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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.

If foodstuffs are sufficiently produced at home, import volume can be reduced and spending on foreign exchange as well, Senior General says



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing speaks on the presentation event of the fisheries industry, fish farming and projects implementation in Myeik District of Taninthayi Region on 15 January 2022.

MARINE products must be produced as value-added products at home for export purposes, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the presentation on the fisheries industry, fish farming and implementation of projects in Myeik District of Taninthayi Region at the office of Myeik Cor-

poration Public Co Ltd in Myeik yesterday afternoon.

First, Chairman of Taninthayi Region Fisheries Federation Chair of Myeik Corporation Public Co Ltd U Hla Than reported on border trade, running of industrial zones, development of Myeik region, construction of Htonkha-Thebyu-Mawtaung

SEE PAGE-2

Local businesspersons need to operate iron ore, coal and limestone production in addition to other industries without emphasizing the fishery alone. Businesspersons need to cooperate with authorities to increase the production rate of edible oil in the Taninthayi Region.

There are 8 colors to choose from, including a "Maroon Color Mask" specially designed for monks.

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 Nay Pyi Taw
 PH:09-693407494
 09-693235737

Mandalay
 PH:09-661702244
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To prevent the spread of COVID-19

- Wear a mask
- Clean your hands
- Keep a safe social distancing



If foodstuffs are sufficiently produced at home, import volume can be reduced and spending on foreign exchange as well, Senior General says

FROM PAGE-1

road, functioning of Maw-taung border, shrimp farming, trawlers and ongoing projects and Myeik International Fish Auction Market and Industrial Zone project in-charge U Han Htoo Aung on the plan to implement the project, Secretary of the Taninthayi Region Fisheries Federation U Thet Soe on offshore and onshore trawlers,

installation of VMS, export of marine products, and project director U Aye Min Aung on the Myeik district project to be implemented by BBWI & MCPC Co Ltd in Taninthayi and Myeik townships.

In his response, the Senior General said priority must be given to the construction of the fish auction market. As Taninthayi Region is not sufficient

in rice, farmlands should not be used for the projects. All businesspersons are urged to strive for increasing paddy per-acre yield in the Myeik region. If foodstuffs are sufficiently produced at home, import volume can be reduced and spending on foreign exchange as well.

Marine products must be produced as value-added

products at home for export purposes. The government arranges to generate hydro-power for sufficient electrification in Myeik. Efforts must be made for generating electricity through solar power.

Local businesspersons need to operate iron ore, coal and limestone production in addition to other industries without emphasizing the fish-

ery alone. Businesspersons need to cooperate with authorities to increase the production rate of edible oil in the Taninthayi Region.

Chairman of the Myeik Corporation Public Co Ltd U Hla Than and officials presented the photo of Myeik to the Senior General. Later, the Senior General cordially greeted the attendees. — MNA

Release of information on recurrence of SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant 15 January 2022

1. The Ministry of Health is continuously monitoring the COVID-19 virus and providing timely information on the detection of SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant among those returning to Myanmar by relief flights.
2. Laboratory samples of the returnees were tested for suspected COVID-19 mutation at the National Health Laboratory and No. (1) Defence Services General Hospital (1000-bed) on (14-1-2022) and (15-1-2022) and the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant was confirmed in 10 laboratory samples.
3. Five Myanmar nationals and three foreigners on the Indian Relief Flight were diagnosed with the Omicron variant.
4. The other two Myanmar nationals are family members of the infected person who came in close contact with the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant confirmed patient on 13-1-2022.
5. Strict quarantine and laboratory tests are being undergone to isolate and treat those who have tested for Omicron.
6. Therefore, the Ministry of Health is monitoring the COVID-19 mutagenic surveillance programme and control and treatment activities are being heightened.

Ministry of Health

Construction of Kamyawkin Bridge project to complete by March 2023



The Kamyawkin Bridge.

THE construction of the Kamyawkin bridge project, crossing the Dawei river in the Taninthayi region is expected to be completed by March 2023, according to the Ministry of Construction. So far, the bridge project has been 49 per cent finished. The effort are being made to complete within the targeted period, said an official from Bridge Task Force 4, the bridge department of the Ministry of Construction.

“The foundation for the bridge is being dug. The girders

for approaching roads are under the construction process. So far, the project has been finished 49 per cent,” said the official from the task force.

It is located between the Dawei-Kamyawkin-Launglon road sections of the Taninthayi Region. The 1,050 feet long two-lane new bridge is 24 feet in width, five feet each of sidewalk and the waterway clearance is 164 feet in width and 16 feet in height.

The old Kamyawkin bridge located between mileposts 2/2

and 2/3 of Dawei-Launglon road was constructed in 1972 and completed in 1975. The new Kamyawkin Bridge project was started on 16 February 2021. the task force 4, the Bridge Department of the Ministry of Construction is responsible for the project. Upon completion of the project, it will be convenient travelling for the resident as well as local travellers from across the country, according to the announcement of the Ministry.—Ko Naing (Bago)/GNLM

MoC facilitates daily imports of essential anti-COVID-19 equipment

THE Ministry of Commerce is overseeing the importation of essential medical supplies plus anti-COVID devices that are critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, including liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders, through trading posts, international airports and seaports.

Anti-COVID-19 equipment was imported by one company using three vehicles. A total of 846 oxygen concentrators and 21 tonnes of gloves were imported via international seaports and the Chinshwehaw trade zone yesterday.

From 1 to 15 January, 20 tonnes of liquid oxygen carried by one bowser, 846 oxygen con-

centrators, 21 tonnes of gloves, 66 tonnes of masks were imported by 14 vehicles of seven companies.

One bowser transported liquid oxygen to Yangon from the Myawady trading zone.

Officials from 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 inquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website — www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA

Daily newspapers available online

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

Most of the factories resume operation

PRIORITIZING agriculture and livestock much supports the State economy. Except for some factories, most of the factories resume operation. The declining disease infection rate helps the tourism sector to resume.

(Excerpt from the speech by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 4/2021 of Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 30-12-2021)

If Kyunsu Township utilizes natural resources it will have greater development with the technical assistance of the government, says Senior General

LOCAL people should strive for uplifting living standards and regional development without satisfaction with existing businesses, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in meeting with departmental personnel and town elders of Kyunsu Township in Taninthayi Region at the city hall of Kyunsu with guidance on regional development.

Township Administrator U Aung San Win reported on agriculture and livestock farms, cultivation of rubber, coconut and oil palm, production of marine products, electrification, issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards in Pankhinn project, fulfilment of education and health sectors, assistance for Salon ethnics, travels of local and foreign visitors to islands, operation of the hotels and tourism industry and operation of the pearl industry.

Union ministers discussed the resumption of Myeik-Dawei-Kawthoung flight, the safety of waterway transport, waterway conservation, plans to produce quality products to be sold to local and foreign travellers, plan of food sufficiency and rural development, production of pearl, tin, tungsten and edible bird nests.

In his address, the Senior General said that Kyunsu Township is a high population density, and local people emphasize livestock and fisheries although development can be seen in the urban area, the township needs many requirements for development. Local people should strive for uplifting living standards and regional development without satisfaction with existing businesses.

Education must be encouraged for having well-versed educated human resources. Education is an individual need, and the country requires educated persons. Learning of



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets the departmental personnel and town elders in Kyunsu Township on 15 January 2022.



The Senior General presents foodstuffs for departmental staff and town elders.

children is for their life and improvement but the government. Parents need to urge school-age children to attend schools. They should have a school education. Encouragement of learning will contribute to the development of individuals and regions.

The township has requirements for local food sufficiency.

Local people should emphasize high per-acre yield more than the expansion of sown acreage. Efforts must be made for the production of products in the region as commodity price is high due to transport difficulties. The government focuses on food sufficiency for respective regions.

Rubber and coconut are

The Senior General said that departmental personnel, town elders and the Tatmadaw need to join hands in regional development and urged local people from urban areas to lead regional development tasks.

thriving in the Myeik region. Necessary assistance will be provided for manufacturing the value-added coconut products on a commercial scale. If Kyunsu Township utilizes natural resources, it will have greater development with the technical assistance of the government.

People need to correctly utilize physical and mental strengths in their businesses to have greater improvement. If they try hard to work, they will secure achievement individually with the contribution to regional development.

