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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

PyinOoLwin conserves Myanmar native orchids to prevent extinction

TO prevent the extinction of Myanmar native orchids, the cultivation of Myanmar orchids has been protected and kept privately in a special place, said Daw Thanda Myint, deputy staff officer of Doekwin Orchid yard in PyinOoLwin Township.

Myanmar is the home of more than 800 different species of orchids. Currently, the Doekwin Orchid yard has conserved about 70 orchid species and 10 native species. But, the yard has distributed only four hybrid orchid species and five ordinary domestic species. The remaining species are only conserved without a sale. The orchids are being stolen and resold back in the black market.

"Orchid is one of the most valuable flowers. The orchids are interesting. Nowadays, people are wearing the orchid as a valuable item at the events and ceremonies. Some grow the nursery orchid plants and distribute their species. Myanmar native orchid species are now used in traditional medicine. Public awareness should be raised to strengthen control over the illegal orchid market. Conservation can't be successful without public participation," she described.

Hybrid orchid species such as cattleya, dendrobium and butterflies are only distributed to the domestic market. In Myanmar, dendrobium orchids are mostly found in Chin, Shan and Kachin States. The hybrid orchid species price ranges between K800 and less than K10,000 per flower pot, depending on the species in the wholesale market, it is learnt. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/ GNLM

Myanmar is the home of more than 800 different species of orchids. Currently, the Doekwin Orchid yard has conserved about 70 orchid species and 10 native species.

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Education
Department of Higher Education
Announcement

Opening of final year (majoring in sciences) courses of University of Distance Education for 2022 academic year

THE Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education announced that the practical and lecturing courses of the final year (majoring in sciences) of the University of Distance Education for the 2022 Academic Year will be reopened at universities, degree colleges and colleges as of 22-1-2022.

Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education

14th Asian International Children's Film Festival to be held

THE Embassy of Japan in Myanmar will hold the JENESYS Online exchange programme "14th Asian International Children's Film Festival".

The programme will be held online this year and participants will enjoy the movies and interact with the youths from other countries. High school students who are interested in film and video creation are welcome to apply to this online programme.

JENESYS (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) Programme is an exchange programme for the youths to observe various topics between Japan and countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

The period of the programme will be between 1:30 pm to 3 pm daily from 8 to 18 March 2022. A total of 5 online exchange programmes will be held over the above-mentioned programme period via the Zoom application.

Myanmar language interpretation will be available during the programme, while the communication with other participants and staff will be in English. Applicants must be high school students aged between 15 to 17. Applicants must be of Myanmar nationality and live in Myanmar. Applicants must be able to attend all 5 days online programmes and must have adequate internet access. Applicants who have already studied or stayed in Japan for a long time and who joined the following programmes are not eligible to apply. The application deadline will be 6 February 2022 (Sunday). Only the selected persons will be contacted by email for the details. If the number of entries reaches the maximum, there will be a draw for selection.
—Myo Min Thura/GNLM

Common crane first ever spotted at Moeyungyi Wildlife Sanctuary

A common crane, which has never been documented at Moeyungyi Wetlands Wildlife Sanctuary in Bago Region, was discovered in December 2021, during a survey of migratory bird species at that sanctuary this year, according to a warden office of the sanctuary.

That crane species (Grus grus) was spotted among a flock of sarus cranes near the lake and field last December. Thousands of common cranes are seen in Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary but surprisingly, the sarus cranes and a common crane formed a group. Only one single common crane was discovered at Moeyungyi Wetlands Wildlife Sanctuary, said a warden.

Cranes are a family, the Gruidae, of large, long-legged, and long-necked birds in the group Gruiformes. The 15 species of cranes are placed in three genera, Antigone, Balearica and Grus. Cranes live on all continents except Antarctica and South America. Two species — Sarus Crane and Common Crane—are found in Myanmar as migratory birds.

Myanmar's sarus crane is on the red list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as it is critically vulnerable to extinction. The common crane is classified as least concern, said a researcher.

Every year, Moeyungyi Wetlands Wildlife Sanctuary is a stopover for migratory birds in winter as it has freshwater lakes where there is abundant food. They usually return in March and April.—Peinzalok Thein Nyunt/GNLM

Two species — Sarus Crane and Common Crane are found in Myanmar as migratory birds.

Public Notification

THE Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee was reconstituted under the State Administration Council's Order No 366/2021 dated 10.12.2021, and action is being taken effectively against illegal trade under the law.

The following telephone numbers, fax and email address can be reached to safely report information in connection with illegal trade.

Auto telephone number - 067 409 883
Mobile phone - 09 404339969
Fax - 067 409 886
Email address - antiillegaltradeinfo@gmail.com

Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee

Public Notification

THE Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee was reconstituted under the State Administration Council's Order No 366/2021 dated 10.12.2021, and action is being taken effectively against illegal trade under the law.

Regarding the "request for money from departmental organizations in conducting trade", the following numbers can be reached to safely report such information.

Auto telephone number - 067 409 881
Mobile phone - 09 699611116
Fax - 067 409 887
Email address - antiillegaltradeoffice@gmail.com

Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee

Daily newspapers available online

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

News and Periodicals Enterprise

Value-added products must be exported

VALUE-ADDED products rather than the raw materials must be exported. It is necessary to seek ways for producing and exporting value-added products by effectively applying natural resources.

(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 31-12-2021)

MoBA Union Minister inspects Nationalities Youth Resource Development Degree College (Yangon), Central Training School

UNION Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung inspected land areas to conduct agriculture and livestock breeding procedures for students, trainees and staff of the Central Training School and Nationalities Youth Resource Development Degree College (Yangon) at Nyaunghnapin Agriculture Zone (3) in Hlegu Township of Yangon Region on 17 January (in picture).

On 18 January morning, the Union minister met principals, teachers and students of the Nationalities Youth Resource Development Degree College (Yangon) in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) at the convocation hall. During the meeting, he discussed proper learning this academic year, participation in the implementation of the five-point roadmap and nine objectives of the State Administration Council, serving duties without any party politics and State development based on unity, and he presented cash prizes to the students.

Then, the Union minister inspected the teaching sessions conducted in line with the COVID-19 health rules for the second year (semester 2) A.G.T.I (Diploma) students of the 2019-2020 Academic Year, upgrade works on the stadium in the school compound, dormitory, dining hall, library and livestock breeding.

The Union minister and party then went to the Central Training School in Dagon Myothit (North) at noon and met principal, instructors, staff and trainees.

He inspected the school compound, school building where the elderly care course will be opened, library, advanced sewing instructor training, greenhouse and fish farms.

The Union minister finally went to the Yangon Region Eastern District Development Supervision Office and inspected the maintenance and strength of heavy machines, manageable-scale crop plantation, chicken and fish farms of the staff.— MNA

MR to make trial run with new trains on Peinzalok-Tawkywein new track

A new train will be tested to run at 100 kilometres per hour on the new railway from Peinzalok in Nyaunglebin Township to Tawkywein in Kyaukdaga Township on 24 January 2022.

Once the test run is complete, the high-speed trains will run on the new track, and the Myanma Railways has issued a notification for the people who are living along the railway line and the people passing by the railway tracks to be careful not to cause any unwanted accidents, not to illegally drive or pass through the railways, and to pay attention to the warning signs and signals of the authorities.

The new railway line between Peinzalok and Tawkywein. **PHOTO: KHIN KO (KYAUKDAGA)**

New carriages are unloaded.

The Yangon-Mandalay Railway Upgrading Project is being carried out in two parts with the JICA's Official Development Assistance loan. The first part, which is from Nyaunglebin to Toungoo, started in November 2018 and will be completed in November 2022. After the project is completed, it will take only three hours from Yangon to Toungoo and 8 hours to Mandalay, saving time for travellers, as well as providing the fast flow of goods, which will inevitably benefit the local development.— Khin Ko (Kyaukdaga)/GNLM

Coord meeting on Union Flag relaying ceremony held to mark Diamond Jubilee Union Day

The coordination meeting on Union Flag relaying ceremony in progress.

