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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing enjoys Naga Traditional New Year festival for 2023



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing accepts the New Year gift given by Chairman of Naga Traditional Literature and Cultural Central Committee U Pao Khu on 15 January.

THE government pledged to strive for harmonious development of education, transport and health sectors of Naga ethnic national people, said State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the Naga Traditional New Year festival for 2023 in Lahe of Naga Self-Administered Zone yesterday afternoon.

In his address, the Senior General expressed his pride in attending the Naga Traditional New Year Festival for 2023 and made his wishes for Naga ethnics as well as all ethnic national people to be physical and mental well-being.

The Senior General stressed the need for Naga ethnics resid-

ing across the nation and all ethnic national brethren to preserve traditions and customs through the unity.

As the government is striving for ensuring peace and stability as well as national reconciliation of the Union, all the entire people are to join hands with the government in respective sectors. **All ethnic people must**

strive for further stabilize the Naga region.

The Union government, the region government and Naga Self-Administered Zone administration body are to join hand in hand with the entire people for development of the zone. In this regard, all the persons need to take responsibility with goodwill in all measures. Departmental

personnel are to serve the local people to have all-round development tasks in administration, education, health and other sectors.

As the government has contributed K5 billion from the State economic development fund for revitalization of the Naga Self-Administration Zone for enhancement

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Statements issued by KNPP, PDF terrorists on brutal attack with heavy weapons at opening ceremony of archway to commemorate 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day

KNPP and PDF terrorists attacked in an inhumane way with heavy weapons from about 4,000 metres northeast of Loikaw at around 7:15 am on 15 January at the opening ceremony of the archway to commemorate 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day with participation of local ethnic people.

The heavy weapon shells fell near the State Hall and in the residential areas. Some members of the security forces, six students, one male and one female innocent people were injured and one male innocent civilian was killed.

It was reported that Young Men's Buddhist Association (Central), Interfaith Friendship Organization (Central), Myanmar Press Council, Myanmar Writers' Association, Myanmar Comedians' Association, and Myanmar Music Association (Central) issued their statements, saying that it was unacceptable incident and that they strongly condemned it.—MNA/KZL

Young Men's Buddhist Association-YMBA (Central) issues statement on strong condemnation

10th Waning of Pyatho 1384 ME
15 January 2023

1. It was learned that the KNPP group and PDF terrorists inhumanely launched heavy weapon fires to the opening ceremony of the archway to commemorate the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day for no reason in front of the state hall in Loikaw in Kayah State yesterday morning.
2. Some members of security forces and six students were injured due to attacks of KNPP group and PDF terrorists. It is heartbreaking to hear that two innocent people were wounded and one innocent person died.
3. The Young Men's Buddhist Association-YMBA (Central) issued a statement that it is totally unacceptable and strongly condemns the act of terrorism targeting innocent people.

Young Men's Buddhist Association-YMBA (Central)

Statement of Interfaith Friendship Organization (Central)

10th Waning of Pyatho 1384 ME
15 January 2023

1. KNPP and PDF terrorists inhumanely committed heavy weapon fire to the opening ceremony of the archway commemorating the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day in front of the state hall of Kayah State in Loikow at around 7.15 am on 15 December.
2. It is heartbreaking to know that some members of security forces, six students and two innocent people were wounded and one innocent person died because of this cruel and inhuman terrorist acts.
3. As it is clear that this act was targeted at innocent people, the Interfaith Friendship Organization (Centre) strongly condemns this act of terrorism.

*Central Executive Committee
Interfaith Friendship Organization (Central)*

Statement of Myanmar Press Council (1/2023)

15 January 2023, Sunday

1. Some PDF terrorists committed heavy weapon fires to the opening ceremony of the archway to commemorate the Kayah State Day in the state hall of Loikaw at 7:15 am on 15 January.
2. As a result of this inhuman act of terrorism, one innocent civilian was killed and some security force members in addition to six students and two civilian people who happily enjoyed the ceremony were wounded.
3. Today morning, it was clear that the terrorist act of firing the heavy weapons and destruction were committed with attempts to intentionally destroy the commemorative ceremony of the local ethnic people as well as the intention of killing innocent people en masse. The Myanmar Press Council strongly condemns that it cannot totally accept any terrorist organization which carried out such terror act.

Myanmar Press Council

Statement of Myanmar Writers' Association

15 January 2023

1. At 7:15 am yesterday, KNPP and PDF terrorists attacked the opening ceremony of the archway to mark the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day with heavy weapons from about 4,000 meters northeast of Loikaw. As a result, heavy weapon shells fell near the State Hall and in the public residential wards. Some members of the security forces, six students, one innocent male and one innocent female were wounded in the explosion of heavy weapon shells and one innocent male civilian was dead.
2. The Myanmar Writers' Association expressed its condemnation of the heavy weapon attacks of the terrorists on residential areas and near the State Hall at the opening ceremony of the archway to mark the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day celebrated by local ethnic people on a grand scale.

Myanmar Writers' Association

Statement of Myanmar Music Association (Central)

15 January 2023

1. On the morning of 15 January, KNPP and PDF terrorists committed heavy weapon attacks on the place at the opening ceremony of an archway commemorating the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day in the state hall of Loikow. Hence, The Myanmar Music Association (Central) is deeply saddened by the fact that some security forces, six students, one male and one female innocent civilians were wounded and one male civilian dead in the explosions of heavy weapon shells which fell in residential wards and near the state hall.
2. The Myanmar Music Association (Central) strongly condemns the firing to innocent people without any reason, and the terrorist acts that have been deliberately fired into crowded places unrelated to the military measures in order to cause mass deaths and injuries to the public.

Myanmar Music Association (Central)

Myanmar Comedians' Association Statement

KNPP and PDF terrorists opened fire with heavy weapons to the opening ceremony of the archway to commemorate the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day in front of the state hall of Kayah State in Loikow yesterday morning.

Some members of security forces, six students and two innocent people were wounded in the explosion of heavy weapon shells near the state hall and in residential areas. It is known that one innocent person was killed.

Members of the Myanmar Comedians' Association issued a statement strongly condemning the inhumane and unprovoked attack with heavy weapons during the opening ceremony of the archway celebrating the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day.

Myanmar Comedians' Association

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Plan is underway to open agriculture institutes and livestock breeding institutes at BEHSs in each district

- During the period that we are taking the responsibilities, arrangements are being made to open agriculture institutes and livestock breeding institutes at basic education schools in each district.
- The opening agriculture institutes and livestock breeding institutes can cause turning out skilful human resources for agriculture, livestock breeding and industrial sectors.

(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with entrepreneurs from MSMEs in Pyay District on 4 October 2022)

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing enjoys Naga Traditional New Year festival for 2023



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends Naga Traditional New Year Festival for 2023 in Lahe of Naga Self-Administered Zone on 15 January.

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of socio-economic life of the local people and the State economy which faced losses triggered by the outbreak of Covid-19, it is necessary to successfully implement agriculture, livestock breeding and other sectors for socio-economic development of the people.

The government pledged to strive for harmonious development of education, transport and health sectors of Naga ethnic national people.

A female Naga ethnic resident explained emergence of the Naga Traditional New Year festival.

The Senior General accepted the New Year gift given by

Chairman of Naga Traditional Literature and Cultural Central Committee U Pao Khu.

The Senior General presented aid for development of the zone, agricultural aid, sports equipment and foodstuff to Naga Traditional Literature and Cultural Central Committee Patron U Maung Nyan and members.

The region chief minister presented K100 million for the festival to the chairman of the Naga Self-Administered Zone administration body.

The Senior General and party enjoyed song and dance entertainment of Naga ethnics and consumed the traditional foods.

