

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 226, 13th Waning of Tazaungmon 1383 ME

www.gnfm.com.mm

Wednesday, 1 December 2021

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Announcement of Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

12th Waning of Tazaungmon 1383 ME
30 November 2021

AS it is necessary to continuously control the infection of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), it is hereby announced that public requests, orders, notifications and directives (except for easing the restrictions) released by the Union-level organizations and Union ministries up to 30 November 2021 have been extended until 31 December 2021 for the prevention, control and treatment of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

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.

Biodiversity of Khakaborazi National Park, Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary heightens ecotourism in high season

THE Khakaborazi National Park, the icy mountain featuring biodiversity, and the Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary in Kachin State are attracting visitors locally in high season.

Biodiversity is showcased in the museum in Putao town. Visitors can go to the snow-capped mountain through Putao town and it takes more than seven days from there. Travellers can go on a one-day trip to the Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary located in the west of Putao District. Visitors can enjoy the scenery of icy mountains in Putao as well.

“Visitors have to take necessary measures to climb up Khakaborazi in high season. Khakaborazi is the largest national park and rich in biodiversity, which are the main attractions to foreign tourists and local travellers.

The biodiversity and scenery of icy mountains are catching the attention of the travellers, said U Aung Myat Soe, a warden of Khakaborazi National Park.

Khakaborazi has been declared as an ASEAN heritage park. Hponkanrazi is regarded



Khakaborazi boasts of its natural beauty and scenery in winter. Those tourism sites in northern Myanmar are attracting homegrown tourists. **PHOTO: KANU**

as a protected area as well. The warden office of Khakaborazi National Park, museum featuring biodiversity, and ecosystem, the orchid garden and Korea-Myanmar biodiversity research

centre are located in Putao. The biodiversity museum features documentary pictures of mammals, migratory birds' flyways, habitats and biodiversity and tourism sites to contribute to

tourism development.

If there is one in Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary, visitors can study the history and habitual life of wildlife animals and biodiversity in the sanctuary.

Khakaborazi boasts of its natural beauty and scenery in winter. Those tourism sites in northern Myanmar are attracting homegrown tourists.—Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM

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Statement to appreciate teachers' efforts

TEACHERS are honoured as part of the Five Infinite Venerables, and the manner of paying respect to the teachers can be only seen in Myanmar as a tradition. The teachers teach their pupils based on their goodwill like their own children and dutifully serve a teacher's duties. They must train their pupils and students in the best discipline. They see that they grasp their lessons well. They instruct them in the arts and sciences, they provide for their safety in every quarter, and they introduce them to their friends and associates.

As the COVID-19 infection rate is controlled to a certain extent, the basic education high, middle and primary schools under the Department of Basic Education have reopened across nation for the 2021-2022 academic year starting 1 June.

Those who want to seek good sake of one party, political extremist NLD members and supporters, NUG, CRPH and PDF committed arson attacks at the schools using mines, homemade bombs and grenades to fail the teaching processes, and threatened the teachers in addition to the incitements, social punishment and threats against education staff to join CDM while the officials made preparations for the reopening of schools and during the current teaching period. Their doings left some casualties, and the State Administration Council has expressed its deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims' families.

The SAC also appreciates the concerted efforts of teachers, who understand two virtues, Hiri — shame at doing evil —and Otappa—fear of the results of doing evil —for teaching the new generations of the country amid such difficulties and challenges.

The security forces will take extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of teachers who are making efforts in the academic sector for the next generations in order to promote the education qualification. The people should keep security awareness and cooperate with the security members in community peace and peaceful learning of children.

*Information Team
State Administration Council*

International flight restrictions extended until 31 December

THE Ministry of Health has issued a directive on the temporary restriction of international commercial passenger flights to Myanmar since it is crucial to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar. With the permission of the Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), "Temporary Measures to Importation of COVID-19 to Myanmar through Air Travel" was revised as "Temporary Measures to Prevent Importation of COVID-19 to Myanmar through Air Travel Issue-2" on 31-12-2020 as of 23:59 hours of Myanmar Standard Time on 30 November 2021.

Until now, the prevalence of the COVID-19 epidemic has risen in most parts of the world. With the permission of the Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the effective period of the above directive has been extended to 23:59 hours of Myanmar Standard Time on 31 December 2021 to further prevent the risk of COVID-19 transmission via international flight passengers into Myanmar.

Ministry of Transport and Communications

Schools reopened in some townships with declining infection rate



Classrooms are once again reviving with schoolchildren in Mongyawng in eastern Shan State.

DEPENDING on the numbers of new COVID-19 patients and infection rates, the government have reopened basic education schools, including private schools and monastic

schools under the Basic Education Department across the nation since 1 November, except for ones in 46 townships.

Among these 46 townships, the infection rate in Hopong, Yaksawk, Pinlaung, Laikha and Namhsan townships in Shan State (South), Lashio, Nawngkio, Kutkai, Namhkam, Ma-bein, Hsenwi and Kunlong townships in northern Shan State and Kengtung and Mongyawng townships in eastern Shan State reached below the fixed estimate and so the schools, including private schools and monastic schools in these townships reopened starting 30 November. —MNA

Myanmar border camps accept returnees

THE border camps receive the Myanmar returnees from foreign countries. A total of 316 Myanmar citizens — 150 males and 166 females — returned to Muse in northern Shan State and another 67 — 33 males and 34 females — to Chinshwehaw on 29 November.

The health officials, Tatmad-

aw medics and other officials provided health-related matters for quarantine.

Then, township administration officials sent them to their respective towns by vehicle and those who have tested for positive are isolated at the designated places.—MNA



Returnees are seen checking in the reception office on the Sino-Myanmar border.

471 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 30 November, total figure rises to 522,402

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 522,402 after 471 new cases were reported on 30 November 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 497,249 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,104 after 7 died.—MNA

Promoting and cementing Union Spirit

LIKEWISE if one is too eager to embrace the past, one may lose the road to the future. The government has decided to further promote the process of cementing the Union Spirit and peace process before the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee Union Day and Independence Day.

(Excerpt from the Message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Chairman of National Unity and Peacemaking Central Committee Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to mark Sixth Anniversary of signing Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement-NCA on 15-10-2021)

Announcement on Extension of Precautionary Restriction Measures Relating to Control of COVID-19 Pandemic until 31 December 2021

1. With a view to the further strengthening of measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has issued the following announcements regarding temporary entry restrictions for visitors from all countries. All those restrictions were extended until 30 November 2021 by the Ministry's announcement dated 1 November 2021.
 - (a) Announcement dated 15 March 2020 regarding precautionary measures for all travellers visiting Myanmar;
 - (b) Announcement dated 20 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers visiting Myanmar and temporary suspension of issuance of visa on Arrival and e-visa;
 - (c) Announcement dated 24 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers from all countries visiting Myanmar;
 - (d) Announcement dated 28 March 2020 regarding temporary suspension of all types of visas (including social visit visas) and visa exemption services.
2. In order to continue its effective response measures to protect the population of the country from the risks of importation and spread of the COVID-19, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has decided to extend the afore-mentioned entry restriction measures until 31 December 2021.
3. In case of urgent official missions or compelling reasons, foreign nationals, including diplomats and United Nations officials, who wish to travel to Myanmar by available relief or special flights, may contact the nearest Myanmar Mission for possible exception with regard to certain visa restrictions. However, all visitors must abide by existing directives issued by the Ministry of Health relating to the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated. 30 November 2021*

Industry Union minister inspects factories in Bago, Magway, Yangon regions

UNION minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than visited the anti-Snake Venom Production Division, Hmawby Township in Yangon Region on the morning of 28 November.

The Union minister urged staff to arrange increased production of anti-snake venom and said that strong and disease-free horses are nurtured in the research and production of anti-snake venom and the Union minister focused on human resource development plans.

He viewed the production of anti-snake venom and the natural condition of horses.

Next, the Union minister arrived at No. 3 Plastic Factory and inspected the production process of various plastic bags.

“Officials need to be able to increase production to meet the demands of the people and to increase investment to provide more employment opportunities for the local people,”



The MoI Union minister inspects the No 1 Shwetaung Textile Factory on 28 November 2021.

he stated.

The Union minister urged the officials of New Generation Industry Co., Ltd. to use some of the factory profits for local development and staff welfare programmes.

In the afternoon, he paid a visit to No. (3) Heavy Industry (Thayawady) in Thayawady, Bago Region.

The Union minister urged the in-charges of the factory to create a systematic business

plan for the factory in order to carry out production activities smoothly and regular maintenance work for the prevention of equipment damage.

He also instructed the officials to use quality raw ma-

terials, to continuously study international techniques and to provide technical training.

After that, the Union minister inspects the production process of plates and tiles.

On the morning of 29 November, he paid a visit to No. (1) Textile Factory in Shwetaung, Bago Region.

The Union minister called on the officials to train the factory workers to produce high-quality products and to supply more clothes for the people.

