

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Saturday, 23 April 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.

A speech on peace delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

7th Waning of Tagu 1384 ME
22 April 2022

Esteemed ethnic armed organizations and people,

The government and the Tatmadaw have firmly granted for building the Union country based on democracy and federal system that ethnic armed organizations have been demanding in successive eras. The Diamond Jubilee Independence Day falls on coming 4 January 2023. Current events prove that ethnic people have not thoroughly enjoyed the essence of 75-year independence yet. The root cause depends on the ethnic armed conflicts based on different opinions.

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SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends opening of 57th Myanmar Gems Emporium

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attended the ceremony to open the 57th Myanmar Gems Emporium at Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The Senior General and party viewed the video clip on the production process of jewellery items and preparations to hold the 57th Myanmar Gems Emporium. The Senior General instructed officials to arrange the sales of pearl and jewellery items at the current emporium by foreign currencies US dollar, euro and yuan and in the coming emporiums by Hong Kong dollar and Thai baht in addition to US dollar, euro and yuan.

The Senior General and party viewed lots of jade, gems and pearl displayed inside the Mani Yadana Hall and uncut jade lots, and the 35-tonne largest jade stone outside the hall.

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SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing looks into the 35-tonne largest jade stone at the 57th Myanmar Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

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A speech on peace delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

7th Waning of Tagu 1384 ME
22 April 2022

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Only when we solve it will the people firmly enjoy the essence of democracy and independence. Hence, I have told that 2022 is set as the year of peace, and we will strive to end the armed conflicts across the nation.

As it is necessary to implement such a process practically, I invite leaders of the ethnic armed organizations to hold the meeting. I myself will meet with all groups. And then, the representatives who are in the capacity of the State Administration Council members will hold talks with them.

If necessary, further talks will take place. The leaders themselves and two members from each ethnic armed organization are to attend the talks. Those candidates who attend the talks must be enlisted no later than 9 May 2022.

After holding coordination between both sides, I'd like to say that the date of the talks will be set. We all will join hands together in holding talks honestly and transparently to enable all ethnic people to enjoy the essence of peace and development.

I'd like to urge all to cooperate with us to serve the interests of all citizens of the Union.

Thank you all.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Statement on Peace

7th Waning of Tagu 1384 ME
22 April 2022

THE Tatmadaw has ceased the fire until the end of 2022, leading to the enduring peace that the entire people are longing for.

The State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services said that the upcoming 4 January 2023 is Diamond Jubilee Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Measures will be conducted to end the armed conflicts across the nation. Moreover, leaders of ethnic armed organizations are also invited to discuss frankly in-person to effectively and practically conduct peace processes.

During the invitation period for peace talks and in the progress of talks, ethnic armed organizations should not make activities that can affect peace, such as recruitment, operations, land expansion and attacks on bases and headquarters of security members who are serving duties for security and the rule of law. If they do so, the Tatmadaw will take necessary actions in response to the attacks.

Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services

U Lwin Oo concurrently accredited as Ambassador of Myanmar to the Republic of Kazakhstan

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Lwin Oo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Russian Federation, concurrently as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated. 22nd of April 2022

First day of 57th Myanma Gems Emporium held in Nay Pyi Taw

THE 1st day of the 57th Myanma Gems Emporium was held yesterday at the Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw.

Starting in the morning, local and foreign jewellers were able to see pieces of pearl and jade lots on display inside the Mani Yadana Jade Hall. They also enjoyed the jade lots on display outside the hall, and proposed prices were put in tender boxes.

At the emporium, 2,000 jade lots, 330 pearl lots, and 120 gems lots, owned by the state, joint-venture companies and private companies, will be sold through an open tender system.

The pearl lots will be sold on 23 and 24 April; Gems lots will be sold on 22 and 24 April and Jade lots will be sold on 26 and 28 April.

In this emporium, pieces



The first day of the 57th Gems Emporium in progress.

of pearls are priced in US dollars, and foreign jewellers can pay in US dollars and Yuan, and local jewellers can pay in

US dollars, Yuan, and Kyat. Gems and Jade lots are priced in Euros and can be purchased in US dollars, Yuan and Euros.

In addition, gems and jewellery shops are opened in the Mani Yadana Jade Hall and are alive with shoppers.

The gems emporiums have been held successfully since 1964 to generate foreign income, and this 57th gems emporium will be held from 22 and 28 April. – Myo Satt Thit/GNLM



Gems merchants view gem stones. PHOTOS: KO KO KYAW

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends opening of 57th Myanmar Gems Emporium

FROM PAGE-1

The largest jade stone was cut from the 308-tonne jade rock excavated from block-2 being operated in mutual interest with the State in Metlinchaung mine in Lonkhin-Phakant gem land. It is a quality utility jade stone, and its reserve price is calculated as more than 5 million euros.

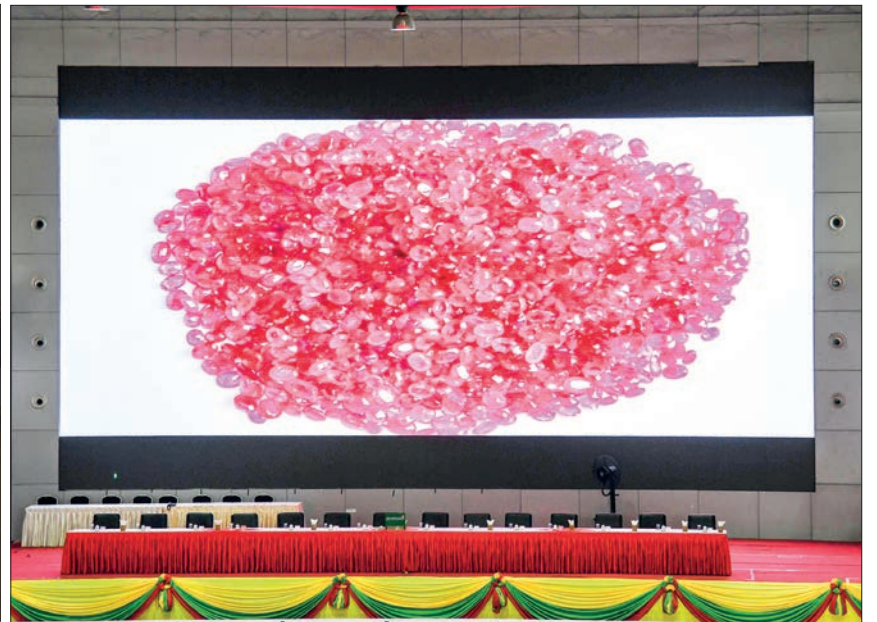
The emporium will be held from 22 to 28 April with the display of 330 lots of pearl, 120 lots of gems and 2,000 lots of jade to local and foreign gem merchants through open tender under the rules and reg-



ulations. The showrooms are opened in the hall to showcase finished jewellery items of private businesspersons for sale.

The reserve prices are set for lots of pearls in US dollars. Foreign gem merchants need to pay US dollars or yuan for the purchase of items, and local gem merchants US dollar, yuan and kyat. Floor prices are also set for lots of gems and jade in euro. Gem merchants may pay US dollars, euro, and yuan to purchase these items.

The Senior General inspected the improvement of the jade park and attended to



the needs for the reports of Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation and officials.

The jade park, located on 8.26 acres of land, was inaugurated in 2010. A total of 5,117 pieces of uncut jade stones and 14,252 other uncut stones are allotted in the park. In accord with the guidance of the Senior General, the park has been upgraded as of February 2022. — MNA



Union Ministers U Maung Maung Ohn, U Aung Naing Oo give virtual interview to foreign news agencies

CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY



Interviewers – Foreign Correspondents.

MINISTERS U Maung Maung Ohn and U Aung Naing Oo replied to questions raised by reporters from AP, Reuters, the South China Morning Post, Straits Times, China Central Television (CCTV), the People's Daily and Xinhua via videoconferencing on 21 April.

In his opening speech, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn expressed his delightedness to meet them and spoke words of thanks for his interest in the affairs of Myanmar.

