

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Saturday, 25 December 2021

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.

The best guarantee for perpetuation of the sovereignty of the State is possessing the dynamic and capable defence force, says Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presses the ceremonial button to unveil the plaque of Submarine Minye Kyaw Htin on the occasion of the 74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Navy), at No 3 Naval Jetty in Yangon on 24 December 2021.

TODAY'S commissioned submarine Minye Kyaw Htin is primarily to serve the training as well as military operation duty, if necessary, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the ceremony to commission Submarine Minye Kyaw Htin and warships on the occasion of the 74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Navy) formed on 24 December 1947 at No 3 Naval Jetty in Yangon yesterday.

Chief of Staff (Navy) Vice-Admiral Zwe Win Myint reported on facts about the commissioned vessels. The commander of Naval Dockyard Command handed over documents related to the vessels to the Commander of Naval Fleet. The Commander-in-Chief (Navy) presented scale models of war vessels to the Senior General.

Then, the procedures of the ceremony to commission the warships into service followed. The Senior General unveiled the plaque of Submarine Minye Kyaw

Htin. The Senior General also visited Submarine Minye Kyaw Htin, one offshore vessel, two river patrol vessels and two fast river patrol vessels.

The Senior General from warship Mottama took the salute of the Guard of Honour and Frigate Aung Zeya, Frigate Kyansitha, Frigate Hsinbyushin and Corvette Tabinshwehti together with fast attack vessels in Single Line Formation and Diamond Formation.

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Efforts are being made to improve naval architectural works and ship construction technology by sending scholarship students abroad to be able to develop their qualifications. Human resource is of great importance to a force.

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Four national objectives of 74th Anniversary of Independence Day 2022

1. All ethnic nationals to safeguard non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, and perpetuation of sovereignty;
2. To ensure the emergence of a good and clean government and administrative system by implementing a genuine disciplined democracy;
3. All ethnic nationals to amicably and unitedly cooperate in the country development based on the genuine Union spirit;
4. To strive for restoring perpetual peace the entire people aspire.

Public Notice

1. The government seizes/uncovers illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other related materials in addition to terrorist attacks of NUG and CRPH, which were declared as terrorist groups in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; and their subordinates PDF groups with homemade guns, gunpowder, mines and accessories, as well as arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other materials imported via border areas by some ethnic armed organizations aiming to make political and military profits on a daily basis, and it also exposes the cases of the terrorists who possess firearms in various ways.
2. Moreover, some terrorists take advantage of the honesty of the people and they make them keep their illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication devices and other related materials, including restricted materials using different ways and forms.
3. Therefore, in order to prevent unnecessary legal action against those who are not related to the terrorists, all the citizens should hand over the illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other related materials, including drugs banned by the government according to the law no later than 31 December 2021 to the respective wards/village administration offices/security forces if they keep these things in their houses, apartments and other places for various reasons and ways, and if they are found after the deadline, action will be taken against them under the existing laws.

*Information Team
State Administration Council*

Mizzima Window Art Gallery held in Sittway Township

THE Mizzima Window Art Gallery was organized at Khine Thazin hall in Sittway Township starting yesterday until 26 December.

Artist Than Kyaw Htay from Dagon Myothit (North) Township of Yangon Region who participated in the show said, "The Rakhine nationals have never held such painting show collectively. During this period, we, the artists want to show how to create a painting full of the essence of our regions and so we organize this exhibition. I am very glad to hold such a show.

"It's an indescribable pleasure to be able to exhibit my paintings in my hometown. When we were young, it was not easy to find a painter, let alone an artist, and we were glad to have hundreds of such paintings on display in the exhibition. Then, the students or anyone may enjoy the show."

The cash received from selling the paintings will be used in some development programmes of Rakhine State.

For the event, 46 Rakhine artists will be showing more than 160 paintings for three days. —Tin Tun (IPRD)/GNLM



PHOTOS: TIN TUN (IPRD)



213 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 24 December, total figure rises to 529,327

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 529,327 after 213 new cases were reported on 24 December 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 506,764 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,248 after 6 died.—MNA

Unity in its real essence

Unity must have a common interests, a common sense of working together and a common objective, for the independence of the whole country and the interests of the whole populace. Unity must work for the people so that they can enjoy shared well-being and shared cause in working together. It is not enough just to say that we want to be united. Labour must be shared, and interests must be shared. Our objective must be the same. Only this kind of effort is worth calling "Unity".

(Excerpt from the speech addressed by Bogyoke Aung San at the AFPFL Conference on 23 January 1946)



The best guarantee for perpetuation of the sovereignty of the State is possessing the dynamic and capable defence force, says Senior General

FROM PAGE-1

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General said that this ceremony marks the 74th Birthday of the Tatmadaw (Navy) as well as the ceremony to commission the second submarine for the Tatmadaw (Navy). In addition to the submarine, one offshore vessel, two river patrol vessels and two fast river patrol vessels built by the Tatmadaw (Navy) were commissioned into service.

The best guarantee for the perpetuation of the sovereignty of the State is to possess a dynamic and capable defence force. The Tatmadaw (Navy) is being built to have a Three-Dimensional Combat-Ready Navy to defend the Exclusive



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits the Submarine Minye Kyaw Htin and presents the C-in-C Emblem.

Economic Zone of Myanmar territorial waters for the first phase with formation of the submarine fleet, building of warships and improvement of human resources.

All naval dockyards were upgraded to be ready to build vessels. These dockyards built 88 warships commissioned from 2011 to 2021 and there were 94 commissioned vessels includ-

ing those of today's ceremony. The Senior General stressed the need to improve the capability of each vessel and to have better combat vessels. Training is being given to

turn out deck officers, deck crew and other personnel from the engine room. Efforts are being made to improve naval architectural works and ship construction technology by

sending scholarship students abroad to be able to develop their qualifications. Human resource is of great importance to a force.

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The best guarantee for perpetuation of the sovereignty of the State is possessing the dynamic and capable defence force, says Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services takes the salute of the Guard of Honour and Frigate Aung Zeya, Frigate Kyansittha, Frigate Hsinbyushin, Corvette Tabinshwehti and fast attack vessels in single line formation and diamond formation at the event.

FROM PAGE-3

The Tatmadaw (Navy) gives training to male and female military personnel. And, female officers are assigned on warships. With the potentials of warfare, the naval formation was improved for effectiveness in the State defence system. Tatmadaw members need to take exercises for having health and fitness. Their health and fitness are important in the sea duties. Hence, they all need to take physical strength without harming the duty.

Troops from the Tatmadaw (Navy) transported vaccines and related equipment for the people. Hence, efforts of the Tatmadaw (Navy) are recognized as the record in the preventive measures of COVID-19.

Tatmadaw members need to take care of individual security, unit security and the Tatmadaw security with a conscience. Although Our Three Main National Causes are national duty, emphasis is being placed on the prosperity of the State and food sufficiency as the current needs of the nation.

Today's commissioned submarine Minye Kyaw Htin is primarily to serve the training as well as military operation duty if



necessary. It was named with the aim of bravely fighting against any invasion which can encroach on the perpetuation of the sovereignty of the State. The Senior General praised officials, engineers and Tatmadaw members who participated in the building of war vessels.

The Senior General and party left No 3 Naval Jetty by Warship Yadanabon for Ayeyawady Naval Region Command Headquarters.

Aboard the vessel, the Senior General and Wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla cut the cake in honour of the 74th Birthday of the Tatmadaw (Navy). Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Moe Aung presented medals in commemora-

tion of the 74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Navy) to the Senior General.

