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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Sunday, 6 February 2022

Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

Yar Maung Bridge on Yangon-Sittway Road opened marking Diamond Jubilee Union Day

THE opening ceremony of the Yar Maung Bridge on the Yangon-Sittway Road in Minbya Township of Rakhine State was organized yesterday to mark Diamond Jubilee Union Day.

The event was attended by State Administration Council Members Admiral Tin Aung San, Mahn Nyein Maung, Daw Aye Nu Sein, U MOUNG HAR, Union Construction Minister U Shwe Lay, Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min, Maj-Gen Htin Latt Oo, Commander of the Western Command and relevant officials.

In his opening speech, SAC member Admiral Tin Aung San said officials are pleased as they constructed and opened the 1,283.3 feet long Steel Box Girder Type Yar Maung Bridge as a landmark of Rakhine State unlike the designs of other bridges. Then, SAC member Daw Aye Nu Sein remarked and Union Minister U Shwe Lay briefed the bridge construction.



The SAC members and attendees pose for the documentary group photo in the inaugural event of the Yar Maung Bridge in Minbya Township of Rakhine State yesterday.

Afterwards, Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min explained the regional development programmes and a resident expressed words of

thanks.

An official of the Ministry of Construction gave a gemstone painting to SAC member Admiral Tin Aung San as a present

marking the opening of the Yar Maung Bridge.

The SAC members and one local cut the ribbon to inaugurate the bridge and pressed the

button to open the signboard. Officials presented cash awards to the Rakhine dance troupe and Rakhine drum group.

SEE PAGE-2

TEAMIX

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National Objectives of Diamond Jubilee Union Day 2022

- (1) All ethnic nationals to safeguard non-disintegration of the Union, national unity and sovereignty forever
- (2) To perpetually ensure strengthening dynamic Union Spirit which is a genuine patriotic spirit
- (3) To further strive for the perpetual existence of the country through strong and united strength of all ethnic national brethren
- (4) To build the Union based on democracy and federalism in the realization of genuine, disciplined multiparty democracy
- (5) To equalize development of all regions and states while making efforts for the enhancement of health, education and job opportunities of the ethnic nationals

Yar Maung Bridge on Yangon-Sittway Road opened marking Diamond Jubilee Union Day

FROM PAGE-1

The new Yar Maung Bridge was constructed over the Laymyo River in Minbya Township by the Special Bridge Task Force (7) of the Bridge Department. It is 1,283.3 feet long and cost K12 billion. Upon completion, it can easily access from Yangon-Sittway to Minbya, MraukU, Kyauktaw, and from Ponnagyun to Sittway, Yathedaung, Buthidaung and Maung-taw townships. Moreover, the products can be exported easily through Maung-taw to Bangladesh. The trade flows will be more streamlined as Pauktaw and Myebon townships can be easily reached via Minbya. It can also develop the Rakhine State, including economy, health and education status.—MNA



Dignitaries press the electric button to unveil the name plaque of the newly-built Yar Maung Bridge in Rakhine State yesterday.

MoC oversees imports of anti-COVID-19 medical supplies

THE Ministry of Commerce is facilitating the importation of anti-COVID-19 medical supplies through international airports, international seaports and land borders without delay.

Eight companies imported 121 tonnes of masks carried by 19 lorries from 1 to 5 February.

The importation of COVID-19 devices will be allowed in line with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), negotiated by relevant departments. Besides, the notification related to the import of medicines and related products has been made available on the Ministry of Commerce's website www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA



Public Notification

THE Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee was re-constituted under the State Administration Council's Order No 366/2021 dated 10.12.2021, and action is being taken effectively against illegal trade under the law.

The following telephone numbers, fax and email address can be reached to safely report information in connection with illegal trade.

- Auto telephone number - 067 409 883
- Mobile phone - 09 404339969
- Fax - 067 409 886
- Email address - antiillegaltradeinfo@gmail.com

Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee

Public Notification

THE Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee was re-constituted under the State Administration Council's Order No 366/2021 dated 10.12.2021, and action is being taken effectively against illegal trade under the law.

Regarding the "request for money from departmental organizations in conducting trade", the following numbers can be reached to safely report such information.

- Auto telephone number - 067 409 881
- Mobile phone - 09 699611116
- Fax - 067 409 887
- Email address - antiillegaltradeoffice@gmail.com

Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee

Motto of 75th Anniversary Union Day 2022

*** Joining hands in unison among ethnic nationals of the Union**

Further State Responsibilities to be discharged

- When the government declared State of Emergency and took State responsibilities under Section 417 of the Constitution, we put all our hearts and souls into the State responsibilities but we encountered domestic/foreign interferences.
- Individual human rights include respect for each other; Appreciation is the most important thing. Citizens can also claim their rights if they have a country.
- Despite the destruction of the country, there is no example in the world that protects the rights of individual citizens. The right of citizens can only be claimed unless there are destructive elements.
- The idea that one must prioritize their own sake than the interests of other people is such hypocrisy for democracy.
- The actions against the government seem to be an opinion that is also against the citizens who are working for the country conscientiously.
- The defence services of the country mean to protect the public at the lowest level and our three main national causes at the highest level. We, the military members, discharge defence duties for the sakes of people with our own wishes but not for private intentions.

(Excerpt from the speech made by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on one-year State responsibilities discharged by the State Administration Council on 1-2-2022)

SAC members meet departmental officials, residents in Minbya Township

STATE Administration Council Members Admiral Tin Aung San, Mahn Nyein Maung, Daw Aye Nu Sein, U Mounng Har, Union Construction Minister U Shwe Lay, Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min, Commander Maj-Gen Htin Latt Oo of the Western Command and Rakhine state cabinet ministers met departmental personnels, town elders and locals of Minbya Township at the Yar Maung Hall to discuss regional development, social, economic, health and transport sectors yesterday. First, SAC Member Admiral

Tin Aung San made a remark regarding measures to ensure smooth trade flows and transport, local stability, social, economic, education and health sectors.

Then, resident U Maung San Kyaw and town elders put forward their requirements on behalf of the Rakhine people and SAC members coordinated the discussion.

The SAC members, Union ministers, Rakhine state chief minister, and commander provided presents and sports materials to township officials and ethnic leaders. — MNA



The SAC members hold the meeting with departmental personnel, town elders and locals in Minbya Township, Rakhine State yesterday.

Union Construction Minister inspects infrastructure projects in Rakhine



UNION Minister for Construction U Shwe Lay inspected along the Sittway-Palinyin Road together with Rakhine State Government Minister for Social Affairs U Aung Myo on 4 February.

During his inspection tour, the Union minister said that roads and bridges need to be good for the development of the region and the concrete paving also need to be met the specified quality. Then, they inspected the concrete paving work.

A class-A type Sittway-Palinyin concrete road is nine miles and six furlongs long. By implementing this road, it will

benefit over 1,300 people from 273 households in 12 villages, it is learnt.

Then, the Union minister and his team inspected the construction of the civil servant rental housing project and instructed them to pay attention to the quality and strength of the building. The civil servant rental housing project includes four four-storey buildings. It contains 64 units.

After that, the Union minister and his team inspected the Sittway-Wabo Creek Bridge construction site and the Minbu-An-Sittway road construction site. — MNA

MoI Union Minister attends “Tu Shin Hnwal Pyaw Gita Pwal Taw” level-2 singing contest



UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn attended the live broadcasting of level-2 “Tu Shin Hnwal Pyaw Gita Pwal Taw” singing competition together with Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein at the Myawady Media Centre in Yangon on 4 February. In level-2, the contestants can choose the songs by themselves. After the contest, the Union minister and region chief minister cordially greeted the participants, presenters and judges.

A total of 10 ethnic contestants from regions and states participated in the singing contest

with The Ensemble music band.

The contest was held every Friday starting 26 November 2021 and the level-1 completed with the decisions of judges. Besides the marks of the judges, in levels 2 and 3, people can vote for their favourite contestants via MPT and Mytel SIM cards. They can unlimitedly send SMS votes within the voting time to “7522” from MPT SIM card and “7575” from Mytel SIM card, including the MF number of their contestants.

The two final rounds will be live shows on MRTV on 6 and 11 February.—MNA

The “Happy Together Music Festival” level-two singing contest in action.

Dried prawns, fish paste, dried lotia produced not only for domestic consumption but for export products

THE dried prawns, fish paste and dried lotia business, which is generating the foreign income and domestic consumption, are produced from fishing business in Pyapon district, Ayeyawady region. It is reported that aquatic products are caught and exported for six months a year.

Ayeyawady Region is primarily engaged in agricultural and fisheries businesses. Fishery products are daily trading from 10 seaports. The aquatic products are caught using motor vessels and bamboo rafts from October to April. There are four types of fishing business such as England fishing business, flooding fishnet business and diamond fishnet business and common fishing business. Among them, England fishing

business is the most dangerous and labour-intensive industry.

To control the scarcity of aquatic resources, fishing was banned from June to August, last year. The Fisheries Department supervised the catching of prawns and fish from fishing businesses depending on the water resources and employment opportunities.