He said he would give interview along with Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations. The statement would be released after 12:15 pm on 21 April. Generally, Myanmar receives significant development in the energy and economic sectors. Oil and gas prices, triggered by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have risen sharply in the world today. The country faced poor development infrastructure, decreasing Myanmar kyat prices, financial issues and other impacts due to the attacks on power grids by the terrorists.

Nowadays, it needs to resolve the energy to ensure the stability of the State. At the same time, the new economic sanctions against Myanmar

have been imposed recently. Most media also highlighted that some foreign oil and gas companies left Myanmar. Therefore, the two Union Ministers will reply to the questions during this interview.

Then, Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo expressed his for meeting with the media and said he would discuss the current economic status of Myanmar and the energy sector, especially the exchange rate that the media are most interested in. The current government faces different challenges, not like previous governments. Economic sanctions and unstable conditions in some regions and states affect the economy.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled to a certain extent. The state economy faced delays in economic growth due to the pandemic, and now it is slower than before.

The current government is focusing on providing the country with the electricity it currently needs. It is working to stabilize the country's economy while the energy sector is a priority. It also tries to implement the projects in the energy sector as soon as possible. New projects are also being invited.

The government will hold the election in 2023 as planned despite the challenges. It will

continue to strive for economic stability and development in Myanmar. He also thanked the media for their participation.

The reporter from the Straits Times said that it was known that new investors are being sought in the oil and natural gas sector. Currently, such a press release is not suitable for investors. The reporter asked: why does it release such information? In reply to the question, Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo said the instability of the local currency kyat exchange rate harms some businesses. So, such a statement was released on 4 April as part of the initial pace in order to stabilize the currency exchange rate. The government has formed the foreign exchange supervisory committee. After releasing the statement, it much affected the businesses but triggered criticisms. Hence, the committee supervises the release of information and the foreign currency exchange process. The committee holds meetings three times a week to discuss currency exchange in the country and seek answers for problems in coordination with relevant ministries and those from the economic community. The committee held a meeting with businesspersons

led by UMFCCI the other day and helped them seek ways to solve their problems. After the Central Bank of Myanmar has issued its announcement, efforts are being made to ease the restrictions for local businesses as much as possible. The committee held the meetings three times last week to adopt decisions for exemption of some foreign-invested businesses, especially companies in special economic zones, from the announcement of the Central Bank of Myanmar.

Moreover, a decision was adopted to grant the exemption for the foreign-invested businesspersons allowed by the Myanmar Investment Commission from the announcement of CBM. So also, foreign embassies, INGOs and NGOs will enjoy the exemption from the notification. As those from the committee understand that the announcement may have some harmful impacts, they solve the best solution by doing the daily analysis. As now is time for the start of the reform period, efforts are being made to arrange the best solution for all-inclusive persons.

In reply to the question of the Straits Times about whether the exemption is for new investors, current investors or not and will it need to ap-

ply for exemption and how to do so, Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo said it includes new foreign investors and current investors. Emphasis is placed on protecting these enterprises against extra impacts triggered by the announcement of the CBM. The supervisory committee always conducts the analyses during the reform process to have progress and success.

The reporter from the Straits Times asked: will the announcement be persistent for a period? Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo replied that it depends on the situation of progress. It was an announcement of CBM, and the committee formed by the government can give guarantees for exemption depending on the situation. Depending on the stability of the Myanmar currency kyat exchange rate, the prohibitions may be lifted.

With regard to the question of stability of currency exchange rate, Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo said in reviewing the instability of currency exchange rate, the exchange rate of US dollar was set as K1,350 per dollar in February 2021. Last month, the currency exchange rate reached K2,000-K2,050 per dollar. It can be seen that the currency exchange rate was very high. Hence, the CBM released the announcement for stabilizing the currency exchange rate.

The reporter from the AP news agency asked whether the news on signing the agreement with the company of Finland for the implementation of two power plants based on natural gas and solar power is correct or not and asked about the performance of energy projects with China. Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo said there

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Union Ministers U Maung Maung Ohn, U Aung Naing Oo give virtual interview . . .

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are many solar power projects. Some of them are to be launched, and some are under construction. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy signed the agreements on these projects. The majority of projects are located in central Myanmar, and there are 13 solar power electrification projects. The medium-scale hydropower projects will be implemented to electrify the country at full capacity. Investors from China submitted proposals for some projects in the previous government eras. But the meetings are still in progress. He hoped that the Ministry of Electricity and Energy would approve the implementation of the projects.

One more question was raised regarding the departure of LNG projects and energy companies. Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo said that it is right that LNG projects were suspended for the unprecedented high prices. They were stopped for no cost-effectiveness in some previous months. But a company submitted its offer to the government for putting an investment in MIC for an LNG project. It is expected that the MIC will approve it in the future. Electricity for foreign-invested projects will be taken from LNG, and the projects will go on. If the prices are down, the suspended LNG power plants will resume operations. There is no problem for the departure of energy companies such as Petronas. And remaining share-holders will take positions under the agreement of rules for operating the works. Hence, oil and natural gas projects will still be operated.

Concerning the continuous implementation of the project worth US\$2.4 billion, Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo said that as the MIC has approved the implementation of the project in Metlinchaing of Ayeyawady Region, the work process will go ahead. It is a heavy energy project.

Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo replied to the question raised by the reporter from the Reuters news agency about whether it can take



Foreign Correspondents.

exemption from the currency exchange rate notification. He said embassies from Thailand, Singapore and Japan, in addition to the US and other western countries operating the invested works in Myanmar, requested to take the exemption for their companies from the announcement. The foreign exchange supervisory committee held the meeting. It adopted three decisions for immunity for all embassies to Myanmar and all UN agencies, their companies which have invested in the special economic zones, and all MIC approved foreign-invested businesses. For instance, as PTT is an invested work approved by MIC, it will have the chance of exemption.

As Myanmar wishes investment, it does not have the purpose of harming the invested works. Hence, the MIC approved works, and the works operated at Thilawa SEZ will have the exemption.

Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo also replied to the question about the Myanmar-India direct payment process, saying that both sides hold meetings. In contrast, the CBM will continuously take responsibility for the coordination sector.

He also answered the question of whether the lessening of electricity is based on the high price of LNG and the blowing up of terrorists on national grids or not and how to take action. He said the high LNG price is one of the points for lessening electricity. Some LNG plants suspended operations.

For further points, the tow-



ers were broken down. So, the government is still repairing the towers. On the other hand, solar energy power plants are being implemented. One more way is being sought to take natural gas from neighbouring countries.

Regarding the question on the currency exchange rate and export items, Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo said exporters are difficult in foreign exchange transactions and Myanmar kyat and taking out Myanmar kyat from banks. Due to the instability of the currency exchange rate, they are difficult to operate their businesses. Hence, the CBM set a rate for ensuring the smooth process of these businesses.

But some exporters committed criticism. Accordingly,

To ensure a smooth process, the standard operating procedures-SOP will be released this week. If so, they will do their businesses smoothly.

In reply to the questions raised by AP News Agency: Does Myanmar face a shortage of natural gas or fuel due to the withdrawal of foreign companies to end a joint venture with Myanmar? How obvious is the problem? How will the State Administration Council manage it? Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn said some foreign investors ended the joint venture with Myanmar and the country currently faces a shortage of natural gas and fuel. The rumour spreading on a social network that there is a fuel shortage in the Thilawa oil storage tank terminal is false information. The country's

fuel storage tanks due to the Thingyan holidays.

There would be no shortage of fuel stocks. The State Administration Council arranges to make a Production Sharing Contract-PSC with local/foreign oil companies to explore oil and gas from 21 vacant onshore and 21 offshore blocks, and the international bids are also invited with the permission of SAC.

The offshore gas drilling projects are being conducted by making PSC contracts with foreign oil companies such as Yadana, Yedagun, Shwe and Zawtika projects.

The Yadana gas field produced 21990.90 million cubic feet in December 2021 and transmitted to local and foreign countries during the Partial Shutdown period. The production/transmission of gas was suspended between 31 December 2021 and 2 January 2022. It currently transmits to Thailand as usual.

