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The message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark the 74th Anniversary of Chin National Day

20 February 2022

Esteemed ethnic national brethren in Chin State,

Today's 20 February is the 74th Anniversary of Chin National Day which is significant and auspicious for all Chin ethnics residing in Chin State and other various regions. On the significant day of Chin ethnics, I extend greetings with a wish to all ethnic national people including Chin ethnics to enjoy physical and mental well-being cheerfully.

A public conference held in Falam of Chin State decided to change the Saopha administration to the democratic administration system on 20 February 1948 when the country regained Independence. The seventh Chin Affairs Council conference held in Yangon on 9 October 1950 sought the wishes of all attendee Chin representatives over the motions to designate Chin National Day. The day 20 February, when the public conference that was held in Falam, was set as the "Chin National Day". Hence, the Chin National Day starting from 1948 turns 74 years this year. The Chin National Day is a significant day for languages, culture, historical traditions and customs in common with all Chin ethnicities.

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

Yangon public rental housing to become worth living estate

IN the vast field of land, the modern construction machinery, labourers, technicians and experts are spreading and moving around the construction areas. In the same scene, there are many nearly completed buildings and under-construction buildings.

These buildings are being constructed by the government for those people who cannot afford to buy a house. This big estate is located near No 7 Road and No 2 Road, Laydaunkan village, Dagon Myothit (South) Township, Yangon Region.

"This project aims to address the impact on the construction sector during the COVID-19 period, to create job opportunities and to assist the families in reducing the costs of apartment rents," said U Win Naing, the deputy director

of the Urban and Housing Development Department with the Ministry of Construction. Demand for housing in the densely populated cities is rising year by year as more and more people are moving from one region to another in the hope of having better job opportunities with the population growing every year.

Besides, people who cannot afford to buy flats are suffering from rising rental costs in privately owned estates.

Currently, even the developed countries have been suffering from the effects of the pandemic. Myanmar as a developing country naturally face a similar effect, people being more likely to lose their jobs, their income decreasing and it is thus almost impossible to afford to rent a flat.

SEE PAGE-4

The Yangon public rental housing project is underway in Dagon Myothit (South) Township.



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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

The message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark the 74th Anniversary of Chin National Day 20 February 2022

FROM PAGE-1

In its geographical conditions, Chin State is teeming with locations of natural resources and underground and above ground resources such as the western mountain range stretching from the north to the south, the Kaladan River flowing into the Bay of Bengal, the Natma Hill as habitats of rare plants and animals, the Khonuamthung Hill, the Kennedy Peak which was famous in the Second World War; the beautiful Reed Lake, the streaming Manipur River, Bwenu River and the Bungtla Waterfall.

Our country is a residence for various ethnic national people amicably living for many years. However, due to colonization and invasion of some world powerful countries in the 19th century, British colonialists occupied the whole of Myanmar in 1885 and separately ruled the hilly and plain areas. The Chin ethnic people who did not wish to accept the slavery acts in the aggressive occupation of foreigners cooperated with other ethnic nationals in waging against colonialists. In battling colonialists, the patriotic spirit of Chin national leaders Bo Kyum Bik and Bi Khai Kam who joined hand in hand with various ethnics born of the Union in fighting the colonialists is an honourable historical tradition of Chin State.

As honorary examples, ethnic leaders such as U Hlur Hmung, U Thawng Za Khup and U Kio Mang, who signed the Panglong Agreement on 12 February 1947, expressed the genuine Union spirit of Chin State.

History proves that national unity and the nationalistic spirit are of importance for our country which is home to various ethnic nationals in unison. All ethnic national people residing in the Union through thick and thin sharing the future altogether need to safeguard the State in all aspects through the genuine patriotic spirit. If so, the country will be perpetually peaceful and prosperous with development, standing tall among the global countries.

Currently, riots, the violation of the law and sabotages breaking up the State in various parts of the nation, including Chin State, are very dangerous for the nation. Understanding the real root causes of instability and knowing the acts of saboteurs to disintegrate the State and acts of internal and external destructionists, all need to prevent these destructive acts.

I'd like to urge you all that now is the time to ensure peace and development of the Union through the genuine patriotic spirit and harmoniously cooperate with each other in building the Union based on democracy and federalism in accord with the aspiration of the people.

The State Administration Council has adopted a vow to successfully implement the political, social and economic objectives and the five-point road map during the prescribed period when it takes the State responsibilities. The government is emphasizing the restoration of internal peace and ceasefire across the nation. As peace, stability and the rule of law are crucial in the development of the nation and nation-building endeavours, I'd like to request all the ethnic national people to join hands with the government in further maintaining peace and stability and ending armed conflicts for the development of the nation.

The government in its part is carrying out the management for opening and upgrading of more basic education schools to develop human resources in Chin State, repairing educational buildings, constructing new buildings and appointing more teachers while establishing more hospitals and clinics and deploying assignment of medical doctors for providing healthcare services to the local people.

Moreover, the government arranges the supply of electricity from the national grid aspired by people from Chin State to various parts of the state. In order to improve the transport facilities, the highways with easy access to the mainland and local roads of the state are being extended. In addition, the development of the Kaladan River Basin which can connect foreign countries from Chin State through the waterway and the construction of the Paletwa Port are being undertaken. These projects are sound foundations for the socio-economic development of the ethnic national people from Chin State in the future.

Although transport difficulties based on natural geographical conditions as well as high hilly areas in Chin State cause hindrances to development tasks, the government is trying hard to fulfil the needs for the development of the state as much as possible. Hence, the ethnic national people residing in Chin State need to cooperate with the Union government and the Chin State government in development tasks.

Participation of all ethnic nationals in equal terms of rights is of great importance in shaping the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to be a peaceful, prosperous, modern and developed Union based on democracy and federalism. So, I hereby send a message and I'd like to urge all ethnic national people residing in Chin State in unison in nation-building tasks.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing
Prime Minister
Chairman, State Administration Council

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 the 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

Seed Fair 2022 continues into second day

THE second day of the Seed Fair 2022 organized by the Department of Agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation was held at the Institute of Agriculture in Pyinmana Township yesterday. There was a total of 35 booths featuring rice, pulses

and beans, edible crops, vegetables, fruit seeds and seedlings produced from the research farms and seed farms of the departments under the ministry, including the booths of the Myanmar Seed Association and seed companies. The farmers, those who are

interested in agriculture, representatives of seed companies from regions and states including Nay Pyi Taw and students of the Institute of Agriculture visited the fair. Moreover, the fair also organized talks under the topic of using quality seeds for so-

cio-economic growth, seminars for farmers and educative programmes for farming based on techniques. The Seed Fair 2022 was held aiming to develop the use of quality seeds and provide the socio-economic status of the country with a high production

rate using quality seeds. The Seed Fair 2022 will be held for five days from 18 to 22 February and the farmers will have a chance to study the seeds that conform with their farmlands and grab agricultural knowledge. — Khit Lu Nge/ GNLM

Seed Fair Week 2022 Workshop held in Pyinmana township

THE Seed Fair Week 2022 Workshop was conducted at the Institute of Agriculture in Pyinmana Township yesterday. At the workshop, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo said the Seed Fair 2022 and the workshop were organized to support all participants such as seed producers and sellers. The production of quality seeds can improve the socio-economic status of the country. Moreover,

the government, private sectors and farmers should work hard in unison to develop the seed production sector. The retired permanent secretary Dr Tin Htut serves as the presenter at the Seed Fair 2022 Workshop and officials from the Agriculture and Research Departments and the Myanmar Seed Association joined the discussion. They shared their experiences and discussed the Seed Law, seed quality, crops



quality and the interests of farmers. About 1,000 farmers, private business persons, seed associations, young entrepreneurs and state/region representatives participated in the workshop online. The Seed Fair 2022 will be held from 18 to 22 February in line with COVID-19 health rules. The farmers seminar on cotton development will be held on 20 February. — MNA



People throng at the Seed Fair 2022 on the second day.

MoST Union Minister inspects universities, institutes, schools in Meiktila Township

UNION Minister for Science and Technology Dr Myo Thein Kyaw inspected the University of Computer Science (Meiktila), Government Technical High School (Meiktila), Government Technical Institute (Meiktila), Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University and Technological University (Meiktila) in Mandalay Region on 18 and 19 February.

On 18 February, the Union minister arrived at the University of Computer Science (Meiktila) and Government Technical High School (Meiktila).

During the meeting with the Deputy Rector, Principal, department head professor and teachers, the Union minister



gave instructions regarding the quality learning, administrative matters, human resources development conditions, successive learning opportunities applying the ICT effectively. He then in-

spected classrooms, the computer room, equipment, teaching aid materials, libraries, workshops and practical sessions of the students.

The Union minister viewed the construction works at the Government Technical Institute (Meiktila) yesterday.

He then inspected teaching sessions, the computer room, equipment, teaching aid materials, libraries, workshops and practical sections of the students.

