

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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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.

74th anniversary of Chin National Day held in Haka

THE Chin State Government Office held the 74th Chin National Day celebration yesterday afternoon in Haka, Chin State. The ceremony was attended by members of the State Administration Council General Mya Tun Oo, U MOUNG HAR, Chin State Chief Minister U NGUN SANN AUNG, state cabinet ministers, state-level departmental officials and invitees.

First, the chairman of the ceremony, Dr RAM NGAI, Associate Professor at Haka University, delivered a speech on the 74th Chin National Day, and the chief minister read out a message of Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General MIN AUNG HLAING on the occasion of the 74th Chin National Day.

At the ceremony, the State Administration Council provided K200 million for the development of Chin State and anti-COVID-19 devices. General Mya Tun Oo handed over the donation to the Chin state chief minister. State Minister for Security and Border Affairs Colonel HAN WIN AUNG and Director of the Chin State Development Supervision Office handed over 100 sets of solar panels provided by the Minis-



State Administration Council member General Mya Tun Oo views the exhibition to mark the 74th Chin National Day in Haka, Chin State, on 20 February 2022.

try of Border Affairs to the Chin state government and were received by Chin State Minister for Natural Resources U KYAW NYEIN.

Afterwards, honorary certificates and prizes were awarded to the winners of the Chin National Day celebration competition, and a documentary photo

was taken.

It is also reported that the members of the State Administration Council, the chief minister and party toured the

exhibition hall of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture after watching the traditional dances of Chin cultural troupes. —MNA

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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

MOFA Press Release on ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting Retreat

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar takes note of the Press Statement of the Chairman of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting Retreat (AMM Retreat) that was held on 17 February 2022.

The Ministry welcomes the priorities and deliverables presented by Cambodia in advancing ASEAN Community building. The Ministry also welcomes the initiatives taken to accelerate regional integration through the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and the IAI Work Plan IV (2021-2025); for reaffirming that TAC is the key code of conduct governing interstate relations in the region and as the foundation for maintaining regional peace and stability; for the commitment to preserve Southeast Asia region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and free of all other weapons of mass destruction; for stressing the importance of strengthening ASEAN centrality and unity; for working towards the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision; and for the full and effective implementation of ASEAN COVID-19 initiatives, including the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) among others.

On RCEP, while taking note of the entry into force of the RCEP Agreement on 1 January 2022, the Ministry would like to recall that Myanmar is one of the signatory states to early deposit its instrument of ratification of the RCEP in accordance with the provision of the RCEP Agreement. However, the Ministry regrets that Myanmar's ratification of RCEP has been politicized by some members and therefore the depositary was not able to comply with the provisions of the RCEP Agreement ultimately causing delays for the Agreement to enter into force for Myanmar. Such a course of action will not only damage ASEAN's credibility but also the credibility of the ASEAN Secretariat. Myanmar hopes that such a course of action will never take place again in ASEAN which is supposed to be a rule-based inter-governmental organization.

The Ministry welcomes the ASEAN Chair's emphasis on strengthening ASEAN centrality and unity in ASEAN's external relations through promoting ASEAN norms and principles, including those enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Myanmar is encouraged by the increasing request by countries to accede to the TAC and looks forward to their accession at an early date. Myanmar encourages ASEAN to uphold the past practices which have existed in ASEAN for over the past 50 years when signing TAC documents.

The Ministry notes ASEAN's continued support for Myanmar's repatriation efforts, especially on the follow-up to the recommendations of the Preliminary Need Assessment (PNA) in facilitating the voluntary return of the displaced persons from Rakhine State in a safe, secure and dignified manner. While ASEAN looks forward to the conduct of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) when conditions allow, Myanmar again encourages the Secretary-General of ASEAN to revitalize the High-Level Coordination Meeting with a view to finalizing the remaining project proposals as well as to identify possible areas for ASEAN to effectively facilitate the repatriation process.

On the implementation of the five-point consensus, significant progress and challenges have been briefed to the diplomats in Yangon on 8 February 2022 by the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Ministry welcomes Mr Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation as the special envoy of the ASEAN Chair. Myanmar will continue to promote constructive cooperation with ASEAN, including with the special envoy, with the understanding that it is a Myanmar-owned, Myanmar-led process as stated in the press statement by the Chairman of the AMM Retreat.

The Ministry notes that while some deliberations were constructive on the implementation of the five-point consensus, two members have suggested the special envoy engage with unlawful associations and terrorist groups which Myanmar Government has declared as terrorist groups. The Ministry would like to recall that the Anti-Terrorism Central Committee of Myanmar has declared CRPH, NUG and all their subordinates as terrorist groups on 8 May 2021 for perpetrating violence and pursuing a total destructive path that is conducive to terrorism in the country. Suggesting the special envoy engage with such groups are not only contrary to the principles of the ASEAN Charter but also undermine ASEAN's counter-terrorism efforts. In this regard, the Ministry again urges the two members not to use ASEAN platforms to make such comments and encourages them to condemn the terrorist acts.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Dated, 20 February 2022

3,303 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 20 February, total figure rises to 565,667

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 565,667 after 3,303 new cases were reported on 20 February 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 523,630 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,331 after 4 died.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 19-2-2022, a total of 23,334,797 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 20,616,499 people have been fully vaccinated and 2,718,298 people yet to get the second shots.—MNA

Tatmadaw is a guardian for implementing multiparty democracy

ALL need to carry out all tasks with their capability holding a concept that Tatmadaw is a guardian for implementing multiparty democracy to be firm and maintain all situations of the State.

(Excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in meeting with officers, other ranks and families of Mongpyin Station of Triangle Region Command and Kholan Station of Eastern Central Command on 18-2-2022)

Seed Fair 2022 continues into third day

THE Seed Fair 2022 organized by the Agriculture Department under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation showcased 35 agricultural booths on its third day at the Institute of Agriculture in Pyinmana Township on 20 February.

At the fair, the research farms and pedigree seed production farms managed by the MoALI, the Myanmar Seed Association and seed companies exhibited a total of 35 booths and displayed the pedigree seed crops, edible oil crops, various beans and pulses, rice, vegetable seeds, seedlings and demonstrations of farming methods.

Those enthusiastic from the regions and states, including Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, and representatives from seed companies closely observed the fair.

Additionally, the talk show under the title of “Let’s coop-



Enthusiastic farmers and visitors are seen observing the farm at the Seed Fair 2022 on the third day. **PHOTO: KO KO HTEIN**

erate in boosting cotton crop production”, a seminar and education campaign to enhance farming knowledge among the farmers and help farmers increase productivity. Those enthusiastic had good opportunities to learn know-how of the pedigree seed production and

the farm practices.

A grower U Soe Win participated in a talk show and called for having loan access for the cotton growers’ group and a manageable pedigree seed production and distribution plan as the loan input cost is extremely high.

The objectives behind the Seed Fair 2022 are to enhance pedigree seed production and productivity and contribute to the socio-economic development of the State.

This five-day event will take place between 18 and 22 February. The farmers are encouraged to join the fair in order to learn the pedigree seeds which are suitable for their farms and build expertise in the agriculture sector in order to increase per-acre yield of crops. — Khit Lu Nge/GNLM



Tatmadaw receives 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines donated from Indian Armed Forces

A flight from Myanmar Airways International (MAI) landed at the Yangon International Airport, bringing 100,000 doses of Covishield COVID-19 vaccines in 20 thermocol boxes weighing 400 kilogrammes donated from the Indian Armed Forces to the Myanmar Tatmadaw yesterday.

The vaccines were received by officials from the Local Drug Store Depot at the airport and will be stored at the branch of the Local Drug Store Depot on Myoma Kyaung street in Dagon Township with the use of temperature-controlled transportation. – MNA

The Indian Armed Forces-donated 100,000 Covishield vaccines arrive at Yangon International Airport on 20 February.

Illegal teak, consumer goods seized this week



Departmental personnel and security members inspect seized illegal logs in Bago District Forest Reserve on 20 February.



Photo shows seized consumer goods at Mayanchaung Permanent Checkpoint on 19 February.

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

On 19 February, a combined team from the Mayanchaung Permanent Checkpoint conducted an investigation and seized 230 unidentified consumer goods (estimated at K2,044,700) that were more than what was declared in the import declaration, and effective legal action is taken under the law.

On 20 February, a combined inspection team under the management of the Sagaing Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force conducted a surprise inspection and found 5.23 tonnes of teaks (estimated at K261,500) in Tamu Township and one Honda Super Cub motorcycle without a licence (estimated at K100,000) in Dabayin Township.

