

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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The Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council: Five-Point Road Map

1. Priority will be given to fully realizing peace, stability and rule of law throughout the Union to safeguard the socioeconomic life of the people.
2. People-centred development work that enhances socioeconomic well-being will be undertaken to ensure the country's prosperity and food security.
3. Processes will further continue to consolidate a genuine, disciplined multiparty democratic system and build a Union based on democracy and federalism.
4. Priority will be accorded to work aligned with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, in order to achieve enduring peace for the entire nation.
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.

Proper feed supply chain in livestock industry makes fish/prawn prices stable

THE agriculture and livestock sectors rely on each other in the agriculture and livestock-based country, Myanmar. The successive production of feedstuffs supply chain and reduction of raw material export can make the fish and prawn prices stable.

Out of Myanmar's marine products, 70 per cent of saltwater fish/prawn and 30 per cent of freshwater fish and prawn are exported and the country has 400,000 acres of freshwater farming and over 100,000 acres of saltwater farming. The people are more interested in freshwater farming for lowering water resources, fuel difficulties in fish and prawn capturing processes in the sea and other difficulties. It needs correct and systematic farming techniques. The development of the fish farming industry needs quality fingerlings, feed, fish hatchery water treatment, management and market. According to the current market status, the entrepreneurs are eager for local production to meet the local consumption and export rather than capturing in the sea.

The feed is crucial in breeding farms and the by-products of winter sunflower, bean and summer paddy being cultivated



Out of Myanmar's marine products, 70 per cent of saltwater fish and prawn and 30 per cent of freshwater fish/prawn are exported and the country has 400,000 acres of freshwater farming and over 100,000 acres of saltwater farming. Varieties of fish are pictured being conveyed from fish farms to cold storage factories. **PHOTO: KANU**

under the arrangement of the government supporting the animal feed production. Therefore, the feed prices will be stable for having adequate raw materials in the country. As a consequence,

the breeding industry can grab proper achievement for the price stability of fish and prawn in the marine product market and promote the State economy.

"The major thing we need

to develop the breeding sector is feedstuff. If the raw material prices are high, the production rate can decline. The government provides the required materials to plant the sunflower

and soybean more in the country without importing them from foreign countries. Then, we should expand the cultivation of paddy, beans and maize.

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Part 4 of Maravijaya Buddha Image conveyed onto jewelled throne successfully

THE Maravijaya Buddha image was carved in Dekkhinathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory with four objectives to show the firm flourishing of Theravada Buddhism of Myanmar to the world, to ensure peace and stability of the State, to develop the region with visits of local and international travellers to the Buddha image and contribute to the development of the State.

The Buddha image combined with parts 1, 2 and 3 weighing 1,700 tonnes was conveyed onto the jewelled throne on 26 January and successfully settled on the jewelled throne on 31 January.

Part 4 of the Buddha image was conveyed onto the jewelled throne at the auspicious ceremony on 11 February. Conveyance processes were being undertaken on the agenda. It was successfully settled on the jewelled throne at

2:43 am on 13 February.

Construction tasks are being carried out for a Sasana Beikman to accommodate 1,200 members of the Sangha and congregation at religious ceremonies and other religious edifices in the Buddha Park. In accord with the guidance of venerable Sayadaws, Pitaka treatises in line with the version adopted by the Sixth Buddhist Synod are being carved on the marble plaques in Pali and Romanized languages with the use of modern machinery in order to keep the stone plaques. The already-carved inscriptions on Tri Pitaka, Atthakatha and Tika treatises were posted in front of the Buddha image. Arrangements are being made for pilgrims to view the Atthakatha and Tika treatises of the Tri Pitaka treatises in the stone inscription chamber. Moreover, a plan is underway to print the Pitaka treatises in

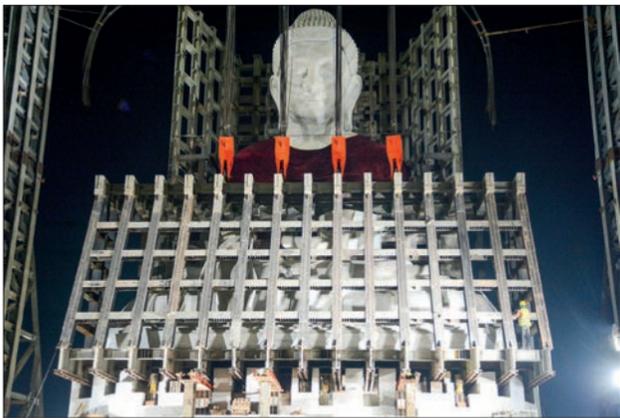


The Maravijaya Buddha Image is seen after all parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 have been placed on the jewelled throne yesterday.

Pali and Romanized languages to be distributed to monasteries across the world.

Officials are making efforts for the constructions of the Buddha image and religious build-

ings the whole day and offering electric lights at night for public obeisance.—MNA/KTZH



(၇၅)နှစ်မြောက် မြန်မာ-ရုရှား သံတမန်ဆက်သွယ်ထူထောင်မှုအထိမ်းအမှတ်
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Forum on Myanmar - Russia Friendship and Cooperation

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1 new case of COVID-19 reported on 13 February, total figure rises to 633,867

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,867** after **one** new case was reported on 13 February 2023 according to the Ministry of Health. The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **614,331**, including **two** new recoveries.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at **19,490** on 13-2-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic. — MNA

Public Notice for Submitting Objection

MYANMAR People's Democratic Party with its headquarters located at No 83, Yangon-Bago Road, Htaukkyant, Yangon Region, applied on 8-2-2023 to be allowed to subsist and register as a political party under Section 25 of the Political Parties Registration Law. In the application, it is reported that the party name, flag and emblem will be used as described. Under Rule 14 (d) of the Registration of Political Parties, it is hereby announced to the public that those who wish to object to the name of the party, the flag and the emblem to be used by that organization may submit their objection to the Union Election Commission with valid evidence within seven days from the date of this announcement. —Union Election Commission



The flag design of the Myanmar People's Democratic Party (MPD)



The emblem of the Myanmar People's Democratic Party (MPD)

Face-to-face meeting needed for peace issues without external interference

ONLY when all ethnic national brethren hold a face-to-face meeting to solve the peace issues of our country without any interference from the external will it achieve success. Whenever those at home and abroad do not wish to benefit from Myanmar's peace process, our peace talks will not reach the goal we aspire to. Hence, all ethnic national brethren need to notice that they should never follow criticisms leading to destruction for peace.

(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Central Committee Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the 7th Anniversary of Signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on 15 October 2022)

MIC meeting 1/2023 approves 8 new businesses including renewable energy-generating electricity

THE meeting 1/2023 of the Myanmar Investment Commission was held yesterday morning at the Union Government Office in Nay Pyi Taw. SAC member Myanmar Investment Commission Chair Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun and members of the commission attended the meeting.

MIC greenlighted the expansion of the capital in eight ongoing investment projects and new investments in the electricity sector, the transport and communications sector, the petroleum and gas sector, the industrial sector, the hotels and tourism sector and the service sector. The investment amount of these businesses is US\$143.634 million and K98,078.094 million generating 1,374 domestic job opportuni-

ties. The production of electricity from renewable energy was also approved.

Out of 52 countries and territories investing in Myanmar, Singapore, China and Thailand ranked the largest shares of investments as of end-January 2023. Among the twelve economic sectors, the most invested sectors are 28.30 per cent of the total investments in the electricity sector, 24.63 per cent in the petroleum and natural gas sector and 14.34 per cent in the industrial sector.

Myanmar Investment Commission oversees and approves project proposals of investment as well as is serving the existing investors under the Myanmar Investment Law. — MNA/TS



Myanmar Investment Commission Chair Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun presides over the meeting 1/2023 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Ethnic traditional food booths, local product salerooms continue marking 76th Anniversary Union Day

EXHIBITIONS of ministries, regions and states, as well as ethnic traditional food and local products from Nay Pyi Taw (Union Territory), states and regions, which are being opened and exhibited at People's Square in Dagon Township, Yangon, continued to commemorate the 76th Anniversary of Union Day.

The exhibitions will be held for 5 days from 10 to 14 February from 9:00 am to 10:00 pm.

A total of 55 exhibition rooms including 25 booths for ministries, 15 booths for Nay Pyi Taw Council, and regional and state galleries, and 15 ethnic traditional food stalls are organized in the event,

and traditional dances are performed by movie artistes, stereo vocalists, and new generation singers.

