

# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 328, 12<sup>th</sup> Waxing of Taboung 1383 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Sunday, 13 March 2022

## Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

## New building of maternity, newborn babies ward launched in Magway

IN hailing the 77<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces Day, a new three-storey maternity and newborn babies ward was ceremonially opened in Magway Region yesterday morning.

Secretary of the State Administration Council Lt-Gen Aung Lin Dwe, Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win, Magway Region Chief Minister U Tint Lwin, the Magway Region cabinet ministers, the director-general, responsible persons, guests and the town elders attended the opening ceremony.

First, the Union minister, the Magway Region chief minister, and Director-General Dr Myat Wunna Soe cut the ribbon to open the new three-storey maternity and newborn babies ward, and the Secretary of the State Administration Council opened a signboard of the new three-storey maternity and newborn babies ward.

Next, the new three-storey maternity and newborn babies ward was inaugurated. The



The SAC Secretary press the electric button to inaugurate the new three-storey maternity and newborn babies ward at Magway General Hospital yesterday.

SAC secretary, Union minister, the chief minister and guests sprinkled the scented water over the plaque.

After that, a group photo was taken to commemorate the opening ceremony and dig-

nitaries visited the emergency room, the operation room, the maternity care unit, neonatal intensive care unit, oxygen plant and water purifiers.

Next, the Secretary of the State Administration Council

gave an opening speech and presented K2.5 million and gifts for the hospital staff.

Dr Thaug Hlaing, head of the Magway Region Medical Services Department and Dr Win Nilar Hla, Medical Superin-

tendent, returned gifts to mark the opening of the Maternity and Newborn Babies Ward.

Then, Superintendent Dr Win Nilar Hla of the Magway General Hospital expressed words of gratitude. — MNA

### For Eternal Smile

# DENTOMECC

Sale Department-Ph:-09 695096943, 09 790903431  
 Nay Pyi Taw-Ph:- 09 693407494, 09 6932 35737  
 Yangon-Ph:- 09 30860180, 09 263147385, 09 662443555  
 Mandalay-Ph:-09 661702244, 09 661702255, 09 661702277

## Objectives of 77<sup>th</sup> 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

## 8<sup>th</sup> Sangha Central Working Committee holds 1<sup>st</sup> session of 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting

THE first day of the fourth meeting of the Eighth State Sangha Central Working Committee was held at the Maha Pasana Cave on Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill in Mayangon Township of Yangon Region yesterday.

The meeting was attended by the State Ovadacariya Sayadaws, State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee member Sayadaws, State Sangha Working Committee member Sayadaws, and officials of Religious Affairs Department.

Vice-Chairman of the State Sangha Central Working Committee Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Bhaddanta Sumangala Bhivamsa presided over the meeting and Joint Secretary Sayadaw Agga Maha Gandhavasaka Pandita Bhaddanta Dhammasara acted as the master of ceremonies.

Then, the MC Sayadaw



The first-day session of the fourth meeting of the eighth State Sangha Central Working Committee in progress.

reported on the number of attendees to the meeting and announced the event was successful as 86 per cent of Sayadaws joined the event.

Sayadaws presented the

Vinicchaya, religious and education-related activities conducted during the term of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee and Joint Secretary Sayadaw Agga Maha Pan-

dita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Setthila coordinated the discussions and sought the approvals.

During the second session of the meeting at noon,

Sayadaws submitted the name lists of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Sayadaws who retired during the first three-year term of the eighth committee.

Then, the Joint Secretary Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Sandhima Bhivamsa reported the name lists of newly-elected committee member Sayadaws and State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Chairman Sayadaw Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa approved it.

Then, Chairman Sayadaw read out the name lists of the Committee Vice-Chairman Sayadaws and Joint Secretary Sayadaws to seek the Sangha's opinions and he concluded the first meeting. —MNA

## 817,000 saplings prepared in Ngaphe Township for 2022 rainy season



OFFICIALS of the Forest Department in Ngaphe Township

of Minbu District in Magway Region are preparing a total of

817,000 saplings in the Myoma nursery garden, the PinOo tem-

porary nursery garden and the Taungpaw temporary nursery garden for the 2022 rainy season in order to revitalize tropics and implement environmental protection.

The cultivated saplings are 749,800 Mezali trees, Myanmar rain trees, teak, star-flower trees, Mohur trees, hyacinths, tamarind, neem, eucalyptus in the Myoma nursery garden and 64,800 of teak tree in the PinOo temporary nursery garden and 2,400 of eucalyptus in the Taungpaw temporary nursery garden.

The total of 817,000 saplings

includes 64,800 teak trees for commercial teak fields, 4,800 Myanmar rain trees and Mezali trees for 55 acres of watershed fields in the 2022 rainy season and 25,000 plants such as teak, star-flower trees, mohur trees, hyacinths, tamarind, neem for officials and public plantations in the rainy season agricultural movement, 720,000 eucalypti for 30 acres of village firewood fields, 2,400 eucalypti for mixed crops and forest fields are prepared to plant depending on rainwater, according to the Township Forest Department. — Ma Yu (Ngaphe)/GNLM

## 641 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 12 March, total figure rises to 604,860

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 604,860 after 641 new cases were reported on 12 March 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 556,646 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,406 after 3 died.—MNA

## To build strength within the country!

- In the first, our economy will be developed by our internal strength. We have abundant natural resources and human resources. We have weakness in the socio-economic development of the people as we have been relying on external products or exports rather than our domestic production.
- Secondly, we will build our political strength internally. Building a Union and multiparty democratic system based on democracy and federalism will certainly enhance our political strength.
- Thirdly, the defence capability of the country should be strengthened with the participation of all ethnic national people. With united strength both in weals and woes, we all will build the defence capability of our country with modern military prowess (Army, Navy and Air Force).

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

## Govt, private sector to cooperate ensuring local oil consumption, major edible oil export country

UNION Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation presided over a coordination meeting with edible oil dealers, oil millers, and beans and sesame seeds merchants at the UMFCCI office in Yangon yesterday.

During the meeting, the Union minister said the government made efforts to support the private investment sectors as it set the policies following the market-oriented system, maintained in line with the existing law and developed trade deals for the agricultural products manufacturing sectors.

Therefore, the private entrepreneurs should focus on the production rate to meet the demand and work together with the government and private organizations to ensure the local oil consumption and to become a nation that exports cooking oil.

The local people mainly consume peanut oil and sesame oil and if the oil millers make investments in the high-quality oil mill industry,



The MoALI Union Minister chairs the coordination meeting with edible oil dealers, oil millers and beans and sesame seeds merchants yesterday.

it can produce more 10 per cent than the original amount.

The oil can be produced from bran, cotton seeds and fermented soya-bean and the business people should expand their investment in it. The oil millers also should make preparations as the cross-breed sunflowers, which has the highest oil production per acre, will be planted in the coming season.

Then, the directors-gener-

al of departments concerned, the UMFCCI president, Chairpersons of the Myanmar Rice Federation, the Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association, the Myanmar Oil Millers Association, the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association and executive committee members reported on their ongoing work activities, annual oil production and consumption rate and establishment of special

sunflower plantation zone in regions and states.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is working hard to grow the crossbreed sunflower – monsoon sunflower and winter sunflower on 1.5 million acres.

The country has more than 7.6 million acres of edible oil plantations – over 2.8 million acres of peanut, 3.7 million acres of sesame and about 600,000 acres of sunflow-

er. The groundnut plantation produces 186 kilogrammes of oil per acre while sesame plantation 91 kilogrammes of oil per acre and crossbreed sunflower plantation over 288 kilogrammes per acre.

The ministry also cooperates with ministries concerned to provide the needed crossbreed sunflower species, technology and other supports to expand the crossbreed sunflower plantations. — MNA

## Sale of US dollar at CBM reference rate coordination meeting held



DEPUTY Minister U Nyunt Aung of the Ministry of Commerce, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Working Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods, attended the coordination meeting held via Zoom on the sale of the US dollar at the Central Bank of Myanmar reference rate at the UMFCCI in Yangon.

The meeting was also attended by the Yangon region government minister for economy, the secretary of the Working Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods, the director-general of the Consumer Affairs Depart-

ment, the deputy director-general of the Petroleum Products Regulatory Department and the departmental officials, the officials from the UMFCCI, the Myanmar Petroleum Importers and Distributors Association and fuel oil entrepreneurs.

Besides, Brig-Gen Yan Naung Soe, in his capacity as the joint secretary of the Working Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods, the director-general of the Customs Department, the director-general of the Central Bank of Myanmar and the fuel oil entrepreneurs also attended the meeting via videocon-

ferencing.

Initially, Deputy Minister U Nyunt Aung gave the opening remarks. Brig-Gen Yan Naung Soe and the economy minister of Yangon Region Government and officials raised the topics regarding ways to stabilize the price of fuel oil and the sale of the US dollars at CBM reference rate. Then, they made suggestions concerning these topics.