Similarly, under the management of the Bago Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force, the Bago Region Forest Department and combined teams reportedly inspected a total of 7.406 tonnes of illegal timbers (estimated at K1,371,324) in the Bago District Forest Reserve and action is taken under the Forest Law.

As a result, a total of four arrests (approximately K3,777,524), were made on 19 and 20 February, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee. — MNA

Stimulant tablets seized in Bhamo Township

A combined team of anti-narcotics police seized 7,653 stimulant tablets from Phyo Hein while inspecting him during a search operation near the old port of Tatkalay in Khuntha Ward, Bhamo Township, Kachin State, at 4:15 pm on 19 February. He was charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law for the possession of drugs, according to the Myanmar Police Force. — MNA

Over K420 mln worth of stimulant tablets seized in Myawady city

MYANMAR Police Force reported a seizure of K420 million worth of stimulant tablets in Myawady city on 18 February. Acting on the tip-off, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force blocked a vehicle (Honda Fit) driven by Zaw Min, 44, on Anadathuka Road in Ward 4, Myawady city at noon on 18 February, when he attempted to flee the scene. About 210,000 stimulant tablets with an estimated value of K420 million were confiscated. Following the tip-off, the police raided the houses in Ward 4 in Myawady and arrested an accomplice called Maung Pee (alias) Sai Pee, 45, who is involved in this crime. They were prosecuted for drug-related offences under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, the Myanmar Police Force stated. — MNA



210,000 stimulant tablets are seized together with two suspects in Myawady on 18 February.

Public Notification

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

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

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

Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee

Public Notification

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

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

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

Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee

Mezali diversion weir to start irrigation to summer crops in Pwintbyu Tsp in early March

MEZALI diversion weir will distribute irrigation water to the farms in Pwintbyu Township, Magway Region starting from early March to grow the summer crops in the 2022-2023 growing season, according to the Pwintbyu Township Department of Irrigation and Water Utilization Management.

The department is yearly delivering irrigation water efficiently to farms in the township through the Mezali diversion weir, ensuring adequate water supply.

“Mezali diversion weir earlier covered the summer paddy, sesame and other crops. This year, irrigation storage is short of supply so the weir cannot provide sufficient irrigation to the summer paddy. Only summer

sesame and other crops will be irrigated. The irrigation will be distributed throughout March. The farmers have been notified of an irrigation network to make their farms ready. The efficient irrigation system is urged to be adopted to minimize the water loss,” said U Ye Htut Aung, an official of the Pwintbyu Township Department of Irrigation and Water Utilization Management.

It is projected to fulfil irrigation needs in 60,428 acres of summer sesame through Mezali diversion weir and 500 acres through Aingma weir, totalling 60,928 acres of summer sesame seeds, according to the data of the Pwintbyu Township Agriculture Department. — Ye Win Naing (NyaungU)/GNLM



Photo catches picturesque view of Mezali Diversion Weir in Pwintbyu Township in Magway Region.

More than 4,800 bridges built for development of border regions till January 2022

THE Ministry of Border Affairs stated that more than 4,800 small and large bridges have been built for development of border regions up to the end of January 2022.

The ministry is implementing the master plans for development of the border regions.

In so doing, the first three-year short-term plan was implemented from 1993-94 financial year to 1995-96 financial year, the first five-year medium-term plan from 1996-97 to 2000-21 financial year, and the second five-year short-term plan from 2001-02 to 2005-06 financial year,

totalling 13 years.

Furthermore, the ministry drew a 30-year master plan from 2001-02 to 2030-31 financial year. It was divided into six portions.

Starting from the 2011-12 financial year, the master plan was shifted into the 20-year master plan for development of border areas.

Such a master plan lasts from 2011-12 financial year to 2030-31 fiscal year.

Up to January 31 2022 of the 2021-22 financial year, a total of 4,896 small and large bridges have been built across the

nation, including 358 bridges of more than 100 feet in length and 4,372 bridges under the 100 feet in length and 166 suspension bridges.

During the period, the ministry built more than 10,303 miles long earthen roads, 7,207 miles long gravel roads, more than 177 miles long laterite roads, over 3,175 miles long asphalt roads, more than 46 miles long repaved roads, more than 91 miles long concrete roads, 543 miles long expanded roads, 5,101 miles long renovated roads, 2,422 conduits and 5,736 culverts.—GNLM



A bridge is lying across a creek for smooth transportation.

Mdy Rural Development Dept ensures adequate water supply to villages in summer

APPROXIMATELY 14 villages in Mandalay Region is possible to face rural water scarcity this summer, according to a drought vulnerability survey. Mandalay Region Rural Development Department has taken necessary measures to distribute water to those vulnerable villages, said U Soe Than, the director of the department.

The drought vulnerability record indicated that 14 villages in eight townships might be affected by water scarcity in the summer, including two villages each in Myittha, Kyaukse, Kyaukpadaung, Mahlaing, Wundwin and Thazi and one each in TadaU and Meiktila townships.

“The survey showed that 14 villagers are at risk of drought. The wa-

ter distribution network at the nearest water source will be connected to those villages. Preparations to distribute water have been undertaken. Township development affairs organization, civil society organization, non-governmental organizations, the Department of General Administration and Myanmar Police Force will cooperate in this effort,” he explained.

The shortage of drinking water supply is the major crisis in those vulnerable villages. Furthermore, the department has declared the contact number for water shortage problems in other villages which is not listed in the survey. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Daily newspapers available online

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High domestic consumption hikes up chickpea prices

THE chickpeas supplied from various regions are abundantly flowing into the Mandalay market. The prices of chickpea are soaring on the back of strong domestic consumption, Mandalay traders stated.

The large volume of chickpeas from Kyaukse, Patheingyi, Madaya, Singu, Sagaing, Myinmu and Monywa are placed in the market. The prevailing prices of chickpea touched a high of K116,000 per three-basket bag whereas it fetched only K80,000 per bag during the year-ago period, according to the Soe Win Myint depot.

“Majority of Myanmar people prefer chickpea for its nutrients and rich taste. Chickpea curry is one of the dishes in the food donation as well. The high demand for chickpea in



Sample pulses and beans in bags are displayed at the brokerage.

the domestic market prompts all the mills in Mandalay to run, creating job opportunities for

residents. Additionally, those merchants are filling the inventory and the buyers from In-

dia are also purchasing them. The yield is pretty high this year due to good weather and

the peas are free from pests. The yield rate is expected to increase 10 per cent compared to those recorded in 2021,” he explained.

Chickpea is primarily cultivated in the upper Myanmar regions and it is also found in Bago Region in the lower Myanmar. Chickpeas (V2, V7 and 927 varieties) are commonly cultivated.

At present, the prices of beans and pulses stand at K121,000 per bag for black gram, K124,000 per bag for pigeon peas, K108,000 per bag for green gram, K142,000 per bag for kidney bean, K97,000 per bag for rice bean, and K3,300 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes) for peanut. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Myanmar exports 51 tonnes of silage corn to China



Farmers are checking silage corn plantations for systematic growth and prevention of

MYANMAR has exported 51 tonnes of silage corn to China, according to the Chinese Embassy in Yangon on 18 February.

The silage corns are legally permitted to export to China through the Chinshwehaw border checkpoint between Myanmar and China for the first time.

The silage corn, exported to China, are cut and stored, without being dried first, to feed cattle.

On 15 November, six Myanmar businessmen have completely registered to export silage corn to China in the Chinese’s General Administration of Customs China (GACC).

Besides, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (Myanmar) and The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People’s Republic of China signed together with an SPS protocol agreement on 31 January to legally export

Myanmar maize to China.

Regarding the agreement, Myanmar maize can be legally exported to China through maritime route and border route. It will boost legitimate agricultural trade between the two countries and bring benefits to local maize farmers.

SPS protocol is essential for the legal export of Myanmar’s agricultural products to China, the main trading partner.

Myanmar targeted to export around 2 million tonnes of corn in the 2021-22 financial year, said U Min Khaing, Chairman of the Myanmar Corn Industrial Association (MCIA).

Currently, Myanmar corns are exported to Thailand through the Myawady border, while the country is conveying corns to the Philippines, India, Viet Nam, Laos and Singapore through the sea route.

In addition, corn prices are on the rise this year compared

to the previous year.

This year, the corn seeds fetched a good price of US\$840-860 per tonne while the FOB corn was priced at \$270-290 per tonne.

Last 2020-2021FY, Myanmar exported around 2.3 million tonnes of corn to external countries, according to the association.

