WELCOME A PLAN OF YRTC FOR YBS PASSENGERS

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

Low and high grades of paddy fetch skyrocketing prices

A photo shows quality of deltaic Pawsan paddy in the market.

PRICES of low and high grades of monsoon paddy are on the rapid rise in deltaic region of Myanmar on 29 January 2023, according to the daily paddy price information released a rice mill in Wakema Township.

On that day, Thukha monsoon paddy was traded at K1.5 million per 100 50-lb bag, Hnankar K1.4 million and Pawsan some K1.75 million per 100 52-lb bag.

On 17 January, Pawsan was priced at K1.65 million per 100 baskets and Thukha K13.5 million.

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Yangon International Airport gave services to over 2 million passengers, over 30,000 flights in 2022

An airplane of Air Asia admits boarding of passengers and cargo at Yangon International Airport. **PHOTO: KANU**

IN 2022, the Yangon International Airport served a total of 2,149,202 arriving/departing passengers and 33,750 flights, according to the Yangon Aerodrome Company Limited (YACL), which takes responsibilities of services at the Yangon International Airport.

Continuous monitoring and notifying

YACL provides services in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

In cooperation with relevant partner organizations for running the international flights, it has been monitoring and notifying flight passengers of the arrival/departure restrictions required by the country of travel.

Increase of travellers

In 2021, the Yangon International Airport could serve 723,540 arrival/departure passengers and running of 20,991 flights.

There were 133,483 arrival/departure passengers and 2,703 numbers of flights in January 2022. By the end of December, there were 275,658 arrival/departure passengers and 3,388 numbers of flights.

As such, the Yangon International Airport gave services to more than two million passengers and more than 30,000 numbers of flights last year. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/KZW

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National Objectives for 76th Anniversary of Union Day 2023

1. To strive for the perpetual existence of national solidarity and perpetuity of the Union through the internal strength
2. To make collaborative efforts of all ethnic nationals to restore perpetual and durable peace
3. To join hands in harmony for ensuring the prosperity and food sufficiency of the nation as two national plans through the Union spirit
4. To help develop all regions and states on equal terms and increase employment opportunities with ensuring the health and fitness of the entire National people
5. To practise the genuine, discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system through fraternity, solidarity and united endeavours of all ethnic national brethren for building the Union based on democratic and federal systems

Maravijaya Buddha image combined with parts 1, 2 and 3 lifted up to 90°

Maravijaya Buddha image being lifted up to 90° by steel tower crane to place it on jewelled throne on 29 January.

MEMBERS of the Sangha led by Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Mandalay's Bhamo Monastery Abbot Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa and Chamcellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Academies Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Maha Dhamma Kathika Bahujanahitadhara Shwegyin Nikaya Chairman Shwegyin Sangharaja Sitagu Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Nyanissara together with well-wishers led by leading donor State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Maung Hlaing attended the ceremony at which the Maravijaya Buddha image was lifted up to be placed on the jewelled throne in Buddha Park in Dekkhinathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory on the morning of 26 January.

The process of lifting up the Buddua image combined with parts 1, 2 and 3 to be placed on the jewelled throne is using a steel tower crane starting from 8:10 am on 26 January. The image was lifted up to 26° as well as the 31 feet high position from the reclining position on 26 January, 51° as well as the 52 feet high position on 27 January, 68° as well as the 63 feet high position on 28 January and 90° as well as the 75.5 feet high position at 9 am on 29 January. The whole lifting up process took 72 hours and 50 minutes.

Four parts of the Buddha image was carved with the use of CNC machine, and combination of parts 1, 2 and 3 have been completed. The lifting up of the image and conveyance of the image onto the jewelled throne continue.

Those from Myanmar Engineering Council and military engineers took seven months in building a steel tower installed with eight cranes to lift up the image to be placed onto the throne after combining the carved parts of the image and building a steel basket for conveying the image to avoid damage, using some 3,800 tonnes of iron wares.

Although those Myanmar engineers did not have technology and experiences in lifting up the large and heavy mass before, they applied their work experiences to do so with utmost efforts after creating the designs and checking the work process with the use of modern technologies in building the Maravijaya Buddha image.

It was reported that eight cranes from the steel tower continue lifting the steel basket carrying the Buddha image combined with three parts and the image weighing 2,367.5 tonnes and it will contune work process in procedures. All the construction tasks and lifting tasks aim to enable the people to peacefully pay homage to the Buddha image, take meditation and view Tri Pitakat treatises preached by the Lord Buddha. —MNA/TTA

Maravijaya Buddha image lifted up to 26°.

Maravijaya Buddha image lifted up to 51°.

Maravijaya Buddha image lifted up to 68°.

Necessary to preserve the languages and cultures of ethnic people as well as Myanmar literature, language and culture

RELEVANT ministries were urged to provide education, health, economic and transport facilities for ethnic people. Hence, relevant ministries need to cooperate with each other in work processes. It is necessary to preserve the languages and cultures of ethnic people as well as Myanmar literature, language and culture.

[Excerpts from the speech delivered by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the third-day coordination meeting held on 10 August 2022 in regard to matters relating to the activities being carried out by the Union Government].

National Landmark Sculpturing and Painting Youth Camp for LMC Fine Arts Students project launched

THE launching of the National Landmark Sculpting and Painting Youth Camp for LMC Fine Arts Students, one of the projects of the Mekong-Lancang cooperation scheme, was held at Yadanabon hall in Mandalay via virtual system yesterday morning.

First, the ceremony was opened performances with a Myanmar traditional spirit dance.

Then, Union Minister of Religion Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko said that the People's Republic of China, Cambodia, Laos, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam have been relying on the Mekong River at Mekong-Lancang river basin as regional member countries. The National Landmark Sculpting and painting Youth Camp for LMC Fine Arts Students, which includes young sculptors and painting artists from six member countries in the Mekong-Lancang region, was hosted by the National University of Arts and Culture (Mandalay) in Mandalay on 29 and 30 January.

Launching ceremony of the National Landmark Sculpting and Painting Youth Camp for LMC Fine Arts Students in progress.

Next, Chief Minister of the Mandalay Region U Maung Ko, Minister Counselor Dr Zheng Zhihong from Chinese Embassy to Myanmar, Vice Chair of the Mekong-Lancang cooperation committee U Win Zeyar Tun from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs extended greetings.

After that, painting and sculpture expert from China Ms Jixian Huang and Myanmar expert Dr Pyae Phyo Kyaw discussed the history of the art and sculpture. Then, a song and dance in honour of Mekong-Lancang cooperation was presented.

The project on National Landmark Sculpting and Painting Youth Camp for LMC Fine Arts Students will continue for the second day on 30 January. —MNA/KZW

MoSYA Union Minister inspects development undertakings in Lahe, Naga Self-Administered Zone

UNION Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan together with Naga Self-Administered Zone Administration Body Chairman U Tun Tun Win and Secretary U Nay Min Thu visited Theravada Buddhist Missionary (Central) Monstery in Lahe, Naga Self-Administered Zone, Sagaing Region yesterday morning and donated offertories and cash for nine prerequisites.

After that, the Union Minister visited the Theravada Buddhist Missionary Nunnery and handed over the books and publications published by the Myawady Literature House, donated by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

The Union Minister viewed round the placement of fiction and non-fiction books at Knowledge Garden Library.

Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan checks layout plan for upgrading football ground in Lahe on 29 January.

After that, the Union Minister and party visited the Shwepyitha Sports Ground in Lahe where the Naga Traditional New Year Festival was held.

In accord with the guidance of the Head of State, the sports ground will be upgraded to a multi-purpose stadium facilitated with a synthetic runway.

The area of the football field will be systematically measured to bring it in line with the set standards.

The Union Minister urged officials and local authorities to coordinate the measures for expanding the land area. The Union Minister stressed the need to make the lawns green, improve the water flow and maintain it for the long term after rebuilding the football field.—MNA/KZL

MoH Union Minister meets entrepreneurs from India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce

AT the invitation of India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce-IMCC in Yangon, Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win attended the meeting as a guest of honour at the India Centre in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

In the meeting, Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Vinay Kumar extended greetings and explained the cooperation between India and Myanmar in various arenas.

