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Five-point roadmap of State Administration Council

- 1. An emphasis will be placed on peace and stability and the full prevalence of law and order throughout the Union to ensure the safety of the socioeconomic life of the people.
- 2. Public-centred development tasks will be undertaken for the development of socioeconomic life to ensure the prosperity and food sufficiency of the country.
- 3. Efforts will be made to continue cementing the genuine discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system and building the Union based on democracy and the federal system.
- 4. An 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 general elections will be held in line with the Constitution (2008), and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

If factories can operate with solar power, it will much benefit them: Senior General

ONLY when raw materials can be supplied will manufacturing process be undertaken, said State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with chairmen and members of industrial zones in Yangon Region and businesspersons of micro, small and medium scale enterprises at Kanaung Hall of Hlinethaya Industrial Zone yesterday afternoon.

Operations in industrial zones, difficulties and requirements reported

Chair of Hlinethaya Industrial Zone U Ohn Hsaing reported on operation of industrial measures, manufacturing, needs of electricity for running industrial zone, speedy allowing of importing industrial raw materials and machine parts, and purchase of the State over local-made quality products.

Businesspersons from industrial zones reported on addressing the problems of squatters in the industrial zones under the law, supply of electricity, transport for staff, deploying health staff in townships for industrial zone, measures of rule of law in the zones, and aid for garment factories to rise the quality.

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State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views production process of foodstuff at Ever Rich International Production Factory in Hlinethaya Industrial Zone in Yangon on 5 February.

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National Objectives for 76th Anniversary of Union Day 2023

1. To strive for the perpetual existence of national solidarity and perpetuity of the Union through the internal strength
2. To make collaborative efforts of all ethnic nationals to restore perpetual and durable peace
3. To join hands in harmony for ensuring the prosperity and food sufficiency of the nation as two national plans through the Union spirit
4. To help develop all regions and states on equal terms and increase employment opportunities with ensuring the health and fitness of the entire National people
5. To practise the genuine, discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system through fraternity, solidarity and united endeavours of all ethnic national brethren for building the Union based on democratic and federal systems

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.

MNHRC inspects Shwe Than Lwin Home for Aged

AN inspection team led by Myanmar National Human Rights Commission members U Kyaw Soe and Dr Than Myint carried out the inspection at Shwe Than Lwin Home for Aged located in Dagon (Seikkan) Township, Yangon Region, on 3 February.

The inspection team inspected the situation of fundamental human rights of the elders who dwelled at the home for aged, healthcare services, providing the food, purified drinking water, freedom of religion, livingness situation in the home, and providing of easily move in the building and recreation places.



Myanmar National Human Rights Commission members encourage the elder persons at the Shwe Than Lwin Home for Aged.

The team warmly encouraged aged 72 elder persons who are looked after at the home for aged. The finding of inspection and suggestions of the team during the inspection visit of the commission are send to relevant organization to do the necessary work.—MNA/KZL

Mottos for 76th Anniversary of Union Day 2023

1. Let's go forward in joining hands among ethnic nationals in union
2. Let's firmly join hands among national brethren of the Union in unity
3. Energetic harmony and stronger unity represent the souls of the Union

2 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 5 February, total figure rises to 633,842

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,842** after **two** new cases were reported on 5 February 2023 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **614,313**, including **one** new recovery.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged **19,490** on 5-2-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic.

The country has vaccinated **30,916,776** people aged 18 and above for COVID-19 vaccines and **6,811,300** people aged under 18 till 4 February 2023. —MNA

Government ready to disburse loans to MSME industries

A plan is underway to loan the MSME businesses and development of livestock sector through the remaining fund from the State economic promotion fund. The government is ready to disburse loans to MSMEs under the scheming rules and regulations.

(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of the MSME Development Central Committee Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 1/2022 of the central committee on 23 September 2022)

If factories can operate with solar power, it will much benefit them: Senior General



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets chairmen and members of industrial zones and MSME businesspersons at Kanaung Hall in Hlinethaya Industrial Zone in Yangon on 5 February.

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The region chief minister explained plans to coordinate the reports of attendees, and development of industries.

Responses to relevant sectors

Union ministers discussed fulfilling the requirements of businesspersons and plans to give technical assistance for industries.

Encouragement for domestic manufacturing

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General said the MSME businesses are being encouraged for economic development of the State. Only when raw materials can be supplied will manufacturing process be undertaken. Encouragement is being given to production of long-staple cotton at home. A plan is underway to produce cotton for local sufficiency and then export the surplus one to foreign countries. Paddy products can be used in MSME manufacturing process.



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing cordially meets businesspersons at the meeting on 5 February.

Likewise, efforts must be made for increasing per-acre yield of oil crops.

Efforts for sufficiency of electricity

Currently, the government

is implementing the hydropower projects as well as generating solar power. Moreover, efforts are being made to generate electricity from wind power. If factories can operate with solar power, it will much benefit them.

If electricity can be generated sufficiently, the public transportation system can be realized with the electricity. Import of electric car is allowed with reduced taxation. Power stations are under construction for recharging the

electric cars on the public roads and major cities.

Encouragement for manufacturing with use of domestic raw materials

It is necessary to primarily use domestic raw industrial materials for manufacturing. The government will help operate manufacturing of tyres based on rubber. Industrial zones are established in districts and townships to be able to produce industrial products. The Senior General expressed his economic guarantee for manufacturing industries to do their businesses without loss. If manufacturing industries develop, the country will improve.

On arrival at Ever Rich International Production Factory and Htoo Thitt feedstuff factory in Hlinethaya Industrial Zone, the Senior General heard reports on work process by officials.

After giving guidance over the reports, the Senior General inspected the products of factories and work process.—MNA

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspects fish farming process, Institute of Fisheries (Twantay) in Shwemayin region of Twantay Township



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets officials on his inspection tour of Institute of Fisheries (Twantay) in Twantay Township of Yangon Region on 5 February.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing yesterday morning inspected fish farming process and the Institute of Fisheries (Twantay) in Shwemayin region of Twantay Township in Yangon Region.

Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Soe Thein and officials reported to the Senior General on fish farming work of Yangon Command and Myanmar Economic Holdings Public Co Ltd in Shwemayin region, distribution of fish to Tatmadaw members, departmental personnel and war veterans at reduced prices, fish farming works in steps, and construction of Kinywa-Kayanwa-Yedwingon-Kwinpauk concrete road for speedy transport of fish from the farms to the market.

After hearing the reports, the Senior General said fish farming in Shwemayin region is to help meet the local fish demand of Yangon Region. As Yangon Region is home to some 9 million population, if each person consumes five ticals of fish per day, it can be seen that there remain many requirements. Fish farming work must be done with least cost for benefiting the people as well as the relevant region.



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views fish farm of Yangon Command in Shwemayin region of Twantay Township on 5 February.

The Senior General stressed the need for transporting livestock products from the region to the market in a rapid process and for selling them at cheap prices. Hence, it is necessary to systematically supervise the route of manufacturing not to raise the cost. Fish from Shwemayin region must be distributed by cold storage trucks to the market.

The Senior General inspected the fish farming works at the relevant farms and left necessary instructions.

At the Institute of Fisheries (Twantay) under the Department of Fisheries, the Senior General met with administrative officials, faculty members and students.

The director general of Department of Fisheries reported on brief history of the institute,

construction of buildings, assistance of the government for students and academic plans, and requirements of the institute. Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Min Naung gave a supplementary report.

In his speech, the Senior General said not only the institute but the university and colleges will be established for the students to continue their

further studies. Agriculture, livestock breeding and technical courses at high schools in 50 districts will be opened across the nation. Qualified students from these schools will have the chance to continue learning advanced subjects.

Depending on the learning of students, the Institute will be upgraded to the college to turn out human resources for the State. Right man and right place will contribute much to development of the State.

The Senior General presented teaching aid and cash assistance for students to principal Daw Moe Thuzar Maung.

The Senior General visited the institute and gave necessary instructions to officials.

The Institute of Fisheries (Twantay) was opened on 12 December 2022 in accord with the guidance of the SAC Chairman Prime Minister to develop fish farming technology and create job opportunities. Currently, 18 male trainees and 23 female trainees are attending the institute. Depending on the academic year and results, the institute will be upgraded to the college for students to learn the advance technologies.—MNA

Naval vessels bring Myanmar citizens back from Thailand

UNDER the guidance of Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, repatriation processes are being undertaken to bring back Myanmar citizens stranded in Thailand facing difficulties to return to Myanmar for various reasons.

