

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

Myanmar eyes for leading country with Hilsa export in coming years

By NyaungU Phee

THE agriculture sector is the backbone of Myanmar and it is also relying on the livestock sector. The country is standing proudly with its strategic 2,230 kilometres long coastlines in the western Rakhine State and southern Taninthayi Region, belonging to the rich marine resources. Myanmar's fishery product is beyond self-sufficiency and it generates foreign currencies from the exports. Myanmar shipped rohu and other fishery products. The income depends on the market demand and quality of the fishery products. Myanmar is harvesting the globally demanded one fish species (Hilsa shad) in Myanmar's sea and the coastlines. Maintaining and increasing in production of that species can generate foreign incomes and enhance the socio-economy of the livelihood of the local community. That species is required to be cared for to keep abreast with the regional countries.

Migratory journey for spawning and juvenile rearing of Hilsa shad

Hilsa shad is anadromous fish species, and it lives in the



The Hilsa shad is primarily harvested in Rakhine and Mon states and Dawei and Myeik districts in Taninthayi Region, Bago Region and Yangon Region. The best fishing spots are Ayeyawady Region and Mon State. **PHOTO : OAKTHA**

sea and migrates upstream to the freshwater environment of the river system for spawning. The migratory journey usually covers up to 1,200 kilometres for spawning, with 20 kilometres per day. It migrates in groups from Asian waters to Iran's the Persian Gulf. It breeds eggs in the sand during June-July and January-February periods. It can

produce up to 2 million eggs. Besides natural causes, the main cause of early death is capture with other species. The mortality of Hilsa larvae is about 25 per cent due to the catch with the different types of nets.

Fishing spot locations

The Hilsa shad is primarily harvested in Rakhine and Mon

states and Dawei and Myeik districts in Taninthayi Region, Bago Region and Yangon Region. The catch has decreased starting from 15 years ago. The best fishing spots are Ayeyawady Region and Mon State.

Hilsa fishing with different types of nets

Gillnets and entangling

nets are used in the manageable Hilsa fishing in inshore areas and rivers, while large-scale commercial fishing operators use purse seine nets and drift nets. There are 685 large-scale commercial fishing vessels and about 15,000 inshore vessels.

SEE PAGE-6



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Objectives of 77th Anniversary Armed Forces Day

1. THE Tatmadaw to participate in the leading role of national politics for the emergence of the Union based on democracy and federalism while safeguarding the Constitution (2008) of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
2. The Tatmadaw to take responsibility for substantial contribution to measures of peace and prosperity of the country and food sufficiency as a national task the government primarily emphasizes
3. The Tatmadaw to join hands with all ethnic national people in the national reconciliation and peace processes
4. The Tatmadaw to provide necessary assistance for convening a free and fair multiparty democracy general election for ensuring the emergence of the Union based on democracy and federalism upon completion of endeavours in accord with the provisions of the State of Emergency
5. To build a powerful, capable and modern patriotic Tatmadaw to protect the national interest of the State

Youth Awareness Talks held in Hpa-an



THE youth awareness talks for youth multi-faceted development programme, jointly conducted by the Information and Public Relations Department in Hpa-an District, Kayin State, the Sports and Physical Education Department and the Education Department was held at 11 am on 19 March in Hpa-an No. 1 Basic Education High School.

Hpa-an District Education Officer Daw Aye Aye Swe gave a lecture on getting good mind-

sets and following the discipline. Hpa-an District Information and Public Relations Department Assistant Director Daw Soe Soe Aye spoke on good morals and patriotism issues. Sports and Physical Education Department Assistant Director U Than Htike gave a lecture on sports education.

Teachers and Grade-8 students of No. 1 Basic Education High School attended the talks and Hpa-an Sports and Physical

Education Department Assistant Director provided sports equipment to Headmaster U Min Kyaw Nyan Khaing.

At the talks, the Hpa-an District Information and Public Relations Department staff distributed pamphlets of the 77th anniversary of the Armed Forces Day published by the department head office to students and teachers. — Saw Myo Min Thein (IPRD)/GNLM

People invited to celebrate 77th anniversary of Armed Forces Day

PEOPLE wishing to honour the Tatmadaw parades which will march on the 77th Anniversary Armed Forces Day along the way from the training ground to the military parade ground can pre-register by telephone.

People can claim their citizenship scrutiny cards by registering in person with their ID card (original) and two colour licence-sized photos on 24 and 25 March.

Please be informed that people can contact the following address.

Security Subcommittee
Nay Pyi Taw Command
Nay Pyi Taw
Phone- 032-30009

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanmar Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

About 95% of forest fires in Myanmar caused by human error

ABOUT 95 per cent of all forest fires in Myanmar are caused by human error, said U Kyaw Aung Moe, the director of the Environmental Conservation Department.

“As many as 95 per cent of forest fires in Myanmar are triggered by people. Most forest burns occurred because of the shifting cultivation system practised in mountain areas. Through forest fire, there will be deforestation, loss of wildlife habitats and scarcity of biodiversity, damaged ecosystems and cause of climate change on account of air pollution. Because of climate change, there will be natural disasters such as

drought, floods, damages to crops and death of livestock animals. Besides, it can affect humans as a shortage of food can escalate outbreak of diseases,” he said.

Regarding transboundary haze pollution, ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution was signed in Kuala Lumpur town, Malaysia on 10 June 2002. This agreement is aimed to prevent, monitor, and mitigate land and forest fires to control transboundary haze pollution through concerted national efforts, regional and international cooperation. The Ministry has included control of cross-border smog in Myanmar’s sewing ac-

tion plan.

“Myanmar has experienced forest fires but it is not as worrying as in neighbouring countries. Serious forest fires have not yet happened in Myanmar. Myanmar doesn’t cause a lot of trouble for grown fire because of deciduous forest in the country but a superficial fire. The country is facing environmental challenges such as deforestation, forest fires, land degradation, accumulation of solid wastes, air pollution and water pollution. The smoke pollution is happening in Myanmar because of forest fires, arson of the land to expand the farmland and other accidental fires, said U Aung

Kyaw Moe.

If there is smog in our environment, the department advised the residents to stay only at their homes and improve the indoor air quality, wear the 95 mask, sunglasses and hat whenever going outside.