The fishing business is only in the Pyapon district, Ayeyawady region. The dried prawns and fish paste are yearly conveyed to Ranong in Thailand and other counties while fish paste and dried lotia are sent to upper Myanmar and border areas. Thus, the fishing business is becoming more important as a business hub in the Pyapon district because the demand is



The fishing business is only in the Pyapon district, Ayeyawady region. The dried prawns and fish paste are yearly conveyed to Ranong in Thailand and other counties while fish paste and dried lotia are sent to upper Myanmar and border areas. **PHOTO: KANU**

higher than the supply.

“There are four teams in Pyapon district – Kapyat village,

Nhaungmhee village, Phoneyithaung Chaungwa village and Pyapon Myoma village. These

four teams have 205 fishing boats. The saltwater prawns used in the domestic market are caught from fishing businesses. Those fishing businesses produced mostly dried lotia and fish paste. This fishing business in the Pyapon district can create employment opportunities for the local people. The fishermen need to comply with the rules and regulations set by the Fisheries Department for the development of the fisheries business,” said U Ko Ko Lwin, the district head of the Pyapon District Fisheries Department.

Dried prawns and Myanmar fish are being exported to Thailand and ASEAN countries markets. They have also been supplied as a local staple food.—Nyein Thu/GNLM

346 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 5 February, total figure rises to 537,569

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 537,569 after 346 new cases were reported on 5 February 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 513,952 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll still stands at 19,310 without casualties for thirteenth consecutive days.—MNA

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MoHT Union Minister meets Magway hoteliers, attends Mann Shwesettaw pagoda festival

UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung presided over a meeting on the tourism development in Magway Region and plans to create tours for local and foreign travellers with Magway Region Chief Minister U Tint Lwin, the Economic Affairs minister and officials at the regional government office on 4 February.

The Union minister then attended the meeting with the Magway Region Tourism Committee officials and hoteliers organized at the same place.

During the meeting, the Union minister underscored the COVID-19 health rules, vaccination programmes to discharge public services coexisting with the pandemic, the development of the socio-economic status of local people by developing



destinations in line with regulations, directives and short/long-term strategic plans, co-operation works of departments

concerned, private and local people and the needs of Magway hotels to work together with the government, the private sector

and residents to develop tourism-related sectors.

The chairman of the Hotelier Association (Magway Zone)

received certificates, which were issued in line with the Enchanting Myanmar Health & Safety Protocol, on behalf of hotels from Region Economic Affairs Minister U Aung Chain.

Then, the Union minister inspected the training on health and occupational safety conducted by the Region Directorate of Hotels and Tourism at Nantikhethu Hotel.

The Union minister attended opening ceremonies of Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda, lower Settawya, upper Settawya, three-storey religious buildings, the elevator tower and the third anniversary of the elephant camp together with Region Chief Minister U Tint Lwin, the commander of the Central Command and other regional cabinet members. — MNA

Daungmyu Creek landslide protection project to be completed by mid-March

THE Daungmyu Creek landslide protection project in Kawlin Township, Sagaing Region will be completed by mid-March, it is learnt.

“The project is being carried out spending over K290 million from the Union capital fund in the 2021-2022FY. As part of the project, the construction of stone slabs and steel basket retaining wall and slabs retaining wall based on the bored pile is undertaken in Kawlin and Wuntho townships. More than 20 per cent of the project has been completed so far. Field inspections are also being conducted to ensure that

landslide protection project is completed in time,” said U Htet Zaw Oo, Assistant Director of the Sagaing Region Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems.

For the Daungmyu Creek landslide protection project, the construction of slabs retaining wall based on bored pile measuring 440 feet in Kwinttaung village, Kawlin township and steel basket retaining wall measuring 510 feet in Mankyigon village in Wuntho township is being developed. Those projects will be completed by 20 March 2022.

In the financial year 2021-

22, the winning bidders started implementing those projects regarding the riverbank landslide protection in the last week of December 2021 in Kawlin and Wuntho townships, spending K295.431 million of the region budgets.

Sagaing Region Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems is conducting Chindwin River, Mu River and Ayeyawady River landslide protection projects in Phaungpyin, Kalewa, Kani, Myinmu, Pinlebu, Shwebo and Taze townships spending Union and region funds. — Lu Lay/GNLM



The Daungmyu Creek landslide protection project is underway.

Black bean price plunges to around K1.2 mln per tonne

THE black bean price has plunged to around K1.2 million per tonne, according to the Yangon Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Bayintnaung Commodity Depot).

Since the end of last year, the price of black beans has been fluctuating around K1.3 million per tonne. Although the black bean price on 12 January was K1,378,000 per tonne, the price slumped to K1,207,500 per tonne on 4 February, a decrease of over K170,000 per tonne in a month, according to the bean market data. The heading of the new black bean from the Ayeyawady region to the market plentifully is the primary reason for the price decrease. The decreasing domestic price of beans in India, the main buyer of Myanmar pulses, has also led to a price drop. Nevertheless, the domestic bean price is positively linked to the international markets and it may change depending upon the foreign exchange rate, according to bean traders.

Last September, the international exchange rate hit a record high of over K3,000 per dollar, pushing up the pulse price to an all-time high of K2 million per tonne in the domestic market.

India, the primary buyer of Myanmar pulses has excused black bean and pigeon peas from being restricted commodities to a free import commodity. A memorandum of understanding was signed to export about

250,000 tonnes of black bean and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon pea to India in five consecutive years (from the 2021-2022FY to the 2025-2026FY). India is the largest producer as well as consumer of pulses, consuming about 2.7 or 2.8 million tonnes of black beans annually. From 1 October to 28 January this 2021-22FY, the country shipped \$361.92 million worth of 453,684.11 tonnes of pulses and beans to foreign markets through the sea route, and \$28.98 million valued at 32,729.36 tonnes were sent to the neighbouring countries through land borders. Myanmar exported US\$1.57 billion worth of over two million tonnes of various pulses to foreign trade partners last financial year 2020-2021. The country shipped \$966.4 million valued at 1.24 million tonnes of pulses and beans to foreign markets through the sea route, and \$604.3 million valued 786,920 tonnes were sent to the neighbouring countries through land borders. Myanmar yearly produces about 400,000 tonnes of black bean and 50,000 tonnes of pigeon pea.

The black bean, which is mainly bought from India, is chiefly grown in Myanmar. Other pulses, including green gram and pigeon pea, are grown in Africa and Australia in addition to Myanmar, according to the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association. — NN/GNLM

Mongyawng residents hold traditional new year festivals



The Mongyawng locals celebrate their traditional new year festivals.

THE residents of Mongyawng Township in Tachilek District of Shan State (East) celebrated

their traditional new year festivals beginning October 2021 and the villagers of Ayechan,

Aungmyay and Zayhti villages also held celebrations yesterday. The pastors lead the ethnic

traditional new year festival according to traditions and people donated paddy, corn, peanut, sesame, chilli and other seasonal crops to their devotees for good deeds.

During the festival, the people living far from their natives return to their relatives and host

family meals with their friends.

The traditional new year festivals of ethnic people in Mongyawng Township were convened in Ayechan, Aungmyay, Zayhti, Namsilin, Parsan, Shaykhin and Ziohn villages this year. — Sai Aung Zaw Lin/ GNLM



CRIME NEWS

Illegal vehicle spare parts, teak, foodstuffs seized

SUPERVISED by the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, effective action is being taken

to prevent illegal trade under the law.

On 4 February, the airport



Seized timbers and foodstuffs in Bago Region.



Confiscated goods at the warehouse of Yangon International Airport.

customs warehouse team inspected and seized illegal foodstuffs, agricultural products and vehicle spare parts (estimated value of K9,070,900) at the airport customs warehouse of Yangon International Airport and action is taken under the Customs Law.

Similarly, managed by the Region Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, inspections were carried out by joint

inspection teams led by the Forest Department of Ayeyawady Region and 11.178 tonnes of illegal timber (estimated value of K782,432) were seized.

Action is taken under the Forest Law.

Next, managed by the Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force, inspections were made by joint inspection teams led by the Forest Department in Bago

Region on 5 February.

A total of 11.4578 tonnes of illegal timber (estimated value of K3,361,000) were seized in Bago, Toungoo and Thayawady districts, and action is taken under the Forest Law.

Thus, on 4 and 5 February, the total number of arrests were five and the estimated value is K13,214,332, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee. —MNA

K660 million worth of heroin seized in Nawnghkio

POLICE in Nawnghkio Township seized heroin worth K660 million, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

A joint team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force stopped and searched a Wish vehicle driven by Sai Myo Min Tun (alias) Sai Maung Khay (38-year-old) accompanied by Sai Nanda Aung (alias) Nanda (36-year-old) near Oriental Tollgate on

the Lashio-Mandalay Road, Nawnghkio Township, Shan State (North) at 10 pm on 1 February.

According to the report, 44 kilogrammes of heroin worth K660 million were confiscated from the vehicle.

The seized heroin was transported from Shan State (North) to Mandalay Region, the investigation stated.

The two are being pros-

ecuted and the perpetrators are still being investigated, according to the police force. —MNA

Two arrestees are seen along with seized heroin and Wish car.



COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various regions, states

DOCTORS and nurses from public hospitals, Tatmadaw medical teams, healthcare workers and volunteers are working hard to administer COVID-19 vaccines in different states and regions as the vaccination programme is one of the most important activities in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 disease.

The COVID-19 vaccine is inoculated daily to target groups regardless of race or religion, including Buddhist monks and nuns, local people over the age of 40, students, religious leaders, prisoners, people with disabilities, ethnic armed organizations, people with chronic diseases, people in IDP camps and over 12-year-old students, respectively.

