

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 259, 2nd Waxing of Pyatho 1383 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Monday, 3 January 2022

Invite all stakeholders and organizations to join the peace talks

THE year 2022 is of importance. Coming 12 February is the Diamond Jubilee Union Day and the 4 January 2023 will be the Diamond Jubilee Independence Day. As such, this year is the pre-Diamond Jubilee period. Hence, it is important to further strengthen the sovereignty of the State and progress of the nation with development fruits.

So, we have to start the new paces for restoration of the peace this year. As it is mentioned in the fourth point of the five-point road map, all stakeholders and organizations are invited to join the peace talks.

(Excerpt from the New Year Message delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 1 January 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.

Kayin new year day ceremony marked in Pathein

THE ceremony to mark the Kayin New Year Day was held at the Panglong Hall of No 5 Basic Education High School, Pathein, Ayeyawady Region, yesterday. The ceremony was attended by Mahn Nyein Maung, Member of the State Administration Council, Chief Minister U Tin Maung Win of Ayeyawady Region, South-West Command Commander Maj-Gen Aung Aung, officials, Kayin ethnic nationals and invited persons.

Firstly, the ceremony was opened with Member of SAC Mahn Nyein Maung striking the Phasi drum and he read out the Kayin New Year Day Message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Then, the region chief minister and commander delivered the new year greetings before Region Minister for Ethnic Affairs Mahn Saw Linn Khel read the message sent by the Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs. At the ceremony, a Buddhist monk Bhaddanta Sumana and Catholic Priest Fr. Pius Mahn Tha Hwi also extended greetings. The ceremony was concluded by the speech of SAC Member Mahn Nyein Maung. After that, SAC Member Mahn Nyein Maung, the region Chief Minister and the Commander visited the traditional exhibitions.—MNA



State Administration Council Member Mahn Nyein Maung and party visit exhibition to mark Kayin New Year Day.

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

Three new stamps commemorating 74th Anniversary of Independence Day to be on sale

PAGE-2

NATIONAL

Union Industry Minister inspects factories in Mandalay Region

PAGE-3

NATIONAL

Kayin national flag hoisting ceremony held on Kayin New Year Day

PAGE-4



NATIONAL

MoC deputy minister inspects road/bridge projects in Ayeyawady region

PAGE-6

Public Notice

1. The government seizes/uncovers illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other related materials in addition to terrorist attacks of NUG and CRPH, which were declared as terrorist groups in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and their subordinates PDF groups with homemade guns, gunpowder, mines and accessories, as well as arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other materials imported via border areas by some ethnic armed organizations aiming to make political and military profits on a daily basis, and it also exposes the cases of the terrorists who possess firearms in various ways.
2. Moreover, some terrorists take advantage of the honesty of the people and they make them keep their illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication devices and other related materials, including restricted materials using different ways and forms.
3. Therefore, in order to prevent unnecessary legal action against those who are not related to the terrorists, all the citizens should hand over the illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other related materials, including drugs banned by the government according to the law no later than 31 December 2021 to the respective wards/village administration offices/security forces if they keep these things in their houses, apartments and other places for various reasons and ways, and if they are found after the deadline, action will be taken against them under the existing laws.

Information Team
State Administration Council

79 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 2 January, total figure rises to 531,025

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 531,025 after 79 new cases were reported on 2 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 508,696 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,274 after 2 died.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 1-1-2022, a total of 20,816,441 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 15,571,917 people have been vaccinated two times and 5,244,524 people once.—MNA

Three new stamps commemorating 74th Anniversary of Independence Day to be on sale



THE Myanmar Post under the Ministry of Transport and Communications will issue three new postage stamps (worth K200 each) at 9:30 am on 4 January 2022, 3rd Waxing of Pyatho 1383 ME (Tuesday), to commemorate the upcoming 74th Anniversary of Independence Day.

The new series will be sold at the Central Post Office in Nay Pyi Taw, General Post office in Yangon and other post offices in each region and state.

To mark a special event, the postage stamps which can be purchased at the Central Post Office in Nay Pyi Taw and General Post offices in Yangon and Mandalay on 4 January and the date will be sealed on the bought stamps.—MNA

Three new postage stamps valued at K200 each are on sale.

Four national objectives of 74th Anniversary of Independence Day 2022

1. All ethnic nationals to safeguard non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, and perpetuation of sovereignty;
2. To ensure the emergence of a good and clean government and administrative system by implementing a genuine disciplined democracy;
3. All ethnic nationals to amicably and unitedly cooperate in the country development based on the genuine Union spirit;
4. To strive for restoring perpetual peace the entire people aspire.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Education Department of Higher Education Announcement Opening of University Day Classes

ALL the universities, degree colleges and colleges under the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, will open the following bachelor and master day classes for the Academic Year 2019-2020 and the Academic Year 2021-2022 on 6 January 2022.

- (a) Fourth Year (Law) Semester II
- (b) Fourth Year (Education) Semester II
- (c) Third Year (Honours) Semester I
- (d) Master (Qualifying) Semester I
- (e) Master (1st Year) Semester I
- (f) Master (2nd Year) Semester I

Department of Higher Education
Ministry of Education

Public request by Ministry of Health

ONLY when the people cooperate will the work process achieve success in a short time for effective prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 among the people. As such, all the people are requested to abide by the following points: -

1. Stay at home as much as possible.
2. Don't accept the guests at the house. You don't visit other houses.
3. The older persons above 65 or those suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart must be worn masks in the house. They must be placed at well-ventilated sites.
4. Wear masks if you go outside without fail. Systematically wash hands. Take a six-foot distance from others. Avoid visits to the rooms where ventilation is not good.
5. Avoid the crowds.
6. If possible, go shopping once a week. Don't buy anything from the vendors who don't systematically wear masks.
7. Take care of carrying the virus to the houses whenever return home from outside. Systematically discard the used masks and single disposable equipment outside the houses. Avoid close contact with family members before changing clothes or washing the body.
8. As the vaccines for your quota is the best, accept vaccinations for full time. Despite receiving the vaccination, you should abide by the protective ways.
9. Systematically cooperate in prevention, control and treatment of the disease with manpower, money, materials and expertise.

Ministry of Health (2-8-2021)

National unity means not just the unity amongst the leaders. It is the wholehearted unity of the entire people across the nation irrespective of race, religion, gender or faction that drives to accomplish national tasks in order to fulfil the aspirations of the national people not only by words but also by deeds.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Bogyoke Aung San at the conference held on the middle terrace of Shwedagon Pagoda on 20-1-1946)



Union Industry Minister inspects factories in Mandalay Region

UNION Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than paid a visit to Paleik, Mandalay Region on the morning of 1 January.

Arriving at the Textile Factory in Paleik, he met industrialists from Mandalay Region at the factory conference hall.

During the meeting, the Union Minister said that by using local raw materials for operations of the factories, local consumption could be sufficient and local people could get jobs. As a substitute for imports, it will have the benefit of reducing the spending of foreign currency.

“If the government and the private sector work together for the development of the industrial sector, it will develop rapidly.

With the development of the textile industry, all those involved in the garment sector will have



Union Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than views round production process of Textile Factory (Paleik).

jobs and living standards will rise,” the Union Minister said.

“In order to obtain sufficient

supply of cotton raw materials for cotton mills, it is necessary to carry out awareness-raising

activities on cotton cultivation by distributing high-yielding cotton seeds to cotton growers,” he

added. He called on the textile industrialists to openly address the difficulties they are facing.

Afterwards, the entrepreneurs presented the issues facing the operation of the business and the Union Minister coordinated and inspected the process of yarn production.

Next, the Union Minister visited the paper mill in Paleik and instructed officials to conduct multiplier training to prevent the loss of existing technology and skills in the factory and inspected the production process inside the factory. At No.7 Garment Factory (branch) in Wundwin, the Union minister inspected production process. In the evening, the Union Minister looked into the looms being tested by the factory staff at No. 8 Garment Factory branch in Yamethin.—MNA

MoALI organizes first Myanmar bovine beauty pageant in Yangon

THE first State/Region-level bovine beauty pageant was held yesterday morning in Mingaladon Township, Yangon Region. The event was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation and attended by Yangon Region Economic Minister U Aung Than Oo, cabinet members, the Yangon Region Development Committee Chairmen, officials from the region Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, livestock companies and owners of the cows/goats.

The event aims to promote domestic dairy cattle/goat/sheep farming, to expand network among livestock farmers to exchange breeding techniques, to highlight the beauty and meat production of Myanmar livestock as well as the economic development of rural animal husbandry, and to raise awareness about the value and behavior of the competing

animals.

There will be seven events of competitions and the first prize, the second prize and the third prize in addition to consolation prizes will be awarded respectively.

Yangon Region Economic Minister U Aung Than Oo urged all to develop the livestock sector in Myanmar and raise good breeds of dairy cows, sheep and goats and strive to be diseased-free and productive under the guidance of breeding experts.

Afterwards, the Minister visited more than 20 booths of the exhibitions and the competition of the animals participated in the event. A total of 10 prizes will be awarded to Myanmar bull beauty contest, dairy cow contest, beef cattle contest and goat contest on the afternoon of 3 January.—Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM



Yangon Region Economic Minister U Aung Than Oo visits bovine beauty pageant. PHOTO: KANU

First day of Dhamma Puja organized by Yangon Region Government held



Dhamma Puja ceremony organized by Yangon Region Government is in progress at hall of region government of Yangon Region.