After the ceremony, the Sen-



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views round galleries of Naga ethnic people on 15 January.



ior General presented the flower basket and cash award to the dance troupes. Then, the Senior General and party visited the traditional booths of Naga ethnics.

In the evening, the Senior General enjoyed a Naga traditional bonfire and lit the bonfire. After enjoying the dances of Naga ethnics, the Senior General presented the flower basket and cash awards to them.

On behalf of SAC members and Union Ministers, SAC mem-

ber Jeng Phang Naw Taung presented cash award to officials. Then, the Senior General warmly greeted them.

The Naga Traditional New Year festival aims to preserve Naga traditions and customs as well as cultural heritages, enhance Naga traditional culture and fine arts, revitalize friendly relations and mutual understanding among Naga ethnics, participate in development of Naga region and forge the Union spirit based on fraternity among Naga tribes. As from 1992, the festival is held in townships of Naga region alternatively. International and local travellers pay visits to the festival and enjoy the bonfire happily.—MNA

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presents aid to Naga Traditional Literature and Cultural Central Committee Patron U Maung Nyan.

Highly-qualified human resources will be required in successfully undertaking production of the products based on agriculture and livestock farms: Senior General



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets departmental officials, town elders and businesspersons at city hall in Homalin on 15 January.

THE inputs, capitals, techniques and good human resources are required for successfully operating the manufacturing process, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at a meeting with district and township departmental officials, town elders, MSME businesspersons from Homalin District at the city hall in Homalin yesterday morning.

Individual reports for economic development

Sagaing Region Chief Minister U Myat Kyaw reported on implementation of MSME businesses in Sagaing Region and Homalin District, disbursement of loans for MSMEs, manufacturing of products for one village-one product scheme and departmental officials, on facts about Homalin District, matters related to Namping small-scale hydropower project and functions for Chindwin Bridge (Htamanthi) project.

Local businesspersons also presented reports on nurturing of forest plantations for plywood factory and for generating jobs for local people, needs of assistance from the State for the industries to produce export products, extension of tea industries in Homalin District and its needs of loans from the State, sending of fish products to the domestic and foreign markets, progress of rubber industry as from 2005 and needs for development of the



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views round domestic products on 15 January.

regional economy.

Discussions of Union ministers in respective sectors

In their response, the Union ministers discussed encouragement of the State for operating MSMEs, own arrangement of businesspersons to link relevant banks to borrow loans and responsibilities to pay back the loans, implementation of the emerald green project, and electrification for Homalin District.

Political progress of the State

In his speech, the Senior General explained his arrival to fulfill the requirements of Homalin District, political progress of the State, efforts for reduction of terror acts and peace and stability of the region.

Encouragement to manu-

facturing sector based on domestic raw materials

The Senior General stressed the need to encourage cultivation of rubber and tea in Homalin region. The region produces groundnut, sesame, canola, bamboo and rattan in addition to gold and natural resources as well as oil and natural gas. Efforts are being made to generate electricity for development of the region.

The Senior General continued to say that it is necessary to encourage manufacturing of products with the use of domestic raw materials. If local people strive for manufacturing of agricultural produce, it will contribute much to the regional development. It is necessary to enhance cultivation of rubber in the region and meet the demand of the rubber products of the nation so as to develop the nation.

Highly-qualified human resources will be required in successfully undertaking production of the products based on agriculture and livestock farms. So, the government encourages establishment of agriculture and livestock breeding high schools and institutes across the nation.

Requirements of inputs, capitals, techniques, good human resources

The inputs, capitals, techniques and good human resources are required for successfully operating the manufacturing process. In this regard, the country may overcome challenges of fertilizers and electricity but critically face high prices of fuel similar to other countries. Myanmar consumes more than one million of vehicles and more than 6 million motorcycles as well as millions of

fuel gallon on a daily basis. So, all need to save consumption of fuel.

The government has opened basic education schools, colleges and universities for all students to learn education. The government is responsible for undertaking regional development tasks. Improvement of individually socio-economic life is concerned with the individual hardworking. Only when it needs to encourage education sector, will the region and the country have abundant human resources. So, everybody needs to encourage learning education.

Efficient use of local resources and plans of the State to fulfill needs

The Senior General outlined that it is necessary to encourage business of the rural people in agriculture and livestock farms for development of the State economy. Local people have to efficiently use the domestic sources. The government will fulfill the requirements.

The Senior General presented gifts for departmental personnel through local authorities.

The Senior General cordially greeted departmental officials, town elders, and MSME businesspersons from Homalin District.

Later, the Senior General viewed round the exhibitions on minerals, foodstuffs, personal goods, industrial goods, traditional handicraft, textile and traditional medicines.—MNA

SAC members, Union ministers attend opening of Kayah State Day commemorative galleries

STATE Administration Council members and Union ministers met with local people at Kayah State Hall yesterday.

Firstly, SAC member Saw Daniel, Union Ministers Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and U Saw Tun Aung Myint explained the five-point Roadmap of State Administration Council.

Then, Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung gave solar accessories and Deputy Minister for Health Dr Aye Tun medical accessories to Chief Minister of State U Zaw Myo Tin and State Minister for Social Affairs U Aung Win Oo.

After that, the local people reported on their wishes to build more bridges and roads in Loikaw, education, health, peace and stability measures. SAC members, Union ministers and party responded to



SAC members and Union ministers visit galleries to mark 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day on 15 January.

their reports.

Next, SAC members Saw Daniel, U Sai Lon Seng and U Shwe Kyein, Union Minis-

ters Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and U Saw Tun Aung Myint, Chief Minister of Kayah State U Zaw Myo Tin, Commander

of Eastern Command Maj-Gen Hla Moe, Deputy Ministers Dr Aung Zaya and Dr Aye Tun and officials attended the 71st An-

niversary of Kayah State Day commemorative galleries at Loikaw City Hall.

First, they opened the galleries and visited the galleries.

The galleries showcase activities of the SAC, regional development activities of the state government, MSME measures in the state, progress of agriculture and livestock farms with State-provided capitals and activities of education, health, social and cultural sectors, documents on electrification, mining and forestry measures to support the country's economy and the socio-economic life of the people in the state, and significant destinations to contribute to the tourism industry of the state. These galleries are opened for public observance at Loikaw city hall from 14 to 16 January.—State IPRD/KZW

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE UNION

သတင်းထုတ်ပြန်ချက်

Publication of Judicial Strategic Plan (2023-2027) and Year One Action Plan (2023) of the Judicial Strategic Plan

THE Judicial Strategic Plan (2023-2027), which has been set up and implemented with the motto "Providing Justice By All" and Year One Action Plan (2023), is published today in Myanmar-English versions.

As a judicial reform process, commencing from 2015, the Judicial Strategic Plan was drawn and implemented accordingly. The second Judicial Strategic Plan for five-year (2018-2022) has been set up in 2018 and implemented the strategic initiatives until 2022. The Judicial Strategic Plan (2023-2027), currently issued by the Myanmar Judiciary becomes the third one and it is an entire effort, without any assistance of our international partners, from frequent consultations and discussions between the strategic planning team of the Supreme Court of the Union and responsible officials of the High Courts of the Region and the State. In addition, as its initial year, the Year One Action Plan (2023) and evaluation on previous five-year strategic plan is accompanied with this new Strategic Plan.

The Judicial Strategic Plan (2023-2027) and the Year One Action Plan of the Judicial Strategic Plan is available on the website of the Supreme Court of the Union www.unionsupremecourt.gov.mm.

Public Notice for elimination of violence

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

9 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 15 January, total figure rises to 633,750

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,750** after **nine** new cases were reported on 15 January 2023 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **614,220**, including **one** new recovery.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country reached **19,490** on 15-1-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic.

