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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.

As every citizen has a chance to hold a single citizenship scrutiny card legally, illegal citizenship scrutiny cards must be cancelled: Vice-Senior General



State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win addresses the meeting to compile voter list for the election, in Nay Pyi Taw on 1 April 2022.

ID record books issued by the Immigration and Population Department to the whole nation are being transformed into the computerization process, said Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win at the meeting to compile voter list for the election at the SAC Chairman Office yesterday afternoon.

In his address, the Vice-Senior

General said: As a basic factor, the data and statistics must be accurate to hold a free and fair in 2023, and election commissions at different levels and immigration and population departments need to join hands in scrutinizing all houses whether everybody and every household have citizenship scrutiny card and household registration Form-66/6. ID record books issued by the Immigration and

Population Department to the whole nation are being transformed into the computerization process. Upon completing such a process, immigration Form 66/6 will be inserted into the computer. After that, he noted that combined teams in townships will scrutinize whether the data on the ground will be checked before 2023 when the election is earmarked.

The Vice-Senior General

stressed that as every citizen has a chance to hold a single citizenship scrutiny card legally, illegal citizenship scrutiny cards must be cancelled. Likewise, he stressed the need to scrutinize Form-66/6 for ensuring clean, free and fair voting.

The Vice-Senior General underscored that the Ministry of Immigration and Population's statistics mentioned that it had issued IDs to more than

51 million people, including dead persons, those who went abroad for good, lost IDs, damaged IDs, and those holding two or three IDs. So far, the relevant ministry has enlisted more than 27 million ID holders under computerization, and there remain more than 24 million people. The remaining data must be inserted into the computer in time.

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 26/2022

1ST WAXING OF TAGU 1383 ME
1 APRIL 2022

Appointment and Duty-Assignment of
Member of Union Election Commission

The State Administration Council has appointed and assigned U Ko Ko Lwin to the duties of the Union Election Commission member under Section 419 of the State Constitution.

By order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 27/ 2022

1ST WAXING OF TAGU 1383 ME
1 APRIL 2022

Appointment of Deputy Ministers

The State Administration Council has appointed the following persons as Deputy Ministers of the Union ministries shown against each of their names under Section 419 of the State Constitution.

- (1) U Myint Soe Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development
- (2) Dr Myo Thant Ministry of Immigration and Population

By order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Ministry of Electricity and Energy
Amendment Notice on the last date of
electricity bill in April 2022

FROM the 1st to the 5th of each month, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy reads the meter units for the monthly electricity bills paid by the people.

Billing is being done from the 6th to the 10th.

From 11th to 15th, billing is being done, and the payment is being received.

The last payment dates for electricity bills are on the 17th, 19th, 21st, 23rd and 25th of the month.

However, in 2022, due to the Thingyan New Year holidays in April, the last dates of the 3/2022 monthly billing will be amended as follows for the convenience of the consumers.

No	Former dates for billing	Updated dates for billing
A	17-4-2022	20-4-2022
B	19-4-2022	22-4-2022
C	21-4-2022	24-4-2022
D	23-4-2022	26-4-2022
E	25-4-2022	28-4-2022

87 new cases of COVID-19 reported on
1 April, total figure rises to 611,674

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 611,674 after 87 new cases were reported on 1 April 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 589,632 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,431 after 1 died. —MNA

Daily newspapers in
circulation on New Year
holidays alternatively

DAILY newspapers of the News and Periodicals Enterprise under the Ministry of Information will be in circulation in rotation during the official holidays of the Myanmar New Year.

The Myanma Alinn Daily will be published from 9 to 12 April whereas the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar dailies will take holidays.

The Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar dailies will be in circulation from 13 to 17 April, while the Myanma Alinn daily will take a break.

Likewise, the Shwipyi Rakhine Image supplement published every Wednesday by the Sub-Printing House (Sittway) will take a holiday on 13 April, the Ethnic Sector supplement in the Shan Language published every Thursday by the Sub-Printing House (Taunggyi) on 14 April, the Ethnic Sector supplement in Mon, Sakaw Kayin, Poe Kayin and Pa-O Languages published every Sunday by the Sub-Printing House (Mawlamyine) on 10 and 17 April. After the Thingyan holidays, all dailies will be published regularly.

Advertisements will be accepted without any holiday during alternative holidays of daily newspapers. As of 18 April, all newspapers will be in circulation as usual.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

Coordinating meeting of MraukU Cultural Heritage Site to be inscribed
on World Heritage List held



A coordination meeting of the issues to be done in advance with locals for MraukU Cultural Heritage Site in Rakhine State to be inscribed on the World Heritage List was held at MraukU Branch Conference Hall of the Department of Archaeology and National Museum on 31 March.

In the meeting, Deputy Director-General for the Department of Archaeology and National Museum U Nyo Myint Htun clarified conducting the necessary processes to be inscribed on the World Heritage List and con-

ducting the clean-up campaign in MraukU Archaeological Site and the participation of the locals in awareness-raising activities.

In addition, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Archaeology and National Museum U Nyo Myint Htun added a beautiful photo exhibition of the MraukU Cultural Heritage Site to be held and the videos of MraukU's social, cultural and archaeological sites to describe not only in the English language but also in Rakhine and Myanmar languages and to distribute with

the participation of the locals.

Deputy Director-General of the Department of Archaeology and National Museum U Nyo Myint Tun, members of MraukU District Administration Body, District General Administration Department and township officials, local heads, social organizations and officials attended the meeting.

District and township officials, members of social organizations, and the Pagoda Board of Trustees also participated in the discussions. — MNA

The right of citizens can only be claimed if there is no destructive elements

- Individual human rights include respect for each other; Appreciation is the most important thing. Citizens can also claim their rights if they have a country.
- Despite the destruction of the country, there is no example in the world that protects the rights of individual citizens. The right of citizens can only be claimed if there is no destructive elements.

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

As every citizen has a chance to hold a single citizenship scrutiny card legally, illegal citizenship scrutiny cards must be cancelled: Vice-Senior General

FROM PAGE-1

The Vice-Senior General instructed the chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council and region and state chief ministers to manage computerized works

in their respective areas within two months. All must strive for putting data of regions and states into the sever of the Ministry of Immigration and Population as quickly as possible.

He stressed the need for all relevant organizations to know and follow election data and provisions to hold a free and fair election in 2023.

Meeting participants

discussed provisions for the election, work process in various sectors to ensure voter lists accuracy, and linkages for working groups to put the data in computerization. The

Vice-Senior General gave the necessary instructions.

The meeting ended with a concluding remark by the Vice-Senior General. — MNA

Ethnic and Public Affairs Management and Services Committee holds 4/2022 meeting



MoD Union Minister General Mya Tun Oo chairs the fourth coordination meeting of the Ethnic and Public Affairs Management and Services Committee yesterday.

THE Ethnic and Public Affairs Management and Services Committee held its fourth coordination meeting yesterday.

During the meeting, State Administration Council member Union Minister for Defence General Mya Tun Oo, in his capacity as Committee Chairman, stressed the need to follow the COVID-19 health rules in celebrating the Thingyan festival. He also highlighted the policies of the Head of State to develop the cities and villages located in the west of the Ayeyawady River, fire awareness in the hot season, 16 per cent of deforestation including

wildfire within 30 years and forest conservation measures. He further talked about monsoon tree-planting programmes in regions/states and preparations to stop the consequences of natural disasters and global warming in the country.

Secretary of the Committee Deputy Minister U Zaw Aye Maung explained the decisions made at the 3/2022 meeting and ongoing work plans.

Deputy Ministers U Ye Tint and U Win Shein, the permanent secretaries, directors-general and officials explained the matters submitted by the Union ministries to

the committee according to the relevant sectors.

The committee chairman approved the matters to be submitted to the management committee meeting of the State Administration Council and the issues to be decided by the committee.

Then, Deputy Minister for Education U Zaw Win explained the work completions based on the decisions of previous meetings.

The meeting attendees coordinated the discussion, and the committee chairman concluded the meeting after making a concluding remark. — MNA

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

THE Ministry of Commerce oversees the importation of crucial medical supplies plus anti-COVID-19 devices critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, through trading posts, international airports, and seaports.