It is held in full swing with ethnic traditional food and local product sales booths, so all people can come and visit for free, officials said. — MNA/KZL



Proper feed supply chain in livestock industry makes fish/prawn prices stable

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"We need bran to feed fish and prawns and maize for chicken. We need by-product of soybean to maintain the protein of bran systematically. If we manage the imported animal feed and exported food raw materials, we can fulfil the required feed demand in the livestock sector. Therefore, there is a relationship between agriculture and livestock and if we have adequate feed demand, the livestock sector will develop as per the aims of the country," said an official of the central executive committee of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

Moreover, it should draft special plans for the investors

to ensure the local production of freshwater/saltwater fingerlings, species conservation and new species processing and hatchery. It should know well about the fish and prawn farming industries to meet the aims of the country and develop the country, agrochemicals such as financial assistance, techniques, transportation and electricity, and opportunities permitted by the Myanmar Investment Commission. The State economy can be promoted in a short period through effective long- and short-term projects to increase the numbers of investors and high techniques for feed production. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/KTZH

SPTT receives Vice-Chairman led NMSP delegation in Nay Pyi Taw



The meeting between the State Peace Talks Team and the New Mon State Party delegation is in progress.

THE meeting between the State Peace Talks Team (SPTT) and the delegation led by the Vice-Chairman of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) took place at the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Centre in Nay Pyi

Taw yesterday afternoon.

The State Peace Talks Team led by State Administration Council Member Union Minister at the Government Office Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking

Negotiation Committee-NSPNC Peace Talks Team Leader Lt-Gen Yar Pyae warmly welcomed the delegation led by NMSP Vice-Chairman Nai Aung Min. Programmes and contents to be discussed in the meeting

were negotiated by both sides and continued as planned.

The meeting was attended by State Administration Council Member Union Minister at the Government Office Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee-NSPNC Peace Talks Team Leader Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, SAC Member Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun, NSPNC Secretary Lt-Gen Win Bo Shein and NSPNC members: Lt-Gen Min Naing and Lt-Gen Aye Win — and NMSP Vice-Chairman Nai Aung Min, Joint General Secretary of the NMSP Nai Win Hla, Central Executive Committee members Nai Banyar Lei and Nai Aung Ma Ngay, and representatives of peace talks.

At the meeting, SPTT Leader Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and NMSP Vice-Chairman Naing

Aung Min gave greeting speeches and discussed proposals that both sides want to review on issues of amending fundamental sections of the 2008 Constitution to build a Union based on democracy and federalism. The first day of the meeting was adjourned after the mutual discussion of participants over their views and attitudes. The second meeting will be continued on 14 February.

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) participated in the signing of the NCA agreement along with the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) on 13 February 2018. The NMSP delegation met with the SPTT yesterday to discuss the issues of building a Union based on democracy and federalism, which is an act of a friendly meeting on a special day. — MNA/CT

COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various states, regions

VACCINATION is being carried out in full swing in various regions and states as the vaccination programmes are one of the most important activities in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 disease.

Yesterday, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams from the Tatmadaw, and relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers gave COVID-19 vaccines to 90 local people and 1,524 students from twenty-six townships in Ayeyawady Region.— MNA

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

Reserved rice donated by Japan, ROK under APTERR Tier-3 transferred to Myinmu residents in Sagaing Region

THE donation ceremony of reserve rice and related materials donated by Japan and Republic of Korea under APTERR Tier-3 to Myinmu Township of Sagaing Region was organized at Myat Zeyar Hall of the Sagaing District Agriculture Department on 11 February.

During the ceremony, the head of the District Agriculture Department called on participants to discuss the cooking process of reserve, rice and related materials and do's and



don'ts as surveys on people's opinion about tastes will be

conducted for tastes from the people. Then, the team leaders cooked rice and the people gave the feedback.

Then, Sagaing District Administration Body Chairman U Khin Maung Sint and officials handed over the donated rice and related accessories to Myinmu residents. It was also attended by departmental officials, residents and members of social organizations.—Zaw Myint Naing (Sagaing District IPRD)/KTZH



Meeting between UMFCCI and TCC held in Thailand

A meeting over the business, trade promotion and human resource development between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry-UMFCCI and the Thai Chamber of Commerce-TCC took place at the Board of Trade of Thailand Hall, Bunjerd Chonvijarn Building in Thailand on 10 February.

The meeting was led by UMFCCI president U Aye Win and Mr Sanan Angubolkul, chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of Thailand. The strengthening of Thailand-Myanmar friendship, investment opportunities and trade promotion, cooperation in promoting the education sector of human resources development, issues related to migrant workers and the smooth flow of the Baht-

Kyat payment system in border trade were discussed.

In addition, the UMFCCI and TCC discussed the success of the Global MBA Offshore Programme cooperation and the future work programmes to be implemented.

At the meeting, UMFCCI president U Aye Win said that UMFCCI hoped to be able to work together with TCC and expand its future plans. Then, Mr Sanan Angubolkul responded that they were always ready to expand such cooperation and coordinate with each other.

UMFCCI president U Aye Win, vice-presidents U Thuang Tin and Dr Win Sithu, general secretary Daw Khine Khine Nwe, central executive committee members U Maung Maung Swe, Dr Su Hla Han, TCC chairman Mr Sanan Angu-



The meeting between the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Thai Chamber of Commerce is in progress in Thailand on 10 February 2023.

bolkul, vice-chairman Mr Phairush Burapachaisri, chairman Mr Prasert Jeungkitrungsrote of the Tak Chamber of Commerce,

honorary advisor Mr Nattawin Phongspheeratat from the Thai Business Association of Myanmar, Asst-Prof Nattapan Bua-

varaporn from the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce-UTCC participated in the meeting. — Myo Min Thura/CT

CRIME NEWS

Drugs seized in Loikaw, Muse and Tachilek townships



An offender is pictured along with seized drugs and a saloon.

A combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force searched the house

of Thiha Naing (aka) Nyi Nyi in Loikaw township at 8:30 am on 12 February and seized 6,660

stimulant tablets.

At 11:30 am on the same day, responsible personnel searched a Toyota Grande Mark II car driven by Win Htun (aka) Yan Naing near Oriental Tollgate in Muse township and sized 38,000 stimulant tablets in the car.

At 2:30 pm on 11 February, responsible personnel searched a Civic car driven by Paing Min Thu in Tachilek township and sized 300,000 stimulant tablets in the car.

Offenders were prosecuted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. — MNA/MKKS

Over K440 million worth of drugs captured in Kutkai township

OVER K440 million worth of drugs were impounded in Kutkai township in Shan State (North), the Myanmar Police Force stated.

A combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force searched a Pajero car driven by Mai Naing Aung

heading to Kutkai from Muse on Muse-Lashio Road in Kutkai township at 9 pm on 11 February, according to information. Officials captured over K440 million worth of 890,000 stimulant tablets and 10 grammes of heroin in the car.

— MNA/MKKS



An arrestee is seen together with captured drugs and a vehicle.

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

A combined team at the Ma-yanchaung permanent checkpoint confiscated K284,801,000 worth of foodstuffs, clothes, sandals and motorbike parts that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) from three vehicles and two trailers (estimated value of K270 million) heading to Yangon from Myawady on 11 February. The action was taken under Customs

procedures.

On 12 February, officials at the Ma-yanchaung permanent checkpoint captured 5,000 kilograms of MDF board that exceeded the Import Declaration (ID) and three kinds of goods, including 600 rice cookers and 50 pieces of luggage, worth K16,650,000 that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) from two vehicles

and two trailers (approximately K230 million) heading to Yangon from Myawady and two kinds of goods, including 100 cartons of Lactasoy soy milk, worth K2 million without official documents from a vehicle (estimated value of K20 million) heading to Nyaunglebin from Myawady. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

Similarly, officials led by the

Myanmar Police Force seized an unregistered Yamaha DT motorbike (approximately K500,000) in Monywa township and the action was taken under the Export and Import Law.

Therefore, 13 arrests (at an estimated value of K553,951,000) were made on 11 and 12 February, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS



Confiscated illegal items in Mon State.

CURRENT AFFAIRS



UMFCCI president receives Euro Cham Myanmar's CEO & members

PRESIDENT of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry U Aye Win and of-

The UMFCCI president meets the delegation of the Euro Cham Myanmar on 8 February.

officials received the CEO of the Euro Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar Ms Karina Ufert and members on 8 February.

At the meeting, the Euro Cham Myanmar discussed the relaxation of rules for import licences, visa extension process, effective protection of illegal

trade and release of accurate information.

