

NATIONAL

Beikthano heritage tourism site enchants enthusiastic visitors in Magway Region

PAGE-2

NATIONAL

SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win addresses meeting of illegal trade eradication steering committee (1/2022)

PAGE-5

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 306, 4th Waning of Tabodwe 1383 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Saturday, 19 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.

Using quality seeds of crops will have advantages for resilience to pest, thirst, swamps and high heat: Senior General

SOME 38 million citizens are residing in rural areas, primarily engaging in the agriculture and livestock farms, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the opening of the Seed Fair 2022 at the Institute of Agriculture in Pynmana of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area yesterday morning.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo and Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr Maung Maung Naing cut the ribbon to open the Seed Fair 2022.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General said the government prioritizes nutritious food sufficiency in the nation. Some 38 million citizens are residing in rural areas, primarily engaging in agriculture and livestock farms. They are striving to earn income for the State.

Using quality seeds of crops will have advantages for resilience to pest, thirst, swamps and

SEE PAGE-3



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views around the display at the Seed Fair in Pynmana of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on 18 February 2022.

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

45 out of 59 hotels operate in Sagaing region

PAGE-5



INTERVIEW

Union Information Minister U Maung Maung Ohn replies to questions raised by Ms Kana Takagi, the reporter from the Mainichi Shimbun from Japan

PAGE-6

NATIONAL

Myanmar hosts ASEAN forum for promotion of women participation in sports

PAGE-7

NATIONAL

26th Myanmar-Thailand Case Management Meeting on Return and Reintegration of Victims of Human Trafficking

PAGE-10

Objectives of 77th Anniversary Armed Forces Day

1. THE Tatmadaw to participate in the leading role of national politics for the emergence of the Union based on democracy and federalism while safeguarding the Constitution (2008) of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
2. The Tatmadaw to take responsibility for substantial contribution to measures of peace and prosperity of the country and food sufficiency as a national task the government primarily emphasizes
3. The Tatmadaw to join hands with all ethnic national people in the national reconciliation and peace processes
4. The Tatmadaw to provide necessary assistance for convening a free and fair multiparty democracy general election for ensuring the emergence of the Union based on democracy and federalism upon completion of endeavours in accord with the provisions of the State of Emergency
5. To build a powerful, capable and modern patriotic Tatmadaw to protect the national interest of the State

Public Notice

15 February 2022

THE Rapid Response Teams (RRT) have been set up in each district of Yangon to provide COVID-19-related information and places for lab tests.

The district RRTs are organized for 24-hour information for the people living in Yangon Region who suffer from COVID-19 symptoms and have close contact with the positive patients, and the people can contact the following phone numbers of the districts.

Daily COVID-19 tests

Those who want to take a test for COVID-19 can contact the district RRT and undergo the COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test (RDT) at the places recommended by the RRT from 9 am to 4 pm daily.

District Bed Management Commit-

tees help for medical services at hospital/COVID-19 treatment centre

The district Bed Management Committees will help assist the patients who need to be treated at the hospital/COVID-19 treatment centre among the COVID-19 confirmed patients.

Teleconsultation Programme launched

Teleconsultation teams have been set up in each district in Yangon Region to provide direct communication with COVID-19 Infectious Diseases (Home Isolation) and Teleconsultation Programme (CDC). Please be informed that the following telephone numbers of these professional groups can be contacted in each district.

24-hour COVID-19 service numbers for Yangon people

District	RRT (COVID-19 related information)	Teleconsultation Team (Direct communication for COVID-19 confirmed patients with the professional doctors)
Southern District	09 882555067	09 88 255 3605
	09 882555068	09 88 255 3606
	09 882555069	
Northern District	09 882555071	09 8825540 08
	09 882556338	09 8825540 09
	09 882556340	
Western District	09 882555063	09 8825540 10
	09 882555064	09 8825540 11
	09 882555065	
Eastern District	09 882555049	09 8825540 05
	09 882555061	09 8825540 06
	09 882555062	

Ministry of Health

Beikthano heritage tourism site enchants enthusiastic visitors in Magway Region



Beikthano -- one of UNESCO's List of World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia.

THOSE enthusiasts who want to explore the history and heritage

of the ancient buildings, the old piece of jewellery, the ancient

moat and the fort, can visit the ancient city called Beikthano,

inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage List, and the Beikthano Museum in Magway Region.

This hidden gem of Myanmar is 12 miles away from Taungdwingyi city in Magway Region. The World Heritage-listed Beikthano old city is located in the north of the Yin creek and Saton creek and in the south of Toungoo creek and Yanpe creek. The remnant features proved the scientific facts of the old city dating back to more than 1,000 years to between BC 190 and 5th Century AD.

It was recognized as one of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed three Pyu ancient city-states on 22 June 2014.

Additionally, the Beikthano Museum will also feature the prehistorical artefacts of the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age. The earthen urns, iron tools, Pyu Era coins, stone beads, bronze cups, statues and bells were discovered in the old city.

The moat, fort and palace models, ancient city's maps, evacuation maps and zone mappings are displayed at the museum. The museum is open between 9:30 am and 4:30 pm every day, except Monday and the gazetted holidays.

The local visitors can explore the architectural treasure of the ancient city free of charge. — District IPRD/GNLM

3,058 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 18 February, total figure rises to 559,314

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 559,314 after 3,058 new cases were reported on 18 February 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 521,609 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,322 after 3 died.—MNA

Promote education as a priority for strengthening democracy

As a larger number of educated persons is designed to own the future of the country for democratization, ...

(Excerpt from the speech made by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at meeting with departmental officials and town elders from Kengtung and Mongpyin townships of Shan State (East), Namsang Township and Kholan of Loilem District in Shan State (South) on 18-2-2022)

Using quality seeds of crops will have advantages for ...

FROM PAGE-1

high heat. If so, farmers will have a high per-acre yield of quality crops and food sufficiency. Surplus foods can be exported to the international market so as to earn foreign exchange. As such, this year's seed fair is held with the theme "use quality seeds, to promote socio-economy".

The crops value chain from the production of seeds, distribution, storage, production of value-added products and systematic packaging for exportation is being implemented for the production of agricultural products meeting the international standards.

Within one year period when the State Administration Council took the State responsibilities, Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing regions and Nay Pyi Taw cultivated edible oil crops



The Senior General and attendees pose for the documentary photo at the Seed Fair 2022 in Pyinmana on 18 February 2022.



The Senior General observes farm products.



The Senior General pays an observation tour around the farms of the Institute of Agriculture in Pyinmana of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on 18 February 2022.

and pulses and beans on 4,552 acres of seed production farms and 8,048 acres of paddy to produce quality seeds. The Senior General urged all to increase investments from the government and the private sector in these sectors in coming years.

With the assistance of the

Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, citizen companies and foreign companies put 100 per cent investments in quality seed production with the purposes of the domestic market and international market.

The Senior General urged departments concerned, ex-

perts and the private sector to harmoniously participate in the development of the seed sector.

The organizations and companies producing quality seeds need to abide by respective laws and procedures for the long term

SEE PAGE-4



Using quality seeds of crops will have advantages for ...

FROM PAGE-3

existence of their industries and for producing quality seeds.

Union Minister U Tin Htut Oo clarified the purpose of holding the Seed Fair 2022.

The Senior General and party visited the booths at the fair and farms of the institute. The Senior General instructed officials to exercise the dropping system in agricultural tasks of water-scarcity areas, feed cattle with fermented corns, straw and grass, strive for operating the integrated agriculture and live-stock farms, disseminate agricultural techniques on all season cultivation system to farmers.

The seed fair aims to improve quality seed production and use and contribute to the



The Senior General warmly greets faculty members and students of the Institute.

socio-economic life of the State with high production using quality seeds in the agricultural sector. The fair displays paddy, pulses and beans, edible crops, vegetables, fruits, seeds, saplings and farms. Local people can view the fair through www.myanmarseedportal.gov.mm. The fair will last for five days.

The Senior General visited the mechanical section, school office, ancient buildings, old agricultural machinery, laboratory apparatuses, carpenter equipment and other materials in the Institute of Agriculture (Pyinmana) and left instructions on systematic maintenance of the ancient buildings in the original style. The Senior General cordially greeted faculty members of the institute

and students.

