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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

Only when all officers and the rank and file of mechanical engineering, navigation, radar and meteorological sectors work in concert will they successfully perform all military operations, Senior General stresses

ONLY when all officers and the rank and file of mechanical engineering, navigation, radar and meteorological sectors work in concert will they successfully perform all military operations, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the ceremony to commission airplanes and helicopters of the Tatmadaw (Air) into service at the Flying Training Base in Meiktila Station at the ceremony to mark the 74th Anniversary of the Tatmadaw (Air) yesterday morning with the aim of enhancing the aviation capability of the State and the Tatmadaw.

Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Maung Maung Kyaw extended greetings to the commissioning of airplanes and helicopters.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General said it is necessary to build the Tatmadaw to be strong, capable and modern armed forces to be able to

SEE PAGE-3



Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing observes one of the training jets at the 74th Anniversary of the Tatmadaw (Air) event in Meiktila on 15 December 2021.

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Air) Commemoration Ceremony, Alms Offering Ceremony held

PAGE-5

NATIONAL

47th Anniversary of Rakhine State Day celebrated in Sittway

PAGE-6

LOCAL BUSINESS

Yuan-Kyat direct trade allowed in Sino-Myanmar border areas

PAGE-7

NATIONAL

Myanmar chairs 3rd workshop on good agricultural practices of BIMSTEC

PAGE-10

NATIONAL

Township medical officer from Kutkai People's Hospital cruelly killed

PAGE-11

MoH statement on terrorist attacks to health workers who serve COVID-19 vaccination programmes

THE Ministry of Health makes efforts in conducting COVID-19 vaccination processes not only in urban areas but also in remote villages as a COVID-19 preventive measure to increase the vaccine coverage and prevent the spread of disease.

The health workers of the ministry run vaccination programmes in regions/states/districts/townships/villages, and on 14-12-2021, a medical team, including Kutkai Township Medical Services Department Head Dr Wint Wint Myaing, three midwives and one driver went to Monesi Village of Kutkai Township in Shan State led by the township deputy administrator with

the support of the General Administration Department for vaccination.

After they conducted the vaccination, they returned to Kutkai Township. On their way back home, the terrorists brutally attacked and Dr Wint Wint Myaing died at about 7 pm on 14-12-2021.

Dr Wint Wint Myaing is an outstanding departmental head of the Township Medical Services and she served to win the model township hospital award three consecutive years for Shan State (North) in selecting the model township hospitals of the regions/states in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

She was also honoured in March 2021 in honouring the hospitals that continued to provide hospital services and is also an honourable township medical services head for carrying out the hospital services and township public health services in 2021.

The Ministry of Health extends condolences to the family members of medical health staff, who died due to the attack of terrorists, who was serving in healthcare services for national races and in COVID-19 vaccination processes with her 21-year experience, and the ministry strongly condemns the terrorists who brutally killed a health staff in such a vicious manner.

MoC facilitates daily import of anti-COVID-19 equipment



THE Ministry of Commerce is overseeing import of essential medical supplies plus anti-COVID devices that are critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, including liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders, through trading posts, international airports and seaports.

Anti-COVID-19 equipment

was imported by three companies using 13 vehicles. A total of 5,238 empty oxygen cylinders, 300 PPE suits, eight tonnes of gloves and 95 tonnes of masks were imported via the Chinshwehaw trade zone and international seaports yesterday.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the

standard operating procedures, including online registration for the import process.

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinating with relevant departments and treatment of COVID-19 as well as contact persons for inquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website — www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA

Prices list of medicines commonly used against COVID-19 till 15-12-2021

No	Product Name	Pack Size	Price in Kyats (Retail)	Company Name
Antibiotics				
1	Injection - Meropenam	1g/Vial	10,000	AA Medical
Anti-inflammatory				
2	PO Dexamethasone	Box of 10x10's	1,450	JDS
3	PO Prednisolone	Box of 10x10	2,000	Aorta
4	Injection- Dexamethasone	Vial	160	Aorta
Antiviral				
5	PO Favipiravir 400 mg	2X10 Tablet	50,000	AA Medical
6	Injection - Remdesivir	Vial	70,000	GHI

Anti thrombosis				
7	Injection Enoxaprim 40 mg	1 Pre-Filled Syringe	7,000	Nyi Lay Naing
8	Injection Enoxaprim 60 mg	1 Pre-Filled Syringe	9,000	Nyi Lay Naing
Symptomatic				
9	PO Paracetamol 500 mg	10X10's tablets/ Box	1,500	AA Medical
10	PO Dextromethophan	10X10's	1,450	AA Medical

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

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

Only when all officers and the rank and file of mechanical engineering, ...



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing poses for the group documentary photo at the event yesterday.

FROM PAGE-1

safeguard the ground, waters and airspace territories of the country in addition to the national interests.

Modern wars prove that avi-

ation and aerospace power can be applied to attack any targets in the world at any time and anywhere. As such, it is necessary to make more efforts for controlling the land, airspace and seas as

well as aerospace.

As the multipurpose fighter planes were upgraded and more fighters, transport planes and helicopters and fighter helicopters were added to the Tatmad-

aw (Air), its capacity could be upgraded to control Myanmar's aerospace territory. Hence, upgrading and research must be done for having second and third-generation aircraft.

The Tatmadaw (Air) was facilitated with necessary aid such as navigation devices and radars for military operations so as to safeguard Myanmar's air space. Only when all officers and the rank and file of mechanical engineering, navigation, radar and

meteorological sectors work in concert will they successfully perform all military operations. Unity is strength in military affairs.

NUG, CRPH and PDF terrorists blow up schools and government buildings, harm innocent people and service personnel and spread fake news to discredit the Tatmadaw and wedge the Tatmadaw and the people through social media networks and alien media.

SEE PAGE-4



The Commander-in-Chief (Air) presents the miniature aircraft to the Senior General.



The Senior General and wife release 74 birds.



Fighters are seen saluting the Senior General in a composite arrow formation.



One transport helicopter hanging State Flag salutes the Senior General.

Generating hydropower

It is necessary to resurge manufacturing at home to be able to substitute the imported products. If the country saves the consumption of fuel oil, the amount for spending the foreign exchange will decline and the trade surplus will increase. The Senior General highlighted the salient points of reduction of fuel consumption, use of electricity, generating hydropower, and implementation of public transport projects.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 3/2021 of the Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 3-12-2021)

Only when all officers and the rank and file of mechanical engineering, ...

FROM PAGE-3

The rank and file and families need to observe actual political conditions of Myanmar and take special care of security for military information and documents, military equipment, military personnel, and warfare and training.

The Senior General expressed his praise for the Tatmadaw (Air) in the transport of COVID-19 vaccines, drugs and other materials to regions and states as well as remote ethnic areas in real-time. Servicemen need to take training for controlling their capability, health and fitness.

The Senior General stressed the need for all Tatmadaw members to emphasize the military unity and organizational measures and try hard to be ready to fight through constant training and military awareness.



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing speaks on the occasion of the 74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Air) yesterday.