A coordination meeting on Union Flag relaying ceremony to mark Diamond Jubilee Union Day was organized in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on Organizing the 75th Anniversary of Union Day discussed the plans to carry the Union Flag placed at Yangon City Hall to Nay Pyi Taw City Hall and to erect and hoist on Union Day that falls on 12 February.

Then, Committee Secretary Deputy Minister U Ye Tint explained the flag-conveying processes and the officials, including the Yangon region chief minister, the committee vice-chairman, Nay Pyi Taw Council chairman, Yangon mayor and other relevant attendees coordinated the discussions. The committee chairman concluded the meeting with the discussions of officials. — MNA

Russian-made Sputnik Light vaccines rolled out in states/regions

Sputnik Light COVID-19 vaccine roll-out is underway beginning 19 January 2022.

THE Ministry of Health is making concerted efforts in vaccination programmes according to the target groups in Nay Pyi Taw and regions/states.

The government vaccinated 4,050 people against COVID-19 using Sputnik Light vaccines, which are purchased and received from Russia as a gesture of bilateral friendship, in Hlinethaya, Shwepyitha and Insein townships of Yangon Region yesterday.

The Sputnik Light vaccine requires only one dose per person and will gain high vaccine coverage in a short period. The Sputnik Light vaccines will be transported via cold chain and used in townships with low vaccine coverage of respective regions and states including Yangon Region.

A total of 17.86 million people has been fully vaccinated as of 18 January 2022 while 3.6 million receive their first doses of vaccine. Therefore, there are 21.46 million who receive vaccines more than one time and a total of 39.48 million doses are delivered in the country. The people should get vaccinated without fail and those who receive the first dose should get second jabs on the due date or within the recommended date at nearest vaccination sites, stated the Ministry of Health. — MNA

Myanmar nationals return via land borders

THE border camps receive Myanmar returnees from foreign countries. A total of 25 people — 14 males and 11 females — returned to Muse Township of Shan State (North) via land borders, while another 17 returnees — eight males and nine females — to Chinshwehaw Town and 73 returnees — 41 males and 32 females — to Laukkai Township on 18 January. Moreover, 201 people — 112 males and 89 females — returned to Myawady Township of Kayin State on 18 January.

The health officials, Tatmadaw medics and other officials provided health-related matters for quarantine.

Then, township administration officials sent them to their respective towns by vehicles and those who test positive for COVID-19 are isolated at the designated places. — MNA

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

MoE holds 3rd day coordination meeting on higher education sector

THE Ministry of Education held the third-day coordination meeting on the higher education sector yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe said the State Administration Council Chairman has been always guiding students to study with joy and rectors and professors to perform their duties in peace.

Under the guidance of the Head of State, universities in the higher education sector will be categorized in Class A, Class B and Class C, and arrangements will be made to open PhD classes in at least one university in each region and state. Master courses can be opened if there are sufficient instructors and teaching aids, he said.

He called on instructors, teachers, professors and rectors to work together with mutual respect and with loyalty to the country. The Union minister also said to renovate the infrastructure of the universities.

He said to support the livelihoods of the teachers as well as to recognize the management of the rectors, pro-rectors and deans of faculties, adding that decent bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens will be included in the hostels of teachers. He also added to hold weekly departmental seminars to improve the qualification of teachers, and to have warm and family-type relations.

The MoE third-day coordination meeting on the higher-education sector is held in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, the discussions were held in six groups among the rectors on becoming top universities, enhancing learning opportunities, promoting learning, drafting of rules and regulations and planning and finance. The group discussion topics were also discussed in PowerPoint presentations.

The meeting was also attended by the permanent secretary, directors-general, rectors of the universities and colleges under the Ministry of Education and officials. — MNA

Vaccination of COVID-19 continues in various states, regions

Gwa residents get inoculated against COVID-19 in Rakhine State.

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

On 18 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 3,822 people from 12 townships in northern Shan State, 613 from four townships in eastern Shan State, 2,790 from five townships in Kayin State, 975 from Palaw Township, Taninthayi Region, 1,230 from Tamway and Yankin Townships of Yangon Region, 23,809 from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 13,401 from 10 Townships in Rakhine State, and 7,435 from seven districts in Mandalay Region, respectively.

Similarly, healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 46 students from Tangyan and Mabein townships in northern Shan State and 732 students from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region on 18 January and yesterday.

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

Hinthada locals receive Covid jabs in Ayeyawady Region.

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

THE Ministry of Commerce is facilitating 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.

A total of 14 tonnes of gloves were imported via international airports and seaports 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 inquires can be reached through the Ministry's Website — www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA

196 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 19 January, total figure rises to 533,604

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 533,604 after 196 new cases were reported on 19 January 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 511,630 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,306 after 1 died.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 18-1-2022, a total of 21,524,017 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 17,863,066 people have been fully vaccinated and 3,660,951 people yet to get the second shots.—MNA

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Shwesettaw Manchaung Resort plans to draw tourist attraction

SHWESETTAW Manchaung Resort in Minbu (Sagu) Township, Minbu District, Magway Region, under the timber extraction area of the Myanma Timber Enterprise, was opened on 9 February 2019, which covers an area of 700 acres and is located in the Padaung-Pyawbwe Forest Reserve.

"To develop tourism based on elephant conservation, provide employment opportunities for elephant staff and local people and to develop community-based tourism activities is important," said U Hla Than, assistant manager of the Minbu District timber extraction.

"We need to understand the behaviour and living nature of elephants and to love them. By establishing Ecotourism, we will be able to enjoy the beauty of Myanmar's natural forest and mountains, and develop a desire to preserve and contribute to the protection of the natural environment," he added.

U Hla Than said that the Shwesettaw Manchaung Resort was opened to generate revenue for the State through a green business.

Shwesettaw Manchaung Resort is only two miles from Shwesettaw Pagoda.

After visiting the pagoda, visitors may come to the elephant camp, ride the elephants and enjoy the natural beauty of the forest, mountains and lakes along the Mann creek.

There are 11 elephants in the camp, and the cost of riding an elephant is K10,000 per foreigner and K5,000 per citizen.

Pilgrims from all over the country visit during the three months from the fifth day of Tabodwe month to the first day of the new year, which is the Shwesettaw Pagoda pilgrimage period, local people said.

"Manchaung Resort also has bungalows with the full set of water and is a popular place to relax. If you want to enjoy the clear and cool water of Mann creek and enjoy the beauty of the forest, mountains and water, you can visit Shwesettaw Manchaung Resort in Minbu (Sagu) Township, Magway Region," residents added. — Zeya Htet (Minbu)/GNLM

Elephant riding at the Shwesettaw Manchaung Resort.

CRIME NEWS

Authorities seize illegal timber, fruits, vehicles, consumer goods

UNDER the supervision of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, action is being taken against illegal trades.

On 18 January, Kawkareik District Anti-Drug Enforcement Division in Kayin State inspected the vehicles that were going to Hpa-an by bypassing the Kawkareik (Tatarkyo) checkpoint.

During the inspection, two vehicles carrying illegal fruits (estimated value of K34,217,500) were seized and action is taken as per the rules and regulations of the Customs Department. On the same day, the Customs Department in Mandalay Region seized a vehicle carrying consumer goods (estimated value of K8,760,000) accordingly to the Department's rules and regulations.

Yesterday, a combined task force under the management of the Illegal Trade Eradication Special Force arrested an unregistered vehicle (estimated value of K6,000,000) in Shwebo Township and five tonnes of teak in Mawlaik Township (estimated value of K750,000).

The vehicle was confiscated in line with the procedures of the Myanmar Police Force and the teak is under control according to the procedures of the Forest Department.

Similarly, a combined task force led by the Department of Forest in Bago Region inspected the forest reserves in Bago, Toungoo and Thayawady districts and reportedly seized 13.7122 tonnes of illegal teak (estimated value of K3,027,760) and 6.4548 tonnes of hardwood (estimated value of K881,920), altogether 20.167 tonnes of illegal timber (estimated value of K3,909,680) under the rules and regulations of the Department. On 18 and 19 January, there was a total of nine cases (estimated value of K53,637,180), the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee stated. — MNA

Confiscated illegal teak.