“As Myanmar is an agricultural country, the Sagaing region mainly grows the paddy and there are a lot of paddy mills found not only in the industrial sector but also in the villages. Then, the rice-husk is burnt along the roadside while the land is burnt to grow the grass to feed the animals. To control the burns for different reasons, the department inspects

the factory and work areas and provides the awareness talk to the public. Currently, the Fire Services Department is cooperating with the Forest Department, Agriculture Department and other relevant departments to prevent forest fires and other cases of fire,” U Kyaw Aung Moe clarified. The common fires in Myanmar are forest fire, land fire, agricultural fire, garbage pile fire and urban fire. Those fires are destroying people’s lives and property. Besides, it can also harm the environment such as the destruction of biodiversity, water, air and soil pollution, it is learnt. — Lu Lay/GNLM

Most of the factories resume operation

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

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

48th Anniversary Mon State Day celebrated in Mawlamyine

THE opening ceremony of venues marking 48th Anniversary Mon State Day, Mon State Day celebration and state honorary titles giving ceremony were held at Mawlamyine Township Hall yesterday.

The events were attended by State Administration Council members Dr Banya Aung Moe and Mahn Nyein Maung, relevant ministries' Union Ministers, State Chief Minister, Commander and invited guests.

First, SAC members Dr Banya Aung Moe and Mahn Nyein Maung, Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung, Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs U Saw Tun Aung Myint, Mon State Chief Minister U Zaw Lin Tun, Mon State Economic Affairs Minister Nai Layi Tama and Mon State Ethnic Affairs Minister U Khin Maung Oo cut the ribbon to launch the display booths of 48th Anniversary Mon State Day and viewed the 53 booths.

Then, the officials saluted the State Flag together with the participants to the ceremonies.

SAC member Dr Banya



The SAC members and dignitaries cut the ceremonial ribbon to launch the display booths in marking the 48th Mon State Day.

Aung Moe read out the message sent by SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark the 48th Anniversary Mon State Day.

Next, Mon State Chief Minister U Zaw Lin Tun delivered a speech.

Union Minister U Saw Tun Aung Myint, Mon State Chief Minister U Zaw Lin Tun, Commander of the South-East Com-

mand Maj-Gen Ko Ko Maung, Mon State Chief Justice U Nyi Nyi Soe and Mon state cabinet ministers gave the excellent awards in the economy, industry, breeding, agriculture, management, service, education and health, social, environmental, researching, security and rule of law sectors to 51 recipients.

Then, Border Affairs Union Minister Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung presented 100 pairs of solar con-

nectors to the state chief minister.

The Mon Cultural Dance Troupe of Mudon Township, Kayin Cultural Dance Troupe of Kyaikmaraw Township and Pa-O Cultural Dance Troupe of Paung Township performed in their ethnic languages and the officials provided cash awards to the dance troupes.

The Mon State conserves their language, literature, arts, culture and traditions and makes efforts to develop the education, health, economy and transportation sectors.—MNA



Union Information Minister inspects Myanmar Art Centre construction site

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn inspected the Myanmar Art Centre construction site located at the corner of 73rd street and 109th street in Mandalay Township yesterday.

First, Director U Kyaw Kyaw Soe of the i Green Development & Engineering Group reported on the implementation of the project, completion and ongoing work processes.

Then, the Union minister talked about the emergence of culture and arts since the Pyu period according to the records, thousand-year-old language, literature, Thabin and music, the conservation of own cultures and artworks in all countries and measures for new generations to value and conserve the arts.



He continued that the quality of culture shows the value or dignity of a country and human being. The Prime Minister also

appreciates the creations of arts and often instructs to provide the needs of artistes. It is such a pride for constructing the Myanmar

Art Centre in Yangon and Mandalay. Therefore, the artistes can grab a chance to show off their qualifications at these centres

and that will benefit the country and entertainment industry.

The government constructs a nation physically and mentally. The construction of the art centre aims to hand over the culture and heritage of the elderly to the young people to conserve and cooperate from their respective sectors.

At noon, the Union minister gave 10 DTH satellite receivers for Mandalay region government to regional Chief Minister U Maung Ko while 500 DVB-T2 Set Top Box for Mandalay residents to region Social Affairs Minister U Yin Htwe and another 500 DVB-T2 Set Top Box for Mandalay Station to Mandalay Station Commander. — MNA

Sittoung Bridge on Pyu-Oak Phyat-Mone Road opened hailing 77th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day

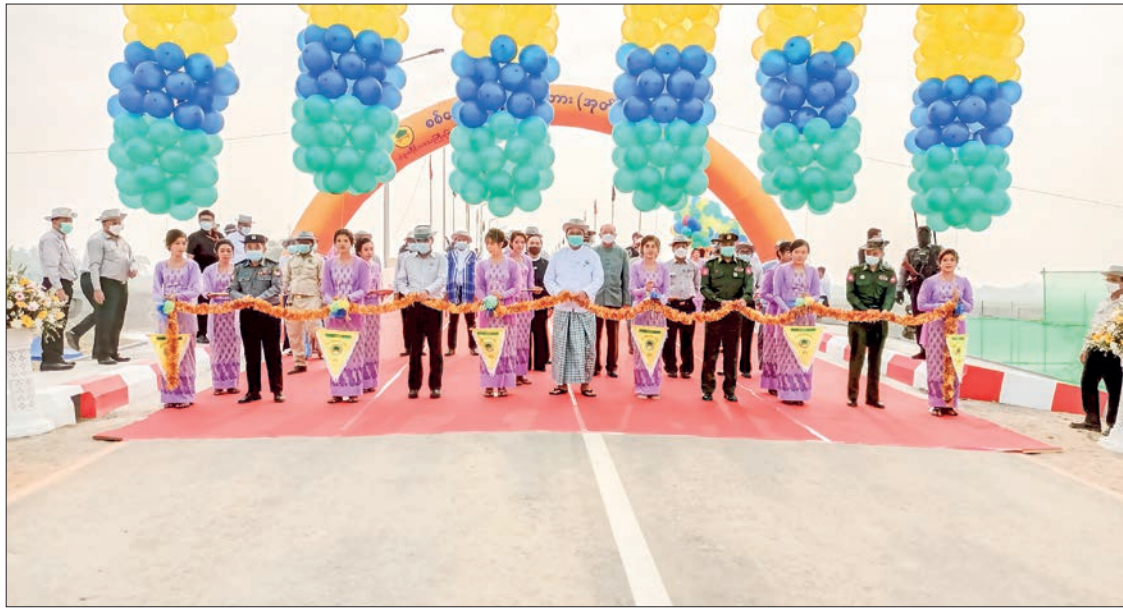
THE opening ceremony of the Sittoung Bridge (Oak Phyat) on the Pyu-Oak Phyat-Mone Road in Pyu Township of Toungoo District of Bago Region was organized yesterday hailing the 77th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day.

The 620 feet long bridge was constructed by the Special Bridge Task Force (10) of the Ministry of Construction.