During the visit, the Union minister also instructed officials to plant trees during the monsoon for a better and clean image of universities, institutes and schools. — MNA

Ygn Mayor U Bo Htay inspects improvemnet of water flow, sanitation project

YANGON City Development Committee Chairman Mayor U Bo Htay inspected the improvement of water flow and sanitation project in the Peiktaut creek in No 5 Ward of Hline Township together with Vice-Mayor U Nyi Nyi, secretary U Nyunt Pe, other committee members and relevant authorities on 19 February

at 7 am. During his inspection tour, the mayor and his team inspected repairing of spillway floor and drainage retaining wall, the planning of flowers and trees along the lake and the building of benches on the sidewalks at the Mingala Lake on Kayaypin road, Mingaladon

Township. Then, the mayor and his team also checked excavation work being carried out along the drain from Palae junction to the railway to improve the flow of the water of Shwepyitha bridge road in front of the Danyingone fresh market in Insein.

The team also inspected cleaning the left and right sides of the road and digging of blocked drains and culverts in ward 1 Shwepyitha township. Besides, they checked cleaning blocked garbage in Kwin Chuang drain and repairing of damaged retaining walls between Kyimyindine and Ahlon townships. —MNA

Yangon public rental housing to become worth . . .

FROM PAGE-1

“Even in the past, we had difficulty saving K100,000 per month for house rent. Now, my husband does not have a regular job because of COVID-19. My salary has been reduced by half and we have to move to another affordable dormitory next month,” said Ma Shwe Sin, who rents a house near the Dagon Seikkan Industrial Zone.

In order to improve the socio-economic life of the people

and create job opportunities through the construction sector, the Ministry of Construction is implementing public rental housing projects in Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw, the densely populated cities.

About 3,104-unit public rental estate project in Yangon will be implemented on a 174-acre plot of land and it will include four five-storey buildings with 194 flats.



The government has invested millions of kyats in the project and they expect to recover the costs by renting the buildings to the public for a long-term period.

Upon completion of the project, the tenants will be able to live in the housing estate at an affordable rental price.

“According to a 50-year investment calculation, the rents are likely to be around K50,000 per month. The costs of the project haven’t been finalized and it is just an estimated rental price,” said Deputy Director U Win Naing.

Each unit of the public rental housing will be 650 square feet wide. Each apartment contains two bedrooms, one living room and one bathroom. The project area also includes the market, school, clinic, playground and park.

Efforts will be made to be

able to lease some of the completed apartments in the project areas by 2022. Now, the finished units are being installed with electricity and water supply facilities.

The applications for renting flats from the public rental housing project will be officially invited to the public. Any family renting the houses in 33 townships in Yangon City Development Zone can apply.

This housing project is open to everyone. Employees will not be given the first priority by this project. Those who are living in the private rental houses need to show the documents that they are currently living in the rented houses, explained U Win Naing.

Public rental housing projects were first started in 1951. The 11 public rental housing estates have been implemented, which include Yankin housing, U Wisara housing, Lanthit housing,

Weluwan housing and Kandawlay housing among others.

The public rental housing project, currently being developed to meet the demand of the houses for the people, will no longer be allowed to stay for a long period as it used to be but will be allowed to be rented only for a limited period.

“Some people thought that they would own those apartments. The project is a rental housing project. So, nobody will own the buildings. The flats will be rented for a fixed period of five to eight years,” said the deputy director.

“It is not easy to buy a house in this situation. As we have to rent a house, we are glad to hear that we will be able to live with low rents. Hopefully, they will scrutinize the applications thoroughly,” said Ma Shwe Sin. – Nadi Min/ GNLM

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

THE 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 51 tonnes of masks were imported by eight vehicles of three companies via the Chinshwehaw trading post yesterday.

From 1 to 19 February, a to-

tal of 443 tonnes of masks were imported from 26 companies by 64 vehicles.

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 inquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website —www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA



Packages of anti-Covid medical supplies are seen to transport them to where necessary.

CRIME NEWS

Drugs seized in some townships



Four arrestees are pictured along with seized drugs and Hijet car.

A joint team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force made inspections on Thanthuma Road, Thuwunna Nga Ka Ward, Thingangyun Township at 3 pm on 17 February and 0.4 kilogramme of heroin was seized during the search of suspect Tun Kyaw.

According to the investigation, officials searched the room of Kyi Lin Thant (alias) Lin Lin's house in Building No. 7 and found Zaw Lin (alias) La-

butta and Kaung Myat Win along with 0.0033 kilogramme of heroin, 1,857 tablets of ecstasy, and 0.018 kilogramme of ICE.

At 5:30 pm on the same day, the Anti-Drug Police Force found 0.16 kilogramme of heroin from Zaw Lin (alias) Labutta's Daihatsu Hijet vehicle on Maha Bandoola Road, No. 4 Ward, Botahtaung Township.

Next, officials stopped and searched a motorcycle driven by Nyunt Maung on the Maw-

bi-Kyauktalongyi Road, near the Kyuntaung Village, Kyauk-taing Village-Tract, Nyaungshwe Township and 89,000 tablets of ecstasy were confiscated.

At 5:30 am on the same day, a search of the home of Aik Tun (alias) Tayot Lay, a resident of Kaungmuton Ward, led to the confiscation of 2,000 ecstasy pills. They are prosecuted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to the police force. —MNA

Illegal timbers, motorcycles without licences seized

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

On 19 February, a joint inspection team under the management of the Sagaing Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force conducted a surprise inspection of one Kenbo-125 motorcycle without a licence (approximately K150,000) and one Toyonax-125 motorcycle without a licence (approximately K150,000) in Homalin Township.

Action is taken under the Import and Export Law.

Similarly, the Bago Region Forestry Department and joint teams under the management of the Bago Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force reportedly inspected forest areas.

A total of 15.9600 tonnes of illegal timber (estimated at K4,469,160) was seized in the forest reserves in Toungoo and Thayawady districts and action is taken under the Forest Law.

As a result, a total of five arrests were made on 19 February (estimated value of K4,769,160), the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee stated. — MNA



3,050 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 19 February, total figure rises to 562,364

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **562,364** after **3,050** new cases were reported on 19 February 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **522,400** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **19,327** after **5** died.—MNA

Muse border trade drastically plummets to \$500 mln as of 11 Feb

THE value of cross-border trade between Myanmar and China via a major trading hub Muse border post plunged to US\$500 million as of 11 February 2022 of the current mini-budget period (October 2021- March 2022), Myanmar Customs Department's statistics indicated.

The figure significantly dropped from \$2.245 billion recorded in the corresponding period of last Financial Year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Between 1 October 2021 and 4 February 2022, Myanmar's exports to China through the Muse land border were valued at \$478 million, while imports are worth \$22 million. The trade showed a slump in both exports and imports against the year-ago period.

At present, the traders are anticipated for the resumption of the Kyalgaung post which performed the largest trade volume



The Muse border post witnessed \$4.057 billion worth of the Sino-Myanmar border trade last financial year 2020-2021, including exports worth \$2.9 billion and imports worth \$1.15 billion.

between Myanmar and China in the previous years. The post has been shut down since March 2021. The COVID-19 preventive measures have been taken at the post and Kyalgaung is rumoured to be reopened in mid-March or late March, a trader engaged in Kyalgaung quoted in his sayings.

China shut down all the checkpoints linking to the Muse

border amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The checkpoints next to the Muse border are Nantaw, Sinphyu, Mang Wein (Kyalgaung), Kyinsankyawt-Wang Ding and Panseng-Wang Ding. Of the checkpoints, Kyinsankyawt has resumed the trading activity from 26 November on a trial run. Myanmar daily delivers rubber, various beans and

pulses, dried plum, watermelon, muskmelon and other food commodities to China through Kyinsankyawt with the use of a Chinese short-haul trucking service.

"Myanmar trucks are restricted to enter China side. However, there is a shortage of Chinese truck drivers. At present, the traders are offering a competitive price for their goods, forcing Chinese drivers to manipulate the pricing. Only Chinese drivers and operators can take advantage of this case. Myanmar truckers cannot help doing it," U Min Thein, the vice-chairman of the Muse Rice Wholesale Centre, stressed.

As a result of this, the cost of Chinese short-haul trucking tremendously rose to K10 million per truck, whereas the trucking was worth only K700,000-800,000 when Myanmar truckers were allowed to enter China. Only when China eases the restric-

tion can the trucking rate drop, he stated.

Additionally, China's new Customs regulation and mandatory quarantine process posed some hurdles in the border market. Traders cannot expect trade facilitation according to the changes in China's policy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Myanmar exports agricultural products including rice, beans and corns, and fishery products such as crab, prawn, etc. Furthermore, Myanmar's natural gas export to China is also conducted through the Muse-Ruili border. The raw CMP materials, electrical appliances and consumer goods are imported into the country.