Seized goods.

Illegal drugs seized in Taninthayi region, Shan state

A combined team of anti-drug police confiscated 28,000 stimulant tablets on 17 and 18 January in Taninthayi Region and Shan State.

On 17 January, the police searched the motorbike ridden by Nay Myo Aung and Htet Zaw Tun and found 6,000 stimulant tablets.

On 18 January, 4,000 stimulant tablets were confiscated from the motorbike ridden by Lwin Myo and Ye Htut Aung. On the same day, 18,000 stimulant tablets were found and confiscated from the motorbike ridden by Lin Wai Oo on the Hopong-Loilem Road near Lwaiwotote Village in Hopong Township.

The arrested suspects have been taken action under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to the Myanmar Police Force. — MNA

Two arrestees along with seized illegal drugs.

Lweje-Laiyang border post reopened after six-month closure

Dignitaries of both sides seen attending at the reopening ceremony at the Lweje-Laiyang border.

SINO-MYANMAR Lweje border post which was suspended in mid-July 2021 during the spike in COVID-19 cases was reopened at 11:45 am on 17 January after six months, U Myint Zaw Moe, Assistant Director of the Department of Trade, formally opened the checkpoint by sprinkling scented water onto the trucks.

Following the three virtual negotiations with Chinese counterparts, the border post resumed its operation on 17 January in line with the COVID-19 preventive measures.

Myanmar will deliver sugarcane and tissue-culture banana to China via Lweje on a trial run, whereas fertilizer, garment raw materials and household goods are primarily imported into the country. According to a mutual agreement, every driver and conductor must get vaccinated two times.—Bhamo-IPRD/GNLM

Exports exceed imports over past three months

MYANMAR'S lower imports over half of the current six-month mini-budget period (October 2021-March 2022) resulted in a positive trade balance of US$113.693 million, according to data provided by the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar's exports surpassed imports in international trade although overall trade value declined compared to the same corresponding period of the 2020-2021 financial year.

Between 1 October and 7 January, the country's exports were estimated at $3.9 billion, imports were valued at $3.79 billion this FY. The external trade drastically sank to $7.7 billion from $8.49 billion recorded in the year-ago period.

"This is a positive balance of trade. A trade surplus is harmful only when the government uses protectionism," a trader points out.

Myanmar witnessed a slump in exports and imports triggered by the coronavirus impacts. Myanmar's maritime trade climbed up yet the country witnessed a drop in border trade amid the coronavirus impacts and political changes. Neighbouring countries tightened the border security and restrict trading in certain border areas.

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

The country's export sector relies more on the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. The Ministry of Commerce is trying to reduce the trade deficit by screening luxury import items and boosting exports. The country mainly imports essential goods, construction materials, capital goods, hygienic material and supporting products for export promotion and import substitution. — KK/GNLM

Sugarcane price edges up as domestic demand on sugar rises

FOLLOWING the sugar price rally in the domestic market, the price of sugarcane soared to over K65,000 per tonne, said Daw Htway Yi, a sugarcane grower from Htigyaing Township.

The prices of sugarcane remain upward trend on the back of strong demand and high price of sugar in the market. However, the growers do not have a great profit due to the high input cost, she added.

This year, sugarcane fetches up to K65,000 per tonne. It was priced at only K43,000 per tonne last year, Mandalay market's data showed.

In a bid to minimize post-harvest losses, the harvested sugarcane in two districts, Mandalay Region is brought directly to sugar mills, the Mandalay Region Agriculture Department stated.

The department's statistics indicated that more than 20,000 acres of sugarcane plantations in Mandalay and PyinOoLwin districts are completed and over 4,000 acres have been harvested.

"It is the harvest season of sugarcane. The growers have already connected with the sugar processing mills. The department is providing technical assistance for post-harvest quality management to the growers to reduce the post-harvest losses and increase their incomes. The harvest season will end in February and March," said Daw Khaing Mo Mo Zin, deputy staff officer of the regional Agriculture Department.

The prices of sugarcane remain upward trend on the back of strong demand and high price of sugar in the market.

Myanmar produced over 400,000 tonnes of sugar in the 2020-2021 financial year, which is a significant drop of 100,000 tonnes as against those recorded in the 2019-2020FY. — KK/GNLM

Green gram growers earn handsome profit

China accounts for 60 per cent of Myanmar's green gram exports.

THE growers of green grams are bringing in a great profit as the prices fetch above K41,000-K45,000 per basket, said a grower from Bago.

The majority of the growers from Bago cultivate green grams after harvesting monsoon rice crops. Mustard, Taiwan water spinach, roselle and spinach are also found in the region.

"Agriculture is our source of income from generations. We primarily farm rice crops. Sequentially, we grow green grams in our villages. The prices of green grams are high despite no foreign demand at present," said a villager of Kantwin village from Bago Township.

We prefer green gram to other beans as it has lower input cost, he added.

China accounts for 60 per cent of Myanmar's green gram exports. China prefers green grams (Shwe Wah) variety. At present, the demand slips due to border trade restrictions amid the COVID-19, traders said.

China makes value-added products from green grams and sends them to foreign markets. Moreover, it produces bean by-products as feedstuffs.

Myanmar conveyed more than 94,280 tonnes of green grams to foreign trade partners over half of the current six-month mini-budget period (October 2021-March 2022), according to the Ministry of Commerce's trade data.

The country generated an income of US$77.66 million from the exports of green grams over the past three months. — Maung Yin Oo/GNLM

20 JANUARY 2022
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Take care of silence killer or chronic disease diabetes

MOST of the Myanmar people who cannot discard the traditional consumption style with rice are suffering from the impacts of diabetes, a chronic disease.

Myanmar people are friendly to consume the instant foods containing high calories due to various reasons such as no spare time to cook meals, no skills to cook, too lake arrivals of home from workplaces, financial problems to store rice and kitchen utensils and keenness to consume the high calories foods.

The number of people suffering from diabetes, hypertension, heart and cancer diseases is on the rise day by day because of uncontrollable foodstuffs. Consequently, many adults are on the increase due to subsequent problems. The WHO's Steps Survey stated 10.5 per cent of people between the ages of 15 and 64 in Myanmar were diabetes patients and the disease has killed 19.7 per cent of the people.

> Now is the time to change the consumption style of Myanmar to overcome the challenges of hypertension, diabetes and heart diseases as well as various kinds of cancers. People should not be too attached to the traditional consumption styles because today's foods are combined with various kinds of chemicals including unsafe cooking oils.

The reliable statistics mentioned that Yangon City is top on the chart of diabetes across the country. It is because local people in Yangon City face population density, too much consumption of tea and soft drinks, the high consumption rate of meals with the content of starch and oil volume, and enjoy the TV and games for a long time.

The Ministry of Health stated that 36 per cent of dead persons in the COVID-19 suffered from diabetes. Among them, 30 per cent of patients were suffering from hypertension and 19 per cent of the patients were burdening both hypertension and diabetes.

The outbreak of diabetes depended on environmental impacts, instant foods and low-quality meals. At present, the dreadful disease diabetes is searching for its prey. In fact, the patients may face unavoidable losses such as blindness, damage of kidneys, heart attacks, stroke and loss of limbs.

However, the victims of diabetes can control themselves to lessen the sufferings of diabetes with physical exercises such as walking, preparedness of lifestyle and consumption system to minimize the foods with too much starch and to maximize consumption of salads.

Now is the time to change the consumption style of Myanmar to overcome the challenges of hypertension, diabetes and heart diseases as well as various kinds of cancers. People should not be too attached to the traditional consumption styles because today's foods are combined with various kinds of chemicals including unsafe cooking oils. Hence, all Myanmar people should change their meals for free from diseases.