Preparations must be made to give services to attract local and foreign travellers with full services. Surveys are being con-

ducted to generate solar power. Electrification based on solar power and windmills will contribute a bit to the development of the Kyunsu region.

The Senior General said that departmental personnel, town elders and the Tatmadaw need to join hands in regional development and urged local people from urban areas to lead regional development tasks.

The Senior General then presented foodstuffs and personal goods for departmental personnel and town elders of Kyunsu Township through the town administrator. After the meeting, the Senior General cordially greeted the attendees. — MNA

70th Kayah State Day celebration in Loikaw



Dignitaries led by the SAC members are seen attending the 70th Kayah State Day event.

THE 70th Kayah State Day ceremony was convened at the state hall in Loikaw yesterday.

The event was attended by State Administration Council Members Saw Daniel and U Shwe Kyein, Union Ministers Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung, U Maung Maung Ohn and U Saw Tun Aung Myint, the Kayah State chief minister and the commander of Eastern Command, departmental officials and local ethnic people among others.

Then, the leaders of nine different ethnic groups of Kayah took their positions and the participants saluted the State Flag, fallen leaders and soldiers.

First, SAC member Saw Daniel read out the 70th Kayah State Day Message sent by SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and the Kayah State chief minister made the speech.

Kayah State Chief Min-

ister U Khin Maung Oo then presented the first award for Excellence in Management to one state government secretary, another first award for excellence in social activities to Loikaw Development Affairs Committee chairman, the second award for excellence in management to two, the third award to one and third award for excellence in peace, security and the rule of law activities to three recipients out of 53 who received good civil service

awards in management, social, security and the rule of law sectors of Kayah State.

Afterwards, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn donated 1,000 DVB-T2 Set Top Box for military outfits and government employees. Commander of Eastern Command Brig-Gen Ni Lin Aung received the donations on behalf of military outfits and state IPRD head Daw Soe Soe Tun on behalf of government employees.

Then, the SAC members,

Union ministers, the state chief minister and leaders of nine Kayah ethnic groups took commemorative photos. Next, officials cordially greeted the local ethnic people.

Of 53 who received honorary titles, eight were presented their honorary titles and certificates during the 70th Anniversary of Kayah State Day, and the remaining award winners will be formally awarded. — MNA



The MoI Union Minister donates the DVB-T2 Set Top Box.

YESC discusses ways to help public cope with power bills, losses, blackout



THE Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation's Acting Chairman U Aung Kyaw Oo presided over a coordination meeting with officials of the head office, district and township electricity manager offices yesterday.

First, the acting chairman made opening remarks and electrical engineers of four districts discussed the activities to reduce the amount of unpaid power bills, power losses and power cuts in detail. Then, the department heads, CEO and board of directors coordinated discussions and the acting chairman of the corporation concluded the meeting. — MNA

170 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 15 January, total figure rises to 533,021

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 533,021 after 170 new cases were reported on 15 January 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 511,094 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,301 after 2 died. — MNA

Myanmar sees higher production prospects of mango this year

THIS year, the mango trees bear fruits well and the production rate will be high, said U Kyaw Soe Naing, secretary of Mandalay's Myanmar Mango Market and Technology Development Association.

Currently, climate change occurs and mango trees begin to fruit in Ayeyawady Region as well as in some areas of plains. The mango farmers started carrying out proper mango cultivation processes and they estimate to receive high production. The mangoes are exported to China primarily.

"The mango trees start blooming especially in February. We estimated that this year would have a high production rate. Due to climate change, people spray fungicide in mango fields after the rain.



There are over 250,000 acres of mango fields and Ayeyawady Region boasts the highest cultivation. The people grow Yin Kwal mango in Ayeyawady Region. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

The fungicide and insecticide should spray in those regions. The mango farmers do such

measures to have stronger blooming. The officials announce it could rain and so

the mango farmers should notice it. The mango trees will bloom soon in the upper re-

gions. The mango production is high every other year. The production was low last year and we estimate it would be high this year," he explained.

The country has more than 200 types of mangoes with marketable mangoes such as Sein Ta Lone, Shwe Hintha, Yin Kwal and Ma Chit Su. Later, the people also grow Padamyar Nga Mauk and Mal Thi mangoes. There are over 250,000 acres of mango fields and Ayeyawady Region boasts the highest cultivation. The people grow Yin Kwal mango in Ayeyawady Region.

The export quality fruits are grown in Mandalay and Sagaing regions and Shan State, while other varieties in some regions and states. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)

Naga Traditional New Year Festival celebrated

THE Naga Traditional New Year Festival was organized in Leshi Township of Naga Self-Administered Zone of Sagaing Region yesterday.

During the event, the Patron

U Aung Win made an opening remark and Naga Literature and Culture Association Secretary read out the new year greeting message sent by the Naga Self-Administered Zone chair-

man. Then, Patron U Aung Win wished Naga people peaceful and prosperous, and the attendees enjoyed traditional Khaung Yay and foodstuffs. —Saing Thar (Leshi)/GNLM



Officials administer COVID vaccines to students in Bahan Township

COVID-19 vaccination was given to primary and middle school students aged 12 and above to control COVID-19 disease in Bahan Township, Yangon Region yesterday.

A total of 468 students from No. (2) and No. (3) Basic Education High School Bahan received the vaccines.

Vaccinations are documented by Red Cross members followed by measuring body temperatures, blood pressure, and monitoring oxygen levels.

Vaccines were given systematically to the students, and only those with normal conditions are vaccinated.

Township Health Department staff, Township Social Welfare Department staff, township police, township fire brigade, township Red Cross, ward administrators, staff from the NGO organizations and charitable organizations assisted in the vaccination activities, officials said. — Aung Myint (IPRD)/GNLM

Public request by Ministry of Health

ONLY when the people cooperate will the work process achieve success in a short time for effective prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 among the people. As such, all the people are requested to abide by the following points: -

1. Stay at home as much as possible.
2. Don't accept the guests at the house. You don't visit other houses.
3. The older persons above 65 or those suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart must be worn masks in the house. They must be placed at well-ventilated sites.
4. Wear masks if you go outside without fail. Systematically wash hands. Take a six-foot distance from others. Avoid visits to the rooms where ventilation is not good.
5. Avoid the crowds.

6. If possible, go shopping once a week. Don't buy anything from the vendors who don't systematically wear masks.
7. Take care of carrying the virus to the houses whenever return home from outside. Systematically discard the used masks and single disposable equipment outside the houses. Avoid close contact with family members before changing clothes or washing the body.
8. As the vaccines for your quota is the best, accept vaccinations for full time. Despite receiving the vaccination, you should abide by the protective ways.
9. Systematically cooperate in prevention, control and treatment of the disease with manpower, money, materials and expertise.

Ministry of Health (2-8-2021)

Illegal teaks, vehicles, handsets, other related items confiscated



မရမ်းချောင်းအမြဲတမ်းစစ်ဆေးရေးစခန်းမှ ဖမ်းဆီးရရှိမှု မှတ်တမ်းဓာတ်ပုံ

Seized goods at Mayanchaung.

UNDER the supervision of the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, effective action is being taken to prevent illegal trade under the law.

On 14 January, the Myanmar Customs Department and combined team were searching a Hino Profia truck vehicle, which stopped at Yepu permanent checkpoint and found illegal 7,400 mobile phone handsets worth estimated at K808,766,700, 570 power banks worth K7,550,000 and phone charger cable weighing

385 kilogrammes worth K577,500 from 12-wheel vehicles. The action is being taken as per the Customs Department procedures.

Similarly, a combined team led by the Forest Department under the supervision of the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee inspected a yard from Panpukwin village, Yekyi township and found illegal teak lumber weighing 0.801 tonne worth estimated at K200,250. The action is prosecuted by the Forest De-



ပဲခူးတိုင်းဒေသကြီးမှ ဖမ်းဆီးရရှိမှု မှတ်တမ်းဓာတ်ပုံ

Confiscated timber in Bago Region.



ရေပူအမြဲတမ်းစစ်ဆေးရေးစခန်းမှ ဖမ်းဆီးရရှိမှု မှတ်တမ်းဓာတ်ပုံ

Seized handsets.

partment procedures.

