

# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. IX, No. 248, 13<sup>th</sup> Waning of Nattaw 1384 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Tuesday, 20 December 2022

## 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 PM Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla enjoy final match of SAC Chairman's Trophy ISR U-18 Women's Football Tourney hailing Diamond Jubilee Independence Day

**A**s a gesture of hailing the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day, the final match and awarding of the State Administration Council Chairman's Trophy Inter-State/Region Under-18 Women's Football Tournament took place at Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon, attended by SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla.

In the final match, Shan State and Mandalay Region poured out utmost efforts in putting pressure on each other to be able to secure the victory as both teams were powerhouses in the tournament. In the 5<sup>th</sup> minute, the Mandalay Region team scored an opening goal. After that, the match raised its tempo with reciprocal attacks. At the final whistle, the Mandalay Region team beat the Shan State team with a 2-1 win.

At the awarding ceremony, SAC members Lt-Gen Soe Htut, U Sai Lon Seng, U Moungh Har, Jeng Phang Naw Taung and Daw Aye Nu Sein presented honorary medals and cash awards to the best players in their respective positions.

**SEE PAGE-3**



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presents the trophy to the Mandalay Region team in the SAC Chairman's Trophy ISR U-18 Women's Football Tourney in marking Diamond Jubilee Independence Day in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

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## Five National Objectives of Diamond Jubilee Independence Day

1. To ensure cementing the discipline-flourishing genuine multiparty democratic system and build the Union based on democracy and federalism;
2. To utmost strive for ensuring prosperity of the nation and food sufficiency as national work processes;
3. To build a better State and socioeconomic life in accord with the theme "Keep Moving Forward to Achieve Our Goal" focusing on interests of the State and ethnic national people;
4. To initiate national solidarity and peace of the Union with a firm vow;
5. To successfully hold the free and fair multiparty democratic general elections and emerge an electoral system in which all ethnic nationals would participate proportionately.



The picture portrays a traditional donation of novitiation ceremony.

## 13 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 19 December, total figure rises to 633,568

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,568** after **13** new cases were reported on 19 December 2022 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **608,141** including **four** new recoveries.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at **19,488** on 19 December with no new deaths reported from the pandemic.

Daily laboratory examination showed decline of infection to less than one per cent for 34 successive days.

According to the research, it is found that people who have been vaccinated do not suffer severely from the disease, need not to be hospitalized and unlikely to die. If they have received booster shot, the death rates can be reduced more.

As such, the people need to follow the new normal way in living with COVID. Hence, all the people above five have to fully receive COVID-19 vaccination inoculated by the Ministry of Health free of charge. Six months after the vaccination, they have to take booster jabs at relevant health centres and ward/village administration offices without fail.

Moreover, they have to wear masks while in closed chambers and public places. They need to often wash hands with soap and water or the hand gel containing alcohol (at least 60 per cent) for 20 seconds.

People need to follow the social distancing rule and avoid the crowds as much as possible. While not wearing masks, if they cough and sneeze, they need to cover mouth and noses with elbows in line with the personal hygienic ways. COVID-19 information can be browsed on the internet page moh.gov.mm of the Ministry of Health. —MNA

## 3<sup>rd</sup> furniture design competition to be held

THE 3<sup>rd</sup> Furniture Design Competition will be held under the title of "Furniture Fits in the Open Air" under the leadership of the city of Hirashikawa, the city of photography in Hokkaido, Japan, and architect Mr Kuma Kengo.

Any citizen is allowed to participate in the furniture competition. Students under the age of 30 who are attending the relevant school (or university) can compete individually (or) as a group. The prizes to be awarded in the competition are one Kuma Kengo Prize, three Excellence Prizes, and six Consolation Prizes.

Those who want to partici-

pate in the competition can register for free, and at the time of applying, a clear description of the priority content of the design title, diagram, finished picture, CG model (or) photo etc., to be drawn horizontally on one page of an A3-size paper and sent as a pdf file.

A description of the design must be submitted in English (or) Japanese.

Among contestants, a total of 10 contestants will be selected to attend the award ceremony. Travel and accommodation expenses will be covered by the organizing committee.

Only one representative contestant will be invited to the award-giving ceremony for team contestants.

Those who wish to take part in the competition must register on the website <https://www.kagu.higa.shikawa.jp> by 28 February 2023.

Furniture design applications must be submitted by 31 May 2023.

For more information, contact the KAGU Design Competition Executive Committee Office, Mail: [official@kagu-higashikawa.jp](mailto:official@kagu-higashikawa.jp). —MNA/KZL

### MYANMAR GAZETTE

## Heads of Service Organizations confirmed and appointed

1. The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations on the expiry of a one-year probationary period.

Name	Appointment
(a) U Ye Yint Lwin	Director-General Office of the Union Election Commission Union Election Commission
(b) U Thein Swe	Director-General Department of Customs Ministry of Planning and Finance
(c) Dr Myint Myint Than	Director-General Department of Public Health Ministry of Health

2. The State Administration Council has appointed the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names on probation from the date they assume charge of their duties.

Name	Appointment
(a) Daw Khin Khin Thi	Director-General Department of Inspection Department of Inspection Office of the Auditor-General of the Union
(b) Daw Thanda Lay	Director-General Deputy Director-General Department of Administration, Training and Research Department of Inspection Office of the Auditor-General of the Union

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## SAC Chairman PM Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla enjoy final match of SAC Chairman's Trophy ISR U-18 Women's Football Tourney hailing Diamond ...



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla and dignitaries watch the final match between the Mandalay Region team and the Shan State team in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

### FROM PAGE-1

SAC member Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun presented individual medals, honorary prizes and cash awards to the fourth prize-winning Kachin State team, SAC member Admiral Tin Aung San to third

prize-winning Ayeyawady Region team and SAC member General Mya Tun Oo to second prize-winning Shan State team respectively.

SAC Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo presented individual medals to players from the first prize-winning

Mandalay Region team.

The Senior General and his wife presented cash awards and championship trophy to the first prize-winning Mandalay Region team and cordially greeted the players.

With the aim of improving the Myanmar football sports

standard and emerging outstanding and talented new generation women footballers from regions and states, the Department of Sports and Physical Education under the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and the Myanmar Football Federation joined hands

in organizing the aforesaid football tournament as of 5 December to mark the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day. Yesterday, the Mandalay Region team clinched the title of the tournament with a 2-1 win over the Shan State team. — MNA

## “Hlapa Thayar Pyi Myanmar” colour photo competition award-giving ceremony held



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn views the photo display at the event yesterday.

THE award-giving ceremony of the “Hlapa Thayar Pyi Myanmar” (Beautiful and Pleasant Myanmar) colour photo contest marking Diamond Jubilee Independence Day was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

It was attended by Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs U Saw Tun Aung Myint, Deputy Ministers Daw Than Than Linn, U Ye Tint, U Zaw Win and Dr Soe Win, Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Myint Soe, Permanent Secretaries, departmental heads, panels of judges and winners.

Speaking at the event, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn said the photo competition was organized to expose the essence of independence. A total of 199 contestants participated in the contest with 751 entry photos.

The photos are historic records as well as art. The people would have the desire to appreciate the independence and sovereignty and be proud of their country through the photos.

The judges selected the best photos in line with the judging criteria and the prize-winning photos will be exhibited in good activities for the country and the public.

The officials then gave prizes to the winners and the first-prize winner U Sai Tun Nay Hlaing expressed words of thanks on behalf of the recipients.

Afterwards, they took a documentary group photo.

The Union Ministers, Deputy Ministers and officials viewed the award-winning photos and displayed photos at the event. — MNA/KTZH



## Quick Win can result from rice sector promotion

- As rice is the staple food, it is the most important crop for socioeconomic development of our country.
- State Administration Council is prioritizing the export promotion activities for national economic development.
- In exporting promotion programmes to further boost products that are globally marketable and suitable with the country's weather and geographical conditions, rice sector promotion is a Quick Win within a short period.

*(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the opening ceremony of Myanmar Rice Conference-2022 on 6 October 2022)*

## SAC member inspects Nyaungdon Township development work



MEMBER of the State Administration Council Mahn Nyein Maung visited to Nyaungdon Township, Maubin District, Ayeyawady Region yesterday. First, he paid homage to the Atula Marazein bronze Buddha image in Nyaungdon Township and then he paid homage to Agga Maha Pandita Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Bhaddanta Osadha Bhivamsa

The SAC member kowtows The Atula Marazein bronze statue of Buddha in Nyaungdon Township.

of the Ponnamarama Zay monastery and offered alms.

After that, SAC member Mahn Nyein Maung inspected bridge construction site in No 1 ward. U Kyaw Zin Htwe, director of the bridge construction special task force 1, explained the purpose of building the bridge across the panhlaing River, and the SAC member gave the necessary instructions.

