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.

Over 150,000 homegrown tourists visit Bagan-NyaungU ancient cultural site during December Christmas holidays

Pilgrims who came from various areas of the country pay visit to Htilominlo Pagoda in Bagan-NyaungU area during December Christmas holidays.

A large number of domestic pilgrims are coming to the religious buildings in the ancient cultural land of Bagan-NyaungU area in Mandalay Region during the Christmas holidays in December, according to the Secretary of Lawkananda Tooth Relic Pagoda Board of Trustees U Htin Lin Oo.

Ancient pagodas such as three Buddha Tooth Relic pagodas in Bagan-NyaungU area, Tantkyi mountain tooth relic pagoda in Pakokku Township, Maha Hngetpyittaung Pagoda, and other religious edifices were visited by domestic travellers until the car parks were difficult during the Christmas holidays.

Ancient monuments, religious edifices and cultural heritages are very attractive to both local and international travellers even though it is not festival period, said Ma Khin Thuza from a flock of pilgrims from Yangon to Bagan region.

According to officials of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Bagan Branch), more than 150,000 pilgrims visited Bagan during the Christmas holidays.

Along the Kyaukpadaung-NyaungU road in the Bagan ancient cultural area, the traditional huts are open to sell jaggery, groundnut oil and sesame oil during the period. Local people can easily earn incomes in giving transport services with the use of tuk-tuks, e-bike and pony carts to the travellers whereas restaurants and local tour guides are well employed.—Ko Kyemon/KZW

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Five National Objectives of Diamond Jubilee Independence Day

1. To ensure cementing the discipline-flourishing genuine multiparty democratic system and build the Union based on democracy and federalism;
2. To utmost strive for ensuring prosperity of the nation and food sufficiency as national work processes;
3. To build a better State and socioeconomic life in accord with the theme "Keep Moving Forward to Achieve Our Goal" focusing on interests of the State and ethnic national people;
4. To initiate national solidarity and peace of the Union with a firm vow;
5. To successfully hold the free and fair multiparty democratic general elections and emerge an electoral system in which all ethnic nationals would participate proportionately.

Graduate officers from 15th to 19th Intakes of DSA hold sixth respect-paying ceremony

THE respect-paying ceremony of graduation officers from the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th Intakes of the Defence Services Academy took place at Anawrahta Hall of Yangon Command Headquarters yesterday morning, attended by graduate officers from the 15th to 19th intakes of DSA and faculty members.

On behalf of the graduation officers, a graduation officer from No 19 Intake of the DSA explained the purpose of holding the respect-paying ceremony.

A graduation officer from the No 15 Intake read a message of paying respect sent by Pro Tem President U Myint Swe of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar from the 15th Intake of DSA to faculty members and a graduation officer of No 19 Intake read a message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing from the 19th Intake of DSA to the faculty members.

Those graduation officers paid respect to the faculty members. On behalf of the faculty members, a veteran teacher spoke words of advice. The graduation officers presented gifts to faculty members.

Officials of the organizing committee presented certificates of honour to graduation officers and well-wishers, and they all posed for group photos together with faculty members.—MNA

5 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 25 December, total figure rises to 633,612

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,612** after **five** new cases were reported on 25 December 2022 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **608,212**, including **10** new recoveries.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country reached **19,490** on 25-12-2022 with one new death reported from the pandemic.

The country has vaccinated **30,837,673** people aged 18 and above for COVID-19 vaccines and **6,796,975** people aged under 18 till 24 December 2022.

Status of COVID-19 vaccination (as of 24 December 2022)

People aged 18 and above who received vaccines	**30,837,673**
People under 18 years old who received vaccines	**6,796,975**

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

Illegal consumer goods, vehicles seized

A combined team under the supervision of Customs Department conducted inspection at Myanmar Industrial Port container checkpoint on 23 December. They seized two kinds of goods including 1,000 Thermos bottles estimated at K5,975,000 from a container, which were more than Import Declaration. Moreover, officials nabbed two kinds of goods including 3,800 shopping bags worth K5.04 million and a Nissan Diesel vehicle worth K 4 million from near the Ywathagyi toll gate, Myawady-Hpa-an-Yangon Highway No 2. The total seizure amounted to K 51,015,000 and the action was taken under the Customs Procedure.

Shopping bags and goods nabbed from Nissan truck at Ywathagyi Tollgate on Myawady-Hpa-an-Yangon Highway No 2 on 23 December.

Thermo bottles seized at Myanmar Industrial Port Container Checkpoint on 23 December.

Similarly, a combined team under the supervision of the Illegal Trade Eradication Special Force of Kayin State performed inspection at Myawady trade zone. They seized 21,570 pairs of PE slippers worth K4,550,770 carried more than ID and action was taken under the Customs Procedures.

Therefore, value of seizures amounted to K55,565,770 on 23 December, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee.—MNA

The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increasing of death rate based on the disease.

More physical and active participation of people seen in nation-building tasks

"Nation-rebuilding endeavours cannot be sufficiently carried out only with the government supporters. Today, the concept of physical and active participation in any endeavours, be it nation building or defence, together with the people of the country is becoming more evident day by day."

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by General Aung San at the All Burma Association of Fire Brigades in June 1947)

Myanmar Traditional Shinbyu, Novitiation Ceremony.
PHOTO BY THAN NAING OO (NGAPHE)

Ceremony for growing Japanese cherry blossom saplings donated by JMCPA held

THE planting ceremony of Japanese cherry saplings donated by the Japan-Myanmar Cultural Promotion Association took place in the precinct of Maravijaya Buddha Image in Dekkhinathiri Township, Nay Pyi Daw Union Territory yesterday morning.

Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko, deputy ministers U Kyaw Myo Htut, U Aye Tun and Dr Moe Zaw Htun, senior military officers, directors-general and officials attended the ceremony, and Mr Hiromichi Watanabe, member of House of Representatives of Japan, JMCPA Chairman Mr Fumio Usui and officials were also present at the occasion.

Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko delivers speech at the ceremony to grow Japanese cherry blossom saplings in Dekkhinathiri Township on 25 December.

Union Minister U Ko Ko showed off his hope that the JMCPA-donated seedlings planted in the precinct of Maravijaya Buddha Image will provide shade and peace of mind to pilgrims upon completion of building the Buddha Image. He expressed his firm belief that it will be a monument between Myanmar and Japan. The Myanmar government places an emphasis on friendly relations with the Japanese government and its people. Moreover, Myanmar wishes for the long-term existence of friendly relations and mutual cooperation between Myanmar and Japan in the future, he added.

Afterwards, Mr Hiromichi Watanabe gave his remark.

Then, the Union minister, Mr Hiromichi Watanabe, JMCPA Chairman Mr Fumio Usui and officials planted the Japanese cherry blossom seedlings and fed fertilizer.

Next, Union Minister U Ko Ko, Mr Hiromichi Watanabe and participants took a documentary photo together and viewed round progress of building Maravijaya Buddha Image. — MNA/CT

SAC Chairman's Trophy Inter-Ministry U-25 Men's Football Tourney's quarter-finals continue marking Diamond Jubilee Independence Day

Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win enjoys quarter-final match of SAC Chairman's Trophy Inter-Ministry U-25 men's football tourney at Wunna Theikdi Stadium on 25 December.

IN commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day, the State Administration Council Chairman's Trophy Inter-Ministry Under-25 Men's Football Tournament, organized by the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, continued quarter-finals at Nay Pyi Taw Wunna Theikdi Stadium yesterday afternoon.

The tourney aims to improve the Myanmar's football sports and produce many outstanding footballers.

In the quarter-finals, the Ministry of Home Affairs team beat the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement team 2-1, and the Sports and Youth Affairs Ministry team trounced the Ministry of Health team 6-1 at 5:30 pm.