The ceremony was attended by State Administration Council members Jeng Phang Naw Taung, U Shwe Kyein, Construction Union Minister U Shwe Lay, Bago Region Chief Minister U Myo Swe Win, Region Commander and other departmental officials and guests.

First, SAC member Jeng Phang Naw Taung said Myanmar is a Union where 135 ethnic groups live in unity. The government prioritizes basic infrastructure for the social, economic, education and health sectors for its people especially the transport sector – road, bridges – and access to electricity. The ethnic nationals can easily communicate only with the proper transport system.

He also talked about the essence of the 2008 Constitution,



The dignitaries cut the ceremonial ribbon to inaugurate the Sittoung Bridge (Oak Phyat).

objectives of the SAC to build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just, cooperation works between Union government and region/state governments to ensure the proportionate development of the nation.

He highlighted the construction of bridges despite the geological features and natural obstacles, upgrade works on roads and transport development programmes implemented in urban

cities and remote areas.

He then pointed out to use the public budget effectively in carrying out the development programmes of the country, ensure the quality, supervise and review whether the projects bring benefits to the regions, cooperate with the officials and make sure to be the effective public projects.

Then, Union Minister U Shwe Lay made a remark and the Bago region chief minister reported on the condition of roads, bridges and regional de-

velopment.

Afterwards, the Union minister and relevant officials cut the ribbon while the SAC members Jeng Phang Naw Taung and U Shwe Kyein pressed the button to inaugurate the stone plaque of the bridge.

The 620 feet long Sittoung Bridge (Oak Phyat) is located on the Pyu-Oak Phyat-Mone Road in Pyu Township of Toungoo District of Bago Region and is a two-lane truss bridge. The foundation of the bridge is constructed with a bored pile foundation and the superstructure is truss beam and deck. The bridge has a capacity of 60-tonne load. — MNA



MoHT Union Minister conducts field study on hotel development programmes in Nay Pyi Taw



UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung met executive committee members of the Nay Pyi Taw Hoteliers Association, general managers and in charge personnel of hotels in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, the Union minister stressed the need to make preparations for providing safe tourism services for tourists as the international flights to Myanmar will be resumed starting 17 April keeping in line

with the COVID-19 health rules, applying for National-HSP Certificates to ensure quality hotels for the local/foreign travellers to Nay Pyi Taw, a tourist attraction, and following the instructions regarding security and health issues while the ministry provides the needed assistance.

Then, the attendees coordinated the discussion and the Union minister inspected the processes of Nay Pyi Taw guesthouse and hotels. — MNA

The MoHT Union Minister views the hotel development programmes in Nay Pyi Taw.

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SAC members inspect IPP power plant, new Attaran Bridge Project in Mawlamyine

MEMBERS of the State Administration Council Dr Banya Aung Moe and Mahn Nyein Maung, Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung, Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs U Saw Tun Aung Myint, Chief Minister of Mon State U Zaw Lin Tun, state ministers and officials inspected the Myanmar Lighting (IPP) Power Plant in Mawlamyine at 1 pm yesterday.

First, Company Chairman U Sein Wann, explained the supply of electricity in Mon and Kayin states, and the generation and distribution of 179 mW of electricity with four gas turbines and two steam turbines.

Members of the State Administration Council thanked the concerted efforts to meet the electricity needs of the people and called for further efforts to meet the electricity needs.



Next, members of the State Administration Council inspected the construction of the new Attaran Bridge by the Department of Bridges under the JICA ODA Loan on the East-West Business Corridor.

At the project briefing, U

Kyaw Swa Tun, Chief Engineer (Civil) of the Department of Bridges, explained the project activities and the members of the State Administration Council asked questions.

The new Attaran Bridge project is 326 metres long and



its approaching bridge is 154 metres long. It is a three-span steel cable-stayed bridge type.

An adjacent bridge is a two-storey pre-reinforced concrete bridge-type constructed of T-shaped pre-reinforced concrete.

The bridge is 20.7 metres wide and has four lanes. The bridge permits tonnes of HL-93 Loading (AASHTO), and 60 tonnes is allowed per vehicle. The project period will take 39 months and now 1.63 per cent has been completed. — MNA

Collective clean-up, agricultural meetings held to hail 77th Armed Forces Day



Hailing the 77th Armed Forces Day, local people and departmental staff jointly carried out a collective clean-up in each ward of Hpa-an downtown on 19 March morning. Kayin State

Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo, members of the state government and officials looked around and encouraged the volunteers.

The Kayin State government and municipal officials are

making efforts for Hpa-an, Kayin State, to be a clean and beautiful green city in line with the city's features. A total of 1,160 staff from 93 departments and locals collectively carried out

the clean-up works in 15 places of nine wards. Students and teachers also cleaned around the schools.

Similarly, Kayin State agricultural land management committee meeting (1/2022) and the vacant, fallow and virgin lands management committee coordination meeting (1/2022) were held on 18 March at 2 pm at the meeting room of the state government office. At the meeting, the state chief minister, in the capacity of the state vacant, fallow and virgin lands management committee chairman, said that it is necessary to systematically manage farmlands, vacant lands and virgin lands, and unauthorized land use is illegal that needs to be managed by the land management com-

mittees at all levels. He urged officials to work hard for avoiding the decrease of the agricultural lands or farmlands. It is necessary to scrutinize the applications for permits ensuring the right decisions.

Afterwards, the state land management committee and the state vacant, fallow and virgin lands management committee secretary and state Agricultural Land Management and Statistics Department Head U Min Min explained the issues of land management and vacant, fallow and virgin lands management. The committee members made rounds of discussion before the closing remark by Kayin State Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo. — Saw Myo Min Thein (IPRD)/GNLM

Ceremony held to present compensation issuance, work-related benefits

PROVISION ceremony for granting survivors' benefits and compensation for permanent disability and death from work-related injuries under the Social Security Act 2012 was held at Yangon Region Skills Training School (Yankin) yesterday.

Deputy Minister for Labour U Win Shein, Yangon Region Government officials, and officials from the Ministry of Labour (Yangon Region) attended the ceremony.

There are 1,087,113 registered workers from 33,776 registered labour departments in 116 townships in the region and

state. There are 78 township social security offices, 13,407 labour offices and 758,324 insurance workers across the country and providing compensation for death and work-related injuries.

Accidental injuries on the road and work-related survivors' benefits and permanent disability benefits were paid in full under the Social Security Act 2012.

It is reported that the deputy minister handed over K43,328,520 in benefits to four injured workers and families of three workers killed in accidents. —MNA



Myanmar eyes for leading country with . . .

