BEEF UP IMPLEMENTATION OF STEEL MILLS IN MYINGYAN, PINPET REGIONS

PAGE-8 (OPINION)

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

The programme would comprise the conveyance of the Union Flag, which has been staying at the Yangon City Hall since 2016, from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw: Vice-Senior General

State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win presides over the 2nd coordination meeting of the Central Committee on Organizing Diamond Jubilee Union Day 2022 in Nay Pyi Taw on 25 January 2022.

ACTIVE participation of relevant region and state governments and individual participants can be seen to hail the Diamond Jubilee Union Day with regard to using the vehicles, said Chairman of the Central Committee on Organizing the Diamond Jubilee Union Day 2022 Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win at the second coordination meeting of the central committee at the SAC Chairman Office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

In his speech, the Vice-Senior General said as arrangements were made to mark the Diamond Jubilee Union Day with essence, the programme would comprise the conveyance of the Union Flag, which has been staying at the Yangon City Hall since 2016, from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw. The Vice-Senior General said active participation of relevant region and state governments and individual participants can be seen to hail the Diamond Jubilee Union Day with regard to using the vehicles. On the other hand, the movements before the Diamond Jubilee Union Day were satisfied with the cooperation, showing the strength of unity.

As this year's Union Day celebration would be the 75th-anniversary ceremony as well as a State-level ceremony, relevant subcommittees needed to make systematically preparations for their assigned duties.

Today's meeting needed to prioritize the discussions on remaining tasks, and decisions must be made immediately.

Chairman of the Organizing Committee on Hailing the Diamond Jubilee Union Day Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn reported on the functioning of the organizing committee and Chairman of the management committee Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr Maung Maung Naing on progress in carrying out the tasks of the management committee and future plans.

Chairmen and officials from relevant subcommittees and Central Committee members-cum-Union ministers reported on respective sectors. The Vice-Senior General gave necessary instructions.

The meeting came to a close with the concluding remark by the Vice-Senior General. — MNA

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National Objectives of Diamond Jubilee Union Day 2022

(1) All ethnic nationals to safeguard non-disintegration of the Union, national unity and sovereignty forever
(2) To perpetually ensure strengthening dynamic Union Spirit which is a genuine patriotic spirit
(3) To further strive for the perpetual existence of the country through strong and united strength of all ethnic national brethren
(4) To build the Union based on democracy and federalism in the realization of genuine, disciplined multiparty democracy
(5) To equalize development of all regions and states while making efforts for the enhancement of health, education and job opportunities of the ethnic nationals

Statement to appreciate teachers' efforts

TEACHERS are honoured as part of the Five Infinite Venerables, and the manner of paying respect to the teachers can be only seen in Myanmar as a tradition. The teachers teach their pupils based on their goodwill like their own children and dutifully serve a teacher's duties. They must train their pupils and students in the best discipline. They see that they grasp their lessons well. They instruct them in the arts and sciences, they provide for their safety in every quarter, and they introduce them to their friends and associates.

As the COVID-19 infection rate is controlled to a certain extent, the basic education high, middle and primary schools under the Department of Basic Education have reopened across nation for the 2021-2022 academic year starting 1 June.

Those who want to seek good sake of one party, political extremist NLD members and supporters, NUG, CRPH and PDF committed arson attacks at the schools using mines, homemade bombs and grenades to fail the teaching processes, and threatened the teachers in addition to the incitements, social punishment and threats against education staff to join CDM while the officials made preparations for the reopening of schools and during the current teaching period. Their doings left some causalities, and the State Administration Council has expressed its deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims' families.

The SAC also appreciates the concerted efforts of teachers, who understand two virtues, Hiri — shame at doing evil —and Otappa—fear of the results of doing evil —for teaching the new generations of the country amid such difficulties and challenges.

The security forces will take extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of teachers who are making efforts in the academic sector for the next generations in order to promote the education qualification. The people should keep security awareness and cooperate with the security members in community peace and peaceful learning of children.

Information Team
State Administration Council

Gold foil debris panning process to be undertaken at Maha Wizaya Pagoda in February

THE 15th gold foil offering event at Maha Wizaya Pagoda in Dagon Township, Yangon Region is being undertaken and gold foil debris panning will be carried out in the first week of February.

Maha Wizaya Pagoda has been covered with scaffolding starting from 6 January. A meeting concerning gold foil debris panning was held on 15 January. The process will start in the first week of February, following the open tendering. The gold plates will be covered including the umbrella atop the pagoda, said U Soe Myint, the alternate chair of Maha Wizaya Pagoda Trustees Board.

The pagoda was built in 1980 and is located south of the Shwedagon Pagoda on Dhammarakkhita Hill. The enshrined relics were contributed by the King of Nepal.

The pagoda was built to commemorate the First All-Gana Buddhist Meeting and to perpetuate and propagate Sasana.

Those devotees who want to make merits by offering the gold foils at Maha Wizaya Pagoda can contact the mobile number (09 424551167) of Pagoda Trustees Board's office. —Ko Naing (Bago)/GNLM

Maha Wizaya Pagoda.

Mottos of 75th Anniversary Union Day 2022

*** Let's forge Union Spirit to bring about peace and tranquillity!**

220 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 25 January, total figure rises to 534,383

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 534,383 after 220 new cases were reported on 25 January 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 512,471 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at 19,310.—MNA

All stakeholders and organizations are invited to join the peace talks

The year 2022 is of importance. Coming 12 February is the Diamond Jubilee Union Day and the 4 January 2023 will be the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day. As such, this year is the pre-Diamond Jubilee period. Hence, it is important to further strengthen the sovereignty of the State and progress of the nation with development fruits. So, we have to start the new paces for restoration of the peace this year. As it is mentioned in the fourth point of the five-point road map, all stakeholders and organizations are invited to join the peace talks.

(Excerpt from the New Year Message delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 1 January 2022)

SAC member, Union ministers attend community-based tourism launching ceremony

MEMBER of the State Administration Council Daw Aye Nu Sein, together with Union Ministers U Ko Ko Hlaing and U Saw Tun Aung Myint, Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min, Commander of the Western Command Maj-Gen Htin Latt Oo, Deputy Minister U Zaw Aye Maung, Member of the Union Election Commission Daw Nu Mra Zan, state ministers and department officials, attended the community-based tourism launching ceremony held in Pyinkauk village in Manaung Township yesterday.

The SAC member and dignitaries first cut the ribbon of the community-based tourism and toured bungalows and rooms set up for the tourism and supported the traditional performance of the villagers. The SAC member, the chief minister and the commander awarded the performers with cash awards. The SAC member and party, afterwards, inspected the construction of the 300 feet Kamachaung Bridge on the Manaung island ring road, which is under construction with K500 million from the State budget for the 2020-2021 financial year and K500 million from the State budget from the 2021-2022 mini-budget period. It is estimated that the bridge will cost around K1,500 million. — Tin Tun (IPRD)/GNLM

Press Statement

CURRENTLY, CRPH and NUG terrorist groups, their subordinates and colluded groups and persons spread incitements to organize Silence Strike and Sound Strike such as clapping strikes, banging pots and pans and blaring car horns to disrupt the State stability and intimidate the public via their Facebook accounts. It is here announced that the people would face legal actions under the law if they follow such incitements.

CRPH and NUG, which were declared terrorist groups, their subordinates and colluded groups and persons are intentionally making incitements, propaganda and threats to destroy the stability of the State and administrative machinery with the public fear using various ways via social networks.

If the people follow and make their incitements and propaganda without understanding or by fear or by sounds or by manners or by any means, destructive elements against people, sharing the propaganda and supportive measures, they will be taken action under the Counter-Terrorism Law Section 52 (a), Penal Code Section 124-A and Section 505-A, Electronic Transactions Law Section 33 (a) and the existing laws.

Moreover, the movable and immovable properties which are related to the crimes will be confiscated if found guilty.

Therefore, it is here announced that the people should not participate in spreading propaganda of terrorist groups, subordinates, their colluded groups and persons, and if not, they will be taken action under the law.

People from remote villages get second dose of COVID jabs

HEALTH officials administered the second dose of COVID-19 vaccines (Phase-5) to the people from the hilly villages of Mongyang Township, Kengtung District, eastern Shan State at the Wanyomai Village Rural Health Centre and the Hsemakaung Village Vaccination Centre in Yangkaung Village-tract on 24 January.

Vaccination is provided by the chairman of the township administration body led by Township Administrator U Aung Zin Oo, staff from Township General Administration Department and Township health workers.

