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Sunday, 9 January 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.

Cambodian PM visits construction site of Mara Vijaya Buddha Image in Nay Pyi Taw

CAMBODIAN Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, who arrived in Myanmar for a working visit at the invitation of State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, visited the construction site of Mara Vijaya Buddha Image in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

First, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko, Lt-Gen Nyo Saw and Lt-Gen Kan Myint Than of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office and officials among others received the Cambodian Prime Minister.

Then, the Cambodian Premier donated to the Buddha Image in the meeting hall. Afterwards, Lt-Gen Kan Myint Than briefed the curving and building of the Mara Vijaya Buddha Image, step-by-step exploration and conveyance of marble rocks, efforts of the Senior General for seeking the guidance of State Ovada Cariya Sayadaws, work processes to publish the Tri Pitaka treatises in the Romanized Language using modern machines and other construction



Cambodian Prime Minister Mr Hun Sen looks into the scale-model of the Buddha Image and pagoda compound in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 January 2022.

processes of religious buildings with architectural works of Yadanabon era.

The Cambodian Prime Minister and party viewed the scale-model of the Buddha Im-

age, pagoda compound, Pitaka inscription chambers, samples of stone inscriptions, location of

altar of the Buddha Image and curving processes with the use of CNC machines.—MNA

Authentic taste of tea, enjoy

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Lemon Tea



Tea Mix

Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen leaves Nay Pyi Taw



CAMBODIAN Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, who has arrived in Myanmar at the invitation of State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing for a working visit, left Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The delegation led by the Cambodian Prime Minister was seen off at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna

Maung Lwin, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Ko Ko Hlaing, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr Maung Maung Naing, Myanmar Ambassador to Cambodia U Thit Lin Ohn, Cambodian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chhouk Bunna and officials.

During his working visit to Myanmar, the Cambodian Premier held talks with the Chairman of the State Administration Council and attended bilateral talks. — MNA

Cambodian Premier Mr Hun Sen is seen off at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport.

MoRAC Deputy Minister attends ceremonies of upgrading Zhou Enlai guest pavilion of Shwezigon Pagoda, renovating Thabinyu Pagoda

THE opening ceremony of the upgraded Zhou Enlai guest pavilion of Shwezigon Pagoda in Bagan ancient heritage cultural zone yesterday.

The event was attended by Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Tun Ohn, Deputy Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Than Aung, Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chen Hai and other officials concerned.

During the ceremony Deputy Minister U Tun Ohn and Chinese Ambassador Mr Chen Hai respectively made remarks.

The Zhou Enlai guest pavilion at Shwezigon pagoda in NyaungU Township was constructed and donated by Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai during his visit to Bagan in 1961.

The 61-year Tazaung is also a sign of good China-Myanmar Pauk Phaw relations. The Chinese people mostly hold their annual ceremonies at the Zhou Enlai Tazaung.

Then, Deputy Minister U Tun Ohn attended the ceremony to start the maintenance works on the Thabinyu Pagoda and delivered the remark together with the Chinese Ambassador.

Thabinyu pagoda was one of the 389 pagodas hit by an earthquake on 24 August 2016. The government signed MoU to repair the earthquake-hit pagoda with the Chinese experts on 22 September 2018.

The Chinese experts conducted 3D Scanning processes and field study including other work plans to start the emergency renovation works before



the monsoon of 2019 and the Department of Archaeology and National Museum (Bagan Branch) launched the monitor-

ing processes.

The proper experience of Chinese experts and skilled staff of the Ministry of Religious

Affairs and Culture will keep conducting renovation works on Thabinyu pagoda in its original style. — MNA

Meeting on making payment with yuan accounts for China-Myanmar border trade held



BANK of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) organized a meeting regarding the issue of opening a Chinese yuan account and making payments for Myanmar-China trade at Pullman Mandalay Mingala Hotel in Mandalay as per COVID-19 health rules yesterday.

First, Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar Daw Than Than Swe discussed the aims, objectives and procedures of the direct use of yuan-kyat in bilateral border trade and advantages.

Secretary of Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods Deputy Minister for Commerce U Nyunt Aung briefed the challenges in making payments by opening yuan accounts.

Then, the merchants to the meeting raised the questions about the banking sectors, payment methods, proposed exchange rate, documents for border trade, bank rate and financial assistance, and Managing Director of MEB, officials of ICBC and BOC coordinated the discussion.

Mandalay Region Economic Affairs Minister, Secretary of the Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods, officials from Myanma Economic Bank and Departments, President and officials from RCCI (Mandalay), officials from the Myanmar Banking Association and private banks, officials from Bank of China and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) foreign branches attended the meeting and some of the officials joined the meeting via video-conferencing. —MNA

The government always invites peace talks

THE government always invites peace talks. As such, it is expected that peace talks will be held in the future to boost the benefits related to peace. Having all tasks concerning the last point of the five-point road map of the State Administration Council been accomplished, a new election will be held and the State power will be handed over to the winning party.

(Excerpt from the speech by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 4/2021 of Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 30-12-2021)

Union Investment Minister inspects investment activities in Heho, Kalaw



UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, U Aung Naing Oo inspected investment activities of Myanmar Belle Shin-Shin Foods Co. Ltd., a joint venture of foreign investment in dried vegetables and export to Japan, running with the permission of the Myanmar Investment Commission in Heho Township, Shan State (South) yesterday morning.

During the inspection, company officials briefed the operation of the company and explained the difficulties encountered and the plans for the future.

The Union minister called for the promotion of domestic

production and discussions were held on expanding cooperation with crop farmers to increase exports, and necessary coordination was made regarding the current difficulties in the business.

Next, the Union minister visited Top Ten Star Production Co., Ltd., running with the permission of Myanmar Investment Commission, in Bawsai Village-Tract, Kalaw Township and the company's officials reported on the operation and difficulties of the plant.

Afterwards, the Union minister discussed the situation of further assistance and toured the mining industry and the refinery. — MNA

Terminal M shopping centre to open in February

A Terminal M shopping centre, located in No 3 main road, Yangon industry zone, Mingaladon Township, Yangon, will be opened in coming February, it is learnt.

The shopping centre, the rectangular building has been constructed on a 4.1 acres plot of land. This four-storey commercial complex will be the first all-inclusive destination leisure mall.

Besides, Terminal M centre consists of four main sectors – anchor tenants such as Ocean Centre, Pro 1 Global Home Mart, Mingala cinema and the largest M food court. Also, about 170 stalls will be opened in the centre such as bar, coffee shops, the significant local and international restaurants, playground for children, car parking and 19

cuisines selling ethnic and international food.

The construction of this shopping centre is completed nearly 100 per cent and it has announced to launch very soon.

“We heard that the centre will be opened in February. We don't know the exact date of launching the centre,” said a resident who lives near the No 3 main road.

The Terminal M shopping centre is located at the junction of Kayaypin road near Aung Mingala highway terminal and No 3 main road which is one of the major points of Yangon. It can be reached in a few minutes from the airport and just a few-minute walk from the Aung Mingala highway terminal. — Ko Naing/GNLM

221 Myanmar nationals return through Myawady Friendship Bridge



MYANMAR citizens from Thailand are being welcomed back through the Myanmar-Thailand Friendship Bridge 2 in Myawady and a total of 221 Myanmar citizens returned home on 8 January.

Those Myanmar nationals were welcomed by U Aung Chan Nyein, Deputy District Admin-

istrator from Myawady district. Then, the officials and staff from the relevant departments are taking necessary action such as providing a COVID-19 awareness talk, collecting the information of the returnees, sending them to the quarantine centres in Myawady town and detecting the COVID-19 test in the health

department.

After having those processes, they were transported to their respective states and regions. A total of 221 returnees, including 133 males and 88 females, from states and regions, came back home. — Mann Than Shwe Myint (IPRD)/GNLM

MoHT Union Minister attends Asia-Pacific Ecotourism Summit 2022

UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung attended the Asia-Pacific Ecotourism Summit 2022, honouring the 20th anniversary of the International Ecotourism celebration as a keynote speaker.

This summit was hosted on 8 January 2022, organized by Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN).

At the summit, Asian Ecotourism Network Chairman Mr Masaru Takayama gave the opening remarks, while Global Ecotourism Network Chairman Mr Glenn Jampol, Minister of Tourism and Creative Economics of the Republic of Indonesia Dr H. Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno and Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung delivered the speech.

At the meeting, Union Minister Dr Htay Aung said that the strategic plans were drawn up for the reopening of the tourism sector based on the COVID-19 prevention measures. The strategic roadmap for tourism revival in Myanmar (2021-2025) has been drawn up and plans are being made to resume the tourism sector. Besides, the responsible tourism poli-



cy, Myanmar tourism master plan, community-based tourism policy, ecotourism policy for natural areas in Myanmar and tourism policies such as governance strategies have been formulated in collaboration with international experts for the sustainable development of the tourism sector in Myanmar.