The Muse border post witnessed \$4.057 billion worth of the Sino-Myanmar border trade last financial year 2020-2021, including exports worth \$2.9 billion and imports worth \$1.15 billion. — KK/GNLM

Peanut prices edge up on edible oil price rally

THE price of peanuts remains the upward trend on the back of strong domestic demand and the price rise in the edible oil market, according to the Mandalay wholesale market.

Tracking the price hike of imported palm oil and Kyat depreciation against the US dollar, the price of palm oil rises tremendously to nearly K6,000 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilograms) in the domestic market. Consequently, the consumers' behaviour has changed and turned to peanut oil due to the health benefits amidst the increase in imported oil prices.

Following the high demand of the local millers, the prices of peanut moved in the range of K2,900-3,300 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilograms), Mandalay market's price statistics indicated.

At present, it is highly demanded in the domestic market rather than the Chinese market.

Myanmar oil body has been planning to export peanut oil produced in line with Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).

There are about 300 oil millers in Mandalay, of whom only 50 hold FDA certification, while the rest have been unable to meet the FDA criteria.

The Myanmar Edible Oil

Millers Association plans to help millers in the entire supply chain get approved by the Food and Drug Administration, to eradicate illegal sales in the market and ensure a strong market for producers.

It also helps millers earn the trust of consumers and place them in a better position to compete with other oil brands being sold in the domestic market, said Mandalay oil millers.

The domestic consumption of edible oil is estimated at one 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.

Myanmar's peanuts are mostly exported to China. Between 1 October 2021 and 11 February 2022 of the current mini-budget period, approximately \$40 million worth of over 43,000 tonnes of peanuts were shipped to the external market, Myanmar Customs Department's statistics showed.

Myanmar has exported US\$190.7 million worth more than 160,776 tonnes of peanuts to the foreign trade partners last financial year 2020-2021, according to the Ministry of Commerce. — KK/GNLM

Myanmar's rice export to Sri Lanka fetches high prices

MYANMAR'S rice export to Sri Lanka is fetching high prices than other countries and the shipment of the rice export is also convenient, said U Than Oo, the secretary of Bayintnaung Rice Wholesale Depot.

Although the freight-on-board (FOB) price of rice exported to other countries is between US\$ 340-\$350 per tonne, the export price to Sri Lanka varies from \$440 to \$450 per tonne.

"Myanmar's rice was exported to Sri Lanka last years. It has been successful. It is one of the neighbouring countries. Myanmar can also export the rice to Sri Lanka through maritime route," said U Than Oo.

Besides, the rice export to Sri Lanka is less restrictive compared to the other countries, he added.

"Sri Lanka hasn't limited the rice quality. The export of Ah Twe and Ahmahtet rice from Myanmar are acceptable. The European countries and China have many restrictions such as AQSIQ and certificates to export Myanmar rice. So, they are a little bit complicated," said U Than Oo.



From 1 October to 31 January in this financial year, the country exported over 1 million tonnes of rice and low-quality rice. Of which, China is becoming a large net importer of Myanmar rice, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation.

Currently, two countries' governments signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on 7 January to export 100,000 tonnes of white rice and 50,000 tonnes of parboiled rice to Sri Lanka in two consecutive years (2022 and 2023).

"This export of rice is yearly led by the MRF. So, the traders and exporters exported the rice to Sri Lanka. Now, it's time to harvest the summer paddy, said U Than Oo.

At present, there is a less stockpile of monsoon paddy in the rice market and the newly harvested summer paddy will enter the market pretty soon.

About 30,000 or 40,000 bags of rice and low-quality rice flowed daily into the Bayintnaung Rice Wholesale Depot, one of the main export markets through the maritime route.

From 1 October to 31 January in this financial year, the country exported over 1 million tonnes of rice and low-quality rice. Of which, China is becoming a large net importer of Myanmar rice, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation. — NN/GNLM

Pomelo growers need technical assistance, market support

THE pomelo growers earnestly desire to get market access and seek technical assistance in their efforts for agricultural supply and value chain processes.

An official of the Myanmar Pomelo Producers and Exporters Association stated that we cannot raise the price in the domestic market only although the pomelos are cultivated under the Good Agricultural Practices. The awareness campaigns for the GAP system are required to encourage the growers to adopt the GAP system.

“I like to call for the government’s support regarding technical assistance”, he quoted in his sayings.

At present, of 15,000 acres of pomelo cultivation, over 300 acres in Bag Region and 20 acres in Mon State used GAP system only. Conventional farming covers the remaining acres.

The pomelos both in organic and conventional farm-



There are approximately 15,000 acres of pomelo acreage across the states and regions. **PHOTO AUNG MYO THU (MUDON)**

ing are harvested and placed in the domestic market simultaneously. The growers have a lack of foreign demand amidst the pandemic.

There are approximately 15,000 acres of pomelo acreage

across the states and regions. However, they can solely rely on the domestic market for now. Only when the growers practice the GAP system widely can they explore foreign markets. The GAP certificate is a must in the

competitive external market, he continued.

The GAP adoption and certificate are required to penetrate more external markets and the international markets prefer the fruits produced

under the GAP system. The GAP ensures food safety, and the GAP growers can get more market access, locally and internationally, according to the Agriculture Department.

In addition to food safety, GAP also ensures worker safety, health and welfare, and conservation of the environment.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation has encouraged farmers to use its GAP protocol in a bid to boost productivity, profitability, market access, and competitiveness in the agricultural sector. The Agriculture Department will raise awareness of GAP among growers by providing courses. The GAP protocol and guidelines include the most consumed and major export items — mango, pomelo, honeydew, watermelon, avocado, chilli, tomato, onion, cabbage, corn, sesame, various beans, rice, and coffee. — Ko Naing/GNLM

2,600 companies struck off register due to AR absence over past 7 months: DICA

A total of 2,600 companies has been struck off the register as of 4 February since July as they fail to submit an annual return (AR) on the online registry system, MyCO, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The DICA has notified any registered company which fails to submit its AR on MyCO are to be suspended, under 430 (F) of the Myanmar Companies Law, according to the DICA's notification.

All registered companies need to file an AR on the MyCO registry system within two months of incorporation, and at least once every year (not later than one month after the anniversary of the incorporation) under Section 97 of the law.

Under Section 266 (A) of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017, public companies must submit annual returns and financial statements (G-5) simultaneously.

All overseas corporations must submit ARs in the prescribed format on MyCO within 28 days of the financial year ending under Section 53 (A-1) of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017.

As per DICA's report, more than 16,000 companies were suspended for failing to submit AR forms within the due date. Newly established companies are required to submit ARs within two

months of incorporation or face a fine of K100,000 for filing late returns. The DICA has notified that any company which fails to submit its AR within 13 months will be notified of its suspension (I-9A). If it fails to submit the AR within 28 days of receiving the notice, the system will show the company's status as suspended. Companies can restore their status only after shelling out a fine of K50,000 for AR fee, K100,000 for restoration of the company on the Register, and K100,000 for late filing of documents, totalling K250,000.

If a company fails to restore its status within six months of suspension, the registrar will strike its name off the register, according to the DICA notice.

The registration and re-registration of companies on the MyCO website commenced on 1 August 2018, in keeping with the Myanmar Companies Law 2017. The number of companies registered on the online registry system, MyCO, topped more than 6,900 in the past 11 months of this year. Earlier, MyCO received more than 1,000 applications from new companies every month.

At present, 100 per cent of the applicants are using the online registration platform, according to data provided by the DICA. — GNLM

Pwintphyu township grows 66,664 acres of edible oil crops, kitchen crops in winter



Pwintphyu township is one of the most irrigation water areas out of 25 townships of the Magway region. The local people are mainly engaging the agriculture business using the Maezali dam.

PWINPHYU township agriculture department has grown about 66,664 acres of edible oil crops and kitchen crops in 2021-22 financial year during the winter planting season, according to the official statistics of the Pwinphyu Township Agriculture Department.

Pwintphyu township is one of the most irrigation water areas out of 25 townships of the Magway region. The local people are mainly engaging the agriculture business using the Maezali dam.

To prevent irrigated water

shortage for local farmers in growing crops, the Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department is providing the irrigated water through the South Mone Myaungmagyi and North Mone Myaungmagyi. Consequently, the local farmers are thriving in the crop sector.

Pwintphyu township agriculture department is providing necessary farming methods and input to increase the crops yield during the winter crop season. Besides, the staff from the department are closely monitoring and supporting pest

control and awareness-raising to the local farmers in each area.

Pwintphyu township targeted to cultivate a total of 66,664 acres of winter crops, including edible oil crops, kitchen crops and other cattle feed. The township grew only about 63,334 acres of winter crops. So far, about 4,447 acres of winter crops were harvested, said Daw Moe Moe Wai, the township head of the Pwintphyu Township Agriculture Department. — Ye Win Naing (NyaungU)/GNLM

Shape Chin State to be peaceful, stable and prosperous

THE day 20th February is the 74th Anniversary of Chin State Day which is significant and auspicious for all Chin ethnics residing in Chin State and other various regions of the nation.

