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Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Announcement 2/2022

5th Waxing of Taboung 1383 ME
6 March 2022

Appreciation to Myanmar delegation who attended the public hearing related to Preliminary Objections raised by Myanmar at International Court of Justice (ICJ)

THE Myanmar delegation led by the Agent of Myanmar, Union Minister for International Cooperation H.E. U Ko Ko Hlaing, the Alternate Agent of Myanmar, Union Minister for Legal Affairs and Attorney-General Dr. Thi Da Oo and the international counsels and advocates attended the public hearing relating to the preliminary objections raised by Myanmar concerning the application filed by the Gambia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) alleging the Republic of the Union of Myanmar of violating the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Peace Palace, The Hague, the Netherlands from 21 to 28 February 2022.

It has been observed that the Agent of Myanmar, Union Minister for International Cooperation H.E. U Ko Ko Hlaing and the international counsels and advocates—Dr. Christopher Staker, Professor Stefan Talmon and Professor Robert Kolb made effective arguments before the Court from the legal perspective that the Court lacks jurisdiction and/or The Gambia's Application is inadmissible.

The State Administration Council expresses appreciation to the members of the Myanmar delegation for their tireless and commendable efforts in defending the interests of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and its people with their legal expertise, and to those who assisted Myanmar delegation, well-wishers, professionals, the members of Sangha and people who welcomed back Myanmar delegation at the Yangon International Airport, civil societies and political parties.

The State Administration Council further expresses gratitude to Dr. Christopher Staker, Professor Stefan Talmon and Professor Robert Kolb for their outstanding legal work at the Court with dedication and professionalism.

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.

National Solidarity and Peace Negotiation Committee meets with political parties' work group

THE National Solidarity and Peace Negotiation Committee (NSPNC) organized a discussion with the work group of political parties in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The meeting was attended by Member of the State Administration Council Chairman of the NSPNC Union Minister at the Government Office (1) Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and committee members and leader of work group of political parties' group Chairman of Shan Nationalities Democratic Party U Sai Aik Pao and other representatives.

During the meeting, NSPNC Chairman Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and leader of political parties' work group U Sai Aik Pao extended greeting speeches.

Then, the two sides discussed step by step implementation of work process beyond 2020 and the issues mentioned in the Table (2).

The meeting ended with concluding remarks by leader of political parties' work group U Sai Aik Pao and NSPNC Chairman Lt-Gen Yar Pyae.—MNA

SAC member National Solidarity and Peace Negotiation Committee Chairman Union Minister at the Government Office (1) Lt-Gen Yar Pyae delivers speech at the meeting on 6 March.

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL
Sagaing Region Govt signs with Terrian Co., Ltd for Zalon Hill bus terminal, service facilities
PAGE-2

NATIONAL
SAC member Union Defence Minister meets staff in Sagaing Region
PAGE-3

NATIONAL
MoI Union Minister holds meeting on literature, music and film arenas
PAGE-4

LOCAL BUSINESS
Onion market fallout hits growers
PAGE-5

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

State Administration Council
Press Release
Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who reside in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

Information Team
State Administration Council

THE State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.

MoC declares palm oil reference rate for a week ended 13 March

THE Supervisory Committee on edible oil import and distribution under the Ministry of Commerce has been issuing a weekly reference rate to control the market in line with the changes at international rates.

The committee has been closely observing the FOB prices in Malaysia and Indonesia including transportation cost, tariff and banking service and issuing the wholesale market reference rate for edible oil on a weekly basis.

The palm oil prices are rocketing in the palm oil producing countries. Depending on the FOB prices within a week, the refence rate for a week from 7 to 13 March is set at the minimum of K5,940 and the maximum of K6,575 per viss (a viss equals to 1.6 kg). The prices are weekly posted on the website of the Department of Consumer Affairs www.doca.gov.mm and Facebook page of Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association.—MNA

Sagaing Region Govt signs with Terrian Co., Ltd for Zalon Hill bus terminal, service facilities

SAGAING Region government signed an agreement with Terrain Co., Ltd regarding Zalon Hill Khamoe bus terminal, service facilities and hotel services near Khamoe village, Laythi village-tract, Bamauk Township, Katha District, Sagaing Region on 4 March 2022.

"The regional development policies have been laid down and five tourism zones set to enhance the tourism industry in the region. Zalon Hill region and Zalontaung Pagoda in Katha tourism zone attract over 500,000 visitors every year. Pilgrims usually flock to the pagoda. The projects are being implemented to maintain greenery and biodiversity, facilitate the accommodation and transportation, create job opportunities for local residents and improve the socio-economy of the local community. This being so, Bamauk, Katha and Indaw cities will develop simultaneously. Terrain Co., Ltd is urged to follow the standard, rules and regulations, complete the project within the set period and conduct the real-time reporting," said chief minister U Myat Kyaw.

After the representative of the Terrain Co., Ltd explained matters for the construction projects, the two parties signed an agreement.

Zalon Hill bus terminal will be developed on 31.54 acres of land owned by Bamauk Township development committee under a Build, Operate and Transfer contract and other facilities will be constructed on 23.31 acres of land. Furthermore, hotel and motel projects will be implemented on 10.23 acres of land, including 160 lodges, stalls to sell local products, orchid nursery and other facilities.—Lu Lay/GNLM

A photo is taken the picturesque view of Zalon Hill in Bamauk Township.

Situation on Peacemaking Process

THE National Unity and Peace Restoration Coordination Committee, the Work Committee and the Negotiation Committee were formed to carry out the tasks to ensure national unity and perpetual peace. Our coordination committee has met NCA signatory ethnic armed organizations 16 times, non-NCA signatory EAOs nine times, political parties seven times and the religious leaders and peace negotiators two times, totalling 34.

Tatmadaw issued 20 statements for a ceasefire from 21 December 2018 to 28 February 2022. A joint declaration after the meeting with the Cambodian Prime Minister in early 2022 mentioned that the ceasefire will last for the end of this year.

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

SAC member Union Defence Minister meets staff in Sagaing Region

MEMBER of the State Administrative Council Union Minister for Defence General Mya Tun Oo, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Aung Gyi and party visited a combined office in Kalay yesterday morning and met township level departmental officials and staff.

The Union Minister addressed the meeting.

Chairman of Kalay District Administration Body U Kyaw Swa Tun reported on the situation in the area and the Union Minister coordinated the submissions.

Then, the Union Minister provided foodstuff for staff at district and township levels through the chairmen of the District Administration Body and Township Administration Body.

SAC member Union Defence Minister General Mya Tun Oo meets town elders at Chindwin Yeiktha Hall in Monywa on 6 March.

After that, the Union Minister and party visited the local military station in Kalay Township and met servicemen and family members at the station hall. The Union Minister made necessary instructions.

They also visited Sagaing Region Government Office in Monywa. In the meeting room, the Union Minister met with the departmental officials.

Officials presented regional development, rule of law and regional security measures, conditions of the agricultural and livestock sectors, progress of COVID-19 vaccination and disease control, opening of basic education schools, and implementation of Pankhin project.

The Union Minister attended to the needs.

Then, the Union Minister presented gifts to the departmental officials on behalf of the departments and cordially greeted town elders at Chindwin Yeiktha Hall in Monywa.—MNA

Public Notice on reduction of electricity supply to national grid within a week

1. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy is providing electricity to the public, and currently, about 667.8 megawatts generated from hydropower and solar power plants, about 1,500.3 MW from gas-fired power plants and coal-fired power plants and about 8.9 MW from diesel generators, totalling 2,177 MW is being generated and sent to the national grid. The national average daily demand for electricity from the national grid is around 3,400 megawatts in day time and the maximum is about 3,600 megawatts at night, and the average daily power consumption is around 2,600 megawatts per day.
2. Normally, the maximum power generation is around 4,200 MW. However, the production of about 750 MW of LNG power plants has been suspended due to rising gas prices. 230 KV Billuchaung (2)-Shwemyo Power Line, which was transmitting electricity from Biluchaung Hydropower Plant, and 230 KV Biluchaung (2)-Toungoo Power Line, and 132 KV Biluchaung (2)-Tikyit Power Line, were blown up and security measures are being taken to repair them. About 220 MW, which is normally supplied to the national grid from these three power lines, has been cut off due to power outages. As the total capacity off about 970 MW is still declining, the load is adjusted and the power is distributed alternatively.
3. In order to reduce the amount of load adjustment, efforts are being made to rehabilitate 220 MW of electricity generated by the Biluchaung Hydropower Plant by repairing the damaged power lines as soon as possible. On the other hand, plans have been made to increase electricity generation, and about 60 megawatts from the new 150-megawatt natural gas-fired power plant in Kyaukpyu has been distributed to the national grid from 10-2-2022. The new 150-megawatt Kyaukpyu gas-fired power plant is also planning to increase power generation, and starting from June 2022, the plant will be able to generate up to 150 megawatts.
4. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy is supplying about 1,455 MW of electricity to the national grid by natural gas-fired power plants using natural gas from offshore gas projects such as Yadana, Zawtika and Shwe offshore projects, and inshore gas wells. Currently, the Shwe offshore project uses about 130 million cubic feet of natural gas per day to generate and distribute about 668 MW of electricity per day. At present, underwater pipeline connection work will be carried out from (12-3-2022) to (18-3-2022) to supply natural gas from two new wells drilled in Shwe Offshore Project into the existing pipeline. In the meantime, production will be suspended, but only a total of 334 MW of electricity will be supplied to the national grid using the remaining Shwe natural gas in the pipeline.
5. Therefore, as the 24-hour load reduction will continue in some places, with a total reduction of 1,304 megawatts, including a further reduction of 334 megawatts, while the construction of a new pipeline for natural gas from the Shwe offshore gas project is underway, we would like to inform the public to understand if there are any inconveniences, and that we are making efforts to replenish the power supply as soon as possible and new projects are also being made.