Among 679 repatriated Myanmar nationals who faced difficulties on their way of return to Myanmar, 118 repatriated Myanmar nationals from Yangon Region from Kawthaung, were brought by the Myanmar Tatmadaw (Navy) on a military vessel Kyansitthar and arrived back at No 3 Naval Jetty in Thilawa, Yangon at 2 pm yesterday.

Commander of the local

naval command Rear-Admiral Htein Win, Minister for Security and Border Affairs of Yangon Region Colonel Win Tint, naval officers, and family members, officials and family members of repatriated Myanmar citizens welcomed back the repatriated citizens.

They were handed over to the officials of the Yangon Region Government and they were given snacks and bottled water.

After being properly monitored in accordance with the rules of COVID-19 at the Yoma Avenue Quarantine Center, Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township, the returnees in Yangon Region will be sent to the relevant township administrators and the returnees who live outside of Yangon



Repatriated Myanmar citizens being welcomed back by officials and people at the jetty in Yangon on 5 February.



gon Region, will also be handed over to relevant region and state governments.

Similarly, 80 repatriated Myanmar citizens from Sittway, Rakhine State from Kawthaung, and 31 repatriated Myanmar citizens from Kyaukpyu are be-

ing transported back to their respective places by naval vessel Anawrahta. The warship arrived at No 1 jetty in Kyaukpyu at 2 pm yesterday.

Commander of the local naval command headquarters Commodore Kyaw Kyaw Htoo,

officials and family members of repatriated Myanmar citizens welcomed back 31 repatriated citizens. It was reported that naval vessel Anawrahta will continue to transport 80 repatriated Myanmar citizens to Sittway and surrounding areas.—MNA/KZL

Myanmar delegation attends 57th ASEAN Tourism Authority Meeting and Related Meetings



Delegates of ASEAN countries pose for documentary photos at ASEAN Tourism Forum in Jakarta of Indonesia on 3 February.

IN connection with the ASEAN Tourism Forum-2023, Indonesia hosted the ASEAN Tourism Authority Meeting and Related Meetings on 2 and 3 February at the Marriot Hotel in Jakarta.

Leaders of tourism authorities, delegates from China, Japan, Korea, India and the Russian Federation, delegates from the ASEAN-China Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre, ASEAN-Korea Centre and representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat, and a Myanmar delegation led by Head of Myanmar Tourism Authority, Director General of the Hotels and Tourism Directorate of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism U Maung Maung Kyaw attended the event.

The Myanmar delegation attended the 57th ASEAN Tourism Authority meeting on 2 February and also joined the 42nd ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and Korea) Tour-

ism Authority meeting, the 29th ASEAN + India Tourism Group Meetings and the 13th ASEAN + Russia Tourism Coordination Meetings on 3 February.

In these meetings, according to the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (2016-2025), the development of human resources in the ASEAN region, information sharing, promotion of tourism, people-to-people communication, restoration of tourism in the ASEAN region were discussed.

In order to ensure the recovery of safe and quality tourism activities, the respective leading countries negotiated accomplishments in 2022 and future plans for 2023.

Officials shared good experiences and information in the safe and secure restoration of regional tourism industries according to tourism cooperation frameworks with ASEAN-China

Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre, ASEAN-Korea Centre, ASEAN + China-Japan-Korea, ASEAN + India, and ASEAN + Russian Federation.

They discussed and coordinated the processes of cooperation in the market promotion and the sustainable development of tourism, and human resource redevelopment and management.

The compilation of professional standards according to the job types and skill levels based on the ASEAN Tourism Professionals Mutual Recognition Program (ASEAN MRA-TP), which was implemented by Myanmar as a leading country in the ASEAN tourism cooperation process, and the work plan on selection of professional standards for key responsibilities were approved during the 57th ASEAN Tourism Authority Meeting.

In addition, Myanmar participated in the press conference where the ASEAN tourism authorities explained the state of development of tourism by country to the world media.

In the ASEAN tourism industry exhibition programme, tourism galleries from Myanmar were also exhibited.

Myanmar won one Community Based Tourism Award and five ASEAN Public Restroom Awards at the ASEAN Tourism Forum-2023.—MNA/KZL

Illegal foodstuffs, consumer goods, industrial raw materials, vehicles confiscated

A combined team under the supervision of Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force of Mandalay Region made inspections on 2 February and seized four items of goods including 1,980 kilogrammes of Gel Ink Pen estimated at K 24,220,000 and a Howo Sino Tractor and trailer worth K7 million, amounting to K 94.22 million on Mandalay-PyinOoLwin highway and the action was taken under the Customs Procedures.

Similarly, a combined team under the supervision of Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force of Mon State made inspections on 2 February and nabbed 1,100 kilogrammes of Cotton Fabric without official documents estimated at K 1,595,000 and a Toyota Dyna estimated at K18 million at Mayanchaung checkpoint. The officials also confiscated four kinds of goods including 15 cartons of Golden Mountain Oyster Sause estimated at K 2,671,750 and a Toyota Hilux Pick Up approximately K 15 million from a vehicle driven from Hpa-an to Bago amounting to K 37,266,750 in toto on 4 February and the action was taken under the Customs Procedure.

Next, a combined team the led by Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force of Kayin State made inspections on 4 February and seized 200 cartons of Singha beer, 200 cartons of Lactasoy, 198 cartons of Lipovitan and 15 cartons of Bingo Star cat feeds estimated at K 12,350,000 and a Mitsubishi Fuso worth K 20 million without official documents at Thanlwin Bridge checkpoint. The total seizure amounted to K32.35 million and the action was taken under the Customs Procedure.

Furthermore, Muse district Illegal Goods Prevention Team under the supervision of Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force of Shan State made a casual inspection to garages in Myayni truck terminal in Muse and seized 99 Loujia brand motorcycles estimated at K 99 million and a Dong Feng vehicle estimated at K 2 million, amounting to K119 million in total and the action was taken under the Customs Procedures.

Therefore, 11 arrests (at an estimated value of K282,836,750) were made from 2 to 4 February, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. —MNA/KZW

CURRENT AFFAIRS



Edible oil is pouring into a bottle for a consumer at a shop.

Three ships bearing 15,000 tonnes of imported palm oil to arrive soon

THREE ships carrying 15,000 tonnes of imported palm oil will arrive in Myanmar in the second week of February 2023, according to Yangon oil market.

In 2022, the average monthly import of oil was around 40,000 tonnes, with the maximum in July at 58,609 tonnes and the minimum in May at 25,020 tonnes.

In the Yangon oil market, palm oil prices rose due to the fact that there is a lack of oil in some oil tanks. The retail price of oil was K6,600 per viss on 3 February. In some deltaic regions, those who kept oil in their hands are selling it at a low price of K6,700 kyats per viss. The DO price was K6,450 per viss.

Between 20 January and

1 February, 2022, about 20,000 tonnes of palm oil were imported. However, it is reported by some major oil outlets in Yangon that there is a difficulty in getting oil from the external oil market in Yangon, making a raise in price.

Oil hoarders raise the oil price under the pretext of difficulty in the available of oil. Thus, the wholesale reference price increased by around K1,000 per viss from the previous price of K4,530-K4,430 per viss. The DO price rose from K5,250 per viss on 2 January 2023 to K6,450-K6,500 per viss on 3 February.

Although it is said that oil extraction is difficult, there is an influx of cooking oil from

abroad. An oil seller said that the exchange price of the Yangon market is a form of speculation by some of those who have spot oil due to the low change in the reference price.

Despite being said that there is a difficulty in getting oil, the supply of palm oil from abroad and low reference price changes keep the Yangon markets' price to appear as a form of price manipulation by some oil hoarders, a dealer said.

After the news that around 15,000 tonnes of oil will enter from abroad, there are speculations about the change in oil price in external markets on 6 February 2023, at the time of the reference wholesale price announcement. — TWA/CT

Checking ground household data inserted into e-ID software completed by 86.7 per cent

CHECKING the ground household population data which have been inserted into the e-ID software have completed by 86.7 per cent, said Union Minister for Immigration and Population U Myint Kyaing at the coordination meeting 1/2023 of Central Committee on Supervising Ground Census Enumeration held on 3 February.

The Union Minister said that it regarding the ground census enumeration, more than 13.5 million of household population has been inserted into e-ID software across the nation but more than 11.7 million households were surveyed based on the current household

pattern and more than 2.8 million households without household registration collected. Hence, the work completion accounted for 86.7 per cent till today.

The Union Minister continued to say that there remain to collect more than 1.7 million households in the nation. Now, relevant township departments are carrying out filling the necessary data which are different from the ground data through e-ID software.