The country has vaccinated **30,865,054** people aged 18 and above for COVID-19 vaccines and **6,805,433** people aged under 18 till 14 January 2023. —MNA

The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increasing of death rate based on the disease.

SAC members, Union ministers attend mass rally, awarding honorary titles and medals



SAC members, Union ministers, Kayah State Chief Minister and officials enjoy dance entertainment of traditional dance troupe at 71st Kayah State Day on 15 January.

A mass rally to mark 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day ceremony was held at the state hall yesterday morning, attended by SAC members U Saw Denial, U Sai Lon Seng and U Shwe Kyein, Union Ministers Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and

U Saw Tun Aung Myint and guests.

Firstly, those at the ceremony saluted the State flag and the fallen leaders.

Then, SAC member Saw Daniel read the message sent by Chairman of the State Ad-

ministration Council, Prime Minister Senior General Thadue Maha Thray Sithu Thadue Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day.

After that, Kayah State Chief Minister U Zaw Myo Tin

delivered a speech.

Next, SAC members, Union Ministers, State Chief Minister, Commander of the Eastern Command and the Deputy Minister presented honorary titles and medals commemorating the 75th Anniversary (Diamond

Jubilee) Independence Day to relevant recipients. Honorable prizes were awarded to the outstanding winners in the SEA Games, training courses and state sports competitions.

The SAC members and the Union Ministers warmly greeted the participants in the commemorative ceremony.

Afterwards, an honorary dinner to mark the 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day was hosted at the State Hall at 6 pm. State Chief Minister U Zaw Myo Tin gave a speech and the ethnic folk dance troupe performed ethnic dance music.

Furthermore, SAC member U Saw Daniel gave a flower basket to ethnic traditional dance troupes and the State Chief Minister presented cash award to the vocalists.—State IPRD/TS



Honorary titles are presented to relevant recipients at the ceremony to mark 71st Anniversary of Kayah State Day on 15 January.

SAC-conferred honorary titles presented

THE State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister conferred honorary titles on recipients individually on 1 and 2 January in marking the 75th Anniversary (Diamond Jubilee) Independence Day.

Yangon Region Chief Min-

ister U Soe Thein, Yangon Command Commander Maj-Gen Nyunt Win Swe and officials yesterday handed over honorary titles to family members of those who were unable to attend the conferring ceremony on their own and on their behalf due to

various reasons.

On behalf of State Council member U San Maung (retired) (deceased), daughter Daw Kyi Kyi San Maung received the Sithu title; on behalf of author Daw Nu Yin, daughter Daw Soe Nyein received the Alinka Kyawswa title; on behalf of author U Ohn Pe, daughter Daw Ngwe Yi received the Theikpa Kyawswa title; on behalf of State Council Member U Tha Kyaw (deceased), son U San Thein and on behalf of State Council Member U Ohn Kyi (deceased), daughter Daw Khin Htar Ni received the Sithu titles; on behalf of writer Daw Khin Swe Oo (deceased), grand-daughter La Pyae Nyein Chan received the Alinka Kyawswa title; on behalf of Bago Region People's Council Chairman Lt-Col Tun Kyaw (retired) (deceased), daughter Daw San San Myint received the



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein and Yangon Command Commander Maj-Gen Nyunt Win Swe hand over the Alinka Kyawswa title to daughter Daw Soe Nyein on behalf of author Daw Nu Yin (deceased).



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein and Yangon Command Commander Maj-Gen Nyunt Win Swe hand over the Alinka Kyawswa title to grand-daughter La Pyae Nyein Chan on behalf of author Daw Khin Swe Oo (deceased).

Thiri Pyanchi title; on behalf of Deputy Minister for Industry-2 Lt-Col Than Nyunt (retired), son U Soe Nyunt Naing received the Wunna Kyaw Htin title; on behalf of Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Mya Thin (retired) (deceased), wife Daw May Nyunt

Yi received the Thiri Pyanchi title; and on behalf of Maj-Gen Hla Oo (retired) (deceased) from Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office, daughter Daw Hnin Malar Oo received the Zeya Kyaw Htin title at their homes respectively.—MNA/KZL

Myanmar-China border trade allows Yuan, Dollar payments

ACCORDING to the statement of the Ministry of Commerce, the types of goods were released for payments of Yuan and dollars in Myanmar-China border trade measures.

The statement stated that pulses, corns, sesame and peanuts can be paid in Yuan in addition to the dollar currency, and other agricultural produce and fishery products such as crab and eel are allowed in Yuan currency.

While trading at the Muse 105th-mile trade zone, if the exporter asks a Certificate of Origin-Form E issued between China and ASEAN countries for customs relief, the verification is being allowed in accordance with the regulations.

A total of 98 applications for Form E were issued from 1 to 3



Truckloads passing through the Chinshwehew Trade Post at Myanmar-China border.

January 2023, and 29 applications of Form E were approved on 3 January alone. Export and import licence applications can be submitted online by the Tradenet 2.0 system, as well as in person at trade posts.

It was reported that 541 truckloads of export and 114 truckloads of import were able to be traded between 1 and 3 January 2023. According to the Ministry of Commerce, the most exported products are crab, sesame, watermelon, rice, broken rice, eel and sugarcane, and most imported goods are vehicles and heavy machinery, telephone and communication devices, apple, orange, kitchen utensils, motorcycle spare parts, plastic raw materials, electric light bulbs, lamps and other consumer goods. — TWA/CT



A photo shows Malaysia-based May Bank.

CBM urges May Bank to participate in remittances of Myanmar workers from Malaysia to home

DAW Than Than Swe, Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar, urged May Bank Yangon Branch to arrange cooperation of the Malaysia-based May Bank in diverting the remittances of Myanmar workers to Myanmar during a meeting with Myanmar representatives from Yangon branch of May Bank on 14 January.

They discussed current foreign currency market development, including the issue on remittance of salaries and wages of Myanmar nationals in Malaysia, operations in the Inter-bank market and trade payments, and May Bank's operation after

opening a branch in Myanmar. They also focused on the policies of the head office and added that they wanted the direction of the Central Bank.

The Central Bank of Myanmar has instructed all to transfer the wages/salaries earned in foreign currency by the expatriate Myanmar citizens through official channels and has announced that it will allow to spend such incomes freely.

Since 2014, May bank has received a domestic banking licence and it started operating its Myanmar branch in 2015 with a net currency amount of US\$ 75 million. —TWA/KZW

124 Myanmar migrant workers transferred from Thailand

A total of 124 Myanmar migrant workers: 81 males and 14 females in addition to 29 persons who wish to return home arrived in Tachilek on 13 January via the Myanmar-Thailand friendship bridge-2.

Among 124 Myanmar citizens, some of them were released from punishment due to arresting them for various reasons while working in Thailand, and some of them returned home due to job problems.



Volunteers perform medical checkup on Myanmar returnees at Tachilek checkpoint on 13 January.



Officials verifying Myanmar returnees.

Those Myanmar citizens were performed medical checkup by the staff of the relevant department for the necessary tests whether they suffered from infection of Covid-19 and of infectious diseases.

It was reported that no Covid-19 virus was found at those persons in the medical checkup and they will be monitored at the Wamlon quarantine centre for seven days. —TWA/KZW

OPINION

Expand the export market of pulses and beans through increased yield

MYANMAR, an agri-based country, emphasizes the export of agricultural produce as the majority of items to earn income for the businesspersons as well as for the State. The agricultural produce, particularly pulses and beans, is flowing out to the international market through maritime and border trade routes.

Local farmers across the nation produce agricultural products such as paddy, maize, groundnut, sesame, pulses and beans, cotton and sugarcane. Among them, pulses and beans stand second in agricultural produce in the entire nation, accounting for 33 per cent. Such kinds of beans are placed on 20 per cent of cropland areas in total.