Two vehicles transported 16 tonnes of disposable masks imported by one company via the Chinswehaw trading post yesterday.

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

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinating with relevant departments in the COVID-19 treatment. The public can reach the contact persons for enquires through the Ministry's Website—www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA



Union Minister for Foreign Affairs pays a working visit to China at the invitation of the Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister

AT the invitation of Mr Wang Yi, State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, paid a working visit to Huangshan, Anhui Province of the People's Republic of China, from 31 March 2022 to 2 April 2022.

While in Huangshan, at 5:00 pm on 1 April 2022, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin had a separate meeting with State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Mr Wang Yi, followed by a bilateral meeting between the two Foreign Ministers. At the meeting, they cordially exchanged views on matters pertaining to the further consolidation of the existing Pauk Phaw relations, accelerating the implementation of Myanmar-China bilateral projects on the basis of mutual benefit, strengthening cooperation in the fights against the Covid-19 pandemic, opening the Myanmar Consulate-General in Chongqing Municipality, the maintenance of peace and stability along the border between Myanmar and China, closer coordination for the



MoFA Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin exchanged the elbow greeting with Mr Wang Yi, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister.

smooth flow of border trade for Myanmar agriculture products and promotion of trade and commerce between the two countries as well as possibilities of the opening of additional temporary and permanent border posts between Myanmar and China.

They also cordially exchanged views on regional and international matters of mutual interest as well as for closer collaboration between the two

countries in regional and multilateral contexts, particularly, ASEAN and the United Nations. The two Foreign Ministers touched on the ongoing implementation of the ASEAN five-point consensus on the basis of non-interference policy and the ASEAN Charter and fundamental principles. The Union Minister also apprised the Chinese side regarding the latest developments in Myanmar and the achievements made on the

implementation of the five-point road map and the nine political, economic and social objectives of the State Administration Council (SAC) for all-round development of Myanmar.

Following the bilateral meeting, the Foreign Ministers witnessed the exchanging ceremony of the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myan-

mar and the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Protocol of Phytosanitary Requirements for the Export of Banana from Myanmar to China between the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China between Myanmar Ambassador to China and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of China. The Ministers also made a public announcement on the establishment of the Myanmar Consulate-General in Chongqing, the People's Republic of China.

With the signing of the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation, China will provide the RMB 650 million grant to Myanmar. And the Protocol of Phytosanitary Requirements for the Export of Banana, Myanmar will have the opportunity to export more bananas to Chinese markets, it is learnt.

Subsequently, the Union Minister attended the dinner hosted by the State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China. — MNA

MoPF Deputy Minister attends ASEAN+3 Finance and Central Bank Deputies' meeting



DEPUTY Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win attended the meeting of ASEAN + 3 Finance and Central Bank Deputies hosted virtually by Cambodia yesterday morning.

The meeting discussed the

review of the ASEAN+3 Regional Economic Outlook 2022 on the post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery plans developed by the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office-AMRO, the plan to use the AMRO office as the regional knowledge hub, AMRO office 2023

budget and staffing status. It also dwelt on review issues on AMRO operations and the progress of the ongoing work under the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM), which is being implemented in ASEAN+3 countries. It discussed matters relating to

the approval of the amendment of the CMIM Agreement, the implementation of ASEAN+3 policy issues, and technical assistance programmes to develop the Asian bonds market and further plans.

While participating in the discussion, the deputy minister said Myanmar participates in the regional macroeconomic research programmes and the capacity building of the Financial Resilience against Climate and Natural Disasters working group. He continued, "Myanmar is also working to revive the country's economy after the COVID-19 period, aiming to reach 3.7 per cent of the economic growth rate."

Despite the increase in financial services using digital technology, there is still a need for digital infrastructure and skills,

technology and cyber security, and it will accelerate the growth of the digital economic system, the deputy minister said. He also added that Myanmar would closely cooperate with ASEAN+3 countries in reviving the regional economy.

The meeting of ASEAN+3 Finance and Central Bank Deputies is being hosted alternately by the ASEAN countries and ASEAN+3 countries: China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The meeting was virtually co-chaired by Cambodia and the People's Republic of China this year. The decisions made at this meeting will be submitted to the ASEAN+3 Finance and Central Bank Governor Meeting to be held on 8 April for approval. — MNA

Over 280,000 students sit second-day of 2021-2022 Matriculation Exam

THE second day of the 2022 Matriculation Exam was held yesterday morning, with 281,397 students sitting the English subject exam.

This year, the Ministry of Education opened 20 foreign exam centres and 1,238 local exam centres. According to the

Ministry of Education, a total of 281,397 students out of 312,424 students registered to take the exam took the English subject exam, accounting for 90.07 per cent. — MNA

Waw, Bago Region.



Tanaing, Kachin State.



Yangon



Taungdwingyi, Magway Region.



Minbya, Rakhine State.

ASEAN+3 Finance and Central Bank Deputies' Meeting (AFCDM+3) virtually held

THE ASEAN+3 Finance and Central Bank Deputies' Meeting - AFCDM+3 was organized via videoconferencing yesterday.

Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar Daw Than Than Swe joined the meeting with other ASEAN+3 Finance and Central Bank Deputies.

First, the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) presented under the topic of "ASEAN +3 Growth Strategic in the Pandemic's Wake" for Regional Economic Outlook, and the Central Bank Deputies exchanged views.

Then, Deputy Governor of CBM Daw Than Than Swe said the CBM bought treasury

bonds and reduced the different budget ratios and interest rates to ensure adequate funding in the banking sector. It also streamlined the loan and stabilized the financial industry as policy responses to develop the country's economy during the COVID-19 period and reduced the central bank interest rate to three per cent three times in the 2019-2020FY. She added that the CBM allowed restructuring, rescheduling, and monitoring the loans by controlling banks' credit risk management.

She also talked about the interbank market, financial exchange programmes between local banks and foreign bank branches, direct payment of

yuan/kyat and baht/kyat at border areas and the adoption of the easing monetary policy until the end of this year amid fuel prices hike.

The meeting also focused

on 2023 work plans, budget, recruitment, medium-term implementation plan (2022-2026) of AMRO, AMRO management level selection programme and assessment of AMRO Direc-

tor for 2021, regional financial supports for CMIM, guidelines for margins, the 13th rehearsal session, future work plans of ASEAN+3 and Asia loan market. — MNA



Announcement of Online e-Visa Reopening

1. The Ministry of Immigration and Population launched the e-Visa Website (evisa.moip.gov.mm) on 1 September 2014. In light of the evolving COVID-19 situation and rapid increase of COVID-19 cases around the globe, there has been a temporary suspension for all new e-Visa applications since 20 March 2020, 23:59 Myanmar Standard Time (GMT +6:30).
2. At present, the COVID-19 diagnosis confirmed rate and infection rate have dropped. In support of the economic development of the State, the Online e-Visa system will reopen on 1 April 2022 for business visa applications in accordance with the COVID-19 rules and regulations of the Ministry of Health.
3. Requirements for the application for Online e-Visa (Business) will be available at the Ministry's website <https://evisa.moip.gov.mm>.

Ministry of Immigration and Population

သတင်းစာ ဂျာနယ် စာစောင်များကို နိုင်ငံတော်ဝန်ထမ်း ပုံနှိပ်လုပ်ငန်း ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါသည်

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Green wall mangrove protected forest reserve designated in Kungyangon



MoNREC designates 9,274.38 acres in Kungyangon Township as "Green Wall Mangrove Protected Forest Reserve" effective 1 April 2022.

EXERCISING powers conferred under Sub-section (e) of Section (6) of the Forest Law promulgated in September 2018, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has designated the area of 9,274.38 acres in Kungyangon Township in Yangon South District as "Green Wall Mangrove

Protected Forest Reserve" as of 1 April 2022, 1st Waxing of Tagu 1383 ME, under Notification No (61/2022).

The Green Wall Mangrove Protected Forest Reserve is intended to balance the water, soil and climate in the region, to sustain biodiversity and ecosystems, to support greenery and the environment, to protect the villages around the coast

against natural disasters such as cyclones, to create a safe and stable ecosystem for wildlife within the boundaries of this mangrove forest reserve, and to develop the socio-economic life of the people.