On 4 February and yester-



Inoculation drive in Mon State.

day, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams

from the Tatmadaw, relevant healthcare workers in collab-

oration with volunteers injected COVID-19 vaccines to 2,053

people from nine townships in northern Shan State, 1,837 people from 11 townships in Kayin and Mon states, 1,540 people from Myeik Township, Taninthayi Region, 16,897 people from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 11,925 people from nine townships in Rakhine State, 7,714 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region and 180 people from Htantabin Township in Bago Region, respectively.

Similarly, healthcare personnel gave the vaccines to 492 students from Namkham and Muse townships in northern Shan State at the same time.

It is reported that officials from the respective Military Commands visited the sites and coordinated the necessary work. —MNA

Local people in Kyaikmaraw Township get Sputnik Light anti-COVID jab



Kyaikmaraw residents get Sputnik Light vaccines.

UNDER the auspices of the COVID-19 Prevention and Control Committee, officials yesterday administered Sputnik Light vaccines to people

over the age of 18 who have never been vaccinated in Kyaikmaraw Township, Mon State.

The vaccination programme was launched at the

Township Public Hospital at 11 am yesterday for the third day.

“The Sputnik Light vaccine was administered between the ages of 18 and 50. Locals who have never been vaccinated against COVID-19 have been vaccinated twice, six months after the first vaccination.

People are systematically inoculated in line with the COVID-19 vaccination guidelines,” officials said.

Officials from the Prevention and Control Committee on COVID-19 visited the vaccination sites and asked about the needs of health workers and charity associations.

A total of 253 local people were vaccinated, according to the Township Health Department. — Cho Myat Myat Htwe (Kyaikmaraw)/GNLM

Government employees, people over 60 start receiving booster doses in Bago

THE government employees and people aged over 60 received booster doses at 18 vaccination sites commencing 5 February in Bago Region.

Those who have been fully vaccinated are administered to receive booster shots.

A total of 2,285 govern-

ment employees and 3,890 people, including persons aged over 60, who have fully vaccinated, and above 18-year-old people, who never have the vaccine once, were vaccinated at respective vaccination sites. — Tin Soe (Bago)/GNLM



Booster doses are launched in Bago Region.

Health officials give Sputnik Light COVID-19 vaccines to local people in Mudon

HEALTH officials administered Sputnik Light COVID-19 vaccines received from the Russian Federation to the local people at 9 am yesterday at the Kangyi Pagoda compound in Myoma (4) Ward, Mudon Township.

Health officials, Chairman of the Mudon Township Administration Committee U Tint Zaw, Township Health Department Director Dr Kyaw Moe Naing, teachers and departmental staff supervised

the vaccination works.

A total of 145 people aged 65 and older were inoculated in two targeted groups (COVID-19 vaccine twice, three months and six months ago), and Red Cross and social relief teams assisted where necessary.

The Sputnik Light vaccine was received through the friendship donation from the Russian Federation and requires one shot only so that it can provide high coverage



of the COVID-19 vaccine in a short period, according to the Township Public Health Department. — Aung Myo Thu (IPRD)/GNLM

Mudon locals receive Sputnik Light vaccines.

Efficiently use fuel oil without waste for saving State finance

TODAY, the government expedites efforts for the enhancement of services related to the public transport system including rail transportation, bus transportation, aviation service and watercraft transportation for convenient travelling of the people.

To be able to accomplish the missions, the entire people need to participate in the development tasks of the nation by efficiently using the fuel.

Reliable statistics showed that there are more than one million various kinds of automobiles and over six million motorcycles in the country. For example, if these motorcycles reduce half a tin of condensed milk of fuel per day, the whole country can save more than 120,000 gallons of fuel daily. Likewise, if each car cuts the use of a litre of fuel, the whole country can save more than 120,000 gallons of fuel daily.

In respect of today's street price of fuel, a gallon of fuel oil is roughly valued at K6,000. So, the country can save K1.5 billion from the consumption of fuel at motorbikes and vehicles on a daily basis. To have such a success, all the people need to join hands with the government for the realization of the missions.

Myanmar imported more than 4.12 million tonnes of fuel in 2021, spending US\$2,496.652 million. Spending a large sum of foreign exchange was based on the weakness of

public transport which pushes the people to use their owned vehicles.

Moreover, many drivers from YBS bus lines under the Yangon Region Transport Committee break the disciplines in a running process. They are in the competitiveness of driving with each other as an act of wasting fuel. They stop at the bus stops for a long time to wait for passengers, whoever cannot know when those passengers will arrive there. So, the drivers waste time and fuel in their transport services. Indeed, they have to abide by traffic rules and the disciplines adopted by the YRTC as part of the regular driving of buses. If so, hundreds of thousand fuel gallons can be saved per day.

In implementing the public transport service, officials need to scrutinize the daily running of buses. These buses consume a large volume of fuel daily but such consumption must be efficient. As such, the individual people need to save consumption of fuel while the government should improve the services of trains, buses and vessels in the public transport service.



Tabodwe, the month of bonfire festival

By Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja, Sithu Dr Khin Maung Nyunt

THE eleventh month of the Myanmar lunar calendar is called "Tabodwe", which roughly corresponds with February. Though Pyatho (January) the tenth month is normally regarded as the peak of Myanmar cold season, Tabodwe can be very chilly, so chilly that, it is said even the tips of the buffalo's horns shiver. Two old folk's sayings regarding Tabodwe are "In Tabodwe, you have a running nose" and "In Tabodwe, ripen plum fruits open".

The astrological name of this month is "Kon" or Kumbha (Aquarius) and its zodiacal sign is a water bearer. Among flowers that bloom in this month, Pauk (Butea) and Lei or Letpan (silk cotton tree, Bombex Malabaricum) are traditionally designated as flowers of the month. In the night firmament of Tabodwe the Maga asterism of four stars resembling an iron hook in Leo (Regulus) and the Moon rival in radiance.

Scholars give two different meanings of the name Tabodwe. The first is that "Tabo" means yoke, and "dwe" means "hang up". In this month all agricultural activities are over, and the farmers hang up all their implements, including yoke. So Tabodwe is the month in which the farmers' yokes are hung up. The other meaning is that "Tabo" means htanbu or spadix of a toddy palm tree from which the sap is tapped. "dwe" means to hang down. It is the month in which toddy palm climbers press spadixes to hang down to tap the sap.

The traditional festival held in Tabodwe is the festival of the bonfire. Bonfire is made by burning sandal or similar fragrant woods in an earthen brazier which is taken to the Buddhist temple to offer it to the Buddha images. The origin of offering bonfires to the sacred images is associated with one event which took place in the lifetime of the Lord Buddha. While the Lord Buddha was residing at the Pubayon Monastery at Savatthi, on one Tabodwe evening he happened to be standing on the hillside. It was so cold that the Lord Buddha kept His back in the warmth of the sun rays. But as the Sun set in, and as it was in the open, the chill of the night was too much for the Lord Buddha, who

was wearing only one robe. As the night advanced cold intensified. So the Lord Buddha put on the second robe to resist the cold. By midnight He had to wear the third robe. By dawn, three robes were not enough to keep the body heat. So the fourth robe was worn over the third. By the rule of Vinaya (Priestly Discipline) only three robes are permitted for each monk. So to silence criticism of some laymen, the last two robes were stitched together to become the third robe called "Dukut". In the extreme cold of Tabodwe night, the Lord Buddha made His hands and feet warm by keeping them on a furnace.

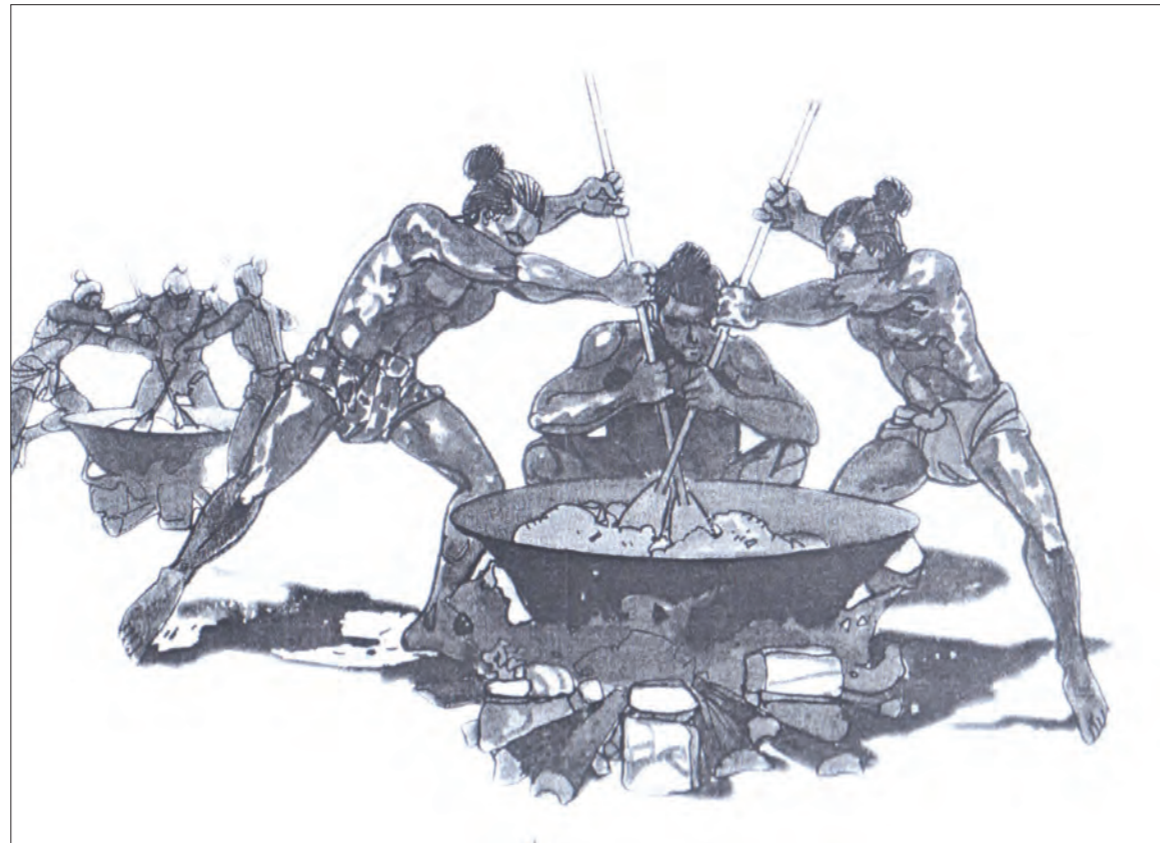
To commemorate that event, the Buddhist devotees offer bonfires to the Buddha images in Tabodwe, especially on its full moon night to gain religious merit. The festival of bonfire held in