Ministry of Electricity and Energy

MoI Union Minister holds meeting on literature, music and film arenas

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn held separate meetings with officials from the Myanmar Encyclopedia Revision Team, Interim Executive Committee of Myanmar Music Association, and the Interim Executive Committee of the Myanmar Motion Picture Organization yesterday in Yangon.

At the meeting with the Myanmar Encyclopedia Revision Team in the morning, the Union Minister discussed the update of the volume (I) of the Myanmar Encyclopedia according to the latest situations, and coordinated business arrangements for initial publication and distribution plans.

Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn delivers speech at the meeting with officials from Interim Myanmar Motion Picture Organization on 6 March.

Afterwards, he met with the officials from the Interim Executive Committee of Myanmar Music Association. He said that the necessary matters must be discussed and coordinated to accelerate the musical works by bringing together musicians under the leadership of the association. The Prime Minister also values the musicians and gave instructions to provide necessary assistance for them, he added. He also called on the association to discuss practical issues.

Chairman of the association U Lwin Myint then presented the formation of the music association at the township level, welfare for the musicians, arrangement for concerts, preparation of the association to effectively participate in the Myanmar's Performing Arts Competitions with the panel of judges and the prescribed music issues.

In the afternoon, the Union Minister met with officials from the Interim Myanmar Motion Picture Organization. He said that plans are made to resume cinema-related activities soon and it would be more successful if the people are involved rather than the government alone in overcoming the current situation, adding the need for the people to properly analyze the current political situation.

Art is the only thing that can bring happiness to the people, he continued. The government is now making plans to complete the construction of art centres, as well as to establish a Literati Beikman. He said the Ministry will provide necessary assistance to resume the suspended artistic works and reopen cinemas.—MNA

Department of Fisheries monitors fishing trawlers with VMS system for marine fisheries control

Officials install VMS system device at fishing trawler to monitor situations of fishing trawlers. **PHOTO : KANU**

VMS systems are being installed at fishing trawlers by the Department of Fisheries in regions and states along Myanmar's coast to monitor the depletion of fish stocks due to global climate change and overfishing in the Myanmar Sea.

In Taninthayi Region, Mon State, Yangon Region, Ayeyawady Region, and Rakhine State, where fish and shrimps are caught for domestic consumption and export, the movement of fishing trawlers equipped with VMS signal system is being monitored by the region/state Department of Fisheries.

To prevent natural disasters and illegal capture/transport of fishing vessels, the Department of Fisheries in Nay Pyi Taw is monitoring the five control points as an additional control center, and the Tatmadaw (Navy) is overseeing foreign fishing vessels illegally entering Myanmar waters.

"Nay Pyi Taw further monitors the VMSs in the five regions and states and directs them as needed. In addition, controlling fish and shrimp catches during the non-fishing season contributes to the long-term sustainability of Myanmar's marine fisheries," said U Aung Zaw Win, Assistant Director of the Department of Fisheries in Western District of Yangon.

There are more than 3,000 VMS-equipped fishing trawlers and carriers nationwide, of which more than 850 fishing trawlers and 130 carriers are based in Yangon Region, with 230 fishing trawlers and 10 carriers in Rakhine State producing the most fishery resources. Although there is no fishing grounds in Yangon, which is the seaport and port city, freshwater and saltwater products are stored in Yangon cold storage facilities for domestic/foreign markets.—Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM

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CP hybrid maize highly yields in NyaungU Tsp, price up by K6,000 per basket

THE acreage of CP hybrid maize sees high yield in NyaungU Township, Mandalay Region. The price is up by K6,000 per 18-viss basket (a viss equals to 1.6 kg) during the current harvest season as against the year-ago period.

The CP maize is worth K15,000 per basket this year, whereas it fetches only K9,000 per basket. The growers of hybrid maize are generating a handsome profit at present.

"The local residents in the villages on both banks along the Ayeyawady River in NyaungU Township cultivate Virginia tobacco, beans and pulses, chrysanthemum, onions and sweet corns. The crops on alluvial soil are highly yielded. The CP maize was started to cultivate during Thadingyut period. They are offered higher price at the moment than those recorded in the same corresponding period last year," a maize grower U Zaw Win from Letpanchaypaw village quoted in his sayings.

Maize plants bear fruits in the harvest season in NyaungU Township. **PHOTO : KO HTEIN**

There are ten varieties of hybrid maize. They can be grown in winter and summer. The winter CP maize grows bigger than the summer ones. The CP hybrid maize is delivered to Pakokku market. The high price allows the growers to do well financially this year, said an owner of Nilar warehouse in Pakokku city.

Additionally, Thailand gives green light to maize imports through Mae Sot under zero tariff (with Form-D), between 1 February and 31 August.

From 1 February 2022, more than 100 trucks load of maize were conveyed to Thailand.

Myanmar targeted to deliver 1.5 million tonnes of maize to the external market in the current 2021-2022 season.—Ko Hein-KPD/KK/GNLM

Thanaka market rebound in open season

Venfors sell grafits of Thanaka in brokerage in Magway Region.

THANAKA market has recovered in open season after the market slowdown in the previous rainy season amid the pandemic impacts, said Thanaka growers from Magway Region.

Thanaka, yellowish-white cosmetic paste made from ground bark, is a natural cosmetic in Myanmar.

Myanmar people prefer to use Thanaka as cosmetic. The collapse of Thanaka market during the COVID-19 resulted in decreasing Thanaka farms.

At present, Thanaka from Yesagyo and Pakokku townships are entering Yenangyoung market in Magway Region. The number of Thanaka vendors increase in the open season. The prices per piece of Thanaka stand at K1,500 to K8,000 depending on the size and varieties.

Additionally, the value-added Thanaka products such as Thanaka powder are also seen in the domestic market, said a seller.

"The fullmoon day of Tabodwe is designated as Myanmar Thanaka Day. After that, the number of consumers has significantly risen," said a trader.

"Thanaka has grasped a market share in the domestic market. The neighbouring country Thailand is eyeing Thanaka powder and so, it has market potential," said a member of Myanmar Thanaka Planters and Producers Association.

Pakokku Thanaka warehouse, Mandalay Thanaka warehouse and Ayadaw Thanaka warehouse are the main suppliers of Myanmar Thanaka, said the traders.

There are nearly 200,000 acres of Thanaka in Sagaing Region and Ayadaw Township has over 100,000 acres.—KK/GNLM

Onion market fallout hits growers

ONION growers in Pwintbyu Township are struggling to survive with the collapse of onion market.

The residents in Pwintbyu Township, Magway Region execute agriculture throughout the year with the use of irrigation network of Mezali diversion weir and underground water. Despite the high yield, the growers are battered by the price drop, onion growers stressed.

"We primarily cultivate onions in monsoon and winter in our region. Approximately 3,000-4,000 viss (a viss equals to 1.6 kg) are produced per acre. When onions were priced around K1,500-K2,000 per viss in the previous years, the growers were happy with it. The prevailing prices (K300-K400 per viss) cannot cover the input cost," a grower elaborated.

The cultivation cost is around K1 million per acre. The residents in Pwintbyu Township are expecting the high price.

The onion market remains sluggish as the foreign demand has dried up, onion traders stated.

In early 2020, the onion fetched K1,200-K1,300 per viss. The onion growers as well as traders have been experiencing market fallouts due to the COVID-19 impacts, said onion dealer from Mandalay.

Next, Bangladesh's demand for Myanmar's onions coupled with high demand in the local market hiked up prices, soaring up to K4,000 per viss on 15 November 2019, according to the Mandalay commodity depot.

The high demand by foreign markets and remarkable rise in price prompted the growers to expand the onion cultivation in 2020. Unfortunately, the market is getting worse amidst the COVID-19 negative consequences.

The prices of domestic onions exceeded K3,000 per viss in 2015, 2018, and 2019.

The onions are primarily grown in Mandalay, Magway and Yangon regions, Nay Pyi Taw and Shan State.—Ye Win Naing (NyaungU), KK/GNLM

Female farming workers are harvesting onions at the farm. **PHOTO : YE WIN NAING (NYAUNGU)**

Illegal timber, vehicles and foodstuff seized

Illegally imported foodstuff are seized in Haka Township of Chin State on 5 March.