The summit also dealt with the fact that Myanmar has the most diverse ecosystems and ethnic cultures, and therefore

the natural beauty and culture must be preserved so that it can be passed on to future generations. Awareness must be provided to the local people to preserve and protect the environment to improve the knowledge on cultural heritage conservation. There are also 19 protected areas and 22 elephant camps in Myanmar designated as ecotourism areas. For the development of the tourism sector, including ecot-

ourism, the trio of government, private sector and locals must work together in coordination and synchronization and keep in line with tourism ethics as well.

In the afternoon programme, Myanmar Tourism Federation senior tourism advisor Daw Kyi Kyi Aye discussed under the title of "Ecotourism practices to be resumed in Myanmar in a new normal way" while Ministry of Hotels and

Tourism director U Zeya Myo Aung discussed matters relating to "Ecotourism development in Myanmar and ways forward".

Further, one representative from India and Kirsi Hyuavenerin from European Ecotourism Network gave ecotourism keynote talks, while officials from Mongolia, Cambodia and Sri Lanka discussed under the name of "Ecotourism support policies".

Also, an ecotourism consultant from Norway read the Oslo declaration on ecotourism, while the Global Sustainable Tourism Council vice-chairman and Asia Pacific Green Destination representative, Asian Ecotourism Network vice-chairman adjourned the meeting with concluding remarks.

On the second day of the summit, on 9 January at 9 am, experts from Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia and South Korea discussed "eco-tourism run by local people" whereas the representatives from Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong and the Philippines will talk about "eco-tourism run by entrepreneurs". — MNA

Illegal goods seized in Rakhine state and Bago region



Confiscated timber in Bago Region on 8 January 2022.

UNDER the supervision of the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, effective action is being taken to prevent illegal trade under the law.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team inspected on Sitway-An Road, near Mae Latt Maung village, An Township, Rakhine State on 6 January and confiscated 4.27 tonnes of illegal Thayet teak lumbers from two vehicles.

On 8 January, another combined team checked at an import checkpoint in Yepu permanent checkpoint, Shan State and found 195 boxes of two illegal foodstuffs on an 8J-8801 vehicle worth an estimated amount of K4,000,000.

Similarly, the combined team led by the Bago Region

Forest Department under the supervision of the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee inspected the forest reserve in Thayawady and Bago districts and found 59 tonnes of illegal forest production including 24 tonnes of teak, six tonnes of hardwood and 29 tonnes of other wood.

Thus, the team seized 4.27 tonnes of teak in Rakhine State on 6 January, estimated worth K4,000,000 at Yepu permanent checkpoint and about 59 tonnes of timber in the Bago Region yesterday.

The action is being taken in accordance with departmental procedures, the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee stated. — MNA

124 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 8 January, total figure rises to 531,925

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 531,925 after 124 new cases were reported on 8 January 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 509,950 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,290 after 2 died.—MNA

MoC facilitates daily importation of anti-COVID-19 medical devices

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

Anti-COVID-19 equipment was imported by one company using three vehicles. A total of 22 tonnes of masks were imported via the Chinshwehaw trade camp yesterday.

From 1 to 8 January, a total of 20 tonnes of liquid oxygen, which was carried by four lorries and one bower, and 22

tonnes of masks were imported.

In the meantime, one bowser transported liquid oxygen to Yangon via the Myawady Trading Zone.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the standard operating procedures, including online registration for the import process.

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



A lorry is seen transporting anti-Covid medical supplies to where necessary.

Myanmar exports over 800,000 tonnes of rice in three months of this FY



Myanmar is delivering rice to nine countries this FY. Among them, China is the primary buyer of Myanmar rice with about 170,000 tonnes, followed by Ivory Coast with over 88,000 tonnes and the Philippines with over 66,000 tonnes.

MYANMAR exported over 800,000 tonnes of rice and low-quality rice for three months of this mini-budget year from 1 October to 31 December, according to a release from the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

According to the figures released by MRF, the country exported over 525,347.6 tonnes of rice and 277,284.71 tonnes of low-quality rice, totalling 802,632.31 tonnes of rice to the international market.

In the first three months, it exported over 750,000 tonnes of rice and low-quality rice via sea route while the country exported

over 45,000 tonnes of rice and low-quality rice via the border trade route.

However, the export volume of rice and low-quality rice via border trade route touched over 270,000 tonnes while the export volume of rice via maritime route hit over 370,000 tonnes, totalling about 650,000 tonnes of rice and broken rice last year.

As a result, this FY's rice and low-quality rice export surpassed the last FY figures by 150,000 tonnes.

Myanmar is delivering rice to nine countries this FY. Among them, China is the primary buy-

er of Myanmar rice with about 170,000 tonnes, followed by Ivory Coast with over 88,000 tonnes and the Philippines with over 66,000 tonnes.

Similarly, the country exported low-quality rice to seven countries and China is the main buyer of low-quality rice with over 120,000 tonnes, followed by the Netherlands with over 95,000 tonnes and Belgium with over 41,000 tonnes.

Last 2020-21 FY, the country generated over US\$700 million from rice exports, with an estimated volume of over 2 million tonnes. — NN/GNLM

Palm oil price surges in domestic market

THE palm oil prices have risen again in the domestic market, according to Myanmar Edible Oil Dealer's Association (MEODA).

The palm oil in the end-December last year was priced at K4,490 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes) in the Yangon domestic market, but the price currently rose to over K4,700 per viss, an increase of over K200 per viss in a week.

Besides, the international palm oil was only US\$1,337 per tonne at the end-December, whereas the price rose to \$1,355 per tonne right now.

Myanmar Kyat depreciation against the US dollar is the main reason for the rising of palm oil prices. Currently, the cost of 1 US dollar in Myanmar Kyat is over K1,900, it is learnt.

Thus, the Ministry of Commerce, in coordination with MEODA purchased at the reference rate of the Central

Bank of Myanmar for the edible oil sector to offer a reasonable price to the consumers.

Till now, over 32,000 tonnes of palm oil were sold which is equivalent to \$41 million that the oil importers directly purchased at the reference rate from the Central Bank of Myanmar, according to the Consumer Affairs Department.

The association is also making concerted efforts with the organizations concerned and the related departments to secure the edible oil sufficiency and offer a reasonable price to the consumers, as per the statement.

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

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Misbehaving monk of Pyitawtha Monastery in Singaing arrested for defaming religion

THE monk U Zawana (aka) Zarni Ko Ko from Pyitawtha Monastery of Singaing Township in Mandalay Region was detained for defaming religion together with another 13 people.

On the morning of 1 January, monk U Zawana streamed a Facebook live video of his birthday party via his Ashin Zawana Facebook Account. The video footage showed that U Zawana misbehaved and violated the Sangha rules in the event. On 3 January, the officials arrested U Zawana (aka) Zarni Ko Ko at the house of Zaw Myo Aung located at the corner of 71st and 102(A) streets in Myothit (1) Ward of Chanmyathazi Township in Mandalay together with another 13 participants, including Zaw Myo Aung.

According to the inspection, U Zawana (aka) Zarni Ko Ko posted support for protests, incitements for government employees to join CDM and spread the false news via his Ashin Zawana Facebook Account.

He used expensive personal items such as shoes, glasses and staff that are not suitable for the monks and also posted his photos using such materials on his Facebook.



U Zawana (aka) Zarni Ko Ko (40)



The house of Zaw Myo Aung in Chanmyathazi Township.



Zaw Myo Aung (52)

He also has communication with the gamblers and plays two- or three-digits lottery games. He also lent K80 million of cash donations to Zaw Myo Aung for gambling

games.
Zaw Myo Aung organized the birthday party of the monk at his house and he pounded his house at the banks and faced lawsuits as he could not make repayment. He cooperates with U Zawana for the swindling of money.
U Zawana (aka) Zarni Ko Ko prefers same-sex relationships and he made love affairs with five young men between 2002 and 2021.
He is now charged under the Penal Code Section 295, 505(a) and Gambling Law. — MNA

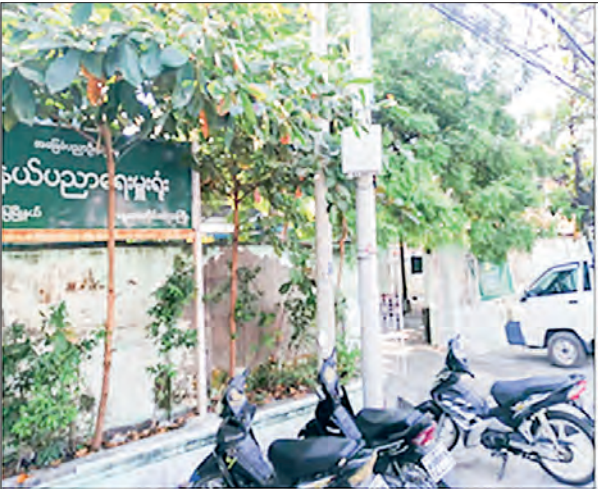
Monk and his father shot dead in Myaing Township

DUE to the brutal assault of terrorist groups NUG and CRPH and their subordinate PDF terrorists, one monk and his father died in Ywagon Village of Myaing Township in the Magway Region.