Local people over the age of 18 in 11 villages in the inaccessible Yangkaung village-tract received the second dose of vaccines. — Khun Ye Htwe(Hsihseng)/GNLM

IPRD celebrates 31st anniversary in Nay Pyi Taw

The thirty-first anniversary celebration of the Information and Public Relations Department in progress.

THE Information and Public Relations Department under the Ministry of Information held its 31st anniversary in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

First, the Pyan/Sat Yaungchi Htawazin Taukpanay Myi song (the ray of IPRD will shine forever) was played honouring the ceremony.

Speaking at the event, Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn said that the department reaches 31 years in existence firmly because of the efforts and unity of departmental officials and staff.

There are 427 IPRD offices across the nation and it is a big network. It is also running with modern and active entertaining programmes upholding the three main objectives of the ministry.

Currently, all the departments under the ministry including MRTV are making efforts to become a creative and reliable media for the people.

All the departments should work hard to develop the procedures of the ministry and department concerned together with the new setup of IPRD in 2022 and the staff should try to spread the true information in unity.

The Union minister presented the best performance award to NyaungU District Office, second prize to Hpa-an District Office, third prize to Mawlamyine District Office and the special prizes to Maungtaw, Kyaukse, Magway, Meiktila and Minbu district offices.

Deputy Minister U Ye Tint gave awards to township-level offices and the best COVID-19-related news quality award winners.

Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung presented awards to the winners of broadcasting educating programmes on Public Library Facebook Page.

After that, the Directors-General and Managing Director presented the awards to the winners of COVID-19 educating programmes, photo contests, including the civil services award winners.

The documentary of IPRD work history was then presented and the ceremony was concluded after a staff officer on behalf of the winners expressed thanks for presenting the awards. — MNA

The MoI Union minister presents one of the best performance awards.

Ex-minister U Min Thu charged under Anti-Corruption Law

THE inspection team of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) inspected the complaint against former Union minister at the Office of the Union Government U Min Thu under the Anti-Corruption Law.

According to the findings of the inspection, the former Union minister received K31.5 million for 18,000 NLD T-shirts and K36 million for NLD bags in September 2020 for the NLD to win the election. As he was found that he committed corruption by abusing his position, the first complaint was lodged against him at the Phayagon Myoma police station in Ottarathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, under Section 55 of the Anti-Corruption Law. — MNA

Myanmar nationals return via border camps

THE border camps accept Myanmar returnees from foreign countries. A total of 240 people —145 males and 95 females — returned to Muse Township of Shan State (North) via border crossing, while 50 returnees — 35 males and 15 females — to Laukkai Township on 24 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 vehicle and those who test positive for COVID-19 are isolated at the designated places. — MNA

Mottos of 75th Anniversary Union Day 2022

*** Let's strive for forging unity of the State through Union Spirit!**

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MoALI holds meeting to boost agricultural productivity in Rakhine State

A coordination meeting to enhance productivity in agro-based industries was convened at the office of the Rakhine State government on 24 January 2022.

Union Minister U Tin Htut Oo for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min and relevant ministers, directors-general and township-level department officials attended the meeting.

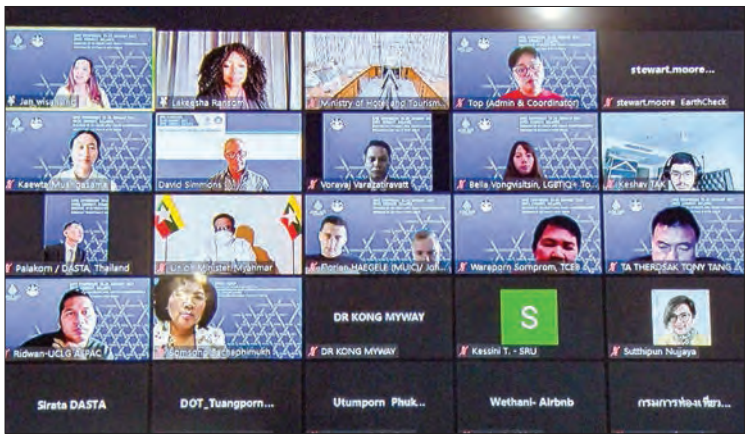
They discussed matters related to meeting the rice production target, using high-producing pedigree crops, having systematic drainage, opening the maintenance and workshop of agricultural equipment, collaborating with the private sector for farm machinery service, multi-cropping, encouraging the growers to farm commercially the most profitable plants such as perennial palms, mango and coffee beans, expansion of fish, shrimp and crab farming, larval rearing and maintenance, growing livestock feed, development of cattle breeding, establishing the industrial zones with good infrastructure, implementation of diploma in livestock and vocational training in fishery and farm machinery at Kyauktaw Institute of Agriculture at the meeting.

Later, the Union minister inspected the surveillance of inshore and offshore fishing trawlers at the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Sub-Control Centre of Rakhine State Fisheries Department to ensure that the vessels comply with vessels monitoring rules set by the Fisheries Department under the existing laws.

In the evening, the team left for Insein Township, Yangon Region the Union minister inspected the fishery value chains of the General Food Technology Industry Co. Ltd which exports the shrimp and squid to Japan, Europe and Australia.

In the evening, the team left for Insein Township, Yangon Region the Union minister inspected the fishery value chains of the General Food Technology Industry Co. Ltd which exports the shrimp and squid to Japan, Europe and Australia. — MNA

Union Tourism Minister attends Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Symposium 2022



THE Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC Symposium 2022) organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand is being held on 25 and 26 January and Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung attended the videoconference yesterday.

The meeting was attended by APEC members, international tourism experts, policymakers and private tourism representatives.

The meeting focused on current developments in tourism development between tourism officials and senior policymakers. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways to revitalize tourism in the future and make recommendations on tourism policies.

Minister of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand Mr Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn gave an opening speech during the meeting.

International tourism experts discussed the best practices for tourism policy and recommendations for better tourism policy.

In addition, necessary arrangements for tourism transformation include policymaking, setting goals for the future of tourism and responsible tourism policies. An overview of tourism promotion issues was also made.

The first part of the meeting ended in the afternoon. The second part of the talks will resume on the afternoon of 26 January.

The meeting was attended by the Union Minister and officials from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. Measuring the success of policies as per the differences in resources and capabilities plus the development of countries were also discussed.

As the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic have brought more emphasis on the sustainability of tourism and related industries, governments need to develop better policies and plans for sustainable tourism, officials said.

Discussions focused on issues such as the cure for the effects of the epidemic on shared businesses. — MNA

Six phases of GTI (Dala) project completed 100 %

SIX phases of the Government Technical Institute (Dala) project, constructed on 25 acres of land in 22/14 wards, near Thabyaygon village, Dala Township, Yangon has now completed by 100 cent per cent.

"The project is being implemented in the 2019-2020 financial year. There are 16 parts of the construction project and 10 construction companies have been granted to implement the whole project. Currently, about six parts of the project, including water and power supply and kitchen theatre were completed, said an official from the Government Technical Institute (Dala) project.

This project will include three-storey RC building for training, staff housing, two four-storey RC buildings, two steel structure workshops, two gates, other utilities, including power and water supply, waste management and water storage, a 50×36 feet RC building for the management office, a 36×48 feet RC kitchen theatre, one RC building, one two-storey buildings for training, one two-storey lecture hall, a two-storey dormitory, four quadruplex staff housing and one feet three-storey main building.

The Government Technical Institute (Dala) project has been implemented under the allocated State budget in each financial year starting from the 2019-2020FY.

Upon completion of the project, the institute is expected to produce about 300 engineers holding AGTI Diploma certificates yearly. — Ko Naing (Bago)/GNLM

Upon completion of the project, the institute is expected to produce about 300 engineers holding AGTI Diploma certificates yearly. **PHOTO: KO NAING (BAGO)**

More IDPs return to Kayah State as areas calm down

IDPs return to Loikaw.

At the Central Market.

TERRORISTS in Kayah State have been identified and arrested by security forces as clashes broke out in January, and innocent people from the area, including in Loikaw, were fleeing from the fighting to safer areas.

Security forces have regained control of the area since 22 January and the area has returned to normal, with markets reopening and trading peacefully.

Pilgrims regularly visit pagodas and other religious temples.

In addition, security forces coordinated with relevant organizations as necessary for the resettlement of the displaced people.

Among the displaced persons, 212 from Loikaw and surrounding villages returned to their homes yesterday.