After that, the Union Minister said that the India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce is an important organization as the bilateral trade and investment conditions are further enhanced.

Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win meets entrepreneurs of India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce in Yangon on 29 January.

India-Myanmar relations have been lasting since ancient times, and because of the closeness of the two countries' borders, they have been able to further enhance relations.

India is Myanmar's main trade partner, and in 2021-2022, the trade value reached some 1.89 billion US dollars, and it will continue to improve. Pharmaceutical products are the main import products from India to Myanmar," the Union Minister continued.

He said that the Ministry of Health has been purchasing and distributing medicines made in India annually depending on the national budget for use in hospitals so that the people of Myanmar have access to quality medicines.

The Department of Food and Drug Administration is also conducting rapid acquisition of import licences for imported drugs and medical products for safely and securely, he said.

India is developing in medical science, and he urged medical professionals from India to come to Myanmar and collaborate with Myanmar medical professionals to carry out medical treatments and to invest in pharmaceutical factories.

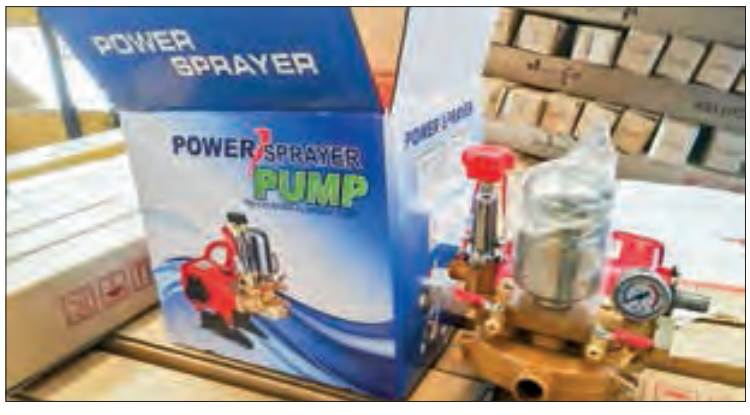
Then the Chairman of India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce Mr Naresh Kumar Dinodiya and the secretary explained the activities of the India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce and Union Minister responded to the questions of the Indian entrepreneurs. —MNA/KZL

Illegal foodstuffs, consumer goods, industrial goods, electronic accessories, vehicles nabbed

A combined team lead by the Secretary of the Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force of Yangon Region seized 1,146 bottles of various foreign-made beverages in 23 types estimated at K 47,905,800 from a garage at the corner of Padauk street and Aungthapyay street in Shwenatha Village-tract in Mingaladon Township on 24 January and the action was taken under the Customs Procedures.

Similarly, an on-duty team under the supervision of Customs Department seized two items of goods including 10,000 kilogrammes of Iron Spring estimated at K 27.3 million not declared in Import Declaration (ID) from a container in Myanmar International Terminal Thilawa and LED soft light band approximately K10.8 million not declared in ID from a container in Hteedan container checkpoint. Officials nabbed 12 items of goods including five Uninterruptible Power Supply units estimated at K 16,882,310not shown in the ID, 4,500 umbrellas approximately K9 million more than the ID and 100 Power Sprayer Pumps worth K5 million different from the ID from three containers at Myanmar Industrial Port container checkpoint on 27 January. Then, 19 items of goods including Half Section Bearing estimated at K 10,588,200 not match in ID and four vinyl curtains worth at K2,439,766 from Yangon International Airport warehouse, totalling K82,010,276 and the action was taken under the Customs Procedures.

Foreign-made beverages seized by combined team led by secretary of Yangon Region Task Force on 24 January.



Power sprayer pumps seized at Myanmar industrial port container checkpoint in Yangon on 27 January.

Furthermore, an on-duty team under the supervision of the Customs Department inspected vehicles on Myawady-Hpa-an-Yangon highway and seized six items of goods including charging cables and phone stands not match in the ID estimated at K18,114,631 from a vehicle near Bago, 600 bottles of Xian JiaLi brand shampoo not included FDA approval and not declared in ID approximately K6 million and a MAN tractor head and a trailer estimated value of K60 million, totally amounting to K 84,114,631 were seized and the action was taken under the Customs Procedures.

Therefore, 11 arrests at an estimated value of K214,030,707 were made from 24 to 27 January, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. —MNA/KZW

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We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email **aungthuya@gnlm.com.mm** with your name and title.

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

Reference wholesale price set as K 4,430 per viss of palm oil

IT was announced yesterday that it would take action under the Important Goods and Services Act if the persons raise prices, illegally store goods and commit scams in the domestic market.

The Committee for the Supervision of the Import and Distribution of Edible Oils under the Ministry of Commerce has issued a statement in a bid to manage the domestic palm oil prices.

Depending on the daily monitoring of FOB prices in Malaysia and Indonesia, transportation costs, bank expenses, and basic wholesale reference price to be traded in the local market are taken into account, including taxes for setting the proper prices.

According to market and price in the world's palm oil exporters this week, the committee has announced the basic Yangon Reference Wholesale Price of palm oil is K4,430 per viss within 30 January and 5 February.

These basic wholesale quotes are available on the Department of Consumer Affairs website: www.doca.gov.mm and on the Facebook page of the Myanmar Oil Traders and Oil Entrepreneurs Association. —MNA/KZW

Consumers are in a queue to buy palm oil.

1 new case of COVID-19 reported on 29 January, total figure rises to 633,819

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,819** after **one** new case was reported on 29 January 2023 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **614,281**, including **two** new recoveries.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged to **19,490** on 29-1-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic.

The country has vaccinated **30,906,090** people aged 18 and above for COVID-19 vaccines and **6,809,563** people aged under 18 till 28 January 2023.—MNA

Mottos for 76th Anniversary of Union Day 2023

1. Let's go forward in joining hands among ethnic nationals in unison
2. Let's firmly join hands among national brethren of the Union in unity
3. Energetic harmony and stronger unity represent the souls of the Union

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.

Reference wholesale prices for Union Territory, Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay and reference retail prices for cities of regions and states

30-1-2023

Kyat/Litre

Fuel (Retail Price)	Yangon	Mandalay	Nay Pyi Taw	Bago	Magway	Dawei	Monywa	Pathein	Myitkyina	Sittway	Hpa-an	Mawlamyine	Lashio	Taunggyi	Loikaw	Haka	Kengtung
92 Ron	2,275	2,325	2,320	2,285	2,325	2,350	2,335	2,310	2,410	2,425	2,315	2,325	2,360	2,365	2,365	2,595	2,900
95 Ron	2,355	2,405	2,405	2,365	2,405	2,425	2,410	2,390	2,490	2,505	2,395	2,415	2,440	2,440	2,445	2,675	2,980
HSD (500 ppm)	2,490	2,540	2,535	2,500	2,535	2,560	2,555	2,525	2,645	2,635	2,530	2,540	2,575	2,575	2,580	2,810	3,500
HSD (50 ppm)	2,570	2,620	2,615	2,580	2,615	2,640	2,635	2,605	2,725	2,715	2,610	2,620	2,655	2,655	2,660	2,890	3,530
HSD (10 ppm)	2,570	2,620	2,615	2,580	2,615	2,640	2,635	2,605	2,725	2,715	2,610	2,620	2,655	2,655	2,660	2,890	3,530

Fuel (Wholesale Price)	Yangon	Mandalay
92 Ron	2,164	2,241
95 Ron	2,240	2,319
HSD (500 ppm)	2,374	2,451
HSD (50 ppm)	2,447	2,526
HSD (10 ppm)	2,447	2,526

Remarks:

(1) It's calculation is based on MOPS price.

(2) If people are not satisfied with purchase of fuel, they may safely send complaints to telephone numbers of the committee as follows: -

067-409881 and 09-699611116, 067-411129, 09-440433533

Fuel Import, Storage and Distribution Supervisory Committee

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Yangon City Development Committee.

Six granted land plots for construction of YP filling stations revoked under the law: YCDC

THE Yangon City Development Committee issued a press release, saying that it revoked the six granted land plots for construction of YP filling stations under the law.