He urged new generations to maintain the fine traditions of the Tatmadaw for ensuring the

perpetual existence of Myanmar. Commander of Flying Training Base Maj-Gen Soe Aung declared the commissioning of aircraft.

General Maung Maung Kyaw presented gifts to the Senior General.

At the ceremony, aircraft of the Tatmadaw (Air) including MTX-1A training plane, light helicopters, fighter helicopters, transport helicopters and transport airplanes saluted the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services with flying demonstrations in composite trail formation, Composite Arrow Head Formation, "8" shape of Lazy Eight Manoeuvre, Arrow Head

Formation, the opening of Landing Light, and Composite Arrow Formation.

Moreover, training jets, jet fighters and multipurpose fighters performed skill demonstrations in the sky. The Senior General then released 74 birds and sprinkled scented water on the commissioned aircraft. The Senior General also greeted the pilots who participated in the skill demonstration and presented cash awards.

Yak-130 and K-8 airplanes are types of training jets and light fighters. They can be used in air to air warfare, air to surface warfare, close aviation supporting fire, interception fighting,

armed reconnaissance, and training of transfer. ATR-72 600 airplane is a medium-transport airplane to transport very important persons, passengers and cargo and perform search and rescue works. Y-12 airplane can be used to transport passengers and cargo, for parachuting, maritime reconnaissance, and search and rescue. Eurocopter helicopter, the medium-transport helicopter, can transport VIPs, and passengers and can be used for search and rescue. The commissioning the aircraft to the Tatmadaw (Air) in its 74th Anniversary celebration is sure to greatly benefit the State and the Tatmadaw. — MNA



The Senior General sprinkles the scented water on the commissioned aircraft.



The Senior General greets the pilots who participated in the event.

Tatmadaw will help Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University fulfil the shortages of demonstrators in academic matters, says Senior General



The Senior General hears the report on the progress of Myanmar's earth observation.

TECHNOLOGIES taught with funds of the State must be efficiently applied at home, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in inspecting the Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University in Meiktila yesterday afternoon.

Union minister for Science and Technology Dr Myo Thein Kyaw reported on the progress of Myanmar's earth observation for the launching of the satellite, sending of scholarship students abroad under the transfer



The Senior General and party view around the Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University in Meiktila on 15 December 2021.

of technique programme, and construction of the satellite base and Acting Rector of the University Dr Aung Myo Thu on teaching the students, construction of buildings at the university, subject-wise training courses, assignment of faculty members, job opportunities for students and the plan of the university to develop human resources.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General explained collaborative efforts of relevant departments for the satellite project, sending of scholarship students to have necessary technologies, systematic construction of the buildings, prioritized appointment from the

graduates from the university for deploying the faculty members, needs of training for students to have skills to be applied in the practical fields, and provisions of teaching aids. He also stressed that technologies taught with funds of the State must be efficiently applied at home. Plans are underway to improve the roads and bridges on the campus of the university, and the Tatmadaw will help the university fulfil the shortages of demonstrators in academic matters.

The Senior General and party viewed around the university and attended to the needs of officials. —MNA



74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Air) Commemoration Ceremony, Alms Offering Ceremony held

A military parade commemorating the 74th anniversary of the Tatmadaw (Air) was held yesterday morning at the Flying Training Base in Meiktila.

Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Maung Maung Kyaw, retired Commanders-in-Chief (Air), Air Base Commanders, officers and other ranks from Meiktila Station and invitees attended the ceremony.

First, the military parade was held as planned, with saluting the national flag and all fallen soldiers. The Commander-in-Chief (Air) inspected the parade companies who took four oaths of allegiance.

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

Similarly, Paritta reciting

ceremony plus alms offering ceremony was held at Aircraft Production and Repair Base.

Members of the Sanghas headed by the Vice-Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, Yan Myo Aung Ward of Meiktila Sasana Waiponla Pali Learning Centre Presiding Nayaka Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Bhaddanta Kovida attended the Paritta reciting ceremony.

Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Maung Maung Kyaw and wife Daw Aung Mar Myint, Air Base Commanders and wives and guests also attended the ceremony.

First, the Commander-in-Chief (Air) and those present at the ceremony received the Five Precepts from the Sayadaw of Sasana Waiponla Learning Centre and



A military parade is held to mark the 74th Anniversary of Tatmadaw (Air) in Meiktila yesterday.

then listened to the sermons delivered by the Venerable Sayadaw.

After that, they donated of

fertories to the monks and listened to the dedication sermon of Sayadaw of Sasana Waiponla Learning Centre.

After that, the congregation shared the merits gained and then donated alms to the Sayadaws. — MNA

47th Anniversary of Rakhine State Day celebrated in Sittway

THE 47th Anniversary of Rakhine State Day was marked at U Ottama Hall of Sittway Township yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by SAC members Mahn Nyein Maung, Daw Aye Nu Sein and U Mounng Har; Union ministers U Maung Maung Ohn, Dr Nyunt Pe and U Min Thein Zan, Rakhine State Chief minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min, Western Command Commander Maj-Gen Htin Latt Oo, UEC member Daw Nu Mra Zan and U Saw Ba Hlaing and other officials.

First, the ceremony was opened with the ‘Gondaw Phwint Simee Khwat’ dance performed by the Rakhine traditional dance troupe.

Then, SAC member Daw Aye Nu Sein read out the message to mark the 47th Anniversary of Rakhine State Day sent by SAC



State Administration Council Member U Mounng Har presents the certificate of honour to one of those who participate in development works.

Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, and the Rakhine state chief minister

delivered a speech.

The SAC members, Union ministers and other officials joint-

ly presented certificates of honour to the government employees, police, Tatmadaw members

and ward administrators who participated in state development operations, COVID-19 prevention activities and also gave prizes to students who won the essay writing and painting competitions on Rakhine State Day.

Then, Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn handed over 1,500 DVB-T2 Set Top Boxes to the Rakhine State Chief minister.

After that, the ethnic traditional dance troupes of Mro, Khami, Dainet and Thet ethnics entertained with their traditional dance and the ceremony came to an end with ‘Yoe Taung Yeik Ka Tha Chin Than’ of the Rakhine traditional dance troupe.

The Rakhine State Day ceremony has been organized since 1975 and now it reaches its 47th anniversary. — Tin Tun (IPRD)/GNLM

MIFER Union minister meets Power China International Group Limited

UNION minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations Int'l Group Ltd U Aung Naing Oo received guests from Power China International Group Limited, China in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday and discussed investment matters.

During the meeting, the Union Minister welcomed the

investment plan proposed by Power China and had cordial discussions.—MNA

The MIFER Union minister receives guests from Power China International Group Limited of China in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.



33rd Executive Committee Meeting of ASEAN War Veterans Association, 20th General Assembly held



THE 33rd Executive Committee Meeting of the ASEAN War Veterans Association and 20th General Assembly were convened yesterday morning by a video conference chaired by the Vietnam Veterans Association.

Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons and delegations from 10 ASEAN member countries, four Myanmar delegation members led by Lt-Gen Sein Win (Retd), Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Myanmar War Veterans Association, attended the meeting.