It is reported that the relevant authorities have systematically accepted the IDPs and are providing necessary assistance. — MNA

Swe Myo Pauk Phaw Magazine holds press conference

A press conference of the monthly published Swe Myo Pauk Phaw magazine was held at Myanmar Sports Hotel, Thingangyun Township in Yangon at 1 pm yesterday.

At the ceremony, U Aye Min, Executive Director of the Myanmar-China Cooperation Centre, explained the activities of the Myanmar-China Cooperation Association, while U Ye Naing Soe (Ye Naing), Editor-in-Chief of the magazine, explained the production of the magazine.

Officials then responded to the media inquiries.

Swe Myo Pauk Phaw Magazine is a monthly publication commemorating the 70th anniversary of Myanmar-China diplomatic relations, and the publication aimed at publicizing the efforts to strengthen Myanmar-China friendship.

The magazine covers a wide range of articles, including articles and news on the development of Myanmar-China relations, and has been in circulation for three years. —MNA

Consumer goods, food to support PDF terrorists seized in Kayah state

Confiscated goods in Loikaw.

Seized foodstuffs.

Storage of foodstuffs and personal goods.

AS NUG, CRPH and PDF terrorists are committing terrorist acts in cities, including the attacks on Loikaw Airport, Loikaw Prison, and using people as human shields during the attacks in Kayah State, security forces are carrying out necessary security and territorial operations in Kayah State.

On 24 January, security forces found a signboard "AVSI-People for Development", which is not registered at the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, in a building in Bardo village, Loikaw at around 3 pm. During the inspection of the building, 120 bags, 1,950 packs of instant noodles, 120 packs of cereal, 760 cans of various kinds of meat, 550 bottles of oil, 100 blankets and consumer goods such as gram, soap bars, detergent powder, were found and confiscated.

According to the analysis of the items, it was found that they were to support PDF terrorists, and action is taken under the existing laws. Security forces are continuing to provide security for peace and stability in Kayah State, and local people are urged to report any terrorist movement or incitement to violence to the relevant authorities and to cooperate with the security forces for peace and stability in the area. — MNA

Foreign trade reports Myanmar's trade surplus at over US$677 mln in 2020-2021FY: MoC

1. According to Myanmar's foreign trade statistics for the financial year 2020-2021, Myanmar exports were US$15.36 billion and imports US$14.69 billion. As the trade volume was US$30.05 billion, the trade surplus was more than US$677 million. The maritime-to-border trade ratio was 66:34.
2. The original target for the 2020-2021 financial year under the Planning Law was US$16,200 million in export value and US$18,500 million in import value, the trade volume was US$34,700 million. Due to delays in operations during COVID-19, the trade volume was estimated at US$29,000 million (US$14,000 million in export value and US$15,000 million in import value). According to the provisional figures for the 2020-2021 financial year, the trade volume reached US$30,049 million (US$15,363 million in export value and US$14,686 million in import value), fulfilling 103 per cent of the trade target.
3. According to the statistics for the 2020-2021 financial year, the foreign trade situation in the state-owned sector and private sector is as follows: -

US$ million

Sector	2020-2021 financial year		
	Government	Private	Total
Export	3531.495	11831.789	15363.284
Import	1022.519	13663.539	14686.058
Total trade	4554.014	25495.328	30049.342
Surplus (+)/deficit (-)	(+) 2508.976	(-) 1831.750	(+) 677.226

4. In comparison of exports by export items for the financial year 2020-2021 to the same period of the previous financial year 2019-2020, more agricultural products were exported, and exports of animal products, fishery products, minerals, forest products, manufactured goods and other goods decreased. The following is the export status of more exported goods than the same period of the previous financial year.

US$ million

Sr	Subject	Unit	2020-2021FY		2019-2020FY		Surplus export			
			Quantity	Volume	Quantity	Volume	Quantity		Volume	
1	Rubber	Metric ton	303293.973	449.102	213413.234	264.442	(+)	89880.739	(+)	184.660
2	Corn	Metric ton	2613666.640	536.335	2222029.323	368.371	(+)	391637.317	(+)	167.964
3	Green gram	Metric ton	673110.884	525.402	534128.157	406.306	(+)	138982.727	(+)	119.096
4	Pigeon bean	Metric ton	214091.626	144.099	53376.675	29.996	(+)	160714.951	(+)	114.103
5	Mung bean	Metric ton	677526.421	526.713	596657.423	437.974	(+)	80868.998	(+)	88.739
6	Sesame	Metric ton	255119.054	338.981	175840.950	279.388	(+)	79278.104	(+)	59.593
7	Peanut	Metric ton	160776.848	190.765	100128.796	132.822	(+)	60648.052	(+)	57.943
8	Cotton	Metric ton	21739.330	30.435	5854.310	8.196	(+)	15885.020	(+)	22.239
9	Sugar	Metric ton	200992.548	89.377	122241.700	68.738	(+)	78750.848	(+)	20.639
10	Rice bean	Metric ton	61893.091	33.418	39609.303	21.085	(+)	22283.788	(+)	12.333

5. In comparing imports of import items to the same period of the previous financial year, investment products, imports of industrial raw materials and consumer goods were reduced. The comparison of the most imported goods from the same period of the previous financial year is as follows: -

US$ million

Sr	Subject	2020-2021 FY	2019-2020 FY	Surplus import	
1	Palm oil	826.974	594.123	(+)	232.851
2	Cement	81.976	69.664	(+)	12.312
3	Toothpaste	16.670	14.574	(+)	2.096
4	Cigarette paper	5.313	4.424	(+)	0.889
5	Powder used in coffee and tea	49.542	49.017	(+)	0.525
6	Milk powder	34.635	34.559	(+)	0.076

6. The trade deficit has been steadily declining to US$1 billion in the 2018-2019 financial year from US$5.4 billion in the 2015-2016FY as exports were increased in value from the 2017-2018FY. Despite the regular export of agricultural products, fishery products and minerals in the 2019-2020FY, due to the impact of COVID-19, exports of manufactured goods (garments, natural gas) were reduced, and imports of investment materials (electricity distribution, construction materials and telecommunications equipment) increased slightly from the previous FY, resulting in a trade deficit of US$1.37 billion. In the financial year 2020-2021, the trade surplus was US$677 million.—MOC

CRIME NEWS

Illegal foodstuffs, timbers, unregistered vehicles seized

THE Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee takes strict action against illegal trade under the law.

The Rakhine State Forest Department carried out an inspection from 20 to 24 January and seized 70.6394 tonnes of illegal timbers worth K4,841,291 in Thandwe, Gwa, Kyaukpyu, An and Taungup townships. They took action under the Forest Law.

On 24 January, the Muse 105th-Mile Trade Zone Inspection Team also confiscated K97,733,200 worth of foodstuffs and vehicle — China-made foodstuffs worth K57,733,200 and a 22-wheel vehicle worth K40,000,000 that carried these foodstuffs. They took action under the Customs Law.

On 25 January, Sagaing Region seized K3,333,000 worth of illegal vehicle and timber — one Nissan AD van (unregistered) worth of K2,500,000 in Sagaing Township and 8.33 tonnes of illegal Kanyin (Dipterocarpus Alatus) timber worth K833,000 in Tamu Township. The officials took action under the Export and Import Law and Forest Law.

Moreover, the Bago Region Forest Department also seized a total of 2.177 tonnes of illegal timber worth K342,370 — 0.8260 tonne of teak worth K247,800 and 1.3510 tonnes of other timbers worth K94.570 in the forest reserve of Toungoo District. They took action under the Forest Law.

There were 11 arrests (estimated at K106,249,861) from 20 to 25 January, according to the committee. — MNA

Seized goods.

Confiscated teak.

Beef up implementation of steel mills in Myingyan, Pinpet regions

NOWADAYS, not only the government but also businesspersons require a lot of deform iron bars after understanding the essential needs of iron and steelware in construction projects across the nation as the emergence of infrastructures depends on iron and steelware.

If the country cuts spending of the State budget on the import of steelware, generally the funds can be spent on other sectors. Hence, businesspersons are allowed under the disciplines for producing steelware at home to meet the demand of construction tasks being undertaken by both the government and the private sectors.

The government plans to resume the operation of steel mills in Myingyan and Pinpet. As such, supervision must be made for the timely completion of the project in respective portions. That is why a sufficient supply of electricity must be fed to steel mills for production at full capacity.