FROM PAGE-1

Market stability and value-added potentials

Myanmar yearly exports 10,000-13,000 tonnes of *Tenualosa ilisha* and *Tenualosa Toil* to 36 foreign countries from 22 cold storage facilities, mainly to China. The major purchasing countries are China, Saudi Arabia, India, the US and the UAE. It is a popular food in India. As Myanmar is able to ship the Hilsa shad to the top consuming country like India, it ensures market stability. Moreover, the value-added products with smooth freight flow bring about economic benefits.

Research on breeding and culture status of Hilsa shad

With technical assistance from Chinese experts in 2012, the onboard breeding trial of Hilsa was conducted at the Kyauktanhar hatchery in Yangon Region so that the marketable commercially valued Hilsa species can be produced. Research activities were also carried out for the sustainable Hilsa resource in coordination with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and South-East Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC). In 2015 and 2018, Myanmar Fisheries Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency and Thailand International Cooperation Agency conducted research on Hilsa biology, spawning, breeding and migration behaviours and collected the species. Myanmar and Thailand also agreed on joint research for Hilsa and rohu. That project was delayed owing to the COVID-19 impacts. Myanmar's native larvae will be sent to Thailand for research.

Degradation of marine resources and depletion of fish

Climate change affects all regions across the world. Lack of wastewater treatment in the factories, livestock businesses, mining activities and agribusinesses, improper waste disposal, sand dredging, having waterways blocking Hilsa migrating jour-



Myanmar is the third-largest producer of Hilsa with only three per cent.

ney, blocking with the dams and reservoirs, developing farmland areas, weak compliance with the fishery regulation in terms of the size of fishing nets, relaxation during the fishing close season for various purposes and those unscrupulous operators in the aquaculture industry are contributing factors to the depletion of fish and degradation of marine resources.

Effective management for sustainable Hilsa shad

Hilsa shad migrates to freshwater for spawning and return to sea in groups. A proper way of fishing is required. So far, 2,288.2 acres in Ayeyawady Region, 2,065 in Rakhine State, over 600,000 in Mon State and 11 spots in Myanmar coastal areas have been set as the conservation areas in the country. Myanmar has a prospect to be a top export country some time. The science-based effective management approach must be improved to do so.

Long-term sustainability of Hilsa for future generations

Setting close season for fishing depending on the Hilsa biology and ecosystem, releasing a statement and raising awareness regarding enforcement, building database and making research analysis on the life cycle of Hilsa shad for the effective conservation management approaches, supporting marine labourers with sustainable fish resources, creating other career opportunities as substitution,

creating jobs with technology and surveillance institutions, building public-private partnership between the government and private entrepreneurs to strengthen domestic and export markets and connecting to regional countries will ensure yearly foreign income from Hilsa production. Marine conservation practices have to pass for future generations.

World Hilsa production

Hilsa culture must be conducted in line with conservation measures. It will undoubtedly enhance the Hilsa production. According to Bangladesh's World-Fish (a nonprofit research and innovation institution), Bangladesh accounts for 85 per cent of the world's Hilsa production. It shut down the fishing season during the Hilsa spawning season between 6 and 28 October. During the 22-day close season, their government yearly provides funds for those fishers holding a licence under the social security programme. Bangladesh's growing Hilsa production is attributed to the fishing restriction on Hilsa larvae and closing areas for fishing during the breeding season and setting protected areas to prevent fishing.

It could maintain the long-term sustainability in Hilsa production when it produced 65 per cent of the world's Hilsa, whereas the neighbouring countries India, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka saw a decline in production. India followed Bangladesh



account of fishing with 4.5-6.5 cm mesh size nets to prevent from catching the larvae, Minister Mr Rezaul Karim for Fisheries and Livestock of Bangladesh analyzed. Marine resources observers also pointed out a good outcome with the social security programme for the fishers during the 22-day close season for fishing.

Research strategies for the development of Hilsa culture

Migratory Hilsa shad species lives in the Bay of Bengal and they usually migrate in groups in Myanmar, India and Bangladesh. Good Aquaculture Methods and Practices can bring the long-term sustainability of Hilsa resources. The research on protected areas for their breeding grounds, maintaining their migratory route and observing the natural breeding status have been carried out in Myanmar waters. Research strategies will ensure the long-term sustainability of Hilsa.

Myanmar's Hilsa market with good prospects

As per Bangladesh's research in 2014, the average weight of a Hilsa shad is 510 grammes (31.8 ticals). The growth of Hilsa shad increased to 915 grammes (57.1 ticals) in recent years. Approximately 1.5-2.5 kilogrammes weight Hilsa shad were exported in 2021. Hilsa shad from India, Myanmar and the countries close to the Arabian sea is 500 grammes (31.25 ticals) and 60 grammes (37.5 ticals) weigh on average. In order to compete with Bangladesh's Hilsa shad, conservation measures for Hilsa larvae must be strictly taken. Myanmar must focus on promoting the production depending on scientific research. Enforcement and PPP in the close season and conserving the protected areas will protect the larvae and enhance Myanmar's Hilsa production.

With continuous efforts, Myanmar will be on track to the top export country some time.

Translated.

379 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 19 March, total figure rises to 608,763

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **608,763** after **379** new cases were reported on 19 March 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **563,746** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **19,423** after **3** died. —MNA

Myeik tourism businesses near extinct on hike fuel prices

ONCE-POPULAR Myeik Archipelago destination in Taninthayi Region crowded with the visitors attract only the small number of visitors and tourism businesses have nearly come to a halt, said a tour guide.

“Soaring fuel oil prices hinder the business as it added extra charges on motorboat ride to tour around the islands. The transport charges increase from

K100,000 to 150,000 per person,” he continued.

The tourism business which seemed to revive one month ago turned out sluggish again due to the COVID situation and security concerns.

“Myeik Archipelago tourism business has nearly stopped since 2020. Omicron variant and the political instability are contributing factors to the sus-

pension of the business”, a tour operator quoted in his sayings.

There are 800 islands in Myeik Archipelago and the famous spots are Smart Island, Bailey Island, Kyalleik Island, Padan Island, Lay Island, Donenyaung-hmine Island and Don waterfall.

The enchanting coastline, picturesque views, natural pebble beach, sandy beach, observing the culture, tradition, cus-

tom and living styles of Salon people and Kayin ethnic people are the tourist attractions in the Myeik Archipelago. Additionally, the visitors can enjoy fun sporting activities such as cycling, swimming, diving and snorkeling, fishing, studying natural rainforest and fishing businesses.

Visitors rarely use road transport amid security concerns and the pandemic. Additionally,

only those individuals who have an urgent case fly with flights to the Myeik Archipelago. The Islands tour does not have any customers, for now, said a tour operator.