Some mangrove species, such as the white mangrove, *Rhizophora Candelaria*, *Sonneratia caseolaris*, and *Heritiera fomes*, have sprouted in this mangrove forest reserve, and it is also the birthplace of crabs, fish, and shrimp, as well as a habitat of water birds. It has been declared a mangrove protected forest because of its many benefits such as systematic management of the mangroves, deforestation prevention, increased forest cover and ecosystem services, balance climate, the abundance of marine products, and meeting the needs of firewood for local people.

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Moeyungyi Lake conserves ecosystem with local bird inhabitants, migratory birds

THE government conserves the birds and wild animals, biosphere reserves and ecosystem. The ecosystem of Moeyungyi Sanctuary in the Bago Region is currently conserved with the residential bird inhabitants and migratory birds when the water level becomes lower starting the end of March.

The water declines to over two feet in March. Some mi-

gratory birds, such as Asian Openbill, Black-winged stilt, Red-wattled Lapwing, Snipes, and others still stay in groups.

They will return to the North Pole in the second week of May.

"We conduct patrols with the department officials to curb the illegal activities in Moeyungyi Sanctuary.

"There are still some migratory birds. The water level



The ecosystem of Moeyungyi Sanctuary in the Bago Region is currently conserved with the residential bird inhabitants and migratory birds when the water level becomes lower starting the end of March. PHOTO: KANU

decreases, and the Storks that eat snails and clams living in groups.

The Bago Region government provides fibre speed boats and ordinary boats. We carry out measures to ensure the stability of Moeyungyi Lake and the sustainable keep of residents. So, we can conserve the ecosystem with the cooperation works," said a sanctuary official.

The Moeyungyi Wildlife Sanctuary of the Bago Region is a Ramsar site. More than 36,000 birds of 132 bird species inhabit in the sanctuary for six months until the end of March.

The sanctuary officials freed fish species to the lake to ensure the keeping of residents from 16 villages and marine resources under the management of the regional government.

The Moeyungyi Sanctuary covers an area of 25,600 acres. It is a Ramsar site located between Waw and Bago townships.

There are six Ramsar sites in Myanmar — Inlay, Indawgyi, Moeyungyi, Mainmahla Island, Nantha Island-Mayu Estuary and Gulf of Mottama to conserve bird species. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM

Strong demand drives tamarind price up in Mandalay market

MANDALAY market sees brisk buying of tamarind on the back of strong demand by foreign and domestic markets, resulting in the price rise as well.

Last year, during the pre-Thingyan Festival, the price of seeded tamarinds was K1,000 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilograms), while the seedless ones fetched K2,200 per viss. This year, the seeded tamarind is worth K1,800 per viss, and the prices of seedless ones stand at K3,600 per viss, said the Soe Win Myint depot owner in Mandalay.

"This year, tamarind businesses are thriving. The yield is also expected to drop. The competitive buying between the domestic dealers and the foreign trade partners hikes the price up. Furthermore, the price is likely to remain higher



This year, the seeded tamarind is worth K1,800 per viss, and the prices of seedless ones stand at K3,600 per viss.

due to the low inventory," he elaborated.

Tamarinds are yearly sent to China, India and Bangladesh. The central Myanmar region (Kyaukpadaung, Popa, Pakokku,

Myaing, Yamethin, Zeepingyi and Pinlebu towns) is the primary producer of tamarinds. They are abundantly supplied to the market during Myanmar Thingyan New Year Festival.

Myanmar shipped US\$9.6 million worth of 20,662 metric tons in the 2021-2022 Financial Year, which was an increase of 9,796 tonnes (estimated value of \$5.6 million) compared to the 2020-2021FY.

Tamarind trees are primarily found in the central Myanmar regions – Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway. They can be harvested only once a year in summer. Myanmar people use tamarind in traditional cuisine besides making traditional medicines. It is also a commercially valued export item. — Min Htet Aung, KK/GNLM

Myanmar's foreign trade tops \$15.5 bln nearly past six months

MYANMAR'S external trade in the six-month mini-budget period (October 2021-March 2022) sank to US\$15.5 billion, which indicated a slight decrease of \$20.48 million as against the year-ago period, the Ministry of Commerce's data showed.

According to data released by the ministry, international trade stood at over \$15.52 billion in the corresponding period of the last FY2020-2021.

Between 1 October 2021 and 25 March 2022, Myanmar's export was worth over \$7.88 billion, whereas the country's import was relatively low at \$7.62 billion.

The border trade dropped owing to the closure of border posts by China, the leading trade partner amid the coronavirus impact, with a sharp drop of \$2.43 bil-

lion against the year-ago period. However, the maritime trade registered a significant increase of US\$2.4 billion during this mini-budget period.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital goods, raw industrial materials, and consumer goods.

The country's export sector relies more on the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. The Ministry of Commerce focuses on reducing the trade deficit, export promotion, import substitution and market diversification. According to the Commerce Ministry's statistics, the external trade stood at \$29.58 billion in the 2020-2021FY. — KK/GNLM

MIC nods to 48 foreign projects in mini-budget period

MYANMAR Investment Commission gave the green light to 48 foreign projects from China, China (Taipei), Hong Kong SAR, India, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Seychelles, Nepal and France between October 2021 and March 2022 of the mini-budget period. The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) indicated that capital of US\$684.686 million was brought into the country, including the expansion of money by existing enterprises.

Those enterprises are to execute in agriculture, livestock and fishery, manufacturing, power, energy, hotel and tourism, and other service sectors. The Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations has invited responsible businesses to benefit the country.

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) ensures that responsible businesses approve by assessing environmen-

tal and social impacts. The commission is working together with the relevant departments to screen the projects.

Meanwhile, the domestic investments made by Myanmar citizens in the country stood at K468.39 billion in the mini-budget period with 38 projects. According to the DICA, those foreign and local businesses create 42,880 job opportunities for residents. Next, the COVID-19 surge and political changes led to a drastic fall in the FDI sector compared with the previous years. Myanmar attracted foreign direct investment of more than US\$3.79 billion in the last financial year 2020-2021 from 48 enterprises.

Last FY2020-2021, the domestic investors pumped K1,171 billion into 17 projects permitted by the Myanmar Investment Commission and into 44 projects endorsed by the state and region investment committees, MIC stated. — GNLM

Sellers outnumber buyers in domestic gold market

THE domestic gold market sees more sellers than buyers, said U Myo Myint of the Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

Although the daily transaction of 50 visses (a viss equals 1.6 kilograms) of gold is seen in the market, they all are solely performed by the resellers.

"Sellers outnumber the buyers in the market. As the gold price remains high, people cannot afford it to buy, so the number of resellers is growing in the market," U Myo Myint elaborated.

The prices of gold are on the upward trend, tracking the global gold prices and the local currency value against the US dollar, he added. At present, gold prices hit over \$1,930 per ounce in the global market. The US dollar exchange rate stands at over K2,000. Meanwhile, the cost of pure gold touched a high of K2,039,000 per tical (0.578 ounce, or 0.016 kilogramme).

Only when Kyat strengthens against the US dollar in the local forex market and the global gold price slides can the domestic gold price fall, U Myo Myint continued.

The domestic gold price is highly correlated with the global gold price, so it re-

mains an upward trend, the YGEA stated.

During the end of September 2021, a dollar value hit an all-time high of over K3,000 in the gold exchanges and consequently, the pure gold reached a record high of K2.22 million per tical in history.

Under the guidance of the Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods, the Monitoring and Steering Committee on Gold and Currency Market was formed on 17 December 2021 as gold and currency market stability play a crucial role in trade facilitation.

The committee's objectives are to inspect and prosecute market manipulation, check if there is compliance with payment rules or not, and proceed against those unscrupulous traders. They intend to interfere with the free and fair operation of the market under the existing laws, by-laws and regulations in line with the official directives, illegal procurement of foreign currency, illicit trade and taking legal actions against price manipulators.

Furthermore, the officials concerned will crackdown on those involved in charging a percentage for money withdrawals at the banks as shadow money. — NN/GNLM



Although the daily transaction of 50 visses (a viss equals 1.6 kilograms) of gold is seen in the market, they all are solely performed by the resellers.