UNDER the supervision of the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, effective action is being taken to prevent illegal trade in accordance with the law. An investigation team led by the Haka Township Police Station conducted an investigation under the management of the Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force and seized illegal food items (estimated at K10,199,000) in Haka Township on 5 March.

Action is being taken in accordance with the Chin State Characteristics Act.

Similarly, under the management of the Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force, combined inspection teams led by the Region Forest Department conducted inspections and seized 1.0726 tonnes of various species of timber (estimated at K33,091) in the Bago District Forest Reserve in Bago Region on 6 March and action is being taken in accordance with the forest law.

Similarly, one unlicensed vehicle (estimated at K5 million) was seized in Sagaing Township, Sagaing Region under the management of the Combined Investigation Team and Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force.

Next, a total of 4.211 tonnes of illegal timber (estimated at K210,550) was seized in Tamu Township, in line with the forest law.

Thus, a total number of arrests was five and its estimated value is K15,442,641 on 5 and 6 March, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee.—MNA

An unlicensed vehicle is seized in Sagaing Township on 6 March.

Stimulant tablets seized in some townships

A combined team of Anti-Drug Police Force conducted inspection in Bhamo at 10:45 am on 5 March. A search of Khin Maung Than (alias) Pho Thar's house in Nanpha Ward resulted in the seizure of 4,070 stimulant tablets.

At 7 pm that night, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force performed a patrol in Myeik Township. Police raid Aung Aung (alias) Ko Aung's house in Kalwin village and seized 10,000 stimulant tablets.

At 10 am that morning, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force made inspections in Wetwun Village, PyinOoLwin Township. A total of 5,130 tablets of ecstasy were seized during a search of a Wish passenger vehicle near a combined checkpoint.

At 6 pm that day, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force arrived in Kunlong Township. A four-wheel vehicle was stopped for inspection and the driver of the vehicle fled away. The anti-drug force seized 180 kilogrammes of raw opium from the four-wheel drive vehicle.

At 4 pm that day, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force conducted inspection near Magyiye Village, Taungshay Village-tract, Nawnghkio Township and 2,200 stimulant tablets were seized from a motorcycle driven by Zaw Lwin Myo on the Nawnghkio-Yaksawk Road.

At 6:30 pm that day, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force conducted a patrol in East Panglong Village, Loilem Township. Driver Thant Naing was arrested along with 100,000 stimulant tablets from a Mark-II car on the Panglong-Laikha Road.

The suspects are being charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to the MPF.—MNA

Packages of raw opium and vehicle are seized in Kunlong Township on 5 March.

K5.5 billion worth of illegal drugs seized in Kunhing, Mongpyin townships

Sai Paung Nwam Kham (a) Kham Han Sint is arrested together with K5.5 billion worth of narcotic drugs in Kunhing Township on 26 February.

ILLEGAL drugs worth over K 5.5 billion were seized in Kunhing and Mongpyin townships, Shan State, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

A combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drugs Police Force searched a 12-wheel Nissan diesel vehicle driven from Karli to Mongpyin by Sai Paung Nwam Kham (a) Kham Han Sint at the Takaw Bridge Combined Checkpoint on the Taunggyi-Tachilek road in Kunhing Township, on 26 February.

During the search, the police seized 150 kg of ICE (Methamphetamine) and 900,000 stimulant tablets from the vehicle.

On the morning of 27 February, the police searched a 12-wheel Nissan diesel which was parked on the roadside near mile post 284 on the Taunggyi-Tachilek Road in Mongpyin Township, Shan State (East), and seized 400 further kg of ICE (Methamphetamine).

It is reported that the confiscated illegal drugs were to be transported from Shan State (East) to abroad through border. Action is being taken against the arrested suspects and the related suspects will be identified and prosecuted.—MNA

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Israel PM meets Putin on Ukraine

Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) welcomes Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett during their meeting, in Sochi in October, 2021. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK/AFP/FILE**

ISRAEL'S premier stepped into the role of mediator Saturday as Russia's invasion of Ukraine intensified, holding a three-hour meeting at the Kremlin with Vladimir Putin before calling Ukraine's president and flying to Berlin.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's sit-down with Putin was the first by a foreign leader since the day Russian forces invaded Ukraine last week, and came after Kyiv had asked Israel to launch a dialogue with Moscow.

Bennett has so far walked a cautious line on the Ukraine conflict, seeking to preserve delicate security cooperation with Russia, which has a large military presence in Israel's northern neighbour, Syria.

Bennett has not joined Western leaders — notably key ally the United States — in forcefully condemning the invasion, instead stressing Israel's strong relations with both Russia and Ukraine.

After his meeting with Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the two agreed their aim was to "end the war in Ukraine as soon as possible", the German's spokesman said in a statement early on Sunday.

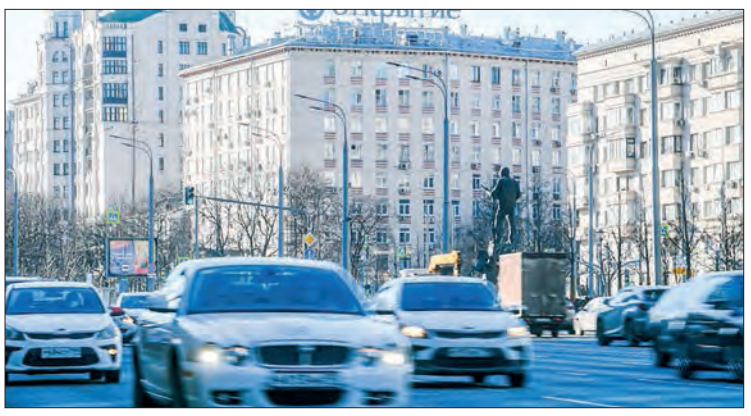
At the end of a whirlwind diplomatic tour, Bennett spoke twice with the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and once with the French President Emmanuel Macron, the prime minister's office said in a statement.

Ahead of the trip, Bennett had spoken by telephone repeatedly with both Putin and Zelensky — who is Jewish, has family in Israel and has visited the country many times.

"Bennett's action is bold but also risky. Much will depend on Putin's state of mind," Michael Oren, former Israeli ambassador to Washington, told AFP.

Oren noted that while Putin rebuffed heavyweight diplomatic outreaches before the invasion, "Russia is in a different position today and Putin may be looking for a way out of his predicament. Naftali Bennet just may supply the ladder." — AFP ■

Russia to let banks cut back reporting results amid sanctions



A sign of the Otkrytie bank is seen in Moscow, Russia, 25 February 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA/EVGENY SINITSYN**

RUSSIA'S central bank announced Sunday it was allowing lenders in the country to reduce the frequency of their financial disclosures, a measure it said was necessary to mitigate sanctions fallout.

Moscow has been hit with a damaging package of financial and cultural penalties by Western countries in the wake of Russia's military incursion into Ukraine.

The central bank in recent days has taken unprecedented measures, including capital controls, to shore up the struggling economy and the ruble.

"The Bank of Russia decided to temporarily reduce the volume of publication of financial statements of credit institutions," it said in a statement on its site.

"This was done to limit the risks of credit institutions associated with the sanctions imposed by Western countries."

It added, however, that financial institutions would still be required to submit reports to it, a step it said would "make it possible to fully exercise effective supervision over their activities and analyse the sector." — AFP ■

Russian shops to limit food sales to counter black market

RETAILERS in Russia will limit sales of essential foodstuffs to limit black market speculation and ensure affordability, the government said Sunday, as sanctions imposed over Moscow's military incursion into Ukraine began to bite.

The trade and industry ministry over the weekend said there had been cases where essential foodstuffs had been purchased "in a volume clearly larger than necessary for private consumption (up to several tons) for subsequent resale".

Trade organisations representing retailers had proposed retailers be allowed to limit the volume of specific goods sold to individuals at any one time, the ministry's statement said.

"The Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture supported the initiative of trade organizations," the release said, noting that the organizations themselves would work out the policy.

Essential goods, whose prices are subject to state controls, include bread, rice, flour, eggs and selected meats and dairy products among others.

Moscow has been hit with a damaging package of financial and cultural penalties by Western countries since the Kremlin initiated what it has called "a special military operation" in neighbouring Ukraine on 24 February. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US, Poland exploring deal to supply planes to Ukraine: reports

WASHINGTON is working on a deal with Poland to supply Ukraine with Soviet-era warplanes to bolster Kyiv's defences against the Russian invasion, according to US media.

Multiple news outlets reported Saturday that US officials told them of the possible deal, in which Poland would send Soviet-era aircraft to Ukraine in return for American F-16 fighter jets.

Since Russia invaded 10 days ago, the economic and humanitarian toll of the war has spiraled and officials have reported hundreds of civilians killed.