THE first day of the two-day Dhamma Puja ceremony organized by the Yangon Region Government was held at the Mingala Hall of the Region Government Office on the evening of 1 January.

Chairman of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Suddhammajotika Mandalay's Bhamo Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa delivered a sermon on the first day of event which was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Hla Soe, Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Nyunt Win Swe and departmental officials, those from Leading Committee

for Dhamma Puja and working committee and subcommittees.

Then, the Yangon Region Chief Minister donated cash for nine prerequisites for the Dhamma Puja through the region's religious affairs officer.

Next, Chancellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Academies Sayadaw Dr. Ashin Nyanisara, and Rector of Sitagu International Buddhist Academy and Abhidhamma University Dr Bhaddanta Nandamala Bhivamsa will deliver sermons on 2 and 3 January respectively and SKYNET Channel, Buddha Channel and Mahabhwadi Channel will broadcast the Dhamma Puja live starting from 7 pm.—MNA

Kayin national flag hoisting ceremony held on Kayin New Year Day

THE Kayin National Flag Hoisting Ceremony was held in Hpa-an of Kayin State at the dawn of the Kayin New Year Day 2716 Kayin Era which fell on 2 January 2022. The ceremony was opened with the Kayin traditional music and playing ceremonial bronze drum. The flag carried by the Kayin young men was hoisted by Kayin State Economic Minister U Saw Khin Maung Myint while the Kayin National anthem was played.

At around 7 am, the 2716th Kayin New Year Day ceremony took place at the same venue attended by Kayin State Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo and wife, Deputy Commander of the South-East Command Brig-Gen Zaw Min Aung, State Chief Justice U Thein Ko Ko and ministers of the Kayin state government, officials from the KNU/KNLA-PC, honourable Kayin elders, representatives from political parties, ethnic leaders,



Kayin national races joyfully participate in 2716 Kayin New Year Day in Hpa-an Township on 2 January 2022.

representatives from social organizations and ethnic people.

Those present at the ceremony saluted the State flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and martyr leaders including General Aung San, and the message of Chairman of the State Administration Council

Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was read out. Afterward, Kayin State Ethnic Affairs Minister U San Ko read out the message sent by Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs U Saw Tun Aung Myint.

Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo said it is necessary for Kayin

State to continue on the path of peace it has already achieved and that cooperation in all sectors is very important for the success of the reform of the Union. He added the incitement to disrupt peace in some parts of the state and urged the people of the state to pay attention to

the fact that some foreign countries and organizations make attempts to end the peace process. He also highlighted the need to preserve and promote culture, literature and traditions of the people to raise the standard of the people.

Afterwards, Kayin youths explained the origin of the Kayin New Year day in Myanmar, East Poe Kayin and Sakaw Kayin languages. The master of the ceremonies read out the biographies of the prominent Kayin elders, and the Chief Minister and cabinet members presented gifts in honour of Kayin elders.

After the New Year celebration, the Chief Minister and party enjoyed the Kayin traditional food together with the people, and observed the Kayin literature and cultural exhibitions and departmental exhibitions.—Saw Myo Min Thein (IPRD)/GNLM

Daily newspapers available online

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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

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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.

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.

Urea fertilizers to be sold at cheap prices to townships with summer paddy and pre-monsoon cotton fields in Mandalay region

UREA fertilizers will be sold at reasonable prices to every township in Mandalay Region with prioritized crops such as summer paddy and pre-monsoon cotton, according to U Sai Than Aung, Deputy Head of the Mandalay Region Agriculture Department.

The price of a 50-kilo bag of urea fertilizer is 30,000 kyats at the factory price, and with the transportation cost and expenses, the farmers can buy K32,000 per bag. In the five months

from October to February, 3,475 tonnes of fertilizer will be distributed for summer paddy and pre-monsoon cotton. For 118,000 acres of summer paddy, at the rate of 25 kg per acre, nearly 60,000 bags, and 10,000 bags for 10,000 acres of pre-monsoon cotton will be sold.

Urea fertilizer produced by Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, is sold cheaply when farmers are in need. In the market, it is around

80,000 kyats per bag.

“It will be sold at less than a half of the market price. Due to the current shortage of fertilizers and high input prices, the government is selling this to farmers who really need them so as not to reduce production of essential crops,” the deputy head of Region Agriculture Department said.

However, this sale is not for every farmer. It will be sold with the approval of the Urea Fertilizer Distribution Committees in

respective villages, departments and townships, after compiling a list of actual summer paddy farmers, he explained.

Of the current quota of 3,475 tonnes, 200 tonnes for October, November and December have already been taken out and collected in Madaya, Singu, Amarapura and Ngazun townships, which have the respective acres of original summer paddy fields, and Yamethin and Pyawbwe townships which have pre-monsoon cotton fields. The fertilizer

will be distributed firstly to the original summer paddy fields in Madaya, Singu, Amarapura and Ngazun townships, and plans are underway to distribute for the rest of the regular summer paddy fields from mid-January. As February and March are the seasons for growing summer paddy, priority will be given to farmers who cultivate good varieties using systematic methods to increase yields.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)/GNLM

Drugs worth over K1 billion seized in Kyaukse, Mahaangmyay townships

OVER K1 Billion worth of narcotic drugs were seized in Kyaukse and Mahaangmyay townships, Mandalay Region on 29 December, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

According to the report, Kyaw Zin Lin, a driver of an AD Van, was found with 22 kilogrammes of heroin worth K550 million near Yeywa Village in Kyaukse Township at 9:30 pm on 29 December.

According to the investigation, the heroin was trafficked from PyinOoLwin Township to Pyigyidagun Township.

Similarly, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force inspected a

Foton 6-wheeler vehicle driven by Nay Myo Aung and a motor cycle driven by Min Min Oo on the 21st Street between 86th and 87th Streets, Aungmyethazan Township, Mandalay Region, at 10:30 am on 31 December.

A total of 19.69 kilogrammes of heroin worth over K490 million were found in the vehicle and 8.5 kilos of opium was also confiscated.

According to the investigation, the drugs were trafficked from Shan State (North) to Sagaing Region.

They are being prosecuted and the perpetrators are still being investigated, according to the Police Force.—MNA



Photo shows seized heroin and opium packages with drug traffickers.

MoC deputy minister inspects road/bridge projects in Ayeyaywady region



DEPUTY Minister for Construction U Win Pe met with staff from the Department of Buildings, Department of Highways, Department of Bridges, Department of Urban and Housing Development and the Department of Rural Road Development in Ayeyawady Region on 1 January.

The Deputy Minister and party also inspected the construction of the 9-storey annex of Pathein General Hospital and instructed officials to complete work on time and to pay attention to meet the set standard. In the afternoon, the Deputy

Minister and party inspected the construction of Pamawadi Bridge (Myinkaseik) on Pathein-Kankon-Myinka-seik-Myaungmya Road.

Afterwards, they inspected the construction of Kyunkon bridge, concrete and asphalt road paving on the 18 ft wide Bogale-Mawlamyinekyun-Kyon-mange Road (24/1-25/0), and the strength of Kyunpythat bridge, Kywechanyekyaw bridge, and Dedaye bridge, the construction of Kungyangon detour and Tawpale Bridge at 1/3-1/5 mile.—MNA

Deputy Construction Minister U Win Pe inspects construction of bridge in Ayeyawady Region.

PDF set fire to residential houses, hospital wards in Thantlang

IN addition to armed attacks, bombing of roads and bridges, CRPH, NUG and PDF terrorists have been committing arson attacks on residential homes in some areas to disrupt the stability, peace and rule of law in the country.

On 1 January at around 7:30 pm, terrorists set fire to houses in No 1 ward, Thantlang, Chin State, destroying 10 houses and a hospital ward (estimated value 22.5 million kyats).

Similarly, due to the arson attacks on houses on 8 December and 24 November in No 1 ward, and houses near the football stadium and some inflammable materials, 113 houses, 3 churches, and a pharmacy were destroyed by fire.

As NUG, CRPH and PDF terrorist groups are committing acts of terrorism in Chin State and some parts of Sagaing Region, which are difficult to access by road, and propagandizing the country's instability through social media, security forces are continuing to provide the necessary security measures to maintain peace, stability and the rule of law in the region, according to MPF.—MNA

PDF terrorists detonate planted homemade mines near school in Thakayta Township



A homemade mine found near BEPS-7 in No 7 East Ward of Thakayta Township was deactivated.

PDF terrorists detonated the planted homemade mines near the fence of the No 7 Basic Education Primary School in No 7 east ward in Thakayta Township, Yangon Region, at around 12:10 pm on 1 January.

When security personnel arrived at the scene, pieces of PVC pipe were found, and at around 20 feet apart, one homemade mine connected with a keypad phone were found, deactivated and confiscated.

It is reported that the security forces are working to identify and arrest the perpetrators under the law, according to MPF.—MNA

First dose of COVID-19 vaccine given to 86,846 people in Madaya

THE first dose of COVID-19 vaccines was given to the people above 18 years old at Township

Gymnasium and villages in Madaya Township, PyinOoLwin District, Mandalay Region yesterday.

The vaccination was administered by the township administration officers, staff from the Department of Public Health and General Administration Department, Ward and Village-tract administrators, township firefighters, teachers, and members of the Red Cross Brigade.

Up to 2 January, 86,846 people had been vaccinated for the first time and 53,440 people for the second time.