To repair equipment for the operation of the factory is also important, he stressed.

On arrival at maize product factory (Yanpei), he inspected the production process of maize starch.

The Union minister urged the factory officials to follow food production procedures and focus on the safety of consumers.—MNA

Ex-president U Win Myint, ex-State counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi charged under Anti-Corruption Law

THE inspection team of the Anti-Corruption Commission inspected the complaint against former Union minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye.

According to the inspection, when he rented a helicopter from 2019 and 2021 and extended the term using the fund of the National Disaster Management Committee, he did not follow the directive 1/2017 of the President's Office, and he neglected the suggestions of the Union Attorney-General Office and Department of Civil Aviation as well as the financial regulations.

He rented the flight from 2019 to 2021 and used it only for 84.95 hours out of 720 flight hours. He did not scrutinize

the unused 635.05 flight hours and he was permitted to extend the contract. Therefore, he paid over \$3.5 million causing a loss to the State funds.

He used the fund of the National Disaster Management Committee without submitting a proposal of the ministry concerned following the procedures in buying a State-owned helicopter. He failed to follow the financial regulations, bought the helicopter without reporting to the Economic Committee and Union Government, did not revive the contract regarding maintenance and fines for the late shipment although general terms of the contract expressed warranty and excusable delays, did not use the fund of the committee effectively and paid more than K23 billion and so it caused a loss

to the State funds.

In undertaking the operation and maintenance of the helicopter, he also failed to review the terms and conditions of a contract made with a company and to follow the financial regulations as he used the fund of the National Disaster Management Committee which must be used only for disaster-related matters and disaster-affected victims. Although he knew that the shipment of the helicopter was delayed in advance, he did not renew the contract with the company.

According to the operation and maintenance of the contract, the fee must be only \$270,000 but he paid \$492,667 for five months before the arrival of the helicopter, and it caused a loss to the State funds.

Therefore, former Union minister Dr Win Myat Aye was charged under the Anti-Corruption Law Section 55 at Phayagon Myoma police station of Nay Pyi Taw on 27 August.

According to further inspection, former president U Win Myint and ex-State counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi abused their power in renting and buying the helicopter and did not follow financial regulations. They granted permissions with the official letters. Such doings caused a loss to State funds and possessions.

Therefore, ex-president U Win Myint and ex-State counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were charged under the Anti-Corruption Law Section 55 at Phayagon Myoma police station of Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. — MNA

MoHS's director of Public Health Department Dr Htar Htar Lin, director-general Dr Soe Oo (retired) charged under Anti-Corruption Law

THE Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) set up an investigation team regarding the complaint of the director of the Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Dr Htar Htar Lin and her associates' engagement in corruption.

According to the investigation team, a Geneva-based organization provided the fund to Myanmar through WHO and UNICEF. The GAVI HSS 2 Grant (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization-Health System Strengthening 2) provided by the organization were submitted to the account of the Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, as per the projects presented by the Expanded Immunization Programme.

Dr Htar Htar Lin was appointed as

the Project Manager for the expanded immunization project. The Project Manager was responsible for submitting the work plan for quarterly use to the Executive Working Group chaired by Director-General Dr Soe Oo. After his approval, the External Aid Committee-EAC chaired by Director-General Dr Soe Oo reviewed and approved the disbursement. Project Manager Dr Htar Htar Lin withdrew more than K8,120 million (K6,990 million out of K16,900 million received in funding at the central level for the 2019-2020 financial year, and K1,130 million from the 2018-2019 non-budget balance) and allocated K10,500 million to regions and states.

As the planned vaccination programme had not been implemented due

to the COVID-19 outbreak since August 2020, it was proposed to change the title of the account because there was a cash balance of K161.198 million at the central level and over K840 million in regions/states/districts/townships.

On submission to change the account title, the Ministry of Health wrote a letter dated 26 January 2021, requesting comments from the Ministry of Planning and Finance. The Ministry of Planning and Finance instructed the MoH not to spend cash balances and to keep them under Hta Sa - 6. However, Dr Htar Htar Lin, without abiding by the instruction, deposited K168.198 million of the central level cash balance to the UNICEF account on 10 February 2021, causing loss of State

financial assets.

The director-general of the Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, who authorized to withdraw cash for the project activities under the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization-Health System Strengthening 2, as a responsible person in charge of the GAVI HSS2 Grant, failed to oversee the activities of Dr Htar Htar Lin, was an aid to loss of State funds.

According to the findings, the first complaint was lodged at the Nay Pyi Taw Phayagon Myoma Police Station yesterday against Dr Htar Htar Lin under Section 56 of the Anti-Corruption Law and Dr Soe Oo under Section 56/63 of the Anti-Corruption Law, according to the Anti-Corruption Commission. — MNA

COVID-19 tests underway with RDT Test-Kit in Hopong Township



Covid detection in progress in Shan State (South). **PHOTO: HOPONG DISTRICT (IPRD)**

THE Shan State officials distributed masks and conducted COVID-19 tests for the people with RDT Test-Kit on Pyidaungsu Road in front of township general administration office in Hopong Township of Pa-O Self-Administered Zone of southern Shan State on 29 No-

vember.

The township administration officials, Deputy Head of General Administration Department U San Tun, municipal officials, police and fire brigade members participated in the operations. — Hopong District (IPRD)/GNLM

COVID-19 vaccination continues in Hinthada, Ayeyawady Region

COVID-19 vaccination has been undertaken in Hinthada Township, Ayeyawady Region to prevent and control the spread of the disease and it was continued yesterday morning at respective immunization sites in the township.

The inoculation was carried out for the people aged 18 and over, senior citizens, hotel staff, factory employees, labour groups, according to the target groups set by the Ministry of Health.

It is reported that the vaccines were administered under the supervision of the Township Administration Body, with the coordination of the health pro-

fessionals, members of civil society organizations, department officials, ward/village administration bodies. — Ko Zaw(Hinthada)/GNLM



Inoculation drive in Hinthada in Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: KO ZAW (HINTHADA)**

More than 4,900 tonnes of tea leaves exported within one year

MYANMAR'S tea which is in the growth stage at present are being exported to South Korea, Germany, China, EU countries and countries in Asia and about 4,900 tonnes of tea leaves were exported between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021.

More than 200 tonnes of tea leaves were shipped and more than 4,000 tonnes via land border checkpoints. The green tea is being marketed to South Korea and Germany, while the dried ones from Shan State are being exported to China and some ASEAN countries.

Assistant Director of the Kanbawza Trade Centre, Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization, Ministry of Commerce, said, "We focus on export promotion. In Shan State, there is a tea plantation project which provides technology to farmers as alternative development. With better methods, production has increased and more advanced



As Myanmar is one of the biggest producers of tea leaves, strengthening production and agricultural technology will make it one of the world's top tea exporters. Tea cultivations, as well as fishery and other exports, generate annual foreign income in Myanmar. **PHOTO: KANU**

products are exported."

Dried tea leaves are mainly exported to China. Pickled tea leaves which are widely consumed domestically are now starting to be exported, he added. As the main focus of the Organization is to boost foreign trade,

Myanmar's commercial attaches in 13 countries are working to expand trade and export markets for Myanmar products, he said.

Myanmar tea is grown mainly in southern Shan State. Pinlaung, Pindaya, and Ywangan dried tea leaves are popu-

lar and Kokang dried tea leaves are being exported. According to the tea growing area, there are three types of tea: Chinese Tea; Assam Tea; Indochina Tea. Assam tea is a small plant that grows to a height of 30 to 50 feet, with large leaves that often show

veins. Indochina tea is almost as thick as Assam, and the leaves are yellow or brown. It usually grows light green.

The United States of America, Russia, the UK, Viet Nam, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Morocco, Germany, China, and Hong Kong are the biggest importers of tea leaves while China, India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Poland, Germany, the UAE, UK, Japan and China (Taipei) are the biggest tea leaves' exporters. The largest producers of tea in the world are China, India, Japan, Kenya, Turkey, Myanmar, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, and Iran.

As Myanmar is one of the biggest producers of tea leaves, strengthening production and agricultural technology will make it one of the world's top tea exporters. Tea cultivations, as well as fishery and other exports, generate annual foreign income in Myanmar. — Nyein Thu(MNA)/GNLM

COVID-19 immunization continues in regions, states



Locals get jabbed against COVID-19 in Taungoo.

TATMADAW has been working together with doctors, health workers and volunteers to carry out COVID-19 immunization to people over the age of 40, including monks, nuns, civil service personnel, prisoners,

persons with disabilities, ethnic armed forces, people in IDP camps, and students aged above 12 in regions and states.

Yesterday, 333 people in Kyaukme Township, northern Shan State, 2,350 people in

eastern Shan State, 12,435 people in Mon State and Kayin State, 8,375 people in Yangon Region, 8,925 people in Ayeyawady Region, 5,321 people in Rakhine State, 640 people in Sagaing Region; 8,560 people in Mandalay Region, and 520 people in Bago Region received the COVID-19 vaccines.

