

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.

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Ambassador Mr Deng Xijun of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Mr Deng Xijun, Ambassador of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in Nay Pyi Taw on 29 December 2022.

STATE Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Ambassador Mr Deng Xijun of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China at the parlour of the SAC Chairman Office in Nay Pyi Taw

yesterday afternoon.

They cordially discussed the political progress of Myanmar; the State's endeavours in holding peace talks with ethnic armed organizations for ensuring peace and stability of the nation and assistance of China

to peace processes, the standing of China with Myanmar in the international arena, continuous assistance of China in humanitarian measures, investments of China for the development of Myanmar; and further promotion of bilateral friendly relations and

cooperation.

After the meeting, the Senior General and the Ambassador of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs exchanged commemorative gifts.

Also present at the meeting were SAC Joint Secretary Lt-

Gen Ye Win Oo, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin and officials. The Ambassador of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was accompanied by officials of the Chinese Embassy to Myanmar. — MNA

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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.

Public Notice for elimination of violence

1. SO called "CRPH", "NUG" and "PDF" terrorist groups are unlawfully committing killings of monks, teachers, civil servants and general people and looting under the pretext of saying "for the people".
2. Not rendering of encouragement, support and assistance to the "CRPH", "NUG" and "PDF" terrorists that are committing intimidations, killings and destructive activities could be construed as protecting lives and property of general public.
3. Giving information secretly relating to bearing of their arms, ammunition and terrorists to authorities could be tantamount to protecting lives and property of innocent people.

8 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 29 December, total figure rises to 633,647

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,647** after **eight** new cases were reported on 29 December 2022 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **608,288** including **ten** new recoveries.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at **19,490** on 29 December with no new death reported from the pandemic.

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



Commissioning ceremony for graduates of 20th and 7th intakes of Military Institute for Nursing and Paramedical Sciences held

THE commissioning ceremony for graduates of the 20th intake and 7th intake (female) of the Military Institute for Nursing and Paramedical Sciences took place at the graduation hall of the institute in Mingaladon Township, Yangon, yesterday. The ceremony was attended by Adjutant-General Lt-Gen Soe Min Oo of the office of Commander-in-Chief (Army),

senior military officers, Commandant Brig-Gen Win Bo and graduates.

Lt-Gen Soe Min Oo and officials took their seats on the stage and then Lt-Gen Soe Min Oo handed over appointment certificates to each of the graduates.

The ceremony came to a close after Lt-Gen Soe Min Oo gave his remarks, it is learnt. — MNA/CT

MINPS holds its 26th Convocation

THE Military Institute for Nursing and Paramedical Sciences (MINPS) held the 26th Convocation yesterday afternoon in Mingaladon Township, Yangon. The ceremony was attended by Commandant Brig-Gen Win Bo and members of faculties.

The commandant and members of the faculties entered the Convocation Hall and took their seats. The National Anthem was played. Afterwards, the commandant declared the convocation ceremony open and the graduates take the oath.

The commandant presented degree certificates to 53 BNSc graduates, five BPharm graduates, five BMed Tech graduates, five graduates in radiology and imaging techniques, five graduates in Physiotherapy and two graduates in prosthetics and orthopaedic technology. The commandant then allowed them to wear uniforms corresponding to their degrees. The commandant then signed the convo-

cation record book and delivered the convocation speech.

The Military Institute for Nursing and Paramedical Sciences has been holding convocations since 2003. To date, the institute has conferred PhDs in Nursing Science on 28 students, the Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Education on 278 students, the Master of Science in Nursing on 429 students, the Master in Pharmacology and Medical Technology on

204 students, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Bridge on 113 students, Diploma in Medical Ultrasound Diagnostics on 16 students, Diploma in Intensive-Care Nursing on 22 students, Diploma in Surgical Nursing on 65 students, Bachelor in Nursing Science on 3,269 students, Bachelor in Pharmacology on 218 students, and Bachelor in Medical Technology on 649 students. — MNA/MKKS



The 26th Convocation of the Military Institute for Nursing and Paramedical Sciences is in progress.

Our historical duty to build a genuine and disciplined democratic State

“It is our historical duty to build a genuine and disciplined democratic State holding pragmatic views on the events experienced in the past and with each of us having understanding and trust.”

*(Excerpt from the message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council
Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the 74th Anniversary
of the Shan State Day on 7 February 2021)*



Scenic Beauty of Bagan. PHOTO BY U NAY LINN (IPRD)

Passing-Out parade of No 20 Intake of Nursing and Paramedical Science Degree Course and No 7 Intake of Female Nursing and Paramedical Science Degree Course of the Military Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences and graduation dinner held



State Administration Council Vice-Chair Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services C-in-C (Army) Vice-Senior General Thray Sithu Soe Win addresses the passing-out parade of No 20 Intake of Nursing and Paramedical Science Degree Course and No 7 Intake of Female Nursing and Paramedical Science Degree Course in Yangon yesterday.

PASSING-OUT parade of No 20 Intake of Nursing and Paramedical Science Degree Course and No 7 Intake of Female Nursing and Paramedical Science Degree Course of the Military Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences took place at the parade ground of the institute in Yangon yesterday morning, with an address by State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Thray Sithu Soe Win, on behalf of SAC Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing.

The ceremony was also attended by Daw Than Than Nwe, wife of the Vice-Senior General, Union ministers and officials.

The Vice-Senior General took the salute of the graduate companies and inspected the flag bearer and graduate companies. Those companies saluted the Vice-Senior General with the slow-march past and the quick-march past.

The Vice-Senior General presented the best trainee award to trainee Salai Pyae Sone Aung, the best training award to trainee



Kyaw Zin Htet and the best studies award to trainee Wai Lin Aung from the No 20 Intake of Nursing and Paramedical Science Degree Course.

The Vice-Senior General also presented the best trainee award to trainee Phway Thant Sin, the best training award to trainee Hsu Lei Nanda and the best studies award to trainee Yun Yun Wai from the No 7 Intake of Female Nursing and Paramedical Science Degree Course.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice-Senior General, on behalf of the Senior General, said the institute was facilitated with

teaching aids, practical rooms and instructors in financial years. The graduates from the institute are allowed to pursue further studies on doctoral courses, master's courses and diploma courses in nursing and paramedical universities in 11 countries. Of them, 137 trainees have passed the courses.

Sending the trainees to foreign courses was aimed to turn out qualified nurses and medical technicians in building a modern armed force meeting international standard. In the practical fields, those trainees need to continue their studies based on the train-

ing of the institute and share their knowledge and experiences with others in the multiplier courses.

Moreover, the Vice-Senior General noted that healthcare services and medical treatments are being provided to Tatmadaw members and families at military hospitals and medical battalions as well as to the local people in successive eras at cheaper costs in line with the aim of the World Health Organization.

The Vice-Senior General noted that as artificial intelligence (AI) technology flows into the medical treatment arena, the curriculum of medical education

must be improved for ensuring medical doctors and nurses are familiar with AI technology. It is necessary to upgrade the curriculum based on knowledge management and communication from the academic system based on knowledge acquisition in order to successfully turn out medical doctors and nurses as members of the medical corps.

The Vice-Senior General took the salute of the graduate companies and left the parade ground.