The Senior General then opened the booths to mark the 74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Navy) and viewed the entertainment, traditional dances and songs of the Tatmadaw (Navy) Band. The booths showcase documentary photos of the Tatmadaw (Navy), naval equipment, scale models of vessels, books and personal goods. — MNA



The Senior General looks around the exhibition in commemoration of the 74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Navy).

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

To issue citizenship scrutiny cards to the people

THE errors in the voter list caused some problems in the 2020 multiparty democracy general election. As such, the Ministry of Immigration and Population was formed to issue the citizenship scrutiny cards to the people under the Pankhin project as over three million cast votes without identity cards.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 18/2021 of the State Administration Council on 13-12-2021)

Shipbuilding professionals from MMU need to lead shipbuilding process at shipyards of the nation, says Senior General

MYANMAR needs to build over-seas-going merchant vessels and other vessels to extract the natural resources from the seas while conserving the sea resources, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in inspecting the Myanmar Maritime University under the Ministry of Transport and Communications in Thilawa of Thanlyin Township in Yangon Region yesterday morning.

At the meeting hall, the Admiral and the rector reported to the Senior General on the background history of the university, implementation of the assigned



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing hears the report on the Myanmar Maritime University in Thanlyin Township of Yangon Region on 24 December 2021.



The Senior General observes one of the Simulator rooms at the university.



The Senior General views around the MMU library.

missions, organizational set-up of the university, academic measures, training of the university meeting international standards, practical training, cooperation with international universities, and participation of the university in the State projects.

After hearing the reports, the Senior General said that this university is a valuable university for the State. Myanmar possesses more than 140,000 square miles of territorial waters and more than 1,260 miles long of

coastal areas. The Ayeyawady, the Chindwin and the Thanlwin rivers are facilitated with ports. The university turns out the maritime professionals who are of importance in local and international maritime transport. It is necessary to appoint those who graduated from the university. It is employment for Myanmar to show their skills for the development of the nation and the creation of job opportunities. The graduates from the university must be deployed for management of small and large

ports so as to contribute much to the development of the nation.

Likewise, the Senior General stressed the waterway transport is the cheapest in transporting a large number of cargos. Myanmar must utilize Ayeyawady, Thanlwin, Chindwin and Sittoung rivers the best. The professionals turned out by the university must serve the State. Port management is of importance in the maritime sector. Hence, it is necessary to study the management subject through modern technologies in

line with international norms. Likewise, maritime professionals and those from the Ministry of Electricity and Energy are to join hands in generating hydropower through the ordinary current as renewable energy.

With regard to shipbuilding, Hsinmalaik shipyard built river vessels and coastal vessels in the past. Myanmar needs to build overseas-going merchant vessels and other vessels to extract the natural resources from the seas while conserving the sea resources. The shipbuilding

engineers who graduated from the university need to serve at the shipbuilding works of the nation. As part of emerging the outstanding shipbuilders, the Senior General stressed the need to give practical exercises to the students. The shipbuilding professionals from the MMU need to lead the shipbuilding process at the shipyards of the nation. Necessary faculty members will be added to the university for giving effective training to the students.

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SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inaugurates upgraded Thanlyin Glass Factory



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presses the button to inaugurate the signboard of Thanlyin Glass Factory in Thanlyin yesterday.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attended the opening ceremony of the upgraded Thanlyin glass factory of Myanmar Economic Corporation in Thanlyin Township of Yangon Region yesterday.

First, SAC member Myanmar Investment Commission Chairman Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun, Union Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than and MEC Chairman Lt-Gen Nyo Saw cut the ribbon. Then, the SAC Chairman Prime Minister pressed the button to inaugurate the signboard of Thanlyin Glass Factory and posed for a commemorative photo together with the attendees to the event.

Then, the SAC Chairman Prime Minister and party inspected the factory compound. He also ignited the furnace by pressing the button.

He watched the documentary video of the glass factory and said that the spending of glass bottles can reduce the impacts on the natural environment. The adequate production of glass products can also reduce imports and the spending of foreign currencies. It also creates



job opportunities in local and so it should make efforts to get success.

Then, MEC Chairman Lt-Gen Nyo Saw and the official of the factory handed over the

gifts marking the opening of the factory to the SAC Chairman Prime Minister who returned a

glass bottles – 300 tonnes of glass per day and the product will meet the local demand. — MNA

fruit basket to an official of the factory.

The glass manufacturing process was initiated in the Bagan era and the industry had its glory in the late Konbaung era. The Thanlyin glass factory was built in 1967 and conducted expansion step by step.

To reduce glass imports, the factory was upgraded under the directive of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in 2018. The currently upgraded Thanlyin glass factory approximately produces more than 400,000

Shipbuilding professionals from MMU need to lead . . .

FROM PAGE-5

Effective maintenance must be undertaken for cleaning rivers, creeks and seas as natural ones. Maritime tourism is one of the various kinds of the tourism industry. The university needs to strive for maintaining the existing success and secure more successes. The university will be facilitated with buildings and teaching aid to keep abreast of the international community. It is necessary to create good environs for the students and the development of social lives. Moreover, it is necessary to encourage the students to use and read

the books supporting the teaching and others for the current era through digital technology.

The graduates from the university need to have skills of spoken English and reading for having the English proficiency to associate with those from the international community and skills of computer science as well. The Senior General stressed the need to fulfil the needs of accommodation, security and food for the students as it is not ordinary university education to become the symbol in the universities of the international community.

The Senior General and party inspected functions of the departments of the university. The Senior General discussed the need for giving training to the students from the small vessels to the ocean liners with the use of basic knowledge.

The MMU was opened for its first batch at the compound of Myanmar Mercantile Marine College in Hsinmalaik of Kamayut Township in 2002. Then, the university was moved to the Thilawa area in Thanlyin Township in 2003. The university was established with the aim of contributing to the modernity and development of

the nation, turning out qualified maritime professionals, giving the science and technology, managing for constant development of maritime science, enabling the maritime professionals to understand the provisions adopted by the International Maritime Organization and conducting the researches for improvement of maritime science. It conducts undergraduate courses, postgraduate diploma courses and master's engineering courses. The university has turned out 4,137 graduates, 1,052 diploma holders and 17 ME graduates from 2007 to 2020.—MNA

UEC discusses electoral reform with political parties

THE Union Election Commission organized an electoral system meeting with the representatives of political parties at the Yangon Region Government office yesterday.

During the meeting, UEC Chairman U Thein Soe said the meeting is the fourth one with the political parties. During the former meetings held in February, May and October 2021, it discussed the proper electoral system that fits the country, the political parties read out the papers and the UEC widely presented the fundamental facts.

The UEC reviewed the papers of political parties and informed the parties to negotiate on 22 November. During this meeting, the proper electoral design that should be conducted with PR system for Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and Region Hluttaw will be



discussed within the boundary of the 2008 Constitution during two days and the PR system paper resulting from the discussion will be read out on the third day.

The UEC chairman then highlighted about proper electoral system and procedures in establishing a multiparty dem-

ocratic system, adoption of PR system, creation of all-inclusive structure and genuine, disciplined multiparty democracy system the fundamental fact of the 2008 Constitution.

He also talked about the use of the FPTP system in previous elections of Myanmar, the proper electoral system

accordingly to the trend and 111 countries in the world that adopt the PR system. He said that it organized groups for a total of 115 people of 62 parties into six groups – Pyithu Hluttaw (2), Amyotha Hluttaw (2) and Region/State Hluttaw (2). Therefore, the UEC members and staff will support the dis-

cussion and the parties should exchange positive opinions for better electoral systems.