YCDC issued the 60-year land plot leased agreements to Yangon Petrol Co Ltd for opening the fuel filling stations in the previous government term. These plots were located in Dagon Myothit (East) and (South) townships and Dala township. These granted land plots have been cancelled under the rules.

The head of Urban Land Management Department of YCDC stated that these land plots were grant book No A 0037058 A of Golden Star Co Ltd on 63.895 acres of plot No 1 in Ward 62 of Dagon Myothit (South) Township, grant book No A 0035310 A of Yangon Petrol Co Ltd on 3.714 acres of plot No 13/A on Ward 12+17+18 in Mayangon Township, grant book No A 0035148 A on 0.699 acre of plot No 2-A in Thuwunna 23rd Ward of Thingangyun Township, grant book No A 0038147 A on 4.941 acres of plot No 613 in extended Ward 1 in Dagon Myothit (East) Township, grant book No A 0039600 A on 0.752 acre of plot No 1-A in Ward 17 of Dagon Myothit (South) Township and grant book No A 0041013 A on 1.415 acres of plot No 1424 in Ward 3 in Dala Township.—TWA/TTA

Myanmar exports 215,340 tonnes of rice worth of over $83 mln in December in shipping

MYANMAR exported 215,340 tonnes of rice and broken rice and earned US$83.107 million in December 2022 via sea trade, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar's seaborne rice exports to international trade partners amounted to $40.746 million from over 99,550 tonnes in December 2022, with some 66,190 tonnes to Asian countries and about 33,360 tonnes to EU member countries.

During the last month, Myanmar shipped over 18,410 tonnes of rice to China, 26,100 tonnes to Bangladesh, 15,860 tonnes to the Philippines, 4,800 tonnes to Indonesia, over 620 tonnes to Malaysia, over 300 tonnes to Hong Kong and over 70 tonnes to Singapore.

Moreover, Myanmar conveyed 7,550 tonnes of rice to Poland, over 4,920 tonnes to Spain, 4,090 tonnes to Türkiye, 2,750 tonnes to Italy, 2,440 tonnes to Bulgaria, over 2,370 tonnes to Portugal, 1,950 tonnes to England, 1,500 tonnes to Belgium, 1,400 tonnes to Lithuania, over 920 tonnes to Slovenia, 1,050 tonnes to Greece, 500 tonnes each to Croatia, Lebanon and Germany, 250 tonnes each to the Netherlands and Czech Republic, 350 tonnes to France and small volume to other countries respectively.

In December, Myanmar exported over 40,200 tonnes of rice worth $14.856 million through Myanmar-China border trade route. So, Myanmar exported a total of 139,750 tonnes to China via maritime and border trade routes. Myanmar's rice export to China was down by over 18,200 tonnes in December compared to that last month.

Myanmar maritime trade saw over 47,050 tonnes of broken rice valued at $17.27 million, with 39,600 tonnes to EU member countries and some 7,450 tonnes to China the whole December last year.

Over 28,540 tonnes of broken rice worth $10.235 million were exported via cross-border points in December, with over 27,200 tonnes flowing to China and over 1,330 to Thailand. The overall broken rice exports through maritime and border trade routes were estimated at some 75,600 tonnes in December last year, which was up by 15,000 tonnes from November's export volume. — TWA/CT

Rice bags are being loaded aboard the vessel for exportation to foreign markets in shipping.

Low and high grades of paddy fetch skyrocketing prices

FROM PAGE-1

Pawsan produced by the deltaic region fetched K1.65 million per 100 baskets compared to K1.9 million to K2.2 million per 100 baskets of Shwebo Pawsan on 18 January 2023.

The domestic market saw high prices of paddy. On 25 October 2022, low-grade Thukha secured K1.3 million per 100 baskets from the deltaic region, K1.34 million on 21 November, K1.31 million on 24 December 2022, K1.35 million on 17 January 2023 and K1.5 million on 29 January 2023.

In November 2022, deltaic Pawsan paddy fetched K1.6 million per 100 baskets, in comparison with K1.675 million in early December, K1.63 million at the end of December 2022, K1.65 million on 17 January 2023 and K1.75 million on 29 January 2023.

During the three-month period of this new paddy season, deltaic Pawsan was risen by K150,000 and some K200,000 for low-grade Thukha paddy.

On 2 January 2023, Shwebo Pawsan pocketed K1.6 million per 100 baskets but K2.2 million on 18 January, according to the press release of paddy prices in Shwebo.

Old Shwebo Pawsan fetched K2.7 million per 100 baskets in Shwebo on 18 December 2022. Prices of high grade rice have been skyrocketing in Yangon rice market since mid-January 2023.

In Yangon market in mid-January 2022, new Shwebo Pawsan rice bagged K43,000 per bag and new Myaungmya/Pathein Pawsan rice some K45,000.

But, Yangon rice market recorded K84,000 per bag of new Shwebo Pawsan rice and new Myaungmya/Pathein Pawsan rice K67,000 in mid-January 2023.

Price of monsoon low-grade paddy in 2021 fetched K600,000 per 100 baskets but summer paddy secured K800,000 per 100 baskets.

In 2022 when monsoon paddy was harvested, 100 baskets of low-grade monsoon paddy was traded at K1.3 million, but it increased to K1.5 million after three months period.

Summer paddy will flow into the market in around March or April this year, so prices of low-grade paddy may not rise more, said a rice merchant.

It was reported that this month, the late-grown low-grade paddy are being harvested. Sown acreage of summer paddy is lesser than that of monsoon paddy but the former meets the market demand. Some two million acres of summer paddy have higher yield of paddy per acre than monsoon paddy.

An acre of paddy can yield some 100 baskets. So, it may reach some 200 million baskets of paddy. Data on yield of crops spreading among the domestic markets are predicted by merchants and warehouse owners.—TWA/TTA

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Rains bring in fresh cold wave in India

RAINS in northern and western parts of India, including Delhi and its nearby areas, have brought along a fresh cold wave during the past 24 hours, as temperature dipped and people stayed indoors.

The lowest temperature of 4 degrees Celsius was observed in Hisar district of northern Haryana state, around 160 km from Delhi.

Rains splashed Jaipur and other areas in western India overnight Saturday, and reached Delhi and its nearby areas on Sunday afternoon. Some parts in central India too witnessed incessant rains during the day, thereby bringing down the Mercury.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), dense to very dense fog conditions during morning and night hours will prevail over parts of northern India, including Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh over the next two days.

"Isolated heavy rainfall/snowfall very likely over Western Himalayan Region on 29 and 30 January. Isolated hailstorm very likely over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, West Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan on 29 January and over Uttarakhand on 29 and 30 January. Strong surface winds 20-30 km per hour likely to prevail over northwest India on 29 and 30 January," the IMD tweeted.

Delhi has witnessed eight cold wave days in January this year, the most in the month in 15 years, local media reported. —Xinhua

People walk over the Atal Pedestrian Bridge at the Sabarmati riverfront amid smoggy conditions on a cold winter day in Ahmedabad on 29 January 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Iran condemns 'cowardly' drone attack on defence site

IRAN on Sunday condemned a "cowardly" night-time drone attack that targeted a defence ministry site, at a time of high tensions over its nuclear programme and Russia's war in Ukraine.

An anti-aircraft system destroyed one drone and two others exploded, the ministry said, adding that there were no casualties and only minor damage to the site in the central province of Isfahan.

"This cowardly act was carried out today as part of the efforts made by enemies of the Iranian nation in recent months to make the Islamic republic insecure," Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said at a press conference with his visiting Qatari counterpart, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

"Such measures cannot affect the will and intention of our specialists for peaceful nuclear developments," he added.

A fireball lit up the night sky in video footage widely shared on social media and published by Iranian state media, with people outside seen running and emergency service vehicles speeding towards the site.—AFP

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian meets with his Qatari counterpart in the capital Tehran, on 29 January 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Cambodia's ruling party fully supports Hun Sen as PM candidate for general election

THE ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) concluded its extraordinary congress on Sunday, voicing its full support for the candidacy of incumbent Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen to run for a new five-year term in the July general election.

