

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Mr Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 January 2022.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Akka

Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, who arrived here to pay a working visit to Myanmar, at the Credentials Hall of the Office of the SAC Chairman in Nay Pyi

Taw yesterday afternoon.

First, the Senior General welcomed the Cambodian Prime Minister who signed the visitors' book and posed for documentary

photos with the Senior General.

At the parlour of the Credentials Hall, they exchanged views on the promotion of diplomatic relations, friendly ties

and cooperation between the two countries, the progress of the internal peace process in Myanmar and participation of

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Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

THE following is message of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State/Government sent to Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, on the occasion of the 74th Anniversary of Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

Mrs Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal sends Congratulatory Message to Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

ON the happy occasion of the 74th Independence Day of Myanmar, I extend to Your Excellency cordial felicitations and best wishes for Your Excellency's personal health and happiness and for the progress and prosperity of the people of Myanmar.

Information release on detection of SARS-CoV-2 Variant Omicron

1. The Ministry of Health is continuously conducting "COVID-19 Molecular Disease Surveillance". The ministry released a statement on 28 December 2021 that among those returnees by Relief Flight, four have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 Variant Omicron.
2. The 22 laboratory samples of the COVID-19 virus of the returnees were sent to the National Health Laboratory and No (1) Defence Services General Hospital (1000-bed) on 7 January 2022 and the SARS-CoV-2 Variant Omicron was found in 12 laboratory samples.
3. The 12 Omicron cases are 11 Myanmar nationals and one foreigner – eight returned from the UAE by the relief flight while three from Malaysia and one from India.
4. The patients are admitted to the designated hospitals for medical treatment and the passengers who returned together with them now undergo Strict Quarantine and lab test.
5. Therefore, it is announced that the Ministry is stepping up the COVID-19 disease monitoring and control activities plus disease prevention, control and treatment activities.

Ministry of Health

177 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 7 January, total figure rises to 531,801

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 531,801 after 177 new cases were reported on 7 January 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 509,757 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,288 after 4 died.—MNA

Education cooperation programme for locals in Mann Oilfield resumes

EDUCATION programmes, conducted by MPRL E&P in partnership with the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprises for young people in the Mann Oilfield, resumed in November 2021 after a period of suspension since April 2020 due to COVID-19.

Under the scholarship programme of MPRL E&P for the 2021-2022 academic year, local youth from the villages near the Mann Oilfield was invited to attend the one-year training course at No (5) Industrial Training Centre in Magway, and 31 candidates took the entrance exam. Of them, five men were chosen for Automobile Maintenance Course and two women for CAD/CAM Course. MPRL E&P provided a total of K4,050,000 for them under the CSR programme.

In addition, five local

young people were awarded scholarships worth more than K6 million for the two-month course in Pharmacology and Healthcare which will be conducted in Minbu and Ayeyawady Training School in Yangon. The selected candidates have been attending the course since 27 December 2021, and arrangements are made to provide them with job opportunities.

In the 2020-2021 Financial year, the MPRL E&P provided scholarships to three young women to attend the courses in Pharmacology and Healthcare and created job opportunities for them. MPRL E&P is also working together with the Agriculture Institute (Pwintphyu) for education programmes and plans are underway to provide scholarships to Mann Oilfield local youths. — MNA



Most of the factories resume operation

PRIORITIZING agriculture and livestock much supports the State economy. Except for some factories, most of the factories resume operation. The declining disease infection rate helps the tourism sector to resume.

(Excerpt from the speech by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 4/2021 of Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 30-12-2021)

State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen signs the visitors' book and poses for the documentary photo with SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

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the ASEAN Chairman's special envoy and Cambodia in the process, undertakings of Myanmar in accord with the five-point consensus of ASEAN, prevention of COVID-19 and humanitarian aid, and efforts of the State Administra-

tion Council in development of the nation in accord with the five-point road map.

Also present at the meeting were Joint-Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo of the State Administration Council, Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin and U Ko Ko Hlaing,

and Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Maung Maung Aye. The Cambodian Prime Minister was accompanied by Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mr Prak Sokhonn, Senior Min-

ister Cambodian Minister of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation Mr Cham Prasidh, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and General Secretary of the Council for the Development of Cambodia Mr Sok Chenda Sophea, and Deputy Commander-in-Chief

of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and Commander of the Royal Cambodian Army Lt-Gen Hun Maneth.

After the meeting, the Senior General and the Cambodian Prime Minister posed for documentary photos. —MNA

Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen arrives in Nay Pyi Taw to pay a working visit to Myanmar



Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia is welcomed with the Guard of Honour at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport yesterday.

PRIME Minister of Cambodia Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen arrived in Nay Pyi Taw by the special aircraft yesterday morning to pay a working visit to Myanmar at the invitation of Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Director-General U Wunna Han of the Protocol Department and Cambodian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chhouk Bouna welcomed the Cambodian Prime Minister aboard the aircraft.

The delegation led by the Cambodian Prime Minister was welcomed at the Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Ko Ko

Hlaing, Myanmar Ambassador to Cambodia U Thit Lin Ohn, Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr Maung Maung Naing and officials together with the Guard of Honour welcomed the Cambodian Prime Minister.

The Cambodian Prime Minister handed over accessories related to the prevention of COVID-19 to Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin. They then posed for documentary photos.

Cambodia donated protective equipment for COVID-19 to Myanmar – three million face masks, 200,000 N-95 masks, 100,000 goggles, 30,000 sets of PPE suits, 30,000 face shields, 3,000 safety plastic boots PR, 50 ventilator machine units, 50 patient monitor + accessories units and 50 oxygen concentrators. — MNA

Arrangements will be made for signing the agreement to reduce the double taxation with cooperation in the trade sector of both countries, says Senior General



The Kingdom of Cambodia and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar hold talks on matters in connexion with the promotion of bilateral relations and cooperations as well as regional matters of common interests of the ASEAN in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 January 2022.

THE Myanmar-Cambodia meeting took place at the meeting hall of the Office of the Chairman of the State Administration Council in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

First, the Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister and the Cambodian Prime Minister extended greetings and gave their encouragements to each other.

Speaking on the occasion, Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen said that both countries gave help each other in taking preventive, control and treatment measures of COVID-19 and he expressed thanks to Myanmar for its donation of COVID-19 vaccines to Cambodia. Myanmar citizens in Cambodia were vaccinated. Likewise, he said that he would like to request Myanmar to give necessary help to members of the Sangha, nuns and Cambodian citizens from Cambodia in Myanmar. Arrangements will be made for signing the agreement to reduce the double taxation with cooperation in the trade sector of both countries.

He would like to draw a new plan for education cooperation. He urged Myanmar to soonest implement the designation of travel partner cities between the Bagan region of Myanmar and Siem Reap of Cambodia. He expressed his wish to resume the airlines at a time when the COVID-19 can be controlled.

In his address, the Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister said that the goodwill visit of the Cambodian Prime Minister in the early year of 2022 would strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries. As Ministries of Foreign Affairs between the two countries have signed the agreement on cooperation in policy affairs, he said he would like to hold the meeting between ministries of both countries at the opportune time. The Senior General said he took pride in controlling the COVID-19 and the development of Cambodia under the three-year plan. The Senior General pledged to arrange the signing of the agreement to reduce the double taxation in the trade sector of both countries.

Cooperation will be made in the enhancement of the tourism industry between the two countries. The tourism services will resume at a time when the COVID-19 can be controlled to some extent, and the aviation services will be resumed to Cambodia as soon as possible.