A public conference held in Falam of Chin State decided to change the Saopha administration to the democratic administration system on 20 February 1948. Honouring a great change of administrative system, Chin State Day was set on 20 February.

Chin State is endowed with natural resources such as the Kaladan River, the Natma Hill, the Khonuamthung Hill, the Kennedy Peak, the beautiful Reed Lake, the streaming Manipur River, the Bwenu River and the Bungtla Waterfall.

People from Chin State need to strive for the emergence of educated persons on whom the state and local people can rely. Those educated persons need to initiate the development of Chin State in all aspects. They should lead the local people in the improvement of their socio-economic life.

Now is the time to ensure peace and development of the Union through the genuine patriotic spirit and harmoniously cooperate with each other in building the Union based on democracy and federalism in accord with the aspiration of the people.

People from Chin State need to strive for the emergence of educated persons on whom the state and local people can rely. Those educated persons need to initiate the development of Chin State in all aspects. They should lead the local people in the improvement of their socio-economic life.

To do so, Chin State needs to restore peace and tranquillity. If so, the whole area will be prosperous for future generations of the state. Let's all the ethnic national people in Chin State make utmost efforts for the creation of good environs for the people!

■ ■ ■

Sports is a business that produces GDP

By Yoshida Suzuka

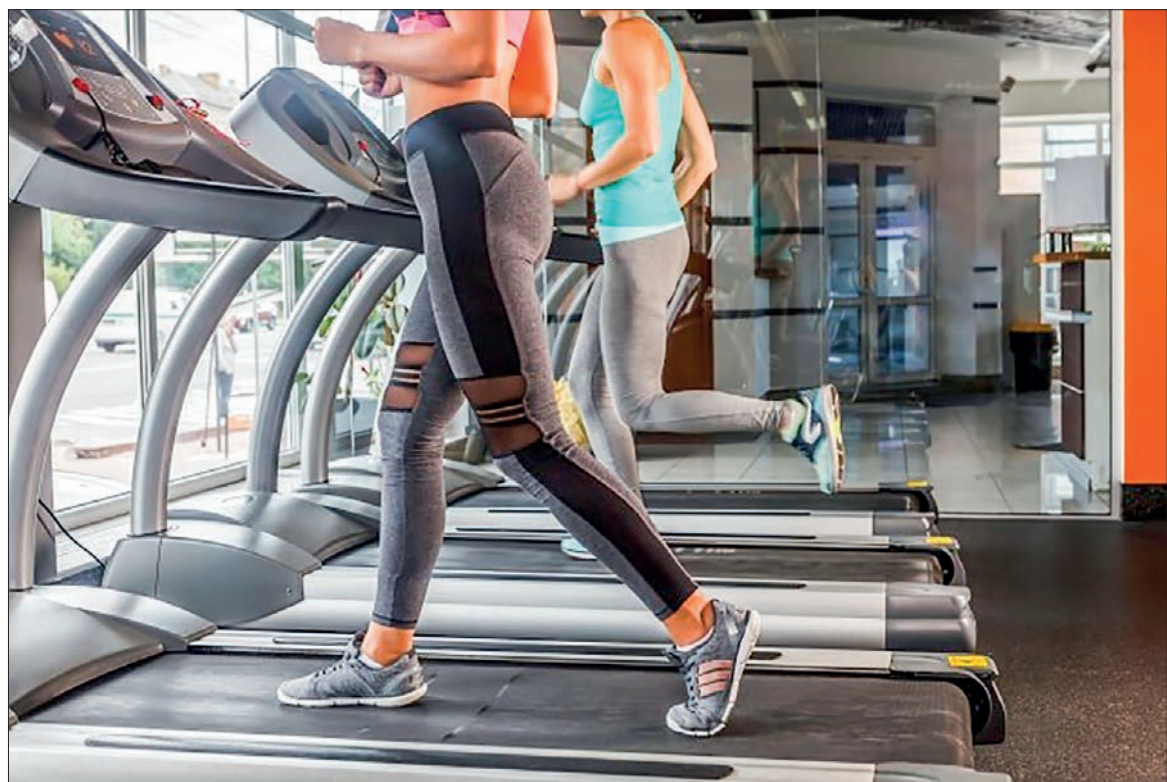
MANY Japanese are interested in watching the Beijing Olympics, which began on 4 February. Not only athletes and their families, but also the general public who have never consulted, and people who are not good at exercising are watching every day. That's because there are many people all over Japan who "play", "watch", "support" and

"make a business" in sports.

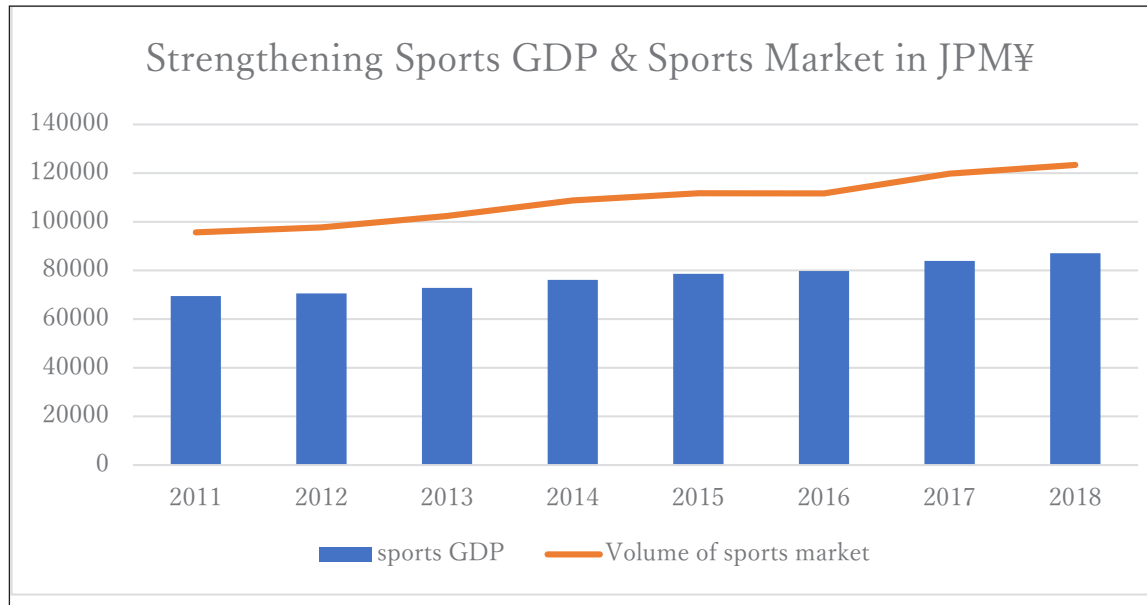
Modern Japanese education policy has emphasized the development of human resources with a strong mind, solid skill, and tough body. From the age of six to the age of 18 when graduating from high school, physical education is incorporated into the school curriculum in the same way as mathematics and Japanese. Children with out-

standing talent were trained by their parents and school coaches as athletes, and some became athletes.

However, in recent years, more and more people are paying attention to sports in a new and different way. The Japanese government established the Japan Sports Agency in 2015 to create a system for fostering sports as an industry. The



Modern Japanese education policy has emphasized the development of human resources with a strong mind, solid skill, and tough body.



Produced by Yoshida in conformity to the Research Paper of Development Bank of Japan Inc.
See page 6 of the URL(Japanese) as below;
<https://www.dbj.jp/upload/investigate/docs/93c6e41f9870fb6e6b97c011bcf2468e.pdf>

government's job is to create a system and law and to grasp the sports market numerically by adopting the idea of Sports Satellite Accounts (SSA), which numerically expresses the economic scale of the sports industry. The sports market is including building stadiums, developing tools, developing nutritious health foods, treating athletes, and everything else involved. Now athletes team up

with experts to improve the environment, improve performance, develop goods and services with manufacturers, and gain financial corporation from supporting companies. And Sport Satellite Accounts are expanding their share of GDP.

The volume of the sports market expanded from about 9.6 trillion yen in 2011 to 12.3 trillion yen in 2018, with a positive growth of about 2.7 trillion yen.

The ratio of sports GDP to the total nominal GDP of Japan increased from 1.4 per cent in 2011 to 1.57 per cent in 2018. The ratio of increase in sports GDP from the previous year continues to be at a positive level. With such stable growth, the Japanese government has high expectations for private companies related to sports.

■ ■ ■

WHO chief calls for cooperation, financing to end COVID-19 pandemic

THE World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Friday called for cooperation and collaboration in the face of common threats from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WHO chief made the remarks at a panel discussion titled "Get Well Soon: Finding a Way Out of the Pandemic" during the ongoing Munich Security Conference (MSC) here in the southern German city of Munich.