The Yedagun gas field daily exports to Thailand via 24 inches pipelines starting in 2000. The Shwe gas field in the Rakhine offshore basin has transmitted gas to China since July 2013, and the project will be ended in 2043.

The field yielded 16,092.99 million cubic feet in December 2021. The Zawtika project in the Gulf of Mottama has been



Foreign Correspondents.

the meetings are held three times a week to review the work processes. Efforts are made to lessen the worse impacts on businesses.

stocks held 45 million gallons of petrol and 70 million gallons of diesel. Two fuel oil tankers have docked at the Depot, and fuel oil cannot be unloaded into



transmitted gas to China starting in August 2014. It produced 9,140.88 million cubic feet in December 2021.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Major tour destinations under complete security, provided with new picturesque views, healthcare services as tourism industry plays a vital role in the country: MoI Union Minister

THE country is unstable in some areas, it is fully secured in significant destinations. It has been prepared in the tourism industry with new locations and complete health services for more than two years, Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn elaborated during the virtual interview with China Central Television (CCTV) news agency.

In his reply, the Union Minister said the domestic tourism industry was reopened as the first phase, and international tourism was resumed starting on 17 April 2022 following COVID-19 health rules. As you know, the economic status has declined

worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and tourism is one of the most affected sectors.

The tourism industry earns foreign income for the country, and it is also a non-smoke industry, especially it creates various job opportunities for the youths and women. The COVID-19 disease is significantly controlled, and it has already made arrangements by cooperating with the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and the ministries concerned. Currently, the preparations are being completed for the international tourists.

Moreover, the tourism industry plays a vital role for the

country, and it also profoundly invites all the countries and the neighbouring country, China. Since the beginning, the arrangements are also made to ensure proper tours by discussing with the consulate general in Mandalay.

Myanmar hosted more than 3.5 million tourists in 2019 (January to October), while there were only more than 800,000 in 2020 (January to October), and it saw a 75 per cent drop in tourist arrivals compared to the previous year, according to the data of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism released in November 2020. — Htun Htun/GNLM



MoI Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn.

MoHT Union Minister attends WTTC-organized 21st Global Tourism Conference

OPENING ceremony of the 21st Global Tourism Conference organized by the World Travel and Tourism Council-WTTC was held in Manila, the Philippines, on 21 April.

Officials led by Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung attended the conference through videoconferencing.

The conference was also joined by government officials, private entrepreneurs and experts from various countries.

The theme of the event was “Rediscovering Travel” to promote sustainable development in all sectors, share its achievements in the future,

and address the challenges in society, environment, and economy based on the common compassion, values, and goals among those working in the tourism industry.

The conference discussed the matters related to developing new ways to resume tourism, establishing the fund, connecting with confidence while travelling, achieving and innovating tourism objectives, smoothing the transportation sector, assessments of the advanced tourism market and tourism reshaping.

The second day of the conference continued yesterday morning.

Officials from the tourism sector and international tourism experts participated in the discussion, which focused on the resumption of tourism, humanitarian actions, and sustainable development of the industry in the future.

Myanmar, which is rich in tourism resources and attractions, is planning to attract international tourists following the COVID-19 rules and regulations and will be able to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in the future by incorporating the findings of this global tourism conference. — MNA



Construction ex-deputy minister U Kyaw Lin, ex-directors-general U Aung Myint Oo, U Ye Min Zaw, U Nay Aung Ye Myint receive sentences under Anti-Corruption Law

ANTI-CORRUPTION Commission inspected the complaints against the ex-deputy minister U Kyaw Lin.

According to inspections, U Kyaw Lin allowed ex-DG of the Highways Department U Aung Myint Oo to spend more than K562 million fund of maintenance without any exact budget data in repairing from the Monywa-Yargyi-Kalewa Road milepost (85/0) to Kyabin Village without following the Myanmar regulations on financial management issued by the Ministry of Planning and Finance Notification No 35/2017, while he was arranging to compete as Minkin Township Pyithu Hluttaw MP of Sagaing Region. Ex-irector-general of the Building Department U Nay Aung Ye Myint also constructed a new KyaukOh Bridge in Minkin Township spending K120 million without any permission from the capital budget. It caused losses to the State budget.

U Kyaw Lin also received K3 million from the 16 Special Building Task Forces staff through ex-director-general U Ye Min Zaw of the Building Department to construct NLD District Office in July 2020 when he served as Deputy Minister for Construction.

When he arranged to compete as Minkin Township

Pyithu Hluttaw MP of Sagaing Region, he paid a visit to the monasteries in Minkin Township and donated cash and rice bags, and he accepted 68 rice bags from the ministry staff without paying the costs.

He got more than K36.3 million cash donations for the election campaign from his personal assistant, construction employees and companies and used it to buy party flags, shirts, caps and pamphlets. He received K60 million from two construction companies via his personal assistant. So he was charged under the Anti-Corruption Law Section 55 while ex-directors-general U Aung Myint Oo, U Ye Min Zaw and U Nay Aung Ye Myint under Anti-Corruption Law Section 55/63 at Mandalay Region High Court on 14 December 2021. The High Court accepted 10 cases from 26/2021 to 35/2021. The court sentenced ex-construction deputy minister U Kyaw Lin to 20 years in prison under Section 55 of Anti-Corruption Law, while the former director-general U Aung Myint Oo to 4 years in prison with labour under Section 55/63 of Anti-Corruption Law, ex-directors-general U Ye Min Zaw and U Nay Aung Ye Myint to two years each in prisons with labour under Section 55/63 of Anti-Corruption Law. — MNA

LOCAL BUSINESS

China makes high offer for Myanmar quality peanut

THE prices of Myanmar's quality peanuts exported to China touched a high of K3,800 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilograms) due to the domestic market's lack of supply and a hike in imported edible oil prices.

According to the Mandalay wholesale market, the price of peanuts remains on the upward trend following the strong domestic and foreign demand.

Tracking the price hike of imported palm oil and Kyat depreciation against the US dollar, the price of peanut oil rises tremendously to over K8,500 per viss and sesame oil fetches K8,000 per viss in the domestic market.

The consumer's behaviour has changed and turned to peanut oil due to the health bene-



Tracking the price hike of imported palm oil and Kyat depreciation against the US dollar, the price of peanut oil rises tremendously to over K8,500 per viss and sesame oil fetches K8,000 per viss in the domestic market.

fits amid increased imported edible oil prices.

Myanmar's peanuts are

mostly exported to China. Between 1 October 2021 and 31 March 2022 of the past

mini-budget period, approximately \$50 million worth of over 54,467 tonnes of peanuts were

shipped to the external market, Customs Department's statistics showed.

Myanmar has exported US\$190.7 million worth more than 160,776 tonnes of peanuts to the foreign trade partners last financial year 2020-2021, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The domestic consumption of edible oil is estimated at 1 million tonnes per year. The local cooking oil production is just about 400,000 tonnes. Myanmar imports about 700,000 tonnes of cooking oil annually to meet the self-sufficiency in the domestic market. The Agriculture Department also extends the sown acreage of edible oil crops such as sesame, sunflower, soybean and peanuts. — KK/GNLM

Manufacturing sector attracts 40 enterprises in past mini-budget period



The office of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

FORTY out of 49 MIC-permitted foreign enterprises put investments in the manufacturing sector, pumping an estimated capital of US\$202.667 million in the past mini-budget period (October 2021-March 2022), according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration-DICA's statistics.

According to Myanmar Investment Commission, the manufacturing enterprises and businesses that need a large labour force are prioritized.

Some labour-intensive

enterprises face financial hardship amid the COVID-19 negative impacts and the political changes. As per the HIS Markit's September report, the industry is returning to normality after the COVID-19 vaccination programme for workers.

Myanmar's manufacturing sector is primarily concentrated in garments and textiles produced on the Cutting, Making, and Packaging basis, and it contributes to the country's GDP to a certain extent.