Restrict unlimited use of water sources in time

TODAY'S globe is under the control of climate change and lesser supplies of foods based on the utilization of water sources. Unsystematic utilization of water and climate change processes makes the water sources to be lessened.

Water is essential for the growing number of populations. But, excessive use of water volume not only in households but in development tasks such as construction and other services extract the water from the world. As such, the water sources of the world are gradually declining.

Global countries are scrambling in utilizing water sources, causing conflicts and tensions among them. Hence, they all need to solve such problems under systematic water management to ease the tensions and overcome challenges and disputes.

Among the various ways of utilizing water sources, the underground water tapping process is of importance for the people. Myanmar possesses 16 per cent of the water sources among the Southeast Asian countries and 12 per cent of water sources in Asia. An increasing number of populations, booming urban areas and degradation of the environment make water requirements higher. Expansion of cultivable lands in rural areas and development of rural-based businesses extract a large volume of underground water year after year. Especially the unlimited tapping of underground water in the urban area is very dangerous for the people and the nation in the future. It is because the emergence of vacant areas based on tapping of underground water will be a root cause of landslides in the urban area. According to the press release issued by the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre-IGRAC, Myanmar uses 68 per cent of underground water for consumption, nine per cent for the industrial sector and 23 per cent for agriculture annually. The majority of some 7 million population of Yangon City uses only underground water or tube-well water. As such, the extreme utilization of underground water will be difficult for the settlement of the people in the long run. Unlimited tapping of underground water may cause landslides, entering of seawater at the seaside areas, a decline of underground water level, collapse of buildings, and deforestation. Hence, people should not prioritize selfishness in using water sources, mainly underground water sources. People need to use the water efficiently, avoiding water waste elsewhere. Authorities should effectively implement the rules and regulations related to the management of underground water utilization. If so, the country can stop the unlimited tapping of water sources in time.

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Authorities should effectively implement the rules and regulations related to the management of underground water utilization. If so, the country can stop the unlimited tapping of water sources in time.

COVID-19: Education risks becoming 'greatest divider'

NOW entering its third year, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to hold back some 405 million school children worldwide from a full return to the classroom, according to a new report released on Wednesday by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

And as 23 countries have yet to fully re-open schools, many children are at risk of just dropping out.

"When children are not able to interact with their teachers and their peers directly, their learning suffers," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. "When they are not able to interact with their teachers and peers at all, their learning loss may become permanent. "This rising inequality in access to learning, means that education risks becoming the greatest divider, not the greatest equalizer. When the world fails to educate its children, we all suffer."

2 trillion hours, gone
The report entitled, Are children really learning?, features country-level education data on the impact that COVID-19 school closures are having on children along with an updated analysis of the state of learning before the pandemic.

The study points out that 147 million children missed more than half of their in-class instruction over the past two years – amounting to two trillion hours of lost in-person education, globally.

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Africa case study

In addition to data on learning loss, the report highlights emerging evidence that many children did not return to school when their classrooms reopened, including in Liberia, West Africa, where 43 per cent of public-school students remained out of the classroom after schools reopened in December 2020.

And between March 2020 and July 2021, the number of children out of school in South Africa, tripled from 250,000 to 750,000. Around one in 10 Ugandan students did not re-



Pupils attend class at a primary school in Kasese District, Uganda PHOTO: MARIA WAMALA/UNICEF

port back to school in January 2022 after two years of school closures.

Meanwhile in Malawi, the dropout rate among girls in secondary education increased by 48 per cent, between 2020 and 2021, and in Kenya, a survey of 4,000 adolescents aged 10-19 years found that 16 per cent of girls and eight per cent of boys did not return when schools reopened.

"When the world fails to ed-

ucate its children, we all suffer," said the senior UN official.

Vulnerable and marginalized

Out-of-school children are some of the most vulnerable and marginalized youth in society – least likely to read, write or do basic math.

Moreover, they are cut off from the school safety nets – putting them at even greater risk of

exploitation and a lifetime of poverty and deprivation. "Even before the pandemic, the most marginalized children were being left behind," reminded Ms. Russell.

"As the pandemic enters its third year, we can't afford to go back to 'normal'. We need a new normal," the UNICEF chief spelled out, "getting children into classrooms, assessing where they

Learning slowdown

Although out-of-school children suffer the greatest loss, pre-pandemic data from 32 countries and territories highlighted an already desperately poor level of learning that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-triggered education crisis.

In the countries analyzed, the current pace of learning is so slow that it would take seven years for most schoolchildren to learn foundational reading skills that should have been grasped in two years, and 11 years to learn foundational numeracy skills.

SOURCE: UN

Vietnam strives to resume int'l tourism amid COVID-19 pandemic

WITH proactive and continuous efforts, Vietnam is stepping up the resumption of international tourism while flexibly adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taking place here from Thursday to Sunday after two years of suspension, the Vietnam Interna-

tional Travel Mart 2022, the largest annual tourism trade fair in the Southeast Asian country, marked the reopening of the Vietnamese tourism sector in the new normal context.

On another positive note, the country welcomed roughly 91,000 international arrivals in the first

quarter of this year, surging 89.1 per cent against the same period last year, said its General Statistics Office.

Promotion activities

Over the past few weeks, promotion activities have been accelerating across localities including

the Vietnamese capital Hanoi, northern Quang Ninh province, and central Quang Nam province to welcome tourists back.

Several new products like marine tourism, cultural tourism and eco-tourism with unique features of localities have been launched as highlights for the upcoming summer travel season.

On 15 March, the country fully reopened its borders to foreign visitors after nearly two years of COVID-19 disruption. Accordingly, most travelling restrictions had been removed for international arrivals to Vietnam.

Visitors now only need to prove that they have been fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19, with a negative test result as per requirements by local health authorities. They are also required to have insurance coverage of at least 10,000 US dollars for possible COVID-19 treatment in Vietnam.

Also from 15 March, immigration procedures for foreigners have been restored like before the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that citizens from a list of 80 countries and regions can now apply for an e-visa for a stay of up to 30 days.

The Vietnamese government reiterated its stance to treat foreign and domestic tourists as the same.

Vietnam had resumed the visa exemption policy for citizens from 13 countries including Japan, South Korea, and Russia, its key tourism markets, on the same day. Prior to this, all restrictions on the frequency of international flights were officially removed since 15 February.

The country hosted a record number of more than 18 million visitors in 2019, the last full year before the coronavirus outbreak, compared to just 157,000 foreign arrivals in 2021 due to border closures. It has set a target of receiving over 5 million foreign tourists in 2022, according to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT).

At a recent meeting on reopening the sector, Deputy Minister of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Minh Vu assessed that an assertive door-opening policy is giving Vietnam the advantage of being among "the first movers".

When many countries and regions have not yet opened, the choices of tourists cannot be as di-

verse as before the pandemic. The advantage will, therefore, belong to the destinations that open early, actively promote and refresh their tourism image to attract tourists' attention.

However, insiders have largely agreed that the reopening does not mean foreign tourists will immediately flock to Vietnam like before the pandemic.

"Opening at this time is to resume the market so that we can welcome international visitors between this September and March 2023, our annual peak season," VNAT general director Nguyen Trung Khanh told local media.

To the pre-pandemic level

Local experts view that it may take months or even years for the number of visitors to recover to the pre-pandemic level, citing their financial and health concerns when travelling. At this point in time, it is a big challenge to reach customers from several important markets due to certain traveling restrictions, Khanh noted, adding that Russia, as another key market, is also affected by the pandemic and the current Ukraine conflict.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Tourists pose for photos on the Golden Bridge on Ba Na Hills, Da Nang city, Vietnam. PHOTO: VNA/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 1 April 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 2 April 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Taninthayi Region and Kachin, eastern Shan States, scattered in upper Sagaing Region and southern Shan State and isolated in (northern)Shan, Chin, Kayin and Mon States. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of scattered rain or thundershowers in upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State and isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 April 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 April 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 April 2022: Partly cloudy.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay Regions.