In addition, 2,050 students in Ayeyawady Region and 772 students in Rakhine State were also inoculated yesterday.

Officials from the respective military commands encouraged those people and coordinated where necessary. — MNA

COVID-19 positive patients, patients to be monitored admitted to COVID-19 centres

COVID-19 positive patients and those required to be monitored are systematically admitted to Tatmadaw hospitals, military training depots, transit centres in respective military commands and are being provided with healthcare.

In addition, officials from the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with relevant departments, charity organizations and responsible citizens, are opening quarantine centres in respective townships.

As of 7 pm last night, the Nay Pyi Taw Transit Centre received a total of 24 people – 15 men and nine women – who need to be monitored.

Local medical teams and officials in respective military commands are assisting in the accommodation, health and medical care of the patients, it is reported. — MNA

Prices list of medicines commonly used against COVID-19 till 30-11-2021 November

No	Product Name	Pack Size	Price in Kyats (Retail)	Company Name
Supportive				
1	PO Multivitamin with/without zinc	3X10's / Box	5,600	OLIVE
2	PO Vitamin C	10X10's / Box	700	Pai Brother
3	PO - Pantocid	10X10's / Box	7,000	PL
4	PO Omeprazole	10X10's / Box	1,650	Shwe Htay Min
5	Injection Pantocid	1g/Vial	1,500	Aorta

6	Injection Omeprazole	1g/Vial	1,050	Aorta
Antibiotics				
7	PO - Azithromycin 500 mg	5x3's	4,000	Rammawaddy
8	PO - Cefalexin 500 mg	Box of 10x10's	6,100	Aorta
9	PO - Levofloxacin 500 mg	Box of 10x10's	7,000	Shwe Htay Min
10	PO.Cefixime	Box of 3x10's	3,600	Aorta

PLEASE visit the Website (www.mccpmd.org) and Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/323302521392189/posts/1720802588308835/?d=n> to know the prices of other medicines

Terrorist groups destroy 12 Supermarkets

EFFORTS one being made to set out a plan for the stability and development of the country and for cooperating with the ethnic peoples, officials said.

Terrorists are trying to block the implementation of the future activities of the State Administration Council and to overthrow the government's administrative machinery.

From 1 February up to 20 November 2021, a total of 12 supermarkets were destroyed by terrorist groups.

Data of supermarkets destroyed by terrorists from 1-2-2021 to 20-11-2021

No	State/Region	Township	Supermarket	Loss Value	Remark
1	Kayin	1	2		
2	Bago	1	1		
3	Yangon	6	9	3,806,550,000	
Total		8	12	3,806,550,000	

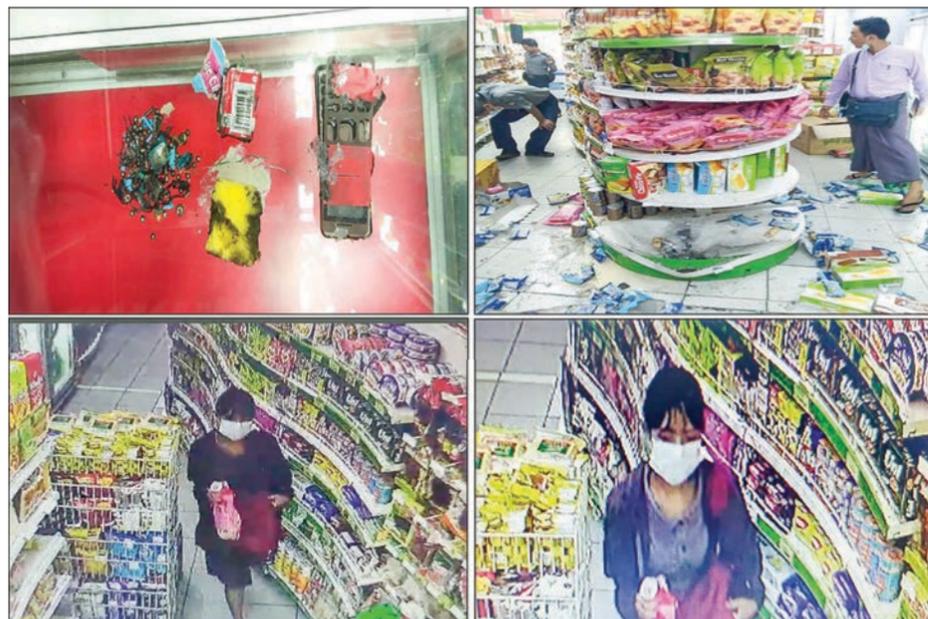
The public is urged to work together to protect the terrorists, and if they receive information about the terrorist movements, they should contact the nearest security forces and cooperate with them until the terrorists can no longer stand, officials stated. — MNA



Bago.



GandamaWholesale in Mayangon Township.



A handmade mine blast in Kamayut Township.



Ruby Mark in Kyauktada Township.



One Stop Mart in Bahan Township.



One Stop Mart in Mingala Taungnyunt Township.



Five pulses destined for Monywa Commodity Exchange at end-Nov

THE five pulses are destined for Monywa Commodity Exchange at the end of November, said U Tin Ko Ko, the information officer of the Monywa Commodity Exchange.

“We can get five varieties of pulses in Monywa depot, including green gram and newly-harvested sesame. There are 30 varieties of pulses. But, five pulses have already been harvested so far. Later, the new pigeon pea will be harvested very soon. About 30 varieties of pulses will be yielded and entered the market at the end of February,” he added.

Currently, the price of sesame seeds is remaining upward trend on low yield. The price of black sesame stood at K78,000 per viss, while the price of another variety sesame is priced at K46,000 per viss.



Every year at this time, the farmers conveyed about 500 bags of sesames to the commodity depot daily. But this year, only about 200 bags are transported to the depot.

The price of sesame has been rising sharply starting last month. The price of other variety sesame has increased to K50,000 per viss. The price of black sesame has also risen to

K80,000 per viss from K58,000 per viss. The black sesame is yielded from the northern part of Monywa, the southern part of Budalin, the western part of ChaungU and Yinmabin townships.

“The black sesame is strongly demanded by China. The country exported black sesame to China through Mandalay. About 3,000 bags of black sesame are being sold at the Monywa commodity

exchange daily. Every year at this time, the farmers conveyed about 500 bags of sesames to the commodity depot daily. But this year, only about 200 bags are transported to the depot,” said U Tin Ko Ko.

The price of green grams in the market has increased when India purchased green grams, pigeon pea and black bean from Myanmar constantly.

“The green gram from Budalin and Mingin townships is conveyed to Yangon market and China. India is also the main buyer of Myanmar beans, especially black bean, green gram and pigeon pea. The green gram price stood at K3,8000 per bag containing 19 visses. It rose to around K42,000 per bag within one month,” said U Tin Ko Ko. — Lu Lay/GNLM

CBM sells US\$31 million in November



In October, the CBM sold a large amount of \$110 million to the authorized dealers to stabilize the currency. In September, the CBM sold 63 million dollars to the private banks to increase the local currency value. Last September-end, a dollar value reached the highest of over K3,000 in history.

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US\$31 million at its FX auction rate in November to steer the local currency value, according to the auction result issued by the CBM on 30 November. The CBM sold the foreign currency to the prioritized sectors (palm oil, fuel oil and pharmaceuticals) at an auction rate through the authorized banks. The CBM sold the US dollars at the set rate to the banks with the authorized dealer licence where the companies screened by the National Trade Facilitation Committee opened an account.

In October, the CBM sold a large amount of \$110 million to the authorized dealers to stabilize the currency. In September, the CBM sold 63 million dollars to the private banks to increase the local currency value. Last September-end, a dollar value reached the highest of over K3,000 in history.

The exchange rate on the US dollar hit around K1,800 in the local forex market at present, as per money exchangers.

In August, the CBM reportedly sold \$28 million at its auction rate. Kyat is weakening in the local forex market. In a bid to control the dollar gain against Kyat, the CBM sold about 6.8 million dollars on 3 February 2021, \$12 million in April, \$24 million in May, \$12 million in June and \$39 million in July in the auction market, respectively.

The local forex market's data showed that the dollar exchange rate touched the maximum of K1,345 and the minimum of K1,327 in January 2021. The rate moved in the range of K1,335-1,465 in February. It reached the lowest of K1,420 and the highest of K1,550 in March. The rate fluctuated between K1,550 and K1,610 in April. The rate fluctuated between K1,585 and K1,730 in May and it moved to the maximum of K1,595-1,620 in June. The rate stood at K1,626-1,670 in July. It hit the lowest of K1,660 and the highest of K1,682 in August. In September, the rate edged up to K3,200 and fell to K1,696. — KH/GNLM

Chinese drivers to bring back Myanmar watermelon on unloading goods

MYANMAR watermelon will be transported to China through the trucks of Chinese drivers when they unload their goods in Myanmar, said Sai Khin Maung from the Khwanyo Fruit Warehouse.