Then, the deputy minister, in his capacity as the chairman of the working committee added coordination to the discussions. — MNA

# Training courses for youths conducted in Hpa-an

THE opening ceremony of the home electrical wiring training and closing ceremony of the basic computer training, basic sewing training and man haircut course were jointly conducted by the Kayin State government working committee on creation of job opportunities and eradication of child labour and the education and vocational working committee at the Government Technical High School in Hpa-an on 11 March.

Kayin State Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo said that children must be educated from an early age so that they will be relied on and proud of by the country in the future. The trainees and graduates are 14 to 18 years old when completing their vocational training. The chief



minister continued to say that they need to increase their indi-

vidual incomes by consistently practising the subjects that have

been learned and using knowledge and skills to benefit each

region and each community.

Afterwards, Principal Dr Nan Moe Moe Kyi of the Government Technical High School in Hpa-an gave a speech at the opening and closing ceremonies of short-term vocational training courses. The graduate representative returned words of gratitude.

State Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo and cabinet members presented certificates and outstanding awards. State Advocate-General U Ye Lwin gave certificates of appreciation and honour to trainers.

After the opening and closing ceremonies, the chief minister and officials greeted trainees and inspected the training hall. — Saw Myo Min Thein (IPRD)/GNLM

# Myanmar receives Thai-donated 500,000 AstraZeneca doses, 500,000 needles

THE first batch of COVID-19 vaccines donated by the Thailand government arrived at the Yangon International Airport yesterday.

Of one million doses of AstraZeneca, a total of 500,000 doses and 500,000 needles was included in the initial batch and the hand-over ceremony was organized at the airport.

The event was attended by Permanent Executive Committee member Dr Tin Nyunt of the Myanmar Red Cross Society, General Secretary Prof Dr Htin Zaw Soe, Yangon Region Public Health Department Director Dr Yan Naung Tun, Charge d' affairs Mrs Kanokwan Pengsuwan of the Thai Embassy to Myanmar, Minister Counsellor Ms Chana Sindhvananda, First Secretary

Ms Chalermkwan Worranit and other officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The newly-arrived COVID-19 vaccines will be allocated to the regions with a low level of vaccine coverage in addition to the border areas.

The Ministry of Health accelerate the momentum in the vaccination programme as per the target groups and 24.7 million of people across the nation received the vaccines up to 12 March, while 21.4 million people have been fully vaccinated and 3.3 million people receive their first dose of vaccine. Therefore, a total of 47.01 million vaccines were delivered in the country until 12 March. If people have been fully vaccinated, the vaccines can help prevent serious illness and death.



Covid vaccines donated by Thailand are received at Yangon International Airport.

The Ministry of Health urged the people to receive the vaccines without fail and those who receive

the first shots to get vaccinated for second doses on the due date or within the fixed period at the

nearest vaccination sites and to participate in the processes actively. —MNA

## Public Notification

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

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

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

Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee



### CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

(+95) (01) 8604532, Hotline - 09 454237515

### ADVERTISING & MARKETING

(+95) (01) 8604530, Hotline - 09 251022355

marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

gnlmnews@gmail.com www.gnlm.com.mm

### Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email [aunghthuya@gnlm.com.mm](mailto:aunghthuya@gnlm.com.mm) with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

# New building of maternity, newborn babies ward launched in Magway

NEWS ON PAGE-1



Dignitaries cut the ribbon at the inaugural event.



The SAC Secretary and party view around the new ward.



The outside and inside view of the new maternity and newborn babies ward.



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

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

A total of 13 tonnes of masks were imported by two vehicles of a company via the Chinshwehaw border trade post yesterday.

From 1 to 12 March, 480 oxygen cylinders, 100 oxygen concentrators, seven tonnes of gloves, and 20 tonnes of masks were imported via international seaports and respective trading zones.

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

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



The imported anti-Covid supplies.

## COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various regions, states



Inoculation is underway in Mon State.

DOCTORS and nurses from public hospitals, Tatmadaw medical corps, healthcare workers and volunteers are working hard to administer COVID-19 vaccines in different states and regions as the vaccination programme is one of the most important activities in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 disease.

The COVID-19 vaccine is inoculated daily to target groups irrespective of race or religion, including Buddhist monks and nuns, local people aged 40 and older, religious leaders, prisoners, people with disabilities, ethnic armed organizations, people with chronic diseases, people in IDP camps and over 12-year-old students, respectively.

On 12 March, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, Tatmadaw medical corps, relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers injected COVID-19 vaccines to 3,654 people from 16 townships in Mon and Kayin states, 1,750 people from Myeik and Palaw townships in Taninthayi Region, 23,869 people from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 8,050 people from seven townships in Rakhine State, 6,620 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region and 203 people from Htantabin and Bago townships in Bago Region, respectively.

Similarly, healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 115 students from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region yesterday.

It is reported that officials from the respective military commands visited the sites and coordinated the necessary work. — MNA

## Illegal teak, foodstuffs, chemical items seized

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

On 3 March, a joint inspection team conducted a search operation at the 16-mile Kyaukchaw Inspection Station under the management of the Anti-Illicit Trade Task Force.

One Scania 22-wheeler truck (estimated at K50,000,000)

was seized for carrying illegal goods and action is taken under the Customs Law.

Similarly, under the management of the Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force, Lashio Township Customs Team carried out inspection near the Tangyang Junction of Mandalay-Lashio Union Highway on 10 March,

One truck carrying LEDIAN branded beers (estimated at K39,950,000) and one 12-wheel-



Confiscated illegal goods in Yangon Region.



Seized items in Shan State.

er truck carrying the food items (estimated at K70,000,000) leaving Tangyang for Lashio were seized and action is taken under the Customs Law.

Similarly, port duty customs team conducted an inspection at the Myanmar Industrial Port Container Inspection Station of Yangon Region on 10 March.

Illegal raw materials used in food production (estimated at K38,400,000) not listed on the import declaration (ID) were seized on 10 March.

On 11 March, an Investigation and Anti-Illegal Trade Division conducted an investi-

gation and found construction materials, consumer goods and motorcycle engine oil (estimated at K198,678,100) were also seized.

On the same day, one container was inspected by the port duty team and electrical appliances, raw materials and pottery (estimated at K20,196,000) were seized and action is being taken in accordance with the customs law.

In addition, on 11 March, Port Customs made an inspection at the Asia World Container Terminal Checkpoint and seized illegal chemical raw materials (estimated at K46,550,000) not

listed on the import declaration (ID) and are prosecuted under the Customs Law.

Similarly, under the management of the Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force, a joint inspection team led by the State Forest Department seized 4.00544 tonnes of illegal timber (estimated at K280,378) in Chaungzon Township and action is taken under the Forest Law.

Therefore, a total of nine arrests (approximately K464,054,478) were made on 3, 10 and 11 March, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee. — MNA

## Police seize drugs in some townships



Seized pill-making machines and related items.

THE combined inspection team consisting of Anti-Narcotics Task Force members inspected the suspect Aung Naing Oo (aka) Ei Thein in Sandawut Village of Myeik Township on 11 March and seized 3,000 stimulant tablets. Then, they inspected the motorcycle driven by Min Htike on the Myeik-Taninthayi Road of Tharame Village in Myeik Township and found 20,000 stimulant pills from him and other 40,000 tablets from Zeya Htet who was

arrested at the Strand Road of Kangyi Ward in Myeik Township on the same day.

On 11 March, the police examined the motorcycle driven by Tun Thura (aka) Tuu Tuu on No (4) main road in Shwepyitha Township and seized 6,133 stimulant tablets. The anti-narcotic agents also inspected the motorcycle driven by Win Aung (aka) Ko Maung on the Aungban-Pinlaung Road in Kalaw Township and confiscated 10,000 stimulant

pills on the same evening.

The anti-narcotics task force raided the Malkyanwe village in Monghsat Township on 10 March according to a tip-off and they seized 340,000 meth tablets, five kilogrammes of stimulant powder, four kilogrammes of Ice, 100 kilogrammes of caffeine, three pill-making machines and other related materials. The suspects were charged under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. —MNA

## K1.85 billion worth of ketamine seized in Pinlaung Township

THE police seized K1.85 billion worth of ketamine in Pinlaung Township, according to the police statement.

The anti-narcotics police examined the Forland vehicle driven by Myin Chi Che (aka) Aung Myint heading to Paunglaung from Pinlaung at the Leinli suspension bridge on the Pinlaung-Nay Pyi Taw Road in Pinlaung Township on 9 March and seized 185 kilogrammes of ketamine worth K1.85 billion. According to the inspection, the suspect transported the ketamine to the Myawady border of Kayin State from Shan State (North). The police are investigating to arrest further suspects. — MNA



An arrestee is seen along with seized ketamine drugs and a Forland truck.