Myanmar has drawn foreign direct investment of more

than \$647.127 million from 49 enterprises during the October-March period. The majority of the enterprises eye the manufacturing sector. Additionally, the agriculture sector drew one project worth \$5 million. The livestock and fishery sector attracted two enterprises with more than \$19 million in investments. Power, construction and hotels, and tourism industries have one new project in the past mini-budget period and three other enterprises invested in other service sectors. — KK/GNLM

Chilli prices jump to over K5,000 per viss

THE prices of chilli pepper (Shankyun and Moe Htaung varieties) fetch up to over K5,000 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilograms).

The prices increased from K4,500 to K5,400 per viss in early March. High input costs such as fertilizers and fuel oil for farming machinery are attributed to the price hike.

Cultivation of chilli varieties that China primarily demands costs K2.5 million per acre on its farmland and K2.5 million for rental management. The chilli can be harvested every 15 days for six months. Yield is estimated at 100 visses per acre in the early season. It

can produce 400-500 visses at maximum.

Traders shared their opinions that the prices of chilli pepper are expected to remain high on the back of solid demand following high input costs and fuel oil. Myanmar's chilli pepper is primarily conveyed to Thailand and China via cross-border trade channels, while it is shipped to Viet Nam through maritime trade.

It is commonly grown in Ayeyawady, Mandalay and Magway regions and Shan State.

The export varieties of fresh chilli are 692, 777, 999, Demon, Sunshine and Lucky One. — NN/GNLM



The prices increased from K4,500 to K5,400 per viss in early March. High input costs such as fertilizers and fuel oil for farming machinery are attributed to the price hike.

OPINION

Be rid of waste from minds

DON'T be surprised to know things if you know your minds are full of waste in various forms. It is really. These wastes are in the forms of tangible and intangible ones as well as natural and manmade ones.

The tangible form of waste can be seen in all parts of the planet Earth. The global people dispose the tangible wastes such as decayed and damaged ones, useless ones, dirty and dangerous ones, and so on. These can be seen in the touchable forms in our environs on a daily basis, disturbing the minds of all. Hence, all the persons are trying to get rid of these forms

of waste from their minds.

The intangible forms of waste are based on the daily acts and malpractices which may cause dirt to the minds of persons. For instance, most of the persons cannot appreciate others' success and progress, but they are eager to look at the disadvantages and missing chances of others. If so, they are satisfied with tasting the losses and sufferings of others.

Tangible and intangible forms of waste can be easily seen in society. As such, it can be made to the conclusion that most of the persons are unable to appreciate the good deeds and advantages of others but are delighted at the bad impacts of others. How terrible it is! It is astonishing that their rude minds are manipulating the nature of society as a daily routine.

Indeed, all the people in different societies need to culture their minds in order to bear good deeds and acts to the future. Somebody shall bring things they wish. They have chances to discard the things they don't want if they keenly wish. Actually, the lifespan of everybody is too short.

They all have been struggling for a period of fewer than 100 years. All the scenes of acts committed by those persons are shown in a rapid manner. It is because the rebirth called vicious circle is an unexpected situation.

All of our minds must be kept soft, clear and clean. It is necessary to get rid of waste from the minds. These minds must stay away from envy and jealousy but must be used in shaping a prosperous society. So also, such minds must be applied in releasing the doves to build a peaceful society in harmony with all diversity.



WHO 'strongly recommends' Pfizer's Covid pill

THE World Health Organization said Friday it "strongly recommended" Pfizer's Covid-19 antiviral pill Paxlovid for patients with milder forms of the disease who were still at a high risk of hospitalization.

However the UN agency warned it was "extremely concerned" that the inequality in access seen with Covid vaccines would again leave low- and middle-income countries "pushed to the end of the queue".

US pharma giant Pfizer's combination of nirmatrelvir and ritonavir was the "superior choice" of treatment for unvaccinated, elderly or immunocompromised people with Covid, the WHO's experts said in the BMJ medical journal.

For the same patients, the WHO also made a "conditional (weak) recommendation" of the antiviral drug remdesivir made by US biotech firm Gilead — which it had previously recommended



South Korean workers transport cargo containing Pfizer's antiviral COVID-19 pill, Paxlovid, at a cargo terminal of the Incheon International Airport in Incheon on 13 January 2022. PHOTO: AFP

against.

The WHO recommended Paxlovid over remdesivir, as well as over Merck's molnupiravir pill and monoclonal antibodies.

Pfizer's oral treatment prevents hospitalization more than the "available alternatives, has

fewer concerns with respects to harms than molnupiravir, and is easier to administer than intravenous remdesivir and antibodies," the WHO's experts said.

The new recommendation was based on the findings of two trials involving almost 3,100 pa-

tients which showed that Paxlovid reduced the risk of hospital admission by 85 per cent.

The trials also "suggested no important difference in mortality" and "little or no risk of adverse effects leading to drug discontinuation".

The recommendation applies to people over the age of 18, but not to pregnant or breastfeeding women.

It also does not apply to patients with a low risk of complications from the disease, because the benefit would be minimal.

The WHO's experts also declined to give an opinion for patients with severe forms of the disease, due to a lack of data.

Limitations and inequities

The WHO stressed the limitations of such antiviral treatments. "The medicine can only be administered while the disease is at its early stages," they said.

This means the patients must quickly test positive and be prescribed the pill by a doctor — all of which can pose obstacles for low- and middle-income countries, the WHO said.

Yet Covid pills have been seen as a potentially huge step in ending the pandemic as they

can be taken at home, rather than in hospital.

Patients must start taking their Paxlovid pills within five days of the onset of symptoms — the course then lasts five days.

Remdesivir can be taken within seven days of symptoms setting in, but it is administered intravenously over three days.

Questions about cost

The WHO called on Pfizer to "make its pricing and deals more transparent" for Paxlovid.

Lisa Hedman, the WHO's senior advisor on access to medicines, said that radio station NPR reported a full course of Paxlovid costs \$530 in the United States. Another source unconfirmed by WHO gave the price of \$250 in an upper-middle income country.

Remdesivir meanwhile costs \$520, Hedman said, but generic versions made by companies in India sell for \$53-\$64.

SOURCE: AFP

Towards Powerful Agriculture with food self-sufficiency and big exports of agricultural and marine products

By Suzuka Yoshida

I WROTE last time that the SDGs have a great influence on the policies of countries around the world. To achieve this, not only Japanese companies but also consumers felt social pressure and began to live a life conscious of SDGs. However, consumers do not understand everything about what their usual behaviour meets or violates the goals of the SDGs, and some people are confused. Little by little, attention has begun to be focused on the SDGs activities that can be done. That is self-sufficient in everyday food and also a counter-measure against climate change.

Japan's energy self-sufficiency rate was 11.2 per cent, and its food self-sufficiency rate was 37 per cent last year. In many cases, feed such as hay and corn used as feed for domestically raised cattle is imported from the United States. The depreciation of the yen and the exchange rate has been added to this, leading to soaring

feed prices. On 19 April 2022, it was 127.65 yen to the dollar, approaching 128.15 yen in 1988. It was the level 34 years ago. Some foodstuffs have begun to stagnate due to the inability to fly over Russia. The prices of foods made from wheat flour, cheese, pork and beef purchased from all over the world are 1.2 to 1.5 times higher than a year ago. According to the idea of food mileage, Japanese food uses carbon dioxide by far among developed countries. Then suddenly, a movement was caused to improve the low self-sufficiency rate of food and energy for domestic consumption and use more domestic ingredients. It is also in line with the SDGs' goals of "LIFE BELOW WATER" and "LIFE ON LAND" and not emitting carbon dioxide as "CLIMATE ACTION".

Local production for local consumption

The Japanese private sector is trying to promote the use of do-

mestic ingredients for domestic consumption. The concept of so-called "local production for local consumption" is the idea of consuming locally produced products locally. For example, locally produced rice is mixed and used with flour when making bread. Substitute "Shinshu salmon" (a farmed variety of rainbow trout and brown trout crossed using biotechnology, which does not lay eggs) rather than Norwegian salmon. The price is somewhat higher for domestic products, but it can provide a stable supply and increase the income of local farmers. If this is the case, even if the price rises somewhat, the people will be convinced that it will bring profits to the country. This is a sign of major changes in Japanese agriculture. This is because the appreciation of the yen has taken root due to the Plaza Accord in 1985, and imported agricultural products are cheaper

to eat on a daily basis, which is no longer profitable for local farmers.