The institute was established as an agricultural department in 1919 and it was opened as an agriculture school in 1920. The agricultural training school was opened in 1923. It was upgraded to the institute in 1954. As of 1982, the institute conducted the agricultural course as well as the livestock course. From 1982 to 1999, the institute turned out 115 diploma holders in livestock. After late-2000, the institute turns out outstanding faculty members. The institute is a birth space for modern agricultural measures in Myanmar and a historic area where the Burma Defence Army (BDA) opened its headquarters in 1942. — MNA

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

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

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win addresses meeting of illegal trade eradication steering committee (1/2022)

THE meeting of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee (1/2022) was held yesterday afternoon at the Ministry of Commerce in Nay Pyi Taw, and Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win addressed the meeting.

The meeting was also attended by Union Minister U Win Shein, Union Minister Dr Pwint San, the deputy ministers, members of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, permanent secretaries, directors-general, the managing director and officials, and chairman and chief ministers of the Nay Pyi Taw Council and regions/states and officials participated in the meeting through videoconferencing.

The meeting is regularly held twice a month to enhance cooperation among the Union Ministries and region/state governments. At the meeting, the Vice-Senior General said the steering committee must implement effective anti-illegal trade eradication measures so as not to lose taxes owned to the country, to enhance the competitiveness of local ethnic businesses and ensure the safety of consumers, as well as



State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win chairs the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee meeting 1/2022 in Nay Pyi Taw on 18 February 2022.

for national security and health. In addition to the storage at airports, ports and border trade points, main storage and distribution in the cities where the markets are located must be identified and inspected to take effective action against illegal trades under the law, the Vice-Senior General said.

He added the need for respective illegal trade eradication task forces and OSS departmental combined teams to strictly comply with the approved standard operating procedures. As a result of the work of the illegal trade eradi-

cation task forces, there were a total of 1,929 illegal trade cases worth K7,412.370 million from February to December 2021. The action was taken against 13 cases worth about K346.356 million on 30 December and 298 cases worth about K6,323.503 million in January 2022.

As the seized export items were the resources of the country such as timber, jade, minerals, and wild animals, it is important to curb illegal trades with a national awareness, he said. He stressed the need for the FDA to constantly monitor the sales of harmful foods, med-

icines and cosmetics on social media and online and sent any irregularities to the Myanmar Police Force (MPF) through a secure communication so that the MPF can take continuous action in line with the law.

He added the need to do regular inspections, in particular, the relevant departments must take strict measures to prevent and take action against unlicensed vehicles. He also said the importance of receiving information in the fight against illegal trades, cooperating among ministries and departments and regional/state

governments, as well as the non-involvement of government employees through the illegal trade chain, is also a matter of special concern.

The meeting discussed the progress and the working conditions of the steering committee, the FDA's monitoring situation of the sales of illegal food, medicines and cosmetics and the arrests, security issues, the plan to relocate the Ma-yanchaung permanent checkpoint to the designated area and illegal trade eradication works in regions and states. — MNA

45 out of 59 hotels operate in Sagaing region



AUTHORITIES have issued hotel licences to 59 hotels, motels and lodges and 45 of them are currently operating in the Sagaing region, said U Aung Thu Oo, the head of the Sagaing Region Directorate of

Hotels and Tourism. "The Sagaing Region Tourism Committee has granted licences to 59 hotels, motels and lodges. Of which, 45 are currently running for the guests. The remaining 14 are

temporarily closed at the wishes of the owners," he added.

The Sagaing Region Tourism Committee was formed with 13 members, including the region chief minister as chairman, minister for eco-

nomics as a vice-chairman, the head for the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism as secretary, six region-level departmental staff, three private tourism representatives and one expert.

"The Sagaing Region Tourism Committee holds the monthly meeting regularly and granted new hotel licences, licence renewal, extending tour

guide licences," U Aung Thu Oo was quoted as saying.

Currently, about six hotels, motels and lodges are under the construction period and will be issued licences upon completion.

So far, some hotels and motels are completed about 90 per cent while some are done 50 and 80 per cent. — Lu Lay/GNLM



Authorities have issued hotel licences to 59 hotels, motels and lodges and 45 of them are currently operating in the Sagaing region.

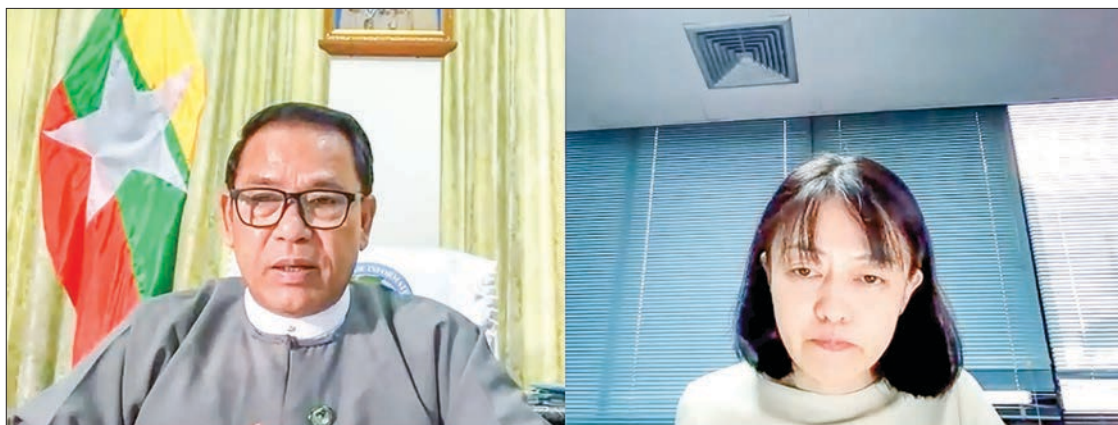
Union Information Minister U Maung Maung Ohn replies to questions raised by Ms Kana Takagi, the reporter from the Mainichi Shimbun from Japan

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn gave a virtual interview to Ms Kana Takagi, the reporter from the Mainichi Shimbun from Japan on the morning of 17 February.

Reporter Ms Kana Takagi asked about the schedules of Myanmar to admit international passenger flights and the situation to accept them, the topic whether the government is difficult to control expanding of social media, reviews over the press freedom, plans to reissue the licences to banned local media, the expectation of the Ministry of Information for foreign media to present the types of information, reviews over the local economy within one year after the State Administration Council has taken responsibilities, process to lure foreign companies to invest in the country, handover of business management to a new government who will come out from the forthcoming election, remarks over the Rakhine State when the Union minister served as the Chief Minister of the Rakhine State, and attitudes of Rakhine political parties over PR system being prepared for the coming election.

In his response, the Union minister replied that arrangements are being made to resume international flights. At present, such a plan is suspended till the end of February due to infection of the Omicron variant. Despite such kinds of restrictions, relief flights to transport citizens returning home and foreigners, the flights for transport of commodities and medical equipment and emergency flights are arranged. The flights for just travelling are restricted temporarily. Depending on controlling the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar and other countries, the flights will be resumed.

Our government does not control the use of social media. Websites are allowed to open. People need to efficiently apply social media, and the Ministry of Information arranges public awareness for applying social media. The information team of the State Administration Council holds the press conference once a month to issue the information and data. The websites of MRTV and MOI post the true



The interviewee MoI Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn and the interviewer Ms Kana Takagi from Japan's Mainichi Shimbun (Daily Newspaper).

news. The Union minister said he led the press briefing to the foreign diplomats.

It is difficult to control the information on social media. Efforts are being made to disseminate true news to the people. MOI and MRTV disseminating the true information were removed from YouTube and Facebook. As the people face fake news and false news on a daily basis, causing weakness, arrangements are being made to broadcast the true news in continuation so as to have the advantages.

The government does not prohibit press freedom. Press freedom should be alive. But media need to abide by rules and regulations and the government and the media need to have mutual respect. Our country has enacted the news media law. If the media comply with such a law, any problem will come out. But, media need to have responsibility and accountability for the broadcasting of news and the news must have firm sources. If they strictly abide by the disciplines, there is no reason to ban them.