Weapons, ammunition and funds have poured into Ukraine from Western allies.

"We are working with the Poles on this issue and consulting with the rest of our NATO allies," a White House official was quoted as saying in reports by the Wall Street Journal and NBC.

Kyiv has urged the West to boost military assistance to the besieged country, including warplanes, with President Volodymyr Zelensky pleading for Eastern European neighbours to provide Russian-made planes that his pilots are trained to fly. — AFP ■

Moldova asks US for more support as refugee numbers surge

MOLDOVAN Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita urged the United States on Sunday to provide more humanitarian support as the number of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine to the small European country hit 120,000.

At the beginning of a meeting with visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, she said her country of 2.6 million, one of Europe's poorest, was straining under the weight of those fleeing Russia's invasion of neighbouring Ukraine.

"As of this morning, we had more than 230,000 people who have crossed the border from Ukraine, and 120,000 stayed in Moldova. 96,000 of them are Ukrainian citizens. For a small country like Moldova, proportionately, this is a very large number," she told Blinken.

"Everybody has come together to host, to provide shelter, to provide food, to provide assistance to those who are fleeing war," she said. — AFP ■

7 MARCH 2022
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Realize the important role of public affairs policies

Public affairs policies emphasizing the interests of the people are defined as giving various kinds of guidance related to various reasons to administrative bodies of the government under the procedures concerning the laws and institutions.

The public affairs policies are based on the laws concerning the State constitution, rules and regulations and accounts, including judicial definitions and law enforcement. These are implemented to identify the types of public affairs problems, adopt new public affairs policies and revise the existing policy.

These firm and strong policies must reflect capability to address the problems, creation of justice and fairness, contribution to government institutions and policies, and activation to the citizens to be active.

Generally, politicians, government servants, lobbyists, experts from relevant arenas and representatives from workplaces or various sectors participate in the process of adopting the public affairs policies which must be realized successfully in various tactics, ways and means.

Some experts define public affairs policies as a system comprising an implementation of the public affairs policies, the management ways and laws, and the prioritized plans to fund a relevant topic prescribed by the government or its representatives. The policies are generally placed under the constitutions, legal performances and judicial decisions.

The public affairs problems may not have any origins but it needs policy affairs responses at the national and the international levels. It is a work procedure in the continuity of frequent responses and correlation. In this regard, the analysis and assessment are an important role to take an effect.

Diverse public affairs problems and various reasons affect a number of systems because of various involvements. These problems and reasons need varied policies for public affairs. In so doing, a large number of persons, corporations, non-profit organizations and enthusiast organizations compete with each other or cooperate to dominate the policymakers.

Generally, politicians, government servants, lobbyists, experts from relevant arenas and representatives from workplaces or various sectors participate in the process of adopting the public affairs policies which must be realized successfully in various tactics, ways and means.

Actually, relevant officials from the government are responsible for adopting the public affairs policies to respond to public affairs or problems. At this juncture, the government officials need to comply with the ethics and restrictions related to the public affairs sector and to take all stakeholders related to the plans into consideration.

Whatever it may be, various forms of public affairs policies must lead to serving the interests of the State and the people, and it must be capable of efficiently solving the public affairs problems.

■■■

Virus rages in Asia but retreats elsewhere

The situation markedly improved in all other regions of the world, with 45 percent less cases in the Middle East, 40 percent less in the Latin America-Caribbean zone, 34 percent less in Africa, 23 percent less in the United States (US)-Canada zone and 22 percent less in Europe.

The army vehicles disinfect the road in Daegu, about 300 km southeast of the capital Seoul, South Korea, 29 February 2020. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

The COVID-19 pandemic continued its retreat around the world this week, but infections were still raging in hotspots in Asia and Oceania, led by Hong Kong and New Zealand.

Here is the state of play based on AFP's database:

12 Percent Fall

The average number of global daily cases dropped for the fifth week in a row, shrinking by 12 percent to 1.47 million, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

Daily infections have fallen by half since peaking at 3.37 million in late January with the highly contagious Omicron variant.

The confirmed cases only reflect a fraction of the actual number of infections, with varying counting practices and levels of testing in different countries.

Asia, Oceania Buck Improvement

This week, Asia and Oceania bucked a global improvement, seeing the number of cases spike by 25 percent and 72 percent respectively compared to the previous week.

The situation markedly improved in all other regions of the world, with 45 percent less cases in the Middle East, 40 percent less in the Latin America-Caribbean zone, 34 percent less in Africa, 23 percent less in the United States (US)-Canada zone and 22 percent less in Europe.

Main Spikes

New Zealand recorded the biggest increase in new cases, with an almost seven-fold spike (590 percent).

Hong Kong was hot on its heels with 403 percent more cases. Then came Vietnam with 119 percent more, South Korea 40 percent more and Thailand 19 percent more.

The main drops came in Central Asia and the Caucasus, led by Azerbaijan where cases plummeted by 63 percent. In neighbouring Armenia, cases dropped by three fifths and by 52 percent in Georgia. In Panama, the number of cases dropped by 51 percent and in Israel by half.

South Korea Has Most Cases

South Korea overtook Germany, to record the highest number of new cases this week, with 170,300 per day, an increase of two fifths.

Germany, with 153,700, or seven percent less cases, stood in second place. Vietnam came in third place with 120,600, an increase of 119 percent.

On a per capita basis, the place with the highest number of new cases over the week was Hong Kong, with 3,555 per 100,000 inhabitants. Latvia followed, with 3,081 and New Zealand with 2,550.

Deaths

The number of COVID-linked deaths continued to fall, by 19 percent this week to 7,596 per day.

The US again mourned the most deaths, with an average of 1,644 per day, followed by Russia with 776 and Brazil 455.

The countries reporting the highest death rates in proportion to their population were Hong Kong with 12.6 per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Latvia (6.6) and Georgia (6.3).

SOURCE: AFP

Aussie "citizen scientists" on mission to unmask litter problem

The country's largest community-based environmental event, Clean Up Australia Day, will this year incorporate a nationwide citizen science project to gauge the extent of face mask litter. **PHOTO: AAP/XINHUA**

Thousands of people around Australia will become "citizen scientists" this Sunday when they confront one of the most common pandemic-related litter problems, discarded face masks.

Organizers of the annual Clean Up Australia Day want the teams of volunteers to keep a tally of the old masks they find strewn in streets, waterways, parks and other public areas where trash accumulates.

The citizen scientists will have access to an online national database with their mask tally information to be shared by relevant organizations such as the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO).

Clean Up Australia chairwoman Pip Kiernan said the extensive COVID-19 lockdowns in recent years had not reduced the amount of litter in the environment.

"Our environmental issues have not gone away, rather they have escalated because of the mountain of rubbish we've created and there's no doubt the amount of plastic waste has been surging," Kiernan said.

"Over the past two years there have been disturbing cases of seabirds and wildlife found tangled up in carelessly discarded single-use face masks."

Monitoring the scale of the problem is vital, Kiernan said, adding that researchers believe the plastics used in disposable masks could release chemical pollutants and nano-plastics for up to 450 years.

Kiernan said the situation underlined the need for "product stewardship" so manufacturers considered what would happen to the masks once they were thrown away.

"We need innovation in the design of PPE (personal protective equipment) so that it's as safe as it can be but kinder on the environment," she said.

The desire to be environmentally sensitive was instilled into Kiernan from an early age, as her late father, Ian Kiernan, founded Clean Up Australia in 1989. That movement subsequently inspired the creation of World Cleanup Day in 2018.

Over the decades the nation's annual clean-up event has inevitably faced an array of challenges such as restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

This year, the organizers have had to contend with widespread flooding throughout much of Australia's east coast.

Kiernan told Xinhua on Friday that the event has been postponed in those flood-ravaged regions.

"We are currently liaising with councils in these flood-affected areas offering to support their clean-up efforts when waters subside and it is safe to do so," she said.

SOURCE: Xinhua

1,029 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 6 March, total figure rises to 598,446

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 598,446 after 1,029 new cases were reported on 6 March 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 547,444 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,389 after 3 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 5-3-2022, a total of 24,064,085 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 21,277,241 people have been fully vaccinated and 2,786,844 people are yet to get the second shots.—MNA

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 6 March 2022)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (17:30) hrs MST today, the low pressure area over Southwest Bay of Bengal still persists. Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 7 March 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Magway, and Taninthayi regions and Shan, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon states. Degree of certainty is (60%). 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 isolated rain or thundershowers in Taninthayi Region and (Southern and Eastern)Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 March 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60)%

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 March 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 March 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60)%.

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North Korea claims new test of 'reconnaissance satellite' component

NORTH Korea carried out "another important test" towards the development of a reconnaissance satellite, state media said Sunday, but analysts warned it was a thinly-veiled ballistic missile launch, just days before South Korea elects a new president.

From hypersonic to medium-range ballistic missiles, Pyongyang test-fired a string of banned weaponry in January and last week launched what it claimed was a component of a "reconnaissance satellite" — although Seoul described it as another ballistic missile.