He then mentioned the case that only one party made efforts to grab the State Power by force and it caused the annulment of the 2020 election, interference of great world countries, basic facts to follow in a democratic system, the need to respect the Constitution for political party affairs and to follow the existing law and implementation of the proper electoral system that is conformity with the country, race, culture and traditions.

During the second session of the meeting, six groups of political parties continued to discuss the proper election design under the PR system for Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and Region/State Hluttaw. The meeting will be conducted on 25 and 26 December. — MNA

Deputy Minister meets Information Ministry staff in Kengtung

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Ye Tint inspected the Sub-printing house of News and Periodical Enterprise in Kengtung on the evening of 23 December and met with staff.

He also met officials from the Information and Public Relations Department of Kengtung, District Office staff at the Joint State Office, Township officers from Mongkat, Mongyawng, and Tongtah, officer in-charge and staff of Kengtung Sub-printing house, and officials from Myanmar Radio and Television retransmission station.

He then inspected the Loimwe retransmission station and met with the staff.

Next, the deputy minister visited Mongphyat Township Information and Public Relations Department Office, Mongphyat retransmission station, office of the Information and Public Relations Department of Tarlay and the Tarlay retransmission station and met with the staff.

During the meeting, the deputy minister briefed them on the state's future plans, working for the development of the country following the objectives, the need to share the truth with the public about the ongoing violence and rumours, correcting the ideas of young people, state stability and peace, elimination of terrorist



activities, the need for education for the development of the country and raising awareness

of COVID-19 outbreak. He called on the people to work together to celebrate the

upcoming Independence Day and Diamond Jubilee Union Day. —MNA

MoC facilitates daily imports of anti-COVID-19 equipment



THE Ministry of Commerce is overseeing imports of essential medical supplies plus anti-COVID-19 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 three companies using five vehicles.

A total of 20 tonnes of liquid oxygen carried by one bowser and 26 tonnes of masks were imported via the Muse 105th Mile Trading Zone, Myawady trading post

and Chinshwehaw yesterday.

One bowser transported liquid oxygen to Yangon via the Myawady trading post.

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

Take shelter of the rule of law for building better society

THE rule of law is defined as the condition in which all members of society, including its rulers, accept the authority of the law. It indicates a specific political situation but any law, rule and regulation. The rule of law is dubbed as authority and influence in society, especially over individuals and institutions.

Generally, those from the judicial arena and politicians say a sentence that no man is above the law. But, is no man really above the law in society?

The rule of law is intended to improve society and participants. It controls all the people not to derail from the legal process and not to commit crimes. Prevailing the rule of law will help the rulers and the people have safe lives under the shelter of the law.

consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of the law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness, and procedural and legal transparency.

The rule of law is intended to improve society and participants. It controls all the people not to derail from the legal process and not to commit crimes. Prevailing the rule of law will help the rulers and the people have safe lives under the shelter of the law.

If the rule of law process deteriorates, the people will not have safety for their daily life and will be absent from their jobs. If so, as the countries of those people will lead to the utter devastation situation, the people have chance to choose the options on prosperity or devastation for their future.



World set to ring in another pandemic Christmas

Omicron's rise has heralded another pandemic-tinged Christmas for billions, with Santa's arrival and longed-for family reunions overshadowed by the prospect of yet more Covid restrictions.

FESTIVE jokes about reindeer having "herd immunity" and millions isolating "Home Alone" may be wearing thin, but the emergence of the ultra-infectious Omicron variant means the pandemic isn't going anywhere.

For a second straight year, surging infections have complicated yuletide plans from Sydney to Seville.

In Bethlehem — the city Christians believe was Jesus' birthplace — hoteliers expecting an influx of tourists have been disappointed. After a near-total pandemic lockdown last year, Israel's borders are again closed.

This year, like last, midnight mass in the city on Christmas Eve will be reserved for a small circle of people by invitation only.

In Europe, governments are reimposing misery-inducing safety measures that are draining the fun from Christmas for many.

The Netherlands is back in lockdown while Spain and Italy have made wearing masks compulsory outdoors.

And with the United Kingdom recording a record high number of Covid-19 infections on Thursday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson suggested getting a vaccine booster shot as a Christmas gift for relatives.

'Sliver of hope'

Still, Christmas gatherings



A giant Christmas tree stands at the Galeries Lafayette department store for the festive season. PHOTO: XINHUA/GAO JING

will be easier than a year ago in many other places around the world.

Most Australians are allowed to travel interstate over the festive break for the first time in two years, bringing a touch of Christmas sparkle even as case numbers hit record highs.

"We've all witnessed the moving scenes of people at airports after months of separation," Sydney's Catholic Archbishop Anthony Fisher said in his Christmas message.

"In such dark times, Christmas is a ray of light, a sliver of hope."

And Pope Francis is still scheduled to deliver the traditional Christmas Eve midnight mass from St Peter's Basilica.

Millions of Americans are also on the move during the busy travel days before Christmas, even as Covid infections with Omicron surpass the peak of the

Delta wave and hospitals run out of space for patients.

However, thousands of them are set to face a grim holiday weekend, with major carrier United cancelling 120 flights because infection numbers had impacted flight crews and other operations.

In one sign of people's darkened mood, one of the most popular shows on Netflix in the run-up to Christmas has been "The Unforgivable", a less-than-festive tale of a murderer released from prison and struggling to win redemption.

Books on identity and slavery topped the New York Times best-sellers and a profanity-laden rant about a bad break-up led the Spotify charts — beating even Mariah Carey's perennial Christmas hit "All I Want for Christmas Is You".

In Britain, Rage Against The Machine's distortion-laden "Killing In The Name" was voted the country's favourite Christmas

Number One of all time.

Operation Present Drop

But angst borne from a seemingly interminable crisis, long testing queues, cancelled flights and close contact notifications will not prevent Santa from doing his rounds.

The hirsute spreader of holiday cheer has reportedly been cleared for travel in Canada's airspace after showing proof of vaccination and a pre-flight negative Covid test, Ottawa's transport minister said.

Santa's flight crew — including reindeer Rudolph, whose "nose shone red and bright (but) made sure he had no Covid-19 symptoms before taking off" — have also been given the all clear.

And Australian authorities said they were working round the clock to ensure "Operation Present Drop" goes smoothly.

SOURCE: AFP

COVAX targets 70% COVID-19 immunization coverage by mid-2022

COVID-19 Vaccines: COVAX was envisioned to be the world's primary distributor of COVID-19 vaccines, with IAVG serving as an independent referee for needs-based allocations.

A MID possible need for variant-specific vaccines, changes to vaccination policies, country preference for some products over others, the programmatic complexity of managing multiple products, and the need for better intelligence on country-level planning and execution, COVAX on Thursday set a target to achieve 70 per cent COVID-19 immunization coverage by mid-2022.

The Independent Allocation of Vaccines Group (IAVG) of COVAX has issued a set of recommendations to make the allocation of COVID-19 vaccines more equitable and more effective, read the statement of IAVG.

The group was established a year ago, to validate and assess vaccine allocations recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Gavi's Joint Allocation Taskforce (JAT) of COVAX. Since then, much has changed.

COVAX was envisioned to be the world's primary distributor of

COVID-19 vaccines, with IAVG serving as an independent referee for needs-based allocations.

But rich nations largely sidestepped COVAX, hoarding doses for their own populations and cutting deals directly with low- and middle-income countries. This has made subsequent allocation decisions even more challenging.

Moreover, IAVG is concerned that the primary priority use of available vaccines is not consistent with the goals outlined in the Strategy to Achieve Global COVID-19 Vaccination by Mid-2022 in October 2021.

The group also noted that it has validated the allocation of only 730 million of the estimated 8 billion doses of vaccine that have been administered globally, which is less than 10 per cent.