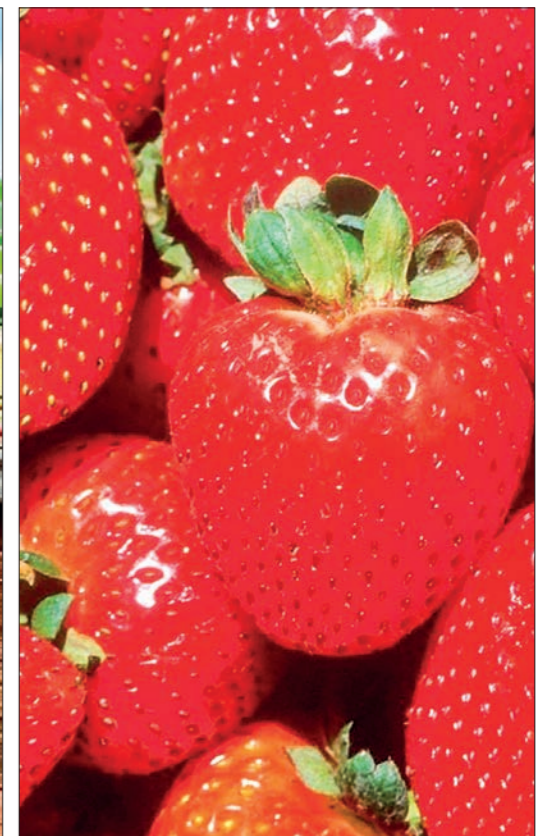
Japan had maintained its self-sufficient agricultural policy as much as possible until the Plaza Accord (an agreement in 1985 that allowed the governments of five developed countries to adjust the exchange rate to correct the dollar's appreciation. Since then, the yen has become stronger). However, after the Plaza Accord, the government and the public were convinced that it was cheaper to import all food than to make it within a country. And farmers got ageing gradually.

Export high value-added agricultural and marine products

There is another high-value-added product carefully produced by agriculture, fisheries, and forestry workers in Japanese agriculture. For instance, the cultivation of sweet and fresh fruits

such as peaches, strawberries and apples, thick and soft scallops, tea, Japanese sake and whiskey. Exports of agricultural and marine products increased 1.25 times in 2021. Joining the entry of younger generations in the production of agricultural and marine products for export, it has gradually become more active. It seems that overseas consumers put their priorities on its high quality. If the yen continues to depreciate, it will be even more appealing for both overseas consumers and domestic producers.

Having both agricultural and marine products for general consumption and high-value-added agricultural and marine products can meet a wide range of demands. About 77 per cent of Japan's land is forests and mountains, so small-scaled and carefully produced agriculture can be relevant to the local environment. The time has finally come for this value to live.



Sweet and big sweet potatoes can withstand rough road transportation, so every country hopes to export them (Left). Strawberries from Japan containing a lot of sugar with uniform grains need to be transported carefully (Right). Due to the well-developed logistics infrastructure in Japan, delicate fruits and seafood can be exported.

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of Service Organizations confirmed and appointed

1. The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of Dr Myat Nyunt as Rector of the University of Toungoo of the Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.

2. The State Administration Council has appointed U Htein Lin of the Ministry of Defence as Director-General of the International Affairs and Corruption Prevention Department of the Anti-Corruption Commission on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

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

MINISTRY of Commerce oversees the importation of necessary medical supplies and anti-COVID-19 devices critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities through trading posts and international airports and sea-ports.

A total of 13 tonnes of gloves via the Muse 105th-mile border trade post and 54

tonnes of masks via the Chinshwehaw border trade post were imported yesterday.

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

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinating with relevant departments to prevent COVID-19,

and contact persons for enquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website – www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA

Imported anti-Covid medical supplies are checked to transport them to where necessary.



6th ASEAN Youth Video Contest 2022 to be held

SIXTH ASEAN Youth Video Contest 2022 on the theme "Youth Addressing Challenges Together – Stay Dynamic in the Time of Pandemic: ACT now!" will be held. It was jointly supported by the ASEAN Foundation, the ASEAN Secretariat, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Cambodia).

Candidates must be aged 18 to 30, amateur filmmakers (not currently employed in the video production profession), and citizens of ASEAN Member States.

Candidates have to give the list via bit.ly/AYVC2022. If there are any questions, they can contact this email: secretariat@aseanfoundation.org and see <https://asean.org/aseanyouth2022-asean-declares-2022-as-the-year-of-asean-youth/>.

The submission deadline is on 8 May 2022 to <http://www.aseanyouthvideocontest.com>.

If there have any questions about the competition, candidates can contact the Youth Affairs Department by dialling 067-3413947, 09-777333545 and 09-425325133 within office hours. — MNA

MIFER ex-minister charged under Anti-Corruption Law gets 9-year prison sentence

INSPECTION team of the Anti-Corruption Commission inspected complaints against Union ex-minister U Thaug Tun for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations under the Anti-Corruption Law.

According to the inspections, former chairman of the Myanmar Investment Commission and former Union minister U Thaug Tun rented 9.220 acres of land owned by the Consumer Affairs Department of the Ministry of Commerce located

on Upper Pazundaung Road in Mingala Taungnyunt Township to his close private company for 30 years without calling tenders.

In such doing, he failed to follow the (land use permit notification relating to the Foreign Investment Law of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar) Notification No 39/2011 and the provisions to set the actual fee of state-owned land and building as per market prices of locations stated in the directive of the President's Office 3/2018,

President's Office Directive 1/2017. So, it caused losses of more than \$0.13 million in rental fees per year and more than \$8.9 million in premium costs. He was prosecuted under Section 55 of the Anti-Corruption Law at Mandalay Region High Court on 20 December 2021.

He was found guilty, and the court sentenced him to nine years in prison with labour for three cases under Section 55 of the Anti-Corruption Law yesterday. — MNA

17 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 22 April, total figure rises to 612,714

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **612,714** after **17** new cases were reported on 22 April 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **591,583** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at **19,434** without more casualties.—MNA

CRIME NEWS

Illegal timbers, vehicles, home appliances, consumer goods seized



Confiscated commodities at the Myanmar Industrial Port.

BY the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, action is being

taken against illicit trade under the law.

On 19 April, combined inspection teams led by the De-

partment of Customs in Taunggyi conducted inspections. They seized a motorcycle spare part, car cushion covers, home electrical appliances, and consumer goods (estimated value of K18,010,000) which were not declared in the Import Declaration, from a vehicle left for Mandalay from Kengtung on the 4th-mile Thittaw Combined Checkpoint.

On 20 April, an unregistered Toyota Probox (estimated value of K4,000,000) was also seized during an inspection conducted by the combined inspection team on duty at the Mayanchaung Permanent Checkpoint in Mon State. Similarly, motorcar spare parts and used clothes (estimated value of K52,035,802), which

were not declared in the Import Declaration, were seized at the Myanmar Industrial Port Container Checkpoint.

In addition, on 21 April, two vehicles carrying 1.2522 tonnes of illegal timbers (estimated at K26,375,660) were seized under the Forest Law in Hlegu Township. Similarly, 51.1734 tonnes of illegal timber (estimated at K10,549,683) were held under the Forest Law in Bago District, Toungoo District and Thayawady District yesterday. The action was taken under the Forest Law.

Therefore, the Anti-illegal Trade Steering Committee stated that 14 arrests (estimated at K110,971,145) were made on 19, 20, 21, and 22 April. — MNA

NEWS IN BRIEF

Shanghai's cautious awakening from Covid lockdown

WHEN Rui ventured out of her Shanghai apartment complex this week for the first time in 20 days, she found a city much altered since Covid-19 brought it to a standstill.