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Termination of Citizenship

- The following individuals who violated the existing laws of the State and left the country illegally were found to be committing acts that could harm the interests of Myanmar. So, their citizenship is terminated under Section 16 of the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law in line with the authority exercised under section 68 by the Central Body established under Section 67 of the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law.
 - Maung Maung Latt (son of U Tun Tin)
 - Kyaw Moe Tun (son of U Tun Yee)
 - Aung Kyaw Naing (son of U Ba Thin)
 - Mya Mya Kyi (daughter of U Guman Singh)
 - Kyaw Swa Min (son of U Kyaw Min)
 - Thet Htar Mya Yi San (daughter of U Mya Ngwe)
 - Su Su Aung (daughter of U Hla Aung)
 - Kyaw Swa Tun (son of U Wong Do Lyan)
 - Kyu Kyu Myint (daughter of U Phone Myint)
 - Myat Thwe Aung (daughter of U Tin Zaw)
 - Yamin Yu (daughter of U Thein Tan)
 - Ye Khaung (son of U Kyaw Swa Min)
 - Han Htoo Lwin (aka) Kyar Pauk (son of U Maung Maung Lwin (aka) Ringo)
 - May Oo (aka) Hein Min Oo (son of U Thaug Myint)
 - Nyi Nyi (Tharawun - Pyay) (son of U Khin Zaw)
 - Han Lin (aka) Phyo Han Kyaw (son of U Yu Pa)
 - Daung (aka) Thura Aung (son of U Myint Aung)
- It is reported that similar perpetrators will be identified and prosecuted. —MNA

COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various states, regions



A local in Ponnagyun Township, Rakhine State gets COVID-19 vaccine shot.

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

COVID-19 vaccine is administered daily to target groups regardless of race or religion, including Buddhist monks and nuns, local people over the age of 40, students, religious leaders, prisoners, people with disabili-

ties, ethnic armed groups, people with chronic diseases, people in IDP camps and over 12-year-old students, respectively.

On 31 March, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams from the Tatmadaw, relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers gave COVID-19 vaccines to 14,792 people from fifteen townships in Shan State (North), 5,431 people from ten townships in Mon and Kayin States, 110 people from Tamway Township in Yangon Region, 13,002 people from twenty-six townships in Ayeyawady Re-

gion, 9,430 from nine townships in Rakhine State, 50 people from Pakakku Township in Magway Region, 24,951 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region, 140 people from Toungoo Township in Bago Region, respectively.

Similarly, healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 52 students from Lashio and Namhkam townships in Shan State (North) on 31 March.

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

CRIME NEWS

Illegal teaks, livestock medicines and household appliances seized

MANAGED by the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, action is being taken against illicit trades under the law.

On 31 March, the port duty inspection team under the management of the Customs Department carried out inspections at the TMT Port container operation station. They seized livestock medicines (estimated at K75,648,604) in violation of import licences, and action was taken under the Customs Law.

Similarly, an Investigation and Anti-Illegal Trade Division team under the management of the Customs Department conducted an investigation at the Myanmar Industrial Port Container Inspection Station. They seized household appliances (estimated at K41,540,000) in violation of import licences, and action was taken under the Customs Law.

On 1 April, a combined inspection team led by Forest De-

partment under Bago Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force conducted an investigation and illegally teak weighing 7.0622 tonnes (estimated at K1,733,760) in Toungoo and Thayawady Districts, and action was taken under the Customs Law.

Therefore, five arrests (estimated value of K118,922,364) were made on 31 March and 1 April, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee. — MNA



Officials confiscate illegal timbers.

K400 million worth of stimulant tablets seized in Shan State



Four arrestees are seen along with seized stimulant pills and vehicles.

THE police seized K400 million worth of stimulant tablets in Hsipaw Township of Shan State.

On 29 March, the combined inspection team consisting of the Anti-Drug Task Force inspected a Toyota Wish car driven by Shane Ko Ko Aung (aka) Aung Aung near milepost (149/2) on the Lashio-Yangon Road in Hsipaw Township of Shan State. It seized K400 million worth of 800,000 stimulant pills. According to another investigation, the police arrested the primary drug traffickers — Ohn Myint (aka) Phoe Sate and his wife Ma Hla Hla Win in a Nissan AD Van on the same day. It is reported that the suspects transport the drugs from Shan State (North) to Yangon Region. They were taken action under the law, and the police conducted further investigations. — MNA

Switzerland to lift all COVID-19 restrictions on April 1



Swiss President Simonetta Sommaruga (L) and Swiss Health Minister Alain Berset walk in front of the Swiss House of Parliament on 27 August 2020. PHOTO: AFP/AFP/FILE

THE Swiss government on Wednesday said that it has decided to lift all COVID-19 restrictions in the country on 1 April.

Starting 1 April, the requirement to wear masks in public transport and medical institutions, as well as the requirement of self-isolation for those who have tested positive for COVID-19, will be lifted, the government said in a statement.

“Due to the high level of immunization of the population, there has been no significant increase in the number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care in recent weeks, but the number of infections has risen again. The situation is unlikely to worsen in the months ahead. However, it is impossible to predict the development of the pan-

demic. SARS-CoV-2 is expected to become endemic rather than cease to exist. Therefore, new seasonal surges should be expected,” the statement read.

Switzerland will also establish a transition phase until spring 2023 with increased monitoring of COVID-19 infections, including testing, vaccination, and contact tracing.

The cantonal authorities of Switzerland will now be responsible for containing the spread of COVID-19, the government added.

A total of 3,468,289 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Switzerland since the start of the pandemic, and 13,534 people have died. Almost 6 million people, or 69.8 per cent of the country’s population, have been vaccinated. — ANI ■

COVID-hit Shanghai to screen 16 mln people in second phase of closed-off management



A deliveryman delivers vegetables to residents outside a community in Shanghai’s Pudong New Area on 28 March 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA/WU ZHENDONG

SHANGHAI will launch a nucleic acid testing campaign in areas west of the Huangpu River starting Friday amid the second

phase of the city’s closed-off management, an official told a press conference on Thursday.

This round of testing will

involve 16 million people, and 12 districts will be put under closed-off management, said Ma Chunlei, secretary-general of the Shanghai municipal people’s government. The megacity with a population of over 24 million on Monday began enforcing temporary closed-off management in two phases to track possible infections and curb the spread of the virus.

Ma said the authorities were making efforts to improve the provision of food supplies as well as address issues with seeking medical help. Shanghai reported 355 confirmed locally transmitted COVID-19 cases and 5,298 asymptomatic carriers on Wednesday, said a statement on the website of the Shanghai Municipal Health Commission.—Xinhua ■

Laos calls for cooperation among ASEAN to curb COVID-19 pandemic

THE ASEAN countries should strengthen their cooperation in slowing the spread of COVID-19, Lao Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Suanesavanh Vignaket, said on Wednesday. “The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to affect the region and the world and is having a long-term effect, not only on socio-economic development but also on

people-to-people connectivity,” the Lao Minister said when virtually addressing the 27th ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council Meeting, adding that “the renewed outbreak comes at a time when we are also facing a sharp increase in the price of fuel and a cost of living crisis as inflation soars.” The Lao government has continued to roll out vaccinations

across the country and aims to have vaccinated 80 per cent of the population by the end of 2022, the Minister told the meeting.

Suanesavanh thanked ASEAN member states, dialogue partners and international organizations for all the support and invaluable assistance extended to Laos in the fight against COVID-19.—Xinhua ■

South Africa’s Covid death toll tops 100,000

SOUTH Africa has registered a total of more than 100,000 Covid deaths, according to official figures released Wednesday, but actual fatalities are believed to be much higher.

Data released by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases showed a total of 100,020 fatalities had occurred since the start of the pandemic two years ago.

The institute reported 44 deaths on Wednesday, but only six were from the past two days, while the rest were discovered during an ongoing government audit. Covid-19 fatalities are estimated to be higher than officially reported, with researchers saying they could be triple the reported figures.

Data compiled by the South African Medical Research Council shows that there have been over 300,000 excess deaths

from natural causes since the pandemic hit.

“Since 3 May 2020, there has been a cumulative total of 303,400 excess deaths from natural causes of persons all ages,” the council said in a report on Tuesday.

The excess deaths data is derived from an estimate of fatalities that might be expected to have occurred without a pandemic, according to the methodology employed by the government-funded but independent research group.

