

# 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.

## Number of migratory birds grows steadily in Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary

**IN** a bid to escape the extreme weather, the migratory birds in the North are steadily entering the Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary as a stopover in winter.

The migratory birds arrived at the lake early, starting from September 2021. More than 26,000 birds including 49 waterbird species flocked to the lake in November. The winged visitors keep flocking to the lake in December.

Over 4,000 Wandering Whistling ducks, 100 common cranes, 1,500 seagulls, 1,500 ferruginous duck, 3,000 common coots, 1,000 wild geese and over 4,000 Tufted ducks appeared in the lake this month. ASEAN Water Bird Census will be carried out on 8-9 January 2022. The majority of the migratory bird species can be witnessed in January. A team comprising Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary's staff and faculty members from Mohnyin University, the ecotourism organizations from Mandalay and birdlovers from Myitkyina, Mandalay and Indawgyi areas has conducted bird census since 2016.

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Various species of migratory birds hibernate at Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary in Mohnyin Township, Kachin State. **PHOTO: KANU**

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## Announcement for the people

Dated: 19-12-2021

1. Illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication devices and related accessories of NUG, CRPH and subordinate PDF declared as terrorist groups in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in committing terror acts with the use of these items were seized. Likewise, arms and ammunition, mines, communication devices and related equipment sent by some ethnic armed groups from border regions to the inner areas for taking political and military profits are also confiscated on a daily basis. In addition, various arms and ammunition held by terrorists in various ways are also seized.
2. Moreover, as some terrorists ordered citizens to hand over their illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication devices and related equipment in addition to prohibited materials to the authorities in various ways and forms by taking advantages of citizens' lack of understanding and honesty but these cases of handover were exposed and seized.
3. As such, all the citizens need to hand over illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication devices and related materials in addition to the narcotic drugs prohibited by the State under the law kept from their houses and apartments in various reasons and ways to relevant ward/village administration offices and nearby security forces not later than 31 December 2021 so that those who are not related to terrorists are not to face the undesirably legal actions. If these items can be found overdue, action will be taken against the possessors under the laws.

Information Team  
State Administration Council

## State Administration Council Press Release

### Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who reside in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

Information Team  
State Administration Council

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## Announcement on COVID-19 mutation surveillance process

Nay Pyi Taw  
19-12-2021

DEPARTMENT of Public Health, Department of Medical Research, Department of Medical Services, National Health Laboratory under the Ministry of Health has been conducting "COVID-19 Molecular Surveillance" in collaboration with the Tatmadaw Medical Research Corps.

According to the process, people came back from the border checkpoints, by relief flights and from Thailand, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, India, Bangladesh and Malaysia through border checkpoints.

Of the returnees, 36 laboratory samples were taken from those who were infected with COVID-19 virus. The SARS-CoV-2 Variant Omicron's Real Time PCR Test was performed on these samples at the National Health Laboratory under the Department of Medical Services of the Ministry of Health and found no SARS-CoV-2 Variant Omicron.

Ministry of Health

## Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit [www.moi.gov.mm/mal](http://www.moi.gov.mm/mal), [www.moi.gov.mm/km](http://www.moi.gov.mm/km), [www.moi.gov.mm/nlm](http://www.moi.gov.mm/nlm) and [www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper](http://www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper).

News and Periodicals Enterprise

## Generating hydropower

It is necessary to resurge manufacturing at home to be able to substitute the imported products. If the country saves the consumption of fuel oil, the amount for spending the foreign exchange will decline and the trade surplus will increase. The Senior General highlighted the salient points of reduction of fuel consumption, use of electricity, generating hydropower, and implementation of public transport projects.

*(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 3/2021 of the Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 3-12-2021)*

## MoBA Union Minister inspects IDP camps, returnee repatriation centres in Rakhine State, provides assistance to displaced persons



Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and party meet town elders, departmental personnel and people from IDP camp in Paletwa.

UNION Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung, in his capacity as Chairman of Coordination Committee on the Implementation of Peace and Stability and Development in Rakhine State, accompanied by Vice-Chairman (1) Union Minister for International Cooperation U Ko Ko Hlaing and Vice-Chairperson (2) Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

Dr Thet Thet Khine inspected the Kyeinnibyin IDP camp in Pauktaw Township of Rakhine State together with state Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Kyaw Thura on 16 December.

They inspected the vaccination processes at IDP camp, station hospitals and BEMS Branch.

They met with the displaced persons at Thetkeyyin IDP camp in Sittway Township and at Otthalin Monastery in Mingan Ward.

During the visit, they highlighted the supports to ensure the peace and stability, development, humanitarian aids, socio-economic development and resettlement programmes.

Then, the Union Minister for Border Affairs inspected paving the concrete on one mile and one furlong long Gangawkyun-Zawmatet-Chaungnwe intersection

of Sittway, construction of 150 feet long Zawmatet Bridge and the 3-storey RC building of Shwezedi Monastic School in Sittway.

On 17 December, the Union Ministers, the Rakhine State Chief Minister and party visited Taung Pyo Letwe repatriation centre in Maungtaung Township, Ngakhuya repatriation centre and Hlapokhaung camp, and provided cash assistance to the staff.

In Paletwa Township, they met with town elders, cultural team members and representatives of IDP camps and discussed relocation processes in respective regions and regional development programmes, and handed over the assistance for the displaced persons.

Then, the MoBA Union Minister met with the trainees of the border area national race youth development training school in Paletwa and inspected the school.

At Teinnyo Village IDP camp in MraukU Township, they provided 400 sets of school uniforms and 400 dozens of notebooks for students living in IPD camp and 894 bags of rice for 2,862 displaced persons. Then, they inspected the road expansion project in Lakkar Village of MraukU Township and construction of a 2-storey RC monastery and 323 houses in the village.—MNA

## Number of migratory birds grows steadily in Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary

### FROM PAGE-1

Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary became a stopover for over 30,000 migratory birds (50 species) last winter. The endangered species such as five mallards and four ruddy shelducks stayed at the lake as well. It is expected to see them in the lake this year either.

Indawgyi Lake has an area of 100 square miles and the Ramsar sites expand across 214.76 square miles. The lake is packed with the migratory birds and birds originated in Myanmar.

It is vital of importance to protect the migratory birds that flock to Ramsar site and inland regions for winter in Myanmar.

Every year, migratory birds flock to the freshwater lake, where there is abundant food, away from colder regions with frozen lakes and short food supply that make it difficult for them to survive. The primary habitats of

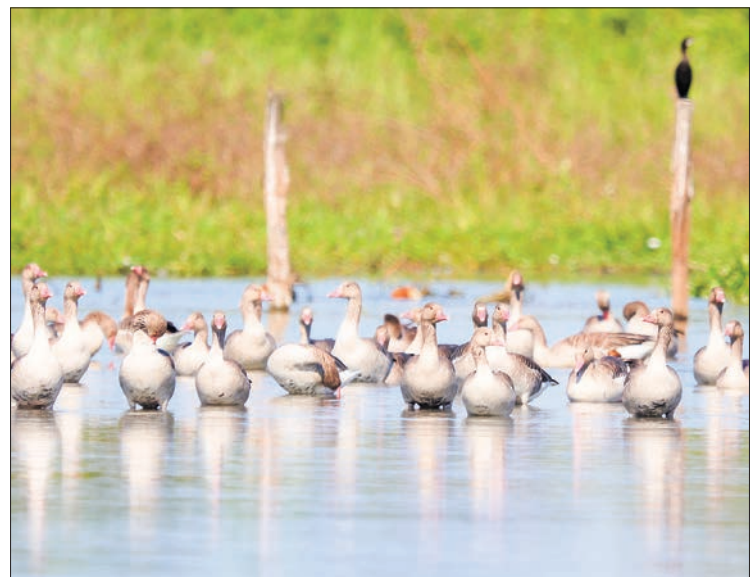
the winged visitors are Indawgyi Lake, Inlay Lake, Paleik Lake, Pyu Lake, Moeyungyi Lake, the Gulf of Mottama, Nantha, Mainmahla and other islands in Taninthayi Region and then, they travelled long distances to the north in May for breeding grounds.

“There are eight ASEAN Heritage sites in Myanmar and Indawgyi Lake, Inlay Lake and Mainmahla islands have been set as ASEAN Ramsar sites. The officials are making concerted efforts for the sustainability of Ramsar sites, with the formulation of law and bylaws. The conservation of wetland areas are also being undertaken to protect the habitat of the migratory bird. The entry of the migratory birds is earlier than last year. Last year, 55 species of migratory birds and 29 local species visited the lake.

We will collect the data of the migratory birds in the coming

January. Indawgyi Lake, which is home to migratory birds in winter, is a pride of the country. This being so, the concerted efforts are required to conserve the ecosystem in Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary,” said U Maung Win, warden of Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary.