Barricaded storefronts and a makeshift hair salon in an empty swimming pool greeted her on a surreal foray into a Chinese commercial capital yawning back to life after lockdown.

Near her home, a few convenience stores had reopened, but blocked their entrances with stacks of shopping baskets and required customers to "stand outside and yell their orders", she told AFP. "Everyone has endured a lot during this time," she added.

The country's largest city ordered its entire population of 25 million to stay home last month, prompting scenes of panic buying and scuffles between residents and police.—AFP

S Korea reports 90,867 new COVID-19 cases

SOUTH Korea reported 90,867 new COVID-19 cases as of midnight Wednesday compared to 24 hours ago, raising the total number of infections to 16,674,045, the health authorities said Thursday. The daily caseload was down from 111,319 the previous day and far lower than 148,425 a week earlier, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA).

The health authorities believed that the daily caseload has been on the decline following the resurgence, driven by the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant and its subvariant BA.2, which peaked in mid-March.

Among the new cases, 31 were imported from overseas, lifting the total to 31,666.—ANI

Thailand drops on-arrival Covid-19 tests for vaccinated visitors



Passengers walk in the Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand, on 1 Feb 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA/RACHEN SAGEAMSAK

THAILAND on Friday announced the end of compulsory Covid-19 tests for vaccinated travellers, as the country steps up efforts to revive its pandemic-thumped tourism industry.

Tight border restrictions helped the kingdom limit infections and deaths in 2020 but brought the tourism sector — which had accounted for about

a fifth of the country's economy — to its knees.

Thailand's Covid-19 taskforce said that from 1 May, fully vaccinated visitors would no longer have to take a test on arrival and wait in a hotel room for the result.

Taskforce spokesperson Taweessin Visanuyothin said authorities will now only re-

quire arrivals to show proof of vaccination and health insurance coverage of at least \$10,000.

"This will propel the economic (recovery) momentum since we are a country that relies quite heavily on tourism," said Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha.

Unvaccinated travellers will either need to show a negative test result taken within 72 hours of departure for Thailand or undergo five days of hotel quarantine and a test.

Earlier this month, Thailand dropped the requirement for mandatory pre-arrival Covid tests.

Hotels, resorts and tour operators have long been pushing for hassle-free entry rules in an effort to lure more foreign tourists.

The kingdom faces an uphill battle to bounce back from its worst economic performance since the 1997 Asian financial crisis.—AFP

'Long live the samba!': Brazil holds first carnival since Covid

AFTER two long years without its frenetic festival of sparkling sequins, sultry samba and towering floats, Rio de Janeiro will hold its famed carnival parades Friday for the first time since Covid-19 hit Brazil.

In what is sure to be a giant, glittering spectacle of pandemic catharsis, thousands of dancers and drummers will descend on the iconic beach city's "Sambadrome," reclaiming the

carnival parade venue that was turned into a drive-through vaccination centre at the height of the health crisis.

The all-night parades by the city's top samba schools Friday and Saturday nights will be the first since February 2020, marking a turning point for hard-hit Brazil, where Covid-19 has claimed more than 660,000 lives, second only to the United States.—AFP



Revellers attend carnival celebrations in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. PHOTO: XINHUA

Possibility of new variants of Omicron in Delhi



Omicron raised alarm because of its sheer number of mutations. PHOTO: AFP

WITH the latest spike of more than 1000 COVID-19 cases in the national capital in a single day, the health experts believed that possibilities of new variants of the Omicron are emerging and they are being sequenced.

Delhi on Wednesday reported 1,009 fresh cases, the highest since 10 February, while the positivity rate is 5.70 per cent.

The top expert believes that

there are eight variants of Omicron and amongst them, one is dominating which can be held responsible for the surge in cases.

Speaking to ANI, Dr SK Sarin, Director, Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) said that there is a possibility of new variants of Omicron in Delhi while adding that the samples at the ILBS lab have been sequenced.

"There is a possibility that new variants are emerging of the Omicron and they are being sequenced," said Dr Sarin.

Dr Sarin further said that there are eight variants of Omicron and amongst them, one is dominating.

"I think by today at our institute ILBS many samples have been sequenced and I think there are eight variants of which one is now dominating, we will come to know slowly," he told ANI.

According to the sources to ANI, BA.2.12.1 is the variant which is a sibling of Omicron and is also responsible for the sudden surge in Delhi.

Dr Sarin warned and said that people need to be careful.

"I would suggest people should be very careful. There is a fear that children may get infected because they are not adequately vaccinated. People must wear masks," he added.—ANI

ECONOMY WORLD

Revitalized Angkor Wat brings hope for Cambodia tourism recovery



A large-scale vaccine rollout and dropping Covid-19 case numbers have allowed Cambodia to resume issuing visas on arrival for some tourists. **PHOTO: AFP**

AS dawn breaks, foreign tourists gather by the ancient towers of Cambodia's Angkor Wat, some of the lucky few to see the World Heritage Site with the crowds thin as the country recovers from the coronavirus.

Hopes are high that the temple complex, recently revitalized from repair work, will spearhead a recovery in tourism after the Southeast Asian nation began re-opening to travellers last November. A handful of overseas visitors are once again roaming the sacred site, with many calling it a unique opportunity.

"I think it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience to really see it with such few tourists," Belgian holidaymaker Marjan Colombie told AFP. "It's so different."

On previous visits to the

12th-century ruins she had been forced to jostle with others and endure long queues, she said.

Despite the huge economic cost for Cambodia, the pandemic has been a boon for renovations and conservation work at Angkor Wat.

The government agency that manages the UNESCO site says the shutdown allowed extra time and space for repair work, maintenance and gardening.

"Our temples could rest too," APSARA Authority spokesman Long Kosal said. Workers fixed crumbling towers and installed a water system to keep the grass green during the dry season. Local businesses in Siem Reap are now seeing an uptick in bookings after Covid-19 decimated tourism.—AFP

Argentina launches construction tender phase of mega gas pipeline

ARGENTINA on Thursday launched the construction tender phase for a gas pipeline megaproject that will eventually extend more than 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) from the southwest to north of Buenos Aires.

It is the largest natural gas project in Argentina in the last four decades and comes at a time

when worldwide energy costs have shot up due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The tender will be launched in May with a decision due in July.

The first stage of the project is due to cost \$1.5 billion, beginning in August and ending in 2024.

In an official ceremony near to the Vaca Muerta pipeline pro-

ject in Neuquen province, President Alberto Fernandez celebrated "the start of work to create the Nestor Kirchner pipeline."

The aim of the megaproject is to expand Argentina's fuel transport capacity for both domestic use and exports.

The first section of the pipeline, named after a late former president, will extend 558 kilometres from Neuquen province to Buenos Aires province.

A second section will extend another 467 kilometres northwards, reaching San Jeronimo.

In total, the new pipeline will increase Argentina's gas supply by more than 40 million cubic meters a day "supplying urban centres and industry in the centre and north of the country and giving the opportunity to export to Brazil and Chile," the presidency said in a statement.—AFP



Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales (YPF) is the national energy company of Argentina. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Yellen warns European ban on Russian energy could harm economies

A European ban on Russian oil and gas imports could have unintended economic consequences, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Thursday.

Major European countries including Germany have faced

calls to stop buying energy from Russia and starve its economy of revenue in retaliation for its invasion of Ukraine, which has sent more than five million people fleeing.

Speaking to reporters fol-

lowing a meeting with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and Finance Minister Sergiy Marchenko in Washington, Yellen said such a ban could ultimately cause more harm than good.—AFP

NEWS IN **Brief**

Cash-strapped Sri Lanka hit by record inflation



Vendors sell food at a roadside stall in Colombo. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

CRISIS-hit Sri Lanka's inflation hit a record high for the sixth consecutive month, official data showed on Friday as the government asked the IMF for an urgent bailout. The broad-based National Consumer Price Index (NCPI) rose 21.5 per cent year-on-year in March, more than four times the 5.1 per cent inflation of a year earlier. Food inflation in March stood at 29.5 per cent, according to the latest data from the Department of Census and Statistics. The figures are likely to rise further: the state-run oil company has subsequently raised the price of diesel, commonly used in public transport, by 64.2 per cent.—AFP

Asian economic growth to reach 4.8% in 2022: expert

THE economic growth of Asia will reach 4.8 per cent in 2022, an expert said at the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) on Wednesday.