He described as "dangerous" the narrative that the pandemic was over with high vaccine coverage in some countries and denied claims that the Omicron coronavirus variant was less severe.

Preventable and treatable disease
Tedros recalled that 70,000 people

were dying each week from a preventable and treatable disease; that 83 per cent of the population in Africa was yet to receive a single COVID-19 vaccine dose; and that the healthcare systems across the world continued to strain and crack under the caseload.

"In fact, the conditions are ideal for more transmissible, more dangerous variants to emerge," he told his fully masked audience.

"We can end the COVID-19 pandemic as a global health emergency this year. We have the tools. We have the know-how," he argued.

Tedros called on all countries to fill the urgent financing gap of 16 billion US dollars for the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator to make vaccines, tests, treatments and personal protective

equipment available globally.

The ACT-Accelerator was established in April 2020, just weeks after the pandemic was declared, to speed up the development and access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. The global vaccine solidarity initiative COVAX is one of its four pillars.

"Compared with the costs of another year of economic turmoil, 16 billion dollars is, frankly, peanuts," he said.

According to Tedros, substantial resources for strengthening global health security were needed both nationally and globally. "Ending this pandemic must remain our focus. At the same time, we must learn the lessons it is teaching us."

Global health security architecture
He emphasized that any effort to

strengthen the global health security architecture could only succeed by attaching importance to the role of the WHO rather than creating new mechanisms, which he believed would only create further fragmentation and potentially leave the world less safe.

Confusion and incoherence have fueled the pandemic, he said, stressing that "we need cooperation and collaboration in the face of common threats." Stronger systems and tools are required to prevent, detect and respond rapidly to epidemics and pandemics.

Tedros concluded his speech by giving an answer to the question he raised at the beginning — when will the COVID-19 pandemic end?

"It will end when we choose to end it. Because, ultimately, it's not a matter

of chance, it's a matter of choice," he said.

According to the WHO website, as of 17 February, more than 416.6 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally, including 5,844,097 deaths, had been reported. Over ten billion vaccine doses have been administered worldwide.

The three-day MSC was opened on Friday with a theme focusing on "unlearning helplessness." There is a mounting feeling of "helplessness" in many societies across the world in the face of a growing number of crises and conflicts, according to a security report published ahead of the conference.

SOURCE: Xinhua

■ ■ ■

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 19 February 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 20 February, 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Kayin and Mon States, fairly widespread in Taninthayi Region and Eastern Shan State, scattered in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyarwady Regions and Kayah State and isolated in Naypyitaw, Mandalay, Magway Regions and Kachin. (North and South) Shan, Rakhine States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Kayin and Mon 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 (5-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of fairly widespread rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Northern Shan, Chin States and isolated in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Taninthayi Regions and (South and East) Shan and Rakhine States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 February, 2022: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 February, 2022: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20th February, 2022: Partly cloudy.

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IAEA wraps up first trip to monitor Fukushima water release



The picture shows the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. More than a million tonnes of liquid has accumulated in tanks at the crippled Fukushima plant. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE International Atomic Energy Agency said Friday it made “significant progress” on its first mission to review the planned

release of treated water from Japan’s Fukushima nuclear plant.

Since Monday, an IAEA taskforce has been in Japan to assess

the country’s plan to gradually release the water, which has been processed to remove most radioactive elements, into the ocean.

The organization’s deputy director-general Lydie Evrard said the international team including non-IAEA experts had examined early preparations at the site for the release, expected to begin as soon as March next year.

“The IAEA taskforce made significant progress in its work this week to get a better understanding of Japan’s operational and regulatory plans for the discharge of the treated water,” she told reporters.

More than a million tonnes of liquid, including rain, ground-water and water used for cooling, has accumulated in tanks at the crippled Fukushima plant since it went into meltdown after a tsunami in 2011, and space is running out. The IAEA has already endorsed the release, which it says is similar to wastewater disposal at nuclear plants elsewhere.

But neighbouring countries have expressed environmental and safety concerns, and local fishing communities are opposed, fearing it will undermine years of work to restore their reputation.

The water is treated but some radioactive elements including tritium remain. Experts say there is no evidence that would pose any danger, but opponents want the plan blocked.

Evrard said the taskforce collected water samples and gathered technical information on the trip and will release its findings in late April, the first of several reports in a multi-year review.

Ahead of the press conference on Friday, Greenpeace said it had “low expectations” for the taskforce’s investigation, calling for alternative options to the release to be explored.—AFP ■

Germany requires transformation of all sectors to achieve climate neutrality: expert panel

GERMANY should adopt a more concrete, coherent and forward-looking climate policy, the government’s expert panel on climate protection said on Friday.

In its first annual report, the Wissenschaftsplatform Klimaschutz said that the goal of greenhouse gas neutrality, which Germany aims to achieve by 2045, requires an “accelerated and far-reaching transformation of all sectors”.

Germany’s climate protection governance must be further aligned with that of Europe, and the country’s climate action plan and programmes must become law, the report adds.

Meanwhile, emissions trading, as proposed by the European Commission for the buildings and transport sectors, should be supported to ensure that its scope is



Electricity pylons are seen in front of the cooling towers of the coal-fired power station of German energy giant RWE in Weisweiler, western Germany, on 26 January 2021. **PHOTO: INA FASSBENDER / AFP**

expanded to “match that of the German fuel emissions trading system”.

Since climate policy depends on support from society, the German government should “make greater use of measures from which all citizens can benefit equally,” such as promoting cli-

mate-neutral mobility, says the report. In order to meet its climate targets, the use of renewable energies should be tripled annually, Wissenschaftsplatform Klimaschutz explains, but the country still lacks a strategy for importing renewable energies.—Xinhua ■

Millions at home, no power, debris everywhere: storm Eunice halts Europe

STORM Eunice killed at least eight people in Europe on Friday, pummeling Britain with record-breaking winds and forcing millions to take shelter as it disrupted flights, trains and ferries across Western Europe.

London was eerily empty after the British capital was placed under its first ever “red” weather warning, meaning there was “danger to life”. By nightfall, police there said a woman in her 30s had died after a tree fell on a car she was a passenger in.

Meanwhile a man in his 50s was also killed in northwest England after debris struck the windscreen of a vehicle he was travelling in, according to Merseyside Police.

Beyond Britain, falling trees killed three people in the

Netherlands and a man in his 60s in southeast Ireland, while a Canadian man aged 79 died in Belgium, according to officials in each country.

A motorist was killed when their car crashed into a tree that had fallen across a road near Adorp in the Netherlands’ northern province of Groningen.

Dozens of homes were evacuated in The Hague amid fears a church steeple could collapse. Footage showed the steeple wobbling and a large piece of debris falling on a car.

As well as in London, the highest weather alert level was declared across southern England, South Wales and the Netherlands, with many schools closed and rail travel paralyzed, as towering waves breached sea walls along the coasts.—AFP ■

Mysteries and music: listening in to underwater life

WHEN marine researchers started recording sounds in the seagrass meadows of the Mediterranean Sea they picked up a mysterious sound, like the croak of a frog, that resounded within the dense foliage – and nowhere else. “We recorded over 30 seagrasses and it was always there and no-one knew the species that was producing this kwa!

kwa! kwa!” said Lucia Di Iorio, a researcher in ecoacoustics at France’s CEFREM. “It took us three years to find out the species that was producing that sound.”

The melodious songs of whales might be familiar music of the world’s underwater habitats but few people will have heard the hoarse growl of a streaked gurnard or the rhythmical drumbeat

of a red piranha. Scientists are now calling for those sounds and many thousands more to become more widely accessible.

They say a global database of the booms, whistles and chatter of the sea will help to monitor diversity in aquatic life – and help put a name to mystery sounds like the one Di Iorio and her colleagues investigated.—AFP ■



A car damaged by a fallen tree is pictured in Southwick, southern England, on 18 February, 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Chinese cities offer cash to combat people smuggling in Covid fight

SEVERAL southern Chinese cities are offering cash bounties worth tens of thousands of dollars for leads on smuggling rings that have brought coronavirus carriers from Hong Kong across the mainland border.

Beijing has adhered to a strict zero-Covid strategy that has kept infection numbers low by employing strict border closures, targeted lockdowns and long quarantines.

Arrivals from Hong Kong -- which is battling a serious flare-up in coronavirus cases -- normally undergo weeks of isolation.

But four people tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday after illegally entering mainland China from the city without quarantine, according to local authorities who announced cash rewards for clues on people smuggling.—AFP ■

India reports 25,920 new COVID-19 cases, tally rises to 42,780,235

INDIA'S COVID-19 tally rose to 42,780,235 on Friday, as 25,920 new cases were registered during the past 24 hours across the country, showed the federal health ministry's latest data.