North Korea is under biting international sanctions for its nuclear weapons programs, but peaceful satellite launches are not subject to the same level of restrictions — although they use much of the same technology.

The development of a military reconnaissance satellite — along with the hypersonic weapons tested in January — is officially one of Pyongyang's key defence projects, as outlined by leader Kim Jong Un last year.

"The DPRK National Aerospace Development Administration (NADA) and the Academy of Defence Science conducted another important test on Saturday under the plan of developing a reconnaissance satellite," KCNA news agency said, using the acronyms of the North's official name.

"Through the test, the NADA confirmed the reliability of data transmission and reception system of the satellite, its control command system and various ground-based control systems," it added. — AFP ■

A combination image shows a North Korean Hwasong-12 intermediate-range ballistic missile test that was carried out 30 January, along with pictures reportedly taken from outer space with a warhead-mounted camera, in this image. **PHOTO: KCNA / KNS / AFP**

'Maladaptation': how not to cope with climate change

Sea walls, dykes and flood-control gates can "create long-term lock-in of vulnerability, exposure and risks," according to the IPCC report on climate impacts. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

A crescendo of deadly extreme weather is outpacing preparations for a climate-addled world, according to a landmark UN assessment of climate impacts released this week.

Whether it is sustainable farming or bioengineered crops to boost food security; restoring mangrove forests or building sea dams to buffer rising oceans; urban green corridors or air conditioning to temper killer heatwaves — the search for ways to cope with the fallout of global heating has become urgent.

"At current rates of adaptation planning and implementation, the adaptation gap will continue to grow," the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns.

At the same time, however, the 3,650-page IPCC report raises red flags about how schemes to deal with climate impacts can go wrong.

There's even a word for it: "maladaptation".

"We're finding that there are many cases in which adaptation projects don't work," said Clark University professor Ed Carr, lead author of a chapter in the IPCC report on climate resilient development. "Some have actually made things worse."

Building a dam, for example, to prevent urban flooding may help protect a small area for a limited time period. "But if the measure you put in place has negative consequences along the rest of the river and makes things worse in the long run, that's maladaptation," said Imperial College London's Friederike Otto. — AFP ■

African experts call for climate-proofing farming systems to overcome hunger

THE eradication of hunger and malnutrition in Africa will only be realized once governments leverage nature-based interventions to strengthen the resilience of farming systems in the face of climatic stresses, experts said on Friday.

Speaking at a forum in the resort town of Naivasha, located about 100 kilometers northwest of the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, the experts were unanimous on the need to climate-proof the continent's agriculture sector amid threats posed by extreme weather events.

Kwame Ababio, a senior program officer of Climate Change and Environment at the African Union (AU) said that investments in farming practices that strike harmony with nature could offer a long-term solution to the continent's endemic food insecurity.

He said the emerging policy and scientific consensus in the continent was the need to strengthen climate resilience of subsistence agriculture through adoption of appropriate irrigation technologies, use of compost manure and diversification. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

America is finally cleaning up its abandoned, leaking oil wells

BILL Suan bought his family's cattle farm in the mountains of West Virginia a decade-and-a-half ago with little thought for the two gas wells drilled on the property – but then they started leaking oil onto his fields and sickening his cows.

After taking the operator to court, Suan was successful in plugging one well, but the company has since disappeared, leaving him to contend with a small-scale environmental disaster that's a symptom of the larger problem of orphaned oil wells across the United States.

"It's shocking to think that it was like that for decades," Suan said.

From rural areas in the east where modern oil production began to cities in southern California, where pumpjacks loom not far from homes, the United States is pockmarked with perhaps millions of oil wells that are unsealed, haven't produced in decades, and sometimes do not have an identifiable owner. – AFP ■

Poorer nations need $60 bn a year to protect nature: NGOs

WEALTHY countries should provide at least $60 billion every year to the world's poorest nations to combat biodiversity loss, an alliance of environment groups said Tuesday.

The appeal by WWF, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and other green groups was launched on the sidelines of a major UN environment meeting in Nairobi.

It comes ahead of key talks for a UN biodiversity summit to be held in China that will see nations hammer out conservation targets for the next decade.

The $60 billion (53.67 billion euros) would address "the disproportionate impact of wealthy country consumption habits on biodiversity," the signatories said in a joint statement.

"Wealthy nations are driving much of the loss of nature in developing countries through imported goods and have a responsibility to address this impact," said Brian O'Donnell, director of Campaign for Nature.

Some $844 billion annually is needed to address the loss of biodiversity and nature – some $711 billion more than is being spent today, the NGOs said.

An boost in financial assistance should go hand in glove with an end to public and private investment that damages the environment, said Marco Lambertini from WWF.

"It is feasible. It requires political will to make it happen," Lambertini said of the $60 billion target. – AFP ■

People receive the COVID-19 vaccine in a mobile vaccination unit in Bangkok, Thailand, on 17 September 2021. **PHOTO: XINHUA/RACHEN SAGEAMSAK**

Thailand's total COVID-19 cases top 3 mln

TOTAL COVID-19 cases in Thailand topped 3 million on Saturday, driven primarily by the highly transmissible Omicron variant, which resulted in recent soaring infections.

The daily case tally has been over 20,000 for 11 days in a row. With 22,818 new infections registered over the last 24 hours, Thailand's total tally stood at 3,004,814, according to the country's health ministry.

Reaching a record high of new infections for three consecutive days in late February, the spreading of the Omicron variant in Thailand seemed faster than it was during the peak of last fall's Delta wave.

However, the country hasn't yet seen a similarly steep rise in cases as seen in some other countries, partly because of the high vaccination rate nationwide, according to the World Health Organization Thailand office.

The official data also showed that the daily death toll remained low compared to the record of 312 fatalities set last August. The cumulative death in the Southeast Asian country rose by 52 to 23,176 on Saturday.

To date, around 71.7 percent of the country's nearly 70 million population had been fully vaccinated, while 30.1 percent had received booster shots. — Xinhua ■

Germany's7-day COVID-19 incidence continues to rise again

GERMANY'S seven-day COVID-19 incidence rate has risen for the second day in a row, reaching 1,196 infections per 100,000 inhabitants, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for infectious diseases said on Friday.

Daily infections also rose, with the RKI registering 217, 593 new COVID-19 infections within 24 hours on Friday. This was around 6,900 more than a week ago. However, German laboratories have also warned of significant under-reporting due to less testing.

Among older people over the age of 65, infection numbers are likely to continue to increase due to the ongoing Omicron wave. "In this age group, the peak of the wave is still to come," the RKI said in its weekly report on Thursday. Nevertheless, Germany further relaxed its COVID-19 measures on Friday. Customers in restaurants and hotels are now only required to follow the so-called 3G rule (vaccinated, recovered, tested), while clubs can reopen under the stricter 2G-Plus rule. This requires a negative test, in addition to vaccinated or recovered status. — Xinhua ■

A city worker sets up a Covid-19 information board in front of a restaurant in Nuremberg, Germany, on 29 October 2020. **PHOTO: CHRISTOF STACHE /AFP**

Turks remain cautious as gov't eases COVID-19 restrictions

TURKISH people have welcomed the government's decision to ease COVID-19 restrictions in public spaces with caution since the country's daily cases remain at a high plateau.

Turkish health authorities on Wednesday lifted the requirements of wearing face masks for outdoor activities and for indoor areas with effective ventilation. Entering public spaces such as shopping malls also no longer requires a health code, except for hospitals.

Wearing masks is still mandatory for public transport, according to the new decision.

The country's daily case number has been on a downward trend since early February but the seven-day average number is running well above 50,000 for the week of 4 March.

Kadriye Ozdemir, manager of a women's clothing store in Istanbul's bustling Sisli district, said she was pleased with the rolling back of the outdoor mask mandates, but for the indoor ones it should be more cautious.

"I am still in favor of putting them on indoors where there is a large flow of people," she told Xinhua, adding wearing masks gives good protection against the virus.

During business hours, "up to 30 people can be inside, and everyone is on the move, with some coughing, others sneezing," she said.

And she believes masks should still be obligatory in indoor places with good airflow or ventilation. "I will keep reminding my clients to put on their masks in the store," she noted.

Ayse Yavuzer, a 73-year-old Istanbul resident who said she has closely complied with all health guidelines, still got infected recently with the Omicron variant. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indonesia reports 26,347 new COVID-19 cases, 328 more deaths

INDONESIA on Friday confirmed 26,347 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total tally to 5,693,702, the Ministry of Health said.

According to the ministry, the death toll from COVID-19 rose by 328 to 149,596, while 40,462 more people recovered from the disease, bringing the total number of recoveries to 5,026,853 in the Southeast Asian country. — Xinhua ■

New Zealand reports 15,161 new community cases of COVID-19

NEW Zealand reported 15,161 new community cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, said the Ministry of Health in a statement.