There are about 70 trucks that arrive in the Muse 105 mile. About 20 to 30 trucks load of watermelon will be brought to China via Chinese trucks after they unload their goods in Myanmar.

“About 70 trucks of watermelon are stuck in Muse. Those watermelons will be delivered to China. On a trial run of the border post, one container carrying watermelons has been sent to China. The remaining is to be gradually shipped. After three or four days later, all of them will be placed in China's market. Chinese truck drivers will carry the watermelon on board when they get back,” Sai Khin Maung stated.

Starting from 26 September, the Kyinsankyawt border post between Myanmar and China has reopened on a trial run. Myanmar's goods weighing five containers can be delivered to China then.

On 27 November, two truckloads of watermelon were put into a container



Among the Sino-Myanmar land borders, Kyinsankyawt crossing resumed operations on 26 November.

and sent to China.

“The freight charges will become higher. It is likely to face delay. If watermelons are stockpiled in the border, it will cause negative consequences,” Sai Khin Maung continued. The transport charges are two times higher than the previous rate, he added.

Transport charges were around K800,000 to one million, whereas it costs approximately K2 million for now.

Traders cannot expect trade facilitation according to the changes in China's policy during the COVID-19 pandemic. If the restrictions are eased and negotiation goes smooth, the trade will go back to normality.

The land borders next to the Muse checkpoint are

Nantaw, Sinphyu, Mang Wein, Kyinsankyawt-Wamding and Panseng-Wamding.

China has closed down the remaining border posts (Kyinsankyawt, Wamding) from 8 July 2021 following COVID-19 cases in Myanmar.

On 30 March, Mang Wein, which is a major border crossing between Muse and Kyalgaung areas, was suspended owing to the COVID-19 cases. On 1 April, Nantaw and Sinphyu land borders were suspended operations. As a result of this, the border trade between Myanmar and China was completely halted.

Among the Sino-Myanmar land borders, Kyinsankyawt crossing resumed operations on 26 November. — NN/GNLM

Don't fear the new COVID-19 variant but follow health guidelines

IN recent days, the World Health Organization disseminated the terrible news about the COVID-19 pandemic to the world, saying that a new coronavirus strain detected in South Africa is a highly transmissible "variant of concern" and named it "Omicron".

AFP news agency stated that the emergence of the B.1.1.529 variant, first reported to the WHO from South Africa on 24 November 2021, has caused authorities around the world to react with alarm and led them to quickly tighten travel restrictions, adding an advisory panel of the UN health agency has warned the variant has "a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning".

On the other hand, medical experts need to invent the vaccines against COVID-19 as quickly as possible for serving the interests of the State and the people. Now is the time for Myanmar people to change their mindset and behaviours to be ready for fighting against COVID-19.

Whatever it may be, Myanmar needs to take preventive measures against the pandemic with restricted health guidelines for the people in time not to face severe health problems next time. All the people need to cooperate with the authorities in battling the pandemic without fail as an act of wearing masks, face shields and gloves, washing hands, legs and faces whenever return home and avoiding crowds and public places.

On the other hand, medical experts need to invent the vaccines against COVID-19 as quickly as possible for serving the interests of the State and the people. Now is the time for Myanmar people to change their mindset and behaviours to be ready for fighting against COVID-19.

The new variant was also found in Botswana, Israel and Hong Kong. It is dangerous for all. It is because Myanmar encountered the severe infection of the pandemic in the third wave. So, a new variant that might not be affected by existing vaccines may bring reluctant information to the global countries.

For the time being, 10.4 million people have fully received COVID-19 vaccines and 4.9 million more people have been vaccinated in Myanmar for the first dose. The government set an aim to vaccinate half of the total population by the end of December and the total population in April 2022.

Herd immunity must have risen at a certain percentage of the total population for ending the infection of the pandemic. The herd immunity can be maintained through the vaccination as well those who recovered from the infected situation.

Myanmar is under a certain situation of controlling the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, all people need to take care of their health conditions by following the restrictions against COVID-19.

Information Technology, IT and IT Tools

By U Khin Maung (A retired diplomat)

What's the internet?

1. Today the world is witnessing ever-advancing Information Technology or IT, and IT applications can benefit the users immensely and greatly. So, we can say IT today has become something we can't do without. We have IT tools such as computers, the Internet, electronic mail or e-mail and English language, etc.

2. You may wish to ask me, what is the Internet? It's a big question, nay it is the question of the day. To answer this, let me start with the most straightforward and simplest definition. The Internet is the network for the transmission and exchange of information. But younger people, with their tendency to shorten words, call it the Net. People who don't know anything about it, but pretend to be experts call it "Super Highway" or such. And people who like to be cool and

hip call it "cyberspace", people who like to be prophetic call it the technological revolution. "However, technical people tend to stick to one word, the most accurate definition, the "Internet".

The indistinguishable Internet

3. "At present, a large majority of people talk about the Net as though it is some mysterious creature, an interesting novelty and a rather peculiar concept that isn't a part of daily life. They might fling web addresses from advertisements and e-mail addresses on business cards, but it is quite easy to imagine a world without it.

4. In the "here and now" the Internet is useful, but it is essentially a hobby, a pastime and most of all an experience. In the future, it will seem to be a practical tool and

a necessary convenience. Just like a telephone or a microwave, although you could probably do without them, a practical tool, and a necessary convenience. Just like a telephone or a microwave, although you could probably do without them, they are in nearly every home, and most people use them every day.

The Internet and Real Life

5. Well, I am sure, you cannot define this "network of networks" in a sentence, a page, a chapter or even a book. It's like a virtual country. Although its many different parts have certain areas of commonality you can't define IRC in the same way as UseNet: any more than you could say that Johannesburg is the same as Cape Town or LA is the same as San Francisco.

Real Life

6. The Internet is part of real-life and it's here to stay. The people who you type to on the Internet are not really any different to those you speak to every day of the week. What it does offer, however, is a means by which people can communicate in not only a much more efficient, but for now at least, a much more personal way, I would say categorically that is its greatest benefit. In conclusion, I would like to quote, Mr Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary-General, has said, "the Internet is the fastest-growing instrument of communication in the history of civilization and it may be the most rapidly disseminating tool of any kind ever."

7. Whatever your age, you should go on learning modern techniques, including IT tools. In any sense, no educative process

is ever the end, it is always the beginning of more education, more learning, more living.¹ Knowledge is power. Ignorance of Information Technology is no excuse in this age.

SOURCE: INTERNET CULTURE IN EASY STEPS BY MR JOHN SMITH.

- (1) do without = forgo, manage without
- (2) forgo (VT) = go without, relinquish, omit or decline to take or use (pleasure etc)
- (3) ling (VT) = to move suddenly and violently, rush, dash
- (4) cool = (slang) very good, pleasuring, excellent.
- (5) hip = (slang) fashionable, stylish, sophisticated

- (6) virtual (adj) = being such practically or in effect, although not in actual fact or name (a virtual impossibility)
- (7) IRC = Internet Relay Chart. It is probably the most cultured of any method of communication on the Internet.
- (8) UseNet = Users' Network. The User's Network is known by several different names. e.g., "Usenet," "news" and "newsgroups".
- (9) cyberspace = It's the electronic infrastructure of the late 20th century Cyberspace encompasses a virtual universe of ideas and information.
- (10) Word power made easy by Norman Lewis.

TO BE CONTINUED

Pandemic to cost global tourism \$2.0 trillion in 2021: UN

The forecast from the Madrid-based World Tourism Organization comes as Europe is grappling with a surge in infections and as a new heavily mutated Covid-19 variant, dubbed Omicron, spreads across the globe.

THE coronavirus pandemic will cost the global tourism sector \$2.0 trillion in lost revenue in 2021, the UN's tourism body said Monday, calling the sector's recovery "fragile" and "slow".

The forecast from the Madrid-based World Tourism Organization comes as Europe is grappling with a surge in infections and as a new heavily mutated Covid-19 variant, dubbed Omicron, spreads across the globe.

The global tourism sector already lost \$2.0 trillion (1.78 trillion euros) in revenues last year due to the pandemic, according to the UNWTO, making it one of sectors hit hardest by the health crisis.

While the UN body charged with promoting tourism does not have an estimate for how the sector will perform next year, its medium-term outlook is not encouraging.

"Despite the recent improvements, uneven vaccination rates around the world and new Covid-19 strains" such as the Delta variant and Omicron "could impact the already slow and fragile recovery," it said in a statement.

The introduction of fresh virus restrictions and lockdowns in several nations in recent weeks shows how "it's a very unpredictable situation," UNWTO head Zurab Pololikashvili told AFP.