President of UMFCCI U Aye Win, vice-presidents, general secretary Daw Khine Khine Nwe, treasurer U Hla Oo, BOD members and invitees attended the meeting. — Myo Min Thura/KZW

Myanmar pockets \$23.3 mln from over 77,000 tonnes of corn exports in seaborne trade last month

MYANMAR exported more than 77,620 tonnes of corn worth US\$23.3 million in maritime trade in January 2023, according to the statistics released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The majority of them were sent to Thailand. The corn export volume stood at 22,130 tonnes to Thailand, 19,490 to Viet Nam, over 16,980 to the Philippines, over 10,760 to China, 8,100 to Bangladesh, 120 to Brunei and small volumes to India and Nepal.

In January, Myanmar conveyed 4,320 tonnes of corn to China and 3,645 to Thailand through cross-border posts.

The overall export volumes were over 85,585 tonnes with an estimated value of \$25.72 million in January 2023. The volume was down by over



The photo shows a corn field located in Kyauktalongyi town, southern Shan State.

70,000 tonnes compared to the previous month (Dec 2022).

At present, corn is cultivated in Shan, Kachin, Kayah and Kayin states and Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. Myanmar has three corn seasons—winter, summer and monsoon. The country

produces 2.3-2.6 million tonnes of corn every year. This year, corn output dropped, traders said.

Myanmar sent over 770,000 tonnes of corn to foreign countries by sea in six months (August 2022-January 2023). — TWA/EM

Export revenue ratio of rice and broken rice via border to be determined

SOME rice traders at the border said that starting from March 2023, the export revenue ratio of 65-35 will be changed for rice and broken rice exporters through the China border.

Thirty-five per cent of the export revenue must be sold according to the exchange rate set by the Central Bank of Myanmar, which was previously only specified for shipping by sea.

"It's almost certain to change," said U Min Thein of the Muse Rice Commodity Centre.

Therefore, rice traders working at the Chinese border would like to report rice and broken rice in advance so that they don't buy rice.

Starting from 1 March 2023, those who want to export rice and broken rice through the border can exchange 65 per cent of the export proceeds at the place they want to exchange, and 35 per cent must be exchanged at the relevant banks at the exchange rate set by the Central Bank of K2,100 per US dollar, market participants said.

In the past, only rice and broken rice were exported by sea.

In 2022, the export of rice and broken rice abroad was more than 1.89 million tonnes by sea, while the export through land borders was only 3.6 million tonnes, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation.

In October 2022, the central bank specified that the exporters must sell the foreign currency they have received and are no longer in use to AD-licensed banks within 30 days. — TPT

Myanmar ships about 13,800 tonnes of rubber to external markets by sea in Jan

MYANMAR bagged approximately US\$16.433 million from exports of about 13,800 tonnes of rubber in the seaborne trade in January 2023, the Ministry of Commerce's data indicated.

Myanmar shipped over 9,220 tonnes of rubber to China, 3,377 to Malaysia, 690 to India, 480 to Japan and a small volume to Sri Lanka last month.

Meanwhile, the cross-border trade saw rubber exports of 1,200 tonnes to Thailand and 1,090 to China, with an estimated value of \$2.728 million. The overall export amounted to \$19.161 million from 16,090 tonnes of

rubber both in sea and border trade channels.

The export volume in January 2023 was down by 6,300 tonnes (worth \$8 million) compared to that of the previous month (December 2022).

Myanmar has shipped more than 200,000 tonnes of rubber to external markets as of early February in the current financial year 2022-2023. The main buyer is China, rubber growers and producers said.

Beyond China, Myanmar exports rubber to the Republic of Korea, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Japan. This

year, Myanmar aims to hit the rubber export target of 300,000 tonnes.

Rubber is commonly found in Taninthayi Region and Mon State and also grown in Yangon, Bago and Ayeyawady regions and Kayin State. There are over 1 million acres of rubber across the country. Approximately 400,000 tonnes of rubber are likely to be produced this year. Mon State is the main producer with over 500,000 acres and over 100,000 tonnes of rubber are annually produced. This lucrative rubber sector generates foreign income every year. — TWA/EM



The photo shows rubber produced in Myeik, Taninthayi Region.

LOCAL BUSINESS

Myanmar targets 300,000 tonnes of rice export in Feb-Mar

MYANMAR has planned to hit 300,000 tonnes of rice export target in the last two months (February-March) of the financial year 2022-2023, according to Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

On 11 February 2023, the coordination meeting was held by MRF, region and state committees, commodity depots, central executives, executive members, and exporting companies. As Myanmar aims to achieve a rice export target of 2 million tonnes for the current FY 2022-2023. More than 1.9 million tonnes of rice have been shipped as of end-January so far. Therefore, 150,000 tonnes each will be shipped to the external market in February and March.

Working procedures of the MRF, goals, contract farming project, domestic and foreign market conditions and rice price, cooperation plans to stabilize rice price in the domestic market, enhancing commodity depots, analysis of strengths

and weaknesses of the State's policies, developing the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, export financing matter, investigation on rumours to harm market stability, disseminating right information, ensuring right trade and matters regarding customers, employees and workers were discussed at the meeting.

Myanmar has shipped over 1.9 million tonnes of rice and broken rice with an estimated value of US\$700 million as of 31 January 2023 in the current FY since April 2022, according to Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

The export values were recorded at \$82 million from 250,947 tonnes in April 2022, \$51 million from 153,507 tonnes in May, \$50 million from 146,094 tonnes in June, \$66 million from 182,550 tonnes in July, \$53 million from 156,893 tonnes in August, \$37 million from 93,792 tonnes in September, \$65 million from 163,189 tonnes in October,



Rice bags are seen to be exported to foreign markets.

\$106 million from 264,038 tonnes, \$90 million from 228,445 tonnes in December and \$107 million from 268,835 tonnes in January 2023.

Myanmar primarily sent rice and broken rice to China (over 620,000 tonnes), followed

by Belgium (270,000 tonnes), Bangladesh (230,000 tonnes) and the Philippines (160,000 tonnes).

Myanmar has been exerting concerted efforts to grow 10 per cent yearly in the rice export sector. To raise foreign

income, it has been prioritizing the exportation of high-grade rice and boosting export volume, MRF stated.

Myanmar bagged over \$700 million from approximately 2 million tonnes of rice export in the 2020-2021 FY. — NN/EM

Palm oil wholesale reference price for Yangon market moves slightly up

THE wholesale reference rate of palm oil in the Yangon market slightly increased compared to that of the previous week, according to the Supervisory Committee on edible oil import and distribution.

The reference price stood at K4,480 per viss in the week from 6 to 12 February. For the week ending 19 February, the price was set higher at K4,490 per viss. The figures showed a small increase of K10 per viss.

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 every week.

Regardless of the reference price, the market price was exorbitantly high at over K6,000 per viss.

If those edible oil retailers and wholesalers are found



Edible oil is pouring into a bottle for a consumer at a shop.

overcharging, storing inventory intentionally and attempting unscrupulous action to manipulate the market, they will face legal action under the Essential Supplies and Service Act, MoC released a statement.

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 K4,700 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 per year. To meet the oil sufficiency in the domestic market, about 700,000 tonnes of cooking oil are yearly imported through Malaysia and Indonesia. — NN/EM

Prices of fuel oil, gold and dollar on 13 February 2023

Fuel Oil Price (Yangon)

Octane 92	K2,170
Octane 95	K2,240
Diesel	K2,210
Premium Diesel	K2,290

All of the prices are based on per litre.

Gold Price

The reference price of high-purity gold set by YGEA	K2,196,000 per tical
High-purity gold in the gold market	K2,870,000 per tical

US Dollar Vs Kyat

A US dollar set by the Central Bank of Myanmar	K2,100
A US dollar in the forex market	K2,845 to K2,860

The above prices may change from time to time.

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OPINION

Don't forget your own responsibilities to the nation

AS Myanmar is an agro-based country, the government has adopted objectives and policies concerning the development of the agricultural sector in order to emerge as a prosperous country with food security.

There are 33.7 million acres of crops on which various kinds of crops are grown, 25.517 million acres of irrigated, rainfed farmlands and river water-pumping areas under the crop plantations, some 15 million acres of monsoon paddy and some three million acres of summer paddy. Among the cultivable lands, 6.71 million acres of land using irrigation facilities, dams, and reservoirs irrigate more than 20 per cent of 33.2 million acres of irrigated areas.

If more than 6 million acres of irrigated farmlands are placed

under paddy-beans-paddy, paddy-sunflower-paddy, paddy-sesame-paddy and other crop combinations with paddy as they like shaping the triple cropping pattern, it is sure that results of the agricultural sector will make a great change for living standard of the farmers. Supply of irrigation water plays a key role in expediting the endeavours of farmers to successfully thrive the crops and develop the rural areas, so the government emphasizes the implementation of damming projects including maintenance of existing dams and reservoirs. Hence, farmers need to efficiently utilize the damming sources in their farmlands and carefully focus on the improvement of agriculture and livestock farming businesses. In order to effectively enjoy the irrigation facilities, farmers need to group themselves to do their tasks in unison so that they can successfully operate the agriculture sector as well as improve their socio-economic life.