> The infrastructures can contribute much to the development of the society with guarantees for living standards of the people as well as the manufacturing arena, including agriculture and livestock, construction, industries, transport, ship-building, and so on. Hence, efforts must be made for the improvement of the industrial sector with the production of steelwares.

Myanmar possesses iron oar, coal and limestones across the nation to utilize them in the production of steel. If efforts can be made for the production of steelwares to be used in construction projects in States and Regions, the import of steelwares can be cut. Consequently, the regional industries will be booming. As steel and steelwares worth US$995 million were imported in the 2020-21 financial year, it is necessary to increase the production of steel as well as reduce importation.

Products of steel mills must be quality for safely using them at the construction sites. The quantity and quality of products from the respective steel mills must be improved. Modern techniques must be applied in manufacturing the steelware meeting international standard. If so, construction projects at home will rely on locally-made iron and steelware.

On the other hand, the production of quality iron and steelware at home can cut the unacceptable spending of foreign exchange. If the dreams come true, the expenditure for using iron and steelwares can be reduced in construction projects. Moreover, the infrastructures can barely grant durability for set periods. Consequently, the safe infrastructures will come out one after another for the State and the people.

In fact, construction tasks and social progress are separable. The infrastructures can contribute much to the development of the society with guarantees for living standards of the people as well as the manufacturing arena, including agriculture and livestock, construction, industries, transport, ship-building, and so on. Hence, efforts must be made for the improvement of the industrial sector with the production of steelwares.

■ ■ ■

Antarctica: Earth's Southernmost Continent

By THAN HTUN
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THE name Antarctica is the Romanized version of the Greek compound word **ἀνταρκτική** (antarktiké), feminine of **ἀνταρκτικός** (antarktikós), meaning "opposite to the Arctic", "opposite to the north".

Antarctica contains the geographic South Pole and it is situated in the Antarctic region of the Southern Hemisphere, almost entirely south of the Antarctic Circle, and is surrounded by the Southern Ocean. At 5,500,000 square miles, it is the fifth-largest continent and nearly twice the size of Australia. About 98% of Antarctica is covered by ice that averages 1.2 miles in thickness. The continent is divided into East Antarctica (which is largely composed of a high ice-covered plateau) and West Antarctica (which is largely an ice sheet covering an archipelago of mountainous islands).

Antarctica, on average, is the coldest, driest, and windiest continent, and has the highest average elevation of all the continents. Most of Antarctica is a polar desert, with annual precipitation of 8 inches along the coast and far less inland; yet 80% of the world's freshwater reserves are stored there, enough to raise global sea levels by about 200 ft if all of it were to melt. The temperature in Antarctica has dropped to -89.2°C, though the average for the third quarter is -63°C. Organisms native to Antarctica include many types of algae, bacteria, fungi, plants, Protista, and certain animals, such as mites, nematodes, penguins, seals, and tardigrades. Vegetation, where it occurs, is tundra.

Antarctica was the last region on Earth to be discovered, likely unseen until 1820 when the Russian expedition of Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen et al sighted the Fimbul ice shelf. The continent remained largely neglected for the rest of the 19th century because of its harsh environment, lack of easily accessible resources, and isolation. In January 1840, land in Antarctica was discovered for the first time, almost simultaneously, by the United States Exploring Expedition, under Lieutenant Charles Wilkes; and a separate French expedition under Jules Dumont d'Urville. The latter made the temporary landing. The first confirmed landing was by a team of Norwegians in 1895.

Antarctica is governed by parties of the Antarctic Treaty System. Twelve countries signed the Antarctic Treaty in 1956, and thirty-eight have signed it since then. The treaty prohibits military activities, mineral mining, nuclear explosions, and nuclear waste disposal. It supports scientific research and protects the continent's ecology. Between 1,000 and 5,000 people from many countries reside at research stations scattered across the continent.

History

Antarctica has no indigenous population. The oldest known human remains in Antarctica was a skull that belonged to a young woman on Yamana Beach at the South Shetland Islands, which dates back to 1819 to 1825, who was likely part of a sealing expedition. She was found in 1985.

On 22 January 1840, two days after the discovery of the coast west of the Balleny Islands, some members of the crew of the 1837–40 expedition of Jules Dumont d'Urville disembarked on the highest islet of a group of coastal rocky islands about 4 km from Cape Géodésie on the coast of Adélie Land where they took some mineral, algae, and animal samples erected the French flag and claimed French sovereignty over the territory.

Geography

West Antarctica is covered by the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. The sheet has been of recent concern because of the small possibility of its collapse. If the sheet were to break down, ocean levels would rise by several metres in a relatively short geological period of time, perhaps a matter of centuries. East Antarctica lies on the Indian Ocean side of the Transantarctic Mountains and comprises Coats Land, Queen Maud Land, Enderby Land, Mac. Robertson Land, Wilkes Land, and Victoria Land. All but a small portion of this region lies within the Eastern Hemisphere. East Antarctica is largely covered by the East Antarctic Ice Sheet.

Basic labelled free map of Antarctica. Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

Lakes

Antarctica is home to more than 70 lakes that lie at the base of the continental ice sheet. Lake Vostok, discovered beneath Russia's Vostok Station in 1996, is the largest of these subglacial lakes. It was once believed that the lake had been sealed off for 500,000 to one million years, but a recent survey suggests that, every so often, there are large flows of water from one lake to another.

Geology and mineral resources

From the end of the Neoproterozoic to the Cretaceous, Antarctica formed part of the supercontinent Gondwana. Over time, Gondwana gradually broke apart, and Antarctica, as we know it today, was formed when Antarctica separated from South America (forming the Drake Passage) and Australia during the late Paleogene. Antarctica was not always cold, dry, and covered in ice sheets. For a large proportion of the Phanerozoic, Antarctica experienced a tropical or temperate climate and was covered in forests.

The geological study of Antarctica has been greatly hindered by nearly all of the continent being permanently covered with a thick layer of ice. However, new techniques such as remote sensing, ground-penetrating radar, and satellite imagery have begun to reveal the structures beneath the ice. Geologically, West Antarctica closely resembles the Andes mountain range of South America. The Antarctic Peninsula was formed by uplift and metamorphism of sea bed sediments.

The most common rocks in West Antarctica are andesite and rhyolite volcanic formed during the Jurassic period. There is also evidence of volcanic activity, even after the ice sheet had formed, in Marie Byrd Land and Alexander Island. The only anomalous area of West Antarctica is the Ellsworth Mountains region, where the stratigraphy is more similar to East Antarctica.

East Antarctica is geologically varied, dating from the Precambrian era, with some rocks formed more than 3 billion years ago. It is composed of a metamorphic and igneous platform which is the basis of the continental shield. On top of this base are coal and various modern rocks, such as sandstones, limestones, and shales laid down during the Devonian and Jurassic periods to form the Transantarctic Mountains. In coastal areas such as the Shackleton Range and Victoria Land, some faulting has occurred.

The main mineral resource known on the continent is coal. It was first recorded near the Beardmore Glacier by Frank Wild on the Nimrod Expedition, and now low-grade coal is known across many parts of the Transantarctic Mountains. The Prince Charles Mountains contain significant deposits of iron ore. The most valuable resources of Antarctica lie offshore, namely the oil and natural gas fields found in the Ross Sea in 1973. The exploitation of all mineral resources is banned until 2048 by the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

Population

Several governments maintain permanent, staffed research stations on the continent. The number of people conducting and supporting scientific research and other work on the continent and its nearby islands varies from about 1,000 in winter to about 5,000 in the summer. The first semi-permanent inhabitants of regions near Antarctica (areas situated south of the Antarctic Convergence) were British and American sealers who used to spend a year or more on South Georgia, from 1786 onward. During the whaling era, which lasted until 1966, the population of that island varied from over 1,000 in the summer (over 2,000 in some years) to some 200 in the winter. The first child born in the southern polar region was a Norwegian girl, Solveig Gunbjørg Jacobsen, born in Grytviken on 8 October 1913, and her birth was registered by the resident British Magistrate of South Georgia. She was the daughter of Frithjof Jacobsen, the assistant manager of the whaling station, and Klara Olette Jacobsen.

Military activities banned

The Antarctic Treaty prohibits any military activity in Antarctica, including the establishment of military bases and fortifications, military manoeuvres, and weapons testing. Military personnel or equipment are permitted only for scientific research or other peaceful purposes. The only documented military land manoeuvre has been the small Operation NINETY by the Argentine military in 1965.