"It's a historical crisis in the tourism industry but again tourism has the power to recover quite fast," he added ahead of the start of the WTO's annual general assembly in Madrid on Tuesday. "I really hope that 2022 will be much better than 2021."

'Confused'

While international tourism has taken a hit from the outbreak of disease in the past, the coronavirus is unprecedented in its geographical spread.

In addition to virus-related travel restrictions, the sector is also grappling with the economic strain caused by the pandemic,

the spike in oils prices and the disruption of supply chains, the UNWTO said.

Pololikashvili urged nations to harmonise their virus protocols and restrictions because tourists "are confused and they don't know how to travel".

International tourist arrivals "rebounded" during the summer season in the Northern Hemisphere thanks to increased travel confidence, rapid vaccination and the easing of entry restrictions in many nations, the UNWTO said.

"Despite the improvement in the third quarter, the pace of recovery remains uneven across world regions due to varying degrees of mobility restrictions, vaccination rates and traveller confidence," it added.

Arrivals in some islands in the Caribbean and South Asia, and well as some destinations in southern Europe, came close to, or sometimes exceeded pre-pandemic levels in the third quarter.

Other countries however hardly saw any tourists at all, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, where arrivals were down 95 per cent compared to 2019 as many

destinations remained closed to non-essential travel.

Closed borders

A total of 46 destinations — 21 percent of all destinations worldwide — currently have their borders completely closed to tourists, according to the UNWTO.

A further 55 have their borders partially closed to foreign visitors, while just four nations have lifted all virus-related restrictions — Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and Mexico.

The future of the travel sector will be in focus at the WTO annual general assembly, which will run until Friday.

The event — which brings together representatives from 159 members states of the UN body — was original scheduled to be held in Marrakesh.

But Morocco in late October decided not to host the event due to the rise in Covid-19 cases in many countries.

Before the pandemic, the tourism sector accounted for about 10 per cent of the world's gross domestic product and jobs.

SOURCE: AFP



International tourist arrivals this year will remain 70 per cent to 75 per cent below the 1.5 billion arrivals recorded in 2019 before the pandemic hit. PHOTO: AFP

International Day of Persons with Disabilities



"Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world"

"အားလုံးအကျိုးဝင် လက်လှမ်းမီပြီး ရေရှည်တည်တံ့သည့် ကိုဗစ်-၁၉ အလွန်ကမ္ဘာ့ဖြစ်ပေါ်ရေးမသန်စွမ်းသူများဦးဆောင်ပါဝင်ကြိုးစားပေး"

နေပြည်တော် ၃-၁၂-၂၀၂၁



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 30 November 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (15:30) hrs M.S.T today, the lowpressure area over South Thailand and adjoining South Andaman Sea. It is forecast to reach South Andaman Sea during next (12) hrs and continuously move to West- Northwestwards and further intensify into a depression. Weather is cloudy over the Andaman Sea and Southeast Bay and a few cloud to partly cloudy elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal. **FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 1 December 2021:** Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Taninthayi Region and isolated in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady Regions and Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthyai Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35) m.p.h. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (7-9) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthyai Coasts and about (4-7) feet off and along Rakhine Coast.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated to scattered rain or thundershowers in Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Mon State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1 December 2021: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1 December 2021: Isolated rain or thundershower: Degree of certainty is (80%)

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1 December 2021: Partly cloudy.

Low Pressure Area Condition

ISSUED AT (17:00) hours M.S.T ON 30-11-2021
ACCORDING TO THE observations at (15:30) hrs M.S.T today, the lowpressure area over South Thailand and adjoining South Andaman Sea. It is forecast to reach South Andaman Sea during next (12) hrs and continuously move to West- Northwestwards and further intensify into a depression.

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

(Issued at 04:15 hour M.S.T.)
A slight earthquake of magnitude (4.2) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about (11) miles west-northwest of Sidoktaya), latitude 20.49°N, longitude 94.08°E, depth (25) kilometers, about (74) miles southwest of NyaungU seismological observatory was recorded at (03)hr (52)min (05)sec M.S.T on 30 November, 2021.

Nissan touts 'pioneer' status with new electric vehicle targets

NISSAN on Monday unveiled plans for electric and hybrid vehicles to make up half its global sales by 2030, with a top executive insisting the firm's "pioneer" status would help it capture market share.

Speaking to AFP, Nissan number two Ashwani Gupta insisted the firm's electric vehicle (EV) targets were "progressive" and said he welcomed "healthy competition" from all-electric rivals like much-hyped Tesla.

"In 2010 when we talked about electric batteries, we were the only ones, and thanks to all these players the awareness has improved. That's helping us," he told AFP after the firm unveiled its new Ambition 2030 long-term plan. "We are very happy to have

these players who are creating the EV awareness... healthy competition is always good."

Last year, just 10 per cent of Nissan's global sales were EVs or hybrids, and it said Monday it plans 23 new models, including 15 new electric vehicles, in a bid to reach the 2030 goal.

It said it will invest two trillion yen (\$17.5 billion) over the next five years to speed up electrification, compared to spending one trillion between 2010-2020, aiming to launch electric vehicles with its proprietary batteries in seven years.

Across the auto industry, firms are boosting electric vehicles, with Sweden's Volvo pledging to switch all sales away from traditional fuel cars by 2030, and

Japan's Honda setting the same target by 2040.

Gupta denied that Nissan's targets were unambitious by comparison, insisting the plan was "sensible, grounded and progressive".

"We are the pioneers," Gupta added. "We launched our first battery electric (vehicle) in 2010, the market didn't exist and the customer didn't ask for it."

'More future than the past'

Now, he said, Nissan is "capitalising on the assets which we have prepared in the last 11 years."

"Our asset is not only about technology, but our asset is (our) customer who has used our battery electric cars," he added.

Electric and hybrid vehicles



Nissan has unveiled plans for electric and hybrid vehicles to make up half its global sales by 2030. Nissan New Mobility Concept. PHOTO: NISSAN MOTOR CO/AFP

are being increasingly adopted in the face of concern about climate change, with Britain moving to

ban new sales of diesel and petrol cars in the UK from 2030, and hybrids from 2035.—AFP ■

Climate 'overwhelming' driver of Australian bushfires: study



Australia's conservative government has consistently played down the role of climate change in the 2019-2020 fires, which cloaked major cities like Sydney in acrid smoke. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

CLIMATE change is the "overwhelming factor" driving the country's ever-more intense bushfires, Australian government scientists believe — directly contradicting claims by the country's political leaders.

In a peer-reviewed study,

scientists at state agency CSIRO reviewed 90 years' worth of data and concluded climate change was the major influencing factor behind megafires like those that ravaged Australia in 2019-2020.

The experts studied a

range of fire risk factors — from the amount of dead vegetation on the ground to moisture, weather and ignition conditions — to see what could be driving catastrophic blazes.

"While all eight drivers of fire activity played varying roles in influencing forest fires, climate was the overwhelming factor driving fire activity," said CSIRO chief climate research scientist Pep Canadell.

The findings were published in the latest issue of scientific journal Nature on 26 November. Australia's conservative government has consistently played down the role of climate change in the 2019-2020 fires, which burned across the southeast coast and cloaked major cities like Sydney in acrid smoke.—AFP ■

Norway rules out 2022 oil licences in 'virgin areas'

NORWAY will not grant new oil exploration licences in virgin or little-explored areas in 2022 under a political compromise on Monday that hands a modest victory to opponents of fossil fuels.

The Scandinavian country's governing centre-left coalition supports continuing oil and gas activities but does not have a parliamentary majority, making it reliant on socialist MPs who

prioritise green issues.

As part of a compromise on the draft 2022 budget, three parties agreed on Monday that Norway — Western Europe's largest hydrocarbon producer — would not hold a 26th so-called "ordinary" concession round next year. This mechanism has allowed oil companies to apply for exploration in previously unexplored areas of the Norwegian continental shelf since 1965.

But the deal does not rule out awarding oil licences in already heavily exploited areas.

Since the North Sea has been extensively explored, the agreement mainly concerns the Barents Sea in the Arctic. The oil industry was a major issue in legislative elections in September, indicating Norway's growing difficulties in reconciling environmental concerns with exploiting energy resources.—AFP ■

30 South African white rhinos relocated to Rwanda in a Boeing 747

THIRTY endangered white rhinos arrived in Rwanda on Monday after a long journey from South Africa in a Boeing 747, conservationists said, hailing it as the largest single transfer of the species ever undertaken.

The majestic animals, which can weigh up to two tonnes, travelled some 3,400 kilometres (2,100 miles) from South Africa's Phinda Private Game Reserve as part of a programme to replenish the spe-

The rhinos began their 40-hour journey to the new home in Akagera National Park in eastern Rwanda following months of preparation, said African Parks, a charity headed by Britain's Prince Harry which is involved in the exercise. "We had to tranquilize them to reduce their stress, which is itself risky, and monitor them," said African Parks' CEO Peter Fearnhead, calling the project a success.