from Letwei Win, and 250 firewood cutters from Anauk Win. Behind them, 1,000 bodyguards followed. Behind them, 100 equestrian soldiers with helmets followed. Behind them, two knights on horseback wearing helmets and ceremonial gowns of their rank followed. When the procession reached Maha Myat Muni Temple, music was kept playing. The bodyguards and firewood cutters went out to gather firewood. The procession returned following the same procedure. When it reached Shey Yone the bodyguards put the firewoods on the stands and bound the firewoods into the bundle. "On the 14th waxing day, the clerks carried the bundles of firewood into Shey Yone. The Minister of Royal

das and Temples for offering to the Buddha Images.

"On pages 544-545 of the Konbaung Set Maha Yazawun Taw Gyi (Great Royal Chronicle of the Konbaung Dynasty) Volume III, a graphic account of the bonfire festival held in the Konbaung Period is given thus: -

"On the full moon day of Tabodwe even the tips of the tusks of Saddan White Elephant shiver in cold. On such day, Lord Buddha the Exalted Sage in His lifetime took the warmth of the fire to keep off the cold. To commemorate that event, an annual puja of the bonfire was held. On the 14th waxing moon night of Tabodwe, the bonfire festival was held in the courtyard of Shey Yone Taw. Officials of the Hluttaw



the time of Myanmar kings described in the Treatise on Court Ceremonies and Festivals titled Law Ka Byu Har Kyan is as follows: -

"On the 8th waxing day of Tabodwe, the ceremonial procession of gathering firewoods took place. In the front were the Samyaung (the Officers to proclaim the impending presence of the King), accompanied by the music of drums, then followed by 250 firewood cutters from Shey Win, 250 firewood cutters

Treasury brought 1,000 braziers." "At 4 o'clock in the evening, princes, princesses, royal grandchildren, Ministers and courtiers wearing ceremonial dresses and ornaments of their ranks came out to attend the ceremony at Shey Yone from 4 o'clock in the evening till 1 o'clock at night. Then they departed."

"The Minister of Royal Granary took 1,000 pots of Yagu (rice porridge), 1,000 stands of firewood, and 1,000 braziers borne by Thwethauksu Shwe Pan Pan equestrian soldiers to the Paga-

(King's Council) and Shey Yone Taw supervised the making of yagu from the first crop of pad-din and sweet milk. Then at the dawn of the full moon day, 15 braziers with burning sandalwoods, 15 plates of yagu, Thazin orchid flowers, and oil lamps were carried by officials to 15 Pagodas and Temples, including Maha Muni, which were in the Royal List. There to the Buddha Images and sacred relics, these were offered."

Nowadays the festival of the bonfire is held only in Upper



Myanmar: In big towns like Monywa, Shwebo, Sagaing, Meikhtila, Magwe, Pakokku and Mandalay, Buddhist devotees still celebrate the bonfire puja at the prominent Pagodas and Temples. On the eve of the full moon day of Tabodwe, they gather fragrant firewoods and arrange them in the shape of a stupa or a spire in the foreyard of the temple or shrine, and burn them on the full moon night as an offering to the Lord Buddha. At some places, the bonfire is offered not only to the Buddha. Images, but also to the prominent head monks and aged laymen to give them warmth. It is a token of respect as well as an act of religious merit.

In Mandalay, at the Temple of the world-renowned Sacred Maha Muni Buddha Image of gold and precious gems, the bonfire puja is held on a grand scale. The day before the full moon of Tabodwe, bundles of sandal and Thanaka woods are piled up like a pagoda in the courtyard of the Temple. Other offertories, including rice porridge or htamane (a Myanmar delicacy concocted from glutinous rice and ingredients), are brought by devotees for the offering. At dawn, the religious music band which is the only one of its kind dedicated to this Temple only begins playing a religious music "Nayi" accompanied by the singing of a Te Diem. This band performs three times a day, at dawn, at noon and eventide. The head monk in charge of the Temple performs every morning a brief ceremony of washing (polishing) the face of the Sacred Image. Piles of fragrant firewoods in the courtyard are burned to provide warmth to the Sacred Image which devotees believe

to be alive with the breath of the living Buddha.

Mandalay is noted for the severe climate. Its cold season is as severe as its summer is warm. It is the belief of the Mandalay that only after the Sacred Maha Muni Image has received the warmth of bonfire on the full moon day of Tabodwe, the cold begins to reduce. The bonfire puja at this temple is one of the major events in Mandalay, attracting a large crowd of devotees and foreign visitors.

Connected with the bonfire festival is the ceremonial making of a Myanmar traditional delicacy called 'htamane'. It is said in Myanmar literature that yagu and htamane are two different names of the same Myanmar delicacy. But they are in fact two different kinds. While yagu is a rice porridge with or without milk and sugar, htamane is a delicacy prepared with glutinous rice seasoned with ingredient and condiment. According to Treatise on Myanmar traditional medicine, the Tabodwe cold dries up the body skin. There is no perspiration to moisten the body skin. So it is necessary to take a little more vegetable oil to protect against the unbearable cold. Oily htamane is thus eaten as a sort of preventive medicine by Myanmar old folks.

There is a recipe for concocting htamane. For easy memorization, it is composed as a tayhtat song. According to its content: "Take 4 pyi of a basket of nice glutinous rice and wash it clean by freshwater. Put one viss of pure sesame oil in a big iron pan which is placed on a wood fire.

SEE PAGE-10 >>

Letter to the editor:

No taxation for the very, very old

I am 82 and still semi-bedridden even after 4 months have elapsed since the surgery in September 2021 of my stomach, because I have to take medicines and see the Physician concerned, as required by the surgeon.

I luckily became a gazetted officer in September 1963 and have been paying monthly income - tax due ever since up to now. And I have never felt it as a burden, as I fully realize that the government needs revenue in the form of taxes in order to rule, regulate and protect its people on the one hand and appreciate what our independence architect, Bogyoke Aung San had said on that subject, on the other.

As everyone knows, at 82 I am looking askance at the cemetery daily (သင်္ချိုင်းကုန်းကို မျက်စောင့်နေသည့်), if I have to borrow the local jargon. At the same time, the living cost for an old-timer over 80 years are very high, because he/she needs a carer to look after him/her in addition to the very high cost of medicines and medical treatments since those aged 80 and above are more or less patients in its broadest sense. Moreover, the number of people aged over 80 and working to earn an income which attracts the income-tax would not be much.

Accordingly, may I request the authorities concerned to relieve the old-timers who are 80 and above from any taxation whatsoever.

Yours etc.,
Win Myint Han,
First National Insurance.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 5 February 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 6 February 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Kachin and Shan states, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing Region and Chin, Kayin and Mon states, scattered in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, and Taninthayi regions and Kayah State and isolated in the remaining regions and states. Degree of certainty is (80%).
STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of continuation of isolated rain or thundershowers in Kachin and Shan states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6 February 2022: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

EARTHQUAKE NEWS (Issued at 13:05 hour MST)

A slight earthquake of magnitude (3.9) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about (19) miles northwest of Mawlaik), latitude 23.77°N, longitude 94.15°E, depth (12) kilometers, about (33) miles southwest of Tamu seismological observatory was recorded at (12) hr (47) min (36) sec MST on 5 February 2022.

Tabodwe, the month of bonfire festival

>> FROM PAGE-9

Fry 3-tical weight of ginger slices in the oil to produce flavour. Put the washed glutinous rice in the ginger flavoured oil and stir it thoroughly. Add some water to it and knead with wooden ladles. When the glutinous rice gets grilled, with oil oozing out of it, reduce the fire, and spray on the stuff in the pan 80-tical weight of fried groundnut, 32-tical weight of roasted sesamum seeds, 20-tical weight of shredded coconut kernel, and 7-tical weight of salt. Then knead and crush the stuff again and again. Taste it to test if it has attained the required quality. If so, the htamane is put on the banana leaves for serving with plain tea.”