Among the spectators were Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win, Deputy Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Myo Hlaing, Tatmadaw officers, officials and employees from relevant departments, Myanmar Football Federation officials and football fans in the quarter-finals.

The second day quarter-finals will be continued today with the matches of the Ministry of Planning and Finance team vs the Ministry of Construction team at 3 pm and Ministry of Commerce team vs the Ministry of Border Affairs team at 5:30 pm.

Spectators can watch the matches free of admission. —MNA/ KZL

The fourth point of the five-point roadmap shapes national causes and political causes

The fourth point of the five-point roadmap was inserted that "Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement." These will shape national causes and political causes. To do so, the peace process must be adopted.

(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Central Committee Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the 7th Anniversary of Signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on 15 October 2022)

Christian churches in Yangon decorated with colourful electric lights

AS 25 December is Christmas Day, it is the birthday of the Jesus Christ for Christians of all ethnicities.

On the day of the commemoration, Christian people join the prayer services at Christian churches all over Myanmar with peace of mind.

In the churches of Yangon, the Christian people gathered and came to the relevant churches and worshiped in celebration of Christ's birthday, enjoyed prayer and sang hymns.

At night, as a commemoration of Christmas, churches are decorated with colourful electric lights, as well as parks, hotels, shopping mall and buildings are also illuminated with colourful electric lights to commemorate the X'mas Day.—Ko Ko Zaw (MNA)/KZL

Ministers' office decorated with lights is seen on 25 December 2022.
PHOTOS: ZAW MIN LATT

Christmas lights illuminate St. Mary's Cathedral in Yangon on 25 December 2022.

Maha Bandoola Park decorated with lights is seen on 25 December 2022.

Holy Trinity Cathedral in downtown Yangon is decorated with Christmas lights on 25 December 2022.

Number of mountaineers leading to Mt Popa on the rise in December

Mountaineers seen on trek to Mount Popa in December.

POPA Mountain is located about 11 miles northeast of Kyaukpadaung Township, NyaungU District, Mandalay Region. A large number of travellers participate in the climbing event every December. On 25 December, a large number of mountaineers from many large and small towns in the country climbed Mount Popa.

More than 2,000 climbers participated in the Papa mountain climbing, from the surrounding towns of Kyaukpadaung such as Magway, Yenangyoung, Chauk, Sale, Taungtha, Meiktila, Ngathayauk, NyaungU, Bagan, Welaung, Popalwin Village, Kanzatkon Village and Inchaung Village. Most of the climbers enjoyed the mountaineering activities together with flocks of friends and families. Some climbers join the mountaineering to the Mount Popa the whole December.

Local people from the Popa area sell purified water, fast foods, various fruits, and various fried meals along the hiking route to the Mount Popa. According to the local vendors, the largest number of climbers may arrive there during the period from 10 to 31 December.

Mountaineers can climb 4,300 feet high Nwalaboh Hill, 4,600 feet high Hsaymon Hill, 4,755 feet high Sapabon Hill and 4,981 feet high Hmanpya Hill which is the height of Mt Popa. A local expected more than 10,000 mountaineers will join the scaling the mountains in December.—Ko Kyemon/TS

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

CB Bank sets K2,865 for foreign income inward remittance with additional contribution of K40 per dollar

THE government of Myanmar provides K30 per dollar (an equivalent amount of foreign currency) in the salary remitted by Myanmar citizens abroad. The authorized CB Bank will add another K10 to this government's contribution of K30. When their family members withdraw cash, they will get an additional contribution of K40 per dollar and a dollar exchange rate is set at K2,865, the CB Bank notified.

Those additional contributions cover the foreign income by Myanmar citizens including seamen and Myanmar migrant workers. Only the remittance of foreign salary through the authorized banks is entitled to this.

CB Bank located at the corner of Maha Bandoola Road and Theinbyu Road in Yangon.

In addition to the additional contributions and commission, they are exempted from tax on foreign income inward remittance under the Union Tax Law.

The dollar over-the-counter market rate is estimated at over K2,800. Transaction is made when the customers and sellers agree on the price. The Central Bank of Myanmar notified on 28 October 2022 about this additional contribution by the government for salary remittance of Myanmar citizens abroad from 1 November. The authorized banks for foreign exchange (KBZ Bank, CB Bank and UAB Bank) are adding the additional support fund of the government, as per the respective statements.

This move is to support and encourage the Myanmar workers abroad who are earning foreign earnings for the State.—TWA/EMM

CMP garment exports bag over $3.7 bln in eight months

THE export value of Myanmar's garment sector working on a Cutting, Making and Packaging basis exceeded US$3.7 billion in the eight months of the 2022-2023 FY, according to the statistics released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The export volume in the September-November period fell owing to a slump in demand by foreign trade partners. During the April-August period, the export of garments grew, as per the Ministry of Commerce's data.

The statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization under the Ministry of Planning and Finance indicated that garment export was recorded the highest of $656 million in July.

In the past eight months of the current FY 2022-2023, exports of the manufacturing sector including garments amounted to $7.89 billion.

Japan, China, the Republic of Korea and European countries primarily order the garments on a CMP basis, according to Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association.

Prior to the pandemic, Myanmar's garment sector contributed to the country's economy a lot. Garment exports generated an earning of about $5 billion in the 2018-2019 FY.—TWA/ EMM

Female and male workers at garment factory working on a CMP basis.

Over 500 import/export licences granted at Muse border trade zone in December

Cargo trucks seen at Muse 105th-mile border trade zone.

THE Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce has been issuing import/export licences at the border trade zone and between 1 and 18 December, a total of 514 licences were granted at the Muse trade zone for Sino-Myanmar cross-border trade, the Ministry of Commerce stated.

Import/export and related business licences can be done through Myanmar Tradenet 2.0 and three licences for exports and 511 for imports of machines and parts, tangerine, stationery, pesticide and other commodities were issued in those days.

To facilitate the National Single Window system, have a single entry in trading and digitize the licensing system and related businesses, the Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce has officially started the Myanmar Tradenet 2.0 portal from 1 November 2020.

The trade value at Muse 105th-mile trade zone totalled U$S1.535 billion, comprising exports worth $1.35 billion and imports worth $182.493 million.—TWA/EMM

LOCAL BUSINESS

Bell pepper price sees drastic decline within one month

Chilli pepper bags entering Bayintnaung Wholesale Market.

THE price of bell pepper from Sinphyukyun area drastically dropped within one month. They entered Yangon wholesale market at K29,000 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes) on 29 November and then, the price fell to K13,000 per viss on 24 December, Ko Hla Han, a chilli pepper depot owner at Bayintnaung Wholesale Market, told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

The price gradually decreased from K26,000-K28,000 per viss on 10 December to K13,000 on 24 December.

The price of bell pepper processed in cold storage reached a record high of K31,000 per viss in Yangon market prior to the supply of new bell peppers from Sinphyukyun area. Market volatility with fresh supply is a natural occurrence in the market, Ko Khin Htwe, who sends chilli pepper to countryside outside Yangon, shared his opinion on the market with the GNLM in an interview. It is also the time when traders are filling inventory.

The prices moved in the range between K12,500 and K13,000 per viss depending on the producing areas. Yangon market sees an entry of Chinese bell peppers through Thailand border areas.

The prices of new chilli pepper stood at K12,500 per viss for Moehtaung variety, K18,000 for red long chilli pepper, K14,000 for long chilli pepper from Shan State and K16,000 for Panye long chilli pepper.

There are small stocks of old long chilli peppers worth K20,000 in the market yet the market is slow moving. Normally, chilli pepper prices (Moehtaung variety and long ones) are priced at K3,000-K4,000 per viss, while bell peppers are worth K5,000 per viss. At present, the price of bell peppers is relatively low compared to those of the long chilli pepper, said a trader.