Research

Each year, scientists from 28 nations conduct experiments not reproducible in any other place in the world. In the summer more than 4,000 scientists operate research stations; this number decreases to just over 1,000 in the winter. McMurdo Station, which is the largest research station in Antarctica, is capable of housing more than 1,000 scientists, visitors, and tourists. Researchers include biologists, geologists, oceanographers, physicists, astronomers, glaciologists, and meteorologists. Geologists tend to study plate tectonics, meteorites from outer space, and resources from the breakup of the supercontinent Gondwana. Glaciologists in Antarctica are concerned with the study of the history and dynamics of floating ice, seasonal snow, glaciers, and ice sheets. Biologists, in addition to examining the wildlife, are interested in how harsh temperatures and the presence of people affect adaptation and survival strategies in a wide variety of organisms. Medical physicians have made discoveries concerning the spreading of viruses and the body's response to extreme seasonal temperatures.

Since the 1970s an important focus of study has been the ozone layer in the atmosphere above Antarctica.

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Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 25 January, 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 26 January 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Kachin State, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing Region, scattered in Chin State and isolated in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Taninthayi Regions and (Northern and Eastern) Shan, Rakhine States. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Nay Pyi Taw and Southern Shan, Kayah States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated to scattered rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Northern Shan, Chin States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 January, 2022: Partly Cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 January, 2022: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 January, 2022: Partly Cloudy.

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FROM PAGE-9

In 1985, three British scientists working on data they had gathered at Halley Station on the Brunt Ice Shelf discovered the existence of a hole in this layer.

In 2007, Polar Geospatial Center was founded. The Polar Geospatial Center uses geospatial and remote sensing technology to provide mapping services to American federally funded research teams. Currently, the Polar Geospatial Center can image all of Antarctica at 500 mm (20 in) resolution every 45 days. In 2007 the Belgian-based International Polar Foundation unveiled the Princess Elisabeth station, the world's first zero-emissions polar science station in Antarctica, to research climate change.

Plant Life

Antarctic plants total about 800 species, of which 350 are lichens. Lichens, although slow-growing, are particularly well adapted to Antarctic survival. They can endure lengthy high-stress periods in dormancy and almost instantly become photosynthetic when conditions improve. Bryophytes (mosses and liverworts), totalling about 100 species, predominate in marine regions, but mosses can grow nearly everywhere that lichens grow.

Liverworts are reported only from coastal and marine regions. Numerous species of moles, yeasts, and other fungi, as well as freshwater algae and bacteria, complete the listing of Antarctic plants. These forms are extremely widespread and are reported as far as latitude 87ºS. In addition, Antarctic seas are highly productive in plankton plant life, particularly in near-shore, nutrient-rich zones of upwelling. Diatoms, a type of algae, are especially abundant.

Animal Life

The native land fauna is wholly invertebrate. Apparently climatically less tolerant and less easily dispersed, the fauna follows plant colonization of newly deglaciated regions and therefore is not as widely distributed. The Antarctic microfauna includes heliozoans, rotifers, tardigrades, nematodes, and ciliate protozoans. The protozoans dominate soil and freshwater communities. The terrestrial macrofauna consists entirely of arthropods, many species being parasitic on birds and seals. The principal arthropod groups represented include Acarina (mites), Mallophaga (biting lice), Collembola (springtails), Anoplura (sucking lice), Diptera (midges), and Siphonaptera (fleas). Two species of beetles, probably alien, are known from islands near the Antarctic Peninsula. The dominant free-living forms, mites, and springtails live under stones and are associated with spore-reproducing plants.

Tourism

Antarctica is a scenic place, and tourism in the Antarctic region can be traced to the late 19th century. However, organized commercial tourism started in the mid-1960s, when Swedish explorer and tour operator Lars-Eric Lindblad chartered cruise trips to Antarctica. Sightseeing overflights by commercial airliners from Australia, New Zealand, and Chile were inaugurated in the mid-1970s. Tourist overflights lost popularity, however, after the November 1979 crash of a New Zealand airliner into Mount Erebus on Ross Island, with the loss of all 257 passengers and crew. In the 2007–08 season some 45,000 tourists visited the continent by cruise ship and other means before their numbers declined markedly following the global financial crisis the following year.

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■ ■ ■

US suits accuse Google of tracking data without users' permission

Google is accused of misleading consumers on privacy protections in new lawsuits. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

A group of top US justice officials accused Google in lawsuits Monday of tracking and profiting from users' location data, despite leading consumers to think they could protect their privacy on the tech giant's services.

Google builds detailed profiles and sells highly targeted advertising with data collected from its billions of users — with location being a key piece of information, argued the suits that seek to block the alleged practices.

"Google falsely led consumers to believe that changing their account and device settings would allow customers to protect their privacy," said Karl Racine, the attorney-general in the nation's capital Washington.

These suits are the latest legal threats against Google and other US Big Tech giants, which have long faced probes and court cases but a lack of new national laws that would regulate their businesses.

Attorneys-general — states' top law enforcers and legal advisors— from Indiana, Washington and Texas were to file suits making the same allegations against the tech colossus.

Google said the officials' claims were inaccurate and based on outdated assertions about its settings.

"We have always built privacy features into our products and provided robust controls for location data," Google said in a statement. "We will vigorously defend ourselves and set the record straight." Racine argued that from 2014 to at least 2019, Google claimed that users could turn off their "Location History" setting and "the places you go are no longer stored." "That is false. Even when Location History is off, Google continues to collect and store users' locations," Racine's office said in a statement.

The officials also allege the Silicon Valley giant has used "dark patterns," or design tricks aimed at subtly influencing consumers' choices in ways that benefit the company.—AFP ■

Germany's Deutsche Bahn starts test-driving battery-powered trains

GERMANY'S railway operator, Deutsche Bahn, on Monday began test operations for battery-powered passenger trains.

Manufactured by French company Alstom, test runs for the Battery Electric Multiple Unit kicked off on regional services in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg. They are scheduled to last until the beginning of May, and another test run in Bavaria is planned for early February, Deutsche Bahn said. "Test operations got off to a successful start this morning with the first train," a spokesperson for Deutsche Bahn told Xinhua. The train, which has 150 seats, should cover a total distance of around 50,000 km by May.—Xinhua ■

UN Biodiversity Conference set to hold in China in April may be affected by COVID-19

THE schedule of the second phase of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in China is likely to be affected by the COVID-19, said the Ministry of Ecology and Environment on Monday.

The meeting, formerly set to be held in southwest China's Kunming in April this year, is supposed to see the completion of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The first phase of COP15 was held in Kunming last October both online and offline, and a follow-up offline meeting slated for January 2022 in Geneva has been postponed as a result of the pandemic.

Liu Youbin, the ministry's spokesperson, said China is keeping close contact with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and relevant parties.

They will take into account the UN meeting agenda throughout the year, time span of the discussions of the framework and preparations of related documents, and the pandemic situation to confirm the date, organization formats as well as epidemic-prevention measures of the second phase of COP15, Liu said. — Xinhua ■

Photo taken by a drone shows the herd wandering in the Jinning District of Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan Province, on 4 June 2021. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Oil price rally continues on stronger dollar

FUEL oil prices are steadily rising on global cues and touch a high of K1,600 per litre, according to petrol stations in Yangon Region.

The prices of fuel oil in the domestic market, tracking the Kyat weakening against US dollar, the market's data indicated.

On 1 January 2022, the prices stood at K1,390 for Octane 92, K1,440 for Octane 95, K1,375 for diesel and K1,385 for premium diesel, whereas the prices inched higher to K1,565 for Octane 92, K1,615 for Octane 95, K1,590 for diesel and K1,600 for premium diesel. There is a price gap of K170-K200 per litre within a month, according to the local fuel oil market.

The fuel oil price is highly correlated with the foreign exchange rate. At present, the exchange rate is pegged at around K2,000 in the local forex market.

Additionally, the domestic oil price is positively related to the global market. Declining inventories and supply disruptions push oil prices higher in the global market, with US$83.99 per barrel for WTI crude and $87.11 for Brent crude at present.

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

One of the petrol stations in Yangon.

Consequently, in a bid to steer the dollar rally in the local forex market, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold $65 million at its auction market rate in January this year.

Additionally, the Ministry of Commerce in coordination with the Myanmar Petroleum Trade Association carried out a scheme to distribute fuel oil at a fairer rate through the government-sponsored petrol station chains starting from 22 September 2021. The total volume of fuel oil that are sold at very cheap rates is equivalent to the amount that the oil importers directly purchased the foreign currency from the CBM.