Besides, a combined team comprising the Customs Department stopped a 12-wheel Mitsubishi Fuso truck carrying illegal goods at Mayanchaung checkpoint yesterday and found 4,000 pairs of Adda brand fitflops worth K8,000,000. Moreover, a combined team led by the forest department checked the forest reserve in Bago, Toungoo and Thayawady districts and found illegal teak weighing 15.694 tonnes worth K3,877,500 and hardwood weighing 15.406 tonnes worth K2,957,800.

A combined team led by the Forest Department examined and found illegal teaks weighing 13.03 tonne and one chain saw used in illegal teak production worth K8,754,790. The action is being taken in accordance with the forest department procedures.

As a result, a total of nine cases estimated value K890,684,540 were arrested on 14 and 15 January, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee. — MNA

Police seize meth pills in Pyigyitagun, Monghsat townships

ANTI-NARCOTICS Task Force inspected suspects Naing Naing Nyein (aka) Maung Nyein and Than Htet Aung in a Crown car and Chit Min who was riding a motorcycle at the corner of 115th and 58th streets in (b) Ward of Pyigyitagun Township of Mandalay Region on 14 January, and seized 20,000 stimulant tablets from Naing Naing Nyein (aka) Maung Nyein.

Similarly, at about 8:30

pm on the same day, the police stopped to inspect two motorcycles driven by two men (still identifying) near Pakha Village of Mongtwan (Taungpaw) village-track of Monghsat Township.

Meanwhile, these two men left their motorcycles and ran away. Then, the police seized 200,000 stimulant tablets in two bags loaded on their motorcycles. —MNA



Seized stimulant tablets along with a motorcycle.

Vaccination continues; 1,391 get inoculated against COVID-19 in Yathedaung Tsp

LOCAL people belonging to the target groups were given the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine including the booster dose in Yathedaung Township, Rakhine State, on the morning of 15 January.

Officials administer the second dose of vaccines to elderly people aged over 55, civil servants, people with disabilities, people with chronic disease, people in target groups, while 10 people received booster doses.

The sixth batch and second doses of Covishield vaccines were jabbed to 608 people, the fifth batch and second doses of Sinovac vaccination to 759, fourth batch and second doses of



Inoculation drive continues in Yethedaung.

Sinopharm vaccines to 14 people, respectively.

A total of 1,391 people were

inoculated against the COVID-19, officials said. —Aung San Tun (IPRD)/GNLM

COVID-19 vaccination continues in Kyaukpadaung, nearby villages

HEALTH officials gave the third, fourth and fifth phase of the second dose of COVID vaccines to local people aged 18 and above in Kyaukpadaung Township yesterday, according to the COVID-19 Control and Immediate Response Committee.

Similarly, the sixth phase of the first dose of the vaccination

will be administered starting from 16 January, officials said.

In Kyaukpadaung Township, 212,301 people are targeted for vaccination. As of 14 January 2022, 107,894 people had been vaccinated for the first time and 73,935 people were inoculated in the second round.

The fieldwork will start on 16

January as phase (3, 4, 5) second doses plus phase-6 first doses are administered daily at designated injection sites in the city.

From 16 to 20 January, field vaccination work will be carried out by seven vaccination teams in 15 villages in 15 village-tracts, officials said. — Ko Nay (Kyaukpadaung)/GNLM

Yadana Sai Kaung Myat Kyaw Co to increase investment of \$760 mln to upgrade cement plant in Thazi Tsp

A cement plant (Pyinaung) in Thazi Township, Mandalay Region, which is leased by Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), will be upgraded with a capital expansion of US\$760 million.

Yadana Sai Kaung Myat Kyaw Mining Company will upgrade cement production from a wet process to an efficient and advantageous new dry process. It expects to enhance cement production capacity to 6,000 tonnes per day, YCDC stated.

The company returned a plant and buildings after a lease ran out. Then, it signed a new agreement with YCDC on 6 January 2022 in order to upgrade the cement plant with a daily production capacity of 6,000 tonnes.

As a diversification, YCDC built a cement plant on 515 acres

of the forest reserve owned by the Department of Forest near Pyinaung village, Thazi Township, Mandalay Region on 1 November 2008. YCDC signed a long-term lease with Yadana Sai Kaung Myat Kyaw Mining Company until 2043. The company makes quarterly payments with Myanmar currency which is equivalent to an annual lease payment of \$1.08 million, according to the Yangon Region Hluttaw meeting held in March 2019. The cement plant was opened on 29 April 2010, with a daily production capacity of 500 tonnes. It was earlier leased to Max Myanmar Manufacturing Co., Ltd under a 45-year agreement. In 2016, it was transferred to Yadana Sai Kaung Myat Kyaw Mining Company without amending the contract. — Ko Naing(Bago)/GNLM



An aerial view of the Pyinaung cement plant in Thazi Township.

Myanmar to export 450-500 tonnes of coffee this coffee season



About 450-500 tonnes of coffee, yielded in this year, will be exported to external countries like America, the Netherlands, Australia, Japan, Korea, France, Germany, Thailand and China. PHOTO: MAUNG AYE CHAN

MYANMAR will export about 450 or 500 tonnes of coffee in this coffee season, according to PyinOoLwin Township coffee research and technology dissemination centre.

Currently, the coffees are being yielded and the high-quality coffees are available mostly from December and March. About 450-500 tonnes of coffee, yielded this year, will be exported to external countries like America, the Netherlands, Australia, Japan, Korea, France, Germany, Thailand and China," said Daw Mee Mee Myint, the

Deputy Director of PyinOoLwin Township coffee research and technology dissemination centre.

"Currently, the coffees are demanded competitively due to the high quality. There are many varieties of the coffee species. The coffee price is ranging between K4 million and K5 million per metric ton. The price of coffee in the international market are above K5 million. Last year, Myanmar exported about 450-500 per tonne of coffee to the external market. This year's coffee has not been shipped

yet. This year, we are planning to export the same amount of coffee as last year. The coffee is now being cultivated because it has a strong market and export market," she clarified. Myanmar annually exports coffee to the external market. At the end of this year's coffee season, the buyers will come and test the quality of the coffee. The coffee plantations in China and Brazil were also destroyed by storms. Consequently, Myanmar coffee price is expected to be upright for almost three years. — Maung Aye Chan/GNLM

CBM sells \$50 mln in two weeks

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US\$50 million at its foreign auction rate in two weeks, according to the statement of CBM.

According to the sales of US dollars in January, the bank sold \$15 million each on 7 and 12 January and, 10 million each on 13 and 14 January.

The CBM is selling the foreign currency at its auction-rate through banks to the prioritized sectors especially fuel oil, edible oil and pharmaceutical sectors where the dollars are vastly in need.

The CBM is conducting an auction for foreign exchange to reduce the sudden fluctuation of foreign exchange rates

Last a few days, the US dollar exchange rate rose to over K2,000 per dollar in the domestic foreign exchange

market. The dollar exchange rate against the Myanmar kyat currently stood at below K2,000 per dollar.

Although the exchange rate on the US dollar hit around K1,330 per dollar the last January, the dollar value reached the highest of over K3,000 last September-end.

Last year, the CBM sold \$429 million to the sectors especially the oil, fuel and pharmaceutical sectors that need US dollars through the banks.

Besides, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) issued the instruction on 9 November that the foreign exchange transactions must be carried out within ± 0.5 per cent of the reference rate established by the CBM.

Currently, the CBM selling the US dollar at the auction rate of K1,778 on 14 January. — NN/GNLM



Central Bank of Myanmar.

Contribute to ecotourism through the attractiveness of elephant camps

AS PART of conserving the forests in Myanmar, the government had adopted a plan to halt timber extraction. Some years later, resumption of timber extraction was allowed under a certain limit.

Consequently, thousands of worker elephants from businesspersons and the Myanma Timber Enterprise became unemployed. Really, as their feedstuffs were very expensive because of the large consumption rate, those elephants had to be resettled in separate jobs.

Hence, the elephant camps emerged one after another the length and breadth of the nation. These camps were formed with

working-age elephants, older ones, and young elephants which are yet to be adults.