Preparation of htamane provides a social occasion for a Myanmar community. It is an activity in which all are involved — adult and young, male and female, and even children. It takes place on the platform of a Pagoda, in the courtyard of a Temple, in the precinct of a monastery or at any open space. Either under an individual or collective sponsorship, a htamane making party is formed. Necessary kitchen utensils such as a giant iron pan, two pairs of long wooden ladles,

knives, daggers, baskets, trays, circular low tables etc, are hired from the monastery or some houses. They are carried to the place by young men. A fireplace is dug out in the ground by adult males who also bring firewoods, and fetch water from a nearby well or tank. Women and girls do the lighter work such as the winnowing and washing of rice grains, shelling groundnuts, slicing ginger, washing pots and pans. Men climb up the coconut palm trees to bring down coconut fruits, and split firewoods. Boys tear away the fibres of coconuts and break them open. Girls shred the kernel into tiny strips. Men put the big iron pan on the fireplace and keep it tight and stable. Women do the initial part of the process such as frying ginger and roasting groundnuts and sesamum seeds. Men’s hard labour comes in when the glutinous rice in the pan becomes soft and pliant. Muscular hands are needed to knead and crush the sticky stuff thoroughly with long wooden ladles. A good htamane is the result of the correct proportion of rice, oil, water and ingredients and thorough kneading and crushing by ladles. It is so exciting to see men doing this arduous work are sweating in the cold of Tabodwe. When the giant



htamane pan is removed from the fire it is the turn of skilful feminine hands. While men keep on crushing the sticky mass with ladles, women spray ingredients, sesamum seeds, groundnuts, and shredded coconut kernel in the pan at regular intervals, a right handful at a time. Experienced adults taste the stuff to test if it is well made. If so, a portion is kept aside for offering to the Buddha and monks at dawn. The rest are served first to the aged, second to the elders and adults, and finally to the young and children. A ladleful of htamane is placed on each of the banana or In leaves gathered by children. Earthen kettles of hot plain tea are ready on the circu-

lar tables for hot plain tea is the best to go with this oily delicacy.

If a contest is held there is more excitement and a more festive atmosphere is created. Contesting parties invite music bands such as Ozi or Dobhat Waings to agitate and cheer up the contestants. Folk songs are sung and folk dances are performed in full swing, performers teasing and mimicking one another. There is a panel of judges to supervise the contest and to see that the proceeding is in accordance with game rules. These judges are also connoisseurs to taste and decide which party’s htamane is the best. The winning party is awarded cash or clothes or both. The winning

party celebrates by leading a procession followed by a music band to the Pagoda or monastery and offering htamane to the Buddha Images and monks. Htamane making contests are held in schools and Colleges to train young students in cultural activities and to breed a community spirit among them.

Htamane feasts are open to all. No invitation is needed to join them. Any stranger or passerby regardless of race, religion, rank, or creed is welcome and is served htamane to his fill with cups of hot plain tea. He may also take some home because there are packets of htamane wrapped up with leaves for the taking.

■ ■ ■

Quito flooding toll raised to 27



An areal view of the damage in the neighbourhood of La Gasca.

PHOTO: AFP

THE heaviest flooding to hit Ecuador in two decades claimed 27 lives this week and left 53 people injured, municipal officials said Friday.

The floods inundated homes, carried off cars, and swept away volleyball players and spectators on a sports field.

Two people remain missing, Quito security official Guido Nunez told reporters.

A massive clean up operation was under way, and rescuers were continuing the search for victims in the vicinity of the sports field that was first in the path of the sudden deluge.

Rain that drenched Quito for 17 straight hours caused flooding and surges of mud that damaged roads, agricultural areas, clinics, schools, a police station and an electric power substation.

Quito mayor Santiago Guarderas said Monday’s rains overwhelmed a hillside water catchment structure that had a capacity of 4,500 cubic metres but was inundated with more than four times that volume.

Guarderas said Monday’s downpour brought down 75 litres per square metre (1.8 gallons per square foot) following 3.5 litres on Saturday.

This is “a record figure, which we have not had since 2003”, he added.

Three days of mourning were observed in Quito, a city of some 2.7 million people.

Heavy rains have hit 22 of Ecuador’s 24 provinces since October, claiming at least 44 lives.— AFP ■

Iceland to end whaling as demand dwindles

ICELAND, one of the only countries that still hunts whales commercially, said Friday it plans to end the practice from 2024 as demand for whale meat dwindles.

For the past three years, Iceland’s whalers have barely taken their boats out into the North Atlantic despite the country’s large quotas.

Demand for Icelandic

whale meat has decreased dramatically since Japan – Iceland’s main market, especially for fin whale meat – returned to commercial whaling in 2019 after a three-decade hiatus.

The extension of a no-fishing coastal zone, requiring whalers to go even further offshore, also made Iceland’s hunt more costly.—AFP ■



The tails of two 35-tonne fin whales are bound to a Hvalur boat off the coast of Hvalfjörður, Iceland on 19 June 2009. PHOTO: HALLDOR KOLBEINS/ AFP/FILE

S Korea sees daily COVID cases exceed 30,000 for 1st time amid surge

SOUTH Korea said Saturday its daily coronavirus cases exceeded the 30,000 mark for the first time the previous day, as the highly transmissible Omicron variant continued to fuel the surge.

Health authorities reported 36,362 new cases for Friday, just days after the daily tally surpassed 20,000 for the first time.

Infections are widely ex-

pected to increase further as many South Koreans traveled during the five-day Lunar New Year holiday, which ended Wednesday.

Despite the spike in daily cases, the number of severely ill remains under 300, in sharp contrast to the previous wave fueled by the Delta variant, when the number exceeded 1,000 at one point, according to

local media.

The authorities have signalled COVID-19 restrictions can be eased in phases even if infections increase, as long as there are enough medical resources left.

Currently, restaurants are allowed to operate until 9 pm, while private gatherings are limited to six people per group.—Kyodo ■



People wearing face masks walk in Gwanghwamun area in Seoul, South Korea, 8 July 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA/WANG JINGQIANG

Canada protests against Covid measures set to ramp up

A week-long occupation of Canada's capital by truckers opposed to vaccine mandates was set to ramp up Saturday with thousands of demonstrators expected to pile into Ottawa while other cities also braced for protests.

Police said they were expecting up to 2,000 protesters as well as 1,000 counter-protesters to join the hundreds already parked in front of parliament, but organizers said tens of thousands were headed to Ottawa.

Similar protests are also planned for Toronto, Quebec City and Winnipeg.

"This remains... an increasingly volatile and increasingly dangerous demonstration," Ottawa police Chief Peter Sloly told a news conference Friday.

Following thousands of complaints from local residents of threats and harassment by protesters who have made even sleep difficult with incessant honking, and an online petition signed by 40,000 demanding action, Sloly vowed to crack down



Police said they were expecting up to 2,000 protestors as well as 1,000 counter-protesters to join the hundreds already parked in front of parliament. PHOTO: AFP

on what he called an "unlawful" protest. But he did not offer a timeline. Reached for comment by AFP, protest coordinator Jim Torma said on behalf of organizers that the protesters would not back down.

"They're not going to hide us," Torma said. "We're going to be in (politicians') faces as long as it takes" to force an end

to public health restrictions aimed at slowing the spread of Covid-19.

With tensions already high and counter-protesters expected to now converge on the city, however, "the prospects for confrontation remain high," warned federal Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sanofi sees strong earnings despite Covid vaccine delay

French pharmaceutical group Sanofi posted strong 2021 sales on Friday and expects another good performance in 2022, as the popularity of its asthma therapy offset setbacks in developing a Covid vaccine.

While Sanofi has yet to produce a jab against Covid, its Dupixent drug, which also treats eczema, has been a huge success, with the drug recording double-digit sales growth.

The company posted overall sales of 37.8 billion euros (\$43.3 billion) in 2021, a 4.8 per cent increase, according to its annual earnings statement.

Sanofi's earnings per share (EPS) — a measure of a company's profitability — rose by a better-than-expected 12 per cent. The company said it expects "low double-digit" growth of its EPS in 2022. EPS is a firm's net profit divided by outstanding shares.—AFP ■

German Olympic team confirms six Covid cases in Beijing

Germany's Winter Olympics team said Thursday it had been hit by an outbreak of Covid-19 on the eve of the Games, with six cases confirmed upon arrival in Beijing.

The German Olympic Sports Confederation (DSOB) said all six cases had resulted from PCR testing by Chinese authorities as team members arrived at Beijing airport on Thursday.

The other 78 members of the travelling German team all tested negative.

The DSOB statement said the positive cases affect three undisclosed sports, but did not name those concerned and did not specify if they were athletes, coaches or support staff.—AFP ■

Compulsory vaccination rules come into force in Austria



People wait to receive vaccines at a COVID-19 vaccination bus in Vienna, Austria, 10 November 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA/GUO CHEN

IT'S official: From Saturday, Austrians over the age of 18 must be vaccinated against Covid-19 or face the possibility of a heavy fine, an unprecedented measure in the European Union.