The CBM has directly sold over $87 million to the fuel oil sector so far.

Normally, Myanmar yearly imports six million tonnes of fuel oil from external markets, the Ministry of Commerce stated. — NN/GNLM

Good price of seasonal plums brings happiness to Patheingyi farmers this year

At present, the plum is sold at K12,000 per carton for large plum shape, K6,000-K8,000 per carton for second grade small plum shape and K7,000 per carton for a small one in the domestic market.

FARMERS in Patheingyi Township, Mandalay region are happy as they get a good price for the seasonal plums (Taiwan) this year, according to plum growers from Patheingyi Township.

At present, the plum is sold at K12,000 per carton for large plum shape, K6,000-K8,000 per carton for second grade small plum shape and K7,000 per carton for a small one in the domestic market. The plum is trading well in the market and earning a good price, it is learnt.

"Last year this time, we did not sell well the plum fruit because of COVID-19. This year, the fruit has yielded abundantly in the early harvest season and the fruit price moves upward as the demand is high. The plums are yielded only once a year. The plum trees are started growing in July and they bloom in September. It can be started harvested in November and December. Due to the lack of imports of apple from China, domestic consumers are buying more plums instead of apples. Consequently, the price of plums is getting a good price. The jam businesses are also using more plums as there is no fruit to make the jam," said U Myint Swe, the plum grower from Hsedawlay village, Patheingyi township.

Around 50 cartons and 30 bags of Taiwan plum are conveyed to the domestic market daily. The plums are transported Yangon, Lashio and Mandalay regions and are mostly conveyed to Yangon and lower parts of Myanmar.

The prevailing price of plums are ranging between K6,000 and K12,000 per carton depending upon the size. There are more than 100 acres of plum plantation in Patheingyi township. Each acre of plum earned between K2 million and 2.5 million. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

FDI flow hits nearly $246 mln in three months of this mini-budget period

THE flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the country stood at nearly US$246 million in the three months of this mini-budget period of the 2021-22FY, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

In three months of the 2021-22FY mini-budget period, a total of $245.902 million FDI, including an increase in investment value flowed into the manufacturing sector, livestock and fisheries sector, energy sector, construction sector, transport and communications sector, hotels and tourism sector and other sectors.

In the 2020-21FY, the electricity sector topped FDI with over $3,121 million, followed by the industry sector with over $286 million and the transport and communications sector with over $133 million.

According to DICA, a total of 48 enterprises have been granted permits and endorsements in the 2020-21FY, bringing in the capital of $3,791.398 million.

The Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations is inviting investors to conduct business in a responsible and accountable manner. If those businesses enter Myanmar, it would be beneficial to the country. — Aye Maung/GNLM

Mudon farmers cultivate long beans on manageable scale, earn better incomes

THE local farmers from the villages around Mudon township are growing long beans on a manageable scale and earning a better income.

Regarding the growing of string beans, the long bean is a crop that does not require a lot of manpower. But the growers need to take care of the long bean daily because it is a favourite plant of leaf beetles and pods. If it is necessary, the growers should spray the pesticide. The long bean cultivation also requires irrigation water.

"After cultivating for one and half months, the marketable long bean crops could be harvested. The domestic market prevailing price of long bean is K 2,500 per viss. In the market, the long beans are sold for K600 per bundle. Now, the growers are earning extra income for their family by growing the long bean," said a long bean grower from Phae Doe village.

Mudon township mainly grows rubber plantations and agriculture. It is also learnt that people from Mudon township are growing other crops and vegetables to make money to support their families.

The long bean is a necessary crop not only for the housewives but for the Myanmar rice noodle soup (locally called Monhinga) sellers. So, the local growers are happy, making a profit by selling the long beans. — Aung Myo Thu (IPRD)/GNLM

Mudon township mainly grows rubber plantations and agriculture. It is also learnt that people from Mudon township are growing other crops and vegetables to make money to support their families.

Japan upgrades view on regional economies for 1st time in 15 months

The Pacific Egret, one of the two British-flagged ships arrived in Japan, is anchored at a port in the village of Tokai, northeast of Tokyo, Monday morning, 21 March 2016. **PHOTO: KYODO/FILE**

THE Finance Ministry on Tuesday upgraded its overall assessment of Japan's regional economies for the first time in 15 months, saying they are recovering from the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

Reflecting recent recoveries in consumer spending and auto output, regional economies "are gradually picking up, although they are still affected by the coronavirus, supply chain disruptions and rising raw material costs," the January report said.

The previous report in October said the economies were recovering, although at a "slowing" pace due to a global semiconductor shortage and supply chain constraints caused by Southeast Asian countries suspending parts factories amid a surge in COVID-19 cases. Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki, in remarks conveyed to an online meeting of the heads of the ministry's regional bureaus by his deputy, said that "the economies are expected to recover, but downside risks should be carefully watched".

Daily coronavirus infections were low in Japan when it fully lifted a COVID-19 state of emergency on 1 October last year. But the highly contagious Omicron variant was confirmed in the country in late November and cases have since shot up, reaching record highs following the year-end and New Year holidays.

The latest report upgraded individual assessments for nine out of 11 regions, including the Kanto area centred on Tokyo, while maintaining the view for the northeastern region of Tohoku.

The evaluation was downgraded for the southern Okinawa region, where Omicron infections surged ahead of other areas.

By component, the assessment of production was upgraded in five regions including Tokai in central Japan, home to Toyota Motor Corp. The report said car output recovered thanks to improvements in semiconductor procurement.—Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russian central bank moves to halt currency slide over Ukraine

THE Russian central bank said on Monday it was suspending purchases of foreign currency after the stock market and ruble tumbled over fears Russia may attack Ukraine. Stocks plunged sharply following two weeks of steady decline, with the dollar- denominated RTS index down nine per cent. The Russian currency fell to its lowest point in more than a year against the dollar at 79 rubles. The Russian central bank said it was halting purchases of hard currency in an effort to reduce volatility on financial markets.

"This decision was taken in order to increase the predictability of the actions of the monetary authorities and reduce the volatility of financial markets," the Bank of Russia said. The bank did not give a timeframe, adding it had enough instruments at its disposal to guard against risks to the financial stability. "Markets are waking up to increased geopolitical and sanctions risks around Russia," Timothy Ash, a senior emerging markets strategist at London-based Bluebay Asset Management, said in a note to clients.

In consultation with the US and other allies, the EU is pushing to put together a package of sanctions against Moscow that it hopes will help deter Russia from any military action. "We expect Russian equities to extend losses today due to an escalation in geopolitical tensions over the weekend," analysts at Alfa Bank said earlier in the day.—AFP ■

S.Korea economy logs best annual growth in 11 years

People wearing face masks walk along a street in the Yeonnam district of Seoul. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

SOUTH Korea's economy grew in 2021 at the fastest pace for 11 years thanks to robust exports and strong activity in the service sector, the central bank said Tuesday.

The 4.0 per cent expansion, which came in line with forecasts, was the best performance since 2010 and came despite the pandemic hurting global supply chains.

The strong data will give the Bank of Korea some room to further tighten interest rates as it looks to battle inflation, which is sitting at a decade high.

Bank officials have lifted the benchmark rate three times since August — the latest hike this month took them to 1.25 per cent — and have indicated more this year.

South Korea is home to leading technology firms including Samsung Electronics, the world's top smartphone maker and whose chips are used in a wide range of devices.

Exports jumped nearly 10 per cent in a sharp turnaround from 2020 when they contracted 1.8 per cent as the pandemic forced governments around the world to shut down their economies to battle the Covid spread.

Domestic consumption increased 3.6 per cent, having contracted five per cent the year before. —AFP ■

Staff wearing masks work at the factory of OPPO in Dongguan, south China's Guangdong Province,13 February 2020. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

GDP of 'world factory' in China exceeds 1t yuan

THE latest statistics show that the city of Dongguan, dubbed the "factory of the world," in South China's Guangdong province, reported a GDP of over 1 trillion yuan ($157.7 billion) in 2021, up 8.2 percent year-on-year.

This marks that Dongguan becomes the 24th Chinese city whose GDP has surpassed 1 trillion yuan so far. Dongguan's crossing the GDP threshold of 1 trillion yuan further demonstrates the strong resilience of China's economy.

As the vane of Chinese foreign trade, the city's foreign trade has been gravely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years. The previous lack of orders and the later lack of workers as well as a shortage of containers had all affected the normal foreign trade of the city.