These elephant camps serve the visitors with skill demonstration and elephant bathing and riding. The environs of elephant camps become the yards of families for elephant lovers. Those visitors are eager to feed the elephants even though the camps were closed during the outbreak of COVID-19. Nonetheless, these camps attract local and foreign travellers with the natural beauties and nature of elephants.

At least, the incomes of elephant camps can be spent on the purchase of feedstuffs. Expenditure can be cut for the feedstuff. In fact, the camp activities are daily works for old and young elephants. It will be their daily operations with no need to take retirement from the work. If not, those elephants may suffer from depressions over the retirements.

Currently, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is operating 19 natural areas and 22 elephant camps as ecotourism services. The ministry called for harmonious efforts of the government, the private sector and local people in the development of the tourism industry.

Ecotourism is booming based on the elephant camps which are attractive to local and foreign travellers. Hence, camp officials need to create the initiatives for improvement of the camps and environs. Even though the income and expenditure of the camps can reach the break-even point, these camps will have success for the first phase.

While conserving the environment with the nature of elephants, the camps will be lasting for coming many years. In a set time, some young elephants will be adults. When they become the age of working, the forest area covering the country may be appropriate to extract timber again.

In the future, the elephant camps across the nation will contribute much to the implementation of ecotourism services for attracting local and foreign travellers as well as earning income for the State and the people.



India emerged as 'global pharmacy' as world continues to reel under COVID variants

WHILE the world is still reeling under the virus, India emerged as a 'saviour' by providing medicines globally across the continent, amply describing the epithet - the pharmacy of the world.

India has delivered 1154.173 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 97 countries till 31 December, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

India on 16 January will mark the first anniversary of the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive which started on 16 January 2021, with healthcare and front-line workers first in line to receive shots. The drive was soon expanded to include senior citizens, people with comorbidities, and, finally, everyone aged 18 and above.

As part of its Vaccine Maitri initiative that was started on January 16 to provide COVID-19 vaccines to countries around the world, the Government of India supplied 1154.173 lakh doses as grants, commercial dispatch and under COVAX facility.

The largest amount of doses were provided to Bangladesh comprising 225.928 lakhs, followed by Myanmar, which received 186 lakhs doses.

India supplied coronavirus doses

India supplied 94.99 lakh coronavirus doses to Nepal, 90.08 lakh jabs to Indonesia as well.

Regarding European coun-



India as the largest provider of generic drugs globally is often referred to as the Pharmacy of the world. The Indian pharmaceuticals market is the world's third-largest in terms of volume and thirteenth-largest in terms of value.

PHOTO: ANI

tries, the largest beneficiary was the UK, which received 50 lakh doses.

Meanwhile, India provided 5 lakh doses to Canada and 8.7 lakh doses to Mexico as well.

India also provided UN Peacekeepers with 2 lakh doses and UN health workers with 1.25 lakh doses.

Driven by its 'Neighbourhood First' policy, India supplied South Asian nations with the biggest amount of COVID doses that

were around 542.858 lakh doses comprising of Bangladesh (225.928 lakh), Myanmar (186 lakh), Nepal (94.99 lakh), Bhutan (5.5 lakh), Maldives (3.12), Sri Lanka (12.64) and Afghanistan (14.68 lakh).

Afghanistan has become the world's largest humanitarian crisis after Taliban returned to power in the country and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank also stopped sending funds to the country.

India assisted the strife-torn

country with 14.68 lakh COVID doses as WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said breakdown in health services is having a rippling effect on the availability of basic and essential healthcare in Afghanistan, as well as on emergency response, polio eradication, and COVID-19 vaccination efforts."

Among Central Asian countries, Ukraine received 5 lakh doses, Tajikistan received 8.91 doses and Uzbekistan received 6.6 lakh

doses of COVID vaccines.

Latin American countries

Among Latin American countries, India provided Brazil with 40 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccinations, Argentina with 5.8 lakh doses, Bolivia with 2.28 lakh doses and Paraguay with 6 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccinations.

As far as the African continent is concerned, India supplied Morocco with 70 lakh doses, South Africa with 10 lakh doses, Ghana with 17.14 lakh doses, Congo with 17.66 lakh doses and Egypt with 50 thousand doses of COVID vaccinations.

It also delivered vaccinations to the Middle East Asian nations like the UAE (2 lakh), and Saudi Arabia (45 lakh).

India as the largest provider of generic drugs globally is often referred to as the pharmacy of the world. The Indian pharmaceuticals market is the world's third-largest in terms of volume and thirteenth-largest in terms of value. Under the Vaccine Maitri initiative, India decided to ship out doses of the novel coronavirus vaccine to 'neighbouring and key partner countries'.

India's vaccine diplomacy could provide innovative opportunities to promote India's foreign policy and diplomatic relations between nations in its neighbourhood and across the globe.

India had earlier supplied hydroxychloroquine, Remdesivir

and paracetamol tablets, as well as diagnostic kits, ventilators, masks, gloves and other medical supplies to a large number of countries to help them deal with the pandemic.

India has also carried out capacity building and training workshops for neighbouring countries.

The 'biggest vaccination drive in the world'

Meanwhile, The Indian government started the 'biggest vaccination drive in the world' by first targeting 30 million front-line workers including health care professionals.

As of date, India is using three vaccines against COVID-19 in its immunization drive. These include Covishield (Oxford AstraZeneca's vaccine manufactured by Serum Institute of India), Covaxin (manufactured by Bharat Biotech Limited) and Sputnik V (developed by Gamaleya Research Institute, Russia). All are two-shot vaccines.

Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has also granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to three other vaccines by Moderna, Johnson and Johnson and Zydus Cadila. The Indian government through its largest vaccination drive aims to target 100 per cent adult coverage by the end of this year. Meanwhile, India's cumulative COVID-19 vaccination coverage has exceeded 156.02 crores on Saturday.

SOURCE: ANI

Australian scientists find biological marker in long COVID patients

A TEAM of researchers from the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and St Vincent's Hospital Sydney have found clear biological marker in patients experiencing long COVID.

The study, published in the Nature Immunology journal on Friday, used data collected from unvaccinated patients at St Vincent's Hospital who were infected with the Alpha variant during Australia's first wave of the pandemic in early 2020.

Dr Chansavath Phetsouphanh, senior research associate at UNSW's Kirby Institute and co-lead author on the paper said this study describes the long-

term impact of COVID-19 on the immune system through analysis in a laboratory setting.

"We found that there is a significant and sustained inflammation that indicates prolonged activation of the immune system response detectable for at least eight months following initial infection," said Phetsouphanh.

Of the 62 COVID patients involved in the study, 30 per cent showed some symptoms of long COVID.

They found that patients that presented with long COVID held biomarkers of infection that disappeared in patients who had fully recovered from the disease.

"These are biological charac-

teristics which can help us define a medical condition in an accurate and reproducible way," said Phetsouphanh.

No link to developing the long-lasting symptoms

Interestingly, the study found that the severity of one's experience with COVID-19 showed no link to developing the long-lasting symptoms seen in long COVID.

Supporting this finding, one participant in the study Doris Gal gave a first-hand account of her experience of long COVID.

"My initial infection was quite mild, however my long COVID symptoms are significant. I've lost the ability to comprehend the way

I did before having COVID," said Gal.

Proving the biological basis for long COVID will not only open up ways to treat and monitor the condition, but it also, for patients like Gal, confirmed a biological basis of the ongoing impacts of the disease.

The researchers said that new studies would need to be conducted to see if the impacts of long COVID are milder or rarer in those who have been vaccinated or with different variants, such as the now dominant Omicron variant.

"We will continue our analysis in response to the Omicron wave. In the meantime, with so many un-



Proving the biological basis for long COVID will not only open up ways to treat and monitor the condition, but it also confirmed a biological basis of the ongoing impacts of the disease. PHOTO: QUINT FIT/XINHUA

knowns with both COVID and long COVID, we should do everything we can to reduce transmission,"

said Kirby Institute director, Professor Anthony Kelleher.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 15 January 2022)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the North Bay and Eastcentral Bay and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 16 January 2022: Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region. Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Mandalay, and Magway regions and Shan State, fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw, Kachin and Rakhine states, scattered in Sagaing Region and Chin and Kayah states and isolated in the remaining regions and states. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of scattered rain or thundershowers in Shan State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 January 2022: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 January 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 January 2022: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Australian town hits record high temperature of 50.7C

A remote town in Western Australia has equalled the country's hottest day on record, reporting a scorching 50.7 degrees Celsius (123.26 degrees Fahrenheit), the Bureau of Meteorology said.