As a modern technique for shaping the new era of the agricultural sector of the nation, farmers need to implement the contract farming system in order to gain the benefit without wasting their time. In this regard, implementation of the contract farming system needs to be based on associations of farmers to have greater progress and benefit. Hence, farmers have to participate in the management of irrigation facilities in the entire nation through united strength for the interests of their regions and the nation and for ensuring food sufficiency across the nation with prosperity.

In fact, all citizens, especially farmers should not understand that the government is responsible for all irrigation functions for agricultural and livestock farms. Not only the government but all farmers are responsible for managing and efficiently utilizing the irrigation facilities. That is why all the citizens including the government are to strive for improvement of agriculture and livestock sectors in order to develop the whole nation by utilizing irrigation facilities.

Under paddy-beans-paddy, paddy-sunflower-paddy, paddy-sesame-paddy and other crop combinations with paddy as they like shaping the triple cropping pattern, it is sure that results of the agricultural sector will make a great change for living standard of the farmers. Supply of irrigation water plays a key role in expediting the endeavours of farmers to successfully thrive the crops and develop the rural areas, so the government emphasizes the implementation of damming projects including maintenance of existing dams and reservoirs. Hence, farmers need to efficiently utilize the damming sources in their farmlands and carefully focus on the improvement of agriculture and livestock farming businesses. In order to effectively enjoy the irrigation facilities, farmers need to group themselves to do their tasks in unison so that they can successfully operate the agriculture sector as well as improve their socio-economic life.

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Ten Things You Don't Know About Russia

By UAC

1. Longest Railroad in the world

Trans-Siberian railway is undoubtedly the longest railway in the world, connecting the capital Moscow with the farthest city in the east, Vladivostok. The latter is a port city, facing the Sea of Japan. The railway itself is more than 5,700 miles long, spanning eight time zones and taking eight long days to complete the journey.

2. Tetris game is from Russia.

One of the most popular games in the world in the 90s was invented by one Soviet software engineer in 1984.

3. Largest country in the world in terms of land mass.

Russian is the largest country in the world equivalent to 11 per cent of the world total land mass. That area is 25 times the size of Myanmar. Yet most of the land mass (77 per cent) is Siberia, not suitable for habitation due to extremely cold and challenging climate.

4. Gender imbalance.

Women outnumber man in Russian. There are only 86 men per 100 women in Russia. All previous Soviet republic countries also have similar ratio, as Soviet Union bears the brunt of WWII, in

terms of soldiers and men killed in action. Soviet Union suffered the highest number of fatalities, with estimates falling between 22 to 27 million, most of them men. It also highlighted that gender imbalance took an extremely long term to reverse, from 75 per cent in 1950 to reach 86 per cent now.

5. Moscow is top 5 in the world in terms of number of billionaires in the city.

Although Russian GDP per capita is a respectable \$12,000, Moscow has 53 billionaires according to Forbes. It stood 5th in the world.

6. 76 per cent of the population live in European side of Russia

Since most of the uninhabitable Siberia fall within Asia, 76 per cent of the Russia population reside within European continent.

7. Coldest town on earth.

Both the coldest town and the coldest city in the world is in Russia. The former is Oymyakon in the east, where the average temperature for the year stood at -15C. The latter is also in eastern Siberia, with more than 350,000 residents, enduring yearly average temperatures around -10C.

8. Bloodiest seize in the world

Between one million and 2.5 million were killed during the seize of Leningrad (now St Petersburg). Beginning on 8 September, 1941, the siege was especially hard on the civilian population, as the German blockade was successful in minimizing any food which could make its way to the city.

9. Most casualty in WWII

Soviet Union suffered the highest number of fatalities, with estimates falling between 22 to 27 million, followed by China.

10. Most polluted lake on earth.

Unfortunately, this lake is in Russia too. Lake Karachay is a small lake in central Russia. Containing just one square mile of water, the lake formed a dumping ground for nuclear waste by the Soviet Union for around 12 years between 1934 and 1957. Some areas surrounding the lake have enough radiation to give a lethal dose to a human in as little as 30 minutes.

Extracts from two wild plants restrain Covid-19 virus: Study

AN Emory University study discovered that extracts from two common wild plants decrease the capacity of the virus that causes Covid-19 to infect live cells.

The findings were published in Scientific Reports as the first large screening of botanical extracts for effectiveness against the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

In laboratory dish tests, extracts from the flowers of tall goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*) and the rhizomes of the eagle fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) each blocked SARS-CoV-2 from entering human cells.

The active compounds are only present in minuscule quantities in the plants. It would be ineffective, and potentially dangerous, for people to attempt to treat themselves with them, the researchers stress.

In fact, the eagle fern is known to be toxic, they warn.

Very early in the process

"It's very early in the process, but we're working to identify, isolate and scale up the molecules from the extracts that showed activity against the virus," said Cassandra Quave, senior author of the study and associate professor in Emory School of Medicine's Department of Dermatology and

the Center for the Study of Human Health, adding, "Once we have isolated the active ingredients, we plan to further test for their safety and for their long-range potential as medicines against Covid-19."

Quave is an ethnobotanist, studying how traditional people have used plants for medicine to identify promising new candidates for modern-day drugs. Her lab curates the Quave Natural Product Library, which contains thousands of botanical and fungal natural products extracted from plants collected at sites around the world.

Caitlin Risener, a PhD candidate in Emory's Molecular and Systems Pharmacology graduate programme and the Centre for the Study of Human Health, is first author of the current paper.

In previous research to identify potential molecules for the treatment of drug-resistant bacterial infections, the Quave lab focused on plants that traditional people had used to treat skin inflammation.

Given that Covid-19 is a newly emerged disease, the researchers took a broader approach. They devised a method to rapidly test more than 1,800 extracts and 18 compounds from the Quave Natural Product Library for activity against SARS-CoV-2.

"We've shown that our natural



Emory University graduate student Caitlin Risener, first author of the study, gathers tall goldenrod in South Georgia. PHOTO: THARANGA SAMARAKOON/EMORY UNIVERSITY

products library is a powerful tool to help search for potential therapeutics for an emerging disease," Risener said, adding, "Other researchers can adapt our screening method to search for other novel compounds within plants and fungi that may lead to new drugs to treat a range of pathogens."

RNA virus

SARS-CoV-2 is an RNA virus with a spike protein that can bind

to a protein called ACE2 on host cells. "The viral spike protein uses the ACE2 protein almost like a key going into a lock, enabling the virus to break into a cell and infect it," Quave explains.

The researchers devised experiments with virus-like particles, or VLPs, of SARS-CoV-2, and cells programmed to overexpress ACE2 on their surface.

The VLPs were stripped of the genetic information needed

to cause a Covid-19 infection. Instead, if a VLP managed to bind to an ACE2 protein and enter a cell, it was programmed to hijack the cell's machinery to activate a fluorescent green protein.

A plant extract was added to the cells in a petri dish before introducing the viral particles. By shining a fluorescent light on the dish, they could quickly determine whether the viral particles had managed to enter the cells and

activate the green protein. The researchers identified a handful of hits for extracts that protected against viral entry and then homed in on the ones showing the strongest activity: Tall goldenrod and eagle fern. Both plant species are native to North America and are known for traditional medicinal uses by Native Americans.

Additional experiments showed that the protective power of the plant extracts worked across four variants of SARS-CoV-2: Alpha, theta, delta and gamma.

Breakthrough HIV drugs

To further test these results, the Quave lab collaborated with co-author Raymond Schinazi, Emory professor of pediatrics, director of Emory's Division of Laboratory of Biochemical Pharmacology and co-director of the HIV Cure Scientific Working Group within the NIH-sponsored Emory University Centre for AIDS Research. A world leader in antiviral development, Schinazi is best known for his pioneering work on breakthrough HIV drugs.

The higher biosecurity rating of the Schinazi lab enabled the researchers to test the two plant extracts in experiments using infectious SARS-CoV-2 virus instead of VLPs.

The results confirmed the ability of the tall goldenrod and eagle fern extracts to inhibit the ability of SARS-CoV-2 to bind to a living cell and infect it.

SOURCE: ANI

No new variants in weeks after China ended zero-Covid: study

NO new variants of Covid-19 emerged in Beijing in the weeks after China ended its zero-Covid policy late last year, a new study said on Wednesday.