Depending on the data and accounts, the population of eligible voters must be sent to the Union Election Commission in March 2023, he added.—TWA/KZW



Computer operators insert household data into e-ID software.

Black gram price plunges back under K1.8 million

ALTHOUGH the price of black gram (RC) per tonne has declined below K1.8 million in the Yangon market, the price shoot up to K1,808,000 on 2 February and K1,815,000 on 3 February 2023. The price of black gram fell by K43,000 per tonne on 4 February, setting the price per tonne at K1,770,000, according to the daily price statements of the Yangon pulse market.

On 2 January 2022, a tonne of RC black gram was K1,285,000, and the price rose to K2.1 million on 31 August which was the highest price not only in 2022 but also in seven years from 2016. However, the price dropped below K2 million starting from 20 September and under K1.9 million on 29 September.

On 26 January 2023, it returned to above K1.7 million and reached over K1.8 million

two days later, on 2 February. Nevertheless, the price of black gram slumped back to below K1.8

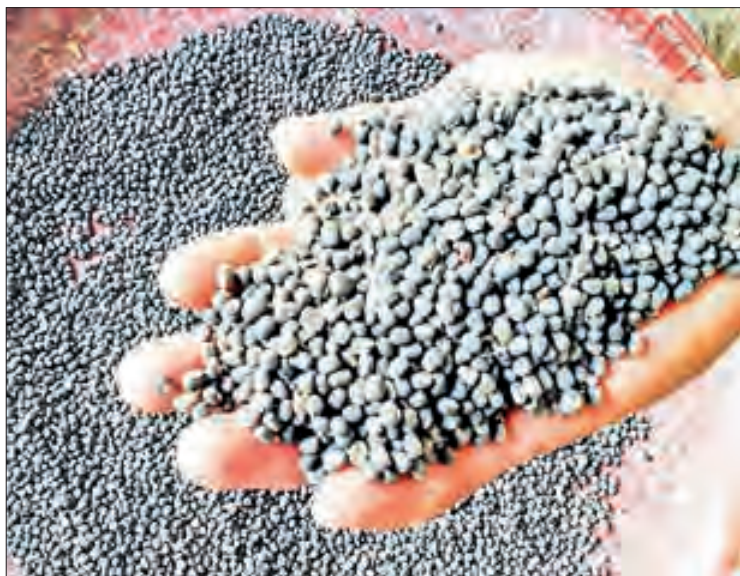


Photo shows sample of black gram in the market.

million on 4 February.

This month, a bulk of pigeon peas and mung bean have been entering the pulse market at a high price, while a few new black gram are entering the market at an unstable price rate. In the Yangon pulse market's statement, there is only a little information about the trading of black gram and some of the trading of pigeon peas.

It is reported that the price per tonne of the black gram FAQ/FOB was US\$725-745 in January, and went up to US\$ 750-770 in early February.

There are imports from abroad as there is a decrease in the cultivation of Myanmar black grams, which are mainly exported to the Indian market, due to

the weather conditions in 2022.

For the five years from 2021-2022 to 2025-2026, Myanmar was allowed to import 250,000 tonnes of black gram and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon pea yearly according to the G to G system. In addition, it is valid to import freely until the end of March 2024.

In early 2023, one quintal of black gram (0.1 tonne) in the Indian market was traded at around 7,000 rupees. As a new black gram will be produced in India in coming October, the price of black gram is expected to reach around 8,000 rupees.

According to a bean and pulse dealer, the remaining old beans are being kept and sold with caution in the Yangon pulse market. — TWA/CT

LOCAL BUSINESS

Buying palm oil tougher than ever in sluggish market

"ON 3 February 2023, it was so hard to buy palm oil in Yangon markets and we cannot purchase as much oil as we want," said an edible oil seller from the delta region.

On 2 February, the wholesale price of palm oil was K6,350 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilograms). The delivery order price was K6,250 per viss then.

These days, irregular trading behaviour is reported at Bayingnaung Wholesale Centre. The market is sluggish as traders are mulling over selling them. The wholesale price opened at K6,600 per viss after 2 pm and the big shops are still observing the market to sell palm oil.

Between 20 January and 1 February 2023, about 20,000 tonnes of palm oil flowed into the country. In 2022, approximately 40,000 tonnes of palm oil were brought into the coun-



Edible oils are seen in the market.

try every month, with 41,541 tonnes entering the domestic markets in January 2022 and 32,337 tonnes in February.

The wholesale reference

price for palm oil is issued on Mondays and the price for three consecutive weeks from 16 January and 5 February was set at K4,430-K4,440 per viss, whereas

the FOB price is \$1,005-K1,008 per tonne. The original price of palm oil is K4,341-K4,353 per viss when it is calculated on the exchange rate of K2,480. The

price hovered unchanged for three straight weeks.

On 3 February, palm oil was priced at K6,500 per viss in Mandalay markets. The opening price was K6,650 per viss in Yangon's wholesale markets. The price in the Mandalay market varies depending on the price recorded in the Yangon market, said a buyer in the Mandalay market.

The traders in Yangon markets stopped sales when there was a high demand. The sellers usually raised the price of K250 higher than that of the previous day. It is hard to forecast the price in Yangon markets. Those traders in possession of palm oil receive handsome profits when the price increases. Traders in regions outside Yangon are closely observing the Yangon market to decide the market price. — TWA/EM

MIC greenlights 70 foreign projects worth \$1.47 bln in ten months



Directorate of Investment and Company Administration in Yangon.

THE Myanmar Investment Commission nodded 70 foreign projects from eight countries in (April-January) of the current financial year 2022-2023. The country attracted a capital of US\$1.476 billion this FY, including the expansion of capital by the existing enterprises, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

Those enterprises are engaged in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, electricity, hotels and tourism, real estate and service sectors respectively.

Singapore is the top source

of FDI this FY, with 15 Singapore-listed enterprises pumping FDI of US\$1.157 billion into Myanmar. Hong Kong SAR stands as the second largest investor this FY with an estimated capital of over \$165 million drawn from 12 projects. China is ranked third in the investment line-up with more than \$105.55 million from 36 projects.

Two each from the Republic of Korea and China (Taipei) put investments into Myanmar, while one enterprise each from Belize, Japan and the UK also made investments in the past ten months respectively. The

existing enterprises from Bangladesh, Japan, Seychelles, China Taipei, China, Hong Kong SAR, the Republic of Korea, India, Thailand, the UK, Thailand, Switzerland and Samoa also increased investments.

Myanmar drew FDI of \$647 million in the 2021-2022 mini-budget period (October to March), DICA's statistics indicated.

The Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations has been inviting responsible businesses to benefit the country.

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) ensures the approval of responsible businesses by assessing environmental and social impacts. The commission is working together with the relevant departments to screen the projects as well.

MIC will prioritize manufacturing of fertilizer, cement, iron and steel, value-added foodstuff, electric vehicle and pharmaceutical and medical supplies, agriculture and livestock farming and related industries and public transportation services for investments. — KK

YGEA reference price dips as gold spot price falls

YANGON Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association's reference price declined to K2,197,000 per tical (0.578 ounce or 0.016 kilogramme) tracking the decrease in gold spot prices.

As the gold price rallied to \$1,955 in the international market, the reference price increased to K2,303,200 per tical on 2 February. On 4 February, the price moved down to K2,197,200 per tical following the spot price dipping to \$1,865 per ounce.

The figures indicated an increase of \$90 per ounce and over K100,000 per tical within two days.

Despite the YGEA's reference price, the pure gold spiked at K2,830,000 per tical in the unofficial market, showing a large gap of over K600,000 per tical.

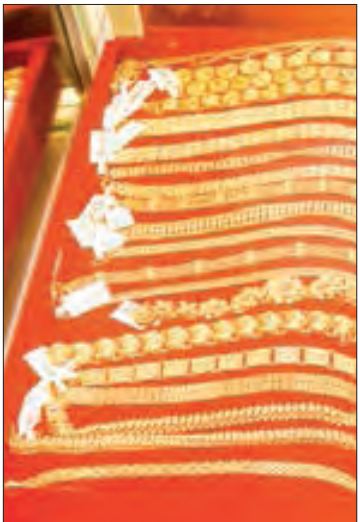
YGEA calculated the price depending on the Central Bank of Myanmar's reference exchange rate of K2,100, with some addition, while the US dollar is exchanged at K2,860 in the unofficial forex market.

The price of gold in the domestic market is highly correlated with the gold spot prices and dollar exchange rate.

The soaring dollar exchanging at over K4,500 drove the pure gold price up to a record-high of K3.7 million per tical in late August 2022.

For the gold price to decline, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation has been selling gold ingots in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw under the auction system.