Next, the SAC member arrived at the Shwehintha Shwegyin-monastery branch in Kyeinpinsel village and he paid homage and made donations to presiding monk U Pannajota.-MNA/KZW

## Coord meeting on Youth and Literary Arts Festival in commemoration of Diamond Jubilee Independence Day held

THE coordination meeting on the Youth and Literary Arts Festival in commemoration of Diamond Jubilee Independence Day was held at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Chairman of the Youth and Literary Arts Festival Organizing Committee Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Tint, Working Committee Member Nay Pyi Taw Council Member U Myint Soe, permanent secretaries, departmental staff and invitees attended the meeting.

First, Deputy Minister U Ye Tint said that eight ministries that will set up exhibition booths can start their preparations for the festival on 23

December, that employees of ministries, entertainment groups, study groups, students and supervising teachers from basic education schools will be invited to the festival and that special attention must be paid to security for visitors to the festival.

Organizing Committee Member NPT Council Member U Myint Soe also took part in the discussion. Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung of the Ministry of Information, presented programmes of literary and artistic exhibitions and measures to be taken by the working committee. Then, attendees made a sector-wise discussion about successfully holding the exhibition and the



The MoI deputy minister chairs the coordination meeting on the Youth and Literary Arts Festival for Diamond Jubilee Independence Day.

deputy minister gave a concluding remark.

“Kye Myat Thaw Myan-

mar”, “Thu Kyun Ma Khan Pyi” and “Nga Ba” movies will be shown at Myanmar Inter-

national Convention Centre II from 26 to 28 December. —MNA/CT

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Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kye Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

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# Statements released on inhumane mine attack of PDF terrorists, subordinates of NUG, CRPH on Pansodan-Dala Cherry 2 ferry

A total of 17 innocent passengers were wounded on 18 December when a mine explosion of PDF terrorists, subordinates of NUG and CRPH occurred on the Cherry 2 ferry heading to Dala from Pansodan jetty. The Young Men's Buddhist Association-YMBA (Central), Myanmar Press Council, Myanmar Writers' Association and Myanmar Comedian Association released statements strongly condemning the attack. — MNA / KTZH



## Statement of Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA)(Central)

19 December 2022

1. The Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) has learnt that PDF terrorists, subordinates of NUG and CRPH exploded an improvised bomb on the Cherry 2 ferry heading to Dala from Pansodan jetty on Sunday evening 18 December.
2. A total of 17 innocent passengers were injured in the explosion perpetrated by PDF terrorists.
3. The Young Men's Buddhist Association expressed its strong condemnation of this inhumane act of terrorists targeting innocent passengers.

Young Men's Buddhist Association



## Myanmar Press Council Statement 7/2022

19 December 2022

1. Some terrorists exploded the Inland Water Transport's Cherry 2 ferry that carried passengers from Pansodan jetty to Dala jetty using a homemade mine at about 6:40 pm on 18 December.
2. The council learnt that 17 innocent people were wounded in that inhumane act of terrorists.
3. It is clear that the attack on Sunday was launched targeting innocent civilians who are struggling for their daily lives and so the council strongly condemns and opposes any terrorist groups that are behind the act of terror.

Myanmar Press Council



## Statement of Myanmar Writers Association

19 December 2022

1. The Myanmar Writers Association has learnt the state-owned passenger ferry "Cherry 2" was exploded by PDF terrorists while heading to Dala jetty from Pansodan jetty of Mithazu Ward in Botahtaung Township of Yangon Region at about 6:40 pm on 18 December. A total of 17 innocent people were injured in the blast and the victims were taken to Yangon General Hospital for medical treatment.
2. The association issued this statement condemning and opposing PDF terrorists who are committing mine attacks and wounding innocent passengers.

Myanmar Writers Association



## Statement of Myanmar Comedians Association

19 December 2022

A total of 17 passengers were injured in a bomb explosion on Pansodan-Dala Cherry 2 ferry in Yangon committed by PDF terrorists.

The Myanmar Comedians Association expressed strong condemnation of this inhumane act of terrorists targeting innocent civilians.

Myanmar Comedians Association

## Statement of Myanmar Music Association (Central)

19 December 2022

1. Myanmar Music Association (Central) are sorrowful about the news that 17 innocent passengers were wounded in a mine explosion of PDF terrorists on the Cherry 2 ferry heading to Dala from Pansodan jetty in Mithazu Ward of Botahtaung Township in Yangon at about 6:40 pm on 18 December.
2. The association expressed strong condemnation of this inhumane act of terrorists using the homemade mine by PDF terrorists targeting innocent passengers on Cherry 2 ferry of Inland Water Transport's Cherry 2 ferry.

Myanmar Music Association (Central)

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## Public Notice

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

PFP, and the people are urged to cooperate in the operations.

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



# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## MR changes schedule for Yangon–Mawlamyine express trains



THE schedule of the Yangon-Mawlamyine express trains will be changed starting 20 December, according to Myanmar Railways.

The No 81 Up train will leave Yangon at 6:30 am and arrive in Mawlamyine at 4 pm and the No 82 Down train will leave Maw-

The Yangon-Mawlamyine express train.

lamyine at 8:30 am and arrive in Yangon at 6 pm. Trains will stop at Toegyauungale, Bago, Theinzayet, Kyaikto, Toungson, Hninpale, Thaton and Paung stations.

In addition, the No 89 Up train will leave Yangon at 7:45 am and arrive in Mawlamyine at 5:45 pm. The No 90 Down train will leave Mawlamyine at 9:15 am and reach Yangon at 7:15 pm. The 89 Up and 90 Down

trains will stop at Toegyauungale, Bago, Waw, Theinzayet, Moppalin, Kyaikkatha, Thaton, Mayangon, Toungson, Hninpale, Theinseik, Yinnyein, Zinkyaik, Paung and Mottama stations.

Ticket prices are K7,050 for the upper class and K3,550 for the ordinary class.

The upper-class tickets will be sold three days in advance and ordinary tickets will be sold one day prior. — TWA/MKKS

## MoC greenlights import of vehicles with left-hand drive manufactured in 2022

THE import of Vehicles with left-hand drive manufactured in 2022 for personal use will be allowed in 2023, the Ministry of Commerce released a statement dated 16 December.

“The vehicles produced in 2022-2023 are given the go-ahead for imports. This means new luxury cars will be allowed to be imported. Alternatively, electric vehicles (EVs) are also given green light,” U Min Nyunt, a car dealer, told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

According to the 2023 auto import policy, the models for private vehicles are set to be 2022 and 2023, while commercial passenger buses and trucks manufactured in 2019-2023 are allowed to be imported.

The model year for fire

engines, machinery and ambulances manufactured in 2014 or later are allowed for import.

Only vehicles with left-hand drive can be imported under the 2023 vehicle import policy.

Heavy equipment that cannot be driven on public roads such as excavators,

bulldozers, wheel loaders and tower cranes are allowed to be brought into the country as long as they are 15 years old or less.

The Ministry of Commerce releases an auto import policy every year. What an unexpected event is model year is only one year apart and 2022 will

be the oldest model to be issued an import permit for private cars for non-commercial purposes. So, the new models and EVs are allowed to flow into the domestic automobile market. That being so, the market is expected to be active. The prices of the old-model cars are likely to drop next year,” Ko Wai Tun, a car dealer, shared his opinion in an interview with the GNLM.

Some import policies for auto vehicles have remained unchanged. It is the yearly issued auto policy with regulations on model years, as per the statement signed by Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo of the Ministry of Commerce.—TWA/EMM



Vehicles being discharged from a ship at an international port.



MNA launched the Yangon-Chiang Mai-Yangon flight on 9 December at Yangon International Airport.

## Yangon-Chiang Mai-Yangon flight schedule to be extended

THE Yangon-Chiang Mai-Yangon direct flight will be extended to three times a week from 21 December, according to Myanmar National Airlines (MNA).

Beginning 9 December, the Yangon-Chiang Mai-Yangon direct flight is operated on Fridays and Sundays. Now at the request of passengers, there will also be one more flight on Wednesday, starting 21 December.

On Wednesdays, the flight will depart from Yangon at 6:30 am and arrive in Chiang Mai at 8:10 am local time. Then, it will leave Chiang Mai at 9:15 am and arrive back in Yangon at 10:50 am.

Myanmar National Airlines announced that the ticket price is 85 US\$ for a single and 160 US\$ for a round trip. — TWA/KZW

## Prices of new chilli pepper, onion drop

CHILLI pepper prices went down after new chillies entered the Yangon market in mid-December 2022, Ko Hla Han, an owner of a chilli pepper brokerage house, told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

On 10 December, new Sinyukyung bell peppers entered the Yangon market at a rate of K28,000 per viss. The price fell to K25,000-K26,000 per viss on 13 December and K21,000 per viss on 16 December.

Prices of long chilli pepper and Moehtaung chilli pep-

per from Shan State fetched K14,500-K15,000 and K15,000 per viss. The price of Moehtaung chilli pepper from various regions ranged from K13,500 to K14,000 per viss. Chilli prices continue to be above K10,000 per viss even though new chillies have come into the market.

Nevertheless, new long chilli prices dropped to K2,000-K3,000 per viss compared to the previous months. Similarly, prices of Moehtaung chilli pepper and bell pepper decreased to around K5,000 per viss.