## Rubber price slightly rise to over K1,200 per pound

THE rubber prices have somewhat mounted to over K1200 per pound (0.45 kilogramme), according to Myanmar rubber entrepreneurs.

The domestic rubber was priced at below K1,000 per pound in late 31 December 2021. But the price of local 3 rubber slightly increases to K1,220 per pound while the local 3 ribbed smoked sheets (RSS) hit K1,240 per pound on 12 March 2022.

Due to the market demand and the Kyat revaluation in the local foreign market, the rubber price is still rising in the market, it is learnt.

Currently, there is demand from China and the dollar exchange rate against Myanmar Kyat stood at over K2,000 per dollar.

Consequently, although the resumption of the rubber plantation starting from last September and the availability of raw rubber in the market has increased, the price of rubber is unlikely to fall low-



The domestic rubber was priced at below K1,000 per pound in late 31 December 2021. But the price of local 3 rubber slightly increases to K1,220 per pound while the local 3 ribbed smoked sheets (RSS) hit K1,240 per pound on 12 March 2022.

er than K700 as last year due to the rising market demand and international exchange rate, according to the rubber traders.

Besides, the prices of raw rubber materials are unlikely to rise to continue in the future. The local 3 or RSS5 lower quality rubbers are vastly pro-

duced in Mon State. As China is also purchasing these low-quality rubbers mostly, the price is likely to fluctuate around K1,000 per pound, the rubber trader predicted.

Regarding the trade route to China, the previously-closed Chinshwehaw border trade post has permitted re-imports

of industrial agricultural raw products such as sugarcane, rubber, tragacanth gum herb and cotton, making it easier to export rubber products.

Similarly, the Kyinsankyawt border which has been shut down earlier was reopened on 26 November and the rubber is being exported

through it.

Rubber is primarily cultivated in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber seasons' data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres, according to the MRPPA.

About 300,000 tonnes of rubber is produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber produced in Myanmar goes to China.

It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Korea, India, Japan, and other countries.

In the last FY2020-21, the country generated \$449.10 million from the export of raw rubber to foreign countries, according to the official statistics of the Ministry of Commerce. — NN/GNLM

## Black bean price on the rise, around K1.4 million per tonne

THE price of black bean (urad called in India) has increased significantly to around K14 million per tonne, according to the Yangon Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Bayintnaung Commodity Depot).

Since the end of last year, the price of black beans has been fluctuating around K1.3 million per tonne. But, the price of black bean was fetched only K1,192,000 per tonne on 9 February. The price significantly rose by over 200,000 per tonne in over a month.

The price of black beans has risen when India's currency rupee slightly depreciated and the prices of some items rose. And, the price of FAQ black beans rose to US\$890 per tonne from \$815 per tonne during these days. The black bean prices in India are also rising because of the rising demand of the pulses from the millers and the domestic consumption, according to Aya Trade Centre, Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization.

Besides, India is also keeping a close eye on Ukraine and they are releasing the forecasts for possible effects over the import of pulses and crops markets.

Following the Kyat depreci-

ation against the US dollar and rise in the global pulses market, the black bean prices are likely to rise, reviewed by Aya Trade Centre.

Though India has been prudent in importing pulses and has only allowed the import of Myanmar pulses until the end of March this year. After the import permit period, the price of Myanmar pulses may cool down a little bit, according to the pulses traders' prediction.

Besides, the domestic bean price is positively linked to the international markets and it may vary depending upon the foreign exchange rate, according to bean traders.

Last September, the international exchange rate hit a record high of over K3,000 per dollar, pushing up pulse price to an all-time high of K2 million per tonne in the domestic market.

A memorandum of understanding was signed to export a total of 350,000 tonnes of Myanmar pulses including 250,000 tonnes of black bean and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon pea to India in five consecutive years (from 2021-22FY to 2025-26FY), according to the Ministry of Commerce.

India is the largest consum-

er of pulses in the world. India's annual consumption of pulses is estimated at about 2.7 million or 2.8 million tonnes.

Presently, Myanmar conveyed 783051.802 tonnes of beans and pulses to foreign markets through border route and sea route from 1 October 2021 to 4 March 2022 in the current financial year 2021-22, generating over US\$ 608.907 million, it is learnt.

In the 2020-21 financial year, Myanmar shipped 2019695.882 tonnes of beans and pulses to foreign markets through border route and sea route, fetching over \$1,570.707 million, according to the figure released by the ministry.

The black bean plantations are yielding around 400,000 tonnes annually in Myanmar. Besides, Myanmar has also produced about 50,000 tonnes of pigeon peas yearly.

The black bean, which is mainly bought from India, is mainly grown in Myanmar. Other pulses including green gram and pigeon pea are grown in Africa and Australia in addition to Myanmar, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association. — NN/GNLM

## Myawady border trade earns \$1.1 bln in last 5 months of this mini-budget period

THE value of trade between Myanmar and Thailand via the Myawady land border as of 4 March 2022 of the current mini-budget period (October 2021-March 2022) showed an increase of US\$1.1 billion, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The value of the Myawady border trade touched a high of \$290.55 million over the last year. The figures mounted from \$543.03 million recorded in the year-ago period, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

As of 4 March, Myanmar's exports to Thailand through the Myawady land border were valued at \$474.56 million, while imports are worth \$635.37 million. The trade showed a hike in both exports and imports compared to the corresponding

period of last year.

The Myawady-Mae Sot route is the most important, carrying about 70 per cent of trade between the two countries.

Besides, Myawaddy corn traders are now preparing to start exporting to Thailand from 1 February 2022 to 31 August as it is duty-free.

Myanmar primarily exports agriculture and livestock products, natural gas, beans, and bamboo shoots to Thailand. It imports non-alcoholic beverages, fabric and yarn, motorcycles and related parts, construction materials and food products.

Thailand is Myanmar's second-largest trade partner and third-largest foreign investor. — ACM/GNLM

ကြော်ငြာရေးနှင့် ကြော်ငြာအကူအညီများ ကြော်ငြာ ထည့်သွင်းလိုပါက  
 ထိုက်ရိုက်ဆက်သွယ် ဆွေးနွေးနိုင်ပါသည်  
 09 974 424 848

# Enjoy beautiful movements in the month of Taboung in Myanmar

**T**ABOUNG is the last and 12th month in the Myanmar lunar calendar. Building the pagoda made of sand is the symbol of Taboung in Myanmar's nature. Such kind of pagoda festival emerged in the Bagan era or before the Bagan era.

The month of Taboung totally falls into the summer. Most of the trees bear old and withered leaves. Some trees leave withered leaves whereas bear buds. As such, the environments in the month of Taboung look like composing a poem.

The nature of Myanmar people may differ from those of other countries. Likewise, Myanmar's concepts will be different from others. It is because the lifestyle of Myanmar people are based on the experiences they have already passed. So, the nature of Myanmar people related to the movements in the month of Taboung should not be discarded. So also, Myanmar people should not envy people from other countries in their movements in the same period. Actually, the month of Taboung is just for Myanmar people but those from other countries.

preventive measures of fire in the society by cleaning the debris, filling water to be ready to put out the fire, collecting fire extinguishers, giving training on firefighting techniques to new recruits and refreshing the skills of firefighters, and raise awareness of the danger of fire to the people. These active movements of the people, especially the young persons, are valuable.

The nature of Myanmar people may differ from those of other countries. Likewise, Myanmar's concepts will be different from others. It is because the lifestyle of Myanmar people are based on the experiences they have already passed. So, the nature of Myanmar people related to the movements in the month of Taboung should not be discarded. So also, Myanmar people should not envy people from other countries in their movements in the same period. Actually, the month of Taboung is just for Myanmar people but those from other countries.



# How to keep building your vocabulary

By U Khin Maung (A retired diplomat)

### Introduction

1. Before the five, simple, but vital steps you need to take so that you can keep your vocabulary ever developing, ever-increasing, I would like to inform you about a short Myanmar poem from my memory. Well, if freely and loosely translated in English, I think it would read as follows: -

"Of the lights, firelight, moonlight and sunlight." Moonlight is brighter than firelight", Sunlight is brighter than moonlight. Ah, the light of knowledge is the brightest of all. No light is there brighter than the light of knowledge. As such, Lord Buddha had preached."

"Therefore, all and sundry, each and everybody should strive to acquire knowledge through building your vocabulary."1

2. It's true you have learnt a lot. But I think, a lot more is still there for us to learn. Well, you may wish to ask me, why? Because "no educative process is ever the end; it is always the beginning of more education, more learning, more living." Let me put it this

way. Learning benefits everybody, young and old; and "only the educated are free." So, we must continue to learn and shall never stop learning. Thus, we must keep building our vocabulary. In fact, to stop increasing our vocabulary is to stop growing intellectually. Knowing this full well, you'll wish, I am sure, to continue growing intellectually as long as you remain alive. Let me, therefore, suggest the steps you should take so that your vocabulary will keep growing and growing. These steps are as mentioned below:

### Step One

3. "You must become actively receptive to new words." Words won't come chasing after you.