With an aim at reducing gold prices, the YGEA and Mandalay Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association sold gold bullion supplied by the executive members and the members as well. — NN/EM



Don't be proud but be open-minded

PROUDNESS is not useful in relations among the people of the society but the open-minded act can create amicability among the people. It can be said that society can be decorated with people with open-minded activities without proudness.

Actually, the proudness is a hindrance to friendly relations and the restoration of a peaceful situation among the people. Only when all the people need to remove selfishness from their souls can they discard proudness. It is because every malpractice not useful in society is based on selfishness. In this case, proudness is also based on selfishness to step up all things to influence others.

In society, everybody wishes to win applause for their success and good deeds. In this regard, they have to apply the best ways to shape themselves with open-minded activities. They have to exercise the acts to be free from jealousy and selfishness based on proudness. If so, they will be in a position to be ready to accept and allow applause of all. Consequently, they will be useful for society. Let's discard proudness but forge open-minded moves!

invested in society. It can be said that those with open-minded souls are always willing to invest their lives in the welfare of society. If so, it is not actually amazing that their minds are deserved to accept the applause of the Universe.

In society, everybody wishes to win applause for their success and good deeds. In this regard, they have to apply the best ways to shape themselves with open-minded activities. They have to exercise the acts to be free from jealousy and selfishness based on proudness. If so, they will be in a position to be ready to accept and allow applause of all. Consequently, they will be useful for society. Let's discard proudness but forge open-minded moves!



Naturally, human beings wish to show off their assets as an act of proudness how to dominate others and how to deceive others into securing the highest positions in society. Some persons one-sidedly see other persons as their opponents in all aspects because of upholding jealousy. They never conceal their envy of other people. To be able to overcome such kinds of malpractices, they have to show off their proudness.

Nonetheless, everybody knows what is right and what is wrong. So, they also know proudness, envy as well as jealousy are wrong in society and not useful in relations with counterparts. These acts never bring advantages to those persons in individuals as well as to society. Hence, everybody needs to discard proudness, selfishness, envy and jealousy from their souls.

But everybody should not keep their soul empty. They have to forge open-minded souls. They have to open their hearts to accept and allow infiltration or penetration of any good deeds. They should use the blood from their hearts to refresh these good deeds to be

Life-threatening fungal infections target of novel vaccine: Research

A new vaccine from the University of Georgia could be the first clinically approved immunization to protect against invasive fungal infections, a growing concern as antifungal drug resistance increases. Fungal infections cause more than 1.5 million deaths worldwide each year and cost billions. They also double hospitalization costs, double the length of hospital stays and double the risk of death in hospitalized patients, according to a previous UGA study.

But there currently are no effective vaccines to protect vulnerable patients from fungal infections. "There's a significant unmet clinical need for this kind of prevention and also treatment, particularly among immunocompromised individuals," said Karen Norris, lead investigator on the new study and professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Patient population at risk

"The patient population at risk for invasive fungal infections has increased significantly over the last several years." The experimental vaccine is designed to protect against the three most common fungal pathogens that are responsible for more than 80 per cent of fatal fungal infections.

The study tested the vaccine's efficacy in four preclinical animal models, including nonhuman primates.

The researchers relied on different immunosuppressed models for the study, reflecting drug regimens similar to those of transplant recipients, people with HIV or cancer patients, some of the most at-risk human populations.

The vaccine was effective in developing protective antibodies in each of the models. "Because it targets three different pathogens, the vaccine has the potential to

be groundbreaking regarding invasive fungal infections," said Norris, who is also faculty in the university's Center for Vaccines and Immunology.

"Plans are underway to develop the vaccine for a Phase I (human) safety trial." More people at risk of fungal infections than just immunocompromised. Fungal infections are most commonly seen in people with immune disorders, including those with uncontrolled HIV or impaired immunity from therapies like chemotherapy or anti-inflammatories.

Previous research

But previous research from Norris, postdoctoral fellow Emily Rayens and the College of Public Health's Jose Cordero in 2022 showed that at-risk population has expanded in recent years.

That study showed people with diabetes; chronic obstructive

pulmonary disease (or COPD); or co-infections such as COVID-19, tuberculosis or flu are likewise at higher risk of developing fungal infections.

The first line of defense is typically treatment with azoles, which are broad-spectrum anti-fungal medications. But antifungal resistance is growing. As a result, fungal infections are becoming more difficult to treat, making prevention even more critical, Norris said.

The new vaccine targets the three most common causes of fungal infections: Aspergillus, Candida and Pneumocystis. Candida, in particular, is a growing concern in health care circles as different strains of the fungus become multidrug resistant.

Antifungal immunity

The vaccine showed broad, cross-protective antifungal immunity in the animal models,

which bodes well for future clinical trials. "This is an area that has been underdeveloped on the research front for a long time," said Norris, who is also the Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar in Immunology and Translational Biomedicine.

"These are very large populations of people who are at risk of invasive fungal infections, and although there has been considerable efforts to develop vaccines, none are yet approved. We believe this is a very strong vaccine candidate."

Published in PNAS Nexus, the study was co-authored by the College of Veterinary Medicine's Emily Rayens, Whitney Rabacal, Hubertine Willems, Gabrielle Kirtton, James Barber and Jarrod Mousa; and the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences' Brandi Celia-Sanchez and Michelle Momany.

SOURCE: ANI



That study showed people with diabetes; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (or COPD); or co-infections such as COVID-19, tuberculosis or flu are likewise at higher risk of developing fungal infections. **PHOTO: FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE ONLY/FREEPIK**

White-tailed deer harbor nearly extinct SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern



These observations point to the involvement of a yet unidentified animal species that served as an intermediate host and enabled spillover of the virus into humans. Two bucks are seen at Cape Henlopen State Park, in Lewes, Delaware, on 25 November 2020. **PHOTO: EVA HAMBACH / AFP/FILE**

THE spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) from humans to white-tailed deer (WTD) and its ability to transmit from deer to deer raised concerns about the role of WTD in the epidemiology and ecology of the virus.

A study found that White-tailed deer may serve as a wildlife reservoir for SARS-CoV-2 strains that no longer circulate in humans.

White-tailed deer are highly susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection, highlighting the need to establish surveillance programs that continuously monitor the

circulation, distribution, and evolution of this pathogen in wildlife populations.

Diego Diel and colleagues assessed the prevalence, genetic diversity, and evolution of SARS-CoV-2 in white-tailed deer in New York. The authors tested 5,462 oropharyngeal lymph node samples

collected from the deer during the hunting seasons of 2020 and 2021.

COVID-19 was declared a pandemic

COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in March 2020 and as of January 2023 has incurred over 659 million human cases and more than 6.6 million deaths globally.

COVID-19 is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), a new zoonotic virus for which most of the first known human infections were linked to the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, China, where several live wild animal species were sold. SARS-CoV-2 is a single-stranded RNA virus within the Sarbecovirus subgenus, Betacoronavirus genus, of the family Coronaviridae.

Analysis of the genome sequence of SARS-CoV-2 revealed high similarity to coronaviruses circulating in bats in China, suggesting that bats are the most likely source of the ancestral virus that originated SARS-CoV-2.

While the closest bat coro-

naviruses (RaTG13, RmYN02, RpYN06, and PrC31) are phylogenetically related to SARS-CoV-2, they present several mutations across the genome that distinguish them from SARS-CoV-2, indicating that direct transmission of the virus from bats to humans was unlikely.

A yet unidentified animal species

These observations point to the involvement of a yet unidentified animal species that served as an intermediate host and enabled spillover of the virus into humans.

Comparative sequence analyses of the main cellular receptor for SARS-CoV-2, the angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2), from more than 400 animal species suggested a broad host range for the virus. Notably, the ACE2 of three species of deer, including reindeer (Rangifer tarandus), Pere David's deer (Elaphurus davidianus), and white-tailed deer (WTD) (Odocoileus virginianus), share a high similarity to the human ACE2 and were predicted to

allow binding and entry of SARS-CoV-2 into deer cells.

The study has confirmed these in silico predictions and demonstrated that WTD are highly susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection. Most importantly, intranasal inoculation of SARS-CoV-2 in WTD resulted in virus replication and shedding, which led to efficient deer-to-deer transmission.

Hotspots of infection

The authors identified hotspots of infection in multiple confined geographic areas. Fewer than 1 per cent of samples were positive in 2020, compared with 21 per cent in 2021. Sequence analysis of SARS-CoV-2 genomes from 164 samples demonstrated the cocirculation of three major variants of concern: Alpha, Gamma, and Delta.