Of 2.3 million tonnes, Thailand is the largest importing country of Myanmar corn, whereas the remaining corn was conveyed to China, India and Viet Nam.

Myanmar is the second-largest exporter of corn among regional countries. At present, corn is cultivated in Shan, Kachin, Kayah and Kayin states and Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. Myanmar has three corn seasons – cold season, summer and monsoon.

The country yearly produces 2.5-3 million tonnes of corn. — NN/GNLM

Myanmar-Thai border trade surges by \$554 mln in current FY

MYANMAR-THAILAND border trade has increased by US\$554.38 million and stands at \$1.86 billion between 1 October and 11 February this mini-budget period, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

During this mini-budget period, exports made up \$1.22 billion, an increase of \$380 million with imports worth \$645.5 million, up to \$173.41 million. Last year, the bilateral border trade hit \$1.307 billion.

Myanmar is carrying out border trade with the neighbouring country Thailand through seven border posts – Tachilek, Myawady, Myeik, Mawtaung, Hteekhee, Kawthoung and Meisei respectively.

Myawady border trade accounted for the largest volume of trade with Thailand, followed by Hteekhee, according to the statistical report of the Ministry of Commerce. The country

exports agricultural, forest and animal products, minerals, manufactured goods and other miscellaneous products to neighbouring Thailand. Its imports include medicines, cosmetics, food and beverages, stationery, footwear, clothing, machinery and other commodities.

The bilateral trade between Myanmar and Thailand stood at \$3.26 billion in the FY2020-21 (as of July), \$5.1 billion in the FY2019-20, \$5.5 billion in the FY2018-19, \$2.9 billion in the mini-budget year of 2018 or transitional period from April to September this year, \$5 billion in the FY2017-18, \$4.3 billion in the FY2016-17, \$4.8 billion in the FY2015-16, \$5.7 billion in the FY2014-15, \$5.6 billion in the FY2013-14, \$4.7 billion in the FY2012-13 and \$4.5 billion in the FY2011-12, according to the Ministry of Commerce. — ACM/GNLM

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Israel sees Iran nuclear deal ‘shortly,’ warns it will be weaker

ISRAELI Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Sunday that Iran may “shortly” agree a new nuclear deal with major powers but warned it will be weaker than the original 2015 agreement.

Bennett was speaking ahead of a weekly cabinet meeting following indications that the outline of a deal was taking shape at talks in Vienna.

“We may see an agreement shortly,” Bennett said. “The new agreement that appears will be made is shorter and weaker than the previous one.”

The 2015 Iran nuclear agreement offered Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme, but the United States unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump and reimposed heavy economic sanctions.

Talks on reviving the initial pact, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have been held in the Austrian capital since late November, involving Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly and the United States indirectly.



Israeli PM Naftali Bennett. PHOTO: AFP

Bennett has been a staunch opponent of the JCPOA and repeatedly warned any revenue Tehran sees from

new sanctions relief will be used to purchase weapons that could harm Israelis.

“This money will eventually go to terrorism,” he reiterated Sunday.

Bennett has said Israel will not be bound by a restored agreement and will retain the freedom to act if Iran advances towards producing a nuclear weapon.

“We are organising and preparing for the day after, in all dimensions, so that we can maintain the security of the citizens of Israel on our own,” he told his cabinet. — AFP ■

Recordings of Colombian drug lord are stolen



Handout picture released on 24 October 2021 by the Colombian Police press office showing Colombia’s most-wanted drug lord and head of the Gulf Clan, Dairo Antonio Usuga (C) — alias ‘Otoniel’ —, after his capture in Bogota. PHOTO: COLOMBIAN POLICE / AFP

RECORDED confessions made by the man who was Colombia’s most wanted drug lord before his arrest have been stolen, in another blow to his latest trial, officials said Saturday.

The recordings of Dairo Antonio Usuga, also known as “Otoniel,” were made Wednesday by a member of the Truth Commission, the body investigating a decades-long conflict between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) that ended with a 2016 peace deal.

The commission reported that on February 18, “unidentified persons entered the investigator’s home at night,” according to a statement.

“In the incident... the digital recorders that were used in the interview and a computer were stolen,” it said.

The commission had already stressed Thursday the need to have “guarantees” that Otoniel’s testimonies were received “in confidentiality,” after various media outlets reported police officers

were present during the interrogations.

Police interrupted a hearing for Otoniel Thursday, arguing there were concerns he was planning to escape.

The Truth Commission also asked authorities and the international community, including the United Nations, for conditions to continue investigating “without intimidation.”

Usuga, 50, was arrested in October in northwest Colombia’s dense jungle during an operation involving some 700 uniformed agents backed by 18 helicopters.

The government of conservative Ivan Duque has expressed its intention that he be extradited soon to the United States, where he is wanted on drug trafficking charges.

Otoniel has been convicted in Colombia on charges including drug trafficking, homicide, terrorism, recruitment of minors and kidnapping. He led the Clan del Golfo, Colombia’s largest drug gang, which exports some 300 tons of cocaine annually, according to official data. — AFP ■

UK says Russia could start Europe’s ‘biggest war since 1945’

RUSSIA is preparing to plunge Europe into its worst conflict since World War II, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said, warning that any invasion of Ukraine would freeze Moscow out of global finance.

“The fact is that all the signs are that the plan has already in some senses begun,” he said in a BBC interview broadcast Sunday from the Munich Security Conference, after two Ukrainian soldiers were killed in attacks around rebel-held enclaves.

Russian invasion plans would see its troops not just enter Ukraine from the rebel-held east, but from Belarus to the north and encircle the capital Kyiv, Johnson said, citing US intelligence relayed to Western leaders by President Joe Biden.

“People need to understand the sheer cost in human life that could entail,” he said, after previously indicating that the West

would continue to support any Ukraine resistance after an invasion.

“I’m afraid to say that the plan we are seeing is for something that could be really the biggest war in Europe since 1945, just in terms of sheer scale.”

In a speech Saturday to the conference in Germany, Johnson warned that Western sanctions in response to any invasion would make it “impossible” for President Vladimir Putin’s regime to access the City of London’s deep capital markets.

He indicated a global reach for the sanctions also involving US measures, telling the BBC that they would stop Russian companies “trading in pounds and dollars” — which he said would hit Russia “very, very hard”.

The UK government has long been accused of turning a blind eye to lucrative flows of

Russian-sourced money through London, some of which has ended up in Conservative coffers, although Johnson’s party says all its donations are legal.

The Sunday Times newspaper reported a list of elite party donors which it said had privileged access to Johnson’s government, including Lubov Chernukhin, who is married to Putin’s former deputy finance minister Vladimir Chernukhin.

Amid accusations that the Putin regime has vast wealth hidden abroad, British law on company and property ownership has also long benefited investors who want to keep their involvement a secret.

But Johnson said Saturday that Britain intended to “open up the Matryoshka dolls of Russian-owned companies and Russian-owned entities, to find the ultimate beneficiaries within”. — AFP ■



People evacuated from the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic. A Russian region bordering Ukraine declared a state of emergency on 19 February 2022, citing growing numbers of people arriving from separatist-held regions in Ukraine after they received evacuation orders. PHOTO: RUSSIAN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS MINISTRY /AFP

Nurture children provided with child literature

THE best way to save the children from the mobile phone trap is to initiate them to raise their reading habits. But it is necessary to create the environs for children to happily join the reading practice.

In this regard, child literature is the most appropriate for those children to taste the reading. The child literature comprises two kinds of presentation for only text and the next one is combined with pictures and text which are attractive to the children.

To raise the reading habit of children, it is necessary to improve the child literature genre in the literary arena. Writers need to create works that must be more appropriate for the reader children.

As literature can nurture children to become good and able citizens since their childhood, the improvement of child literature is crucial for all participants in the literary arena because all the people have new generations in their families. Holding up the compassion, they have to create excellent children literature for reader children.

knowledge from the literary arena.

As literature can nurture children to become good and able citizens since their childhood, the improvement of child literature is crucial for all participants in the literary arena because all the people have new generations in their families. Holding up the compassion, they have to create excellent children literature for reader children.

The child will be an adult in the future. Their immature critical thinking must be trained to become mature. It is because they shall polish the future of the nation to be brighter and brighter.



The works must support immature critical thinking to be mature. Stories, myths, performances of heroes and experiences in childhood can catch the interest of children.

Currently, various kinds of cartoons, series of stories, journals and publications representing the life of children come out in the literary arena. Moreover, the poems portraying the lives of children are suitable for reader children. All these works must have a single vision for children as “doing good deeds in life and doing righteousness along with their lifespans” and “doing misdeeds shall face same consequences”.