The forecast was made by Zhang Yuyan, head of the Institute of World Economics and Politics under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, on behalf of a research team for a new report. The pace of economic integration in Asia has sustained despite COVID-19 inflicting heavy losses, according to the report titled "Asian Economic Outlook and Integration Progress" released by the BFA.—Xinhua

Russia fines Google for Ukraine videos

A Russian court on Thursday slapped a series of small fines on Google for failing to take down contentious YouTube videos about the Kremlin's military operation in Ukraine.

The Moscow court ordered the US tech behemoth to pay a total of 11 million roubles (\$135,000) for ignoring the state media regulator's orders to remove posts alleging heavy Russian losses in Ukraine.

complained of numerous casualties in their ranks, Russian state news agencies reported.

Another alleged that soldiers who were trying to move back from Ukrainian counter-offensives were being shot by retreat-blocking Russian detachments, the state media reports said.

Google's ubiquitous video hosting service has been in Russia's crosshairs throughout its nearly two-month campaign in Ukraine.

The tech giant infuriated Russian officials by blocking the lower house of parliament's official media channel earlier this month.—AFP

Mexico to operate digital currency in 2025

MEXICO will begin to operate a digital currency issued by the Central Bank of Mexico (Banxico) in 2025, the bank's Governor Victoria Rodriguez Ceja announced Thursday.

The digital currency will seek to generate means of payment aimed at financial inclusion; expand options for fast, secure, efficient and interoperable payments; and implement competitive features to payment methods, she said before



In Mexico, an ATM is called a 'cajero'. Most cities and towns in Mexico have an abundance of ATMs (cash machines). PHOTO: AFP/FILE

the Senate Finance Committee.

"We estimate that the final operation process will

take about three years and will be aimed at banked and unbanked people, expanding payment possibilities," she explained.

She also said that the digital currency will comply with three basic characteristics: a means of payment, a unit of account and a store of value, and will coexist with physical bills and coins circulating across the country.

Banxico announced plans for a digital currency two years ago.—Xinhua

UK tightens pressure on firms to hit diversity targets

THE UK has increased pressure on London-listed companies to meet government-backed targets on more women and ethnic

minority board members. In final proposals, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has ordered firms to update in annual reports

their progress on having a board made up of at least 40 per cent women, the watchdog announced Wednesday. Listed companies have

previously been ordered to have also at least one woman holding a top executive role, such as CEO or chief financial officer.—AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PHUC THAI VOY.NO. (2221S/2222N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V PHUC THAI VOY.NO. (2221S/2222N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-4-2022** 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.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SITC CONTAINER LINE CO., LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V TORRES STRAIT VOY.NO. (213W/216E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V TORRES STRAIT VOY.NO. (213W/216E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-4-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/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.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S'PORE) PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY.NO. (232N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY.NO. (232N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-4-2022** 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.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY.NO. (170N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY.NO. (170N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-4-2022** 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 LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V YORK 17

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V YORK 17 VOY. NO. (V.3061)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-4-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GOLDEN AUTUMN

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V GOLDEN AUTUMN VOY.NO. (305)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-4-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIPL** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO LTD

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Slovenian PM Jansa risks defeat in tight vote

SLOVENIAN Prime Minister Janez Jansa faces a tight race on Sunday in parliamentary elections billed as a “referendum on democracy” by the opposition in the deeply polarised country.

Jansa, an ally of nationalist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and admirer of US ex-president Donald Trump, is polling head-to-head with newcomer Robert Golob, former chief of a leading power company.

Analysts say concerns over the rule of law have boosted the

opposition and Golob has a real chance of getting a majority in the Alpine nation of two million, the first ex-Yugoslav state to join the European Union in 2004.

Tens of thousands of people have attended regular anti-government rallies, accusing Jansa of authoritarianism since he took power in March 2020.

The opposition has accused Jansa of using the coronavirus pandemic to dent the country’s democratic institutions, violate press freedom and question the

independence of the judiciary.

“Slovenia has reached a point it has never been before... It has become one of the biggest troublemakers (in the EU) with an authoritarian-style government and almost daily breaches of the rule of law, with narrowing freedoms,” Ljubljana University professor Vlado Miheljsek told AFP. Golob’s ascendancy began when he took over a small Green party in January, renaming it Freedom Movement (GS).—AFP



Analysts say concerns over the rule of law has boosted the opposition against Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa. **PHOTO: AFP**

Mexico says it axed US-trained unit fighting drug cartels

MEXICO has dissolved a special unit trained by US authorities to fight drug cartels because it was infiltrated by criminals, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Thursday.

Some members of the group have been detained over the allegations, Lopez Obrador told reporters.

The police unit, which received training from the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, was disbanded more than a year ago, but the decision was not announced at the time.

“There’s still cooperation (with US authorities) but that group that was supposedly of a very high strategic level was infiltrated (by organized crime) and its leaders are being investigated,” Lopez Obrador told reporters.

The unit, whose closure was



A Mexican soldier stands guard as a haul of marijuana and cocaine are incinerated in the background in November 2009. **PHOTO: JESUS ALCAZAR/AFP/FILE**

first reported by the Reuters news agency, was created in 1997 and worked on cases such as the capture of notorious drug kingpin Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman.

In December 2020, Mexico announced steps to restrict the activities of foreign agencies like the DEA, following a row over the arrest of a former defence

minister in Los Angeles for drug trafficking.

Lopez Obrador expressed irritation that he had not been informed about the investigation into retired general Salvador Cienfuegos, who was eventually sent back to Mexico, where he was exonerated by prosecutors.—AFP

S.Korea expresses regret over Japanese PM’s offering to war-linked shrine

SOUTH Korea on Thursday expressed regret over Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida sending a ritual offering to the notorious war-linked Yasukuni Shrine, seen as a symbol of the militaristic and colonial past of Japan.

The South Korean foreign ministry said in a statement that the government expresses deep disappointment and re-

gret over the fact that responsible leaders of Japan have once again sent offerings to and paid respects at the Yasukuni Shrine, which glorifies Japan’s war of aggression and enshrines war criminals.

The South Korean government strongly urges the leaders of Japan to squarely face history and demonstrate through action their humble

reflection and sincere remorse for Japan’s past history.

The Japanese premier reportedly sent the masakaki offering to the Yasukuni Shrine earlier in the day on the occasion of the shrine’s spring festival.

Kishida sent a similar offering during the autumn festival after becoming prime minister in October last year.—Xinhua

NEWS IN BRIEF

Queen Elizabeth II turns 96

GUN salutes will mark Queen Elizabeth II’s 96th birthday on Thursday, although the monarch herself was expected to mark the occasion with little fanfare after a troubled year hit by health concerns.

Royal officials released a photograph of the horse-loving head of state with two of her fell ponies, as family members wished her well. Her grandson Prince William and his wife Kate called her “an inspiration to so many across the UK, the Commonwealth and the world”.

In the British capital, 62 gun rounds will be fired later from the Tower of London and 42 in Hyde Park, where a military band will also play “Happy Birthday”.

Royal tradition since the 18th century has also seen the monarch have a second, official birthday, typically celebrated in warmer weather in June.—AFP

Venice readies day-trip booking system to ease crowds

VENICE plans to trial a reservation system for day-trippers, an official said Wednesday, in a bid to ease over-tourism as visitors flock back to the Italian city following the pandemic.