Among the 15,161 new community infections, 7,226 were in the largest city Auckland. Four new cases of COVID-19 were detected at the New Zealand border, said the Ministry.

One more death was reported. There were 618 COVID-19 patients in New Zealand hospitals, including 10 people at intensive care units (ICU) or high dependency units (HDU).

New Zealand reported a total of 222,011 confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic.

New Zealand is currently at the highest Red settings under the COVID-19 Protection Framework. At Red settings, face masks become mandatory in many indoor environments and gatherings are limited to 100 people. — Xinhua ■

Austria : Coronavirus restrictions lifted on Saturday

AUSTRIA largely lifted its coronavirus restrictions on Saturday. Among other things, people can again visit hotels, restaurants and bars without proof of vaccination or testing. The general night curfew will also be lifted. There are no upper visitor limits for events. The obligation to wear an FFP2 mask will be limited to hospitals, public transport and the customer areas of essential shops, among other things.

Austria's government is pursuing its easing policy, although the coronavirus traffic light is currently red in all federal states. This means there is a high risk of spread as well as a high risk of overburdening the healthcare system. The entry rules were relaxed two weeks ago. The 3G rule now applies to visits to the Alpine republic. Travellers must therefore be vaccinated or recovered or tested. —AFP ■

China sets lowest GDP target in decades over 'grave' outlook

Workers assemble engines on a producing line of a Weichai company in Weifang, east China's Shandong Province, 19 March 2020. The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for China's manufacturing sector firmed up to 52 in March from 35.7 in February, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said Tuesday. **PHOTO: XINHUA/ GUO XULEI**

CHINA set its lowest GDP target in decades Saturday, as Premier Li Keqiang warned of a "grave and uncertain" outlook against the backdrop of the coronavirus, a property slump and uncertainty over the war in Ukraine.

Li announced the unusually modest target of around 5.5 percent — the lowest since 1991 — in his speech opening the annual session of China's rubber-stamp parliament.

Addressing about 3,000 members of the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing's cavernous Great Hall of the People, Li said the world's second-largest economy "will encounter many more risks and challenges, and we must keep pushing to overcome them".

The target was based on a need to maintain stable employment, basic living needs and "guard against risks", according to his speech, which is China's version of an annual state of the nation address.

The growth target is closely watched in China, whose ruling Communist Party has based its legitimacy on delivering steady economic expansion and improved standards of living.

The party is deeply concerned over any social instability in its huge population should economic growth dip too low.

Stability is 'top priority'

Economic stability must be a "top priority", Li added.

The annual parliament session is a week of highly choreographed meetings that lays out the party's political priorities, economic expectations, and foreign policy goals, and this edition comes in a year in which President Xi Jinping intends to further cement his grip on power.

Prior sessions have unveiled high-profile legislation such as the tough national security law imposed on Hong Kong and reversals to the country's one-child policy, but no flagship laws are expected this year. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

ECB reckons with impact of war on eurozone's doorstep

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has added an extra layer of complexity to the decisions facing European Central Bank policymakers as they meet on Thursday.

Already managing record inflation figures and a fragile recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, members of the bank's 25-member governing council now have to reckon with the impact of war on the edge of the eurozone.

The pace of consumer price rises shifted up a gear in February, rising to 5.8 percent from 5.1 percent the previous month, a new all-time high for the euro area.

The spike has been driven in no small part by soaring prices for energy, caught in the middle of the conflict with Russia, a major supplier to European countries.

ECB President Christine Lagarde responded to the February 24 invasion by saying the central bank would "take whatever action is necessary" to stabilise the euro region's economy.

PRICES for gas and oil were "likely in the short term to increase inflation", she said, sustaining it for longer than the bank previously expected. — AFP ■

Number of active US drilling rigs unchanged this week

THE number of active drilling rigs in the United States remained the same as the previous week ending on 25 February, up by 247 from last year, according to the weekly data released Friday by Houston-based oilfield services company Baker Hughes.

These 650 active drilling rigs included 519 oil rigs operating in the US oil fields, down by 3 from the previous week; 130 gas drilling rigs, up by three from last week; and one miscellaneous rig, unchanged from last week.The rigs included 635 land drilling rigs, three inland water rigs, and 12 offshore drilling rigs, all unchanged from last week.

OF them, 30 are directional drilling rigs, 595 are horizontal drilling rigs and 25 are vertical drilling rigs.— Xinhua ■

Turkey tourism recovery hurt by Russia invasion of Ukraine

EVERY Sunday Noori Sani welcomes his old friends around a bountiful Turkish breakfast in Istanbul. But surrounding him now are empty tables on his terrace at his restaurant by the Blue Mosque.

"On a day like this, we should be full," the owner of Serbethane restaurant said in the city's historic district.

Within a few days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, Ukrainians and Russians cancelled reservations for trips, disastrous for Turkey where tourism represented 10 percent of GDP before the pandemic.

Around 4.5 million Russian and two million Ukrainian tourists descended on Turkey last year. **PHOTO: AFP**

There had been high hopes for a tourism revival in 2022 and the sector was in desperate need of a boost after the Turkish lira lost significant value last year and inflation soared to over 50 percent in February.

Visitors from Ukraine and Russia made up over a quarter of all tourists who arrived in Turkey last year, usually opting for the turquoise beaches on the Mediterranean and Aegean, according to tourism ministry figures. "Russia and Ukraine are very important markets for us," Hamit Kuk of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB) said.— AFP ■

Neutral Switzerland's economy shaken by sanctions on Russia

SWITZERLAND'S newly adopted tough stance on Russia has forced the Swiss economy to readjust to sanctions, blowing a wind of panic through the raw materials market in particular.

Switzerland announced Monday it would follow the sanctions being imposed by the European Union, abandoning Bern's traditional reserve by ordering the immediate freezing of assets belonging to Russian companies and individuals appearing on the EU blacklist.

And it went further on Friday, adopting even stricter EU sanctions applied in response to Moscow's 24 February full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Exporting goods that could enhance Russia's military capabilities is prohibited, as is the exportation of certain goods and services in the oil sector, and aviation technology. — AFP ■

Samsung Electronics suspends shipments to Russia

Samsung Electronics Vice Chairman Jay Y. Lee visits ASML in the Netherlands on 27 October 2021. **PHOTO: KEDGLOBAL/AFP/FILE**

SAMSUNG Electronics has suspended shipments to Russia over "geopolitical developments", the firm said Saturday, as major firms including Apple cut ties with the country over its invasion of Ukraine.

The South Korean tech giant is the world's biggest memory chip maker and the leading smartphone seller in Russia.

"Due to current geopolitical developments, shipments to Russia have been suspended," Samsung said in a statement.

"We continue to actively monitor this complex situation to determine our next steps."

The decision comes as Western governments, sporting organizations and big companies cut Russia off and deal it punishing sanctions over the internationally condemned attack on its neighbor.

Samsung controls just above 30 percent of the smartphone market share in Russia, according to Bloomberg News — four percent of the tech giant's total global smartphone revenues.

Sales of semiconductors in Russia, in turn, accounted for less than 0.1 percent of Samsung Electronics' profits, according to a report by Hana Financial Investment.

South Korea, a key US security ally, also this week announced it would block financial transactions with major Russian banks and their subsidiaries subject to US sanctions.

Samsung is also donating $6 million, including $1 million in consumer electronics as well as voluntary donations from employees, to "actively support humanitarian efforts" and refugees in the region, the firm said. — AFP ■

Portuguese rush to gas stations amid surging fuel prices

Photo taken on 18 February 2022 shows a street view of Lisbon, Portugal. **PHOTO: PEDRO FIUZA/XINHUA**

INFLATION in global oil prices caused a general readjustment of fuel prices in Portugal, causing a rush of consumers to fill up their cars.

Long queues were seen at gas stations on Saturday across the country, and the government announced measures to soften the impact of the price increase.

Portuguese finance minister Joao Leao told a press conference that he will grant a monthly bonus of 20 euros (22 US dollars) to help Portuguese drivers, as well as tax cuts.

The Portuguese enrolled in the program called "Autovoucher" will receive a refund of 10 euro cents per liter of fuel.

The Portuguese minister explained that his European Union (EU) colleagues are waiting for guidance from the European Commission (EC) to respond to the increase in energy prices.

In addition, the Minister of Environment and Climate Action, Joao Pedro Matos Fernandes, presented measures for public transport, which will receive 30 cents per liter of fuel.

Fuel retailers consider the measures announced by the government to mitigate the "huge increase" in prices to be "insufficient," reiterating that the "definitive solution" is to reduce the "extremely heavy tax burden" on gasoline and diesel. — Xinhua ■

Visa, Mastercard suspend operations in Russia

CARD payment giants Visa and Mastercard announced Saturday they will suspend operations in Russia, the latest major US firms to join the business freeze-out of Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

"Noting the unprecedented nature of the current conflict and the uncertain economic environment," Mastercard said it had "decided to suspend our network services in Russia."