The seabirds and bird species form the North Pole migrate for the winter to various countries through nine flyway. They fly from their breeding grounds to wintering grounds to survive. Migration is the regular seasonal movement undertaken by many species of birds. Migratory birds enter Myanmar through two flyways: Central Asian Flyway and East Asia-Australasian Flyway every year. As Myanmar both ratified the Ramsar Convention and became a member of EAAFP, Myanmar, in coordination with conservation actors and countries along the migratory pathways, is



Waterbirds take hibernation at Indawgyi wildlife Sanctuary in Mohnyin Township. PHOTO: KANU

striving to keep migratory birds safe.

There are illegal gold mining activities near Indawgyi area and it can negatively affect the ecosystem. Thus, environmental conservation plays a pivotal role

in protecting migratory birds. The sanctuary usually marks welcoming to the migratory birds on 10 October and a farewell is held on 10 May.—Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM

## IPRD holds colour-photo contests to emerge professional photographers to portray disadvantage of the pandemic and activities of prevention, control and treatment for COVID-19



Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn views prize winning works of colour-photo contest.



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Hla Soe presents first prize to U Zaw Win in amateur colour-photo contest.

PROFESSIONAL and amateur photographers can take pride in their works for public observation as part of benefiting the State on one hand, said Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn at the prize awarding for colour-photo contests at professional and amateur levels took place at the hall of Printing and Publishing Department under the Ministry of Information on Theinbyu Road in Yangon yesterday morning.

Speaking on the occasion, the Union minister recounted that entries were received in the colour-photo contest depicting the movements of prevention,

control and treatment of COVID-19, impacts of the pandemic, endeavours of health staff, charity associations and volunteers.

The Information and Public Relations Department holds invitational colour-photo contests twice a year to emerge the professional photographers to portray the disadvantage of the pandemic and activities of prevention, control and treatment for COVID-19 to the people. Consequently, these works will motivate the people to be able to overcome the challenges of the pandemic.

So far, the government has given vaccination against the disease to the people and members

of the Sangha including the students above 12 years old. A plan was set to complete vaccinations accounting for more than 50 per cent in the end of December 2021.

Veteran photographers and members of the panel of judges scrutinized and selected the prize winning works in the contest. The department will showcase these photos if necessary. Professional and amateur photographers can take pride in their works for public observation as part of benefiting the State on one hand.

The Union minister expressed his thanks to the veteran photographers and members of the panel of judges of the contest

and invited contestants to participate in more contests.

Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Hla Soe in his address acknowledged the hero volunteers and well-wisher people for their performance in prevention, control and treatment activities of COVID-19 as the Myanmar faced the highest infection rate of the pandemic from June to August 2021. Now, the region opens 17 treatment centres. Health care services are being provided to members of the Sangha and nuns with the help of the military medical corps.

Chairman of the prize winner scrutiny committee film direc-

tor Bagyi Soe Moe explained the scrutiny and selection of the prize winning works.

The Union minister presented the first, second and third prizes to winners in the professional level photo contest whereas Yangon Region Chief Minister U Hla Soe gave the first, second and third prizes to winners in the amateur level. Officials presented special prizes to respective winners. On behalf of winners, U Sai Tun Nay Hlaing spoke words of thanks. Later, the Union minister, the chief minister of the region and officials posed for documentary photos together with winners.—MNA

## Public Notice

1. The Anti-Corruption Commission has established corruption prevention units within ministries to effectively curb corruption.
2. The ACC used SMS on the mobile phone to ask the public who seek services at an office of the department of the relevant ministries via Short Code No "1111" for feedbacks, including the Public Feedback Programme-PFP.
3. According to the PFP, the right replies of the citizens via Short Code No "1111" will provide the quality of services of each department and the requirements for corruption prevention to be fixed.
4. Therefore, the public should make a reply to the questions of the ACC and corruption prevention units of the ministries via SMS at Short Code No "1111" and such doing is a supportive measure for PFP, and the people are urged to cooperate in the operations.

*Anti-Corruption Commission*

Answer "1111" to fight against corruption  
Answer "1111" to improve services  
Let's work together to eliminate corruption towards prosperity

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## MoH Union Minister inspects general hospitals in Magway Region

UNION Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win inspected the general hospitals in Magway Region on 18 December.

The Union Minister first met with the Magway Region Chief Minister and officials of departments concerned, COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment committee members, the head of region Public Health/Medical Services departments, medical superintendents and township health officers.

During the meeting, the Magway Region Chief Minister reported on the current COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities.

Then, the Union Minister talked about the Omicron like extension of suspension period of international flight, RT-PCR tests and preparations for proper medical services if necessary.

He also said there are more than 19.5 million people who have received the first



Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win visits Magway General Hospital in Magway.

does and the government keeps conducting the vaccination programmes to ensure the coverage as the first dose can protect the disease to a certain extent. The government receives adequate COVID-19 vaccines and will get further

amounts of vaccines. The country also cooperates with China to produce the vaccine locally.

He then stressed the needs to conduct educating programmes for the public and the plans to provide liquid oxy-

gen to Magway Region.

He added that the post-graduate courses of medical university are now opened and the second MB, third MB and final year part-1 as follow-up courses will be conducted on 20 December.

Moreover, arrangements are also being made to open the regular classes of Medicine and Medical Related Universities in January 2022.

The regular courses of University of Community Health (Magway) will be also opened. It needs to strict the regulations to ensure the safety and peaceful learning of students including vaccination programmes.

Then, the Union Minister and party inspected the Japan-aided new building in Magway General Hospital compound and stressed the needs to run the treatment at that building.

They finally went to Minbu General Hospital and gave instructions regarding concurrent duty assignment of respective subjects by Professors at the University of Medicine (Magway), installation of new Oxygen Plant and promotions of nurses.—MNA

## Mini Gems Emporium 2021 continues for third day



Gems merchants are attending third day of Mini Gems Emporium at Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw **PHOTO: KO KO KYAW**

THE third day of the Mini Gems Emporium 2021 was held yesterday at the Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw in accordance with the COVID-19 preventive guidelines.

Starting in the morning, local and foreign jewellers were able to see the pearls and jade lots on display inside the Mani Yadana Jade Hall. They also enjoyed the jade lots on display outside the hall.

On the second day of the emporium, 220 lots of pearl were sold through open tender system. Yesterday, 220 lots of pearl were also sold

through open tender system. After that, officials systematically opened the price invoices from Pearl lots from 221 to 330 and announced that 110 lots of pearl were sold.

Jade lots from 1 to 250 were then sold through open tender system, with jewellers inspecting the jade lots on display and placing bids in the tender boxes.

After that, the authorities closed the bidding for jade lots from 1 to 250 at 3 pm yesterday and will announce the jade lots for sale at 8 am on 20 December.

In the afternoon, Union

Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation and Chairman of the Central Committee of Myanmar Gems Emporium U Khin Maung Yi, Deputy Minister U Min Min Oo and members of the Central Committee inspected the auction of pearl and jade lots on the ground floor of Mani Yadanar Jade Hall.

A total of 780 lots of jade were on display at the emporium. On 21 December, jade lots from 501 to 780 will be sold to local and foreign gem merchants through open tender.—Ye Naing Win/GNLM

## MoC oversees daily import of anti-COVID-19 equipment

THE Ministry of Commerce is overseeing import of essential medical supplies plus anti-COVID devices that are critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities through border trade camps and seaports.

Anti-COVID-19 equipment was imported by three companies using six vehicles. A total of 20 tonnes of liquid oxygen carried by one bowser and 36 tonnes of masks were imported via Myawady and Chinshwehaw border trade camps, and international airport and seaports yesterday.

One bowser was transported to Yangon via Myawady trade zone.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the standard operating procedures, including online registration for the import process.

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinating with relevant departments and treatment of COVID-19 as well as contact persons for inquires can be reached through the Ministry's Website—[www.commerce.gov.mm](http://www.commerce.gov.mm).—MNA

**152 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 19 December, total figure rises to 528,253**

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **528,253** after **152** new cases were reported on 19 December 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **505,395** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **19,220** after **7** died.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 18-12-2021, a total of **19,803,024** people have been vaccinated. Of them, **13,745,477** people have been vaccinated two times and **6,057,547** people once.—MNA

## YRTC to resume YPS card system



YBS buses running in Yangon. PHOTO: MIN HTET

TE Yangon Region Transport Committee (YRTC) stated it would lead a project to resume the YPS card system for YBS passengers in Yangon City.

“According to the complaints, we know that the passengers currently get frustrated with some YBS lines. Some do not use the cash boxes and the drivers and conductors keep the bus fares in person and some ask for double charges. To overcome such difficulties of passengers, YRTC implements a programme to apply the YPS card system widely like before. We would start it in coming week,” said joint-secretary U Lyan Cin Mang of YRTC.