Onion, edible oil, chilli pepper and rice hit record prices in the Yangon commodity market since mid-2022. Although their prices except that of rice have dropped significantly, they are still higher than those in previous years.

Dealers who keep new monsoon onions in their hands are facing losses in the high-priced onion market due to the decrease in their prices.

Chilli peppers in the market were not available at the same price before the new chilli pepper came out, according to the



A grocery is seen in the market.

regional brokers. However, chilli pepper growers are earning more than usual because the prices

of chilli pepper are still higher than in the same period in typical years. — TWA/CT



# LOCAL BUSINESS

## Muse border traders expect abolition of driver-substitution system

TRUCK owners are calling for an end to the driver-substitution system in Muse border like Lweje.

Prior to 16 May 2022, China banned Myanmar trucks and drivers to enter its side owing to the COVID-19 protocols and only Chinese short-haul drivers were allowed to transport the goods. Thereafter, Myanmar trucks are given the go-ahead for border-crossing through the Kyinsankyawt-Wang Ding trade channel under the driver-substitution system starting from 16 May 2022.

“We cannot use our vehicles for transport. Only the driver-substitution system is allowed for now. This system is expected to put an end only when Mang Wein and other borders linking to the Muse border are reopened,” said U Min Thein, vice-chair of Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

On 10 December 2022, the driver-substitution system was abolished at the Lweje crossing

for cross-border trade between Myanmar and China. That is why traders and truck owners engaged in the Muse border trade zone are anticipating it.

At present, there is no responsibility and accountability if goods are damaged under the driver-substitution system. Therefore, Myanmar exporters choose short-haul driver services and bear high freight costs.

“We have to let Chinese drivers drive our trucks. There are problems like tyre defects, damage and car battery theft. So, freight forwarders are forced to hire short-haul drivers due to a lack of guarantee in the driver-substitution system. If this system is cancelled, we can directly go on the China side and save high short-haul driver costs,” U Min Thein elaborated.

Furthermore, it will ease traffic and facilitate trade, truck owners said.

China shut down all crossings linking to the Muse border



Myanmar has opened five border trade posts with China: Muse, Lweje, Kampaiti, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung. The majority of the trade is carried out through the Muse border.

amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the checkpoints, Kyinsankyawt has resumed trading activity from 26 November 2021. Myanmar daily delivers rice, broken rice, pulses, rubber, watermelon, fishery products, chilli pepper and other food commod-

ities to China through Kyinsankyawt with about 100 trucks and building materials, electrical appliances, pharmaceuticals, fertilizer, household goods and industrial raw materials are imported into the country with 40 trucks.

Myanmar has opened five border trade posts with China: Muse, Lweje, Kampaiti, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung. The majority of the trade is carried out through the Muse border, the Ministry of Commerce’s data indicated. —NN/EMM

## Palm oil wholesale reference price down by K100 per viss



Local consumers are seen lining up to buy palm oil at the reference price.

THE wholesale reference rate of palm oil in the Yangon market fell by K100 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes) from the last week’s price, according to the Supervisory Committee on edible oil import and distribution.

The price stood at K4,515 per viss in the week ending 18 October. Then, the reference price declined to K4,415 per viss in the week from 19 to 25 December, indicating a decrease of K100 from last week’s rate.

The Supervisory Committee on edible oil import and distribution under the Ministry

of Commerce has been closely observing the FOB prices in Malaysia and Indonesia including transport costs, tariffs and banking services, and issuing the wholesale market reference rate for edible oil weekly.

Despite the reference price, the current market price is too high.

If those edible oil retailers and wholesalers are found overcharging, storing inventory intentionally and attempting unscrupulous action to manipulate the market, they will face legal action under the Specific Goods

Tax Law, MoC released a statement.

The Ministry of Commerce is striving for consumers not to worry over the supply of edible oil. The ministry is also trying to secure edible oil sufficiency, supervise the market to offer reasonable prices to consumers and maintain price stability.

At present, mobile market trucks operated by oil importing companies, in coordination with Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers’ Association, were back to business in some townships on 17 July to offer palm oil at a subsidized rate. They sell palm oil at K4,400 per viss to consumers directly. However, there are limited sources of supply although they directly sell palm oil at a reference rate depending on the volume quota.

The domestic consumption of edible oil is estimated at 1 million tonnes per year. The local cooking oil production is just about 400,000 tonnes. To meet the oil sufficiency in the domestic market, about 700,000 tonnes of cooking oil are yearly imported through Malaysia and Indonesia. — NN/EMM

## Prices of fuel oil, gold and dollar on 19 December 2022

### Fuel Oil Price (Yangon)

Octane 92	K1,890
Octane 95	K1,975
Diesel	K2,420
Premium Diesel	K2,500

All of the prices are based on per litre.

### Gold Price

The reference price of high-purity gold set by YGEA	K2,112,000 per tical
High-purity gold in the gold market	K2,675,000 per tical

### Dollar Price

A US dollar set by the Central Bank of Myanmar	K2,100
A US dollar in the forex market	K2,820 to K2,840

The above prices may change from time to time.

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# OPINION

## Create safe and secure workplaces for insured workers

**T**HE Social Security Board under the Ministry of Labour conducted four reforms namely Information Technological Reform, Medical Reform, Administrative Reform and Legal Reform to become a reliable service organization for insured workers, offer better healthcare, the main requirement of employers and employees and facilitate the fast flow of benefits.

The SSB is drafting a strategic plan under the Social Insurance system and providing 15 SSB benefits of two insurance systems out of six to the employees, the majority of who are working in

Workers are playing a key role in the manufacturing sector of the nation. Relevant workplaces need to turn out skilled workers to handle modern machinery. Reciprocally, workplace authorities and employers need to create chances for those workers to be able to enjoy social security in their lives. Hence, the government, the employers and the employees should implement the social security system in order to contribute to the insured workers pouring out their strengths in manufacturing at full capacity. If so, various kinds of SSB will be beneficial for the workers.

Workers can get the benefits such as health treatment, maternity, funeral, temporary disability benefit, permanent disability benefit and survivors' benefits for decease owing to occupation depending on the monthly SSB fees.

As an act of taking care of insured workers, the SSB implements the Social Security Project providing health care and benefits to 1.3 million insured workers in 116 townships at three workers' hospitals, 99 SSB offices of regions/states/districts/townships, 96 township clinics, 57 departmental clinics, 12 free for services payment clinics with PPS system, 25 capitation payment clinics, eight obstetric clinics, one traditional medicinal clinics and also offering treatment with two mobile medical units, and a total of 89,949 insured workers get treatment at departments to date.

Workers are playing a key role in the manufacturing sector of the nation. Relevant workplaces need to turn out skilled workers to handle modern machinery. Reciprocally, workplace authorities and employers need to create chances for those workers to be able to enjoy social security in their lives. Hence, the government, the employers and the employees should implement the social security system in order to contribute to the insured workers pouring out their strengths in manufacturing at full capacity. If so, various kinds of SSB will be beneficial for the workers.

the country's manufacturing sector; using the SSB contributions of employer, employee and government under the 2012 Social Security Law for providing healthcare services and cash benefits for the insured workers.

The insured workers are a driving force to accelerate the productivity of relevant ministries. The SSB is responsible for fulfilling the needs of life safety for those workers. Consequently, they can focus on workplaces without the need to consider daily issues, especially the health problems of their families.

Currently, two mobile medical units of the Social Security Board are providing healthcare services at its affiliated ministries like the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Electric Power and the Ministry of Immigration and Population as a gesture of hailing the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day.

Moreover, insured workers can get the benefits such as health treatment, maternity, funeral, temporary disability benefit, permanent disability benefit and survivors' benefits for decease owing to occupation depending on the monthly SSB fees.

# The Importance of Peace in Health Sector Development Perspective

By Dr Than Lwin Tun

**H**EALTH is defined as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization-WHO, 1948). The Global Health for Peace Initiative (GHPI) aims to position health as an influencer of peace and WHO as a sustaining peace actor through conflict-sensitive health interventions, deliver peace outcomes in conflict-affected areas, and contribute to WHO's Triple Billion goals. The GHPI considers different levels or components of peace; "Peace" as political peace, peace processes and agreements at high levels and "Peace" as social cohesion, resilience and trust at the com-

munity level.

**Why the GHPI:** Because 80 per cent of WHO's humanitarian caseload, as well as 70 per cent of disease outbreaks that WHO responds to take place in Fragile, Conflict-affected and Vulnerable (FCV) settings – because using a conflict-sensitivity approach avoids "doing harm", increases project acceptance, and helps mitigate risks, because health interventions can make a real difference: health being often viewed as a "common good" by all sides of a conflict, it allows health initiatives to serve as a starting point for bringing people together, because the Health for Peace approach strengthens the sustainability of our interventions and results through

dialogue, participation, inclusiveness, and trust building and because changes are happening at the global policy level, such as with the promotion of the UN Sustaining Peace agenda and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN).