Those who have yet to be vaccinated will continue to be vaccinated, according to the township COVID-19 Disease Control and Emergency Response Committee.—Soe Kyaw Thu Htwe (Madaya)/GNLM



A health staff is injecting anti-COVID-19 vaccine into a local in Madaya Township. PHOTO: SOE KYAW THU HTWE (MADAYA)

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Pakistan's inflation rate increased in December by 12.3 pc, highest in 21 months

PRICES of consumer goods continues to rise in December as inflation edged up to 12.3 per cent from 11.5 per cent, the highest in 21 months, local media reported citing the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) data released on Saturday.

Inflation — measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) — has increased to its highest level in 21 months — driven by a record rise in global oil prices, undermining earlier gains, Dawn reported.

The Pakistani publication said that the recent rise in oil price prices was the highest ever in the country's history, which is expected to lead to an increase in the cost of food items due to higher transportation charges.

The year-on-year increase in inflation in recent months is mainly driven by soaring prices of fuel, electricity, house rent, transport and non-perishable food items.

Food inflation is still on the higher side; in urban areas, it has shot up to 11.7 per cent in December on a yearly basis and a decline of 2.3 per cent on a monthly basis, whereas the respective growth in prices in rural areas was 9 per cent and a decline of 3.1 per cent, Dawn reported.

According to the PBS data, in rural areas, non-food inflation was higher than that recorded in urban areas - a reversal of the trend that is usually witnessed where urban areas experience higher inflation. Citing the finance ministry report, the Pakistani publication reported that the global commodity prices surged to unprecedented levels, putting pressure on currencies and pushing inflation around the world to higher levels.—ANI ■



People buy peanuts at a shop in northwest Pakistan's Peshawar on 9 December 2020. PHOTO: UMAR QAYYUM/XINHUA

France removes EU flag from Arc de Triomphe after rightwing anger



The EU flag was installed to mark the debut of France's helm of the EU Council. PHOTO: AFP

FRENCH authorities removed a temporary installation of the European Union flag from the Arc de Triomphe monument in Paris on Sunday, after right-wing opponents of President Emmanuel Macron accused him of "erasing" French identity.

The giant blue flag was raised in place of the French flag on New Year's Eve to mark France's turn at the rotating presidency of the EU Council, which it will hold for the next six months.

The arch, a monument to war dead, and other landmarks including the Eiffel Tower and the Pantheon are also being illuminated with blue lights for the remainder of this week.

But Macron's right-wing rivals for presidential elections in spring seized on the removal of the tricolor flag, calling it an affront to France's heritage and its veterans.

"Preside over Europe yes, erase French identity no!" tweet-

ed Valerie Pécresse, the conservative candidate who polls indicate could be the main challenger to Macron in the upcoming vote.

She urged him to restore the French flag, saying, "We owe it to our soldiers who spilled their blood for it."

Far-right candidate Marine Le Pen, who had vowed to file a complaint with the State Council, France's highest court for administrative matters, called the removal of the EU flag "a great patriotic victory," claiming on Twitter that a "massive mobilisation" had forced Macron to backpedal.

But an official in the French presidency said Sunday that the flag's removal before dawn was "in line with the planned schedule", insisting that unlike the blue lights for monuments, it was only supposed to be at the Arc for two days.

Europe Minister Clement Beaune had accused the right on Saturday of "desperately chasing after the sterile controversies of the far right."—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Australia to rename Island to honour Queen Elizabeth on platinum jubilee: PM

AUSTRALIA will rename Aspen Island in Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin as part of June 2022 national and community events to celebrate 70th anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II to the British throne, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Saturday.—ANI ■

France bans plastic packaging for fruit and veg

A ban on the use of plastic to package a range of fruit and vegetables came into force in France on Saturday, to the dismay of the sector's packaging industry. Environmentalists have long campaigned against single-use plastics as pollution worsens globally while President Emmanuel Macron has backed the move defending a "pragmatic" approach.—AFP ■

Victims turned activists: Iraqi women battle abuse

AFTER a day's work in an Iraq public sector job, Azhar offers legal support to women who are victims of domestic abuse, something she knows well given her experience with a brutal husband. After she was forced into marriage by family pressure, Azhar, 56, battled in court for almost a decade to divorce the man who would beat her up.

"I believed I was going to die," she said, recalling one attack and showing pictures of purple bruises on her arms and legs. "That was the moment when I decided to break my chains." She eventually won her freedom, and the ordeal prompted her to study law. "I felt I was weak in the face of the justice system," recalled Azhar, who heads a non-govern-

ment organisation that offers legal support to victims of violence and is part of the Iraqi Women's Network coalition. "I help any woman who is a victim of violence or in need of legal aid, so that these women become aware of their rights and can defend themselves," she said. From marriage of minors to economic coercion, feminists and lawyers struggle to defend the rights of women in the overwhelmingly patriarchal country. They cite regressive laws and the indifference of authorities as key obstacles. In a country of 40 million, about 17,000 complaints of domestic violence were registered in 2021 by the interior ministry's family protection unit, said media official General Saad Maan.—AFP ■



Iraq has no specific law dealing with violence against women. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Uplift sports standard of Myanmar with forging sport spirit

THE State Administration Council has been implementing the political, economic and social objectives since its establishment for building a peaceful and prosperous nation. Of them, the social objectives comprise "to enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation".

As uplift of sports standard can be defined as safeguarding the State and improving the mindset of the youths, utmost must be expedited for development of the sports sector of the nation within the coming decade to resurge Myanmar's sports standard.

Sports activities can change the physical and mental behaviours of participants. Such a kind of mindset is of great importance in society. Those holding up the sporting spirit will be society builders and State builders at present and in the future.

with health and fitness. Moreover, those young athletes will have physical and mental strength depending on their exercises. The sporting spirit is of importance for every athlete. In fact, everybody needs to hold up the spirit in the society because the sporting spirit is based on compassion, sympathy, tolerance, genuine goodwill and the spirit of giving a helping hand.

Significantly, the sporting spirit symbolizes noble activities that the sacrifice is made to help even opponents who face problems. Hence, youths must culture the sporting spirit whether they are keen to join the sports arena or not. It is because the youths are colourless in their minds.

Sports activities can change the physical and mental behaviours of participants. Such a kind of mindset is of great importance in society. Those holding up the sporting spirit will be society builders and State builders at present and in the future.



Take lessons from independence struggles for preservation of the values

By Dr Myat Moe

MYANMAR has regained its Independence and sovereignty for 74 years after losing the independence for more than 120 years since 1824.

Myanmar is still striving for gaining development in all aspects. Whenever the exhortation for a paradigm suspends, the development process delays. As the country has firm histories for the country, nationality, culture and values, its sovereignty is still strengthening. Due to the united strength, Myanmar has been standing tall in the global community. The country does not integrate because of farsightedness of the State leaders.

Meaning of "Myanmar" representing the powerful strength of the nation

The definition of "Myanmar" is very wide. People of the country initiate everything with wisdom and courage. In this regard, if the definition of "Myan" is combined with "Mar", the word "Myanmar" defines a significant meaning with dynamic desire, relentless perseverance, nationalistic spirit and hardness.

"Myanmar" represents all ethnic nationals as well as the powerful nationality with prestige since yore. The strength of defence and leadership are crucial in successive eras. It can be seen that if the leadership is strong with the united strength of ethnic nationals of the Union based on the capacity of defence, the country will be strong and powerful in stability and development. When the country faced weak defence capability under the worsening leadership without the united strength, the country faced invasion of others. Myanmar lost its independence as well due to these points. Ancient leaders were lack of farsightedness to build the defence forces because the royal palace was full of scandals. While not having capacity to defy the systematic arms and man power of the colonialists, Myanmar could not foster the unity among the national races, and then, the country fell under the colonial rule.

Many sacrifices for the Independence

Although the independence can lose easily, it is necessary to strive for regaining the independence for many years through

independence struggles. They all had to hardly fought against the colonialists through greater perseverance. Many numbers of sacrifices were invested to secure the victories. A large number of workers, farmers, students and nationalistic movements were staged one after another with sacrifice of all walks of life under detention and sacrifice of lives.

In the every paradigm along the independence struggles, everybody needs to notice the patriotic spirit and nationalistic characters were a main drive. Myanmar could drive both British colonialists and Fascist Japanese off through the belief on the main drives and farsightedness of leadership, the unity among the national races from plains and hilly regions, a keen wish of the people to regain independence and formation of a systematic armed forces with equipped with arms. Finally, all the people could march towards the independence goal.

Take lessons from loss and don't lose sight for rights

Although the country lost its independence due to lagging development, the colonialists could



revolution in the independence struggle of Myanmar history. Hence, it should not forget the endeavours of ethnic national leaders from the remote areas who raised the revolution soon after the Myanmar had lost its independence. Taking lessons from losses and casualties, Myanmar firmly grasped the opportunities of historic independence struggles based on the Second World War in which the British

World War, the disputes happened in the AFPFL, causing the splits as example. Based on political and personal dissatisfactions, when they kept the self-interests on the fore, they made admiration of the people destroyed. It caused impacts on the unity among the leaders and it was likely to delay the endeavours of the process for securing the independence the people aspired.

After regaining the independence, the people safeguard the sovereignty of the State with utmost efforts. It was a consequence of the disunity. The disunity was related to the interference of foreign countries. With a belief that "it needs to fight for regaining the independence" which was left wing and ism guided by those abroad, the Burma Communist Party (BCP) went underground, accelerating the internal armed conflicts. Before the rebellions of BCP which did not wish to restore the peace raised the protests in the cities and held the mass rallies. It is noticeable that acts of BCP were designed to instigate the government and the people.