“Although more data are needed on the underlying causes of (natural) death, (the) observation is strongly supportive that a significant proportion of the current excess mortality being observed in South Africa is likely to be attributable to Covid-19,” it said in a report on its website.—AFP ■



South Africa is the continent’s hardest hit country, counting more than 3.7 million coronavirus cases or more than 30 per cent of Africa’s over 11.3 million cases. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS
IN BRIEF

German unemployment stable in March as war rattles economy

GERMAN unemployment stayed at five per cent in March, figures published Thursday showed, as the war in Ukraine darkened the outlook for Europe's largest economy.

The number out of work went down by 18,000 in March on a seasonally adjusted basis, although the overall joblessness rate remained unchanged from February, the BA federal labour agency said.

Russia's invasion of its neighbour, which has added to supply chain disruptions and sent prices for energy rocketing, has so far only had an "isolated" impact on the labour market, BA regions director Daniel Terzenbach said. But the risk that supplies of natural gas and oil from Russia could be cut off if the conflict were to escalate were "weighing on the economic outlook" for Germany, Terzenbach said.—AFP

UK growth slightly less than expected in 2021: data

BRITAIN'S economy rebounded slightly less than initially thought last year, official data showed Thursday, ahead of a far tougher 2022 on fallout from the Ukraine war and soaring inflation.

Gross domestic product jumped 7.4 per cent in 2021, down on an initial estimate of 7.5-per cent growth, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The revision still marked Britain's strongest growth since the Second World War.

Better-than-expected growth in the fourth quarter of last year followed a slightly weaker-than-forecast third quarter, the ONS added.

"GDP grew a little stronger than we first thought in the fourth quarter, meaning it is now only 0.1 per cent below its pre-pandemic level," said Darren Morgan, director of economic statistics at the ONS.

Output expanded 1.3 per cent in the final three months, up from an estimate of 1.0 per cent growth.—AFP

Thailand sticks to pro-growth policies despite inflation worries



Customers shop at a shopping mall in Bangkok, Thailand, 17 May 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA/RACHEN SAGEAMSAK

THAILAND'S central bank has decided to leave its interest rate unchanged to shore up the subdued economy despite the upris-

ing inflation, which has recently recorded the steepest climb in more than 13 years on soaring food and energy prices.

The Bank of Thailand (BOT) announced Wednesday to keep the benchmark policy rate unchanged despite inflation spiralling above its target, vowing to continue to put emphasis on supporting economic recovery as the rising inflation will not persist.

The central bank expected Thailand's headline inflation to rise 4.9 per cent in 2022, above its target range of 1-3 per cent for the year. However, it projected the inflation pressure to ease in early 2023 with energy and food prices stabilizing.

The BOT monetary policy committee voted unanimously to maintain the policy rate at a record low of 0.5 per cent, which has been left unchanged since May 2020.

The decision was in line with market expectations, as most economists expect the Bank of Thailand to keep the rate steady throughout 2022 to support a nascent economic recovery.

The country's consumer price index, a major gauge of inflation, surged 5.28 per cent year-on-year in February, the fastest pace since September 2008 and up from 3.23 per cent in January. The index is widely expected to rise further in March.—Xinhua ■

Japan rules out withdrawal from joint Russia gas project

JAPAN has no plans to withdraw from a joint Russian oil and gas project, despite joining tough sanctions on Moscow over its Ukraine invasion, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Thursday.

Energy resource-poor Japan is attempting to balance its need for fossil fuels with toeing a hard line on Russia, and has faced questions over its continued involvement in the Sakhalin-2 project.

After Russia launched its war in Ukraine last month, oil giant Shell said it would sell its 27.5 per cent stake in Sakhalin-2 in Russia's far east.

But Kishida said the project was helping to provide "long-term, inexpensive and stable LNG supplies" to Japan.



Japan aims to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, but Sakhalin oil and gas projects, in which the Japanese government and companies hold stakes, are important for its energy security. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

"It is an extremely important project in terms of our energy security," he told a parliamentary session. "Our plan is not to

withdraw."

Japan's Mitsui controls a 12.5 per cent stake in the project, while Mitsubishi owns 10 per cent. It is 50-per-cent controlled by Russian energy company Gazprom.

Despite the decision, Japan will "continue to make efforts to reduce our energy dependency on Russia" in line with G7 policy, Kishida said.

Tokyo has pressured Moscow over the invasion with a series of sanctions on Russian groups and individuals, including President Vladimir Putin.

Japan is heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels, in part because many of its nuclear reactors have been offline since the Fukushima meltdown in 2011.—AFP ■

Russia-Ukraine conflict poses new challenge to global food security, says FAO official

THE ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which came at a time when economies worldwide are still grappling with the negative effects of COVID-19, poses a new challenge to global food security, an official with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has said.

"Many countries rely on supplies from Ukraine and Russia for their food import needs, including numerous least developed countries and low-income food-deficit countries," Boubaker Ben-Belhasen, director of FAO's trade and markets division, told Xinhua

in a recent written interview.

Russia and Ukraine are major agricultural producers and exporters, he said, adding that Russia stood as the world's top exporter of nitrogen fertilizers, the second leading supplier of potassium fertilizers and the third largest exporter of phosphorous fertilizers in 2021.

"Disruptions to Ukrainian and Russian grain and oilseed production and exports and restrictions on Russia's exports can have significant impacts on global food security," noted Ben-Belhasen.—Xinhua ■



People go shopping at a supermarket in Lviv, Ukraine, 28 February 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA/REN KE

South Korea exports hit all-time high in March

SOUTH Korea's exports hit an all-time monthly high in March thanks to strong demand for semiconductors and petroleum products, Seoul's trade ministry said Friday.

The country is home to major technology firms including Samsung Electronics, the world's leading smartphone maker, whose chips are used in a wide range of devices.

South Korea's outbound shipments stood at US\$63.48 billion for March 2022, up from \$53.69 billion a year earlier. The figures are "the highest tally since 1956, when trade statistics started to be collected",



The country is home to major technology firms including Samsung Electronics, the world's leading smartphone maker, whose chips are used in a wide range of devices. PHOTO: SAMSUNG/AFP

the ministry said in a statement. "Robust growth momentum continues with a double-digit growth for the

13th consecutive month". Exports of semiconductors and petrochemicals reached a new month-

ly peak of \$13.12 billion and \$5.42 billion respectively, according to ministry data.—AFP ■

Pokemon bread sets off craze in S. Korea, fuelled by nostalgia

POKEMON bread has sparked a craze in South Korea on its return to shelves for the first time in some two decades, driven mainly by the childhood nostalgia of fans of the global hit animation series "Pocket Monster" but also winning new admirers.

About 4.7 million packs of the bread have sold in less than a month since it returned to stores in late February. It comes with stickers of characters from the beloved Japanese animation and video game series, which made its debut in South Korea in 1999. With stores quickly selling out, queues have formed and even celebrities have been scrambling to buy the cake-like bread. RM, the leader and member of famed K-pop boy band BTS, took to social media to say he had to go to eight convenience stores to finally get hold of some. The bread, which was first released in 1998 and was sold until around the early 2000s, returned to the market due to consumer demand, according to its manufacturer.—Kyodo ■

Japan's new car sales slip 3rd straight year as pandemic continues

NEW car sales in Japan declined for the third straight year in fiscal 2021, down 9.5 per cent from a year earlier, as production slowed on shortages of semiconductors and other components amid the coronavirus pandemic, industry bodies said Friday.

A total of 4,215,826 cars were sold in the year ended Thursday, according to the Japan Automobile Dealers Association and the Japan Light Motor Vehicle and Motorcycle Association. Domestic auto sales

excluding mini vehicles slumped 8.2 per cent to 2,660,855 units, the second lowest since the survey began in fiscal 1968.

Toyota Motor Corp. sold 1,313,913 units, down

9.7 per cent. The pandemic's impact in Southeast Asia forced it to scramble for parts and temporarily reduce domestic production significantly.

Honda Motor Co. and

Nissan Motor Co. marked declines of 3.4 per cent and 1.1 per cent, respectively. Mazda Motor Corp. reported a 15.4 per cent fall, with Subaru Corp. losing 14.2 per cent.

Sales of minivehicles, which have an engine displacement of up to 660 cc, tumbled 11.5 per cent to 1,554,971 units, the lowest in 24 years.