The price of the chilli pepper from delta region was only K4,000 per viss in summer 2022. However, the traders kept them in their hands and stored them in cold storage. They are resold at K20,000 per viss after six-month storage. After deducting the warehouse cost of K500 per viss, traders make profit of K15,000 per viss. The traders made handsome profit this year amid the record prices.—TWA/EMM

Fuel prices on uptick trends

FUEL prices in the market have increased gradually, according to the source.

On 13 December, the prices stood at K1,795 per litre for 92 Octane, K1,885 for 95 Octane, K2,130 for diesel and K2,205 for premium diesel in the Yangon market.

Then, the market showed a gradual price rise and it was K1,970 per litre of 92 Octane, K2,055 per litre of 95 Octane, K2,300 per litre of diesel and K2,380 per litre of premium diesel on 24 December.

Therefore, the prices of fuel are increasing by about K170 per litre within two weeks.

The prices are on the rise again as the prices of Singapore-based Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) become higher, according to the Supervisory Committee on Import, Storage and Distribution of Fuel Oil.

By the end of August, the fuel prices reached their highest at K2,605 per litre for 92 Octane, K2,670 for 95 Octane, K3,245 for diesel and K3,330 for premium diesel.

The committee conducts measures to ensure fuel shortages and price stability. Moreover, the Petroleum Products Supervision and Inspection Department released the daily fuel reference prices under the guidance of the Supervisory Committee on Import, Storage and Distribution of Fuel Oil.

The reference rate in Yangon Region is set on the MOPS' price assessment, shipping cost, premium insurance, tax, other general cost and reasonable profit rate. The rates for regions and states are evaluated after adding the transport costs and the retail reference rates are daily covered in the state-run newspapers and posted on the media and official website and Facebook page of the department daily starting from 4 May.

Therefore, the fuel oil stations that sell oil at higher prices than the reference prices are scrutinized and taken action under Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law 2017.

As 90 per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally, the oil prices in the market are changing depending on the international market prices.

The government maintains the situation to be stable prices that benefit the oil importers, sellers and consumers and distributes at the fairer prices compared to the prices of regional countries.

Some countries levied higher tax rates and hiked oil prices than Myanmar. However, Malaysia's oil sector receives government subsidies and the prices are about 60 per cent cheaper than that of Myanmar. Every country lays down different patterns of policy to fix the oil prices. Myanmar also poses only a lower tax rate on fuel oil and strives for energy consumers to buy the oil at a cheaper rate.—NN/KTZH

A vehicle being fuelled at filling station.

Peanut prices on the rise again for high local/foreign demand

THE peanut price is increasing again for high local and foreign demand, according to the Mandalay Wholesale Centre.

Currently, the entry of peanuts to the Mandalay wholesale centre is falling and the groundnut and groundnut Japan demand from China is high.

Moreover, the farmers buy the peanut species to grow on loam island and groundnut from oil mills.

In last week of November, there was no peanut export and the sales to oil mills were also slack and there was cooling in prices. In Mandalay market, new S1 peanut (Anyar) was set at K5,200 per viss, K 5,750 for new S1 peanut (red), K4,700 for S1 groundnut and K5,400 for M groundnut.

Currently, the S1 groundnut and M groundnut prices remain unchanged and the new S1 peanut (Anyar) is priced at K5,700 per viss and new S1 peanut (red) K6,500 per viss.

Although the prices are on the rise, they cannot reach the highest prices of September.

In early September, the highest price of S1 peanut was K7,200 per viss while K7,000 for red peanut and K6,800 for S1 groundnut.

In April, the world's top palm oil exporter Indonesia, which is one of the main oil suppliers to Myanmar, declared an export ban on cooking oil export to reduce the domestic shortage. Consequently, Myanmar's Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce temporarily suspended exports of oil crops (peanut and sesame) from 9 May to have oil self-sufficiency. The Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce announced on 5 July when exports of Myanmar's edible oil crops resumed as the world's top palm oil exporters returned to normalcy. Currently, the country exported 11,000 kilos of peanut via sea and land border earning $12.364 million until 16 December of this FY.—NN/KTZH

LOCAL BUSINESS

Yangon Region to cover over 120,000 acres of green gram, over 28,000 acres of summer paddy under State Economic Development Fund

MORE than 120,000 acres of green gram and 28,000 acres of summer paddy in Yangon Region will be grown under the State Economic Development Fund (SEDF), according to handover ceremony of payment-in-kind held on 23 December in Yangon Region to expand the acreage of green gram and summer paddy.

The State will provide payment-in-kind (seeds, fertilizer and diesel) instead of cash and the summer paddy growers will be entitled to receive K200,000 worth of payment-in-kind per acre of summer paddy and K120,000 worth of payment-in-kind per acre of winter green gram. Except from one per cent of service fee, those payments-in-kind are provided free of interest. At the harvest time, those crops which are equivalent to the payment-in-kind have to be returned at the prevailing market price and the growers can freely sell the remaining.

Those collected money will go to further contribution plans in the coming crop seasons. This project is to provide sustainable agriculture. Those participants in the projects are encouraged to exert concerted efforts to achieve this, officials said.

Those participating growers in Thanlyin District and Taikkyi District received the payment-in-kind under the SEDF on 25 December at the handover events held at No 1 BEHS Thanlyin and Shwegyobyu Hall in Takkyi Township respectively.

The permanent secretary U Khant Zaw, director-general Dr Ye Tint Tun of the Department of Agriculture and director-general U Aung Thura of the Cooperative Department elaborated on the matters regarding the objectives behind the contribution project of the green gram and summer paddy, needs for cooperation of the stakeholders including growers' groups, businesspersons for agricultural inputs, millers and traders in the supply-chain, crop yield promotion, production of quality crops, strong market access, requirements to follow growing methods, strong points of cooperatives in agriculture sector and assisting in foundation of cooperatives.—MNA/EMM

A power-tiller being operated in farmland as preparing for cultivation of summer paddy.

Price of millet grains increase to double against last year

THE millet grains from various regions are abundantly flowing into the Mandalay market. The price has increased to double this year compared to last year's rate, according to traders from Mandalay city.

The millets are utilized in making medicine and brewing beer or alcohol. That being so, the demand is pretty high in both domestic and foreign markets. The yield is high this year on account of the favourable weather this year. The price rose from K30,000 to K61,000 per three-basket bag during the harvest this year, said Soe Win Myint, an owner of Soe Win Myint depot from Mandalay.

Millet plants thriving in farmland to double production.

"Millets are included in grains or species of cereal grasses. They are foreign species grown in Myanmar. The millets are widely grown in the central Myanmar regions and the growers reap success in this as they are climate resilient crops. They are highly demanded by brewers in Mongmit, Mogok and Monglon areas. They are exported to China in winter. The strong demand keeps the price high. They are commonly grown once a year. The price remains high and there is a probability of price rise this year," he continued.

Large supplies of millets from Kyaukse, Thedaw, Wundwin, Taungtha, Myingyan, Mahlaing and Monywa areas are entering the Mandalay. The millets traders are doing a roaring trade for now.

They are grown in June and July and harvested in October and November. They are commonly found in Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. There is no need to use pesticide and fertilizer so it is the cheapest cost-effective crop to be grown.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)/ EMM

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OPINION

Warmly welcome Youth and Literary Arts Exhibition

AS a gesture of hailing the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day which falls on 4 January 2023, a plan is underway to host the Youth and Literary Arts Exhibition at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-II in Nay Pyi Taw from 26 to 28 December this year.

In the previous year, the Youth and Literature Festival took place at the Wunna Theikdi Stadium of Nay Pyi Taw in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee Union Day. This year, the festival was renamed into a new title as the Youth and Literary Arts Exhibition to be more significant and profound, and it will be organized on a grand scale at the national level, creating chances for student youths and staff families to be able to participate in it.

> Hence, every citizen needs to heartily welcome the presentation and theme of the national-level exhibition for giving various items of knowledge about youth and youth affairs, health, social, education and literary topics so as to forge the nationalistic spirit and enhance prestige and integrity of the entire people based on images of independence struggles.