At about 7 pm on 7 January, Sayadaw U Khemasara and his father U Hla Pyu were shot to death at Maha Nandi Magyee Monastery by the PDF terrorists.

Security forces conduct security measures to arrest PDF terrorists who brutally killed the monk and his father. The entire people are urged to work with officials to prevent such a murder against monks.—MNA

Terrorists explode landmines on township education office, primary school



The handmade bomb explosion in Mandalay Region.

TERRORISTS made explosion activities by using bombs, hand grenades, and landmines on education offices, departments and schools in Yadanabummi East Ward, Maha Aungmye Township, Mandalay Region at around 10:30 am on 7 January.

An explosion occurred and some equipment was damaged as two male terrorists on a motorcycle fired grenades in front of a village BEPS on 36th Street. After the explosion, U Aung Thu (32 years old) got an injury near his eyes, abdomen and left



Blast of a handmade mine in Sagaing Region.

hand.
Security forces inspected the scene in detail and found an improvised explosive device (IED) made from a pot and a hand grenade made of PVC pipe was found and confiscated.
Security forces are investigating to take effective action against the perpetrators of the violence. — MNA

Kanmalay solar-powered pumping for irrigation project to cover 300 acres of summer crops in Magway Region

A new solar-powered pumping system project, which started in the 2020-2021 financial year, will irrigate summer crops in Kanmalay Village, Aungmye Township, Magway Region, according to the Magway Region Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department.

“This new solar pumping project will provide irrigation to 300 acres nearby during the upcoming summer growing season. It will initially run on a trial basis with 100 acres starting from the last week of January,” said U Myint Oo, deputy director



A new solar-powered pumping system project, which started in the 2020-2021 financial year, will irrigate summer crops in Kanmalay Village, Aungmye Township, Magway Region, according to the Magway Region Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department.



The project includes a two-mile long irrigation network, 99 canals and a 170kW solar system. It is slated to end in the 2022-2023 financial year.

of the department. The component of the solar-powered pumping system is three 75kW submersible pumps with retaining and irrigating networks. The project includes a two-mile long irrigation network, 99 canals and a 170kW solar system. It is slated to end in the 2022-2023 financial year. Upon completion of the project, growers nearby the project area will get access to adequate irrigation supply in all-around

seasons (summer, monsoon and winter). As a result of this, the productivity, yield rate and socio-economy life of the local community will be enhanced. “This solar pumping project can save 40 per cent of electricity supply so it contributes to sustainable development,” U Myint Oo elaborated. In a bid to reduce the elec-

installed in Minbu Township, while the Myinkun solar pumping irrigation project is a part of regional budget planning in the 2022-2023FY. More solar pumping irrigation projects will be carried out in the region. The department is lessening concerns of growers engaged in 39,376 acres in this tropical region, with 30 solar



In a bid to reduce the electricity cost in irrigation, solar-powered irrigation activities are being implemented in Magway Region. pumping projects for irrigation. During the 2021-2022 summer growing season, it has projected to provide water across 16,680 acres. — Aung Min Han (MNA)/GNLM

Bokashi composting system turns garden waste into rich compost

BOKASHI should be practised to turn food scraps, kitchen waste and garden waste into compost, Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) stated. “Burning leaves poses health hazards. Bokashi is a solution to break down food scraps and garden waste. It does not have to commit to a landfill. Most importantly, it will bring us eco-friendly benefits. If YCDC provides an on-call waste col-

lection service, it will put a burden on some households. This is why Bokashi fermentation is the simplest, fastest and least costly way to recycle organic waste in order to reduce pollution,” an environmentalist suggested. The majority of Myanmar people usually burn leaves and garden waste in winter and it causes pollution and health hazards. Air pollution negatively affects our health and people are

not aware of it. Air quality often reaches an unhealthy red level so Bokashi fermentation is encouraged to adopt in the community, he added. One bucket or bin or pallet can be used to build Bokashi stacks. The green leaves and food waste are stacked on top of one another. After three or four months later, the organic waste will be converted into the soil which can be utilized as the organic fertilizer along with animal manures. This method is good for the environment as well as can eliminate air pollution in the neighbourhood.

In 2017, about 45,000 deaths in Myanmar were attributed to air pollution, according to the World Bank’s analysis. To mitigate death risk from air pollution an environmental-friendly community should be established with a good practice of Bokashi composting, YCDC released a notification. — Pwint Thitsar/GNLM



A compost basket. PHOTO: SOE MYINT AUNG

South Korean garment factory in Dagon Myothit Seikkan Tsp recruits workers

THE Republic of Korea-listed Yangon Pan-Pacific International Co., Ltd (Y.P.I) on Kanaung Minthagyi Road in the Kyisu Industrial Park, Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township is recruiting workers for an expansion of business. Between 24 December 2021 and 5 January 2022, the company recruited the workers (supervisor, chief supervisor, female workers for QC, CAD and pattern designs) four times. Additionally, a merchandiser who can speak English fluently and has experience in the industry, a designer who can use Optiex pattern software, a designer for CAD room patterns and skilled workers were also employed be-

tween June and 29 December 2021. Those interested can enquire about jobs through 09408001284, 09408001281 and 09259916014 and send CV to ypihrrecruit@gmail.com, with an attachment of both an original and a copy of the household certificate, citizen scrutiny card, two licence photos, and other documents. The lowest minimum wages for a worker are K5,200. The salary will vary depending on the grade of the operators. Y.P.I have the best corporate reputation in the past 22 years in the country. It is expected to employ 350 workers, according to the job opportunity announcement of the company. — Ko Naing (Bago)/GNLM



The Yangon Pan-Pacific International Company Limited.

Enhance friendly relations between Myanmar and Cambodia

EVERYBODY cannot live alone in and out the society. Likewise, any country cannot stand alone through the international community. As such, societies are formed with individuals and groups of humans. Similarly, the international community is constituted of small and large countries.

Myanmar is located in the Southeast Asian region, close to South Asia. Its location is strategic, sharing borders with two bid power countries in addition to Southeast Asian countries. Despite various forms of geographical conditions, Myanmar enhances diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries, regional countries, Mekong

basin countries and other global countries amicably.

In the early days of January 2022, Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen paid a working visit to Myanmar. The goodwill visit of the Cambodian Prime Minister would strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries. It is a fine result for the peoples from both countries.

Cambodia pledged full support to Myanmar in implementing the five-point consensus under the ASEAN Charter. The Cambodian Prime Minister also emphasized that implementation of the five-point consensus should be complementary in the realization of the five-point roadmap of the State Administration Council.

Both countries have been amicable for many years. Not only leaders of the countries but the peoples friendly exchange their visits many times. Cambodian hospitality host the Myanmar citizens

who arrive in Cambodia for various reasons. As now is the time of preventing and controlling the infection of COVID-19, Cambodian authorities provide vaccinations to Myanmar citizens in their land similar to its citizens. Hence, Myanmar must show off hospitality to Cambodian citizens arriving in Myanmar with various aids.

Buddhism is a common religion between Myanmar and Cambodia. Hundreds of Buddhist monks and nuns from Cambodia are pursuing Buddhism literature at the missionary university in Myanmar to widen their scopes of Buddhism so as to share knowledge with their natives. As those Cambodian members of the Sangha are friends of Myanmar's Buddhist monks, the formers have the chance to learn the Pariyatti works of literature. It is the strong and firm ties between both countries.

The working visit of the Cambodian Prime Minister would be a drive for accelerating the bilateral trade sector, education, defence and peace measures. Cambodia's Win-Win Policy success in achieving national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability, development and prosperity is sure to benefit Myanmar on its future path.

■ ■ ■

Equestrian festival and tourney

By Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja,
Sithu Dr Khin Maung Nyunt

15th Century, guns and cannons were introduced into the Myanma army.