The results revealed multiple human-to-deer spillover events of the Alpha and Delta lineages, with subsequent deer-to-deer transmission and rapid adaptation of the viruses. According to the authors, the findings underscore the need for measures to minimize additional virus introductions in animals that may lead to spillback of novel deer-adapted SARS-CoV-2 variants to humans.

SOURCE: ANI



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 5 February 2023)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 6 February 2023: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Taninthayi Region and isolated in Kachin, Eastern Shan, Kayin and Mon states. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing Region and (Northern and Southern) Shan State and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4 - 6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Isolated rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6 February 2023: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6 February 2023: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6 February 2023: Generally fair weather.

ENVIRON

WORLD

New study sheds light on how ‘Earth’s thermostat’ regulates climate

WEATHERING is the process by which rocks, rain, and carbon dioxide help govern the Earth’s climate over thousands of years, much like a thermostat. A new study performed by Penn State scientists could help us better understand how this thermostat reacts to temperature changes.

“Life has been on this planet for billions of years, so we know Earth’s temperature has remained consistent enough for there to be liquid water and to support life,” said Susan Brantley, Evan Pugh University Professor and Barnes Professor of Geosciences at Penn State, adding, “The idea is that silicate rock weathering is this thermostat, but no one has ever really agreed on its temperature sensitivity.”

Because many factors go into weathering, it has been



For millions of years, carbon has lain trapped in the rock of mountains. The Dunajec River Gorge runs through the Pieniny Mountains in the south of Poland and the north of Slovakia as Dunajec is the border river between the two countries in the area. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/AFP/FILE**

challenging to use results of laboratory experiments alone to create global estimates of how weathering responds to temperature changes, the scientists said.—ANI

Death toll in Chile forest fires rises to 23: official

AT least 23 people have died in hundreds of forest fires whipped up amid a blistering heat wave in south central Chile, a senior government official said Saturday night.

“We want to mourn the passing of 23 persons,” said Deputy Interior Minister Manuel Monsalve, adding that 979 people have been injured in the fires.

Monsalve said 232 wildfires were still active on Saturday, including 16 that began earlier in the day.

The government of President Gabriel Boric extended a state of disaster to include the southern region of Araucania. The regions of Nuble and Biobio were already under a disaster designation.

The move allows Boric to

mobilize the military to help battle the fires as the death toll continued to rise.

Temperatures soared to 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), hindering efforts to contain the fires, many of which raged out of control.

Boric, who suspended a holiday to rush to the city of Concepcion, 510 kilometres (320 miles) south of the capital, Santiago, tweeted that he would keep working “to confront the forest fires and to help families.”

Boric said Argentina had offered to send firefighters and equipment.

Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico and Spain have also offered help, Interior Minister Carolina Toha said.—AFP

Avalanches in Austria, Switzerland kill five

AVALANCHES in Austria and Switzerland have left five people dead, leading officials to warn on Saturday of the risks posed by particularly unstable snow cover.

Three of those killed were visiting Austria’s Alpine regions.

“One winter sports enthusiast was killed in an avalanche in Kaltenbach on Saturday,” a police spokesman told AFP, without giving further details of the accident in the small Alpine village.

Austrian news agency APA

reported that the victim was a 17-year-old New Zealander who was skiing off-piste.

On Friday, a 32-year-old Chinese man, who was also said to be skiing away from the designated routes, died in an avalanche in the resort of Soelden.

A third victim was found dead Saturday after being reported missing the previous day. APA reported that the man, in his 50s, had died in the Kleinwalsertal valley on Austria’s border with Germany.—AFP



Avalanches in Austria and Switzerland have left five people dead, leading officials to warn on Saturday of the risks posed by particularly unstable snow cover. **PHOTO: KANTONSPOLIZEI GRAUBUENDEN/AFP/FILE**

UK mega-lab generates weather to test homes of future

THE thermometer sinks below zero as a blizzard of fine snow descends on two houses freshly built inside a massive laboratory in northern England.

Despite the icy conditions, the two energy-efficient homes remain cosy and warm due to their use of cutting-edge heating and insulation technology.

Welcome to Energy House 2.0 — a science experiment designed to help the world’s housebuilders slash carbon emissions, save energy and tackle climate change.



Simulated snow covers a car and the walls of one of two houses built in a lab to develop future heating solutions that will use less energy and help meet climate goals. **PHOTO: AFP**

The project, based in a laboratory resembling a giant warehouse on Salford University campus near the centre of Manchester, opened last month.

Rain, wind, sunshine and snow can be recreated in temperatures ranging from 40 degrees Celsius to -20C, operated from a control centre.

Replicating weather

“What we’ve tried to achieve here is to be able to replicate the weather conditions that would be experienced around 95 per cent of the populated Earth,” Profes-

sor Will Swan, head of energy house laboratories at the university, told AFP.

The facility, comprising two chambers that can experience different weather at the same time, will test types of housing from all over the world “to understand how we deliver their net-zero and energy-efficient homes”, he added.

The two houses, which are quintessentially British and constructed by firms with UK operations, will remain in place for a few years.

Other builders will then be able to rent space in the lab to put their own properties under the spotlight.

The project’s first house was built by UK property firm Barratt Developments and French materials giant Saint-Gobain.—AFP

HEALTH/PANDEMIC
WORLD

Sapporo Snow Festival opens for 1st time in 3 yrs with 160 sculptures

THE annual Sapporo Snow Festival began Saturday in the Hokkaido capital, opening its venues to the public for the first time in three years and featuring 160 sculptures made from snow and ice.

The festival, one of Japan's largest winter celebrations dating back to 1950, returned to an in-person format after being held virtually for the previous two years due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Hokkaido is a popular destination for overseas travelers. The snow festival usually attracts more than 2 million domestic and overseas tourists every year, with 2019 seeing a record 2.74 million people visiting.

At the main Odori site, a sculpture of Nippon Ham Fighters' new baseball stadium, Es



Visitors to the Sapporo Snow Festival take photos in front of one of the sculptures on Saturday. PHOTO: KYODO

Con Field Hokkaido, was displayed standing at around 12 metres high. The festival will be held at two sites in Sapporo through 11 February. "It was good to see the snow sculptures in person at the venue," said Midori Kojima, 40, who had been visiting the festival every year until it was closed to the public.

Kojima visited with her family from the city of Eniwa, around 27 kilometres from Sapporo. "My children also enjoyed seeing the sculptures of anime characters," she said. Other exhibits include sculptures featuring a historic building in Embley Park in Britain, the winter home of the family of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, to show gratitude to medical workers who are battling against the pandemic.—Kyodo

As pandemic fades, Guatemalan motorcyclists resume religious pilgrimage

THOUSANDS of motorcyclists on Saturday roared 140 miles across Guatemala in a rolling procession to venerate a religious crucifix, the Black Christ of Es-

quipulas. Thumping motorcycle engines roared to life at dawn in Guatemala City's main Constitution Square, and riders soon sped



Bikers set out in a convoy from Constitution Square in Guatemala City to Esquipulas, 222 km to the east, to visit a 16th-century carved black statue of Jesus in a basilica, on 4 February 2017. PHOTO: JOHAN ORDONEZ/AFP

off, resuming a practice begun in 1961 but suspended for two years by the pandemic.

"This is the 12th time that God has allowed me to arrive in Esquipulas," said Alberto Godines, 43, who wore a mask of a skull with horns.

Other participants also wore masks of devils or characters from the movies, all to take part in what is known as the "Caravan of Zorro," which every February takes cyclists to Esquipulas, a city declared in 1996 by then Pope John Paul II as the "Central American capital of Faith."

The Black Christ of Esquipulas has been venerated for more than four centuries by the Catholic faithful, and its home is in the basilica in Esquipulas. —AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Study links adoption of electric vehicles with improved health

IN the first study to use real-world data to correlate electric cars, air pollution, and health, a team of researchers from USC's Keck School of Medicine has begun to chronicle the actual impact of electric vehicle adoption.

Using publicly available records, the researchers examined a "natural experiment" taking place in California as citizens quickly shifted to electric cars, or light-duty zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs).

The findings have recently been published in the journal Science of the Total Environment. —ANI

Somalia gets hospital to provide treatment, care for security forces

THE African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) said it has handed over a new hospital facility designed to provide quality treatment and care to Somali security forces involved in the fight against al-Shabab across the country.

Somalia's Minister of Defense Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur said the 68-bed facility located in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, would go a long way in providing urgent medical attention to soldiers and other security officers wounded on the battlefield.

"This facility is critical to the safety of our soldiers engaged in the fight against terrorism," Nur said in a statement issued in Mogadishu on Thursday evening.