The extraordinary congress "fully supports Samdech Techo Hun Sen as the Prime Minister candidate for the seventh legislature of the National Assembly and supports His Excellency Hun Manet as the future Prime Minister candidate," said a party's resolution.

Hun Sen, 70, has been in power for 38 years, while his eldest son, Hun Manet, 45, who is currently a member of the CPP's Permanent Committee, is a deputy commander-in-chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) and the commander of the Royal Cambodian Army.

The resolution came at the end of a two-day CPP extraordinary congress held at the party's headquarters in Phnom Penh under the presidency of Hun Sen, who is also the CPP's president.

Speaking at a press briefing after the meeting, CPP spokesman Sok Eysan said the congress approved tasks and directions for 2023 and a political platform for 2023-2028.—Xinhua

African Swine Fever kills 256 pigs in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara

THE number of pig deaths suspected to be caused by the African Swine Fever (ASF) virus in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara has reached 256.

"There were only 253 deaths at first, but now there are three more cases in North Central Timor Regency," Nusa Tenggara Animal Husbandry Service official Melky Angsar told local media on Sunday.

Since 21 December last year, the virus has spread to Kupang Regency, Kupang City, Ende Regency, East Flores Regency, Sikka Regency, Southwest Sumba Regency, West Sumba Regency, and North Central Timor Regency.

To combat the infectious virus, the authorities have distributed 39,200 liters of disinfectant to farmers and banned the movement of pigs in and out of the province.

The same swine flu also attacked East Nusa Tenggara in 2000 and killed thousands of pigs.—Xinhua

Rwanda troops clash with DRC police: Congolese sources

A clash between Rwandan soldiers and DR Congo police on a small island in Lake Kivu sparked panic given ongoing tensions between Kigali and Kinshasa, Congolese sources said Sunday.

Police stationed on Ibindja island in eastern Congo, on the south side of the lake which the neighbours' border bisects, challenged three boats carrying armed Rwandan troops as they approached their base on Saturday, a DRC navy source based in the region said on condition of anonymity.

According to the source, a DRC policeman went to challenge the soldiers as to why they were on the Congolese side of the border.

After a discussion, "voices were raised and there were exchanges of gunfire," sparking panic among locals in earshot in Chivumu village.

Several families fled the island and took refuge just across the water at Birava, local civil society representative Jackson Kalimba said.

Naval sources said the Rwandan troops returned to base without disembarking on the island and Archimede Karhebwa, DRC local assistant administrator, said the situation was under control Sunday.

He said one police officer had suffered a gunshot wound and added the local naval regiment was on alert pending military high command taking "measures to reinforce surveillance of Lake Kivu".

Rwandan authorities contacted by AFP had not commented on the spat by Sunday afternoon.—AFP

Welcome a plan of YRTC for YBS passengers

ON a recent day, a news item came out on social media, mentioning the plan of the Yangon Region Public Transport Committee-YRTC to take action against offenders of YBS bus lines.

As for a news item, it is a regular function of relevant organizations. But, the YBS bus lines are being operated to provide transport services to the people, mostly in Yangon city on a daily basis. But, now is the time for the YRTC to improve its services as public transport for the people.

In Myanmar, varieties of laws have been enacted till today but these are not enough for all. Hence, governments in successive eras have been promulgating the laws one after another aimed at protecting the entire people in the legal frameworks against unnecessary impacts and effects from some expected events.

On 20 January 2023, the YRTC held meeting No 19 on the safety of YBS drivers at its office. On the occasion, an official of the committee revealed the plan of YRTC to hand own fine punishment against the YBS drivers who attempted to overtake each other on the roads as of 1 February.

Moreover, the official of YRTC stressed the need for keeping buses neat and tidy for the convenience of passengers as the public transport system requires traffic safety and good transport service. The committee arranges using telematics devices and deploying inspection teams to monitor the moves of YBS buses and whether they violate the rules.

Such news deserved to be welcomed by all. The meeting decision fulfilled the requirement of taking action against offenders of traffic rules enforcement. Everybody knows the acts of reckless drivers may cause dangerous events. These may harm anyone, especially road users on the roads as well as aboard buses and other small or large vehicles.

Everybody loves their lives. They all are worried about suffering from pains from injuries triggered by something. Anyone who faced traffic accidents may suffer from serious or unserious injuries. Unfortunately, the traffic victims may lose their lives. Practically, anybody does not wish to face such incidents in their lives while using roads or riding buses or vehicles. That is why the YRTC decided to punish the YBS drivers who did not follow the restrictions with a fine of K10,000 for each violation for overtaking each other.

Moreover, the official of YRTC stressed the need for keeping buses neat and tidy for the convenience of passengers as the public transport system requires traffic safety and good transport service. The committee arranges using telematics devices and deploying inspection teams to monitor the moves of YBS buses and whether they violate the rules.

If so, the public transport service in the commercial hub of Yangon City will have developed soon. In fact, success cannot be achieved easily. So, both YBS employments and road user people are to abide by the prescribed traffic rules for saving their lives and limbs forever.

Thirteen Sad but True Deficiencies of Myanmar Managers

By U AC

THE following thirteen deficiencies were originally pointed out by a foreigner, who had worked in Myanmar for many years. The writer himself agreed with all of them based on his own personal and past experiences. Obviously, the followings are generalizations referring to the normal state of affairs, rather than the totality (the whole population) of the private and public sector managers.

1. Doing things together for better effectiveness does not exist in Myanmar managers' vocabulary. They want their own doing. No discussion, no negotiation, no communication with peers, or other departments.

2. Sharing and caring are deficient. There is always a lot of jealousy, both hidden and explicit. Even if he cannot do half of the other person's work done, let's criticize first, just in order to diminish the other's impressive accomplishments.

3. Attack other people's weakness(es), just to preserve one's position or get own's position. Instead of improving themselves, most of them tend to specialize in disparaging others, trying to attack, and looking to show off their own's good-for-nothing achievements.

4. Ego and knowledge mismatch. Never accept he still needs to improve or is lacking knowledge. That acknowledgement would be akin to downgrading oneself or the position that you are undeservedly holding.

5. Extremely poor teamwork. Just want to boast I am Chairman of this, General Secretary of that, etc., and want to be the centre of attention and individual hero, regardless of how untalented he might be.

6. Little responsibility or accountability or delegation. Any screwup is not his fault, but others.

7. Indecisive and delayed responses and do not consider the urgency of things to take immediate action. Never accept that it was his mistake or never take responsibility and always look for scapegoats, trying to avoid addressing the situation head-on.

8. No customer orientation. Do not accept a sense of duty or service towards the customer or the country and try to be overbearing and tyrannical.

9. No foresight. Cannot differentiate between long and short-term plans. Not trying hard to have that ability either.

10. Biases and favouritism. Prevalence of subjective judgements and gossip, while trying to create their own little turfs and promoting incompetent and corrupt subordinates.

11. No personal sacrifice for the department, organization or country to be successful. Just want to sit back, relax, enjoy the position, spend the budget, and get the benefits, without putting in much effort.

12. Instead of being a leader, just want to be an authorized, appointed person. Instead of developing standards for better performance and criteria for selection and decision-making, just focus on how to order and command people based on assumed or real authority.

13. Prioritizing internal politics and gossip, over-focusing on results.

Sad but true, yet a detriment to our country. As Jim Collins said, "The purpose of bureaucracy is to compensate for incompetence and lack of discipline - a problem that largely goes away if you have the right people in the first place". The solution or part of the solution would be to ensure that competent, brave and qualified people are placed in leadership positions in the first place, by our entrusted leaders.

Characteristics of effective teamwork include a shared sense of purpose, the ability to set aside personal prejudices and the willingness to take responsibility as a group. **PHOTO: FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE ONLY/FREEPIK**

WHO panel debates Covid's emergency status

Scientists load patient sample specimens into a robotic liquid handler to prepare them for sequencing. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ NATE LANGER/UPMC**

THE World Health Organization's emergency committee on Covid-19 was meeting Friday to discuss whether the pandemic still merits the highest level of global alert.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus suggested the emergency phase of the pandemic is not over, pointing to surging numbers of deaths and warning that the global response to the crisis "remains hobbled".