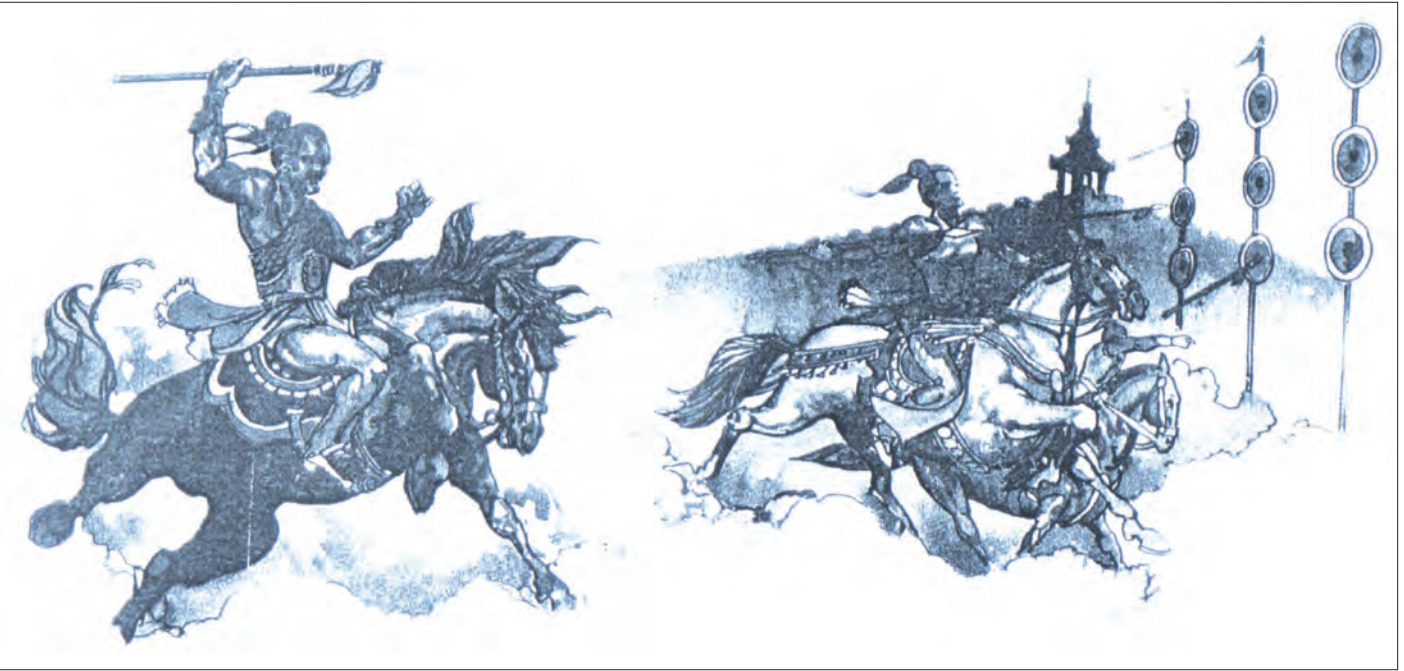
The earliest evidence of the Equestrian Festival that can be traced so far was found in the literature of the Pinya Period (A.D. 1298-1364). It was in the reign of King Thihathu (A.D. 1298-1324) that one unknown author composed a "Kyo" song describing a love-forsaken court lady longing for her lover who was

elephant back, horse race, horse-riding, lance-throwing etc. The equestrian tourney was called in Myanmar "Set Thwin Pwe" or "Set Hto Pwe" because equestrians contested in lance-throwing to hit the centre of the circular targets on poles. The King or Chief Queen awarded the winners with scarfs woven with gold or silver threads and a bunch of Thazin orchids. King Thibaw (A.D.1878-1885) the

gold or silver threads and a bunch of Thazin flowers for every lance that hit the centre of the circular target. When the tournament of the equestrian lancers was over, Officers of Cassay Horse (Manipuri regiment) and Akabat Horse

How and when Gu-lee came to Myanmar no one can tell. One can only surmise from what anthropologists and historians say. Ethnically Myanmars are of Mongoloid stock; they still have cultural traits not dissimilar to those of the Mongols. The time when their forefathers migrated gradually from Central Asia riding horses and driving caravans in quest of new pasture in Myanmar, their Mongoloid tradition and custom including equestrian game like Gu-lee were introduced into Myanmar. But historians say that the Gu-lee game appeared in Myanma Chronicles and literature only in the 15th century, and from Taungoo Period (A.D. 1486- 1599) to the end of the Konbaung Period (A.D. 1752-1885) Gu-lee was the popular game among the ruling class. Court bards composed different forms of verse describing this game in association with the Equestrian Festival. In Myanma traditional performing arts also Gulee game was composed, sung and mimed in dance. 37 songs of propitiation for 37 nat spirits have a description of the Gu-lee game. In the dance gestures of a female inaugural dancer in Myanma traditional play or puppet show, were mimetic movements of horse riding and playing Gu-lee game. One of the 37 nat — spirits in Myanma Pantheon was Shwe Nawrahta, a high-ranking officer at the court of King Shwe Nan Kyaw Shin of the Innwa Period. He was an excellent Gu-lee player. Legend has it that when he became nat spirit after his violent death, songs were sung praising his mastery of the Gu-lee game. His statues have a Gu-lee stick in one hand and a Gu-lee ball in the other. In view of these pieces of evidence, one may say that Myanmar already had the Gu-lee game long before the British introduced it as a Polo game.

With the loss of independence in 1885 Equestrian Festival and Tourney ceased. Royal Regatta also disappeared, though boat races were held locally. British horse races were introduced; at Mandalay and Yangon racecourses, horse races were held for revenue and fundraising, not for cultural purposes. Many people were ruined by betting at the horse races. Young generations have no idea of what the royal regatta and equestrian tourney looked like. They learn about them only in school textbooks. Now thanks to the joint effort of the Government and the public royal regatta had been revived and held almost annually. The Equestrian Festival had made its debut on the 23 October 1993, thus providing a golden opportunity for every Myanmar to see the long-forgotten royal pageant and events.



an officer of some rank, seen riding his white horse to Equestrian Tourney. But this evidence alone cannot establish that the equestrian festival originated in Pinya Period, because lack of evidence in the previous Periods does not necessarily rule out the possibility of such festival held before the Pinya Period. Either the previous shreds of evidence might have been not discovered yet or lost. Even if we accept Pinya Period as the date of its first appearance, there must have been before that date some initial stages of the festival. For cultural traditions and customs did not drop out of the blue. They evolved for several decades or centuries.

Myanma Traditional Equestrian Festival had two programmes—display and contest. In display, 37 different modes of horsemanship and 37 different ways of playing with lance were demonstrated by select equestrians. Men of letters of different historical periods had described them in verses of different forms. Also in Myanma classical music and song are those compositions that depicted the equestrian tourney. One outstanding piece of literary work on 37 modes of horsemanship and 37 ways of lance playing was the 37 Luta verses and 37 songs composed by Maha Dhamma Thingyan, Royal Adviser to King Bagyidaw (A.D. 1819-37). He submitted his compositions to the king. For easy memorization, he also rhymed them in Than Bauk couplets.

In contest or tournament, 17 ways of horse-riding used in war, and Myanma traditional martial arts were competed such as equestrian combat, combat on

last Myanma King held Equestrian Festival in 1878 which was probably the last festival of its kind. It was recorded in the Chronicle "Konbaung Set Maha Yazawun Taw Gyi" Vol 3, as follows:

"In that year (1240 ME) second waning day of Pyatho (i. e. January) to prepare for holding of equestrian festival and tourney following the traditional display of cavalry, elephantry, charity, archery, and demonstration of princely martial arts as staged by previous kings of the past, five circular target posts were set up in straight line in the courtyard on the left-side of Mye Nan Palace building. The heights of five circular target posts ranged from 5 cubits, 20 cubits, 25 cubits, 30 cubits to 50 cubits. On the north side of the royal Thetkadan staircase, a royal pavilion was built. It was decorated with royal emblems and was ready for the events. On the 3rd waning day of Pyatho, Princes, Ministers, Ministers of the Interior, commanders of the Palace Guard, Knights, Commanders, and army officers dressed in their military uniform rode caparisoned steeds. Each with 10 lances participated in the contest. Riding the horse at high speed, each by turn, threw a lance at a time, at the circular targets on the posts, until all ten had been thrown. Princes dressed in the army uniform of their rank also contested. His Majesty wearing a priceless military uniform and gem-studded helmet and Chief Queen and the Court came out to the Pavilion from where he watched the Equestrian Tourney. His Majesty and Chief Queen awarded the winners a scarf woven with

(Assamese regiment) of cavalry and their equerries gave a demonstration of their skill in weaponry and horsemanship such as cutting banana stems, lime fruit, and water pot with swords and spears while riding at speed, and different techniques of horse-riding. After seeing them His Majesty and the Court entered the Palace".

One princely game played at the Equestrian Festival was 'Gu-Lee' a kind of Polo. In Myanmar history and literature, the word "Gu-lee" has been spelt and pronounced differently. This game was one of the favourite games Myanma royalty, nobility, and aristocracy played any time of the year. But being an equestrian game that required skill in horse-riding, it was included in the programmes of Equestrian Tourney. All countries with horse tradition claimed the origin of this game. Mongolia, China, Persia, Tibet, and most Central Asiatic countries deserve such a claim because they all have Gu-lee games.