The Vice-Senior General met with outstanding trainees and spoke words of honour at the parlour of the institute headquarters.

In the evening, the Vice-Senior General had a graduation dinner together with the graduate nurses of the No 20 intake and No 7 intake of the training courses and other attendees.

After enjoying the entertainment of the military band of the institute, the Vice-Senior General presented cash awards to the band.

At the Thabin Hall, the Vice-Senior General and party enjoyed the entertainment of the Myawady entertainment troupe under the Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare. — MNA

Ensuring production of raw materials enhances healthy market for finished products

MANUFACTURING based on domestic raw materials will be more firm for the economic development of the region and the State. Only when the production of raw materials is firm will finished products gain progress with a firm market.

(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with MSME businesspersons from Kayin State on 17 October 2022)

SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win attends inauguration of five-storey annexe of Orthopaedic Speciality Hospital-Yangon

AS Covid-19 can be controlled to some extent, an emphasis is being placed on undertaking regular healthcare services, treatment, research and medical education at full capacity in remedying the Covid-affected workplaces, said Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win at the inauguration ceremony of the five-storey annexe of Orthopaedic Speciality Hospital-Yangon in Kymyindine Township of Yangon Region yesterday morning as a gesture of hailing Diamond Jubilee Independence



State Administration Council Vice-Chair Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services C-in-C (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win inaugurates the five-storey annexe of the Orthopaedic Speciality Hospital in Yangon yesterday.



The Vice-Senior General views round the five-storey annexe.



treatment to patients. The government appointed fresher assistant doctors and nurses, conducted necessary training courses for turning medical technicians and nurse-aids in cooperation with medical technicians from the Ministry of Defence as well as the postgraduate courses for producing subject-wise specialist doctors while building new hospital buildings and staff housing for service personnel with provisions of allowances.

The Vice-Senior General urged the medical superintendent and all health staff to systematically maintain the hospital building for its long-term existence.

The Vice-Senior General accepted the commemorative gift presented by Union Minister for Health Prof Dr Thet Khaing Win.

The Vice-Senior General and party viewed round the five-storey annexe. — MNA

Day.

The Vice-Senior General unveiled the signboard of the annexe and sprinkled scented water on it.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice-Senior General said that as Covid-19 can be con-

trolled to some extent, an emphasis is being placed on undertaking regular healthcare services, treatment, research and medical education at full capacity in remedying the Covid-19-affected workplaces. There are 1,178 hospitals

under the Ministry of Health, 83 of which are being operated in the Yangon Region. The Orthopaedic Specialty Hospital-Yangon was established as a Home for the Disabled and Leprosy in 1895 and designated as an orthopaedic hospital

in 1976. It was upgraded to a 300-bed hospital in January 2012 to provide orthopaedic treatments to the patients. Due to population density and smooth transport facilities, 10 central-level speciality hospitals are operated to provide

SAC Vice-Chair Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win inspects agriculture and livestock farms of Yangon Command



SAC Vice-Chair Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win hears the report on the agriculture and livestock zone.

STATE Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win yesterday afternoon inspected agriculture and livestock farms of Yangon Command.

At No 1 Agriculture and Livestock Farm, the commander of Yangon Command reported to the Vice-Senior General on agriculture and livestock farming tasks, and the sale of meat, fish, vegetables, eggs and milk from the farms to Tatmadaw members and families, war veterans, police members and

families at fair prices. The Yangon Region chief minister reported on the establishment of the agriculture and livestock zone, formation of committees and undertaking of farming tasks.

In his speech, the Vice-Senior General explained the undertaking of agriculture and livestock farms with the purpose of selling products to Tatmadaw members and service personnel at reduced prices, focusing on welfare tasks without the need to take profit, production of healthy products, taking consultation with veterinarian researchers, and collaborative efforts in the



The Vice-Senior General inspects the breeding farm.



The Vice-Senior General views the agricultural products.

farming tasks between the command headquarters and the regional government to contribute to the food supply of commercial hub Yangon city.

The Vice-Senior General pointed out the need for systematic supervision of the supervisory bodies for farming tasks in the Nyaungnabin special zone, necessary measures for balancing the demand and supply for the population of Yangon City, storage of surplus meat and fish in the frozen system and invitation to businesspersons to invest in businesses to export products to the foreign market.

The Vice-Senior General and party inspected the display of vegetables, mushrooms and eggs produced from the farms.

Moreover, he viewed round breeding of Novogen Brown chicken and netting of fish at the No 1 fish farm. A total of 1,500 rohu fish, 800 river catfish, 500 pomfret and 200 sturgeons were bred at the farm from 5 January 2022. In today's netting, each fish weighed about one viss on average, and the fish farms were netted to produce 2,250 viss of fish today and these will be distributed to Tatmadaw members and families. After hearing the reports, the Vice-Senior General attended to the needs.

The Vice-Senior General also inspected No 3 agriculture and livestock farm and the breeding of ducks and fish at the farms. — MNA

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State Peace Talks Team conducts its final meeting with 5 PPST-member EAOs



The final day of the meeting between the State Peace Talks Team and the delegation from five EAOs is in progress in Nay Pyi Taw.

THE third-day meeting of the State Peace Talks Team and the delegation of five Ethnic Armed Organizations, members of the Peace Process Steering Team-PPST, was held at the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Centre in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

State Administration Council Member Union Minister at the Government Office Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee-NSPNC Peace Talks Team Leader Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and members — SAC Member Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun and NSPNC Secretary Lt-Gen Min Naung — and NSPNC members Lt-Gen Min Naing, Lt-Gen Win Bo Shein, Lt-Gen Aye Win and Colonel Wunna Aung, and leaders of ethnic armed organizations-EAOs — signatories to the NCA — Patron Phyar Tan Khun Okkar of the Pa-O National Liberation Organization-PNLO, Vice-Chair Saw Mra Yazar Linn of the Arakan Liberation Party-ALP, Chief of Staff Saw Steel of the Demo-

cratic Karen Benevolent Army-DKBA, Vice-Chair Dr Naw Kapaw Htoo of the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-KNU/KNLA-PC (Peace Council), Vice-Chair Kyar Phu of the Lahu Democratic Union-LDU and representatives of peace talks were present at the meeting.

At the meeting, final agreements resulting from three days of negotiations were confirmed and signed by both sides, after the re-discussion. Then, Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, and PNLO Patron Phyar Tan Khun Okkar on behalf of the participating EAOs, gave their concluding remarks and presented Sandisolar Mono 18V 5W lamps given by the Ministry of Border Affairs. — MNA/CT

20-MW Taungdawgwin Solar Power Plant opened in Myittha Township

THE opening ceremony of the 20-megawatt Taungdawgwin Solar Power Plant established by the Ministry of Electric Power in Myittha Township of Mandalay Region was conducted in commemoration of Diamond Jubilee Independence Day yesterday.

First, State Administration Council Member Jeng Phang Naw Taung made an opening speech and Union Minister for Electric Power U Thaung Han explained the advantages of the 20-megawatt Taungdawgwin Solar Power Project while the Region Chief Minister U Maung Ko clarified the construction of the power plant.

The SAC members, Union ministers, the region chief minister and officials watched the video clip on the construction of the power plant and the official

of Green Power Energy Co Ltd expressed words of thanks.