The government arranges to hold the Youth and Literary Arts Exhibition, aimed at motivating the students to read books and publications, know the advantages of literature, uplift patriotic spirit, prestige and integrity through movies and fine arts, adore the independence of the nation with the knowledge of independence struggle and sufferings in the colonial era, enjoy peace, stability and beautifying scenes of the nation with development activities as well as panoramic rural scenes to emerge the soul for adoring the relevant regions and states, and easily know endeavours of relevant ministries through the displays of booths at the exhibition.

The exhibition primarily aims to present demonstrations on crime reduction, the danger of narcotic drugs and enforcement of traffic rules, display biographies of historic persons, pacts and records, show off skill demonstrations on aviation science, activities of growing trees, raising public health awareness, showcase documentary photos activities, books and records on youth, and arrange the competitions for children as well as present the famous films to visitors.

It is firmly believed that the exhibition is sure to contribute to widening the scope of knowledge for the youths in order to know dos and don'ts in society and how to seek the best opportunities to be utilized for their lives. If the youths can expose their chances in the exhibition, it will be the best for those youths as well as the organizer of the exhibition.

Hence, every citizen needs to heartily welcome the presentation and theme of the national-level exhibition for giving various items of knowledge about youth and youth affairs, health, social, education and literary topics so as to forge the nationalistic spirit and enhance prestige and integrity of the entire people based on images of independence struggles. ■

ARTICLE

Efforts made to build a barrier against COVID-19

AS multiple regions in China have seen surging COVID-19 infections, local governments are taking swift and precise measures to prevent severe cases, protect people's health, and build a barrier against the epidemic.

These measures include providing timely medical treatment, meeting medicine needs, improving health services for the elderly and other key groups, promoting COVID-19 vaccination, and strengthening epidemic prevention and control in rural areas.

BOLSTERING MEDICAL RESOURCES

Medical institutions at all levels are optimizing procedures, expanding resources, increasing the medical workforce, as well as coordinating COVID-19 patient treatment and daily medical services.

In Shanghai, fever clinics in 145 secondary and higher-level hospitals have been asked to fully open to meet the needs of people for medical services.

The Huashan Hospital Affiliated with Fudan University in Shanghai has set up outdoor emergency and fever clinic pre-examination windows. In order to ease the pressure of receiving patients and expand its capacity, the hospital has reserved intestinal clinics as a backup in addition to the original fever clinics. Medical staff with experience in epidemic prevention and treatment have been encouraged to establish a reserve talent pool.

Hangzhou and other cities in east China's Zhejiang Province have opened internet hospitals in response to the high demand for diagnosis and treatment in fever clinics.

The Sir Run Run Shaw Hospital, affiliated with Zhejiang University School of Medicine, launched a green channel for the rapid COVID-19 consultation on 9 December. Since then, a total of 72 experts from departments such as infection and respiratory medicine have provided 24-hour online services and more than 8,400 online consultations have been conducted so far.

People line up to seek medical advice in a makeshift fever clinic in Guang'an Gymnasium in Beijing, capital of China, 24 December 2022. **PHOTO: ZHANG CHENLIN/XINHUA**

The treatment of critical COVID-19 patients is one of the current priorities for medical institutions. The Xinhua Hospital affiliated with Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine has added intensive care beds for adults and children.

PROTECTING KEY GROUPS

The National Health Commission has asked grassroots medical institutions to set up ledgers for special groups such as the elderly living alone, pregnant women and patients with underlying health conditions, to ensure necessary medical services.

In the city of Xiangtan in central China's Hunan Province, the family doctor team of the Yuetang sub-district's community health service centre provides home medical services for the elderly with underlying diseases or other vulnerable groups in need.

After China optimized the epidemic prevention and control response, the residential communities shifted their focus to guarantee medical treatment services and provide health investigation, drug delivery and other services for residents.

At the community health service centre of Dapuqiao sub-district in Shanghai's Huangpu District, family doctor Wu Shuyao was seen carefully assessing the health status of residents, paying special attention to the elderly over 80 years old, patients with chronic diseases, hemodialysis patients, cancer patients and pregnant women. Wu provides them with medical guidance via telephone and video.

The Yongsheng Community in Kuancheng District, the northeastern Chinese city of Changchun, has set up a volunteer service team to meet the residents' demand for the distribution of medicines, daily necessities, and other materials.

In Pingguoyuan sub-district of Beijing's Shijingshan District, a team, consisting of five to six community workers and medical staff, provides door-to-door vaccination services for the elderly every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoon.

ENHANCING HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

Grassroots governments are improving health services in view of the relative shortage of health resources in rural areas and the increase in population mobility and the return of migrant workers during the upcoming New Year and Spring Festival holidays.

The Linxiang municipal health commission in Hunan Province, together with local medical institutions, compiled the guidelines for epidemic prevention and health awareness manuals and distributed them to villagers. Family doctors have been creating awareness among villagers about the correct use of medicines.

The health centre in Tandu Township, Linxiang, has set up a fever clinic with medical staff on duty 24 hours a day. The fever clinic has seen dozens of patients every day, with three doctors taking turns on duty. A batch of emergency medicines, including antipyretics, are also available in the fever clinic.

In the city of Jiaozhou, east China's Shandong Province, the municipal health commission has set up 536 community medical points and organized 446 medical personnel and volunteers to provide medical services to villages. There are at least two medical personnel in each village clinic and medical point offering 24-hour medical services such as consultation, medicine dispense, and patient transfer for key groups.

Ye Shanyu, an attending physician of the central health centre of Jiaodong sub-district in Jiaozhou, distributed health kits to residents in Damawan Sancun Village. "Many villagers are concerned about the correct use of medicines. After my explanation, the people's concern subsided," Ye said.

SOURCE: Xinhua

Researchers discover new mechanism to boost RNA therapies

RESEARCHERS at Cedars-Smidt Sinai's Heart Institute have discovered how biological pacemaker cells, which regulate your heartbeat, can "fight back" against treatments meant to biologically correct irregular heartbeat rhythms. The study also revealed a novel strategy to modulate this "fighting back" activity and enhance the efficacy of RNA treatments.

This innovative idea, which was just published in the peer-reviewed journal Cell Reports Medicine, represents a significant development for biological pacemakers, which have the potential to eventually replace conventional electronic pacemakers.

The team looked for a way to bypass the suppressive effect of the microRNAs. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/OMNIA EDUCATION**

Heart cells

"We are all born with a specialized group of heart cells that set the pace for our heartbeats," said Eugenio Cingolani, MD, senior author of the study and director of the Cardiogenetics Program in the Smidt Heart Institute at Cedars-Sinai. "But in some people, this natural heartbeat is too slow, leading to the need for an electronic pacemaker."

While electronic pacemakers have saved many lives since they were invented in the 1950s, there are limitations and side effects, including battery life, device-related infections and system failure. They also come with risks, including infection, swelling, bleeding, blood clots, damage to neighbouring blood vessels, and in some cases, a collapsed lung.

"But the biggest problem is that the machines do not cure the problem," Cingolani said. "They only allow you to find a way around it. Our intention is to create a biological solution, cells that we can reprogram within the heart to naturally stabilize the heartbeat."

Same modified messenger

In the latest research study, Cingolani and team harnessed the same modified messenger RNA (mRNA) technology used in creating the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. MRNA carries information from genes to make proteins, the building blocks of life.

An mRNA vaccine is essentially a code that, when it enters a cell, tells it to make a specific protein.

In their latest research study, investigators injected laboratory mice with mRNA that was chemically modified to express a protein called TBX18. In doing so, they found that heart cells "fought back": They inhibited TBX18 protein expression by producing microRNAs, nature's own regulatory molecules that specifically fine-tune gene expression. As a result, the amount of TBX18 protein produced was insufficient to support the heartbeat.