Such temperatures could become commonplace in Australia due to global warming, the country's Climate Council warned.

The coastal town of Onslow hit the blistering high on Thursday afternoon.

"NEW Western Australian maximum temperature record and equal National temperature record!" the state's Bureau of Meteorology posted on Twitter.

"Onslow reached an unprecedented - 50.7C which is a WA record and equals Australia's hottest day set 62 years ago in Oodnadatta SA."—AFP ■

Loss of animals impacting plants' ability to survive climate change: study

DECLINES in seed-dispersing animal species are harming plants' ability to move to more suitable habitats in a warming world, a new study in the journal *Science* said Thursday.

The findings illustrate a worrying feedback loop between biodiversity loss and the global climate crisis, with forests vital for trapping carbon.

"When we lose birds and mammals, we're not just losing the species themselves. We're losing this important ecological function, which is seed dispersal," lead author Evan Fricke of Rice University told AFP.

The paper is the first to quantify the issue at the global scale, and estimates that the ability of animal-dispersed plants to keep pace with climate change has already been reduced by 60 per cent due to the loss of mammals and birds.

Climate change is altering ecosystems around the world, which means that an area that is hospitable for a given tree species today might be hostile in the coming decades.—AFP ■

Japan team carries out world-first spinal cord stem cell trial

A Japanese university said Friday it has successfully transplanted stem cells into a patient with a spinal cord injury, in the first clinical trial of its kind.

There is currently no effective treatment for paralysis caused by serious spinal cord injuries, believed to affect more than 100,000 people in Japan alone.

Surgeons at Tokyo's Keio University want to study whether induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells can be used to treat the injuries.

iPS cells are created by stimulating mature, already specialized, cells back into a juvenile state.

They can then be prompted to mature into different kinds of cells, with the Keio University



There is currently no effective treatment for paralysis caused by serious spinal cord injuries, believed to affect more than 100,000 people in Japan alone. PHOTO: KEIO UNIVERSITY /AFP

study using iPS-derived cells of the neural stem.

The first step in the trial involved implanting more than two million iPS-derived cells into a patient's spinal cord in an oper-

ation last month.

"This is definitely a huge step forward," Masaya Nakamura, a Keio University professor who heads the research, told reporters.

But there remains "lots of work to be done" before the treatment can be put to use, he added.

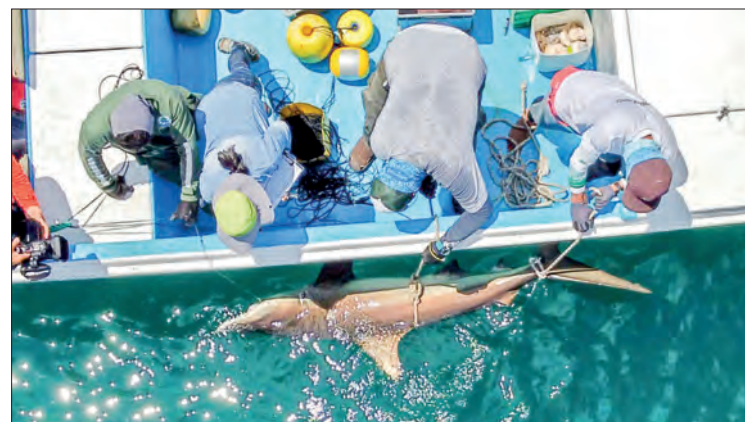
The initial stage of the study aims to confirm the safety of the transplant method, the researchers said.

The patient will be monitored by an independent committee for up to three months to decide whether the study can safely continue and others can receive transplants.

The team also hopes to see whether the stem cell implants will improve neurological function and quality of life.

The university received government approval for the trial in 2019, but recruitment was temporarily put on hold because of the Covid-19 pandemic.—AFP ■

Ecuador expands sea life protections around Galapagos



Galápagos National Park rangers catch a shark near Santa Cruz Island in April as part of a monitoring programme. PHOTO: RODRIGO BUENDIA /AFP

ECUADOR created a massive new marine reserve Friday north of its Galapagos islands, forming a Pacific corridor up to Costa Rica's Cocos Island National Park

to preserve species of migratory fauna, such as sharks.

President Guillermo Lasso, on board a scientific vessel from the Galapagos National Park

(PNG) anchored in the bay of Puerto Ayora off Santa Cruz Island, signed the decree creating the new reserve called "Hermandad" (Brotherhood).

To mark the opening of the marine reserve, he then cut a ribbon made out of materials collected during coastal cleanups conducted in the Galapagos.

The new reserve is incorporated into the 138,000 square kilometres (50,200 square miles) of reserve that have existed since March 1998.

So the archipelago that inspired English naturalist Charles Darwin has now expanded to an impressive 198,000 square kilometres of protected marine area.

The Galapagos marine reserve, in which industrial fishing is prohibited, is the second-largest in the world. More than 2,900 marine species have been reported within the archipelago, which is a Natural World Heritage Site. Authorities are planning for protected areas in adjacent Colombia and Panama to join later, creating an international marine biosphere reserve. The leaders of those two countries also signed the decree along with Lasso. Lasso announced the expansion of the Galapagos marine reserve, which has unique flora and fauna and fragile ecosystems, in November in Glasgow, on the occasion of the COP 26 climate summit.—AFP ■

Over 62,000 animals killed by drought in northern Tanzania

AT least 62,585 animals, including cattle, sheep and goats, have been killed by prolonged drought in Tanzania's northern district of Simanjiro in Manyara region, an official said on Friday.

Sendeu Laizer, vice-chairman of the Simanjiro district council, told a meeting of councilors in the district that the drought situation in the district was alarming.

Laizer said out of the 62,585 killed animals, 35,746 were cattle, 15,136 sheep, 10,033 goats and 1,670 donkeys.

He said livestock officials are continuing to assess the number of animals killed by drought in all the district's villages.

"The prolonged drought is forcing livestock keepers to take refuge to few areas with relative supply of water and grass for grazing," said Laizer.

Christopher Ole Sendeka, a Member of Parliament for Simanjiro constituency, said the drought has forced some livestock keepers to graze their animals in neighboring countries.—Xinhua ■



A Maasai man sells sheep in a livestock market near the Tanzanian-Kenyan border on 5 June 2018. PHOTO: XINHUA/WANG TENG

In blow to Biden, Supreme Court blocks vaccine mandate for businesses

THE US Supreme Court delivered a blow to President Joe Biden on Thursday, blocking his Covid vaccination-or-testing mandate for employees of large businesses.

At the same time, the nation's highest court allowed a vaccination mandate for health care workers at facilities receiving federal funding.

Biden said he was "disappointed" in the nine-member court's decision striking down his mandate for businesses with 100 employees or more to vaccinate

or test their workers for Covid-19.

"I am disappointed that the Supreme Court has chosen to block common-sense life-saving requirements for employees at large businesses that were grounded squarely in both science and the law," Biden said in a statement.

The president welcomed the requirement that health care workers be vaccinated, saying it would affect some 10 million people working at facilities receiving federal funds and will "save lives".

After months of public appeals to Americans to get vaccinated against Covid, which has killed more than 845,000 people in the United States, Biden announced in September that he was making vaccinations compulsory at large private companies.

Unvaccinated employees would have to present weekly negative tests and wear face masks while at work.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a federal agency, gave businesses until 9 February to be in compli-



The Supreme Court's six conservative justices ruled the mandate for employees of large businesses would represent a 'significant encroachment into the lives – and health -- of a vast number of employees'. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

ance with the rules or face the possibility of fines.

But the Supreme Court's six conservative justices ruled

the mandate would represent a "significant encroachment into the lives – and health -- of a vast number of employees."—AFP ■

Pfizer seeks approval for oral COVID-19 pill in Japan



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visits a Pfizer factory in Puurs, Belgium. **PHOTO: AFP**

PFIZER Japan Inc. said Friday it has applied to the Japanese health ministry for approval of its COVID-19 pill which, if granted, would make it the second oral drug for mild coronavirus cases available in the country.