In the religious and culture sector, the Senior General expressed his satisfaction of allowing 249 Cambodian monks and nuns at Buddhist missionary universities in Myanmar from 1999 to 2020. The Myanmar-Cambodian monastery has been established in Yangon. The Senior General pledged to cooperate in the development of Buddhism between the two countries. This year, religious titles were offered to a Cambodian monk and a layperson. A plan is underway to cooperate with Cambodia in the extension of signing the agreement on educational cooperation in 2017-2021. Further cooperation will be undertaken in defence affairs. The countries from the Mekong Basin need to be united. The Senior General expressed thanks to Cambodian for its

support to Myanmar with a positive attitude in the international and ASEAN arenas. The Senior General said he is striving for ensuring the development of the region and peace and stability in the nation. In his tenure, the Senior General said more than 48,000 prisoners were granted a pardon, and more prisoners will be granted a pardon at the appropriate time. The Senior General said he thanked the Cambodian Prime Minister for restoring peace in Myanmar with keen efforts. The Senior General said he set this year as the year of peace. He expressed his warm welcome to the special envoy of the Cambodian Prime Minister to cooperate in the peace process of Myanmar. He said he was satisfied with today's meeting focusing on cooperation in both countries and regional issues.

Also present at the meeting were Joint-Secretary of the State Administration Council Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, Union Ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, U Aung Naing Oo, U Ko Ko Hlaing, U Win Shein, Dr Thet Khaing Win, Dr Thet Thet Khine,

Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Maung Maung Aye, Deputy Minister Dr Kyaw Myo Htut, Myanmar Ambassador to Cambodia U Thit Lin Ohn and officials. The Cambodian Prime Minister was accompanied by Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mr Prak Sokhonn, Senior Minister, Minister of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation of Cambodia Mr Cham Prasidh, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and General-Secretary of Council for the Development of Cambodia Mr Sok Chenda Sophea, Ministers at the Prime Minister's Office Mr Sry Thamarong and Dr Kao Kim Hourn, Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Dr Soeung Rathchavy and Mrs Eat Sophea, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and Commander of the Royal Cambodian Army Lt-Gen Hun Maneth, Cambodian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chhouk Bunna and delegation members. — MNA

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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.

SAC Chairman hosts dinner in honour of delegation led by Prime Minister of Cambodia



The Senior General, Cambodian Prime Minister and dignitaries have the dinner together in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 January 2022.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing hosted a dinner in honour of the delegation led by Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

Together with the Senior General, Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win,

Joint-Secretary of the Council Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, Union Ministers, the Chief of General Staff, the MoFA deputy minister, the Myanmar Ambassador to Cambodia and officials attended the dinner.

The Prime Minister of Cambodia was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia Mr Prak Sokhonn, Cambodian Senior Minister, Minister for Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation Mr

Cham Prasidh, Cambodian Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and General-Secretary of the Council for the Development of Cambodia Mr Sok Chenda Sophea, Ministers at the Prime Minister's Office Mr Sry Thamarong and Dr Kao Kim Hourn, Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Dr Soeung Rathchavy and Mrs Eat Sophea, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Roy-

al Cambodian Armed Forces and Commander of Royal Cambodian Army Lt-Gen Hun Maneth, Cambodian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chhouk Bunna and officials.

Firstly, the Senior General welcomed the Prime Minister of Cambodia and introduced him to the Vice-Senior General, Joint Secretary of the State Administration Council and the Union Ministers.

The Senior General and

the Cambodian Prime Minister had dinner together with the attendees.

Before and during the dinner, artistes from the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture played music and entertained with performances.

After the dinner, the Senior General and the Prime Minister of Cambodia exchanged gifts. — MNA



The Prime Minister of Cambodia gives the gift to the Senior General.



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presents the photo album of the working visit paid by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen.

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

On the Visit of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar 7-8 January 2022

AT the invitation of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, led a high level delegation to pay a working visit to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 7-8 January 2022.

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, had a bilateral meeting with Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing during which both sides discussed a number of bilateral and regional issues of common interest and concerns. The two leaders briefed each other on the recent developments in their respective countries.

On the developments in Myanmar, Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing informed Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, that the Myanmar Government had declared a five-month ceasefire with all Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) until the end of February 2022 and decided to further extend it until the end of 2022. Senior General also called on all parties concerned to accept the ceasefire in the interest of the country and people, end all acts of violence and exercise utmost restraint, a move Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, strongly supported with the view to deescalating tension and enable constructive dialogues among relevant stakeholders to achieve enduring peace and national development. To this end, Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing welcomed the participation of the special envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar to join the ceasefire talks with and among the EAOs. This important step is embodied in the ASEAN five-point consensus.

To strengthen the efficiency of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar, especially to the people who are most in need of help, the two Leaders supported the convening of a meeting among stakeholders such as the special envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, the representatives of the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Management Centre (AHA Centre), and the Myanmar National Task Force to Facilitate Provision of Humanitarian Assistance through the AHA Centre, the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) and the relevant United Nations Specialized Agencies. The two sides acknowledged the critical importance of setting up mechanisms and proper facilities for the COVID-19 vaccination programme along with the provision of humanitarian assistance effectively to the people in need without discrimination, as nothing is more important than saving people's lives.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing congratulated Cambodia for assuming the ASEAN Chairmanship 2022 and welcomed the appointment of Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, as special envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar and pledged full support to the latter in fulfilling his mandate to implement the five-point consensus in accordance with the ASEAN Charter. He also emphasized that implementation of the five-point consensus should be complementary in realization of the five-point roadmap of the State Administration Council.

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, shared Cambodia's Win-Win Policy success in achieving national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability, development and prosperity. He also stressed that based on the experiences and lessons learned from Cambodia's peace process, complete peace and national reconciliation cannot be achieved without participation and agreement from all parties involved. In the same spirit, Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has assured the facilitation of the visit of the special envoy to Myanmar and to meet with all parties concerned taking into account of the prevailing situation in Myanmar.

The two sides also exchanged views on bilateral cooperation to further enhance the existing friendly relations between the two peoples, particularly in the context of global health crisis. Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing expressed his deep appreciation to the Government and people of Cambodia for the additional donations of 3,200,000 masks, 30,000 personal protection equipment (PPE), 50 ventilator machines, 50 patient monitors and accessories and 50 oxygen concentrators and other medical equipment to assist Myanmar in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The meeting was concluded in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and in a frank and candid manner.

Nay Pyi Taw, 7 January 2022

Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen arrives in Nay Pyi Taw to pay a working visit to Myanmar

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The handover ceremony is held for the donation of medical supplies from the Government and People of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Inter-Region/State U-25 Women's Football tourney 2022 opened in Nay Pyi Taw

AN opening ceremony of the Inter-Region and State Under-25 (Women) Football Tournament was held at 3 pm yesterday at Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw.

The tourney aims to raise the standard of Myanmar football and the standard of health and fitness of the whole nation plus promoting the inter-ethnic friendship and emerge of a new generation of athletes, officials said.

Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Myanmar Olympic Committee U Min Thein Zan addressed the tourney.



The SAC members and Union Government dignitaries watch the Inter-Region/ State Under-25 Women Football Tourney in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 January 2022.



The Inter-Region and State Under-25 (Women) Football Tournament in action.

The Union Minister said that the women's football tourney was held to attract the interest of young ethnic women in each region and state.

"The Department of Sports

and Physical Education, in collaboration with the Myanmar Football Federation, is holding annual inter-region and state women's football tournaments to raise the standard of Myanmar women's

football and to continuously produce qualified female footballers, the Union Minister said.

"In 2020-2021, the competition was suspended due to the increase in the COVID-19 epidemic.

We want the relevant officials and athletes to compete vigorously as it will be a competition that will help us to be proud of football in the international arena.

I would like to emphasize that special efforts should be made to enhance the dignity of the country through women's football skills as women's football is drawing the interest of the people as well as men's football and has been successful in international competitions of all ages.

The women's squad won a bronze medal at the 29th South-east Asian Games in Malaysia in August 2017 and the 30th South-east Asian Games in the Philippines in 2019.

The Myanmar team has also won the qualifiers for the 2022 Asian Cup Women's Championship and qualified for the finals.

Myanmar team striker Win Theingi Tun is playing for the Indian professional club as the first female professional football player in Myanmar.

Therefore, I would like to wish

all the athletes who will be competing in today's competition to show their talents and abilities and to be good athletes with full sportsmanship and respect the rules and regulations of the competition.