China saw an explosion of infections after starting to lift its strict pandemic measures from early December, sparking fears the world's most populous country could become a fertile breeding ground for new, more transmissible or severe strains.

More than a dozen countries promptly imposed fresh restrictions on travellers from China, also citing a lack of transparency about the scale of the outbreak, sparking Beijing's ire.

But the new study by Chinese researchers, which analysed 413 samples from Beijing sequenced between 14 November and 20 December, said "there is no evidence that novel variants emerged" during that time.

Instead, more than 90 per cent of the cases were BF.7 and

BA.5.2, Omicron subvariants which were already present in China and have been overtaken by more transmissible subvariants in Western nations.

BF.7 accounted for three quarters of the samples, while more than 15 percent were BA.5.2, according to the study published in The Lancet journal.

"Our analysis suggests two known Omicron sub-variants — rather than any new variants — have chiefly been responsible for the current surge in Beijing, and likely China as a whole," lead study author George Gao, a virologist at the Institute of Microbiology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said in a statement.

Wolfgang Preiser and Tongai Maponga, virologists at South Africa's Stellenbosch University not involved in the research, cautioned that it only covered a few weeks after China lifted its zero-Covid measures.

SOURCE: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 13 February 2023)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 14 February 2023: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Yangon, Ayeyawady, and Taninthayi regions and Southern Shan, Rakhine, Kayin, and Mon states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (3 - 5) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Isolated to scattered rain or thundershowers in Taninthayi Region and Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14 February 2023: Generally fair weather.1

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14 February 2023: Partly cloudy.

SCI/TECH/ENVIRON WORLD

Beijing's number of major AI firms exceeds 1,000



A visitor tries an AI exercise device at the China National Convention Centre during the 2022 China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) in Beijing, capital of China, 3 September 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

BEIJING had 1,048 major artificial intelligence (AI) companies as of October 2022, accounting for 29 per cent of the national total, according to a report on the cap-

ital's AI development released Monday.

The report, released by the municipal bureau of economy and information, noted that Beijing

boasts the top industrial agglomeration capacity in China and that it has a well-developed AI industry chain.

The city has more than 40,000 professionals in core AI technologies and has produced the most published papers on AI in the country, the report said.

The number of smart factories and digitalized workshops in Beijing reached 36 and 47, respectively, in 2022.

In 2023, Beijing will guide enterprises, research institutes, open-source communities, and others to collaborate for the achievement of core AI technology innovation. It will also support top firms in creating ChatGPT-style large models to strive for new breakthroughs in the development of the AI industry, according to the report. —Xinhua

On climate, most corporations more talk than action

THE world's biggest and richest companies are failing to deliver on their climate pledges, according to an in-depth analysis released Monday that calls on governments to crack down on corporate greenwashing.

Under growing pressure from shareholders, governments and consumers, companies are racing to roll out strategies to reduce the carbon emissions of their operations, along with their products and services.

Twenty-four multinationals examined have all endorsed the Paris treaty target of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, and aligned themselves with UN-backed campaigns to ensure that business plays its part in decarbonising the global economy.

Staying under that critical temperature threshold will require slashing global greenhouse gas emissions 45 per cent by 2030, and reaching "net zero" — with any residual emissions balanced by removals — by mid-century, the UN's IPCC science advisory panel has said.

But the 2030 pledges of the 22 companies that made them would only slice 15 per cent off their collective emissions, the report found.

And net zero targets adopted by all 24 multinationals — if met — would barely remove a third of their current emissions.

"The overwhelming majority of these corporations are simply not delivering the goods they promised," the 2023 Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor concluded.

Climate think tanks Carbon Market Watch and NewClimate Institute did a deep-dive into sectors ranging from the auto, shipping and aviation industries, to retail fashion, high tech and food, to steel and cement. No oil or gas companies were included.

Vague 'net zero' pledges

With combined earnings of more than \$3 trillion, the two dozen companies under the microscope account for some four per cent of all global emissions — two billion tonnes of CO2 or its equivalent each year.

Analysts assessed the integrity of each corporation's climate plan, looking at the accuracy of self-reported emissions, targets set for reducing them, progress to date, and how heavily pledges depend on questionable compensation schemes known as carbon offsets.

"At a time when corporations need to come clear about their climate impact and shrink their carbon footprint, many are exploiting vague and misleading 'net zero' pledges to greenwash their brands while continuing with business as usual," said Carbon Market Watch executive director Sabine Frank.—AFP

China's renewable energy industry continues to lead globally: official

CHINA'S renewable energy industry continued to lead globally in 2022, National Energy Administration official Wang Dapeng said on Monday.

China-made photovoltaic modules, wind turbines, gear boxes and other key components accounted for 70 per cent of the global market share last year, Wang said at a press conference.

"The centre of gravity of the global new energy industry

is shifting further to China," he said.

China's renewable energy development has made positive contributions to global emissions reduction.

In 2022, China's renewable energy generation was equivalent to a reduction of 2.26 billion tonnes of domestic carbon dioxide emissions. China's exports of wind power and photovoltaic products helped other countries reduce

emissions by approximately 573 million tonnes.

The two figures added up to 2.83 billion tonnes of emissions, or about 41 per cent of the world's total carbon emissions reduction converted from renewable energy, data from the administration shows.

"China has become an active participant and important contributor in the global fight against climate change," Wang said.—Xinhua

Saudi Arabia to send its first woman into space

SAUDI Arabia will send its first ever woman astronaut on a space mission later this year, state media has reported, in the latest move to revamp the kingdom's ultra-conservative image.

Rayyana Barnawi will join fellow Saudi male astronaut Ali Al-Qarni on a mission to the International Space Station (ISS) "during the second quarter of 2023", the official Saudi Press Agency said on Sunday.

The astronauts "will join the crew of the AX-2 space mission" and the space flight will "launch from the USA", the agency said.

The oil-rich country will be following in the footsteps of the

neighbouring United Arab Emirates which in 2019 became the first Arab country to send one of its citizens into space.

At the time, astronaut Hazzaa al-Mansoori spent eight days on the ISS. Another fellow Emirati, Sultan al-Neyadi, will also make a voyage later this month.

Nicknamed the "Sultan of Space", 41-year-old Neyadi will become the first Arab astronaut to spend six months in space when he blasts off for the ISS aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

Gulf monarchies have been seeking to diversify their energy-reliant economies through a



UAE astronaut Sultan AlNeyadi gives a press conference at the Museum of the Future in the Gulf emirate of Dubai on 2 February 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

plethora of projects.

Saudi de facto leader Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman has also been trying to shake off

the kingdom's austere image through a push for reforms.

Since his rise to power in 2017, women have been allowed to drive and to travel abroad without a male guardian, and their proportion in the workforce has more than doubled since 2016, from 17 per cent to 37 per cent.

Saudi Arabia's foray into space is not the first, however.

In 1985, Saudi royal Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, an airforce pilot, took part in a US-organized space mission, becoming the first Arab Muslim to travel into space.—AFP

China-Maldives ophthalmology centre assistance, cooperation programme inaugurated

AN inauguration ceremony of the China-Maldives ophthalmology centre assistance and cooperation programme was held in Hulhumale Hospital on Saturday with the participation of Vice-President of the Maldives Faisal Naseem and other officials.

Naseem expressed his gratitude for the China-aided centre and the medical expert team sent by China, and voiced his confidence in strengthening China-Maldives relations.

Naseem said the programme not only benefits local patients but also provides an excellent opportunity to train local doctors and nurses in the ophthalmology profession.

The material support and technical expertise provided by China will bring an elevated standard of care for the Maldivian citizens, said Minister of State for Health Shah Abdullah Mahir at the inauguration ceremony.

China's medical aid model to the Maldives is shifting from "giving people fish" to "teaching people how to fish", which will not only set a new model of sustainable cooperation between the two countries, but also bring tangible benefits to the Maldivian people, said Chinese Ambassador to the Maldives Wang Lixin.

The programme will assist Hulhumale Hospital in the diagnosis and treatment of ophthal-

mic diseases, with the priority focused on training local medical teams, said Chen Weirong, head of the China-Maldives ophthalmology centre.

Chen added that local medical staff will be invited to China for professional training to enable them to complete the diagnosis and treatment of common ophthalmic diseases independently.

