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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.

Bagan eyes more local/foreign tourists as hoteliers prepare quality services

THE hotels and motels across the nation are making preparations for local/foreign travellers in the New Year period, December and the hotels in the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone, the heart of Myanmar people, are also ready to host both domestic and international travellers during the New Year festival and Bagan pagoda festival.

The Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone with a 19 square miles area boasts 3,822 pagodas and hosts great numbers of travellers in the open season. While the tourism industry of Bagan was suspended during the COVID-19 outbreak, the government concerted its greatest efforts to revive the tourism sector in 2022



Travellers are pictured at the Htilominlo Pagoda in the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone in 2022. **PHOTOS: ZWEMANN**

and the pagodas across the nation, Bagan, Inlay, Pindaya and resorts are crowded with travellers starting Thadingyut and Tazaungdaing festivals. The ho-

tels, motels and guesthouses become alive again with travellers and the business opportunities of locals are also active again.

"There are visitors to Bagan

even on office days in addition to holidays. The tourist arrivals by flights also started in October and still in December.

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Bagan eyes more local/foreign tourists as hoteliers prepare quality services



Pagodas in the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone revive with travellers in 2022.

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There are also visitors via land routes. The numbers of local travellers are high during long holidays. This month, the hotel/motel offer promotion for Christmas and new year. They prepare regional food and music bands. They are making arrangements to lure visitors to pay a visit to the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone again. There are various loca-

tions and picturesque scenes. The number of visitors increased in October 2022 and that amount might remain unchanged until 2023. Hotel bookings are also on the rise for the new year festival,” said U Win Aung, Deputy Director of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Bagan Branch).

A total of 154 hotels and 75 guesthouses supervised by the development committee in Ba-

gan are ready for local/foreign travellers.

The Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone hosts 107 tourists by flight in October and 188 tourists in November. Hotels expect higher numbers of travellers in December than in previous months, said U Moe Wai, owner of Bagan No 18 Hotel.

“For Bagan tourism, we launch competitive services to attract visitors. There are tourists and our hotel welcomes many Spanish tourists. In the early period of the full moon day of Pyatho, there will be higher numbers of domestic and international travellers for the Ananda Pagoda festival. The travellers also make hotel reservations for December new year festival. Hotels and motels in Bagan always welcome Myanmar’s open sea-

son and prepare competitive services during this open season,” he said.

Hotels offer new services such as K7,000 per air conditioning unit per person including breakfast this open season and entertainment programmes with Myanmar traditional orchestra featuring the essence of Bagan’s cultures.—Nyein Thu (MNA)/KTZH

Nay Pyi Taw collective walk held in December week 3

THE collective walk of the December third week was held as a gesture of marking the public sports month of December 2022 at Wunna Theikdi Stadium yesterday morning.

About 3,700 people led by officials from Union-level organizations, Union ministers, deputy ministers, departmental officials, staff and families participated in the walking event.

They walked from Wunna Theikdi Stadium according to designated routes and took part



Nay Pyi Taw locals take part in the collective walk yesterday.



People are seen taking physical fitness exercises in Nay Pyi Taw.

in the group physical fitness exercises parts 1 and 2, and physical fitness dance exercises. Then, officials from the Department of Sports and Physical Education provided purified drinking water, Royal-D electrolyte drinks and nutritious snacks.

To promote public health, the community walk will be held every Saturday in December, and employees from various ministries and their families will participate in the sports activity. — MNA/

8 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 17 December, total figure rises to 633,551

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,551** after **eight** new cases were reported on 17 December 2022 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **608,112** including **23** new recoveries.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at **19,488** on 17 December with no new deaths reported from the pandemic.

Daily laboratory examination showed decline of infection to less than one per cent for 32 successive days.

According to the research, it is found that people who have been vaccinated do not suffer severely from the disease, need not to be hospitalized and unlikely to die. If they have received booster shot, the death rates can be reduced more.

As such, the people need to follow the new normal way in living with COVID. Hence, all the people above five have to fully receive COVID-19 vaccination inoculated by the Ministry of Health free of charge. Six months after the vaccination, they have to take booster jabs at relevant health centres and ward/village administration offices without fail.

Moreover, they have to wear masks while in closed chambers and public places. They need to often wash hands with soap and water or the hand gel containing alcohol (at least 60 per cent) for 20 seconds.

People need to follow the social distancing rule and avoid the crowds as much as possible. While not wearing masks, if they cough and sneeze, they need to cover mouth and noses with elbows in line with the personal hygienic ways. COVID-19 information can be browsed on the internet page moh.gov.mm of the Ministry of Health. —MNA

Taking State responsibilities under 2008 Constitution

- The State Administration Council government is controlling the country in accord with the 2008 constitution.
- Protests and violence were handled in accord with the law.
- Meetings were held with the government officials concerned to solve the election problems. But they failed and attempted to grab State power by calling a parliament. Therefore, we had to take over State duties unavoidably.

(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with entrepreneurs from MSMEs in Pyay District on 4 October 2022)

Inauguration of 9-storey medical building at Pathein General Hospital hails Diamond Jubilee Independence Day

AS a gesture of hailing the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day, a ceremony to inaugurate a 9-storey medical building took place at the Pathein General Hospital yesterday morning, attended by Secretary of the State Administration Council Lt-Gen Aung Lin Dwe.

The SAC Secretary unveiled the signboard and bronze plaque of the building and viewed round relevant medical wards, the blood centre, laboratories, operation theatres and other facilities.

Speaking on the occasion at the multifunctional hall of the building, the Secretary said that during the tenure of the State Administration Council, annexes were opened at hospitals in Hinthada, Hpa-an, Magway, Monywa and Waibargi of Yangon. The nine-storey new medical building of Pathein General Hospital was built on 2.23 acres of land with more than K22 billion from the allotted fund. Arrangements are being made to



The nine-storey medical building is inaugurated at the Pathein General Hospital on 17 December 2022.



upgrade Pathein General Hospital as a 500-bed facility formed with speciality departments.

The Secretary continued to say that thanks to the opening of the new building for modern medical treatment, health staff will have the chance to study advanced medical science. Hence, they have to apply these good

opportunities in uplifting their medical treatment capacity and providing better healthcare services for the people.

The Union Minister for Health expressed that the Ministry of Health is striving for the betterment of public healthcare services and treatments to enable all people to have longevity

free from diseases. The ministry manages 1,178 hospitals across the nation, 133 of which are located in the Ayeyawady Region. These regional hospitals admit more than 3,000 inpatients per day, he noted. The Union Minister underscored Pathein General Hospital gave treatments to more than 70,000 inpatients and

more than 60,000 outpatients in 2022.

The Chief Minister of Ayeyawady Region spoke words of thanks, and the head of the Region's Public Health Department/Medical Services Department and the medical superintendent presented gifts to the guests. — MNA

MoI Union Minister joins Product Show of Yangon's 29 industrial zones



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn views round the product exhibition in Yangon yesterday.

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn attended the Product Show of Yangon's 29 industrial zones organized at MCC (Myanmar Convention Centre) in Yangon yesterday.

According to the directive of the Prime Minister to emphasize MSMEs as they support the State economy and regional development, the product show is organized from 15 to 18 December.

The 88 booths of the event exhibit products manufactured from 29 industrial zones such as medicines, traditional medicines, commodities, cosmetics, foodstuffs, electronics-related

materials, and utensils for hotels, kitchens and living rooms.

The Union minister observed the exhibition together with Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein and other relevant regional ministers.

The Union minister and the region chief minister also watched the result show of "Tu Shin Hnwal Pyaw Gita Pwal Taw" Season 2, which marks Diamond Jubilee Independence Day, held at the MRTV Studio A on Pyay Road yesterday.