Parents and guardians need to provide good child literature for the children to easily read them. Schools need to establish libraries for lending books to school-children to seek knowledge from literature at their level as much as possible.

Authors should create better and better stories for children. They have to create good stories luring the children to the creative worlds based on the literature. Knowledge in the appropriate content must be disseminated to the children. Depending on their absorbing capacity, the children themselves will widen their scopes for searching the

China helps virus-ravaged Hong Kong build isolation units

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



Epidemiologists visit the Contact Tracing Office under the Communicable Disease Branch of the Center for Health Protection of the Department of Health of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government in south China's Hong Kong, 19 February 2022. PHOTO: INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HKSAR/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA

CONSTRUCTION crews from mainland China were helping Hong Kong build two temporary isolation facilities to house thousands of coronavirus patients on Sunday as a senior official declared the city “in full combat mode”.

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

A strict zero-Covid policy like China uses kept infections at bay

for two years but left the city cut off internationally.

And when the highly transmissible Omicron variant broke through, authorities were caught flat-footed with a dangerously under-vaccinated elderly population and few plans in place to deal with a mass outbreak.

Late Saturday city leader Carrie Lam announced that China State Construction International Holdings, the largest state-owned constructor in Hong Kong, would start work on two temporary isolation facilities to provide 9,500

extra beds.

Located at Penny's Bay

The units will be located at Penny's Bay, which already hosts a quarantine camp, and in Kai Tak where the city's old airport once stood.

Lam also announced that three hotels would be used to create an additional 20,000 beds.

Chief Secretary John Lee, Hong Kong's number two official, wrote on his official blog on Sunday that the city's government was in “full combat mode”.

“With our motherland's strong support, we will definitely win the battle,” Lee wrote.

The sudden flurry of activity came after Chinese President Xi Jinping ordered Hong Kong to make tackling the outbreak its “overriding mission” in comments that were seen as something of a rebuke to the city's leadership.

It is not yet clear when the new facilities will be ready and whether they will be enough given Hong Kong's spiralling caseload.

Under China's direction, Hong Kong is sticking to a policy of trying to isolate everyone who tests positive for the coronavirus and has rejected calls to shift to a strategy of living with Covid.

Over the last few days officials have announced around 6,000 confirmed cases daily with a similar number of “preliminary positives” that still need to be certified.

About 22,000 cases

About 22,000 cases have been recorded since the current outbreak hit last month compared to just 12,000 in the two years before that.

Some hospitals have had to house patients on gurneys outdoors in grim winter conditions while thousands are still waiting at home in the city's notoriously

small apartments with positive test results.

Ben Cowling, a coronavirus expert at the University of Hong Kong, said isolation facilities would be useful but increasing hospital beds must be a priority.

“New cases needing admission will continue to accumulate faster than beds are freed up, and delays to admission will get longer and longer,” Cowling wrote on Twitter.

“Construction of isolation facilities for mild/asymptomatic cases will be useful for people that can't isolate at home... but increasing hospital beds and ICU beds must be a priority.”

Lam announced plans on Friday to test Hong Kong's entire 7.5 million population by some point in March, when modellers predict the daily caseload could reach 28,000.

She has ruled out the kind of hard lockdown that China has used to stamp out smaller outbreaks.

How Prepared Were They?

The extremely contagious Omicron variant was first discovered within Hong Kong's local community in late December – far later than much of the rest of the world.

Authorities reacted quick-

ly – banning flights, forbidding gatherings of more than two, and launching a mass hamster cull after coronavirus-positive pet store rodents were discovered.

But these measures did little to curb Omicron's spread.

As of Friday, Hong Kong had recorded more than 20,200 infections in less than two months – outstripping its cumulative two-year total of about 12,000.

City leader Carrie Lam admitted this week the fifth wave had “dealt a heavy blow”, and by Friday announced a postponement to the planned March selection of Hong Kong's next chief executive.

The government is now scrambling to find a place to build a makeshift mega-hospital while seeking the mainland's help with testing capacity and the speedy construction of quarantine facilities.

“I don't think (the government) was ever really prepared for an outbreak of this scale,” Karen Grepin from the University of Hong Kong's School of Public Health said.

“Our strategy to fight COVID really never evolved despite the fact that the virus... has become much more transmissible.”

SOURCE: AFP
■ ■ ■

Study: COVID-19, lockdowns led to drop in digital music streaming

THOUGH music has the power to set our mood for anything, however, recent research has revealed that music streaming services were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was published in the INFORMS journal, ‘Marketing Science’.

The research found that the drop in peoples' mobility during the pandemic significantly reduced the consumption of audio music streaming. Instead, people turned more to video platforms.

Audio music consumption

“On average, audio music

consumption decreased by more than 12% after the World Health Organization (WHO) pandemic declaration on March 11, 2020. As a result, during the pandemic, Spotify lost \$838 million of revenue in the first three quarters of 2020,” said Jaeung Sim of Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST).

“Our results show that human mobility plays a much larger role in the audio consumption of music than previously thought.”

The study, ‘Virus Shook the Streaming Star: Estimating the COVID-19 Impact on Music Consumption,’ conducted by

Sim alongside Daegon Cho also of KAIST, Youngdeok Hwang of City University of New York and Rahul Telang of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), looked at online music streaming data for top songs for two years in 60 countries, as well as COVID-19 case and lockdown statistics and daily mobility data, to determine the nature of the changes.

Common expectation

“Despite the common expectation that the pandemic would universally benefit online media platforms, we found that it adversely impacted music stream-

ing services,” said Telang of Heinz College at CMU. “Our findings imply that the substantially changing media consumption environment can put streaming music in a fiercer competition against other media forms that offer more dynamic and vivid experiences to consumers.” The researchers found that music consumption through video platforms was positively associated with the severity of COVID-19, lockdown policies and time spent at home.

SOURCE: ANI



The research found that the drop in peoples' mobility during the pandemic significantly reduced the consumption of audio music streaming. Instead, people turned more to video platforms. PHOTO: SIASAT.COM/ANI



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 20 February 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 21 February 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Taninthayi Region, scattered in Kachin, Eastern Shan and Chin States and isolated in Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and (Northern and Southern) Shan, Rakhine, Kayin, 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 scattered to fairly widespread rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, (Northern and Eastern) Shan, Chin States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 February 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 February 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 February 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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NEWS
IN BRIEFAussie researchers
reveal dark side of
happiness

AN international survey completed by a team of Australian and international researchers has revealed that people in countries with higher rates of happiness feel greater societal pressure to be happy.

The study, published in the Scientific Reports journal and released to the public on Friday, measured some 7,443 responses from individuals across 40 countries against their countries' rates of happiness, as measured by the World Happiness Index.

Senior author of the paper and Professor in Psychology at Melbourne University Brock Bastian told Xinhua the somewhat counter-intuitive findings show that overall happiness can have detrimental effects on those who are not part of the happy majority. "Yes, overall these countries (with higher happiness indexes) are happier, but for some people, that actually exacerbates a certain pressure to maintain happiness, and the damage can actually be counterproductive." — Xinhua ■

Musk donates
satellite gear to
reconnect Tonga

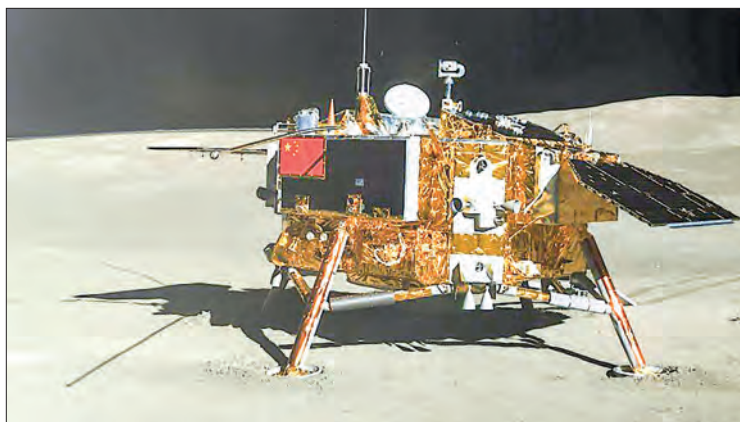
TONGA says space entrepreneur and Tesla founder Elon Musk has donated 50 satellite terminals to help the volcano-damaged Pacific island reconnect with the world.