■ ■ ■

Myanmar Gazette

Heads of Service Organizations confirmed and appointed

1. The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of U Maung Maung Than as the Director-General of the Labour Department under the Ministry of Labour on the expiry of the one-year probation period.

2. The State Administration Council has appointed the following persons as heads of service organizations shown against each on probation from the date they assume charge of their duties.

Name	Appointment
1. Professor Dr Abe Pro-Rector (Admin) University of Community Health, Magway Department of Human Resources for Health Ministry of Health	Rector University of Community Health, Magway Department of Human Resources for Health Ministry of Health
2. U Aung Kyaw Moe Deputy Director-General Social Welfare Department, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement	Director-General Rehabilitation Department Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

I SAY WHAT I SEE:

By Oung Moun Moun

We all ushered in the New Year 2022 a few days ago — much more precisely nine days back from today. Not even all, many others advance with fresh ideas or concepts towards their specific goals in the new year ahead. Almost all just simply express best wishes of good health and great wealth for their friends, relatives and loved ones far and near at this time of transformation from the old year into a new one.

Positively, everyone irrespective of those born with silver spoons in their mouths and those on their uppers alike wishes to be healthy as well as wealthy. First and foremost, health is of paramount importance as a teaching goes "Aroja Parama Labha". The excerpted phrase taken from the widely known Dhammapada verses can literally interpret that health is the ultimate profit — the benefit of being healthy.

Secondly, wealth comes after health consequently. Should we live in good health we can get educated and find or do a job or work compatible with our educational level or any vocational skill. Thereafter, prosperity or wealth can be materially accumulated depending on how much one can work hard and exert efforts in his or her tasks. However, happiness is the ultimate wealth, the Dhammapada says. So, let's find true happiness!

Here, I wholeheartedly wish for your long healthy prosperous life not just in 2022 but further on.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 8 January 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 9 January 2022: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, and Taninthayi regions and Kachin and Mon states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

Transmission towers destroyed by terrorist bombings

TERRORIST groups have targeted and killed innocent people living peacefully in some areas for aiming at total annihilation of government administrative mechanisms with their subversive acts.

State-owned buildings, public hospitals, schools, homes, villages, markets, state-owned banks, private banks, departmental offices, state-owned property, private property, factories, workplaces and power transmission towers are under the mine and arson attacks.

On the morning of 7 January, an explosion was heard in front of the Takaung Nickel Plant in Htigyaing

Township and power was cut off.

Security forces inspected the factory and found no explosions or damage around the plant.

At around 3 pm yesterday evening, pillars T-245 and T-244 were found to have collapsed from the ground and pillars T-243 were tilted.

Officials are working to maintain the operation of the factory and to restore the power lines as terrorists destroyed the towers.

An investigation is underway to arrest the terrorists who are fleeing after the mine blast. — MNA



Ravages in the aftermath of the mine explosions.

‘Ocean battery’ targets renewable energy dilemma



Frits Blik, CEO of Dutch startup Ocean Grazer, explains an “ocean battery,” during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) on 6 January 2022 in Las Vegas. **PHOTO: AFP**

A wind turbine sitting idle on a calm day or spinning swiftly when power demand is already met poses a problem for renewables, and is one researchers think can be tackled under the sea.

In one vision, offshore wind farms could use seawater to essentially store energy until it’s needed, helping wean humanity off fossil fuels.

“We came up with a solution

is most in demand.

Blik’s “ocean battery” relies on massive flexible bladders on the seabed, which are filled up with seawater by the wind farm.

When the power is needed, the pressure of the ocean squeezes the water through the system on the seafloor that includes turbines -- and the result is electricity.

A key consideration with energy is cost, and storage systems involving some type of battery are not only very expensive but also at risk of leaks or contamination in an ocean environment.

Systems that rely on pressure are already used in hydroelectric dams that pump water into the reservoir behind the dam when electricity demand falls, effectively storing it to come back through the facility’s turbines.

The US Department of Energy traces the concept, called “pumped storage hydropower,” to Italy and Switzerland in the 1890s, though facilities can now be found all around the world.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

S Korea to develop technology for artificial sun to maintain 100 million degrees for 300 seconds by 2026

THE Korean government is planning to develop a technology for Korea’s first artificial sun ‘KSTAR’ to maintain 100 million degrees for 300 seconds by 2026. The 300 seconds is the minimum time required for the commercialization of nuclear fusion technology.

The Ministry of Science and ICT announced on 30 December that it held the 16th National Fusion Committee at the Korea Institute of Fusion Energy and finalize the ‘4th basic plan of nuclear fusion energy development (2022-2026)’. The science ministry sets goals and directions of its policies for nuclear fusion energy development every five years.—ANI ■

Chileans protest lithium contract sale

CHILEANS took to the streets Friday to protest a government plan to sell a lithium extraction contract, reviving debate about nationalization of the resource as a new leftist president prepares to take over.

Protests were called by the opposition under the banner: “To reclaim our resource.”

Opposition lawmakers launched a court action -- rejected Friday because the clock on the process had run out -- earlier this week to stop the bidding process for a 20-year contract to extract 400,000 tonnes of lithium in the world’s second-largest producer of the metal, which notably is used in electric car batteries. The tender process, which opened last October, will close this month, just two months before centre-right president Sebastian Pinera is replaced by leftist Gabriel Boric. In Santiago Friday evening, marchers chanted, “Pinera, understand that lithium is not for sale.”—AFP ■

Nine dead, hundreds ill with diarrhoea in typhoon-hit Philippines

NINE people have died and hundreds have fallen ill with diarrhoea in areas of the Philippines wrecked by a typhoon last month, with aid officials warning of a health crisis as millions struggle to secure clean water and food.

Three weeks after Typhoon Rai struck southern and central islands, destroying thousands of homes and killing more than 400

people, relief work continues to deliver supplies to stranded residents left homeless by the storm.

Nine people have died from dehydration caused by diarrhoea in the impoverished Dinagat Islands and the neighbouring resort island of Siargao, known for its surf spots, the Philippine health department’s regional office said.

A total of 895 cases were re-

corded there since the typhoon struck, mostly among those left homeless, as the government and aid agencies rush to build emergency water treatment facilities, department spokesman Ernesto Pareja told AFP.

“It’s hard to say it’s under control. The water supply remains irregular. Their food needs have not been addressed,” Pareja said.—AFP ■



Thousands of homes have been destroyed by Typhoon Rai in the Philippines. **PHOTO: AFP**

US Supreme Court to hear challenges to Covid vaccine mandates

THE US Supreme Court is to hear challenges on Friday to President Joe Biden's bid to impose Covid vaccination mandates on millions of American workers.

After months of public appeals to hesitant or reluctant Americans to get their shots, Biden turned up the pressure in September.

"We've been patient, but our patience is wearing thin," he said.

The Democratic president made Covid vaccinations compulsory at businesses that employ 100 workers or more, as well as for healthcare workers at facilities receiving federal funding.

Unvaccinated employees would have to present weekly negative tests and wear face masks at work.

The Occupational Safety and



Some 400 people gathered on Saturday 18 April 2020 in front of the Parliament of Concord, capital of New Hampshire, to demand an end to the confinement. **PHOTO: JOSEPH PEZIOSO, / AFP**

Health Administration (OSHA) has given businesses until 9 February to be in compliance with the rules or face the possibility of fines.

The vaccine mandates came under immediate attack from some Republican lawmakers and business owners as an infringement on individual rights and an

abuse of government power. A flurry of lawsuits ensued, and the conservative-majority Supreme Court is holding a special hearing to decide whether the mandates can be implemented while the legal challenges continue. A decision is expected within a few weeks. Businesses with 100 employees or more represent about two-thirds of the private sector workforce in the United States, or some 80 million people.

The health care worker mandate would apply to roughly 10 million people. In a brief submitted to the court on behalf of the Biden administration, Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar said the measures were necessary "confronted with the deadliest pandemic in the nation's history."—AFP ■

UK to deploy troops to virus-hit London hospitals



Members of the armed forces gather outside the NHS Nightingale Hospital in London in April 2020. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

BRITAIN will deploy troops to hospitals in London to alleviate severe staff shortages caused

by the Omicron outbreak, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said Friday.

Around 200 armed forces personnel will join health workers in the capital, which has been particularly badly hit by the recent upsurge in coronavirus cases leading to mass staff absences in hospitals.

"The men and women of our armed forces are once again stepping up to support their dedicated colleagues in the NHS (National Health Service) as they work hand-in-hand to protect the nation from Covid-19," said Defence Secretary Ben Wallace.

"They have shown their worth time and again throughout this pandemic, whether driving ambulances, adminis-

tering vaccines or supporting patients in hospital, and they should be proud of their contribution to this truly national effort."

The deployment will include 40 military medics and 160 general duty personnel, said the ministry.