There were approximately 40 tour companies who have been offering service to Myeik Islands. Now, only ten have survived. — Myint Oo (Myeik)/GNLM

Avocado growers happy after getting good price in Pindaya



This is the main season of avocado production. Farmers are selling them by bringing it to the market. Pindaya township is located at 3,880 feet above sea level and the region is growing local crops using agricultural techniques to attain good varieties of local fruits, vegetables and flowers.

THE avocados were grown near the villages in Pindaya township, Danu Self-Administered Zone, Shan State (South). Now, the growers are happy to get good price for avocado this year because it can create more job opportunities and earn the extra family income.

This is the main season of avocado production. Farmers are selling them by bringing it to the market. Pindaya township is located at 3,880 feet above sea level and the region is growing local crops using agricultural techniques to attain good varieties of local fruits, vegetables and flowers.

People from nearest villages from Pindaya township are growing the avocado plants in their yard on a manageable scale while some are growing on a commercial scale.

The flat land villages near Pindaya township harvested

the avocado in December while the mountain villages such as Maenaetaung village, Pansitt village, Hsekyainn village and other mountain villages will start harvesting the fruit in March. Subsequently, the price of avocado is better than other regions.

Currently, the avocado from Pindaya township have been entered to the market with a minimum of K17,000 and a maximum of about K20,000 per carton containing 25 avocado fruits. The price of avocado can be different depending on size of the fruit.

The avocados from the villages are conveyed to Yangon and Tachilek towns though Pindaya township. Farmer are happy to get better price this year as compared to the previous year, according to a trader who come and collects avocado from the villages and sells them back in other regions. —Aye Aye Latt (Pindaya IPRD)/GNLM

Value of trade via Muse border trade zone on the decline

THE value of trade via the Muse border trade zone was on the decline as of 4 March in the mini-budget financial period, according to the official statistics of the Ministry of Commerce.

The value of trade via Muse in this mini-budget year amounted to US\$579.48 million, whereas in the same period of last FY the figure was \$3.09 billion, a slump of over \$1.92 billion.

Between 1 October 2021 and 4 March 2022, Myanmar's exports to China through the Muse land border were valued at \$555.52 million, while imports are worth \$23.9 million. The trade showed a slump in both exports and imports against the year-ago period.

China shut down all the checkpoints linking to the Muse border amidst the COV-

ID-19 pandemic. The checkpoints next to the Muse border are Nantaw, Sinphyu, Mang Wein (Kyalgaung), Kyinsankyawt-Wang Ding and Panseng-Wang Ding.

Of the checkpoints, Kyinsankyawt has resumed trading activity from 26 November on a trial run. Myanmar daily delivers rubber, various beans and pulses, dried plum, watermelon, muskmelon and other food commodities to China through Kyinsankyawt with the use of a Chinese short-haul trucking service.

Exports to China through Muse are made up largely of agricultural produce like rice, beans and fruits, while Myanmar imports medicines, electronics and construction materials via the overland route. —ACM



Exports to China through Muse are made up largely of agricultural produce like rice, beans and fruits, while Myanmar imports medicines, electronics and construction materials via the overland route.

Enhance Union spirit to develop the Mon State and residents

THE traditional culture of Mon ethnics is invaluable with abundant cultural heritage, and at present, Mon, Bamar, Kachin, Kayin, Chin, Rakhine, Shan and Pa-O ethnic national people are peacefully and amicably residing in the Mon State. The Mon State is fine in climatic conditions, and the state is decorated with national resources such as Zingyaik Hill, Nwalaboh Hill, Mottama Hill and Taungnyo mountain ranges in addition to rivers and creeks, green forests and plenty of land and water sources as well as ancient religious edifices which are pride to be taken by the people in beautiful scenes.

According to the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Myanmar, No 1 Taninthayi Division was designated as Mon State on 19 March. From then onward, the celebration of Mon State Day has been organized 48 times on a grand scale, based on ceremonies marking the Mon State Day depending on traditions and cultures of national ethnics, and today's celebration turns 48.

As the Mon State bears sound foundations such as natural resources and underground and above ground natural resources, flourishing Buddhism, the long history of Mon ethnics, plentiful of advanced cultural heritages, and the sea and long beach areas, good potential to develop the state within a decade through the restoration of perpetual peace can be seen.

the adorable for improvement of the already achieved sound foundation.

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Misinformation that Omicron is 'the last COVID-19 variant' fuelling uptick worldwide: WHO

A COMBINATION of factors, including misinformation that the pandemic is over, the lifting of mask mandates, ending physical distancing - and a more transmissible Omicron BA.2 variant - are causing an increase of COVID-19 cases globally, the World Health Organization warned on Wednesday.

"After several weeks of declines, reported cases of COVID-19 are once again increasing globally, especially in parts of Asia", WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Gebreyesus told journalists in Geneva.

In the past week, the agency has seen an 8 per cent increase in detection of COVID-19 cases, with more than 11 million positive test results.

"These increases are occurring despite reductions in testing in some countries, which means the cases we are seeing are just the tip of the iceberg", Tedros explained, warning that when cases tick up, so do deaths.

"Each country is facing a different situation with different challenges, but the pandemic is not over", he reiterated.

A combination of factors

WHO's Dr Maria Van Kerkhove explained that a combination of factors is fuelling the increase of cases worldwide, beginning with a more transmissible variant.

"We still have Omicron which is transmitting at a very intense level around the world. We have sub-lineages of Omicron BA.1 and



The World Health Organization is helping countries boost testing capacity for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. PHOTO: WHO/NANA KOFI ACQUAH

BA.2. BA.2 is more transmissible, and this is the most transmissible variant we have seen of the SARS-CoV2 virus to date", she warned.

The COVID-19 Technical Lead informed that in the last 30 days of more than 400,000 sequences sampled, 99.9% are Omicron, and 75% correspond to the BA.2 variant. "We do not see an increase in severity with BA.2. However, with huge numbers of cases you will see increase hospitalisations and we have seen this in country after country", Dr Van Kerkhove highlighted.

Another factor influencing the increase of numbers is the lifting of public health and social measures.

"Lifting of the use of masks, lifting of physical distancing, lifting of restrictions limiting people's movement, this provides the virus an opportunity to spread", Dr Van Kerkhove cautioned.

The expert also pointed out that there are 'huge amounts of misinformation' causing a lot of confusion among people.

"The misinformation that Omicron is mild, misinformation that the pandemic is over, misinformation that this is the last variant that we will have to deal with", she explained.