Then, Union Minister for Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Moe, MoEP Union Minister U Thaung Han and Union Minister for Energy U Myo Myint Oo, Union Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than, Region Chief Minister U Maung Ko and the official of Green Power Energy Co Ltd cut the ribbon to inaugurate the power plant. SAC members Jeng Phang Naw Taung and U Sai Lone Seng pressed the electric button to unveil the stone inscription of the power plant.

The 20-MW Taungdawgwin Solar Power Plant is the third project completed in Myanmar. It can generate 45 million kilowatt



The SAC members, Union ministers and officials opens the 20-megawatt Taungdawgwin Solar Power Plant.

hours a year and supply power to about 21,000 households. Currently, the country supplies power to 6,956,295 households in 40,693 villages of 508 towns across the nation until December 2022 and 64 per cent of the population get access to electricity. The government also makes efforts to achieve 100 per cent electrification by 2030. — MNA/KTZH

YR to take ground population census from 9 Jan

YANGON Region Field Census Supervision Committee will begin enumeration of a ground population census in townships of the Yangon Region from 9 January 2023.

The ground population census will be enumerated all over the country from 9 to 31 January 2023, said Union Minister U Myint Kyaing, Chairman of the Central Committee on Field Census Supervision, at the opening ceremony

of the Central-Level Instructor Course of the Central Committee on Ground Census Enumeration.

Field survey work for the ground population census was managed by the Region Field Census Supervisory Committee, and other relevant departments, election commissions, the immigration department, social organizations and volunteers will participate in it.

In addition to correctness

of the personal information of individual citizens, it is an important process for the State and so relevant authorities are urging people to cooperate with them. The demographic information obtained from the survey will also be installed in the e-ID software in 2023. It will also be conducted from 9 January to 10 February, according to the ground population census work committee. — TWA/KZW



Home-to-home collection of population census was underway in 2014.

Dedalu Bridge inaugurated in Ayeyawady Region

THE opening ceremony of Dedalu Bridge on Pyapon-Kyondun-Dawnyeina Road in Pyapon Township, Ayeyawady Region, was held yesterday morning, as a gesture of hailing the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day.

The ceremony was attended by State Administration Council Member Mahn Nyein Maung, Chief Minister of Ayeyawady Region U Tin Maung Win, Commander Brig-Gen Kyi Khaing of South-West Command, Deputy Minister U Win Pe of the Ministry of Construction, officials and town elders.

SAC Member Mahn Nyein Maung, in his speech, said that the development of the transport sector, a key requirement for the development of a region, is being prioritized by the government to advance the standard of living for My-

anmar nationals. He requested the officials to cooperate and point out the need for the use of public funds for the implementation of projects and whether it is beneficial for the region or not.

Agriculture, marine product industry, livestock, fishing industries, salt production, Thinpyu mat business and Patheingyi parasol production thrives in the Ayeyawady Region, the main rice-producing region of Myanmar. The region had to rely mainly on the sea route before. Thus, the upgrading and construction works for roads and bridges are being done to facilitate transport between regions, he added.

Afterwards, the deputy minister for construction clarified the construction of the Dedalu bridge and a resident expressed words of gratitude.



SAC Member Mahn Nyein Maung and dignitaries inaugurate the Dedalu Bridge in Pyapon Township.

Then, the chief minister and officials opened the bridge by cutting the ribbon, and SAC Member Mahn Nyein Maung pressed the electric button to unveil the commemorative stone plaque of the Dedalu Bridge.

Finally, the guests sprayed scented water on the plaque and observed the bridge, it is learnt. — MNA/CT



MoFA Union Minister receives Chinese Ambassador of Ministry of Foreign Affairs

UNION Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received Mr Deng Xijun, Ambassador of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, at 1 pm on 29 December 2022 at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they cordially discussed matters pertaining to further consolidation of the existing Pauk Phaw relations and cooperation, the maintenance of peace and stability along the border between Myanmar and China, latest developments on peace and national reconciliation process of Myanmar, China's continuous constructive support towards Myanmar development endeavours and closer collaboration in regional and international arena particularly ASEAN and the United Nations. — MNA

Coord meeting on precursor chemical smuggling interdiction and suppression plan held

THE coordination meeting on precursor chemical smuggling interdiction and suppression between Laos, Myanmar and Thailand was held at the Heritage Pattaya Beach Resort in Thailand from 25 to 27 December.

The meeting was attended by the Laos delegation led by Secretary-General Mr Inpong Chanthavongsa from the Laos Commission on Drugs Control (LCDC), the Myanmar delegation led by Joint Secretary of the Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control and Commander of the Drug Enforcement Division Police Brig-Gen Win Naing and the Thailand delegation led by General-Secretary Mr Wichai Chaimongkon of the Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB).

Secretary-General Mr

Wichai Chaimongkon of ONCB said that the meeting was conducted under the Plan of Safe Mekong Operation Project (2019-2022) to prevent the entry of chemicals into drug production areas in the Golden Triangle and discussed the joint control and elimination of precursor chemicals according to relevant countries and future programmes.

In addition, Secretary-General Mr Wichai Chaimongkon said Thailand is carrying out the control of sodium cyanide, benzyl cyanide and benzyl chloride and plans to control hydroxylamine again this year and to implement effective ways to control narcotic drugs.

Police Brig-Gen Win Naing said the anti-narcotics activities have been very successful due to the close cooperation of the three

countries (Lao-Myanmar-Thailand) but there is no decline in drug production and trafficking in the Golden Triangle, that Myanmar is ready to cooperate with neighbouring countries in the illegal importation of chemical substances used in the production of narcotic drugs. He also emphasized the importance of prevention and control of chemical substances by the respective countries for the prevention of man-made drug production and more cooperation of Laos, Myanmar and Thailand for the prevention of illegal trafficking of precursor chemicals and seizures.

The meeting also focused on access to funding and equipment support from the international narcotics control boards including UNODC in the annual destruction of seized precursor



Meeting attendees pose for the group photo at the event.

chemicals by the respective countries for the safety of the public's health and the environment, compiling the necessary data to be reported to the CND, information exchange, conducting training by ONCB of Thailand to the anti-narcotic force from Laos and Myanmar and closer cooperation in the control of narcotic drugs by Laos, Myanmar and Thailand to reduce trading of narcotic drugs in Golden Triangle.—MNA/MKKS

Don't worry about an unexpected natural disaster - earthquake

ASHAKING earthquake is a geological process which directly affects human beings and may cause a certain degree of damage in earthquake-hit areas. Subsequent problems of the earthquake are landslides, surging tsunami waves and damage to housings.

Indeed, earthquake is one of the unrespectable natural disasters all global peoples may face. Although human beings can guess and forecast natural disasters such as flooding and inundation, the effects of storms, heat waves, cold waves, and forest fires, they are trying hard to forecast the possibility of earthquakes.

So, all the people are in fear of causing possible earthquakes. They think about when the earthquake will shake their places, how they can protect themselves during the earthquake and how they do to escape from the danger of the earthquake. Indeed, they have to consider the ways to be followed in the outbreak of earthquakes with high intensity without worrying about unexpected measures.