The YPS devices were installed on YBS buses in early 2019 and the passengers used more than 60,000 cards on 1,900 buses. Meanwhile, the COV-

ID-19 pandemic broke out and so the YRTC will revive the system with the permission of Yangon Region Government.

Currently, some YBS buses failed to follow the regulations and so more than 500 buses were suspended. However, some bus lines still violate the regulations of YRTC.

The YRTC warned the YBS bus lines which do not follow the disciplines for many times before it revokes the licences. They took such action as the bus conductors took extra bus fares than the fixed amount. Therefore, the officials arrange to resume the YPS.

The YRTC fixes the YPS card price at K2,000 and buyers do not need to pay for the cards if they use K 3,000 top-up. The free distribution of cards will be conducted to a certain extent. —Myint Mo/ GNLM

## Sedawgyi Dam to irrigate over 68,000 acres in mini-budget period

SEDAWGYI Dam will supply irrigation water to more than 68,000 acres of summer rice paddy and other crops in Mandalay Region during the mini-budget period (Oct 2021-Mar 2022).

The distribution of irrigation water will commence in the first week of February 2022. Madaya Township Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department ensures the adequate supply of irrigation.

The dam has a capacity to hold water up to over 360,000 acre feet and 330,000 acre feet can be reused.

About 67,469 acres of summer rice paddy and Sedawgyi Dam is projected to irrigate 1,162 acres of other crops in three townships, U Aung Aung Soe, a staff officer of Madaya Township Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department.

“The dam has stored to

provide adequate irrigation water to the farmers,” he said.

During the mini-budget period, the department has planned to cover 42,225 acres of summer rice crop in Madaya, 19,066 acres in Patheingyi and 6,178 in Amarapura of PyinOoLwin districts, totaling 67,469 acres of summer paddy and 1,162 acres of other crops.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay sub-printing house)/ GNLM



Photo shows an aerial view of Sedawgyi Dam. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

## COVID-19 vaccination continues in various states, regions



A health staff vaccinates a people in anti-COVID-19 vaccination programme.

MEDICAL doctors and nurses from public hospitals, Tatmadaw medical teams, healthcare workers and volunteers are working hard to give COVID-19 vaccines to the people in various states and regions as the vaccination programme is one of the most important activities in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 disease.

COVID-19 vaccine is being given daily to target groups regardless of race or religion including Buddhist monks and nuns, local people over the age of 40, religious leaders, prisoners, people with disabilities, those of ethnic armed groups, people with chronic diseases, and people in IDP camps respectively.

Medical doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams from the Tatmadaw, relevant healthcare workers in

collaboration with volunteers have already given COVID-19 vaccines to 6,696 people from 16 townships in Shan State (North), 3,180 from four townships in Shan State (East), 10,945 from 13 townships in Mon and Kayin states, 27,500 from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 7,995 from three townships in Rakhine State, 9,210 from seven districts in Mandalay Region and 1,190 from Htantabin and Toungoo townships in Bago Region.

Similarly, healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 978 students from Northern Shan State, and 1,002 students from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region.

It is reported that officials from the respective military commands visited the vaccination sites and coordinated the necessary work.—MNA

## Sino-Myanmar Kanpaiti border post resumes operations in mid-December

MYANMAR delivered 20 truckloads of tissue banana to China through Kanpaiti border post following the reopening of the border post, Kachin State Fruits and Vegetables Producers and Exporters Association stated.

Kanpaiti border post, which has been shut down for over four months, was reopened on 15 December. Chinese authorities shut down all the Sino-Myanmar border posts amidst the COVID-19 impacts on 11 July.

After a series of negotiation between Myanmar government and Chinese counterparts, the border post resumed its operation again. Myanmar conveyed more than 20 truckloads of tissue banana to China, said U Gam Aung, secretary of the association.

Myanmar exporters had to seek approval first from Kachin State government and then, they exported them to China as per instruction of the state



Cargo trucks carrying load of tissue banana are ready to enter China as part of border trade process.

government, he continued.

“Our company had requested Kachin State government

to operate 20 trucks for cargo transport.

Other respective companies

also asked the government to grant permit for export. The government had given the go-

ahead to seven out of 20 trucks so far,” he added.

Myanmar truck drivers and assistants have to take a rapid COVID-19 test twice at Washaung and Kanpaiti checkpoints as a mandatory. The driver substitution system is practised in China’s side, said a businessman.

There is a short haul transport service in China. After they unload the goods, they return the trucks to Myanmar drivers. Myanmar drivers cannot enter China market at the moment, said an exporter.

Myanmar primarily sent tissue banana to China via Kanpaiti, whereas the consumer goods, building materials and agricultural inputs are imported into the country.

The initial agreement covers 500 trucks from Myanmar for Sino-Myanmar border trade via Kanpaiti posts.—Khin Maung Swe (Mawlu)/GNLM

## Manufacturing sector attracts \$75.6 mln in Oct-Nov



Female workers focus on production of CMP products in garment factory of manufacturing sector.

MAJORITY of foreign enterprises eye the manufacturing sector for investments, pumping the estimated capital of US\$75.6 million into eight projects in the past two months of the current mini-budget period, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration stated.

The manufacturing enterprises and businesses that need a large labour force are prioritized, Myanmar Investment Commission stated.

At present, labour-intensive enterprises are facing financial hardship amid the COVID-19 negative impacts and the political changes.

Myanmar’s garment export drastically dropped on the back of slump in demand by European Union market in the previous months. Consequently, some CMP garment factories permanently and temporarily shut down and left thousands of workers unemployed.

Nonetheless, the industry is returning to normal after the COVID-19 vaccination programme for the workers, as per the HIS Markit’s September report.

Myanmar’s manufacturing sector is largely concentrated in garment and textiles produced on the Cutting, Making, and

Packaging basis, and it contributes to the country’s GDP to a certain extent.

Myanmar has drawn foreign direct investment of more than \$234.5 million from 13 enterprises during October-November period. The investments are flowing agriculture, livestock and fisheries, manufacturing, power, construction, transport and communications, hotels and tourism and other services sectors, including expansion of capital by existing enterprises and investments in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, the DICA’s statistics indicated.—KK/GNLM

## China GACC registration mandatory for Myanmar exporters

THE Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization under the Ministry of Commerce encouraged the exporters to register with the General Administration of Customs of the People’s Republic of China as the goods from the registered businesses will be allowed only for import to China starting from 1 January 2022, according to the notifications 248 and 249 of the GACC.

The competent authorities are helping the exporting companies, organization and individuals register with GACC. The registration must be done by 31 December 2021 and it is obligatory.

As a result of this, the ministry notified Myanmar exporters of the lists of the contact of the related departments to carry out the registration

process, along with the lists of the goods.

Those individuals executing edible oil, oilseeds, stuffed pastry products, edible grains, grains milling industrial products and malt, fresh and dehydrated vegetables, dried beans, plant species, nuts and seeds, dried fruits, unroasted coffee and cocoa bean, special dietary food excluding milk-based formula, functional foods, bee products, aquatic products including farm products, animal products and animal feed and livestock animals businesses need to apply for GACC license before the 2021-end in order to place their goods in China’s market.

Myanmar’s MoC is trying to boost exports of rice, broken rice, agro products, fruits and fisheries to China through diplomatic negotiations.—MNA

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# Let's take walking exercise for health and fitness

Myanmar people always talk about health conditions whenever someone suffers from the illness, using a saying that goes: "Health is Wealth". However, the majority of people neglect the value of health conditions.

When suffering from severe pains in illness and diseases, the people value the wealth of health. As such, everybody needs to take care of health and fitness for their daily life, setting aside the impacts of diseases. If they are healthy and fit, they can do everything at full capacity to secure victories.

Everybody needs to take care of the advantages of physical exercises, especially walking sports events. Hence, they all should take the walking exercise not only in December but the whole winter for possessing a healthy and fit life.

reduction of body weight, and youthfulness of body structure more than the age. Moreover, those who have the practice of walking can make long trips without easy tiredness, good digest and improved concentration.

Currently, the collective walking activities are staged as a campaign held in the month of December designated as the sports month on a yearly basis. People from various strata participate in collective walking activities in regions and states. Apart from such an activity, most of the people in individuals, groups and families defying the coolness of the winter take physical exercises at the public areas where they can take fresh air and taste the coolness of the winter.

Everybody needs to take care of the advantages of physical exercises, especially walking sports events. Hence, they all should take the walking exercise not only in December but the whole winter for possessing a healthy and fit life.



# Emergence of variants reminder that pandemic far from over: WHO Regional Director

"We should not dismiss Omicron as mild. Even if Omicron does cause less severe disease, the number of cases could once again overwhelm health systems": Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, South-East Asia Region Director, World Health Organisation (WHO), on Friday said that the risk of COVID-19 remains high globally, adding that the emergence of variants is a reminder that the pandemic is far from over.