The final match of the singing contest and music award ceremony will be held at MRTV Studio A on 30 December 2022. — MNA/KTZH

Union Information Minister attends respect-paying ceremony to doyen literati marking Myanmar Literati Day

THE Myanmar Writers Association organized a respect-paying ceremony to doyen literati marking Myanmar Literati Day or Sarsodaw Day in Yangon on Friday.

Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein, Region Commander Maj-Gen Nyunt Win Swe, regional ministers, Myanmar Writers Association Chairman U Ohn Maung (Myinmu Maung Naing Moe), members, elderly literati, writers and guests.

At the ceremony, officials handed over K2,470,000 cash donation including K10 million donated by the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services to the Chairman of the Myanmar Writers Association.

Speaking at the event, the Union minister said the respect-paying ceremony led by the association reaches its 35th anniversary this year since 1980. There were only 10 literati in 1980 and now 247 from 1996 to date.

The Prime Minister and his wife also donated the needed things to the literati individually to show respect to them. The great authors were also awarded during the diamond jubilee of the Sarpay Beikman including the National Literature Awards 2020 and 2021 and the National Lifetime Award for Literary Achievement.

Today, plans are underway



The obeisance-paying ceremony to doyen literati is in progress yesterday in Yangon.

to establish Sarso Beikman which will be more prestigious than Sarpay Beikman. Moreover, the government also confers honorary titles and medals and they will be awarded by the Prime Minister on Diamond Jubilee Independence Day.

Then, the Yangon Region chief minister talked about the establishment of the Myanmar Writers Association in 1944 and the number of literati – 247 doyen literati to date and the chairman of the association expressed thanks to the Head of the State and donors for their contributions and pledged to make efforts with the mighty pens for peace and tranquillity of the State and its

development.

After paying respect to the elderly literati, writer Takkatho Myat Thu delivered words of advice on behalf of the elderly.

At noon, the Union minister inspected the message printing processes of Dimond Jubilee Independence Day at the Central Printing Factory of the Printing and Publishing Department on Theinbyu Road.

Then, the Union minister gave cash awards to members of the National Literary Award Selection Committee and Sarpay Beikman Manuscript Award Selection Committee at the meeting hall of the department and left proper instructions.—MNA/KTZH



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn looks into the printing processes of felicitations for Diamond Jubilee Independence Day at the Printing and Publishing Department yesterday.



COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various states, regions

VACCINATION is being carried out in full swing in various regions and states as the vaccination programmes are one of the most important activities

A local from Kyaunggon Township in Ayeyawady Region gets jabbed against COVID-19 on 17 December 2022.

in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 disease.

Yesterday, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams from the Tatmadaw, and relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers gave COVID-19 vaccines to 1,019 people from twenty-six townships in Ayeyawady Region, 335 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region, respectively.

Similarly, on that day healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 90 students from seven districts in Mandalay Region. — MNA

Hotel service training course opened

AN opening ceremony of the training course on hotel services was held yesterday morning at the Mingala Thiri Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw.

The course was organized and supervised by the Nay Pyi Taw Hotel Entrepreneurs Association, and Union Minister Dr Htay Aung attended the opening ceremony.

Departmental officials, responsible persons from the Nay Pyi Taw Hotel Entrepreneurs Association, Hotel operators, facilitators and trainees attended the event.

At the event, the Union minister said that since the hotel and tourism industry is a service-based industry, it is important to improve the quality of hotel service sectors.

It is necessary to create a place that can meet the needs of visitors. In the tourism industry, guest satisfaction is important,



Union Minister Dr Htay Aung observes the organic vegetables and fruits at the training.

so they need to be trained to fulfil these qualities, the Union minister said.

In the course that will be opened today, four subjects related to hotel services will be taught, so the participants are encouraged to try and learn so that they can be usefully applied in the practical field, he said.

After that, the associate secretary of Nay Pyi Taw Hotel

Operators Association explained how the training was done and the objectives of the training, and the Union minister and officials toured the training.

A total of 45 attendees joined

the course that will provide theories and practices of four subjects: reception services, food and beverage catering, arrangement, and bedroom maintenance for two months.

In addition, the Union minister observed the organic vegetables and fruits, hotel services and solar energy deployment plans and encourage staff to strive to become quality products.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is making efforts for the systematic long-term development of Myanmar's tourism industry and developing the quality of operators in the hotel and travel industry. With the aim of increasing employment opportunities and per capita income and reducing poverty through tourism, hotel and travel service courses and language courses are continuously being opened in various regions, states and Nay Pyi Taw. — MNA/KTZH

Illegal timbers, consumer goods, construction materials, Agri-materials and vehicles confiscated



Confiscated illegal commodities in Mandalay Region.

AN on-duty team under the supervision of the Customs Department conducted inspections on 15 December at the Myanmar Industrial Port container checkpoint and captured 570 boxes of fancy chains worth K5,250,000 that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) from a container. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

In addition, the Pyawbwe township food and drug administration under the management of the Mandalay Region

FDA conducted market monitoring activities and confiscated 54 bags of fertilizers (Myinpyan brand) worth K4,425,000 without a product label in the Myanmar Language. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

An on-duty team confiscated K4,038,400 worth of sandals and construction materials that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) from two vehicles and two trailers (estimated value of K230 million) at the Mayanchaung permanent checkpoint in Mon State. The

action was taken under Customs procedures.

On 16 December, a total of 12.0262 tonnes of sawn teak worth K7,937,292 from a vehicle (approximately K30 million) was seized in Shwepyitha township in Yangon North District and the action was taken under the Forest Law.

Therefore, 10 arrests (estimated value of K281,650,692) were made on 15 and 16 December, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

Dollar exchanged at K2,850 higher than CBM's reference rate

ALTHOUGH the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) set the reference exchange rate at K2,100 per dollar, it reached K2,850 per dollar in the market, according to local forex traders.

The CBM released a statement at a reference rate within the margin of ± 0.3 for selling, purchasing and exchanging foreign currency on 10 August.

Therefore, the banks and business persons including exchange counters set the purchase price at K2,100 per dollar and the selling price at K2,106 per dollar.

Despite the set prices, the purchase price was K2,835 per dollar while the selling price was K2,9855 per dollar in the unauthorized market on 17 December.

Thus, the CBM declared on 15 December that there is no plan to fix the reference

rate, despite a gap between the market price and the reference price.

Some unscrupulous traders spread rumours of possible changes in CBM's reference rate and the various reasons for rising dollar prices, to manipulate the market, the CBM stated.

In addition, CBM sold US\$ 108 million, including USD liquidity and salary transactions, into the market in 45 days and announced further selling in the future.

Also, the hard currency US dollar hit a high of over K4,500 in the forex market at August-end. Consequently, the CBM sold dollars at its auction market for the sectors in need, to stabilize the exchange rate. A total of US\$443.8 million were sold at an auction rate in 2021 as well. — NN/CT



CURRENT AFFAIRS



Some SIM cards of Myanmar are seen in hands of the user.

Telecom operators announce importance of re-registration of SIM cards

SIM cards users in Myanmar need to check their identifications and re-register their SIM cards with correct information by 31 January 2023, according to the announcement of Posts and Telecommunications Department (PTD) under the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Re-registration can safeguard digital and physical security, and users can safely use mobile financial services and be protected from fraudulent activities.

SIM card users in Myanmar are required to register SIM cards using their full name, Citizenship Scrutiny Card (National Registration Card, NRC) number and its clear and correct front and back color photos by the activation of the SIM card.

The Posts and Telecommunications Department an-

nounced that the SIM cards information shall be checked with national database of the Ministry of Immigration and Population and those with incomplete/incomplete information shall be deactivated.