Besides, 492 deaths due to the pandemic since Thursday morning took the total death toll to 510,905.

There are still 292,092 active COVID-19 cases in the country with a fall of 40,826 active cases during the past 24 hours. This was the 25th consecutive day when the number of active cases declined in the country.—Xinhua ■

Health authorities in Solomon Islands warn of more challenges as COVID-19 cases continue to surge

SOLOMON Islands Minister of Health and Medical Services Culwick Togamana warned on Thursday that people need to take extra care of themselves and their families as COVID-19 continues to overstretch the country's health services. Government data showed a total of 5,043 cases have been reported as of 16 Feb since community transmission began in January 2020, but health authorities believe that the figure is underreported due to the limited testing capacity. According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies last week, Solomon Islands authorities said one in every two people had COVID-19 symptoms when testing was overwhelmed, indicating more possible infections with the virus. "COVID-19 is spreading faster than the wind from our cities and towns to the most remote communities. Testing and health services are overloaded, and this dangerous virus is running rampant in villages where people are yet to be given a first dose of the vaccine," said Solomon Islands Red Cross Society Secretary General Clement Manuri.—AFP ■



Personal baggage is disinfected at Honiara airport in line with Covid-19 protocols in Solomon Islands following the arrival of an Australian aid flight. PHOTO: DEFENCE DEPARTMENT/XINHUA

Japan to relax border controls, cut quarantine period from March: PM

JAPAN will ease COVID-19 border controls starting from March by raising the daily entry cap and reducing the quarantine period from seven days to three for both Japanese and foreign nationals, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Thursday.

Japan will adjust its ban on new entrants from the current 3,500 to 5,000 per day starting next month. Foreign nationals will also be allowed to enter the country for purposes other than tourism.

The decision came as the country's entry ban on nonresident foreigners, imposed from late November to the end of February, has sparked strong criticism for being too strict and not based on science.

Upon arrival in Japan, travellers will be asked to quarantine for three days and the period will end after they test negative for COVID-19.



Japan will ease COVID-19 border controls starting from March by raising the daily entry cap and reducing the quarantine period from seven days to three for both Japanese and foreign nationals. PHOTO: KYODO

The easing of the entry curbs was approved after the head of an expert panel of the health ministry said Wednesday that the recent surge in COVID-19 cases has likely "peaked" in early February.

The country decided to impose border controls at the end of November in an effort to curb the highly transmissible Omicron

variant of the coronavirus.

Only a fraction of nonresident foreigners wishing to enter Japan have received visas as exceptions. Students, businesspeople, academics and even lawmakers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party have been strongly urging the Japanese government to ease the restrictions.—Xinhua ■

BioNTech to ship mobile Covid vaccine labs to Africa



BioNTech is looking to have its first BioNTainer in Africa during the second half of 2022. PHOTO: BIONTECH/AFP

GERMANY'S BioNTech, which together with Pfizer developed the first mRNA vaccine against the coronavirus, said Wednesday it plans to ship mobile vaccine production units to Africa.

"The question was, can we make the process compact enough to fit in a container," the chief executive and co-founder of BioNTech, Ugur Sahin, told AFP as the company unveiled the new labs, dubbed "BioNTainers".

BioNTech said it aims to establish the "first manufacturing facility in the African Union" in "mid-2022" and expects to ship the modular production units to

Rwanda and/or Senegal.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and his Senegalese counterpart Macky Sall attended the Vaccine Equity for Africa meeting at BioNTech's mRNA production site in Marburg, Germany, along with Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo and World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"The modular system opens up new perspectives for global vaccine equity," Kagame said.

Tedros said that boosting local production was "essential", particularly as more than 100 countries worldwide had failed

to attain the vaccination rate of 70 per cent that the WHO had been targeting for the middle of this year.

Africa is the least-vaccinated continent in the world — more than two years after the start of the pandemic and more than a year after the roll-out of the first coronavirus vaccines, less than 12 per cent of Africans have been fully vaccinated.

Earlier this month, South African biotech company Biologics announced it had produced the continent's first coronavirus vaccine based on mRNA technology using the genetic code that another mRNA vaccine maker, Moderna, had made publicly available.

Sahin said BioNTech, which developed its vaccine with US pharma giant Pfizer, has sold tens of millions of the shot and was aiming to "instal production sites for our mRNA technology on every continent".

Meticulous production process

South Africa could "potentially" join the list of recipients of the mobile labs, BioNTech said.—AFP ■

NEWS IN
BRIEFG20 members agree
to minimize impacts
of Fed's raising
interest rates

FINANCE leaders from the Group of 20 (G20) agreed on realizing a well calibrated, well planned, well communicated normalization in the monetary policy to minimize the impacts of the Fed's raising interest rates.

The consensus was made on Friday evening during the second day of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting in Jakarta, with Indonesia serving as the host country.

Bank Indonesia's Governor Perry Warjiyo told a press conference that developed countries should ensure that the normalization policy only posed minimum impacts to the global financial market and that it did not pose any spillover effect to developing countries.—Xinhua ■

Oil prices settle
mixed amid hopes
for Iran deal

OIL prices ended mixed on Friday to notch a weekly fall, amid growing hopes for restoring the Iran nuclear deal.

The West Texas Intermediate for March delivery lost 69 cents, or nearly 0.8 per cent, to settle at 91.07 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude for April delivery increased 57 cents, or 0.6 per cent, to close at 93.54 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange.—Xinhua ■

Russia's GDP up 4.7
pct in 2021: Federal
Statistics Service

RUSSIA'S GDP rose 4.7 per cent in 2021, according to preliminary data provided by Russia's Federal Statistics Service on Friday.

The GDP increase was linked to "a revival of production, which was accompanied by an increase in demand for the services of banks and insurance companies," "rising global energy prices," and an increase in prices of residential real estate in the secondary market.—Xinhua ■

Ukraine showdown casts shadow over
Qatar gas summit

Global supply was tight because of high Asian demand for LNG and lower-than-normal Russia gas pipeline flows. **PHOTO: AFP**

LEADING gas producers meet in Qatar from Sunday to discuss how to answer frantic world demand, but Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to stay away as Ukraine tensions

soar, diplomats said.

The 11-member Gas Exporting Countries Forum holds its summit as the Ukraine showdown sends prices ever higher while Europe fears for its supplies

from Russia.

The group that includes Russia, Qatar, Iran, Libya, Algeria and Nigeria -- accounting for more than 70 per cent of proven gas reserves -- has faced mounting

pressure as Europe has sought alternative suppliers to Russia.

But most say they are already at or near maximum production and can only send short term relief supplies to Europe if existing customers agree.

Diplomats who took part in preparatory meetings said the group -- which excludes key producers Australia and the United States -- will discuss ways to increase production in the medium term. "But their hands are tied, there is next to no spare gas," said one, speaking on condition of anonymity.

After two days of ministerial meetings, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi, who has rarely left his country since taking office, is to join Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, for the main summit on Tuesday. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria will also be present with other government leaders.—AFP ■

India's gems, jewellery
sector to achieve export
target this year: gov't

A senior Indian official said Friday that the gems and jewellery sector is expected to achieve an export target of 40 billion US dollars this year. **PHOTO: AFP**

A senior Indian official said Friday that the gems and jewellery sector is expected to achieve an export target of 40 billion US dollars this year.

Federal Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal made the remarks while addressing the inaugural ceremony of India International Jewellery Show Signature 2022.

"The sector is expected to register a growth of 6.5 per cent over the pre-COVID-19 levels," Goyal said, noting that the gems and jewellery sector is a strong pillar of the Indian economy.

"Our gold and diamond trade contributes about 7 per cent to our GDP and employs over 50 lakh (5 million) persons," Goyal said.

Goyal encouraged the industry to aim to be a global champion by taking up bigger and bolder targets in domestic production as well as overseas sales.

According to the minister, about 850 exhibitors displayed products in over 1,450 booths during the exhibition, which drew over 14,000 pre-registered visitors.—Xinhua ■

Tunisians fear more
economic pain as IMF
talks loom

EVERY day at the family grocery stall in a Tunis market, Bilel Jani sees the reality of a biting economic crisis, which for many has overshadowed Tunisia's latest political turmoil.

"People here are poor," he said, handing a meagre bag of olives to a customer. "Most of our customers are living day-to-day. Monthly salaries these days don't even cover a week."

The small North African country, roiled by years of political turmoil that deepened with President Kais Saied's power grab last July, is also mired in a deep recession.

Surging prices and job losses have hurt families that were already struggling before the coronavirus pandemic.

This week, Tunisia started preliminary talks with the International Monetary Fund over a bailout package.