Tonga's telecommunications system has been severely restricted since January 15 when a violent volcanic eruption and tsunami severed its underwater fibre-optic cable.

Musk's Space X corporation is providing 50 very-small-aperture terminals (VSAT) "and we are looking at how we can best utilize it," Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni said Friday.

The tiny South Pacific kingdom was also considering offers to increase Tonga's internet capacity, which has been operating on a very small bandwidth since the cable was broken. "It's something we are testing right now," he said. Technical staff from SpaceX and the Tonga Government were working on installing the equipment to have it operational from next week. — AFP ■

China's Chang'e-4 discovers glass globules on far side of moon



An image of the lander of Chang'e-4 probe. PHOTO: CFP/XINHUA

THE Yutu-2 lunar rover of China's Chang'e-4 mission has discovered two macroscopic trans-

lucent glass globules during its exploration of the far side of the moon, which could potentially

help reveal the moon's early impact history.

According to a study published in Science Bulletin, the Yutu-2 rover captured images of two translucent globules using its panoramic camera.

No composition data has been obtained for the globules. But their unique morphology and local context suggest they are most likely impact glasses — quenched anorthositic impact melts produced during cratering events — rather than being of volcanic origin or delivered from other planetary bodies, the

researchers said.

Lunar anorthosite is a major rock of the lunar highlands, which formed in the lunar magma ocean.

The researchers said the globules are different from the glass beads sampled by the Apollo missions, as they are larger in size and exhibit colors.

They predicted that the glass globules would be abundant across the lunar highlands, providing promising sampling targets that could reveal the early impact history of the moon. — Xinhua ■

Ethiopia to start generating power from Nile dam Sunday

ETHIOPIA will start generating power from its mega-dam on the Blue Nile on Sunday, government officials told AFP, a major milestone for the controversial project.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), set to be the largest hydroelectric scheme in Africa, has been at the centre of a regional dispute ever since Ethiopia broke ground there in 2011. "Tomorrow will be the first energy generation of the dam," an Ethiopian government official said on Saturday.

A second official confirmed the information. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because the development has not been officially announced. Ethiopia's downstream neighbours Egypt and Sudan view the dam as a threat because of their dependence on Nile waters, while Addis



The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has been at the centre of a regional dispute for more than a decade. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Ababa deems it essential for its electrification and development.

There was no immediate response from Cairo or Khartoum, which have been pressing Ethiopia to sign a binding agreement

on the filling and operation of the dam ever since work first started.

The three governments have held multiple rounds of talks, but so far there has been no sign of any breakthrough.

The \$4.2-billion (3.7-billion-euro) project is ultimately expected to produce more than 5,000 megawatts of electricity, more than doubling Ethiopia's electricity output. — Xinhua ■

Namibia observes World Pangolin Day, striving for raising awareness on saving endangered scaly mammal

NAMIBIA has recorded a total of 320 cases of crimes involving pangolins in the last five years since 2017, a government official said Saturday as the country celebrated World Pangolin Day.

The figures consisted of 43

cases in 2017, 62 in 2018, 96 in 2019, 59 in 2020 and 60 in 2021, said Romeo Muyunda, the spokesperson for the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, in a statement.

"Authorities have confiscated

1,505 pangolin products which include 15 carcasses; 81 live animals, 193 skins; 6 skin pieces and 1,210 scales from suspects. We have since intensified our efforts against wildlife crimes including those committed against pangolins in Namibia," he said.

According to Muyunda, the ministry has formed alliances and collaborations with key stakeholders including civil organizations, law enforcement agencies, private sector institutions and members of the public.

"Because of this collaboration coupled with other measures put in place against pangolin crimes, 592 suspects have been apprehended since 2017. Together with other partner organizations and institutions, we have set up a reward scheme for

information leading to the arrest of people catching, killing, trading and trafficking pangolins," he said. Muyunda said members of the public are encouraged to aid authorities in catching culprits involved in pangolin crimes, not necessarily for the reward, but for the protection and preservation of this species. "If someone is in possession of any of these products and they are found guilty by a court in Namibia, then they are liable for a fine of up to 15 million Namibia dollars (991,938 U.S. dollars) or imprisonment for up to 15 years, or both a fine and imprisonment up to the stated amounts. Perpetrators are therefore cautioned to stop crimes against pangolins or risk being caught to face the full wrath of our law," he added. — Xinhua ■



Pangolin replica products are displayed during an event to raise awareness on saving pangolin in Windhoek, Namibia, on 19 February, 2022. PHOTO: MUSA C KASEKE/XINHUA

India opens biosafety level-3 lab for detecting, containing pathogen outbreaks

INDIA has opened a biosafety level-3 (BSL-3) mobile laboratory to facilitate early detection and quick containment of highly infectious pathogens during outbreaks, a statement by the country's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said Friday.

In view of repeated outbreaks of highly infectious pathogens like Nipah, Zika, Avian influenza and now COVID-19, the mobile laboratory, the first in the country, is critical to be able to detect the emerging epidemics/pandemics at a very early stage, the ministry's statement said.

The mobile Lab in Nashik, 167 km from Mumbai, will help

in real-time data collection and prevent further spread of any emerging viral infections, said Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Bharati Pravin Pawar at the inauguration of the laboratory.

The need for such lab was felt during the Nipah virus outbreak in the country's southern state of Kerala and samples had to be transported to the National Institute of Virology located in Pune in the western state of Maharashtra, said Balram Bhargav, director-general of Indian Council of Medical Research, the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and



Biosafety Level-3 Mobile Lab. PHOTO: ANI

promotion of biomedical research.

"Such mobile Laboratories can be stationed at different re-

gions of the country and may be mobilized in case of sudden outbreaks," Bhargav said at the inauguration.

Built at a cost of about 3.35 million U.S. dollars, the self-sufficient laboratory is airtight, access-controlled, bio decontaminable, fitted with safe change HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Absorbing) filtration and biological liquid waste decontamination system.

The lab is controlled through an intelligent control automation system, which maintains the working environment under negative air pressure, the statement said. — Xinhua ■

Europe, Africa to work out solution for more equitable COVID vaccine access by spring



BioNTech employees in cleanroom suits test the procedures for the manufacturing of the vaccine. PHOTO: AFP

THE executive arms of the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) will address differences and work out a solution for a more equitable access to

COVID-19 vaccines by this spring, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said on Friday.

"We share the same goal.

We have different ways to reach that goal. There must be a bridge between those two ways," she told a press conference that concluded the sixth EU-AU summit in Brussels.

The commissions of the two unions will organize a College-to-College meeting in Brussels in spring to deliver a solution, she said. Leaders from the two continents held the summit on Thursday and Friday, and the talks were featured by a "good, intense, constructive" discussion on the question of TRIPS (Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights) waiver and compulsory licensing, according to von der Leyen. — Xinhua ■

US children's mental health crisis worse during COVID-19: CDC studies

AMERICAN children's mental health crisis has gotten worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to two new studies published by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday.

Both studies examined pediatric emergency department (ED) visits data from 2019 through January 2022.

One study showed COVID-19-related ED visits increased across all pandemic years and among pediatric age groups.

There were also increases in the weekly number and proportion of ED visits for certain types of injuries, some chronic diseases, and visits related to behavioral health concerns, especially among children aged from 5 to 17.



Students line up in the morning at Yung Wing School on 27 September 2021 in New York City. PHOTO: AFP

The other study showed that adolescent females may have experienced the largest overall increase in distress. During the pandemic, the proportion of ED visits for eating disorders doubled and tic disorders more than tripled in this group.

Adolescent females also

visited the ED more often, for an increasingly wider variety of mental health conditions. Such conditions can be triggered by pandemic-related risk factors and made worse by pandemic-related reduced access to mental health care, according to the CDC. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indonesia reports 59,384 newly-confirmed COVID-19 cases, 158 more deaths

INDONESIA confirmed 59,384 new COVID-19 cases on Saturday, raising its tally of infections to 5,149,021, the country's health ministry said.

According to the ministry, the death toll from COVID-19 in the country rose by 158 to 146,202, while 34,699 more people recovered during the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of recoveries to 4,481,909. As the Indonesian government is accelerating its national vaccination programs to curb the spread of the virus, more than 189.53 million people have received their first doses of vaccines, while over 139.94 million have taken the second doses.

Indonesia started mass COVID-19 vaccinations in January last year after the authorities approved the emergency use of the Chinese Sinovac vaccine. — Xinhua ■

India vaccinates over 80 pct of adult population against COVID-19

INDIA has vaccinated over 80 percent of its adult population with both doses against COVID-19, said federal Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday. "India is fast moving towards achieving the target of 100 percent vaccination," the health minister tweeted.