Therefore, it is utmost important that all SIM card users in Myanmar are encouraged to check their identification and re-register their SIM cards within the defined period to avoid the deactivation.

The SIM card users can check their current registered ID by dialing *601# for Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications (MPT), *766# (or) *979*3*3# for ATOM, *666# for Ooredoo and *966*6# choose 2 for Mytel.

Re-registration of SIM cards can be done on official website and applications of respective operators and at respective point of sales. — TWA/KTZH

Drugs worth over K1069.94 billion seized over 11 months

HOME Affairs Union Minister Lt-Gen Soe Htut said there were 6,276 drug seizures worth over K1,069.94 billion during 11 months of 2022 at the meeting of the Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control 1/2022 at the hall of Myanmar Police Force in Nay Pyi Taw on 14 December.

In 2022, there were 6,276 cases of drug seizures of over 1.1 tonnes of raw opium, over 1.32 tonnes of opium, over 16 4.87 million stimulant tablets,

over 21.75 tonnes of Ice (methamphetamine), over 2.04 tonnes of ketamine including other drugs and chemicals which are used in making of drugs.

As a result of drug control operations, the number of captures has increased every year and special operations are carried out 37 times in 2022.

There were 26 drug-related cases transferred to the Financial Intelligence Units in 2022 and 29 cases were transferred in 2021. — TWA/MKKS

ME to resume extension process for PJ passports on 7 Jan 2023

MYANMAR Embassy in Thailand announced the extension process will resume for Myanmar PJ passports, which expired in 2022, in Thailand on 7 January 2023.

In addition, the process will

include those who have previously received appointment tokens, and OWIC cards will also be issued. The Myanmar Embassy (new location) will carry out the extension process on Saturday only from 9 am to 12 noon.

The Myanmar Embassy notified that appointment tokens will be stamped in old passports and issued only to those who come in person to the Myanmar Embassy in Thailand.—TWA/MKKS



Myanmar nationals are seen lining up for passport process at the Myanmar Embassy in Thailand.

New tamarind enters market during Christmas season

THE new Darsin (chopped) tamarind from Yamethin township enters the Yangon market at K2,300 per viss starting 14 December, according to the Sinpanlan tamarind and chilli wholesale centre.

The new tamarind usually enters the Yangon market near Christmas yearly and they are also available in the market this year.

Shortly after tamarinds from Yamethin arrived at the market, the ones from Kyaukpadaung township enter the

market.

Later 2021, the new Darsin tamarind entered the market at K2,000 per viss and the prices of new ones this year are higher compared to the same period of the previous year.

Although tamarind merchants expected that prices can rise in 2022, prices of tamarinds and Shan garlic are slightly higher this year.

In early 2022, the Yangon market received the new Darsin tamarind at K2,000 per viss.

The new Pwintkat tamar-

rind was K2,100 per viss on 28 January and K2,000-2,100 per viss on 16 December.

The Bayintnaung tamarind wholesale centre said tamarinds will not fetch good prices in 2022 while tamarind traders expect higher prices in 2022 for a large number of leftovers and various reasons.

In November, the tamarind entry to the Bayintnaung wholesale centre increased.

The Akyawswal tamarind is also exported to foreign countries. The Darsin tamarind fetches the lowest prices and is most common in the market only in the early period of the year.

The Pwintkat tamarind weighting one viss is also available in the market. The Akyawswal tamarind price is lower than Darsin tamarinds. The tamarind without seed fetches the highest price in the market.

The price of the Pwintkat and Darsin mix stands at a low level. The one-viss tamarind and pile of tamarind weighing 10/11 visses are available in the market. — TWA/KTZH



Tamarinds are seen in the market.

LOCAL BUSINESS

Muse border sees surge in rice export

MYANMAR’S rice and broken rice export to China through the Muse border have risen, said U Min Thein, vice-chair of the Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

At the end of November, the daily export volume was over 20,000 rice bags. At present, more than 30,000 bags of rice are daily shipped to China via the Muse border.

As Chinese Yuan payment is given the go-ahead for rice exports to China and 100 per cent of export earnings can be used without limits, rice export has risen, he added.

“The authorities nod Chinese yuan payment. Moreover, rice exports are not affected by a new forex rule. This is the strong point for rice traders compared to other commodities. Approximately 30-40 truckloads of rice and broken rice (50 bags per truck) are daily leaving for China through Muse,” U Min Thein elaborated.

On 14 December 2021, the Central Bank of Myanmar released a notification that the use of Yuan or Kyat in the bilateral transaction was officially allowed in the border areas between Myanmar and China to boost bilat-

eral cross-border trade, facilitate trading and bilateral transaction, increase the use of domestic currency, as per the objectives of the ASEAN Financial Integration

However, Foreign Exchange Supervisory Committee notified the traders of the dollar payment for agricultural exports such as rice, corn, oil crops, beans and pulses, according to a directive dated 30 June.

Export earnings have to be exchanged according to the CBM’s reference rate of K2,100.

Therefore, there is a large gap between the reference rate and the over-the-counter rate (K2,870).

According to a meeting 66/2022 of the Foreign Exchange Supervisory Committee, export earnings of some items can be made in Chinese Yuan and Thai Baht in addition to the US dollar. The CBM’s notice dated 18 November takes effect on those export items; various pulses (green gram, black gram, chick-pea, pigeon pea), edible oil crops

(peanut, sesame seeds), corn, rubber, fishery products (fish, shrimp, crab, eel) and livestock products (live cattle, hides, frozen meat, dried meat).

The traders need to apply for a licence to make Yuan or Baht payments. According to the US dollar policy, 65 per cent of earnings must be exchanged for local currency at the CBM’s reference foreign exchange rate, while exporters can use 35 per cent of export earnings or transfer or sell them to authorized

dealers (ADs) or others with an over-the-counter rate within one month.

This directive came into effect starting on 21 November, the CBM stated.

However, rice and broken rice exports to China via the Muse border are excluded from that forex rule. So, rice and broken rice exports are allowed to proceed with Yuan as before.

Therefore, rice export returned to normality. The prices in the Muse trade zone stood at 127 Yuan per 50-kilogramme bag of broken rice and 140-150 Yuan per bag of rice.

At present, Myanmar daily delivers rice, broken rice, rubber, various beans and pulses, fishery products, chili pepper and other food commodities to China through Kyinsankyawt by 100 trucks and building materials, electrical appliances, household goods and industrial raw materials are imported into the country by 40 trucks.

As China eased coronavirus restrictions, only the Kynsankyawt checkpoint out of the Sino-Myanmar land borders linking to the Muse post are reopened. — NN/EMM



The Muse 105-Mile Trade Zone on the Sino-Myanmar border.

Monsoon onion price slumps within week

MONSOON onions from various regions are entering the Yangon market on daily basis. There is only a demand for domestic consumption in the market, leading to a drop in the price of monsoon onions from the Myingyan area up to K1,600 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes), according to onion depots in the Bayintnaung market.

Various varieties of monsoon onions around 180,000 visses entered the market on 16 December and most of them are from the Myittha area. The wholesale prices are K1,500-K2,800 and K2,300-K3,700 per viss for Myingyan and Myittha onions based on varieties.

Except for new monsoon onions, summer onions whose price rose to the highest price

of K5,100 per viss starting from 6 December are no longer entering the Yangon market. On 9 December, the price per viss of big-sized Myingyan onions and Myittha onions were K4,400 and K4,800, indicating a fall in price by K1,600 and K1,500 per viss respectively.

Two regional depots are receiving 150,000 to 200,000 visses of new monsoon onions supply daily.