The 33rd Executive Committee Meeting was chaired by Lieutenant-General (Retired) Nguyen

Song Phi, Vice-Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Association, at 8 am.

At the Executive Committee meeting, 10 resolutions proposed to be submitted to the 20th General Assembly were reviewed and approved.

The 20th General Assembly was chaired by Senior Lieutenant-General (Retired) Nguyen Van Duoc, Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Association, at 1 pm.

At the conference, the decisions of the 33rd Executive Committee meeting were approved and the chairmanship was handed over to the Thai Veterans Association. —MNA

Yuan-Kyat direct trade allowed in Sino-Myanmar border areas

THE use of Yuan or Kyat in the bilateral transaction is officially allowed in the border areas between Myanmar and China in a bid to encourage trade, according to the notification released by the Central Bank of Myanmar on 14 December.

In exercise of the power conferred by sections 17 and 22 of the Foreign Exchange Management Law, the CBM released this notification.

This move is aimed to boost the bilateral cross-border trade, facilitate the trading and bilateral transaction and increase the use of domestic currency in line with the objectives of ASEAN Financial Integration. Myanmar traders are

allowed to open the accounts at the designated banks which can make Yuan-Kyat direct payment.

Those designated banks must also strictly adhere to the guidelines of the use of Yuan or Kyat in the direct trade in the cross-border trade. This notification came into effect starting from the notification date, the CBM stated.

There are five cross-border posts between Myanmar and China; Muse, Lwejel, Chinshweh, Kamapaiti and Kengtung. Of them, Muse is the major border post, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics showed.

Myanmar conducted US\$4.057 billion worth of



Myanmar conducted US\$4.057 billion worth of cross-border trade through Muse posts in the financial year 2020-2021, with exports valued at \$2.9 billion and imports worth \$1.15 billion, the trade data indicated.

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Thazi township grows about 25 acres of winter sunflower cultivation for seed production



About 25 acres of winter sunflower for seed production have been cultivated in Thazi Township, Mandalay Region to boost the edible oil production.

ABOUT 25 acres of winter sunflower for seed production have been cultivated in Thazi Township, Mandalay Region to boost the edible oil production, said Daw Moe Moe Ngwe, the township manager of Thazi Township Agriculture Department.

Regarding winter sunflower cultivation, it has been carried out by growing two rows of male plants and four rows of female plants and it is a cross-pollinated crop. The sunflower seeds are ordered from the farmlands under

the Department of Agricultural Research-DAR. About ten farmers are selected to grow those mixed sunflowers. There are two species of sunflowers – Hsin Shwe Kyar-2 and Yezin-1 species cultivated in Thazi township.

“The sunflower seeds production is to meet the demand in the region. It is a rural area and sunflower cultivation is widespread in the winter season and monsoon. The mixed sunflowers are cultivated to increase edible oil production. A basket of Hsin

Shwe Kyar-2 species of sunflower seeds can produce about 2.50 visses while one basket of Yezin-1 species can make about 4.50 visses. Therefore, the department is aiming to extend more Yezin-1 species of sunflower cultivation. The sunflowers planted in early October are now in bloom,” she added. The Yezin-1 species sunflower cultivation will yield about 40 or 50 baskets per acre if farmers can apply the good input. In the region, it can produce over 30 baskets per acre. The lifespan of the sunflower is 85 days. The growers will be able to sell the species for K50,000 per basket, which can increase their income.

The township agriculture department is also conducting awareness activities for the sunflower growers to improve sunflower yield and cultivate good quality sunflower seeds. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Digital marketing becomes trendy in avocado industry

DIGITAL marketing, which also guarantees product quality, has caught on in the avocado industry. The sellers can earn the trust of the consumers as well, said U Myo Nyunt, vice-chair of the Myanmar Avocado Producers and Exporters Association.

At present, the abundant supply of avocados from various regions is flowing into the market. The market has barriers to shipping to foreign markets during the COVID-19 period. Consequently, consumer buying behaviour has also changed in the domestic market.

“The quality avocados can be sold through online platforms. The fair market value is set to avoid overpay-

ing for the consumers and underpricing for the growers. The consumers will receive much fairer prices when the bulk supply of avocado enters the market,” he pointed out.

Avocado is perennial and the harvest time varies depending on the height above the sea level. It is harvested between September and February. Hass avocado variety is mostly demanded in the market.

The prices of avocado stood at K9,500-10,000 per kilogramme for A-grade, K8,500 for B-grade and K6,500-7,000 for C-grade and under C-grade. An avocado of good quality fetches K1,500 in the market. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Rubber price from Homalin drips

THE prices of rubber from Homalin Township, Sagaing Region dropped in these days, said Daw Su Su Htway, head of the Homalin Township Agriculture Department.

“Rubber price earlier fetched K1,010 per pound. The price of rubber has dropped to K980 per pound at present. The price has somewhat plunged. The domestic rubber market slightly declined as the global rubber

market downturn. But, the growers expected that the price will be upright again. The domestic rubber price is positively related to the global market,” said Daw Su Su Htway.

Rubber from Homalin earlier fetched K1,010 per pound. The price of rubber has decreased to K980 per pound at present. Last year, the price of rubber from Homalin was K800 per pound, which is fetched more than this

year.

The rubber sheets from Homalin Township are delivered to the Mandalay market. The cultivation cost of the rubber plantation is over K500,000 per acre and it is yielded about 500 or 600 pounds per acre of rubber plantation. About 300,000 pounds of natural rubber are yearly produced in Homalin township.

More than 200 acres of rubber has been cultivated in



More than 200 acres of rubber has been cultivated in Homalin Township since 2015. The acres grew year over year, and the number of rubber acres reached 8,187 in 2021, according to the township Agriculture Department.

Homalin Township since 2015. The acres grew year over year, and the number of rubber acres reached 8,187 in 2021, according to the township Agriculture Department. — Lu Lay/GNLM

Uplift leadership skills to serve the nation and the people

ONLY then will the good leaders be able to develop their organizations and the country, sacrificing their interests but setting aside selfishness.

Thanks to the proper support of followers in the organizations, the leaders will have to chance to show off their brilliant skills in order to achieve success. In fact, the leaders must be supported by capable followers.

Only when the leaders have capability will their organizations grasp the chance to march forwards as well as achieve greater victories. So, it can be said the victories are secured due to the concerted efforts of both leader and followers.

Leaders should not forget their lives struggling in various difficulties and criticism but they must be able to apply experiences in overcoming the challenges for their future plans benefiting the followers as well as those outside their organizations.

Leaders must have to know most things to be able to adopt comprehensive plans on a wider scale they shall do. Leaders should listen to topics that others talked, and understand they should talk later before adopting the final decisions. It is an act of gathering the opinions of followers so as to choose the best things for decisions.

The good leader is responsible for explaining all things he planned to the followers and oppositions for charming their trust and understanding. Those leaders need to initiate the all-inclusiveness for any operations. Leaders shall never commit malpractice when they grasp authority. The decisions on how to rule a country and how to do the best for the country depend on the leaders. Hence, those leaders need to apply their own experiences in building a developed nation for enabling the people to enjoy the fruits of such development. That is why the leaders must have the ability of good execution.