Such a deal would likely mean cuts to subsidies and public sector wages, which many fear would spell more suffering for the most vulnerable. That could fuel the same kind of grievances that sparked a revolution a decade ago and brought down autocrat Zine El Abidine Ben Ali after 23 years in power.—AFP ■



Tunisians shop at Halfaouine market near central Tunis on 15 February 2022. The Tunisian economy is plagued by recession, inflation and high unemployment. **PHOTO: FETHI BELAID /AFP**

S.Korea's domestic demand expected to be weakened on Omicron spread: gov't report

SOUTH Korea's domestic demand is expected to be weakened due to the rapid spread of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, a government report said Friday.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance said in its monthly economic report, called Green Book, that the South Korean economy maintained a solid export and a rapid growth in employment.

The ministry, however, expressed worry about domestic demand amid the Omicron variant spread.

In the latest tally, the country reported a record daily high of 109,831 COVID-19 cases for the past 24 hours, raising the total number of infections to



Revenue among department stores and discount outlets gained in double figures last month. People walk past a clothes shop in Seoul, South Korea, 26 February 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA/WANG JINGQIANG

1,755,806.

The government decided to ease its social-distancing guideline for the next three weeks as the

tightened quarantine measures for the past nine weeks roiled the businesses of small merchants.

The country's export

advanced 15.2 per cent in January from a year earlier, and the number of jobs soared 1,135,000 last month.—Xinhua ■

French state to pony up billions for EDF

FRANCE announced Friday a cash lifeline for state-owned energy giant EDF, which is buckling under massive debt just as it embarks on a new nuclear plant programme pushed by President Emmanuel Macron.

EDF's fortunes had already taken a hit after the government ordered it last month to cap electricity bills for French clients, even as prices have spiked on global markets.

The measure, which was enacted just weeks before Macron is expected to seek a second term in April, infuriated critics who accused him of electoral posturing that would

cost the company some eight billion euros (\$9.1 billion).

While EDF normally generates the bulk of its electricity from its network of 56 nuclear reactors across France, many are near the end of their 40-year lifespans and around a dozen have been shut or will be soon to carry out safety inspections over corrosion risks.

That will force the group to buy power on the European market, expected to cost it some 11 billion euros this year—even as its total debt load now stands at 43 billion euros. "EDF is experiencing problems linked to re-

actor outages, it's selling less nuclear power, and so it's revenues are down and it needs financial support from the state," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told RTL radio.

This month Macron

announced plans to build as many as 14 new next-generation EPR2 reactors to reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels, which EDF has said could cost some 50 billion euros.—AFP ■



EDF's Fessenheim nuclear power plant in eastern France. PHOTO: SEBASTIEN BOZON/AFP /FILE

US existing home sales shot up 6.7% in January: report

EXISTING homes have become harder to find than ever, but Americans kept buying in January, pushing the pace of sales up much more than expected, according to industry data released Friday.

Existing homes sales jumped 6.7 per cent last

month to a seasonally-adjusted annual rate of 6.5 million, even as the inventory of homes for sale hit a new all-time low, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) said.

The real estate market has boomed during the Covid-19 pandemic

thanks in part to the Federal Reserve's easy money policies, causing property prices to climb and inventory to grow scarce. With the Fed next month set to hike interest rates for the first time since the crisis began to fight runaway inflation, of which home

sales are a part, NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun said shoppers scrambled to get deals. "Buyers were likely anticipating further rate increases and locking-in at the low rates, and investors added to overall demand with all-cash offers," Yun said.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

American Airlines cuts summer flights due to Boeing 787 delays

AMERICAN Airlines on Friday said it would cut more international flights over the summer than originally planned as it deals with delays in deliveries of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner long-haul jet.

The plane has been plagued by major production problems after initial manufacturing flaws were discovered in the summer of 2020, and deliveries have been suspended since last May.

Boeing is in negotiations with US aviation authorities, and unwilling to commit to a date to restart deliveries.

American Airlines was hoping to have 13 of the jets in its fleet by this year.

But in an internal notice seen by AFP, American said it was "taking a proactive approach to reduce the negative impact Boeing's delays could have on our business and our customers".

The airline will postpone the launch of its Dallas-Tel Aviv route as well as temporarily halt the Seattle-London, Dallas-Santiago de Chile, and Los Angeles-Sydney routes. It will reduce Miami-Sao Paulo service to once per day.

The company had previously cut its flight schedule in December, giving up certain destinations such as Edinburgh, Prague and Dubrovnik.— AFP ■

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Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO WISDOM VOY.NO. (048N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-2-2022** 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 NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

US Supreme Court to consider repealing Trump-era border policy

THE US Supreme Court agreed on Friday to consider whether President Joe Biden can end a controversial Trump-era border policy that denies asylum-seekers entry to the United States while their case is reviewed.

The Democratic president's administration in December asked the conservative-leaning high court to review decisions made by appeals courts that left in place the migration program implemented in 2019 by the previous government.

Under then-president Donald Trump's "Remain in Mexico" programme, tens of thousands of non-Mexican asylum seekers -- mostly from Central America -- were sent back over the border pending the outcome of their applications.

Since taking office in January 2021, Biden has pledged a more humane immigration policy and sought to dismantle the programme, officially called the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP).

Those efforts have faced setbacks in the US court sys-



Migrants make their way across the almost-dry riverbed of the Tijuana River on their way to the El Chaparral port of entry to the US in Tijuana, Mexico, on 25 November 2018. **PHOTO: GUILLERMO ARIAS /AFP/**

tem, with an appeals court ruling in December that the programme should continue.

The Justice Department argued the programme "exposes migrants to unacceptable" risks and the previous court decisions were based on "erroneous interpretations" of the law, in its request to the Supreme Court to review the case.

The Supreme Court is expected to consider the case as early as April, according to court documents seen by AFP, while a decision is expected in the summer.—AFP ■

Hong Kong postpones new leader selection over virus outbreak



Photo taken on 24 November 2021 shows a view of Hong Kong, south China. **PHOTO: XINHUA/WANG SHEN**

HONG KONG said on Friday it would postpone picking the city's new leader and was preparing to test the entire population for COVID-19 as it struggles to tackle a wave of infections.

The Chinese financial hub is currently in the throes of its worst-ever coronavirus outbreak, registering thousands of cases a day with hospitals reaching breaking point and a Beijing-mandated zero-COVID policy collapsing.

A small committee of Beijing loyalists had been set to choose the city's new chief executive in late March, with the nomination period for candidates beginning Sunday.

But current leader Carrie Lam on Friday announced the selection would now need to be pushed back to 8 May.

"The decision is due to Hong Kong facing the most severe situation since the pandemic began two years ago. It is a critical situ-

ation," she told reporters.

Lam confirmed authorities were moving to test all 7.5 million residents.

"One of the measures that we are planning - planning very seriously - is mandatory universal testing. So we will test everyone in Hong Kong," she said, although she once again ruled out a full city lockdown.

Mass testing has been used frequently on the Chinese mainland alongside strict lockdowns to quickly stamp out clusters.

But it is unclear what effect it will have in a city with so many daily infections and where a mainland style lockdown would be hard to pull off.

It is also not clear where Hong Kong would house and isolate so many positive cases once discovered.

Lam said the new measures were "in line with the spirit expressed by President Xi Jinping in his important instructions, namely that we must make controlling the epidemic our overriding priority".—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dubai ruler's daughter tells UN she is well, year after "hostage" videos

An Emirati princess who said last year that she had been held "hostage" in a palace assured UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet at a meeting in Paris that she was healthy, the high commissioner said on Friday.

The meeting, held on an unspecified date at the request of Dubai-based Latifa, took place a year after a video released by the British media in February 2021 spoke of the hostage-taking and the threat to his life.

"Latifa told the High Commissioner that she was fine and expressed her desire to respect her privacy," said Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a tweet, which included pictures of two women on a Paris street.—AFP ■

Sri Lanka clears police, defence chiefs over Easter bombings

Sri Lanka's High Court on Friday acquitted two top officials accused of "crimes against humanity" for failing to prevent the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings that killed 279 people.

The state had indicted the two men in November for failing to act on early warnings from an Indian intelligence agency that local jihadists were planning a string of suicide bombings in April 2019.

The three-judge panel dismissed all 855 charges against Hemasiri Fernando, then secretary to the ministry of defence, as well as then inspector general of police Pujith Jayasundara.

A court official said the judges in a unanimous decision exonerated the suspects and released them without calling defence witnesses. The attacks, blamed on a homegrown Islamic extremist group, targeted three churches and three hotels in the capital and killed 279 people, including 45 foreigners, leaving more than 500 wounded.—AFP ■



Libya's security forces parade at the Martyrs' Square in the capital Tripoli. **PHOTO: AFP**

Eleven years since revolt, Libya far from democracy

LIBYANS on Thursday marked 11 years since the revolt that toppled dictator Muammar Ghaddafi, but the democracy many hoped for seems as elusive as ever, and many fear a return to conflict.