Chief of Defense Forces Odowaa Yusuf Rageh said the opening of the facility was a significant step in the transition process and hailed the collaboration which enabled the successful implementation of the project. ATMIS built the facility as a Quick Impact Project, which is aimed at bringing basic services closer to the people and involves the construction of schools, health facilities, police stations, and the sinking of boreholes, among other necessities.

Special Representative of the African Union Commission Chairperson for Somalia Mohammed El-Amine Souef said the facility will help improve treatment and care offered to Somali security forces as they continue their offensive against al-Shabab militants. —Xinhua

Mongolia leads world in cancer mortality rate

MONGOLIA has the world's highest rate of cancer mortality per 100,000, the country's National Cancer Center said Saturday.

In 2022, 4,548 people died of cancer in Mongolia with a population of 3.4 million, while at least 6,885 people were diagnosed with the disease in the country, the center said in a statement on the occasion of the World Cancer Day that falls on February

4 each year.

More than 70 per cent of new cancer cases have been diagnosed too late, and 87 per cent of cancer patients are those aged 45 years or older; it said, adding that liver, gastric, esophageal and cervical cancers accounted for the majority of all registered cases.

Mongolia launched nationwide health checkups from last May to detect serious diseases

early so as to promote a healthy lifestyle and narrow the life expectancy gap between men and women.

Late diagnosis makes treatment less likely to succeed and reduces survival chances, the country's Ministry of Health said in a statement, urging the public to actively participate in the checkups free of charge. —Xinhua

Viet Nam seeks ways to boost export, production

VIET Nam considers trade facilitation, technical barriers reduction and improving products' quality among key tasks to diversify export markets amid multiple external challenges, local media reported on Friday.

Viet Nam's economy scale is still modest with limited resilience and competitiveness, therefore it is crucial to avoid the global recession, local newspaper Bao dau tu (Investment) reported, citing Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh at a meeting.

Noting that external factors have led to lowering demand and decreasing production in Viet

Nam, he said, it is important to diversify exports and supply chains while developing a resilient and self-independent economy and increase demand for the domestic market of nearly 100 million people.

Minister of Industry and Trade Nguyen Hong Dien said a range of measures are needed to facilitate production and exports, including diversifying export markets, taking advantage of 15 free trade agreements that are in effect and updating new regulations from buyers.

Companies should further accelerate diversifying market



Viet Nam is becoming a new manufacturing hub outside of China for many first-tier IT companies. **PHOTO: AFP**

and avoid overreliance on traditional markets, he said at the meeting held on Friday.

Though accounting for small share of Viet Nam's export, northern Europe and Latin American markets still have much room for growth. With proper approach, Viet Nam's products can increase their presence in these markets, he added. The Vietnamese manufacturing sector continued to face challenging business conditions in January this year with declining production and new orders, according to a report by S&P Global Market Intelligence. —AFP

Cash and fuel crisis cranks up Nigeria election tensions



Ruling APC party candidate Bola Tinubu, seen here on a campaign poster, says the fuel and cash crisis is a bid to undermine him. **PHOTO: AFP**

WITH just three weeks to go before Nigeria's presidential election, major cash and fuel shortages are stirring up public anger and tensions during campaigning for the country's top post.

Candidates have traded accusations of blame over the shortages with the ruling party hopeful even suggesting his enemies had manufactured the crisis to undermine his election chances.

Campaign rhetoric has been heating in the run up to the February 25 vote to decide on the successor to President Muhammadu Buhari, a former army commander who steps down after two terms in office.

The election appears close with three leading candidates: Bola Tinubu of the ruling party All Progressives Congress (APC), main opposition party Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) Atiku Abubakar and Labour party hopeful Peter Obi.

Already grappling with widespread insecurity and economic fallout from the Ukraine war, Nigerians are also dealing with fuel shortages and limited access to cash due to a programme to exchange old bank notes for new ones. —AFP

Rural China gains renewed vitality as economy rebounds

AS the adage goes "The whole year's work depends on a good start in spring," and perhaps few people understand this better than the farmers.

With the Chinese economy recovering rapidly from the shadow of COVID-19, China's vast rural land is thriving with hope and vitality.

Only three days into the week-long Spring Festival holiday, an agricultural company in Baoqing County of Heilongjiang Province already resumed

business to a bustling crowd of customers.

Though most of the northernmost province is still covered in snow, farmers have kicked off preparation for a new planting season that usually begins in April.

Li Xuewu, a corn and soybean grower in Baoqing, ordered about 30 tonnes of fertilizers from the company as early as last October.

With the guidance of agro-technicians, Li has mas-

tered more effective seedling and fertilization techniques, allowing him to achieve the best harvest of his farming career in 2022.

"I'm full of confidence to do even better this year," said Li.

As China's grain barn with rich black soil, Heilongjiang has topped the country's total grain output chart for 13 consecutive years. The province has set aside 14.5 million hectares for crop planting this year. —Xinhua

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pakistan needs to enhance exports for sustainable economic growth: minister

MINISTER for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said on Friday that Pakistan needed to enhance its exports for sustainable economic growth and development.

"Pakistan's sustainable and self-reliant economy depends on how fast we can increase our exports as this is the only solution to ending our dependence on international financial institutions," the minister said while addressing a ceremony of a report titled Next Generation Report here.

He said that Pakistan would get out of the economic swamp if it could elevate exports out of the indigenous resources from 32 billion US dollars to 100 billion dollars in the next five to eight years.

"We have to work hard to catch up with the emerging economies in the world. The country is presently facing big economic challenges, but they are not bigger than our capabilities and resolve to overcome them," he added.

Talking about the young generation of the country and their role in economic development, Iqbal said that the Pakistani government had undertaken various initiatives to cater to the aspirations of the youth, who comprises more than 60 percent of the total population. —Xinhua

Slovenia's external trade expands in 2022: statistics

SLOVENIA'S exports and imports of goods in value increased by more than 30 per cent in 2022, the country's Statistical Office said on Friday, with figures indicating a strong economic performance of the export-oriented European Union (EU) member state.

"Slovenia's exports in 2022 amounted to 52.9 billion euros and imports to 56.8 billion euros. The value of external trade was much higher than in the previous year, exports were up by 34.2 per cent and imports by 36.6 per cent," the office said in a press release.

China was Slovenia's fourth largest import partner with imports from China representing 8.9 per cent of the country's total imports last year, the office said. Figures showed that chemicals and related products represented more than a third of the country's imports and exports. Other main export items included cars, car parts and household appliances. Local household appliances producer Gorenje, which is owned by China's Hisense, is one of Slovenia's largest exporters. —Xinhua

Sri Lankan coal company requests over 12 million USD amid power cuts fear

THE Lanka Coal Company, incorporated to procure and supply coal for coal-fired thermal plants of Sri Lanka, on Saturday requested over 12 million US dollars to buy coal for

power plants. Chairman of the Lanka Coal Company Shehan Sumanasekara told media that he has asked the money from Minister of Power and Energy Kanchana

Wijesekera. The Lanka Coal Company needs 2 million metric tons of coal annually, or 33 ship loads, to manage energy needs, he said.

Earlier, Ceylon Electricity Board, the state-owned electricity producer, warned that without a continuous supply of coal, the country may face extended power cuts in the dry season.

Sri Lanka has been experiencing daily power cuts since early 2022 due to foreign reserve shortages. About 45 per cent of the country's electricity is generated by the thermal power, which relies on the import of fuel.—Xinhua



The Lanka Coal Company needs 2 million metric tons of coal annually, or 33 ship loads, to manage energy needs. **PHOTO: THE LANKA COAL COMPANY**

India's largest helicopter manufacturing facility to open in Karnataka

INDIA'S ministry of defense announced on Saturday a new helicopter-making factory of state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) will be opened in Karnataka.

The Greenfield Helicopter Factory, which spreads across 615 acres of land, is India's largest helicopter manufacturing facility," the ministry said in a statement.

According to the ministry, initially, the factory will produce around 30 helicopters



Officials said the HAL plans to produce more than 1,000 helicopters in the range of 3-15 tonnes over a period of 20 years. **PHOTO: ANI**

per year and the output can be enhanced to 60 choppers and then 90 per year in a phased manner.

Officials said the HAL plans to produce more

than 1,000 helicopters in the range of 3-15 tonnes over a period of 20 years.

The foundation stone of the facility was laid in 2016.—Xinhua

Geisha wanted to bring tourists, tradition to famous hot spring city

THE famed hot spring city of Gero is continuing its program of hiring a woman to work at city hall while training as a "maiko," or apprentice geisha, in a bid to revive the iconic Japanese tradition and drum up tourism.