You must train yourself to be on a constant lookout, in your reading and listening, for any words that other people know and you don't.

### Step Two

4. "You must read more." As an adult, you will find most of the sources of your supply of

new words in books and magazines. Is your reading today largely restricted to a quick perusal of the daily newspaper? Then, you will have to change your habits. If your aim is to have a superior vocabulary, you will have to take the time to read at least one book and several magazines every week. Not just this week - but for the rest of your life. In short, you must be a voracious reader and also an omnivorous reader. And if you sow the act of reading then you'll reap a habit.

### Step Three

5. "You must learn to add to your own vocabulary the new words you meet in your reading."

When you see an unfamiliar word in a book or magazine, do not skip over it impatiently. Instead, pause for a moment and say it over to yourself - get used to its sound and appearance. Then puzzle out its possible meaning in the context of the sentence. It's not important whether you come to the right conclusion or not, whether you are able to come to any intelligent conclusion or

not. What is important is that you are, by this process becoming superconscious of the word. As a result, you will suddenly notice that this very word pops up unexpectedly again and again in all your reading - for you now have a mind - set for it. And of course, after you have seen it a few times, you will know fairly accurately not only what it means but the many ways in which it can be used.

### Step Four

6. "You must open your mind to new ideas."

Every word you know is the translation of an idea. Think for a few minutes of the areas of human knowledge that may possibly be unknown to you - psychology, semantics, science, art, music, or whatever. Then attack one of these areas methodically - by reading books in the field. In every field, from the simplest to the most abstruse, there are several books written for the average, untrained lay reader that will give you both a good grasp of the subject and at the same time add immeasurably to your vocab-

ulary. College students have large vocabularies because they are required to expose themselves constantly to new areas of learning. You must do the same.

### Step Five

7. "You must set a goal." If you do nothing about your vocabulary, you will learn at most twenty-five to fifty new words in the next twelve months. With conscious effort, you can learn quite a lot of new words. Set yourself a goal of finding new words every day. This may sound pretty ambitious - but you will discover as soon as you start actively looking for new words in your reading, and actively doing reading of a more challenging type, that new words are all around you - that is if you're ready for them. And please bear it in mind: vocabulary building snowballs - please also take it to heart: the best time to build up your vocabulary was a few years ago; the second-best time is now. It's never too late to start doing a worthwhile job - to start learning.

8. In conclusion, I would

also like to quote a short Myanmar poem again. If informally translated into English, it would read as follows: -

"In this world of ours, technology is our true friend. Technology is so great that everyone has got to wonder at it. It is so great that, so solid that, it is immovable and it cannot be stolen. It is one's own property."2

### Reference:

၁။ မီးရောင်၊ လရောင်၊ နေအရောင်၊ ဉာဏ်ရောင်လူမ်း၍ မိုး။ သိပ္ပံသမား အဘာ နက္ခတ္တ ဗြဟ္မစနိဟော၍ ကျွမ်းကိုကိုး။ ထို့ကြောင့် များစွာ လူတကာ၊ ပညာရအောင် ကြိုး။ ပညာကောင်းမှာ ၊ ပဒေသာ၊ သုံးရာမကုန်နိး။

၂။ ဤလောကမှာ တတ်ပညာ မှန်စွာ မိတ်ကောင်းပါ။ ပညာအရောင်၊ ထွန်းလင်းပြောင်၊ များမြောက်အံ့ဩကြ၊ ပညာ ခန့်နိုင် ၊ မ ခိုးနိုင်၊ ကိုယ်ပိုင်စစ်ပါလှ။

၃။ Word Power made easy by Norman Lewis



## New studies find more evidence supporting natural origin of SARS-CoV-2

**T**HREE reports newly published by different research teams from different countries have revealed more evidence that some zoonotic origins were behind the spread of SARS-CoV-2, which caused the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

The studies were conducted by groups of scientists from the United States, Britain, Australia, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and also China. Though all reports are preprints and have not completed peer review at a journal, the conclusions have gained spotlight, given the researchers' background as renowned immunologists and virologists.

### Lineage A and lineage B

Their major findings include that lineage A and lineage B of SARS-CoV-2, which caused the early outbreaks, are genetically too different from one another, thus the coronavirus must have evolved in non-human animals and



The refrigerated truck carrying COVID-19 vaccines arrives at the disease control center in Ganzhi Prefecture of southwest China's Sichuan Province, 22 July 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA/PENG ZIYANG/FILE

the two lineages spread to humans separately.

One report was released on Feb. 25 by researchers in China

working with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention and other institutes

after an analysis of over 1,000 samples collected from the environment and the animals within Huanan Seafood Market in Wuhan,

China, in early 2020, while the other two were published on 26 Feb by the US-led international teams. The international teams studied the data and information collected by the World Health Organization and other authority channels, as well as the early features shown in the spreading of the virus.

Michael Worobey, a virologist at the University of Arizona in Tucson and a co-author on the papers released by the international teams, told the Nature magazine that his thinking on the origins of COVID-19 has shifted. He once kept an open mind about whether the pandemic stemmed from a laboratory.

As more evidence has come to light supporting a zoonotic origin story, it's extremely improbable that two distinct lineages of SARS-CoV-2 could have been derived from a laboratory, Worobey said.

### Strongest evidence

Kristian Andersen, a virolo-

gist at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California, and an author of the two reports by the international teams, also confirmed that the two preprints provide the strongest evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic began from "live animals" instead of laboratories.

After posting on Twitter one report entitled "SARS-CoV-2 emergence very likely resulted from at least two zoonotic events," Andersen tweeted that the scientists need "more and better data" to approach the origin as there are still questions such as "What animals? Farmed or wild? Connectedness?" and "Future risk?" needed to be answered.

In spite of some clamor hyping up lab-leak hypothesis, more and more studies have proved that the COVID-19 origin tracing is a serious issue needed to be dealt with through the collaboration of global scientists on basis of scientific attitude and principles.

SOURCE: Xinhua



## Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 700 pm Saturday 12 March 2022)

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

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 13 March 2022:** Rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon, and Ayeyawady regions and partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Taninthayi Region.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13 March 2022:** Generally fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13 March 2022:** Generally fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13 March 2022:** Generally fair weather.

## Trademark Caution

The Global New Light of Myanmar

# PLEASE CALL



# 09 251 022 355

သတင်းစာ ဂျာနယ် စာစောင်များကို နှိုင်းထက်ကမ်းစံချိန်စီ ပုံနှိပ်ပေးပါ ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါသည်။

# 01 860 4530

ကြေးမြို့နယ်များနှင့် ကြေးမြို့ခရိုင်များ ကြေးမြို့ခရိုင် တစ်သွင်းပေးပါ။

ထိုကုန်ပစ္စည်းများကို ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါသည်။

# 09 974 424 848

NEWS IN  
BRIEFHuge spiders  
spread from Asia to  
America, but maybe  
it's a good thing

BIG and scary-looking Joro spiders have spread from Asia to the southern United States and are now poised to colonize the country's cooler climes — but they're nothing to fear and might end up actually helping local ecosystems.

That's according to scientists who have been studying the arachnid invaders since they first arrived in Georgia around 2013.

In a few short years, the golden webs spun by the bright yellow, dark blue and red spiders have become a common sight throughout the state, and new research suggests they will clamber up the Eastern Seaboard next.

"The reason we got involved in this project was because they literally fell in our lap," Andy Davis, an ecologist at the University of Georgia, told AFP on Friday.—AFP ■

New giant tortoise  
species found in  
Galapagos after  
DNA study

A new species of giant tortoise has been discovered in the Galapagos after DNA testing found animals living on one island had not yet been recorded, Ecuador's environment ministry said.

Researchers compared the genetic material of tortoises currently living on San Cristobal with bones and shells collected in 1906 from a cave in the island's highlands and found them to be different.

The 20th-century explorers never reached the lowlands northeast of the island, where the animals live today, and as a result, almost 8,000 tortoises correspond to a different lineage to what was previously thought.