The new drug application for Paxlovid, a combination of two antiviral drugs nirmatrelvir and ritonavir, comes at a time when Japan is battling its sixth

surge of COVID-19 cases amid a spread of the Omicron variant, with Japan already agreeing to procure enough of the drug for 2 million people.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said earlier in the week a final agreement with the Japanese arm of US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. on the drug's purchase is expected by the end of January, aiming for its approval

in February.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has already approved the oral drug molnupiravir, developed by US pharmaceutical company Merck & Co. in December.

Health minister Shigeyuki Goto said in December that oral drugs are expected to play a significant role in treating sufferers of mild COVID-19 symptoms.

Clinical trials have shown that Paxlovid has a higher chance of preventing hospitalizations and deaths compared to molnupiravir, cutting such risks by 88 per cent for patients who took the drug within five days of the onset of symptoms, compared to those who were given a placebo, according to the company. The pill, which prevents the coronavirus from multiplying in the body, is prescribed to be taken twice a day for five days.—Kyodo ■

Major UK retailers win Omicron boost over Christmas

UK retailers Sainsbury's, Tesco and Marks & Spencer posted this week strong Christmas sales data as Omicron boosted demand for at-home celebrations, but the sector nevertheless remains blighted by ongoing Covid uncertainty.

The nation's biggest retail giant Tesco on Thursday lifted its annual profit forecast after posting a 3.2-per cent sales increase over the festive period, or

six weeks to 8 January, compared with a year earlier.

"Once again, Covid-19 led to a greater focus on celebrating at home," said Tesco Chief Executive Ken Murphy in a statement.

Sales rose 8.7 per cent when compared with pre-pandemic 2019 according to the supermarket giant, which added it had shrugged off ongoing cost pressures and supply chain chal-

lenges. The news came one day after supermarket rival Sainsbury's also reported "strong" Christmas grocery volumes and market share growth – and also upgraded profit guidance. "I am really pleased with how we delivered for customers this Christmas. More people ate at home," said Sainsbury's Chief Executive Simon Roberts in a trading update.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Greece extends curbs, calls in army on Covid tests

GREECE'S health minister on Wednesday said the army would help boost Covid-19 testing after extending entertainment restrictions to contain the Omicron variant.

In a radio interview, Health Minister Thanos Plevris said 50 additional free testing locations would be set up near army camps, after days of long queues at pharmacies.

The ministry on Wednesday had also announced that music and seating restrictions at bars and restaurants would be extended to 23 January. The government also said Thursday that a 100-euro (\$114) monthly fine on persons aged over 60 who refuse to take the vaccine would take effect from Sunday.—AFP ■

Argentina registers record 139,853 new COVID-19 cases over past 24 hours

ARGENTINA has registered 139,853 new COVID-19 cases within the past 24 hours, marking the largest daily increase since the start of the outbreak, the national Ministry of Health said.

The death toll has risen by 96 to 117,901 people within the same period of time, according to the ministry.

The total number of those who tested positive for COVID-19 in Argentina has surpassed 6.9 million. Like many other countries, Argentina is now facing a new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic linked to the spread of the Omicron strain. — ANI ■



British grocers had a good holiday season as the Omicron variant pushed people into celebrating at home. **PHOTO: AFP**

Draghi's presidential ambitions worry markets

ITALY'S economy has turned a corner under Prime Minister Mario Draghi but a possible move to the presidency is sparking concern among analysts that the post-pandemic recovery might come to an abrupt halt.

The former European Central Bank chief, hailed for his work to protect the eurozone during the debt crisis a decade ago, is the favourite to be elected head of state later this month — but many economists are hoping he stays where he is.

Since being brought in by outgoing president Sergio Mattarella in February 2021, Draghi has led a remarkably united gov-

ernment, comprising almost all Italy's political parties.

But fractures are appearing, notably over coronavirus rules, raising doubts as to whether it can last until 2023 elections.

Draghi's departure presents "a big risk, at least in the short term", notes Jesus Castillo, economist at Natixis.

"It is Mario Draghi who has maintained the unity of the government, and there is nobody in Italy's political landscape today who could follow him in guaranteeing such cohesion," he told AFP. "If he becomes president, very quickly we will see a political stalemate and probably early



Italian restaurant and club owners are seeking urgent government support due to increased cancellations prompted by a surge in coronavirus infections. **PHOTO: AFP**

elections."

Such elections would come at a bad time, as Italy "must

keep to a very tight programme of reforms to receive funds" from the European Union's post-pandemic

recovery scheme, of which Rome is the main beneficiary, to the tune of almost 200 billion euros.

Draghi's departure would "bring instability and would have serious repercussions on the implementation of the recovery plan, with a loss of credibility of the government, and on investor confidence", said Giuliano Noci, professor of strategy at Milan's Polytechnic business school.

He said it would likely significantly increase the spread — the gap between German and Italian bond yields watched as a sign of market confidence, which shrank after Draghi's arrival.—AFP ■



China to cultivate 200,000 new high-tech SMEs by end of 2025

MORE than 200,000 new high-tech small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will be cultivated by the end of 2025 as China strives to foster a favourable environment for the growth of such firms, according to a notice

recently issued by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

China will, in particular, boost the development of innovative sci-tech SMEs featuring key technologies, research personnel, high-value intellectual property rights, and high research input, according to the notice.

More efforts will be made to support high-tech SMEs to generate innovation as well as introduce domestic and global talents by optimizing related policies and injecting diverse resources, the notice added.—Xinhua ■

A visitor tries a VR spinning based on 5G technology at the digital achievements exhibition during the fourth Digital China Summit in Fuzhou, southeast China's Fujian Province, 25 April 2021. **PHOTO: XINHUA/WEI PEIQIAN**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sweden records highest inflation since 1993

SWEDEN recorded the highest inflation since 1993 in December 2021, as consumer prices measured with a fixed interest rate were up 4.1 per cent from the same period a year earlier, Statistics Sweden said on Friday.

The main driving factor was the cost of electricity, which has soared over the last few months. In December, this trend accelerated.

"It was the highest monthly change in electricity prices measured in the 2000s," Caroline Neander, price statistician at Statistics Sweden, said in a press release.—Xinhua ■

German industry still waiting on post-virus boom amid shortages

GERMANY was yet to see any signs of a "post-coronavirus boom", the head of the influential BDI industry lobby said Thursday, as persistent supply chain issues weighed on the economy.

Bottlenecks which have plagued manufacturers in Europe's largest economy through 2021, were set to continue into the new year, the group predicted, with consequences for growth.

Supply disruptions would cost industry "more than 50 billion euros (\$57 billion) in both 2021 and 2022", BDI head Siegfried Russwurm said in a press conference.—AFP ■

India's wholesale inflation eases to 13.56% in December

INDIA'S wholesale price index (WPI) eased to 13.56 per cent in December last year, data released by the federal ministry of commerce and industry said Friday.

The high rate of inflation, as compared to 1.95 per cent in December 2020, is primarily due to rise in prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum and natural gas, chemicals and chemical products, food products, textile and paper and paper products etc., a statement issued by the ministry said.

In November 2021, wholesale price inflation was recorded at 14.23 per cent.

WPI inflation, an indicator of prices in the wholesale mar-



Electronics market in the city Pune. **PHOTO: LBB/ANI**

ket, rises or falls mainly due to steep increase or decrease in commodity prices globally.

India's retail inflation, or

Consumer Price Index (CPI), rose to 5.59 per cent in December last year, official data said.—Xinhua ■

India's exports grow by 25% in December 2021

INDIA'S overall exports in December 2021 stood at 57.87 billion US dollars, up by 25.05 per cent year on year, data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Friday showed.

Overall imports in December 2021 stood at 72.35 billion dollars, compared to 54.05 billion dollars in December 2020, according to a statement issued by the ministry.

The ministry said India's overall exports from April to December 2021 are estimated to be 479.07 billion dollars, exhibiting a positive growth of 36.31 per cent over the same period last year and a positive growth of 20.25 per cent over April-December 2019.