Mostly, the top cash crops namely black bean, green gram and pigeon pea take positions on two-thirds of the total croplands of pulses and beans plantations. The remaining areas are placed under various kinds of beans including kidney beans, butter beans, white-eyed beans, chickpeas, soya beans, cowpea, horse gram and others.

As part of earning incomes for businesspersons and levying revenue for the State, black bean and pigeon peas are primarily exported to India and green gram to China and European countries. Currently, the Ministry of Commerce is striving for stretching its wings into foreign markets with the export of Myanmar's pulses and beans.

Only when the market of the export products is expanded and market shares grasped will Myanmar products including beans have to catch the attention of customer countries. As such, it is necessary to emphasize the export of quality products and guarantees free from dangers to have the marketable prospect of Myanmar products and grasp the market share.

Globally, the modern markets demand an inflow of products which must be in conformity with the rules and regulations of the safe food supply process. If the export items are refused to be accepted due to lower quality, exporters will face great losses. Consequently, they may face a loss of market for their products in the long run.

In the 2020-21 financial year, Myanmar earned some US\$1.6 billion in the export of pulses and beans. All participants in the chains of production need to strive for expanding the market of beans in order to benefit the State and those who participate in the chains of production as well as the entire people.

Hence, all businesspersons need to take care of food production chains at different levels from the cultivation to the export market through food processing, storage and transport in accord with the health restrictions to sustainably maintain their reputation in the exportation arena.

Hence, all businesspersons need to take care of food production chains at different levels from the cultivation to the export market through food processing, storage and transport in accord with the health restrictions to sustainably maintain their reputation in the exportation arena.

Pro-Growth Policies on Death Bed?

By U AC

TEN years ago, government leaders of almost every country were talking about growth. Growth through trade, growth through liberalization, growth through globalization, and through investments. Yet, nowadays everybody politician seems to have fallen out of love with growth.

Now we talk about protection. We advocate self-sufficiency. We favour regulations and restrictions. We want 'out', instead of being 'in' trade organizations. We close our borders for every little incident. The rich countries are now anti-immigration. The US government introduced 12,000 new regulations in 2021 alone. From 2010 to 2020, rich countries' tariff restrictions on imports doubled. The UK voted for Brexit, to keep the country

white among other motives. In 2007, nearly six million people have migrated to rich countries. In 2019, the number was down to four million.

Anti-growth strategies may have less to do with doing what is good for the country and more to do with the flavour of the day for the politicians to win votes. Trump won the elections mainly based on this agenda. As rich countries become fully developed, the growth rates are now hovering around three per cent. Even the great China, which has achieved growth rates of around 10 per cent over the last three decades, has lower expectations of growth at around five per cent in 2023. Pushing the growth rate beyond five per cent for developed countries is only feasible, with significant investments in

new technology and products. These countries are no longer in the catch-up game.

As with all potential gains, the country has to suffer pains first. Investments into the future come with opportunity costs. In a world where an ageing population is growing especially in developed countries, it means sacrificing budget items such as social welfare or healthcare. Any slightest hint of cutting down on these is definitely going to affect the elderly votes, a hugely significant percentage of total vote counts, especially since the youth naturally do not turn up to vote anyway. Thus, politicians dare not venture into these areas. See what happened to Liz Truss and her pro-growth plans for Britain. In a time when the general population is facing pressures from

inflation, higher energy bills, increased medical expenses, unemployment and difficulties in meeting daily needs, asking them to make further sacrifices now, so that future generations would enjoy better times ahead, seems impractical at best and against human nature at worst. "Why would I want to sacrifice now, for the things that I might not have a chance to enjoy?" is the usual rhetoric from elderly voters across the western world.

Hence pro-growth policies are now on the back burner. It just suits the politicians and civil servants perfectly, most of them at least. They are good at spending, using up the budgets and claiming entitlements. Pro-growth policies require them to

work hard, make tough choices and meet targets. Spending to appease people, be it healthcare, social security or other payouts, put them in favourable publicity and help them win votes. So why bother with something that may not translate directly into votes! Case in point: President Thein Sein's administration got a lot of flak doing the reforms and implementing many pro-growth policies and strategies. Yet what Su Kyi did was just sitting on the throne, spending the budget and brainwashing people with her baloney speeches. Her administration got significantly lesser hostility than the former's, albeit achieving seriously worse economic performance. Myanmar did become the poorest in ASE-

AN during her administration!

Such spending-at-will concepts have led many rich countries to accumulate debts from continuous budget deficits. High levels of debt have now constrained many policymakers' room for manoeuvre. Across the G7, private debt has risen to 30 per cent of GDP since 2000. Even small declines in cash flows could make the servicing of the debt harder. Investors' sensitivity towards additional debt accumulation has also swelled. Liz Truss' growth plan through additional borrowing resulted in significant falls in Stirling Pound and an alarming increase in government borrowing rates.

In a world of accumulating high debts, acting on populism by Western democracies and rising tensions between global powers, even Ray Dalio, who runs the world's largest hedge fund, was worried that the stage could be set for a situation like the great

depression of the 30s, where you may experience a complete destruction of wealth as we know it!

So, what is the Antidote?

Let the world issues be dealt with by the rich countries, IMF, WB, etc.

For Myanmar, we cannot follow the same path and forget the pro-growth policies altogether. The truth may be bitter, but the fact that we become the poorest in ASEAN around 2017 is real. Our GDP per capita is lower than any of our neighbouring states, including hyper-populated Bangladesh. First, we have to accept and agree on that as the starting point. Then we can all acknowledge that we need growth to catch up. We need investments, we need exports, we need innovation, we need technologies to reach where we want to be. Since our income is limited, it may mean sacrificing some budget items to allocate more

towards pro-growth initiatives.

Self-sufficiency drives are all good, but these alone would amount to nothing. History has already proven that through the years of Mao Zedong in China and our very own Ne Win. No hecatomb should be spared to promote GDP growth in conjunction with self-sufficiency, in order to wriggle our way out of the deep poverty trap.

In a world where respect is earned only based on \$ and military might, we have to plant seeds of growth for our country now, so that the whole population could have shade from uncorroborated attacks and accusations from unfriendly foreign countries in the foreseeable future. That sacrifice would be remarkably better than having to defend, deny, dispute, disagree or reject all the unfounded accusations from the UN and the West. Unfortunately, et tu, ASEAN!

China reports declining critical COVID-19 cases as peaks pass

The COVID-19 detection rate at fever clinics also continues to decline, peaking at 33.9 per cent on 20 December 2022. The number dropped to 10.8 per cent on 12 January

CHINA has reported declining numbers of fever patients and critical COVID-19 cases nationwide as both peaks have passed less than a month after the country optimized its epidemic response in early December.

The country's health authorities reported 59,938 COVID-related deaths in hospitals between 8 December 2022 and 12 January 2023.

"The number of critical cases in hospitals peaked on 5 January, totaling at 128,000 on the day," said Jiao Yahui, head of the Bureau of Medical Administration under the National Health Commission (NHC), at a press conference held by the State Council joint COVID-19 prevention and control mechanism, on Saturday.

The number then began to drop with fluctuations, falling back to 105,000 on 12 January, Jiao said.

"At present, 75.3 per cent of beds for severe cases are being used," Jiao said, adding that the total number of intensive care beds is sufficient to meet the need

for treatment.

PEAKS PASS

According to Jiao, the number of people seeking treatment at fever clinics peaked on 23 December 2022 at about 2.87 million, and the figure has since been in continuous decline.

The number of fever patients fell to 477,000 on 12 January, a decrease of 83.3 per cent from the peak daily figure.

Two weeks after the peak of fever patients, the number of critical cases in hospitals reached its peak, Jiao said.