Members of the State Administration Council: Mahn Nye-in Maung, Daw Aye Nu Sein, Jeng Phang Naw Taung, U Moungh Har, U Saw Daniel and U Shwe Kye-in, Chairman of Union Election Commission U Thein Soe, Union Ministers, officials from the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and Myanmar Football Federation, special guests, coaches and athletes from the participating teams attended the ceremony.

After that, the Union minister and party greeted the participating teams. In the first match, Yangon Team beat Mandalay by 2 goals. Inter-Region and State Under-25 (Women) Football Tournament 2022 will be held from 7 to 21 January at Wunna Theikdi Stadium. Thirteen teams from different regions and states compete in the tourney. —MNA

Myanmar inks G-to-G agreement to export rice to Sri Lanka

MYANMAR signed a government-to-government (G-to-G) rice export bilateral Agreement with Sri Lanka yesterday.

The virtual signing ceremony was attended by Union Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint San, Minister for Trade of Sri Lanka Dr Bandula Gunawardhana, and other officials concerned.

First, the Union Minister said the G-to-G agreement is signed as an initial activity to export other products including rice of the farming sector in order to promote bilateral trade. The country also invites investments in the tourism industry that make profits for two countries and welcomes

further cooperation works to develop the economy.

Then, the Minister for Trade of Sri Lanka talked about the establishment of diplomatic relations with Myanmar in 1949, expressed words of thanks for exporting rice under the G-to-G system and also pleaded to improve the bilateral trade and investment.

According to the G-to-G agreement, Myanmar Rice Federation and Sri Lanka State Trading (General) Corporation will supervise the rice trade, and Myanmar will have to export 100,000 tonnes of white rice and 50,000 tonnes of parboiled rice to Sri Lanka in 2022 and 2023. — MNA



The virtual signing event in progress.

Avoid too many activities with anxieties for new variant Omicron

INFECTION of COVID-19 pandemic is controllable in Myanmar due to preventive, control and treatment measures taken by the Ministry of Health and the public's active participation. Emphasis is being placed on conducting laboratory tests on samples on a weekly basis, results on the number of confirmed patients and finding of the virus in monitoring the infection of the pandemic. As such, the finding of confirmed patients is declining week by week between one and two per cent.

COVID-19 variant virus Omicron has spread more than 100 countries across the world up to 27 December 2021, infecting some 200,000 confirm patients.

The people should not have too much anxiety as well as too much care about the new variant Omicron. The Ministry of Health is monitoring the spreading of the Omicron variant in the entire world while taking preventive and control measures against the infection of such variant virus into Myanmar with might and main.

All the people need to avoid too many activities by following the basic health rules for COVID-19 guided by the Ministry of Health without fail in their daily lifestyle. In so doing, laboratory samples found COVID-19 virus from the returnees by relief flights to Myanmar are tested by the Medical Research Department, the National Health Laboratory and the Tatmadaw's Medical Research Unit. Moreover, samples are sent to laboratories of the regional WHO office. In this regard, 30 samples of Myanmar returnees expatriated from other countries who arrived back in Myanmar by the relief flight from Dubai of the United Arab Emirates were sent to the laboratory on 14 December.

Among them, 26 returnees were found COVID-19 Delta virus and the remaining four, Omicron virus. According to the result received on 28 December 2021, Omicronvirus was found in the laboratory samples. One of four patients was found ordinary symptoms of the virus and the remaining three were found no symptoms. Those four returned were kept at treatment centres under surveillance. When the quarantine period was over, they all were discharged from the treatment centre due to good conditions of their health.

The people should not have too much anxiety as well as too much care about the new variant Omicron. All the people need to avoid too many activities by following the basic health rules for COVID-19 guided by the Ministry of Health without fail in their daily lifestyle.

70 per cent vaccination target must be met to ward off Omicron: WHO

AS THE Omicron variant of COVID-19 continues to surge across the world, the UN health agency on Tuesday said that it was crucial that more is done to help all countries receive lifesaving coronavirus jabs as quickly as possible.

The development comes as a senior World Health Organization (WHO) epidemiologist repeated the agency's message that countries could not "boost" their way out of the pandemic, while the Omicron variant was transmitting so "intensely", just as the Delta variant has done.

"In the context of intense social mixing, in the context of limited use of proven public health measures, in the context of limited vaccination coverage globally... those are conditions that will allow any variant, any virus, to thrive," Dr Maria Van Kerkhove told BBC radio. "Omicron is taking advantage of that, and so is Delta."

Global reach

Before the holiday period,



The Delhi international airport has made arrangements to accommodate at the airport up to 1,500 international passengers at a time, including those coming from 'at-risk' countries, till results of their RT-PCR tests taken after arrival are declared. Passengers lineup to check-in outside the Indira Gandhi International airport. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

128 countries reported that they had identified Omicron, the WHO said, during a scheduled press briefing in Geneva.

WHO epidemiologist Dr Abdi Mahamud, told journalists that there was still not enough data available to say whether the Omicron variant is less severe than other coronavirus strains.

He noted that in London, which has been "hit very hard" by spiking numbers of COVID-19 infections, hospitalisation rates were around 20 per cent lower now than they had been in 2020,

before vaccinations were available.

"So the main message is, if you are vaccinated, you are protected, but if you are vulnerable or if you have not been vaccinated, this Omicron - however light or mild it may be for others

- it could hit you very hard," he said. "So, vaccination (is) very critical."

The WHO epidemiologist noted that an increasing number of studies seemed to show that the Omicron variant appeared to affect mostly the upper respiratory tract, causing milder symptoms.

Other strains impact the lungs, and could cause severe pneumonia, he said, but further research was needed to prove this Omicron assessment.

"The challenge has not been the vaccine, but the vaccination of the most vulnerable populations," he said, before urging more countries to push for 70 per cent vaccine coverage as soon as possible.

Without this level of vaccine protection, the virus "replicates in an environment that's overcrowded, not ventilated and not protected, not vaccinated", Dr Mahamud continued, describing these types of settings as ideal places for COVID-19 to mutate.

"We saw it in Beta, we saw it in Delta, we saw it in Omicron, so it is in the global interest" to vaccinate 70 per cent of national populations to reduce the impact of the variant, he said.

Fair share

WHO's call for vaccine equity is not new and comes as many wealthy countries consider offering a fourth coronavirus vaccine to their populations.

Before Christmas, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that "blanket booster programmes" were likely to prolong the pandemic "by diverting supply to countries that already have high levels of vaccination coverage, giving the virus more opportunity to spread and mutate".

The WHO chief stressed that the priority must be on supporting countries to vaccinate 40 per cent of their populations as quickly as possible, and 70 per cent by the middle of 2022.

SOURCE: UN

Work, school, play: How Covid reshaped our world

THE most basic everyday activities, from working to shopping and going to school, have completely transformed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and may never be the same again.

As the world marks nearly two years since China announced the first death from Covid-19 — a 61-year-old man in Wuhan — on 11 January 2020, here's a look at how our lives have been fundamentally altered by the virus.

WFH

As the virus marched across the globe, governments ordered citizens to stay inside — forcing billions of people to hastily set up home offices.

Remote working, working from home (WFH) all quickly became staples in our new pandemic vernacular.

Even as lockdowns eased, working from home at least some of the time has remained the norm for many.

In 2021, the percentage of people working remotely hit 32 per cent, up from just 17 per cent in 2019, according to consulting firm Gartner.

For others, the pandemic prompted

a change of jobs or demands for better conditions.

In the United States, tens of thousands of workers from hospitals to Hollywood walked off the job last year in a movement dubbed "Striketober" to protest long hours and poor pay.

E-commerce boom

With billions bunkered down at home, businesses of all kinds had to quickly pivot, and online sales for everything from groceries to meals, clothes and furniture rapidly boomed.