**How to implement the Health for Peace approach:** The GHPI promotes and supports the development of health programmes and we need to consider step by step the following: analyze conflict and peace factors, actors and dynamics, analyze how they interact with our interventions, "Do no harm" – Design interventions that are sensitive to conflict dynamics, drivers, and actors, and seek ways to contribute to peace out-

comes while pursuing health objectives (peace-responsiveness).

We would like to mention examples of peace-responsive programming like the improvement of social cohesion and resilience at the local level, improvement of citizen-state cohesion and reducing exclusion, increased trust between conflicting parties and facilitation of inter-state collaboration (health diplomacy on health governance and cooperation).

Health and peace are inter-related. In the words of the WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros, "there cannot be health without peace, and there cannot be peace without health".

**Innovative Approach:** what is new and innovative about the

Health for Peace approach is that health programmes can be used not only to work in conflict (achieving health benefits in conflict situations) but also to work on conflict. In this way, the GHPI builds on past WHO health programmes which looked at delivering health interventions with direct health benefits in conflict settings, such as the WHO – Health as a Bridge for Peace projects in the 1980s and 1990s.

Peace-relevant health interventions can help improve the prospects for local peace in at least four ways: the first as a minimum, by mainstreaming conflict-sensitivity into humanitarian analyses and assessments, recruitment, programming and monitoring and evaluation, the

second by working to improve trust and communication between citizens and the state by making health care more accessible and equitable, the third by building collaboration between different sides in a conflict on common topics like health governance and the delivery of care, and finally by improving social cohesion at the local level through community healing or inclusive, health promotion initiatives.

The GHPI is the WHO's contribution to the growing architecture linking humanitarian assistance, long-term sustainable development (through the Sustainable Development Goals) and peacebuilding.

The COVID-19 outbreak

has demonstrated that health emergencies, or the responses to them, can be a trigger or an aggravating factor for conflict. However, it has also demonstrated that health programmes can be powerful enablers in the peace-building process and carefully chosen health activities can deliver peace dividends in addition to health benefits. The GHPI brings this into focus and emphasizes that the connection between health and peace is real, powerful and essential to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of health programmes.

Health interventions are particularly well-suited for

peacebuilding because caring for the sick and injured is considered both a neutral activity and a universal good. The Health for Peace approach strengthens the sustainability of our interventions and results through dialogue, participation, inclusiveness, and trust building.

In addition, if we work collectively with team spirit and a health-for-peace approach, we will never ever fail in our endeavour and we will be successful in effectively serving the population of our country.

Reference:

WHO; Global Health for Peace Initiative (GHPI)

## COVID-19 vaccines lag in rural, underdeveloped areas: Study

**V**ACCINE resistance is just one of the reasons why fewer people have been vaccinated against coronavirus in some parts of the United States.

A study in the journal *Lancet Regional Health* found that wide disparities in healthcare coverage, particularly in rural areas, hampered vaccination efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings point to a hidden divide in America between those with ready geographic and financial access to doctors, hospitals and clinics and those without.

### Availability of health care

University of Cincinnati epidemiologist Diego Cuadros led an international team of researchers investigating disparities in vaccination rates across 2,417 US counties. They found that the availability of health care resources influences vaccine coverage.

The pandemic has killed more than 6.3 million people worldwide, including more than one million people in the United States alone. When it comes to the country's comparatively high rate of mortality, researchers point to failures of

vaccination compared to other countries.

Cuadros, an associate professor of geography in UC's College of Arts and Sciences, said the rate of vaccination varies widely across the United States. While some people may be reluctant to get vaccinated because of unfounded fears or misinformation, that tells only part of the story, he said.

"During the pandemic we realized the huge healthcare disparity we have in this country," he said.

Barriers to health care access include cost, insurance coverage and transportation.

### An unwillingness to be vaccinated

In national surveys, about 20 per cent of the US population has reported an unwillingness to be vaccinated. This does not account for the larger unvaccinated population. While more than half of the population in every US state is now fully vaccinated, some states are much further ahead than others.

Cuadros said areas with low vaccination saw the highest rates of mortality from the virus during the delta and omicron waves, demonstrating the ter-

rrible impact that health disparities can have on underserved communities.

Co-author Neil MacKinnon, provost for Augusta University in Georgia, said the pandemic caused enormous disruptions to healthcare services even in

places with ready access. People saw their doctors much less frequently, leading to more undiagnosed cases of cancer and other diseases.

"Our study demonstrates that these disruptions were not uniform across the United States," MacKinnon said.

"Many counties, especially those in rural areas, experienced significant disruptions in health care, including the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine itself."

### Underserved communities

The new analysis found that people in underserved communities were as much as 34 per cent less likely to be vaccinated against COVID-19. These included counties in Nevada, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska where vaccination rates were lowest.

"America's healthcare system has improvements to be made to address historical disparities that, as shown in our study, can influence individual-level decision-making," study co-author and UC geography student Santiago Escobar said. "Our study suggests clear disparities that need to be addressed."

Co-author Phillip Coule, M.D., chief medical officer for Augusta University Health in Georgia, said the study underscores the impact of vaccination in fighting diseases like COVID-19.

"Those responsible for guiding health policy need to consider issues such as vaccination rates, access to care and health disparities when evaluating outcomes from COVID-19 and other conditions," he said.



Medical workers work at a drive-through COVID-19 testing site in Dallas, Texas, the United States, 21 March 2020. PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ DAN TIAN/XINHUA



**BAY INFERENCE:** According to the observations at (17:30 hrs MST) today, the low pressure area over South Bay of Bengal and adjoining East Equatorial Indian Ocean still persists. Weather is cloudy over the South Andaman Sea and South Bay of Bengal and a few cloud to partly cloudy over the North Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 20 December 2022:** Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing and Mandalay regions and Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Strong easterly winds with rough seas are likely at time in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthyai Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly winds may reach (35-40) mph. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (8-10) 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:** Slight decrease of night temperatures in Eastern Myanmar Areas.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2022:** Partly cloudy.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2022:** Partly cloudy.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2022:** Partly cloudy.

### EARTHQUAKE NEWS

A slight earthquake of magnitude (3.1) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about 6 miles east-southeast of Tada-U), latitude 21.78°N, longitude 96.06°E, depth (12) kilometres, about (17)miles south-southwest of Mandalay seismological observatory was recorded at (06)hr (34)min (19)sec MST on 19 December 2022.

SOURCE: ANI



# Atrocious Terrorist Incident of NUG/PDF in Tamu Township

BY Min Khant

**A**TRENDING news report on social media that attracts the people's attention is a video clip about an inhumane murder crime committed by members of the so-called PDF, affiliates of NUG declared as a terrorist group. **At the beginning of December, the final month of 2022, there emerged a video clip in which an innocent young woman was violently beaten while she was handcuffed and repeatedly shot in her head to death on the middle of a public road by PDF terrorists from Tamu township. The video clip not only went viral on social media but did catch the attention of international news agencies.**

The perpetrators of terrorists from the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Tamu PDF claimed responsibility for the hideous murder in an interview made by themselves. Moreover, the announcement of the NUG terrorist group claiming a probe will be carried out into the case simply confesses the terrorists of their armed wing PDF actually committed the crime. As they released a statement on social media admitting that they actually committed the grisly and inhumane murder, the perpetrators of the crime are indisputably the NUG and its affiliate members of Tamu PDF.

The young woman who got brutally murdered in the terrorist act was found out to be a 22-year-old general worker living in the Myoma (12) ward

of Tamu. The victim was reportedly abducted by PDF terrorists on her way back home from work on 8 May 2022 and the date of the murder was not discerned exactly. The emergence of such a video clip is not the first time as a similar video clip also appeared in June 2022. In the video clip, a woman called Ma Nandar with hands tied behind her back was forced to kneel and chopped to death with a machete. Two months after in September, on social media emerged another video clip in which PDF members were beheading a woman, who was blindfolded, with hands tied behind her back. They alleged the woman was a military informant before killing her.

**In the third video clip recently going viral on social media, the young woman had denied until her last breath that she was not a Dalan (informant). Against the backdrop of such situations, the number of atrocious murder crimes committed by PDF terrorists as per the instruction of NUG might be much higher than we can think of. Even some Myanmar people remark that such inhumanities are far worse than the acts of terrorists from the Middle East region. The brutalities and inhumanities of the so-called PDF terrorist groups, who got instilled with ideologies of extremism in Myanmar's political change, have created an atmosphere of loathing among people for almost two years.**

Despite that, the Western bloc led by the United States, with a reason to put one-sided political pressure on the current administration of Myanmar, has taken all possible measures to cover up and prevent the heinous acts of PDF terrorists from reaching widely among Myanmar people and international communities by using various means of manpower, finance and media.