At the inauguration ceremony, Wang and Chen donated a batch of medical equipment to Hulhumale Hospital on behalf of China's National Health Commission and the Zhongshan Ophthalmic Centre of Sun Yat-sen University based in south China's Guangdong Province. — Xinhua



Chinese experts from China-Maldives ophthalmology centre give surgical instructions to local doctors at Hulhumale Hospital, the Maldives, on 8 February 2023. PHOTO: CHINA-MALDIVES OPHTHALMOLOGY CENTRE/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA

COVID-19 cases in Tokyo down below 1,000 for 1st time in 8 months



People wearing face masks walk across scramble crossing in Tokyo's Shibuya district on 27 January 2023. PHOTO: KYODO

THE Tokyo metropolitan government said new cases of novel coronavirus infections fell below 1,000 for the first time in around

eight months, slipping to 799 on Sunday with concern receding about an eighth wave of COVID-19 outbreak.

The fall comes as the Japanese government of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has been relaxing COVID-19 restrictions, which have been imposed since early 2020, toward the normalization of social and economic activities in the country.

The capital reported that the hospital bed occupancy rate by COVID-19 patients was 31.2 per cent on Sunday in Tokyo, while the number of deaths was eight.

Across the nation, Japan saw 13,203 newly confirmed cases on Sunday, down more than half compared to the week before, according to health authorities. —Kyodo

Sweden discards 8.5 mln doses COVID-19 vaccines

SWEDEN has discarded nearly 8.5 million doses of vaccines against COVID-19, local media reported on Sunday.

The discarded doses equal to about 20 per cent of vaccine doses Sweden has procured, according to Swedish Public Health Agency's statistics, Radio Sweden reported.

Richard Bergstrom, Sweden's former national vaccine coordinator, told Radio Sweden that the total value of the discarded doses was 1.5 billion Swedish kronor (143 million US dollars).

The main reason for dos-

es being discarded was the fact that individuals had not had their booster doses as expected, Bergstrom explained.

"The bulk is doses that people have chosen not to take, in other words, the third, fourth, or fifth (booster) dose. These were already purchased and now have to be destructed," said Bergstrom.

As of Thursday, 88.2 per cent of all individuals aged 18 or over have received at least one dose, while 86.4 per cent have received two doses or more, Swedish Public Health Agency's statistics show. — Xinhua

Pakistan to start polio vaccination campaign in 39 districts

A polio vaccination campaign is set to kick off from Monday in 39 districts of Pakistan to vaccinate more than six million children under the age of five, the Pakistani Health Ministry said.

The five-day polio drive has been primarily initiated after sewage samples in the country's eastern Lahore city tested positive for wild poliovirus last month, the ministry said in a

statement on Sunday.

The campaign would begin in full across nine districts, including the seven endemic districts in the southern part of northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and two districts of eastern Punjab province, the statement said.

Partial campaigns would be conducted in the remaining 30 districts, during which the chil-

dren will be vaccinated, it added.

The first positive sample of 2023 was detected on 19 January and was found genetically linked to the poliovirus detected in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province in November 2022, the ministry said, adding that this was the first evidence of cross-border transmission of the virus in more than a year. —Xinhua



A health worker administers polio vaccine drops to a child at a school during a vaccination campaign in Lahore on 16 January 2023. PHOTO: AFP

ECONOMY WORLD



A container vessel anchored out past the Pasir Panjang terminal port is seen behind cable car cabins in Singapore on 17 June 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

Singapore maintains 2023 GDP growth forecast, spurred by China reopening

SINGAPORE said Monday it will stick to its economic growth forecast for 2023 despite the slowdown last year, encouraged by China's rapid reopening after years of crushing zero-Covid policies.

The city-state's economic performance is often seen as a useful barometer of the global environment because of its

reliance on trade with the rest of the world.

Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry said in a statement that it would maintain its growth forecast of 0.5 to 2.5 per cent.

"Growth in China is projected to pick up in tandem with the faster-than-expected easing of its Covid-19 restric-

tions," the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) said in a statement.

"This has led to improvements in the growth outlook of regional economies."

It also pointed to the easing of global commodity prices, but cautioned that they "remain elevated with the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war".—AFP

S Korea logs trade deficit for 1st 10 days of February

SOUTH Korea logged trade deficit for the first 10 days of February due to a faster increase in import than export, customs office data showed Monday.

Trade deficit amounted to 4.97 billion US dollars during the 1-10 February period, up from a deficit of 3.57 billion dollars tallied in the same period of last year, according to Korea Customs Service. The trade balance stayed in red for the 11th consecutive month through January when the trade deficit hit a record monthly high of

12.69 billion dollars.

Export grew 11.9 per cent to 17.62 billion dollars in the 10-day period, while import expanded 16.9 per cent to 22.59 billion dollars. The daily average export tumbled 14.5 per cent in the cited period. The outbound shipment kept a downward trend for the fourth successive month through January.

Semiconductor export dropped 40.7 per cent, and those for mobile devices and home appliances shrank 8.3 per cent and 32.9 per cent respectively.—Xinhua

European equities rise on hopes of inflation slowdown

EUROPEAN stock markets rose Monday as investors set aside Asian losses and forecast easing inflation in Britain and the United States, dealers said.

"The expectation is inflation will have eased slightly when the US and UK report tomorrow and Wednesday respectively," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.

Europe also climbed on news that the eurozone economy was forecast to narrowly avoid recession this winter.

The 20-nation area's econo-

my is now expected to expand by 0.9 per cent instead of 0.3 per cent, as "favourable developments" helped it weather fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Union's executive arm said.

Inflation in the eurozone is also expected to slow more than previously forecast after the war sent oil and gas prices soaring last year. The Bank of England, the European Central Bank and the US Federal Reserve ramped up interest rates last year in efforts to tame sky-high inflation.

In Asia on Monday, equities fell on growing expectations that US interest rates will go much higher and for longer than previously thought. While US inflation has been trending down for several months, data showing the jobs market remained very tight in January indicated the world's top economy was still robust.

The employment reading led a number of Federal Reserve officials to insist there was still plenty of work to do before they were happy they had prices under control.—AFP

Philippine investment board registers US\$7.55 bln in January

INVESTMENTS registered with the Philippines' Board of Investments (BOI) in January this year have reached 414 billion pesos (roughly 7.55 billion US dollars), according to data from the Department of Trade and Industry.

"It means the government investment body already hit more than 40 per cent of the one trillion pesos (roughly 18.2 billion dollars) target for 2023," Trade Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo told a forum over the weekend.

He said that the BOI-registered investments have already reached close to 60 per cent of the 2022 record, referring to the 729 billion pesos

(roughly 13.29 billion dollars) investments approved by the BOI in 2022.

Rodolfo expressed optimism that the BOI could hit its one trillion pesos investment target this year.

Rodolfo said Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos' foreign visits have created a pipeline of solid interest from investors. He added that the increase in investments shows that the government's promotional visits are working, with investors from Southeast Asian countries, the United States, Belgium, and China showing interest in putting their money in the Philippines.—Xinhua

London Heathrow enjoys best start since before Covid

LONDON'S Heathrow airport has enjoyed its best start to the year since before the coronavirus pandemic, it revealed on Monday.

More than 5.4 million passengers passed through the hub in January, touching a level not seen since the start of 2020.

Demand also rebounded after severe disruption in the run-up to Christmas, when Border Force staff went on strike over pay.

"Heathrow is back to its best," said chief executive John Holland-Kaye in a group statement.

The hub added Monday that it welcomed recent news that British Airways and Virgin Atlantic will restart flights to China in the spring after the Asian giant fully lifted its "zero Covid" restrictions.

Covid ravaged global avia-



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 22 May 2020, passengers arrive at Terminal 2 of Heathrow airport, west London. London's Heathrow airport, the main British "hub", announced on Monday, 13 February, that it had experienced "the strongest start of the year" since the beginning of the pandemic. **PHOTO: AFP**

tion, grounding planes worldwide and forcing airlines to slash thousands of jobs in 2020.

Demand has since recovered

sharply after lockdowns were lifted, but airlines and airports alike have struggled to recruit sufficient staff.—AFP

Foreigners buy S Korean stocks for 4th month in January

FOREIGN investors continued to buy South Korean stocks for the fourth successive month last month, financial watchdog data showed Monday.

Foreigners purchased a net 6.15 trillion won (4.8 billion US dollars) worth of domestic stocks in January, remaining as net buyers since October last year, according to the Financial Supervisory Service.

It marked the largest monthly stock purchase by offshore investors in

over nine years since September 2013.

Overseas investors were net buyers in the benchmark KOSPI market, but they sold shares in the tech-savvy KOSDAQ market.

Foreign holdings of local listed stocks totaled 635.98 trillion won (498.1 billion dollars) at the end of January, taking up 26.9 per cent of the total market capitalization.

Offshore investors dumped a net 3.54 trillion won (2.8 billion dol-



South Korean financial officers celebrate in front of a screen showing South Korea's benchmark stock index during a ceremony celebrating the New Year's opening of the South Korea stock market at the Korea Exchange in Seoul on 2 January 2023. PHOTO: AFP

lars) worth of local listed bonds last month.