New monsoon onions weighing 159,156 visses arrived at the Pakokku market on 8 December at a record price of K3,500 per viss. Similarly, the Myingyan depot received 162,480 visses of monsoon onions on 9 December, with the highest price rate of K3,400 per viss.

Although the highest price of onions from the Myittha area

hit K4,000 per viss in the Mandalay market on 8 December, it dropped to K2,800 per viss on 16 December.

The year 2022 is unique in the history of the domestic onion market. Onion price set a new record three months earlier than the previous years. The record price has risen from the previous price of K3,700 to K5,100 this year.

New monsoon onions were planted early because the price of summer onions went up earlier than expected. A great number of new monsoon onions are entering markets in Yangon and other regions despite the minor damage in the plantation. Growers of summer onions are expected to get more profits in the coming summer, like the rain-fed rice of 2022, it is learnt. — TWA/CT

Prices of fuel oil, gold and dollar on 17 December 2022

Fuel Oil Price (Yangon)

Octane 92	K1,890
Octane 95	K1,975
Diesel	K2,420
Premium Diesel	K2,500

All of the prices are based on per litre.

Gold Price

The reference price of high-purity gold set by YGEA	K2,112,000 per tical
High-purity gold in the gold market	K2,683,000 per tical

Dollar Price

A US dollar set by the Central Bank of Myanmar	K2,100
A US dollar in the forex market	K2,835 to K2,855

The above prices may change from time to time.

Preserve ancient cultural heritage as a national duty

THE higher living standard is an index of improving the cultural standard. In this regard, the cultural standard is based on physical and mental politeness, sympathy and empathy under the religions and faiths, the guidance of customs and traditions, the establishment of modern societies and civilization, and appreciation of flourishing culture and fine arts.

Every country or every national preserves tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage can be defined as languages, ideas, customs, costumes and dressing, beliefs and

Everybody needs to preserve ancient tangible and intangible cultural heritage for ensuring long-term existence and to adore these kinds of heritage to be passed down from generation to generation as a natural duty. If so, the posterities will clearly know the value of the cultural heritage of the nation and histories in successive eras in preservation measures.

know the value of the cultural heritage of their areas due to a lack of general knowledge and a lack of emphasis on their environment.

As such, the authorities and relevant organizations identify the cultural heritage with the installation of significant plaques. On 9 December 2022, a bronze plaque was installed at the Royal Thante School called Dio High School as the ancient cultural heritage in Aungmyaythazan Township of Mandalay Region. Such a school was built and donated by King Mindon to Dr Marks in 1869. In fact, it was the oldest high school in Myanmar.

In the monarchical era, Myanmar royal princes including King Thibaw in his princehood pursued an education in Latin, English, Geography, Mathematics, History and other subjects. Currently, the historic Thante School has been transformed into the No 10 Basic Education High School in Aungmyaythazan Township where students from various statuses of families have chances to learn education happily.

Everybody needs to preserve ancient tangible and intangible cultural heritage for ensuring long-term existence and to adore these kinds of heritage to be passed down from generation to generation as a natural duty. If so, the posterities will clearly know the value of the cultural heritage of the nation and histories in successive eras in preservation measures.

WHO eyes end to Covid emergency in 2023

THE World Health Organization said Wednesday it hoped that Covid-19 would no longer be a public health emergency in 2023, as it urged China to share information that could pinpoint how the pandemic started.

As the third anniversary of the original outbreak rolls around, the WHO said the virus was here to stay but would need managing alongside other respiratory illnesses.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the weekly Covid death toll was now around a

fifth of what it was a year ago — but was still far too high.

“Last week, less than 10,000 people lost their lives. That’s still 10,000 too many and there is still a lot that all countries can do to save lives,” he told a press conference.

“But we have come a long way. We are hopeful that at some point next year, we will be able to say that Covid-19 is no longer a global health emergency.” The WHO’s emergency committee on Covid-19, which advises Tedros

on whether the virus constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), will

discuss the criteria for declaring an end to the emergency phase when they next meet in January.

Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO’s Covid-19 technical lead, said the committee would look at the epidemiology, variants like Omicron, and the impact of the virus. While waves of infection are still expected, the pandemic “is not what it was in the beginning”, with cases resulting in fewer hospitalizations and deaths, she said.

“These deaths are largely happening among people who are not vaccinated,” or have not received their full course of jabs,

Van Kerkhove said.

While the WHO says more than 13 billion vaccine doses have been administered, around 30 per cent of the world has not received a single dose, she added.

Covid origins

Nearly 650 million confirmed Covid cases and more than 6.6 million deaths have been reported to the WHO, though the UN health agency acknowledges this will be a vast undercount.

Tedros said that as the world looks to end the Covid emergency, which has upended economies

and left millions suffering ongoing symptoms, it needs to understand how the pandemic began.

The first cases of Covid-19 were recorded in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019.

“We continue to call on China to share the data and conduct the studies that we have requested, to better understand the origins of this virus,” Tedros said.

“All hypotheses remain on the table,” he said, adding that this includes the theory that the virus escaped from Wuhan’s virology laboratories.

SOURCE: AFP



Dr Sonia Maciejewski (R) and Dr Nita Patel, Director of Antibody discovery and Vaccine development, look at a sample of a respiratory virus at Novavax labs in Rockville, Maryland, one of the labs developing a vaccine for the coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP



Book Title	- Zero to One
Translator	- Diyay
Publishing House	- Maha
Publication Date	- December 2021 (1 st Edition)
Price	- K4,000

Zero to One

(By Peter Thiel)
Notes on Startups, How to Build the Future

THE book titled ‘Zero to One’ makes suggestions as to how to build up companies which will make creations and/or inventions. This book shares the experience of the joint founder of PayPal and Palantir, who also has invested in hundreds of enterprises inclusive of Facebook and SpaceX. It is said in the foreword of this book that although it shares the lessons learned, the readers of this book will not be able to find a success formula.

In the field of business, the same innovation or creation cannot be repeated. Each moment happens once. The writer said that there will not be another Bill Gates, who can create the same computer software system. Likewise, there will not emerge a second Larry Page or Sergey Brin who can create a search engine like Google. In the same vein, there will not appear a second

Mark Zuckerberg who can create a social network like Facebook. As long as you are apishly emulating the working processes and/or procedures of the aforesaid inventors or the pioneers, you cannot be said to have learnt anything from them, it is said by the original writer.

Chapter 1: ‘The Challenge of the Future’ is opened with the question, “What important truth do very few people agree with you on?” This question is the one the writer always asked in all personal interviews. The readers are also asked to answer this question, and then, check the answer to find out how close they are to the correct answer. The idea of ‘Zero to One’ was introduced. Next, the writer explained the difference between vertical progress technology and globalization. Chapter 1 is concluded with the philosophy of enterprise. Chapter 2: ‘Party Like It’s 1999’ recalls Dot-com mania, which was a Silicon Valley gold rush. The entrepreneurs who stuck with Silicon Valley learned four lessons:

1. Incremental changes are the safe path;
 2. Lean and flexible;
 3. Improve on competition;
 4. Product is more important than sales.
- Chapter 3: ‘All Happy Companies Are Different’ is about the biggest economic lie told by economists who say that perfect competition leads to market equilibrium. Chapter 4: is ‘Ideology of Competition’ while Chapter 5 is ‘Last Mover Advantage’. Chapter 6 is ‘You Are Not a Lottery Ticket. The writer deals with the argument as to why people succeed; Is success achieved by luck or by hard work? Chapter 7 is ‘Follow the Money’; Chapter 8 is ‘Secrets’; Chapter 9 is ‘Foundations’; Chapter 10 is ‘The Mechanics of Mafia’; Chapter 11 is ‘If You Build It, Will They Come’; Chapter 12 is ‘Man and Machine’; Chapter 13 is ‘Selling Green’; Chapter 14 is ‘The Founder’s Paradox’; and Chapter 15 is Conclusion: ‘Extinction or Singularity. All chapters have illustrations to enable the readers to have a clear understanding.