The new measure, adopted on 20 January by Parliament, was signed into law by President Alexander Van der Bellen on Friday, the culmination of a process that began in November in the face of the rapid spread of the Omicron variant.

The government decided to pursue its new tougher ap-

proach despite criticism within the country.

"No other country in Europe is following us on compulsory vaccines," said Manuel Krautgartner, who has campaigned against the new approach.

In neighbouring Germany, a similar law championed by the new Social Democrat Chancellor Olaf Scholz was debated last month in the Bundestag, or lower house of parliament, but has not made progress yet due to divisions within the political class.

Checks from mid-March

Despite the threat of such a drastic measure, the vaccination rate in Austria has still failed to take off, languishing below the levels seen in France or Spain. Vienna vaccination centres remain relatively quiet.

"We are far from reaching maximum capacity, things are completely stagnating," Stefanie Kurzweil, of the humanitarian association, Arbeiter Samariter Bund, which oversees one of these sites, told AFP a few days ago.—AFP ■

NEWS
IN BRIEFUS finalizing
exempting part of
Japan's steel imports
from tariffs

WASHINGTON and Tokyo are in the final stage of talks to exempt a portion of US imports of steel from Japan from extra tariffs imposed by former President Donald Trump, sources close to the matter said Saturday.

The two countries are discussing establishing a tariff-free import quota but its size and some other details have yet to be finalized, the sources said.

The United States has levied additional duties of 25 per cent on steel and 10 per cent on aluminum imports since 2018, when the Trump administration cited potential national security risks under its "America First" foreign and trade policy.

The two countries will continue discussions on the levies on aluminum imports, according to the sources.—Kyodo ■

Oil prices extend
gains as markets
weigh strong US
jobs data

STOCKS were mixed Friday as markets weighed a surprisingly good US jobs report against concerns over tightening monetary policy, while oil prices pushed closer to \$100 a barrel.

The United States added an unexpectedly robust 467,000 jobs in January, according to Labor Department data that also significantly raised employment increases for November and December.

While the report suggests health in the world's largest economy, another big rise in 10-year US Treasury note yields Friday focused concerns on expectations for multiple Federal Reserve interest rate hikes this year.

Worries about monetary tightening weighed on the Dow, while the S&P 500 and Nasdaq both finished higher.

All three major US indices finished the week in positive territory, with the S&P 500 winning 1.5 per cent.

Earlier, European bourses had retreated a day after the European Central Bank opened the door to hiking interest rates in light of inflation.—AFP ■

US lawmakers advance China competition bill

US lawmakers voted Friday to greenlight a multibillion-dollar bill aimed at jumpstarting high-tech research and manufacturing, countering China's growing influence and easing a global shortage of computer chips.

The House Democrats' America Competes bill, their version of the Senate-passed \$250-billion US Innovation and Competition Act, was approved in a 222-210 vote in the lower chamber.

The legislative push came after the US Commerce Department warned that companies have an average of less than five days' worth of semiconductor chips on hand, leaving them vulnerable to shutdowns.

President Joe Biden wants



Workers at a workshop processing electromechanical devices in Tangshan, North China's Hebei province, 17 November 2019. PHOTO: XINHUA

to invest \$52 billion in domestic research and production and, after sitting on the bill since it passed the Senate on a cross-party vote in June, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi recently

listed the \$350-billion package as a top priority.

The package would mark a win that Biden would love to be able to trumpet at his State of the Union address on 1 March,

although it will now need to be reconciled with the Senate version, which could take several weeks. "The House took a critical vote today for stronger supply chains and lower prices, for more manufacturing -- and good manufacturing jobs -- right here in America, and for outcompeting China and the rest of the world in the 21st century," the president said in a statement.

'Predatory trade'

The White House sees the initiative as the main legislative tool to combat China's growing prowess. Senior administration officials, including Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, had been pushing the House behind the scenes to move it quickly.—AFP ■

NATO chief Stoltenberg to head Norway central bank



Norway's Finance Minister Vedum presents Stoltenberg as Norway's new central bank chief at a press conference in Oslo. PHOTO: GULFTIMES/AFP

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg will take over as Norway's central bank governor at the end of the year, officials said Friday, a con-

troversial choice that has already raised concerns about the bank's independence.

The appointment comes

amid escalating tensions between the West and Russia. Western nations fear Moscow has plans to invade Ukraine, which aspires to join the NATO alliance.

But Stoltenberg, a 62-year-old trained economist, insisted Friday he would stay on as NATO secretary general until the end of his term in October.

"Until my mandate at NATO ends on 1 October, I will devote all my strength and attention to leading the Alliance", he told a press conference in Norway via video link.

"It's absolutely necessary at a time when Europe and North America must stand together",

he added.

The central bank and finance ministry said he would take over "around 1 December".

Norway's central bank determines monetary policy but also manages the country's enormous sovereign wealth fund, the biggest in the world. Worth 11.76 trillion kroner (more than 1.17 trillion euros, \$1.33 trillion), the fund controls around 1.4 per cent of the world's market capital. A former prime minister and finance minister in his native Norway, Stoltenberg applied for the job after the finance ministry contacted him, and he thanked the government for the vote of confidence.—AFP ■

N Ireland court orders post-Brexit port checks to resume

NORTHERN Ireland's High Court on Friday issued an interim order suspending a decision by Agriculture Minister Edwin Poots to stop post-Brexit checks on agri-food moving to and from mainland Britain.

The ruling, made by judge Adrian Colton, will stand until a judicial review against the unionist minister's decision can be heard in full.

The checks on trade between the province and mainland Britain are mandated by a post-Brexit EU protocol, but are deeply unpopular among the pro-British community.

Unionist parties say that checks on the Irish Sea border, to prevent unchecked goods

entering the European single market via EU-member Ireland to the south, Northern Ireland risks being cast adrift from the rest of the UK.

The Irish government in Dublin and nationalist, pro-Irish parties in Northern Ireland said the order by Poots, of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), broke the law.

In his ruling, Colton said: "There shouldn't be any confusion hanging over those in the Civil Service, so I am persuaded this is a case where there should be interim relief.

"I therefore make the order to suspend the instruction given by the minister for agriculture until further order of this court."



A lorry leaves Larne port, north of Belfast in Northern Ireland, after arriving on a ferry from Stranraer in Scotland, on 3 February. PHOTO: PAUL FAITH/AFP

The DUP is bitterly opposed to the Northern Ireland Protocol, an agreement reached between London and Brussels to regulate its trade when the UK left the European Union.

It and all other unionist parties argue the checks on goods coming from England, Scotland and Wales are damaging the Northern Ireland economy.—AFP ■

China-made diesel locomotives handed over to Thailand



The first batch of diesel locomotives manufactured by China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC) Qishuyan Co. Ltd was officially handed over to the Thai railway authorities on Friday. PHOTO: ASEANNOW/XINHUA

THE first batch of diesel locomotives manufactured by China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC) Qishuyan Co. Ltd was officially handed over to the

Thai railway authorities on Friday, which would boost efforts of Thailand to improve its railway service. The delivery of the 20 diesel AC motor locomotives

was the first batch of the 50 locomotives ordered by the State Railway of Thailand in its largest single locomotive order. Speaking at the hand-

over ceremony at the Sira-cha railway station in Chon Buri Province, Governor of State Railway of Thailand Nirut Maneephan said that his agency is making great efforts to develop the country's railway infrastructure in a bid to achieve an even greater modernization of Thailand's railway system.

The new diesel locomotives could help the State Railway of Thailand to provide faster and safer transportation of passengers and freight, thus improving the quality of service of the Thai railway, he said.

According to CRRC Qishuyan, the latest locomotives were customized for the State Railway of Thailand with a maximum operating speed of 120 km per hour.—Xinhua ■

Slovenia's trade deficit hits 10-year high

SLOVENIA'S exports of goods jumped to 39.4 billion euros (about 45 billion U.S. dollars) last year, up 19.8 per cent compared to 2020, and imports rose by 30.8 per cent to 42 billion euros, the country's national statistics office said on Friday. "The trade deficit amounted to 2.6 billion euros and was the highest in the past ten years," the office said in a report.

Germany accounted for 17.3 per cent of all exports, followed by Switzerland, Italy, Croatia and Austria. Main import partners also included Germany, as well as Italy, Switzerland, China and Austria.

China was Slovenia's fourth main import partner, with 10 per cent of all Slovenia's imports coming from the Asian country last year.—Xinhua ■



Slovenia's exports of goods jumped to 39.4 billion euros (about 45 billion US dollars) last year, up 19.8 per cent compared to 2020, and imports rose by 30.8 per cent to 42 billion euros. PHOTO: DATA D.O./XINHUA

Libya's daily oil production drops by 100,000 barrels per day

THE state-owned Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced on Friday that the country's daily oil production has dropped by 100,000 barrels per day due to its inability to maintain oil tanks damaged by armed conflicts.

"The National Oil Corporation expresses deep concern about having to reduce daily oil production as a result of the inability to carry out maintenance of tanks damaged by wars, as well as the disruption of some emergency projects," the NOC said in a



An oil refinery in northern town of Ras Lanuf, Libya, 3 June 2020. PHOTO: AFP

statement. Currently, 11 out of the 19 oil tanks are out of service, making it impossible to maintain oil

production, according to NOC Chairman Mustafa Sanalla. Waha Oil Company, a Tripoli-based compa-

ny engaged in the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas, "was forced to reduce its production by about 100,000 barrels per day as a result of the lack of storage capacities, because of the suspension of maritime traffic in the ports of the Sirte Gulf," Sanalla said.