"As we enter the fourth year of the pandemic, we are certainly in a much better position now than we were a year ago, when the Omicron wave was at its peak, and more than 70,000 deaths were being reported to WHO each week," he told the committee at the start of the meeting.

Tedros said the weekly death rate had dropped below 10,000 in October but had been rising again since the start of December, while the lifting of Covid restrictions in China had led to a spike in deaths.

Last week, almost 40,000 Covid deaths were reported — more than half of them in China — while the true toll "is certainly much higher", he said.

The panel's 14th meeting on the crisis comes nearly three years to the day since it first sounded the WHO's highest emergency alarm, as what was then called the novel coronavirus began to spread outside China.

The independent committee meets every three months to discuss the pandemic and reports to Tedros, who then decides whether it remains an international emergency.

Concern over variants

The WHO director-general said vaccines, tests and treatments had been critical in saving lives, preventing severe disease and easing the pressure on health systems and medics.

"But the global response remains hobbled because in too many countries, these powerful, life-saving tools are still not getting to the populations that need them most — especially older people and health workers," Tedros said.

Public trust in these Covid tools is being undermined by a "continuous torrent" of mis- and disinformation, he said, while health systems are still struggling to cope with the additional Covid burden.

And in terms of monitoring how the virus is evolving, surveillance and genetic sequencing has dropped sharply, making it harder to track the myriad variants and detect new ones in good time.

The emergency committee meeting, chaired by French doctor Didier Houssin, is scheduled to conclude on Friday, with the outcome issued in the following days.

When the committee last met in October 2022, it concluded that the pandemic still constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) — the WHO's highest level of alert.

Though declaring a PHEIC is the internationally agreed mechanism for triggering a global response to such outbreaks, it was only after Tedros described the worsening Covid situation as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, that many countries woke up to the danger.

Globally, nearly 665 million confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported to the WHO, including more than 6.7 million deaths, though the United Nations' health agency always stresses that the true numbers will be much higher.

Meanwhile, more than 13.1 billion vaccine doses have been administered.

In addition to the Covid crisis, two other WHO-declared PHEICs are currently ongoing -- one on poliovirus, first declared in May 2014, and the other on mpox, previously called monkeypox, declared in July last year.

SOURCE: AFP

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 29 January 2023)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (17:30) hrs MST today, the Well Marked Low Pressure Area over the Southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining East Equatorial Indian Ocean still persists. It is likely to move West-Northwestwards and further intensify into a Depression over Southwest Bay of Bengal around (30.1.2023) and reach near Sri Lanka coast around (1.2.2023). Weather is cloudy over the South Bay of Bengaland partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 30 January 2023: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region and Eastern Shan State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Lower Sagaing and Magway regions and partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough seas are likely at times in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly winds may reach (30-35) mph. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar Waters. Wave height will be about (7-9) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts and (4-7) feet off and along Rakhine Coast.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Shan, Kayah and Kayin states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 30 January 2023: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 30 January 2023: Generally fair weather.

ENVIRON WORLD

Green India Challenge reaching new heights, 'Inspiring' Environment Flag hoists on Antarctica

Anmish with Green India Challenge flag. **PHOTO: ANI**

THE Green India Challenge, which has been launched with the objective to nurture the Nature and Environment better and providing clean air to mankind, touched another height after its emblematic flag was hoisted on the peak of the highest mountain in Antarctica.

The Green Challenge is already spreading the campaign to fight climate change and the importance of plantations.

Bhupathiraju Anmish Varma successfully completed the task of climbing seven peaks on seven continents. At the end of the globe, Anmish Verma climbed Mount Vintion, the highest mountain in the icy continent of Antarctica, and hoisted the Green India Challenge flag.

Anmish Verma said that there is an environmental threat to the world in the form of global warming. Rajya Sabha MP Joginapally Santosh Kumar launched Green India Challenge with a strong determination to plant trees extensively and save the world from environmental threats.

To take this ambition further, Anmish revealed that he is climbing the highest mountains to display the Green India Challenge flag with the aim of creating environmental awareness among all. Anmish said that he successfully completed the climbing of seven peaks on seven continents including Everest. Anmish said he feels proud to present the Green India Challenge on the Globe's South Pole. He also appealed to all to make efforts to reduce pollution and work towards a clean environment. —ANI

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turning waste into wealth, reeds harvested in major lake in China's Hebei

GREEN development is bringing notable changes to a major lake in north China's Hebei Province.

Baiyangdian is the largest freshwater lake on the North China Plain in Hebei, and also the largest wetland ecosystem in northern China. It's home to about 80 million square meters of reeds, which play a key role in maintaining the ecological environment and ecosystem.

The reeds need to be harvested in time in winter, as long-time immersion of reeds in water will cause sediment deposition and water quality decline.

However, with a change in lifestyle in recent years, local residents rarely harvested reeds spontaneously.

The local government has implemented "balanced harvesting" of reeds in Baiyangdian, harvesting about half of the reeds each winter, and reserving the other half for bird habitats.

With increased protection and restoration, the lake has witnessed significant improvement in its ecosystem.

The harvested reeds have also brought tangible benefits to local residents.—Xinhua

'Drought' has New Yorkers asking: 'Where's the snow?'

New York's Bryant Park on a snowy day in December 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE idea of New York in wintertime conjures up images of Manhattan's Times Square and Central Park shrouded in snow. Not this year.

The city is forecast Sunday to surpass a 50-year record for the latest first snowfall of the season.

It is also close to recording its highest number of consecutive days without any measurable flakes.

The snowless streak has New Yorkers puzzled, some questioning their love-hate relationship with the white stuff.

"It's really sad," said retired teacher Anne Hansen. "Basically, we don't like to see the snow. But now we're sorely missing it," she told AFP.

The Big Apple usually gets its first dusting around mid-December. Last season it arrived on Christmas Eve.

A heavy load often results in "snow days," beloved by children and office workers who gets days off school and work.—AFP

Fans enjoy a snowball fight after Igloofest 2023 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on 26 January 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Montrealers shrug off the cold to dance and party at Igloofest

SNOW may have been falling on Montreal's Old Port, with temperatures in the bone-chilling category, but that didn't stop the exuberant dancers during the city's first Igloofest after a Covid pause.

In their bright-colored snowsuits, woollen caps on their heads and glasses of hot wine in hand, celebrants turned out for the first festival in two years.

So what, they seemed to say, if temperatures were on the wrong side of zero.

"The atmosphere is really cool, like being in a nightclub; you have to do it at least once in your life," said 34-year-old Laurent Maurenas, a Frenchman living in Quebec. "Yes, it's a bit cold at first, but you dance and you forget."

Zoe Charbonneau, 29, was attending her 13th Igloofest.

"For me," she said, "the Igloofest is Montreal, and Montreal is my great love.

"The Igloofest is the biggest event in my city, and I'm proud of it," she added, dancing the whole time.

For this 15th edition of the festival, taking place every weekend through 11 February, a record 85,000 tickets have been sold.

Festival co-founder Nicolas Cournoyer said that shows that people need to get out. "It's therapeutic for everyone to come together like this," he said. —AFP

Insomnia drove late Pope Benedict to resign: report

Pope Benedict XVI became the first pope in nearly 600 years to step down, when he resigned in 2013. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

RECENTLY deceased ex-pope Benedict described years of persistent sleeping troubles as the "main reason" behind his shock decision to step down in 2013, according to a German media report Friday.

Benedict was plagued by insomnia almost "constantly" from the start of his time as pope in 2005, according to a letter written a few weeks before his death on New Year's Eve.

In the message to his biographer Peter Seewald, obtained by German magazine Focus, Benedict said "strong" pills prescribed to him by his doctor meant he was still able to fulfil his duties as head of the Catholic Church.

The drugs however "reached their limits", meaning the ailing German pontiff was less and less available, he said in the letter dated 28 October 2022.

A nasty accident on a papal visit to Mexico and Cuba in March 2012 precipitated Benedict's final decision to resign.