Only when the leaders are capable will the country develop. The leaders must have skills to keep an open mind as the most important thing. It is most important that a leader is to be humble. If the leader takes pride in everything, his followers leave him alone at first and then the people.

Leadership skills can play a great role in a person's career development. Good leadership can win the heart of the people but the leader's soul must be really honest. It is because those leaders are born of the people.

Leaders should not forget their lives struggling in various difficulties and criticism but they must be able to apply experiences in overcoming the challenges for their future plans benefiting the followers as well as those outside their organizations.



Brief information of SARS-CoV-2 variant: Omicron

By Dr Than Lwin Tun

THE Technical Advisory Group on SARS-CoV-2 Virus Evolution (TAG-VE) of the World Health Organization (WHO) is an independent group of experts that periodically monitors and evaluates the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 and assesses if specific mutations and combinations of mutations alter the behaviour of the virus. The TAG-VE was convened on 26 November 2021 to assess the SARS-CoV-2 variant: B.1.1.529.

The B.1.1.529 variant was first reported to WHO from South Africa on 24 November 2021. The epidemiological situation in South Africa has been characterized by three distinct peaks in reported cases, the latest of which was predominantly the Delta variant. In recent weeks, infections have increased steeply, coinciding with the detection of the B.1.1.529 variant. The first known confirmed B.1.1.529 infection was from a specimen collected on 9 November 2021. This variant has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning. Preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection with this variant, as compared to other Variant of Concerns (VOCs). The number of cases of this variant appears to be increasing in almost all provinces in South Africa.

Current SARS-CoV-2 PCR diagnostics continue to detect this variant.

On 26 November 2021, WHO designated the variant B.1.1.529 a variant of concern, named Omicron, on the advice of WHO's TAG-VE. This decision was based on the evidence presented to the TAG-VE that Omicron has several mutations that may have an impact on how it behaves, for example, on how easily it spreads or the severity of illness it causes.

Current knowledge about Omicron

Researchers in South Africa and around the world are conducting studies to better understand many aspects of Omicron and will continue to share the findings of these studies as they become available.

Transmissibility: It is not yet clear whether Omicron is more transmissible (e.g., more easily spread from person to person) compared to other variants, including Delta. The number of people testing positive has risen in areas of South Africa affected by this variant, but epidemiologic studies are underway to understand if it is because of Omicron or other factors.

Severity of disease: It is not yet clear whether infection with

Omicron causes more severe disease compared to infections with other variants, including Delta. Preliminary data suggests that there are increasing rates of hospitalization in South Africa, but this may be due to increasing overall numbers of people becoming infected, rather than a result of a specific infection with Omicron. There is currently no information to suggest that symptoms associated with Omicron are different from those from other variants. Initially reported infections were among university students — younger individuals who tend to have a more mild disease — but understanding the level of severity of the Omicron variant will take days to several weeks. All variants of COVID-19, including the Delta variant that is dominant worldwide, can cause severe disease or death, in particular for the most vulnerable people, and thus prevention is always key.

Effectiveness of prior SARS-CoV-2 infection

Preliminary evidence suggests there may be an increased risk of reinfection with Omicron (ie, people who have previously had COVID-19 could become re-infected more easily with Omicron), as compared to other vari-

ants of concern, but the information is limited. More information on this will become available in the coming days and weeks.

Effectiveness of vaccines: WHO is working with technical partners to understand the potential impact of this variant on our existing countermeasures, including vaccines. Vaccines remain critical to reducing severe disease and death, including against the dominant circulating variant, Delta. Current vaccines remain effective against severe disease and death.

Effectiveness of current tests: The widely used PCR tests continue to detect infection, including infection with Omicron, as we have seen with other variants as well. Studies are ongoing to determine whether there is any impact on other types of tests, including rapid antigen detection tests.

Studies underway

At present, WHO is coordinating with a large number of researchers around the world to better understand Omicron. Studies currently underway or underway shortly include assessments of transmissibility, the severity of infection (including symptoms), the performance of vaccines and diagnostic tests, and the effective-

ness of treatments.

WHO encourages countries to contribute the collection and sharing of hospitalized patient data through the WHO COVID-19 Clinical Data Platform to rapidly describe clinical characteristics and patient outcomes?

More information will emerge in the coming days and weeks. WHO's TAG-VE will continue to monitor and evaluate the data as it becomes available and assess how mutations in Omicron alter the behaviour of the virus.

Recommended actions for countries

As Omicron has been designated a Variant of Concern, there are several actions WHO recommends countries to undertake, including enhancing surveillance and sequencing of cases; sharing genome sequences on publicly available databases, reporting initial cases or clusters to WHO; performing field investigations and laboratory assessments to better understand if Omicron has different transmission or disease characteristics, or impacts the effectiveness of vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics or public health and social measures. Countries should continue to implement effective public health measures to reduce COVID-19 circulation

overall, using risk analysis and a science-based approach. They should increase some public health and medical capacities to manage an increase in cases. WHO is providing countries with support and guidance for both readiness and response?

In addition, it is vitally important that inequities in access to COVID-19 vaccines are urgently addressed to ensure that vulnerable groups everywhere, including health workers and older persons, receive their first and second doses, alongside equitable access to treatment and diagnostics.

Recommended actions for people

The most effective steps individuals can take to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus is to keep a physical distance of at least 1 meter from others; wear a well-fitting mask; open windows to improve ventilation; avoid poorly ventilated or crowded spaces; keep hands clean; cough or sneeze into a bent elbow or tissue, and get vaccinated when it's their turn.

References

- WHO: Classification of Omicron (B.1.1.529) SARS-CoV-2 Variant of Concern
- WHO: Update on Omicron (28 November 2021)

Pfizer says Covid pill drastically reduces severe disease

PFIZER said Tuesday that clinical trials confirmed its Covid pill — a new type of treatment that should withstand the mutations seen with Omicron — drastically reduced hospitalizations and deaths among at-risk people by almost 90 per cent.

The announcement came as a real-world study from South Africa showed two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was 70 per cent effective in stopping severe illness from the new variant, a result called encouraging by researchers, though it represents a drop compared to earlier strains. Data for the new pill, which hasn't yet been authorized any-



Members of the public wait for a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, as they queue outside Manchester Town Hall, which is being used as a COVID-19 walk-in vaccination centre, in Manchester, north west England, on 14 December. PHOTO: AFP

where in the world, came from more than 2,200 volunteers, and backed up preliminary findings announced last month.

The American drugmaker said its treatment, called Paxlovid, also held up against the Omicron variant in lab-testing.

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told CBS News the drug was a "game changer," and he expected the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to give its green light as soon as this month.

The trial showed that the pill reduced the need for hospitalization in high-risk adults with Covid-19 by 89 per cent if the treatment was given within three days of symptom onset and by 88

per cent if given within five days.

Overall, there were 12 deaths in the placebo group, and none in the drug group.

Side-effects were found at comparable rates between the treatment and placebo groups (23 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively), and were mostly mild.