According to the official data released by the federal health ministry on Friday morning, more than 1.7 billion vaccine doses had been administered till Thursday evening. Meanwhile, the country'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, according to the federal health ministry. — Xinhua ■

New study: Increased risk of mental health disorder after Covid

A STUDY PUBLISHED this week in the British Medical Journal finds infection from Covid-19 leads to a significantly increased risk of developing new mental health disorders.

The researchers looked at over 153,000 Covid-positive patients in the US Veterans Affairs health system from March 2020 to January 2021 and compared them with other health records.

More than 18% of Covid patients developed mental health problems, compared with 12% of those who did not contract Covid.

The risk of developing cognitive problems, sleep disorders, depression, anxiety, stress and opioid use disorder were all substantially higher for Covid patients than individuals who did not have the disease.

Speaking to The Guardian, senior author Ziyad Al-Aly said: "This is basically telling us that millions and millions of people in the US infected with Covid are developing mental health problems... That makes us a nation in distress." — AFP ■

Washington has to adjust its economic structure to reduce trade deficits: expert

THE US government's approach to deal with trade deficits has failed and the country has to make big adjustments in its economic structure, a renowned US economist has said.

"You can't fix your deficit problem by going after your largest deficit trading partner. It didn't work with Japan. It's not working with China," Stephen Roach, a senior fellow at Yale University's Jackson Institute of Global Affairs, said Wednesday at an online dialogue organized by the Asia Society, a non-profit New York-based institution.

The United States had trade deficits with more than 100 countries in 2021, which reflects the lack of domestic savings but not the alleged unfair trading practice of its trading partners, Roach



A container delivery truck passes containers stacked at the Port of Long Beach in Long Beach, California. **PHOTO: FREDERIC J BROWN / AFP/FILE**

said.

The former chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia said he is very critical of the current ad-

ministration for staying with an approach that was doomed to failure, adding that there are better ways to address the trade issues.

"We fixate on China because it's an excuse for not getting our own house in order in terms of managing our budget deficits

over the long term, and boosting our national savings and making this less reliant on surplus savings from abroad and running massive current account and multilateral trade deficits to attract the capital. So we have created this problem. It's not China's fault," he said. To take unilateral actions as former US President Donald Trump did with China under the guise of "Making America Great Again," was "a non-starter," said Roach. "We always like a scapegoat. We're the victims. We have a victim complex ... We need someone to blame for our problems," Roach said. "It's high time that we recognize that we are on a dangerous path," and the United States needs to turn its attention to it before it's too late, the economist said. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan had IMF delete mention of coal in report on its economy

THE Japanese government had the International Monetary Fund delete a sentence on the country's apparent pledge to phase out support for overseas coal projects in a staff report released last month, government sources said.

The deletion was made at the request of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which places an emphasis on exports of coal-fired power plants.

The report, which details conclusions made by IMF staff at the end of an official visit to Japan, was released on Jan. 27 following online discussions between the international financial institution and the Japanese government.

The document contains analysis on recent economic developments and policies in Japan amid the novel coronavirus pandemic, as well as the outlook and risks for future recovery.

Under a section titled "Shifting to a Low-carbon Economy," an initial draft obtained by Kyodo News included a passage that said the Japanese government, based on an agreement reached at the Group of Seven summit last June, had pledged to end new financing for coal-fired projects that lack measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"While the Japanese government pledged to end new unabated coal financing, ending exceptions from the pledge and phasing out of existing commitments to support coal projects abroad would further contribute to the global efforts on climate policy," the draft said. In the document that was actually released, however, there was no mention of ending support for coal. — Kyodo News ■

Cuba unveils food security plan

CUBA on Friday unveiled a national program for food security, including increasing production to reduce its reliance on imports.

"We are taking steps towards developing the agricultural sector amid the intensification of the U.S. blockade against Cuba, the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of climate change on the island," Agriculture Minister Irael Perez said.

"By doing so, we are making a strategic contribution to the country's national security," he added. The program is expected to be presented to the parliament for debate later this year.

The island nation, home to 11.2 million people, imports over 60 percent of the food it consumes, according to official statistics. — Xinhua ■

Lebanon's 'zombie banks' downsize to weather crisis

ONCE the economy's crown jewel, Lebanon's banks are shutting branches and laying off employees in droves, resizing to the bleak reality of a crisis they are widely blamed for.

Before the onset in 2019 of a financial collapse deemed one of the world's worst since the 1850s by the World Bank, the small Mediterranean country had an oversized but prosperous banking sector. The capital Beirut was a booming regional financial hub, attracting savers keen to profit from high interest rates and banking secrecy laws.

But more than two years into the crisis, the reputation of Lebanese lenders has been shredded.

A dizzying currency collapse, coupled with banks imposing strict withdrawal limits and pro-



Customers outside a bank branch of Societe Generale de Banque au Liban. **PHOTO: AFP/JOSEPH EID**

hibiting transfers abroad, has left ordinary depositors watching on helplessly as their savings evaporate.

And yet bankers stand accused of bypassing those exact same capital controls — stoking

the crisis by helping the political elite squirrel billions of dollars overseas. Their trust destroyed, citizens now keep new income well away from the banks, which in turn are deprived of money they could lend. — AFP ■

With weak lira, Turkey woos foreign firms



People buy fruits and vegetables at a shop in Istanbul, Turkey, 11 February, 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA/SHADAT**

THERE is a silver lining to Turkey's currency crisis and the global supply chain crunch: The country is becoming an attrac-

tive alternative at the gates of Europe for foreign firms.

Turkey is seizing on its geographic advantage to woo

companies as the skyrocketing cost of sea freight and pandemic-related disruptions to supply chains push some European companies to reduce their dependence on Asia.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose policies have contributed to the lira's plunge, has promoted a new slogan for exports: "Made in Türkiye", using the country's language instead of the internationally-known "Made in Turkey". But his vision must overcome concerns about Ankara's complicated relationship with the European Union, the independence of the judiciary and political uncertainty ahead of elections next year. — AFP ■

Chinese battery giant launches 2.8-bln-yuan project in Shanghai

CONTEMPORARY Amperex Technology Co, Ltd (CATL), China's leading automotive lithium-ion battery maker, began construction for two new projects in the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone on Saturday, the company has said.

With a total investment of 2.8 billion yuan (about 443 million US dollars), the projects will be based in the zone's Lin-gang Special Area.

Projects related to batteries and smart technology will include workshops, raw material and finished goods warehouses, and a research and development office building, with a total floor area of about 350,000 square meters.

CATL aims to build green, efficient and smart



An engineer tests products at Contemporary Amperex Technology Co, Ltd in Ningde, southeast China's Fujian Province, 10 September 2019. PHOTO: XINHUA/LIN

factories in Lin-gang and upgrade key technologies in the industry, said senior CATL executive Qu Tao.

In 2021, CATL's installed power battery

capacity reached 97 gigawatt-hours, surging 168 percent year on year, with its global market share reaching 33 percent, according to statistics from market research firm

SNE Research. The projects will be completed and put into operation within one year, said Lin-gang Special Area official Wu Xiaohua. — Xinhua ■

Luxury sector undaunted by Covid, soaring inflation



Luxury good makers can respond to inflation by hiking their prices and actually look more desirable to their customers. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

THE pandemic and soaring inflation have done nothing to take the shine off luxury brands, from Louis Vuitton to Gucci and Cartier, as the sector hiked prices to notch up stellar profits.

The world economy began to recover from the pandemic last year but the rebound has been accompanied by rising inflation, with prices for raw materials and energy soaring.

But luxury good makers can respond by hiking their prices and actually look more desirable to their customers.

"Our advantage over many other companies and groups is a certain price flexibility, ie we have

the means to react to inflation," LVMH chief executive Bernard Arnault told reporters.

UBS analysts estimate that top brands such as Louis Vuitton, which is owned by industry leader LVMH, have raised their prices two-and-a-half times higher than the inflation rate over the past 20 years.

Indeed, "pricing power remains one of the key characteristics of the luxury goods industry," UBS analysts wrote in a research note.

LVMH bagged a record 64 billion euros (\$72 billion) in sales and 12 billion euros in net profit last year, both exceeding pre-pandemic

levels. The French company also owns a broad range of spirits, perfume, jewellery and cosmetics products.

'Less susceptible' to rising costs

Kering — which owns Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent — also beat its pre-Covid levels to book a net profit of 3.2 billion euros on sales of 17.6 billion euros, the group reported on Thursday.