The Ministry of Information fully gives the rights of the press to the news agencies and media in accord with the provisions of the law. Section 354 of the Constitution states that every citizen shall be at liberty in the exercise of the following rights, if not contrary to the laws, enacted for Union security, the prevalence of law and order, community peace and tranquillity or public order and morality to express and publish freely their convictions and opinions. The news media law was enacted with the aim of emerging the media with the rights of free expression and

publishing and the entitlement and freedom of media.

The Chapter III of the news media law mentions the entitlement of media persons and Chapter IV mentions the duties and ethics of media. All the news without opposing the laws of the State and the interests of the State can be freely expressed. Emphasis is being placed on press freedom. With regard to press freedom, the press scrutiny system was revoked after 2012. The Prime Minister recognizes the media sector as the fourth estate and fully allows press freedom. All media need to do their work under the law.

If they comply with the press ethics and law, we don't have any reason to ban them. Currently, I hope that social media does not express the news harming the sovereignty of the State and national unity and hate speech. If you want to know whether these news items are one-sided opinions and fabricated news or

banned. Reissuance of licences to local media and agencies depends on their activities. The Ministry of Information will give back licences to them if they express and broadcast the news focusing on the Perpetuation of Sovereignty, Non-disintegration of the Union and Non-disintegration of national solidarity. The ministry wishes to join hands with the media by easing the restrictions as much as possible. So, all media have been invited. If the media focus on national cause and public cause, licences will be given back to them.

At a time when the State Administration Council took the State responsibilities, the State economy has declined due to the outbreak of COVID-19 similar to other global countries. It can be said that many factories and industries resumed their operations. The withdrawal of some companies was dependent on politics. They left here due to violent acts and setting

allowed for 12 investment sectors for 44 businesses from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2022. In this regard, US\$3,062 million was allowed for the electricity sector as the largest amount. More than US\$237 million was invested in other service sectors. The industrial sector was invested with more than US\$199 million. The total foreign investment worth US\$3,823 million comprises US\$2,504 million from the UK, US\$516 million from Japan and US\$442 million from Singapore.

This year's inflow of FDI was 128 projects of investments less than that of last year but the investment amount increased to US\$558.339 million. So, foreign investments created jobs for 24,258 local workers and citizen investments, 11,704 workers, totalling 35,962.

Efforts are being made to regularize the border trade with the main trade partner China. The Myanmar kyat and Chinese yuan direct payment systems are being implemented successfully. There are many countries wishing to invest in Myanmar. For example, work requirements are being solved at the Thilawa Special Economic Zone where the majority of Japanese entrepreneurs operate their businesses. As riots are down in Myanmar, schools reopen. The State Administration Council has successfully controlled its functions. Economic development more than now will be realized in 2022.

The root cause of the withdrawal of foreign companies is the push of their mother countries. And, some of them left here due to terrorist acts of NUG and PDF groups. Some companies left here during the COVID-19 period. But many companies have come back. As of May 2021, the government endorsed business visas and allowed relief flights for more than 3,200 companies. A total of 9,010 foreigners returned here. Due to the pressures of foreign countries, some companies left here while some new companies entered the country. The government takes returns of international companies and puts investment in Myanmar into consideration. The government gives firm guarantees to investors and protects

As arrangements are being made to create job opportunities for local people and exchange of techniques for economic development, I'd like to extend the invitation to the investors to Myanmar.

true ones, contact us. I'd like to expose the reality and true news. The news without limitation is dangerous. It does not contribute to the peace and stability of the State. Some media and agencies infringing on disciplines were

fire by NUG and PDF terrorist groups. As of 2 February 2021, the government has allowed 18 foreign direct investment projects and 15 Myanmar citizen investment projects. So far, more than US\$3,823 million was al-

Myanmar hosts ASEAN forum for promotion of women participation in sports

THE ASEAN Forum for Promotion of Women Participation in Sports was held virtually yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw. The forum was hosted by Myanmar as part of a series of events to promote the participation of women and girls in the ASEAN regional sports sector, one of the five activities that Myanmar has included as a leading country in the ASEAN Work Plan and Sports 2021-2025.

The forum was attended by Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan, Deputy Minister U Myo Hlaing, departmental officials, representatives from ASEAN nations and regions/states, officials from the Myanmar Olympic Committee and SOMS, and invitees.

While addressing the forum, the Union minister said this is the first time Myanmar hosts such an event, adding the importance of women's participation in sports and the necessity to develop systematic plans



to increase the participation of women in the sports sector. Efforts are being made to develop programmes and strategies at the national level by establishing friendship between ASEAN and Myanmar in future sports activities, especially women's sports cooperation, the Union Minister said.

Afterwards, Vice-President of the Myanmar Women Sports Federation Daw Yi Yi Win dis-

cussed "Women in Sports in Myanmar"; Lecturer at the Thailand National Sports University (Chiang Mai Campus) Ms Pacharakamon Arkornsakul discussed "Suggestion for Increasing Female Sports Participation in Thailand"; Principal of Sports and Physical Education Institute (Loikaw) Daw Soe Soe Myar, Department of Sports and Physical Education, discussed "Women Lead Women at Ad-

ministrative Role in Sports"; Member of Women and Sports Committee, Malaysian Olympic Council, Ms Nurul Huda Abdullah discussed "Women in Sports: Malaysia's Journey to Action".

In the afternoon programme of the forum, Professor from Dagon University Dr Sein Nyo Nyo Ko discussed "Women's Participation in Sports in Higher Education"; Mr Asahi Takano from the Portas Con-

sulting and Head of the Asia Pacific office and Mr Jhoshan Jothilingam from the International Government and Business Expert (Portas) discussed "2021 ASEAN Sports Participation Study".

Vice-President of the Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities Professor Dr Than Than Htay discussed "Women Participation in Paralympic Sports"; Senior Officer of the Department of Education, Youth and Sports, ASEAN Secretariat, Ms Larastilndrawagit discussed "Outcomes of ASEAN-Japan Action on Sports Project: Policy Workshop on Gender Equality in Sports and ASEAN #WeScore Campaign".

Attendees at the forum raised questions on the discussions, and the Deputy Secretary General from the ASEAN Secretariat and the Director-General of the Sports and Physical Education Department gave concluding remarks. — MNA

MoC facilitates daily imports of essential anti-COVID-19 equipment

MINISTRY of Commerce is overseeing the importation 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.

A total of 29 tonnes of masks were imported by four vehicles of three companies via the Lweje

and Chinshwehaw trading posts yesterday.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the standard operating procedures 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 inquires can be reached through the Ministry's Website—www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA



Union Information Minister U Maung Maung Ohn ...

FROM PAGE-6

their business profits in accord with international standards.

So far, the Myanmar Economic Recovery Plan-MERP is being implemented as quickly as possible. The plan comprises 10 work programmes, 30 visions, 165 outcomes and 430 work procedures. Although it is a short- and medium-term plan, some procedures will be implemented in the long run. The plan mentions the first point for guarantees for international investors, the second point for economic norms of the international community, the third point for security measures and the fourth point for measures to ease restrictions if necessary. International investors should not believe the exaggerated information disseminated by those outside the country and they are

deeply invited to safely invest in Myanmar.

When the provisions of the State of Emergency have been completed, efforts are being made to implement the promise to hold the election. It is necessary to conveniently cast votes in the general election of the country without losing the rights of democracy. Only when peace and stability are prevailed for holding the election, will the people safely cast votes. If so, it will be a free and fair election. All the people need to join hands with the government for its endeavours for restoring the peace and stability of the State. At a time when the provisions of the State of Emergency have been completed, a free and fair multiparty democracy election will be held in accord with the

Constitution (2008) in order to hand over the State duties to the winning party in line with the democratic norms.

No matter what any government comes out, MIC Law cannot be changed. All the investments allowed by the existing government must be allowed by the forthcoming government. We continuously allow the projects adopted by the previous governments. According to the MIC law, all investors need to believe that the businesses allowed by our government must be continued by the coming government. The Myanmar Investment Commission has issued the prioritized invested businesses. These are manufacturing of fertilizers, cement, steel wares, agriculture and livestock businesses and related tasks, production of val-

ue-added foodstuffs, manufacturing of electric automobile, production of medicines and health equipment and public transport service. Investments are invited to these sectors. The government gives firm guarantees for these investments with a plan to develop the State economy. As arrangements are being made to create job opportunities for local people and exchange of techniques for economic development, I'd like to extend the invitation to the investors to Myanmar.