Daihatsu Motor Co., Toyota's minicar subsidiary, sold 506,436 cars, down 7.8 per cent. Suzuki Motor Corp. suffered a 12.8 per cent fall to 470,498 units.—Kyodo ■



Daihatsu Motor Co., Toyota's minicar subsidiary, sold 506,436 cars, down 7.8 percent. PHOTO: DAIHATSU/KYODO

Chinese internet company Meitu sees 39.5 pct increase in revenue in 2021

CHINESE internet company Meitu on Wednesday reported nearly 1.67 billion yuan (about 262.4 million US dollars) in revenue in 2021, up 39.5 per cent year on year.

Meitu also recorded an adjusted net profit of 85.1 million yuan, marking its second consecutive full-year

of profitability in terms of adjusted net profit.

The company attributes the encouraging results in its annual report to VIP subscription services and image software-as-a-service (SaaS) businesses, which grew 146.9 per cent year-on-year.

Founded in October 2008, Meitu is an AI-driven technology company that aims to "beautify" users with its image products and beauty management services, and to assist with the digital transformation of the beauty industry by providing SaaS services.—Xinhua ■

Intel agrees to buy Israeli software firm

THE US chip giant Intel has signed an agreement to acquire the Israeli software company Granulate Cloud Solutions, both companies confirmed on Thursday.

Granulate, founded in 2018 and headquartered in the coastal city of

Tel Aviv, is a developer of a real-time autonomous optimization software.

The acquisition will help cloud and data centre customers maximize compute workload performance and reduce infrastructure and cloud costs, Intel said.

Granulate's autonomous optimization reduces processor utilization and application latencies by learning the customer's application and deploying a customized set of continuous optimisations at runtime.—Xinhua ■

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

AS the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 9th APRIL 2022 to 17th APRIL 2022 Thingyan Water Festival (New Year Public Holiday), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MAERSK NASSJO VOY.NO. (209W/212E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MAERSK NASSJO VOY.NO. (209W/212E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2-4-2022 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.

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QUICK SUMMARY

Japan expands sanctions against N. Korea over missile development

The Japanese government on Friday expanded sanctions against North Korea by newly freezing the assets of four Russian organizations and nine individuals of the reclusive Asian country for their involvement in Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development programmes.

Japan's top government spokesman, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno, said the measure, approved at a Cabinet meeting in the morning and to take effect the same day, is part of Japan's efforts to comprehensively resolve issues involving North Korea.

"Japan urges North Korea to take concrete actions toward resolving issues" including its nuclear and missile development programmes as well as the North's past abductions of Japanese nationals, Matsuno told a regular news conference.

Referring to the additional sanctions at a House of Councilors session, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said, "We will continue to do everything to gather information and monitor the situation while ensuring the peace and security of our country."—Kyodo ■

Biden under fire over record US immigration

US Republicans accused President Joe Biden Wednesday of deliberately manufacturing an immigration crisis that rights campaigners say has seen thousands of migrants tortured and raped, as dramatic increases in already record-breaking entries are expected.

Crossings from Mexico have been surging in recent weeks, and two memos being circulated by the party leadership argue that Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris had made the current border crisis "the worst in American history".

A group of Republican senators told reporters Biden's weakness on the border was to blame for thousands of migrants being victimized by unscrupulous traffickers on their perilous journeys north.—AFP ■

JICA's China office to stay open even after end of development aid

THE Japan International Cooperation Agency's office in China will remain open even after Tokyo's decades-old official development aid to the world's most populous country ends in March.

The Japanese government has determined that keeping the JICA office in Beijing open is necessary to grasp better China's new role as a major provider of economic assistance to developing countries, officials said.

Japan's official development assistance to China started in December 1979 and has contributed to an improvement in infrastructure and helping China rise to its current status as the world's second-largest economic power.—Kyodo ■

Ukraine announces first indictment for 'collaboration' with Russia

UKRAINE on Wednesday announced the first indictment of a citizen for collaborating with Russian forces, under a new law that could lead to sentences of up to 12 years in prison.

The General Prosecutor's Office said a resident of the eastern town of Kramatorsk had posted a video on TikTok "in which he denied Russian aggression against Ukraine and publicly called on citizens to support illegal decisions and actions of the aggressor state."

"This is the first indictment sent to court for collaboration," prosecutors said in a post on Telegram.—AFP ■

Sri Lankan security forces deployed in Colombo after night of violence



Protesters shout slogans after setting a bus on fire during a demonstration outside the Sri Lankan president's home to call for his resignation in Colombo. PHOTO: AFP

SECURITY forces were deployed across the Sri Lankan capital on Friday after protesters tried to storm the president's home in anger at the nation's worst economic crisis since independence.

The South Asian nation of 22 million people is facing wide-

spread shortages of essential goods and sharp price rises, weighed down by enormous debt.

Police in Colombo said they arrested 45 people after Thursday night's unrest, in which one man was critically injured.

A curfew put in place overnight was lifted early Friday

morning, but police and military presence was beefed up around the city, where the burnt-out wreckage of a bus was still blocking the road to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's house.

On Thursday night, protesters lit tyres on fire to barricade a main road into the capital.

Hundreds of people, rallied by unidentified social media activists, marched on Rajapaksa's home demanding his resignation, setting two military buses and a police jeep ablaze and using bricks to attack officers.

Security forces fired into the crowd and used tear gas and water cannon to disperse the demonstrators. It was not immediately clear if they used live rounds or rubber bullets.

Rajapaksa was not at home during the melee, according to official sources, but top military officials went into a huddle to discuss the crisis.—AFP ■

Kyiv sends 45 buses to evacuate civilians from Mariupol

THE Ukrainian government is sending 45 buses on Thursday to evacuate civilians from the besieged city of Mariupol, where the Russian defence ministry has announced a local ceasefire, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said.

"Tonight, we received a message from the International Red Cross Committee that the Russian Federation confirms its readiness to open access for the humanitarian convoy to the city of Mariupol with transit through the city of Berdiansk," she said in a video posted on Telegram.

"We are sending 45 buses to the Mariupol corridor". Seventeen buses had already left for Mariupol from Zaporizhzhia,



Residents prepare to evacuate Ukraine. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

around 220 kilometers (136 miles) to the northwest, she said.

Another 28 were waiting for authorization to pass the Russian checkpoint in Vasylivka, near Zaporizhzhia.

"We will do everything possible to ensure that buses arrive in Mariupol today and pick up people who have not yet been able to get out of the city," Vereshchuk said.—AFP ■

Turkey seeks to shelve Khashoggi case

A Turkish prosecutor on Thursday asked an Istanbul court to halt the trial of 26 suspects in the murder of Saudi critic Jamal Khashoggi and hand the case over to Riyadh.

Turkey is seeking to mend ties with Saudi Arabia to bolster its struggling economy, four years after the gruesome 2018

killing of the dissident Saudi journalist inside Riyadh's consulate in Istanbul.

The Istanbul court is trying 26 Saudi officials in absentia over the macabre killing but the prosecutor said the trial should be stopped and the case transferred to Saudi Arabia, at the latter's request.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said the prosecutor's request was "terrible news". The press rights group urged the Turkish justice ministry to turn it down.

Khashoggi's Turkish fiancée confirmed the Saudi government had asked to take over the case in Istanbul.—AFP ■

Russia creates working groups to probe US-controlled biolabs in Ukraine



The building of Russia's State Duma is seen in this picture. PHOTO: STATE DUMA/XINHUA

A Russian parliamentary commission held its first meeting on Thursday, announcing the establishment of four working groups to investigate US-controlled biological laboratories in Ukraine.

The commission heard information from the Russian Defence Ministry on the investigation into biological research by American specialists in Ukraine, the Russian State

Duma or the lower house of the country's Federal Assembly said in a statement.

During Russia's special military operation, the dangerous biological activities of the United States on the territory of Ukraine were revealed, said Irina Yarovaya, co-chair of the commission and deputy chairperson of the State Duma.

"Dangerous both for Russia and for Ukraine itself. We

are talking about secret activities controlled by the US Department of Defence, with signs of the development of biological weapons," she said.