The pay-to-visit scheme will not cap tourist numbers but aims entice some people to visit during the low season by charging them less. “We will start with an experimental phase during which the reservation will not be mandatory, but optional” and will cost nothing, Venice’s deputy tourism councillor Simone Venturini told AFP. Visitors just popping in for the day will be encouraged to sign up through incentives “such as discounts on museum admissions”, he said. The start date will be announced in the coming weeks.—AFP



Tourists sit at a cafe near the Rialto Bridge in Venice, Italy on May 20, 2021. **PHOTO: MARCO BERTORELLO / AFP**

Leaders of North, South Korea exchange letters despite tensions



The warm words from North Korea to President Moon Jae-in came in an exchange of letters less than three weeks before Moon leaves office to be replaced by a conservative leader who has already signalled a tougher line on North Korea. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un and outgoing South Korean President Moon Jae In have exchanged personal letters, the North's official media reported Friday, despite rising tensions over Pyongyang's military provocations.

Kim and Moon shared the view that inter-Korean relations "would improve and develop" if the North and South "make tireless efforts with hope," the Korean Central News Agency said.

In Seoul, presidential spokeswoman Park Kyung Mee said that in his letter to Kim, Moon said, "Holding the hands of Chairman

Kim, I took one clear step that would change the fate of the Korean Peninsula."

The exchange between the two leaders came just days after South Korea and its defence ally the United States began joint springtime military exercises, which the North slammed as a "rehearsal" for war.

By improving ties with Seoul during Moon's remaining tenure, Pyongyang might be trying to urge South Korea's conservative President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol to abide by joint declarations previously signed by Kim and Moon, pundits said. Yoon will take office

on 10 May.

KCNA said Kim received a personal letter from Moon on Wednesday and replied to him the following day, adding the exchange of letters between the two leaders is "an expression of their deep trust." "Kim Jong Un appreciated the pains and effort taken by Moon Jae In for the great cause of the nation until the last days of his term of office," the news agency said.

Spokeswoman Park relayed that Kim said in his letter he regretted not being able to achieve as much as the two leaders had hoped.— Kyodo

RUSSIA - UKRAINE WAR HIGHLIGHTS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Follow all of the latest developments.

Russia slaps travel ban on Kamala Harris, Zuckerberg

RUSSIA on Thursday slapped travel bans on US Vice-President Kamala Harris, Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg and dozens of prominent Americans and Canadians in retaliation for sanctions imposed over Ukraine.

The Russian foreign ministry said the travel restrictions on 29 Americans and 61 Canadians – which also includes defence officials, business leaders and journalists from both countries – would remain in effect indefinitely. The foreign ministry said the list was comprised of people responsible for the two countries' "Russophobic" policies.

In Washington, one of the officials targeted, State Department spokesman Ned Price, said that the travel ban was "an honour." —AFP

Ukraine says Russia planning sham independence vote in occupied regions

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelensky has accused Russia of planning to "falsify" an independence referendum in the partly occupied southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

In a video message Thursday evening, Zelensky urged residents of areas under occupation to not provide any personal information, like their passport numbers, to the Russian forces.

"This is not to help you... This is aimed to falsify the so-called referendum on your land, if an order comes from Moscow to stage such a show," the Ukrainian leader said.— AFP

Russia hits 61 Canadians with travel ban: foreign ministry

RUSSIA on Thursday announced a travel ban on 61 Canadian citizens, including a number of officials and journalists, in response to sanctions imposed over Moscow's military operation in Ukraine.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said the list of persons "indefinitely" banned from Russia includes those "directly involved in the development, substantiation and implementation of the Russophobic course of the ruling regime in Canada". — AFP

Russia closes several consulates of Baltic states



Ukraine's second-largest city Kharkiv was under intense bombardment on Thursday, its mayor Ihor Terekhov said. **PHOTO: AFP**

RUSSIA said Thursday it was closing the consulates of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in response to Moscow's consulates being shut in the three Baltic

states over military action in Ukraine.

The Russian foreign ministry said it decided "to withdraw consent to the activities" of the

consulates in Saint Petersburg as well as Latvia's consulate and Estonia's office in Pskov, a city close to the border with Estonia.

"The heads and other consular officials of these Estonian and Latvian consular missions are declared 'persona non grata'," the ministry said.

It said they and all other non-Russian consular staff must leave Russia in the same time frame that was given Russian consular staff in the Baltic states.

Last month, Russia expelled 10 diplomats from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia after the three countries — along with several other EU members — expelled Russian diplomats over Ukraine. —AFP

Ukraine needs \$7 bn a month in aid, Zelensky says

UKRAINE needs \$7 billion in month to keep its economy afloat amid the "economic losses" inflicted by Russia, President Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday, as the United States announced another infusion of financial aid for the country.

The "Russian military are aimed at destroying all objects in Ukraine that can serve as an economic base for life. That includes

railroad stations, food warehouses, oil, refineries," Zelensky told leaders of the World Bank and IMF via video link at a meeting to discuss a financial lifeline for Kyiv.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen announced \$500 million in aid to help Ukraine continue paying salaries, pensions and providing services.

She detailed the assistance

following her meeting Wednesday with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and Finance Minister Sergiy Marchenko, saying it was necessary to help their government continue to function amid the ongoing Russian invasion. "The needs of Ukraine are urgent, and we plan to deploy this direct aid to Ukraine as soon as possible to be used on most urgent needs," Yellen said. —AFP

Leaders of North, South Korea exchange letters despite tensions

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SPORT

Myanmar women's football team to take training in South Korea

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Football Federation, the Myanmar women's football team will take a training in South Korea in preparation for the 31st SEA Games. The team will leave for South Korea on 24 April to play three friendly matches. "Our team will play friendly matches against women's clubs, including the South Korean youth team," an MFF official said.

Since February,

the Myanmar women's team has been taking a training for the SEA Games after the Asian Cup, with an initial 30-player squad, but only 22 will be on a trip to South Korea.

Win Theingi Tun, who is currently playing for Indian club Gokulam FC, will not be able to join the team on the trip to South Korea until the Myanmar women's team arrives in Viet Nam, MFF officials added. The team will take a training in South Korea until the first week of

May and then travel directly to Viet Nam for the SEA Games. The women's squad has been competing in international competitions since October 2021. In January 2022, the team participated in the final round of the Asian Cup Qualifiers.

Before the tournament, the team had planned to play in international friendlies but could not play due to the COVID-19 epidemic and was only allowed to play before the SEA Games. —Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM



The Myanmar women footballers seen in their training session in Yangon ahead of international tour and SEA Games. PHOTO: MFF

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.

Man City, Liverpool locked in title battle as Arsenal eye top four bid

PREMIER League leaders Manchester City and their relentless challengers Liverpool will expect to stay neck and neck in the title race after this weekend's matches. In the battle for top four places, Arsenal can deliver a hammer blow to Manchester United's hopes, while Chelsea can't avoid another slip against West Ham. **No margin for error in title race**

Pep Guardiola believes Manchester City will have to hold off one of the best teams ever if they are to pip Liverpool to the title.

Guardiola's side are one point clear of second placed Liverpool after both teams won comfortably in midweek. With six games left, it will likely take just one slip from either team to decide the enthralling race.—AFP



Manchester City and Liverpool are fighting for the Premier League title. PHOTO: AFP

S Korean sports fans can roar again after Covid bans lifted



Supporters of the Hanwha Eagles during a match in Seoul earlier this month. PHOTO: AFP

SOUTH Korean baseball fans and football supporters will be allowed to cheer at stadiums for the first time in two years from Friday as the country drops almost all coronavirus restrictions.

Baseball is the most popular spectator sport in South Korea and the games are a chance for

fans to let loose, fuelled by liberal supplies of alcohol and fried chicken. Since the pandemic however spectators were supposed to watch the games in relative quiet and wear a face mask — if they were allowed to attend at all — and chicken and beer were available only for consumption

out of sight of the field. The Korea Baseball Organization later started allowing eating at most stadiums and on Friday announced the lifting of the ban on cheering, chanting and shouting.

Spectators will still be required to wear masks.

"Starting today, cheering will be allowed at all stadiums where KBO League games are held," the league said in a statement, adding that "chanting while eating will be prohibited".

Hours later, the K League professional football told AFP that it was also lifting restrictions, starting this weekend — "but cheering is not actively encouraged".

Seoul said last week it will lift almost all social distancing measures, except for the mask mandate, citing a dramatic fall in reported cases of Covid-19 after an Omicron-fuelled surge.—AFP