Book Title	- The Ten Commandments for Business Failure
Translator	- Htin Zaw Hmu Thin
Publishing House	- Maha
Publication Date	- December 2021 (2 nd Edition)
Price	- K4,000

See Pwar Yay Kyahsone Hmu Atwet Pyinnyat Chet Hsai Chet (The Ten Commandments for Business Failure)

Foreword by Warren Buffett

THIS week I would like to introduce a book which is said to be dedicated to the millions of men and women past, present and future who make up the remarkable Coca-Cola family around the world. The writer of the original book is Donald R. Keough, who is the founder of Coca-Cola. He has been in the field of business for almost six decades and shared his experience. He discussed the Ten Commandments which will lead a businessman to failure if he follows them. He is so great an orator that world-famous billionaire Bill Gates always wants Donald to speak. Bill just loves listening to Don because Don talks such sense and offers such inspiration, said Don’s close friend called Warren Buffett, who wrote the foreword for the book of Donald.

In the introduction, Donald wrote, “Show me a failed business, and I will bet you with considerable assurance that their leaders

have violated more than one of the Ten Commandments. One step toward failure, unchecked, leads to another. So, view this little book as a cautionary tale. If you find yourself a disciple of one or more of these commandments, watch out. You are on your way to failure and taking your company with you.

Commandment One — Quit Taking Risks. The commandment starts with the quotation of Friedrich von Schiller which says, “He that is overcautious will accomplish little.” Commandment Two — Be Inflexible. This commandment is commenced with the quotation of Yogi Boroush, which says, “I prefer status quo.” Another one who is quoted is William Blade. He says, “He that never changes his opinion can be likened to the still water, which can breed such dirty mind as contempt and hatred.” Commandment Three — Isolate Yourself. Don quoted Socrates, who says, “Do not consider loyal

to you those who do not admonish you for your wrongdoings although they praise you for your words and deeds.” Commandment Four — Assume Infallibility. Command Five — Play the Game Close to the Foul Line. Commandment Six — Don’t Take Time to Think. Commandment Seven — Put All Your Faith in Experts and Outside Consultants. This is derived from a quotation from Jainism. Commandment Eight — Love Your Bureaucracy. Commandment Nine — Send Mixed Messages. The readers will read a quotation from Bernard Shaw, who says, “The problem of communication is that people think things are finished after communication.” Commandment Ten — Be Afraid of the Future.” This commandment quotes Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as saying, “Nothing great has ever been accomplished on this earth without enthusiasm.

SCI/ENVIRON WORLD

Robot plant grows, wilts on fate of UN nature talks

IT'S not always easy to make sense of the complex environmental diplomacy taking place at a UN summit billed as humanity's last hope to save nature.

It's not always easy to make sense of the complex environmental diplomacy taking place at a UN summit billed as humanity's last hope to save nature.

That's why a scientist and artist have teamed up to build a large, data-driven robotic plant that withers or flourishes depend-

ing on countries' policy commitments: a tangible demonstration of how human actions will impact the world's threatened species.

Called "ECONARIO," the 5.5-metre (18-foot) tall artwork took a year to build from recycled steel and is currently on display in Montreal Convention Centre, keeping policymakers at the COP15 meeting on their toes as they attempt to hammer out a deal to protect ecosystems.

Its creator, Dutch artist Thijs

Biersteker, told AFP the idea behind it is simple: "If the research does not reach us, then how can the research teach us?"

"Art reflects the time we're in, and it should reflect these important issues."

The plant feeds on data from the Biodiversity Intactness Index (BII) — an estimated percentage of the original number of species that remain, and their abundance in any given area, despite human impacts.—AFP



A 5.5-metre (18 feet) tall artwork took a year to build from recycled steel and is currently on display in Montreal Convention Centre, keeping policymakers at the COP15 meeting on their toes as they attempt to hammer out a nature deal. **PHOTO: AFP**

Scientists reveal key reasons for shrinking of Aral Sea



Rusted ships stranded on the desiccated seabed and ghost fishing villages are a sad reminder of the once thriving fishing industry. **PHOTO: WORLD BANK**

AFTER five years of joint scientific research, Chinese and Uzbek scientists have revealed key factors behind the shrinking of the Aral Sea over the past 20 years, including climate warming and a lack of water-saving technology in farmlands.

The Aral Sea, located between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, was once the world's

fourth-largest inland waterbody. It has shrunk remarkably since 1960 — with its surface area dwindling from 67,000 square kilometres in 1960 to just 6,000 square km in 2020.

Most findings considered farmland expansion as the main cause behind the contraction of the Aral Sea. "But since 2000, the farmland in the Aral Sea basin

has stopped expanding," said Chen Xi, director of the Research Centre for Ecology and Environment of Central Asia under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The latest research showed that rising temperatures, a lack of water-saving technology in farmlands, wetland expansion in the middle and lower reaches, and a large amount of water storage in upstream hydropower stations, had all accelerated the shrinkage of the Aral Sea in the past two decades, Chen said.

The dried shores produce salt dust, posing a serious threat to the local ecological environment and people's health. Scientists from both China and Uzbekistan put forward a roadmap for the ecological restoration of the dried lake areas. They divided the Aral Sea into various sections, which will be treated with tailored measures.—Xinhua

Nature at risk of 'cascading' species extinction: study

CLIMATE change and habitat degradation will cause extinctions that cascade through communities of animals and plants and drive dramatic biodiversity loss, according to new research published on Friday.

The study, in the journal Science Advances, found that chain-reaction extinctions are unavoidable and predicted Earth's ecosystems will see average biodiversity loss of between six and 10 per cent by 2050, depending on different carbon emissions scenarios.

By 2100, losses of animals and plants could rise to as much as 27 per cent, they found in their research that used virtual Earths to map out thousands of food webs.

The authors said their

modelling suggested that the biggest changes will come before mid-century, predicting "the bleakest time for natural communities might be imminent and that the next few decades will be decisive for the future of global biodiversity".

With life on Earth under threat from human destruction, overexploitation and pollution, scientists have warned that a million species are facing extinction in what many fear heralds the planet's sixth mass extinction event.

Climate change is expected to dramatically accelerate the losses, with impacts of warming ranging from the effects of extreme weather, to changes in behaviour and habitat.—AFP



Australia's koalas are increasingly threatened by wildfires, land-clearing, drought and disease. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Zimbabwe starts cloud seeding to augment rainfall

ZIMBABWE has started cloud seeding in an effort to increase rainfall in the current summer season, an official said Friday.

The country recently acquired the latest technology to aid in cloud seeding, and a test run was conducted on Wednesday in Mt-Hampden in the outskirts of the capital Harare, resulting in some rains falling, Prosper

Matondi, national coordinator for Climate Change Department in the Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry, told Xinhua.

He said the government has availed significant resources for cloud seeding in the current rain season, which usually runs from November to April. This year, his department is geared to carrying

out timely cloud seeding to minimize the effects of mid-season dry spells that normally occur during the month of January, Matondi said. "Traditionally, we always do cloud seeding to complement the natural rainfall each season, and we usually start just into the season to cloud seed based on the different conditions that obtain on a day-to-day basis.—Xinhua

HEALTH/PANDEMIC WORLD

Climate change fuelling cholera surge: WHO



"The factors which drive cholera are still the same: poverty, vulnerability and people who do not have access to clean water," Barboza said.
PHOTO: AFP

CLIMATE change is fuelling a global cholera upsurge, the WHO said Friday, warning the situation was compounded by vaccine shortages and will only worsen unless it is stamped out soon.