Many threats faced for independence

When BCP went underground and some regiments split from the Tatmadaw, Pyithu Yebaw (White) and Union military police units staged rebellions. When BCP raised rebellions, university students supporting BCP went underground. Service personnel under the disguise of the union staged boycotts. Hence, schools and government offices were in disarray.

Good leader and main theme of unity

The leadership played a key role in the history of independence struggle and the unity as well. Although the good leaders can undertake the organizing capacity with goodwill, the unity may disintegrate due to some leaders with selfish and less farsightedness. After the Second

cated with the self-interests and selfishness, utmost efforts must be made for securing the plus from the minus and the goodness from the badness. Due to lack of responsibility and accountability, the people did not totally enjoy the taste of independence at the environs where undisciplined acts, carelessness and unlawful acts exit at the thin layer between the wrong and the right.

A country is easy to lose the independence but difficult to regain it. It is difficult to develop but easy to lose the mission. Lessons

face loss amid the terrible crises in successive eras. The Union did not disintegrate. The Independence did not lose again. Although some persons betrayed to the State and the national, a large number of people did not lose loyalty. During the parliamentary democracy era, the loyal people sought arms from the government to fight against the rebels who raided the towns and villages. Many regiments and troops loyal to the government sacrificed their lives for safeguarding the independence and democra-

tization.

Whenever the country faced problems, a large number of ethnics among all ethnics pledged to willingly safeguard the Union with faithfulness. Some ethnics supported the rebels but a lot of ethnics supported the government. It is necessary to recognize many politicians who were loyalty to the State, the people and the government without desire to grasp the State power.

As a gesture of hailing the 74th Anniversary of Independence Day, if one observes the independence struggles and the safeguarding the independence, they will find the issues to be taken lessons and many things for apprehension. Today's youths and new generations need to know these past things. At least, they will understand the value of independence and will have the spirit to adore the independence.

Every citizen is responsible for serving the national duty in future generations to continuously conserve a value owned by all with sacrifice of lives in hardship in successive eras.



A country is easy to lose the independence but difficult to regain it. It is difficult to develop but easy to lose the mission. Lessons can be taken from the global issues that the bad governance, conflicts, instability, decrease of economy, disunity, undisciplined acts, crimes and not rule of law are possibilities to lose the independence for a country which cannot totally initiate the democracy.

can be taken from the global issues that the bad governance, conflicts, instability, decrease of economy, disunity, undisciplined acts, crimes and not rule of law are possibilities to lose the independence for a country which cannot totally initiate the democracy.

It is necessary to take lessons from the global issues as much as possible and monitor the issues of environs from the mother land without losing sight. Regional countries form the alliances from the Asia-Pacific area to Indo-Pacific area, compete in the economic market to influence the region, equip themselves with arms competitively, spark the problems as fueling the flames, control other countries under the military power and put pressure of economic on them and influence others. It is necessary to take care of these factors and make preventive measures. The entire national people need to take care of falling under the colonial yoke.

There were loyal people, armed forces and ethnic nationals

However, Myanmar did not

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 2 January 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 3 January 2022: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Yangon, and Ayeyawady regions and Shan, Chin, Rakhine and Kayah states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin and Shan states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 January 2022: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 January 2022: Partly cloudy.

NEWS
IN BRIEF

US seeks new 5G delay to study interference with planes

US authorities have asked telecom operators AT&T and Verizon to delay for up to two weeks their already postponed rollout of 5G networks amid uncertainty about interference with vital flight safety equipment. The two companies said Saturday they are reviewing the request.

The US rollout of the high-speed mobile broadband technology had been set for 5 December, but was delayed to 5 January after aerospace giants Airbus and Boeing raised concerns about potential interference with the devices planes use to measure altitude.

US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and the head of the Federal Aviation Administration, Steve Dickson, asked for the latest delay in a letter sent Friday to AT&T and Verizon, two of the country's biggest telecom operators. — AFP ■

Jaguar released in Argentina to help endangered species

A jaguar named Jatobazinho was released into a national park in Argentina Friday as part of a programme to boost the numbers of this endangered species. This was the eighth jaguar freed this year into Ibera National Park but the first adult male, said the environmental group Rewilding Argentina, which is behind the project. Jatobazinho weighs about 90 kilos (200 pounds) and has brown fur peppered with black spots. He first appeared at a rural school in 2018 in Brazil, looking skinny and weak after crossing a river from Paraguay.

The big cat spent a year in an animal refuge in Brazil until he was sent to a jaguar reintroduction center operating since 2012 in Argentina's northeast Corrientes province, where the species had been extinct for 70 years.

Sebastian Di Martino, a biologist with Rewilding Argentina, said that as the jaguar needed to be nice and relaxed as it left its enclosure and entered the wild. "If the animal is stressed it can become disoriented and end up anywhere," he said. — AFP ■

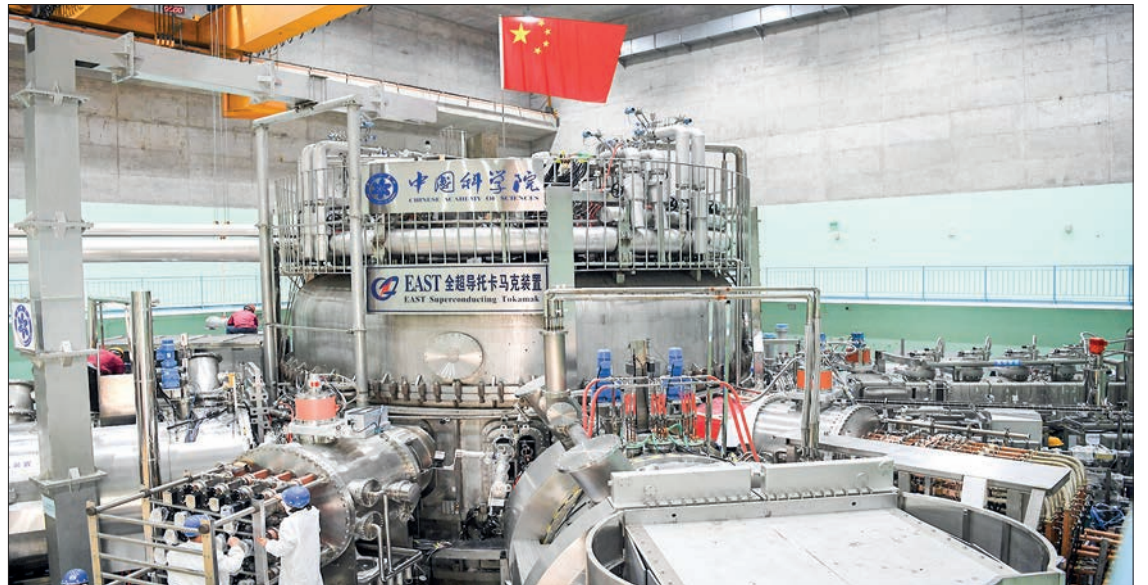
Chinese "artificial sun" sets new world record

THE experimental advanced superconducting tokamak (EAST), or the Chinese "artificial sun," has achieved a continuous high-temperature plasma operation for 1,056 seconds in the latest experiment on Thursday, the longest time of operation of its kind in the world.

The breakthrough was announced on Friday by Gong Xianzu, a researcher at the Institute of Plasma Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (ASIPP), who is in charge of the experiment conducted in Hefei, capital of east China's Anhui Province.

"We achieved a plasma temperature of 120 million degrees Celsius for 101 seconds in an experiment in the first half of 2021.

This time, steady-state plasma operation was sustained for 1,056 seconds at a temperature close to 70 million degrees Cel-



The experiment at the experimental advanced superconducting tokamak (EAST), or the "Chinese artificial sun," also realized a plasma temperature of 160 million degrees Celsius, lasting for 20 seconds. PHOTO: XINHUA/ZHOU MU

sus, laying a solid scientific and experimental foundation toward the running of a fusion reactor," said Gong.

The ultimate goal of EAST, located at ASIPP in Hefei, is to

create nuclear fusion like the Sun, using deuterium abundant in the sea to provide a steady stream of clean energy.

As opposed to fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural

gas, which are in danger of being exhausted and pose a threat to the environment, raw materials required for the "artificial sun" are almost unlimited on earth. — Xinhua ■

EU moves to label nuclear, gas energy as 'green'



Energy company RWE Npower's new gas-fired Pembroke Power Station is the largest of its type in Europe. PHOTO: UK-IRELAND.RWE.COM/AFP

THE EU is planning to label energy from nuclear power and natural gas as "green" sources for investment despite internal

disagreement over whether they truly qualify as sustainable options.

The proposal, seen by AFP

on Saturday, aims to support the 27-nation bloc's shift towards a carbon-neutral future and gild its credentials as a global standard-setter for fighting climate change.

But the fact the European Commission quietly distributed the text to member states late Friday, in the final hours of 2021 after the much-delayed document had been twice promised earlier in the year, highlighted the rocky road to draft it.

If a majority of member states back it, it will become EU law, coming into effect from 2023.

France has led the charge for nuclear power — its main energy source — to be included, despite robust opposition from Austria and scepticism from Germany, which is in the process

of shutting all its nuclear plants.

Fossil-reliant countries in the EU's east and south have also defended the use of natural gas, at least as a transitional source, even though it still produces significant greenhouse emissions.