However, in January 2021, the growth rate of Dongguan's foreign trade stopped falling and started to pick up. The total import and export volume of the year reached 1.52 trillion yuan, up 14.6 per cent year-on-year.

Dongguan Ramaxel Technology Company, a DRAM module manufacturer, temporarily transformed its meeting rooms into staff dormitories during the hardest time of the COVID-19 outbreak last year, for the sake of a due production schedule and epidemic prevention and control needs. —Xinhua ■

Boeing invests $450 mn in air taxi venture

BOEING has invested $450 million in Wisk, a Silicon Valley air taxi venture that aspires to develop the first autonomous, all-electric passenger-carrying aircraft certified in the United States, the companies said Monday. Flying electric taxis have been seen as a promising, emissions-free solution to address urban congestion. However, Mountain View, California-based Wisk's emphasis on autonomy is expected to push back its development timeframe compared with some rival concepts.

Marc Allen, chief strategy officer for Boeing, said in a statement that autonomy "is the key to unlocking scale," meaning that "straight-to-autonomy is a core first principle."

In 2019, Boeing joined the venture, which is also backed by Kitty Hawk Corporation, a company co-founded by Google co-founder Larry Page. Boeing has not disclosed the size of prior funding rounds.

Some other companies in the flying taxis space have envisioned piloted air taxies as a first step towards autonomous service.

Wisk has not released a timetable for commercialization, but it envisions some 14 million annual flights serving more than 40 million people within five years of certification.

"We recognize that our self-flying first approach means that we will not be first to market," a Wisk spokesperson said. "We're ok with that. However, our progress to-date and our leadership in autonomous flight means that we will be first to market with a fully autonomous, scalable and accessible" electric air taxi.

Monday's announcement follows public stock listings of a number of other companies in the flying taxi space, including Vertical Aerospace and Joby Aviation.

The latter has said it wants to win US certification in time to launch commercial service in 2024 with piloted taxis.—AFP ■

Electric air taxi startup Wisk Aero is co-developing air taxis with Kitty Hawk. The startup raises a new round of funding from Boeing. With the $450 million investment into Wish Aero, Boeing is possibly going to become "one of the most well-funded [advanced air mobility] companies in the world." **PHOTO: WISH AERO/AFP**

UK bank jobs soar despite Covid, Brexit strains

BRITAIN'S banking sector saw job vacancies hit a record high last year as the economy reopened from lockdowns and London avoided a post-Brexit exodus of workers, a survey showed Monday.

The number of job openings soared by 129 per cent between 2020 and 2021, according to a study by recruiters Morgan McKinley and data analysts Vacancysoft.

"Vacancies in the UK's banking industry hit an all-time high in 2021… despite Covid restrictions, general sector underperformance and issues such as the post-Brexit financial services agreement still unresolved," the study said.

US investment bank JP Morgan Chase was the industry's leading recruiter in the UK last year, with vacancies up 122 per cent.

Among British banks, NatWest led the way with vacancies up almost fourfold, as retail banks benefit from strong mortgage demand and higher interest rates.

UK vacancies at Swiss bank UBS, however, dipped 3.5 per cent.

Hakan Enver, UK managing director at Morgan McKinley, said companies "felt confident in hiring again" after having put thousands of roles on hold in 2020.

Despite holding onto jobs in the wake of Brexit, London over the past year has lost out to European rivals on equity trading volumes.

The 'City' financial sector has also yet to strike a post-Brexit deal with Brussels on equivalence, which would allow London-based firms to fully operate in Europe.—AFP ■

A man uses a mobile phone as he walks past a branch of a Lloyds bank, operated by Lloyds Banking Group, in the City of London. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

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Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

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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

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lebanon's ex-PM Hariri says retires from political life

FORMER Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri announced Monday he would not run in upcoming parliamentary elections and was withdrawing from political life.

The announcement could jeopardise the crisis-hit country's ballot altogether and marks the end of an era that saw the Hariri family dominate Lebanese Sunni politics since the end of the civil war in 1990.

The 51-year-old three-time premier, who was propelled into politics by his father Rafic's assassination in 2005, announced his decision during a press conference in the capital Beirut.

The Sunni Muslim leader said he was "suspending his work in political life" and urged fellow members of his Future party to also leave the political arena.

A tearful Hariri, who was first elected to parliament in 2005, declared he would not run in the legislative polls due in May.—AFP ■

No plea deal to quit politics: Ex-Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu amid trial

FORMER Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday denied reports he had reached a deal with prosecutors that would force him to quit politics, and vowed to remain leader of his Likud party.

Netanyahu, who served as prime minister from 2009 to until last year, is on trial for bribery, fraud and breach of trust, allegations he has denied.

His legal team has been negotiating a plea deal with Israel's attorney-general that, according to Israeli media reports, included an admission to the offence of "moral turpitude," which would have carried a mandatory seven-year ban from politics.

"In recent days, false claims have been published in the media about things I allegedly agreed to, for instance the claim I agreed to moral turpitude. That is simply incorrect," Netanyahu said in a statement.—AFP ■

US and Iran ready for direct nuclear talks

Direct talks between Iran and remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear accord aimed at resuscitating the deal started in Vienna last year. **PHOTO: EU DELEGATION IN VIENNA/AFP/FILE**

IRAN for the first time Monday said it was open to direct nuclear negotiations with the United States, which declared itself ready to hold talks "urgently" — in a possible turning point in efforts to salvage the 2015 nuclear accord.

Tehran has been engaged since last year in talks with the five other world powers still part of the agreement, which offered sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program.

After unilaterally withdrawing in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump, Washington has been taking part indirectly in the Vienna negotiations, which seek to bring the United States back into the nuclear accord and ensure Iran returns to its commitments.

But Washington has said on multiple occasions it would prefer to hold direct talks, and on Monday Iran's foreign minister said his country would consider doing so if it proved the key to a "good agreement" to salvage the floundering deal.

"If during the negotiation process we get to a point that reaching a good agreement with solid guarantees requires a level of talks with the US, we will not ignore that in our work schedule," said Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

A US State Department spokesperson reiterated after the Iranian comments that the United States is "prepared to meet directly".

"We have long held the position that it would be more productive to engage with Iran directly, on both JCPOA negotiations and other issues," the spokesperson said, referring to the nuclear deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"Given the pace of Iran's nuclear advances, we are almost out of time to reach an understanding on mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA," the official added.—AFP ■

Australia buys rights to Aboriginal flag, ending long dispute

THE Australian government has struck a US$14 million deal to buy the copyright to the Aboriginal flag, ending a long-running debate about its public use.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said his government had "freed the Aboriginal flag for Australians."

The deal emerged from negotiations with Aboriginal artist Harold Thomas, who designed the flag in 1971.

Over the past 50 years, the flag has become an important symbol of protest and celebration for Australia's Aboriginal people.

But there was intense debate about public use of Thomas' design after the artist granted licenses to companies to use it on their products.

One of these companies, WAM Clothing, sent cease and desist letters to many organisations, including the Australian Football League, for using the Aboriginal flag on clothing.

"I hope that this arrangement provides comfort to all Aboriginal people and Australians to use the flag, unaltered, proudly and without restriction," Thomas said of his deal with the Australian government. "I am grateful that my art is appreciated by so many, and that it has come to represent something so powerful to so many." Morrison said the deal means the flag can be used on apparel, sport grounds, artworks "and in any other medium without having to ask for permission or pay a fee."—AFP ■

The Australian and Aboriginal flags fly on Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of Australia Day celebrations in Sydney on 26 January 2021. **PHOTO: WENDELL TEODORO / AFP**

Burkina Faso president arrested by mutinous soldiers: security sources

Security forces patrol the streets during a demonstration in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 22 January 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

MUTINOUS troops in restive Burkina Faso arrested President Roch Marc Christian Kabore on Monday and detained him in army barracks a day after staging an uprising, security sources told AFP.

Soldiers at several army bases across the West African country rebelled on Sunday, demanding the sacking of the military top brass and more resources to fight a bloody jihadist insurgency.

Later in the day gunshots were heard near Kabore's private residence in the capital Ouagadougou, and witnesses reported seeing a helicopter above it.

"President Kabore, the head of parliament and the ministers are effectively in the hands of the soldiers" at the Sangoule Lamizana barracks in the capital Ouagadougou, a security source said, with another source confirming the arrest.