Kering CEO Francois-Henri Pinault acknowledged that "for every new season, we create a new collection and we review all the price matrices." — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Annual global chip sales top \$500 bil for 1st time in 2021

ANNUAL global semiconductor sales topped \$500 billion for the first time in 2021, as chipmakers ramped up production to cope with the global supply crunch exacerbated by a rapid economic recovery from the pandemic, an industry body said.

Sales totaled a record \$555.9 billion last year, up 26.2 percent from \$440.4 billion in 2020, as the industry shipped an all-time high of 1.15 trillion units, the Semiconductor Industry Association said in a recent report.

Chip demand is expected to continue to grow for use in autos, computer game consoles and network and mobile equipment, among other consumer and industrial products.

"In 2021, amid the ongoing global chip shortage, semiconductor companies substantially ramped up production to unprecedented levels to address persistently high demand, resulting in record chip sales and units shipped," John Neuffer, SIA president and CEO, said in the report. — Kyodo News ■

Textiles fan inflation fears amid London Fashion Week

TEXTILE prices, like many raw materials, are soaring on resurgent post-pandemic demand and the rocketing cost of both energy and transport, industry experts say.

Cotton, linen, silk and wool, as well as synthetic materials derived from petroleum, faced surging prices in recent months, boosted also by the global supply-chain crunch.

As a result, red-hot inflation is now a major talking point at the industry's London Fashion Week showpiece, which runs until Thursday. — AFP ■

Somali leaders reject 'illegal' oil deal with US company

SOMALIA'S president and premier have declared null and void a deal signed by their energy minister with a US company to explore for oil and gas off the coast of the troubled Horn of Africa nation.

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Abdirashid Mohamed Ahmed and Coastline Exploration Ltd had announced on Saturday seven production sharing agreements (PSAs) covering deep water offshore blocks.

Ahmed hailed it as a "huge moment" for Somalia, one of the poorest countries in the world, which is in the grip of a political crisis over long-delayed elections and also battling a jihadist insurgency. — AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PANJA BHUM VOY.NO. (186W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V PANJA BHUM VOY.NO. (186W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **21-2-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** 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.

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Shipping Agency Department
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M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

Russian troops ‘poised to strike’ Ukraine: US defence chief

RUSSIAN troops on Ukraine’s border are “uncoiling” and “poised to strike”, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Saturday during a visit to Lithuania.

“They are uncoiling and are now poised to strike,” he said, adding that troops were “moving into the right kinds of positions to be able to conduct an attack”.

But he said conflict was “not inevitable”, adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin “can choose a different path”.

“The US, in lockstep with our allies and partners, have offered him an opportunity to pursue a diplomatic solution. We hope that he takes it. We hope that he steps back from the brink of conflict.”

Austin said he agreed with US President Joe Biden that



Ukrainian service members conduct artillery and anti-aircraft drills near the border with Russian-annexed Crimea on 28 January . PHOTO: PRESS SERVICE OF THE JOINT FORCES OPERATION/HANDOUT/AFP

Putin had “made the decision” to invade. “There are significant combat forces forward, those forces are now beginning to uncoil and move closer to the border, that facilitates their onward movement,” he said. “Having done this before,

I can tell you that is exactly what you need to attack and the stance that you need to be in to attack,” said Austin, who served as US commander in Iraq.

Austin also assured the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that the US “stands with our allies” and its commitment to NATO’s collective defence was “iron-clad”.

The current security tensions in the region have rattled the formerly Soviet-ruled Baltic states, which all have borders with Russia.

Alongside Austin, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said the Russian troop build-up around Ukraine was “a direct military threat to Ukraine but it also poses a threat to the entire region”. — AFP ■

Over 200 sci-tech results serve Beijing Winter Olympics

MORE than 200 sci-tech developments have been used to support the Beijing Winter Olympics, a Chinese official said at a press briefing on Wednesday.

In excess of 10,000 researchers from more than 500 teams are behind the over 200 developments rolled out to support Winter Olympics-related events, said Zhu Xuehua, an official with China’s Ministry of Science and Technology.

One of the highlights of efforts to host a green Winter Olympics is its sci-tech features, said Yu Hong, an official with the Beijing 2022 organizing committee technical team.

According to Yu, the ice sur-

face of the National Speed Skating Oval and the Capital Indoor Stadium are both made with a carbon dioxide transcritical direct cooling ice machine system, which uses energy more efficiently than conventional refrigerants.

Moreover, the competition zones in Yanqing and Zhangjiakou are serviced by hydrogen-fueled buses, providing transport for teams and support staff, Yu said, adding that all venues for Beijing Winter Olympics are supplied with 100 percent green power.

Zhu said that sci-tech accomplishments not only support the ongoing Beijing Winter



Staff members at the National Stadium in Beijing are attracted by a robot powered by artificial intelligence that cleans and disinfects Olympic venues. PHOTO: XINHUA

Olympics but, in the future, they can also play a positive role in high-quality economic and social development. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

NATO moves Ukraine staff from Kyiv to Lviv and Brussels

NATO is relocating staff from Ukraine’s capital Kyiv to Lviv, in the west of the country, and to the Belgian capital Brussels for their safety, an alliance official said Saturday. “The safety of our personnel is paramount, so staff have been relocated to Lviv and Brussels. The NATO offices in Ukraine remain operational,” the official told AFP, without giving numbers. Ukraine is not a member of NATO, and the alliance does not have any forces there. — AFP ■

French first lady sues two women over trans claims



Brigitte Macron, France’s first lady, has filed a lawsuit against two women who claimed she was transsexual, sparking a wave of online rumour-mongering weeks ahead of her husband’s expected re-election campaign. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

BRIGITTE Macron, France’s first lady, has filed a lawsuit against two women who

claimed she was transsexual, sparking a wave of online rumour-mongering weeks ahead

of her husband’s expected re-election campaign, a legal source said Friday.

A first hearing in the case has been set for June 15 in Paris on claims of a violation of privacy and fundamental personal rights, and illicit use of her image.

A lawyer for Brigitte Macron declined to comment on the suit that was first reported by M6 television, which said it was co-filed by Brigitte Macron’s three children from a previous marriage as well as her brother.

In recent months messages have multiplied on social media claiming that the first lady, formerly Brigitte Trogneux, is a trans woman whose name at birth was Jean-Michel.

The two women targeted in the lawsuit, one a self-proclaimed spiritual medium and the other an independent journalist, posted the rumour along with pictures of the first lady and her family on YouTube in December.

The post coincided with a surge in the hashtag #Jean-MichelTrogneux on Twitter and other networks.

Emmanuel Macron’s relationship with his wife 24 years his senior, whom he met while she was a teacher and he was still a teenager, has been a source of media attention in France and abroad. — AFP ■

Violence in Sudan’s Darfur lays bare deepening crisis

ATTACKS on UN facilities, a surge in tribal clashes, lootings, rape, and anti-coup protests — Sudan’s Darfur region is reeling from a widening security gap after last year’s coup. Sudan is one of the world’s poorest countries but the vast, arid Darfur region has for years suffered more than its share of the nation’s challenges. When a coup took place in October hundreds of kilometres (miles) away in the capital Khartoum, Darfur was still reeling from the legacy of a conflict that broke out under former strongman Omar al-Bashir in 2003, and which left hundreds of thousands dead. — AFP ■

Macron and Putin to talk as front line grows more volatile

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that his country was a “shield” against Russia and deserved more support in the face of a feared Russian invasion, as Moscow test-fired nuclear-capable missiles in a defiant show of force.

French President Emmanuel Macron will call Russia’s Vladimir Putin on Sunday to try to avert what Western powers predict will be an imminent invasion of Ukraine.

Over the weekend, civilians were evacuated from increasingly barraged front line regions where Kyiv said Saturday two of its soldiers had died in an attack — the first fatalities in the conflict in more than a month.

The Kremlin insists it has no incursion plans, but its test-firing of nuclear-capable missiles Saturday did little to alleviate tensions.

“Every indication indicates that Russia is planning a full-fledged attack against Ukraine,” NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said.

US President Joe Biden, who earlier said he was “convinced” Russia would invade in the coming days, is convening a rare Sunday National Security Council meeting over the crisis.

US and EU officials have said they believe Moscow is attempting to fabricate a pretext for its offensive by having proxy outlets put out false information about violence in rebel-held en-



File photo of Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visiting positions of armed forces near the frontline with Russian-backed separatists in Donbass region, Ukraine 9 April 2021. **PHOTO: UKRAINIAN PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SERVICE/HANDOUT/AFP/FILE**

claves in eastern Ukraine.