"It is necessary to recognise that the fossil gas and nuclear energy sectors can contribute to the decarbonisation of the Union's economy," the commission proposal says.

It added that, for nuclear power, appropriate measures should be put in place for radioactive waste management and disposal. And for gas, carbon-emission limits should be set to well below those produced by coal-burning plants, it said. — AFP ■

World's 1st "wooden" satellite planned in Japan for 2023 launch

A plan is under way in Japan to launch the world's first "wooden" satellite in 2023, as its development team aims to harness the environmental friendliness and low cost of wood in space development.

A satellite whose exterior is made of wood will burn up upon re-entering the Earth's atmosphere after the end of its operation, giving less burden on the environment, according to the team comprised of Kyo-

to University and Sumitomo Forestry Co.

In addition, it will be cheaper to make than using aluminum, the current mainstream material for a satellite. Because electromagnetic waves can penetrate wood, the satellite can contain an antenna inside.

The planned satellite will be a cube with 10-centimeter sides. Its outside will be covered in wood and solar cells,

and it will hold an electronic substrate inside.

The state-run university in western Japan and the Tokyo-based wood products company are set to test the durability of wood in space, possibly from February, using an extravehicular experimental apparatus of the International Space Station.

The team, led by Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Takao Doi, plans

to attach on the apparatus wooden sheets with varying hardness, taken from several tree species. The sheets will remain exposed to outer space for about nine months to check their deterioration.

Doi, a programme-specific professor at Kyoto University, said if the plan succeeds, it will lead the way to "allowing even children who are interested in space to make a satellite." — Kyodo ■

Added value of China's tourism, related industries shrinks in 2020

CHINA'S tourism and related industries declined dragged by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, official data shows.

The added value of tourism and related industries in China amounted to about 4.06 trillion yuan (about 637.45 billion US dollars) in 2020, down 9.7 per cent from one year earlier, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The figure accounted for 4.01 per cent of the country's GDP in 2020, down 0.55 percentage points from the previous year, NBS said.

Affected by the COVID-19

outbreaks, the added value of the accommodation sector tumbled by 28.8 per cent year on year, while the figures for travelling and catering plummeted by 12.1 per cent and 10.8 per cent from one year earlier, respectively.

Before the pandemic struck, China's travel and tourism sector's contribution to the nation's GDP represented CNY11.5 trillion (11.6 per cent of the total economy). In 2020, when the pandemic brought international travel to a grinding halt, the sector's contribution to the national economy fell by almost 60 per cent, representing a decrease of



People visit the West Lake in Hangzhou, capital of east China's Zhejiang Province, 1 October 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

CNY6.9 trillion. However, according to the research, and based on the current rate of recovery, the sector's contribution to the

country's GDP could see a year on year increase of 60.7 per cent in 2021

Domestic spend is expected to grow by 75 per cent by the end of this year and experience a further year-on-year rise of more than a third (35.9 per cent) in 2022. However, while international spend, which is critical to the sector's recovery, is set to grow by just 7.2 per cent in 2021, next year, when China's border is expected to reopen to major source markets around the world, it could significantly outpace domestic spend with a rise of 94.3 per cent. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Crew at remote Antarctic polar ice station catch Covid-19

AT the Belgian research centre Princess Elisabeth in Antarctica, 16 of the 25 staff members are infected with corona. Despite the remote location and the fact that all staff members have been fully vaccinated, the virus has been circulating since mid-December. It is believed to have been introduced when a new team of staff arrived. The infected staff have mild symptoms. "The situation is not dramatic," project manager Joseph Cheek told the BBC. "While it was annoying to have to quarantine certain staff, it has not significantly affected our work at the station in general." — AFP ■

UAE bans travel for unvaccinated citizens, mandates booster dose for vaccinated

THE United Arab Emirates announced a travel ban on its citizens unvaccinated against coronavirus disease (Covid-19), starting 10 January. The National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA) of the UAE said that the vaccinated citizens, in order to travel, are further required to obtain the booster dose as per the country's Covid protocol. The Arab nation will allow travel for individuals medically exempted from taking the Covid-19 vaccine, humanitarian cases, and those travelling for medical and treatment purposes. — ANI ■

Tony Blair and Covid officials receive knighthoods

QUEEN Elizabeth II on Friday announced a knighthood for former prime minister Tony Blair, while the traditional New Year's Honours also decorated officials who spearheaded Britain's fight against Covid-19. The Queen personally appointed Blair as Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, the most senior order of knighthood. She previously knighted former Conservative prime minister John Major in this way in 2005. Blair, now 68, defeated Major with a landslide Labour victory in 1997 and spent a decade in office. His successes included securing peace in Northern Ireland and massively expanding gay rights. BUT he was widely reviled at home for his support for the 2003 US-led war in Iraq. Blair said "It is an immense honour to be appointed Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, and I am deeply grateful to Her Majesty the Queen." The main New Year's Honours list gave knighthoods to Chris Whitty, the UK government's chief medical adviser, and England's deputy chief medical officer Jonathan Van-Tam. — AFP ■

UK coronavirus cases top 13 mln

BRITAIN has reported another 162,572 coronavirus cases in the latest 24-hour period, bringing the total number of coronavirus cases in the country to 13,100,458, according to official figures released Saturday.

Britain also reported a further 154 coronavirus-related deaths. The total number of coronavirus-related deaths in Britain now stands at 148,778, with 11,918 COVID-19 patients still in hospital.

The data on Saturday did not include Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland due to differences in reporting schedules over the New Year weekend.

The latest figures came as British Health Secretary Sajid Javid said further restrictions must be a "last resort" and Britain will now have to "live alongside" the virus in 2022.

The health secretary, writing in the Daily Mail, said England "welcomed in 2022 with



A person wearing a mask walks across the Millennium Bridge in London, Britain, on 9 March 2020. PHOTO: TIM IRELAND/XINHUA

some of the least restrictive measures in Europe."

"Curbs on our freedom must be an absolute last resort and the British people rightly expect us to do everything in our power to avert them," he said. "So I've been determined that we must give ourselves the best chance

of living alongside the virus and avoiding strict measures in the future."

Javid added that it was "inevitable that we will still see a big increase" in COVID patients over the next month, warning that the pandemic is "still far from over." — Xinhua ■

Vietnam reports 14,835 new COVID-19 cases



A street artist walks past a mural depicting Covid-19 frontline workers along a street in Hanoi, Vietnam. PHOTO: AFP

VIETNAM reported 14,835 new COVID-19 cases on Saturday, including 14,822 locally transmitted and 13 imported, according to its Ministry of Health.

The Vietnamese capital Hanoi remained the place with the highest number of infections with 1,748 more cases, followed by southern Vinh Long province

with 1,223 cases and southern Tay Ninh province with 947 cases.

The infections brought the country's total tally of confirmed cases to 1,746,092 with 32,610 deaths, said the ministry. Nationwide, as many as 1,358,276 COVID-19 patients have so far recovered, up 2,990 from Friday.

Some 152.2 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, including 68.8 million second shots and 5.7 million third shots, have been administered, according to the ministry. — ANI ■

Country's economic growth rate over 8 per cent, foreign investment at record high: PM Modi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that the country's economic growth rate is over 8 per cent.

Speaking at the release of the 10th installment of financial benefit under PM-KISAN, the Prime Minister said that the foreign investments, forex reserves, and GST collections are also at record high levels.

"Today the growth rate of our economy is more than 8 per cent. Record foreign investment has come to India. Old records have also been broken in the GST collection. We have also set new paradigms in the matter of

exports and especially agriculture," said PM Modi.

PM Modi said that it is time to start a "new vibrant journey" of the country's resolves in the year India will complete 75 years of independence.

"Today, as we are entering the new year, taking inspiration from our efforts of the past year, we have to move towards new resolutions. This year we will complete 75 years of our independence. This is the time to start a new vibrant journey of the country's resolves, to move forward with renewed vigour," he added.

During the event, the Prime Minister also released an equity grant of more than Rs 14 crores to about 351 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), which will benefit more than 1.24 lakh farmers.

As per an official statement from the Prime Minister's Office, this is in line with the government's continued commitment and resolve to empower grass-roots-level farmers.

This will enable the transfer of an amount of more than Rs 20,000 crore to more than 10 crore beneficiary farmer families, said PMO. — ANI ■



In fiscal year 2021, the automobile sector in India saw an equity inflow from foreign direct investments worth approximately 1.6 billion US dollars. In this photograph taken on 23 July 2019 workers assemble a car at a FCA India Automobiles manufacturing facility in Ranjangaon, some 200km east of Mumbai. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka food prices hit record highs as shortages bite

SRI Lanka's food prices rose by a record 22.1 per cent in December, official figures showed Saturday, as the country struggles to finance urgent imports to tackle an acute shortage of essentials.

The census and statistics department said food inflation hit an all-time high last month on a year-on-year basis since the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) was launched in 2013.

The price increases in December compared to a figure of 17.5 per cent in November, the previous record, the department said.

It added that overall inflation was also at a record 12.01 per cent in December, the highest since the CCPI index was launched.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in his New Year message expressed hope of reviving the cash-strapped economy but did not announce measures to address the crippling foreign exchange crisis.

"I am confident that the new year will provide an opportunity to further the steps taken by the government to pursue and overcome challenges and strengthen the people-centric economy," he said.

International rating agencies have downgraded Sri Lanka and raised concerns about its ability to service its debt of \$26 billion. — AFP ■

US removes Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea from trade pact

PRESIDENT Joe Biden's administration announced on Saturday that it had excluded Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea from a US-Africa trade agreement, saying the actions of the three governments violated its principles.