The COVID-19 detection rate at fever clinics also continues to decline, peaking at 33.9 per cent on 20 December 2022. The number dropped to 10.8 per cent on 12 January, Jiao added. The proportion of positive COVID-19 tests among all hospital outpatients peaked at 5.7 per cent on 19 December 2022, and has since continued to drop, falling to 0.9 per cent on 12 January, Jiao said. People seeking treatment at general outpatient departments totaled



Doctor Sun Qingliang prepares medicines for home visits at a village clinic in Wangdadiao Village, Fengnan District of Tangshan City, north China's Hebei Province, 11 January 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA/MU YU

nearly 9.14 million on 12 January, basically returning to the pre-epidemic level, Jiao said.

Regular medical services at hospitals are recovering gradually,

Jiao said.

PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

According to the press conference, the majority of critical

cases and COVID-related deaths are the elderly, most of whom have underlying issues.

The average age at the time of death was 80.3 years, said Jiao,

adding that more than 90 per cent of the deaths involved underlying issues, including cardiovascular diseases, advanced tumors, cerebrovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, metabolic diseases and renal insufficiency.

The average age of severe case patients is 75.5 years, said Jiao, adding that of the severe cases in hospitals on 12 January, 92.8 per cent have severe underlying issues complicated with COVID-19 infection.

In the next step, efforts will be made in health monitoring and referral services for the elderly, pregnant women, children and patients with underlying issues, said Mi Feng, an NHC spokesperson, at the press conference.

Mi called for ensuring the smooth channel for transferring critical cases, treating patients with integrated Chinese and Western medicine and further boosting vaccination among the elderly.

He also underlined enhancing the capacity of medical services in rural areas.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 15 January 2023)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 16 January 2023: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi regions and Chin State and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (3 - 6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Slight decrease of night temperatures in Sagaing Region and Kachin, Shan, Chin and Kayah states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 January 2023: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 January 2023: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 January 2023: Generally fair weather.

Earthquake News

A slight earthquake of magnitude (4.4) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about (1) miles west-southwest of Pyigyidagun), latitude 21.90°N, longitude 96.09°E, depth (10) kilometres, about (8)miles south-southwest of Mandalay seismological observatory was recorded at (10)hr (33)min (08)sec MST on 15 January 2023.

SCI/ENVIRON WORLD



Replacing your plastic bags with reusable ones is a cheap and easy way to improve your carbon footprint. **PHOTO: AFP**

Raft of single-use plastic items to be banned in England: govt

ENVIRONMENTAL policy is a devolved issue for the governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK government in London sets policy in England.

Similar legislation has already been passed in Scotland and Wales.

Repeated breaches of the ban could end up constituting a criminal offence with offenders running the risk of a fine, said the department.

“We all know the absolutely devastating impacts that plastic can have on our environment and wildlife,” said UK Environment

Secretary Therese Coffey.

“We have listened to the public and these new single-use plastics bans will continue our vital work to protect the environment for future generations,” she added. The ban will not extend to supermarket ready meals, said the government.—AFP

China aims to build world's largest national park system

AS Wang Jinqiang walks to work each morning, his journey is accompanied by the high-pitched calls of Hainan gibbons, a wild animal whose population he is employed to track and count.

Since the start of winter, 56-year-old Wang and his colleagues have spent over 15 days every month living in the mountains of China's southernmost tropical province of Hainan. Their task is to monitor the world's rarest primate, with a view to helping it flourish after decades of pressure from human activity.

Wang is a member of the Hainan gibbon monitoring team in the Bawangling area of Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park, one of the first five national parks established in China.

Starting in 2015, China launched 10 pilot national parks to protect the natural environment and biodiversity. In October 2021, the country officially designated five of these pilot projects as national parks, further improving the national park system. In December 2022, it took another step, setting out a plan that envisages the creation of the world's largest national park system by 2035.

The spatial layout plan for national parks was issued jointly by several government bodies, including the National Forestry and Grassland Administration and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment. The plan includes a total of 49 candidate sites for the construction of national parks.—Xinhua

Japan to start releasing treated water from Fukushima this year

JAPAN plans to start releasing more than a million tonnes of treated water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant into the ocean this year, a top government spokesman said Friday.

The plan has been endorsed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but the government will wait for “a comprehensive report” by the UN watchdog before the release, chief cabinet secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters.

Cooling systems at the plant were overwhelmed when a massive undersea earthquake triggered a tsunami in 2011, causing the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl.

Decommissioning work is under way and expected to take around four decades.



An employee conducts a tritium measurement on a sample of contaminated water at the Tokyo Electric Power Company Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant in Okuma, Japan, 5 March 2022. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

The site produced 100 cubic metres (3,500 cubic feet) of contaminated water each day on average in the April-November period last year — a combination of groundwater, seawater and rainwater that seeps into the

area, and water used for cooling.

The water is filtered to remove various radionuclides and moved to storage tanks, with more than 1.3 million cubic metres on site already and space running out.—AFP

Experts in Greece worry about no-snow winter, record high temperatures

GREECE has been experiencing unseasonably warm temperatures this winter, prompting people to head for the beach instead of the ski resorts. However, the mild weather leaves scientists concerned.

“Normally at this time (of the year) about 10 to 12 per cent of the Greek territory, in particular the mountains, is covered with snow,” Kostas Lagouvardos, research director at the Institute for Environmental Research of the National Observatory of Athens, told Xinhua in a recent interview.

“According to estimates based on available satellite data, this figure is now 0.1 per cent. That is about 100 times



People lie on a beach at Phalasarna on the Greek mediterranean island of Crete on 30 July 2022. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

lower than the seasonal average. Since 2004, after nearly 20 years of having reliable satellite

measurements, this is the first year we have had such a low percentage,” he said.

December 2022 was one of the warmest Decembers in decades in Greece, he said. In most parts of the country temperatures were higher than normal and this weather pattern continued in January.

“In some areas in northern Greece, the temperatures these days are 7-8 degrees Celsius above normal.”

In certain parts of central and northern Greece, this phenomenon started in October and this is what worries experts the most, he said.

“We should not only focus on the extreme phenomena, which are also of interest, a cold spell or a heat wave, but also on the average course of temperature,

which shows that a change linked to climate change is consolidating,” Lagouvardos said.

Similar images of unusually mild weather, record high temperatures, plenty of sunshine and lack of snow have been recorded in many European countries this winter. Since the beginning of this week, Greece has received rainfalls and snow in the mountainous regions. Meanwhile, concerns over climate instability, climate crisis and climate change remain.

“The signs for the coming decades are not auspicious. The situation will get worse if we can't stop the continuous emission of greenhouse gases,” Lagouvardos said.—Xinhua

HEALTH/PANDEMIC WORLD

NEWS IN BRIEF

Honduras declares health emergency over bird flu

HONDURAS on Saturday declared a national, 90-day health emergency due to an outbreak of avian flu, according to an executive decree published in the official gazette.

The measure came after the presence of avian flu was confirmed in waterfowl including brown pelicans at La Ceiba beach in Atlantida department and in Alvarado Lagoon in Puerto Cortes, Cortes department.—Xinhua

China scales up medical oxygen generator supply

China is moving to increase the supply of medical oxygen generators in former poor counties that have been lifted out of poverty, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) said on Saturday.

Among the country's latest efforts, the MIIT, together with three other state organs, has mobilized a Jiangsu-based medical equipment manufacturer to provide over 10,000 oxygen generators for 832 such counties nationwide.—Xinhua

WHO chief speaks highly of China's COVID response efforts



A patient registers at a community health service center in Minhang District in east China's Shanghai, 8 January 2023. Small-molecule COVID-19 drugs have been put into use in community health service centers in Shanghai. PHOTO: XINHUA/WANG XIANG

THE chief of the World Health Organization (WHO) spoke highly of the Chinese government's efforts to cope with the COVID-19 epidemic in his phone conversation with a senior Chinese health official.