Actually, an earthquake is a natural disaster challenging society. It may cause changes in human society. Currently, civil engineers and architects consider how to construct high-rise buildings and bridges with resilience to the earthquake. They try to create structures with further strengthening against earthquakes. Although such types of buildings cost a higher expenditure, a larger amount of expenditure is sure to be cost-effective for human beings in line with the concept that anything is not more valuable than human life.

everything from the adjacent area to the rivers or seas. So, they have to seek ways to the higher and safer lands. If they use fire during the earthquake, they have to put it out. They have to swift off. When driving, they have to speed down and stop at a safe place.

Actually, an earthquake is a natural disaster challenging society. It may cause changes in human society. Currently, civil engineers and architects consider how to construct high-rise buildings and bridges with resilience to the earthquake. They try to create structures with further strengthening against earthquakes.

Although such types of buildings cost a higher expenditure, a larger amount of expenditure is sure to be cost-effective for human beings in line with the concept that anything is not more valuable than human life.



Miscalculating Age of the Earth and the Errors of Past Scientists: Comparative Comments

By Myint Zan

Bishop James Ussher and his estimate of the Age of the Earth

23 October 2022 was (by one account) the 6,026th birthday of planet Earth. Bishop James Ussher (4 January 1581-21 March 1656), in the book *Annals of the World* published in 1654 stated that the world was ‘created at night fall’ on 23 October 4004 Before the Common Era (BCE). Therefore, according to Bishop Ussher on 23 October 2022, the Earth is 6,026 years old!

This writer recalls that on 23 October 1996 the 6,000th anniversary of the ‘supposed’ creation of the Earth there was an (informal) party with drinks and refreshments to celebrate the Earth’s 6,000th Birthday at the University of New England, Armidale in Australia which he attended.

Johannes Kepler’s Slightly Earlier Estimate of an ‘Older’ Age of the Earth

But it was not only Bishop Ussher in a book published over 460 years ago who stated that the Earth was created about 6,000 (plus) years ago.

The very eminent scientist Johannes Kepler (27 December 1571-15 November 1630) in a book published under the pseudonym ‘Kleopas Herennius’ (supposedly an anagram of Johannes Kepler) titled (in Latin) *Kanones Pueriles* stated that the Earth was created ‘on

27 April 4997 BCE’. Kepler an older contemporary (by about a decade) of Ussher calculated or postulated the age (or rather creation) of the Earth to be about 900 years earlier than Bishop Ussher’s estimate.

19th-century scientist Lord Kelvin’s estimates of the Age of the Earth wrong ‘merely’ by about 4,400 million years

Fast forward from the mid-17th century (when Bishop Ussher estimated the age of the Earth) and a few decades earlier (when Kepler made his own estimate) to the year 1892 (over 200 years later). Geological and Earth sciences have developed much in those 200-plus years. The estimate this time was made by the scientist William Thomson (Lord Kelvin) (26 June 1824- 17 December 1907). Kelvin estimated that the Earth was around 100 million years in the ‘Age’.

Early 21st-century calculations indicate the Age of the Earth to be around 4.54 billion (4,540 million years) + or -0.5 billion years. Would these estimates be proven wrong again? To cover for minor adjustments (so to speak) online sources indicate ‘plus or minus’ 0.5 billion years which is a ‘whopping’ long time of about 500 million years!

Lord Kelvin’s estimate was wrong ‘only’ by about 4,440 million years! Apparently independently, in the 17th century,

Bishop Ussher and Johannes Kepler ‘grossly’, (in)gloriously, stupendously miscalculated the Age of the Earth-based largely on their Biblical interpretations. In contrast, Lord Kelvin’s miscalculation can be said to be primarily based on his own interpretations of Earth and geological sciences (of his time) at the end of the 19th century.

First ‘science fiction’ book by Johannes Kepler and ‘reptile-like creatures’ on the Moon

Johannes Kepler, in addition to being a very eminent astronomer of his (and indeed to a large extent) our times as well dabbled in astrology. In addition, he wrote what is now retrospectively and arguably considered to be the earliest science fiction book which was first published posthumously in 1634. Kepler’s ‘science fiction’ tract in Latin is *Sominum* in English translation *The Dream* with the sub-title ‘A posthumous work on Lunar Astronomy of Johannes Kepler’. Although (in part) only science fiction Kepler imagined that there could be some reptile-like creatures (‘enormous creatures with spongy skins that turn brittle in the Sun’) on the Moon.

Kepler’s postulates both about the Age of the Earth and ‘reptiles on the Moon’ have been disproven in most scientific circles by the late 19th century. One

notes though that Kepler’s estimates of the Age of the Earth were made in what can be considered, in context, serious work and his ‘projection’ of reptile-like creatures on the Moon was made in what is retrospectively known as ‘science fiction’.

It is also significant that even in the late 19th century Lord Kelvin an eminent scientist got the Age of the Earth wrong albeit not as gloriously wrong as the even more eminent scientist Johannes Kepler. From Age of the Earth to ‘exobiology’ Kepler has expressed his (wrong) views. Needless to say, these do not (not) detract from nor do they in any way diminish the other great scientific achievements of Kepler which have withstood the test of time these few centuries.

Exobiology and SETI

In the contemporary period, one of the early pioneers of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) is the late Frank Drake (28 May 1930-2 September 2022) who devised in 1961 the so-called ‘Drake equation’ calculating the odds of the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence or ‘civilizations’ in the Universe (or Multiverse, see below).

Even IF HYPOTHETICAL-ly there are reptilian creatures on the Moon according to the definition of ‘intelligence’ applied territorially and projected extraterritorially these reptil-



ian creatures would not qualify as ‘extraterrestrial intelligence’. (Kepler’s statement has been falsified so the above is merely a ‘counter-factual hypothetical’)

What has not been falsified is this projected (not predicted) past and future scenario in the scientific field of exobiology: if the previous (as in hundreds of millions or over a billion years ago) or currently, the existence of microbes on or under the surface of the planet Mars or the moon(s) of Jupiter were to be discovered they arguably would **not** be considered as extraterrestrial intelligence though they would qualify as extraterrestrial life.

Johannes Kepler and Lord Kelvin were great scientists (it may be granted that even by the standards of his era Bishop

Ussher was not a scientist). And on the aspects indicated above they have been proven wrong around 250 years after Kepler’s estimate and within several decades after the estimate of Kelvin (regarding the Age of the Earth).

Quite a few physicists in the late 19th century had thought that they have reached (so to speak) (almost) ‘the end of physics’ which has been proven wrong perhaps as early as the first decade of the 20th century. Still, these mid to late 19th-century physicists were not as wrong as those ‘estimates’ made by Ussher and Kepler described above.

Even should there be adjustments of say, the current estimate of the Age of the Earth of 4.54 billion years it may not be as a great ‘gigantic leap’ as adjusting from around 6,000 years (Ussher, Kepler) and Kelvin (around 100 million years).

Speed of Light, The Big Bang and the Multiverse in Cosmology

Among the contemporary scientific truths limiting to the subject of astrophysics would be the so far non-falsifiable statement that nothing in the Universe (or should there be a multiverse, see below) ‘travels’ faster than the speed of light (186,282) miles per second. Since (mainly) Albert Einstein (14 March 1879-18 April 1955) stated it the above truism has

‘hold’ true for about 120 years.