The situation was tense and confused in the capital, where mobile internet had been cut on Sunday, making it difficult to verify rumours of a coup in progress.—AFP ■

US, Europe declare 'unity' against Russia over Ukraine

PRESIDENT Joe Biden declared "total" unity among Western powers Monday after crisis talks with European leaders on deterring Russia from an attack against Ukraine, while the Pentagon said 8,500 US troops were put on standby for possible deployment to boost NATO.

"I had a very, very, very good meeting — total unanimity with all the European leaders," Biden told reporters shortly after finishing a one hour and 20 minute video conference with allied leaders from Europe and NATO.

In London, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's office also said "the leaders agreed on the importance of international unity in the face of growing Russian hostility."

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said "it is up to Russia to undertake visible de-escalation," while NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned of "severe costs" if there is "any further aggression" by Moscow against Ukraine.

Also on the call were the leaders of France, Italy, Poland and the European Union.

Despite insisting he has no intention of attacking, President Vladimir Putin has deployed some 100,000 troops close to Ukraine, where Russia already seized Crimea in 2014 and backs a separatist army in the east.

Moscow is demanding a guarantee that Ukraine, a former Soviet republic, never be allowed to join NATO, as well as other concessions by the United States in return for a decrease in tension.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg insisted the alliance 'will continue to take all necessary measures to protect' members and was considering deploying fresh battle groups to eastern allies. **PHOTO: AFP**

The United States and NATO have rejected the Russian demands and told Putin to withdraw from Ukraine's borders, warning that a Russian attack will trigger damaging economic sanctions, as well as a beefed-up NATO presence in eastern Europe.—AFP ■

Lawmaker calls for new vote in Honduras Congress dispute

Deputy for the Libertad y Refundacion (LIBRE) party Rassel Tome proposes Luis Redondo for President of the Congress of the Republic's Board of Directors in Tegucigalpa, on 23 January 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

ONE of the two lawmakers who were named as duelling presidents of the Congress in Honduras on Monday proposed a new election to end the crisis that is overshadowing the election of the country's first woman president.

"Let's have a dialogue. If necessary, let's repeat the vote. I submit myself to the scrutiny of the deputies whenever they want," Jorge Calix said in a recorded message.

"If that's what it takes to restore peace, let's do it."

The crisis began last Friday, when MPs came to blows in the Congress chamber during its first session since being elected in November.

They were fighting over who should lead the body for its four-year term.

Members of president-elect Xiomara Castro's leftist Libre party had put forward the name of Calix, one of their cohorts -- but Castro loyalists claimed this violated a pact with Libre's coalition partner. Libre on Sunday named Luis Redondo, of Libre's coalition partner the Savior Party of Honduras (PSH), as Congress president at a ceremony in the Congress building.

Separately, Libre dissident members with backing of right-wing parties named Calix at a separate event held at a private venue.—AFP ■

Puerto Rico statue of Spanish explorer toppled before king's visit

PUERTO Rican authorities hastily reinstalled a statue of Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon that was toppled earlier Monday in the capital San Juan, just hours before a visit to the Caribbean island by Spain's King Felipe VI.

"Some individuals approached the statue," located in a square in the historic center of San Juan, and "caused damage," according to a police report quoted by local media.

The capital's mayor, Miguel Romero, criticized the incident as an "act of vandalism" in remarks to news outlet El Nuevo Dia, but sought to downplay the significance of the incident and the extent of the damage.

Felipe VI arrived hours later and was given a red carpet welcome. He was visiting Puerto Rico, a US territory, to mark the 500th anniversary of San Juan's founding.

The city's origins date back to 1521, but the official celebrations were delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Authorities indicated they were looking at security camera footage to help identify those responsible for damaging the statue.

Local media reported that a group known as the Boriken Libertarian Forces has claimed responsibility.—AFP ■

The Juan Ponce de Leon statue in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico is seen prior to its toppling by unknown assailants on 24 January 2022, hours before Spanish King Felipe VI was set to visit the Caribbean island. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

At least 18 dead after clash, fire at club in Indonesia's West Papua

At least 18 people were killed during clashes between two groups at a night club in the town of Sorong in Indonesia's West Papua province, police said Tuesday, with most dying after the venue caught fire.

"The clash broke out last night (Monday) at 11 pm. It was a prolonged conflict from a clash on Saturday," Sorong police chief Ary Nyoto Setiawan said in a statement.

One victim was stabbed and 17 more died in the blaze at the Double O nightclub, officials said.

"We found 17 bodies in Double O. They were all found on the second floor. We have evacuated the bodies to Selebe Solu Hospital," said Sorong Police's health division head Edward Panjaitan.

Police said the clash did not involve locals in remote West Papua, where there is a long-running, low-level insurgency.—AFP ■

US reports nearly 2 mn migrant apprehensions at southern border in 2021

ALMOST 180,000 migrants were apprehended attempting to enter the United States from Mexico in December, official figures published Monday showed.

The additional 178,840 detentions in December bring the total number of apprehensions at the US southern border in 2021 to almost two million — a record.

The Republican Party quickly accused Democratic President Joe Biden and his Vice-President Kamala Harris of having created a "historic humanitarian crisis".

"On their watch, cartels and smugglers are thriving, border officials are overwhelmed, our communities are less safe," said Republican National Committee chairwoman Ronna McDaniel in a statement. —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 MMA fighter Tial Thang. **PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**

Myanmar fighter Tial Thang to face Indonesian star Sunoto

MYANMAR'S MMA fighter Tial Thang will fight against Indonesian fighter Sunoto in the BAD BLOOD event of ONE Championship to be held on 11 February.

A total of 13 bouts will be included in the event.

This is his first bout with an Indonesian fighter this year, and the fifth bout since joining the ONE Championship.

Tial has won three of the last four matches, losing one as two matches were scheduled for him in 2021.

Tial lost a fight on 27 August 2021 with South Korean Song Min-Jae.

Sunoto has fought 19 bouts in his MMA career, winning 12 matches with seven losses.

Sunoto took a victory in his last bout in 2020.

The ONE Championship has been held as usual since the beginning of this year, with Myanmar player Tial making his debut in February. —Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

Ranieri sacked as Watford manager after just 14 games

WATFORD manager Claudio Ranieri was sacked on Monday after only 14 games in charge of the Premier League strugglers.

Ranieri was hired in October to replace Xisco Munoz after the Spaniard's dismissal. But the 70-year-old Italian was unable to improve Watford's fortunes, with the Hornets taking just seven points during his brief reign.

Just 112 days after his appointment, Ranieri paid the price for Watford's slump into the relegation zone following last week's 3-0 defeat against relegation rivals Norwich. "Watford Football Club confirms the departure of Head Coach Claudio Ranieri," a club statement said. Watford are second bottom of the table, two points from safety, after losing seven of their last eight league games.

Watford have appointed Claudio Ranieri as their new head coach on a two-year contract after sacking Xisco Munoz. In October 2021 he was appointed manager of Watford. **PHOTO: JEAN-FRANCOIS MONIER/ AFP/FILE**

They are without a victory in nine games in all competitions, their longest winless run since 2013. Watford's owners, the Pozzo family, felt they had to act now to give the team a chance as they battle to avoid relegation after last season's promotion from the Championship. — AFP ■

Nadal 'destroyed physically' by epic Shapovalov win to reach semis

AN ailing Rafael Nadal said he was "destroyed physically" by his gritty five-set quarter-final win over Denis Shapovalov at the Australian Open on Tuesday.

But the Spanish great still managed to move to within two matches of a record 21st Grand Slam title with an incredible display of guts and resilience against the talented 22-year-old.

The sixth seed edged the Canadian 14th seed 6-3, 6-4, 4-6, 3-6, 6-3 in 4hr 8min of thrilling action on Rod Laver Arena.

"I was honestly destroyed physically. But my serve worked well, and for me, every game that I was winning with my serve was a victory," said Nadal, who will have two days to recuperate before Friday's semi-finals. "Being in semi-finals means a lot to me and to have a victory against a great player after all the things that I went through, so it's an amazing news. I'm super happy." It will be Nadal's seventh semi-final in Melbourne where he will meet either Matteo Berrettini or Gael Monfils. Nadal is tied with great rivals Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer on 20 Grand Slams, but with Djokovic deported and Federer injured, the opportunity is there for him to go clear at the top.—AFP ■

Rafael Nadal celebrates his epic five-set win against Canada's Denis Shapovalov to reach teh Australian Open semi-final. **PHOTO: AFP**