Paxlovid also reduced the risk of severe disease, as well as the amount of virus detected, in a separate study of people at normal risk — but the results were on the edge of statistical significance and need further confirmation.

SOURCE: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 15 December 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 16 December 2021: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, (Southern and Eastern) Shan, Chin 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 (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain in Taninthayi Region.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 16 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

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SAC members pay homage to Rakhine State Ovadacariya Sayadaws, Sangha Nayaka Committee Chairman Sayadaw



The State Administration Council members and Union ministers meet representatives of Rakhine, Mro, Khami, Dainet and Thet ethnicities.

STATE Administration Council members Mahn Nyein Maung, Daw Aye Nu Sein and U Moungh Har including Union ministers, Rakhine State Chief minister and command commander paid homage to Rakhine State Ovadacariya Sayadaw, Rakhine

State Sangha Nayaka Committee Chairman Sayadaw and senior monks at Sasana Beikman of Lawka Nanda Pagoda in Sittway Township yesterday.

Then, the officials took Five Precepts from Presiding Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nandasiri of

Nanda Yama Buddhist learning centre of Sittway Township and they donated to the Sayadaws.

The SAC members and party also visited Sakka Muni Thunzetta Pagoda in Lawka Nanda Pagoda precinct and inspected the renovation works on Lawka



Rakhine's traditional wrestling contest.

Nanda Pagoda.

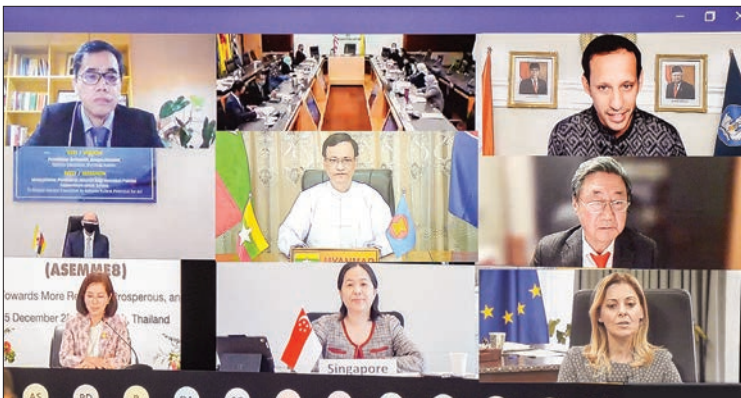
They went to World Buddha Sasana Azani Guru Guru Maha Guru Ashin Candamani Beikman and paid homage to a bronze statue of the Sayadaw.

In the evening, the SAC members viewed the final competition of Rakhine traditional wrestling, which was held to mark the 47th Anniversary of Rakhine State Day and the prize-awarding ceremony.

Then, the SAC members, Union ministers and Deputy Minister U Zaw Aye Maung met representatives of Rakhine, Mro, Khami, Dainet and Thet ethnic people and discussed ethnic people-related matters, including literature and culture.

After that, they joined a dinner of the Rakhine state government hosted to mark the 47th Anniversary of Rakhine State Day. — MNA

8th Asia-Europe Education Ministers' Meeting held



THE 8th Asia-Europe Meeting of Education Ministers was chaired by the Thai Ministry of Education at 3 pm yesterday and Education Ministers and officials from 47 countries in Asia and

The 8th Asia-Europe Education Ministers' Meeting in progress online.

Europe, Deputy Minister for Education Dr Zaw Myint and the directors-general attended the meeting.

First, Minister of Education of Thailand Mr Treenuch Thienthong gave a welcome address at the meeting.

Afterwards, the Asian and European Education Ministers delivered speeches on the four strategic goals for Asia-Europe

Education for the next decade, and Deputy minister Dr Zaw Myint on behalf of Myanmar discussed the theme of Promoting Lifelong Learning.

Then, the forum of education ministers was held on the theme of cooperation for ASEAN-Europe Education Strategy 2030. It then approved the Asia-Europe Education Strategy and Action Plan 2030. —MNA

Myanmar chairs 3rd workshop on good agricultural practices of BIMSTEC

THE Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation chaired the 3rd workshop on good agricultural practices (GAP) of the member states of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) through videoconferencing yesterday morning and the director-general for the Department of Agriculture addressed the workshop.

The workshop was chaired by Deputy Director-General of the Department of Planning Dr Thanda Kyi. Representatives of the member states of BIMSTEC: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and officials from the Sec-

retariat of the BIMSTEC.

Myanmar representatives are composed of officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international organizations.

The workshop discussed each member country's current activities, challenges, difficulties encountered, and further plans to improve the implementation of good agricultural practices, ways to enhance cooperation in the field of agricultural practices among the member countries and ways to improve compliance.

BIMSTEC has been implementing 14 areas of cooperation in such as trade and investment,



technology, energy, transportation, tourism, fishery, agriculture, culture, environmental conservation and natural disaster man-

agement, public health, poverty mitigation, anti-terrorism, and climate change by identifying leading countries. Myanmar

is cooperating with member countries to take the lead in the agriculture and energy sectors. — MNA

Township medical officer from Kutkai People's Hospital cruelly killed

AN armed terrorist group brutally killed Dr Daw Wint Wint Myaing, 50, a township medical officer from the Kutkai People's Hospital, on the evening of 14 December.

A group of five officials from the Kutkai Township General Administration Department and a group of five personnel led by Dr Daw Wint Wint Myaing returned from Monesi village in Kutkai Township, in two vehicles after carrying out the COVID-19 vaccination which had started at 10 am on 14 December.

While the group of the General Administration Department temporarily stopped by in Tamoenye Town to get the immunization record, the group with the doctor left for Kutkai. When they arrived at a place between Mawhan village and Naungcho village at around 7:15 pm, a group of armed terrorists (under scru-

tiny) ordered to stop the vehicle, ordered the passengers to get off the vehicle, and cruelly shot only Dr Daw Wint Wint Myaing with a small weapon, causing her to fall on the spot. The armed terrorist group ordered the rest of her group to turn off the lights and drive back towards Tamoenye town.

By the time the group of the General Administration Department arrived at Kutkai at around 8:45 pm, they tried to contact the group with the doctor as they had not arrived. At around 11 pm, the driver of the vehicle of the doctor's group reported on the incident that the armed terrorists ordered them to get off the vehicle in the Myanmar language, however, they talked to each other in Jingphaw language.

Security forces and local civil society organizations searched for the body of the doctor and found it on the left

side of the Tarmoenye-Kutkai road near the old Naungcho village. She was found dead with five bullet wounds. The body was taken to the Hospital and arrived at around 12:30 am.

Dr Daw Wint Wint Myaing was born in Lashio and had served the people at the Kutkai People's Hospital since 2002. She was a dutiful and friendly civil servant who everyone including department staff. She was under protection for her security after she had received threatening messages because she did not involve in the CDM campaign. It was a day trip for her to Monesi village which is 70 kilometres far from Kutkai where she provided the villagers with the vaccination against COVID-19. She did not ask for security during this trip as she didn't expect such brutal killing as well as she was being supported by the local



Incident place.

people.