**Reviewing the situation, international communities**

**and individuals should take heed of the fact that the Western bloc is clouding the judgement on and misinforming about Myanmar by using the power of finance, manpower, technology and media. There are many individuals and organizations out there engaging with and supporting or abstaining from the recognition of chaotic NUG and PDF terrorist groups crowned with all kinds of cruelties and there-**

缅甸群众抗议PDF当街杀害一名22岁女教师

缅甸实皆省德穆镇的公路上，有一名叫玛埃马吞的女教师遭到人民保卫军（PDF）当街杀害。



12月4日中午，实皆省吉灵庙镇的群众聚集，向PDF、民族团结政府（NUG）抗议。

中午11时许，德穆镇街子4保也有群众聚

## Innocent woman in Tamoo Township

RFM : Yangon : 3rd December 2022

terrorists Group have been killing an innocent poor young



BREAKING NEWS

NLD/ PDF terrorists are brutally and inhumanely torturing and killing an innocent young woman on a middle of asphalt road in Tamoo township, Sagaing Division on 2nd December 2022. According to the interrogative and abusive words against the victimized young woman, the poor young woman was being accused as "a spy or an informer" to the security forces while her two hands were tied. The poor young woman very

## NLD/PDF Terrorists Brutally Tortured And Killed An Innocent Woman In Tamoo Township



fore, I wonder what attitudes to such acts of terrorism they would take.

As a response to the hideous terrorist incident, people from Kalay township demonstrated by holding placards that read 'We don't want PDF murders and terrorists' and 'oppose terrorist groups of CRPH, NUG and PDF'. Similarly, people from Tamu township also demonstrated against the PDF terrorists by holding placards that read, 'Rest in peace Ma Aye Mar Tun, who got violently killed', 'Fall of PDF terrorists - our cause', 'Oppose any act of terrorism' and so on.

**Likewise, on social media, all people, regardless of political colours, denounced in a single overtone against the terrorist acts of PDF. However, fewer reported such incidents. Moreover, it is notably observed that subversive media outlets particularly the ones supported by the Western bloc under various labels have not reported on or described the inhumane acts of PDF terrorists. Only BBC perfunctorily described a news report stating that NUG would carry out a probe into the crime. The US Embassy in Yangon, interfering in Myanmar's internal affairs and releasing many**

statements, was then found to be blind and deaf to the case.

Moreover, it is amazing to witness that such diplomatic missions to Myanmar, that are releasing various statements condemning the rule-based legal actions of security force members against the terrorist groups by comparing with human rights norms and values, are now burying their heads in the sand and literally ignore the undeniable terrorist acts of NUG/PDF. No matter how the unscrupulous ones remain blind and deaf, everyone who witnesses such terrorist acts is saddened by the deaths of the victims who got killed for no reason.

Therefore, the voices of Myanmar people who do not want terrorism and admire the truth can be seen on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and VK as follows.

**I also like to highlight some provisions and definitions of terrorism set by the United Nations and other powerful countries. In the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly (49/60) on 9 December 1994, a point of declaration describes terrorism as "Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular**



The remote mine attack by NUG/PDF that killed an innocent toddler described in Telegram channels.



The case of Ma Aye Mar Tun inhumanely and brutally killed by NUG/PDF terrorists gone viral on VK.



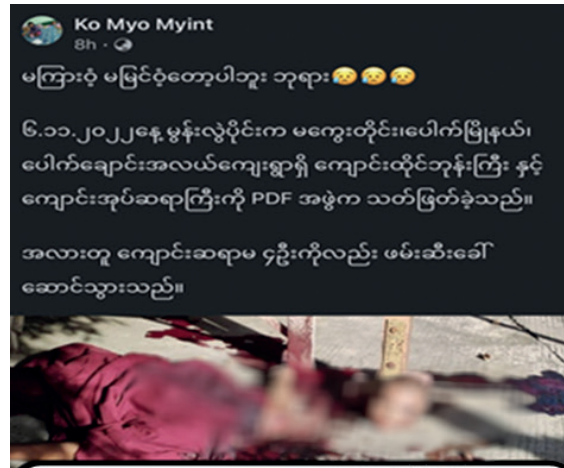
persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them.” Therefore, terrorism purports to be the criminal acts intended to provoke a state of terror in the general public with any reason of political, racial and religious or any other nature.

The definition of terrorism by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the University of Maryland is also notable. The GTD defines terrorism as ‘Acts of violence by non-state actors, perpetrated against civilian populations, intended to cause fear, in order to achieve a political objective’.

In the overall review of the definitions of terrorism mentioned above, the acts of threatening or targeted killings of innocent civilians or non-combatants, to provoke fear among the general public rather

than seeking a political solution through peaceful political means, can be clearly seen as the acts of terrorism recognized by all societies around the globe. Even an ordinary person can see the acts of PDF terrorists are merely targeted assassinations and extrajudicial killings of innocent civilians or non-combatants. That is just terrorism far worse than human rights violations.

In the nature of the global political order of a zero-sum game, we should consider and be aware of the fact that some interest groups are installing radicalism and extremism into the Southeast Asian and Asia-Pacific regions based on the diversities of politics, races and religions. The interest groups are apparently willing to manipulate and create a volatile situation in the Southeast Asian and Asia-Pacific regions including Myanmar which holds a strategic geopolitical location. Accordingly, they are exerting all-round



The case of Buddhist monk U Tay Zeinta brutally killed by NUG/PDF terrorists found spreading on Facebook.



The arson attacks to villages by NUG/PDF terrorists found spreading on Twitter.

pressure on the State Administration Council government that temporarily assumed the State’s responsibilities as per the State Constitution without accommodating their manipulation. On the other hand, for the mere intention to build pressure on the State government, it is quite ugly to perceive their attempts to

cover up the terrorism and acts of NUG/PDF as though they know nothing about it.

However that may be, the case of terrorizing and murdering a 22-year-old young woman from Tamu township is an acute alert for the society of Myanmar, the region and the whole world as well. Moreover, we should also heed the fact that similar

problems might break out in the region if we all fail to stop such demonstrations of wrongdoing. For that reason, I hereby urge the peaceable people, to prevent and stop together the NUG’s course of terrorism by finding out the realities of terrorism doctrine and the inhumanities of NUG/PDF groups.

## Traffickers sentenced to jail for human trafficking

THE Mahaangmyay District Court sentenced two traffickers to 13 years imprisonment with labour on 16 December under Section 24 for their role in trying to sell a girl to a Chinese man.

The victim, Ma..., aged 20, from Pyigyidagun Township, was persuaded to work in China with a high salary. But the victim was brought to China and forced to be marriage with

a Chinese man by Ma Thwel Thwe (aka) Ma Thwe (aka) Ma Khaing Oo from Wakema township in Ayeyawady region and Ma Thida Aye (aka) Ma Datha from Pyigyidagun township in Mandalay region.

The traffickers were prosecuted at the Pyigyidagun Myoma police station under Sections 24/32 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law. — MNA/MKKS

## Drugs seized in Kawkareik, Monghsat townships

A combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force stopped and searched a motorbike driven by Kaw Soe Lin (aka) Mala at the Kawkareik (Tadakyoe) combined checkpoint at 1 pm on 18 December and seized 5,850 stimulant tablets.



Two offenders are seen along with seized drugs and a motorbike.

At 3 pm on the same day, Myanmar Police Force examined a motorbike driven by Sai Tun Tit accompanied by Shaehla on the Mogok-Monghsat Road in Monghsat township and found 8,730 stimulant tablets.

Those offenders have been prosecuted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. — MNA/MKKS

## Illegal foodstuffs, consumer goods, industrial materials, car parts and vehicles confiscated

AN on-duty team under the supervision of the Customs Department conducted inspections on 17 December at the Mayanchaung Permanent checkpoint in Mon State.

Officials captured 2,500 kilogrammes of MDF boards (medium-density fibreboard) worth K2.1 million that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) from a Cheng Long, tractor head and a trailer (estimated value of K115 million) heading from Myawady to Yangon. Similarly, on 18 December, officials confiscated 5,000 kilogrammes of Asphalt drums worth K6,018,600 without official documents from a Mitsubishi Canter light truck (approximately K25 million) near Kywechangon village in Mawlamyine township. The action was taken in line with Customs procedures.

In addition, on 18 December, a combined team led by the Region Customs Department seized K7,066,500 worth of foodstuffs, industrial materials and consumer goods without official documents from a Yutong car (estimated value of K58 mil-



Seized illegal commodities.

lion) on the Yangon-Mandalay expressway and K71,336,600 worth of foodstuffs and consumer goods without official documents from a Yutong car (estimated value of K58 million) in Power-5 bus station compound. The action was taken according to Customs procedures.

On 19 December, a total of five unregistered vehicles worth K20.5 million in DaikU township were seized and the action was taken under the Export and Import Law.

At the Kawkareik (Tadakyoe) combined checkpoint, officials confiscated 95 rice cookers worth K1.9 million without official documents from a vehicle from Myawady to Yangon and the action was taken in accordance with Customs procedures.

Therefore, 23 arrests (estimated value of K364,921,700) were made on three consecutive days from 17 to 19 December, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS



# ECONOMY WORLD



Workers produce electric bus on the assembly line of a new energy vehicle plant in Shijiazhuang, north China's Hebei Province, 24 March 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

## China's economy to see independent upward trajectory in 2023: official

WHILE the world's growth will likely weaken significantly in 2023, the Chinese economy is expected to see an independent upward trajectory with an overall recovery, a senior official said.