On the first morning of the trip, Benedict found his handkerchief "totally drenched in blood".

"I must have hit something in the bathroom and fallen," Benedict wrote in the letter, according to Focus. Following the incident, his doctor pushed for a "reduction" in Benedict's use of sleeping pills and insisted that Benedict only participate in morning events on future foreign trips.

It was quickly clear to Benedict that the medical restrictions could only be followed "for a short time", he wrote, leading him to announce he would step down in 2013 before the next major trip to Brazil.—AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indonesian leprosy survivor crafts new limbs for shunned villagers

WHEN Ali Saga visited a clinic in Jakarta four decades ago, he watched as patients and health workers scrambled to get away from him.

"The doctor suddenly shouted at the patients, 'stand back! this person is a leper!" the 57-year-old said, recalling one of the most devastating moments after his diagnosis in the 1970s.

"They also roughly used a syringe to test my skin and I cried. My skin might not feel anything but my soul was hurt," the former leprosy patient added, choking back tears.

Now he is using his pain to help other residents of a village on the outskirts of the Indonesian capital live a normal life after leprosy with hand-crafted prosthetic limbs.

After Brazil and India, Indonesia has the world's third-highest cases of leprosy — a contagious bacterial disease transmitted by prolonged close contact with untreated cases.—AFP

Uganda carries out polio vaccination in areas affected by previous Ebola outbreak

UGANDA has rolled out a polio vaccination exercise in districts that were affected by the Ebola outbreak, which was contained early this month.

Ministry of Health said the 10-day exercise targeting children aged five years and below started on Friday in the districts of Mubende, Mityana, Kampala, Wakiso, Kassanda and Mukono. The districts missed out on the nationwide exercise last November when the country was battling the Ebola outbreak.

In the Central District of Wakiso, Dorothy Asiimwe, community health officer told Xinhua on Saturday that so far, the exercise is going on smoothly and many parents have brought their children for immunization.—Xinhua

AI-based early detection of visual impairment on smartphone: study

CHINESE scientists from Sun Yat-sen University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University used artificial intelligence (AI) technology to detect visual impairment among kids via smartphones.

Visual impairment is one of the most important causes of long-term disability in children worldwide. Still, its early detection is frequently missed since kids are capable of only limited cooperation with standard vision tests.

The study published in the journal Nature Medicine on Thursday described a smartphone-based health system, the Apollo Infant Sight (AIS).

The AI-driven system is shown to identify visually impaired children with 16 eye disorders by recording and analyzing their gazing behaviors and facial features.

The AIS is designed to induce a steady gaze in children by using cartoon-like video stimuli and collecting videos that capture the facial appearance and ocular movement for further analysis using AI-based deep learning models, according to the study.

The study published in the journal Nature Medicine on Thursday described a smartphone-based health system, the Apollo Infant Sight (AIS). **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ COMMUNICATIONS OF THE ACM/XINHUA**

Videos from 3,652 children under four years old have been prospectively collected to develop and validate this system.

The study shows that untrained parents or caregivers who use the system on their smartphones are able to achieve high-quality detection.—Xinhua

Australia: Missing radioactive capsule triggers health warning

A missing radioactive capsule lost somewhere between Perth and a Pilbara mine site over an area of 1,400 kilometres in Australia has triggered an urgent health warning, ABC News reported.

Emergency services have started the search for the missing radioactive capsule which is 6mm in diameter and 8mm in height.

Addressing a press conference on Friday, Western Australia's chief health officials urged people to stay away from the capsule if they see it due to its radioactive properties. Radioactive gauges are used in mining and it went missing from a truck sometime after January 10, according to ABC News report.

As per the news report, the radioactive capsule could be anywhere along the more than 1,400 km journey between Malaga, in Perth and Newman in Western Australia's remote north. Chief Health Officer Andy Robertson said the capsule was lost while it was being transported, somewhere between a mine site north of Newman and Malaga, northeast of Perth, according to ABC News.—ANI

ECONOMY
WORLD

China continues to lead in global shipbuilding market

Ships under construction at the Heniu Shipping Limited Company shipyard in Yunyang county, Chongqing on 5 December 2017. **PHOTO: RAO GUOJUN/FOR CHINA DAILY/FILE**

CHINA remained the world's leading shipbuilder in 2022, grabbing the largest market share and making breakthroughs in high-end ship models.

The country topped the globe in three major indicators, contributing 47.3 percent of global output, receiving 55.2 percent of new orders, and having 49 percent of holding orders, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology showed.

2022 marked the 13th straight year for Chinese ship manufacturers to hold the largest share of global markets. Six companies ranked as the world's top 10 shipbuilding enterprises.

Seizing opportunities from surging global shipping demand, especially for crude oil and natural gas, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, China further consolidated its position as the world's major shipbuilder. Three main shipbuilding clusters have emerged in regions surrounding the Yangtze River Delta, Bohai Rim, and Pearl River Delta.

"Now the shipbuilding industry has entered the recovery cycle, showing a steady upward trend," said Cao Bo, a researcher at the China Association of the National Shipbuilding Industry (CANSI).

With the largest shipbuilding market share, China is moving briskly to a manufacturer of quality. —Xinhua

Women drive fast train to Mecca as Saudi workforce evolves

DRIVER Tharaa Ali takes her seat at the helm of a high-speed train ferrying pilgrims to Mecca, a beneficiary of conservative Saudi Arabia's bid to employ its booming female workforce.

Saudi women only gained the right to drive in 2018, and until recently 25-year-old Ali's transportation experience was limited to cruising around her native Jeddah in the family sedan.

But last year she joined some 28,000 applicants vying for just 32 slots for women drivers on the Haramain High Speed Railway, which plies the 450-kilometre (280-mile) route between the holy cities of Mecca and Medina at speeds of up to 300 kilometres (186 miles) per hour.

To her astonishment, the former English teacher was among the lucky few selected, and she completed her first trip last month.

"The first day working here was like a dream for me — entering the train, entering the cabin," she told AFP.

"When you are in the cabin, you see things heading towards you at a very high speed. A feeling of fear and dread came over me, but thank God, with time and intensive training, I became confident in myself."

The proportion of Saudi women in the workforce has more than doubled since 2016, from 17 percent to 37 percent. —AFP

Saudi conductors walk beside a high-speed train ferrying pilgrims to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah. **PHOTO: AFP**

US trade shifts on Covid and China tensions, but no 'decoupling' yet

US trade flows are realigning on the back of pandemic shocks and tensions with China, but efforts to reduce interdependence between the superpowers have not brought a swift decoupling.

While security concerns have escalated and US imports from China fell after Washington and Beijing imposed tit-for-tat tariffs, trade has since climbed again. The numbers could rise further when 2022 trade data is released next month, pointing to how interlaced the world's two biggest economies are.

But experts say tensions have left their mark in other ways. "US imports from China are well below the trend that they were on before the trade war started," said Mary Lovely, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE).

"There is definitely a turn away from China in US imports, especially or primarily in those goods on which the US raised tariffs," she told AFP.

An aerial photo taken on 22 June 2021 shows cargo containers stacked at Yantian port in Shenzhen in China's southern Guangdong province. **PHOTO: STR/AFP**

After the trade war started, the value of America's goods imported from China dropped from $506 billion in 2017 to around $450 billion in 2019.

Bilateral relations are not the only factors affecting trade. The pandemic taook a heavy toll as well. Last November, China saw its sharpest drop in exports since the start of Covid-19, with business activity slammed by a strict zero-Covid policy.

Also weighing on imports is an "ongoing shift in the US away from spending on goods," said Ryan Sweet of Oxford Economics. —AFP

Sri Lankan economy to grow in 2024: president

SRI Lanka's economy, though contracted by 11 percent in 2022 and possibly 3.5 percent or 4 percent this year, will see growth in 2024, said President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Saturday.

However, the president warned, if the economic projects implemented by the government and the debt restructuring program are disrupted, the country is still at risk of falling into an economic crisis.