Local people are deeply saddened and outraged by the unexpected death of a good civil servant by the terrorists and the Ministry of Health and the State itself has lost a good civ-

il servant. Security forces are working hard and investigating to uncover the perpetrators and it is reported that the local people are requested to secretly report any information related to the case to the relevant authorities. — MNA

Irrigation dept official abducted on way to hospital in Falam



U Than Win (wounded).

STAFF Officer of the Department of Irrigation U Than Win in Falam Township of Chin State was abducted by CDF terrorists from the ambulance on the way to Kalay Township hospital yesterday at around 1 am.

U Than Win was wounded due to the armed attack committed by two armed CDF terrorists on the afternoon of 14 December 2021, while he was drinking tea with his friend at "Htee Yeik Branch (2)". The terrorists fired at him and took

his Surf car 2F/6226. A total of three gunshot wounds were reported and he was taken to Falam People's Hospital for treatment.

Yesterday morning, when he was taken to Kalay People's Hospital from the Falam Hospital by an ambulance owned by "Falam Youth Association", CDF terrorists (under investigation) attacked the ambulance at the Khawle junction in Falam Township. The driver and the man accompanied him left the vehicle to escape from the terrorists and U Than Win was taken away.

The driver was reportedly wounded by three small firearms, and while he was being treated at the Lamban Station hospital, three armed CDF terrorists came and took their phones.

It is reported that security

forces are working together with local Tatmadaw forces to take action against the per-

petrators under the law, according to the Myanmar Police Force. — MNA



Incident Site.

229 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 15 December, total figure rises to 527,503

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 527,503 after 229 new cases were reported on 15 December 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 504,178 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,197 after 4 died.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 14-12-2021, a total of 19,271,009 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 13,379,945 people have been vaccinated two times and 5,891,064 people once.—MNA

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"Pharmaceuticals and medical preparations; sanitary preparations for medical purposes; dental preparations and articles; medicated toothpaste; antiseptic mouthwash; mouthwashes for medical purposes; material for stopping teeth, dental wax; disinfectants; medicated preparations for the mouth, teeth, lips and gums; hand sanitizer; antibacterial alcohol skin sanitizer gel; spray sanitizer for personal use; medicated shampoos; medicated antibacterial shower gel; medicated bath preparations; veterinary preparations; dietetic food and substances adapted for medical or veterinary use, food for babies; dietary supplements for human beings and animals; plasters, materials for dressings; preparations for destroying vermin; fungicides, herbicides." in **Class 5**.

"Dental apparatus and instruments; electric dental apparatus; dental implants; dental tools; medical devices for dental surgery; teeth protectors for dental purposes; syringes for applying dental preparations; surgical, medical and veterinary apparatus and instruments; artificial limbs, eyes and teeth; orthopaedic articles; suture materials; therapeutic and assistive devices adapted for persons with disabilities; massage apparatus; apparatus, devices and articles for nursing infants; sexual activity apparatus, devices and articles." in **Class 10**.

"Toothbrushes; toothbrush cases, not of precious metal; toothpick holder; toothbrush holders, not of precious metal; electric toothbrushes; heads for electric toothbrushes; interdental toothbrush; dental tape and floss; toothpicks; dental flossers or dental floss picks; water apparatus for cleaning teeth and gums, not for use in dentistry; glasses; glass cups; cups (not of precious metal); mugs (not of precious metal); household, kitchen, cosmetics or perfumery utensils and containers and dispensers (not of precious metal or coated therewith); combs and sponges for personal, cosmetics and household purposes; brushes (except paint brushes); brush-making materials; articles for cleaning purposes; steelwool; unworked or semi-worked glass (except glass used in building); facial and body cleansing brushes, sponges and abrasive instruments; hair brush; dust coat brush; toilet utensils; household or kitchen utensils and containers; cookware and tableware, except forks, knives and spoons; combs and sponges; glassware, porcelain and earthenware." in **Class 21**.

"Chewing gum; mint candy, mint for confectionery; coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, rice, tapioca, sago, artificial coffee; flour and preparations made from cereals, bread, pastry and confectionery, ice; honey, treacle; yeast, baking powder; salt, mustard; vinegar, sauces (condiments); spices; pasta and noodles; chocolate; ice cream, sorbets and other edible ices; seasonings, preserved herbs; sauces and other condiments; ice (frozen water)." in **Class 30**.

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Daw Aye Tha Zin Myo, (H.G.P)
For **Hawley & Hazel (BVI) Co. Ltd.**
c/o **Baker & McKenzie Limited**
Suite 28, Level 14, Junction City Tower,
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Dated: **16 December 2021**

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U Kyi Win Associates Company Limited
for **AstraZeneca UK LIMITED**.
P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.
Phone: 01-8372416
Dated: 16th December, 2021

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

**Central Committee for Holding Myanma Gems Emporium
The Information on 2021 Mini Gems Emporium**

1. The significant **2021 Mini Gems Emporium**, under the supervision of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, will be held on December 17 to 22, 2021 at Maniradana Hall in Nay Pyi Taw, Genuine Myanmar pearl and rough jade lots will be sold at the Emporium.
2. In accordance with the Myanmar Gemstone Law local gems entrepreneurs who got permit to make gems mining and local gems merchants who got licence to operate the finished gemstone making and dealings will be allowed to attend and purchase the lots at 2021 Mini Gems Emporium according to the terms and conditions.
3. For further information in detail about granted admission to purchase lots at 2021 Mini Gems Emporium, can inquire and keep contact with Emporium Central Committee, Myanmar Gems Enterprise (Head Office), Myanmar Pearl Enterprise (Head Office) in Nay Pyi Taw.

Emporium Central Committee

Japan gov't overstated construction orders for 8 years

THE Japanese government overstated monthly data on construction orders for about eight years, officials said Wednesday, raising the possibility that the practice may have led to miscalculating the country's gross domestic product figures.

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism had double counted some of the data it received from the same businesses when compiling its monthly construction orders data since fiscal 2013, according to the officials.

The monthly construc-

tion orders, one of the 53 key economic statistics in the country, are calculated using data submitted every month from about 12,000 businesses. They are used to compile the country's GDP and influence policy-making of the government as well as management decisions of businesses.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said at a parliamentary session Wednesday that misrepresentation of the data does not have an impact on GDP figures for fiscal 2020 and 2021, which will end next March.

—Kyodo ■

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UK inflation spikes to decade-high on eve of BoE rate call

BRITISH inflation has rocketed to its highest level for more than 10 years on broad-based price gains, data showed Wednesday on the eve of a Bank of England interest rate decision.

The annual inflation rate surged to 5.1 per cent in November after Octo-

ber's 4.2 per cent, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That marked the highest level since September 2011, with inflationary pressures driven partly by jumping motor fuel costs.

The BoE, whose main task is to keep inflation close to 2.0 per cent, is

however expected to hold its record-low interest rate on Thursday due to turmoil over the Omicron coronavirus variant.