The team looked for a way to bypass the suppressive effect of the microRNAs. After identifying the precise microRNAs involved, the investigators used chemical antagonists to specifically suppress those microRNAs, increasing TBX18 protein expression, and stabilizing the heartbeat.

Modified RNA

"This concept that cells 'fight back' against modified RNA is of practical importance, as it suggests how one might improve the effectiveness of RNA therapy," said study author Eduardo Marban, MD, PhD, executive director of the Smidt Heart Institute and the Mark S. Siegel Family Foundation Distinguished Professor. "We now have a clearer picture of how to inhibit microRNAs, release the brake, and ultimately get better gene expression."

Of equal significance, researchers found a similar reaction--the cells' ability to fight back--is at play in limiting the expression of VEGF-A, an alternative type of chemically modified messenger RNA that has been used to grow new blood vessels.

SOURCE: ANI

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 25 December 2022)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (17:30) hrs MST today, the Depression has crossed into the Sri Lanka near Trincomalee and moved west-southwestwards. It is weakened into a Well Marked Low Pressure Area. It is likely continue to move west-southwestwards and reach to Comorin Area and neighbourhood during next (12)hrs. Weather is a few cloud over the North Bay and partly cloudy to cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 26 December, 2022: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, Upper Sagaing, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions and Kachin and (Southern and Eastern) Shan states. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Lower Sagaing and Magway regions and Chin State and partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-7) 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 State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 December 2022: Likelihood of isolated light rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

SCI/ENVIRON
WORLD

Brunei launches nationwide recycling day initiative

A total of 1,919.2 kg of scrap paper were collected with a nationwide recycling day initiative being held in Brunei on Saturday, said the country's Department of Environment, Parks and Recreation under the Ministry of Development.

According to the department, with the cooperation and support of four local recycling companies, 1,919.2 kg of scrap paper, 134.3 kg of cardboard boxes, 417.8 kg of plastic bottles, 224.7 litres of used cooking oil and 428 units of e-waste were collected during the event.

A total of 1,919.2 kg of scrap paper were collected with a nationwide recycling day initiative being held in Brunei on Saturday. **PHOTO: NAM/XINHUA**

The waste was transported to recycling companies to be processed either domestically or exported overseas for further recycling processes. —Xinhua

As energy crisis bites, Spaniards snap up solar panels

Given the high price of electricity, Spaniards are snapping up solar panels. **PHOTO: AFP**

DEMAND for solar panels has shot up to unprecedented levels in Spain as Europe's energy crisis shows no sign of letting up, in a welcome boost for a sector with huge potential.

"Here we have sun almost all year round," said Paloma Utrera showing off the black panels installed on her roof in Pozuelo de Alarcon, a well-heeled suburb of western Madrid.

"We need to make the most of it." Like many Spaniards in recent months, Utrera has started producing her own electricity after installing 13 photovoltaic panels on her roof with a total output of 4.5 kilowatts.

"It's not cheap" but with the help of EU and government subsidies, "the savings we'll make on the electricity bill, the investment isn't that bad," she said.

The 50-year-old airline industry employee said she's halved her electricity bills since having the solar panels installed in September.—AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

UK outlines US green subsidy opposition in letter: media

BRITAIN outlined in a letter to Washington its opposition to US green subsidies, claiming they would "harm multiple economies" and "undermine UK-US trade and investment flows", UK media reported Friday.

The Financial Times (FT) and The Times newspapers cited the letter by UK Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch to US counterpart Katherine Tai that hit out at the climate subsidy package worth around $370 billion.

Washington's landmark Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) also contains tax cuts for US-made electric cars and batteries, to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy.

It claims the subsidies are needed in the race to battle climate change.

But Badenoch said the plan would "harm multiple economies across the world and impact global supply chains in batteries, electric vehicles and wider renewables", according to the FT.

The subsidies, "also undermine our shared goals to promote free and fair trade internationally", The Times quoted Badenoch as saying.

"The UK expects to be and should, as the closest of US allies, be part of any flexibilities in the implementation of the IRA," she reportedly added.—AFP

Shell to pay 15 mln euros to Nigerian farmers over pollution

Shell said Friday it will pay 15 million euros to Nigerian farmers to compensate them for damage from pipeline leaks.

A Dutch appeals court ruled last year, following 13 years of legal battles, that Shell's Nigerian branch must pay out for a series of leaks and that the parent company must install new pipeline equipment to prevent further devastating spills.

Shell said Friday that it had reached a deal with the Dutch environmental group Milieudefensie that has helped the affected communities.

"Under the settlement The Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd (SPDC) as operator of the SPDC joint venture, will pay an amount of EUR 15 million for the benefit of the communities and the individual claimants," it said in a statement.

The deal also confirms the installation of a leak detection system on 20 pipeline segments in accordance with the Dutch court ruling and that remediation work has been completed.—AFP

Male panda at Dutch zoo turns out to be female

A two-year-old giant panda at a Dutch zoo has caused a stir by turning out to be a female and not a male as initially thought.

The discovery at the Ouwehands Zoo was made during a routine medical check-up on Fan Xing, who was the first giant panda to be born in the Netherlands.

The zoo's manager confirmed the news on national television late Thursday.

"Fan Xing surprised us," said Jose Kok, in a statement released by the zoo after the broadcast interview.

"For us, the sex was just a fact we wanted to check during the exam under anaesthesia, to be sure."

The panda underwent a short medical examination a few months after being born, which has to be done quickly so that the baby can be reunited with its mother.

But Kok said that determining sex is difficult in a young baby not under anaesthetic.

"We were so convinced the baby was male we never doubted it," she said.

Fan Xing was born on May 1 to two giant pandas — mum Wu Wen and dad Xing Ya — who were loaned to the Netherlands by China in 2017 for 15 years.

Her name was revealed in October. "Fan" is a reference to the Chinese name for Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh and "Xing" means star, a reference to van Gogh's famous painting, Starry Night.—AFP

His name is a reference to the Chinese name for Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh. **PHOTO: ANP/AFP/FILE**

HEALTH/PANDEMIC WORLD

Japan medical bodies aim to develop tailored drugs for rare diseases

TWO Japanese medical institutions are planning to develop tailored drugs for patients with genetic disorders in the hope of finding treatment for extremely rare diseases, a leading project member said Sunday.

The project involving Tokyo Medical and Dental University and the National Centre of Neurology and Psychiatry will search for rare diseases that have the potential to be treated by nucleic acid drugs, a new emerging class of therapeutics, from a database of around 2,250 patients. The development will be carried out based on technology that targets the expression of disease-causing proteins in the mutated gene. Pharmaceutical companies are reluctant to develop medicines for extremely rare diseases because of the costs and difficulties regarding business viability. Such drugs have already been administered in the United States.

"We hope to discover whether we can make effective patient-tailored nucleic acid drugs, and find as many people as possible who can be treated," said Takanori Yokota, a professor of neurology and neurological science at Tokyo Medical and Dental University. He is a leading member of the project.

Participants will be selected from patients registered in the Initiative on Rare and Undiagnosed Diseases, a project that analyzes the genes of people whose disease cannot be identified, or for which no treatment is known.—Kyodo

Tokyo Medical and Dental University Hospital doctors treat a COVID-19 patient with severe symptoms on 15 February. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ TOKYO MEDICAL AND DENTAL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL / VIA KYODO**

China to stop publishing daily Covid figures-NHC

A worker arranges durians at a durian processing factory in the Chanthaburi province, Thailand, 5 May 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA/ WANG TENG**

CHINA will no longer publish daily figures for Covid-19 cases and deaths, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Sunday, ending a practice that began in early 2020.

Cities across China have struggled with surging infections, and a resulting overflowing hospital wards, after Beijing rapidly dismantled its zero-Covid strategy.

"From today, we will no longer publish daily information on the epidemic," the NHC said, without giving an explanation for its policy shift.