The four working groups will conduct a detailed analysis of all documents and facts, including at the expert level, the senior lawmaker noted.

"Today the commission has instructed the working groups on defence, security and international law to start working on materials on the involvement of Hunter Biden in the project in Ukraine, as well as an invitation for explanations from him and Victoria Nuland," Yarovaya said.

The investment fund Rosemont Seneca, currently managed by US President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden, financed the Pentagon's military biological programme in Ukraine, the Russian Defence Ministry said last week.—Xinhua ■

US announces largest-ever release of oil reserves amid Russia's war

THE United States on Thursday announced plans for its largest-ever release of emergency oil reserves in an effort to address rising energy prices amid Russia's war in Ukraine, vowing to put one million barrels on the market per day for the next six months.

President Joe Biden is coordinating the action with allies and partners around the world, and other countries are expected to follow suit, bringing the total release to "well over" an average of one million barrels per day, according to the White House.—Kyodo ■



An undated photo provided by the Department of Energy shows crude oil pipes at the Bryan Mound site near Freeport, Texas. PHOTO: DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY/FILE

Turkey welcomes guarantor role for Russia-Ukraine peace deal: Turkish president

ANKARA welcomes the proposal of being one of the guarantor countries in terms of the security of Ukraine, Turkish media reported on Thursday, quoting Turkey's president as saying.

"We can be one of the guarantor countries in terms of guaranteeing the security of Ukraine. We welcome this in principle. But of course, the details need to be clarified," Turkish President Re-

cep Tayyip Erdogan told reporters accompanying him during an official visit to Uzbekistan.

He will have phone conversations with both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, urging them to meet in Turkey for a final peace agreement, semi-official Anadolu Agency quoted him as saying.

"I am determined to hold

talks with both Mr Putin and Mr Zelensky as soon as I return (to Turkey). In these talks, I will say, 'Our goal now is to bring you together as soon as possible'. We are ready to host the meeting at the level of heads of state," he said.

In the meantime, it is of great importance to ensure a temporary ceasefire, Erdogan said.—Xinhua ■

NEWS DIGEST

Here are the latest developments in the war in Ukraine:

Fire at oil depot in Russia's Belgorod

Fire broke out at an oil depot in the Russian city of Belgorod after two Ukrainian military helicopters attacked the fuel storage facility, Vyacheslav Gladkov, governor of the Belgorod Region, said Friday.

Russia bans EU leaders

Russia says it will expand the list of EU figures banned from entering the country following Western sanctions.

EU to urge China rethink on Russia

EU is set to hold a virtual summit with China against a backdrop of increasing alarm over Beijing's growing proximity with Moscow and its reluctance to condemn its invasion of Ukraine.

"The meeting will focus on the role we are urging China to play, to be on the side of the principles of international law without ambiguity and exert all the necessary influence and pressure on Russia," says French European affairs minister Clement Beaune.

Russia regrouping: Zelensky

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky warns Russia is consolidating and preparing "powerful strikes" in the country's south, including besieged Mariupol.

"We know that they are moving away from the areas where we are beating them to focus on others that are very important... where it can be difficult for us," he says.

NATO also says it is not seeing a pull-back of Russian forces in Ukraine and expects "additional offensive actions", alliance chief Jens Stoltenberg warns.

EU parliament leader visiting Kyiv

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola says she is on her way to Ukraine, making her the first EU leader to visit the war-torn country.

The Maltese MEP, who was elected in January, tweets "On my way to Kyiv" alongside a Ukrainian flag, but gives no further details.

Russia leaving Chernobyl

Russian forces have begun to pull out of the defunct Chernobyl nuclear power site and move towards Belarus, but took an unspecified number of captive Ukrainian servicemen with them, officials in Kyiv say.

Troops seized control of the Chernobyl site -- where radioactive waste is still stored -- on 24 February, the first day of the invasion.

New gas war front

Putin says "unfriendly" countries, including all EU members, must set up rouble accounts to pay for gas deliveries from April, or "existing contracts would be stopped".

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz insists payments continue in euros or dollars, while France says Paris and Berlin are preparing for a cut in Russian gas deliveries.

'Longer' conflict possible: US

Russia's refocusing of its military efforts on the Donbas could herald a "longer, more prolonged conflict" as Ukrainian forces put up fierce resistance there, a senior US defence official says. "It's been fought over now for eight years," the official says of the heavily contested region.

Putin ratings up

Putin's ratings have received a boost since the start of military actions in Ukraine, Russia's independent Levada Centre polling institute says, with more than 80 per cent of Russians saying they support his actions.

SOURCE: AFP/XINHUA

SEA Games' drawing-lots ceremony to be held on 6 April

ACCORDING to the SEA Games organizing committee, the drawing-lots ceremony for the 31st SEA Games, which Viet Nam will host, will take place on 6 April.

The Viet Nam Olympic Committee will only put team sports in the drawing lots for the SEA Games.

Sports for the individual events will be decided during the Sports Administrators' Meeting.

The group draw will be held on 6 April for the men's and women's football tournament, men's and women's futsal event, men's and women's volleyball event and men's and women's Handball tourney.

There will be ten teams in the national men's football competition, eight teams in the women's football competition, six teams in the national men's futsal

competition, and five teams in the women's futsal event.

Myanmar male and female teams participate in the football event, futsal competition and volleyball tourney.

The 31st SEA Games will be held from 12 to 23 May, and some sports, including football tourneys, will be launched before the opening day. — Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

China readies Covid plan after Asian Games venues completed

COMPETITION venues for the Asian Games have been completed six months before the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou hosts athletes from across the region, organizers said Friday.

The 19th edition of the regional sporting event is still on despite nearby Shanghai battling one of China's worst Covid-19 outbreaks since the pandemic began.

Organizers say a virus control plan that "learns from the successful experience" of the Beijing Winter Olympics in February will be published in the coming weeks. All 56 competition venues for September's Asian Games and Asian Para Games have been completed, organizers added in a statement.

"Functional checks for the events have been finished," the statement said, adding sever-



This aerial photo taken in March 2019 shows different coloured flowers used to create the logo of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou.

PHOTO: AFP

al Games villages and over 30 training venues have also been built. "We're now just making a few final adjustments and improvements to the facilities," Lu Chunjiang, an official in charge

of operations at Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre, told state broadcaster CCTV.

"Most of our energy is going towards preparatory work for venue operations." — AFP ■

Fernandes signs new Man Utd deal till 2026



Bruno Fernandes has extended his Manchester United contract to 2026. PHOTO: AFP

BRUNO Fernandes extended his contract at Manchester United till 2026 on Friday in a deal expected to make the Portuguese midfielder one of the club's highest earners.

Fernandes has been a key player for the Red Devils since joining from Sporting Lisbon in January 2020, scoring 49 goals and providing 39 assists in 117 appearances.

However, United need him to improve on his indifferent form this season if the club are to improve on their current sixth position in the

Premier League and make a strong finish to the season to qualify for the Champions League.

United also have an option to extend the deal by a further year to 2027.

"From the moment that I joined Manchester United, I have had a special relationship with the club and our amazing fans," said Fernandes.

"I grew up watching this team, dreaming of getting the chance to play here one day. That dream is now a reality and an honour." — AFP ■

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.

Biennial World Cup feasible, debate continues: FIFA president



FIFA president Gianni Infantino clarified at the 72nd FIFA Congress in Doha, Qatar on Thursday that FIFA has not proposed a biennial World Cup and it needs more time to discuss. PHOTO: XINHUA/FILE

FIFA president Gianni Infantino clarified at the 72nd FIFA Congress in Doha, Qatar on Thursday that FIFA has not proposed a biennial World Cup and it needs more time to discuss.

Speaking about the speculations on the biennial World Cup, Infantino said the world football governing body has not made a proposal to change the global calendar. "The last FIFA congress asked the FIFA administration with a vote, and 80% voted in favor to study

the feasibility of the world cup every two years," said Infantino. "FIFA came to the conclusion that it is feasible and it would even be positive for a big part of the world. But there is also a big opposition to it due to the repercussions and impacts." FIFA is not in a hurry to make the final decision and Infantino believed it still needs some time to debate, discuss and convince, and FIFA is trying to find agreements and compromises with all parties involved. — Xinhua ■