"THE United States today terminated Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea from the AGOA trade preference programme due to actions taken by each of their governments in violation of the AGOA Statute," the US Trade Representative (USTR) said in a statement.

THE African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was put in place in 2000 under the administration of former president Bill Clinton to facilitate and regulate trade between the United States and Africa. BUT the United States is "deeply concerned by the unconstitutional change in governments in both Guinea and Mali," the statement said. IT also voiced concern about "gross violations of internationally recognized human rights being perpetrated by the government of Ethiopia and other parties amid the widening conflict in northern Ethiopia."

"EACH country has clear benchmarks for a pathway toward reinstatement and the administration will work with their governments to achieve that objective," the USTR said. — AFP ■

Indonesia bans coal exports in January over domestic supply worries



Indonesia is the world's biggest exporter of thermal coal, exporting around 400 million tonnes in 2020. Coal being unloaded from a barge at the Suralaya coal power plant in Indonesia. PHOTO: AFP

INDONESIA, the world's biggest exporter of coal used in electricity generation, on Saturday said it has banned January exports of the fuel in a move aimed at safeguarding its domestic power supply.

Rising demand for electricity in the country risks widespread blackouts unless more supplies are diverted to power stations, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources said in a

statement.

Indonesia exports the majority of its coal but mandates that producers must set aside minimum amounts to supply the nation's power plants.

The decision comes against a backdrop of surging demand, as post-pandemic economic growth across the world drives electricity needs that cannot be met from less-polluting alternatives.

The International Energy Agency last month said global demand for coal, the world's biggest source of greenhouse gases, hit a record in 2021 and would be sustained into 2022, threatening plans set out at last year's COP26 climate change conference to cut emissions.

Last January, Indonesia exported almost 30 million tonnes of coal, according to the Central Statistics Bureau.

The export ban was imposed after coal miners failed to meet the so-called Domestic Market Obligation, under which they are obliged to supply at least 25 per cent of a mine's approved production plan at a maximum sales price of US\$70 per metric tonne — less than half the global benchmark price.

The temporary export ban would prevent almost 20 power plants providing a total of 10.9 gigawatts of power from shutting down, a senior official at the ministry, Ridwan Jamaludin, said in a statement Saturday. — AFP ■

North Korea's Kim says focus on economy, food production for 2022

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un put the economy front and centre of an agenda-setting speech at the end of a key ruling party meeting, state media reported Saturday, with no mention of the United States.

Instead of the policy positions on diplomacy for which Kim's New Year statements have been closely watched in

recent years, he focused on food security and development at a plenary of the central committee of the Workers' Party of Korea.

The impoverished, nuclear-armed nation has been under a rigid self-imposed coronavirus blockade that has hammered its economy. In a speech at the end of the party meeting on Friday, Kim acknowledged the "harsh

situation" in 2021 as he laid out plans for the coming year, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

He described the challenges of 2022 as "a great life-and-death struggle" and set "an important task for making radical progress in solving the food, clothing and housing problem for the people", KCNA said. — AFP ■

S Korea's export hits record high in 2021

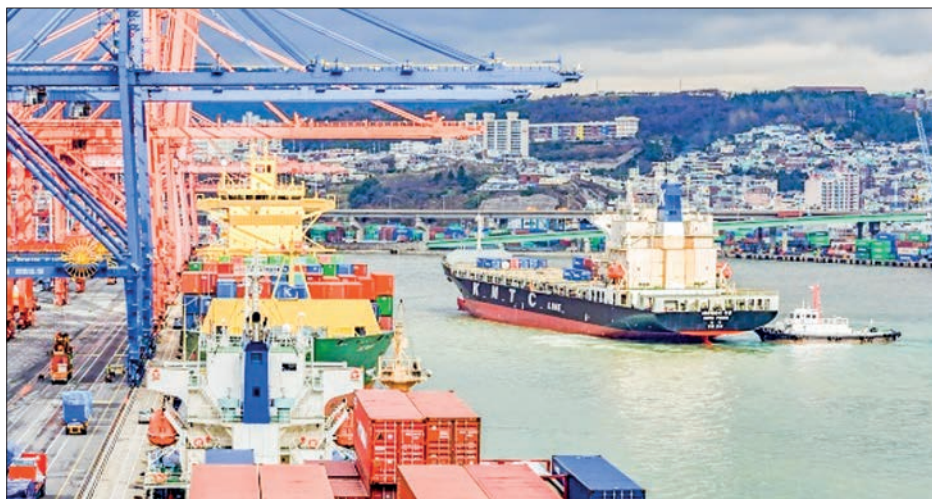
SOUTH Korea's export hit a record high in 2021 due to global economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, a government report showed Saturday.

Export, which takes up about half of the export-driven economy, surged 25.8 per cent over the year to reach a fresh yearly high of 644.54 billion US dollars in 2021, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy.

It topped the previous record high of 604.9 billion dollars in 2018, marking the fastest increase since 2010.

Import soared 31.5 per cent to hit a record high of 615.05 billion dollars last year, sending the trade surplus to 29.49 billion dollars. The trade balance stayed in black for 13 straight years.

All of the country's 15



On top of the robust growth of traditional main export items, new products including bio, secondary cells, agricultural and fishery products and cosmetics gained \$12.3 billion from 2018, accounting for 45 percent of the total growth. PHOTO: XINHUA

major export items recorded a double-digit expansion in 2021.

Semiconductor export advanced 29 per cent to 127.98 billion dollars, and those for petrochemicals and oil products soared more than 50 per cent to 55.08 billion dollars and 38.15 billion dollars each.

Global demand for

locally-made chips got steeper as the pandemic boosted a so-called contactless economy, while the shipment of oil-relevant products gained last year on expensive crude oil.

General machinery export added 10.8 per cent to 53.08 billion dollars, and automotive export

advanced 24.2 per cent to 46.47 billion dollars.

Export for steel, mobile devices, display panels, auto parts and computer increased in double figures to 36.38 billion dollars, 16.2 billion dollars, 21.39 billion dollars, 22.78 billion dollars respectively. — Xinhua ■

Cambodia's rice export to China exceeds 300,000 tons for 1st time last year



The leading upland rice growing provinces are Rotanak Kiri, Kampong Cham and Siem Reab in Cambodia. PHOTO: XINHUA

CAMBODIA'S rice export to China surpassed 300,000 tons for the first time in 2021, marking another historic milestone in the rice sector between the two countries, according

to a report from the China Certification & Inspection Group (CCIC)'s Cambodia branch on Saturday.

The southeast Asian nation exported 306,222 tons of milled rice to Chi-

na last year, an increase of 22.8 per cent from 249,322 tons in a year earlier, Chen Qisheng, general manager of CCIC's Cambodia branch said.

Chen said the growth has subsequently increased from about 5,000 tons in 2012 to more than 300,000 tons last year, the highest first time ever in a year.

"With strong support from China, Cambodia's rice production and processing industry has made great progress," he told Xinhua.

Chen said apart from rice, Cambodia first ex-

ported fresh bananas and fresh mangoes to China in 2019 and 2021, respectively, and the two countries have been working together to enable the export of Cambodian longan fruit to China in the near future.

As the China-Cambodia Free Trade Agreement (CCFTA) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) entered into force on Saturday, Chen believed that the two pacts will further boost Cambodia's socio-economic development, especially the development of agriculture. — Xinhua ■

China to scrap subsidies for electric vehicles

CHINA will end subsidies for electric and hybrid cars at the end of the year, authorities have announced, saying the strength of sales in the sector meant state support was no longer needed.

In a statement published Friday, the Ministry of Finance said purchase subsidies would be re-

duced by 30 per cent from the beginning of 2022 before being scrapped completely by the end of the year.

"Given the growth of the industry for vehicles with new energy, the sales trends and the smooth transition of manufacturers, the subsidies... will end on 31 December," the

ministry said.

"Vehicles registered after 31 December, 2022 will not be subsidised."

Sales of electric and hybrid cars have boomed in China, with increases of more than 100 per cent year-on-year in recent months.

The cars are set to represent 18 per cent of

all vehicle sales in 2022, the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM) estimated last week. In 2019, they accounted for only five percent.

Of the 27.5 million vehicles set to be sold this year, according to CAAM, five million will be electric and hybrids. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prices Of Commercial LPG Cylinder Reduced by Rs.102.50

FINALLY there's some relief for the consumers of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) on the eve of New Year as National Oil Marketing companies have decided to slash the prices of 19 kg commercial LPG cylinder by Rs.102.50 and it will be implemented from January 2022 onwards. The prices of the commercial LPG cylinder will now cost Rs. 1998.50 in Delhi and this will begin from 1 January, 2022. Earlier, the prices of 19 kg LPG cylinders witnessed a hike of Rs. 100 thereby pushing the prices of the commercial cylinders to Rs. 2,101 in the national capital.

The prices of the LPG cylinder touched a new high in 2012 when a single LPG cylinder costed around Rs 2,200. Meanwhile, the prices of domestic cylinders weighing 14.2 kg, 5 kg, 10 kg composite or 5 kg have not been reduced as of now. It means that the prices of the 19 kg domestic cylinders will remain unchanged and will cost Rs 2,072 while the commercial ones will be priced at 1998.50 from today onwards. — ANI ■

Plans of China int'l consumer products expo revealed

AUTHORITIES in south China's Hainan Province announced the plans of the 2022 China International Consumer Products Expo on Sunday during an activity upon the 100-day countdown to the expo.