■ ■ ■

What's at stake in Covid-19 jab patent waiver row

For pharmaceutical companies, the major drawback of patent waivers is the loss of revenue that would result from their invention being reproduced without compensation.

OVER a year into global Covid-19 vaccination efforts the question of whether jab formulas ought to be freely available is still unresolved — and undersupplied countries are turning to workarounds.

Here's a look at the waiver row, with arguments for and against as well as workarounds that have sprung up in the meantime.

International medical charity Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) has urged rich countries to stop blocking a patent waiver plan that could boost the global production of coronavirus vaccines.
PHOTO: TADEU ANDRE/MSF/AFP

Pros and Cons

Proponents of waiving intellectual property rights owned by pharma giants like Pfizer and Moderna argue that freeing the technology would lead to faster local production of live-saving jabs.

The industry however warns that allowing their inventions to be copied without compensation would would wind up discouraging medical innovation.

As the Covax jab-sharing scheme continues to ship jabs in to undersupplied areas, experts are looking at licensing, technology-sharing and other ways to jumpstart vaccine development in low- and middle-income settings.

The argument in favour of waivers says Covid-19 jabs are a public good that should be available to everyone.

Red Cross president Francesco Rocca told AFP in December that suspending intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines in order to boost production was a "moral imperative".

'Encourage innovation'

But for pharmaceutical companies, the major drawback of patent waivers is the loss of revenue that would result from their invention being reproduced without compensation.

It can take many years and heavy investments to develop new medicines and a patent on their discoveries ensures they'll recoup the cost.

"The central idea is to encourage innovation," Strasbourg-based intellectual property rights specialist Yann Basire told AFP.

Former German chancellor Angela Merkel referenced this idea when she opposed waiving vaccine patents in May, 2021.

"I think that we need the creativity and the power of innovation of companies, and to me, that includes patent protection," she said, adding that without such incentive firms might not be so quick to develop jabs adapted to variants.

Complex rules, lacking supplies

Paris-based lawyer Cyra Nargolwalla says another hurdle is the complexity of vaccine intellectual property protection, which sometimes can mean a combination of patents for technologies from different firms.

"If you lift all these patents it may not only affect vaccines but also other products that have nothing to do with Covid," she said. Pharmaceutical industry leaders also insist patents are far from being the most urgent issue holding up the vaccine supply in low- and middle- income countries.

Instead they point to global shortages of vaccine components and ingredients and insufficient infrastructure as the major hurdles.

But Charles Gore of the Medicines Patent Pool disagrees that supplies and regulations stand completely in the way of sharing vaccine technology.

"We agree that there is much more than patents to making an effective vaccine," the MPP executive director told AFP.

"But we do think that there are manufacturers in many countries that are able to make them."

Voluntary licensing

The MPP, which was established in 2010 to improve access to HIV medications in low- and middle-income countries, has succeeded in licensing Covid treatments for cheaper production.

In November it signed major deals for an antibody test and for Pfizer's oral antiviral pill to be produced more cheaply and Gore said they are in talks with a few vaccine developers.

The MPP declined to weigh in on whether waiving all vaccine patents is still a good idea.

Instead, Gore pointed to another approach: forging ahead with publicly available knowledge on current jabs in lieu of an exact recipe. To that end the MPP joined the WHO to support the creation of an technology and training transfer hub for mRNA technology in South Africa.

Reverse engineering

Researchers at the Afrigen development facility in Cape Town are reverse-engineering a jab based on the Moderna vaccine.

Their aim is to produce a version that can be kept at warmer temperatures than the original jab, which requires expensive -25°C to -15°C refrigeration.

Research is still in the early stages and the hope is for the MPP to reach a licensing agreement with Moderna before the jab is ready for clinical trials, currently projected for some time in 2023.

SOURCE: AFP

Cyber attacks surge amid Covid-driven digitalization: World Economic Forum Study

THE accelerating pace of digitalization, fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a record-breaking year for cybercrime with ransomware attacks rising 151 per cent in 2021, and an average of 270 cyberattacks per organization being faced, a new study showed on Tuesday.

The World Economic Forum's 'Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2022', released during its online Davos Agenda summit, further said that each successful cyber breach cost a company USD 3.6 million (nearly ₹ 27 crore) last year, while the average share price of the hacked company underperformed NASDAQ by nearly 3 per cent even six months after the event in case of the breach becoming public.

Global digital economy

The WEF said the global digital economy surged on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic, but so has cybercrime and nearly 80 per cent of cyber leaders now consider ransomware a 'danger' and 'threat' to public safety.

At the same time, there is a large perception gap between business executives who think their companies are secure and security leaders who disagree.

Some 92 per cent of business executives surveyed agree that cyber resilience is integrated into enterprise risk-management strategies, but only 55 per cent of cyber leaders surveyed agreed. This gap between leaders can leave firms vulnerable to attacks as a direct result of incongruous security priorities and policies, the report said.

Even after a threat is detected, the WEF survey conducted in collaboration with Accenture, found that nearly two-thirds would find it challenging to respond to a cybersecurity incident due to the shortage of skills within their team.

Even more troubling is the growing trend that companies need 280 days on average to identify and respond to a cyberattack. To put this into perspective, an incident that occurs on January 1, may not be fully contained until October 8.

"Companies must now embrace cyber resilience -- not only defending against cyberattacks but also preparing for swift and timely incident response and recovery when an attack does occur," WEF Managing Director Jeremy Jurgens said.

Cybersecurity

Accenture Chair and CEO Julie Sweet said organisations need to work more closely with ecosystem partners and other third parties to make cybersecurity part of their ecosystem DNA, so they can be resilient and promote customer trust.

The survey also found that less than one-fifth of cyber leaders feel confident that their organisations are cyber resilient.

Remote working has opened up new possibilities for cyber attack.
PHOTO: AFP /FILE

Also, they do not feel consulted on business decisions, and they struggle to gain the support of decision-makers in prioritizing cyber risks, while recruiting and retaining the right talent is their greatest concern.

Besides, nearly nine in ten see SMEs as the weakest link in the supply chain.

SOURCE: AFP

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 19 January 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 20 January 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Eastern Shan State, scattered in Kachin and (Northern and Eastern)Shan States and isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and Kayah, Kayin, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of scattered rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing, Tanintharyi Regions and Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 January 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thunder showers.Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 January 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 January 2022: Partly cloudy.

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More protected areas won't save biodiversity, warn experts

EXPANDING nature preserves will not be enough to stem a rising tide of extinctions, a panel of experts warned Wednesday, taking aim at a draft treaty tasked with rescuing Earth's animal and plant life.

Setting aside at least 30 percent of both land and oceans as protected zones is the cornerstone target of the so-called global biodiversity framework to be finalised in May at UN negotiations in Kunming, China.

But a report by more than 50 top experts said the draft plan still falls far short of what is needed.

"We're in the middle of a biodiversity crisis, with a million species at risk of extinction," lead author Paul Leadley, a professor at Paris-Saclay University, told AFP. "There's good evidence that we will fail again to meet ambitious international biodiversity objectives if there's too much focus on protected areas at the expense of other urgent actions."

The Pangasananan territory in the Philippines has been conserved for centuries by the Manobo Indigenous people. **PHOTO: GLAIZA TABANAO/ICCA CONSORTIUM/AFP**

The plan, under negotiation by nearly 200 nations, sets a score of targets for 2030 — and aims by 2050 to reverse biodiversity loss and be "living in harmony with nature." The world failed almost entirely to reach a similar set of 10-year objectives set a decade ago at UN talks in Aichi, Japan.

"We keep trying to treat a critically ill patient with plasters — that has to stop," said Leadley.

Echoing a similar warning issued by the UN's science advisory panel for climate change, Leadley and his colleagues said reversing the damage done to nature will require "transformative change" in society, starting with the way we produce and consume food.

Multiple drivers

Policymakers must also realise that all the drivers of extinction — habitat loss and fragmentation, over-hunting for food and profit, pollution, the spread of invasive species — must be tackled at once. "Biodiversity loss is caused by multiple direct drivers in nearly all cases, meaning that actions on only one or a few will be insufficient to halt continued loss," the report said.