“Locals in Donetsk reported calm despite Russian claims of

a car bomb,” said US State Department spokesman Ned Price. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Brazil hits back at US barbs on Bolsonaro Russia trip

BRAZIL lashed out Saturday at US criticism of President Jair Bolsonaro’s recent trip to Russia, after Washington chided the far-right leader for visiting Vladimir Putin amid the escalating Ukraine crisis.

The Brazilian foreign ministry said it “regrets the tone” of statements Friday by White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, who said the visit had left Brazil looking isolated from the “vast majority of the global community.”

The United States tried to dissuade Bolsonaro from visiting Russia, which has been massing troops on Ukraine’s borders, triggering US warnings of an imminent invasion. But the Brazilian leader pressed ahead, meeting his Russian counterpart Wednesday and voicing Brazil’s “solidarity” with Russia. A day later, the US State Department issued a rare rebuke to Brazil, typically seen as an ally. — AFP ■

Tribal mediation fails to release kidnapped UN staff in Yemen

A mediation conducted by local tribal figures failed on Friday to release five United Nations staff kidnapped reportedly by gunmen in Yemen’s turbulent southern province of Abyan, a government official told Xinhua.

“Over the past few days, a high-ranking committee composed of local tribal figures conducted a series of negotiation rounds with an armed group for the aim of releasing the kidnapped UN staff in Abyan,” the local government source said on condition of anonymity.

“The tribal mediation efforts ended in deadlock ... because the kidnappers demand a ransom of 5 million US dollars ... while the UN officials and the local Yemeni authorities refuse to pay ransom for their release,” he added.

There are attempts to form a new mediation committee to conduct another round of negotiations with the kidnappers during the upcoming days, according to the official. — Xinhua ■

Australia commemorates 80 years since Japanese bombing of Darwin



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison heads to lay flowers at a memorial ceremony in Darwin as the northern Australian city on 19 February 2022 marked the 80th anniversary of a Japanese air raid that killed hundreds during World War II. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE northern Australian city of Darwin on Saturday marked the 80th anniversary of a Japanese air raid that killed hundreds during World War II.

The bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942, the first attack by Japanese forces on the Australian mainland, killed at least 250 people and destroyed

30 aircraft and nine ships.

“Eighty years ago, Australia and Japan faced off across a seemingly unbreachable divide,” said Darwin’s mayor Kon Vatskalis on the eve of the anniversary. “But time, good sense, and an improved appreciation of not just our differences but our similarities have healed those old wounds.” Prime Minister Scott Morrison echoed the sentiment on Saturday, recalling the quiet moment of reconciliation in November 2018 when he laid a wreath at the memorial alongside former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

“That enemy that inflicted such violence on this city and this nation, on this day, has now become one of our most trusted and loyal friends,” Morrison said. “Out of the suffering of war,

we have turned to each other in a spirit of reconciliation and respect.”

At 9:58 am, the sound of air raid sirens blared across the waterfront as members of the Australian Defense Force re-enacted the exact moment 188 Japanese aircraft flew over Darwin Harbor.

Cannons fired plumes of red smoke into the air, as army personnel simulated the Australian response to the Japanese air raid, returning fire using blanks while Royal Australian Airforce fighter aircraft flew by overhead.

Darwin’s strategic location on Australia’s northern edge, close to present-day Indonesia, along with a major military build-up since the mid-1930s made it a prime target for Japanese forces during the war. — Kyodo ■

Show of force in Ottawa as police clear main protest hub

POLICE in riot gear cleared the main protest hub in downtown Ottawa Saturday, using batons and pepper spray and making dozens of arrests, as they worked to flush out a hard core of demonstrators occupying the Canadian capital.

In a day-long show of force, hundreds of officers pushed into the city center — facing off in tense scenes with determined protesters who hurled gas canisters and smoke grenades at advancing police, linking arms and chanting “freedom.”

By the afternoon, police backed by tactical vehicles and overwatched by snipers had cleared Wellington Street in front of the Canadian parliament —



Protesters lock arms as a police line pushes forward in Ottawa, Canada. **PHOTO: AFP**

the epicenter of the trucker-led demonstrations that began almost a month ago over Covid-19

health rules.

Trucks were towed and tents, food stands and other structures

set up by the demonstrators were torn down. Ottawa interim police chief Steve Bell told a news conference “very important progress” had been made on day two of the operation to clear the protesters, though he cautioned it was “not over.” On side streets around the parliament, a police message boomed by loudspeaker urged die-hard demonstrators, “You must leave, (or) you will be arrested.”

A few hundred ignored the order, braving bone-chilling cold into the night while waving Canadian flags, setting off fireworks at a barricade and singing the 1980s rock anthem, “We’re Not Gonna Take It.” — AFP ■

I'm not shaving until I get my belt back: Aung La N Sang

AUNG LAN SANG admitted that he will not shave until his title is back, according to his statement on social media.

Aung La N Sang will fight against Vitaly Bigdash in a trilogy bout at ONE: Full Circle for a middleweight battle.

Their bout is important for challenging the championship belt next.

The Burmese Python said, "It doesn't matter whose next. I just want to keep competing and keep getting better. I want the belt back eventually, but it's up to ONE. I'm not shaving until I get my belt back, and my wife's getting pretty tired of my beard."

"I would say my wrestling. My wrestling has gotten better. I've become a little bit more athletic, I have better body awareness, and my striking is going to be better. I'm going to have



Aung La N Sang (left) takes his special training ahead of the ONE: Full Circle bout against Vitaly Bigdash to be held on 25 February in Singapore. **PHOTO: AUNG LA N SANG'S FACEBOOK PAGE**

a little more power than in my previous fight," Aung La N Sang added.

Both men now have their eyes set not only on regaining

their top position but also settling an old score. For these two reasons, this trilogy bout between the two hungry fighters is sure to fire at ONE: Full Circle. — GNLM

India to host IOC session next year for first time in 40 years



Nita Ambani, India's first woman member in the IOC, at the Winter Olympics in South Korea in 2018. **PHOTO: IOC/ANI /FILE**

INDIA won the right to host the 2023 International Olympic Committee's (IOC) session in Mumbai in an unopposed race during the 139th IOC session in Beijing on Saturday.

This will be the first time

in four decades and the second time overall that India hosts the IOC session after 1983 when it was last held in New Delhi. The Indian delegation, comprised of the country's first individual Olympic gold med-

allist (Beijing 2008, shooting) Abhinav Bindra, IOC member Nita Ambani, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president Narinder Batra, and Youth Affairs and Sports minister Anurag Singh Thakur, made the presentation to IOC members during the 139th IOC session, being held alongside the ongoing Winter Olympics in Beijing.

"It is truly an honour to lead the Indian delegation today and share our passion and our ambition for hosting such a prestigious Olympic event. This will be the first IOC session in India in 40 years," Ambani in a video statement said.

Ambani said India's next generation is brimming with a billion hopes.— Xinhua ■

Australia's Green makes golfing history with win in mixed-gender event

FORMER US LPGA champion Hannah Green made history Sunday by becoming the first woman to win a mixed-gender professional golf tournament with a dominant four-shot victory at the TPS Murray River event in Australia.

The world number 30 overcame gusty conditions and a host of chasing male rivals to shoot a closing five-under-par 66 at Cobram Barooga

Golf Club and clinch the title. It is the first time a woman has won a 72-hole mixed tournament on any major world tour at this level.

"It's weird. I don't normally have golf dreams — very, very rarely — but I actually had one last night of me after winning," Green told reporters.

"I didn't know how many I won by but for it to come true is really cool.— 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.

Finland wins first ever Olympic ice hockey gold medal

FINLAND edged past defending champion the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) 2-1 to get its first ever Olympic ice hockey gold medal at Beijing 2022 in the men's final on Sunday.

Before the final, Finland, the second in the world rankings, has never won a Olympic gold medal since it entered the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) family dur-

ing the Olympics in St. Moritz in 1928, and it got a silver medal at Turin 2006 after losing to Sweden in the men's final.

The US and Canada split the seven women's titles since the women's program made its debut in 1998. World No. 3 ROC edged past Germany 4-3 in overtime at Pyeongchang 2018, and it fell 3-1 to Finland in the quarterfinals at Sochi 2014.— Xinhua ■



Athletes clash during ice hockey men's gold medal game of Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics between Finland and ROC at National Indoor Stadium in Beijing, capital of China, 20 February 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA/MENG YONGMIN**