"The risk of COVID-19 remains high globally. The emergence of variants is a reminder that the pandemic is far from over," Dr Poonam said.

Amid concerns arising out of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, the Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region also said that Omicron appears to be spreading faster than any other previous variant and added that one should not dismiss it as "mild".

"We should not dismiss Omicron as mild. Even if Omicron does cause less severe disease, the number of cases could once again overwhelm health systems," she said.

Dr Singh further said that preliminary data suggest that vaccines may likely have reduced effectiveness against infections by Omicron variant. "It will take a few more weeks before there is enough evidence to fully assess vaccines' performance against Omicron."

"However, more data are needed to draw firmer conclusions. There is still limited data on clinical severity associated with Omicron. More information on case severity associated with Omicron is expected in the coming weeks," she added.

As many as 101 cases of Omicron variant of COVID-19 so far have been detected across 11 States and Union Territories in India, the Central government informed on Friday.

A new variant of COVID-19 was first reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) from South Africa on 25 November. As per the WHO, the first known confirmed B.1.1.529 infection was from a specimen collected on November 9 this year.

On 26 November, the WHO named the new COVID-19 variant B.1.1.529, which has been detected in South Africa, as 'Omicron'. The WHO has classified Omicron as a 'variant of concern'.

SOURCE: ANI



Thailand's authorities said on 27 November they are going to ban entry of people travelling from eight African countries in the wake of the new Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP

# Here's how immune system builds long-term memory

Scientists from Japan have discovered a fundamental part of the immune system's long-term memory, detailing how to design better vaccines for diseases, ranging from COVID-19 to malaria.



Representation Image: The immune system is made of many cell types, but the two types relevant for this University of Tokyo research project are white blood cells called CD4+ follicular helper T cells and B cells. PHOTO: ANI

The research, published in the Journal of Experimental Medicine, reveals a new role for the enzyme TBK1 in deciding the fate of immune system memory B cells.

The immune system is made of many cell types, but the two types relevant for this

University of Tokyo research project are white blood cells called CD4+ follicular helper T cells and B cells. After the body recognizes an infection, the follicular helper T cells release chemical signals that cause immature B cells to learn and remember what pathogens to attack.

This process of T-to-B cell signalling and B cell training occurs within a temporary cell structure called the germinal centre in organs of the immune system, including the spleen, lymph nodes and tonsils.

Memory B cells developed within the germinal centre memorize a pathogen the first time it infects you and then if it ever gets into your body again, the mature, trained memory B cells attack it by inducing antibody production before the pathogen can multiply, saving you from feeling sick a second time.

"A goal of vaccination is to produce high-quality memory B cells for long-lasting antibody production," said Project Assistant Professor Michelle S. J. Lee from the UTokyo Institute of Medical Science, first author of the recent publication.

"There are many factors to consider when designing vaccines for long-lasting immunity,

so we should not focus only on the germinal centre alone. But if you don't have a functional germinal centre, then you will be very susceptible to reinfection," said Lee.

However, there is no limit to the number of times you can be bitten by mosquitoes and reinfected by the malaria parasite. Somehow, malaria parasites escape memory B cells. Although children are more likely to die from malaria than adults, some people can become severely ill despite any number of previous malaria infections.

This ability of the parasite to prevent and evade effective B cells is what makes malaria an interesting pathogen for Professor Cevayir Coban, who leads the Division of Malaria Immunology at the UTokyo Institute of Medical Science and is the last author of the research paper with Lee and collaborators at Osaka University.

"We want to understand the fundamentals of the natural immune response. Whatever we do should aim to eventually benefit malaria patients," said Coban. "The COVID-19 pandemic brought global attention to infectious diseases and interest in vaccine design, so we have a chance to renew the focus on neglected diseases like malaria," she continued.

Over many years, the scientific community has identified a wide range of roles for the molecule TBK1, an enzyme that can alter the activity of genes or other proteins by adding chemical tags, through a process called phosphorylation. TBK1 has well-known roles in antiviral immunity. However, no research group had connected TBK1 to B cell fate and the germinal centre.

Researchers genetically modified mice that had non-functional TBK1 genes only in

specific types of cells, primarily either B cells or CD4+ T cells. This cell type-specific knockout of TBK1 gives researchers a clearer idea of what a gene with many jobs is doing in different cells of the body. Coban, Lee and their colleagues infected these modified mice and healthy adult mice with the malaria parasite, observed their health, and then examined samples of their spleens and lymph nodes.

Microscopy images revealed that germinal centres only form in mice that have functional TBK1 in their B cells. Mice with no TBK1 in their B cells were more likely to die and die sooner from the malaria infection than their normal peers. Additional experiments showed that the few mice who survived malaria with no TBK1 in their B cells were able to use other types of immune responses, but they can become reinfected.

SOURCE: ANI



## Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 19 December 2021)

**BAY INFERENCE:** According to the observations at (13:30) hrs MST today, the low pressure area over Southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining Equatorial Indian Ocean still persists. Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and a few cloud elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 20 December 2021:** Light rain are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Mandalay, Yangon, and Ayeyawady regions and Kachin, Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of isolated light rain in Upper Sagaing, and Taninthayi regions and Kachin State.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2021:** Generally fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2021:** Generally fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2021:** Generally fair weather.

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# Preparations underway for moon landing

CHINA is making preparations for a moon landing that will place its astronauts on the lunar surface, according to a senior official at the China Manned Space Agency.

Dong Nengli, head of the agency's technology bureau, said at a news conference at the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee in Beijing on Friday afternoon that space program planners and engineers are researching the road map and technologies for the manned moon landing.

"The results of their work will be seen in due course. Our astronauts will definitely touch down on the moon," he told reporters.

The news conference invited key figures from China's manned space programs, who are also members of the Communist Party of China, to share their stories and thoughts with journalists.

China's space authorities have a long-term plan to land astronauts on the moon and set up at least one scientific station there. They hope to use the manned missions to carry out scientific surveys and technological research, explore ways to develop lunar resources and strengthen the nation's space capabilities.

Zhou Yanfei, a deputy chief designer of China's manned space program, said in September 2020 that the country has the capacity to independently land astronauts on the moon because of its technologies, well-trained, innovative professionals and efficient research and management systems.

Toward that goal, Wang Yanan, editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, said Chinese engineers need to build new, stronger carrier rockets and spacecraft before they arrange a moon-bound journey for

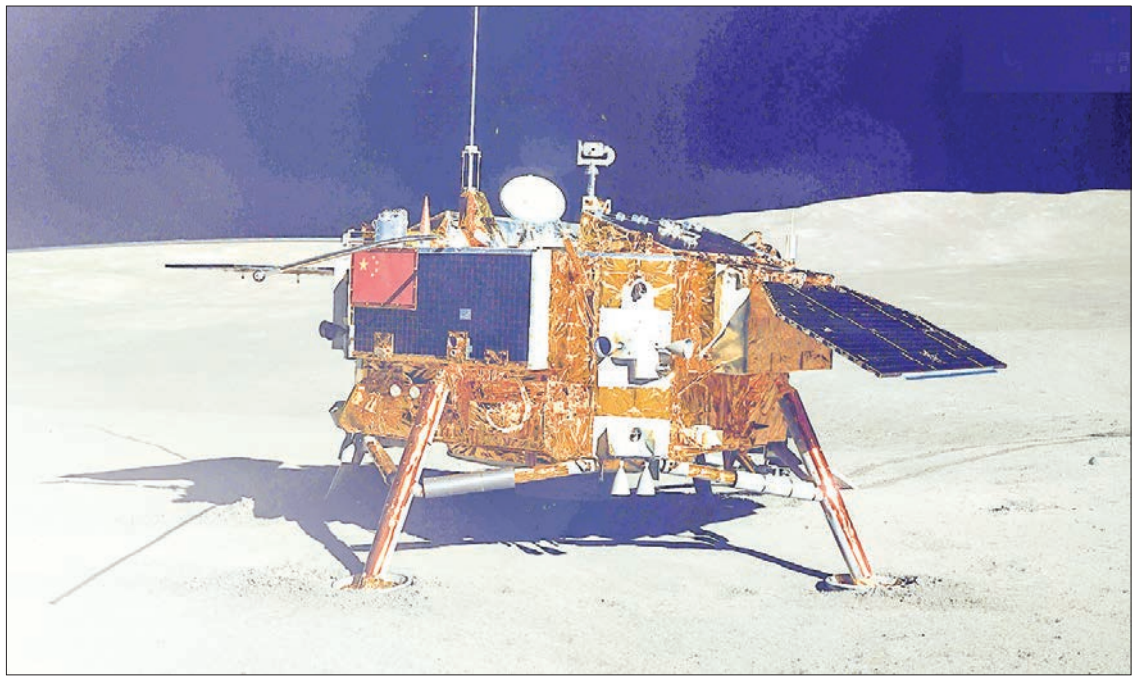


Photo taken by the rover Yutu 2 (Jade Rabbit 2) on 11 January, 2019 shows the lander of the Chang'e 4 probe. **PHOTO: CHINA NATIONAL SPACE ADMINISTRATION/XINHUA**

Chinese astronauts.