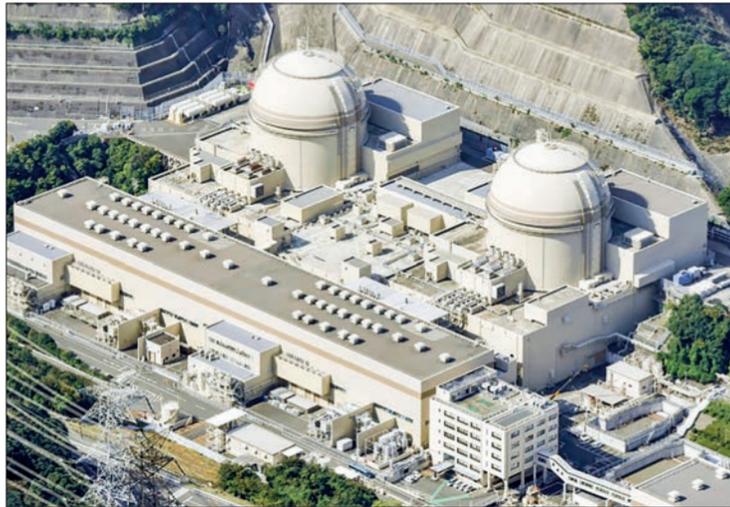
"The species of giant tortoise that inhabits San Cristobal Island, until now known scientifically as *Chelonoidis chathamensis*, genetically matches a different species," the ministry said Thursday on Twitter.—AFP ■

Japan ruling party pushes for nuclear  
energy use amid Ukraine crisis

JAPAN'S major ruling party has pushed for reactivating the country's halted nuclear facilities for energy following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, amid worries about the stable procurement of resources such as crude oil and natural gas.

Some members of the Liberal Democratic Party are stepping up calls to reactivate more reactors, the majority of which halted operations following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, to minimize the economic impact of rising energy prices and risks arising from political instability.

Following the suspension, the Japanese government introduced stricter safety rules and set a target for nuclear power generation to account for 20 to 22 per cent of the country's electricity supply by fiscal 2030, as



Japan's energy self-sufficiency rate was as low as 11.2 per cent as of fiscal 2020, and the resource-poor country is susceptible to the effects of political unrest abroad. PHOTO: KYODO

part of efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

"Given the situation in Ukraine, it is essential to accelerate the reactivation and increase

our energy self-sufficiency rate," Tomomi Inada, a former defense minister who now heads one of the LDP's groups promoting nuclear power generation, said

earlier this month. Japan's energy self-sufficiency rate was as low as 11.2 per cent as of fiscal 2020, and the resource-poor country is susceptible to the effects of political unrest abroad. Resource prices have skyrocketed due to the Ukrainian crisis, and rising gasoline and utility costs have put pressure on Japanese households.

"The rise in prices will have a major impact on the economy," Hiroyuki Hosoda, who chairs a separate intraparty group promoting the use of nuclear energy, said Thursday, when it unanimously adopted the idea that the suspended reactors should be urgently restarted. "We should put more efforts into reactivation," said Hosoda, president of the House of Representatives.—Kyodo ■

Honduras clarifies  
stand on open-pit mines

HONDURAS on Friday clarified that existing open-pit mining contracts remain in effect, after President Xiomara Castro said she was banning the practice.

Castro on 1 March announced the ban in the Central American nation declaring the mining style harmful to the environment and to people.

The move was met with joy by rights defenders and environmentalists but brought uncertainty to the industry.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Lucky Medina told AFP Friday that large mining companies that use surface mining will be allowed to continue their activities in Honduras under "strict surveillance" until their permits expire.

That includes gold mines operated by multinational Aura Minerals in San Andres in the west of the country and iron oxide mines in Tocoa in the north-east.—AFP ■



For illustrative purposes only. Open-pit mining is condemned by environmentalists internationally for its ecological and human cost, as well as its heavy use of cyanide. Honduran President Xiomara Castro has clarified her stand on open-pit mines. PHOTO: APORREA/AFP/FILE

UN holds biodiversity talks on deal to stave  
off mass extinction

GLOBAL efforts to cut plastic and agricultural pollution, protect a third of wild spaces, and ultimately live "in harmony with nature" will dominate UN biodiversity negotiations starting Monday, held in person after a two-year pandemic delay.

Almost 200 countries are due to adopt a global framework this year to safeguard nature by mid-century from the destruction wrought by humanity, with a key milestone of 30 per cent protected by 2030.

The aim is also to safeguard the "services" nature supplies: the air we breathe, the water we

drink, the soil that yields the food we eat. The meeting in Geneva will set the stage for a crucial UN biodiversity summit, initially due to be held in China in 2020 and postponed several times. It is now expected to take place at the end of August.

Geneva is a chance to strengthen a draft global biodiversity agreement "that many observers feel currently lacks the teeth needed to meaningfully address interconnected biodiversity and climate crises that cannot be solved in isolation", according to the Nature Conservancy.

Campaigners have for years



Experts fear Earth is facing an era of mass extinction. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

called for a deal on halting biodiversity loss similar to what the

Paris Agreement outlined for the climate.—AFP ■

## Chinese city locks down, Shanghai shuts schools as Covid spikes

A Chinese city of nine million was ordered into lockdown on Friday and Shanghai shut its schools as authorities scrambled to halt a Covid-19 outbreak that has pushed nationwide cases to their highest levels in two years.

Changchun, the capital of northeastern Jilin province and an important industrial base, ordered residents to stay at home, allowing one person out every two days to buy “daily necessities”.

The city also halted all public transport, ordered schools and businesses shut and said

it would institute mass testing.

China’s daily coronavirus case count soared past the 1,000 mark this week for the first time since the pandemic’s early days in 2020.

That is up from fewer than 100 cases just three weeks ago as the highly transmissible Omicron variant challenges China’s zero-Covid approach to tackling the pandemic.

Covid-19 was first detected in China in late 2019 but the government has kept its case count extremely low by international standards with a combination

of snap lockdowns, mass testing and largely closed borders.

There were 1,369 cases across more than a dozen provinces, according to Friday’s daily official count. Jilin, which has reported hundreds of cases in recent days, is one of more than a dozen provinces facing upticks along with major cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Shanghai on Friday ordered its schools to close and shift to online instruction for the foreseeable future after dozens of cases emerged in the eastern economic hub in recent days.—AFP ■



A teacher shows students the correct way to wash their hands at a primary school in east China’s Shanghai, 2 June 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA/ZHANG JIANSONG/FILE

## Elderly care homes in eye of Hong Kong’s deadly Covid storm



People queue at a mobile specimen collection station for Covid-19 testing in Hong Kong’s Central district on 7 February, as authorities scrambled to ramp up testing capacity following a record high number of new infections. PHOTO: AFP

KATHLEEN Wong thought her 89-year-old mother was lucky to get a coveted spot in a government nursing home, but now she watches in horror as a coronavirus wave tears through Hong Kong’s elderly population.

Care homes have become the epicentre of the city’s

worst-ever outbreak, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of all deaths since January when an Omicron-fuelled resurgence kicked off.

Hong Kong has recorded nearly 3,000 deaths this year, with the majority among the elderly, the city’s most vaccine-hesitant

group.

“I am on tenterhooks all the time, fearing a sudden call with bad news,” Wong told AFP.

Her mother, who has a cognitive disorder and needs help eating, is among the nearly 60,000 residents living in Hong Kong’s elderly care homes.

The facilities have recorded more than 1,700 deaths among 22,070 infected tenants — a fatality rate nearing eight percent.

Overwhelmed with bodies piling up and elderly patients waiting in outdoor makeshift wards, Hong Kong’s hospitals have started turning people away.

This has pushed unequipped and understaffed facilities to battle the disease on their own, said Cheng Ching-fat, secretary-general of the Community Care and Nursing Home Workers General Union.

“Care homes do not have any design or facilities for quarantine,” he told AFP.—AFP ■

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Mandatory masking in US schools reduces COVID-19 cases during Delta surge: study

US schools with mandatory masking during the Delta surge had 72 per cent fewer cases of in-school transmission of SARS-CoV-2, when compared to schools with optional or partial masking policies, according to a new study.

The study, funded by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), covered more than 1.1 million students and over 157,000 staff attending in-person schools across nine states, with data collected from 26 July to 13 December 2021.

Researchers found that most COVID-19 cases among students and staff were acquired from the community and about 10 per cent of cases were acquired within school.—Xinhua ■

#### COVID-19 spike expected in Aussie states as Omicron subvariant emerges

COVID-19 cases are expected to double in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) within weeks as new Omicron BA.2 variant spreads, the state’s health minister warned.

The state health department reported 14,034 new cases of COVID-19 and seven deaths on Friday. There were 998 people in hospitals, slightly up from Thursday’s 991, with 39 in intensive care.

While the Omicron variant is still the dominant virus strain in NSW, the new BA.2 subvariant could quickly overtake and cases could double within the next four to six weeks, NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard said on Thursday.—Xinhua ■

## US launches trial to study allergic reactions to COVID-19 mRNA vaccines



Health workers prepare as people arrive at a Covid-19 testing station in Houston, Texas, to receive a Covid test on 7 January 2022. PHOTO: AFP

US researchers are conducting a clinical trial designed to help understand rare but potentially serious systemic allergic reactions to COVID-19 mRNA vaccines, the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced on Wednesday.