The NOC statement said bad weather caused the closure of most oil ports in the Sirte Gulf, but the closure could have been averted if proper infrastructure had been in place.—Xinhua ■

Grand Theft Auto' game maker says new edition in development

THE maker of the notorious "Grand Theft Auto" video game franchise announced Friday that a new edition is under development, confirming long-bubbling speculation.

New York-based Rockstar Games did not

say when "Grand Theft Auto 6" will hit the street or how it will be different from the previous edition of the game released in 2013 to blockbuster sales.

"We're pleased to confirm that active development for the next entry in

the series is underway," the studio's subsidiary Take Two Interactive said in an online post.

More than 230 million copies of "Grand Theft Auto," referred to as "GTA" have been sold overall. An online, mul-

ti-player version of the game boasts a large and devoted community of fans, some of whom took to Twitter to express delight at the news along with jibes that Rockstar might not deliver the new game for years.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR PENIDA VOY.NO. (107N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR PENIDA VOY.NO. (107N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6-2-2022 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

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NEWS IN
BRIEFUN Security Council
calls for normal
functioning of gov't
in Lebanon

The UN Security Council on Friday called for the normal functioning of government in Lebanon to carry out much-needed reforms and hold elections. In a press statement, the members of the Security Council took note positively of the meeting of the Council of Ministers of Lebanon on 24 January, and stressed the need for the swift resumption of its regular meetings.

The council members urged expeditious and effective decisions by the government to initiate measures, including the swift adoption of an appropriate budget for 2022 that would enable the quick conclusion of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund. Moreover, they reiterated with urgency the need to implement previously outlined, tangible reforms which are necessary to help the Lebanese population. They also underlined the importance of delivering those reforms in order to ensure effective international support.—Xinhua ■

Iran criticizes US
for denying visas to
wrestling athletes

THE Iranian government on Friday condemned the United States' decision not to issue visas to some members of the Iranian national wrestling team.

Ali Bahadori Jahromi, the spokesman of the Iranian government, tweeted that the change of US administrations does not make any difference in Washington's "anti-people and illegal" approaches.

On Thursday, President of Iran's Wrestling Federation Alireza Dabir announced that the Iranian national team's trip to Texas state of the US had been cancelled. In an email to his American counterpart Bruce Baumgartner, Dabir said six Iranian wrestlers' US visa requests were denied despite having submitted the required documents. The Iranian and American freestyle wrestling teams were scheduled to have matches on 12 February at the formal invitation of the US side.—Xinhua ■

Bullet train showcases China's railway
prowess to Olympic visitors

A Winter Olympic-themed Fuxing bullet train is pictured at Taizicheng Railway Station in Zhangjiakou, China, on 30 January 2022. PHOTO: KYODO

THANKS to tight restrictions aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19, foreign athletes, media staffers and officials at the

Beijing Winter Olympics will only glimpse everyday life in China from inside the so-called closed loop management system sepa-

rating them from local residents.

While the Olympic exclusion zone is essentially limited to sports venues, press centres and

accommodation, it also affords some visitors a close-up look at one of the most visible symbols of China's growing economic power – the country's high-speed railway network.

The main Olympic hub in central Beijing is connected to two mountainous snow sports zones by the world's first automated high-speed railway line, featuring a driverless Fuxing bullet train launched in time for the 4-20 February games. Although the pandemic derailed plans to showcase the state-of-the-art train to Olympic spectators from around the world, it will ferry accredited visitors back and forth from the out-of-town competition zones at speeds of up to 350 kilometres per hour.—Kyodo ■

After eight years of war, Ukraine's army a tougher prospect

WHEN he arrived at the front line as a volunteer to fight Russian-backed separatists in 2014, Pavlo Dolynskiy found Ukraine's army in a desperate state.

Kyiv had just lost the Crimean peninsula to Moscow without a shot being fired and its regular forces – eaten away by years of neglect and corruption – couldn't cope with the spiralling conflict in the east of the country.

"The army had reached the point where it couldn't stand up to the enemy," Dolynskiy, who now works at a veterans association, told AFP.

Soldiers struggled to get uniforms and boots, they had antiquated Soviet-era weapons,



As tensions soar over a massive Russian military buildup on its border, Ukraine's armed forces present a far tougher prospect. PHOTO: AFP

equipment often malfunctioned and the army relied on a ragtag mix of volunteers to plug the gaps.

"It really was in a lamentable condition," he said. But now, as tensions soar over a massive Russian military buildup on its

border, Ukraine's armed forces present a far tougher prospect.

Battle-hardened by nearly eight years of a simmering war that has claimed over 13,000 lives, the military has undergone reforms and been bolstered by Western arms and training.

"Eight years ago, the Ukrainian army did not exist. It was only on paper, and did not have the potential to fight," said Mykola Beleskov, a defence analyst at the National Institute for Strategic Studies in Kyiv.

"Now they are the best armed forces that Ukraine has had in thirty years of independence. The best prepared and the best trained."—AFP ■

Death of IS chief: what we know

A day after the death of Islamic State leader Abu Ibrahim al-Qurashi during a US raid in Syria, many questions remain on the operation and the jihadist group's future.

How was he located?

Qurashi was killed in the town of Atme during a nighttime airborne operation on his house.

US officials said his location had been narrowed down last year. The building's owner told AFP Qurashi had been living there for 11 months. The raid came days after IS launched its biggest operation in years to spring fighters from a huge Kurdish-run prison in the north-

eastern city of Hasakeh. "The timing of the operation suggests that there was intelligence linking Qurashi to the Ghwayran prison attack," said Nick Heras, an analyst at the Newlines Institute. "It would not be surprising that the US put pressure on Turkey to relinquish information."

Turkey holds considerable sway over northwestern Syria and maintains a form of working relationship with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the jihadist that controls most of the Idlib area.

Large numbers of IS prisoners are thought to have broken out during the Hasakeh attack. Their subsequent trajectories



Islamic State group leader Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, who had a \$10 million US bounty on his head, blew himself up when US forces raided a house in northwestern Syria, killing his wife and two children. PHOTO: CHIANG RAI TIMES/ AFP

and communications may have created intelligence opportunities. "If Qurashi was planning to record a statement about the

recent attacks, perhaps that created an opening," said Aron Lund, a fellow with Century International.—AFP ■

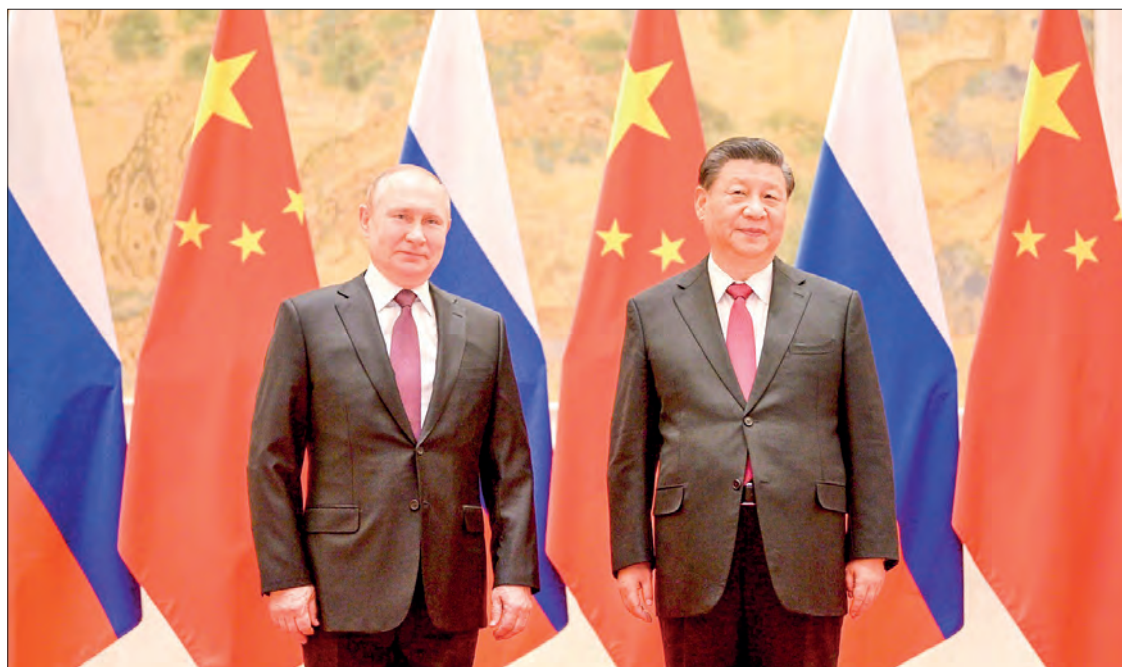
China, Russia oppose further expansion of NATO amid Ukraine crisis

CHINESE President Xi Jinping and visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday opposed further expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with fears mounting about Moscow's possible invasion of Ukraine.

In a joint statement released by Russia, Xi and Putin, who met in Beijing before attending Friday's opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics, also lambasted a security partnership among Australia, Britain and the United States called AUKUS.