Britain on Tuesday recorded 218,724 daily cases of the virus, the highest figure since the pandemic started.

Although deaths and patients requiring ventilators have remained steady, the sheer number of health staff testing positive for the virus and having to self-isolate is putting pressure on the system.—AFP ■

India reports over 1 lakh new COVID-19 cases, Omicron tally crosses 3000 mark

INDIA reported 1,17,100 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the daily positivity rate in the country to 7.74 per cent, said the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Friday.

With this, the country's COVID-19 case tally has gone up to 3,52,26,386. According to Health Ministry, the country has so far reported 3,007 cases of Omicron of which 1,199 have been recovered. Maharashtra accounts for the highest number of Omicron cases (876), followed by Delhi



Daily infections nearly tripled over two days this week to more than 90,000, a surge driven by the highly contagious Omicron variant. **PHOTO: AFP**

(465) and Karnataka (333).

The Ministry informed that India's active caseload presently is at 3,71,363. It accounts for 1.05 per cent of the country's total cases. The weekly positivity rate is at 4.54 per cent, while the daily positivity rate is at 7.74 per cent.

With the recovery of 30,836 patients in the last 24 hours, the cumulative tally of COVID recovered patients, since the beginning of the pandemic, now stands at 3,43,71,845. The current recovery rate is at 97.57 per cent.—ANI ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mauritania tightens restrictions amid rising COVID-19 cases

THE Ministerial Committee in charge of monitoring the development of COVID-19 in Mauritania on Friday tightened restrictions amid rising COVID-19 cases. The committee banned "all public gatherings" and ordered the "closure of theatres."

Also on Friday, the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization issued a decree, making it mandatory to wear protective masks in public places, including in markets, cafes, restaurants and on public transportation.

The ministry also announced the deployment of teams monitoring compliance with precautionary measures.

The Mauritanian government will also mount a national awareness campaign on the new Omicron variant by means of media and civil society.—Xinhua ■

Almost 100,000 children lost parents to Covid in Peru

Covid-19 killed at least one parent or primary caregiver for nearly 100,000 children in Peru, the country with the world's highest coronavirus death rate, its government reported Thursday.

"Unfortunately our country has almost 98,000 children who lost their father, mother or guardian during the pandemic," said Peru's Minister of Women Anahi Durand, citing figures published in the medical journal The Lancet.

Peru leads the world in overall Covid deaths per capita, with more than 6,000 Peruvians per million having died from the disease, according to an AFP analysis of official figures.

The government currently provides a pension of 200 soles (\$50) every two months to more than 18,000 families.

Durand hopes to expand the benefit to cover psychological and educational support, and to reach more than 83,000 children and adolescents.

A key issue under the current system is that many families lack the necessary documentation to receive the benefit, Durand said.—AFP ■

US ends 2021 with disappointing job growth ahead of Omicron surge

THE US economy ended 2021 on a sour note with a worse-than-expected employment report Friday underscoring the challenges awaiting President Joe Biden in the new year, as the Omicron variant runs rampant and his legislative agenda stalls.

The world's largest economy gained only 199,000 jobs in the final month of the year, the Labor Department said, defying expectations for an increase of hundreds of thousands of positions fuelled by the recovery from Covid-19.

However, the unemployment rate dropped to 3.9 per cent, not far from where it was before the pandemic struck, and Biden hailed the report as marking "a historic day for our economic recovery."

Analysts warn the days ahead may nonetheless grow darker as Covid cases caused by

the new variant surge and again complicate daily life.

"All of this is before Omicron, which is making lots of people sick and disrupting lots of businesses," Mark Zandi of Moody's Analytics tweeted, noting that the survey was based on data collected before the recent spike in infections.

"Businesses are getting better at managing through the waves, but the pandemic is still calling the shots for the economy." The data was the latest setback for Biden after his marquee spending plan called Build Back Better was put on hold in Congress due to the resistance of a key lawmaker in his Democratic Party.

The Republican opposition in the Senate meanwhile tweeted that the report marks "another huge miss for the Biden economy."—AFP ■



Women walk past a "Now Hiring" sign outside a store in Arlington, Virginia, US, 16 August 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Sri Lanka rations electricity as dollar crisis worsens

SRI Lanka imposed electricity rationing Friday with the main power utility unable to buy fuel oil for its power stations as a result of the island's worsening dollar crisis. Oil normally accounts for around nine per cent of electricity generation on the island, but a Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) official said the company had run out of dollars to buy it from the state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corporation. The CEB was having to rely on its coal- and hydro-powered generating facilities and was applying rotating one-hour power cuts

around the island, he said.

He did not say how long the rationing would last but added that the 160-megawatt Sapugaskanda power station and a barge-mounted 60-megawatt generator at a Colombo port had been closed for an indefinite period. "The power cuts are being imposed because the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation has not supplied us with fuel," the official said. Sri Lanka's acute foreign exchange shortage has already led to rationing of milk powder, sugar, cooking gas and cement.—AFP ■

Vietnam truck jam as China tightens import rules for Covid

THOUSANDS of trucks carrying fruit were stuck Friday at Vietnam's main freight border crossing with China after Beijing tightened rules on imported goods because of the pandemic.

Lorries loaded with thousands of tonnes of dragonfruit, jackfruit, mango and other produce are languishing at the crossing in Vietnam's northern Lang Son province.

Some of the drivers say they have been waiting for days or even months to cross.

"I have been here for 40 days. My fruits are going to be rotten. I am so tired of this," said a driver who identified himself as Hai, while cooking a meal beside his truck full of jackfruit.

Hai was carrying the produce from southern Tien Giang province. He did not know when he could come back home.

On another truck, Nguyen Van Nen from northern Bac Ninh province said it was the biggest hit he experienced in years.

"If I am lucky, I think I can get through after 10 days," Nen told AFP, explaining his contain-



Lorries loaded with thousands of tonnes of dragonfruit, jackfruit, mango and other produce are languishing. **PHOTO: AFP**

er of 32 tonnes of watermelon will have to wait for more than 800 trucks.

The border crossing is not fully closed, but only a trickle of trucks are making it through — on Thursday only around 100 passed through the Huu Nghi gate.

Earlier in the week, Lang Son provincial authorities issued a statement advising provinces and businesses not to send goods to the border until the end of the month.

The statement said the jam

was due to "Chinese authorities' tougher pandemic control measures against people and vehicles entering the country".

China has been testing cold-chain imported foods for traces of covid-19 since 2020, though the World Health Organization says there is only a very low chance of the virus being passed on this way.

Several local governments in China have said they have detected covid traces on dragonfruit imported from Vietnam.—

AFP ■

What day is it? UAE works on Friday for first time

EMPLOYEES and schoolchildren juggled work and studies with weekly Muslim prayers on the first ever working Friday in the United Arab Emirates as the Gulf country formally switched to a Saturday-Sunday weekend.

Some grumbled at the change and businesses were split, with many moving to the Western-style weekend but other private firms sticking with Fridays and Saturdays, as in other Gulf states. The weekly day of prayer has always been a free day in the UAE, which had previously observed a Thursday-Friday weekend until 2006.

However, mosques appeared busy as worshippers carrying prayer mats arrived as usual, before many of them later headed back to the office.

"I'd rather take (Friday) off," said 22-year-old Briton Rachel King, who works in the hospitality industry and has been living in Dubai for six months.

"That is what we all know and love, having a Friday off and

going to certain places that are open and we could do things. But now it is going to be Saturday."

The UAE made the surprise announcement of the weekend switch for the public sector in December as it grapples with rising competition in international business from other Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia.

Government bodies and schools will operate four-and-a-half-days per week, closing at 12 pm on Fridays for a fixed prayer time of 1:15 pm, whereas the Mus-

lim prayer schedule usually depends on the position of the sun.

Out of 195 businesses polled by human resources consultancy Mercer, only 23 per cent were preparing to follow the four-and-a-half-day week, but more than half would switch to Saturday-Sunday weekends. "Luckily I have the same days off as my kids, but that's not the case for my husband," said Fati, who works in an international distribution company, asking not to give her full name.—AFP ■



Employees walking to work. **PHOTOS: AFP**

Omicron slams UK retail recovery: body

RESTRICTIONS imposed in the wake of the Omicron coronavirus variant have “wiped out” much of a recent recovery enjoyed by UK bricks-and-mortar stores, the British Retail Consortium revealed Friday.

It comes as UK businesses and consumers face mounting fallout from surging inflation, including higher interest rates.

Much of the progress made in late 2021 “was wiped out in December as surging Omicron cases and new work-from-home advice deterred many from shopping in-store, particularly in towns and city centres”, said

BRC chief executive Helen Dickinson.

“Nevertheless, while UK footfall saw a moderate decline compared to previous months, it remained above levels of other major European economies, as the country avoided some of the more severe restrictions implemented elsewhere,” she added in a statement.