The anniversary comes as the country, for years plagued by divisions between east and west, finds itself with two rival prime

ministers based in the capital Tripoli. Just weeks after national elections planned for 24 December were indefinitely postponed, the east-based parliament voted to appoint influential ex-interior minister Fathi Bashagha to replace the interim unity government. Incumbent Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, appointed as part of a United Nations-driven

peace process, has insisted he will only hand over power to an elected government.

The resulting showdown has sparked fears of another conflict -- not between east and west, but within Tripoli itself.

Streets in Tripoli were lined with the red, black and green flags adopted after Ghaddafi's overthrow.—AFP ■

Russian parliament's call for east Ukraine independence sparks alarm

POSSIBLE Russian recognition of separatist "republics" independent from Kyiv is threatening to derail an already fragile peace process, as fears grow of large-scale conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Tensions between the West and Russia over Ukraine have soared in recent months, after Moscow massed tens of thousands of troops near its neighbour's border.

Western leaders say Russia could launch an attack on Ukraine at any moment, though Moscow has denied such plans.

But an appeal by Russia's parliament to President Vladimir Putin to recognize the independence of the self-proclaimed "republics" of Donetsk and Lugansk in Ukraine's industrial east has raised alarm.

Kyiv has been battling pro-Russia separatists in its eastern regions since 2014 in a conflict that has claimed around 14,000 lives.



Russia's parliament wants President Vladimir Putin to recognize the independence of self-proclaimed 'republics' in Ukraine's industrial east. **PHOTO: RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY/AFP**

Fighting has largely diminished since the 2014 and 2015 Minsk accords, under which Russia and Ukraine agreed to a ceasefire and a roadmap to a

political settlement.

But that process has hit a wall, with each side accusing the other of not fulfilling its end of the deal. Ukraine's foreign

ministry told AFP that a Moscow recognition of the republics would make Russia "totally responsible for destroying the Minsk accords".—AFP ■

Munich Security Conference opens focusing on 'unlearning helplessness'



Western leaders discuss Ukraine. **PHOTO: ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS/AFP**

THE 58th edition of the Munich Security Conference (MSC) opened here on Friday afternoon with a theme focusing on "unlearning helplessness" against the backdrop of tensions in the Ukraine crisis, reported Xinhua.

There is a mounting feeling of "helplessness" in many societies across the world in the face of a growing number of crises and conflicts, according to a security report published ahead of the conference. "The feeling of helplessness is becoming a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, which leads to give up, even though we have all the tools and resources

to address such challenges as the pandemic, climate change or great power confrontations," said Wolfgang Ischinger, chairman of the MSC, in his opening speech.

Man-made problems can be solved by man, Ischinger said, calling on everyone to collectively unlearn and overcome helplessness. Participants in the high-profile conference are also scheduled to discuss the ongoing tension around Ukraine. While Russia says it is withdrawing some of its troops from the Ukrainian border, US President Joe Biden says his government has "not yet verified that". — Xinhua ■

War fears mount as Putin to oversee drills, Zelensky to meet allies

RUSSIA'S leader will oversee major military drills along Ukraine's borders on Saturday, further escalating tensions after Washington said Moscow would invade within days, and Ukraine's president headed to Europe to drum up support.

Artillery shelling in the east of Ukraine and orders from Russian-backed separatists for civilians to evacuate the region on Friday inflamed an already febrile situation as

Washington insisted Moscow was encircling its pro-Western neighbour.

The Kremlin continues to say it has no plans to attack.

US President Joe Biden said that the invasion would come in the next week or days and that his Russian counterpart President Vladimir Putin had "made the decision" to invade. But Biden left the door open for a diplomatic resolution. — AFP ■



File photo shows a tank during joint exercises of the armed forces of Russia and Belarus as part of an inspection of the Union State's Response Force, at a firing range near Brest. **PHOTO: RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY/AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Clashes at international far-right meeting in Bogota

POLICE clashed Friday with masked and hooded anti-fascism protesters who threw stones and broke windows at a hotel hosting a meeting of far-right political groups from Spain and Latin America.

The meeting of representatives of Spain's Vox party and far-right groups from Colombia, Peru, Cuba, Venezuela and Chile, attracted about 100 left-wing protesters with anti-fascist banners.

They threw stones and trash cans at the hotel hosting the so-called "Madrid Forum", hitting the shields of riot police posted outside, and breaking windows.

Police responded with stun grenades, arresting several protesters. "They are the Nazis," shouted a young man in the crowd, referring to those attending the meeting.

Vox member Victor Gonzalez, a Spanish MP, told AFP the protesters were supporters of a "new communism". —AFP ■

France told to withdraw troops from Mali without delay

THE Malian government has called on France to immediately withdraw the Barkhane and Takuba forces from the national territory under the supervision of the Malian authorities, said a statement issued Friday by Abdoulaye Maiga, the spokesperson for the Malian government.

This decision was taken by Bamako, in view of the "repeated breaches of the defence agreement" between Mali and France, said Maiga in the statement. Maiga is also the Malian Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization.

According to the statement, the Malian government insisted that it had taken note of the "unilateral decision of 17 February 2022" of the French authorities to withdraw the military forces Barkhane and Takuba in "violation of the agreements" binding France and Mali as well as involving "other partners".—Xinhua ■

Sweden's curlers deny Britain a first Beijing Winter Olympics gold



Sweden beat Team GB in the final of the men's curling. PHOTO: AFP

BRITAIN were denied their first gold medal of the Beijing Winter Olympics when their men's curling team were pipped 5-4 by Sweden in the final on Saturday.

The disappointed British team at least had the consolation

of winning Britain's first medal of the Games and a tweet of congratulations from the royal family saying "you should be incredibly proud of your performance this week".

Swedish skip Niklas Edin has

finished fourth and won bronze and silver medals in previous Games, so he was overjoyed to finally call himself an Olympic champion.

"God, it's nice. It's obviously been an incredibly long journey with pretty disappointing defeats in a couple of the previous Games," the 36-year-old said.

"It feels so crazy, I almost had to ask someone before I came here, 'We have won, right?'"

British skipper Bruce Mouat told the BBC: "It's still pretty raw. That's going to the case for quite a while." Team GB have one more chance to win an elusive gold with the British women's quartet, skippered by Eve Muirhead.

They take on Japan in the final in the National Aquatics Centre, nicknamed the "Ice Cube", on Sunday.—AFP ■

Porteous wins chaotic, wind-battered final for second N.Zealand gold

FREESTYLE skier Nico Porteous survived treacherous winds, bone-chilling temperatures and a nasty fall to win New Zealand's second gold medal in Winter Olympic history on Saturday in Beijing.

The 20-year-old came out on top in a wild halfpipe final battered by high winds and he took a tumble on his final run that left him bleeding from his ear and nursing a sore shoulder.

But he had already done enough to win thanks to his first-run score of 93.00 and he was given a congratulatory haka by his New Zealand team-mates, having ended American David Wise's eight-year run as champion.

Snowboarder Zoi Sadowski Synnott gave New Zealand their first ever Winter Olympics gold the previous week and Porteous said it was "almost scary and really motivating" to watch her make history.

"To have Zoi do that was so inspirational, so driving for me," said Porteous, who won bronze in the event four years ago at the Pyeongchang Games.

"It made me put my head down and do everything I could for this moment."



New Zealand's Nico Porteous won gold in Beijing. PHOTO: AFP

The competition featured several high-impact wipe-outs in the tricky conditions, including one on the last run for American Aaron Blunck that delayed Porteous's celebrations.

Wise, who finished second on 90.75, said the weather "defined the competition", realizing beforehand that it "might be the kind of day where a stock run could be on the podium".

Porteous's title-winning first run was anything but ordinary, but he acknowledged that he needed "a little bit of luck" to

claim the gold.

"It's a constant uphill battle to keep your legs warm and keep your body warm because there's nothing worse than dropping into a run with cold muscles and not feeling sharp," said Porteous.

"In our sport, especially on a day like today, it's anyone's game."

American Alex Ferreira finished third on 86.75, putting all three medal winners from the 2018 Pyeongchang Games back on the podium but in different order.—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

Djokovic faces Italian teenager Musetti in Dubai comeback

NOVAK Djokovic faces Italian teenager Lorenzo Musetti in Dubai next week in a tough first round comeback following the drama surrounding his Australian Open deportation.

The world number one makes his return to the court on Monday after the coronavirus vaccine row that kept him from defending his Australian Open title.

Djokovic and wild card Musetti have history, with the 19-year-old taking the first two

sets off the Serb when they met in last year's French Open.

Musetti eventually retired due to injury with Djokovic leading the last 16 clash 6-7 (7/9), 6-7 (2/7), 6-1, 6-0, 4-0.

Djokovic went on to seal the title at Roland Garros for his 19th Grand Slam, with his 20th secured at Wimbledon the following month. The 34-year-old has kept a low profile since his deportation from Australia last month over his refusal to get jabbed.—AFP ■



Djokovic (left) was two sets down to Musetti at last year's French Open. PHOTO: AFP