Central banks normally use interest rate hikes to try to damp high inflation, which is weighing on companies and consumers globally.—AFP ■

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U Kyi Win Associates Company Limited

for **AstraZeneca AB**

P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.

Phone: 01-8372416

Dated: 16th December, 2021

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Daw Kyi Nyein Chan, (H.G.P)

For **ekaterra Group IP Holdings B.V.**

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Dated: 16 December 2021

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M.V ALS SUMIRE VOY.NO. (1063W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ALS SUMIRE VOY.NO. (1063W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **16-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **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 OCEAN NETWORK EXPRESS (S'PORE) PTE LTD

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Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S ELDER TRIUMPHANT SHIPPING LINES PTE LTD

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Paris 2024 opening ceremony to be held at Seine in front of 600,000 spectators

THE opening ceremony of the Paris Olympic Games on 26 July 2024 will be staged on the River Seine and at least 600,000 spectators are expected to attend the grand party, as the organizers announced the details of the plan on Monday.

For the first time in a summer edition of the Games, the opening ceremony of Paris 2024 will take place outside of a stadium and in the heart of the city. Some 160 boats will transport the athletes, sailing six kilometres from Pont d'Austerlitz to the Pont d'Iena with the river and the capital's iconic monuments like Notre Dame, the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower will serve as the backdrop. The organizers are expecting at least 600,000 can attend the ceremony alongside the river - ten times more than could attend in the Stade de France. While the lower part of the river bank will be subject to ticketing, there will be free access to the upper part with spectators able to see holograms on the water, dancers on the roofs of nearby buildings and aerial shows.—Xinhua ■

China to open green channels, facilitate forex business during Winter Olympics

CHINA'S State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) has approved the Bank of China, the official partner of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics to open green channels for foreign exchange business related to the event.

The launch of the green channels would facilitate the opening of foreign exchange accounts, personal consumption on mobile equipment and other foreign exchange business related to the Winter Olympics, SAFE said. According to the regulator, bonus payment and tax refund business related to the event will also be covered by the mechanism. SAFE will continue to facilitate foreign exchange business and ensure the smooth organization of 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, it said.—Xinhua ■

Philippines' Duterte withdraws from 2022 Senate race

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte on Tuesday withdrew his candidacy for the 2022 Senate race, the government elections monitor said, a month after he made a last-minute entry into the contest.

Duterte, 76, is constitutionally barred from seeking re-election, and his decision to run for the Senate had been seen as a way of staying in politics while facing an international probe into his deadly drug war.

"The President has filed his withdrawal from the Senatorial elections," James Jimenez, spokesman for the Commission on Elections office, said on Twitter.

Duterte decided to withdraw from the May elections to "better focus" on the government's pan-



Rodrigo Duterte is constitutionally barred from seeking re-election as president. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

demic response and ensure "orderly and peaceful elections", his spokesman Karlo Nograles said.

"After over four decades in public service, the President plans to retire from government

to spend more time with his family when his term ends in June 2022," Nograles added, without specifying if Duterte was quitting politics altogether.

The elections will see thou-

sands of candidates contest more than 18,000 posts from president to town councillor.

Duterte said previously he would run for the country's second-highest office, before changing his mind and announcing plans to retire from politics — which was met with deep scepticism among analysts.

His latest withdrawal does not necessarily mean he will exit politics. Under election rules, he has until midday on election day to substitute in for another candidate sharing his surname if they are disqualified or die.

Duterte's daughter Sara is running for vice president while his son Sebastian is contesting the mayoral race in the family's southern stronghold of Davao City.—AFP ■

Singapore sporting dreams collide with national service



National service in Singapore is a decades-old policy that leaders say remains necessary to defend the city-state. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

CALVIN Cheng broke records in his native Singapore and his career as a long jumper was starting to take off internationally.

But then came national service.

Now 31 and a lawyer, Cheng can't help but wonder what could have been: "Unfortunately, I just wasn't able to get the time off to train.

"That was when I decided that it just wasn't worth it, and that was when I gave up," Cheng told AFP by telephone.

Singaporeans are required to spend two years in the military, police or emergency servic-

es upon turning 18, a decades-old policy that leaders say remains necessary to defend the city-state.

But critics have increasingly questioned this obligation — which applies to men only — when it comes to athletes, saying it can torpedo sporting careers just as they are getting off the ground. The debate has been fuelled by two Singaporeans who refused to enlist so they could pursue their careers with top English football teams — and were then warned they had broken the law, meaning they could face jail.—AFP ■

Russian court considers closing top rights group Memorial

RUSSIA'S Supreme Court reconvened on Tuesday to hear a request to shut down Memorial, the country's most prominent rights group and a pillar of its civil society.

In court for alleged violations of its designation as a "foreign agent", Memorial is facing its biggest threat since it was founded by Soviet dissidents, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov, in 1989. Prosecu-

tors have asked the Supreme Court to dissolve Memorial International, the group's central structure, for alleged failures to use the "foreign agent" label on all their publications, including social media posts, as required by law. Dozens of supporters gathered in sub-zero temperatures in front of the Supreme Court in central Moscow and police vans were parked nearby.

A supporter holding a plac-



Russia's Supreme Court is hearing a request to shut down Memorial, the country's most prominent right group. PHOTO: AFP

ard saying "Hands off Memorial" was detained, the group said.

"It is necessary to preserve Memorial so that we can under-

stand where we lived, where our parents lived, and where we cannot return," said supporter Vladimir Ananich.—AFP ■

EU tries to salvage eastern ties under Russian threat



Eastern European countries such as Ukraine are on the front lines of the west's standoff with Russia. Ukrainian National Guard servicemen take part in a military drill near the Azov Sea port of Mariupol in April.

PHOTO: UKRAINE INTERIOR MINISTRY/AFP/© AFP/FILE

EU leaders will try to rescue their outreach to five former Soviet republics of eastern Europe on Wednesday, all of them would-be partners undermined by Russian meddling and regional strife.

The "Eastern Partnership" has already lost a member: Belarus, which broke with the grouping in June after criticism from EU capitals of strongman Alexander Lukashenko's disputed re-election.

The remaining five partners — Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan — will send leaders to Brussels to meet the heads of the 27 member states, one day ahead of a full EU summit.

"The timing of this summit has been well chosen, because these countries are going through a complicated spell," a senior European official explained.

The date may be right, but diplomats in Brussels are expecting a frustrating encounter.

On one hand, western capitals are keen to show a united front against Russian threats.

On the other, they know that they can't honestly offer the eastern countries a path to EU membership.

Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova — which all have Russian troops occupying regions on their soil — would like to join the European Union, seeing it as a guarantor of peace and prosperity.

But a European minister told AFP: "We can't do anything."

Each step of the long accession process needs unanimous support from existing member states, and long-standing candidates in the western Balkans already face an uncertain wait.

"Some member states are pushing to accept Georgia and Ukraine into the EU, but others say that is not possible," the minister told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

UN calls on US, Iran to return to terms of nuclear deal

THE UN Tuesday urged Washington to lift sanctions on Tehran in line with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, while calling on the Islamic republic to return to commitments to limit its nuclear programme.