According to the Hainan provincial bureau of international economic development, the event will be held from 12 to 16 April in Haikou, the capital of Hainan.

The exhibition area will span over 100,000 square meters, 80 per cent of which will be set up for overseas exhibitors featuring fashion, jewelry, food, medicine and other professional services. France will be the guest of honor.

The expo is expected to become a platform leading the global consumer fashion, and well-known brands will release their latest products during the exhibition, according to the bureau.

The expo is co-hosted by China's Ministry of Commerce and the Hainan provincial government.

On 1 June 2020, China released a master plan for the Hainan Free Trade Port, aiming to build Hainan Island into a globally influential high-level free trade port by the middle of the century. — Xinhua ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE M.V CTP MAKASSAR VOY.NO. (241N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V CTP MAKASSAR VOY.NO. (241N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **3-1-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

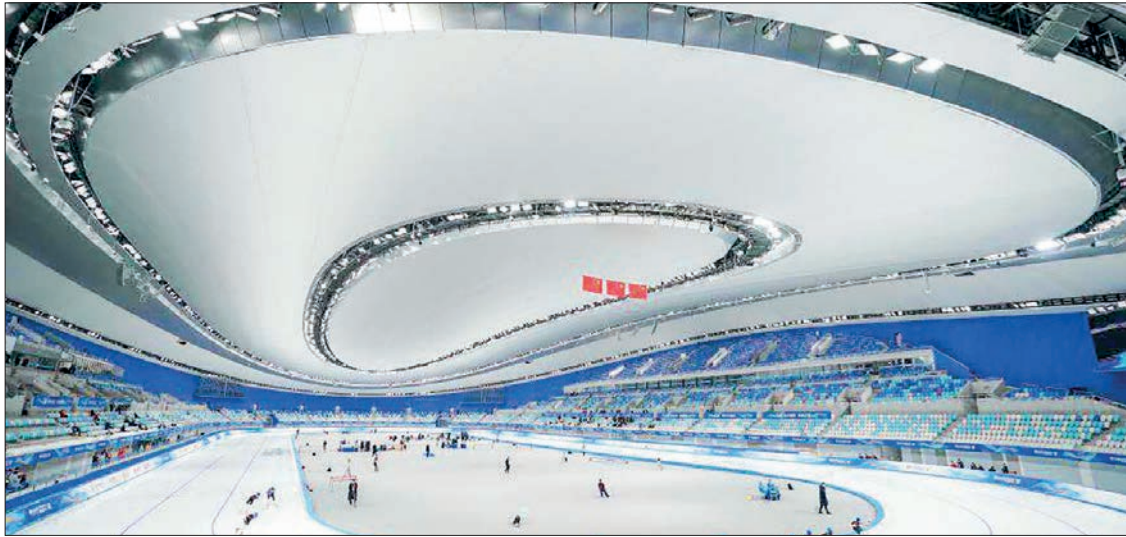
Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING

Xi vows to make Beijing Olympics success despite diplomatic boycott

CHINESE President Xi Jinping pledged Friday to make the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics a success, while the United States and other democratic countries have announced they



Skaters compete during the speed skating test program at the National Speed Skating Oval in Beijing, capital of China, 10 April 2021. A 10-day ice sports test programme for the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games is held from 1 to 10 April. **PHOTO: XINHUA/JU HUANZONG**

will implement a “diplomatic boycott” of the global sporting event.

“We will spare no effort to present a great games to the world. The world is turning its eyes to China, and China is ready” for the Olympics slated for February 2022, Xi said in his televised speech on New Year’s Eve.

Xi’s remarks suggested China is confident in hosting the Winter Games, although the United States has promised not to send government officials to the Beijing Olympics. Other nations, such as Australia, Britain and Canada, have followed suit.

The Chinese Commu-

nist-led government under Xi has been keen to use the Olympics as a way to enhance national prestige, as he has been trying to pave the way for a controversial third term as the country’s leader, foreign affairs experts said.

As for self-ruled Taiwan, Xi said, “The complete reunification of our motherland is an aspiration shared by people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.”

China and democratic Taiwan have been governed separately since they split in 1949 as the result of a civil war. Beijing has regarded the island as a renegade province to be reunified with the mainland, by force if necessary. — Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

A year after Capitol siege, US democracy still faces test

ONE year after supporters of Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol and shut down Congress, Americans still await a reckoning on the unprecedented challenge to the country’s democracy.

Was it a simple protest-turned-riot? An insurrection? A coup attempt plotted by Trump?

Videos from 6 January 2021 bear witness to the violence wrought in the former president’s name. — AFP ■

Gaza rockets fall into sea off Tel Aviv: Israel army

TWO rockets fired from Gaza early Saturday fell into the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Tel Aviv, the Israeli army said, with no injuries reported.

“Earlier this morning, two rocket launches were identified from the Gaza Strip toward the Mediterranean,” the army said in a statement. “The rockets fell off the coast of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area,” it added. No sirens were sounded and Israel’s Iron Dome rocket interception system did not deploy, the army added.

It was unclear who fired the projectiles. Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist group that controls Gaza, did not claim responsibility. — AFP ■

Thousands flee as Mozambique jihadists shift attacks

NEARLY 4,000 Mozambicans have fled their villages in a month due to intensifying jihadist attacks in Niassa, a province neighbouring insurgency hotbed Cabo Delgado, a government official said Friday. Militants terrorising the gas-rich northern Cabo Delgado province for the past four years have in recent weeks shifted their attacks to the west into Niassa.

“There are 3,803 displaced so far. These are people who fled from areas targeted by attacks in Mecula district,” Felismino Patricio, a government spokesman in Niassa province, told AFP by phone.

The latest displacements add to the more than 820,000 that have fled the insurgency in Cabo Delgado since 2017. Niassa province has since the end of November become the latest target for militants being driven from Cabo Delgado by African troops. — AFP ■

Fire at South African parliament in Cape Town



The Houses of Parliament in Cape Town consist of three sections, including the original and oldest building that was completed in 1884. **PHOTO: MARCO LONGARI/AFP**

A major fire broke out in the South African parliament building in Cape Town on Sunday, said AFP reporters at the scene.

Firefighters were present at the building as large flames and a huge column of smoke were seen at around 0530 GMT.

“The roof has caught fire and the National Assembly building is also on fire,” a spokesman for the city’s emergency services told AFP, requesting reinforcements at the scene.

“The fire is not under control and cracks in the walls of the building have been reported,” he added.

Images seen on social media — and not verified by AFP — showed a mass of flames licking through what appeared to be the roof of one of the parliament buildings.

There was no indication of what may have started the fire. — AFP ■

Rising health risks continue to threaten Afghan children: UNICEF

MILLIONS of Afghan children are increasingly vulnerable to disease due to a combination of rising malnutrition, food crisis and a deteriorating humanitarian situation, according to a statement of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“As the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in Afghanistan, outbreaks of life-threatening diseases are putting children’s lives at risk. More than 66,000 cases of measles have been so far reported in children in 2021,” the statement posted on the UNICEF-Afghani-

stan website said.

There have also been outbreaks of acute watery diarrhoea, malaria and dengue fever. Four cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV-1) have been confirmed this year, it added.

“We are approaching a critical juncture for Afghanistan’s children, as winter brings with it a multitude of threats to their health,” Abdul Kadir Musse, UNICEF Afghanistan representative, was quoted in the statement as saying.

“There is no time to lose. Without urgent, concerted ac-

tion, including ensuring we have the resources to deploy additional cash transfers and winter supplies, many of the country’s children will not live to see spring,” he said.

The UNICEF estimates that one in two children under five will be acutely malnourished in 2022 due to the food crisis and poor access to water, sanitation and hygiene services.

Earlier this month, UNICEF appealed for a 2-billion-U.S. dollar fund to respond to humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. — Xinhua ■

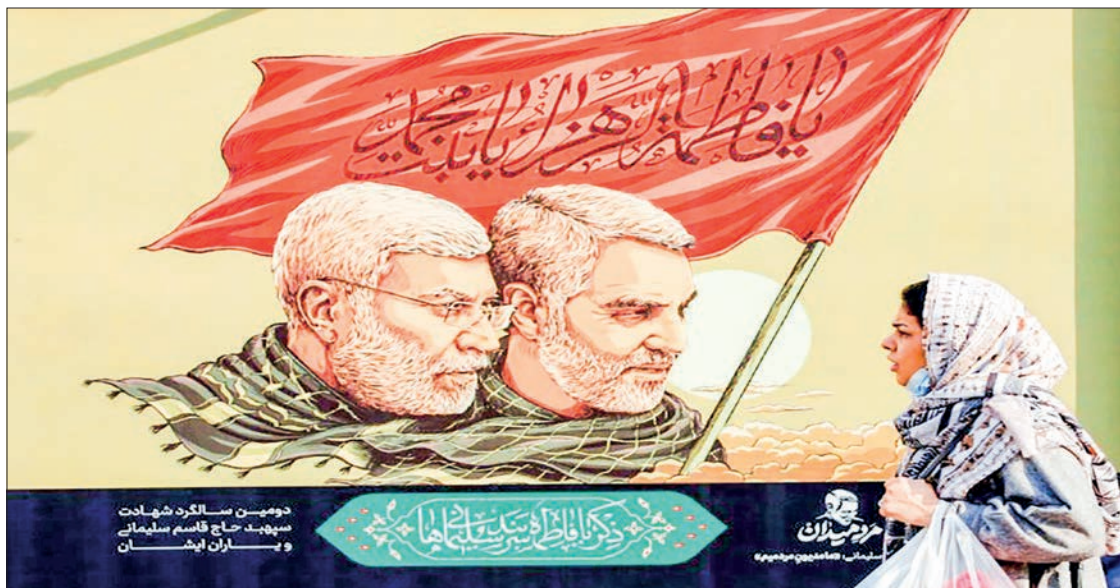
Thousands rally in Iraq to mark 2020 killing of Iran general

THOUSANDS of supporters of an Iraqi alliance of armed groups Saturday marked the upcoming second anniversary of a US drone strike that killed a revered Iranian commander and his Iraqi lieutenant.