Given the maturing debts worth 3.03 trillion won (2.4 billion dollars), the foreign net withdrawal from the local bond market stood at 6.57 trillion won (5.2 billion dollars) in January.

Foreign ownership of domestic bonds amounted to 221.98 trillion won (173.9 billion dollars) at the end of January, accounting for 9.4 per cent of the total listed bonds. —Xinhua

Nissan, Renault to invest \$600 mln to make 6 new models in India



This picture taken on 4 February 2023 shows people walking near the head office (C) of Japanese automaker Nissan Motor in Yokohama. PHOTO: AFP

NISSAN Motor Co and Renault SA said Monday that they will expand their operations in India with an investment of \$600 million to develop six new models and boost local production.

Nissan and Renault, alliance partners for more than two decades, will jointly develop two electric and four sport-utility vehicle models for India, as well as for export, based on com-

mon platforms, expecting to create up to 2,000 new jobs at their joint research and development centre.

Under the project, the Japanese and French automakers will manufacture electric vehicles for the first time in India and contribute to turning the country into an export hub, though details such as the EV launch schedule and local production capacity increase plans have yet to be decided.

The two partners last week unveiled a revamp of their alliance by reducing Renault's stake in Nissan to 15 per cent, making it on par with Nissan's in its French peer.

"This project together with Nissan is a first concrete output of the new alliance ambition released on 6 February," Francois Provost, who oversees Renault's partnership, said in a release.

The new plan comes as India becomes increasingly lucrative for carmakers, overtaking Japan for the first time in 2022 to become the world's third-largest auto market with over 4.7 million vehicles sold.

In India, the alliance began production at a plant in Chennai in 2010 as their first joint manufacturing venture. Nissan built its Datsun-brand vehicles at the plant.—Kyodo

PESTICIDES DISTRIBUTER CHANGING

Notice is hereby given that the official distributor have been changed to Marlarmyaing Public Co., Ltd for the following insecticide manufactured by Sinamyang Group Pte.,Ltd.

Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Registration Type	Registration Number
Softer 30 EC	Pretilachlor 30% EC	Full	F2022-3915

We invite objections to Co-secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, Department of Agriculture, 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 receive within the period prescribed, parties mentioned above shall proceed with the completion of formalities recorded with the Pesticide Registration Board.

Sinamyang Group Pte., Ltd.
9, Temasek Boulevard, # 18-01A,
Suntec Tower Two, Singapore 038989.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V NEGAR VOY.NO. (SCY1147)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V NEGAR VOY. NO. (SCY1147)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **13-2-2023** 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
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S LAND AND SEA INTERMODAL LOGISTICS
SDN BHD LINE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SPM BANGKOK /V.EAL59

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SPM BANGKOK /V.EAL59** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **13-2-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AIPT** 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: 2301191/2301178

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S EVERETT ASIA LINE PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GREEN PACIFIC VOY.NO. (0UV0EE1NC)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V GREEN PACIFIC VOY.NO. (0UV0EE1NC)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **14-2-2023** 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
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CMA CGM ASIA SHIPPING PTE LTD

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Syria's Assad may consider more border crossings for quake aid: WHO

THE WHO chief said Sunday that Syria's President Bashar al-Assad had voiced openness to more border crossings for aid to be brought to quake victims in the country's rebel-held northwest.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus met with the Syrian president in Damascus on Sunday afternoon to discuss the response to the devastating earthquake which has killed more than 33,000 people across Syria and Türkiye.

Concerns have been running particularly high for how aid might reach all those in need in Syria, which has been devastated by more than a decade of civil war.

"The compounding crises of conflict, Covid, cholera, eco-



Workers unload aid from the United Arab Emirates at the Bassel al-Assad international airport in Syria's Mediterranean port city of Latakia on 11 February 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

nomie decline and now the earthquake have taken an unbearable toll," Tedros said after visiting Aleppo and witnessing the devastation first hand.

He said he was "waiting to move across lines to the northwest, where we've been told the impact is even worse".

The situation is particular-

ly dire in the rebel-held area in the northwest, which cannot receive aid convoys from government-held parts of the country without Damascus's authorization.

The single border crossing open to shuttle aid from Türkiye also saw its operations disrupted by the quake.

Some pre-positioned aid has been delivered, and convoys began rolling through the border crossing again on Thursday, but there have been mounting calls to open more crossings to speed up the aid delivery.

"This afternoon I met with His Excellency President Assad, who indicated he was open to considering additional cross-border access points for this emergency," Tedros told a virtual press conference from

the Syrian capital.

'Massive access' needed

Humanitarian aid in rebel-held areas usually arrives through Türkiye via a cross-border mechanism created in 2014 by a UN Security Council resolution.

But it has long been contested by Damascus and its ally Moscow, who see it as a violation of Syrian sovereignty.

Under pressure from Russia and China, the number of crossing points has been reduced over time from four to one.

Equally vital for Syria's quake-hit northwest is speeding up aid from within the country. Tedros hailed the "recent blanket approval by the government of Syria for the UN for cross-line convoys" to bring aid into the rebel-held northwest. — AFP

Israeli fighter jets strike Gaza military post in response to rocket fire

ISRAELI fighter jets bombed a military post in the Gaza Strip early on Monday in response to a rocket launch from the Palestinian enclave on Saturday, sources with the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) told Xinhua.

Several explosions were heard in separate areas of the coastal enclave, which is home to more than two million Palestinians. Witnesses saw ambulances and civil defence crews moving to the bombing sites.

An Israeli army spokesman said in a statement that the underground post produced raw materials for manufacturing missiles and was run by the Hamas.

"The airstrike deals a serious blow to Hamas' capabilities to fortify and arm itself," the statement said.

On Saturday night, the Israeli army said that it had detected and intercepted one rocket launched from Gaza. —Xinhua

Venezuelan president urges youths to defeat US blockade

VENEZUELAN President Nicolas Maduro on Sunday urged the country's youths to fight and defeat "the challenge of the blockade, sanctions and attacks" of the United States.

Addressing thousands during a ceremony marking National Youth Day, he called on the younger generations to "liberate the homeland", and to "fight so that Venezuela will not be a colony again."

Under the leadership of the late reformist leader Hugo

Chavez, more opportunities were created for the young in culture, sports and education areas, but more remains to be done, said Maduro.

To that end, he said a Great National Youth Congress will be held on 11-12 March to launch the Great Venezuela Youth Mission to promote varied social programmes for young people.

Young Venezuelans marched on Sunday in support of the Bolivarian Revolution and the reforms it has achieved, as

part of celebrations on the day.

Today's Venezuelan youth "is the generation that despite the difficulties, the unilateral blockade by the United States, has never lost ... hope and the desire to defend the homeland," said Rodbexa Poleo, youth leader of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela.

12 February was declared National Youth Day in 1947 in tribute to the students who fought Spanish colonialism on that day in 1814. — Xinhua

Lack of hygienic facilities endangers survivors in quake-hit Türkiye

SIX days after the deadly twin earthquakes that killed nearly 30,000 in Türkiye, the lack of hygienic facilities has started to endanger the survivors.

With thousands of buildings destroyed across the 10 quake-hit provinces in southern Türkiye and many more unsafe to enter, the lack of lavatory facilities becomes one of the major issues.

"The issue of hygiene is becoming more and more urgent," wrote Ihsan Cakir, deputy

general secretary of Hatay Municipality on Friday. The Hatay province was one of the worst hit areas by Monday's earthquakes.

"We need portable toilets," said Cakir, noting that volunteers and other personnel are now forced to go to neighbouring cities to meet their needs.

Local media reported Sunday that 58 portable toilets and showers had been sent to the affected areas, while manufacturers around the country are gearing up to produce more.

In addition to toilets, access to clean water was just as urgent.

"Underwater sources might have been polluted, with the sewage system in ruins," warned Celalettin Kocaturk, a doctor in Istanbul, adding that now the tap water is not safe for drinking or ablutions.

"There is an increased risk of an epidemic," he said.

The latest official death toll in Türkiye as of Sunday evening was 29,605 people. — Xinhua



Local residents walk among rubble of collapsed buildings in Kahramanmaraş on 13 February 2023 as rescue teams continue to search for victims and survivors after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck the border region of Türkiye and Syria. **PHOTO: AFP**

Flights grounded, power cut as storm lashes N Zealand

TENS of thousands of homes in New Zealand were without power and hundreds of flights were cancelled Monday as a tropical storm lashed the north of the country.

A state of emergency was declared in five regions on the North Island, covering almost one-third of New Zealand's entire population of 5.1 million.