Climate change is also rapidly emerging as a major threat to many animal and plant species on land and in the oceans, outpacing their ability to adapt.— AFP ■

'We are homeless': Victims of twin Afghan quakes await aid

SURVIVORS of twin earthquakes in Afghanistan were waiting Wednesday for aid to arrive after spending their second night exposed to sub-zero temperatures following tremors that killed at least 22 people and wrecked homes.

Rescuers continued to comb through debris in search of survivors from Monday's quakes, which jolted Qadis district in the western province of Badghis, damaging hundreds of buildings.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) said two earthquakes hours apart of magnitudes 4.9 and 5.3 rocked the district, a rural area not easily accessible by road.

Many survivors spent a second straight night out in the open while some took shelter in tents on Tuesday night, an AFP correspondent reported.

Scattered aid has begun to reach the area but the vast majority of victims are still awaiting assistance.

"We lost everything that we had. We are homeless. Everything is buried under the rubble," Abdul Rahman, a survivor whose house in Qadis was damaged, told AFP late Tuesday.

When the tremors began "everybody started screaming", he said. "Everyone from every house just ran out from their homes and fled."

Footage of the earthquake's aftermath showed completely destroyed mud houses, with survivors including children searching the ruins for their belongings.

One man, his face covered in mud, could be seen walking through the debris carrying an infant, as clothes, carpets and household items lay scattered around.—AFP ■

Residents examine a damaged house, in Qadis district in Afghanistan's western Badghis province, after twin quakes struck. **PHOTO: AFP**

Austria gears up to fight EU 'green' nuclear energy plan

AS the EU moves to label energy from nuclear power and natural gas as "green" investments, Austria is gearing up to fight this, including with a legal complaint.

The European Commission is consulting with member states and European lawmakers until Friday on its plans.

A final text could be published by end of the month and would become EU law effective from 2023 if a majority of member states or the EU Parliament fail to oppose it. "Neither of these two forms of energy is sustainable and therefore has no place in the taxonomy regulation," Environment Minister Leonore Gewessler told AFP in an interview this week in her eighth-floor office overlooking the Danube canal that flows through central Vienna. "If the Commission continues to work with this proposal and implements it then it is clear that we will take legal action," the Green politician added.

The nuclear power plant in the Lower Austrian market town of Zwentendorf an der Donau has never been used to generate nuclear energy as the nation's voters blocked it from going online in a 1978 referendum. **PHOTO: BWAG/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ AFP**

The 44-year-old said Austria had "very, very strong arguments" why energy from nuclear power and natural gas should not be labelled as green and as such she had "great confidence" a complaint at the EU Court of Justice (ECJ) could succeed.

"The question of waste disposal (from nuclear energy) has not been solved for decades... It's as if we give our children a backpack and say 'you will solve it one day,'" she said.

She also noted natural gas produces significant greenhouse emissions.—AFP ■

Damaged undersea cable that has isolated Tonga will take month to repair

AN undersea cable connecting volcano- and tsunami-hit Tonga with the rest of the world will take at least a month to repair, New Zealand's foreign ministry said Wednesday.

"US cable company SubCom advises it will take at least four weeks for Tonga's cable connection to be repaired," the ministry said in an update on the disaster, which has cut the small South Pacific nation from the rest of the world.

Tonga has been isolated since Saturday's violent eruption severed the cable in two places. What little communication there has been after the disaster has been through a few satellite phones, mainly held by foreign embassies in the capital Nuku'alofa. Telecom operator Digicel, which is restoring some basic domestic 2G services, reported that resuming international communications could still be some way away. The firm said there seemed to be two separate breaks in the cable — one is 37 kilometres (23 miles) offshore and the other is a domestic cable close to the volcano, making repairs difficult. A repair ship is currently en route from neighbouring Papua New Guinea.—AFP ■

Canada health authority approves Pfizer's anti-Covid pill

CANADA'S health authority said Monday it has approved Pfizer's anti-Covid pill, Paxlovid, for adults at high risk of progressing to serious disease.

The oral treatment was approved after an "expedited review," Health Canada said in a statement on its website, adding that it would continue to monitor its safety and effectiveness.

"No drug, including PAXLOVID TM, is a substitute for vaccination," the statement added.

The drug, which comprises two types of tablet, is the first Covid-19 therapy which can be taken at home, and is potentially a huge step towards ending the pandemic.

"Today's announcement is particularly important as access to easy-to-use treatments could help to reduce the severity of Covid-19 in adults who become newly infected and are at high-risk of progressing to serious illness," said Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer.

The approval comes as Canada, like many countries, has been struggling to contain the Omicron variant of Covid-19.

The French-speaking province of Quebec recently announced it would levy a tax on the unvaccinated, arguing they impose a burden on everyone else. Paxlovid has so far been authorized in a handful of countries including the United States and Israel, while the European Union has allowed member states to use it ahead of formal approval as an emergency measure against Omicron.

Unlike vaccines, it does not target the ever-evolving spike protein which the coronavirus uses to invade cells. —AFP ■

A woman receives a Covid-19 vaccine in the Canadian city of Mississauga in May 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Two more regions in Italy move to upper risk of COVID-19 transmission

Passengers wear masks in Milan, Italy's main train station. **PHOTO: AFP**

TWO more regions moved to an upper pandemic risk level in Italy on Monday, as health authorities signalled the wave of COVID-19 infections caused by Omicron variant might reach its peak soon.

Small northwest Aosta Valley turned orange, and the southern region of Campania turned yellow on the base of a specific ordinance signed by Health Minister Roberto Speranza on Friday night following the results of the latest pandemic monitoring survey.

This complied with the four-tiered system of red, orange, yellow, and white zones implemented in Italy since late 2020, which respectively denote a high, medium, lower-intermediate and low risk of virus transmission.

Currently, one region is in orange, 14 regions in yellow, and five in white nationwide.

Meanwhile, the Italian central government said it might consider changing the way new COVID-19 cases are counted in the country, as several regional governors have lately asked.

This request would imply a key change — excluding people who test positive for COVID-19, but are vaccinated and asymptomatic, to the daily count of new cases.

Speranza told local media on Sunday that technical talks to consider this request would be launched soon, and a working table with governors would be opened in the next two weeks.

"The situation is not easy, and the number of infected people is still high, but hospital bed occupancy is lower (than in previous pandemic waves) thanks to the high vaccination rate," the health minister said.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ibiza trip lands French minister in hot water ahead of Covid strike

FRANCE'S education minister faced calls to resign Tuesday after it emerged he had announced a strict Covid testing protocol for students while on vacation on Ibiza.

Jean-Michel Blanquer, a close ally of President Emmanuel Macron, unveiled the strict testing and isolation rules in a video interview with the Parisien newspaper on 2 January, just hours before classes were to resume after the holiday break. The paper did not specify that Blanquer, who has infuriated teachers with successive protocol changes that prompted a major strike last week by teachers, was speaking from the Spanish island resort of Ibiza. The new rules forced thousands of classes to close and left students waiting in long lines with their parents outside pharmacies and labs for tests.—AFP ■

Police detain seven with false covid test certificates at Lisbon airport

Seven people were detained at the Humberto Delgado Airport in Lisbon, for possession of false negative results of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, announced the Judicial Police (PJ) on Monday, stressing that the individuals were detected at the boarding gates.

In an operation supported by the Shared Services of the Ministry of Health (SPMS), the PJ, through the National Anti-Corruption Unit, said in a statement that the individuals were three women and four men, aged between 26 and 36, who were preparing to travel to another country in Europe.—Xinhua ■

Hong Kong to cull hamsters after Covid found in pets

HONG KONG will cull hundreds of hamsters after some tested positive for the coronavirus, officials said Tuesday, as the city pushes to maintain its strict "zero-Covid" strategy.