The animals were trans-



Two female northern white rhinos graze at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya. Rhinos have few predators in the wild due to their size but have been devastated by poaching for their horns. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

cies' population, decimated by poaching since the 1970s.

Once plentiful across sub-Saharan Africa, white rhino suffered first from hunting by European settlers, and later a poaching epidemic which largely wiped them out.

ported in a chartered Boeing 747 and were placed in two grassy enclosures — each the size of a football stadium — after arriving in the park.

Later they will be allowed to roam the expansive park, authorities said.—AFP ■

First Omicron case detected in Japan



Japan has confirmed the first case in the country of the omicron variant of the coronavirus. PHOTO: KYODO

JAPAN on Tuesday confirmed its first case of the Omicron coronavirus variant, a day after authorities announced new Covid border restrictions.

“Regarding the traveller arriving from Namibia, it was confirmed to be a case of Omicron after analysis at the National Institute of Infectious Diseases,” government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters.

“This is the first Omicron case confirmed in Japan,” he said, adding that the infected

traveller, a man in his 30s, is now in isolation at a medical facility.

The case was flagged during routine testing at an airport. Japan requires all arrivals to be tested before travelling to the country and when they land.

The announcement came a day after Japan tightened its border rules again, barring all new foreign arrivals just weeks after relaxing tough regulations to allow some students and business travellers entry.

The new rules mean only

Japanese citizens and existing foreign residents can enter the country, with few exemptions, and those coming from areas with known Omicron cases require hotel quarantines ranging from three to 10 days.

Japan has recorded just over 18,300 coronavirus deaths during the pandemic, while avoiding tough lockdowns.

After a slow start, its vaccination programme picked up speed and nearly 77 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated.—AFP ■

French minister in talks with unions on troubled Caribbean islands

FRANCE’S minister for overseas territories left the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe Monday night at an impasse over ways to end more than a week of violent protests sparked by Covid-19 restrictions.

Before departing for more talks in neighbouring Martinique, Sebastien Lecornu told reporters that the Guadeloupe negotiations had been deadlocked over the “obvious and indispen-

sable” demand that the various unions condemn the violence.

Discussions were not possible so long as the unions “do not want to condemn assassination attempts” against security forces, he said.

Unrest in the former colonial outpost began with a protest over compulsory Covid-19 vaccinations for health workers, but quickly ballooned into a broader revolt over living conditions, and

spread to next door Martinique.

Both islands are now under curfew. In the French overseas territories, each of which has close to 400,000 inhabitants, residents complain of greater poverty, higher costs for basic goods and poorer public services than on the mainland.

Lecornu said his talks with four union representatives in Guadeloupe were limited to the receipt of a list of demands.

Maite Hubert-M’Toumo, secretary-general of Guadeloupe’s main trade union UGTG, said the requests include a suspension of the vaccine mandate for health professionals, no convictions for protesters over the violence and improvement of living conditions for Guadeloupean families. Lecornu, who laid responsibility for some of the issues at the feet of local elected officials, said he expects to make better headway in Martinique where the “republican prerequisite” for negotiations has already been met.—AFP ■



France sent a group of dozens of elite security force officers to its overseas territory of Guadeloupe after protests against coronavirus rules turned violent. Officials in Guadeloupe now have 2,250 officers at their disposal to counter the rioters. PHOTO: AFP

UK extends Covid vaccine booster programme to all adults

ALL adults in Britain will now be able to get a third Covid jab, a government scientific advisory body said Monday, as concern mounted about the spread of the new Omicron variant.

The move, approved by Health Secretary Sajid Javid, comes as the UK government said it needed to react swiftly to the new variant, which was first detected in South Africa.

“We’re advising that the booster programme should now be extended to adults aged 18 to 39 years old,” said Wei Shen Lim, of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization (JCVI).

Until now, only adults aged 40 and over were eligible for a booster dose six months after their second.

At the same time, the advisory body also recommended second doses of vaccine for children aged 12 to 15.

Since last week, the

government in London has slapped a travel ban on 10 southern African countries, including South Africa, to try to control the spread of Omicron.

It has also reintroduced compulsory testing for travellers, and mandatory mask-wearing in shops and public transport in England, as well as self-isolation for contact cases. The JCVI approved the government’s proposed expansion of the rollout of booster jabs of Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech to include more people within a shorter time.

Britain is one of several countries to have announced cases of the new variant on their soil, including Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Six cases of the new strain were detected in Scotland on Monday, two of them in the largest city of Glasgow. Five others were confirmed in England, Javid told parliament.—AFP ■



A photograph released by the UK Parliament’s Christmas tree being erected at Westminster Hall in London. Adults in Britain will be able to get 3rd Covid jab, a government body said, as concerns mount about the Omicron variant’s spread. PHOTO: AFP

Cryptocurrency Omicron in frenzy over Covid-19 variant

TRADING in the cryptocurrency Omicron exploded Monday and its value gyrated after the World Health Organization decided to use that name for the latest variant of Covid-19.

Obscure and relatively stable in recent weeks, the virtual unit jumped to nearly \$700 early Monday, about 10 times its previous value, according to the crypto news website CoinMarketCap. It later fell to \$152 before rebounding and stabilizing at around \$350.

The WHO on Friday gave the name Omicron to the latest variant of the coronavirus to worry officials, following its policy to name them after letters in the Greek alphabet.

The cryptocurrency Omi-

cron was created in early November, with its founders making no reference to Covid-19 at the launch.

Instead, they expressed hope that it could conserve purchasing power independently of the market’s volatility.

Omicron isn’t the only virtual unit to benefit from notoriety from the real world, only to see the gains collapse.

The Squid coin, created by fans of the TV series, rose from \$0.70 at its launch on 21 October to a peak of \$2.86 on 1 November. It fell to \$0.003 the following day. Traders discovered they couldn’t cash out their profits and the creators disappeared from social media.—AFP ■

OPEC+ meets under pressure from Biden and Omicron

OPEC+ oil producers meet Thursday under pressure from US President Joe Biden, who has opened up his country's taps hoping to bring down crude prices, and a new Covid-19 variant that has complicated the equation.

The meeting "is shaping up to be one of the most significant since the pandemic demand recovery began, and the key signal will be how much more oil will be added to supply to start the new year," said Peter McNally, an analyst at the Third Bridge think tank.

After coming under heavy pressure to step up production, leading members the United States, China, India and Japan last week announced that they would dip into their strategic reserves to help bring down crude prices, after a surge that has un-

dermined economic recovery. Biden called it a "major initiative", with analysts estimating the injection at between 65 and 80 million barrels, including 50 million from the United States alone. But the move did not have the desired effect, with prices rising regardless — followed by the damper on prices caused by the emergence of the new Omicron variant of Covid-19.

The detection of the new variant on Thursday caused crude prices to plunge more than 10 per cent, a first since the nightmarish drops of April 2020.

Carsten Fritsch of Commerzbank said "there is much to suggest that OPEC+ will not initially step up its oil production any further" in an effort to maintain current prices at around \$70 a barrel.—AFP ■



OPEC+ oil producers meet Thursday under pressure from US President Joe Biden, who has opened up his country's taps hoping to bring down crude prices, and a new Covid-19 variant that has complicated the equation. A truck drives past an oil storage facility in Houston, Texas, on 21 April 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

From tents to tallest building: UAE's 'remarkable' 50-year rise



People walk next to a monument at Dubai Expo 2020, on 28 November 2021, celebrating the upcoming United Arab Emirates' 50th anniversary which falls on 2 December. **PHOTO: AFP**

EHAB Fouad was a teenager when he marched in the parade marking the birth of the United Arab Emirates, that has gone from desert outpost to regional powerhouse in 50 years.

The retired civil engineer, now 64, vividly recalls 2 December, 1971, when he proudly held aloft the photo of the oil-rich Gulf state's founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, and saw its new flag for the first time.

Fouad, who strode directly behind the flag-bearer, tears up when he remembers the Abu Dhabi parade and reflects on the decades that followed.

"Fifty years later, I feel special," said the Egyptian father of one.