The World Health Organization is responding to cholera outbreaks in 29 countries, including Haiti, which has more than 1,200 confirmed cases, more than 14,000 suspected cases and more than 280 reported deaths.

This week, Haiti received almost 1.2 million doses of oral cholera vaccines.

But the WHO said that vac-

cine stockpiles were extremely low -- and that manufacturers were not enthusiastic about producing a vaccine chiefly aimed at some of the poorest countries in the world.

"If we don't control the outbreak now, the situation will get worse and worse," Philippe Barboza, the WHO's team lead on cholera, told reporters in Geneva.

He said fatality rates are extremely high for most of the countries for which the UN health agency has data.

Cholera is contracted from

a bacterium that is generally transmitted through contaminated food or water.

It causes diarrhoea and vomiting, and can be especially dangerous for young children.

"The factors which drive cholera are still the same: poverty, vulnerability and people who do not have access to clean water," Barboza said.

These are amplified by conflict, humanitarian crises and natural disasters, which reduce access to drinking water.

Vaccine shortage

"But this year, we have a factor which is even more important: the direct impact of climate change, with a succession of major droughts, unprecedented floods in certain parts of the world, and cyclones which have amplified most of these epidemics," he said.

Barboza said that while there had been big epidemics in certain countries before, they had not happened simultaneously, as now.

Although cholera can kill within hours, it can be treated with simple oral rehydration, and antibiotics for more severe cases.

But many people lack timely access to such treatment.—AFP

US CDC director warns vaccine misinformation one of biggest public health threats



Tens of thousands of children across the United States have already fallen behind in vaccinations for diseases like measles, chickenpox or polio, a trend that has been bubbling for years but accelerated during the pandemic, said a report of NBC News. **PHOTO: AFP**

VACCINE misinformation is among the biggest threats to public health, Director of the US Centres of Disease Control

and Prevention (CDC) Rochelle Walensky told NBC News in a recent interview.

Doctors' appointments missed during the first years of COVID-19 contributed to a dip in childhood vaccination rates, but it is the onslaught of vaccine disinformation that continues to put young kids at risk for preventable death and disease, said Walensky.

Just 42 per cent of kids under age 18 in the United States have had their flu shots this year, according to CDC data. The vast majority of kids ages 4 and younger, about 90 per cent, have not got the updated COVID-19 shot, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.—Xinhua

China conducts survey on population most susceptible to COVID-19 infections

CHINA is carrying out a survey to identify people most susceptible to COVID-19 infections, including the elderly and those with underlying diseases, an official with the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Thursday.

The action came in line with China's optimization of COVID-19 response, with the priority of work shifted from preventing infections to medical treatment and more efforts devoted to the protection of vulnerable groups and improvement of primary-level medical services. All localities have been required to have a clear understanding of the health conditions of people aged 65 and above, especially those with such diseases as coronary heart disease, stroke and hypertension, Nie Chunlei, head of the department of primary health of the NHC, told a press conference in Beijing.

The elderly can be classified according to their underlying diseases, age groups, and COVID-19 vaccination status following the survey, according to the official. "The move is aimed at providing classified services for elderly people suffering from underlying diseases so as to direct the limited medical resources to those most in need and improve the efficiency and quality of medical services," Nie said.—Xinhua



A medical worker injects COVID-19 vaccine for a senior citizen in Dongcheng District of Beijing, capital of China, 18 April 2022. Dongcheng District set exclusive venues for senior citizens to get COVID-19 vaccines. **PHOTO: XINHUA/JU HUANZONG**

Biden says COVID-19 cases rising across US

US President Joe Biden said on Thursday that COVID-19 cases "are rising" across the country.

The remarks, which Biden posted on Twitter, came as American families are getting together for the holidays.

The White House is resuming a programme to send COVID-19 testing kits to households that request them ahead of a potential winter surge.

A senior official of the Biden administration told reporters on Wednesday that "we're seeing COVID cases rising in parts of the country following Thanksgiving."

"While COVID isn't the disruptive force it once was, we know that the virus will circulate more quickly and easily as folks gather indoors for the winter holiday season," the official said. The seven-day average of weekly new COVID-19 cases, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reached more than 65,000 last week, an increase of nearly 50 per cent compared to the previous week.—Xinhua

ECONOMY
WORLD

EU studies ways to rival vast new US subsidies on greener tech

EU leaders on Thursday tasked the European Commission with coming up with ways to vie with huge US subsidies on greener tech such as electric vehicles to protect the bloc's industrial base.

"We will come forward in January with a state aid proposal that is not only faster and simpler, but even more predictable," commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said after a summit.

The European bloc is unsettled by parts of the multi-billion-dollar US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) which lavishes subsidies and tax cuts for US purchasers of electric vehicles -- if they "Buy American".

The bloc views the act as discriminatory against European car manufacturers, a breach of World Trade Organization rules, and a threat to investment in Europe. To compete -- and keep big industrial companies on its shores -- many EU countries want rules around national subsidies loosened and public investment in cleaner energy

boosted. European companies "need subsidies in the same way as those in the United States, and of the same magnitude, if you want to avoid a fragmentation of the European market," French President Emmanuel Macron said.

The EU leaders, in their summit conclusion text, stressed the need to safeguard "Europe's economic, industrial and technological base and of preserving the global level playing field".— AFP



American multinational automotive and clean energy company Tesla designs and manufactures electric vehicles, battery energy storage from home to grid-scale, solar panels and solar roof tiles, and related products and services. **PHOTO: AFP**

Macau casino giants pledge \$15 billion for 10-year licences



Visitors walk on the Cotai Strip, Macau's main gambling area, on Friday. **PHOTO: AFP**

SIX Macau casino firms agreed Friday to invest a total of 118.8 billion patacas (\$15 billion) after being granted 10-year operating licences, with the bulk of the money pledged to non-gaming projects.

The former Portuguese colony is the only place in China where casinos are allowed, and

bents all won licence renewals, beating back a surprise bid from a newcomer firm linked to Malaysian gaming and resorts giant Genting.

The casino firms promised to spend 108.7 billion patacas -- more than 90 per cent of their investment total -- on "exploring overseas customer markets and developing non-gaming projects", the government said Friday.

Such projects would cover the "convention and exhibition business, entertainment and performances, sports events, culture and art, health care, and themed amusement", the government added. Macau's leader Ho Iat-seng said he hoped the operators would contribute to Macau's development and "deliver on their corporate social responsibilities regarding protection of local employment and promotion of upward mobility of local workers".— AFP

Japan ruling camp OKs permanent NISA tax-free investment scheme

JAPAN'S ruling parties agreed Friday to make permanent a tax-free scheme for households to boost investment, in line with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's drive to encourage households with abundant cash to invest more.

The NISA reform plan aims to raise the ceiling on no-tax investments to 3.6 million yen (\$26,000) a year -- 1.2 million, triple the current limit, for investment trusts and 2.4 million yen, or double the current amount, for another "growth investment"

type that includes stocks.

Kishida, who is pushing for a "new form of capitalism", is seeking to "double" financial assets held by Japanese households. As of June, about half of some 2,000 trillion yen worth of household assets was held in cash.—Kyodo

EU agrees to grant Kosovo visitors visa-free travel

EUROPEAN Union member states and the EU parliament agreed Wednesday on a plan to allow visitors from Kosovo to enter the bloc without visas.

Statements from parliament and the European Council said new rules allowing two 90 day visits a year would go into effect before 1 January, 2024.