Wickremesinghe made the remarks when addressing a religious event in Anuradhapura, the capital city of North Central Province. — Xinhua

Cooling US inflation lifts hope for smaller Fed rate hike

As consumer inflation rocketed to decades-high levels last year, the Federal Reserve raised rates seven times in an aggressive campaign to cool the world's biggest economy and lower costs. **PHOTO: AFP**

SLOWING inflation and a cooling property sector are fueling expectations that the US central bank can adopt a smaller interest rate hike this week, as policymakers assess current efforts to rein in prices. As consumer inflation rocketed to decades-high levels last year, the Federal Reserve raised rates seven times in an aggressive campaign to cool the world's biggest economy and lower costs.

Since then, the interest-sensitive property sector has slumped, retail sales have weakened and wage growth has started to ease, prompting some Fed policymakers to suggest it may be time to slow the pace of rate hikes further.

"A slower pace of rate hikes will give the committee time to assess the full economic effects of monetary tightening thus far," said Moody's Investors Service in a report.—AFP

Sudanese tighten belts as economic crisis grinds on

AS Sudan's economic crisis drags on, grocer Hassan Omar keeps busy cleaning packaged food items that have been gathering dust for months as his dwindling customer base make fewer purchases.

"People can no longer afford to buy all their needs," Omar, 43, told AFP at his grocery store in the capital Khartoum.

A vegetable vendor arranges fruits at a market in Khartoum. Sudanese shop owners complain their sales have plummeted over the past six months as inflation has sapped the purchasing power of their customers. **PHOTO: AFP**

"Purchasing power has significantly declined over the past six months," he said, noting that his sales had plummeted from 500,000 Sudanese pounds ($877) to 200,000 pounds ($350) per day over that period.

His plight reflects Sudan's spiralling economic crisis which has forced many households to tighten their belts as nearly one third of the 45 million population face acute hunger.—AFP

Japanese insurance company encourages staff to work elsewhere

MAJOR Japanese insurance company Sompo Holdings Inc. is attempting to change its traditional working culture by encouraging some employees to work for almost a year at start-ups and nonprofit organizations unrelated to their usual line of work.

The company hopes that their employees' diverse experiences will enhance its competitiveness in the insurance market as it ventures into new domains such as nursing care and digital realm that require a more varied skill set.

Its main business areas currently are domestic property, life and casualty insurance.

Sompo Holdings President Mikio Okumura says the company wants to encourage people to take on new challenges in unfamiliar areas. "By getting to know people with different values, we want to create a company culture desirable for developing products our clients really need," he told Kyodo News in a recent interview.—Kyodo

Toyota CEO taps younger successor amid paradigm shift in industry

TOYOTA Motor Corp.'s surprise announcement Thursday of a change in its top management came as CEO Akio Toyoda, the grandson of the founder, picked an executive more than 10 years younger than him as his successor at a time when the global auto industry faces a once-in-a-century paradigm shift driven by decarbonization and digitization.

The head of the auto group's Lexus brand operation Koji Sato, 53, will become CEO in April while 66-year-old Toyoda who has led the company since 2009 will become chairman, allowing him to devote more time to lobbying activities.

Toyoda is currently the chairman of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association.

Toyoda said in a press conference Thursday that youthfulness is an essential quality for his company's next leader when game-changing disruption in the industry is on the horizon.

Toyota's previous presidents, except for those from the founding family, have always been in their 60s when they assumed the top position.

"When no one knows what the right answer is (for the industry's future), the leader needs to be like a foreman," Toyoda said in a press conference. "In order to do that, you have to be physically, mentally and passionately fit."—Kyodo

Undated photo shows Toyota Motor Corp President Akio Toyoda (R) and Operating Officer Koji Sato test-riding Lexus's first electric vehicle model, RZ. President Toyoda, 66, announced on 26 January 2023, the promotion of Sato, 53, to president on 1 April. Toyoda will become chairman of the board of directors after heading the company for about 14 years. **PHOTO: KYODO**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MSC FORTUNE F VOY.NO. (SB303A)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MSC FORTUNE F VOY.NO. (SB303A)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-1-2023** 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 MEDITERRANEAN SHIPPING COMPANY S.A

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

North Korea denies arms dealing with Russia

North Korea on Sunday denied providing arms to Moscow after the United States said the nuclear-armed state supplied rockets and missiles to Russia's private military group Wagner. A man wearing military camouflage stands at the entrance of the PMC Wagner Centre, associated with the Wagner Group, in St. Petersburg, Russia, on 4 November. **PHOTO: OLGA MALTSEVA / AFP**

NORTH Korea on Sunday denied providing arms to Moscow after the United States said the nuclear-armed state supplied rockets and missiles to Russia's private military group Wagner.

Washington earlier this month designated the Wagner group as a "transnational criminal organization," citing its weapons dealings with Pyongyang in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

The White House showed US intelligence photographs of Russian rail cars entering North Korea, picking up a load of infantry rockets and missiles, and returning to Russia, according to national security spokesman John Kirby. In a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, a senior North Korean official rejected the accusations, warning that the US will face a "really undesirable result" if it persists in spreading the "self-made rumour".

"Trying to tarnish the image of (North Korea) by fabricating a non-existent thing is a grave provocation that can never be allowed and that cannot but trigger its reaction," said Kwon Jong Gun, director general of the Department of US Affairs.

He also called it "a foolish attempt to justify its offer of weapons to Ukraine". Earlier this week, US President Joe Biden promised 31 Abrams tanks, one of the most powerful and sophisticated weapons in the US army, to help Kyiv fight off Moscow's invasion. —AFP

Ukrainian businesses suffer 13 billion USD losses due to conflict

UKRAINIAN businesses have suffered direct losses of 13 billion US dollars due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the government-run Ukrinform news agency reported Friday, citing a recent study.

In 2022, a total of 109 large and medium-sized enterprises suffered direct losses of 9 billion dollars, showed the study by the Kyiv School of Economics.

Indirect losses of the Ukrainian businesses caused by the conflict reached 33.1 billion dollars, according to the study. — Xinhua

'Fierce' battle in Ukraine for Vugledar near Donetsk

UKRAINIAN troops were locked in a "fierce" confrontation with Russian fighters Friday for control of the town of Vugledar southwest of Donetsk as the two sides battle along the southern front.

Both sides claimed success in the small administrative centre of apartment blocks surrounded by flat fields, a short distance from the strategic prize of the village of Pavlivka.

"The encirclement and subsequent liberation of this city solves many problems," said Denis Pushilin, the Moscow-appointed leader of the Donetsk region.

"Soon, Vugledar may become a new, very important success for us," he was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

But Kyiv said the town, which had a pre-invasion population of around 15,000 people, remained contested.

"There is fierce combat there," Ukrainian military spokesman Sergiy Cherevaty told local media. —AFP

WORLD: TOP HEADLINES

Syria to blame for 2018 chlorine attack: watchdog

THE global chemical weapons watchdog blamed Syria on Friday for a 2018 chlorine attack that killed 43 people, in a long-awaited report on a case that sparked tensions between Damascus and the West.

Investigators said there were "reasonable grounds to believe" that at least one Syrian air force helicopter had dropped two cylinders of the toxic gas on the rebel-held town of Douma during Syria's civil war.

Damascus and its ally Moscow claimed the attack was staged by rescue workers at the behest of the United States, which launched air strikes on Syria days afterwards along with Britain and France.

The Douma case also caused controversy after leaks from two former employees cast doubt on earlier findings by the Hague-based Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

The Douma case also caused controversy after leaks from two former employees cast doubt on earlier findings by the Hague-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

But the OPCW said its investigators had "considered a range of possible scenarios" and concluded that "the Syrian Arab Air Forces are the perpetrators of this attack." —AFP

N Ireland journeys from building ships to screen hits

FOR much of the last century Belfast's dockyards dominated global shipbuilding but now the harbour that built Titanic is the launchpad for some of the world's biggest TV and film releases.

A string of major recent cinematic and streaming projects made in the UK province have earned it a growing international reputation for television and cinema production.