The IAVG is therefore calling for the achievement of 70 per cent coverage with COVID-19 vaccines in all countries as a global imperative.

As the overall vaccine supply

to COVAX is anticipated to continue to grow substantially next year, COVAX will have a greater opportunity to contribute to achieving this goal, read the statement.

Manufacturers, vaccine-producing and high-coverage countries must prioritize vaccine equity and transparency, including the sharing of information about manufacturing capacity and supply schedules with COVAX, as well as vaccine access plans.

All countries to work with COVAX with considerable urgency to optimize the strategic use of the growing vaccine supply.

This means that high-coverage countries will need to establish complementary, "dual-track" approaches that consider both domestic and international goals, read the statement.

It also stressed on greater attention to who is being immunized and equity as the overarching principle, and priority in all countries to ensure that the primary series is offered first and

foremost to all adults and adolescents, in the step-wise manner recommended by the WHO, as these populations still require primary immunization.

However, as more is known about the required vaccination response in the face of Omicron, the need for booster doses and need to immunize children, the COVAX vaccine allocation decisions must consider these recommendations, added the statement.

The rapid emergence of the Omicron variant is a stark reminder of the ongoing threat posed by the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and reinforces the critical need to achieve high levels of immunization coverage in all countries, including in highly vulnerable populations, in a timely manner.

Given the global health and epidemiologic consequences of failing to immunize vulnerable populations, including those in humanitarian settings, the IAVG recommends that COVAX contin-



Workers transfer boxes of COVID-19 vaccines arrived at Abidjan International Airport in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, 26 February 2021. PHOTO: YVAN SONH/XINHUA

ue to work with all manufacturers and countries to immediately increase the availability and uptake of vaccines in these populations.

All countries to have a steady, predictable supply of COVID-19 vaccines, which meet the unique needs of each country. Attention must be paid to addressing prohibitive absorptive challenges in

countries that request support. This may include support for vaccine storage, distribution, administration and/or record-keeping, which may in part be due to competing health and immunization crises, said the statement.

SOURCE: ANI



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 24 December 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 25 December 2021: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, (Northern and Eastern) Shan States. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Magway Region and Rakhine, Kayin States and partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

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 isolated rain in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Shan States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 25 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 25 December 2021: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 25 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay Region and partly cloudy in Yangon Region.

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74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Navy) commemoration ceremony, alms offering ceremony held

A military parade commemorating the 74th Anniversary of the Tatmadaw (Navy) was held yesterday morning at the Naval Training Command Headquarters in Thanlyin Station yesterday.

Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Zeya Kyaw Htin Moe Aung, Chief of Staff (Navy) Vice-Admiral Zwe Win Myint, Naval Base Commanders and senior officers from Thanlyin Station attended the ceremony.

The Commander-in-Chief (Navy) took salute and inspected the parade companies who took four oaths of allegiance.

Afterwards, the Commander-in-Chief (Navy) delivered a speech to mark the anniversary of the Tatmadaw (Navy) and left the parade.

Similarly, Paritta recit-

ing ceremony plus alms offering ceremony was held at Mahanawanika Zayamingala Temple at the Thanlyin Station.

Members of the Sangha headed by Sayadaw Bhaddanta Teja, patron of Myo Oo Satpyitkwin Monastery attended the Paritta reciting ceremony.

Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Moe Aung and wife Daw Aye Khaing Nyunt, Chief of Staff (Navy) Vice-Admiral Zwe Win Myint and wife, Naval base commanders and wives, senior officers from Thanlyin Station also attended the ceremony.

First, the Commander-in-Chief (Navy) and those present at the ceremony received the Five Precepts from the Sayadaw and then listened to the sermons deliv-



Paritta reciting ceremony in progress.

ered by the Venerable Sayadaw. After that, they offered alms and donations to the monks and

listened to the Metta Sutta recited by Sangha.

After that, the congrega-

tion shared the merits gained and then donated alms to the Sayadaws. — MNA



Conference on direct use of Yuan/Kyat in Sino-Myanmar border trade held

A conference on the direct use of Yuan/Kyat in Sino-Myanmar border trade was held at Mingala Hall of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Yangon at 1 pm yesterday in line with COVID-19 prevention protocols.

Deputy-Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar Daw Than Than Swe and officials, Secretary of the Working Committee on Ensuring of the smooth flow of Trade and Goods, officials from Myanmar Economic Bank and Departments, President and officials from UMFCCI. Officials from the Myanmar Banking Association and private banks, officials from Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and Bank of China (BOC) foreign branch-



es, Export and Import Traders, officials from the associations attended the meeting.

Chairman of the Working Committee Deputy Minister for

Commerce U Nyunt Aung and officials from the department attended the meeting via video conference.

First Deputy Minister U

Nyunt Aung delivered an opening address online.

Next CBM Deputy-Governor Daw Than Than Swe explained the purpose of direct use

of Yuan/Kyat in border trade between Myanmar and China, and policy, process and its benefits were also discussed in detail.

Afterwards, the Managing Director of Myanmar Economic Bank, officials from ICBC and BOC discussed banking services issues.

The traders who attended the meeting also discussed banking arrangements, payment methods, proposed exchange rates, trade documents to be obtained for border trade, banking rates and funding programs.

Officials from the Central Bank of Myanmar and departmental officials held the discussions. CBM Deputy-Governor Daw Than Than Swe coordinated the meeting and made concluding remarks. — MNA

Suspects of robbery case on Insein overpass arrested

ON 19 December, U Hnin Ngwe, owner of Kyon Sin jewellery shop opened in the Insein market of Zaygon Ward in Insein Township, returned to his house together with his wife Daw Thuzar Aye and son Maung Maung Thet Khaing from his shop. When they arrived in the middle of the Insein overpass, a white car Probox YGN-5F/7939 blocked their way and robbed two handbags containing four vises and 50 ticals of gold worth of (K720 million) and ran away.