Visa, for its part, said that "effective immediately" it would "work with its clients and partners within Russia to cease all Visa transactions over the coming days."

US President Joe Biden "welcomed the decision" during a phone call with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky in which the two discussed US, ally and private industry actions to deter Russia from aggression, according to a White House readout.

Major corporations across a range of industries have halted business in Russia since its invasion began on 24 February, including everything from US-based tech firms such as Intel and Airbnb to French luxury giants LVMH, Hermes and Chanel.

Visa and Mastercard had already announced that they were complying with US and international sanctions imposed on Russia in the wake of its attack.

"Our colleagues, our customers and our partners have been affected in ways that most of us could not imagine," Mastercard said, stating that its cards issued by Russian banks would no longer be supported by the company's network. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

China's weekly export container shipping index dips

CHINA'S index of export container transport edged down in the past week ending Friday, according to the Shanghai Shipping Exchange.

THE average China Containerized Freight Index (CCFI) went down 1.1 percent to 3,388.59, said the exchange.

THE sub-reading for the South America service led the decline with a week-on-week drop of 5.3 percent, followed by that for the Australia/New Zealand service, which went down 4 percent from the previous week.

BUCKING the trend, the sub-reading for the Mediterranean service reported a week-on-week gain of 2.2 percent.

THE CCFI tracks spot and contractual freight rates from Chinese container ports for 12 shipping routes across the globe, based on data from 22 international carriers.

THE index was set at 1,000 on 1 January 1998. — Xinhua ■

Cambodia's insurance industry grows by 9.5 pct in 2021 despite pandemic

CAMBODIA'S insurance industry reported a total premium of 293.4 million US dollars in 2021, up 9.5 percent year-on-year, despite the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a report of the Insurance Regulator of Cambodia (IRC) on Saturday.

THE growth was generated from 18 general insurers, 14 life insurers, seven micro-insurance companies and one reinsurance firm, the report said.

THE gross premium of general insurance market in 2021 was almost 123 million dollars, an increase of 7.4 percent compared to 2020, while life insurance premium totaled 170.4 million dollars, up 11 percent, the report added.

IRC'S director general Bou Chanphirou said at a dissemination seminar on sub-decree on insurance on Friday that the insurance industry has been playing an important role in supporting social and economic sectors.

"WITH Cambodia's political stability and positive economic growth under the leadership of Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen, the insurance market has been growing rapidly," he said. Chanphirou said the insurance industry contributed about 1.1 percent to the kingdom's gross domestic product (GDP). — Xinhua ■

On Sweden's Gotland, Ukraine war revives fears of Russia

"YOU never know": like many other Swedes on the island of Gotland, Emelie Cedeskog has stocked up on canned foods and checked where the nearest air raid shelter is.

In a country long marked by a "fear of Russians", many of the island's 60,000 residents have had concerns reignited by tensions between the West and Moscow.

"We're a bit worried, we can't really know what's going to happen," the 35-year-old teacher told AFP. A week after the invasion of Ukraine, four Russian fighter jets violated Swedish airspace on Wednesday over the Baltic Sea to the east of the strategically located island. Local authorities have responded by appealing for calm.

"We've had a lot of phone calls, people were worried, especially about where the air raid shelters are, where to go if something happens," Rikard von Zweigbergk, head of preparedness for the regional authority, told AFP.

Supply rush

"There are many people who have bought a lot of canned food, though there is still some left, but the water containers and portable stoves are sold out," he said. To the most anxious, "we tell them: stay calm, keep your cool", the official said.

"The risk is minimal, even if it is higher than it was before."

Gotland is a popular holiday destination for Swedes, with its small beaches and picturesque medieval town of Visby. **PHOTO: AFP**

For most Swedes, Gotland represents a popular holiday destination for Stockholmers with its small beaches and picturesque medieval town of Visby, with hordes of tourists descending on the otherwise sleepy island in the summer.

But it's also less than 350 kilometres (217 miles) from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad.

Military analysts consider Gotland an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" which could serve as a crucial base to control maritime and air traffic in and over the Baltic. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Zelensky says Ukrainian forces holding key cities

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelensky says forces are holding key cities in the central and southeastern part of the country, while the Russians were trying to block and keep encircled Kharkiv, Nikolaev, Chernihiv, and Sumy.

"We're inflicting losses on the occupants they could not see in their worst nightmare," Zelensky says.

He alleges that 10,000 Russian troops have been killed in the 10 days of the war, a claim that could not be independently verified. The Russian military doesn't offer regular updates on their casualties. Only once, on Wednesday, did they reveal a death toll, numbering nearly 500.

British journalist shot and wounded in Ukraine

STUART Ramsay, chief correspondent at Sky News, was hit by a bullet in the lower back on Monday as they drove towards the Ukrainian capital.

Sky News showed footage of the attack late Friday.

TWO bullets hit a camera operator's body armour. The five-person crew escaped their car and was later rescued by Ukranian police.

A Russian saboteur reconnaissance squad is suspected of carrying out the attack, Sky News said.

"Bullets cascaded through the whole of the car, tracers, bullet flashes, windscreen glass, plastic seats, the steering wheel, and dashboard had disintegrated," Ramsay said in a written account.

The news crew is now safe and back in the UK, while their Ukrainian producer is with his family in Ukraine.

"The point is we were very lucky," Ramsay said.

Russia's Aeroflot to halt flights abroad, except Belarus, from 8 March

RUSSIA'S flagship carrier Aeroflot will stop all flights abroad with the exception of those to Belarus from 8 March, the TASS news agency has quoted the company as saying.

RUSSIA'S state aviation authority on Saturday recommended that Russian airlines with foreign-leased aircraft to suspend flights of passengers and cargo abroad from Russia from March 6 and from foreign countries to Russia starting on 8 March.

SOURCE : AFP

In Spain's 'Little Ukraine', anguish over the war

ON the calendar in Mykola Grynkiv's internet cafe, every day since 24 February is ringed in black, Russia's war stopping time in this northern Spanish village where one in seven residents is Ukrainian.

Before the invasion, locals in Guissona — which lies about 115 kilometres (70 miles) northwest of Barcelona — would come to Grynkiv's business to go online, make photocopies or a phone call from one of the private booths at the back.

But since Russia invaded Ukraine, this internet cafe in the heart of Spain's northeastern Catalonia region has been transformed, its floor covered with boxes filled with donations that will be sent by truck to Poland.

Like millions of other Ukrainian expats, Grynkiv's priorities have totally changed within the space of a week.

"Now the business isn't running any more. I'm losing money but I don't want my country to lose" the war, says this stocky 48-year-old, who arrived in Guissona from western Ukraine more than 20 years ago.

Volunteers, many of them Ukrainian, have been working around the clock to gather humanitarian supplies for war refugees in Poland. **PHOTO: AFP**

"If I lose out and my country wins, no matter. I'll make up for it one day," he says in a rare moment when his mobile stops ringing.

Among the dozen or so volunteers filling boxes with medicines, clothes, blankets or women's sanitary products is Sofia Shchetbiy.

Until last week, she was working as a dermatologist in Ivano-Frankivsk, a city in western Ukraine. — AFP ■

Italy seizes Russian oligarch's yacht: govt

ITALY said Friday that it seized the yacht of a Russian oligarch who is seen as close to President Vladimir Putin and is subject to EU sanctions.

"Italy's police has just seized 'Lady M Yacht', a 65 million euros ($70 million) vessel belonging to Alexey Alexandrovits Mordaschov located in Imperia (Liguria) — in compliance with the recent EU sanctions," Ferdinando Giugliano, a media adviser to Italy's prime minister, said in a tweet.

Steel magnate Mordashov owns Severstal group and is among the ultra-wealthy, influential Russians blacklisted by Brussels for their perceived closeness to the Kremlin.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February, the EU has moved to freeze the assets of connected oligarchs and bar them from entering the bloc.

Mordashov used a statement issued Monday to distance himself from Putin's war in Ukraine. "I have absolutely nothing to do with the current geopolitical tensions and I don't understand why the EU has imposed sanctions on me," he said.

Italian media have reported that another yacht, the Lena owned by Gennady Timchenko, the billionaire co-founder of commodities trader Gunvor, has been seized in Sanremo. — AFP ■

Russia almost completes destruction of Ukrainian military infrastructure: Putin

RUSSIA has "practically" completed the mission of destroying Ukraine's main military infrastructure, including weapon warehouses, ammunition depots, aviation and air defence systems, President Vladimir Putin said Saturday.

Russian forces will fulfill all their assigned tasks and the operation in Ukraine is proceeding in accordance with the plan and schedule, Putin said at a meeting with women flight crews of Russian airlines.

Commenting on a new wave of Western sanctions, Putin said they are akin to a "declaration of war."

He stressed that there is no need to introduce a state of emergency in Russia.

It was "a difficult decision" to launch a special military operation in Ukraine, but there are "absolutely real threats" to Russia, the president said.