The official of the office of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs made the remarks after last week's tone-setting Central Economic Work Conference.

The bright prospect can be attributed to the optimized epidemic response, effective pro-growth policies, and a low base this year.

China's improved COVID-19 response will exert a major positive influence on the economy, the official said, predicting a faster recovery in the first half of 2023, especially the second quarter. The country will retain its existing

policies of increasing demand and promoting structural improvement next year and introduce new measures in line with actual needs as well, the official said.

Given lower-than-expected growth this year, as long as the economy returns to normal growth, the base effect will provide support for the economic data next year, the official said. —Xinhua

## Total investment of China-Africa Development Fund exceeds US\$5 billion

CHINA-AFRICA Development Fund, an equity investment fund managed by China Development Bank, has invested more than 5 billion US dollars in African countries, the fund said.

Covering infrastructure, agriculture, people's livelihood, capacity cooperation, industrial parks, and other fields, the investment has helped boost local economies, employment, and tax revenues in Africa.

With the hefty and diversified investment, the fund has played an exemplary role in promoting joint Belt and Road construction between China

and African countries.

The fund was set up to support Chinese companies in Africa in 2007 following the 2006 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) with an initial scale of 5 billion dollars.

In 2015, during the FOCAC Johannesburg Summit, China announced that it would further allocate 5 billion dollars to the fund.

So far, the fund has decided to invest more than 6.6 billion dollars in projects in 39 African countries and has driven more than 31 billion dollars of investment from Chinese enterprises. —Xinhua

## German business morale up again as prospects brighten

GERMAN business confidence improved for a third straight month in December, a key survey showed Monday, the latest sign a downturn in Europe's top economy may be milder than feared.

The Ifo institute's monthly confidence barometer, based on a survey of about 9,000 companies, reached 88.6 points, up from a reading of 86.4 points in November.

Earlier in the year, the gauge declined for months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and subsequent reduction in gas exports, sent inflation soaring and triggered warnings of recession for next year.



A man stands next to railtracks and containers at the DUSS Terminal (Deutsche Umschlaggesellschaft Schiene - Straße DUSS), a central hub of German railway operator Deutsche Bahn, in Munich-Riem, southern Germany, on 18 March 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

But a massive government fund to cap prices and efforts to diversify the country's en-

ergy supplies have eased the immediate sense of crisis. —AFP

## Malaysia's exports up 15.6% in November

MALAYSIA'S exports rose by 15.6 per cent year on year to 130.24 billion ringgit (29.46 billion US dollars) in November, official data showed Monday.

Export expansion was underpinned by strong exports of electrical and electronic (E&E) products, liquefied natural gas (LNG), petroleum products as well as crude petroleum, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) said in a statement.

According to the statement, E&E products, valued at 53.16 billion ringgit (12.03 billion US dollars) and accounted for 40.8 per cent of

total exports, increased by 32.1 per cent from November 2021.

Petroleum products, valued at 12.33 billion ringgit (2.79 billion US dollars) and comprised 9.5 per cent of total exports, rose 26.4 per cent year on year.

LNG, valued at 6.62 billion ringgit (1.5 billion US dollars) and accounted for 5.1 per cent of total exports, surged by 69.5 per cent year on year.

Meanwhile, Malaysia's trade expanded by 15.6 per cent year on year to 238.17 billion ringgit (53.9 billion US dollars) in November.

Imports for the month

were higher by 15.6 per cent to 107.93 billion ringgit (24.42 billion US dollars) and trade surplus increased by 15.6 per cent to 22.3 billion ringgit (5.04 billion US dollars).

For the period of January to November, Malaysia's trade expanded by 29.9 per cent to 2.61 trillion ringgit (590 billion US dollars) compared to the same period last year.

Exports increased by 27.2 per cent year on year to 1.42 trillion ringgit (321 billion US dollars), while imports rose by 33.3 per cent year on year to 1.19 trillion ringgit (269 billion US dollars). —Xinhua

## Italy partly bows to EU over card payments

ITALY'S new hard-right government has abandoned plans to allow merchants to refuse card payments under 60 euros (\$64), following pressure from the European Union.

Economy Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti confirmed the U-turn as he set out amendments to the 2023 budget late on Sunday.

The European Commission last week approved the general direction of far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's first budget, but warned moves to boost the use of cash risked efforts to fight tax evasion.

"We must find solutions that are compatible with the recommendations and reference standards, also at the European level," Giorgetti told a parliamentary commission.

The government had proposed merchants be allowed to refuse card payments for transactions worth less than 60 euros without incurring penalties, alongside measures to raise the maximum for cash payments in shops from 2,000 to 5,000 euros, which also drew criticism from Brussels.

The plan to raise the ceiling on cash payments will go ahead. —AFP



## Malaysia's air passenger traffic to grow by maximum 52% on year in 2023

THE Malaysian Aviation Commission (MAVCOM) said Monday that it expects Malaysia's air passenger traffic in 2023 to increase by between 40 per cent and 52 per cent year on year, which is translated into between 74.6 million and 80.8 million passengers.

MAVCOM said in its industry report that it expects the international passenger traffic to experience significant recovery, with routes to key markets gradually being restored beginning the fourth quarter of 2022.

According to the commission, the growth in 2023 will be driven by the gradual restoration of key markets, with local carriers, including Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, AirAsia X, and Batik Air, having made plans to restore capacity and increase frequency in their flights to popular destinations such as China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Japan, Australia, and the Middle East.

With more seats scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2022, the total air passenger traffic for Malaysia this year is now estimated to slightly outperform MAVCOM's best-case scenario forecast — surging 380 per cent to 400

per cent year on year to between 53 million and 55 million passengers.

In the third quarter of 2022, total passenger traffic in Malaysia was 15.6 million, the highest since the start of the pandemic.

Due to the low base effect, the third quarter passenger traffic soared by 1,434.3 per cent year on year. This marks a 55.9 per cent recovery from the same quarter in 2019.

This improvement brings the passenger traffic number in the first 10 months to 42.2 million.

The domestic traffic in the third quarter was equivalent to 71.3 per cent of pre-pandemic levels while international traffic was 38.6 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.

The stark increase in the passenger traffic number was mainly supported by the full reopening of the Malaysian borders to international travellers from April 2022.

MAVCOM Executive Chairman Saripuddin Kasim said the resumption and introduction of new air service routes by local airlines, as well as the relaxation of travel restrictions around the world, have contributed significantly to the recovery of passenger traffic to Malaysia.—Xinhua

## Asian markets track US losses on recession worries

ASIAN markets fell on Monday as traders weighed the prospect of a global recession caused by central bank moves to fight inflation.

Equities took a turn south last week after monetary policymakers around the world signalled that while price rises appeared to be stabilizing, more work would be needed to get them under control.

All three main indexes on Wall Street ended sharply lower Friday after the Federal Reserve warned that it would continue tightening monetary policy into 2023.

That was followed by similar warnings from the European Central Bank and Bank of England, while data suggested economies were feeling the pinch, dealing a blow to sentiment heading into the Christmas break.

“With no shortage of economic headwinds, investors struggle to find something cheerful about this holiday week after the two most dominant central banks cast a pall over the proceedings,” said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes. The sell-off in New York fed through to Asia, where Tokyo shed more



A man walks past an electronic board showing the numbers on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, along a street in Tokyo on 7 December 2022. PHOTO: AFP

than one per cent, while Hong Kong, Shanghai, Taipei, Manila, Bangkok, Jakarta and Wellington were all in negative territory.

However, Singapore and Mumbai edged up, while London, Paris and Frankfurt opened higher.—AFP

### Notice for change of distributor

Notice is hereby given that the official distributor – Myanmar Arysta LifeScience Co.,Ltd. to AGRICO LTD has been changed for the following pesticides manufactured by United Phosphorus Ltd (UPL Limited), India.

No.	Trade Name	Active Ingredients	Registration Type	Registration No.
1.	Lancer 75 SP	Acephate 75% SP	Full	F 2012 – 842
2.	Mallet	Imazethapyr 24% SL	Full	F 2018 - 1711
3.	Kris	Bispyribac sodium 40% SC	Provisional	P 2019 - 4499
4.	Glory	Azoxystrobin 5% + Mancozeb 70% WG	Provisional	P2019 - 3215

Myanmar Arysta LifeScience Co.,Ltd. invites objections to Co-secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogone, Insein township, Yangon from all parties within a period of fourteen (14) days from the publication of this notice. If no objections are received within the period prescribed, parties mentioned above shall proceed with the completion of formalities recorded with the Pesticide Registration Board.