According to the National

Health Commission, its director Ma Xiaowei exchanged views on China's current COVID response with WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Saturday.

Ma said China has been sharing COVID information with the WHO and other countries since the onset of the epidemic. China was the first to identify the pathogen and publicize key information including the genome sequencing of the virus. China also set up a technical exchange mechanism with the WHO.

Since China optimized its COVID response, the two sides have conducted many technical exchanges. China will continue to support the role of the WHO in pooling international efforts to fight the virus, Ma said.—Xinhua

Social isolation is a risk factor for dementia in older adults: Study



Social connections matter for our cognitive health, and it is potentially easily modifiable for older adults without the use of medication. PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/FREEPIK/ANI

RESEARCHERS from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Bloomberg School of Public Health have significantly added to evidence that social isolation is a significant risk factor for dementia in community-dwelling (noninstitutionalized) older adults in two studies using nationally representative data from the National Health and Aging Trends Study collected on thousands of Americans, and identified

technology as an effective way to intervene.

Collectively, the studies do not establish a direct cause and effect between dementia and social isolation, defined as lack of social contact and interactions with people on a regular basis. But, the researchers say, the studies strengthen observations that such isolation increases the risk of dementia, and suggest that relatively simple efforts to increase social support

of older adults — such as texting and use of email — may reduce that risk. In the United States, an estimated 1 in 4 people over age 65 experience social isolation, according to the National Institute on Aging.

“Social connections matter for our cognitive health, and it is potentially easily modifiable for older adults without the use of medication,” says Thomas Cudjoe, M.D., M.P.H., assistant professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and senior author of both of the new studies.

The first study, described in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, used data collected on a group of 5,022 Medicare beneficiaries for a long-term study known as the National Health and Aging Trends, which began in 2011. All participants were 65 or older, and were asked to complete an annual two-hour, in-person interview to assess cognitive function, health status and overall well-being”. —ANI

Japan retailers post improved 9-month earnings as COVID effects ease

MAJOR Japanese retailers reported improved earnings for the nine months through November, with some posting record net profits and sales as eased pandemic restrictions helped revive consumption.

Aeon Co. said Friday that its operating profit rose 26.3 per cent from a year earlier to 112.68 billion yen in the March-November period as sales grew 4.2 per cent to an all-time high of 6.72 trillion yen on strong sales of food products under affordable private brands. Many retailers in Japan close their books in

February.

Aeon's archrival Seven & i Holdings Co. said Thursday it logged a record net profit of 234.71 billion yen over the same period, up 34.2 per cent from a year earlier, citing its solid convenience store business at home and abroad. Sales soared 43.5 per cent to a record 8.82 trillion yen.

Among convenience store operators, Lawson Inc. said earlier this week that net profit gained 7.2 per cent to 26.12 billion yen in the nine-month span and sales jumped 41.1 per cent to a record 737.39 billion yen.—Kyodo



Major Japanese retailers reported improved earnings for the nine months through November, with some posting record net profits and sales as eased pandemic restrictions helped revive consumption. PHOTO: KYODO

ECONOMY WORLD

Japan startups team with farmers to put tech to work in agriculture

FROM robots to artificial intelligence and blockchain-based marketing, technological innovation is increasingly being harnessed in Japan to improve farming methods and create a more sustainable industry.

Among those embracing the digital trend is Metagri-Labo, a community launched in March 2022 that aims to merge agriculture and blockchain technology to increase farming revenues while revitalizing regional areas.

The group is working to make decentralized finance, an umbrella term for peer-to-peer financial interactions using smart contracts, a reality in the agricultural industry by 2024 with the launch of its first non-fungible token project in partnership with farmers in April 2022.

The collaborative project with Shimada watermelon



From robots to artificial intelligence and blockchain-based marketing, technological innovation is increasingly being harnessed in Japan to improve farming methods and create a more sustainable industry. A drone delivers a package to residents in a mountainous area in Ina, Nagano Prefecture, in August 2020. **PHOTO: KYODO/FILE**

farm in Kumamoto Prefecture, southwestern Japan, issued 20 limited edition “MetagriLabo Suica Collection” NFTs, with

actual watermelons and other benefits delivered to those who purchased them.

The expanding community

has since issued similar agricultural NFTs for tomato, grape and rice farmers, with the sale of a collection of citrus-themed

NFTs to support the revitalization of Nakajima, an island off the coast of Ehime Prefecture, one of its latest projects.

Going from cyber space to outer space, Tenchijin Inc., a startup of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency founded in 2019, has been utilizing AI and data collected from satellites to assess land for optimal rice production.

Known as Compass, the system analyzes big data to identify ideal conditions and cultivation methods for growing higher-quality rice in a global environment altered by climate change.

The technology, which uses machine learning, takes “into account everything from environmental to socioeconomic factors to the characteristics of purposed land use,” Tenchijin CEO Yasuhito Sakuraba said in a press release.—Kyodo

Brunei's economy posts positive growth in 7 quarters

BRUNEI'S economy increased by 0.9 per cent year-on-year in the third quarter of 2022, rebounding from the past six quarters' negative growth since 2021, official data showed on Saturday.

A growth of 4.6 per cent in non-oil and gas sector led to the bounceback of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in the quarter, which was valued at 4.6 billion Brunei dollars (3.5 billion US dollars) at constant prices.

The oil and gas sector declined by 2.7 per cent due

to the decrease in oil and gas mining activities and the manufacturing of liquefied natural gas.

In the quarter, the agriculture, forestry and fishery sector and the industrial sector declined by 6.3 per cent and 1.7 per cent, respectively.

The services sector increased by 5.1 per cent. Positive growths were recorded in air transport by 249.6 per cent, followed by land transport (35.9 per cent) and restaurants (31.4 per cent). (1 Brunei dollar equals 0.76 US dollars).—Xinhua

Uncertainties linger on amid energy transformation — a global energy outlook in 2023

IN 2022, an energy crisis hit Europe, causing fuel shortages, business closures and economic slowdowns. The impacted countries were prompted to adjust domestic energy policy, and the world is feeling the spillover.

Energy uncertainty will remain into 2023, given ongoing geopolitical conflicts, global warming and exchange rate volatility. Moreover, the international energy landscape could be profoundly reshaped.

CHAIN REACTION

“The world is in the midst of its first global energy crisis — a shock of unprecedented breadth and complexity,” the International Energy Agency



The Nordstream 2 gas pipeline is just one of many casualties of Russia's war in Ukraine. **PHOTO: DPA / JENS BUTTNER/AFP**

(IEA) said in its World Energy Outlook 2022 published in October. Due to tightened

supplies, international energy prices have been highly volatile since last year.—Xinhua

Pakistan's economy grinding to a halt as dollars dry up

THOUSANDS of containers packed with essential food items, raw materials and medical equipment have been held up at Pakistan's Karachi port as the country grapples with a desperate foreign exchange crisis.

A shortage of crucial dollars has left banks refusing to issue new letters of credit for import-

ers, hitting an economy already squeezed by soaring inflation and lacklustre growth. “I have been in the business for the past 40 years and I have not witnessed a worse time,” said Abdul Majeed, an official with the All Pakistan Customs Agents Association.

He was speaking from an office near Karachi port, where

shipping containers are stuck waiting for payment guarantees — packed with lentils, pharmaceuticals, diagnostic equipment and chemicals for Pakistan's manufacturing industries.

“We've got thousands of containers stranded at the port because of the shortage of dollars,” said Maqbool Ahmed Malik,

chairman of the customs association, adding that operations were down at least 50 per cent.

State bank forex reserves this week dwindled to less than \$6 billion — the lowest in nearly nine years — with obligations of more than \$8 billion due in the first quarter alone.