"The nation's current rockets and manned spaceships can't send astronauts to the moon because they are not de-

signed for such a mission. We need to design a new rocket, a new spacecraft, a lunar landing capsule and a new spacesuit fit for a moon walk. We also need to

upgrade our ground support system that was designed for operations in low-Earth orbit rather than on the lunar surface," he explained. — Xinhua ■

## Russia ready to 'fight' for space tourism supremacy



Roscosmos cosmonaut Alexander Misurkin, centre, and space flight participants Yusaku Maezawa, left, and Yozo Hirano pose for a picture during a training session ahead of the expedition to the International Space Station at the Gagarin Cosmonauts' Training Center in Star City outside Moscow, Russia, 14 October 2021. **PHOTO: CFP/AFP**

AFTER a decade-long hiatus, Russia is relaunching an ambitious bid for dominion over the

world's budding space tourism industry, jostling with zealous billionaires, the United States,

and rising China.

Russia flaunted its comeback this month dispatching two cosmic adventurers — Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa and his assistant — to the International Space Station (ISS) in its first launch of tourists in 12 years.

Buoyed by the success, fire-brand space chief Dmitry Rogozin talked up Russia's next steps to supremacy: a special module at the ISS for Russia's visitors, spacewalks outside the station, and — down the line — trips around the moon.

"We will not give this niche to the Americans. We are ready to fight for it," he told reporters at a press conference as Maezawa was blasting towards the ISS on a 12-day mission. — AFP ■

## Fukushima toxins in Arctic add to pressure on Japan

THE revelation that radioactive material from the Fukushima nuclear plant has reached the Arctic Ocean is sparking renewed calls for Japan to scrap a decision to dump toxic water from the crippled plant into the sea.

According to a study by Yuichiro Kumamoto, a senior researcher from the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology, radioactive

Cesium-134 that flowed into the ocean after the Fukushima nuclear accident in 2011 arrived in the Arctic region about eight years later.

According to the study, which was published on Tuesday, seawater collected at 73 degrees latitude north in the Arctic Ocean in October 2019 contained 0.07 becquerel of Cesium-134 per cubic meter, who has a half-life of around two years.

Kumamoto's study claimed that it is the first time that Cesium-134 has been detected beyond the marginal sea of the Arctic Ocean.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Wednesday that it is not the first report that confirmed a radioactive substance from the Fukushima plant had been detected in the Arctic Ocean. — Xinhua ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### India tests nuclear-capable ballistic missile

INDIA on Saturday successfully tested its new generation nuclear-capable ballistic missile "Agni P".

The missile test was carried out from the A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of India's eastern state of Odisha at 11:06 am, said an official statement by the Ministry of Defence.

The statement said that telemetry, radar, electro-optical stations and down-range ships positioned along the eastern coast tracked and monitored the missile trajectory and parameters.

"The missile followed text book trajectory meeting all mission objectives with high level of accuracy," added the statement.

The "Agni P" is a two-stage canisterised solid propellant ballistic missile with dual redundant navigation and guidance system. This second flight-test has proven the reliable performance of all the advanced technologies integrated into the system, said the defence ministry's statement. — Xinhua ■

### Tunisia recyclers struggle to tackle mountains of waste

"WHEN I see plastic, I see money," says Tarek Masmoudi, owner of one of the few recycling companies in Tunisia, where a waste crisis is threatening widespread social unrest.

Recycling is almost non-existent in the North African country, which produces 2.6 million tonnes of waste each year.

Some 85 per cent of that ends up in landfills, while much of the rest winds up in informal dumps, says Tunisian waste management expert Walim Merdaci.

But with many facilities close to overflowing and neighbouring communities up in arms, the crisis is already stoking tensions.

In November, a man died as security forces fired tear gas to disperse protesters demanding the closure of a stinking landfill they say has spread deadly diseases and health problems to their town of Agareb, near second city Sfax.

That could be a worrying sign of things to come as, according to expert Wassim Chaabane, most of the country's 11 official dumping grounds are due to close by the end of 2022.

That has authorities scrambling to find new sites. — AFP ■

## Chinese COVID-19 vaccine in high demand in Kyrgyzstan, says official



Residents wait in line to get a booster vaccine dose in front of a mobile vaccination bus in Yunmeng County, Xiaogan City, Hubei Province, 10 December 2021. PHOTO: CFP/XINHUA

CHINESE vaccines against COVID-19 are in high demand in Kyrgyzstan, director of the Republican Centre for Immunoprophylaxis of Kyrgyzstan Gulbara Ishenapisova has said.

People have received the Sinopharm vaccine and "it began to be in good demand," the director told Xinhua on Wednesday, noting that the Kyrgyz health authorities have made efforts

to inform the people about the quality and effectiveness of the Chinese vaccine.

The Sinopharm vaccines have been used since the first nationwide vaccination campaign launched in March, Ishenapisova said, adding that people over 60 years old, representatives of law enforcement agencies, health workers, social workers, people with chronic diseases are given

priority for vaccination.

Noting that multiple batches of vaccines from China have been delivered to Kyrgyzstan since March, the director said China is "the first to respond and support us with the necessary personal protective equipment."

Ishenapisova expressed her gratitude to the government of China for the help in the fight against COVID-19. — Xinhua ■

## Covid rules shutting down Hong Kong's aviation industry: Qatar Airways boss



In this 11 August 2021 photo, a woman wearing a face mask walks past a flight information board at Hong Kong International Airport. PHOTO: ISAAC LAWRENCE / AFP

HONG Kong's strict adherence to a zero-Covid strategy is damaging the hub's aviation industry and "killing" Cathay Pacific, a major shareholder in the city's home carrier told local media.

Following Beijing's lead, Hong Kong has maintained

some of the world's strictest quarantine measures and travel curbs, which has kept the city coronavirus-free but internationally isolated.

Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al Baker took issue with a border-control rule that temporarily bans airlines that have brought

in infected passengers.

"You can't just shut the aviation industry (down) because somebody got infected coming in (on) someone's aeroplane," he told the South China Morning Post.

Al Baker added that he was "a little disappointed" that Hong Kong has remained closed, and he had expected a major part of Cathay's fleet to be flying again.

Qatar Airways is Cathay's third-largest shareholder, with a 9.6 per cent stake purchased for HK\$5.16 billion (\$661 million) in 2017.

Under Hong Kong's rules, if an airline brings in too many infected passengers on a particular route, it is banned from flying that route for two weeks.

Those rules have been tightened over fears of the Omicron variant, which Hong Kong has recorded 14 cases of as of Friday. — AFP ■

## UK breaks daily COVID cases record for 3<sup>rd</sup> day in a row

BRITAIN reported 93,045 coronavirus cases in the latest 24-hour period, breaking the daily record for the third consecutive day and bringing the total number of coronavirus cases in the country to 11,190,354, according to official figures released Friday.

Another 3,201 Omicron cases have been found in Britain, the biggest daily increase since the COVID-19 variant was detected in the country, taking the total Omicron cases found in the country to 14,909, the UK Health Security Agen-

cy (UKHSA), said Friday.

The country also reported a further 111 coronavirus-related deaths. The total number of coronavirus-related deaths in Britain now stands at 147,048, with 7,611 COVID-19 patients still in the hospital.

The latest data came as a study by Imperial College London showed that the risk of reinfection from Omicron is more than five times higher than Delta and shows no sign of being milder than the previous coronavirus variant. — ANI ■



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told Sky News Friday that Omicron is a "very serious threat" and that the country is seeing a "very serious wave coming through." PHOTO: AFP

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Portugal starts vaccinating children amid Omicron variant

PORTUGAL started vaccinating children ages 5-11 against COVID-19 on Saturday, said the country's Directorate-General for Health (DGS). About 41,200 children were vaccinated on Saturday, with priority being given to those with comorbidities, it added.

According to the government forecast, a total of 77,000 children will receive vaccines formulated in pediatric doses by the Pfizer laboratory, with the second dose being administered between Feb. 5 and March 13 next year.

Deputy Secretary of State and Health Antonio Lacerda Sales said that all children up to 11 years old "may come to vaccination centres and receive the vaccine." — Xinhua ■

### Cases of COVID-19 Omicron variant climb to 134 in Israel

ISRAEL on Friday reported 45 new cases of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, raising the total Omicron cases in the country to 134, said the Israeli Ministry of Health.

The ministry said that 86 of the infected are returning passengers from South Africa, Britain, France, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Hungary, Italy, Namibia, Tanzania, Germany, Morocco, Spain, Serbia, Belgium, and Turkey.

It added that 28 others were infected in Israel through close contact with travellers returning from South Africa, the United States, France and Britain, while the remaining 20 were infected in Israel without being abroad nor in close contact with returning passengers.