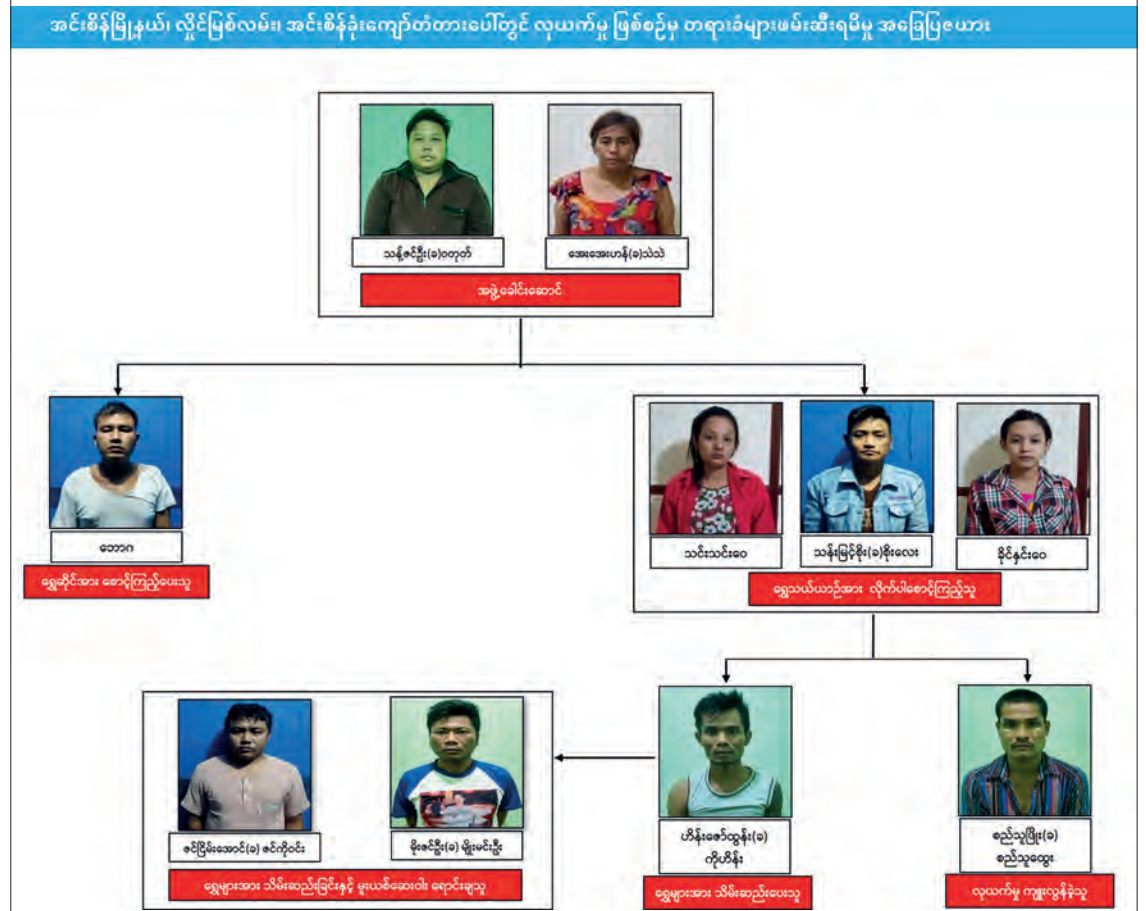
The police investigated to arrest the suspects, and on the evening of 22 December, they seized the Probox car and one homemade bomb on that car at Arkar Kyaw car workshop near Danyingon railway station in Insein township.

When they inspected the owner of the car, they arrested Thant Zin Oo (aka) Wa Toke and Aye Aye Han (aka) Thei Thei at No 913 in No 42 Ward of Dagon

Myothi (North) in the evening together with K1,140,000, 165 gold rings, 14 pairs of gold earrings, four necklaces, two hand chains, 46 gold chains and 15 bracelets.

According to the confession of Thant Zin Oo (aka) Wa Toke, the police arrested Baw Ga with K900,000, 97 gold rings, 14 pairs of earrings, 40 gold necklaces, eight hand chains, 20 gold chains and eight bracelets at Mudita Housing (2) in Ywama (West) Ward of Insein Township in the evening while Than Myint Soe (aka) Soe Lay, Thin Thin Wai and Khine Hnin Wai at Thawka Street in North Okkalapa Township together with K13.5 million, 20 rings, two hand chains, one gold chain, four pairs of earrings, two gold buttons and one Probox taxi.

According to the words of Than Myint Soe (aka) Soe Lay, the police arrested Hein Zaw Tun (aka) Ko Hein at Kyat Chan Kwin (1) Ward in Mayangon Township at night and Sithu Phyo (aka)



Sithu Htwe in Thamine Myothit Ward on the morning of 23 December together with K900,000, 30 pairs of earrings and one ring.

Based on the confession of Hein Zaw Tun (aka) Ko Hein, the police arrested Zin Nyein Aung (aka) Zin Ko Win and Moe Zin Oo (aka) Myo Min Oo in Baho Street in No 2 Ward of Mayangon Township together with 25 pairs of earrings, one gold ring and 5,450 WY tablets at noon on 23 December.

In this case, the police arrested 10 suspects—7 males and 3 females together with K16,440,000, 284 rings, 87 pairs of earrings, 44 necklaces, 12 hand chains, 67 chains, 23 bracelets, two gold buttons, 5,450 WY tablets and two taxis.

The suspects admitted that Thant Zin Oo (aka) Wa Toke and BawGa discussed robbing the Kyon Sin gold shop in November and inspected the condition of the

shop. Then, Thet Zin Oo (aka) Wa Toke ordered Bawga to hire another persons and so he communicated with Sithu Phyo (aka) Sithu Htwe and other suspects who are still at large Zaw Lin, Nay Zaw, Kalar, Hmat Gyi and Cho Oo to rob.

They assigned the duties such as the vehicle driven by Thant Zin Oo (aka) Wa Toke to block the way of his car and another car carrying Than Myint Soe (aka) Soe Lay and Zaw Lin (still at large) had to follow the vehicle driven by U Hnin Ngwe. Sithu Pyo (aka) Sithu Htwe and Hmat Gyi (still at large) and Cho Oo (still at large) had to wait at the left side of the Insein overpass while Nay Zaw and Kala, who are still at large, at the right side of the road.

After they assigned the duties, Baw Ga inspected the working hours of the gold shop from 16 to 19 December. On 19

December, the suspects robbed the gold shop according to the fixed procedures. The suspects shared the robbed materials. The suspect Baw Ga kept K4 million at Thant Zin Oo (aka) Wa Toke and used the remaining amount. Than Myint Soe (aka) Soe Lay sold some gold materials at K16 million. Sithu Phyo (aka) Sithu Htwe gave some gold to Hein Zaw Tun (aka) Ko Hein and Zin Nyein Aung (aka) Zin Ko Win to boil them.

The suspects committed robbery taking chances on the doings of PDF terrorist groups that intentionally conducted bomb attacks to threaten the public, killed innocent people, destroyed CCTVs and Control Box. The suspects robbed the gold after using drugs. Therefore, the people can report to the security forces regarding the activities of PDF and those who give information will be awarded covertly. — MNA



Passenger plane shot by KNPP members, PDF terrorists while landing at Loikaw Airport

A flight of the Myanmar National Airlines landed at Loikaw Airport at about 8:35 am yesterday.

Meanwhile, a combined team, including KNPP members and PDF terrorists, arrived in the wards and shot it down with 107mm rockets.

The flight carrying 64 passengers left for Loikaw from Yangon and landed at Loikaw Airport.

Then, the group containing KNPP members and PDF terrorists attacked the flight with four 107mm rockets from the cemetery near Bardoe Village in Daw Paw Kale Village-tract in the west of Loikaw Township.

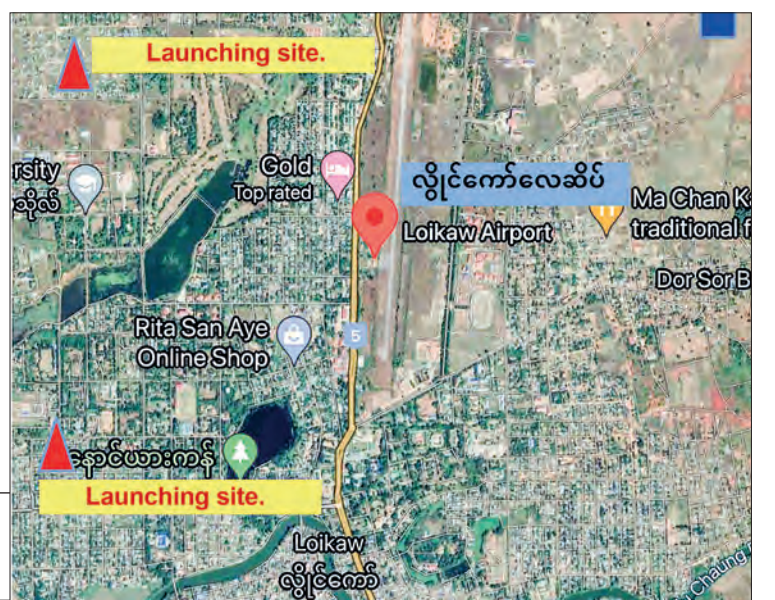
The rockets exploded at about 2,000 metres from the airport and no one was injured. The flight returned to Yangon carrying 38 passengers at

about 8:55 am.