Likewise, the ministry said overall imports in



Jawaharlal Nehru Port, also known as Nhava Sheva port, is the largest container port in India. East of Mumbai, in the state of Maharashtra. PHOTO: JOC/ANI

April-December 2021 are estimated to be 547.12 billion dollars, exhibiting a positive growth of 57.33 per cent over the same period last year and a positive

growth of 18.57 per cent over April-December 2019. Taking merchandise and services together, the overall trade deficit

reached 14.48 billion dollars for December 2021, as compared to 7.77 billion dollars in December 2020, the ministry said. — Xinhua ■

Electricity prices hit record high in Finland in 2021

WHOLESALE electricity prices in Finland hit a record high in 2021 as power

consumption returned to pre-pandemic levels, the national broadcaster Yle

reported on Friday.

According to sector organization Finnish Energy, in 2021 the average price of electricity in Finland was nearly 2.6 times higher than in the previous year, up from about 28 euros (32 US dollars) per megawatt-hour (MWh) to 72 euros per MWh.

One of the main reasons behind the price hike was the rise in power consumption, particularly the growing industrial demand. Last year, the

country's final electricity consumption totaled 86 terawatt-hours (TWh), 6 per cent more than in 2020. The industrial sector's consumption accounted for 44 per cent of the total.

Jukka Leskela, Finnish Energy's managing director, explained to Yle that wholesale energy prices have been unprecedentedly high for a long time. This winter's freezing temperatures could result in further price spikes, he said.—Xinhua ■



Representational image: Low temperatures have driven up demand for electricity in Finland. Utility workers balance on a high-voltage utility tower. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Dutch gov't eases lockdown, but cafes, restaurants remain closed

DESPITE rising COVID-19 figures, the new Dutch government on Friday lifted some of the current lockdown measures by reopening schools and non-essential stores, while keeping cafes and restaurants closed. The announcement was made by the newly inaugurated fourth cabinet of Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte during their first press conference on COVID-19 in the Hague. Instead of the

previous minister Hugo de Jonge, the new Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, Ernst Kuipers, stood next to Rutte behind the desk.

After opening the primary and secondary schools on 10 January, all education can reopen starting 15 January, including higher education and universities. In addition, all restrictions on sports were lifted, although no audience is allowed to watch.—Xinhua ■



A woman is seen shopping from the doorstep of a shop in Haarlem, the Netherlands, 14 January 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA/SYLVIA LEDERER

NEWS IN BRIEF

China's 5G phone shipments soar 63.5% in 2021

SHIPMENTS of 5G phones in China skyrocketed by 63.5 per cent year on year to reach 266 million units in 2021, data from the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT) showed.

The figure accounted for 75.9 per cent of the total shipments during the same period, much higher than the global average of 40.7 per cent, said the research institute under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. Declining phone price has injected impetus to the boom in 5G's popularity, as the price of 5G mobile phones dipped below 1,000 yuan (about 157.04 US dollars), the institute noted.— Xinhua ■

Casino stocks rally following Macau gaming law announcement

US gaming shares of Macau-linked operators surged following the Macau Government's announcement of the new gaming law proposal on Friday.

Sands China's parent company Las Vegas Sands saw a 14.15 per cent jump, while shares of Wynn Resorts soared by 8.6 per cent. The shares of another Las Vegas operator, MGM Resorts International, went up by 0.5 per cent.

Meanwhile Melco Resorts & Entertainment's shares climbed 16.6 per cent. The Macau Government announced yesterday (Friday) details of the gaming law amendment bill, setting a maximum of six concessions, which can operate for a period of up to 10 years (to be extended for 3 years under exceptional circumstances).— Xinhua ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

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NEWS
IN BRIEF

Greco-Roman era tomb discovered in southern Egypt

An Egyptian-Italian archaeological mission discovered a Greco-Roman tomb in Aswan province, Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities said in a statement on Friday.

"The tomb is divided into two parts: one above the earth surface and the other craved in a stone hill," the statement said.

The first part is a rectangular-shaped building made of sandstone including the entrance of the tomb, while the second part leads to a rectangular yard consisting of four burial rooms. The statement added that 20 mummies in good conditions were found in the tomb.

Initial investigations revealed that the tomb is a mass grave for several dynasties. Meanwhile, stone pictures, copper-made necklace and several wood bird statues were found in the tomb, it added— Xinhua ■

'Smart' guns with fingerprint sensor, security code headed to US market

"Smart" pistols designed to limit who can shoot them are poised to hit the booming US firearm market this year, taking aim at spiking gun deaths as federal lawmakers remain deadlocked on any new restrictions.

Questions over reliability and political fights have bedeviled the technology for decades, but backers say it's a chance to prevent children, criminals or people considering self-harm from pulling the trigger.

Yet whether the deadly weapons will be embraced by buyers, perform as intended in real-life, or deliver on their pledge to increase gun safety are questions that could be years from a definitive answer.

"I don't have a crystal ball to know whether it's going to be good on balance, bad on balance or ultimately like other smart guns in the past -- kind of a dud," said Adam Skaggs, chief counsel and policy director at gun control advocacy group Giffords. The system from entrepreneur Tom Holland's company Smart-Gunz uses RFID chips -- similar to the emitters many people use in their car to pay tolls -- installed inside rings.—AFP ■

China says UK spy claims result of watching 'too many 007 movies'



The alleged Chinese agent reportedly tried to influence lawmakers in London on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party. PHOTO: AFP

CHINA on Friday dismissed a rare public warning by British security services that a suspected Chinese agent was trying to

influence lawmakers, saying it was the result of watching "too many 007 movies". British authorities said

Thursday that a London-based solicitor "knowingly engaged in political interference activities" inside parliament, citing Britain's

counter-intelligence and domestic spy agency MI5. Christine Lee had reportedly worked on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party to gain influence through donations, the office of House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle said. China's foreign ministry denied engaging in "interference activities", blasting the accusations as "alarmist remarks based on some individuals' subjective assumptions".

"Perhaps some individuals have watched too many 007 movies, leading to unnecessary mental associations," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a regular press conference, referring to the James Bond book and movie franchise.

MI5's security notice said Lee was acting "on behalf of the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party" and answered to figures in China and Hong Kong.—AFP ■

Philippines awards US\$375 million contract for BrahMos anti-ship cruise missiles

IN a major success for the government's plans to increase defence exports, the Philippines has accepted Indian BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited's proposal worth USD 374.9 million to supply Shore-Based Anti-Ship Missile systems for the Philippines Navy.

"The Notice of Award has been communicated to BrahMos officials by the Philippines Department of National Defence accepting the proposal worth around USD 375 million," government officials said here.

The Philippines govern-

ment's Department of Defence has also uploaded the contract award notice on its website.

Defence Research Development Organization and BrahMos Aerospace together have been pushing hard for exports of this missile to friendly foreign countries for the last few months.

The Indian government's defence export push is coming from the DRDO stable as it bagged orders for a 'made-in-India' weapon locating radars from the Armenian government recently. The BrahMos export order would be



Representational Image: Defence Research Development Organization and BrahMos Aerospace together have been pushing hard for exports of this missile to friendly foreign countries for the last few months.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ANURAG/ANI

the biggest for the country in this field and is likely to propel India amongst the arms exporter

countries as more orders for the missile are expected from other friendly countries too.—ANI ■

3 attacked at Univ. of Tokyo amid unified entrance exams, man held



Yellow police tape is seen at an entrance at the University of Tokyo after a stabbing incident on 15 January 2022. PHOTO: KYODO

TWO high school students taking Japan's unified university entrance exams and another person were attacked with a knife on Saturday at the University of Tokyo and a 17-year-old man has been arrested, the operator of the nationwide tests and police said. A 72-year-old man from Tokyo was seriously injured after he and the two other victims -- a male and a female student both aged 18 -- were slashed in the back around 8:30 am outside one of the gates to the university's

main campus in the capital's Bunkyo Ward.

The two high school students, both from Chiba Prefecture, did not sustain life-threatening injuries, the police said, adding the suspect was not acquainted with the three. The suspect, a student at a private high school residing in Nagoya in central Japan who was not taking the exams, was arrested at the scene on suspicion of attempted murder. He has admitted to the charge.—Kyodo ■

North Korea fired railway-borne missiles in third test this year

NORTH Korea fired two railway-borne tactical guided missiles, state media reported Saturday, the country's third weapons test this month despite a volley of new United States sanctions.