The single-site trial will enroll up to 100 people aged 16 to 69 years who had an allergic reaction to a first dose of COVID-19 mRNA vaccine.

Study participants will receive a second dose of vaccine as

inpatients under carefully controlled conditions at the NIH’s Clinical Centre in Bethesda, Maryland.

At admission and during the inpatient stay, participants will have breathing tests and frequent blood draws, which will be used by medical staff to discern details of any allergic or other responses to the vaccine.

The enrollees will also complete mental health questionnaires prior to, at the time of, and in the months following vac-

ination, according to the NIH.

“People who experienced an allergic reaction after receiving a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine may be hesitant to complete their vaccine regimen,” said Anthony Fauci, director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. “This study will help us determine if individuals who experienced moderate systemic allergic reactions can safely receive a second dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine,” he said. —Xinhua ■

NEWS  
IN BRIEF

G-7 to take steps to strip Russia of trade benefits as WTO member

THE United States, Japan and other Group of Seven industrialized nations on Friday agreed to take steps to strip Russia of trade benefits it has enjoyed as a member of the World Trade Organization, ratcheting up pressure on Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine.

Ending benefits such as low tariffs and few trade barriers in unison with other nations that make up half of the global economy will be another “crushing blow to the Russian economy,” US President Joe Biden said at the White House as he announced a fresh set of sanctions the G-7 leaders have agreed on. According to a joint statement, each member of the group – Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States, plus the European Union – vowed to take independent actions to revoke Russia’s “most-favoured nation” status, which has granted the country the best possible trade terms on key products. —Kyodo ■

Japan to defer economic cooperation projects with Russia over Ukraine

JAPAN will put economic cooperation projects with Russia on hold for the time being, including an eight-point plan intended to break the deadlock over a territorial issue, the top government spokesman said Friday as Tokyo hardens its stance on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the Russian aggression in Ukraine has made it difficult to deepen bilateral cooperation in the economic field. Japan has taken a spate of sanctions including an asset freeze targeting Russian President Vladimir Putin. —Kyodo ■

US to revoke Russia’s most-favoured nation status amid Ukraine crisis

THE US government will revoke Russia’s most-favoured nation trade status amid the Ukraine crisis, the White House said Friday, noting that it will work with Group of Seven (G7) countries and the European Union to roll out new sanctions.

US President Joe Biden and the other G7 leaders “will announce new economic actions” to “further isolate Russia from the global financial system,” the White House said in a statement.

The sanction followed an energy embargo on Russia announced by Washington on Tuesday, among a series of moves against Russia over the Ukraine crisis, even though analysts have warned of huge potential consequences and spillovers.

On the same day, leaders of the European Union agreed on imposing new sanctions against Russia in an informal summit in Versailles, France.

President of the European



Carmaker Stellantis produces and sells the Peugeot, Citroën, Opel, Jeep and Fiat brands in Russia. **PHOTOS: AFP**

Commission Ursula von der Leyen said the new sanctions aim to further isolate Russia from the global economic system. She also announced a plan to find alternatives to Russian fuels by 2027 in order to reduce EU’s dependence on Russia.

“There’s the law of unintended consequences,” US-China Business Council President

Craig Allen told Xinhua earlier this week, commenting on the potential economic impact of Western sanctions on Russia.

“What you intend to do, perhaps is punish Russia, but there are unintended consequences to every action. And it’s too early to be able to say, what are the unintended consequences of this,” Allen said.— Xinhua ■

S Korea’s current account surplus falls in January on high oil price

SOUTH Korea’s current account surplus fell in January due to higher price for imported crude oil and raw materials, central bank data showed Friday.

Current account surplus, the broadest measure of cross-border trade, amounted to 1.81 billion US dollars in January, according to the Bank of Korea (BOK).

The current account balance stayed in black for 21 months since May 2020, but the January figure was down from a surplus of 6.78 billion dollars tallied a year earlier.

The sharp fall was attributed to the higher import cost for raw materials and crude oil.

Import surged 34.4 per cent from a year earlier to 55.46 billion dollars in January, while export gained 19.8 per cent to 56.13 billion dollars.

Trade surplus stood at 0.67 billion dollars in January, down 4.9 billion dollars from a year ago.

Services account balance, which gauges the flow of travel, transport cost and royalty, posted a deficit of 450 million dollars in January, down from a deficit of 930 million dollars a



Containers stacked on the dock at Busan, South Korea’s leading port. **PHOTO: SEUNG-IL RYU / AFP**

year earlier.

Transport account surplus gained to 2.32 billion dollars in January from 930 million dollars a year earlier due to the higher transport cost, while the travel account deficit added from 520 million dollars to 560 million dollars.

Primary income account, which includes monthly salary and investment income, recorded a surplus of 1.88 billion dollars in January down from a

surplus of 2.57 billion dollars a year earlier.

Financial account, which measures cross-border capital flow without transactions in goods and services, registered a net outflow of 660 million dollars in January.

Overseas direct investment by domestic residents amounted to 5.2 billion dollars, while foreign direct investment in South Korea came to 1.52 billion dollars.— Xinhua ■

German inflation exceeds 5 pct mark again in February

THE national consumer price index (CPI) in Germany in February rose by 5.1 per cent on an annual basis, the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) said on Friday. In January, inflation declined for the first time in six months and hit 4.9 per cent. The exceeding 5 per cent mark in February was influenced by “delivery bottlenecks and significant price increases at upstream stages in the economic process,” according to Destatis.

Due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were “increas-

ingly superimposed by uncertainties,” said Georg Thiel, president of Destatis.

“The current price increases, especially for mineral oil products, are not yet reflected in the results for February 2022,” he said. Prices for energy products rose by 22.5 per cent in February, significantly more than overall inflation, according to Destatis. While fuel prices increased by 25.8 per cent, prices for light heating oil and natural gas even jumped 52.6 per cent and 35.7 per cent, respectively.— Xinhua ■



People stand on walkways at central square of LP12 Mall of Berlin. **PHOTO: AFP/ODD ANDERSEN/FILE**

## Crisis drives Japan publishers to reprint books on Ukraine, Russia

JAPANESE publishing companies are increasingly reprinting books as well as giving free online access to manga on Ukraine and Russia amid heightened interest among readers following Moscow's invasion of the Eastern European country.

But some firms are wary and rather low key in promoting the republished materials out of consideration for the victims, whose numbers continue to grow in the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. "I feel guilty about the sales," a publishing industry official said.

Among the firms is Chuokoron-Shinsha Inc. which reprint-

ed 30,000 copies of "Monogatari: Ukuraina no Rekishi" (Stories of Ukrainian History) by Yuji Kurokawa, former Japanese ambassador to Ukraine.

Since the book was first published in 2002, orders for it have gone up whenever Ukraine attracts international attention such as Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Chuokoron-Shinsha said. Chikumashobo Ltd. reprinted 20,000 copies of "Gendai Roshia no Gunji Senryaku" (Modern Russia's Military Strategy) by Yu Koizumi, a lecturer at the University of Tokyo's Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology.



Photo taken on 9 March 2022, shows books about Ukraine and Russia on display in a special corner of a bookstore in Tokyo. PHOTO: KYODO

Koizumi appears frequently on television to answer questions

on the Ukraine crisis and interpret Russia's military action.

Kodansha Ltd. has made six chapters of its "Funso Deshitara Hatta Made" (If there's conflict, go to Hatta) series available for free on its webcomic site Comic Days.

The chapters in the series by Motohiro Den involve Ukraine in the story, which follows titular character Yuri Hatta, a "geopolitical risk consultant," who travels the world solving problems. Publib LLC has also scrambled to reprint copies of guidebook "Ukuraina Fan Bukku" (Ukraine Fan Book), written by Takashi Hirano, Japanese language editor for Ukraine's state-run Ukrinform news agency.—Kyodo ■

## China's smartphone market logs stable growth in January



Sales people introduce mobile phone products to customers through livestreaming at a shopping mall in Zhengzhou, capital of Central China's Henan province, on 13 March 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

CHINA'S smartphone market saw steady growth in January with the sales increasing by 0.4 per cent year-on-year to reach

30.87 million units, according to an industry report.

On a month-on-month basis, smartphone sales vol-

ume rose by 38.6 per cent from December 2021, according to a report by the research and consulting company CINNO Research.

Domestic smartphone maker Oppo took the top spot with its sales up 42.6 per cent from a month ago, while Vivo followed with an increase of 55.8 per cent, the report said.

Honor maintained growth momentum last month as its sales went up 242.9 per cent from a year earlier, the largest year-on-year growth among the top five brands.