#### Myanmar Arysta LifeScience Co.,Ltd.

Suite # 09 – 02 , Crystal Tower, Junction Square Compound, Kyun Taw Road, Kamayut Township, Yangon 11041, Myanmar.  
T: (+95)1- 9339359, 9339360

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V UNI ACCORD VOY.NO. (0282-737N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V UNI ACCORD VOY.NO. (0282-737N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-12-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

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

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V CHATTANOOGA VOY.NO. (N062)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V CHATTANOOGA VOY.NO. (N062)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-12-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S INTER ASIA LINES

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY.NO. (187N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY.NO. (187N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-12-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES



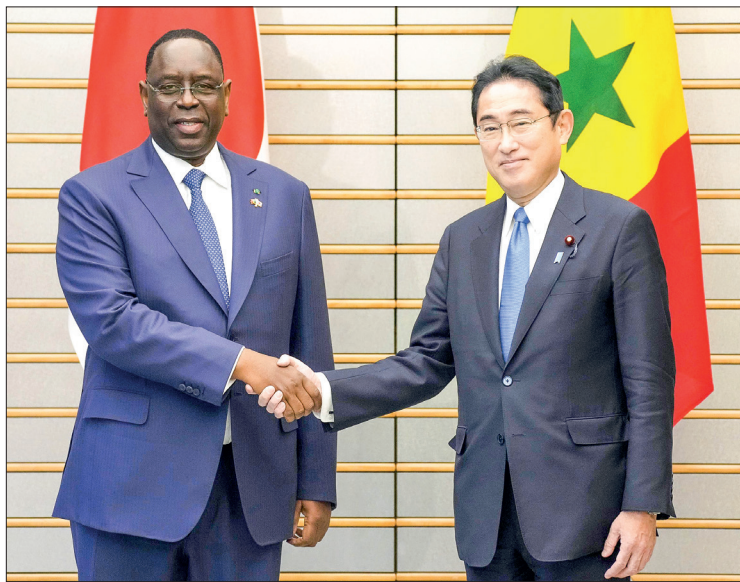
# GLOBAL AFFAIRS

## Japan PM voices support for African Union G-20 membership

PRIME Minister Fumio Kishida said Monday that Japan supports the idea of the African Union becoming a permanent member of the Group of 20 major economies after he talked with Senegalese President Macky Sall in Tokyo.

Kishida's remarks came after US President Joe Biden made a similar commitment last week with Washington on becoming more willing to strengthen relations with Africa amid its rivalry with China. The Senegalese president chairs the African Union this year.

"In light of the expanding role of African countries in the



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (R) and Senegalese President Macky Sall shake hands ahead of talks at the prime minister's office in Tokyo on 19 December 2022. **PHOTO: KYODO**

international community in recent years, Japan has been keen to reinforce ties with Africa," Kishida said at a joint press conference with Sall. The Senegalese president said he appreciated Kishida's proposal.

The two leaders, meanwhile, agreed to work together on oil and natural gas development projects in Senegal, with a view to implementing measures to encourage more Japanese companies to invest in the western African nation.

Kishida also promised that Japan will offer up to 10 billion yen (\$73.5 million) in low-interest loans to the education sector in Senegal and up to 15.42

billion yen in grant aid aimed at helping the African country boost exports of its fishery products.

Tokyo has been seeking to deepen relations with the 55-member African Union as the Asian nation will serve as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council for two years since next January.

Japan has co-hosted an international meeting on African development, called TICAD, every three years since 2013. Before that, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development had taken place every five years following its launch in 1993.—Kyodo

## Russian troops to hold drills in Ukraine's neighbour Belarus

RUSSIAN troops will conduct military exercises in Belarus, which neighbours Ukraine, the Interfax news agency said on Monday, citing the defence ministry in Moscow.

In October, Belarus announced the formation of a joint regional force with Moscow with several thousand Russian servicemen arriving in the ex-Soviet country.

"The final assessment of the combat capability and combat readiness of the units will be given... after the battalion tactical exercises have been conducted," Interfax quoted the ministry as saying.

It did not say when and where the drills will take place but the announcement comes hours before Russian President Vladimir Putin visits Minsk for talks with counterpart Alexander Lukashenko.

Lukashenko, who has been

in power since 1994, is a long-time Kremlin ally.

The visit comes 10 months into Russia's military campaign in Ukraine, which was launched from several directions, including Belarusian territory.

The deployment of Russian troops in Belarus in October had raised fears that Belarusian troops could join them in their offensive in Ukraine.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday evening "the protection of the border with both Russia and Belarus is also a constant priority".

"We are preparing for all possible defence scenarios," Zelensky said in his daily address to the nation following a meeting with Ukraine's military commanders.

Lukashenko has repeatedly said he does not plan to send Belarusian troops to Ukraine.—AFP

## US Capitol riot panel to meet, vote on Trump criminal referrals

WRAPPING up an 18-month probe into last year's deadly attack on the US Capitol, lawmakers will convene Monday to vote on whether to recommend criminal charges against former president Donald Trump and some of his closest aides.

The select House of Representatives committee has interviewed more than 1,000 witnesses and held explosive public hearings into what happened on 6 January 2021 — and who was responsible for it.

The panel, made up of seven Democrats and two Republicans, will meet at 1:00 pm (1800 GMT) to unveil the findings on their investigation into the deadly riot, in which Trump supporters — who falsely claimed that the 2020 election was stolen from him by Joe Biden — ransacked the Capitol.

At least five people died in connection with the melee and 140 police officers were injured. About 900 people have been ar-

rested in connection with the violent rampage, which sent shockwaves across the country and around the world.

The panel will decide whether or not to recommend that the Justice Department seek charges against Trump — who is running to retake

the Oval Office in the 2024 election — on at least three counts, according to reports. Those charges would be inciting an insurrection, obstruction of an official proceeding and conspiracy to defraud the US government, NBC News reported Sunday.—AFP



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 13 October 2022 a video is shown of former US President Donald Trump at the US House Select Committee hearing to Investigate the 6 January Attack on the US Capitol, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Severe turbulence on Hawaii-bound flight injures 36

THIRTY-SIX people were injured Sunday after a Hawaiian Airlines flight hit severe turbulence before landing in Honolulu, the capital of the US state of Hawaii, local media reported, citing officials.

The plane from Phoenix,

Arizona, experienced severe turbulence roughly 30 minutes outside of Honolulu, local television station KHON-TV reported, adding that Honolulu Emergency Medical Services and American Medical Response responded to the emer-

gency Sunday afternoon at the Daniel K Inouye International Airport.

The report said paramedics and emergency medical technicians treated 36 patients on the scene.

Officials said that 20

patients, ranging from a 14-month-old to adults, were transported to hospital, of which 11 were in serious condition.

Hawaiian Airlines confirmed that the plane, an Airbus A330 aircraft carrying 278

passengers and 10 crew members, landed safely in Honolulu at about 10:50 am local time (0050 GMT) after the incident.

The US Federal Aviation Administration said it was investigating the incident.—Xinhua



## North Korea conducts 'final-stage test' for spy satellite: state media

NORTH Korea carried out an "important final-stage test" for the development of a spy satellite, which it will complete by April next year, state media said on Monday.

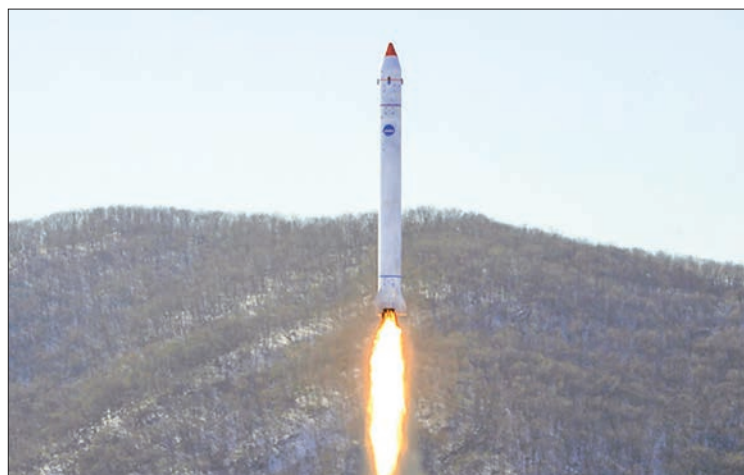
The report comes a day after Seoul's military said it had detected launches by Pyongyang of two medium-range ballistic missiles, the North's latest in a year of unprecedented weapons tests.

Analysts say developing such a satellite would provide North Korea with cover for testing banned intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), as they share much of the same technology.

The launches were "an important final-stage test for the development of (a) reconnaissance satellite", a spokesperson with the North's National Aerospace Development

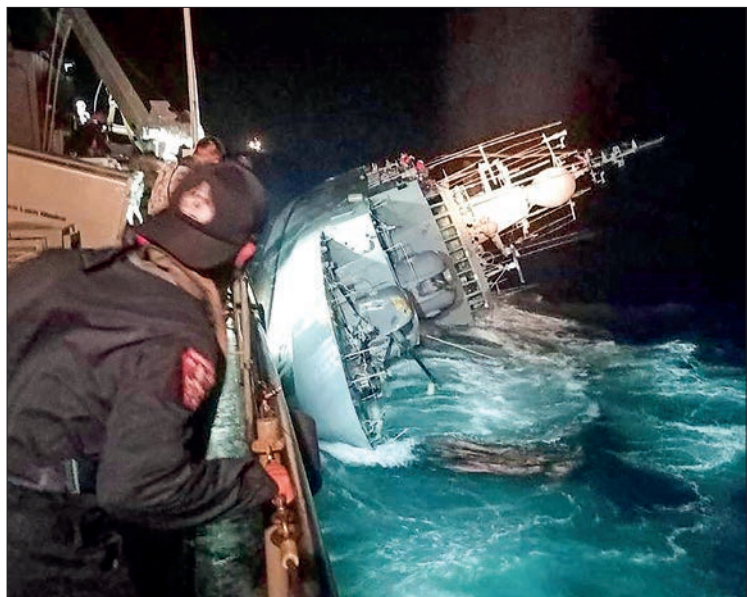
Administration (NADA) said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency on Monday.