In cosmology perhaps inchoately since the 1980s but more concretely by the turn of the 21st century ‘the multiverse’ idea (is it a firm scientific hypothesis as yet?) has complimented rather than challenged or ‘overturned’ the ‘Big Bang’ hypothesis.

‘The Big Bang’ hypothesis was first proposed in the late 1920s by, among others, the Catholic priest (not a Protestant ‘Bishop’ like Ussher) and scientist/cosmologist Georges Lemaitre (17 July 1894-20 June 1966) has gained very significant support among many cosmologists and scientists since the 1960s. Even if the multiverse idea (see below) were to have become a firm scientific hypothesis the ‘Big Bang’ seems to be a valid hypothesis for THIS Universe.

From this (interested) diletante’s observation, the Big Bang hypothesis is now more than a tentative hypothesis though it is not unshakeable ‘scientific dogma’. Has the multiverse hypothesis reached the ‘status’ of a scientific hypothesis? Or is it (at best? at least?) (only) a tentative scientific hypothesis?

Two Scientific Hypotheses (or Facts) in Earth and Physical Sciences: Present and Future Perfect or Not?

Would the contemporary

two scientific hypotheses namely the estimates of the Age of the Earth, ‘nothing travelling faster than the speed of light’, a few centuries, decades or years ahead be proven wrong in the same manner and to the same degree as the ‘theories’ of Bishop James Ussher, astronomer Johannes Kepler, geologist/ scientist Lord Kelvin on the issue of the Age of the Earth has been proven wrong?

These two scientific theories mainly in the Earth sciences and astrophysics are, in a sense, presently ‘perfect’ theories (‘present perfect’). Apart from minor adjustments (recall that some physicists stated in the 19th century that their fields only need minor adjustments) will the ‘present perfect’ of the two scientific hypotheses become ‘future imperfect’ in the scientific future?

In relation to Johannes Kepler stating over 400 years ago that reptilian creatures could ‘inhabit’ the moon this article commemorates the 50th anniversary of the last astronauts visiting the Moon and ‘returning safely to the Earth’ in December 1972.

This article also commemorates the 451st birthday of Johannes Kepler on 27 December 2022.



US hits over 100 mln COVID-19 cases amid another surge in holiday season

THE United States has officially recorded more than 100 million COVID-19 cases amid another surge in the holiday season, according to the latest data released by the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The United States is the first country to have recorded 100 million COVID-19 cases around the world.

The country totalled

100,216,983 confirmed cases as of 21 December, according to CDC data posted on Wednesday.

Experts said the actual number is much higher as people testing at home do not relay their results to public health departments, and many people do not do tests any more.

Tom Frieden, former CDC director under the Obama administration, estimates that the reported data reflects less than

half of the actual total.

There are at least 200 million infections in the United States, “so this is a small portion of them”, Frieden told CNBC. “The question really is will we be better prepared for COVID and other health threats going forward, and the jury is very much still out on that.”

“It’s really hard to stop this virus, and that’s one of the reasons why we’ve shifted the focus to hospitalizations and deaths and

not just counting cases,” said Jennifer Nuzzo, an epidemiologist and director of the Pandemic Centre at the Brown University School of Public Health. More than 1.08 million people in the United States have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic began, more than any other country in the world, according to CDC data.

The country is currently averaging about 65,000 cases, 5,000 hospitalizations and 390 deaths

each day, CDC data showed.

In the midst of the holiday season, COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in the United States have increased in recent weeks. More than 44 per cent of US counties are experiencing medium to high COVID-19 community transmission levels, according to the CDC. “We’re still in the middle of this -- it is not over,” said White House chief medical advisor Dr Anthony Fauci, who is stepping

down this month. “Four hundred deaths per day is not an acceptable level. We want to get it much lower than that,” Fauci said.

At the same time, this cold and flu season have added risks. The trio of COVID-19, flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is continuing to stress the country’s healthcare system, resulting in decreased hospital capacity and staffing shortages.

SOURCE: Xinhua



A child receives a COVID-19 vaccine shot in Los Angeles, the United States, on 17 Dec 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA

Region/State Chief Ministers, recipients of honorary titles join Youth and Literary Arts Festival in Nay Pyi Taw



Dignitaries watch the song and dance entertainment at the Youth and Literary Arts Festival in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.



Myat Thaw Myanmar (Noble Myanmar).

Afterwards, the Union minister and wife, region and state chief ministers, recipients of honorary titles, families, students and guests enjoyed the performance of students from basic education schools of Nay Pyi Taw.

Then, they kept watching the entertaining sections of comedian Dein Daung, other comedians and the Myanmar Comedians Association. After the entertainment, the students and artistes who performed at the event were awarded.

Moreover, the Union minister, his wife and party watched the Kyee Myat Thaw Myanmar (Noble Myanmar). — MNA/KTZH

THE Youth and Literary Arts Festival held as a gesture of hailing Diamond Jubilee Independence Day continued its final day at MICC-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At noon, the region and state chief ministers joined the

event and were welcomed by Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn and his wife Daw Khin Swe Win.

Then, the Union minister explained the filmmaking gears, setting and behind-the-scenes of Myanmar's first 3D film, Kyee

Youth and Literary Arts Exhibition concludes successfully

THE Youth and Literary Arts Exhibition held as a gesture of hailing Diamond Jubilee Independence Day continued its fourth day at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

As it was last day of the exhibition, the booths of the ministries concerned and the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association were crowded with visitors.

The students and youths were interested in the displays of Nay Pyi Taw Police Force as they featured security, the rule

Transport and Communications displayed the transportation services including the ship-building processes, research paper, water flow metre and satellite-based location altimeter of the Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems.

Similarly, the booths of the Road Transport Administration Department featured the diesel engine, traffic rules, and vehicles used in different times of history and the displays of Myanma Railways included Yangon circular train, railway,



People through the Youth and Literary Arts Exhibition. PHOTOS : KO GYI HTEIN



At the Ministry of Information booth.

of law and criminal cases, public services, capacity building, cartoon displays of traffic rules and regulations, actions on gambling and other matters and special security equipment used by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Moreover, the Ministry of

diesel-electric locomotives and other locomotives.

The students and youths also observed the cyber security section and the Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications also conducted MPT Sim Card registration and MPT Pay Account

services at their booths.

The students, youths and cultural dancing troupes participated in fun fair games and quizzes.

Moreover, officials displayed the movie-making materials of Kyee Myat Thaw Myanmar film, the first 3D film in Myanmar.

The booths of the Ayeyawady Region also featured the making of Patheingyi parasol and the region's food.

The festival intends to encourage students to read books and journals, know the benefits of literature, uplift patriotic spirit and dignity through arts with the knowledge of the history of independence and know peace, stability and development of

the country including the lovely culture of rural regions and to love their regions and states via photo contests and to un-

derstand activities of ministries concerned through the booths. — Hein Min Soe/Than Min Aung/KTZH



Students look into exhibits at the "Kyee Myat Thaw Myanmar" booth.

2023 Matriculation Exam
to start on 8 March

DEPARTMENT of Myanmar Examinations under the Ministry of Education announced the date of the 2023 matriculation examination yesterday.

The 2023 matriculation examination will be held from 8 to 18 March 2023.