The hire, the second of its type in the unique local government project, is expected to work as a civil servant while learning dancing, singing and musical instruments for a maximum of three years.

In the 1970s, the city in the central prefecture of Gifu had more than 200 geishas and apprentices. But that number has declined, leaving only three at present, including Marika Takemoto, 23, the first to be hired under the program.

The city also says that past years have seen fewer tourists visiting in groups, which are generally geishas' customer base, shrinking opportunities for the kimono-clad



Photo shows Marika Takemoto, a woman who works as a public servant and apprentice geisha under a Gero city programme, in Gifu Prefecture, central Japan, on 25 November 2022. **PHOTO: KYODO**

women to display their graceful art.

Takemoto, a Tokyo native who was hired in 2021 as part of Gero's tourism division, said she admired the maiko and was also interested in revitalizing rural areas.

Takemoto has been focused on using social media to attract people to the hot spring resort which still retains vestiges of its ancient history.

As an apprentice maiko, she is learning et-

iquette, dancing and folk songs.

Being a state employee means she is unable to entertain private groups but she can perform in public. With the experience gained there and from her lessons, she can decide to continue on the path of a geisha after her time with the program ends. "I appreciate the depth of culture as I learn the manners and customs of a geisha," says Takemoto.—Kyodo

Winemaker to start making "Nagoya wine" this summer

A project is under way in the heart of Nagoya to produce local wine as soon as this summer while overcoming the difficulties of meeting strict content requirements in a quest to get the metropolis's name on its label.

On the ground floor of what used to be a mahjong parlor in a dated three-story building in the central Japan city's

Nishi Ward, Noriyuki Baba, 55, and others have been preparing to make what would be called "Nagoya wine."

The winemaker's goal is to make casual wine and establish a new culture of urban wineries.

The Nagoya Winery project originally started among business owners and others from a local shopping street, but it fell

apart as the coronavirus pandemic hit their own businesses hard.

Baba, who runs a tourist farm, a farmer's restaurant and a winery in Tokoname, an Aichi Prefecture city to the south, learned of the situation and thrust himself into the project in their stead.

He started wine-making around 15 years ago

after visiting Portland in the US state of Oregon, where wineries are set up in urban areas. "Locals were enjoying drinking wine," he said. "That was a happy scene."

Baba felt that his project in Nagoya, a metropolis with a population of some 2.3 million, would be close to what he had seen in Portland.—Kyodo

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V X-PRESS MEGHNA VOY.NO. (23004N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V X-PRESS MEGHNA VOY.NO. (23004N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6-2-2023 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AWPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

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Pope to wrap up landmark
S Sudan visit with holy mass

Pope Francis (left) looks on during the Ecumenical prayer at the John Garang Mausoleum in Juba, South Sudan, on 4 February 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

POPE Francis wraps up his pilgrimage to South Sudan with an open-air mass on Sunday after urging its leaders to focus on bringing peace to the fragile country torn apart by violence and poverty.

The three-day trip is the first papal visit to the largely Christian country since it achieved independence from Sudan in 2011 and plunged into

a civil war that killed nearly 400,000 people.

Despite a peace deal signed in 2018 between President Salva Kiir and his deputy Riek Machar, violence continues to roil the world's newest nation, driving people from their homes into displacement camps.

The pontiff, who himself tried to broker peace during the civil war, has received a raptur-

ous welcome, with thousands expected to attend the mass at the John Garang mausoleum — built in honour of South Sudan's rebel hero who died in 2005.

On Saturday, Francis met victims of the civil war, who were brought to the capital Juba from various camps, and urged the government to restore "dignity" to the millions affected by conflict.

"Sadly, in this war-torn country, being a displaced person or a refugee has become a common and collective experience," he said.

"I want to renew my forceful and heartfelt appeal to end all conflict and to resume the peace process in a serious way, so that violence can end and people can return to living in dignity." "The future cannot lie in refugee camps," he said to applause. —AFP

US cargo train derails,
causing huge fire and
leaking hazardous gas

A cargo train derailed in the midwestern United States, sparking a massive fire and triggering the release of small amounts of vinyl chloride, a hazardous chemical, officials said Saturday.

No injuries or fatalities were reported after around 50 cars of the 140-car train came off the tracks late Friday near the Ohio-Pennsylvania state border.

The Norfolk Southern train was shipping cargo from Madison, Illinois, to Conway, Pennsylvania, when it derailed in East Palestine, Ohio.

Ten of the cars that derailed carried hazardous materials, including five with vinyl chloride, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the lead federal investigating agency, said in a tweet Saturday night. —AFP



Smoke rises from a derailed cargo train in East Palestine, Ohio, on 4 February 2023. **PHOTO: DUSTIN FRANZ / AFP**

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Ukraine says latest
Russian assault on
Bakhmut beaten back

UKRAINE fought off a fresh Russian assault on the embattled eastern city of Bakhmut, its leaders said Saturday, as it endured a wave of shelling in the disputed Donetsk region.

Officials meanwhile recovered the bodies of two British volunteers, killed trying to help evacuate people from the eastern warzone.

And the southern city of Odesa suffered a massive power cut affecting half a million households after an accident at a war-damaged electrical substation.

"This week, the Russian occupation forces threw all their efforts into breaking through our defence and encircling Bakhmut, and launched a powerful offensive in the Lyman sector,"

said Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malyar.

"But thanks to the resilience of our soldiers, they did not succeed."

Ukraine's border guard service reported that its soldiers had stopped the latest attack, killing four and wounding seven of the opposing forces.

Russia unleashed a fresh wave of bombardment across the eastern front lines Saturday morning. Ukrainian officials reported shelling in the Chernigiv, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Lugansk, Donetsk and Mykolaiv regions.

In his evening address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky acknowledged that the situation was getting tougher. —AFP

Europe looks to geothermal energy as gas
alternative

The geothermal heating plant in Munich is one of the largest of its kind in Europe. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE heating plant in Munich's southern Sendling neighbourhood has been run for more than a century on gas, often imported from far away.

But increasingly, it is the hot waters from deep underground the station that provide the energy.

Tacked on to the side of the original 19th-century red-brick plant is a boxy new geothermal unit surrounded by a tangle of pipes.

Work on the new installation started in 2016 and it opened in 2021, before Russia launched its assault on Ukraine and shut the

pipelines to Europe.

But the timely opening of the modern unit — one of the largest of its kind in Europe — is a happy coincidence for the city, which like the rest of the country is facing the challenge of making up for lost Russian gas supplies.

Perfect location

Munich is pouring in one billion euros (\$1.1 billion) through 2035 to develop the geothermal energy and make the city's heating carbon neutral.

"We're sitting on a gold mine," says Christian Peltl, director of geothermal energy at SWR, the operator of the plant in Sendling.

"Munich has the perfect geological location" in a region known for its thermal baths, Peltl says.

Everywhere in Europe, interest in geothermal projects has grown in recent years as officials search for ways to decarbonise their energy systems. —AFP

Cyprus to elect new president in close contest

CYPRUS votes on Sunday in a close presidential election between three front runners, with the electorate focused more on corruption and the economy than the island's long-standing division.

A record 14 candidates -- but only two women -- are standing, with the winner needing 50 per cent plus one vote to succeed two-term President Nicos Anastasiades.

Opinion polls predict a run-off on 12 February, with no contender expected to secure an immediate outright majority.

Former foreign minister Nikos Christodoulides is the favourite. Backed by centrist par-

ties, the 49-year-old commands a firm lead but not enough to shake off his rivals.

He is likely to face off in the second round against either Andreas Mavroyiannis, a 66-year-old technocrat backed by communist party AKEL, or Averof Neofytou, 61, leader of the ruling conservatives, DISY.

The last opinion poll by state broadcaster CyBC on January 27 had Christodoulides leading at 26.5 per cent, Neofytou at 22.5 per cent and Mavroyiannis 21 per cent.

Many analysts believe that Christodoulides, who served in both Anastasiades administrations, is still the favourite. —AFP



Lelft to right) Cypriot Parliament Speaker Annita Demetriou, President Nicos Anastasiades, and head of the ruling Democratic Rally (DISY) and presidential candidate Averof Neofytou, attend a campaign rally in the southern coastal city of Larnaca on 27 January 2023, ahead of the country's presidential vote. **PHOTO: AFP**

Pakistan's former military ruler Pervez Musharraf dies: army

PAKISTAN'S former military ruler Pervez Musharraf has died in Dubai aged 79 after a long illness, the army said Sunday.