"It was a remarkable journey for me, and a remarkable journey for this country," said Fouad, who lives with his family in Dubai, one of the country's seven emirates.—AFP ■

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Markets hit by Moderna vaccine warning over Omicron



Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell warned Omicron posed a 'downside risks to employment and economic activity, and increased uncertainty for inflation'. People walk through a shopping area in New York City, on 11 June 2021. PHOTO: AFP

EQUITIES and oil sank again Tuesday after the head of Moderna warned current coronavirus vaccines might be less effective at fending off the Omicron variant, fuelling fears that countries could be forced back into economically painful lockdowns. Stocks had mostly been edging up after a

two-day sell-off that followed news Friday of the new variant, which some observers said was overdone as billions of people have been inoculated. But Stephane Bancel's comments in an interview with the Financial Times sent shivers through markets again, as he said the high amount of

mutations on Omicron and its swift spread in South Africa indicated the present jabs would need to be tweaked. "There is no world, I think, where (the effectiveness) is the same level... we had with Delta," the Moderna CEO told the newspaper. Tokyo, Hong Kong,

Singapore, Bangkok and Jakarta all lost more than one per cent while Seoul sank more than two per cent. London, Paris and Frankfurt opened in the red and futures in New York were also sharply lower. Sydney, Wellington and Taipei closed higher before the interview was published. The selling also spread to oil markets where both main contracts plunged more than three percent, after slowly recovering from Friday's collapse of more than 10 per cent as demand fears came flooding back. Tourism-linked firms were among the worst hit with Cathay Pacific losing more than four per cent in Hong Kong — having already been impacted by new restrictions on travel to the city — and Singapore Airlines off more than one percent.—AFP ■

Foreign investment in Viet Nam up slightly in 11 months

VIET Nam attracted an estimated foreign investment of 26.46 billion U.S. dollars in the first 11 months of this year, up 0.1 percent year on year, the country's General Statistics Office said Monday. Specifically, Viet Nam licenced 1,577 new foreign direct investment (FDI) projects with total registered capital of 14.06 billion US dollars, down 31.8

per cent in quantity but up 3.7 per cent in capital year-on-year. Among countries and regions with newly licenced investment projects in Viet Nam during the period, Singapore was the largest source of registered capital with 5.35 billion US dollars, followed by Japan with 2.71 billion US dollars and China with 1.63 billion US dollars, said the office.—AFP ■



A model stands next to a Ford Focus during the Viet Nam Motor Show 2017 in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, on 1 August 2017. Seventy automobile models from 12 Vietnamese and foreign firms were displayed at Viet Nam Motor Show 2017. PHOTO: XINHUA/HOANG THI HUONG/FILE

Shanghai's first drone delivery route begins testing

SHANGHAI'S first drone delivery route, which is expected to open for trial operation in the first half of 2022, has already begun internal testing, with deliveries taking about 17 minutes, according to a report by CCTV on Monday. Delivery workers take customer orders to the nearest drone airport, and the service radius of the

drone delivery is planned to reach two kilometres with scheduling, takeoff and landing guided by the system. The takeoff and landing airport will be mainly laid out in key business districts and office buildings. At present, merchants are required to apply the period of each drone flight in advance.

In the future, the drone deliveries are expected to achieve normalization. The drone delivery system, jointly led by Chinese food delivery platform Meituan and Shanghai Jinshan District, can help delivery workers ease their work intensity as well as improving delivery efficiency, experts said.

In the past three years, Meituan has delivered more than 2,500 orders with drones. Since January 2021, the company's drone business department has launched a commercial trial project for real users in Shenzhen's Pingshan District and Longgang District in South China's Guangdong Province.—Xinhua ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V FLOURISH OCEAN

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V FLOURISH OCEAN VOY.NO. (V.2869)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-1-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT-4** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon. Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel. No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day. Phone No: **2301928** Shipping Agency Department Myanmar Port Authority Agent For: **M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO LTD**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MAERSK VALENCIA VOY.NO. (146S/147N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MAERSK VALENCIA VOY.NO. (146S/147N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **1-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon. Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel. No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day. Phone No: **2301185** Shipping Agency Department Myanmar Port Authority Agent For: **M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MAERSK NARVIK VOY.NO. (145W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MAERSK NARVIK VOY.NO. (145W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **1-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon. Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel. No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day. Phone No: **2301185** Shipping Agency Department Myanmar Port Authority Agent For: **M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ALVAN VOY.NO. (SCY1115)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ALVAN VOY. NO. (SCY1115)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-11-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon. Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel. No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day. Phone No: **2301185** Shipping Agency Department Myanmar Port Authority Agent For: **M/S LAND AND SEA INTERMODAL LOGISTICS SDN BHD LINE**

NEWS
IN BRIEFUS Congress faces
December pile-up as
default threat looms

LAWMAKERS returned to Washington Monday staring down a critical holiday season to-do list that juggles President Joe Biden's domestic spending priorities with keeping the government open and averting a catastrophic debt default.

Senators are bracing for what is shaping up to be the one of the most gruelling Decembers in years, with defence funding and the expanding probe into the 6 January insurrection on Capitol Hill likely to add to the workload.

But the top priority is government funding, with federal agencies due to run out of cash on Friday.

A lasting deal to avoid a damaging shutdown would require agreement on spending bills for the 2022 fiscal year, as the government is still funded at levels approved during Donald Trump's administration. —AFP ■

Prosecutors ask US
Supreme Court to
rule on Bill Cosby
release

PROSECUTORS have asked the US Supreme Court to review comedian Bill Cosby's overturned conviction for drugging and sexually assaulting a woman 15 years ago, they announced Monday.

"The US Supreme Court can right what we believe is a grievous wrong," Kevin Steele, district attorney for Montgomery County, Pennsylvania said in a statement announcing that the appeal had been filed last Wednesday.

Cosby was freed from prison on June 30 following a ruling by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court that he had been denied a fair trial, in a move seen as a blow to the #MeToo movement.

At the time of his release, the comedian had been jailed since 2018 for assaulting Andrea Constand at his Philadelphia mansion in 2004 when she was an employee at Temple University.

In its decision, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court focused on a non-prosecution agreement between a former district attorney and Cosby over evidence he gave in a civil case. —AFP ■

Chile lawmakers set to approve same-sex
marriage bill

CHILE'S parliament is set to approve a long-awaited bill to legalize same-sex marriage Tuesday, joining just a handful of countries in majority Catholic Latin America with similar laws.

The bill will also enable married same-sex couples to adopt children.

Chile, which legalized same-sex civil unions in 2015, has been awaiting this bill since 2017, when it was sent to congress by socialist then-president Michelle Bachelet. In a surprise move, her conservative successor, Sebastian Pinera, announced in June he would seek the bill's urgent passage through parliament.

It was given the go-ahead by the lower house, or Chamber of Deputies, earlier this month, and must now be approved by the upper house, or Senate, before finally being signed into law by Pinera.

"We want to insist that this bill should become law right now. There can no longer be excuses for continuing to drag out the discussion in congress while



The Iguales Foundation LGBT rights group demonstrated outside the Constituent Assembly in Santiago, Chile, on 29 November 2021, ahead of a Senate vote to approve a bill legalizing same-sex marriage. PHOTO: AFP

hundreds of families wait anxiously," said Isabel Amor of the Fundacion Iguales LGBT rights group. "Love does not discriminate, but the law does," added Lorena Grez, who with other activists delivered 20,000 signatures in support of the new law.

"In Chile we are not recognized as a family," but rather are treated as "second-class" citizens, she said.

Same-sex marriage is legal in six Latin American and Caribbean countries -- Costa Rica, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Uru-

guay and Argentina, as well as in 14 of Mexico's 32 states.

The Senate hearing on the bill will be preceded by a decision of a constitutional commission, a step which could see the vote delayed by hours, or perhaps to another day. —AFP ■

Peru quake injures 12, leaves
more than 2,400 homeless

A 7.5-magnitude earthquake in northern Peru injured 12 people and destroyed 117 homes, leaving more than 2,400 people without a roof over their heads, authorities said Monday.

The quake, which struck in the early hours of Sunday and sent shock waves across the region, also levelled five churches and damaged a clinic and some 1.5 kilometres (0.93 miles) of roads.

The tremor was felt in nearly half of the country, including coastal and Andean regions and the capital Lima. It also caused damage in neighbouring Ecuador.

The epicentre was 98 kilometres east of the small Peruvian town of Santa Maria de Nieva in the Peruvian Amazon — a sparsely populated area inhabited by indigenous people, many of whom live in wood and mud houses, which collapsed.

The 14-metre (45-foot) tower of a colonial-era church collapsed in the La Jalca district, also in the Amazon. Widespread power outages were reported, and roads were cut off by rocks unearthed by the tremor. "We have all taken to the streets, we are very scared," a listener called Lucia told RPP radio from the northern town of Chota. —AFP ■



Peruvian President Pedro Castillo (L) visited residents hit by an earthquake in the Amazonas department of northeast Peru. PHOTO: PERUVIAN PRESIDENCY/AFP

France issues arrest warrant
over Japan 'parental kidnap'

Vincent Fichot's case has revived debate over the issue of 'parental abduction' in Japan. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

FRENCH authorities have issued an arrest warrant for a Japanese woman whose two children have been kept from their father in a case that has revived debate about "parental kidnapping" in Japan.

The children's French father Vincent Fichot -- a resident in Japan -- has drawn international attention over his attempts to reestablish contact with his son and daughter, who he says were kidnapped by their mother in 2018.

French authorities issued the international warrant over allegations of parental abduction and endangering a minor, according to a source close to

the issue and Fichot.

The French embassy declined to comment on the case.

Japanese law does not include a provision for shared custody when parents separate, and authorities have long been accused of turning a blind eye when one parent denies the other access to their children.