The long sought-after deal came on the same day as leaders from Kosovo -- which is recognised as a state by all but five EU members -- applied to join the bloc.

Kosovo is the last of the six countries in the Western Balkans to not have an EU visa waiver, and the only one whose membership bid has yet to be accepted. "This is a very important moment for its European future," said Dutch MEP Thijs Reuten, who led the parliament's team in the rules

negotiations.

"Finally, Kosovars will be able to travel to the EU for holidays, family visits and business trips without having to apply for a visa."

The European Council, which represents member states, said more steps remain but the rule would come into force with the new European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

"And in any case no later than 1 January 2024," the statement added. In Pristina, President Vjosa Osmani, Prime Minister Albin Kurti and parliamentary speaker Glauk Konjufca jointly signed an application for EU membership. This will be submitted to the Czech Republic, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency, but is seen as only the start of a potentially very long process.—AFP



Copenhagen Airport in Denmark. **PHOTO: AFP**

US probing GM’s autonomous driving unit after incidents

US authorities opened a preliminary investigation into General Motors’ Cruise autonomous driving programme following sudden stop incidents, according to a notice seen Friday by AFP.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is reviewing two types of incidents that result in Cruise vehicles “becoming unexpected roadway obstacles”, said the notice.

Cruise began offering first-in-the-nation commercial driverless taxi service to the public in part of San Francisco in June.

While there have been no fatalities from the incidents, the investigation comes on the heels of an ongoing NHTSA probe into Tesla’s “Auto-pilot” driver-assistance system.

The agency received three incident reports in which Cruise vehicles were struck by another auto from the rear following a “hard braking manoeuvre,” according to the notice. —AFP



Sudden stopping of Cruise taxis in San Francisco have prompted a federal review of the General Motors programme. **PHOTO: AFP**

Vietnamese commercial banks to slash interest rates as businesses struggle with lower orders

MANY commercial banks in Viet Nam pledged to lower lending interest rates by 0.5 to three percentage points to support businesses amid falling demand and orders, Viet Nam News Agency reported on Thursday.

A total of 16 banks had pledged to slash interest rates following the State Bank of Viet Nam’s decision to expand the credit room, the news agency reported.

BIDV lowers interest rate by 0.5 to 2.5 percentage points for lenders in priority groups including those affected by COVID-19, those working in export-import industries, foreign businesses, or individual lenders.

Vietcombank also slashes interest rate by one percentage point for 175,000 lenders with a total credit worth 500 trillion Vietnamese dong (21.1 billion US dollars).

The interest rates at banks are still high, the news agency said. The average rates range from 10 to 16 per cent per year for unsecured loans, and from 10 to 14 per cent per year for mortgage loans, the news agency reported.—Xinhua

Germany to cut the ribbon on first LNG terminal



LNG terminals allow for the import by sea of natural gas chilled to liquid form to facilitate transport. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

GERMANY will on Saturday inaugurate its first liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal, built in record time, as the country scrambles to adapt to life without Russian energy.

The rig in the North Sea port of Wilhelmshaven will be opened by Chancellor Olaf Scholz at a ceremony on board a specialist vessel known as an FSRU, named the Hoegh Esperanza.

Germany plans to open four more government-funded LNG terminals over the next few months as well as a private terminal in the port of Lubmin.

Together, the terminals could deliver 30 billion cubic metres of gas a year from next year, or a third of Germany’s total gas needs -- if Berlin can find enough LNG to service them.

LNG terminals allow for the import by sea of natural gas which has been chilled and turned into a liquid to make it easier to transport.

The FRSU stocks the LNG, then turns it back into a ready-to-use gas. —AFP

Goldman Sachs to cut up to 8% of staff: reports

GOLDMAN Sachs could cut up to eight per cent of its staff, or around 4,000 jobs, according to reports Friday, as the financial giant eyes sluggish global growth in 2023.

The job cuts are expected early in 2023, according to reports in Semafor and CNBC that said the final figure could ultimately be smaller than eight per cent.

Goldman Sachs typically trims about one to five per cent of headcount each year, targeting underperforming staff.

This year’s culling will be deeper than usual in light of the uncertain economic outlook and the growth in Goldman’s staffing in recent years, a person familiar with the matter told AFP. —AFP



Goldman Sachs could cut as much as eight per cent of its staff as the investment bank eyes a slowing economy. **PHOTO: AFP**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL BLESSING VOY.NO. (2217S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL BLESSING VOY.NO. (2217S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-12-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V RICH SEAWAY VOY.NO. (040N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V RICH SEAWAY VOY.NO. (040N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-12-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

China holds Central Economic Work Conference to plan for 2023

THE annual Central Economic Work Conference was held in Beijing from Thursday to Friday as Chinese leaders decided priorities for the economic work in 2023.

Delivering an important speech at the conference, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, reviewed the country's economic work in 2022, analyzed the current economic situation and arranged next year's economic work.

Li Keqiang, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Han Zheng, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi attended the conference.

It was noted at the meeting that an overall recovery and improvement is expected in the country's economic performance in the next year, and that a firm confidence is necessary to do a good job in the economic work.

The meeting demanded making economic stability a top priority and pursuing steady progress while ensuring economic stability for the next year.

Proactive fiscal policy and prudent monetary policy will continue to be implemented next year. Meanwhile, efforts will be made to intensify macro-control and coordinate various policies to form synergy for high-quality development, according to the meeting.—Xinhua



This 7 November 2014 photo shows the landscape of Yujiapu Finance District at Binhai New Area in Tianjin's Pilot Free Trade Zone. PHOTO: YUE YUEWEI / XINHUA

Guam serves as Pacific “springboard” for US forces: commander

A 16-year-old plan to transfer a significant number of US Marines from the Japanese island prefecture of Okinawa to the US territory of Guam continues to make sense strategically and politically, a US military commander said. Joint Region Marianas Commander Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson, in a recent interview with Kyodo News and other media, said Guam plays an important role as “springboard” for US forces to rapidly respond, by air or sea, to any military crisis in the region amid looming threats from China and North Korea. “It’s essentially equidis-



This August 2018 file aerial photo shows preliminary construction work off Henoko, in Nago city, Okinawa prefecture, Japan, where the Japanese government plans to relocate a US air base from one area of Okinawa's main island to another. PHOTO: KOJI HARADA/KYODO /FILE

tant between Tokyo, Manila and Port Moresby,” he said.

Nicholson said the ability to quickly deploy troops and equipment is the current focus in the so-called second island chain, a strategic defence line formed by Japanese islands south of Tokyo and the Mariana Islands. In June, the United States test-fired a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, and conducted Patriot missile live-fire exercise during the US-only Valiant Shield exercise to demonstrate its capabilities in multiple locations across Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and Palau.—Kyodo

UN launches 10-year survival plan for indigenous languages at risk

THE United Nations on Friday launched the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to help them survive, and protect them from extinction.

Preserving their languages is “not only important for them, but for all humanity,” said UN General Assembly President Csaba Korosi. “With each indigenous language that goes extinct, so too goes the thought: the culture, tradition and knowledge it bears. That matters because we are in dire need of a radical transformation in the way we relate to our environment,” he said.—Xinhua

RUSSIA - UKRAINE CONFLICT

Putin to visit Belarus Monday for talks with Lukashenko



An estimated 30,000 Russian troops, supported by tanks, aircraft and the advanced S-400 air defence system, pictured on 9 February 2022, are involved in exercises in Belarus, near Ukraine's border. PHOTO: RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY/AFP/FILE

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin will visit Belarus on Monday for talks with his counterpart and ally Alexander Lukashenko, the Belarus leader's office said.