The KNPP members and PDF terrorists intentionally committed attacks on people who are not related to military affairs to cause mass casualties. Security forces investigated to arrest the terrorists.

— MNA

The 107mm rocket launching site.



Livestock sector struggling with high input cost

MYANMAR livestock sector is burdened with high input costs, including feedstuff cost and transport charges, the Myanmar Livestock Federation (MLF) stated.

Additionally, they are facing another problem owing to unfair trade practices with illegally imported frozen meat. The depreciation of Kyat on the US dollar is also another contributing factor to a price rise as feedstuff and fuel oil are imported.

The economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 consequences led to the drop in production of layer poultry and broiler chicken this year.

The prices of poultry meat and egg dramatically jumped in July 2021 as the demand grew



The prices of poultry meat and egg dramatically jumped in July 2021 as the demand grew amid the COVID-19 cases spiking in the country. After the concerted efforts of the stakeholders in the industry to govern the volatile price, the price fell.

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the volatile price, the price fell.

At present, the breeders are worried about the price drop. If the price is in the bear market,

the breeders will not even cover the production cost, breeders stressed.

Livestock and poultry pro-

duction in Myanmar has been growing 10-15 per cent annually. Most breeders are using traditional methods and some have shifted to modern methods. Moreover, integrated poultry and fish farming is widely seen in Myanmar.

Furthermore, the local producers are also facing pressure from foreign investors entering the sector. Local poultry breeding is mostly carried out on a small scale by farmers, but now investments from China, Thailand and India have entered the sector. That is why local breeders need to shift to modern breeding methods and increase the production rate to keep up with the foreign investors. — KK/GNLM

Green gram Shwe Wah variety flooding Mandalay market



The green grams from Monywa, Shwebo, Myaung and Myinmu townships enter the Mandalay market. The newly harvested green grams are commercially valued due to their high quality.

GREEN gram (Shwe Wah) variety is found in abundant supply these days in the Mandalay market, Mandalay bean traders said.

The green grams from Monywa, Shwebo, Myaung and Myinmu townships enter the Mandalay market. The newly harvested green grams are commercially valued due to their high quality. Last year, the price of green grams stood at only K100,000 per three-basket bag, whereas it touches a high of K120,000 per bag at present.

"The yield rate is regular this year. The green grams produced in Yangon Region will also get to the Mandalay market soon. Mandalay is the central market for green grams. Chi-

nese buyers come to purchase in Mandalay every day as some Sino-Myanmar border posts resume operations. Additionally, the use of Yuan or Kyat in the bilateral transaction is officially allowed in the border areas between Myanmar and China in a bid to encourage trade. We expect a brisk market in future," said Soe Win Myint beans and pulses warehouse owner.

The prices of beans in the Mandalay market are estimated at K145,000 per three-basket bag for Japanese white sesame, K135,000 for white sesame, K195,000 for black sesame, K145,000 for black-eyed peas and K2,950 per viss for peanut. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Post-monsoon cotton gets better prices this year in Yamethin

THE local farmers from Yamethin township, Mandalay region grew the post-monsoon cotton and are earning better prices this year than last year, said U Than Win, the deputy head of Yamethin Township Agriculture Department.

More than 30,000 acres of cotton were cultivated in Yamethin township in July and August. These kinds of cotton are being harvested in November and December. Each acre of cotton plant produced about 460 visses. Last year, the price of harvested cotton

was only K1,400 per viss. But this year, the cotton price are ranging between K1,500-K1,600 per viss.

"The cotton cultivation is mainly for clothing. When the cotton is ground, it can produce cotton wool. We can sell them at the domestic factories. Some factories bought cotton wool. Then, those are sold to China under the companies' arrangement. There are some domestic textile factories. Cotton is mainly planted to meet the domestic demand for factories. This year, the local grow-

ers are making a handsome profit by growing them," he clarified.

More than 30,000 acres of post-monsoon cotton are cultivated and sold by over 10,000 farmers in Yamethin township. The price of kinds of cotton has also increased this year than last year. Most of the people are growing model long-staple cotton species such as Shwetaung 8, Shwetaung 10 and Ngweche 9. But, they primarily cultivate Shwetaung 10 cotton species. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

CBM sells US\$15 mln for sixth time this month

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US\$15 million at an auction market rate this month on 23 December for the sixth time, according to figures released from the CBM.

The bank sold \$15 million at an auction market rate of K1,778 per dollar, it is learnt.

The CBM reportedly sold \$15 million on 3, 15, 17 and 22 December and \$13 million on 9 December, bringing the total number of sales to \$88 million during December.

Currently, the dollar exchange rate against Myanmar kyat stood at around K1,900 per dollar in the domestic US exchange market, according to the currency exchange counters.

Consequently, the CBM is conducting an auction for foreign exchange to reduce the sudden fluctuation of foreign exchange rates.

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.

The dollar exchange rate against Myanmar kyat stood at around K1,330 per dollar at the end-January. Then, the dollar's value reached the highest of over K3,000 per dollar in history last September-end.

The local foreign exchange market's data in 2021, the highest and the lowest exchange

rate is currently fixed around K1,327-1,345 in January, K1,335-1,465 in February, K1,420-1,550 in March, K1,550-1,610 in April, K1,585-1,730 in May, K1,595-1,620 in June, K1,626-1,670 in July, 1,660-1,682 in August, K1,696-3,200 in September, K1,850-1,990 in October and K1,773-1,880 in November.

In 2020, the exchange rate moved in the range of K1,465-1,493 in January, K1,436-1,465 in February, K1,320-1,445 in March, K1,395-1,440 in April, K1,406-1,426 in May, K1,385-1,412 in June, K1,367-1,410 in July, K1,335-1,390 in August, K1,310-1,355 in September, K1,282-1,315 in October, K1,303-1,330 in November and K1,324-1,403 in December. — NN/GNLM

Asia markets climb as Covid fears recede

ASIAN markets rose in thin trade on Friday, extending their rally as fears over the Omicron coronavirus variant faded and further positive economic data from the United States cheered investors.

Studies indicating Omicron infections are less likely to result in hospitalization and US approval of drugs from Merck and Pfizer to add to a growing arsenal of weapons against Covid have increased confidence that the pandemic will have less impact on the economy.

“Omicron is looking more like a short-term disruption to the economic outlook and not a destructive headwind that knocks the economy off its course,” said OANDA’s Edward Moya.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 ended the last session before the holiday weekend at a fresh record following a raft of mostly decent US economic data.

Commerce Depart-



People walk at a shopping mall in Santa Anita, Calif., on 20 December 2021.

PHOTO: FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP

ment data showed consumer spending climbed in November, though at a slower rate, and new home sales rose.

Jobless benefit claims held steady from the prior week and orders for big-ticket manufactured goods climbed, though mostly due to aircraft.

Inflation, however, posted the biggest increase in nearly four

decades, illustrating the delicate balancing act the Federal Reserve faces between reining in inflationary pressures and keeping the economic recovery on track. Omicron “will create some slowdowns in the economy, perhaps some slowdowns of production which could add to inflation pressures in the short term,” Paul Christopher, head of global market

strategy at Wells Fargo Investment Institute, told Bloomberg Television, adding however that the economy would work its way through the situation.

The optimistic mood carried over to Asia, with most markets rising, although in quiet trade with several stock exchanges shut or on shortened hours ahead of the Christmas holiday.—AFP ■

Nissan, Mitsubishi halt minivehicle shipments on airbag issues

NISSAN Motor Co. and Mitsubishi Motors Corp. said Friday they had stopped production and shipment of some of their minivehicles since earlier

in the month after finding potential problems with the airbags installed in several models.