The virus has 'not settled down'

Meanwhile, Dr Mike Ryan,

WHO's Executive Director of the Health Emergencies Programme clarified that the virus has not 'settled down' into a purely seasonal or predictable pattern yet.

"So, the idea that 'we are through with it' in the northern hemisphere and now we have to wait until next winter, I think (for example) when we look at increasing rates in the UK, we need to be very vigilant and cautious with this", he said.

The expert added that the virus is still 'very fit' and it's moving around easily and in the context of waning immunity and vaccines not acting perfectly against infection, the virus will likely continue to echo around the world.

ID-19 but this virus spreads very efficiently between people and if we don't have the right interventions in place the virus will take opportunities to continue to spread, and the more the virus spreads the more opportunities it has to change", Dr Van Kerkhove added.

Vaccination and vigilance

Both doctors and WHO chief Tedros also spoke about the importance of vaccination pointing out that the majority of deaths remain amongst the unvaccinated, and older individuals and people with underlying conditions who have not received the full course of effective vaccines.

"We need to reinstate the importance of vaccination in every country. This is not just a North-South issue. Every country needs to look again at vaccination levels on the most vulnerable whether using booster policies or not and ensure that at the very minimum every individual who is vulnerable has two doses of effective vaccines", Dr Ryan urged.

Dr Van Kerkhove explained that the data shows that COVID-19 vaccines remain 'incredibly' effective to prevent severe disease and death, including against Omicron.

She added that the world also needs a very strong surveillance system for COVID-19 to be aware of how the virus is evolving.

"We completely understand that the world needs to move on and wants to move on from COV-

SOURCE: UN

Under 2% of babies born to mothers with Covid get infected: study

UNDER two per cent of babies born to mothers with Covid-19 then test positive for the virus, a comprehensive study found Wednesday, with researchers hailing the "hugely reassuring" news for parents.

The analysis published in the BMJ medical journal reviewed nearly 500 previous studies involving almost 29,000 mothers, offering the most sweeping insight yet into the risk of transmitting coronavirus during pregnancy.

"This is as comprehensive as it can get in terms of giving the evidence of mother-to-child

transmission," said lead author Shakila Thangaratnam of Britain's University of Birmingham and the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Global Women's Health.

"This is a hugely reassuring message for parents and parents-to-be that less than one per cent of babies test positive in the first 48 hours of being born and overall, less than two per cent," she told AFP. But the study found that babies were more likely to test positive in severe Covid cases where the mother died or was admitted to intensive care. Of the

592 babies where there was data on how and when they contracted Covid, just seven were confirmed to have been infected while in the womb and two while being born.

Professor Thangaratnam said babies were more likely to be infected after birth, emphasizing that mothers and healthcare workers maintain mask-wearing and other hygiene measures — and reduce the number of people coming in contact with newborns.

The analysis found no link between new-borns testing positive with Covid and breastfeeding, the method of birth, whether they

were premature or had been separated from their mothers.

"Current evidence does not support measures such as caesarean sections, mother-baby separation at birth, or formula feeding to avoid Covid-19 transmission to babies," the study said.

SOURCE: AFP

In this file photo nurses put face shields on newborn babies, as a preventive measure against the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, at the National Maternity Hospital in Hanoi. PHOTO: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 19 March 2022)

BAYINFERENCE: According to the observations at (17:30) hrs MST today, the well marked low pressure area over Southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining South Andaman Sea still persists. It is likely to move Northwards near Andaman Sea, Nicobar Islands and Coco-Island, intensify into a Depression during next (18)hrs and Southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining South Andaman Sea into a Cyclonic Storm during next (42) hrs. It may intensify into a depression, thereafter it is lead to near Coco Island, Myanmar on (20.3.2022), lead to near Hainggyikyun, Ayeyawady Region on (21.3.2022) and reach to Rakhine coast on (22.3.2022). Weather is cloudy over the Andaman Sea and Southeast Bay of Bengal, partly cloudy over the Southwest and East-central Bay of Bengal and a few cloud elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 20 March 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Taninthayi Region, scattered in Kayin and Mon states and isolated in Bago, Yangon, and Ayeyawady regions and (South and East) Shan, Rakhine and Kayah states. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with rough seas are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35)mph. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (8-10) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts and about (5-7) feet off and along Rakhine Coast.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of fairly widespread to widespread rain or thundershowers in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi regions and Shan, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 March 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 March 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 March 2022: Partly cloudy.

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IPRD surveys May Yu FM listeners in Rakhine State



THE government implements seven prioritized projects of ASEAN and Myanmar technological working groups for the repatriation processes of refugees in Rakhine State as per the recommendations in Preliminary Needs Assessment-PN of the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team.

The officials conducted a field study on getting the May Yu FM radio in Maung Ni Ward of Maungtaw Township of Rakhine State yesterday.

U Oo Soe Lwin, head of the Maungtaw District IPRD office explained the survey and the de-

partment staff collected the data following the COVID-19 health rules. They then gave presents to the participants in the survey. A total of 400 residents from Maung Ni Ward joined the survey.

U Adhu Raman said the locals are satisfied with the May Yu FM broadcasting of local and international news, information regarding the repatriation of refugees, COVID-19 information, vaccination processes, health news and songs with clear voices and also suggested broadcasting the activities of State leaders and other knowledgeable things. — District IPRD

2,738 students take examinations in Sittway Township

A total of 2,738 students are sitting for the primary, middle and high school level examinations for the 2021-2022 academic year starting from 17 March in Sittway Township.

In Sittway Township, the Grade-9 Examination is being held at 30 basic education high schools and students from basic education high schools, two monastic schools and four

private schools are taking the exam.

In Sittway Township, the new examination for Grade-4 and middle school examinations for the 2021-2022 academic year was held from 17 March with a 45-minute examination time. The students have finished answering peacefully, officials said.

Similarly, the Grade-9

exam is scheduled for two hours per day from 17 to 23 March, and the new Grade-10 system is being tested in two subjects per day.

There are 138 basic education schools, two monastic schools and four private schools in Sittway Township. It is reported that the students are answering with peace of mind. —Tin Tun (IPRD)



CRIME NEWS

Police seize illegal timbers, foodstuffs, commodities, electronic materials, vehicles

THE Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee focuses on strict control of illegal trade under the law.

The Ayeyawady Region anti-illegal task force seized K10,574,870 worth of 35.0256 tonnes of illegal timbers in Maubin, Myanaung and Yekyi townships on 12, 13 and 15 March and took actions under

the Forest Law.

On 18 March, the Customs Department of Myanmar Industrial Port Terminal also seized K72,495,000 worth of illegal sports shoes, toilet materials, battery and rat traps and took action under the Customs Law.