The Chinese territory's staunch adherence to the mainland's "zero-Covid" policy has kept the number of cases low, but maintaining it has cut the finance hub off from the rest of the world for the last two years.

The decision to cull about 2,000 hamsters and other small animals comes after health officials recorded Covid cases at a Hong Kong pet shop.

Health secretary Sophia Chan said the move will protect public health after a pet shop employee and a customer handling hamsters tested positive.

The employee was found to be infected with the Delta variant, which has become rare in Hong Kong. "Internationally, there is no evidence yet to show pets can transmit the coronavirus to humans, but... we will take precautionary measures against any vector of transmission," Chan said during a press conference.

Eleven preliminary positive samples were found on hamsters for sale at the Little Boss pet shop in the bustling shopping district of Causeway Bay.

Officials believe they were imported from the Netherlands and urged anyone who bought a hamster after 22 December to give up their pet for culling. About 1,000 animals from Little Boss and its warehouse will be seized and put down, while staff and customers have been sent for testing.—AFP ■

Hong Kong will cull hundreds of hamsters after some tested positive for the coronavirus. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lao central bank issues licences for cryptocurrency exchange platforms

Lao central bank, the Bank of the Lao PDR (BOL), has issued licences authorizing two companies to trade in cryptocurrencies.

The companies are the Lao Digital Assets Exchange (LDX), a joint venture between the AIF Group and the Phongsupthavy Group, and Bitqik, a subsidiary of the Simuong Group.

LDX and Bitqik are now the only licensed and regulated institutions in Laos that can offer full brokerage and trading services in cryptocurrencies and other digital assets, both within Lao and the region, local daily Vientiane Times reported on Wednesday.

The two trading platforms are expected to provide full services in April, in full compliance with the regulations of the BOL in terms of cybersecurity and client protection, to ensure the seamless and secure use of digital assets.—Xinhua ■

Millionaires join non-profits in wealth tax appeal

A wealth tax on the world's richest people could raise at least $2.52 trillion per year, enough to fund Covid vaccines for everyone and lift billions out of poverty, groups including non-profits and millionaires said Wednesday.

The proposal from a network of NGOs, social movements and pro-tax millionaires follows separate reports showing that the world's wealthiest people have grown richer during the now two-year-old pandemic.

"The insane reality is that whilst billions face a daily struggle to survive during this pandemic, billionaire wealth is spiralling out of control. This cannot be right," Jenny Ricks, global convenor of the Fight Inequality Alliance, said in a statement.

The tax proposal was made to coincide with a meeting of the World Economic Forum, which is taking place online for the second straight year as its Davos gathering was postponed due to the spread of the Omicron variant.—AFP ■

Japan PM vows to push for green, digital transformation

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Tuesday he will push for a green and digital transformation as part of his efforts to create a new form of capitalism, in an address at a virtual World Economic Forum event.

In his speech at the Davos Agenda conference, Kishida, who took office in October, stressed the need to overhaul economic and social structures by keeping universal values such as democracy, pointing to the risks posed by state capitalism in an apparent reference to countries such as China.

"Japan is determined to lead this global trend in this new form of capitalism and demonstrate concrete examples of how capitalism can evolve as we assume the Group of Seven presidency next year," Kishida said.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida addresses a virtual World Economic Forum event on 18 January 2022, at his office in Tokyo. **PHOTO: CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE/KYODO**

Kishida expressed his hope of creating a "zero-emission" community in Asia by promoting joint investment and financing or shared technological standards in hydrogen and other green energy sources as the region faces geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges. He compared the framework to the European Union, which evolved from the European Coal and Steel Community during the Cold War.

Kishida said the COVID-19 pandemic has created an "opportunity" for Japan to promote digitalization, adding that his country will build infrastructure such as seabed cables and optical fibre networks, as well as data centres in various parts of the nation, to cope with a surge in data volume.

"Abenomics achieved great results, but it is clear that the efforts made thus far are not enough to transform the Japanese economy into a sustainable and inclusive one," Kishida said, referring to the economy-boosting programme pushed by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, consisting of bold monetary easing, fiscal stimulus and structural reforms. "My Cabinet will build on Abenomics...and boldly pursue the transformation of the Japanese economy" with the focus on a green society and digitalization, the prime minister said. — Kyodo ■

162 projects inked under China-Singapore connectivity initiative by 2021

A total of 162 business cooperation projects worth 25 billion US dollars had been inked under the China-Singapore (Chongqing) Demonstration Initiative on Strategic Connectivity by the end of 2021.

The information was revealed in the government work report delivered Monday at the fifth session of the 5th People's Congress of the Chongqing Municipality.

Launched in 2015, the initiative mainly targets sectors including financial services, air transportation, logistics and information communication.

It is the third intergovernmental cooperation project between China and Singapore, following the Suzhou Industrial Park in east China's Jiangsu Province and the Tianjin Eco-city in north China's Tianjin Municipality.

The New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, a trade and logistics passage jointly built by Singapore and provincial-level regions of western China, has also enhanced connectivity between China and other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Chongqing saw 2,036 freight train trips via the land-sea trade corridor in 2021, up 53 per cent year on year. It has expanded its reach to 315 ports in 107 countries and regions worldwide.—Xinhua ■

The first train of the regular sea-rail transit route linking Chongqing Municipality in southwest China and Singapore is seen before departure in Chongqing, southwest China, 25 September 2017. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

In the photo, provided by KEB Hana Bank, bank officials closely examine a magnified image of what appears to be a fake banknote at a Seoul branch office on 23 September 2019. **PHOTO: KEB HANA BANK/YONHAP/XINHUA**

S.Korea's fake banknotes hit record low in 2021

SOUTH Korea's fake banknotes found in 2021 hit a record low as the COVID-19 pandemic reduced demand for face-to-face transactions, central bank data showed Wednesday.

The number of counterfeit banknotes, which were found or reported last year, stood at 176, according to the Bank of Korea.

It was down from 272 tallied in 2020, marking the lowest since relevant data began to be compiled in 1998. The number of reported 5,000-won (4.2 US dollars) fake bills was 97 in 2021, taking up 55.1 per cent of the total. It was trailed by 10,000-won (8.4 dollars) counterfeit bills with 39 cases, 50,000-won (42 dollars) fake notes with 22, and 1,000-won (0.84 dollars) fake bills with 18.

About 77 per cent of the fake notes were found in the Seoul metropolitan area, the data showed. —Xinhua ■

Airbus to set up aircraft transition center in SW China

AIRBUS plans to establish an aircraft transition center in the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu to manage the entire "lifecycle" of aircraft, including dismantling and recycling.

The plan was unveiled at a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing ceremony on Tuesday attended by Airbus, Chengdu authorities, French aircraft dismantler Tarmac Aerosave and Airbus subsidiary Satair. It is the first aircraft-recycling project outside of Europe that Airbus has directly invested in, according to Airbus.

George Xu, CEO of Airbus China, said that the project is consistent with China's green development strategy and will help promote the sustainable development of the aviation industry, while improving the recycling efficiency of aircraft and aviation materials. With a total investment of no less than 6 billion yuan (about 945 million U.S. dollars), the proposed facility is expected to be put into use by September 2023. It will cover an area of 61 hectares, with a storage capacity of 125 aircraft, according to a news conference following the ceremony. According to the plan, the project is expected to store 685 aircraft and dismantle 98 aircraft by 2030, with an estimated industrial scale of 21.07 billion yuan.—Xinhua ■

The safe and responsible recycling of commercial aircraft is one of the main challenges facing the global aviation industry. Tarmac Aerosave employees work on a plane engine. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

UK inflation hits decades high in cost of living squeeze

BRITISH annual inflation accelerated to a near 30-year high in December, official data showed Wednesday, stoking fears over a cost of living squeeze as wages fail to keep pace.

Economies worldwide are battling decades-high inflation that is forcing central banks to lift interest rates, including the Bank of England which last month raised its key borrowing cost for the first time in more than three years.