The number of shoppers visiting UK stores slid 18.6 per cent in December compared with two years earlier, or before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the BRC.

“December footfall capped

a challenging year for brick-and-mortar stores, which saw footfall down one-third on pre-pandemic levels,” Dickinson added.

Soaring virus cases

The UK, already among the worst hit countries in Europe by the pandemic with a virus death toll of nearly 150,000, has seen a fresh surge in cases owing to the arrival of the Omicron variant in late November.

More than one in 20 people had Covid-19 in the week ending 31 December — the highest UK infection rate recorded during the pandemic.—AFP ■



Customers browse clothing in the pop-up shop Pangaia inside Selfridges department store in London on 12 April 2021 as coronavirus restrictions are eased. **PHOTO: GLYN KIRK/ AFP**

India's JSW Steel earmarks 2 bln USD to expand capacity

INDIA'S JSW Steel has earmarked 2 billion US dollars to expand its capacity by 5 million tons per annum (MTPA), the company said in its filing with the Bombay Stock Exchange Friday.

The brown-field expansion, for which the foundation stone was laid on Friday, will be spread across 240 hectares at Ballari in India's South Western state of Karnataka. The project is expected to be completed by 2023-2024.

The expansion includes establishing 4.5 MTPA Blast Furnace, two steel melt shops that are 350 tons each, and 5 MTPA Hot Strip Mill along with other allied and auxiliary facilities.



JSW Steel is a leading manufacturer of steel products including TMT bars, galvanised corrugated sheet, cold rolled and wire rods. **PHOTO: ANI**

The JSW Steel has a current capacity of 28 MTPA in India and the United States, including their joint-ventures. It has

a roadmap of achieving a 37.5 MTPA steel capacity by financial year 2024-25, the filing said.—Xinhua ■

German Mercedes-Benz records sales slump in Q4 2021



Retail unit sales of Daimler's brand Mercedes-Benz dropped by 24.6 per cent year-on-year to 464,130 units worldwide in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2021. **PHOTO: STEFAN BALDAUF / SB-MEDIEN/XINHUA**

RETAIL unit sales of Daimler's brand Mercedes-Benz dropped by 24.6 per cent year-on-year to 464,130 units worldwide in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2021, the

German carmaker said Friday.

Mercedes-Benz Cars delivered almost 2.1 million vehicles, a decrease of 5 per cent, between January and December, as “a

lack of semiconductors delayed the supply of vehicles despite strong demand for passenger cars and vans in all segments and across all regions,” the company said. Deliveries of electric Mercedes-Benz passenger cars and plug-in hybrid models on the other hand surged by 69.3 per cent and reached a record of 227,458 units, according to the German carmaker.

In Europe, sales of Mercedes-Benz passenger cars dropped by 11.2 per cent to 696,136 units in 2021, while sales in the North America region rose slightly to 318,456 units. Sales in the Asia-Pacific region fell by 1.6 per cent to 1.01 million, reaching 758,863 units in China.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indonesia's forex reserves stand at 144.9 bln USD in December 2021

INDONESIA'S foreign exchange reserves remained high at 144.9 billion US dollars by the end of December 2021, despite lower than 145.9 billion dollars in November 2021, the central bank said Friday.

The decline in the foreign exchange reserves in December 2021 was influenced, amongst others, by the need for the government's external debt payment, according to Bank Indonesia's Head of Communication Department Erwin Haryono.

The position of foreign exchange reserves was equivalent to finance eight months of imports or 7.8 months of imports and servicing government's external debt, and well above the international adequacy standard of three months of imports, he noted. Bank Indonesia considers that the position of the foreign exchange reserves was able to support the external sector resilience and maintain macroeconomic and financial system stability, Erwin added.—Xinhua ■

China's service robots make themselves at home at CES 2022

CES 2020 being held in the US city of Las Vegas this week is a veritable sci-fi movie set of wonderkind robots that have spectators line up to see what the present and the future holds in store in proto-humans.

Many of the leading robotic firms are from China, and this year's state-of-the-art robots from China on display at the CES put an end to the outdated litany that Chinese companies lack innovation. In commercialized service robotics and artificial intelligence (AI), they are leading the pack.

Keenon Robotics, based in the Chinese city of Shanghai, was founded in 2010 and started with a handful of employees, and now the company boasts 2,000 employees with more than 23,000 robots in operation around the globe.—Xinhua ■

Mexico records 7.36 pct inflation in 2021, highest in over 20 years

MEXICO'S annual inflation rate stood at 7.36 per cent at the end of 2021, the highest level in more than two decades, figures from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) showed on Friday.

In December alone, the National Consumer Price Index rose 0.36 per cent over the previous month, due to the increase in prices of some foods and services, INEGI said in its monthly statement.

The core inflation, a benchmark for the central bank of Mexico Banxico, was 0.8 per cent in December and 5.94 per cent in 2021.

In a separate report, the Banorte financial group highlighted that both the headline and core inflation reached their highest levels for a full calendar year in 2021 since 2000 in Mexico.—Xinhua ■

North Korea says US boycott of Beijing ‘insult’ to Olympic spirit



Aerial photo taken on 19 January 2021 shows the National Sliding Centre in Yanqing District, Beijing, capital of China. **PHOTO: XINHUA/ZHANG CHENLIN**

NORTH Korea has slammed the US-led diplomatic boycott of February's Beijing Winter Games, state media reported Friday, describing it as an "insult" to the Olympic spirit.

Washington and some of its allies have announced a diplomatic boycott, citing China's human rights record, in a decision that incensed Beijing.

China is the main ally and economic benefactor of impoverished North Korea, which is suspended from competing in the Chinese capital.

North Korean Olympic and sports bodies criticised the boycott in a letter to their Chinese counterparts, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

"The US and its vassal forces are getting ever more undisguised in their moves against

China aimed at preventing the successful opening of the Olympics," the letter said, according to KCNA.

Their moves are "an insult to the spirit of the international Olympic Charter".

North Korea stayed away from the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games last year, refusing to send its athletes over Covid-19 concerns.

The International Olympic Committee punished the no-show with a suspension that meant it could not participate in the Beijing Winter Games.

Despite being barred, North Korea depicted its absence as the result of the pandemic and "hostile forces".

The KCNA report did not identify the "hostile forces" and there was no mention of the IOC suspension.—AFP ■

Indian court allows huge Hindu festival despite Covid concerns

AN Indian court on Friday rejected a bid to cancel a major Hindu festival despite fears the vast gathering could spread coronavirus infections as the country sees an Omicron-driven surge in cases.

Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to attend the annual Gangasagar Mela

festival, which begins Saturday on an island where the holy river Ganges enters the Bay of Bengal.

It marks the harvest season and will reach a climax next weekend ahead of the new moon on 17 January.

Kolkata-based doctor Avinandan Mondal sought a court order to ban the festival over

coronavirus concerns, with infection rates surging in a country that saw a deadly wave last year.

New cases passed 100,000 on Friday and authorities in several megacities have brought in restrictions as they seek to slow the spread of the virus.

But the Calcutta High Court rejected the request, instead asking the regional government -- which estimated attendance at no more than 500,000 and supported the gathering -- to issue advertisements warning people about the risks of attending.

"People from all states in the country will attend the religious festival and take a holy dip," environmentalist Subhash Dutta told AFP.

"They may carry variant viruses and this religious festival may end up being the biggest superspreader in the coming days," he added.—AFP ■



Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to attend the annual Gangasagar Mela festival, which begins Saturday on an island where the holy river Ganges enters the Bay of Bengal. **PHOTO: DIBYANGSHU SARKAR / AFP / FILE**

Pakistan national carrier inches closer to full international flights

PAKISTAN'S national carrier now meets global safety standards, the country's aviation minister said Thursday, but the airline still needs authorities in Europe and the United States to lift a ban before it can resume flights to major Western destinations.

Pakistan International Air-

lines (PIA) was decertified by the world's civil aviation authority in 2020 after one of its Airbus A-320s crashed while landing at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, killing all but two of the 99 passengers and crew.

Flight 8303 damaged its engines when the pilots attempted

to land without the undercarriage lowered, and crashed into a crowded neighbourhood while circling for a second attempt. The accident was attributed to pilot error as a result of the crew being out of action for months, having been grounded by the coronavirus epidemic.—AFP ■



Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa spent 12 days aboard the International Space Station. **PHOTO: AFP/PHILIP FONG**

Japan space tourist eyes Mariana Trench trip after ISS

JAPANESE billionaire Yusaku Maezawa said Friday his trip into space had given him a new appreciation for Earth, and he now hopes to plunge into the ocean's forbidding Mariana Trench. Maezawa and his assistant Yozo Hirano spent 12 days on the International Space Station last month, where they documented life in space for one million YouTube subscribers. Speaking Friday for the first time since his return to Japan, Maezawa said the voyage had made him appreciate home even more.