In my view, Rakhine parties are still considering the PR system. A total of 62 political parties agreed to the PR system due to the trend of the meetings. Germany, Italy, Norway, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Thai-

land and Switzerland are exercising the PR system. Today's track leads to democracy and federalism, so the PR system benefits greatly. Before leading to democracy and federalism, ethnic states wish to manage their states. In implementing democracy and federalism, I believe that they would have the deserved rights and the management for their states.

So, they may accept the PR system. Good results came out from the meetings with ethnic armed organizations.

If Rakhine parties trust in the government, they will accept the PR system. I myself build the trust together with ethnics for enabling Rakhine parties to accept the PR system the majority of political parties accepted. —MNA

Let's overcome shortages of fresh water in the coming summer

SUMMER will be coming soon. At a time when summer falls, some parts of the country will face shortages of water. Hence, not only the authorities but local people need to overcome the challenges of water shortages.

As climate change extends in the world gradually, the total volume of freshwater declines. Hence, millions of global people are facing shortages of safe and healthy drinking water for daily life. As such, the World Health Organization expressed its remarks, saying that some a half of the global population may face diseases based on water in 2025; and many parts of developing countries may encounter water requirements in 2030.

An individual person needs to drink some three litres of water on a daily basis for maintaining the health conditions to be healthy and fit body structures. Sufficient consumption of water can contribute much to the daily functioning of inside organs such as the heart, kidney and muscle. Consequently, water consumption lessens tiredness and exhaustion and health disorders as well as improvement of happiness, good digestion and adjusting the body weight.

That is why people in Myanmar should supply fresh water to those from the water scarcity areas as valuable support because they all are national brethren sharing their future altogether. Let's defy shortages of water as solvable challenges in the summer for all!

Actually, more than 70 per cent of the population is residing in rural areas. The majority of those rural people are suffering the shortages of fresh water in summer yearly. Hence, relevant government departments are sinking tube wells and building earthen lakes for the supply of fresh water and storage of water.

Everybody understands they need to efficiently use the water because freshwater is essential for the daily consumption of the people and agricultural purposes. Such utilization directly affects the daily lifestyle of the people as well as indirectly reflects environmental conservation. So, everybody needs to take care of their behaviours not to harm society in addition to the environment. Only when the environmental conservation is functioning properly will the climate change itself gradually extend the coverage areas of favourable weather.

In accord with a Myanmar saying goes: "Water can cover a morning for life of living being", the water is invaluable for all the persons. Everybody needs to beware of systematic consumption of water without waste in daily life. That is why people in Myanmar should supply fresh water to those from the water scarcity areas as valuable support because they all are national brethren sharing their future altogether. Let's defy shortages of water as solvable challenges in the summer for all!



Prevalence of COVID-19 taste loss estimated by researchers

One of the most common symptoms of COVID-19 is definitely loss of smell and taste. Reports of taste loss have been on the rise over the last two years.

THE taste dysfunction comes in different forms, including ageusia (total taste loss), hypogeusia (partial taste loss), and dysgeusia (taste distortion). Researchers from the Monell Chemical Senses Centre showed that reports of taste loss are in fact genuine and distinguishable from smell loss.

Their study, published in 'Chemical Senses', examined the prevalence of taste loss in COVID-19 patients and how the way the symptom was measured might impact the prevalence estimate.

While taste loss can be a distressing experience, scientists have been sceptical about whether reports of taste loss are genuine.

Two senses are closely linked
Their doubts stem from the knowledge that taste loss was rare prior to COVID-19 and can often be confused with smell loss because the two senses are closely linked.

The effort was the largest undertaken to date. The research team reviewed data from 241 studies that assessed taste loss and were published between 15 May, 2020, and 1 June 2021.

The publications were selected out of an original pool of 712 publications screened by Monell's research team, an unprecedented



Research conducted since the start of the pandemic is starting to suggest that the mouth could be a key player in COVID-19 infection. A dentist and an assistant in Iran work in full personal protective equipment to treat a patient during the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO: ATTA KENARE/AFP

large number of articles to be included in a single analysis. Collectively, the 241 selected studies included 138,785 COVID-19 patients. Among these patients, 32,918 reported some form of taste loss.

Eventually, the overall estimate of the prevalence of taste loss following was 37 per cent. In other words, "about four in every 10 COVID-19 patients experience some form of taste loss," said first

author Mackenzie Hannum, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow in the lab of Danielle Reed, PhD.

In addition, the team found that age and sex influenced the prevalence of taste loss. Middle-aged (36 to 50 years old) individuals have the highest prevalence of taste loss out of all age groups. And female patients are more likely to lose their sense of smell than their male counterparts.

Analysis used different approaches

To assess taste loss, studies included in the analysis used different approaches: self-reports or direct reports. "Self-reports are more subjective and can be in the form of questionnaires, interviews, health records, for example," said Hannum. "On the other hand, direct measures of taste are more objective. They are conducted using testing kits

that contain various sweet, salty, and sometimes bitter and sour solutions given to participants via drops, strips, or sprays."

Based on previous analysis on smell loss by the same Monell research team, direct tests were expected to be a more sensitive measure of taste loss than self-reports.

This time, however, their findings were different -- whether a study used self-reports or direct measures of taste did not impact the estimated prevalence of taste loss.

In other words, objective direct measures and subjective self-reports are as good as each other in detecting taste loss.

"Here self-reports are backed up by direct measures, proving that loss of taste is a real, distinct symptom of COVID-19 that is not to be confused with smell loss," said coauthor Vicente Ramirez, a visiting scientist at Monell and a doctoral student at the University of California, Merced. "Taste and smell loss have been emphasized in the context of COVID-19, yet only 18 out of 241 studies included an objective measurement of this sense.

How critical they are for public health

There is definitely a gap between how these symptoms are being treated and how critical

they are for public health."

This study hinted towards ways of narrowing this gap, given that solution-based taste tests are more sensitive indicators of taste loss than other direct measures.

Simple tastes dissolved in water may be easier to detect without other distractors like food textures. They also offer more experimental control as they are not as affected by the amount of saliva in a study participant's mouth, "providing opportunities for advancements in developing standardized taste tests," said Reed.

The research team emphasizes the need for taste assessment to become standard clinical practice, for example at an annual physical check-up. In addition to being the first step to helping people cope with taste loss, establishing such baseline procedures would help physicians to identify patients with this dysfunction, either from long-COVID, ageing, or medications like chemotherapy.

Now that it was clear that taste loss is a symptom of COVID, Reed said, "it is time to turn to the tongue to learn why taste is affected and to start on how to reverse or repair the loss."

SOURCE: ANI



WHO reveals countries to produce first COVID-busting mRNA vaccines in Africa

EGYPT, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia will be the first countries on the African continent to receive the technology needed to produce game-changing mRNA vaccines, which have proved crucial to the fight against COVID-19, the head of the UN health agency said on Friday.

The announcement was made at a ceremony hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Council, France and South Africa and with the respective Presidents of each in attendance. "No other event like the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that reliance on a few companies

to supply global public goods is limiting, and dangerous", WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. The revolutionary mRNA technology teaches the body's own cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response, without using any viral material. In the case of COVID-19, it produces a harmless piece of the spike protein, alerting the body to defend itself from the virus.

Production on home soil

The global mRNA technology transfer hub was established in South Africa last year to support low and middle-income countries in manufacturing their own mRNA

vaccines -- with the required operating procedures and know-how to meet international standards.

Primarily set up to address the COVID-19 emergency, the hub has the potential to expand its capacity for other manufacturing as well, putting countries in the driver's seat when it comes to the kinds of vaccines needed to address their health priorities.

Depending on the country's infrastructure, workforce and regulatory capacity, WHO and partners will work with them to develop a roadmap, organize training and provide support to begin producing the highly effective vaccines at home, as soon as possible.

Biomanufacturing hub

To ensure that every country builds the capacity to produce their own vaccines and health technologies, WHO has been establishing a biomanufacturing workforce training hub for States interested in production and scientific and clinical research, which will be announced in the coming weeks.

Moreover, WHO's current activities in support of low and middle-income countries will expand through a global tool that assesses countries' ability to ensure the quality, safety and efficacy of health products.