Candidates will have to take Myanmar, English and Mathematics exams on 8, 9 and 10 March respectively. Then, they will sit for Chemistry and Physics on 13 and 14 March and Biology and Economics on 15 March. Geography, History and Optional Myanmar exams will be on 16, 17 and 18 March respectively.

A total of 132,077 out of 281,751 students passed the exam in 2022 matriculation examinations and the national pass rate was 46.88 per cent, according to the Ministry of Education. – TWA/MKKS



The 2022 matriculation exam result was announced at No 2 BEHS Latha. PHOTO: XINHUA

CBM reassures public about
maximum security of banknotes



Pictures show a sample banknote worth K10 bearing the signature of the then treasury secretary Maung Kaung of the former Republic of the Union of Burma government and a sample K1 coin with the signature of San Lin.

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) is making concerted efforts to ensure maximum security of banknotes, said Dr Lin Aung, deputy governor of the CBM.

He gave the remark at the coordination meeting of banknotes distribution and management matters held on 27 December in Nay Pyi Taw.

The CBM has the sole right to publish currency notes and manage the currency. The CBM is prioritizing the security features of the notes, detecting fake notes and eliminating soiled

notes.

It will implement exchanging of the notes which have been excessively soiled, brittle and mutilated. The investigation will be undertaken to spot counterfeit notes and expose and take action against those counterfeit money sellers and distributors.

Under the Union Bank of Burma Act 1952, the Union Bank of Burma's new financial department was bestowed power to issue the currency notes and commenced the central bank's banking operations on 1 July 1952.

After that, the promissory notes are amended. Newly issued notes included 1-, 5-, 10-, and 100-Rupee notes. Then, the Kyat currency was connected. Kyat note bears the watermark of a peacock. For the second time, the banknotes had an image of Bogyoke Aung San in military uniform in 1958.

Bank notes of K1,5,10 and 100 were issued on 12 February 1958 and, K20 and 50 notes were issued on 21 August respectively. It is the first-ever currency note issued in Myanmar. — TWA/EMM

Lack of foreign demand drives
monsoon onion prices down

THE price of monsoon onions remains on a downward trend due to a lack of foreign demand.

It is the abundant harvest season of onions in Myanmar's onion-importing countries (Thailand and Viet Nam) so there is no demand in the border market as well. That being so, the price is likely to drop.

The wholesale price of new monsoon onions stood at K4,400-4,800 per viss depending on the producing areas (Myingyan and Myittha) on 9 December. After 13 days, the price fell to K1,900-2,100 per viss.

On 26 December, new monsoon onions from various regions were priced at K1,700-2,700 per viss in the wholesale market, Ko Swe, an onion and potato seller from Nyaungpilay market, told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

Nonetheless, the price is still higher than those in the corresponding periods of 2020 and 2021. The onions were worth K150-700 per viss on 27 Decem-



Monsoon onions are seen being abundantly flowed into the domestic market.

ber 2021 and K200-450 per viss on 26 December 2020 respectively.

The retail prices of onions are US\$1.06 per kilo in the neighbouring country Thailand, \$1.25 in Viet Nam and \$0.47 in Bangladesh and \$0.41 in India, according to price data of foreign markets. The retail price of onions in Myanmar is \$0.70 per kilo.

Only two months are remaining for new summer onions to enter the market. The growers expect they will fetch a good price of above K1,000 per

viss. The price is usually K600 per viss at the harvest time of summer onions.

In 2022, those traders who kept the stocks in their hands sold them at an exorbitant price which is five times as much as the original price. In November-December, the record price was seven-fold.

Those traders in possession of old summer onions had waste (one-fourth of a whole). The net profit is estimated at K2,000 per viss. – TWA/EMM

Tenders invited for
implementation of Smart
City projects in Bago Region

PRIVATE companies have been invited to tender for the Smart City projects in Bago Region, according to the Bago Region government.

The Smart City projects – one in Pyay, two in Thayawady, three in Nyaunglebin and four in Nattalin, will be carried out.

These projects will be implemented with the capital fund of the Bago Region government in the financial year 2022-2023, and officially licensed companies will be invited. Those interested can purchase and submit tender proposals starting 26 December at the Bago Region government office.

The Smart City project was started in Bago Region in 2017 to upgrade the city of Bago with the help of the Republic of Korea. — TWA/KZW



General view of the city centre of Pyay.

ECONOMY WORLD

Viet Nam reports strong economic growth of 8 per cent

VIET NAM'S economy grew by eight per cent in 2022, driven by strong exports and retail sales, authorities said on Thursday.

Growth in the communist nation stuttered at around three per cent for two consecutive years due to the pandemic.

Before that, Viet Nam was a success story among Asian economies, posting growth of seven per cent in 2019.

This year the economy grew by an estimated eight per cent, beating the government's target of 6-6.5 per cent, the official statistics office said.

"The economy has recovered" from the Covid-19 pandemic, it added.

However, growth slowed in the final quarter of the year as economies worldwide were hampered by the war in Ukraine and massive inflation.

Exports turnover in the fourth quarter experienced a year-on-year decline of 6.1 per cent due to a lack of overseas orders, the statistics office said.

Earlier this month the Asian Development Bank forecast growth of 7.5 per cent for Viet Nam's economy for 2022,

although it warned of weakening global demand for its exports.

The lender said it forecast Viet Nam's economy to grow 6.3 per cent in 2023. The recent cost-of-living crisis in Europe and the United States — major markets for Vietnamese-produced goods — has seen the buying power of Western shoppers plunge.

According to the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour, almost half a million workers have had their hours slashed during the last four months of this year, while about 40,000 people have lost their jobs. — AFP



People package dragon fruits in the city of Buon Ma Thuot in Viet Nam's central highlands Dak Lak province on 12 Aug 2020. **PHOTO: VNA VIA XINHUA/FILE**

Over 2.4 mln foreign tourists visit Philippines so far this year



Official data showed the tourism industry contributed 5.2 per cent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2021, below the pre-pandemic level. **PHOTO: ROUELLE UMALI / XINHUA**

OVER 2.4 million foreign tourists visited the Philippines so far this year, earning roughly 2.65 billion US dollars in tourism revenues for the Southeast Asian country, according to the Philippines' Department of Tourism (DOT) data released on Wednesday.

Since the easing of pandemic restrictions and opening

of borders this February, the tourism department said that 2,462,140 international travelers visited the Southeast Asian country famous for beaches and diving sites. Most visitors came from the United States, South Korea, Australia, Canada and Britain.

The number of international tourist arrivals has surpassed

the DOT's target of 1.7 million this year. For 2023, it projects 2.6 million "in a low scenario" and 6.4 million "in a high scenario".

Next year, the Philippines plans to improve connectivity and convenience to lure more tourists, including upgrading tourism infrastructure and digitalization.

Specifically, the government plans to develop cruise tourism, conduct regional travel fairs, develop tourism circuits and continue convergence with tourism-enhancing government agencies.

Official data showed the tourism industry contributed 5.2 per cent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2021, below the pre-pandemic level.

The tourism industry's contribution to the GDP was 12.9 per cent in 2019. It plunged to 5.1 per cent in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, its lowest level in at least two decades. —Xinhua

Consumer gas prices in Germany to remain high for most of 2023: minister

GAS prices for consumers in Europe's largest economy will remain high for another year in the wake of the energy crisis, Germany's Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck has said. "I hope that things will already be better toward the end of 2023," Habeck told the German Press Agency (dpa) on Wednesday. However, he added: "We will still have to endure higher prices."