The end of strict testing mandates has made caseloads virtually impossible to track, while authorities have narrowed the medical definition of a Covid death.

"The Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will publish information about the outbreak for reference and research purposes," the NHC said, without specifying the type or frequency of data to be published by the CDC.—AFP

87-year-old granny's ageless passion for skiing

AS this year's ski season got underway, Liu Zhihua joined the crowd at a ski resort and glided fluently down the piste. With only a brief break, she took a brisk turn, got onto a chairlift and was ready for another round.

Liu has become a star at the resort in Urumqi, the capital of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Dressed in her baby blue suit and white helmet, she blends in with the other ski enthusiasts, but in fact, she is the resort's oldest skier, at 87 years of age.

Though a fluent skier now, Liu only took up the sport when she was 72. Up until then, like many old people, she would spend her days taking care of her grandchildren, watching TV or playing mahjong.

Encouraged by her children, Liu got on the piste for the very first time in 2007. "The first day was not easy. My waist and legs ached. But in the following days, I was able to walk on the skis," Liu recalled. "After conquering the fear of falling, I became increasingly interested in it and got addicted as time passed."

Starting on the beginner slopes, Liu gradually advanced to intermediate runs, and has even got onto the advanced ones. —Xinhua

Pele's family gather at his hospital bedside on Christmas Eve

FAMILY members visited the legendary Pele on Saturday at the Sao Paulo hospital where he is suffering from worsening cancer as well as kidney and heart problems, according to a social media post by his daughter.

Edinho, Pele's son — who was recently appointed coach of Serie B football club Londrina, based in Parana in the north — arrived on Christmas Eve at the medical centre, where he joined his sisters Flavia and Kely Nascimento.

He posted an Instagram photo of himself holding the football star's hand, captioning it: "Father… my strength is yours."

The ex-goalkeeper arrived a day after having explained his absence at his father's side to local media.

"I would like to be present, but I am committed to my mission here. I'm not a doctor, I couldn't really help much," he said in an interview published on Friday by the daily Estadao.

That same day, Kely shared a photo of herself hugging her 82-year-old father in the hospital with the caption "one more night together".

Late on Saturday, Kely posted a picture of Pele's wife Marcia Aoki and other family members gathered at the Albert Einstein Hospital where he is being treated. Pele was not visible in the image.—AFP

A Brazil supporter poses with a sign for Brazilian former football player Pele prior to the Qatar 2022 World Cup quarter-final football match between Croatia and Brazil at Education City Stadium in Al-Rayyan, west of Doha, on 9 December 2022. **PHOTO: NELSON ALMEIDA /AFP**

ECONOMY
WORLD

Türkiye upbeat on tourism growth for 2023

TURKISH tourism officials and industry insiders are optimistic about the country's tourism growth in 2023, as they believe a robust rebound in tourism this year and a weak currency will add momentum to the sector's growth next year.

In a speech delivered at the Turkish parliament on 8 December, Turkish Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy said Türkiye aims to attract 60 million foreign visitors next year and expects the tourism sector to bring in 56 billion US dollars in revenue.

"We are revising our year-end target for 2022 to 51.5 million visitors and 46 billion dollars in revenue," he said. The figures were slightly up from an official target set in October, when officials estimate that the country would have welcomed 50 million foreign tourists and generated 44 billion dollars in tourism revenue by the year-end.

Tourists walk near Galata Bridge during a two-day curfew to limit the spread of COVID-19 in Istanbul, Türkiye , 31 January 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

According to official data released in late October, the number of foreign visitors climbed 88.1 per cent year-on-year to reach 39.61 million in the first 10 months of this year, almost matching the pre-pandemic level of 2019, when 45 million foreign tourists travelled to Türkiye.

"The year of 2022 is especially a good one for the (Turkish) tourism industry. Occupancy rates were over 90 per cent in most resorts," said Kaan Sahinalp, German tourism giant TUI's representative in Türkiye.

"This year is uplifting in terms of tourism revenues for the years ahead. If Türkiye continues on its road of sustainability, the future looks bright," he said in a recent interview.

Moreover, Türkiye's weakened currency will also make the country's tourism sector more competitive, analysts say.

The Turkish currency lira lost about 70 per cent of its value against the greenback since last year. One dollar now is equivalent to 18.69 liras, compared to around 8 liras in September 2021.

Despite the tourism sector in countries such as Türkiye has witnessed a strong recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has warned in a report in early December that the post-pandemic rebound in tourism is at risk of slowdown as the global economy loses momentum by the energy shock triggered by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, high inflation, and weakened household purchasing power.—Xinhua

New home sales in US post surprise jump in November

SALES of new homes in the US bounced unexpectedly in November despite high mortgage rates, official data showed Friday, with low inventories of existing homes likely nudging buyers into the market for new properties.

The real estate sector, which is sensitive to interest rates, has been reeling as the central bank raised the benchmark lending rate multiple times this year to cool demand and rein in soaring inflation.

But sales of new single-family houses jumped 5.8 per cent to an annual rate of 640,000 in November, seasonally adjusted, said the Commerce Department.

This was higher than the revised rate of 605,000 in October, and defied analyst expectations of a decline.

But compared with November 2021, the rate was down 15.3 per cent, the report said.

Monthly data can be volatile, and economists have cited a lack of existing inventory as a reason that buyers are turning to new properties. But the median sales price of new houses sold in November dropped to $471,200, from $484,700 in the month prior.

The market for new homes is smaller than that of existing homes in the United States, which has seen sales decline for a record 10 straight months.

Analysts do not expect the current trend to last, given that higher mortgage rates continue to batter affordability.

The popular 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 6.3 per cent as of mid-December, according to home loan finance company Freddie Mac, nearly double the figure a year ago. —AFP

Russia says may cut oil output following price cap

MOSCOW could cut oil production by up to seven per cent in early 2023 following an oil price cap agreed by Western countries, a Russian deputy prime minister said Friday.

"At the start of next year, we could make a reduction of 500,000-700,000 barrels per day. For us, that's around 5-7 per cent," Alexander Novak, who is in charge of Moscow's energy policy, said according to Russian news agencies.

He said Russia will not supply oil to countries that are enforcing a price cap — a part of punitive measures on Moscow following its offensive in Ukraine.

The price ceiling of $60 per barrel agreed by the European Union, G7 and Australia came into force in early December and seeks to restrict Russia's revenue while making sure Moscow keeps supplying the global market.

Introduced alongside an EU embargo on seaborne deliveries of Russian crude oil, the cap aims to ensure Russia cannot bypass the embargo by selling its oil to third countries at high prices.—AFP

Introduced alongside an EU embargo on seaborne deliveries of Russian crude oil, the cap aims to ensure Russia cannot bypass the embargo by selling its oil to third countries at high prices. **PHOTO: AFP**

China vows further judicial protection for traditional medicine intellectual property

CHINA'S apex court has introduced guidelines on strengthening the judicial protection for intellectual property in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in all respects.

The 16-article guidelines issued recently by the Supreme People's Court put forth targeted measures regarding major areas and key issues of TCM, providing clear guidance for the adjudicatory work related to TCM intellectual property.

The guidelines vow to beef up the judicial protection of well-known trademarks, traditional brands, and time-honored brands in TCM, and promote the passing down and development of TCM brands.

TCM trademark registrations with an ill will shall be punished according to the law, with malicious litigations to be tackled resolutely, say the guidelines, adding that TCM trademark infringement will be cracked down on harshly. —Xinhua

NEWS IN BRIEF

Number of foreign workers in S Korea falls in 2022

THE number of foreign workers in South Korea fell slightly this year as the COVID-19 pandemic restricted arrival at and departure from the country, statistical office data showed.

The number of foreign nationals with jobs was 843,000 in May 2022, down 12,000, or 1.4 per cent, from a year ago, according to Statistics Korea.