Nissan said that collision tests conducted on

its Nissan Rook model showed that the airbags might not function properly under certain conditions. Mitsubishi said in a separate statement that similar issues were found in its eK space and eK X space models.

The automakers did not elaborate on what conditions would lead to the airbags not functioning properly.

However, both companies said there are no safety concerns when vehicles are driven regularly and that airbags will function

when they collide.

Nissan and Mitsubishi Motors said they had suspended the production, shipping and sales of the three minivehicle models since Dec. 3 to look into the matter without revealing the timeline for a resumption.

The three models have been produced under a joint venture between the two companies. The models were developed by Nissan and produced at Mitsubishi’s factory in Okayama Prefecture, western Japan.—Kyodo ■



Supplied photo shows Mitsubishi Motors Corp.’s eK X space minivehicle. PHOTO: KYODO

Ryanair doubles annual loss forecast on Omicron

LOW-COST airline Ryanair said Wednesday that the Omicron coronavirus variant would have a strong impact on its financial performance as it more than doubled the forecast for its annual loss and cut back flights.

The Irish airline now

expects a loss of between 250 to 450 million euros (\$283-510 million) in its financial year that runs through March 2022, up from an earlier forecast of 100 to 200 million euros.

Ryanair said in a statement that “the Omicron

Covid variant and recent government travel restrictions across Europe have notably weakened close-in Christmas and New Year bookings”.

It added that “this sudden downturn has also caused Ryanair this week to cut its planned

January schedule capacity by 33 per cent.”

A growing number of European nations are tightening travel restrictions and several are reimposing restrictions on gatherings as the number of Covid-19 infections is rapidly rising.—AFP ■

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U Bo Bo

Advocate (Reg. No. 10664)

For **Dabur India Limited**

C/o **Fame Myanmar Law Firm**

No. 45/C, 2nd Floor, 50th Street (Lower Block),

Botahtaung Township, Yangon Region, Myanmar.

Dated: 25th December 2021

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Belgium will close all nuclear reactors by 2025



Progressively phasing out nuclear power has been enshrined in Belgian law since 2003.
PHOTO: UNSPLASH/AFP

BELGIUM will shut down all seven of its nuclear reactors by 2025 but will not close the door on new-generation nuclear technology, according to a deal reached Thursday by the coalition government.

A government source told AFP the all-night negotiations included an agreement of “investments of around 100 million euros (\$1.1 million) on small modular reactors”.

A press conference is due to take place at the prime minister’s office headquarters at 1000 GMT to present the details.

Progressively phasing out nuclear power has been enshrined in Belgian law since 2003. The final date is 2025, a target the current government committed to meet when it took

office in October 2020.

But the issue has divided the governing seven-party coalition of greens, socialists and Prime Minister Alexander De Croo’s liberals. The French-speaking liberal MR party argued against completely abandoning nuclear power, the strategy proposed by Flemish green Energy Minister Tinne Van der Straeten.

They said some of Belgium’s current nuclear capacity should be retained as new gas-fired power stations planned to secure energy supplies were too polluting.

Belgian broadcaster RTBF reported that a ministerial meeting agreed to invest in “renewable and carbon-neutral energies” – including new-generation nuclear power.—AFP ■

Moscow court considers shutting down Memorial rights centre

A Moscow court on Thursday heard a case against a leading rights group Memorial that could shut down the veteran organization, closing off a year marked by a major crackdown on civil society.

Memorial’s Human Rights Centre, which campaigns for political prisoners and other disadvantaged groups, is accused of violating Russia’s law on “foreign agents” and of justifying terrorism.

As the first hearing in the case kicked off Thursday, around three dozen supporters gathered outside the Moscow courthouse in freezing temperatures.

Observers were not allowed inside, which judge Mikhail Kazakov said was “to create safe conditions for the participants of the process”.

Next week, Russia’s Supreme Court will rule on the



Observers were barred from the courtroom and a group of supporters gathered outside in the cold. **PHOTO: AFP**

liquidation of the group’s main wing, Memorial International, as Russians prepare to start a 10-day state holiday.

The court cases bookend a year when authorities launched an unprecedented crackdown on the opposition and independent

media, imprisoning top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in February and banning his organizations.

The move against Memorial has led to a major outcry inside Russia and from the West, with which tensions have been rising over ex-Soviet Ukraine.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Vietnam to disallow large gatherings during upcoming holidays

VIETNAMESE Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh has requested localities not to hold activities with large gatherings, especially during the New Year and its traditional Lunar New Year festivals amid complicated developments of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chinh made the order at a recent teleconference while asking for more drastic actions to prevent and control the pandemic nationwide, the Vietnamese Government Office said in a notice issued late Wednesday.—Xinhua ■

US drops in-person interviews for H-1B, L-1 visas for now as Covid surges

Amid growing concerns of COVID-19 surge, the US on Thursday (local time) is temporarily dropping an in-person interview requirement for some work-visa categories - H-1B, L-1 and O-1.

The State Department is temporarily dropping an in-person interview requirement for some work-visa categories in 2022 to ease visa issuances, as the COVID-19 pandemic stretches into the third year, the department announced. Applicants for H-1B, L-1 and O-1 visas applying from abroad won’t be required to do an in-person interview at a US consulate, typically the final step before a visa is issued. Those categories represent the most common visa types companies use to attract high-skilled talent from abroad.—ANI ■

37 dead in Bangladesh as packed ferry catches fire: Police

AT least 37 people died when an overcrowded night ferry caught fire in Bangladesh on Friday, police said, as terrified passengers leaped overboard to escape the blaze.

The latest maritime tragedy to hit the impoverished low-lying nation happened in the early hours in a river near Jhalokathi, 250 kilometres (160 miles) south

of Dhaka.

“We have recovered 37 bodies. The death toll may rise. Most died from the fire and a few by drowning after many people jumped into the river,” local police chief Moinul Islam told AFP.

The blaze was believed to have originated in the engine room and ripped through the ferry, Islam said. Despite having

an official capacity of 310 the vessel was carrying at least 500 people, many of who were returning home from the capital.

“We have sent some 100 people with burn injuries to hospitals in Barisal,” he said.

Witnesses said the fire originated at around 3:00 am (2100 GMT) and quickly spread.—AFP ■



The blaze was believed to have originated in the engine room and ripped through the ferry. **PHOTO: AFP**

Japan's defence budget for 2022 hits record for 8th year

THE Cabinet of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida approved Friday a defence budget of 5.40 trillion yen (\$47 billion) for fiscal 2022, setting a record high for the eighth consecutive year, to advance the development of new technologies in the face of a militarily expanding China.

The draft budget, including outlays for hosting US military bases, rose 1.1 per cent from the current fiscal year ending in March as Japan ramps up its defence capabilities also against North Korea's nuclear and missile threat.

The increase for a 10th year in a row is largely attributable to a sharp rise in research and development spending, for which the Defence Ministry has earmarked 291.10 billion yen, up 79.60 billion yen, or 37.6 per cent, from a year earlier.

The ministry will invest in game-changing technologies, such as crewless planes using artificial intelligence that fly in teams with next-generation fighter jets.



Photo taken on 19 August 2021, shows Japan's Defence Ministry in Tokyo. PHOTO: KYODO

"As the security environment surrounding Japan has been changing at an unprecedented speed and becoming increasingly severe, it is an urgent task for Japan to strengthen its necessary defense capabilities," Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi said at a press conference.