In addition, 42 of the 134 infected are unvaccinated or recovered more than half a year ago. — Xinhua ■

## India to become fastest expanding economy in 2021-22, says Amit Shah

UNION Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation Amit Shah said on Friday that India is likely to become the fastest growing economy in the world in the current financial year.

“We are reaching the pre-COVID levels. July to September GDP number has been at 8.4 per cent and I think in the year 2021-22, India is likely to become the fastest growing economy in the world. I will not be surprised if we touch double-digit growth,” Shah said while addressing FICCI’s Annual Convention & 94<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting.

Shah said out of the 22 parameters of the economy, India has exceeded in 19 parameters, and this shows that the country

has come out strong from the crisis. “Both manufacturing and service sector index has reached the pre-COVID levels. With the announcements of various packages and relief, our inflation is within the targeted range of 4-6 per cent as set by the government,” he added.

Highlighting the potential of the MSME sector, Shah said that till the time “we encourage and strengthen this sector we cannot address the issue of unemployment in the country”. He also emphasized on the need of spending more in the R&D sector. The Home Minister pointed out that FICCI’s Annual General Meeting was happening at an important juncture as on the one



Shah said out of the 22 parameters of the economy, India has exceeded in 19 parameters, and this shows that the country has come out strong from the crisis. **PHOTO: ANI**

hand, the world is slowly coming out of COVID and on the other hand, India is celebrating Azadi

ka Amrit Mahostav. The time has come for FICCI to come forward and increase its role in India’s

growth along with exploring new areas of opportunities, he noted. — ANI ■

## Net profits of China’s central SOEs hit 1.75 trln yuan in Jan-Nov



Workers carry out tasks relating to construction of a refinery project at a petrochemical industry base in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province on 27 January. **PHOTO: WANG JIANMIN/CHINA DAILY/XINHUA**

CHINA’S centrally-administered state-owned enterprises (SOEs) saw robust growth in net profits in the first 11 months of the year, said the country’s top state assets regulator on Saturday.

During the January-Novem-

ber period, net profits of central SOEs expanded to 1.75 trillion yuan (about 274.94 billion U.S. dollars), according to the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) of the State Council.

Enterprises in the petro-

leum and petrochemical, iron and steel as well as coal industries saw an apparent increase in their profitability, said the SASAC.

The research and development (R&D) intensity (the percentage of revenue that is reinvested in R&D) of the central SOEs went up by 0.1 percentage points from a year earlier to stand at 2.3 per cent during the period.

Since the beginning of the year, central SOEs have accelerated their investment in strategic emerging industries, according to the SASAC.

In the first three quarters, central SOEs’ investment in the strategic emerging industries reached 726.7 billion yuan, up 6.3 per cent year on year, the data shows. — Xinhua ■

## US supply chain crunch drags world down

THE US supply chain crisis has grabbed global headlines as ships continue to dawdle at ports in the state of California.

Shipping companies have reportedly prioritized sending empty containers from the United States to China, while cutting shipping capacity to Japan and other countries for higher profits on routes between the United States and Asia.

Analysts said that the Asia-Pacific region and even the whole world have been plagued by the US supply chain disruptions, which have triggered a chain reaction and severely chal-

lenged the recovery of the global economy.

The import and export sectors are paying the price.

Freight costs are up 30 per cent from last year, Norman Krug, a US farmer from Chapman, Nebraska, said at a Senate hearing, adding that the chaos has led to higher logistics costs and longer shipping times.

At the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, long queues of ships are a common sight, and tens of thousands of containers full of goods cannot go ashore.

In mid-August, the wait time for each freighter to unload was

six days at the Port of Los Angeles; today, the time is 10 to 12 days.

From January to October this year, the total sea container volume from Asia to the United States increased by 23.9 per cent year-on-year.

Freight per 20-foot equivalent units on China-US routes soared from 1,500 US dollars in 2019 to 28,000 dollars this summer, and remains as high as about 8,400 dollars, according to Descartes Datamyne, a US company specializing in logistics and supply chain solutions. — Xinhua ■

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Greek parliament ratifies 2022 state budget

GREECE’S parliament approved on Saturday the 2022 state budget, which foresees strong economic growth in the year of 2022, after this year’s overperformance.

A year ago, the government had forecast 4.5 per cent growth for 2021. Greece has registered a 9.3 per cent growth in the first nine months of 2021, one of the highest across the eurozone, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis noted, addressing the parliament shortly before the budget was approved by 158 lawmakers in the 300-member strong plenary.

“This is the result of a policy which turned difficulties into opportunities and exceeded expectations. Our country moves forward with a dual growth, growth and social welfare,” he said, according to Greek public broadcaster ERT.

Despite the challenges, Greece has recovered all losses suffered due to the pandemic by focusing on innovation and extroversion, the Greek leader said, explaining the reasons of the positive outcome.

So far, a minimum 4.5 per cent growth rate is expected for 2022. The unemployment rate is forecast to fall to 14.2 per cent next year from 15.9 per cent this year, while inflation rate is projected at 0.8 per cent in 2022. In order to help businesses and households cope with the increased energy costs, Mitsotakis also announced more relief measures during the debate, which include an increase in state subsidies for electricity bills and natural gas bills and additional aid for the agricultural sector. — Xinhua ■

#### China revises preliminary calculation of 2020 GDP

CHINA’S gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 was revised to 101.36 trillion yuan (about 15.92 trillion US dollars), official data showed Friday. The amount represents a reduction of 241.9 billion yuan from the preliminary calculation, data from the final verification conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed.

At constant prices, the 2020 GDP increased 2.2 per cent year on year, down 0.1 percentage point from the preliminary calculation, according to the NBS.

China’s annual GDP goes through two sets of accounting in accordance with the current national economic accounting system. The first is the preliminary calculation of GDP, which will be revised in a final verification based on the annual statistical data, fiscal final accounts and departmental administrative records. — Xinhua ■

NEWS  
IN BRIEF

China's crude oil output up 2.7 pct in November

CHINA'S crude oil output rose 2.7 per cent year on year to 16.31 million tonnes in November, official data showed.

THE volume went up 3.9 per cent from the 2019 level, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). IN the first 11 months, the country's crude oil output came in at 182.48 million tonnes, up 2.5 per cent year on year, the NBS said.

AS one of the world's largest oil buyers, China imported 41.79 million tonnes of crude oil last month, down 7.9 per cent from a year earlier.

DURING the January-November period, crude oil imports fell 7.3 per cent year on year to 466.84 million tonnes, NBS data showed. — Xinhua ■

Indian School of Business to develop curriculum of 4 skilling programmes

THE Indian School of Business (ISB) and Telangana's State Board of Technical Education and Training (SBTET) on Friday signed an MoU on strengthening employability skills in the state for undergraduate students.

As part of the MoU, ISB will develop and deliver the curriculum of four skilling programmes – Business Literacy Programme, Behavioral Skills Programme, Digital Literacy Programme and Entrepreneurial Literacy Programme, in its Learning Management System (LMS) platform as asynchronous recorded sessions by expert faculty from ISB. The MoU was signed by ISB Deputy Dean Professor Deepa Mani and SBTET Secretary Dr C Srinath in the presence of Telangana IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao. Collegiate and Technical Education Commissioner Navin Mittal and ISB Dean Prof Madan Pillutla, IT Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan were also present. — ANI ■

JR East, West to cut commuter services next year amid pandemic

EAST Japan Railway Co. which serves the Tokyo metropolitan area and West Japan Railway Co. operating in the western region will cut the number of trains during morning rush hours next year after the coronavirus pandemic led to a fall in passengers.

Railway companies across Japan are adjusting services due to drops in ridership numbers and changes in passengers' lifestyles in the wake of the coronavirus spread.

East Japan Railway known as JR East will reduce services by one to four trains per hour on 16 lines in the Tokyo area from March, including on the Yamanote Line connecting the busiest stations in the capital.

As for its shinkansen bullet train services, JR East will reduce the num-



People wait on a platform as a train arrives at Shibuya Station in Tokyo on 25 October 2021. PHOTO: KYODO

ber of regularly operated trains by 25 to 324, the largest cut since the company's creation through the national railway operator's privatization in 1987.

JR West will also re-

duce regular services from March by cutting trains and shortening service routes including those in the Osaka metropolitan area.

Affecting about 500

regular trains, it is the largest service overhaul since JR West's establishment in 1987, according to the company.

Similarly, Tobu Railway Co., which also serves

the Tokyo area, said it will slash its services during the morning rush hours from March.

Other western Japan railway firms like Hankyu Hanshin Holdings Inc. are also considering slashing the number of trains running at peak times due to the pandemic.

Hankyu Hanshin Chairman Kazuo Sumi told Kyodo News in a recent interview, "We would review timetables to meet demand," but did not mention specific numbers of peak-hour trains to be cut.