The reserves are enough to

pay for around a month of imports, according to analysts.

Pakistan's economy has crumbled alongside a simmering political crisis, with the rupee plummeting and inflation at decades-high levels, while devastating floods and a major shortage of energy have piled on further pressure.—Xinhua

Institutions expect stronger Japanese yen against US dollar in new year

AS the new year starts, the Japanese yen is closely watched by global financial markets with local institutions predicting that the currency's strength against the US dollar might gradually pick up pace this year.

In 2022, big losses in the yen's exchange rate shocked the Japanese economy, with the currency once falling by more than 30 per cent against the US dollar. Yen's depreciation in 2022 was caused by multiple aggressive rate hikes of the US Federal Reserve

since the beginning of last year, which also pushed the dollar up against other currencies. In late October 2022, the yen-dollar exchange rate in Tokyo's foreign exchange market plunged below 150, the lowest level since August 1990.

The United States adopted a tight monetary policy in response to high domestic inflation, triggering many central banks to follow up with interest rate hikes, according to a report released by Japan's largest bank MUFG Bank.—Xinhua

Shanghai Disney Resort gearing up for Spring Festival celebrations



The resort kicked off a month of festivities from 13 January to 10 February to celebrate the upcoming Year of the Rabbit. PHOTO: XINHUA

SHANGHAI Disney Resort is taking on a new look, featuring special decorations with traditional Chinese elements, as the Spring Festival approaches.

The resort kicked off a month of festivities from 13 January to 10 February to celebrate the upcoming Year of the Rabbit. The Spring Festival, or the Chinese Lunar New Year, falls on 22 January this year.

Rabbit characters such as Judy from Zootopia will appear in the celebration, welcoming

the Chinese New Year together with tourists. Other Disney characters such as Mickey and Minnie will also be putting on their New Year costumes.

Chinese New Year's Eve will start with a special firework display, featuring the Chinese character for "Rabbit" written in the night sky. From 23 January, visitors can also enjoy the Lion Dance, a traditional Chinese performance.

Both events will continue until the Lantern Festival, which falls on 5 February this year.—Xinhua

Iraq's currency in flux as foreign transfers come under scrutiny

IRAQ'S local currency has been on a two-month roller coaster ride following a tightening of procedures for international transfers, with some blaming Washington for the dinar's woes.

While the official exchange rate has been fixed at 1,470 Iraqi dinars against the dollar, the currency was trading at up to 1,600 to the greenback on local markets from mid-November, before set-



A street money exchanger counts banknotes at the al-Kifah stock market in Baghdad, Iraq, 27 December 2022. PHOTO: AFP

ting at about 1,570 dinars, according to state media.

Though the depreciation does not seem par-

ticularly dramatic, especially compared to other countries in the region, it has sent panic through the Iraqi population, which fears a price surge on imported goods such as gas and wheat.

"The fundamental reason" for this depreciation is "external constraints", said Muzhar Saleh, a financial adviser to Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani.—Xinhua

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Registration No: (4/10327) (Date: 14.12.2022)

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GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Japan PM vows to pitch vision of world without nuclear weapons at G-7

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida pledged Saturday to pitch his vision of a world without nuclear weapons at the Group of Seven summit to be held in Hiroshima in May, amid fears that Russia might use an atomic device against Ukraine in the ongoing war.

Kishida's remarks came after he held talks with his French, Italian, British, Canadian and US counterparts earlier this week during a weeklong trip to five of the G-7 countries in Europe and North America in the run-up to the gathering in the western Japan city.

The world should "not make light of the history" in which no nuclear weapons have been used over the past 77 years, said Kishida, elected from a Hiroshima constituency,



Prime Minister Kishida Fumio meets with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa on Thursday, a day before he heads to Washington to meet with US President Joe Biden. **PHOTO: AFP**

in comments at a press conference in Washington.

He added that the G-7 will confirm its commitment to upholding "the international order based on the rule of law" at the upcoming summit in the city devastated by a US atomic bombing in August 1945.

On Friday, Kishida met with US President Joe Biden in Washington. The two leaders agreed that Japan and the United States will deepen security ties and join hands to secure semiconductor supply chains to counter China's economic clout in the region.

Tokyo and Washington "will try to strengthen the bilateral alliance and bolster cooperation in fields ranging from the economy to technology," Kishida said.—Kyodo

China appoints security hardliner to head Hong Kong office

THE hardline head of Hong Kong's national security agency has been appointed China's top representative in the city, state media said on Saturday, as Beijing tightens its grip since 2019 democracy protests.

The State Council has appointed Zheng Yanxiong, 59, to lead the central government's Liaison Office in Hong Kong with immediate effect, replacing Luo Huining. Zheng led Hong Kong's national security agency since its inception in 2020, when Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on the finance hub after the huge and often

violent protests. The agency under Zheng oversaw the implementation of the security law, which has since been used to prosecute dozens of activists.

City leader John Lee welcomed the appointment, saying on Saturday Zheng "coordinated, oversaw and guided" Hong Kong's work in safeguarding national security.

The mini-constitution drawn up for the city's handover from Britain to China in 1997 forbids mainland officials from interfering in the running of Hong Kong's day-to-day affairs.—AFP



Hardliner Zheng Yanxiong, the head of Hong Kong's national security agency, has been appointed China's top representative in the city, state media reports. **PHOTO: AFP**

Peru declares state of emergency in Lima over protests

PERU'S government late Saturday declared a state of emergency in the capital Lima and three other regions due to protests against President Dina Boluarte that have claimed at least 42 lives in recent weeks.

The measure, in force for 30 days, authorizes the army to intervene to maintain order and suspends several constitutional rights such as freedom of movement and assembly, according to a decree published in the official gazette.

In addition to the capital, the state of emergency covers the regions of Cusco and Puno

and the port of Callao, adjacent to Lima.

More than 100 roadblocks blocked traffic across Peru on

Saturday, mainly in the south, which has been the epicenter of the protests, and also around Lima.—AFP



Demonstrators hold a blockade in the Pan-American highway at La Joya to demand the resignation of Peruvian President Dina Boluarte in Arequipa, Peru on 12 January, 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Sri Lanka to cut army by half after financial crisis

BANKRUPT Sri Lanka will drastically slash its military, the defence ministry said on Friday (13 January), as the government works to overhaul its shambolic finances after an unprecedented economic crisis.

The island nation is still reeling from months of food and fuel shortages that made daily life a misery for its 22 million

people last year. President Ranil Wickremesinghe has hiked taxes and imposed harsh spending cuts to smooth the passage of an expected International Monetary Fund bailout following a government debt default.

Sri Lanka's armed forces are next on the chopping block, with the defence ministry announcing it would retire 65,000

soldiers from its 200,000-strong army over the year.

The cuts make up the lion's share of plans to downsize Sri Lanka's land forces to 100,000 by the end of the decade. "The overall aim of the strategic blueprint is to broach a technically and tactically sound and well-balanced defence force," a ministry statement said.—AFP

Massive protests held in Israel against judicial reforms

TENS of thousands of Israelis gathered in different Israeli cities on Saturday evening to protest the new government's plan to implement widespread reforms of the judicial system.

Israeli media quoted the police as saying that over 80,000 protesters held the main protest in Tel Aviv. Smaller demonstrations were also held in other cities, in what was called one of the largest protests in the country in recent years.

The protesters in Tel Aviv



Israeli police estimated that 20,000 people joined the rally in central Tel Aviv. PHOTO: JACK GUEZ/AFP

held signs such as "Stop the craziness – fight for our country," chanting slogans against Israeli President Isaac Herzog who has so far remained silent on the controversy engulfing the country.