Online sales rose 38 per cent in the first third of 2021 compared to the same period a year before, according to the Adobe Digital Economy Index.

It even brought some shoppers online for the first time who aren't likely to leave soon, Gaelle Le Floch of consulting firm Kantar told AFP.

"We saw new customers, more senior citizens, who became regular shoppers," she said.

Planes, trains and... bicycles

Between border closures and travel restrictions, the tourism sector was pum-

elled by the pandemic. Experts warn the air and rail industries may not return to normal before 2024.

Air travel was worst affected, with worldwide traffic dropping by two-thirds in 2020.

By the end of 2021, it had only reached half of 2019 levels as travel restrictions remained in place in many countries.

Even as travel picked up following initial lockdowns, chaos remains the norm in airports as passengers line up to show vaccine passes or negative Covid tests.

Cities around the world also saw a drop in public transportation such as trains over fears of the virus spreading and as more people stayed home.

Cycling grew in popularity — but so did commuting by car.

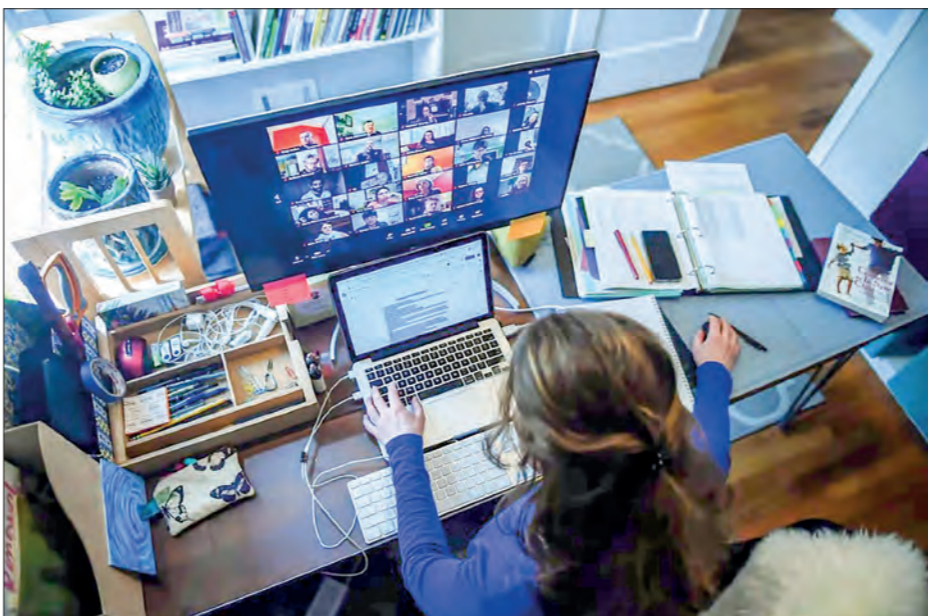
Zoom learning

As adults stayed home to work, so too did students, with hundreds of millions of children and teens suddenly logging onto Zoom and other platforms for online classes.

UNESCO, the UN's culture and education authority, has called the pandemic

the worst-ever education crisis.

School systems in most countries saw at least some period of complete closure. The worst impacts have been in low- and middle-income countries where 53 per cent of children already suffered from a lack of access to schooling.



As adults stayed home to work, so too did students, with hundreds of millions of children and teens suddenly logging onto Zoom and other platforms for online classes. PHOTO: AFP

That proportion could increase to 70 percent, according to the World Bank.

In some parts of the world — including Brazil, Pakistan, India, South Africa and Mexico — a significant drop in math and reading skills has been reported.

SOURCE: AFP

Myanmar Daily Weather Report
(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 7 January 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 8 January, 2022: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Kachin State. Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing Taninthayi Regions 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 isolated light rain in Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 8 January, 2022: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 8 January, 2022: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 8 January, 2022: Generally fair weather.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and Yangon Regions.

EARTHQUAKE NEWS
(Issued at 13:15 hour M.S.T.)
A slight earthquake of magnitude (3.9) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about (3) miles south-southeast of Thabeikkyin), latitude 22.85°N, longitude 95.99°E, depth (10) kilometers, about (36) miles southeast of Kanbalu seismological observatory was recorded at (12) hr (51) min (38) sec M.S.T on 7th January, 2022.

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Meeting on holding Diamond Jubilee Union Day youth and literature festival held



The MoI holds meeting on organizing Diamond Jubilee Union Day youth and literature festival yesterday.

THE Ministry of Information held the coordination meeting to hold the Youth and Literature Festival to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee Union Day yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

The coordination meeting was attended by Chairman of Steering Committee on Youth and Literature Festival to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee Union Day Union Min-

ister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, Vice-Chairmen of the committee Union Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe and Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan, Secretary and committee members.

At the meeting, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn said his ministry has been traditionally holding literature festivals and this year festival

will be the focus on the role of youth, adding the Prime Minister pays attention to the younger generations.

Arrangements will be made to ignite patriotism for the young people who will attend the ceremony, the Union Minister said. The festival will be held in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Sports

and Youth Affairs on 29 and 30 January at Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw.

The festival will include book sales, displays of prominent authors, children reading room, aeronautical demonstrations, displays of historical treaties and records, sports activities gallery, cartoon exhibition, exhibitions of the Ministry of Science and Technology. Significantly, the Myanmar Aviation Enthusiasts Association's aviation demonstration will also be included.

In addition, entertainment programmes, puzzles, and paint house building competitions will be included for children. As for the youth, the training of athletes who will compete in the SEA Games and the importance of the sports sector will also be shown. The festival will be held following the COVID-19 rules and regulations. The Union minister also urged all to work together for the successful implementation of the festival.

Vice-Chairman of the Committee Union Minister U Min Thein Zan said he is

proud that his ministry is a part of the youth and literature festival held this year, and the festival aims to promote the role of young people. Deputy Minister U Ye Tint and Deputy Minister U Zaw Win discussed requirements to hold the festival bustling and enjoyable for students and youth under the COVID-19 guidelines.

Afterwards, officials explained the purpose of the festival, the organization of the steering committee, working committee and subcommittee, and plans for the successful holding of concerts and ceremonies.

It is reported that Diamond Jubilee Union Day Youth and Literature Festival aims to sharpen the talents and ideas of children and youth who will become the future leaders of the country, to develop good habits of participating in group activities while celebrating the festival happily, to stimulate the creativity of young people and increase their desire to read and study literature, to build future Myanmar society with their good ideas. — MNA

Wooden bridge maintenance in Kandawgyi Lake slated to complete in end-Jan

YANGON City Development Committee reported that maintenance of the wooden bridge in Kandawgyi Lake is expected to complete at the end of January.

This curved wooden bridge is 7,237 feet long and 17 feet and six inches wide. The maintenance work began in the 2017-2018 financial year. About 6,737 feet long bridge part has been restored so far and mending of the remaining part is slated to end this month, YCDC stated.

Yangon mayor U Bo Htay, who is also chairman of YCDC

and minister for Yangon Region Development Affairs, accompanied by the officials concerned, inspected the reconstruction work implemented by YCDC Engineering Department (Road and Bridge) on 5 January.

The maintenance of the wooden bridge walking over the Kandawgyi Lake was carried out with the fund of K1.404 billion allocated by the Yangon Region Government in the 2018-2019 Financial Year.

Maintenance works have been conducted for 1,700 feet

bridge parts in FY2016-2017 and 1,330 feet in the 2017-2018FY. In the 2018-2019FY, K940 million out of the proposed budget of K1 billion were allotted for the restoration of 2,000 feet bridge part and only 1,800 feet part was reconstructed.

The COVID-19 consequences hindered construction work. As it is the famous spot for sports and leisure activities, the departments concerned are making effort to complete the project at the soonest time. — Ko Naing (Bago)/GNLM



Wooden walkway under maintenance in Kandawgyi Lake.