"If we reduce the number of trains at peak times, we can also slash the number of trains we need to keep, benefiting our businesses," he said, referring to the importance of cost reduction.

— Kyodo ■

Omicron scrambles anew US firms' in-person aspirations

MAJOR US companies are having to reassess their return-to-office plans and getting tough on vaccine or mask requirements as the Omicron Covid variant looks set to extend pandemic-induced work-from-home culture.

A resumption of pre-virus workplace norms was

only partially moving forward in the United States when the fast-spreading new variant arrived and provoked fresh concern.

Legal challenges have made the future of President Joe Biden's vaccine mandate for companies with over 100 workers uncertain, and firms have

been pursuing their own requirements. Tech giant Google has been notably uncompromising in warning employees of lost pay or even dismissal if they do not report their vaccination status by a particular deadline, according to an internal document viewed by CNBC. — AFP ■

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- The subordinate legislations in the form of 99 regulations and 32 standards, which will be prescribed for nautical and marine engineering praxis based on the provisions as emanated from International Conventions and its instruments, to which Myanmar has ratified or planned to ratify, are required to draft for the promulgation.
- The companies or institutions with expected capacity, who are intended to submit the proposal, are to be assessed, selected and assigned for the purpose; in this regards, any companies or institutions under fully ownership of Myanmar citizen are invited to submit the proposal form to the following address:
  - (i) *Date and Time of vending proposal form:* From 22 December 2021 to 07 January 2022 (within office hours)
  - (ii) *Location of proposal form vending/submission:* Department of Marine Administration (Head Office) No. 363-421, Corner of Theinbyu and Merchant Street, Botahtaung Township, Yangon.
  - (iii) *Proposal form last submission date:* 21 January 2022, not later than 15:00 hrs (Myanmar Standard Time)
  - (iv) *Pre-Tender meeting date:* 10 January 2022, 13:00 hrs (Myanmar Standard Time)
- Proposals must be submitted to the aforementioned address on-time, any delayed proposals will be rejected.
- The necessary information of this bid, inclusive of proposal form, terms and conditions and any queries can be inquired at the following contacts within office hours:  
Department of Marine Administration (Head Office), Yangon  
Contact: 01 9010039, 01 397643

Tender Acceptance and Assessment Committee

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GREEN CLARITY VOY.NO. (0250-050N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V GREEN CLARITY VOY.NO. (0250-050N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20-12-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S EVERGREEN MARINE (S'PORE) PTE., LTD.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PANJA BHUM VOY.NO. (180W)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PANJA BHUM VOY.NO. (180W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20-12-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT 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 REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

## 7<sup>th</sup> round of Iran nuclear talks concludes in Vienna

THE seventh round of the Iran nuclear talks concluded here on Friday.

The latest round, started on Nov. 29, brought together the representatives of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and Iran under the chairmanship of Enrique Mora, deputy secretary general of the European External Action Service. The aim of the talks is to resume the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also referred to as the 2015 nuclear deal. Mora briefed the press on the progress made during this round of talks.

“First, We have incorporated in our work, the new Iranian delegation. They have come to a negotiation that was ongoing before the summer ... We es-



Photo taken on 17 December 2021 shows a meeting of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Joint Commission in Vienna, Austria. **PHOTO: EU Delegation in Vienna/Handout via Xinhua**

established very quickly, very good working relationship with the new Iranian colleagues,” he said.

Second, the parties held in-depth discussions on a variety of sensitive issues. These included

“the political positions, the new political sensitivities of the new administration in Tehran,” he

said. Moreover, Mora said: “We have incorporated some of the most relevant elements of the new Iranian positions ... to the documents that we will still work on.” Wang Qun, Chinese envoy to the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations in Vienna, said on Friday that after three weeks of intense negotiations and through the concerted effort of all parties, the seventh round produced an important consensus and a new document, laying a solid foundation for advancing the follow-up negotiations as well as for bringing the JCPOA back on track.

The Chinese envoy said he expected the important consensus reached in this round to be translated into a final agreement as soon as possible. — Xinhua ■

## Reclusive Laos to re-open to foreign travellers



Laos was receiving about 4.7 million foreign tourists each year before the pandemic. **PHOTO: AFP**

LAOS has announced plans to partially re-open to foreign travellers in the new year, throwing a lifeline to the tourism industry after borders were sealed for more than 18 months to keep out Covid.

Fully vaccinated visitors on

pre-booked tours will be able to enter from 1 January and visit the capital Vientiane, eco-tourism hotspot Vang Vieng and UNESCO World Heritage-listed Luang Prabang, state media reported Friday. Further destinations will

be opened up in April and July as vaccination rates in Laos increase. But entry will only be available to tourists from 17 nations, mostly Southeast Asian and European countries as well as China, the United States, Australia and Canada. All visitors will also need to test negative for Covid before arriving.

The reclusive communist nation this month opened a \$6 billion Beijing-built railway that connects its capital to the southwestern Chinese city of Kunming. Health authorities are now rushing to deliver Covid booster shots to people living in tourist spots along the train line in anticipation of an influx of travellers. Laos was receiving about 4.7 million foreign tourists each year before the pandemic. — AFP ■

## EU offers solution to ensure medicine supply from Great Britain to NI

THE European Commission put forward proposals to ensure timely supply of medicines to Northern Ireland (NI) from the rest of the United Kingdom (UK), announced officials on Friday.

“The Commission is today proposing a bespoke arrangement for the supply of medicines to Northern Ireland.

It means that everyone in Northern Ireland will have access to the same medicines at the same time as elsewhere in the UK, while ensuring that the

integrity of the EU Single Market is protected,” said Maros Sefcovic, Vice-president of the European Commission and co-chair of the EU-UK Joint Committee and Partnership Council.

Not only generic medicines, such as paracetamol, but also life-saving medicines such as cancer treatment, are included, he said at a press conference.

In line with the proposals, if a new medicine has been authorized in the UK, but not yet in the EU, it will be temporarily

supplied to patients in Northern Ireland pending authorization in the EU, European Commissioner for Health, Stella Kyriakides told the same press conference.

Those temporary authorizations should be time-limited and end as soon as the Commission has granted the authorization to market the medicine, she added.

The European Commission's proposals still need to be sent to the European Parliament and the Council for examination and endorsement. — Xinhua ■

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Russia delivers 36 tons of humanitarian aid to Kabul

THREE Russian military transport aircraft have delivered 36 tons of humanitarian aid to Kabul, local media reported on Saturday. According to Sputnik, the flights were organized upon the instructions of President Vladimir Putin to evacuate over 300 people from Afghanistan.

“Each Russian military transport aircraft is carrying humanitarian aid from Russia for the Afghan people. A total of 36 tons of humanitarian cargo including food and medication have been airlifted [to Afghanistan],” the Russian News Agency quoted the country's Defence Ministry statement.

It further added that medical crews are aboard each aircraft to provide the evacuees with the necessary help.

This evacuation group is the fourth organized by Russia, and the planes are to fly Russian and Kyrgyz citizens and Afghan students studying in Russia out of Afghanistan.

From 26 August to 1 December, Russia evacuated 770 Russian, Belarusian, Kyrgyz, Armenian, Ukrainian, and Afghan citizens from the country, and sent 72 tons of humanitarian aid, Sputnik reported citing the defence ministry statement. The Taliban took over control of Kabul on August 15 and following this the country has been battered by deepening economic, humanitarian and security crisis. — ANI ■

#### Over 1 mln children in danger of violence as crisis deepening in Lebanon

MORE than one million children in Lebanon are at serious risk of physical, emotional, or sexual violence, as Lebanese families struggle to cope with the deepening crisis, according to a new report released on Friday by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Dubbed ‘Violent beginnings: Children growing up in Lebanon's crisis,’ the report revealed that around 1.8 million children (more than 80 per cent) are now experiencing multidimensional poverty - up from around 900,000 in 2019 - and risk being forced into abuses such as child labor or child marriage to help their families make ends meet. Yukie Mokuo, the UNICEF representative in Lebanon, said that children's safety and wellbeing are intricately connected to every pillar of a well-functioning society. Najat Rochdi, the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator for Lebanon, said that the shocking figures of children subject to abuse and exploitation, and deprived of their basic rights, must be reversed. — Xinhua ■

# Russia officially withdraws from Open Skies Treaty

RUSSIA has officially withdrawn from the Treaty on Open Skies, the Russian Foreign Ministry announced Saturday in a statement.

“Decades of fruitful implementation of the treaty showed that it has served well as a tool for strengthening confidence and security, creating additional opportunities for an objective and unbiased assessment of the military potential and military activities of the participating states,” it said.