The UK's inflation rate hit 5.4 per cent last month, rising further above target on price gains for clothing, domestic energy, food and furniture, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The BoE, whose chief task is to keep inflation close to a 2.0-per cent target, is now expected to hike again at its next meeting in February amid easing concerns over Omicron.

'Cost of living squeeze'

Britain's cost of living is forecast to soar even higher in April due to looming hikes in national insurance tax and domestic energy, analysts say.—AFP ■

Businesses urge UN to adopt legally binding treaty on plastic pollution

SEVENTY leading companies and financial institutions have called on the United Nations (UN) to start negotiations on a comprehensive, legally binding treaty to tackle plastic pollution.

In a joint statement issued on Monday, the companies and institutions urged the negotiations for the treaty to be launched at the upcoming UN Environment Assembly (UNEA).

Hosted by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UNEA brings together representatives of various stakeholders to discuss and agree on policies to address the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

Employees carry banners informing customers about the ban on free single-use plastic bags at a shopping mall in downtown Bangkok on 2 January 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

The UNEA is scheduled to take place virtually and in in-person sessions in Nairobi, Kenya, between 28 February and 2 March.

This is the first time industry leaders advocate for such a robust policy on plastic pollution, Eirik Lindebjerg, the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) global plastics policy manager, told Xinhua in an online interview.

"Plastic pollution is … a problem that every country in the world really struggles to handle, and most countries struggle to handle it alone. A treaty would put in place global cooperation and could be a vehicle then to create global rules," he said.

The WWF said that pressure has been mounting on the international community for a legally binding treaty.

"Plastic pollution is one of the most rapidly growing global environmental challenges," Lindebjerg said. "Plastics are everywhere, and this is starting to affect entire ecosystems." He stressed China's important role in the global war against plastics.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BUNUN MIRACLE

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BUNUN MIRACLE VOY.NO. (BUNM012)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-1-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **IBTT** 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.

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Invitation For Open tender No.(3/2022)

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Department of Mines invites to submit the tender quotation sale open tender of (1208.574) Metric Tons, (7) Lots of Cathode Copper by United States Dollar as follow;

(a)	(108.574) Metric Tons	(1) Lot,	Yangon, Warehouse
(b)	(100) Metric Tons	(1) Lot,	Yangon, Warehouse
(c)	(200) Metric Tons	(5) Lots,	Yangon, Warehouse

2. The base price of the Cathode Copper will be determined based on the Unknown Price of the Copper at the London Metal Exchange on the opening day of the tender, and the bidding price will be (LME + Premium) and the highest bidder will be the winner of the tender.

3. The closing date and time of the tender is 22.2.2022 at (14:00) hours and opening time of tender is at (15:00) hours that day.

4. For any further detailed information, it is requested to contact the telephone number (+95) 067 3409378 and 067 3409372, Mineral Development Division, Department of Mines, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Tender Committee
Department of Mines
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Australia to rebate visa fees for int'l students, backpackers amid staff shortfalls, surging COVID cases

PRIME Minister Scott Morrison on Wednesday said the government would rebate visa fees for international students and backpackers to support the workforce challenge amid surging COVID-19 cases nationwide.

Those include international students who arrive in Australia over the next eight weeks and backpackers who arrive within 12 weeks.

"And there are around 150,000 students who have visas who we are encouraging to come back to be there for the start of their university or college year," he told reporters in Canberra.

"But we also want them to come here and be able to be filling some of these critical workforce shortages, particularly those who are working and being trained in health care, aged care, those types of sectors," he said.

Australia on Wednesday reported more than 70,000 locally-acquired coronavirus infections and more than 60 deaths, according to health department figures from states and territories.

The latest data make it the second deadliest day of coronavirus pandemic in Australia after more than 70 deaths were reported on Tuesday.

A poll published by Nine Entertainment newspapers on Wednesday found that an overwhelming majority of Australians want the federal government to subsidize rapid antigen tests (RATs) for COVID-19.—Xinhua ■

The visa fee, which is around $600, will be rebated for international students who arrive anytime in the next eight weeks. The University of Sydney is one of the best universities in Australia. **PHOTO: SYDNEY.EDU.AU/XINHUA**

NEWS IN BRIEF

US court awards Warmbier family $240,000 seized from North Korea

A United States court has awarded the family of Otto Warmbier, the American student who died after being jailed by Pyongyang, $240,000 seized from a North Korean bank, court records showed.

The 22-year-old Warmbier, who was detained in North Korea for allegedly removing a propaganda poster from his hotel, died days after being sent back to the United States in a coma in 2017.

His parents, Cynthia and Frederick Warmbier, sued North Korea for the alleged torture and murder of their son, with a US judge ordering Pyongyang to pay them $501 million in 2018.

Impoverished North Korea, struggling under biting international sanctions over its nuclear weapons programme, is believed to have few assets in the United States and has ignored the 2018 ruling.

Last week, Judge Lawrence Kahn of the Northern District Court of New York approved the seizure of the funds from North Korea's Korea Kwangson Banking Corporation after they failed to respond to a forfeiture order.—AFP ■

Anti-abortion lawmaker elected EU parliament chief

EU lawmakers on Tuesday chose centre-right Maltese politician Roberta Metsola the new head of the European Parliament, despite controversy over her anti-abortion stance.

Metsola — a member of the largest bloc, the European People's Party — won a large majority with 458 votes to become the third woman to head the chamber after a deal between the leading political groupings.

Her election comes a week after the shock death of outgoing centre-left parliament president David Sassoli, who was due to step down as part of the power-sharing pact.

MEPs applauded and sang "Happy Birthday" as Metsola scooped the top job on the day she turned 43 — becoming the youngest ever head of the legislature. "In the next years, people across Europe will look to our institution for leadership and direction, while others will continue to test the limits of our democratic values and European principles," Metsola said in her acceptance speech.

Roberta Metsola attends the European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg, France, 18 January 2022. The European Parliament on Tuesday elected conservative politician Roberta Metsola from Malta as its new president, succeeding David Sassoli who died of illness last week. **PHOTO: XINHUA/ZHENG HUANSONG**

"We must fight back against the anti-EU narrative that takes hold so easily and so quickly."

The mother-of-four styles herself as a pro-LGBTQ progressive and champion of women's rights — but her tough stance over abortion has drawn criticism from opponents.

Abortion is illegal in largely Catholic Malta — the EU's smallest nation — and Metsola in June voted against a report urging all member states to offer safe access to terminations. That stance saw the Left and Green groups in parliament field two staunchly pro-choice feminists as their challengers.

But a backroom deal between the major political forces meant that Metsola's election to head the parliament until mid-2024 was in the bag.—AFP ■

11 dead as coalition bombs Yemen after UAE attack

ELEVEN people were killed in air strikes on Yemen's rebel-held capital, a witness and medical sources told AFP on Tuesday, as the Saudi-led coalition hit back after a deadly attack on Abu Dhabi that sent Gulf tensions soaring.

Residents were combing the rubble for survivors after the strikes levelled two houses in Sanaa, hours after the Huthi rebels claimed a drone and missile attack that killed three people in the Emirati capital.

"Eleven people were killed. The search is still going on for survivors in the rubble," said Akram al-Ahdal, a relative of some of the victims. A medical source confirmed the death toll.

The UAE, part of the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Iran-backed rebels, had vowed a tough response to Monday's attack, the first deadly assault acknowledged inside its borders and claimed by the Yemeni insurgents.

The coalition launched fresh strikes "targeting Huthi camps and headquarters" in Sanaa on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia's state-owned Al-Ekhbariya TV tweeted.

Crude prices soared to seven-year highs partly fuelled by the attacks, which exploded fuel tanks near storage facilities of oil giant ADNOC, killing three.

The Huthis later warned UAE residents to avoid "vital installations".