COVID-19 inoculation continues in regions and states

TATMADAW has been working together with doctors, health workers and volunteers to carry out COVID-19 immunization to people over the age of 40, including monks, nuns, civil service personnel, prisoners, persons with disabilities, ethnic armed forces, people in IDP camps, and students aged above 12 in regions and states.

A total of 4,258 people in Shan State (North), 1,766 people in Shan State (East), 8,189 people in Taninthayi Region, 5,630 people in Yangon

Region, 40,266 people in Ayeyawady Region, 6,715 people in Rakhine State, 9,420 people in Mandalay Region, two monks and 587 people in Bago Region, was vaccinated against COVID-19.

In addition, 291 students in Shan State and 723 students in Ayeyawady Region received the vaccine yesterday.

Officials from the respective military commands encouraged those people and coordinated where necessary. — MNA

Pulaw locals get inoculated against COVID-19.

Tatmadaw reoccupy Kyapazetgyi camp shortly after surprised attack of large-scale terrorist groups

TATMADAW reoccupied the Kyapazetgyi camp in the Hway Pon Laung-Kau Kau region of Kayah State at noon after they strategically retreated for a while as a large-scale terrorist group of KNPP and PDF launched a surprised attack on the camp yesterday morning.

The KNPP and PDF terrorist groups attacked the Tatmadaw's Kyapazetgyi camp, where Tatmadaw conducts security measures in Kayah State, using large and small weapons. Meanwhile, the security members strategically

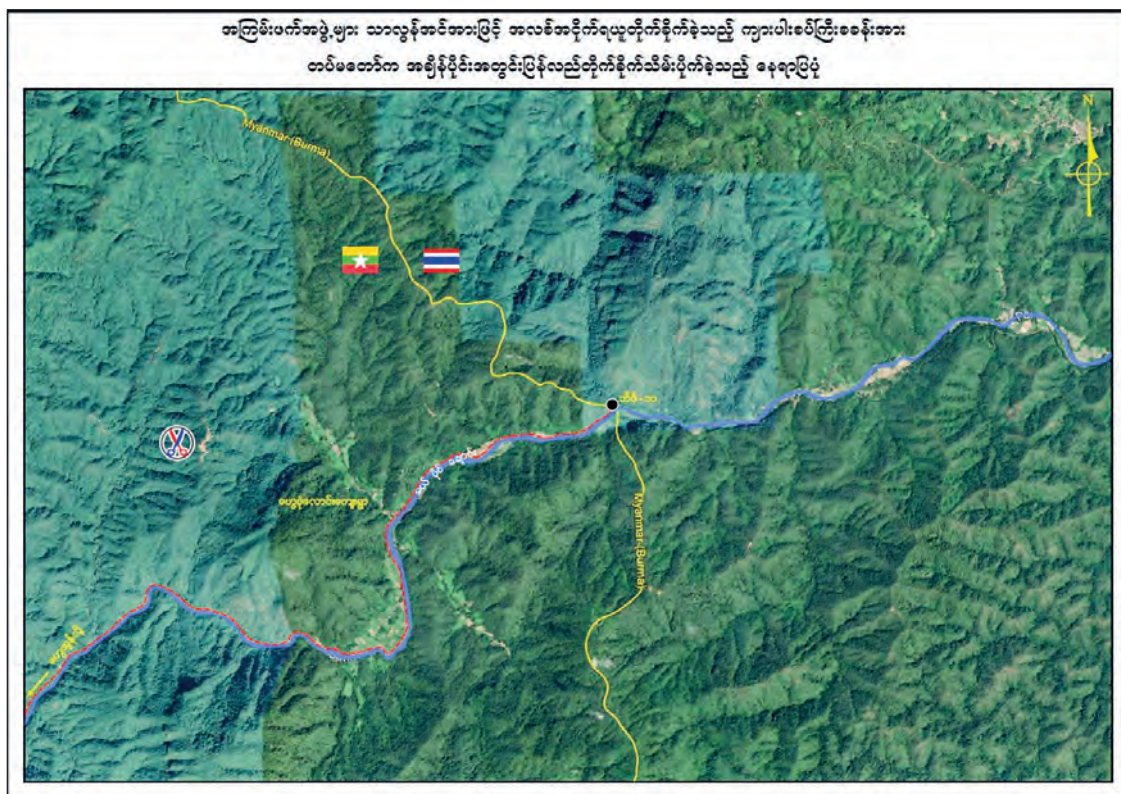
retreated from the camp and conducted a counterattack with the help of the air force and refilled the numbers. At noon, they reoccupied the camp and the terrorist group ran away to the northeast part of the region.

In the attack, some Tatmadaw officers and soldiers were injured and the dead bodies of terrorists and arms and ammunition were also seized.

Although Tatmadaw strictly follows the statement on ceasefire and perpetual peace which was extended to 28 February 2022, the security mem-



Seized arms and ammunition.



The site of reoccupied Kyapazetgyi camp.

bers have the rights to defend themselves from such attacks on military operations and military bases with the most effective methods.

The terrorists also com-

mitted attacks on the security forces who serve their duties to ensure the peace of border area and security affairs and the mine attacks along public roads of the border area, includ-

ing other destructive elements. Therefore, the security forces beef up the security measures keeping in line with the rule of engagement (ROE). — MNA

Illegal timber seized at various checkpoints



Confiscated timber in Thandwe Township.

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

On 6 January, a combined inspection team reportedly inspected illegal timber in Thandwe Township.

A total of 4,5338 tonnes of timber worth K680,070 on vehicle No. YGN-1P/7980, 3,5540 tonnes of timber worth K533,100 on Vehicle No. BGO-4I/5636 and 8,0878 tonnes of timber worth K1,213,170 were found and confiscated on Yezin Village Road near Thandwe-Taungup Highway.

Similarly, on 7 January, in Bago Region, a combined team led by the Depart-

ment of Forest under the management of the Anti-Illegal Trade Special Task Force inspected illegal logging in Bago, Toungoo, Pyay and Thayawady districts.

A total of 81.5 tonnes of timber and teak including 29.4 tonnes of illegal teak, 9.5 tonnes of Pyinkadoe, 10.6 tonnes of hardwood, and 32 tonnes of timber carried by three trucks were seized.

Thus, 8,0878 tonnes of sawn timber were seized on 6 January, and 81.5 tonnes of various types of timber were seized on 7 January. The case has been opened and action is being taken as per departmental procedures, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee. — MNA

About 310 fires break out in Sagaing region in 2021

ABOUT 310 cases of fire have been reported in the Sagaing region in 2021, causing an estimated over K3,092 million in property damage, according to the official statistic of the Sagaing Region Fire Services Department.

“The massive fire at the market has caused a great loss to shop owners in the Sagaing region. The market firefighters and securities need to follow the training, provided by the Sagaing Fire Services Department. Initially, they will be able to put out the fire. Then, they need to make the way for the fire trucks to enter the market to pull down the fire,” said U Than Htut Oo, the head director of the Sagaing Region Fire Services De-

partment. Most fire outbreaks were caused by arson with 201 cases. Besides, there were also 42 electric shocks, 38 negligence, 20 stove fires, six auto fires, two forest fires and one thunder fire.

“A total of 1,335 houses, two factories, 15 warehouses and one car were damaged by the fire in the Sagaing region in a year. Besides, a total of 296 men and 333 women were adversely affected by the outbreaks of fire.

About 34 people were killed and 26 others were injured in the massive blaze, according to the official reports of the Sagaing Region Fire Services Department. — Lu Lay/GNLM



NEWS
IN BRIEFIndonesia revokes
over 2,000 mining,
other business
permits

INDONESIAN President Joko Widodo said Thursday the government has revoked more than 2,000 mining, plantation, and forest-use permits as companies holding the permits failed to meet obligations.

The revocation aims to improve the transparency of the business permit system and better manage natural resources following a coal export ban announced Saturday to secure power supplies in Indonesia, the world's biggest coal exporter.—Kyodo ■

Japan household
spending down
1.3% on year in
November

JAPAN'S household spending fell a real 1.3 per cent in November from a year earlier for the fourth straight month of decrease, reflecting lower expenditure in food and energy as more people went out amid a fall in new coronavirus cases, the government said Friday.