SOURCE: UN



Researchers at WHO technology-transfer hub complete first step in a project aimed at building capacity for vaccine manufacturing in low- and middle-income countries. Researchers at Afrigen Biologics and Vaccines in Cape Town are attempting to replicate Moderna's vaccine. PHOTO: AFRIGEN BIOLOGICS



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 18 February 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 19 February, 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Taninthayi Region and Kayin, Mon States, fairly widespread in Yangon, Ayeeyawady regions, scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Bago region and Kayah state and isolated in Mandalay, Magway regions and Kachin, Shan, Rakhine states. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

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 scattered to fairly wide spread in or thunder showers in upper Sagaing region and Kachin, Chin states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 19 February 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 19 February 2022: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 19 February, 2022: Partly cloudy.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon region. Weather will be partly cloudy in Mandalay region.

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26th Myanmar-Thailand Case Management Meeting on Return and Reintegration of Victims of Human Trafficking

THE Department of Rehabilitation of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and Thailand's Ministry of Social Development and Human Security virtually organized the 26th Myanmar-Thailand Case Management Meeting on Return and Reintegration of Victims of Human Trafficking yesterday.

The meeting was hosted by Thailand and Permanent Secretary Ms Ramrung Worawat of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security said although two countries cooperated online during the outbreak of COVID-19, it received positive



outcomes. It has been about 10 years and Thailand and Myanmar worked as model countries and it reaches the 26th meeting now. The Permanent Secretary

also expressed willingness to hold face-to-face meetings again when the COVID-19 infection rate drops.

Then, Director-General U

Aung Kyaw Moe of the Rehabilitation Department talked about the holding of the virtual meeting for transportation difficulties amid COVID-19.

He also said in the 21st century, human trafficking has developed into one of the most terrifying forms of slavery, a social problem that affects all parts of the world. Although most of the victims were women and children, the number of men is increasing today.

Myanmar and Thailand face such problems as other countries. He then pledged the country will cooperate in the fight against human trafficking and protection services. The meeting also discussed the implementations based on the facts of the 25th meeting. — MNA

CRIME NEWS

Illegal timbers, foodstuffs, commodities, motorcycle, vehicles seized

SUPERVISED by the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, effective action is being taken to prevent illegal trades under the law.

On 16 February, a combined inspection team of the Customs Department of the Yaypu checkpoint and relevant departments seized a total of K6,250,000 worth of illegal materials – undocumented China-made foodstuffs worth K2,250,000 and 1P/3145 Mitsubishi Chariot worth K4,000,000 that carried these foodstuffs.

On 17 February, the Ayeyawady Region Forest Department seized 2.2644 tonnes of ironwood worth K452,880 in Kyangin Township.

On 18 February, the combined inspection of the Sagaing Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force confiscated one unregistered Yangon CC/3169 Nissan Wingroad Y-12 worth K25,000,000 in Sagaing Township and one unregistered Kenbo-125 motorcycle worth K100,000 in Homalin Township.

Similarly, the Bago Region Forest Department seized K1,599,180 worth of 10.5468 tonnes of illegal timbers in the forest reserves of Toungoo, Pyay and Thayawady districts.

Moreover, the Kawkaireik (Tadakyoe) inspection team of Kayin State seized a total of K5,770,000 worth of undocumented products – 40 (23-litre)

Samsung Brand Microwave Oven worth K3,520,000 and 25 (30-litre) Samsung Brand Microwave Oven worth K2,250,000.

Moreover, the Customs Department and relevant departments of the Mayanchaung checkpoint conducted a surprise check and seized one unregistered 5E-1379 Nissan March hatchback (4x2 RHD) vehicle worth K1,500,000.

Thus, a total of 11 arrests (estimated value of K40,672,060) were made on 16, 17 and 18 February and actions were taken under the Forest Law, Customs Law and Export and Import Law, the committee stated. — MNA



Confiscated consumer goods.

Drugs seized in Pyigyidagun, South Okkalapa, Hopan townships

MANDALAY Region Police Force raided the house of Phoe Tha (aka) Hmway Ni in No (6) Ward of Pyigyidagun Township and seized 1.955 kilogrammes of heroin and 0.415 kilogramme of ICE on 15 February.

The anti-narcotics agent also raided the house of Aung Nyo Lay (aka) Lars Phit

in 3rd Min Ye Kyaw Swar street in No (7) Ward of South Okkalapa Township on 17 February and found Shwe Kyaw Oo (aka) Sha Lit and Ibrimhim (aka) Ange Lay including him and seized 0.19 kilogramme of heroin, 0.16 kilogramme of marijuana and 200 stimulant tablets.

The police also arrested Aung Naing on Their Phyu Road of No (6) Ward of Botahtaung Township on the same afternoon. Similarly, the combined team consisting of anti-narcotics task force members examined the motorcycle driven by Yee Wai Chein on the Hopan-Phakyut road in Meinpanshan Ward of Hopan Town in Shan State in the same evening and seized 1,200 stimulant tablets.

The suspects were charged under the Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law. —MNA



Over K270 mln worth of stimulant tablets seized in Tatkon Township



MYANMAR Police Force reported a seizure of K270 million worth of stimulant tablets at the checkpoint in Kintha village in Tatkon Township at noon on 16 February.

Acting on the tip-off, a combined team consisting of members of the

Anti-Drug Police Force stopped and searched a vehicle Grand Mark II driven by Maung Maung, 65, and Htein Lin Aung, 24, onboard, which was driving en route from Pinlaung to Tatkon. Over 180,000 stimulant tablets with an estimated value of K270 million were confiscated.

At 4 pm on the same day, they arrested Kyaw Hla, 56, who was involved in the transportation of those tablets in Pinlaung Township. The tablets were reportedly conveyed to Sagaing Region from southern Shan State during an interrogation. They were prosecuted for drug-related offences under the Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law, Myanmar Police Force stated. — MNA

New Zealand police reject calls to clear anti-vax camp

NEW ZEALAND police ruled out forcibly clearing anti-vaccination protesters camped around parliament in Wellington on Friday, saying they did not want to provoke violence on the streets of the capital.

Police have taken a hands-off approach after an attempt to take control of the lawns late last week resulted in violent clashes and 120 arrests.

Commissioner Andrew Coster acknowledged growing frustration among Wellington residents and business owners as protest vehicles blocked downtown streets for the 11th day.

But he insisted dialogue with the demonstration's lead-

ers was yielding positive results, even though the number of people squatting outside the legislature continues to swell.

"Enforcement action taken by police runs the real risk of injury to the public, escalation in numbers of people, and a transition away from a largely peaceful protest to violence," Coster said.

"In our assessment, the only safe option at the present point in time is a continued focus on de-escalation."

The protesters, inspired by Canada's "Freedom Convoy", jammed roads with cars, trucks and campervans early last week, then set up camp on the lawns of parliament.

They have erected tents and



Police take over an intersection leading to Parliament on the ninth day of demonstrations against Covid-19 restrictions in Wellington on 16 February 2022, inspired by a similar demonstration in Canada. **PHOTO:**

shelters, and organized portable toilets, food distribution points and childcare facilities.

New Zealand's largest news website said police had "seemingly ceded control" of the par-

liamentary precinct, pointing to the presence of protesters acting as self-styled security guards to monitor access to the grounds.

Coster said about 800 people were at the camp, with more than 450 vehicles obstructing roads, and predicted numbers would increase over the weekend.

Police threatened to use the military to tow vehicles this week but backed off after protesters put out a call on social media for reinforcements.

Wellington residents have complained about being abused for wearing masks and noted some far-right messaging among the anti-government and anti-media slogans displayed by protesters.—AFP ■

UK to offer COVID vaccine to all children aged 5-11



Across London, everyone is working hard to stop the spread of coronavirus. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

ALL children aged five to 11 in England will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine, the UK government said Wednesday, following similar announcements in the rest of the UK.

The move, coming nearly two months after British regulators approved Pfizer and BioNTech's shot for use among the age group,

sees Britain following the lead of the United States, the European Union and other countries.

It has only been vaccinating at-risk under-12s and those who live with immuno-suppressed people, using a lower-dose formulation of the jab that was found to be "safe and effective".