The ministry mentioned that during Russia’s participation in the treaty, the country has conducted 646 flights, and allowed for 449 flights to be



The Treaty on Open Skies establishes a program of unarmed aerial surveillance flights over the entire territory of its participants. Russian Air Force, RF-92957, Beriev A-50 Mainstay airborne early warning and control aircraft PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA/XINHUA

carried out over its territory among the 1,580 total flights made.

“Unfortunately, all our

efforts did not allow us to preserve the treaty as it was intended by its authors,” it said.

“The entire responsibility for the degradation of the agreement lies with the initiator of the collapse of the Trea-

ty on Open Skies: the United States of America,” the ministry said.

After the formal U.S. withdrawal in November 2020, the Russian Foreign Ministry said this January that the country had started domestic legal procedures for the official pullout from the treaty.

On 7 June, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law to quit the treaty.

The multilateral pact, which came into effect in 2002, allows its states-parties to conduct short-notice, unarmed reconnaissance flights over the others’ territories to collect data on military forces and activities. —Xinhua ■

## Taliban govt resumes issuing Afghan passports in Kabul



Alam Gul Haqqani (C), head of the passport office, says the Taliban will resume issuing passports after a deluge of applications caused biometric equipment to break down. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

AFGHANISTAN’S Taliban authorities said Saturday they will resume issuing passports in Kabul, giving hope to citizens who feel threatened living under the Islamists’ rule.

Thousands of Afghans have applied for new travel documents to escape a growing economic and humanitarian crisis described by the United Nations as an “avalanche of

hunger”.

Authorities will start issuing the documents from Sunday at Kabul’s passport office, Alam Gul Haqqani, the head of the passport department in the interior ministry, told reporters.

The Taliban stopped issuing passports shortly after their August 15 return to power, as tens of thousands of people scrambled to Kabul’s only airport in a bid to catch any international flight that could evacuate them.

In October authorities reopened the passport office in Kabul only to suspend work days later as a flood of applications caused the biometric equipment used there to break down.—AFP ■

## Hong Kong elite picks new ‘patriots only’ legislature

HONG Kong’s political elite began voting to pick new city lawmakers on Sunday under Beijing’s “patriots only” rules that drastically reduce the number of directly elected seats and control who can run for office.

It is the first legislature poll under the new political blueprint China imposed on Hong Kong in response to massive and often violent pro-democracy protests two years ago.

All candidates have been vetted for their patriotism and political loyalty to China and only 20 of the 90 legislature seats will be directly elected.

Voting centres opened at 8:30 am (0030 GMT) for some



Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam and her ministers have tried to drum up public enthusiasm for the polls. PHOTO: AFP

4.5 million registered voters in the city of 7.5 million, and will close 14 hours later with polling suggesting the turnout could be low.

The largest chunk of legislature seats — 40 — will be picked

by a committee of 1,500 staunch Beijing loyalists.

The remaining 30 will be chosen by reliably pro-Beijing committees that represent special-interest and industry groups. —AFP ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Malaysia’s leading coalition records landslide win in state election

CYPRUS repatriated a group of 258 Vietnamese immigrants who were allegedly staying illegally in the eastern Mediterranean island, an official statement said on Saturday.

It said that the repatriation, in cooperation with the government of Vietnam, was made on a special flight on Friday.

It was the first such repatriation announced by Cyprus, which said that it has reached its limits in hosting immigrants and asylum seekers.

The Ministry of Interior said that several thousand immigrants, from Turkey, Syria and other Asian and African countries, arrived illegally in the past few months.

The Interior Ministry said that it is trying to maximize immigrants’ returns through bilateral agreements with third countries and strengthening cooperation with international and European organizations. Cyprus has claimed that it has the largest concentration of immigrants among European Union countries, making up four per cent of its population. —Xinhua ■

### Brexit negotiator David Frost quits UK govt

FORMER Brexit negotiator David Frost resigned from the government with immediate effect on Saturday, topping a torrid week for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson after a party rebellion on new coronavirus curbs and by-election humiliation.

Frost, a trusted ally of the prime minister, sent his resignation letter following reports that he was to leave his post in January.

“It is disappointing that this plan has become public this evening and in the circumstances I think it is right for me to write to step down with immediate effect,” he said in the letter, published by Johnson’s Downing Street office.

Frost told Johnson he had “concerns about the current direction of travel” regarding coronavirus regulations and tax rises.

Johnson responded that he was “very sorry” to receive the resignation, “given everything you have achieved and contributed to this government”.

The Mail on Sunday earlier reported that Frost had handed in his resignation a week ago, but had been persuaded to stay on until the New Year. Johnson is already reeling from a rebellion by 100 of his MPs in a parliamentary vote over coronavirus measures and the stunning loss of a 23,000-majority seat in a by-election.

That was partly blamed on a slew of reports that his staff and aides had held parties last Christmas despite virus restrictions in place at the time. —AFP ■

## Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

### 1. Political affairs

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

### 2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.

- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

### 3. Social affairs

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

## Plan underway to hold XXXI SEA Games from 12 to 23 May

THE XXXI SEA Games (South-east Asian Games) postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be held from 12 to 23 May, 2022.

The tournament was originally scheduled to run from 21 November to 2 December this year, but was postponed due to an epidemic and was resched-

uled for May next year.

The SEA Games has been postponed to next year, but the tourney will remain the same as before, with 40 sports scheduled.

Host Vietnam will organize 526 sport events in 40 sports. The opening ceremony will be held on 12 May while the closing ceremony will be held on 23 May

and some sports will be held before the opening day.

Myanmar plans to compete in 18 sport events and athletes are undergone special training camp. Myanmar Sports Team taking training in Nay Pyi Taw and some sports teams are taking training abroad.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM ■

## Next, the World Cup: after Arab Cup, Qatar faces bigger test



Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (C) and FIFA President Gianni Infantino (R) present Algeria's goalkeeper and captain Rais M'Bolhi with the the Arab Cup. **PHOTO: AFP**

QATAR passed their first test with a successful hosting of the Arab Cup but bigger challenges lie ahead when 1.2 million fans and 32 international teams arrive for the World Cup one year from now. Algerian rejoicing at Saturday's 2-0 extra-time win over Tunisia in the final — exactly a year before the 2022 World Cup decider, and with FIFA president Gianni Infantino in the stands — will have been accompanied by satisfaction from Qatari officials.

But now comes the hard work as Qatar prepares for the unique task of hosting a World Cup in and around a single

city, Doha, with limited hotel accommodation and a transport network that is likely to come under strain.

The wealthy Gulf state will also be bracing for intense scrutiny after coming under fire over the rights of the migrant labourers who have built its infrastructure, including the World Cup stadiums.

And it will be mindful of a cultural gap when fans from around the world arrive in a conservative Muslim country with restricted access to alcohol, and where public drunkenness and homosexual relations are illegal. — AFP ■

## Woods happy with return at PNC Championship

A smiling Tiger Woods made a successful return to competitive golf on Saturday, teaming up with his son Charlie to card a 10-under-par 62 at the PNC Cham-

pionship family tournament in Florida.

Woods, playing for the first time since suffering career threatening injuries in a Febru-



Tiger Woods looks on as son Charlie plays a shot during their 10-under-par round at the PNC Championship family tournament in Florida on Saturday. **PHOTO: AFP**

ary crash in California, showed flashes of his old brilliance even though he lacked his usual power and length. The 45-year-old golfing icon used a cart to help ferry him around the Ritz Carlton Golf Course's 7,106-yard layout.

He later admitted the physical demands of the round had been challenging; at one point Woods was seen wincing visibly.

"It's frustrating when I don't hit the ball as far as I know that I can and the shots that I see don't come off the way I want," Woods told reporters, saying he hit only "three good shots" all round.

"I don't have endurance. I haven't played. This is, what, my fourth, fifth round the entire year? I don't have any golf endurance," the 15-time major champion said.—AFP ■

## Barca's young guns deliver late win over Elche, Atletico undone by Sevilla

BARCELONA are in sight of La Liga's top four again after 19-year-old Nico Gonzalez scored a late winner to seal a much-needed victory over Elche before Atletico Madrid were beaten by Sevilla.

Nico's strike came after the 22-year-old Ferran Jutgla, making his full debut, and the 17-year-old Gavi had earlier given Barca a two-goal lead at Camp Nou.

But Elche scored twice in 96 seconds shortly after the hour as Tete Morente and Pere Milla pulled the visitors level, only for Nico to drag Barcelona to a 3-2 victory.

And the result got even better for Barca's top-four chase after Atletico lost 2-1 away at Sevilla, Lucas Ocampos smashing home in the 88th minute at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan to consign Atleti to a third consecutive

league defeat.

"It's a difficult moment but I'm calm," said Diego Simeone. "I trust in the squad we have." Barcelona are now seventh, two points behind Atletico and three behind Rayo Vallecano in fourth, yet having played one game fewer than Rayo. Sevilla are second, five points behind Real Madrid, who play at home to Cadiz on Sunday. — AFP ■