"I appeal to the United States to lift or waive its sanctions as outlined in the plan and extend the waivers regarding the trade in oil with the Islamic Republic of Iran," said Rosemary DiCarlo, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

"Also important is the extension of US waivers regarding certain civilian nuclear-related activities," she told the UN Security Council, as negotiations resumed in Vienna on reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, as the nuclear deal is formally known.—AFP ■

Berlin court to rule in high-stakes 'Russian hitman' case

A German court will decide Wednesday whether a Russian man is guilty of shooting dead a former Chechen commander in broad daylight in a Berlin park on the orders of Moscow.

The suspect named by prosecutors as Vadim Krasikov, alias Vadim Sokolov, stands accused of gunning down 40-year-old Georgian national Tornike Kavtarashvili in the Kleiner Tiergarten park on 23 August 2019.

On charging Krasikov last year, prosecutors said they believed Russia had ordered the murder, making the case a flashpoint for already frayed ties between Berlin and Moscow. The suspect is accused of approaching Kavtarashvili from behind on a bicycle and firing two shots from a Glock 26 pistol equipped with a silencer.—AFP ■

Trump W. House chief held in contempt for defying Capitol riot probe

US lawmakers voted Tuesday to recommend criminal contempt charges against Donald Trump's former top aide Mark Meadows for refusing to testify before the congressional panel investigating the 6 January assault on the Capitol.

The rebuke from the House of Representatives moves the ultra-conservative ex-congressman a step closer to becoming the first White House chief of staff to be prosecuted after leaving the post since H.R. Halde- man in the Watergate scandal nearly 50 years ago.

"We've given Mark Meadows every opportunity to cooperate. He's brought this situation on himself," the House 6 January select committee said in a statement ahead of the vote, which went roughly along party lines, with just two Republicans joining every Democrat to hold Meadows in contempt.

The panel is investigating Trump's efforts to overturn his defeat in the November 2020 election in the run-up to the Capitol riot — as well as the help he got from Meadows and others.—AFP ■



Mark Meadows faces becoming the first White House chief of staff in half a century to be prosecuted. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Tunisia opposition condemns extension of parliament freeze



A Tunisian man checks newspapers on a stand on Habib Bourguiba Avenue in the capital Tunis on 14 December 2021. PHOTO: AFP

OPPONENTS of Tunisian President Kais Saied on Tuesday slammed his decision to extend a months-long suspension of parliament, accusing him of dealing another blow to the country's nascent democracy.

Saied had on Monday vowed to press on with reforms to Tunisia's political system, months after he sacked the government, froze the legislature and assumed wide-ranging executive

powers.

The former law professor announced an 11-week "popular consultation" to produce "draft constitutional and other reforms" ahead of a referendum next 25 July.

That will mark one year since his power grab, which came as the North African country was mired in political and economic crises compounded by the coronavirus pandemic.

Saied had in October moved to rule by decree, escalating fears for the only democracy to have emerged from the 2011 Arab uprisings.

He said on Monday that parliament would remain suspended until new elections on 17 December next year, the anniversary of the start of the revolution that chased dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from power.—AFP ■

Arteta lays down the law after Aubameyang stripped of captaincy

ARSENAL manager Mikel Arteta insists no player is bigger than the club after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was stripped of the captaincy. Gabon forward Aubameyang was dropped ahead of Saturday's win over Southampton after reportedly returning late from a club authorized trip to visit his ill mother.

Arsenal on Tuesday revealed Aubameyang had lost the armband as they said "all our players, particularly our captain, to work to the rules and standards we have all set and agreed".

It is not Aubameyang's first transgression, having previously been dropped to the bench for March's north London derby against Tottenham after what was described as a breach of the club's pre-match protocol.

Arteta, a former Arsenal captain himself, admitted it was difficult having to take action against Aubameyang.

But the Spaniard made it



Arsenal striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang. PHOTO: AFP

clear he could not let one individual's behaviour influence the mood of the entire club.

"The decision that we have taken as a club is very clear - it is because we believe that he has failed to be committed at the level that we all expect and agreed, as simple as that," Arteta said ahead of Wednesday's game against West Ham.

"What I expect from any person in this football club, that

is representing this badge, is passion and that he gives absolutely 100 per cent, that he puts the club in front of any personal interests and is able to do anything to fulfil the badge we have on the chest.

"Apart from that, you can listen to individuals and you can understand different cultures, but that commitment and passion has to be there. Unfortunately, it wasn't.—AFP ■

Boca beat Barcelona in inaugural Maradona Cup



Barcelona's Dani Alves (L) vies for the ball with Boca Juniors' Juan Edgardo Ramirez in the inaugural Maradona Cup friendly in Riyadh. PHOTO: AFP

BOCA Juniors beat Barcelona on penalties on Tuesday in Riyadh, in a friendly match in honour of Diego Maradona, marked

by the return of Brazilian Dani Alves to the Spanish club.

Ferran Jutgla gave Barca the lead in the 50th minute but

Exequiel Zeballos levelled midway through the second half and the match finished 1-1.

The Argentines then won the inaugural 'Maradona Cup' 4-2 in a penalty shootout. Alves, 38, has rejoined Barcelona where he played between 2008-2016 and won three Champions League titles and La Liga six times; but is ineligible to appear in competitive matches until the transfer window opens early next year.

He was a free agent after leaving Sao Paulo in September following a dispute over unpaid wages. Right-back Alves was busy and dangerous, and converted his penalty in the shootout.—AFP ■

Premier League increases testing as Covid ravages schedule

PREMIER League players and staff must take a lateral flow test every time they enter their club's training ground as part of strict new measures to curb the threat of the coronavirus.

The protocols were agreed after Manchester United's Pre-

mier League match at Brentford on Tuesday and Tottenham's trip to Brighton last Sunday were postponed due to Covid-19 outbreaks.

United, Tottenham, Brighton, Leicester, Norwich and Aston Villa have all been hit by the

virus over the last week as the new Omicron strain threatens to cause havoc in England's top-flight. Twice-weekly PCR testing is also reported to have been introduced after a clubs' shareholders' meeting on Tuesday.—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

Carlsen says he might not defend his world chess title

NEWLY-CROWNED double World Chess champion Magnus Carlsen says he's unlikely to defend his title unless he faces French-Iranian prodigy Alireza Firouzja.

"For those who expect me to play the World Championship next time, the chance that they will be disappointed is very great," the Norwegian said in a podcast interview recorded in Dubai. The 31-year-old crushed Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi 7.5-3.5 in his fifth straight victorious title match.

"It's been clear to me for most of the year that this World Championship should be the last. It doesn't mean as much anymore as it once did," Carlsen said. "I haven't felt that the positive outweighs the negative."

He said that only Firouzja excites him as a possible challenger. The 18-year-old won an 11-round 108-payer tournament in Riga in November that decided the eight qualifiers for a candidates competition to who will play off for the right to face Carlsen next year.—AFP ■



'It doesn't mean as much anymore as it once did,' said Magnus Carlsen of his fifth chess world title. PHOTO: AFP/FILE