The ministry has allocated 85.80 billion yen for the development of new fighter jets to replace the Air-Self Defence Force's aging F-2s. For this goal, Japan will work together with

Britain on a new jet engine.

It has also decided to spend 39.30 billion yen for standoff missiles to be launched from ships, aircraft and land.

Such missiles are capable of attacking vessels from outside their firing range and are likely to fly 900 kilometres, with officials saying that they are aimed at deterring China's naval activities around Japanese islands while keeping Self-Defence Forces personnel safe.—Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump asks Supreme Court to block release to Capitol riot probe

FORMER US president Donald Trump asked the Supreme Court on Thursday to block the release of White House records to a congressional committee investigating the 6 January assault on the Capitol by his supporters.

Trump asked the nation's highest court to stay a ruling this month by a federal appeals court which rejected his attempt to keep the documents and records secret.

Trump, who has been accused of fomenting the assault on Congress, is seeking to exercise his privilege as a former president to keep White House records and communications that might relate to the attack under wraps.—AFP ■

French fugitive captured in Indonesia after storm damages yacht

A French fugitive convicted of a double murder was arrested after 20 years on the run when a storm damaged his yacht in waters off Indonesia's Sulawesi island, police said Thursday.

Thierry Ascione, 62, and another French national made an emergency landing in the Talaud islands between the Philippines and Indonesia on 3 October to seek help for repairing the boat.

Authorities nabbed them for violating immigration rules, said local police chief Lendi Hutabarat.

"The navigation system (on the yacht) was damaged due to strong waves," Hutabarat told AFP.

Ascione was hiding in the boat when the police questioned and arrested his compatriot, who was found wandering around the island trying to buy a SIM card.

The police later raided the boat and found Ascione without a passport.—AFP ■

Iraq pays final Kuwait war reparations

IRAQ has paid its last war reparations to Kuwait more than 30 years since the invasion of the Gulf country by former autocrat Saddam Hussein, officials said Thursday.

On 2 August 1990, Hussein ordered his army to invade Kuwait and seize what he described as "Iraq's 19th province", before being pushed back seven months later by a US-led coalition.

"Iraq has closed the file of the Kuwait war reparations, having paid the last of its dues," Mozher Saleh, the prime minister's economic advisor, was quoted as saying by the official Iraqi News Agency. In total, Iraq has paid \$52.4 billion in reparations, he said.

"This is not a small amount," he added. "The sum would have been enough to construct an electricity network that would have served Iraq for many years."

Despite being rich in hydrocarbons, Iraq's electricity infrastructure has suffered from years of negligence and successive wars, facing regular power cuts.—AFP ■



A major long-term effect of the first Gulf War was that it paved the way for greater US security and military presence in the region. PHOTO: GERARD FOUET/AFP/FILE

S. Korea grants pardon to former President Park Geun Hye

THE South Korean government said Friday that it will grant a pardon to former President Park Geun Hye who is serving a 22-year prison term after being convicted of corruption and other charges.

Justice Minister Park Beom Kye told reporters that the amnesty will be given Friday next week "as a way to unite South Koreans". The former president is still popular among supporters of the People Power Party, the main opposition and conservative party.

A spokeswoman of President Moon Jae In quoted the president at a press briefing saying, "We should proceed to the new era and leave the pain of the past era behind."

Moon decided on the pardon after considering the 69-year-old former president's deteriorating health that saw her hospitalized recently.

The pardon is seen as an effort by the government of the ruling Democratic Party



South Korea's disgraced ex-president Park Geun-hye has been granted a pardon. PHOTO: XINHUA /FILE

of Korea to show a generous attitude and gain public support ahead of the presidential election next March, with the spokeswoman adding another quote from Moon, "Now is the time to gather power for the future rather than fighting over the past."

Park has been in prison since March 2017 after being impeached for abuse of power,

embezzlement and accepting bribes from large conglomerates such as Samsung and Lotte Group.

The justice minister said that 3,094 prisoners including Park will be granted a pardon. But former President Lee Myung Bak, who is also serving a prison term over bribery and embezzlement, was not included in the list.—Kyodo ■

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.

Shooting competition ahead of XXXI SEA Games concludes



A shooting competition award-giving ceremony for the athletes who are training ahead of the XXXI Southeast Asian Games was held at the International Shooting Range in Dagon Myothit (North), Yangon Region, at 1 pm yesterday.

Region Ministers, the Director General of the Department of Sports and Physical Education, the President and officials from the Myanmar shooting Federation attended and watched the women's 25m pistol and men's 50m prone pistol competitions. After the games, Technical Advisor to Yangon Region Government presented the first prize in the men's 10m air pistol competition

to Ye Htun Naung, while second prize went to Kyaw Swa Win and the third prize to Han Min Htet. Legal Advisor to Yangon Region Government presented the first prize in the men's 10m air rifle competition to Kaung Myat San, second prize to Min Satt Paing and the third to Aung Moe Naing.

The Director-General of the Department of Sports and Physical Education presented the third prize in the men's 25m standard pistol competition to Han Min Htet and first prize in the men's 50m pistol event to Hlaing Win Soe, second prize went to Ye Tun Naung and the third prize to Kyaw Swa Win.

The Attorney-General of

Yangon Region government presented first prize in the women's 10m air pistol competition to Thuzar Htay, and the second prize went to Chit Soe Nwe and the third prize to Thin Thin Swe.

Next, Yangon Region Minister for Natural Resources presented the first prize in the women's 10m air rifle competition to Aye Myat Yadanar Oo, second prize to Ohnmar Khaing and the third prize went to Kay Zin Wah Wah. Yangon Region Economic Minister also presented the first prize in the women's 25m pistol event to Thuzar Htay, second prize to Thin Thin Swe and the third prize to Ni Ni Win respectively. —MNA ■

Aung La N Sang's rival to be confirmed early next year

MYANMAR MMA fighter Aung La N Sang's rematch will be confirmed early next year, according to the statement with the ONE Championship.

Aung La N Sang announced on his Facebook page on 21 December that his rival will be announced in early 2022.

Aung La has been out of MMA since the end of July and ONE CEO will announce his rival at the beginning of the year, probably as early as March, MMA experts predicted.

Aung La N Sang fought twice in 2021 and has not returned until the end of the year.

Aung La N Sang used to stay in the Light Heavyweight World Championship category while Middleweight Challenge fights will be launched next year,

and both challengers or world title matches will likely be announced simultaneously.

Aung La N Sang has decided to fight only in the middleweight division after missing out on two world championships. If Aung La will fight De Ridder in the upcoming bout, he will have to fight for the world title.

If Aung La had to fight with Okami of Japan or Bigdash of Russia, it would be a challenge.

De Ridder of the Netherlands currently holding both the Middleweight and Light Heavyweight World Championships which were previously won by Aung La N Sang.

Aung La defeated Leandro of Brazil in the first round on 30 July this year. —Ko Nyi Lay/ GNLM ■



China plans for Beijing Olympic bubble with no holes or hugs

FEBRUARY'S Beijing Winter Olympics look set to be the strictest mass sporting event since the coronavirus pandemic. AFP Sport looks at what measures athletes and others can expect to face in the

“bubble” and how that compares to last summer's virus-delayed Tokyo Games. **What is the 'closed loop'?**

China, where the virus emerged towards the end of 2019, has pursued a “ze-

ro-Covid” strategy and is taking the same no-nonsense approach to the February 4-20 Olympics. Organizers hope to limit the spread of infections and keep the Games running smoothly by cocooning almost

every person involved in a “closed loop”, effectively a big bubble containing thousands of people. They will be in there from the moment that they land in the Chinese capital to the time they leave. — AFP ■