South Korea's military said it had detected the launch of two short-range ballistic missiles Friday afternoon, just hours after Pyongyang accused the United States of "provocation" over fresh sanctions.

The tests were held to "check and judge the proficiency in the action procedures of the railway-borne regiment,"

Pyongyang's official KCNA news agency said.

North Korea test fired missiles from a train for the first time in September 2021.

Friday's launch "demonstrated high manoeuvrability and rate of hits," KCNA said.

"Issues were discussed to set up proper railway-borne missile operating system across the country," the report added.

Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Friday's launches flew a distance of 430 kilometres (270 miles) at an altitude of 36 kilometres.



North Korea has tested railway-borne missiles for a second time, KCNA said. PHOTO: KCNA VIA KNS/AFP

It was Pyongyang's third weapons test this month, following what it called two successful tests of hypersonic missiles on

5 January and 11 January. In response, the United States imposed new sanctions on Pyongyang this week, with Secretary

of State Antony Blinken saying North Korea was likely "trying to get attention" with the string of missile launches.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US says Russia readying 'false-flag' operation to invade Ukraine

RUSSIA has put in place operatives trained in explosives to carry out a "false-flag" operation to create a pretext to invade Ukraine, US officials alleged Friday.

The United States released intelligence findings the day after National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said that Russia, which has amassed tens of thousands of troops on the Ukrainian border, was "laying the groundwork to have the option of fabricating a pretext for an invasion."

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said US intelligence believed Russia could begin the operations "several weeks" before a military invasion, which could start between mid-January and mid-February.—AFP ■

US court orders Colombia ex-rebels to pay \$36mn over Betancourt kidnap

A US court has ordered Colombia's former FARC rebels to pay \$36 million in compensation for the kidnapping of presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, who was held hostage from 2002 to 2008.

According to a 4 January ruling by a federal court in Pennsylvania, which was made public late Thursday, Lawrence Delloye — the son of Betancourt from her first marriage to Frenchman Fabrice Delloye — was entitled to \$12 million in compensation and may "recover threefold the damages he . . . sustains and the cost of the suit, including attorney's fees."—AFP ■

Russia dismantles REvil hacker group at US request



A Gulf service station runs out of gasoline on 11 May 2021 in Atlanta following a hacking attack on the Colonial Pipeline blamed on Russian hackers. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

RUSSIA Friday said it had dismantled the prominent hacking group REvil, which carried out a high-profile attack last year on US software firm Kaseya, following a request from Washington.

The announcement came on the same day that Ukrainian government sites were hit by hackers in an attack that Kyiv

linked to Moscow, which has amassed tens of thousands of troops on the border.

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said in a statement that it had "suppressed the illegal activities" of members of the group during raids on 25 addresses that swept up 14 people.

The searches were carried

out following an "appeal from the relevant US authorities".

Cybersecurity was one of the main issues on the agenda of a summit meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joe Biden last June.

In Washington, a US official praised the arrests, saying that one suspect was behind the disruptive hack of the Colonial Pipeline, but separated the issue from tensions on Ukraine.

"I want to be very clear — in our mind, this is not related to what's happening with Russia and Ukraine," the official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

"I don't speak for the Kremlin's motives, but we're pleased with these initial actions," she said. "We've also been very clear — if Russia further invades Ukraine... we will impose a severe cost on Russia in coordination with our allies."—AFP ■



Chile court freezes multi-million dollar lithium deal

A Chilean appeals court on Friday suspended a million-dollar state lithium tender issued two days earlier that had generated

This handout file picture by SQM (Chemical and Mining Society of Chile) taken on 26 December 2016 shows an aerial view of the processing plant of the lithium mine, in Del Carmen salt flat, in the Atacama Desert, northern Chile. PHOTO: SQM/AFP/FILE

controversy for coming just two months before the end of conservative President Sebastian Pinera's term. "Bearing in mind that the contested act is in full execution, it is agreed not to innovate, paralyzing the bidding and award process for the lithium, while this appeal is resolved," said the court in Copiapo in the north of the country, according to documents seen by AFP.

China's BYD Chile SpA and Chile's Servicios y Operaciones Mineras del Norte S.A. were awarded the right to extract 80,000 tonnes of lithium each over 20 years, the minerals ministry said Wednesday. Leftist president-elect Gabriel Boric's team had asked the government to postpone the tenders and set up a "roundtable" to discuss various conditions to apply to the contracts.—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.

Real Madrid close in on Super Cup but criticism remains of Saudi 'image-washing'



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior has been key to their success so far this season. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

REAL Madrid will be chasing their first trophy in Carlo Ancelotti's second spell as coach when they face Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup final on Sunday, but criticism continues to surround the Spanish federation's decision to stage the tournament in Saudi Arabia. Madrid scraped past Barcelona 3-2 after extra-time in Riyadh on Wednesday before Athletic sprung a surprise by coming from behind to defeat Atletico Madrid 2-1 on Thursday. The annual competition, which includes the top two in La Liga from the previous season, as well as the most recent Copa del Rey finalists, is being played in Saudi Arabia until 2029 as part of a deal that earns the Spanish football federation around 30 million euros (\$34.2 million) a year. Amnesty International have asked that players wear purple armbands this week in protest against the treatment of women and the LGBTQ community in Saudi Arabia, a request that was ignored in the semi-final matches.—AFP ■

Myanmar footballers show talents in Thai, Malaysian, Indian clubs

IN recent years, the number of Myanmar football players has increased to play at foreign clubs, including Thai, Malaysian and Indian clubs.

Up to nine Myanmar players and woman footballers are involved in the foreign clubs till the beginning of 2022.

The current Myanmar football players include those who have been playing in the past and those who left Myanmar at the end of last year.

Male national footballers are playing for Thai and Malaysian clubs, while Myanmar women's footballer Win Theingi Tun is currently playing for Indian clubs.

Among the Myanmar men's football players, Aung Thu is playing for the Thai League-1 club Buriram United while Maung Maung Lwin is in the Thai League-2 club Lamphun, Zaw Min Tun in the Trat FC, Aung Kyaw Naing in Ranong United, Kyaw Ko Ko in Rayong FC, Aung Kaung Man in Udon Thani FC, and Swan Laman is playing for the Navy FC of Thai.

Aung Thu and Zaw Min Tun have been playing for these teams since the beginning of the season and the rest of the players have been transferred since the mid-season transfer window.

Hein Htet Aung, a Myanmar striker, will continue to play for Malaysian club Selangor and is preparing for the new season.

Win Theingi Tun, a Myanmar female striker who plays for the only foreign club, has renewed his contract with Indian club Gokulam and is currently playing in domestic leagues.

Win Theingi Tun has scored many goals in the Indian league with her brilliant football skills.

Some Myanmar footballers are also trying to play for foreign clubs, with Malaysian and Thai clubs being a priority, Myanmar Football officials said.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM



Myanmar player Maung Maung Lwin (white) is currently playing for Lamphun Warriors F.C of Thai League II. **PHOTO: LAMPHUN FC**

Covid-hit Arsenal ask for Spurs postponement

ARSENAL said on Friday they had asked the Premier League to postpone their north London derby at Tottenham Hotspur this weekend due to a combination of coronavirus cases, injuries and players at the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Martin Odegaard missed Thursday's goalless League Cup semi-final first-leg draw at Liverpool due to Covid-19, with Emile Smith Rowe and Takehiro Tomiyasu ruled out through injury. Cedric Soares and Bukayo Saka suffered injuries at Anfield in a match where Granit Xhaka was sent

off. Arsenal were already without Thomas Partey, Mohamed Elneny, Nicolas Pepe and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang due to their AFCON commitments.

"We can confirm we have made an application to the Premier League for the postponement of Sunday's north London derby against Tottenham Hotspur," said an Arsenal statement. "We have reluctantly taken this step but we have many players currently unavailable across our squad as a result of Covid, injuries and players away with their countries at AFCON."

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta, speaking earlier on Friday, was uncertain about whether the match would go ahead.

"I don't know, it's difficult to say that with total honesty without assessing our players," he said when asked if he would like the game to be called off.

"What is today very unlikely, tomorrow is likely to happen. It's gone the other way for us when we were ready to play a match and it was cancelled twice because the other team had issues so it can go both ways. But our intention is always to play."—AFP ■