Average spending by households with two or more people was 277,029 yen (\$2,400), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications said.

Following the complete lifting of the coronavirus state of emergency on 1 Oct, daily new COVID-19 cases remained low in the reporting month and more people were seen going out. The Omicron coronavirus variant was first confirmed in Japan on 30 Nov.—Kyodo ■

RCEP to boost ASEAN's post-pandemic
economic recovery, says Malaysian analyst

A worker assembles a vehicle at the assembly line of the SAIC-GM-Wuling Automobile (SGMW) plant in Cikarang, Indonesia, 14 March 2019. PHOTO: DU YU / XINHUA/FILE

THE economies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states will receive a much needed boost in their post-pandemic economic recovery with the implementation of

the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, a Malaysian analyst has said. In an interview with Xinhua, Oh Ei Sun, principal adviser for Malaysia's Pacific Research Centre, said that beyond the economic benefits of the world's largest free trade deal to date, RCEP is a victory for multilateralism and a strong affirmation of China's strong and continuous push for global free trade to be inclusive and balanced.

"China is the major trading partner of a number of Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN as a whole also became China's largest trading partner," Oh said.

"On that very successful basis, why not we extend it to in-

clude some other regional major economies right, such as Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and also Australia," explained the Malaysian analyst. Hopefully, with this extension, RCEP will become the world's largest free trade bloc, and it should then serve as a leading light for the free trade movement in the world, he said.

This would spur post-pandemic economic recovery efforts by participating economies, allowing better integration of supply chains, common standards, and infrastructure through the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and allowing the movement of goods, services and technology between RCEP participants, Oh said.—Xinhua ■

Canada trade surplus soars to highest point in 13 years

CANADA posted its biggest trade surplus in more than 13 years in November as record exports offset the effects of flooding in the west of the country, the government said Thursday.

The surplus of Can\$3.1 billion (\$2.4 billion) was well above what economists had expected.

For the second month in a row, both exports and imports hit levels not seen since September 2008. Exports of consumer goods increased nine percent in November to Can\$7.3 billion, mainly thanks to pharmaceutical products, Statistics Canada said.

In November, large shipments of Covid-19 medication came into Canada for packaging and labelling, and most of it was later exported the same month. This caused a boost to both export and import statistics.

The rise in the trade surplus is "another sign that the flooding in British Columbia had only a small impact on overall econom-



The Port of Vancouver is the third largest port in North America in terms of total tonnage moved in and out of the port. PHOTO: MARITIMEINFO.ORG/AFP

ic activity," said Stephen Brown of Capital Economics.

"It confirms that the economy headed into the latest lockdowns in a stronger position than

we initially expected."

Exports of farm and fishing products, as well as coal, posted the largest decreases.

In mid-November, flooding

and landslides damaged infrastructure in British Columbia, disrupting transports of goods to and from major ports on Canada's Pacific coast.—AFP ■



A man wearing a protective shield is seen at a supermarket in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on 25 June 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA/RAHEL PATRASSO

Global food prices hit 10-year high in 2021: UN

GLOBAL food prices reached a 10-year high in 2021, rising by an average of 28 per cent compared to the previous year, the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization said Thursday.

The FAO's Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of commonly-traded food commodities, dipped slightly in December.

However, at 133.7 points, it remained close to the record of

137.6 points it set in February 2011. The index stood at 125.7 points for the year as a whole, also the highest in a decade.

"While normally high prices are expected to give way to increased production, the high cost of inputs, ongoing global pandemic and ever more uncertain climatic conditions leave little room for optimism about a return to more stable market conditions even in 2022," FAO

Senior Economist Abdolreza Abbassian said in a statement.

Prices in all food categories jumped last year due to strong demand, he said.

Food oils saw an average price jump of 66 per cent last year to hit their highest ever level. Grain prices rose by 27 per cent, hitting a level not seen since 2012, with corn prices soaring 44.1 per cent and wheat rising 31.3 per cent.—AFP ■

Samsung Electronics forecasts 52.5% jump in Q4 profits on record sales

SAMSUNG Electronics expects operating profits for the fourth quarter to soar 52.5 per cent, the South Korean tech giant said in a statement on Friday, spurred by record sales.

The world's biggest smartphone maker forecast 2021 fourth-quarter operating profits at around 13.8 trillion won (\$11.5 billion), up from 9.05 trillion won in the same quarter last year.

The firm was boosted

by record sales in the quarter, estimated at 76 trillion won, up 23.5 per cent on-year, according to the statement. A spokeswoman told AFP annual sales in 2021 were also expected to be the highest ever.

While the coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc on the world economy, it has helped many tech companies boom.

Pandemic-driven working from home has boosted demand for devices

powered by Samsung's chips, as well as home appliances such as televisions and washing machines.

Analysts had also expected the firm to benefit from the traditionally lucrative holiday season.

Samsung Electronics is the flagship subsidiary of the giant Samsung group, by far the largest of the family-controlled empires known as chaebols that dominate business in South Korea.—AFP ■



South Korean tech giant Samsung Electronics is the world's biggest smartphone maker. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Trump social network expects 21 February launch

FORMER US president Donald Trump's media group is aiming to launch its long-promised social network in February, according to a listing at Apple's App Store.

A "Truth Social" app is "expected" to be available on 21 February, the listing showed, and will have features similar to online connection tools found at Facebook.

The 75-year-old was thrown off Twitter — his preferred communication conduit while president — as well as Facebook and YouTube after last year's January 6 insurrection,



Former US president Donald Trump's 'Truth Social' app is expected to be available on 21 February 2022, according to a listing at Apple's App Store. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

in which a mob of Trump supporters, riled up by his repeated false claims that the November 2020 elec-

tion was stolen from him, assaulted the US Capitol.

Trump says the new platform will be an alter-

native to Silicon Valley internet companies that he says are biased against him and other conservative voices.

The social network is currently being used by invited guests as it readies for public launch, according to Trump Media and Technology Group.

President Joe Biden on Thursday savaged Trump's "lies" and attempt to overturn the 2020 election, vowing on the first anniversary of the 6 January Capitol riot that he would let no one put a "dagger at the throat of democracy."—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

New York Times to buy sports news site The Athletic

THE New York Times will acquire sports news website The Athletic, the companies announced Thursday, the latest move by the iconic US newspaper in its diversification drive.

"Acquiring The Athletic puts us in a position to be a global leader in sports journalism and offer English speakers around the world another reason to turn to the Times Company to meet their daily news and life needs," New York Times chief Meredith Kopit Levien said in a statement.

The newspaper company will pay \$550 million for The Athletic, which has become a leader in sports coverage over the past six years as it took advantage of a tough environment for local media.

The transaction — first reported by online technology publication The Information — is expected to be finalized in the first quarter.

Levien said the addition will help the Times achieve its goal of more than 10 million subscribers, from eight million currently. Founded in January 2016 by Alex Mather and Adam Hansmann, The Athletic had about 1.2 million subscribers at the end of 2021, according to the statement.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V RESOLUTION VOY.NO. (2166N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V RESOLUTION VOY.NO. (2166N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **8-1-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SITC CONTAINER LINE CO., LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

TUG;CASSANDRA-1 BG;CASSANDRA 2501 V.03/21

Consignees of cargo carried on **TUG;CASSANDRA-1 BG; CASSANDRA 2501 V.03/21** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **9-1-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **TMIT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

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Election rallies cancelled as India sees Omicron surge



Bharatiya Janata Party supporters hold cutouts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a 5 January rally in Firozpur, India.

PHOTO: NARINDER NANU/AFP

ELECTION rallies were cancelled in India's heartland Thursday as authorities fret over a sudden Covid surge, driven by the Omicron variant, which has seen confirmed infections nearly triple in two days.