During their face-to-face talks, the two leaders confirmed the solid unity between China and Russia, state-run media reported, as their tensions with the United States and its allies have been escalating over several issues including Ukraine.

Putin has demanded that NATO pull back troops and



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) and Chinese President Xi Jinping meet in Beijing on 4 February 2022. PHOTO: KREMLIN PRESS OFFICE/HANDOUT/ANADOLU AGENCY/KYODO

weapons from Eastern Europe, while Xi has opposed the politicization of sports as the United States and some democratic

countries have staged a "diplomatic boycott" of the Beijing Olympics.

Xi has not visited other na-

tions since early 2020, when the coronavirus started to rage. He is expected to resume face-to-face meetings with his counter-

parts in a full-fledged manner in the wake of the Olympics to boost China's clout in the global arena.

On Friday, Xi told Putin that he stands ready to work with the Russian president to chart the future and provide guidance for bilateral relations under new historical circumstances, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Xi added he is willing to work with Putin to help transform high-level mutual trust between the two countries into cooperation in all fields that produce results, according to Xinhua.

Chinese and Russian media reported Putin told Xi that the two countries have continued to develop their ties under a friendly and strategic partnership, expressing hope that they will further bolster cooperation in the international community.—Kyodo ■

Peru president sacks PM accused of domestic violence



Peruvian President Pedro Castillo, dressed in typical Andean attire, speaks during a massive rally calling for political and economic stability in Juliaca, Puno region, Peru in December 2021. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

PERUVIAN President Pedro Castillo dumped his prime minister Friday just three days after appointing him, amid outrage

over revelations he was accused of domestic violence in 2016.

"I have decided to recompose the cabinet," the president said, meaning Prime Minister Hector Valer Pinto is out.

The leftist Castillo announced the change in a brief television address in which he did not mention Valer Pinto by name.

The opposition and even some cabinet ministers were up in arms about Valer Pinto's continued presence in the government.

When the president names a new cabinet, it will be his fourth since taking power six months ago.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iraq, Iran discuss efforts to hold 5th round of Iranian-Saudi talks in Baghdad

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein discussed on Friday with his Iranian counterpart the efforts to hold the fifth round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Baghdad.

In a phone call from Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the Iranian minister told Hussein about "the improvement of bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran in certain areas," said a statement by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.

"The two sides stressed the need to continue the talks that started in Baghdad and have reached the fourth round," the statement noted, stressing "the trilateral cooperation of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq to start the fifth round of talks."

The two ministers also reviewed the regional developments, "including the security situation in the Gulf and Yemen," according to the statement.

The Iranian minister also briefed his Iraqi counterpart the latest developments of the Vienna negotiations on reviving the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal between Iran and the world powers, noting "there are steps that can be considered positive."—Xinhua ■

In Chernobyl ghost town, Ukraine forces train for combat

MACHINE gun fire echoed through the abandoned buildings of Pripyat in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, as Ukrainian National Guard troops on Friday staged urban combat exercises.

The live-fire training — carried out in one of the most radioactive places on earth — came as warnings swirl over a potential Russian invasion.

Moscow has massed over

100,000 troops along Ukraine's border — including deploying personnel to Belarus, which lies just 10 kilometres (six miles) to the north for joint drills.

For Ukraine's forces, the deserted streets and apartment blocks of Pripyat — empty since residents were evacuated following the nuclear reactor disaster in 1986 — made an ideal training ground.

Troops in winter camouflage practised clearing armed attackers from buildings, targeted mortar fire and took on snipers in urban conditions.—AFP ■

Ukraine's defence minister Oleksiy Reznikov played down the likelihood of an incursion by Russian forces sent to Belarus for joint drills. PHOTO: AFP



Myanmar traditional boat team prepares for 2022 Asian Games, 2023 SEA Games

THE Myanmar Traditional Boat Team is now under training for the 2022 Asian Games and the 2023 SEA Games, according to the sports authorities.

As the 31st Viet Nam SEA Games, which will be held in May this year, does not include traditional boat races, the Myanmar Rowing Federation is only preparing for international boat and canoe events, with traditional rowers preparing for the Asian Games and the SEA Games.

The 2022 Asian Games will be held from 10 to 25 September this year in Hangzhou, China.

The 32nd SEA Games 2023 will be held in May 2023 in Cambodia.

The Myanmar Traditional Boat Team consists of 15 males and 15 females and is being trained at a special camp.

Potential candidates from the region and state traditional boat races, which began earlier this month, have been shortlisted.

More than 40 potential players have been selected for the tournament and will be merged with more than 30 previously selected players.

The Myanmar Traditional

Boat Team has been successful in international competitions.

The team has not competed in international competitions since the 2019 SEA Games and will have to compete again in the Asian Games, as the traditional Viet Nam boat will not be included in the upcoming Viet Nam SEA Games.

The Myanmar Traditional Boat Team is likely to compete in other international invitational events ahead of the Asian Games, depending on the COVID-19 situation.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM ■

Norway's Johaug wins first gold of Beijing Winter Olympics

NORWAY'S Therese Johaug won the first gold medal of the Beijing Winter Olympics on Saturday, storming ahead of the competition in the women's 7.5km-plus-7.5km skiathlon cross-country skiing.

Johaug, the clear favourite ahead of the event, finished the course in 44min 13.7sec to take what is expected to be the first of many cross-country skiing medals for Norway at these Games.

Natalia Nepryaeva battled it out with Austria's Teresa Stadlober for second place, with the Russian prevailing to finish 0.3 seconds ahead to clinch silver.

It was a triumphant Olympic comeback for Johaug. She won relay gold at the 2010 Olympics and a bronze and silver in 2014, but missed the 2018 Pyeongchang Games because of a doping suspension.

She had tested positive for a steroid which she said was in a lip balm given to her by a team doctor.



Norway's Therese Johaug celebrates after winning the Cross-Country Skiing Women's 7.5km + 7.5km Skiathlon at National Cross-Country Skiing Centre in Zhangjiakou, north China's Hebei Province, 5 February 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA/MU YU

According to sports statisticians Gracenote, Norway are expected to take home 45 medals in Beijing, including 21 golds.

Dinigeer Yilamujiang, a 20-year-old Uyghur athlete

thrust into the spotlight after being chosen by China as one of two athletes to light the cauldron in Friday's opening ceremony, finished 43rd in Saturday's race.—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

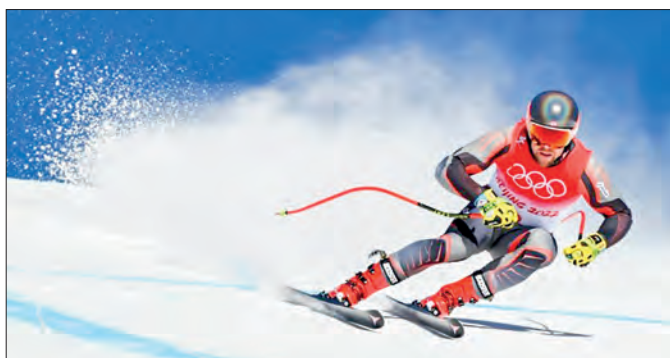
- To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
- To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire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

Man Utd suffer shock FA Cup shoot-out exit against Middlesbrough

MANCHESTER United suffered a shock FA Cup fourth round exit as Championship club Middlesbrough won 8-7 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford on Friday. Ralf Rangnick's side crashed out after Anthony Elanga blazed his spot-kick over the bar in a nerve-jangling shoot-out. Swedish teenager Elanga was the only player from either team to miss in the shoot-out, leaving the forward holding his head in disbelief as Middlesbrough celebrated their stunning victory.

Jadon Sancho had put United ahead in the first half, but Matt Crooks grabbed a controversial equalizer after the interval to set the stage for Middlesbrough's memorable upset. Crooks' goal was allowed to stand despite Duncan Watmore controlling the ball with his hand before providing the assist. Cristiano Ronaldo had missed a first half spot-kick for United, who have now lost seven of their last eight penalty shoot-outs, including last season's Europa League final against Villarreal.—AFP ■

Final men's Olympic downhill training cancelled due to high winds



Gold medal favourite Aleksander Aamodt Kilde was one of just three skiers to make a run before the final downhill practice was cancelled. PHOTO: AFP

THE final training run for the men's Olympic downhill was cut short Saturday because of high winds that blew pre-race favourite Aleksander Aamodt Kilde 60 metres (200 feet) into the air on his run.

Just three racers – Norway's Kilde, Austrian Matthias Mayer and Christof Innerhofer of Italy – came down the 3.1 kilometre (two-mile) "Rock" course before organizers called it a day, to the disgruntlement of some racers unable to take to

their skis.

Kilde said the gusts of wind were "coming from every direction" and had propelled him into the air on some of the five jumps that punctuate the man-made course on artificial snow.

"Due to the present weather situation with high winds and no window in the forecast for decreasing winds, in the best interest of safety the jury together with the organisers have decided to cancel

today's (training run)," a statement read.

According to the official forecast, the wind made the minus 19.5 degrees Celsius (minus 3.1 degrees Fahrenheit) temperature feel like minus 28.3C.

The medal race for the downhill, one of the most prestigious Winter Olympic titles, is scheduled for 0300 GMT on Saturday, when similar windy and cold conditions are expected.—AFP ■