Apple took the fourth place with the sales climbing by 11.4 per cent year-on-year, followed by Chinese brand Xiaomi, the report said.—Xinhua ■

## Italy's wine exports reach record levels in 2021

ITALY'S wine sector hit a record 7.1 billion euros (7.8 billion US dollars) in exports last year, more than compensating for lower export totals in 2020 due to the worst period of the coronavirus pandemic, showed data released on Friday. According to an analysis by the Qualivita Foundation of data from Italy's National Statistics Institute (ISTAT), Italian wine exports grew by 12.4 per cent in 2021 compared to the previous year. This was compared to a 2.2-per cent year-on-year decrease in 2020.—Xinhua ■



Wine barrels are pictured in a cellar of the Hofstaetter vineyards estate on 28 May 2020 in Termeno, Trentino-Alto Adige northern Italy. PHOTO: MIGUEL MEDINA/AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### New Zealanders queue for petrol as price hikes

Cars, boats and gallon bottles, New Zealanders were filling every tank with fuel before another big price hike tipped at the weekend.

Petrol prices have already jumped up dramatically over the past month, which saw national average price of 91 petrol increase 11.8 percent to 2.94 New Zealand dollars per litre, and 23.1 percent increase for diesel to 2.28 New Zealand dollars per litre, according to the price comparing tool Gaspy.

On Friday, local fuel retailer Waitomo warned of a looming unprecedented rise in prices. Chief Executive Jimmy Ormsby said the company had been advised by its supplier that prices would increase after 6 p.m. local time Friday evening.

"With the biggest single jump in our wholesale price seen in my time," said Ormsby.—Xinhua ■

#### Volkswagen's global deliveries down 16.7 pct in February

GLOBAL deliveries by the Volkswagen Group in February further declined by 16.7 per cent year-on-year to 542,900 vehicles, Germany's largest carmaker said on Friday.

Deliveries to China, Volkswagen's biggest market, decreased by 14.4 per cent to 193,800, according to the company. In Western Europe, the carmaker delivered 183,800 vehicles, 10.9 per cent less than the year before.

Sales of the group's core brand Volkswagen fell by 19.7 per cent to 280,900 vehicles. Luxury brand Audi recorded an 11.5 per cent decline and delivered 107,800 vehicles.—Xinhua ■

#### N Macedonia bans exports of cereals to protect domestic market

TO prevent potential shortages and protect domestic consumers, the government of North Macedonia decided on Friday to ban for 10 days (until 20 March) the export of cereals, such as wheat, corn and sunflower seeds and oil, Economy Minister Kreshnik Bekteshi told a press conference here.

According to the minister, this "is a preventive measure to avoid bigger disruptions to the market". Its aim is to "protect the citizens amid a pandemic and while facing one of the largest economic crises in recent times". Bekteshi underlined that the government remains fully committed to minimizing the negative effects of the current crisis.

He stressed that the citizens should not be concerned as the country had sufficient food reserves to meet domestic needs.—Xinhua ■

## Israeli lawmakers reinstate controversial citizenship law

ISRAELI lawmakers passed a law Thursday reinstating a ban on Palestinian spouses from the West Bank and Gaza Strip from obtaining citizenship via marriage to Israeli nationals.

The law was passed after a fractious late night session that exposed deep fault lines in the governing coalition of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

Known as the “citizenship law”, it reinstates a ban that was first enacted in 2003 during the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

The legislation had been

renewed continuously until last July, when Bennett’s freshly sworn-in coalition – which pulls in parties from across the political spectrum – did not unite around it and failed to muster support from the opposition.

But on Thursday, hawkish opposition lawmakers helped push the bill across the finish line in a 45-15 vote.

Bennett’s hawkish Yamina party allied with right-wing factions in the opposition to pass the legislation above protests of more liberal parties inside and outside government.—AFP ■



Palestinians walk past shops in the West Bank city of Ramallah in this 20 December 2021 file photo. PHOTO: AFP

## North Korea plans ‘monster’ missile launch by April: analysts



North Korea’s top priority is an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that can carry multiple warheads – the Hwasong-17, dubbed a “monster missile” and first unveiled at a parade in October 2020.

PHOTO: KCNA/AFP

NORTH Korea has been using satellite subterfuge to test parts of a so-called “monster” missile, analysts say, as it gears up for a sanctions-shattering launch ahead of a key domestic anniversary.

Pyongyang has conducted a record nine weapons tests so far this year, in what experts see as an effort to work through a laundry list of strategic weapons set out by leader Kim Jong Un.

One top priority is an intercontinental ballistic missile

(ICBM) that can carry multiple warheads -- the Hwasong-17, dubbed a “monster missile” and first unveiled at a parade in October 2020.

It has never been test-fired — but Washington said Thursday Pyongyang had recently tested parts of it disguised as a satellite.

North Korea has been observing a self-imposed moratorium on testing long range and nuclear weapons, but with talks stalled and sanctions still in place, it seems close to tearing

it up.

“I think the moratorium is as good as over. We should expect to see a return to ICBM testing,” said US-based security analyst Ankit Panda.

The tests of purported “reconnaissance satellite” components on 27 February and March 5 were likely the Hwasong-17, possibly the technology to “carry and deliver multiple warheads,” he said.

“North Korea hasn’t demonstrated the latter capability before, even if it has tested ICBMs capable of ranging the United States three times,” he said.

### Cycle of escalation

North Korea’s renewed determination to test an ICBM comes at a delicate time in the region, with a new, more hawkish president, conservative Yoon Suk-yeol, set to take control in South Korea.

Yoon — who has threatened Pyongyang with a pre-emptive strike and promised to tell “rude boy” Kim to behave — looks set to take a hard line with the North after five years under dovish liberal President Moon Jae-in.— AFP ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Saudi oil refinery hit by drone attack

A drone attack on an oil refinery in the Saudi capital caused a small fire but no disruption to supplies, officials said Friday, as crude prices soar after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The act of “sabotage and terrorism” follows a series of similar attacks on Saudi facilities by Yemen’s Iran-backed Huthi rebels, who are fighting a Saudi-led coalition.

The attack took place in the early hours of Thursday morning. “The Riyadh oil refinery was attacked by a drone, resulting in a small fire that has been brought under control,” the energy ministry said, according to the official Saudi Press Agency, without directly blaming the Huthis. “The attack did not result in any injury or death, nor was the supply of oil or its derivatives affected.” Brent oil prices have seesawed between \$139 and \$105 in extreme volatility this week, after the war in Ukraine prompted concerns over supplies.—AFP ■

### South Sudan to face its worst hunger crisis yet: WFP

MORE than 70 per cent of South Sudan’s population will face extreme hunger this year as conflict and climate-related disasters deepen food scarcity, the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) warned Friday.

Since gaining independence from Sudan in 2011, the world’s newest nation has been in the throes of economic and political crisis, and is struggling to recover from a five-year civil war that left nearly 400,000 people dead.—AFP ■

## Prayers in Japan 11 years after tsunami and nuclear disaster

PEOPLE in Japan’s northeast offered prayers and carried out searches for the missing on Friday, 11 years after an earthquake and tsunami left 18,500 people dead or unaccounted for and triggered a devastating nuclear meltdown in Fukushima.

A minute’s silence was held at 2:46 pm (0546 GMT), the moment a 9.0-magnitude quake — among the strongest ever recorded — struck off northeastern Japan on 11 March 2011.

Japanese television showed live footage of people praying towards the ocean, as students standing on massive sea walls built to protect against large waves flew kites painted with messages of hope.

The undersea quake unleashed a deadly tsunami which wrecked entire coastal communities and set off the world’s worst nuclear disaster since the 1986 Chernobyl accident.

There was no state-funded national ceremony this year to



The 2011 tsunami wrecked entire coastal communities. PHOTO: JIJI PRESS/AFP

commemorate the lives lost, because the government has brought the annual ritual to a close now that more than a decade has passed since the disaster.

Nonetheless, bereaved families and more than 33,000 former residents still classed as evacuees, who were either ordered or

chose to leave due to radiation, gathered to remember the date.

In the Tohoku region devastated by the tsunami, some met in the early morning along the coast to offer prayers, while local TV showed people conducting an annual search for those still missing in the Namie area of Fukushima.— AFP ■

# Putin agrees to send ‘volunteers’ to Ukraine



Photo taken on 8 March 2022, in Lviv, western Ukraine, shows a cathedral covered with protective iron plates amid the Russian invasion. **PHOTO: KYODO**

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin on Friday agreed to invite volunteers to participate in Russia’s “special military operation” in Ukraine.  
“If you see that there are

people who want on a voluntary basis, especially not for money, to come and help people living in the Donbas – well, you need to meet them halfway and help them get to the combat zone,” Putin said at

the Security Council meeting, as quoted by Sputnik. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said that many volunteers are ready to help people in Donbas, including 16,000 people from the Middle Eastern countries. This comes as a Pentagon official on Thursday said the Russians have moved about five kilometres closer to Kyiv since Wednesday and are now about 40 kilometres east of the city. The US Defense Department official revealed this information during an on-background press briefing at the Pentagon.