Although the storm was downgraded from a cyclone before it made landfall, high winds and torrential rains have already toppled trees, damaged roads and downed power lines.

Wellington-based Prime Minister Chris Hipkins was among thousands stuck in the northern city of Auckland after the wild weather grounded flights.

"Things will get worse before they get better," Hipkins told New Zealanders in a press conference Monday, calling for them to "be prepared, stay inside if you can".

He said the government had considered declaring a national state of emergency for only the third time in the country's history — but it was not yet necessary.

The government announced an aid package of 11.5 million New Zealand dollars (\$7.25 million) to help recovery efforts.

Police said one person was missing aboard a boat, which issued a distress call early Monday near Great Barrier Island, north of Auckland.

Winds of up to 140 kilo-



A general view of a damaged road after a storm battered Titirangi, a suburb of New Zealand's West Auckland area, on 13 February 2023. Thousands of homes in New Zealand were without power and flights were grounded Monday as a tropical storm lashed the north of the country. **PHOTO: AFP**

metres (87 miles) per hour battered the Northland region, while Auckland's harbour bridge

was rocked by gusts of 110 kph. About 58,000 people were without power on Monday after-

noon, according to Roger Ball, head of the national emergency management agency.

Emergency management minister Kieran McNulty said Monday would be a difficult day due to the "highly dangerous" combination of high winds and heavy rain.

McNulty added that it was "unsafe" to try and repair the network while the dangerous weather continued.

Auckland, New Zealand's largest city and home to 1.6 million people, is still recovering after flash floods in late January forced thousands from their homes and resulted in four deaths.

"Many people haven't been able to catch a break," Hipkins said.—AFP

Japan to buy US Tomahawk missiles in bulk in FY 2023

JAPAN is considering making a package purchase of Tomahawk cruise missiles from the United States in fiscal 2023, which starts in April, a government source said Monday, instead of its initial plan of buying them over the next several years.

The move apparently reflects that Tokyo wants to put the US-developed long-range missiles in practical use as soon as possible to enhance the nation's deterrence as it faces rapidly growing military threats from China and North Korea, the source said.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's administration is also eyeing

consultation with the US side to explore the possibility of moving the start of the missiles' deployment in the country forward from the currently scheduled fiscal 2026, according to the source.

The government has been considering purchasing up to about 500 Tomahawks, the source said, although it has not disclosed the number.

Japan is expected to buy the latest-model missiles, which the US Navy uses and can be launched from Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force Aegis destroyers, the source added.

In its three key defence documents updated in December,

the government vowed to possess what it calls "counterstrike capabilities" that allow Japan to strike targets in enemy territory in case of emergency.

The documents also said Tomahawk missiles, which have a strike range of about 1,600 kilometres and would cover China's coastal areas, will be utilized to develop the counterstrike capabilities until Japan deploys home-developed ones.

During their talks last month in Washington, Kishida told US President Joe Biden that Japan will introduce the Tomahawks, and Biden expressed his support for the plan.—Kyodo

Cambodia officially revokes West-backed VOD radio's licence over slanderous broadcast

CAMBODIA'S Ministry of Information on Monday officially revoked the licence of the West-backed VOD (Voice of Democracy) radio for broadcasting "slanderous" information.

In its announcement signed by Information Minister Khieu Kanharith, the ministry cancelled the licence held by the Cambodian Centre for Independent Media (CCIM), which oversaw the VOD radio, for "gross professional misconduct".

The announcement said their "intentionally slander-

ous" report and failure to run corrections in accordance with the press law had tarnished the "reputation and prestige of the government".

The revocation of the media outlet's licence was made at Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen's order on Sunday.

The Cambodian government accused the VOD radio of broadcasting an "intentionally slanderous" article pertinent to the country's recent relief aid to the earthquake-hit Türkiye.—Xinhua



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin speaks at a press conference on 13 February 2023, in Beijing. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Senior Chinese diplomat to visit France, Italy, Hungary, Russia, attend 59th Munich Security Conference in Germany

WANG Yi, director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, will visit France, Italy, Hungary and Russia from 14 to 22 February at the invitation of the governments of the four countries, Foreign Ministry

Spokesperson Wang Wenbin announced on Monday.

Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, will also attend the 59th Munich Security Conference, and deliver a speech at its China session to communicate the vision of

common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security advocated by President Xi Jinping, make clear China's abiding commitment to peaceful development and share China's position on major international issues in light of the theme of the Conference.—Xinhua

Flights grounded,
power cut as
storm lashes N
Zealand

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SPORT

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council: Twelve 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 prioritize 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.
- (d) To ensure peace, stability, rule of law, and the safe and smooth functioning of transport networks across the Union.

2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance development based on agriculture and livestock using modern production techniques and to 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 assure support for the sustainability of Micro-, Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) that prioritize import substitution, export production, and the use of domestically produced raw materials, in order to increase domestic production and generate employment opportunities.
- (d) To advance the socio-economic life of the people, in order to ensure the country's prosperity and food security.

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 people and preserve and safeguard their faiths, beliefs, culture, and characteristics of patriotic nationalism.
- (c) To strengthen basic health care in order to achieve the emergence of a health system that enhances the longevity and health of the entire nation.
- (d) To comprehensively promote the education sector to make it capable of producing the human resources necessary for building a modern, developed, and progressive democratic nation.

Team Myanmar midfielder Kyaw Min Oo transfers to Malaysian club

MYANMAR national team midfielder Kyaw Min Oo has moved to a Malaysian club, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

Kyaw Min Oo was recruited by the Malaysian Super League club PDRM and is doing pre-season training with the team. Kyaw Min Oo had been out for a long time due to a knee injury, but he recovered in the last few years and was able to play well, attracting the interest of foreign clubs.

As Kyaw Min Oo moved to the Malaysian club PDRM, three Myanmar players will play in the same Malaysian



Myanmar team midfielder Kyaw Min Oo. PHOTO: THAW GYI

league next season. Before Kyaw Min Oo, Hein Htet Aung was playing for the Selangor team, and Zaw Min Tun is playing for the Penang team. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe and Paris Saint-Germain's French head coach Christophe Galtier speaks during a training session in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, west of Paris on 13 February 2023, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League round of Last 16 First leg football match against FC Bayern Munich. PHOTO: AFP

Mbappe included in PSG squad for Bayern Champions League tie

KYLIAN Mbappe has been named in Paris Saint-Germain's squad for their Champions League last 16, first leg against Bayern Munich on Tuesday after making a faster-than-expected return to training following a thigh injury.

After Mbappe suffered the injury against Montpellier on 1 February, the French champions said he would be out for three weeks. On Saturday, coach Christophe Galtier said he did not think Mbappe would play on Tuesday.

"I don't think so. He follows his rehabilitation protocol. He was a victim of a muscle injury," Galtier said after PSG lost 3-1 away at Monaco in Ligue 1. "We will take zero, zero, zero risk with Kylian."

But his name featured in the squad of 22 players announced by PSG on Monday, along with Lionel Messi and Marco Verratti, both of whom sat out the Monaco game due to injury. —AFP

Pedri guides Barca past Villarreal to 11-point Liga lead



Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Pedri celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the Spanish League football match between Villarreal CF and FC Barcelona at La Ceramica stadium in Vila-real on 12 February 2023. PHOTO: AFP

PEDRI'S strike earned Barcelona a battling 1-0 win over Villarreal on Sunday to move 11 points clear of second-placed Real Madrid at the top of La Liga.

The champions, who won the Club World Cup on Saturday, face Elche in midweek to try and bite

back into the growing gap. Barcelona rode their luck in a gripping clash at Estadio de la Ceramica but held off a Yellow Submarine onslaught to continue marching towards their goal of winning the title for the first time since 2019.

Defender Ronald Araujo in particular made a number of superb blocks and interceptions to help protect Barcelona's slim advantage until the end, locking in another clean sheet.

Barcelona have shut

out opponents 16 times in 21 league games this season, conceding just seven goals.

"The truth is we are working really hard (defensively)," Araujo told Movistar.

"We had to correct this from last season, when teams scored a lot of goals against us, and it was hard for us to keep clean sheets.

"We're doing well at the back and the midfielders aren't leaving spaces, the forwards too. It's the fruit of (our) work."

Robert Lewandowski missed a big chance in the opening stages, firing too close to veteran goalkeeper Pepe Reina when through on goal.

However the Polish international, La Liga's top scorer, made up for it with a cushioned pass for Pedri to open the scoring after 18 minutes. Barcelona fashioned a superb team move, finished off by the 20-year-old midfielder for his fourth goal in seven games across all competitions. —AFP