After rising from 848,000 in 2020 to 855,000 in 2021, the number of foreign employees shrank this year due to restrictions on entry to and exit from the country, caused by the continued pandemic.—Xinhua

Railway strike to continue up to Christmas in France

FRANCE'S national railway company SNCF said it reached an agreement on Friday with the country's labour unions to avoid further strikes over the New Year's weekend.

However, travel will still remain disrupted this weekend, with roughly one in three high-speed TGV trains cancelled.

According to local media, SNCF's management has agreed to "strong" measures to improve the recognition of the profession of conductors, the creation of more jobs and future promotions.—Xinhua

Chinese firms in Pakistan adopt 'go-slow' policy amid its faltering economy, delay in payments

AMID delays in payment to the IPPs, rising exchange rate, and "unhelpful behaviour of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) with its companies", Chinese companies in Pakistan opted for a "go-slow" policy, reported Business Recorder.

Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, Nong Rong, shared information during a meeting with Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Coordination Syed Tariq Fatemi.—ANI

China home to 110 cities with gigabit 5G, optical fibre coverage

People at an exhibition booth of China Telecom at the 2022 World 5G Convention in Harbin. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

THE number of cities in China with the capability to offer gigabit 5G and optical fibre services reached 110 by the end of October, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

In terms of regional distribution, 41 of these cities are in east China, 29 in the central region and 40 in the country's west.

Gigabit fibre network coverage in average urban households in these cities exceeded 100 per cent, while the number of 5G base stations reached 22.2 per 10,000 people, higher than the national average of 15.7.

In these cities, over 80 per cent of the large public hospitals, key universities, major cultural and tourist sites, trunk airports, and key roads have access to 5G network. —Xinhua

India's solar energy capacity rose 91% in 3 years

SOLAR energy capacity in India has increased from 28,180 megawatts in March 2019 to 53,996 megawatts at the end of 2021-22, Union Minister of New and Renewable Energy and Power RK Singh informed Parliament earlier this week.

The cumulative solar energy capacity at the end of 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 was at 34,627, 40,085, and 53,996 mega watts, respectively.

Further, in reply to a question whether the government has set any target to increase the solar capacity across the country, the minister replied: "The Government has set a target of achieving 500 GW of installed capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2030, in line with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's announcement at CoP-26." —ANI

The cumulative solar energy capacity at the end of 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 was at 34,627, 40,085, and 53,996 mega watts, respectively. **PHOTO: SAM PANTHAKY/AFP**

Over 50,000 int'l tourists visit Sri Lanka in 1st 20 days of December

Tourists walk out of a cruise ship in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 23 December, 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

SRI LANKA recorded over 50,000 international tourist arrivals for the first 20 days of December, a significant improvement compared to previous months, according to latest data released by the tourism authority.

The daily average of arrivals in December is over 2,500 and in the first 11 months of this year, the figure was around 1,900, data from Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) showed.

The total number of international tourist arrivals for the year to 20 December was 678,392, according to the SLTDA. Tourism, one of Sri Lanka's leading foreign exchange earners, has suffered a setback due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the country's economic and political crises.Sri Lanka aims to attract around 1.5 million tourists in 2023 and 3 million tourists in 2024, Minister of Tourism and Lands Harin Fernando said earlier this month. —Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V KOTA HIDAYAH VOY.NO. (KHDY0330N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V KOTA HIDAYAH VOY.NO. (KHDY0330N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **26-12-2022** 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 PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL LINES

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Türkiye says Ukraine war 'will not end easily'

TÜRKIYE conceded Saturday that Russia's war on Ukraine "will not end easily", despite Ankara's repeated efforts to arrange peace talks between Kyiv and Moscow.

NATO member Türkiye, which has friendly relations with both of its Black Sea neighbours, has positioned itself as a neutral player and tried to broker a truce.

But the continuing war, which entered its 10th month, is dashing Ankara's hopes.

"It appears that this war will not end easily," Defence Minister Hulusi Akar told journalists during a year-end briefing in the capital Ankara.

Relatives of Ukrainian servicemen (POW's) and civilians captured by Russian forces hold placards during their rally at Independence Square in Kyiv on 24 December 2022, as they call to hasten their release from Russian captivity according to the formula "All for All". **PHOTO: AFP**

He pointed to Western support for Ukraine and Russia's statements that it would not give up for his reasoning.—AFP

Russia's war eclipses opposition to Japan's nuclear policy shift

JAPAN has made a significant turnaround in its nuclear power policy amid concerns about a stable power supply because Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused commodity market disruptions and spiked energy prices.

With the 2011 nuclear disaster in northeastern Japan propelling the government to reduce its dependence on nuclear power, lawmakers and officials opted not to build new reactors in light of safety concerns among the public and falling costs for renewable energy.

But lessons learned from the disaster centering on a Fukushima nuclear power plant have apparently been overshadowed by soaring prices for essential goods driven by the Ukraine crisis and the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic-hit world economy.—Kyodo

WORLD: TOP STORIES

Eighteen trapped in Xinjiang gold mine collapse

RESCUERS were working Sunday to reach 18 people trapped underground after a cave-in at a gold mine in northwest China's Xinjiang region, state media reported.

A total of 40 people were working underground at the mine in Yining county, about 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the border with Kazakhstan, at the time of the collapse Saturday afternoon.

Twenty-two miners were brought to the surface but 18 remain trapped.

"A rescue operation is underway to retrieve the remaining miners," Xinhua news agency said late Saturday.

Mine safety has improved in recent decades, as has media coverage of major incidents, many of which were once overlooked.

But accidents still occur frequently in an industry where safety instructions are often lax, especially at the most rudimentary sites.—AFP

Northwest China has vast gold reserves, including those at mines such as the one pictured here in Inner Mongolia. **PHOTO: AFP**

FARC dissident group announces end-of-year truce in Colombia

A group of armed renegades who refused to sign a 2016 peace accord in Colombia have declared a unilateral ceasefire until the new year, the country's peace commissioner tweeted Saturday.

The dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) had refused to lay down their arms alongside their comrades six years ago, when the fearsome rebel army signed the deal with Bogota to end more than five decades of conflict.

They have continued to battle government forces, and divided into various factions. The Indepaz think tank said they total around 5,200 rebels.

The news that one of the main factions would temporarily lay down their arms came days after the country's last recognized rebel group, the powerful National Liberation Army (ELN), also announced a truce as they conduct peace negotiations in Caracas, Venezuela.—AFP

Several splinter groups of FARC dissidents — one of which is seen here attending a funeral in November 2022 — have announced a cease-fire until the new year. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

China urges Japan to steer bilateral ties from strategic point of view

CHINESE Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Sunday called on Japan to "steer the course of the bilateral relations from a strategic perspective" after the leaders of the two countries agreed last month to promote the stability and growth of relations.

Wang said in an online speech to a Beijing symposium that it is important for the two Asian neighbors "to avoid backpedaling and flip-flopping, be far-sighted and forward-looking" in their relations after they commemorated the 50th anniversary of the normalization of bilateral ties in September.

On the United States, Wang said Beijing has firmly rejected Washington's "erroneous China policy," under which it has "stubbornly continued to see China as its primary competitor and engage in blatant blockade, suppression and provocation."—Kyodo

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Pope Francis to address faithful on Christmas Day

THOUSANDS of people are set to gather Sunday in St Peter's Square to hear Pope Francis deliver his Christmas Day message, where he is expected to offer prayers for war-torn Ukraine.

The head of the Catholic Church will address the faithful from the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, before delivering the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing ("to the city and the world").

The 86-year-old is expected to focus on the brutal conflict in Ukraine in his speech, which is broadcast on television and radio around the world.

Pope Francis has called for peace ever since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, condemning the war but seeking to maintain a delicate dialogue with Moscow.