Moreover, the Mon State Customs Department of Mayaungchaung inspec-

tion camp also confiscated K2,115,760 worth of electronic materials in a truck heading to Yangon from Myawady and charged under the Customs Law.

On 19 March, the Sagaing Region anti-illegal task force seized one unregistered Toyota Portae worth K3,000,000 in Indaw Township, one unregistered motorcycle worth K1,500,000 in Htigmaing Township and K3,966,500 worth of illegal batteries, solar panels, foodstuffs and clothing in Sagaing Township, 4.29 tonnes of Kanyin wood in Tamu Township and took action under the Forest Law.

Similarly, the Bago Region Forest Department seized 22.5858 tonnes of illegal timbers worth K2,929,292 in Bago, Toungoo and Thawady districts on the same day and took action under the Forest Law.

Therefore, a total of 14 arrests (estimated value of K96,835,922) were made on 12, 13, 15, 18 and 19 March, according to the committee. —MNA



Seized illegal commodities in Yangon Region.

Police seize drugs in some townships



Ma Thin Yanant Aung, Soe Swe Oo and Khun Sit Paing are seen together with seized stimulant tablets.

A combined team consisting of members of the Myanmar Police Force from Kayin State searched the house of Soe Swe Oo at Meinmashar Village, Hpa-an Township of Kayin State on 18 March and arrested him together with Ma Thin Yanant Aung and Khun Sit Paing and seized 154,054 stimulant tablets and K130,000.

Similarly, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Narcotics Task Force searched a vehicle at a checkpoint near Wetwun Village, PyinOoLwin Township on 18 March and seized 0.981 kilo-

gramme of heroin on that car.

A combined team consisting of security forces seized 0.88 kilogramme of heroin from a motorcycle near Tarpon Village in Lashio Township on 18 March. At 12:30 pm on that day, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Narcotics Task Force searched the house of Lar Than Hlang at No 164/b, Tarhan Ward, Kalay Township and seized 0.01 kilogramme of heroin and 1,390 stimulant tablets. The suspects were charged under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. —MNA

Thailand further eases COVID-19 restrictions despite record-high cases



From 1 April, the requirement to take a negative test within 72 hours of travel will be scrapped, and instead visitors will be tested on arrival in Thailand. PHOTO: AFP

DESPITE record-high daily COVID-19 cases, Thailand on Friday announced further easing of social distancing rules nationwide, allowing more businesses to resume operations.

The government is also considering to cancel the requirement of pre-departure COVID-19 tests for inbound travelers from 1 April, as part of relaxed border control measures to boost tourism, Natapanu Nopakun, an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told a daily news briefing of the Centre for the COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA).

Aiming to help the economy recover from the pandemic, Thailand plans to declare COVID-19 an endemic disease by 1 July, regardless of a recent spike

in COVID-19 cases.

On Friday, new infections in Thailand hit a record high of 27,071, surpassing the previous record of 25,615 in late February, according to the CCSA. The country also reported 80 more deaths, the highest number of coronavirus-linked fatalities registered since November 2021.

To tackle the highly contagious Omicron wave, the authorities already approved a plan to gradually contain the surge of new infections and prepare the country to treat the virus as an endemic, with the help of accelerated vaccination.

As of Thursday, around 72 per cent of its nearly 70-million population had been fully vaccinated, while 31.7 per cent had received booster shots.—Xinhua ■

Vietnam adjusts COVID-19 controlling target

VIETNAM has switched its target in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic from controlling infections to controlling serious cases and deaths only, while heading to remove the disease from its “especially dangerous” list.

The approach has been specified in a government resolution issued Thursday about COVID-19 prevention and control work in 2022 and 2023.

Vietnam’s overarching goal in the period is to ensure effective disease control, protect the life and health of the people, minimize the number of serious illnesses and deaths caused by disease, and enable economic recovery and development, the document said. Thanks to high vaccination coverage, the death



Travellers are seen at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi, Vietnam, on 15 March 2022. Vietnam on Tuesday fully reopened its borders for international tourists, its tourism authorities said. PHOTO: VNA VIA XINHUA

number in Vietnam has been decreasing in recent months. In the past week, though new infections rose 16 per cent to over 171,400 cases per day on average, fatalities declined by 14 per cent to 75

cases, according to data from its health ministry. As of Thursday, over 201 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered to a population of about 98 million.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Canada approves Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for children

CANADA on Thursday approved the use of the Moderna Spikevax (50 mcg) COVID-19 vaccine in children 6 to 11 years of age, reported Xinhua.

Health Canada said in a statement that this is the second COVID-19 vaccine authorized in Canada for use in this younger age group. Previously Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine was approved for children 5 to 11 years old.

Health Canada said the vaccine was initially authorized for use in people 18 years of age and older on 23 December 2020, and subsequently authorized for children 12 to 17 years of age on 27 August 2021.—Xinhua ■

Rwanda ends temperature screening in COVID fight

Temperature screening at public place entrances in Rwanda is no longer required, and is not considered as one of the ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health said Thursday.

The directive came as infection rate continues to fall.

“The ministry directs heads of public and private institutions and organizers of public events to stop temperature screening at entrances,” the statement said.—Xinhua ■

Hong Kong leader defends mainland medics against ‘divisive comments’

HONG Kong’s leader on Friday warned against making “divisive comments” about mainland medics helping battle the city’s deadly Omicron-fuelled wave after questions of accountability were raised by the press. China this week sent about 400 healthcare workers to bolster the ranks of Hong Kong’s anti-pandemic staff, a move that fuelled questions over the waving of working

licenses for foreign doctors and medical accountability. Local station Now TV drew the ire of Beijing supporters on Wednesday after its reporter asked how patients’ complaints about mainland medics would be handled. When pressed on the incident, leader Carrie Lam dismissed the idea the attacks on Now TV’s reporter were a sign of waning press freedom. She pointed out

the tough working conditions the medics face in Hong Kong – travelling in a closed-loop bubble and toiling in makeshift hospitals far from their families. Lam’s administration has been widely panned over its unclear public messaging and handling of Hong Kong’s fifth Covid-19 wave, which has seen nearly a million cases recorded and about 5,000 deaths in less than three months.—AFP ■



People wearing face masks walk in Tsuen Wan, south China’s Hong Kong, 28 February 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA/LO PING FAI

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Chinese banks report net forex purchase in February

CHINESE banks saw a net foreign exchange purchase last month, data from the country's forex regulator showed Friday.

Chinese lenders bought 160.1 billion US dollars worth of foreign currencies and sold 155.9 billion dollars' worth in February. It resulted in a net purchase of 4.2 billion dollars, said the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE).