After that period, Germany's LNG infrastructure will likely be developed enough that sufficient replacements for Russian gas can be imported, thereby also regulating prices, Habeck said.

Gas prices in Europe have already fallen significantly, after peaking at the end of August. European TTF (Title

Transfer Facility) gas futures were trading at around 80 euros (85 US dollars) per megawatt hour on Wednesday, down from almost 350 euros.

To secure Germany's gas supply, liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals are being constructed to create new infrastructure for imports. In mid-December, the country's first site for the operation of a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) was officially opened in Wilhelmshaven.

"If we manage to expand this further at the current pace, then we will reconnect Germany to the world market," Habeck said. "And then we will also get world market prices that are significantly below what we have now." (1 euro = 1.06 US dollar)—Xinhua



In this file photo taken on 29 September 2022 a worker rides a bike next to a pipeline at the landside construction site of the Uniper Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal at the Jade Bight in Wilhelmshaven on the North Sea coast, northwestern Germany. **PHOTO: FOCKE STRANGMANN / AFP**

Extreme weather had serious impact on Italy's agricultural production: union

THE hottest year on record in Italy has resulted in dramatically lower output for the country's farming sector, Italy's main agricultural union said on Wednesday. Following the announcement on Tuesday by Italy's National Research Council

LaMMA meteorology consortium that 2022 was the hottest year since record-keeping began in 1800, the union Coldiretti released data showing that these unusual weather patterns have taken a heavy toll on the country's agricultural sector.

Impacts include a 30-per cent reduction in extra virgin olive oil, 10 per cent lower production for tomato-based products, and a 5-per cent decrease in the production of durum wheat, which is used to make pasta.—Xinhua

M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINES

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AFFAIRS

WORLD: TOP HEADLINES

Peru's ousted president asks court for his freedom

PERU'S ousted president Pedro Castillo, jailed while awaiting trial on charges of "rebellion" and conspiracy, asked a court Wednesday to free him.

"I ask for an end to hatred and for my freedom," Castillo told the Supreme Court in an online hearing.

"I never committed the crime of rebellion," he added.

Castillo, 53, was impeached and arrested on 7 December after he tried to dissolve Congress to rule by decree.

Since coming to power in

July 2021, he faced vehement political opposition on all fronts and investigations started almost immediately into numerous graft claims.

After his failed self-coup, Castillo was ordered held in pre-trial detention for 18 months.

The ouster of the former rural school teacher and union leader caused protests country-wide, with Peru's rights ombudsman reporting 22 people killed in clashes and more than 600 injured.

Castillo's defence team is

asking for his pre-trial detention at a prison on a police base in Lima to be terminated.

The court, headed by judge Cesar San Martin, must rule later Wednesday.

"Judge, I have not committed any crime of conspiracy," insisted Castillo, who was accompanied by his lawyer. — AFP

Pedro Castillo was impeached and arrested on 7 December after he tried to dissolve Congress to rule by decree. **PHOTO: AFP**



Five dead, 37 injured in South Korea road tunnel fire



Firefighters work at the scene of a fire in an expressway tunnel in Gwacheon on 29 December. **PHOTO: AFP**

FIVE people have been killed and dozens injured after a bus and truck crash caused a huge fire at an expressway tunnel on the outskirts of Seoul, the local fire

department told AFP.

Images of the scene in local media showed huge flames and plumes of smoke rising from the tunnel, as hundreds of firefighters

battled to bring the blaze under control.

The fire started when a bus collided with a truck at around 1:50 pm (12:50 pm, Singapore time) in the expressway tunnel in Gwacheon, an official at the Gwacheon fire department told AFP.

The raised tunnel, which is designed to protect surrounding buildings from the noise of the road, was quickly engulfed in flames, images in local media showed.

Firefighters have brought the blaze under control, the official said. "We are doing a search inside the tunnel in case of additional casualties," the official added. — AFP

Ten killed, scores injured in huge hotel-casino fire on Cambodian border

PEOPLE were seen jumping from burning building to escape the deadly Cambodia casino fire.

About 10 people are dead and more than a dozen on life support after a fire at a Cambodian border casino, with photos from the scene showing people desperately huddled on ledges and perched on windowsills in a bid to escape the flames.

The blaze at the Grand Diamond City hotel-casino in Poipet, on the Thai border, broke out late Wednesday night, Cambodian police said.

A provisional police report seen by AFP put the death toll at "about 10" and the number of injured at 30.

But Thai authorities in neighbouring Sa Kaeo province later said that more than 50 victims had been hospitalized there, with public health official Prapas Pookduang telling AFP that 13 people were "on life support".

Sa Kaeo Governor Parinya Phothisat said another 60-odd people caught up in the conflagration had already been checked and cleared by Thai hospitals. — AFP

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

UN names new coordinator for Black Sea grain initiative

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday named a retired Kuwaiti vice-admiral as coordinator for the Black Sea Grain Initiative to manage grain shipments from war-torn Ukraine. Abdullah Abdul Samad Dashti will help coordinate the five-month-old operation by Türkiye, Ukraine, Russia and the United Nations to ensure shipments of grains, oilseeds, fertilizers and other farm products can get safely to markets from the Black Sea. — AFP



A vessel transports grain under the Black Sea Grain Initiative. **PHOTO: OCHA/LEVENT KULU**

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Most of Ukraine's Lviv city without power after strikes: mayor

MOST of Ukraine's western city of Lviv was left without electricity after fresh Russian missile strikes on Thursday morning, the city's mayor said. "Ninety per cent of the city is without electricity," Andriy Sadoviy said on social media, also warning of potential water cuts. "We are waiting for more information from energy experts. Trams and trolleybuses are not running in the city." — AFP

All 16 Russian missiles targeting Kyiv 'shot down': officials

KYIV authorities said Thursday that air defences downed all 16 missiles that targeted the Ukrainian capital as part of a new wave of Russian strikes on the pro-Western country. "Sixteen missiles were recorded over Kyiv. All 16 missiles were shot down," the city's military administration said on social media, adding that missile fragments damaged three private houses and a car. — AFP

Israel's Netanyahu back with extreme-right government

AFTER a stint in opposition, Benjamin Netanyahu will return to power in Israel on Thursday, leading what analysts describe as the most right-wing government in the country's history.

Senior security and law enforcement officials have already voiced concern over its direction, as have Palestinians.

"It becomes for Netanyahu's partners a dream government," Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute think-tank, told AFP.

"And one side's dream is the other side's nightmare," he

said, adding: "This government is expected to take the country in a completely new trajectory."

Netanyahu, 73, who is fighting corruption allegations in court, already served as prime minister longer than anyone in Israeli history, including a record 12-year tenure from 2009 to 2021 and a three-year period in the late 90s.

He was ousted from power in the spring of 2021 by a motley coalition of leftists, centrists and Arab parties headed by Naftali Bennett and former TV news anchor Yair Lapid.

It didn't take him long to come back.

Netanyahu will present his new government to the Israeli parliament for a ratification vote at 11:00 am (0900 GMT).