However, he has been criticized in some quarters for not being more explicit in blaming Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Pope Francis kisses a statue of Baby Jesus as he presides over Christmas Eve Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. **PHOTO: VATICAN**

He has focused on the human toll of the war, weeping earlier this month as he offered prayers for a "tormented" Ukraine.

In an interview published at the end of November in the US Jesuit magazine America, the Argentine pontiff denounced the cruelty of Russia's troops in Ukraine, drawing a formal protest from Moscow.

On Saturday evening, the pope led the traditional Christmas Eve mass at St Peter's Basilica with some 7,000 people attending, according to the Vatican.

Using a wheelchair as he continues to struggle with knee pain, the pope prayed for "the children devoured by wars, poverty and injustice" and lamented that "men hungry for power and money swallow up their loved ones, their brothers".

He called on people to "abandon the warmth of worldliness" and "rediscover the meaning of Christmas" in the face of "consumerism", advocating for a Church that serves the poor.

Around 4,000 people followed the ceremony on giant screens installed outside as the world's 1.3 billion Catholics prepared to mark the holiday celebrating birth of Christ.—AFP

Troops deployed in San Salvador amid massive gang crackdown

Soldiers patrol the streets of San Salvador on 24 December 2022 as part of a major security operation. **PHOTO: AFP**

MORE than 2,000 soldiers and police surrounded two districts in El Salvador's capital on Saturday as part of President Nayib Bukele's war on gangs, the second such operation this month in the Central American country.

"As of this morning, the Tutunichapa district in San Salvador is totally surrounded," Bukele posted on Twitter.

"More than 1,000 soldiers and 130 police officers will extract the criminals who still remain," he added.

Bukele later tweeted that 1,000 more soldiers and 100 police officers had been dispatched to La Granjita, another neighbourhood in the capital.

"After encircling Tutunichapa, a famous drug distribution centre, we knew that many drug traffickers would take refuge in the neighborhood of La Granjita, another famous distribution centre", Bukele tweeted.

Images released Saturday by the office of the president showed heavily armed soldiers entering Tutunichapa, a populous district where small houses mostly constructed of concrete blocks stand alongside one of the many polluted streams that run through San Salvador. Justice Minister Gustavo Villatoro posted photos of members of an anti-narcotics police unit with drug-sniffing dogs.

"We are going to extract every criminal from our communities," Villatoro said in a Twitter post.

'Bastion on crime'

Defence Minister Rene Merino said 23 people had been arrested in Tutunichapa, without specifying whether they were accused of being gang members or drug traffickers.

"All terrorists, drug traffickers and gang members will be removed" from the area, Bukele said in another tweet, adding that until recently it was a "bastion of crime."—AFP

Taliban order NGOs to stop women staff from working over 'hijab'

AFGHANISTAN'S Taliban rulers ordered all national and international NGOs to stop their women employees from working after "serious complaints" about their dress code, the economy ministry said on Saturday.

The order threatened to suspend the operating licences of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that failed to implement the directive.

The move drew swift international condemnation, with governments and organisations warning of the impact on humanitarian services in a country where millions rely on aid.

The latest restriction comes less than a week after the Taliban authorities banned women from attending universities, prompting global outrage and protests in some Afghan cities.

While the Taliban had promised a softer form of rule when they returned to power in August last year, they have instead imposed harsh restrictions on women — effectively squeezing them out of public life.—AFP

The Taliban have effectively squeezed Afghanistan's women out of public life. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Türkiye says Ukraine war 'will not end easily'

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

SPORT

Myanmar to play opener against Cambodia in U-20 women's Asian Cup qualifiers

THE first round group matches of the 2024 Asian Cup U-20 Women's Qualifiers have come out, and the Myanmar team will start playing against the Cambodian team.

The first qualifiers will be divided into eight groups.

China, Laos, Hong Kong, and the Philippines are falling in the Group A while Nepal, UAE, Northern Mariana Island and Palestine are placed into Group B.

Meanwhile, Group C sees Australia, Kyrgyzstan, Guam and Iraq while Group D includes Lebanon, Jordan, Mongolia, and Bhutan.

Next, Thailand faces China Taipei, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the Group E, while three ASEAN teams: Viet Nam, Indonesia, and Singapore are falling in the same Group F with India.

Myanmar is placed in the Group G with Malaysia, Pakistan, and Cambodia while Iran, Bangladesh, and Turkmenistan are booked in the Group H.

The first qualifiers will be held from 8 to 12 March, and only the top eight teams from each group will be qualified for the second qualifiers.

Cambodia will host the Group (G) matches in which the Myanmar team participates.

As group matches, Myanmar will play against Cambodia on 8 March, Pakistan on 10 March, and Malaysia on 12 March respectively.

The second qualifiers will continue in 2023, and the eight teams from the first qualifiers will be divided into two groups of four teams. The Myanmar team qualified for the last tournament in 2019 and qualified for the final round.—Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

Howe ignoring Premier League table as Newcastle resume in third place

EDDIE HOWE has insisted he has no interest in looking at the Premier League table as Newcastle bid to maintain their impressive start to the season following the World Cup break.

England's top flight paused for the tournament in Qatar with the Saudi-backed Magpies riding high in third place, having lost just one game in all competitions all season and won their last five in the league.

Newcastle, who haven't won a major domestic trophy since lifting the 1955 FA Cup, resume their league campaign away to Leicester on Monday with manager Howe trying to keep a lid on the growing expectation of the team's large and passionate fan-base.

Newcastle manager Eddie Howe. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

"I haven't actually looked at the league table once, genuinely I haven't," he said.

"That's not to say that I'm not aware of where we are, but for me the focus is always on the next training session to make sure we give the players the best chance to play well in the next game and let everything else fall into place."

This time last year, Newcastle were firmly fixed in the relegation zone after winning just one of their first 18 fixtures.—AFP

Charlo suffers broken hand, showdown with Tszyu postponed

UNDISPUTED world super-welterweight boxing champion Jermell Charlo suffered a broken left hand in training and his January showdown with unbeaten Australian Tim Tszyu has been postponed, promoters announced Saturday.

The matchup, which had been set for January 28 at Las Vegas, would have been the first time Charlo defended all four major sanctioning body world crowns after unifying them in May by knocking out Argentina's Brian Castano.

Charlo broke his left hand in two places, between the pinkie and ring fingers and at the base of the thumb, on Tuesday after landing a punch in sparring at his gym in Houston.

The 32-year-old American visited two doctors and a hand specialist in Houston and his hand was placed in a cast, where it will stay for the next two months. Only then will Charlo begin rehabilitation of the injury, which he must complete before he can resume training for a fight.—AFP

American Jermell Charlo has suffered a broken left hand in training that has forced postponement of his planned January boxing showdown against Australian Tim Tszyu for an undisputed world super-welterweight crown. **HOTO: AFP/FILE**

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.

Vieira slams Martinez's 'stupid' World Cup celebrations

CRYSTAL PALACE manager Patrick Vieira believes Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez's "stupid" celebrations have tarnished Argentina's World Cup final win.

Martinez was a key figure in Argentina's victory over France.

He made a fine save to deny Randal Kolo Muani in extra-time and then denied Kingsley Coman in the shoot-out in Qatar as Argentina won a thrilling final.

But the keeper was then seen making a crude gesture after winning the golden glove trophy for the best goalkeeper at the tournament.

Then, during Argentina's victory parade in Buenos Aires, he was seen holding a baby doll with its face covered by a photograph of France star striker Kylian Mbappe, who scored a hat-trick in the final but still finished on the losing side.

Martinez criticism - Crystal Palace manager Patrick Vieira. **PHOTO: AFP**

Vieira, a World Cup winner with France in 1998, was unimpressed by Martinez's antics.

"Some of the pictures I saw from the Argentinian goalkeeper, I think, take away a little bit what Argentina achieved at the World Cup," said Vieira a pre-match press conference ahead of Palace's Premier League match against London rivals Fulham.—AFP