Teeming crowds have thronged campaign events for next month's poll in Uttar Pradesh -- the country's most populous state with over 200 million people and a pillar of support for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has traversed key cities to cut the ribbon on infrastructure projects and partake in Hindu religious rituals to boost the state government's prospects.

But with several cities imposing coronavirus curfews and health experts warning of exponential infection growth, several parties have brought their public campaigns to a halt.

"Owing to concerns over the growing number of Covid cases, all... rallies of the party

have been cancelled," Ashok Singh, a spokesperson for the opposition Congress, told AFP.

Another opposition group said it had switched to virtual campaigning while the BJP cancelled a rally planned for Thursday in Noida, a satellite city of the capital New Delhi that has seen a spate of new cases.

Party spokesman Manish Shukla denied the virus was the reason for calling off the Noida event -- where Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, seen as a potential Modi successor, was set to appear.

"It was cancelled due to some other technical reason," he told AFP, without giving further detail.

But recent electioneering has sparked concern in some quarters of the BJP.

"Imposing curfew in the night and calling (hundreds of thousands) of people in rallies during the day - this is beyond the comprehension of the common man," party lawmaker Varun Gandhi tweeted last week.—AFP ■

Yemen ship seizure flashes warning for Red Sea



In a further escalation in hostilities in the Yemen war, the Houthi rebels have seized an Emirati flagship in the red sea. Yemen's Houthi rebels say the Rwabee Emirati-flagged ship they seized carried military hardware but the Saudi-led coalition says it transported medical supplies. PHOTO: AFP

YEMENI rebels' seizure of a UAE-flagged vessel has set off alarm bells that the conflict could "wreak havoc" on oil and cargo shipping in the strategic Red Sea, analysts said.

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels are more used to fighting in the dusty country's craggy mountains but on Monday took

the bold move to hijack the Rwabee with its international crew.

They later showed video purportedly of military jeeps and weapons on board, while the Saudi-led coalition fighting for the internationally recognised government insisted it was carrying medical

equipment.

The hijacking, in the busy Red Sea that separates the Arabian peninsula from Africa, and is connected to the Mediterranean by the Suez Canal, sent out a clear message, analysts say.

"It is hard to pinpoint the exact cause for the Houthi seizure, and the group's messaging has been a bit mixed," Peter Salisbury, a Yemen specialist at the Crisis Group non-governmental organization.

"But it is hard not to read it as a not-so-gentle reminder that they could wreak havoc on Saudi and Emirati shipping in the Red Sea if they so wished."

The seven-year war, a battleground for the regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, has displaced millions, creating the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe, according to the United Nations.—AFP ■

China introduces easier security checks at major airports

CHINA'S civil aviation authorities have introduced safer, more efficient and comfortable security check measures at major airports nationwide to enhance passenger services.

The so-called "easy security check" service has been put into operation at 40 major airports each with annual passenger throughput of more than 10 million starting from 1 Jan, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).

The new move is expected to enhance the airport security check as well as better serve passengers by providing more efficient and diverse services at airports, said the CAAC.

Exclusive security-check lanes will be opened to passen-

gers who have completed the registration and reservation process.

Air passengers should firstly conduct real-name registration and certification at airports or on the national government affairs service platform. After that, they are able to make an appointment for an "easy security check" within 48 hours before departure. They can also access the service at the airport after buying a ticket and completing registration.

The new security check measures feature precise checks, simplified flows, faster speed and a better experience for passengers at airports, especially busy airports with large passenger flows, said the CAAC.—Xinhua ■



Passengers walk in the terminal of Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport in Qingdao, east China's Shandong Province, 12 Aug 2021.

PHOTO: XINHUA/LI ZIHENG

NEWS IN BRIEF

Philippines bans child marriage

Child marriage became illegal in the Philippines on Thursday as a law banning the practice took effect in a country where one in six girls enters wedlock before the age of 18.

The impoverished Southeast Asian country has the 12th highest number of child marriages in the world, according to Britain-based rights group Plan International, with long-held cultural practices and gender inequalities hindering change.

But the new law, signed by President Rodrigo Duterte and released to the public on Thursday, lays out prison terms of up to 12 years for marrying or cohabiting with anyone under 18.

People arranging or solemnising underage unions also face the same penalty.

"The state... views child marriage as a practice constituting child abuse because it debases, degrades, and demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of children," the law states.

The government says the law is consistent with international conventions on the rights of women and children.

However, some portions of the legislation have been suspended for one year to allow for a transition period for Muslims and indigenous communities in which child marriage is relatively common.—AFP ■

Biden tears into Trump on anniversary of 'insurrection'

PRESIDENT Joe Biden on Thursday savaged Donald Trump's "lies" and attempt to overturn the 2020 election, vowing on the first anniversary of the January 6 Capitol riot that he would let no one put a "dagger at the throat of democracy."

After largely ignoring Trump for a year, Biden took off the gloves, describing the Republican as a cheat whose ego wouldn't let him accept defeat and whose supporters almost shattered US democracy when they stormed Congress

to prevent certification of the election.

It was a searing speech, signaling Biden's decision to abandon his previously cautious approach -- and it immediately prompted an equally bitter Republican backlash.

"This was an armed insurrection," Biden declared from Statuary Hall inside the Capitol, where a year ago thousands of people brandishing Trump flags trampled over police to invade the chamber, forcing lawmakers to flee for their lives.

"For the first time in our history, a president not just lost an election. He tried to prevent the peaceful transfer of power," Biden said.

"I will allow no one to place a dagger at the throat of democracy."

Biden's voice filled with anger as he laid out the dangers facing a country that has long styled itself as leader of the free world.

"Are we going to be a nation that accepts political violence as a norm?" he asked.—AFP ■



Democratic members of the US Congress take part in a prayer vigil on the first anniversary of the assault on the US Capitol, on the East Steps of the Capitol in Washington, DC on 6 January 2022. PHOTO: AFP

UN Security Council to meet 10 January on North Korean hypersonic missile launch



The UN Security Council will hold a meeting to address North Korea's second trial launch of a hypersonic missile -- seen here in a photo released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency. PHOTO: KCNA VIA KNS/AFP

THE UN Security Council will meet behind closed doors Monday to discuss the testing of what North Korea said was a hypersonic missile, according to diplomatic sources.

The meeting was requested by the United States, France and

the United Kingdom — three of the five permanent members on the Security Council — as well as Ireland and Albania, the sources said Thursday.

In 2017, the Security Council unanimously passed three sets of economic sanctions after

North Korea carried out nuclear and missile tests — a rare showing of unity for the often gridlocked body.

No joint declaration is expected after Monday's meeting, one diplomat said, although another added that statements are likely to be issued before or afterwards.

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), a state media outlet, said Wednesday's missile carried a "hypersonic gliding warhead" that "precisely hit a target 700 km (435 miles) away," without identifying the launcher.

The warhead also demonstrated a "new" capability, moving 120 kilometers laterally after it detached from the launcher to strike the target, it added.

The launch was the second reported test of what Pyongyang claimed were hypersonic gliding missiles, after a similar trial last September.— AFP ■

In Chavez's Venezuela fiefdom, a fight for political survival

VENEZUELA'S governing party is leaving nothing to chance in its bid to reclaim a fiefdom of ex-president Hugo Chavez which shocked the establishment by seemingly siding with the opposition in a recent election.

The western state of Barinas, controlled by the Chavez family for over two decades, voted in large numbers in November 21 regional elections for an outsider — opposition figure Freddy Superlano. The vote count was stopped by a court as

Superlano claimed what would have been the first defeat in Barinas since 1998 for the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), now run by President Nicolas Maduro.

Superlano is an ally of opposition leader Juan Guaido, recognized by the United States and dozens of other governments as Venezuela's true president over Maduro, whose 2018 reelection was not seen as legitimate by part of the international community. As the opposition participated in regional and lo-

cal elections for the first time since 2017, Superlano took the lead over incumbent Barinas governor Argenis Chavez — the deceased ex-president's older brother, who subsequently resigned his post.