Musharraf seized power in a 1999 bloodless coup, ruling as "chief executive" when the 9/11 attacks on the United States took place, before becoming president in 2001.

He was America's chief regional ally during its invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan, but resigned in 2008 and was forced into exile after a backlash over his constitutional overreach.

Senior military chiefs "ex-

press heartfelt condolences on sad demise of General Pervez Musharraf", a brief statement released by the military's media wing said. "May Allah bless the departed soul and give strength to bereaved family."

The four-star general died in hospital in Dubai on Sunday morning, according to media reports and a senior security official who spoke to AFP.

"I can confirm that the late general breathed his last in Dubai this morning ... He is no more," the official, who asked not to be named, told AFP. —AFP

Catholic prelate chides Peru Congress for inaction on vote



Artists hold up artisanal altarpieces as part of a protest in the Lima district of Barranco on 4 February 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

A Roman Catholic cardinal voiced dismay Saturday that the nation's Congress again declined to advance elections to defuse Peru's political crisis.

"It hurts our souls that they have (not acted on) a proposal to move up elections," Cardinal Pedro Barreto said, hours after the church's highest ecclesiastical body sent a letter to legislators warning them that it is "urgent" to move up elections to later this

year. Thousands of protesters, meanwhile, amassed at vehicular chokepoints around the capital and in a downtown plaza in further demonstrations that have roiled the nation for nearly two months.

"We are not going to end this struggle. The person who must resign is the usurper woman," said Romina Cuno, a 37-year-old woman from Puno in the high

Andes, referring to President Dina Boluarte.

Congress a day earlier slammed the door shut until August on any further debate to bring forward general elections currently slated for April 2024 into 2023 -- a key demand of near-daily demonstrations that are crippling the country of 33 million people.

For the fourth time in a week, legislators rejected a bill on advancing elections, blocking further debate on procedural technicalities.

The move dimmed prospects for an avenue out of the crisis, which has claimed 48 lives since 7 December, when then-president Pedro Castillo was arrested after attempting to dissolve Congress and rule by decree.

In December, lawmakers moved elections, originally due in 2026, up to April 2024, but as protesters dug in their heels, Boluarte, Castillo's former vice president, called for holding the vote this year instead. —AFP

China strongly opposes US move to shoot down unmanned airship

CHINA expressed strong dissatisfaction and opposition towards the US use of force to attack China's civilian unmanned airship, Chinese Foreign Ministry said Sunday in a statement.

The Chinese side has, after verification, repeatedly informed the US side of the civilian nature of the airship and conveyed that its entry into the United States due to force majeure was totally unexpected, the statement said, noting the Chinese side has clearly asked the US side to properly handle the matter in a calm, professional and restrained manner.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Friday when answering a relevant query that the civilian airship is used for research, mainly meteorological purposes. Affected by the Westerlies and with limited self-steering capability, the airship deviated far from its



A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Friday when answering a relevant query that the civilian airship is used for research, mainly meteorological purposes. **PHOTO: AGENCIES/ CHINA DAILY**

planned course. According to the statement, the spokesperson of the US Department of Defense also noted the balloon does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground.

Under such circumstances, the US use of force is a clear

overreaction and a serious violation of international practice.

China will resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the company concerned, and reserve the right to make further responses if necessary, said the statement. —Xinhua



SPORT

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council 12 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.
 - (d) To ensure peace and stability, rule of law and secure and smooth transport across the Union.
- 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 encourage micro, small and medium-scale enterprises based on domestic raw materials in order to substitute import goods and enhance export products to have long-term guarantees and create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.
 - (d) To develop the socioeconomic life of the people to ensure prosperity and food sufficiency of the country.
- 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 faiths, culture and national characteristics based on national spirit.
 - (c) To further strengthen basic healthcare services of the nation and to emerge the health system for enhancement of longevity and health of the entire National people.
 - (d) To promote multiple education systems in order to produce the necessary human resources for building a modern developed democratic nation.



The referee (white jersey) signals a foul ball in the friendly match between Yangon United and Kachin United at Yangon United Sports Complex on 28 January 2023. PHOTO:MNL

12 football clubs to compete in 2023 Myanmar National League

THE 2023 Myanmar National League will be held from 21 February to 29 October 2023 with 12 contending football clubs, football authorities said.

The Myanmar Football Federation and the Myanmar National League Committee have confirmed the schedule for the 2023 Myanmar National League-1 football tournament, which will begin in the third week of February.

Shan United, Yangon United, Hanthawady United, Myawady FC, Ayeyawady United, Yadanabon FC, ISPE FC, Mahar United, GFA FC, Rakhine United, Dagon Star United, and Kachin United FC will participate in the tourney.

The tournament will take place at Youth Training Centre in Thuwanna and Yangon United's Artificial Turf (YUSC) Stadium in Yangon.

The matches to be played at Thuwunna YTC will begin at 4 pm and matches to be played at the YUSC stadium will begin at 3:30 pm.

Efforts are being made to be able to broadcast the tourney live on television, and detailed information will continue to be released, officials said.—KZL

PSG in talks with Messi over renewing contract



Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring for Argentina during a friendly against Jamaica in Harrison, New Jersey, on 28 September 2022. PHOTO:AFP/FILE

PARIS Saint-Germain's football advisor Luis Campos says he will be "delighted" if Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi agrees to extend his contract with the French champions.

The 35-year-old seven-time Ballon D'Or winner achieved his lifetime ambition of winning the World Cup in December but has maintained a decent run of form on his return to France.

He scored a key goal in the 3-1 win over Montpellier and then notched his 10th Ligue 1 goal of the season on Saturday as PSG, missing Kylian Mbappe and Neymar through injury, came from behind to beat Toulouse 2-1.

Messi joined PSG in 2021 on a two year contract, with the option of renewing it for another, after an emotional farewell to Barcelona where he had spent his whole professional career. "We are in discussions. I cannot hide that, I would love to have him involved in this project, that he can continue with us," Campos told French broadcaster TF1.—AFP

Malnati leads as high winds halt play at Pebble Beach

AMERICAN Peter Malnati was atop the leaderboard when gusting winds halted play at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am on Saturday, with US PGA Tour officials now expecting the tournament to finish on Monday.

Only a couple of players had completed the third round when gusting winds forced organizers to suspend play because balls wouldn't hold on at least one green. A planned resumption never materialized as the winds sweeping in from the Pacific Ocean continued blow.

Malnati admitted he had mixed feelings when play was halted. He had six birdies through 12 holes on the par-72 Pebble Beach Golf Links, one of three courses in use over the first three rounds along with par-72 Spyglass Hill and par-71 Monterey Peninsula.

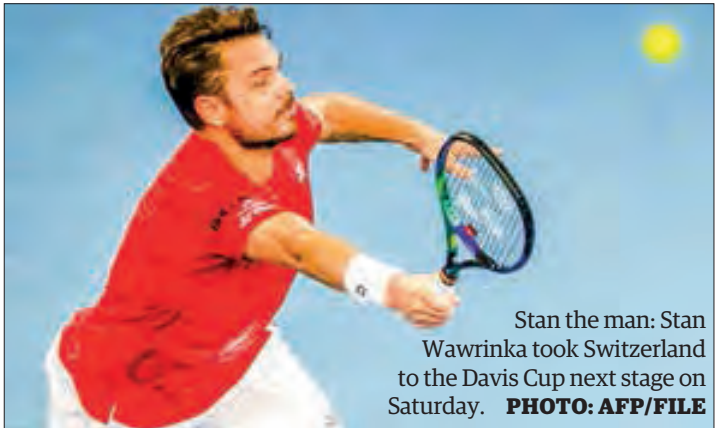
"I got to play eight holes before the weather got bad, so that was nice," said Malnati, who teed off on 10 and birdied the 11th, 12th and 13th.—AFP

Stan's the man as veteran claims Davis Cup victory for Switzerland

STAN Wawrinka took Switzerland to the Davis Cup Finals group stage on Saturday, winning a rollercoaster deciding clash against Germany, just weeks shy of his 38th birthday.

Three-time Grand Slam title winner Wawrinka, who helped the Swiss to the Davis Cup title alongside Roger Federer in 2014, defeated Daniel Altmaier 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 as his country triumphed 3-2 in their qualifying tie.

Former world number three Wawrinka, now down at 135 after a long spell rebuilding his career following two foot surgeries, was playing in the tournament for the first time in eight years having made his debut in 2004. By contrast Altmaier, 13 years younger, was making his Davis Cup debut in Trier.—AFP



Stan the man: Stan Wawrinka took Switzerland to the Davis Cup next stage on Saturday. PHOTO: AFP/FILE