Last week, Israeli Justice Minister Yariv Levin announced a series of reforms, including giving the parliament the ability to override supreme court rulings with a simple majority. In addition, politicians will have greater influence in the appointment of supreme court judges and legal

advisers to ministries.

Opponents say these reforms will weaken the supreme court and undermine democracy in the country.

The new Israeli government, the most rightist one in history, has promised to have widespread reforms in several arenas since being sworn in two weeks ago. The judicial system has been the focal point of these reforms, which have aroused heated debate and strong protests. —Xinhua

WORLD: TOP HEADLINES

Egypt unearths 'new royal tomb' in Luxor

EGYPTIAN authorities announced Saturday the discovery of an ancient tomb in Luxor dating back around 3,500 years that archaeologists believe holds the remains of an 18th dynasty royal.

The tomb was unearthed by Egyptian and British researchers on the west bank of the River Nile, where the famous Valley of the Queens and Valley of the Kings lie, said Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities. —AFP

1 killed, over 20 injured during stampede in India's Odisha

ONE person was killed and over 20 others injured Saturday during a stampede on the occasion of a religious festival in the eastern Indian state of Odisha, officials said.

The stampede occurred on a bridge in Cuttack district, about 28 km north of Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha.

A 55-year-old woman devotee was killed and over 20 injured in the stampede, which happened as devotees were walking over the narrow bridge, an official said. —Xinhua

Plane with 72 people on board crashes in Nepal

AN aircraft with 72 people on board crashed in Nepal on Sunday, Yeti Airlines and a local official said.

"There are 68 passengers on board and four crew members... Rescue is underway, we don't know right now if there are survivors," the airline's spokesman Sudarshan Bartaula told AFP.

He said the plane crashed between the old and new Pokhara airports in central Nepal. The wreckage was on fire and rescue workers were trying to put out the blaze, said local official Gurudutta Dhakal.

"Responders have already reached there and trying to douse the fire. All agencies are now focused on first dousing the fire and rescuing the passengers," Dhakal said.



Locals watch the wreckage of a passenger plane in Pokhara, Nepal, Sunday, 15 January 2023. A passenger plane with 72 people on board has crashed near Pokhara International Airport in Nepal, the daily newspaper Kathmandu Post reports. PHOTO: AFP

Footage shared on social media showed flames on the ground and black smoke billowing into the sky, apparently from wreckage strewn across the crash site. AFP was unable to

immediately verify the footage. Nepal's air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas as well as foreign trekkers and climbers.—AFP

Tourists surge back to Jordan's desert marvel Petra



Jordan tourism authorities confirm that Petra is back in business and drew 900,000 visitors last year, close to the record of one million set in 2019. PHOTO: MARWAN NAAMANI/AFP

TENDING to his camels in Petra, Jordan's spectacular archae-

ological marvel hidden deep in a desert canyon, Hussein Bdoul is

all smiles: the tourists are back.

After years in which the Covid pandemic turned the storied "Rose City" into a ghost town, the father of seven is back at work, offering visitors rides on his decorated animals.

"Tourism has returned and the numbers are even greater," said Bdoul, 35, wearing Bedouin garb with a red keffiyeh scarf over his long black hair, reflecting on a resurgence last year.

"At the time of the coronavirus pandemic, we did not see anyone in Petra," said Bdoul — a disaster for the town where, he said, "90 per cent of people work in tourism".

"We hope from God Al-

mighty that people will stay well."

Jordan tourism authorities confirm that Petra is back in business and drew 900,000 visitors last year, close to the record of one million set in 2019.

Jordan as a whole received 4.6 million visitors in 2022 — almost four times the level from 2020 — earning the country \$5.3 billion.

Top draw Petra, famous for its stunning temples hewn out of the rose-pink cliff faces, is a United Nations World Heritage site and was chosen as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World in a 2007 online poll.

It was built in 312 BC as the

capital of the ancient Arab kingdom of the Nabateans, which fell to the Romans in 106 BC.

The ancient city remained unknown in the West until a Swiss traveller visited it in 1812.

'Sigh of relief'

"This place and the colours are incredible," marvelled French student Alia, 16, taking a break from exploring with her mother to check out a souvenir stand.

Around 1,700 people make a living from Petra as tour guides, trinket sellers or by taking visitors through the site on donkeys, horses, camels or electric buggies.—AFP

Japan PM vows to pitch vision of world without nuclear weapons at G-7

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SPORT

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

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

PSG threaten to quit Parc des Princes after city refuses to sell



The Paris Mayor has no plans to sell the Parc de Princes to the PSG owners. PHOTO: AFP

PARIS Saint-Germain on Saturday threatened to quit the Parc des Princes ground, which has been their home for almost 50 years, after city officials refused to sell the stadium to them.

City mayor Anne Hidalgo said in an interview published

in Saturday's Parisien newspaper that the stadium "is not for sale" and "will not be sold" to Qatari-owned PSG.

However, a spokesman for the club said he was "disappointed and surprised" that the city wanted to "turn Paris

Saint-Germain and their supporters out of the Parc des Princes".

"The mayor is forcing PSG to leave its home."

He added: "Everyone loses in the position taken by the mayor. PSG is now forced to find alternative options to relocate the club.

"This is not the outcome the club, nor its supporters, were hoping for."

PSG has made acquisition of the ground in the city's leafy western suburbs a condition for carrying out modernisation and expansion works to the tune of 500 million euros.

In November, PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi told Spanish sports daily Marca that PSG was "no longer welcome" at the Parc des Princes, adding that they were looking at "other alternatives".—AFP

Two eagles lift Buckley to Sony Open lead



Hayden Buckley plays his shot from the 13th tee during the third round of the Sony Open in Hawaii. PHOTO: AFP

HAYDEN Buckley had two eagles in a six-under-par 64 on Saturday to grab a two-shot lead after three rounds of the Sony Open, where he's chasing a first US PGA Tour title.

The 26-year-old American holed out from the fairway for an eagle at the 10th, then broke free atop the leaderboard with another eagle at the par-five

18th, where his approach from the fairway settled two feet from the pin.

He was two strokes clear of overnight leader Chris Kirk, David Lipsky and Ben Taylor.

England's Taylor carded a five-under-par 65 to join the group on 13-under 197 while Lipsky fired a second straight 66 and Kirk posted a 68.

Andrew Putnam charged up the leaderboard with an eight-under 62 that featured 10 birdies, and was joined on 198 by South Korean Kim Si-woo, who signed for a 64.

Buckley, who finished tied for fifth at the Zozo championship in October, said his round was "a testament to being patient."

"I missed a three-, four-footer for birdie kind of early on and I just stuck with it," he said, adding that he didn't feel as in control as he had on Friday.

"I hit a lot of greens, obviously, but I hit them in some tougher spots today — a lot of shots pin-high, with a lot more break and a little bit quicker putts," he said. I feel like I just played smart."

On a day when a dozen players held at least a share of the lead at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu, Hawaii, Buckley's eagles made the difference.—AFP

Nadal facing tough test in Australian Open defence

RAFAEL Nadal opens his Australian Open title defence Monday feeling vulnerable and against a dangerous young opponent, with women's top seed Iga Swiatek also facing a tricky encounter as she targets a maiden crown.

The first Grand Slam of the year kicks off at Melbourne Park with the men's world number one ranking at stake and a new women's champion set to be crowned after Ashleigh Barty's shock retirement following

her win last year.

Spanish great Nadal, 36, has lost six of his past seven matches, including his opening two this year, ahead of a difficult afternoon clash on Rod Laver Arena against Britain's in-form Jack Draper.

"Probably one of the toughest first-round (games) possible, being seeded," said the 22-time Grand Slam winner and top seed. "Young, powerful, growing very, very fast on the ranking, playing well."—AFP



Rafael Nadal attends a practice session at Melbourne Park. PHOTO: AFP