Fichot staged a three-week hunger strike during the Tokyo Olympics earlier this year to draw attention to his case, and says he has received support from foreign and Japanese parents in a similar position.

A lawyer for Fichot's wife declined to comment on the warrant. —AFP ■

NATO eyes Russia's Ukraine buildup amid invasion fears



Soldiers take part in the NATO annual military exercise "Winter Shield" 2021 in Adazi, Latvia. PHOTO: AFP

NATO foreign ministers will meet on Tuesday to discuss how to counter a Russian military build-up on Ukraine's border amid fears the Kremlin could be preparing to invade.

The long-scheduled gathering in Latvia's capital Riga comes at a volatile moment on NATO's eastern flank as allies also grapple with a migrant crisis the West says is fuelled by Kremlin-backed Belarus.

Western countries spearheaded by the United States worry that Moscow could be planning an incursion into Ukraine after accusing the Kremlin of

massing forces close to the frontier.

"There is not clarity about the Russian intentions but there is an unusual concentration of forces for the second time this year," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told AFP during a visit to alliance forces in Latvia. "We see heavy armour, drones, electronic warfare systems and tens of thousands of combat-ready troops."

Moscow, which seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and backs separatists fighting Kiev, has strongly denied it is plotting an attack and blames NATO for

fuelling tensions.

NATO diplomats say the bloc remains uncertain of Russian President Vladimir Putin's intentions -- but ministers will discuss contingency plans should Russia invade.

The US-led alliance is looking to show the Kremlin it faces severe costs if it threatens Ukraine, while stopping short of provoking Moscow into further aggression.

Officials expect talks on additional support for Ukraine's military and potentially strengthening NATO forces arrayed along its eastern wing.—AFP ■

Pentagon plans stronger US posture toward China, Russia

THE US military will re-inforce deployments and bases directed at China and Russia, while maintaining forces in the Middle East adequate to deter Iran and jihadist groups, the Pentagon said Monday, referencing results of a review.

The US Defence Depart-

ment will be upgrading and expanding military facilities in Guam and Australia, underscoring its focus on China as the country's leading defence rival, officials said.

The details of the "global posture review," commissioned by President Joe Biden's admin-

istration early this year, would remain classified, the officials added, so as not to reveal plans to rivals.

The move comes in the wake of the formation of a new defence alliance, dubbed AUK-US, between the United States, Britain and Australia to counter a rising China, which has been building up its own navy and testing decades of US military dominance across Asia.

The review confirmed the priority region for the US military was the Indo-Pacific, said Mara Karlin, a top Pentagon policy official. The review "directs additional cooperation with allies and partners across the region to advance initiatives that contribute to regional stability and deter potential military aggression from China and threats from North Korea," she told reporters.—AFP ■



A new Pentagon planning document called the 'global posture review' emphasizes building defenses in the Indo-Pacific region against potential threats from China. PHOTO: US NAVY/AFP/FILE

France to offer Johnson EU deal on migrants

FRANCE'S Prime Minister Jean Castex is preparing to write to British counterpart Boris Johnson with proposals for a new post-Brexit deal on migration with the EU after the disaster in the Channel last week that left 27 migrants dead, a minister said Monday.

Castex will write to Johnson on Tuesday, less than a week after a letter penned by the British premier to President Emmanuel Macron and immediately posted on Twitter angered France, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

Darmanin told reporters that France was prepared to resume discussions with the

UK on the issue — after pointedly disinviting Home Secretary Priti Patel from a meeting of European ministers at the weekend — but only once the "double talk" stopped in London.

He called for a "balanced" accord that would offer "real solutions" for dealing with highly organized trafficking networks often spread across France, Belgium, Germany and other countries. Darmanin insisted it could not be with France alone but all of the EU.

"We do not want a unilateral agreement," he said after a meeting chaired by President Emmanuel Macron.—AFP ■



British military assets have been deployed to assist the Border Patrol in their border enforcement activities. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

NEWS IN BRIEF

Duterte's chosen successor exits Philippines presidential race

PHILIPPINES President Rodrigo Duterte's chosen successor on Tuesday announced his withdrawal from the 2022 presidential race, saying it was "not yet my time".

Senator Christopher Go, a close aide to the president, entered the contest for the country's highest office two days before the 15 November deadline, after previously registering for the vice-presidential race.

His sudden exit narrows the field of candidates vying to replace Duterte, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second six-year term. He is running for the Senate.

"My family doesn't want it either so I thought maybe this is not yet my time," Go told reporters.—AFP ■

Former first lady set to become Honduras's first woman president

FIRST lady Xiomara Castro appeared set to become the first woman president of Honduras after taking a commanding lead over the ruling party candidate, partial election results showed on Monday.

With just over half of votes counted, the opposition leader had taken more than 53 per cent with a lead of almost 20 percentage points over the conservative National Party's Nasry Asfura, according to a National Electoral Council (CNE) live count.

Castro, whose husband Manuel Zelaya was deposed from the presidency in a coup in 2009, claimed victory late on Sunday, even as the CNE said no result will be announced until the last vote is counted.

"Good night, we've won," Castro told supporters, promising to lead "a reconciliation government" in a country wracked by violent crime, drug trafficking, rampant corruption and large-scale migration to the United States.—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

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

3. Social affairs

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

Myanmar billiards team to compete in Viet Nam SEA Games

MYANMAR billiards team will compete in the 31st SEA Games to be held in Viet Nam in next year May.

There will be four pool competitions and two carom competitions. Billiards will feature 10 types of competitions,

including two types of billiards events and two snooker tournaments, officials said.

The Myanmar Billiards Team will compete in individual billiards competitions, Doubles Snooker events, Individual snooker competition, Snooker

6 Red Tournament, Pool 9 Ball Individual and Pool 10 Ball Individual.

The Myanmar Billiards and Snooker team is under training with six tentatively selected players and plans to add some new players.

Myanmar Billiards Team players are taking training in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay and are preparing for success, officials said.

The Myanmar Billiards Team won two gold medals, one silver medal and three bronze

medals in the previous SEA Games in the Philippines in 2019.

The Myanmar billiards team was the most successful among the Myanmar sports teams in the 2019 SEA Games. —Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM



China is determined to pull off a smooth Olympic Games unmarred by Covid-19. Photo taken on 9 Jan 2019 shows the sand table of the National Speed Skating Hall, the venue for speed skating events of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, in Beijing, China. PHOTO: Xinhua/Bi Mingming

China says Omicron will 'lead to challenges' for Winter Olympics

CHINA warned Tuesday that the fast-spreading Omicron Covid-19 variant would cause challenges in hosting next February's Winter Olympics in Beijing.

Although China has largely quashed the coronavirus within its borders through travel restrictions and snap lockdowns, recurrent domestic outbreaks linked to the Delta variant have put the authorities on high alert. "I think it will definitely lead to challenges linked to prevention and control," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao

Lijian said, adding that Beijing "appreciates the efforts by South Africa in offering timely information" on the variant. "But China has a lot of experience in responding to Covid-19," Zhao added. "I firmly believe the Winter Olympics will be conducted smoothly."

China is determined to pull off a smooth Olympic Games unmarred by Covid-19, in what would be a decisive propaganda win for Beijing's zero-tolerance Covid strategy. Thousands of athletes, media and participants

arriving from overseas are required to enter a strict "closed-loop" bubble.

Organizers last month admitted that the virus would be the "biggest challenge" in hosting the Games. But health authorities said they had the means to cope with the new variant. "China has already done a good job of technical preparations" for the Omicron variant, said Xu Wenbo, head of the virus control institute at China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. — AFP ■

Messi wins Ballon d'Or for seventh time as Putellas crowned women's winner

LIONEL Messi admitted winning the Copa America with Argentina might have been the determining factor in him claiming the men's Ballon d'Or prize for the seventh time after a turbulent year, as Spain's Alexia Putellas took the women's award. Now 34, Messi pipped much-fancied rivals like Robert Lewandowski and Karim Benzema to take the award in a glittering ceremony on Monday in Paris, the city he now calls home after leaving boyhood club Barcelona for Paris Saint-Germain in August.

Despite his tearful goodbye from Barcelona and his relatively underwhelming start to life in France, the jury of journalists

from around the world rewarded him in particular for captaining Argentina to their first major international title since 1993. "Two years ago I thought I was coming into my final years but here I am again back here," said Messi, who won the last edition of the Ballon d'Or in 2019 before last year's awards were cancelled due to the pandemic. Messi also won in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and in 2015.

"People were starting to ask me when I was going to retire but now I am here in Paris and I am very happy," he said at the Chatelet Theatre in central Paris, where he was joined by his wife Antonella Rocuzzo and their three children. —AFP ■



Lionel Messi won his seventh Ballon d'Or after a year in which he captained Argentina to victory at the Copa America and left Barcelona for PSG. PHOTO: FRANCK FIFE/AFP