There are multiple lines of advancements toward Kyiv, with the assessed intent of encircling the Ukrainian capital. However, their progress to do so hasn’t been effective, the official said.—ANI ■

# Japan to spend 8.8 bil. yen on humanitarian aid for war-torn Ukraine

THE Japanese government decided on Friday to disburse 8.8 billion yen (\$75.3 million) from fiscal 2021 reserve funds for humanitarian assistance to Ukraine following its invasion by Russia since late last month.

Japan will offer the assistance to relevant international organizations including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and help fund the activities of Japanese nongovernmental organizations helping Ukraine, the Finance Ministry said. The amount is part of the emergency humanitarian aid worth \$100 million that Prime Minister Fumio Kishida pledged last month.



A woman from Donbass arrives at Rostov Region, Russia, on 24 February 2022 **PHOTO: ANDREY BOK/XINHUA**

On Friday, the top government spokesman, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno, told a press conference that the aid would include food, water and shelter for affected people in Ukraine and those fleeing to neighboring countries.—Kyodo ■

# Poland’s Warsaw, Krakow can no longer accept refugees from Ukraine

UKRAINE’S border guard service has said that Poland’s Warsaw and Krakow can no longer accept refugees from Ukraine. Since Russia’s military operation began in Ukraine, thousands and thousands of people of Ukraine are fleeing to different countries. Most of the border-sharing countries have warmly accepted refugees from Ukraine. Over the course of two weeks, about 100,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Krakow, and 200,000 in Warsaw. But now, both of the cities are not able to accept refugees.—ANI ■



Ukrainian refugees walk across a bridge at the buffer zone of the Polish border in western Ukraine on 6 March 2022. **PHOTO: DANIEL LEAL/AFP**

## NEWS DIGEST

### Russia-Ukraine News

The following is the latest list of selected news summaries.  
The Russia-Ukraine conflict continues on Saturday as relevant parties are working to broker a peaceful solution. Following are the latest developments of the situation:

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday that a possible meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is not ruled out.

“Yes, it is indeed possible in theory,” Peskov told reporters. “But first, both delegations and ministers must do their part so that the presidents do not meet for the process and for the sake of conversation, but meet for the result.”

Meta Platforms Inc., the parent company of social networks Facebook and Instagram, said on Thursday that it has allowed posts with violent speeches towards Russians in response to Russia’s military operation in Ukraine.

Instagram has distributed materials which call for committing violent acts against Russian citizens, including military personnel, Russia’s telecom watchdog Roskomnadzor said Friday in a brief statement.

Peskov said Friday that Russia will investigate if the social media platforms allowed publications of calls for violence against Russians, and it will be necessary to ban the applications if they allow hate speech.

In a meeting on Friday with his Belarusian counterpart, Alexander Lukashenko, Putin said as the West imposed restrictions on Russia, “this is indeed a time of opportunity when we must strengthen our technological and economic sovereignty”.

“The Soviet Union indeed always lived in conditions of sanctions but developed and achieved enormous success,” Putin said, stressing that “we have of course become stronger in this respect”.

Putin said Friday that he supported the idea of allowing volunteers from abroad to provide military assistance to Donbass.

Western countries and Ukraine do not disguise the fact that they are gathering mercenaries and sending them to Ukraine, Putin said at a meeting with permanent members of Russia’s Security Council.

Ukraine established 12 humanitarian corridors in four regions on Friday to allow civilians to leave the conflict-torn areas, the Ukrainian government-run Ukrinform news agency reported, citing Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk.

The humanitarian corridors were set up to evacuate people from some cities and towns in eastern Donetsk and Kharkiv, southern Zaporizhzhya and north-central Kiev, Vereshchuk said.

At an informal meeting held on Thursday and Friday in Versailles, France, leaders of the European Union (EU) member states have agreed to intensify the sanctions pressure on Russia, and pledged to “continue to provide coordinated political, financial, material and humanitarian support” to Ukraine.

At 9:51 am on Saturday, a temporary flight carrying Chinese citizens evacuated from Ukraine arrived in Hangzhou, east China’s Zhejiang Province.

Prior to today, ten temporary flights taking Chinese nationals back from Ukraine have already returned to China safely.

Source: Xinhua

## Myanmar Futsal Team leaves for Thailand to compete in invitation championship



PHOTO:MFF

THE Myanmar National Futsal team left for Bangkok, Thailand yesterday morning to compete in the NSDF Futsal Invitation Championship 2022 to be held from 15 to 20 March.

Team Manager Dr Ye Mon Htut, Team Administrator U Ye Win Htut, Head Coach, Team head coach Boonlert Charoenwong, assistant head coaches U Htay Myint, U Kyaw Zin Nyunt, goal coach U Tun Tun Latt, fitness coach Tarwun (Thailand), phy-

sician U Aung Aung, goalkeeper Kyaw Htet Aung, Zwe Pyae Sone, Moe Min Aung, Hein Min Soe, Myo Myint Soe, Zaw Wunna, Ko Ko Lwin, Sai Pyone Aung, Wai Zin Oo, Htet Myat Tun, Htet Myat Naing, Myo Thet Aung, Nyein Min Soe, Htet Wai Tun, Chan That, Tun Aung Kyaw, Thaing Bwe Aung, Khin Zaw Lin, Ye Min Khant, Naing Lin Tun Kyaw, Hlaing Min Tun and Aung Zin Oo are included in the team.

Six teams — Thailand,

Oman, Maldives, Iran, Myanmar and Mongolia — will compete in this competition. Iran, Myanmar and Mongolia are participating in Group B. The Team Myanmar will play group matches against Mongolia on 16 March and Iran on 17 March.

The team will continue training in Thailand after the tournament and will compete in the 2022 ASEAN Futsal Championship to be held in Thailand from 3 to 12 April. — Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM ■

### Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

#### 1. Political affairs

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

#### 2. Economic affairs

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

#### 3. Social affairs

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

## 'Not impossible' for resurgent Barca to win La Liga, says Xavi

LA Liga has adopted a familiar look with Barcelona and Atletico Madrid back in the top four and both teams might now begin to believe they can finish second as Sevilla continue to stumble.

Barcelona, in particular, look primed for a late surge after winning four games on the bounce, their January signings giving them a boost just when they needed it most. They still have seven points to overturn to reach second but Xavi Hernandez's side do have a game in hand, as well as a meeting with Sevilla to come next month at Camp Nou. Such is the optimism around Barcelona that Xavi was even asked on Wednesday if they could yet win the title, although for Real Madrid to spurn a 15-point advantage with 11 games to go, 12 in Barca's case, seems unthinkable.

"Mathematics say that we can win the league, so why not?" Xavi said. "The others are failing but not Real Madrid. They have time on their side. It's very difficult, but not impossible." —AFP ■



They still have seven points to overturn to reach second but Xavi Hernandez's side do have a game in hand, as well as a meeting with Sevilla to come next month at Camp Nou. PHOTO: AFP

## Canadian skier Brian McKeever makes history with 16<sup>th</sup> Paralympic gold

CANADA'S Brian McKeever raced into the history books and grabbed his 16<sup>th</sup> Paralympic gold medal in cross-country skiing at the Beijing Winter Games Saturday.

McKeever won the middle distance race, and in doing so equalled the gold-medal haul of German former para alpine skier Gerd Schonfelder — the most decorated men's Paralympian.

Norwegian cross-country skier Ragnhild Myklebust holds the record as the most successful Winter Paralympian overall — 22 golds and 27 total medals over five games from 1988 to 2002.

McKeever had already bagged two titles in the visually impaired sprint and long-distance events this week at Zhangjiakou.

The 42-year-old made his Paralympic debut at Salt Lake City in 2002 and Beijing will be his last Games.

He played down the fuss over reaching Schonfelder's record.

"To be perfectly honest, it doesn't mean a damn thing," McKeever said, laughing.



Canada's Brian McKeever (right) has won his 16<sup>th</sup> Paralympic gold medal. PHOTO: AFP

"If the records happen to come, great. But that was never the focus."

He said he loves having adventures with his guides and is proud of being able to demonstrate the level that Paralympic athletes can reach.

"The hard work is done in the offseason, we enjoy it. We love it. We love getting lost in the mountains and sometimes dragging our butts home after 10 hours," McKeever said.

McKeever has a chance to win a 17th medal in the relay event Sunday.

Sweden's Zebastian Modin, 27, placed second and Ukraine's Dmytro Suiarko won bronze.

Modin hailed McKeever's achievement.

"He has meant so much for this sport," he told AFP.

"He has been working at the front for 20 years and shown what para-athletes can do, and how fast para-athletes can ski." —AFP ■