If Ukraine joins the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the whole military bloc is obliged to support Kiev militarily and Ukraine may get into Crimea, leading to direct clashes between Russia and NATO, Putin warned.

As Russia demands demilitarization of Ukraine, Putin said there are many different options on the negotiating table with Kiev. — Xinhua ■

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, second from left, arrives to attend a military drill outside the city of Rivne, northern Ukraine on 16 February 2022. **PHOTO: ARIS MESSINIS/ AFP**

Ukraine's Zelensky asks Biden for more support

A school building damaged in Friday's shelling in the city of Chernihiv. **PHOTO: AFP**

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday he spoke by phone with his US counterpart Joe Biden to discuss financial support and sanctions against Russia as his country faces an intensifying onslaught.

"As part of the constant dialogue, I had another conversation with @POTUS," Zelensky tweeted. "The agenda included the issues of security, financial support for Ukraine and the continuation of sanctions against Russia."

In a readout on the half-hour call, the White House said Biden had emphasised steps his administration and allies have taken "to raise the costs on Russia for its aggression in Ukraine."

He also highlighted efforts by private companies, such as payment giants Visa and MasterCard, to freeze out Moscow by suspending operations in the wake of the 24 February invasion. — AFP ■

Putin warns against imposing no-fly zone over Ukraine

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin warned Saturday that Moscow would consider any country imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine to have entered into the conflict, while he also equated global sanctions with a declaration of war.

Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky has pleaded with the West to support a no-fly zone as his besieged country continues to resist Moscow's invasion, now in its second week.

Putin, who has dubbed his incursion a "special military operation" to defend separatist regions and previously argued that Ukrainian statehood is a fiction, also threatened his ex-Soviet neighbour's continued existence should its leaders "do what they are doing".

While Kyiv's allies have levelled sweeping sanctions to try to deter the Russian assault, they have so far ruled out a no-fly zone, fearing it could escalate into a wider war with the world's most nuclear-armed state.

Putin warned that a no-fly zone would have "colossal and catastrophic consequences not only for Europe but also the whole world". — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ukraine dominates social media info war with Russia

UKRAINE has succeeded in dominating social media in the first days since the Russian invasion, in an intensifying information war with Moscow that Kyiv so far appears to be winning, analysts say.
Even as President Volodymyr Zelensky remains bunkered down in Kyiv amid heavy bombardment and the fear of assassination, his government has forced an all-out assault on social media to win supporters for their cause.
Zelensky's daily video addresses, usually published with English subtitles, have become viral sensations, while the defence and foreign ministries tout the military resistance of Ukraine in snazzy graphics.
Meanwhile, Ukrainians have posted videos showing the success of their forces that have become viral trends, including a Ukrainian missile shooting down a Russian helicopter and a Ukrainian farmer towing away captured Russian military hardware on his tractor.
"IN the first phase of the conflict, in terms of international opinion, the Ukrainians are clearly ahead in information," said Baptiste Robert, founder of Predicta Lab, a French company fighting disinformation.

Russian plane lands in US to remove diplomats expelled for alleged espionage

A Russian plane landed at Washington's international airport Saturday to pick up about a dozen diplomats from Moscow's UN mission who are accused by Washington of espionage, authorities said.
THE United States closed its airspace to all Russian aircraft after Moscow invaded Ukraine.
The Ilyushin Il-96 aircraft was allowed, however, to land at Dulles International Airport. The landing was confirmed by the FlightAware website, which tracks all air movement.
"The US government approved a flight chartered by the Russian government to facilitate the departure of Russian UN Mission personnel who were expelled for abuse of their privileges of residence," a State Department spokesman told AFP.
"This special exception was done... to ensure Russian mission personnel and their families departed by the date we had instructed," the spokesman added, speaking on background.
The United States had called on Monday for the expulsion of 12 members of Russia's UN mission by 7 March.
A day later, again citing alleged espionage, the US ordered the expulsion of a Russian national working for the UN secretariat.

Latest developments

HERE are the latest developments in Russia's war in Ukraine:

Ceasefire collapses

Russia resumes its offensive against the besieged southeastern city of Mariupol hours after agreeing to a ceasefire to allow residents trapped by the fighting to leave which Ukraine says it violated. Officials in Mariupol had announced plans for a large-scale evacuation during the ceasefire but later said they had to postpone the operation in the face of continued Russian shelling.
Russia accused Ukrainian forces in Mariupol of blocking residents from leaving.

Nearing Kyiv

Russian forces inch closer to the capital Kyiv from the north and west.
AFP witnesses scenes of widespread destruction in the northern town of Chernihiv, where dozens of civilians have been killed in shelling, missile attacks and air raids.

More talks planned

One of Ukraine's negotiators says a third round of talks with Russia on ending the fighting will take place on Monday. Russian President Vladimir Putin in a phone call with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz says Moscow is ready for dialogue over Ukraine if all its demands are met.

SOURCE : AFP

AFF to resume ASEAN level youth football tourneys in late 2022

THE ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) is planning to resume ASEAN-level youth football matches late 2022, according to the football authorities.

The football federation is trying to get all the matches back this year, as all the tourneys were postponed due to the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

AFF hosted the first ASEAN U-23 Championship in Cambodia from 14 to 26 February and the second ASEAN Futsal Championship in Thailand in April.

The ASEAN Football Confederation is also planning to host the U-16 and U-19 men's and women's competition from July to October 2022.

Myanmar football teams regularly compete in the ASEAN level competitions and will compete in those competitions according to the pandemic situation.

The Asian Football Confederation and the ASEAN Football Federation have been working to resume regional football matches as usual and have resumed competitions since the second half of last year.

The Myanmar youth team has been away from international competitions since the beginning of 2020 and will be able to compete again later if it is held this year.—Ko Nyi Lay/ GNLM

Farkasova wins first gold of 2022 Winter Paralympics

Slovakia's Henrieta Farkasova (R) and her guide Martin Motyka celebrate after the Alpine Skiing Women's Downhill Vision Impaired event of the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games at the National Alpine Skiing Center in Yanqing District, Beijing, capital of China, 5 March 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA/JIANG HAN**

HENRIETA Farkasova of Slovakia grabbed the first gold medal of the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games here on Saturday, bringing her collection of Paralympic golds to ten.

Farkasova clocked a winning time of one minute and 19.50 seconds at the women's downhill vision impaired race, followed by Zhu Daqing of China in 1:21.75. British skier Millie Knight came in third in 1:23.20.

This is the tenth gold Farkasova won at the Winter Paralympics.

"I am very happy, it is my 10th Paralympic gold medal. I had some problems in my knees the last four years, so I am very happy to be here and to be racing," said the 36-year-old racer.

Farkasova had overcome a knee injury she sustained three years ago at the world championships before coming to the Beijing Winter Paralympics.

"I had three operations and it was very hard for me, very painful. But now I am back. I am first and it feels very good," she said. There were six golds up for grabs at the first day's Alpine skiing downhill races.

The gold of men's downhill vision impaired went to Austrian Johannes Aigner who finished in 1:13.45.— Xinhua ■

South Korea's Ko storms to Singapore victory

SOUTH Korea's Ko Jin-young stormed to a two-shot victory by closing with a final round six-under-par 66 to win the HSBC Women's World Championship at the Sentosa Golf Club on Sunday.

Playing in her first event of the 2022 LPGA season, Ko showed why she is the world number one as she outplayed her closest rivals by firing five birdies in her last six holes to clinch her sixth LPGA title with her winning total of 17-under-par 271.

Australia's Minjee Lee staged a strong comeback by posting the day's lowest score of 63, to end her Singapore campaign tied for second place alongside overnight leader Chun In-gee of South Korea.

"It feels amazing right now. I just tried to focus on doing my best today. It's always hard to be playing in the last group but I thrive on playing under pressure," said Ko.

South Korea's Ko Jin-young won the HSBC Women's World Championship golf tournament by two shots. **PHOTO: AFP**

"I was on Facetime with my mom and dad. They were smiling all the time and were very emotional with my latest victory."— 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.

Liverpool ride their luck to cut gap on Man City

Liverpool closed to within three points of Manchester City at the top of the Premier League as Sadio Mane's goal secured a nervy 1-0 win over West Ham at Anfield. **PHOTO: AFP**

LIVERPOOL closed to within three points of Manchester City at the top of the Premier League as Sadio Mane's goal secured a nervy 1-0 win over West Ham at Anfield. Defeat leaves West Ham still two points outside the top four having played more games than all their competition for a place in next season's Champions League.

But David Moyes' men will rue a host of missed chances to salvage a point, which would have given City breathing space at the top of the table. Pep Guardiola's men can restore their six-point advantage when they host Manchester United in a derby at the Etihad on Sunday. Jurgen Klopp made mass changes to his side in midweek for an FA Cup win over Norwich which kept alive hopes of a historic quadruple of trophies for Liverpool.

The pursuit of City may be the biggest challenge as the Reds attempt to follow up last weekend's League Cup win with three more trophies in the remainder of the season.— AFP ■