However, Health Secretary

Sajid Javid - who has responsibility for England only - said he had now accepted guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization, which advises UK health departments, to expand the rollout. "The NHS (National Health Service) will prepare to extend this non-urgent offer to all children during April so parents can, if they want, take up the offer to increase protection against potential future waves of COVID-19 as we learn to live with this virus," he said in a statement.

Javid added the priority remained offering vaccines and boosters to adults and vulnerable youngsters, noting that children without underlying health conditions are at low risk of serious illness from coronavirus.

Hours earlier, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced Scotland would also start jabbing five to 11-year-olds, while Wales unveiled the same policy the previous day.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Swiss president tests positive for COVID-19

SWISS President and Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis has tested positive for COVID-19, said a government statement on Thursday.

"At the end of Wednesday afternoon, the President of the Confederation Ignazio Cassis underwent a PCR test in view of his participation in the Munich Security Conference. The test came back positive and the president went into self-isolation this morning as soon as he learned of the test result," the statement said.

It added that Cassis has no symptoms and is in good health, and will continue his work from home until Sunday.—Xinhua ■

China offers Southeast Asia strongest COVID-19 vaccine support: survey report

CHINA was selected by 57.8 percent of respondents as the ASEAN Dialogue Partner which provided the most COVID-19 vaccine support to Southeast Asia, according to a survey report published by the ASEAN Studies Centre at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute on Wednesday.

The State of Southeast Asia: 2022 Survey Report said all ASEAN (the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations) countries have used either Sinopharm or Sinovac as part of their national vaccination roll-outs. The survey, conducted from 11 November to 31 December last year, was designed to highlight the perceptions of the region's policymakers, academics, researchers, business people, media personnel and civil society activists toward a range of issues affecting Southeast Asia. A total of 1,677 respondents from 10 Southeast Asian countries took part in the survey.—Xinhua ■

Unvaccinated US seniors dying from COVID-19 at incredibly high rates: The Atlantic

THE vaccination rates of American adults aged 65 and older are still low, and the unvaccinated elderly have been dying from COVID-19 at incredibly high rates, The Atlantic magazine has reported. So far this year, three-quarters of COVID-19 deaths in the United States have been in people aged 65 and older, 93 per cent in people aged 50 and older, the

magazine said Tuesday, citing the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data in early December.

The United States has not only a lower overall vaccination rate but lower coverage in the elderly. Britain, for example, has achieved 96 per cent full-vaccination coverage in people over 65, but in the United States, the

figure stands at 88.5 per cent.

"Our vaccination rates, as well as booster use, in people aged 60- or 65-plus are woefully low and expose a tremendous amount of vulnerability to severe disease, hospitalizations, and deaths," Eric Topol, director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, told reporters.—Xinhua ■



The shipments of the vaccine rolled out of a factory in Michigan. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS
IN BRIEF

China to raise prices of gasoline, diesel

CHINA will raise the retail prices of gasoline and diesel from Friday, the country's top economic planner said on Thursday.

The price of gasoline will increase by 210 yuan (about 33.16 US dollars) per tonne, and the price of diesel will increase by 200 yuan, according to the National Development and Reform Commission.

Under the current pricing mechanism, when international crude oil prices change by more than 50 yuan per tonne and remain at that level for 10 working days, the prices of refined oil products such as gasoline and diesel in China are adjusted accordingly. China's three biggest oil companies — China National Petroleum Corporation, China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation, and China National Offshore Oil Corporation — have been asked to maintain oil production and facilitate transportation to ensure stable supplies. — Xinhua ■

Hong Kong foreign domestic workers
'abandoned' in virus crisis

HONG KONG'S foreign domestic workers are being "abandoned" in the current coronavirus wave sweeping the city, with some forced to sleep rough or being denied treatment after testing positive, charities warned Friday.

The Chinese financial hub is currently in the throes of its worst-ever coronavirus outbreak, registering thousands of confirmed cases a day as hospitals reach breaking point.

Hong Kongers live in one of the world's most densely packed cities and rely on some 370,000 foreign domestic workers, the vast majority women from the Philippines and Indonesia who cook, clean, and look after their families.—AFP ■

UK axes investor visa
in crackdown on 'illicit'
Russian money

BRITAIN said Thursday it will not accept new applicants for investor visas, with the government admitting "security concerns" about some past cases as it increasingly targets illicit Russian finance.

The so-called "golden visa" had allowed entry and stay in Britain if an applicant invested £2 million (\$2.7 mln, 2.4 mln euros) in active UK registered companies, but new applications will no longer be accepted.

A 2018 report by parlia-

ment's Foreign Affairs Committee accused ministers of risking national security by "turning a blind eye" to the Russian "dirty money" flowing through London's financial centre.

"It has been under constant review and some cases had given rise to security concerns, including people acquiring their wealth illegitimately and being associated with wider corruption," the interior ministry said in a statement Thursday.—AFP ■



Workers cross London Bridge, with the City of London financial district seen behind, during the morning rush-hour, in London, UK, 4 January 2022. PHOTO: AFP

US Congress temporarily avoids
government shutdown

The United States Congress. PHOTO: CHIP SOMODEVILLA / AFP/

THE US Senate passed a stop-gap funding bill Thursday, after threats by some Republicans earlier in the week risked a damaging government shutdown.

The bill, which passed by 65 votes to 27, will extend federal spending at current levels until 11 March.

Had the bill not passed by Friday at midnight, the federal government would have entered a costly shutdown, with hundreds of thousands of govern-

ment employees furloughed and all non-essential offices closed.

The House of Representatives passed the bill, the third such stop-gap spending text in less than five months, on 8 February. It now goes to President Joe Biden to sign it into law.

Nineteen Republican senators joined Democrats in voting for the bill, putting it above the threshold of a filibuster.

Despite some threats from Republicans to hold up the pro-

cess, a shutdown was highly unlikely.

Most elected officials on both sides of the aisle signalled they did not want a shutdown, which would create havoc by sending millions of public workers home without pay.

The stop-gap funding gives lawmakers some more time to reach a long-term spending package to cover the rest of the fiscal year through September 30.

Rank-and-file members in both chambers have also warned that if Congress cannot move beyond temporary fixes, billions of dollars made available last year through the \$1.2-trillion infrastructure package will remain in limbo.

Biden, who has been travelling the country touting his infrastructure deal, is eager for a fresh congressional victory, as his approval ratings crumble a few months before crucial mid-term elections.—AFP ■

G20 warned of Ukraine threat
to global recovery

People wearing face masks prepare to board their train at Seoul Station in Seoul, South Korea, 10 February 2021. PHOTO: LEE SANG-HO/

THE crisis in Ukraine is a serious threat to the global economy's post-pandemic recovery, Indonesia's leader on Thursday warned a meeting of finance chiefs from the G20 nations.

The Group of 20 — which brings together the world's top economies including the US, China and some European nations — is holding talks in hybrid format in the Indonesian capital Jakarta.

Opening the two-day meet-

ing, Indonesian President Joko Widodo warned of the risks to the fragile recovery from the crisis in Ukraine, where fears are growing that Russia is set to invade.

"This is not the time for rivalries and creating new tensions that disrupt the... recovery, let alone endanger the safety of the world, as is happening in Ukraine," said Widodo, whose country currently holds the G20 presidency.

"All parties must stop the

rivalry and tension."

He urged the G20, which includes Russia, to instead focus on "collaborating" to help boost the global economy.

The threat of a Russian invasion of its ex-Soviet neighbour presents a fresh challenge for a world already struggling to keep a recovery from the coronavirus pandemic on track as inflation surges.

Also on the agenda at the meeting — originally due to take place on holiday island Bali before being moved due to an Omicron virus wave — was how to reform global health systems to be better prepared for future pandemics.

'Mobilise funds'

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, speaking via video-link, said that "we must act urgently to strengthen the global health architecture so that we have the tools to prevent, prepare for, and respond to future health crises".

The world's large economies "must also focus on mobilising the funding needed to address gaps in the system", she said.—AFP ■

Air France-KLM slashes losses by half in 2021

FRENCH-DUTCH aviation giant Air France-KLM on Thursday said its net loss narrowed by more than half last year but would need more capital strengthening measures due to the pandemic.