But the opposition triumph was not to last. The ballot count was suspended in the region of 870,000 voters and Venezuela's Supreme Court — accused of pro-government bias by the opposition and observers — annulled the preliminary result a week later.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan regime nearing end in 'revolution': dissident leader

The regime that has ruled Kazakhstan since the fall of the Soviet Union is nearing its end in a popular revolution where people have for the first time unified to express their anger, a France-based opposition leader said on Thursday.

Mukhtar Ablyazov, a former energy minister and bank chairman wanted in his home country on a range of charges, in an interview with AFP also described a Russian-led military intervention as an "occupation" and urged Kazakhs to stand up to the foreign forces.

Kazakhstan, often seen as the most stable state in Central Asia under its first post-Soviet President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his successor Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, has been riven by its most serious protests that have left dozens dead and hundreds detained.

"I think the regime is at its end. It is only a question now of how long," Ablyazov, who leads the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (QDT) party and has vociferously encouraged the protests through his social media channels, told AFP in Paris.

"Literally in three days a revolution took place, and it is really a revolution in the public consciousness... and people understood that they are not weak," he added.—AFP ■

Ukraine court freezes ex-president's assets in treason probe

A Kyiv court on Thursday ordered the assets and property of Ukraine's former leader Petro Poroshenko seized as part of a treason investigation, the prosecutor-general's office said.

Poroshenko, 56, is accused of helping pro-Russian separatists, who control parts of two of the ex-Soviet country's eastern regions, sell coal to the Ukrainian capital.

"The court decided to seize the suspect's property" including real estate and his shares in a number of private companies, the prosecutor's office said in a statement.

Poroshenko, who is currently abroad and has vowed to return to Ukraine on 17 January, has not yet commented on the court's decision.

The former leader has denied the charges and said the treason investigation was orchestrated by the current President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Ahead of the court's decision Thursday, Poroshenko wrote on Facebook that he "will return to Kyiv" to appear in front of a judge "not to defend myself against Zelensky, but to defend Ukraine from incompetent leadership".

Poroshenko is suspected of aiding the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics in selling some 1.5 billion hryvnia (\$55 million, 48 million euros) worth of coal to Kyiv between 2014 and 2015.

He would face up to 15 years in prison if convicted in the treason case. In April 2019, Poroshenko was trounced in a presidential election by Zelensky, a comedian with no previous political experience.—AFP ■

All ASEAN-level competitions scheduled for this year

THE ASEAN Football Federation plans to hold all ASEAN-level matches this year as usual, the tourney organizers said.

In 2020, all competitions were cancelled, and in 2021, only the ASEAN Suzuki Cup and the ASEAN Futsal Club could be held, and most of the remaining competitions could not be held.

The ASEAN Football Federation (MFF) will host several youth competitions this year, in-

cluding the ASEAN Suzuki Cup, ASEAN Women's Championship and Futsal competitions as well.

The first edition of the ASEAN U-23 Championship will be held in Cambodia in February this year and the ASEAN Futsal Club Championship will be held next in August.

In addition, ASEAN U-19 Men's Football Championship, ASEAN U-19 Women's Championship, and ASEAN U-16 Men's

and Women's Championships will be held in the mid-year, ASEAN football body said.

The fixtures for the ASEAN Women's Championship and the Suzuki Cup will be announced later.

Myanmar football teams are competing regularly at the ASEAN level and will take their special training for the ASEAN U-23 Championship in February. — Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM ■

Trippier becomes first signing under Newcastle's new Saudi owners

ENGLAND defender Kieran Trippier became Newcastle's first signing under their new Saudi owners on Friday after completing his move from Atletico Madrid, with more arrivals expected in the January transfer window.

The full-back has moved back to the Premier League for an undisclosed fee, understood to be in the region of £12 million (\$16 million) plus add-ons.

The former Tottenham defender has signed a two-and-a-half-year contract and his arrival signals the launch of a new era under Eddie Howe, who was appointed as manager at St James' Park in November. "Newcastle United are delighted to confirm the signing of England full-back Kieran Trippier from Atletico Madrid for an undisclosed fee," the club said in a statement.

"The 31-year-old has agreed



England defender Kieran Trippier has joined Newcastle from Atletico Madrid. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE**

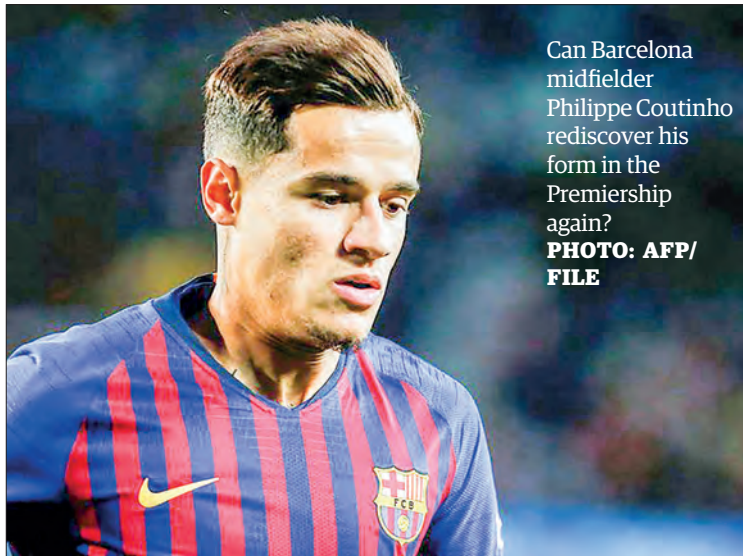
terms on a two-and-a-half-year deal and becomes the first senior signing under the club's owners and head coach Eddie Howe."

Speaking at his pre-match press conference, Howe insisted Trippier had not joined the club for financial reasons, and is hop-

ing his arrival paves the way for others to join.

"Kieran hasn't come for the financial benefits of the contract," said Howe, whose team host English third-tier side Cambridge United in the third round of the FA Cup on Saturday.—AFP ■

Philippe Coutinho joins Aston Villa on loan from Barcelona



Can Barcelona midfielder Philippe Coutinho rediscover his form in the Premiership again? **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

celona have agreed terms for Philippe Coutinho to spend the rest of this season on loan at Villa Park," Villa said in a brief statement.

"The agreement, which is subject to the player completing a medical and receiving a work permit, also includes an option to buy and Philippe will travel to Birmingham in the next 48 hours."

Coutinho, 29, joined Barcelona from Liverpool in 2018 but has struggled for form at the Nou Camp and spent the 2019/20 season on loan at Bayern Munich.

He will link up with Villa boss Steven Gerrard, with whom he played at Liverpool.—AFP ■

PHILIPPE Coutinho is joining Aston Villa on loan for the rest of the season from Barcelona, the

Premier League club announced on Friday.

"Aston Villa and FC Bar-

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

Outside Djokovic 'hotel', Serbian supporters rub shoulders with refugee advocates



A supporter of Djokovic is held back by police outside the detention centre. **PHOTO: AFP**

AS rain pelts the crowd outside a Melbourne detention centre believed to be housing Novak Djokovic, shouts of "free Novak" alternate with "free refugees" as fans stand alongside activists and anti-vaccine protesters.

The vaccine-sceptic tennis ace was held after arrival in Australia this week — his visa revoked for failing to meet the country's tough pandemic restrictions.

In the crowd of about 50 people that gathered for a second day of protest Friday, some displayed larger-than-life posters of the star while others held anti-vaccine placards and another group called "Grandmothers for Refugees" voiced support for detained migrants. Draped in flags and playing nationalistic songs, some Serbians celebrated Orthodox Christmas Day at the protest.

"He's our blood, we are supporting our nation. He's not getting a Christmas and is stuck in a detention centre," said Djokovic supporter Tara Aksentijevic.—AFP ■