"Going to space makes you even more fascinated about the Earth. You learn to appreciate how you feel the wind, smell

things and experience the seasons," he told a press conference in Tokyo.

"I thought: the Earth is amazing." While in space, he produced a string of videos including demonstrations on how to urinate, shampoo hair and brush teeth in space.

On Friday, he explained some of the difficulties of life in zero gravity, including sleeping.

"It's not so easy to fall asleep, because you're constantly floating while asleep — there is nothing to anchor your body." The art collector also revealed he had taken a small piece by a Japanese artist with him to the ISS, and had left it behind for others to enjoy.—AFP ■

US, NATO take firm line ahead of Russia talks on Ukraine

THE United States said Friday a diplomatic solution was possible with Russia but that it would not give in to its demands in talks next week, as NATO warned of real risks Moscow will invade Ukraine.

Top Russian and US diplomats meet Monday in Geneva after Moscow amassed tens of thousands of troops on the Ukrainian border and urged the West to agree in writing not to expand NATO.

With unusual bluntness, Secretary of State Antony Blinken accused Russia of “gaslight-

ing” the world by alleging provocations by Ukraine and vowed that the talks would focus on Moscow’s “aggression toward Ukraine.”

“We won’t be diverted from that issue,” Blinken told reporters.

Using an analogy he has employed before, Blinken likened Russia to “a fox saying it had to attack the henhouse because its occupants somehow pose a threat.”

Blinken said that Russia should know it was issuing “absolutely non-starter demands”



A Ukrainian soldier with an FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank missile during exercises in the Rivne Region of western Ukraine, 26 May 2021. **PHOTO: VOLODYMYR TARASOV/ UKRINFORM/ BARCROFT MEDIA/ AFP**

but that it was part of its “play-book.”

Russia can “claim that the other side is not engaging and then to use that as somehow justification for aggressive action,” Blinken said.

Blinken said it was up to Russia whether there will be success in Geneva, where the delegations will be led by his deputy Wendy Sherman and Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Macron meets von der Leyen as France kicks off EU Council Presidency

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron met here on Friday with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen as France took over the rotating six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU).

At a press conference, Macron outlined the French Presidency’s agenda and said that Paris will focus on promoting the EU in the international community, pushing the digital transformation and protecting the EU’s external borders.

Von der Leyen recalled the solidarity between European countries during the pandemic. She said that over 70 per cent of the EU’s adult population have now been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and that the EU aims to donate and deliver 1.7 billion vaccine doses around the world by the middle of this year.—Xinhua ■



People hold signs with images of the victims of the downed Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752, which was shot down near Tehran by Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, as family and friends gather to take part in a march to mark the first anniversary, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on 8 January 2021. **PHOTO: AFP / AMANUEL SILESHI**

Iran says begins paying families over downed Ukraine jet

IRAN has begun paying compensation to families of those killed when it shot down a Ukrainian airliner two years ago, authorities said on Friday.

“The transport ministry has made transfers to a certain number of (victims’) families,” the foreign ministry said in a statement marking the anniversary of the tragedy.

Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 was shot down shortly after take-off from Tehran on 8 January 2020, killing all 176 people aboard, most of them Iranians and Canadians, including many dual nationals.

Three days later, the Iranian armed forces admitted to downing the Kyiv-bound plane “by mistake.” Arash Khodaei, a vice

president of Iran’s Civil Aviation Organisation, said that “the sum of \$150,000 has been transferred” to some families, while “the process has begun” for others. The payment “does not infringe upon (their) right to take legal action,” state news agency IRNA quoted him as saying.

In 2020, Iran offered to pay “\$150,000 or the equivalent in euros” to each of the victims’ families. Ukrainian and Canadian officials strongly criticized the announcement, saying compensation should not be settled through unilateral declarations.

A Canadian court awarded more than \$80 million in compensation to the families of six of the victims in a decision made public Monday.—AFP ■

Nervous residents venture out in tense Kazakhstan

WARNING shots rang out in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan’s biggest city on Friday as people cautiously took to the streets in small groups after unprecedented unrest. Shattered glass and burnt-out cars littered Almaty’s streets which were enveloped in an eerie mist. With parts of the city unrecognizable after looters ran rampant, people watched as rescue service vehicles positioned concrete blocks as checkpoints around the area where clashes between protesters and police had been fiercest.

Police patrol cars appeared on the streets for the first time since a thousands-strong protest this week saw demonstrators seize the mayor’s office building and ransack the presidential residence, which is on a street named

after the country’s first president Nursultan Nazarbayev.

In a financial district where banks were shuttered, police stopped and searched passing cars as bewildered drivers held their hands behind their heads.

The square adjacent to the mayor’s office — which was overrun by protesters — was sealed off by the military on Friday after a peacekeeping mission by a Moscow-led military alliance was deployed to the city.

An AFP correspondent frequently heard warning shots fired into the air.

One long burst of gunfire scattered onlookers who had gathered close to a checkpoint, pointing and taking photos of a destroyed car with traces of state markings.—AFP ■



Protesters set fire to the city administration building in Almaty, Kazakhstan. **PHOTO: AFP**

Need USD 2.6 billion to help Afghan people, says World Food Programme

EXPRESSING concerns over the starvation level in Afghanistan, the World Food Programme has said the organisation needs up to USD 2.6 billion to provide food to Afghan people, reported local media.

Poverty and starvation have arrived in Afghan cities this time which is concerning, said WFP spokesperson for Afghanistan Shelley Thakral, reported Khaama Press.

Thakral also emphasised that Afghan people have survived acute hunger worse than the ongoing ones.

Nearly 23 million people in Afghanistan are starving due to the worst drought in decades, a surge in food prices and the political condition of the country, said Thakral. She also stressed that hundreds of thousands of people especially teachers and construction workers who have been laid off after political transformation are experiencing food shortage and insecurity of food for the first time, according to Khaama Press.—ANI ■

MFF to select final squad for 2022 AFC Women's Cup



Myanmar Women's Football teammates.

THE Myanmar Football Federation will announce the final squad of the Myanmar women's football team in the coming days for the upcoming 2022 AFC Women's Cup.

The Myanmar women's team is training with 27 preliminary players, with only four to be reduced.

Among those preliminary players, striker Win Theingi Tun is currently playing for Indian

club Gokulam.

Win Theingi Tun will only be joining the team once the squad arrives in India.

The Myanmar squad started training for the final round of the Asian Cup in the second week of November. The team tried to play invitational tournaments but could not attend due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

The team Myanmar had to play without any international

qualifiers before the Asian Cup in mid-October.

The squad will travel to India in the third week of January to compete in the Asian Cup.

The final round of the 2022 Asian Cup Women's Championship will be held from 20 January to 6 February. Myanmar is included in Group C with defending champions Japan, South Korea, and Viet Nam. — Ko Nyi Lay/ GNLM ■

Third round of FA Cup gives a chance for smaller clubs to dream of glory

ALTHOUGH there are perhaps fewer surprises in the modern game than in the past, when playing on pitches in less than perfect conditions always led to 'giant-killing' acts by lower league clubs, the entry of Championship and Premier League clubs into the third round of the FA Cup always provides some moments of drama. Manchester City will have to overcome the loss of Pep Guardiola and assistance coach Juanma Lillo along with several players to COVID-19 for their visit to fourth division League Two's Swindon Town on Friday night.

Liverpool will rest players for their home game against Shrewsbury Town from League One, while FA Cup holders Chelsea will probably do likewise when they play at home to Chesterfield Town from the fifth tier Conference Premier in the sort of game that still makes the FA



Hull City will believe they can deepen Everton's woes as they host Rafa Benitez's players. PHOTO: GETTY/XINHUA

Cup a competition for the football romantics. Crystal Palace can expect a much tougher Saturday afternoon when they make the short trip to visit Championship neighbours Millwall in a southeast London derby. Everton coach Rafael Benitez must also

be worried about his side's visit to Hull City, who also play in the Championship and are on the verge of a change of ownership, and Benitez has commented that new signings, Nathan Patterson and Vitalii Mykolenko, will play some part on the game. — Xinhua ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

Canada stun defending champions Russia to make ATP Cup final

FELIX Auger-Aliassime and Denis Shapovalov stunned defending champions Russia Saturday in a decisive doubles rubber to send Canada storming into an ATP Cup final against Spain.

Their Sydney showdown went to the wire after Shapovalov neutralised Roman Safiullin 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 in the opening singles match.

But world number two Da-

niil Medvedev then thrashed 11th-ranked Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-0 to level it up with a flawless performance in an ominous warning ahead of the Australian Open later this month.

It forced the match into a doubles shoot-out which looked to be going Russia's way only for Canada to find an extra gear and grind out a 4-6, 7-5, 10-7 win to make their first-ever final in the team event. — AFP ■



The players shake hands at the net. PHOTO: AFP