The airline's losses totalled 3.3 billion euros (\$3.8 billion) last year.

It said the capital

strengthening measures could amount to some 4.0 billion euros and acknowledged that the Omicron Covid-19 variant had hampered positive trends after a good start to the fourth quarter.

"This new step in the recapitalization plan measures intends to further restore the equity

position," it said. The company said it would not be giving guidance for 2022 due to the uncertainty over the pandemic and over when Japan and China would fully reopen to travel. "After a good start of the fourth quarter and the reopening of the United States early November, the rise of the Omicron variant hampered in December the continuous increase in load factors for the medium haul and domestic traffic," it said.

Omicron also led to a spate of flight cancellations through January after a better than expected 4th quarter showing which brought operating profits of 178 million euros for that period — better than the corresponding period of 2019 before the health crisis hit.—AFP ■



In this 19 November 2020 photo, an Air France Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner prepares to depart from Charles De Gaulle International Airport (CDG). PHOTO: DANIEL SLIM / AFP/FILE

Chinese food delivery giant slumps on new fee-cut measures



Food delivery giant Meituan has hundreds of millions of customers in China. PHOTO: AFP

SHARES of Chinese food delivery giant Meituan slumped Friday as Beijing released new guidelines instructing internet platforms to lower fees for struggling eateries.

The guidelines, published by China's top economic planner, aim to support a service sector hit especially hard by restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Shares in Meituan, which has hundreds of millions of users in China, plunged almost 15 per cent in Hong Kong when markets closed Friday.

Earlier this week, a State Council meeting pledged to scale up support for sectors such as catering, retail and tourism, including temporary tax breaks, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

And internet companies, including those doing food delivery, should be guided to further cut service fees, helping merchants bring down operating costs, according to the latest document from the National Development and Reform Commission.

"Internet platform companies shall be guided to give preferential service fees to catering firms... where medium- or high-risk areas in the pandemic are located," the NDRC added.

Beijing has embarked on a sweeping regulatory crackdown in the past year or so, clipping the wings of several major internet firms and leaving investors jittery. Meituan shares have dropped nearly 60 per cent in the last year, according to Bloomberg News.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V VENUS C VOY.NO. (2204S/2205N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V VENUS C VOY.NO. (2204S/2205N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **19-2-2022** 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

Agent For:

M/S SITC CONTAINER LINE CO., LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3102S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3102S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **19-2-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GARNET

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V GARNET VOY. NO. (01/2022)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **19-2-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **TMIT-2** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S WILHELMSSEN SHIPS SERVICE(S) PTE LTD

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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MCL 20

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MCL 20 VOY. NO. (003/22)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-2-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MKH** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES (S'PORE) PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V XIN HAI TONG 17

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V XIN HAI TONG 17 VOY.NO. (2112)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **21-2-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT-5** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S ELDER TRIUMPHANT SHIPPING LINES PTE LTD

Germany tries Russian ‘space rocket spy’



The European Ariane 5 rocket stands on the launch pad at the Guiana Space Center in Kourou, French Guiana, 11 August 2005. **PHOTO: BERTRAND GUAY/AFP/FILE**

A Russian scientist accused of spying for Moscow while working at a German university goes on trial Thursday, another source of friction in already frayed ties between the two countries.

The accused, identified only as Ilnur N. by prosecutors, allegedly shared information about Europe’s Ariane space rocket programme with Moscow, receiving 2,500 euros (\$2,800) in cash in exchange.

The case is the latest in a string of alleged Russian spies uncovered on German soil at a time of the worst tensions between Moscow and the West since the Cold War over Presi-

dent Vladimir Putin’s troop build-up at the border with Ukraine.

It reportedly led to the expulsion of a diplomat from Russia’s consulate in Munich, after another two embassy personnel were declared persona non grata over the 2019 assassination — allegedly ordered by Moscow — of an ex-Chechen commander in a Berlin park.

Prosecutors allege that Ilnur N. was working at an unnamed Bavarian university when he was contacted by Russian foreign intelligence service SVR in the autumn of 2019 at the latest.

After agreeing to cooperate, he “passed on information on

research projects in the field of aerospace technology, in particular the various development stages of the European launcher Ariane”, prosecutors said in a statement.

SpaceX competition

The European Space Agency’s Ariane programme consists of a series of transportation rockets designed to ferry heavy loads including satellites into space.

The 40-year-old programme, often held up as a model of industrial and political cooperation between European countries, faces growing competition from newcomers such as Elon Musk’s SpaceX.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Khamenei rejects ‘absurd’ claims Iran wants atomic bomb

IRAN’S supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed as “absurd” claims his country wants to acquire atomic weapons, in remarks on Thursday amid signs of a breakthrough in nuclear talks.

The Islamic republic is locked in negotiations with world powers to revive a 2015 deal that offered it sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

The deal known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, was designed to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear arsenal — a goal it has always denied pursuing.

Tehran’s chief negotiator Ali Bagheri tweeted that “we are closer than ever to an agreement” late Wednesday, hours after France warned that Iran had just days left to accept a deal.—AFP ■

Dutch PM offers ‘deep apologies’ to Indonesians over colonial violence

DUTCH Prime Minister Mark Rutte offered his “deep apologies” on Thursday to the people of Indonesia in response to a report on colonial violence committed by the Dutch during the Indonesian war of independence between 1945 and 1949, reported Xinhua.

“I make deep apologies to the people of Indonesia today for the systematic and widespread extreme violence on the part of the Dutch side in those years and the consistent look away by previous cabinets,” Rutte stated.—Xinhua ■

Mozambique’s ex-president Guebuza to testify in debt scandal

Ex-president Armando Guebuza was on Thursday expected to testify in Mozambique’s biggest corruption scandal, an affair concerning secret loans contracted under his tenure that triggered an economic crisis.

The country, ranked among the poorest in the world, illicitly borrowed \$2 billion (1.76 billion euros) in 2013 and 2014 from international banks to buy a tuna-fishing fleet and surveillance vessels. The government masked the loans from the country’s parliament.

However, the “hidden debt” finally surfaced in 2016, prompting donors including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) cut off financial support.

An independent audit later found \$500 million had been diverted and remains unaccounted for.

The 79-year-old former leader, who will be the most



Before the storm: The then head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, is greeted by Guebuza in Maputo in May 2014. **PHOTO: IMF/AFP/FILE**

high-ranking witness in the scandal, was president between 2005 and 2015.

His eldest son Ndambi is among 19 high-profile defendants facing trial over alleged links to the case. He was arrest-

ed in February 2019 and has been in detention since then.

Last year Ndambi denied charges he took bribes to persuade his father to approve the maritime deal and facilitate the secret loan.—AFP ■

Russia says pulling back more troops despite US claims



The Ukrainian army has carried out military drills amid fears of a Russian invasion. **PHOTO: AFP**

RUSSIA on Thursday announced more troop pullbacks from the Ukrainian border as Washington insisted that Moscow is still building up forces for a potential invasion of its pro-Western neighbour.

After previously announced withdrawals earlier this week, the United States, NATO and Ukraine all said they had seen no evidence of a pullback.

The Russian defence ministry said units of the southern military district were returning to bases from Moscow-annexed

Crimea and that tank units of the western military district had departed on a military train for their bases 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) away. It did not provide details on the specific amount of troops or equipment involved.

Western officials say Russia has amassed well over 100,000 troops and significant military hardware near Ukraine’s borders in preparation for a potential invasion, which Washington says could take place “at any time”.

Russia has said “large-scale”

military exercises are taking place in various areas, including near Ukraine, but has not provided any specific numbers and has repeatedly denied any plans for an attack.

US says pullback claims ‘false’

The troop build-up and Western threats to respond to an invasion with painful economic sanctions have brought tensions between Moscow and the West to their highest since the end of the Cold War.—AFP ■

Kishida tells Putin diplomatic solution needed over Ukraine

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Thursday urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to find a diplomatic solution that is acceptable to the countries concerned amid concern that Russia may invade Ukraine.

Kishida told reporters after telephone talks with Putin that Japan opposes the use of force to change the status quo

and will continue to monitor the Ukraine-Russia situation with “grave concern”.