The Belarus presidency said Friday the pair will hold discussions at the Independence Palace, Lukashenko's office, in Minsk during Putin's “working visit”. The visit comes 10 months into Russia's offensive in Ukraine, which was launched from several directions, including Belarusian territory.

Minsk said the pair will hold one-on-one talks as well as wider negotiations with their ministers on “Belarusian-Russian integration”.

Moscow and Minsk have committed to a wide range of programmes for deeper economic and defence cooperation.

The statement said the “presidents will also give priority to security issues and exchange views on the situation in the region and the world” but did not mention Ukraine. —AFP

‘Explosions’ in Kyiv, strikes in other Ukraine regions: officials

A fresh barrage of Russian strikes hit several cities including the Ukraine capital Kyiv early Friday, officials said, leading to water and power cuts in many areas. “Due to damage to energy infrastructure, there are interruptions to the water supplies in all areas of the capital,” Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko said on social media, after telling residents that “metro traffic is temporarily stopped on all lines.”—AFP

US to refill oil reserve after huge Biden release



The Biden administration announced plans to refill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, citing the drop in crude prices. **PHOTO: BRANDON BELL /AFP/FILE**

THE US Energy Department announced on Friday a plan to add oil back to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) after a historically large release undertaken by the Biden administration. The policy marks a significant shift after President Biden authorized the biggest-ever release earlier this year following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which sent oil prices to US\$120

a barrel. The plan represents “an opportunity to secure a good deal for American taxpayers by repurchasing oil at a lower price than the \$96 per barrel average price it was sold for, as well as to strengthen energy security,” the Department of Energy (DOE) said in a news release. The agency said it will buy up to three million barrels of

oil under a pilot programme designed to attract sellers who can lock in prices. The SPR currently holds 382 million barrels of crude, down some 216 million barrels from its level before September 2021. A Biden official said in October that the administration planned to purchase oil to refill the reserve as soon as prices hit around US\$67-72 a barrel.—AFP

Jordan arrests 44 after deadly fuel protests



Soldiers have been deployed due to the state of emergency but Revollar said they need to understand that their role is simply to support police. **PHOTO: PERUVIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE/AFP**

JORDAN has arrested dozens of people accused of involvement in protests against rising fuel prices in which a senior police officer was gunned down, the country’s security agency said Saturday.

Colonel Abdul Razzaq Dalabeh, the deputy police chief of Maan province, died of a gunshot to the head in the town of Al-Husseiniya on Thursday while confronting what the authorities called “riots”.

“Forty-four people who participated in the riots in a number of regions in the kingdom have been arrested and they will be brought before the courts,” the Public Security Directorate said in a statement. It said reinforcements had been sent to the provinces, and accused “vandals and outlaws” of being behind violence in Maan, in the country’s south. Jordan’s King Abdullah II warned on Friday that “anyone who raises a weapon against the state will be dealt with firmly”. Interior Minister Mazen al-Faraya, also on Friday, said “the security services are working to arrest the perpetrator and bring him to justice as soon as possible”. Two other policemen were shot and wounded, also in Al-Husseiniya, the security directorate said.—AFP

Tunisians to vote on toothless parliament in poll shunned by opposition

TUNISIA holds a lacklustre election on Saturday for a parliament with virtually no power, the final pillar in President Kais Saied’s political overhaul in the birthplace of the Arab Spring. The vote comes after three weeks of barely noticeable campaigning, with few posters in the streets and no serious debate among a public largely preoccupied with pressing financial concerns. Opposition political groups in the North African country have called for a boycott, saying the poll is part of a “coup” against the only democracy to have emerged from the 2011 wave of uprisings across the region. Last year, after months

of political deadlock and economic crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, Saied suspended parliament and sent tanks to surround it in a dramatic power grab more than a decade after a popular revolution unseated dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Saied, a former law professor, has since pushed through a new constitution giving the presidency almost unrestrained powers and laying the ground for a 161-seat rubber-stamp legislature. His moves were initially supported by many Tunisians tired of the messy and corrupt democratic system in the post-Ben Ali era.— AFP



The vote comes after a barely noticeable campaign, with the public largely preoccupied by pressing financial concerns. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Almost 10,000 trapped amid Colombia rebel “armed strike”

REBELS in Colombia who have launched an armed strike have essentially trapped thousands of people in the northwest, authorities said Friday. Around 9,800 people have been forced to confine themselves due to the “indefinite armed strike” imposed in Choco department by the ELN guerrillas amid ongoing peace negotiations with the government, the Ombudsman’s Office reported. “Following the announcement of an armed strike” by the rebels in the department of Choco, “at least 9,800 people from the municipalities of Istmina, Medio San Juan, Sipi and Novita” are “in indefinite confinement”, with restrictions on “mobility”, “daily activities”, “transportation of groceries and food as well as access to health services”, the ombudsman’s office said in a statement. In a document released on Wednesday, the National Liberation Army (ELN) prohibited circulation and activity in that region, alleging the murder on Monday of “young Santiago Caceres” at the hands of “paramilitaries” in “collusion” with government forces.—AFP



Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

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



The winning teams of the 2022 Myanmar Hockey Federation National Freestyle Hockey Tournament pose for a group photo with officials. PHOTO: THAW GYI

MHF Cup National Hockey Tournament held

FLY Eagle won the 2022 Myanmar Hockey Federation National Hockey Tournament final at the Thein Pyu Hockey Stadium in Yangon yesterday evening. Six teams competed in the tournament, playing in a round-robin format, and the two teams with the most points played in the finals.

After the group matches, the Smart team won four games, and one draw out of five games, garnering 13 points and winning first

place in the group while the Fly Eagle team won three games, and two draws in five games, finishing second in the group with 11 points. Both teams reached the Final with the most points. In the final, the Fly Eagle team and the Smart team played a competitive game, and the Fly Eagle team won by 4-3.

After the final, an awarding ceremony was held and officials presented cash prizes plus individual awards to the second-run-

ners-up Tong Tah Team, first-runners-up Smart Team and Champion Team Fly Eagle.

Kyaw Moe Naing (Fly Eagle Team) got the best goalie award, Ko Wai (Smart Team) garnered the best defender award, Thet Ko Ko (Tong Tah Team) earned the midfielder award, and Zaw Lin Aung (Fly Eagle Team) the forward award. The best player award goes to Nyein Chan Aung (Smart Team). — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022

Croatia beat Morocco to finish third at World Cup

CROATIA defeated Morocco 2-1 in the World Cup third place play-off on Saturday, with Mislav Orsic curling home the winner. Josko Gvardiol, one of the stars of the tournament in Qatar, headed Croatia into the lead in the seventh minute at the Khalifa International Stadium but Achraf Dari brought Morocco level right away.

Orsic's terrific curling strike late in the first half ensured Croatia took home the bronze medal, the 11th World Cup in a row a European team has finished third.

Morocco, the first World Cup semi-finalists in history, had signalled their intent with a spirited

display against 2018 runners-up Croatia in their opening game in Qatar. The rematch was nothing like the cagey 0-0 draw in the group stage, with Morocco goalkeeper Yassine Bounou dangerously close to passing the ball into his own net early on.

Croatia soon surged in front from a well-rehearsed free-kick as Ivan Perisic nodded Lovro Majer's clip into the box back towards a diving Gvardiol, who planted his header into the corner.

But Morocco hit back two minutes later when Hakim Ziyech's free-kick looped up off the head of Majer, allowing Dari to head past Dominik Livakovic. —AFP



Croatia's players celebrate after winning the Qatar 2022 World Cup third place play-off football match between Croatia and Morocco at Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on 17 December 2022. PHOTO:AFP

FIFA World Cup 2022

Final

21:30 MST, 18 December 2022

Argentina

vs

France