Conducted from Sohae Satellite Launching Ground in Tongchang-ri, Sunday's test confirmed "important technical indices" including camera operation in space, and data processing and transmission capabilities of communication devices.—AFP



This picture taken on 18 December 2022 and released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on 19 December 2022 shows a rocket carrying an experimental satellite as it is launched from the Sohae Satellite Launch Ground in Tongchang-ri. **PHOTO: STR / KCNA VIA KNS/ AFP**

## Thai navy searches for 31 sailors after vessel sinks



This handout photo taken on 18 December 2022 and released on 19 December by the Royal Thai Navy shows the HTMS Sukhothai warship on its side before sinking in the Gulf of Thailand, off the coast of Bang Saphan district in Prachuab Kiri Khan province. **PHOTO: HANDOUT / ROYAL THAI NAVY / AFP**

THAI military frigates and helicopters were on Monday searching for 31 sailors after a naval vessel sank, with dozens of others having been hauled from choppy waters.

The HTMS Sukhothai capsized late on Sunday night as it was patrolling the Gulf of Thailand, about 37 kilometres (22 miles) off the nation's south-eastern coast.

Some sailors survived by jumping into a life raft at night, according to images shared by the Royal Thai Navy, which said 75 people had been rescued.

However, 31 sailors were still missing on Monday afternoon, according to navy spokesperson Admiral Pogkrong Monttrapalin.

The search and rescue operation involved two Seahawk helicopters, two frigates and one amphibious ship, according to a navy statement.

A statement from the Royal Thai Air Force later Monday said they were also assisting in the operation, without giving details.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha said the cause of the incident was being investigated.

"I am following the news closely, about five people are seriously injured," he added in a statement.

The navy spokesperson said the vessel sank after its electronics system was damaged.—AFP

## 64% disapprove tax hikes to cover Japan's rising defence budget: poll

THE Japanese public has raised pressure on the administration of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, with a poll by Kyodo News finding Sunday that 64.9 per cent disapprove of a recently announced plan to raise taxes to finance a substantial increase in the nation's defence spending.

The support rate for his Cabinet stayed at 33.1 per cent from last month's survey, the lowest since its launch last year. The disapproval rating was almost unchanged at 51.5 per cent.

On Friday, Kishida announced Japan's new security strategy to forge ahead with its biggest defence buildup programme since World War II amid China's rise and North Korean threats.

As for the planned increase in defence budgets for five years from the next fiscal year, 53.6 per cent oppose it,

with 39.0 per cent in favour.

The government also plans to increase corporate and tobacco taxes to boost defence spending.

In the telephone poll held Saturday and Sunday, 87.1 per cent felt Kishida had failed to explain the tax hike plan adequately, with only 7.2 per cent saying his explanation was sufficient.

As the government will divert a portion of tax revenues designated for reconstruction following a massive 2011 earthquake and tsunami in northeastern areas to defence purposes, 74.5 per cent oppose the plan, while 19.5 per cent approve of it.

Public opinion was divided on the issue of Japan acquiring "counterstrike capability," allowing it to strike enemy territory, with 50.3 per cent approving the policy and 42.6 per cent disapproving.—Kyodo

## Australian FM to visit China

AUSTRALIAN Foreign Minister Penny Wong will visit China from 20 to 21 December at the invitation of State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson announced on Monday.

Spokesperson Mao Ning said that Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, will hold talks with the Australian foreign

minister. The two sides will hold a new round of China-Australia diplomatic and strategic dialogue.

It is hoped that the visit will facilitate the implementation of key consensus reached by the Chinese and Australian leaders during their meeting in Bali, Indonesia, the spokesperson said at a daily press briefing.

As 21 December this year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

the China-Australia diplomatic relations, Mao said this can serve as an opportunity for the two sides, by adhering to the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit, and seeking common ground while shelving differences, to strengthen dialogue, expand cooperation, manage differences and bring bilateral relations back on the right track of sustainable development.—Xinhua



People protest against a tax hike plan for higher defence spending in front of the prime minister's office in Tokyo on 16 December 2022. **PHOTO: KYODO**



North Korea conducts 'final-stage test' for spy satellite: state media

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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.

## AFF Cup: most advanced competition in ASEAN region to start on 20 December

THE 2022 ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) Cup, the most advanced competition in the ASEAN region, will be held on 20 December.

The tournament will be divided into two groups of five teams, and current champion Thailand is falling in Group A with Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Brunei. Group (B) has Viet Nam, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, and Laos teams.

The group matches will be held from 20 December 2022 to 3 January 2023, and the competing teams will play four group matches: two home matches, and two away matches. On the first day of the competition, the Cambodian team will take on the Philippines team, and the Brunei team will play against the Thai team on 20 December.

The Myanmar team, which is in Group B, will play its first group

game against the Malaysian team on 21 December.

Myanmar will play an away match against Singapore on 24 December, a home game against the Laos team on 30 December and another away match against the Viet Nam team on 3 January.

The Myanmar team is likely to make more efforts to advance to the next stage, and only if they can get full points in both home matches without mistakes, and if the results in the away matches are good, they will be able to enter the semi-finals.

The Myanmar national team started training for this tournament on 18 November, and after the friendly trip to Thailand, the squad will come out with 26 preliminary players. The Myanmar national team will have to select 23 final players, so they will have to reduce further three players.

Kyaw Zin Phyto, San Satt Na-



A Myanmar team player (white) slips the ball during the friendly match against the Thai team on 11 December: PHOTO: FAT

ing, Tun Nandar Oo, and Myo Min Latt participated in the goalkeeper list.

The back row features talented players: Nanda Kyaw, Hein Phyto Win, Thiha Htet Aung, Ye Min Thu, Hein Zeya Lin, Zaw Ye Tun, Kyaw Zin Lwin, David Htan, and Win Moe Kyaw.

The midfield was reinforced by experienced play-

ers: Aung Naing Win, Wai Lin Aung, Kyaw Min Oo, Lin Htet Soe, Lwin Moe Aung, Yan Naing Oo, Myat Kaung Khant, Ye Yint Aung, Maung Maung Lwin, and Hein Htet Aung.

The forward of the team Myanmar was set up with talented youths: Win Naing Tun, Aung Kaung Marn and Naing Zin Htet. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

## FIFA readies 48-team World Cup as eyes turn to 2026

FORTY-EIGHT teams, three host countries, and potentially more than 100 games.

After successfully staging the most compact World Cup in history, FIFA is now preparing to organize the biggest.

The dust had barely settled on Sunday's World Cup final before attention turned to the gargantuan figure of 2026 looming on the horizon.

For the first time, football's greatest tournament will be held across three host nations — the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The tournament will notably see an expansion to 48 teams, up from the current 32-team format that has been in place since 1998, and double the number of teams that took part in the last World Cup held on US or Mexican soil.

The enlarged competition represents a triumph for FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who made expanding the World Cup a priority after taking over as world football's supremo in 2016.

The 16-team increase marks the biggest expansion in the World Cup's evolution. From 13 teams at the inaugural tournament in 1930, the finals remained a 16-team event from 1934 to 1978, before increasing to 24 in 1982.

The biggest beneficiaries of the expansion to 48 teams will be Africa and Asia. Under the new format, Africa will receive nine qualifying slots for the finals (compared to five previously) while Asia will nearly double to eight (from 4.5 slots). —AFP

## Ecstatic Argentina prepares to welcome World Cup winners



Fans of Argentina celebrate winning the Qatar 2022 World Cup against France at the Obelisk in Buenos Aires, on 18 December 2022. PHOTO: AFP

LIONEL Messi and his teammates were due to arrive in Argentina to a hero's welcome

on Monday as millions of their compatriots waited to catch a glimpse of the World Cup trophy.

In the capital Buenos Aires and throughout the country, millions took to the streets on Sunday to celebrate the penalty shoot-out victory over France in a remarkable final in Qatar.

Messi finally crowned his record-breaking career with football's biggest prize as he produced one of the greatest World Cup final performances, scoring a first-half penalty and netting again in extra time.

France had fought back from 2-0 down in the last 10 minutes of the match as Kylian Mbappe scored twice to equalize and force extra time in a pulsating match watched by an 89,000 crowd in Lusail Stadium. Messi seemed to have decided the match in extra time with his second goal of the game before his Paris Saint-Germain teammate Mbappe completed only the second World Cup final hat-trick in history to bring the score to 3-3 and force penalties.—AFP