The two leaders agreed to continue dialogue over the Ukraine crisis and toward reaching a postwar peace treaty between Japan and Russia, Kishida said. Japan and Russia remain at loggerheads over the ownership of a group of islets off Hokkaido.—Kyodo ■



Transport planes crammed with huge heavy crates. Inside the crates are weapons and ammunition that the US and UK are sending to Ukraine. PHOTO: AFP

US says nuclear deal possible within days if Iran ‘shows seriousness’



Negotiations to save the Iran nuclear deal are taking place in Vienna's Hotel Palais Coburg, pictured in December 2021. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

THE United States said Thursday that “substantial progress” during negotiations in Vienna to save the Iran nuclear deal had been made, deeming an agreement possible within days if Iran “shows seriousness” on the matter.

The Vienna talks, which involve Iran as well as Britain, China, France, Germany and

Russia directly, and the United States indirectly, resumed in late November with the aim of restoring the 2015 deal.

That accord had offered Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme, but the United States unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under former president Donald Trump and reimposed

heavy economic sanctions, prompting Iran to begin rolling back on its commitments.

Stating that “substantial progress has been made in the last week,” a State Department spokesperson told AFP that “if Iran shows seriousness, we can and should reach an understanding on mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA within days,” using an acronym for the 2015 deal.

But “anything much beyond that would put the possibility of return to the deal at grave risk”, the spokesperson added.

Experts believe Iran is only a few weeks away from having enough fissile material to build a nuclear weapon — even if it would take several more complicated steps to create an actual bomb.

President Joe Biden said he is willing to return to the deal and ease some of the US sanctions, provided Tehran resumes its commitments under the agreement.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US judge orders Trump to testify in New York fraud probe

A US judge ruled Thursday that former president Donald Trump and his eldest children must testify under oath in New York’s civil probe into alleged fraud at his family business.

The ruling is the latest legal blow to the 75-year-old as he fights numerous cases that threaten to complicate any bid for another run at the White House in 2024. The Trumps have repeatedly tried to shut down the investigation by New York Attorney-General Letitia James, who last month said she had uncovered “significant evidence” of fraudulent or misleading practices at the Trump Organization.

Following more than two hours of oral arguments, state judge Arthur Engoron rejected a plea by Trump, Donald Jr and Ivanka to quash subpoenas issued by James in December.—AFP ■

South Korea’s cyberbullies driving victims to suicide

MAN-hating feminist, mentally-ill, grind her into dog food: activist Kim Ju-hee endures a torrent of abuse from powerful South Korean cyberbullies, who are driving more and more of their victims to suicide.

From K-pop stars like Sulli to lesser-known figures like a volleyball player who killed himself earlier this month, South Korea’s cyberbullying crisis is spreading and victims have no way out, activists say.

In a country where sexism is entrenched, a leading presidential candidate can vilify feminism, and misogynistic posts are a defining feature of Reddit-like forums, cyberbullies have the power to ruin people’s lives — and face few repercussions.—AFP ■

Refugees in Greece face hunger, homelessness despite status

TWO minutes into a Greek jobs fair interview, Hashim, a 21-year-old Afghan refugee, is offered work as a waiter at a swanky Corfu hotel.

It’s his ticket out of the grim migrant camp he has called home for the past year, but there’s a caveat: he has to cut his ponytail.

“Health and safety protocol,” his interviewer explains.

Hashim, who won asylum in Greece a month-and-a-half ago, has little choice.

“If I do not have work, I need

the camp,” he explains in a mix of broken English and Greek, summing up the predicament of many refugees in Greece.

Athens has granted refugee status to over 68,000 people in the past three years, according to the migration ministry.

But if obtaining asylum in an EU country is a dream come true for many migrants, in Greece it means having to confront a whole new set of challenges. Right now “it’s probably easier to survive in Greece as an asylum seeker than

as a refugee,” says Spyros-Vlad Oikonomou, advocacy officer at the Greek Council for Refugees, one of the country’s leading rights groups. “It’s a particularly sad paradox... essentially, Greece still has no integration system,” he told AFP.

Starting in 2019, the conservative government began phasing out accommodation and financial assistance for people with asylum status, arguing that such benefits only encouraged further migration.—AFP ■



In Greece, obtaining asylum means having to confront a whole new set of challenges PHOTO: AFP

Gu wins women's free ski halfpipe, her second gold for China at Beijing 2022

FREE ski talent Gu Ailing eased to top podium of her odds-on halfpipe at the Beijing 2022 here on Friday, which is her second gold medal for host China.

Gu, 18, grabbed her first gold in the big air event in her Olympic debut on 8 February in Beijing, and won the silver in the slopestyle here on 15 February.

Best at halfpipe in the three events she attended, Gu scored 93.25 points in her first run to lead the 12-strong final standings, collecting 95.25 points in her second run to extend the lead and sealed the win before her third run.

Gu was the last competitor came out in every run in the final as she topped the qualification with 95.50 on Thursday. Before her third run on Friday, all the other finalists could not surpass her definitely. Then Gu made an easy run to celebrate her triumph.

In the three-run final, Ca-



Chinese athlete Gu Ailing (C), Canadian athletes Cassie Sharpe (L) and Rachael Karker celebrate after the freestyle skiing women's freeski halfpipe final of Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics at Genting Snow Park in Zhangjiakou, north China's Hebei Province, 18 February 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA/WANG HAOFEI

nadian skier Cassie Sharpe took the silver with her stable performances. Her best score was 90.75 in her third run and the worst was 89.00 in her first run.

The bronze went to Rachael

Darker, also a Canadian, with her first-run score of 87.75.

Gu's teammates Li Fanghui and Zhang Kexin finished fifth and seventh, both with their first-run scores.—Xinhua ■

Czech bobsledder shows deafness no barrier at Beijing Olympics



Czech Republic's Dominik Dvorak and Jakub Nosek react at the end of their final run in the two-man bobsleigh. PHOTO: AFP

BOBSLEIGH teams begin their charge over the ice with encouraging shouts, but Czech Republic racer Jakub Nosek has to rely on his team-mates' "rhythm" at the Olympics.

The 32-year-old lost all hearing in his right ear and 85 per cent in the other after suffering from meningitis as a small child.

That has not stopped him competing at the last two Win-

ter Games as brakeman behind Czech pilot Dominik Dvorak.

They finished 15th in Tuesday's two-man event and hope to rank higher Sunday as part of a four-man crew.

All-rounder Nosek has represented his country in high jump, long jump, decathlon and javelin at three editions of the Deaflympics, for athletes with impaired hearing.

However, pushing a sled down an ice track requires team work, especially hard when Nosek cannot hear.

"The jumping into the sled is pretty difficult," said Dvorak. "We've had the same rhythm for eight years so we know how to do it now."

Team-mate Dominik Zalesky says Nosek takes his cue from "our rhythm" at the start of each charge.

Some bobsleigh teams count to three in unison before starting.

Nosek is inspired by his family and the names of partner Aneta and daughter Viktorie are written on his race shoes.

He says the Covid pandemic, and wearing protective face masks, makes it much harder to communicate. "I read lips but I can't now."

He hopes to prove physical disability is no barrier to competing at an Olympics and blocks any negative comments.

"I hear everything -- except what I don't want to hear," he said.—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.

Maguire denies reports of Ronaldo rift at Man Utd

MANCHESTER United captain Harry Maguire has denied reports of a power struggle with Cristiano Ronaldo as the club battle to end the season in the Premier League's top four.

Maguire has been well below his best this season and it has been reported that the United skipper feels undermined by Ronaldo's influence, with his continued role as captain questioned.

United forward Marcus Rashford dismissed talk of a dressing room divide involving Ronaldo earlier this week and Maguire has denied the latest reports.

"I've seen a lot of reports about this club that aren't true and this is another," he posted on Twitter on Friday ahead of Sunday's Premier League match at Leeds.

"Not going to start posting about everything that is writ-



Manchester United captain Harry Maguire has denied reports of a power struggle with Cristiano Ronaldo as the club battle to end the season in the Premier League's top four. PHOTO: AFP

ten but I needed to make this one clear. We're united and focused on Sunday. Enjoy your day everyone."

United's 2-0 win against Brighton on Tuesday lifted them back into fourth place in the English top-flight -- the top four teams all qualify for next season's Champions League.—AFP ■