Yemen, whose near seven-year war has killed hundreds of thousands, occupies a strategic position on the Red Sea, a vital conduit for oil from the resource-rich Gulf.—AFP ■

Yemenis survey the damage after the Saudi-led coalition carried out retaliatory air strikes against the rebel-held capital Sanaa following a rebel drone and missile attack on the United Arab Emirates. **PHOTO: AFP**

Russia says needs answers from US to continue Ukraine talks

Negotiations between Russia and the West have done little to ease concerns over Ukraine's security. **PHOTO: HANDOUT RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY/AFP**

RUSSIAN Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday that Moscow was waiting for a response from the United States on sweeping security demands put to the West before continuing talks over Ukraine.

Moscow last month put forward a wide array of defence-related demands to NATO and the United States with the aim of stemming Western influence in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Those demands were at the centre of a wave of negotiations between Russia and representatives of the United States, NATO, and the OSCE that were held as concerns were mounting that Russia was planning to invade Ukraine.

"We are now awaiting responses to these proposals — as we were promised — in order to continue negotiations," Lavrov said during a joint press conference in Moscow with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. "Let's hope these talks will continue," Lavrov said.

The West has raised concerns in recent months over a build up of Russian troops around Ukraine's borders, concerns reiterated by Baerbock in Moscow. "Over the past few weeks, more than 100,000 Russian troops, equipment and tanks have been deployed near Ukraine for no reason. It's hard not to see that as a threat," she said.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Verdict due in Belgium trial over UK migrant truck deaths

A Belgian court on Wednesday is to deliver its verdict in a trial of 23 people suspected of being involved with a gang that smuggled Vietnamese migrants to Britain, 39 of whom died in the back of a truck in October 2019.

The trial, which started in the city of Bruges on 15 December focused on the fact that many of the victims left from the outskirts of Brussels, where the gang allegedly had two safe houses to group migrants.

The bodies of the migrants — 31 men and eight women, aged 15 to 44 and all from Vietnam — were discovered in Britain when the container they were in was opened. They had suffocated to death in extremely hot weather during the ferry crossing.—AFP ■

Los Angeles to host Summit of the Americas in June

The ninth Summit of the Americas will be held in Los Angeles in June, US President Joe Biden announced Tuesday, saying it will focus on building a sustainable and "equitable future."

The United States will host leaders from the region to "advance our shared commitment to economic prosperity, security, human rights, and dignity," the White House said in a statement.

The Summit of the Americas is the only meeting that brings together the country leaders of North, South and Central America and the Caribbean, the statement noted. "The ability of our democracies to close the gap between what we promise and what we deliver depends in no small part on what we do, together, to make it better," the White House said, insisting that US interests "are inextricably bound to the fortunes of our closest neighbours in the Americas." —AFP ■

Indonesia passes law paving way for capital's move to Borneo

INDONESIA'S parliament on Tuesday passed a law approving the relocation of its capital from slowly sinking Jakarta to a site 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) away on jungle-clad Borneo island that will be named "Nusantara".

The House of Representatives vote provides the legal framework for the move, which was first tipped by President Joko Widodo in April 2019, citing rising sea levels and severe congestion on densely populated Java island.

Home to more than 30 million people in its greater metro area, Jakarta has long been plagued by serious infrastructure problems and flooding exacerbated by climate change, with experts predicting up to a third of the city could be underwater by 2050.

The new capital will cover about 56,180 hectares (216 square miles) in East Kalimantan province on the Indonesian part of Borneo, which the country shares with Malaysia and Brunei.—AFP

Computer imagery released by artist Nyoman Nuarta shows his modified design for Indonesia's state palace in East Kalimantan. **PHOTO: NYOMAN NUARTA/HANDOUT/AFP**

Former FARC hostage Betancourt announces fresh presidential bid

INGRID Betancourt — who was abducted 20 years ago while campaigning for Colombia's presidency, and held captive by FARC rebels in the jungle for more than six years — on Tuesday announced a new bid for the country's top job.

The Franco-Colombian leader of the Oxygen Green Party told reporters in Bogota she would vie to become the nominee to represent centrist parties in the race.

If she wins the nomination, she will contest the first round presidential election on 29 May.

"I will work tirelessly from this moment... to be your president," she said.

Betancourt, 60, was captured by the FARC guerilla group in 2002 while campaigning for the presidency, and was rescued in a military operation six-and-a-half years later, in 2008.

She was chained for much of her captivity after she tried to escape.

The Revolutionary Armed Forced of Colombia (FARC) has been disarmed and disbanded under a 2016 peace pact that ended Colombia's decades-long internal war, and has since converted itself into a minority political party.

"I am here today to finish what I started with many of you in 2002," said Betancourt, who has mostly lived abroad since her liberation.

She added she was convinced "Colombia is ready to change course."—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

(a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.

(b) To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

(c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

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

(b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international inves tment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.

(c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

(a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.

(b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.

(c) To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

Myanmar to play defending champions Japan in 2022 AFC Women's Cup

The Myanmar national women's football team was seen before an international football match. **PHOTO: MFF**

THE final round of the 2022 AFC Women's Cup will be held in India, with Myanmar set to take on defending champions Japan in their opening group game.

The tournament will start today and the Myanmar team will play against the defending champions Japan on 21 January at 2:30 pm Myanmar Standard Time.

This is the third meeting between Myanmar and Japan in the group stage of the Asian Cup, and Japan trounced Myanmar in all matches.

Japan beat Myanmar 7-0 in 2003 and 8-0 in 2010. The Japanese women's team has already won the Women's World Cup, so it will be different from the Myanmar team and they will have to try not to lose without conceding a goal.

The Myanmar women's team started training in the second week of November and has more than two months to prepare.

The Myanmar women's team had planned to go to Thailand for training before the tournament but was cancelled due to COVID-19 disease.

U Tin Myint Aung, the head coach of the Myanmar women's team, has re-selected 19 of the 23 players who competed in the tournament and is a combination of senior players and young players. The first group matches will be played on 20 and 21 January.

Myanmar vs Japan, South Korea vs Viet Nam, Australia vs Indonesia and Thailand vs the Philippines matches will be played on 21 January.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

'Nothing wrong' with Saudi Asian Tour investment: Casey

ENGLISH golfer Paul Casey on Wednesday defended Saudi Arabia's $200 million cash injection to revive the Asian Tour, following criticism of the deal over the oil-rich kingdom's human rights record.

Speaking ahead of this week's SMBC Singapore Open, where he finished tied-second in 2019, Casey welcomed the funding from LIV Golf Investments, which is majority-owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund.

"Look, investment is investment. Every tour needs investment, that's plain and simple," said Casey, currently world number 27.

"The revenues are amazing on the PGA Tour, and I'm part of the PGA Tour. I'm proud of that, but I'm also excited about the investments in the other tours around the world. So that is a good thing," he added. Casey said fellow players were upbeat about the cash infusion."It's a big deal. The fact that they got more events and more money to play for. Nothing wrong with that," said Casey, who has also committed to playing the Saudi International that starts in two weeks.—AFP ■

Paul Casey has committed to playing in the Saudi International that starts in two weeks. **PHOTO: AFP**

Qatar World Cup ticket sales launched at reduced prices

QATAR World Cup ticket sales were launched at reduced prices on Wednesday with residents and migrant workers able to attend games for just $11 as concerns persist over Covid-19.

Authorities have not yet announced how many fans will be allowed into stadiums for the first World Cup in an Arab country, which runs from 21 November until 18 December.

Football's world governing body FIFA opened a draw which offers individual match tickets for as little as $69 for international fans — about one third less than at Russia 2018 — but a ticket for the final could cost up to $1,607.

Qatari residents, including migrant labourers whose treatment has been a source of controversy for the organizers, will be able to get tickets for as little as $11.

Fans who apply now for the different packages — for individual games or following a team, or for special stadium tickets — will go into a draw after the first deadline on 8 February. FIFA said fans who are successful in a random draw will be told by 8 March.

Qatar has spent billions of dollars preparing for the first winter World Cup and FIFA is staking a lot of its prestige in making sure it goes smoothly.

Seve n stadiums have been purpose-built and one refurbished, but as there will not be enough hotels some fans may have to stay on cruise ships for the event.—AFP ■