Chanting “Death to America”, the Hashed al-Shaabi loyalists filled a Baghdad square to honour Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, who headed the Quds Force, the foreign operations arm of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, until his death on 3 January 2020.

The night-time drone strike near Baghdad airport sent shock waves across the region and sparked fears that decades of arch enmity between Washington and regional Shiite power Tehran would escalate into direct military confrontation.

“US terrorism has to end,”



Top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, pictured on the right, and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis were killed in a US drone strike in Baghdad. PHOTO: AFP

read one sign at the rally by backers of the pro-Iranian Hashed, a Shiite former paramilitary alliance that has been integrated into Iraq’s state se-

curity apparatus.

The strike against Soleimani, the architect of Iran’s Middle Eastern military strategy, was ordered by then US president

Donald Trump, and it also killed his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the Hashed’s deputy chief.

Hashed supporters, some

with their children, marched into a square in central Baghdad that was closed off to traffic, an AFP correspondent said.

Some unfurled huge white flags emblazoned with the Hashed insignia, as well as Iraq’s national flag, while others held pictures of Soleimani and Muhandis.

Unclaimed attacks

The US said at the time that Soleimani was planning imminent action against US personnel in Iraq, a country long torn between the competing demands of its principal allies Washington and Tehran, and the assassination came after a wave of attacks on US interests in the country.

Iran, which wields considerable cross-border influence, warned it would avenge Soleimani’s death. — AFP ■

US airport chaos as more than 2,700 flights cancelled



Travelers walk to a security check point at LaGuardia Airport in New York, on 24 December 2021. PHOTO: ANONYMOUS/AFP HANDOUT

AIR travel continued to be severely disrupted in the United States on Saturday, with bad weather in parts of the country adding to the impact of a mas-

sive spike in Covid-19 infections fuelled by the Omicron variant.

The United States had 2,723 cancelled flights, more than half of the 4,698 cancelled worldwide,

around 11:00 pm (0400 GMT Sunday), according to tracking website FlightAware. In addition, 5,993 domestic flights were delayed on Saturday, out of a total of 11,043 worldwide for the day.

The worst affected US airline was SkyWest, which had to cancel 23 per cent of its flight schedule, according to the site.

In the United States, airports in Chicago were particularly hard-hit because of bad weather, with a snowstorm expected in the area on Saturday afternoon and into the night. The global air travel industry is still reeling from the highly contagious Omicron variant. — AFP ■

The long decline: mass migration batters Balkans

ABANDONED shops and mostly empty streets offer few signs of life in North Macedonia’s Valandovo, where young people are fleeing in large numbers hoping to find a better life abroad.

Like much of this impoverished corner of southeastern Europe, this tiny Balkan nation is sitting on a demographic time bomb fuelled by an ageing population, sinking birth rate and mass migration.

North Macedonia has shed 10 per cent of its population in the last 20 years. Around 600,000

Macedonian citizens now live abroad, according to World Bank and government data.

Abysmal economic growth and a lack of investment have clobbered the country, now home to just 1.8 million people, in its 30 years of independence.

“If you have a little over 2.4 million citizens and more than a quarter have left, then you have to seriously be worried about what is happening,” says Apostol Simovski, director of the country’s statistics office.

Villages and small towns

such as Valandovo, 146 kilometres (90 miles) from the capital, offer few jobs, pushing the ambitious and able to search elsewhere.

“The spirit of young people has been systematically destroyed,” Pero Kostadinov, the newly elected 33-year-old mayor tells AFP. “The enthusiasm to fight and stay home has been lost.” In Valandovo alone, nearly 90 per cent of people’s income is linked to agriculture, a common denominator across North Macedonia. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Unidentified person enters North Korea from South in rare border breach: Seoul

AN unidentified person entered North Korea from the South on New Year’s Day, the military in Seoul said Sunday, a rare breach of the heavily fortified border between the neighbours.

Years of repression and poverty in North Korea have led more than 30,000 people to flee to the South in the decades since the Korean War, but crossings in the other direction are extremely rare.

The person was detected by surveillance equipment in the Demilitarised Zone — which divides the Korean peninsula — at 9:20 pm local time on Saturday, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said Sunday. It sparked a search operation by the military, but to no avail.

“It was confirmed the person crossed the Military Demarcation Line into the North,” it added.

The person has not been identified yet, a JCS official told reporters, adding South Korean authorities sent a message to the North on Sunday regarding the incident. — AFP ■

S Africa holds modest state funeral for ‘spiritual father’ Tutu

SOUTH Africa on Saturday held a state funeral for Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the last great hero of the struggle against apartheid, that was stripped of pomp but rich in glowing tributes.

Tutu died last Sunday, aged 90, triggering grief at home and abroad for a life spent fighting injustice.

FAMOUS for his modesty, Tutu gave instructions for a simple, no-frills ceremony, with a cheap coffin, followed by an eco-friendly cremation. Family, friends, clergy and politicians gathered at Cape Town’s St. George’s Anglican Cathedral, which was illuminated in purple, the colour of his clerical robes.

It was there where Tutu used the pulpit to rail against a brutal white-minority regime and it’s there he will be buried.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, who accorded Tutu the official funeral usually reserved for presidents, described the ceremony as “category-one funeral with religious characteristic”.

“Our departed father was a crusader in the struggle for freedom, for justice, for equality and for peace, not just in South Africa...but around the world as well,” said Ramaphosa. — AFP ■

Myanmar Billiards Team to compete in six categories for SEA Games

THE 31st SEA Games, postponed due to the COVID-19, will resume in May this year, with Myanmar billiards and snooker teams competing in six events.

The Vietnam SEA Games will feature 10 types of event including Billiards, Snooker and Pool.

Team Myanmar will compete in Billiards Individual Tournament, Billiards Doubles' Tournament, Snooker Individual Tournament, Snooker 6 Red Individual, Pool 9 Ball Individual Tournament and Pool 10 Ball Individual Tournament respectively.

The Myanmar billiards team has been under training at the camp since mid-2021 and has currently selected seven players.

Billiard, Snooker and Pool players are currently taking their special training in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay ahead of the upcoming SEA Games.

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the Myanmar billiards team has not been able to compete in international competitions since the 2019 Philippine SEA Games, but is working to get full training before the Vietnam SEA Games.

The Myanmar Billiards Team was the most successful Myanmar team in the last 2019 SEA Games, winning two gold, one silver and three bronze medals.

The gold medals for the Myanmar Billiards



Billiard players are currently taking their special training in three major cities ahead of the Viet Nam SEA Games. **PHOTO: BHONE THWAY ZIN**

team were won individually in the Pool 9 Ball Individual and Doubles events.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

IOC president Bach confident of safe, secure Beijing 2022

INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach expressed confidence in a successful Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in his New Year message published on the IOC official website on Saturday.

"We are looking forward to successful Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 and we have great confidence, built on our experience, that we will stage safe and secure Olympic Winter Games for everybody," Bach said.

The IOC chief highlighted Beijing as the first city ever to host both summer and winter editions of the Olympic Games and acknowledged China's effort

to engage 300 million people in winter sports.

"These Winter Games will open a new era for winter sports globally," read the message.

Bach also reviewed the year 2021 where the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games were staged with success, engaging three billion unique viewers worldwide.

Looking into the upcoming year, Bach underlined the IOC's targets to push forward Olympic Agenda 2020+5 reforms, strengthen the Olympic Refugee Foundation and promote digitalization. — Xinhua ■



International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach. **PHOTO: AFP**

Man City move 11 points clear, West Ham, Spurs close on top four



Spurs' saviour: Davinson Sanchez (top) scored the only goal in Tottenham's 1-0 win at Watford. **PHOTO: AFP**

MANCHESTER City took another giant stride towards retaining the Premier League title with a controversial 2-1 win at 10-man Arsenal, as West Ham and Tottenham took advantage to close the gap to the top four.

City are now 11 points clear of Chelsea and 12 ahead of Liverpool, who face off on Sunday with precious little more room for error if they are to mount a title challenge despite having games in hand.

Liverpool will have to cope without manager Jurgen Klopp at Stamford Bridge after he returned a suspected positive test for coronavirus.

The Reds have also suffered three oth-

er positive cases among Klopp's backroom staff and will be missing three unnamed players due to the virus.

A total of 18 top-flight games in England have been called off in recent weeks due to the rising numbers of Covid-19 cases, but only two of the 10 Premier League games scheduled for this weekend have been postponed. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta was also absent from the dugout after testing positive for Covid-19 for the second time earlier this week. But that had little impact on his side's performance as the Gunners' continued their impressive form by pinning the champions back for the first 45 minutes. — AFP ■