Industry insiders say Northern Ireland is increasingly likely to be known globally as the backdrop to "Game of Thrones" rather than for the decades of sectarian violence that plagued it until the signing of 1998 peace accords. —AFP

N Ireland was the backdrop to 'Game of Thrones'. **PHOTO: AFP**

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Former NATO general Petr Pavel wins Czech presidential vote

RETIRED NATO general Petr Pavel defeated a billionaire former prime minister in an election run-off on Saturday to become the fourth president of the Czech Republic.

Pavel, a former paratrooper, won 58.3 percent of votes while Andrej Babis scored 41.7 per cent, according to final results published by the Czech Statistical Office.

"I would like to thank those who voted for me and also those who did not but came to the polls, because they made it clear they honoured democracy and cared about this country," Pavel said after the results showed his victory.

"I can see that values such as truth, dignity, respect and humility have prevailed in this election," he added.

The 61-year-old Pavel will in March replace President Milos Zeman, an outspoken and divisive politician who fostered close ties with Moscow before making a U-turn when Russia invaded Ukraine last year.

Turnout in the EU and NATO member country of 10.5 million people was unusually high, topping 70 per cent following an acrimonious campaign marked by controversy.

Babis and his family have been targeted by death threats, while Pavel was the victim of a hoax claiming he was dead as disinformation plagued the final campaign.

Pavel said he was ready to start tackling rifts in the society caused by the campaign, recent crises including the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, and Zeman's divisive politics. —AFP

Petr Pavel said he wanted to be a 'dignified' president. **PHOTO: AFP**

Tunisians vote in second round of poll for defanged parliament

POLLING began in the second round of elections for Tunisia's toothless parliament on Sunday, but as the divided nation grapples with economic woes, all eyes will be on turnout.

A total of 262 candidates are competing for 131 seats in the new legislature, a body largely stripped of its powers following President Kais Saied's dramatic power grab in the birthplace of the Arab Spring uprisings.

On 25 July 2021, Saied sacked the government and froze parliament before dissolving it and pushing through a new constitution granting him almost unlimited powers, sweeping away the system that had emerged from the 2011 revolt.

The latest polls, whose first round in December saw just 11.2 per cent of registered voters take part, are seen as the final pillar of Saied's transformation of politics.

The new legislature will have almost no power to hold the president to account. —AFP

Analysts predict low turnout again for the second round of voting, which major parties are boycotting. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Burkina rally celebrates French troop pull-out announcement

THOUSANDS of demonstrators rallied in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou Saturday in support of the ruling junta, days after France confirmed its special forces there would withdraw, an AFP journalist saw.

Packing Nation Square in central Ouagadougou, protesters held signs bearing slogans including "Down with imperialism", "Down with French policy in Africa" and "Forwards for Burkina's sovereignty".

"We do not want any more foreign military bases on our soil," Lazare Yameogo, spokesman for the Inter-African Revolutionary Movement told the crowd. "We want respect and a win-win cooperation.

"We will remain on the lookout until Burkina Faso is liberated from Western imperialism," he added.

Former colonial power France has special forces based in Ouagadougou, but its presence has come under intense scrutiny as anti-French sentiment in the region grows.

Paris confirmed this week that the troops, deployed to help fight a years-long jihadist insurgency, would leave within a month.

It was anger within the military at the government's failure to stem a jihadist insurgency that has raged since 2015 that fuelled two coups in Burkina Faso last year. —AFP

WORLD: TOP HEADLINES

Germany's Scholz heads next to Chile, Brazil on Latin America tour

GERMAN Chancellor Olaf Scholz travels to Chile on Sunday, part of a Latin America tour that also includes Argentina and Brazil, where Berlin and the EU are seeking a reset following the election of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Accompanied by a delegation of business leaders, Scholz arrived at his first stop, Buenos Aires, on Saturday and met with President Alberto Fernandez.

The two leaders affirmed the importance of concluding a trade agreement between the EU and trade bloc Mercosur, comprised of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

"We agree to deepen bilateral trade relations and for this the EU-Mercosur agreement is of special importance," Scholz told reporters after the meeting. "Our goal is to reach a quick conclusion."

With Lula's inauguration to the presidency earlier this month in Brazil, "we are in a better position" to reach an agreement, Fernandez said.

Germany wants to boost cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean on "renewable energies, green hydrogen and responsible trade in raw materials," Scholz said in an interview Saturday with the Grupo de Diarios America (GDA) consortium of South American newspapers. —AFP

South Korean soldier fires near border by mistake: report

A South Korean soldier mistakenly fired a machine gun near the border with North Korea, prompting the military to inform Pyongyang that the shooting was unintentional, a report said Sunday.

Four live rounds were fired during a training along the border in Gangwon province on Saturday evening, Yonhap news agency reported, citing South Korean military officials.

All of the bullets landed on the South's side and no damage was reported.

The military unit immediately informed North Korea that the firings were not intentional and stepped up readiness posture, the officials said.

"No particular signs have been detected from the North's side, and an investigation is under way over the exact circumstances of the incident," an unnamed military official told Yonhap. —AFP

SPORT

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Former NATO general Petr Pavel wins Czech presidential vote

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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.

Stylish Man United progress in FA Cup, Son at the double for Spurs

Casemiro scored twice as Manchester United turned on the style to beat 10-man Reading 3-1 and reach the FA Cup fifth round on Saturday as Tottenham forward Son Heung-min ended his recent goal drought. **PHOTO: AFP**

CASEMIRO scored twice as Manchester United turned on the style to beat 10-man Reading 3-1 and reach the FA Cup fifth round on Saturday as Tottenham forward Son Heung-min ended his recent goal drought.

On a day lacking major shocks, there were wins for Premier League strugglers Leeds, Leicester and Southampton but Fulham were held by Championship team Sunderland. Erik ten Hag's United took the lead in the 54th minute when Anthony produced a defence-splitting pass to find Brazil teammate Casemiro, who lifted the ball over goalkeeper Joe Lumley.—AFP

Chelsea sign France Under-21 defender Gusto

Malo Gusto is Chelsea's seventh signing of the January transfer window. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

CHELSEA continued their winter spending spree by announcing on Sunday they have completed the signing of France under-21 right-back Malo Gusto from Lyon.

The 19-year-old has signed a contract at Stamford Bridge to the summer of 2030 but will finish the current season back in Ligue 1 with Lyon on loan.

Chelsea will pay a reported £26.3 million ($32.6 million) for Gusto, who came through the ranks at Lyon and made his senior debut in January 2021.—AFP

Thway Thit Win Hlaing defeats Tun Tun Min by decision

CHALLENGER Thway Thit Win Hlaing beat former Myanmar Lethwei Champion Tun Tun Min by decision in the main bout of the Great Lethwei event held in Yangon yesterday. Thway Thit Win Hlaing won by a referee's decision as there was no clear result of the three-minute, five-round bout. In the first round, Thway Thit Win Hlaing managed his tempo by punching Tun Tun Min with left kicks and left fists.

In the second round, Tun Tun Min's power play was strong, and Thway Thit Win Hlaing lost his balance a bit, as Tun Tun Min's punches were effective.

In the third round, Thway Thit Win Hlaing played very cautiously, while Tun Tun Min tried to win the match with a right kick along with a pair of fists.

In the fourth round, Tun Tun Min's stamina dropped a bit. This was because he used power punches for three full rounds. Due to Thway Thit Win Hlaing's punches, Tun Tun Min fell to the floor twice and the referee had to count twice. In the fifth round, Tun Tun Min didn't go down and attacked again. In turn, Thway Thit Win Hlaing also pressed towards the strike in the last round to suppress the attacks, and used more punches than kicks. However, both sides were unable to overpower each other, and it was decided by the point system, and Thway Thit Win Hlaing won and became the new Myanma Lethwei champion.

"I will let whoever wins this match challenging me. To become a king, you must defeat the king. I am ready for the next challenge. Good luck to both fighter," current World Lethwei champion Dave Leduc said before this match.

Thway Thit Win Hlaing, who beat Tun Tun Min, will be able to challenge the reigning World Lethwei Champion.—KZL

Tun Tun Min (left) puts knee attack on Thway Thit Win Hlaing during the main bout of the Great Lethwei Challenge held in Yangon on 29 January 2023. **PHOTO: BALA SOE**