Following the election on 1 November, Netanyahu entered into negotiations with ultra-Orthodox and extreme-right parties, among them Bezalel Smotrich's Religious Zionism formation and Itamar Ben Gvir's Jewish Power party.

Both have a history of inflammatory remarks about the Palestinians.— AFP



Benjamin Netanyahu, 73, already served as prime minister longer than anyone in Israeli history. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Bolivia charges key opposition leader with 'terrorism'



Right-wing Bolivian opposition leader Luis Fernando Camacho has been arrested. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

BOLIVIAN police on Wednesday arrested Luis Fernando Camacho, governor of the economic powerhouse Santa Cruz region, on "terrorism" charges, setting off street clashes between his supporters and security forces.

"We inform the Bolivian people that the Bolivian police exe-

cuted an arrest warrant against Luis Fernando Camacho," Interior Minister Eduardo del Castillo said, adding that Camacho was flown to La Paz, the administrative capital, for questioning.

Camacho, a former right-wing presidential candidate, was under investigation on several

charges, including for an alleged role in the resignation of leftist president Evo Morales in 2019, and for allegedly fanning protests in Santa Cruz this year.

The public prosecutor's office said Camacho was accused of "terrorism" in relation to efforts to oust Morales, without providing further details. The charge echoed the arrest and trial of former president Jeanine Anez, who was detained in 2021 and given a 10-year prison term in June for allegedly plotting the toppling of Morales. The governor's office, meanwhile, claimed Camacho had been "kidnapped in a completely irregular police operation". After learning of Camacho's arrest, supporters barricaded streets in Santa Cruz with paving stones, tree branches and vehicles to demand his release. They also torched the regional prosecutor's office. No injuries were reported.— AFP

Window for reviving nuclear deal not to open forever: Iranian FM

THE Iranian foreign minister warned on Wednesday that the window for achieving an agreement on the revival of a 2015 nuclear deal won't remain open forever, official news agency IRNA reported.

"The window for a nuclear agreement is open today, but ... if the other sides, especially the United States, do not give

up hypocrisy and the West does not act realistically," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told IRNA in Muscat, capital of Oman, following meetings with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and other senior officials.

Tehran will resort to other alternatives if the West continues its hypocrisy and interference, the Iranian foreign

minister added.

Commenting on his meeting with the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on the sidelines of a regional conference in Jordan's capital Amman last week, Amir-Abdollahian said the EU, as the coordinator of the nuclear talks, is continuing its efforts.—Xinhua

Canada-led group seeks arbitrator over jet downing by Iran

A group of countries led by Canada on Wednesday called for an arbitrator to settle claims against Iran over its shooting down of a Ukrainian passenger plane in January 2020.

The move is a first step in possibly bringing a case against Iran at the International Court of Justice, which victims' families have long demanded.

"Those who lost loved ones in the downing of PS752 deserve justice," Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly tweeted. "We have taken an important step to advance our pursuit of that justice at the international level this week and will continue to work together to hold Iran accountable for this tragedy." Iranian forces shot down Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 shortly after its take-off from Tehran on January 8, 2020, killing all

176 people aboard -- including 85 Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

Three days later, Iran admitted that its military had targeted the Kyiv-bound Boeing 737-800 plane by mistake.

Canada, Britain, Sweden and Ukraine have been seeking reparations on behalf of the victims' families.

They said in a joint statement Wednesday that they "have requested that Iran submits to binding arbitration of the dispute related to the downing of Flight PS752", under a 1971 multilateral treaty on threats to civil aviation.

And if the parties cannot agree within six months on the terms for organizing an independent arbitration tribunal, the dispute may be referred to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. —AFP



Women in Kyiv lay flowers to commemorate the crew and passengers of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752, which was shot down by Iran. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Israel's
Netanyahu back
with extreme-
right government



SPORT

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.

Myanmar team defender David Htan (left) and Myanmar head coach Antoine Hey are seen at the pre-match press conference for the AFF Mitsubishi Electric Cup 2022. **PHOTO: MFF**



Myanmar to play Laos today in AFF Mitsubishi Electric Cup 2022

THE pre-match press conference for the ASEAN Championship AFF Mitsubishi Electric Cup 2022 Group B match between the Myanmar national team and the Laos national team, which will be held today at Thuwunna Stadium, was held at the press conference hall of the Stadium yesterday.

Before the pre-match press conference, the Match Coordinating Meeting was held, and officials from the ASEAN Football Federation, officials from the Myanmar national team and the Laos national team attended and discussed matters related to the competition.

After that, the press conference continued, and Team Myanmar head coach Antoine Hey and defender David Htan, the Laos team head coach Hans Michael Weiss and Laos team striker

Billy attended it and answered.

"After the match against Singapore, some players, including the goalkeeper, have injury problems. In the matches against Malaysia and Singapore, they did not get good results, but the team played well. I am also satisfied with the efforts of the players. The best plans for the future of the club have been drawn up.

"It should be seen that the Myanmar team has improved in the past matches. We will play our best to win against Laos. After the AFF Mitsubishi Electric Cup, I will handle the team properly.

"Experienced players and young players will be used equally in other competitions, including the SEA Games," said Myanmar head coach Antoine Hey. Next, Myanmar team de-

fender David Htan said, "We are best prepared for a good result against Laos. We will try to achieve the best form of individual performance. Thank you to the audience for always supporting me."

The AFF Mitsubishi Electric Cup 2022 tournament will be held at home. There are matches because they have to play away. The Myanmar team will be fresher because they have had more rest days than us. But as a team, we will show that we are getting better game by game. The Myanmar team is good. We will have to play away, but we will prepare the best," said Laos head coach Hans Michael Weiss.

"Our players are tired, but we will not give reasons. In the match against Myanmar, I will try to play for a good result," said Laos team striker Billy. — KZL

Brazilian football legend Pele has died: family

BRAZILIAN football icon Pele, widely regarded as the greatest player of all time and a three-time World Cup winner who masterminded the "beautiful game", has died at the age of 82, his family said Thursday.

"Everything we are is thanks to you. We love you infinitely. Rest in peace," daughter Kely Nascimento wrote on Instagram. Named athlete of the century by the International Olympic Committee in 1999, Pele is the only footballer in history to win three World Cups – 1958, 1962 and 1970.

Nicknamed "O Rei" (The King), he scored more than 1,000 goals in one of the most storied careers in sport, before retiring in 1977. He had been in increasingly fragile health, battling kidney problems and colon cancer – undergoing surgery for the latter in September 2021, followed by chemotherapy. AFP



India to bid for 2036 Olympics

INDIA is planning a bid for the 2036 Olympic Games and will lobby for hosting rights at an International Olympic Committee meeting next year, the country's sports minister has said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has been vying to establish India as a global sporting power and has shovelled money into domestic infrastructure. Ahmedabad in Modi's home state of Gujarat — India's candidate for Olympic host city — is the site of the largest stadium in the world, opened in 2020 and named after the leader. Sports minister Anurag Thakur told the Times of India newspaper it was the "right time" for his country to pitch for the world's largest sporting event.—AFP



India is planning a bid for the 2036 Olympic Games and will lobby for hosting rights at an International Olympic Committee meeting next year. **PHOTO: AFP**