There continued to be net inflows of cross-border capital related to the real economy last month, with net inflows from cross-border goods trade up 41 percent year on year to 25.7 billion dollars, according to Wang Chunying, deputy head of the SAFE.

Wang noted that facing external complexities, COVID-19 pandemic and mounting inflation made it more difficult for countries to adjust their monetary policies.—Xinhua ■

UK cuts tax accord with Russia over Ukraine war

BRITAIN said Thursday it is suspending accords on sharing tax information with Russia, the latest in a series of sanctions aiming to squeeze Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

"The UK has suspended all exchange of tax information with Russia and Belarus under the UK's exchange of information agreements," a government statement said.

It said the move "will ensure the UK is not supplying Putin's regime with information that could lead to an increased tax benefit or yield for Russia."—AFP ■

Argentina parliament approves IMF deal for \$45 billion debt

ARGENTINA'S Senate on Thursday gave final approval to an agreement with the International Monetary Fund that restructures a \$45 billion debt, clearing the country's short-term financial horizon but leaving a serious inflationary challenge.

The late-night vote greenlights the new credit programme ironed out between Argentine officials and IMF staff as they sought to finalize the debt, the legacy of a record

loan contracted in 2018 by the government of former president Mauricio Macri.

Outside the Senate, several hundred people demonstrated, called by unions and leftist movements to oppose the restructuring.

Last week, the agreement won the approval of the Chamber of Deputies with a broad consensus between the centre-left ruling coalition and the centre-right opposition, a rarity in Argentina.—AFP ■



Under the new deal, Argentina has committed to progressively reducing its fiscal deficit from three percent in 2021 to just 0.9 percent in 2024. A shopping center in Buenos Aires. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

World's largest trade deal RCEP comes into effect in Malaysia



Malaysia is expected to see a 200-million-US dollar increase in export gains, making the RCEP a vital tool in recovering from the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Port Klang (Malay: Pelabuhan Klang) is a town and the main gateway by sea into Malaysia. **PHOTO: WIKI/XINHUA**

THE Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world's largest trade deal so far, came into effect in Malaysia from Friday, the country's trade ministry said in a statement.

Malaysia is expected to be the largest beneficiary among the ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members from the RCEP in terms of export gains, the country's International Trade and Industry Ministry (MITI) said.

The country is expected to

see a 200-million-US dollar increase in export gains, making the RCEP a vital tool in recovering from the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ministry said.

"Representing a significant milestone in the vibrant growth and revitalization of economies, anchored on the rules-based multilateral trading system, RCEP enables Malaysia to enjoy the global trade and investment ecosystem, benefiting from the eventual elimination of around

90 percent of tariff among members," it said.

"Other advantages to be gained include further liberalization of trade encompassing removal of non-tariff barriers, increased trade facilitation, removal of barriers to the services sector as well as enhancement of business environment through regulations relating to intellectual property protection, government procurement practices and e-commerce," it added.—Xinhua ■

FAO expert warns of Russia's attack's possible heavy toll on food security

THE chief economist of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Maximo Torero, on Wednesday warned of the possible heavy toll of the Russia's attack on Ukraine on world food security, reported Xinhua.

To assess the potential impact on international food prices caused by a conflict-induced reduction in cereal and vegetable oil exports from Ukraine and Russia, simulations have been carried out, he said.

On the basis of their already elevated baseline values, wheat price would increase by 8.7 percent in a moderate-shock scenario and by 21.5 percent in a severe-shock scenario, he told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York.

For maize, the increase would be 8.2 percent in the moderate case and 19.5 percent in the severe scenario. For other coarse grains, prices would rise by 7 to 19.9 percent, and for oilseeds by



The war in Ukraine will continue to push up food prices as the supply from the "Breadbasket of Europe" is cut in the short term and, possibly, the long term depending on how the conflict plays out. A staff member fetches freshly-baked bread at a bakery in the capital Tunis. **PHOTO: AFP**

10.5 to 17.9 percent, he said.

Globally, in terms of impacts on food security, in the moderate scenario, the number of undernourished people would increase by 7.6 million people, while this level would rise to 13.1 million people in the severe-shock setting, said Torero. Moreover, ad-

ditional upward pressure on fertilizer prices has stemmed from disruptions and high transportation costs following the imposition of export restrictions and due to sharp increases in bulk and container freight rates caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, he said.—Xinhua ■

Portugal to subsidize fuel for freight transporters

PORTUGUESE government's Council of Ministers approved on Friday a resolution to subsidize the fuel consumed by freight transporters, intending to mitigate the sharp rise in prices seen in recent days.

The decision authorizes a benefit of 30 eurocents (33 US dollar cents) per litre of fuel for transporters of vehicles up to 35 tonnes, in addition to 20 eurocents for heavy vehicles from 35 tonnes.

"The pollutant emis-

sion control liquid," which works in the exhaust system of diesel vehicles will also be subsidized "regardless of the vehicle's weight," said a statement from the Council of Ministers.

According to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing, the support will be paid in a single monthly installment, calculated according to fuel consumption according to the tonnage of the vehicles.

The measure aims

to reinforce support for companies affected by fuel price inflation, which has risen by an average of 10 per cent in the last two weeks.

Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa had already announced a package benefiting individual consumers in general, the main measure being the return of amounts charged as Tax on Petroleum Products. (1 euro = 1.11 US dollars)—Xinhua ■



The measure aims to reinforce support for companies affected by fuel price inflation, which has risen by an average of 10 per cent in the last two weeks. PHOTO: XINHUA

Runway fashion shows return to Istanbul after 2-year suspension



Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Istanbul. PHOTO: ALEMDAR/GETTY IMAGES FOR IMG/XINHUA

RUNWAY fashion shows have made a major comeback in Istanbul, Turkey's cultural and financial hub, after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More than two dozen Turkish designers

put new collections on show at Fashion Week Istanbul on Friday, the closing day of the 4-day event, with this year's edition featuring hybrid events of film screenings, runway shows, and

collection presentations under social-distancing measures.

Gokhan Yavas, an Izmir-born designer, presented his menswear collection on a runway show in the SOHO House

Istanbul, the event's main venue in the European side of the city. "I recently held my first digital show in London. But from now on, I will try to take bigger steps," Yavas told Xinhua after the show.

He said Fashion Week Istanbul, which was first launched in 2009 as Istanbul Fashion Days, has brought together some leading players in the Turkish and global fashion industry, presenting a unique opportunity for Turkish designers to go abroad and make big.

Yavas said his "biggest dream" is to promote globally the new look of his namesake brand, especially to far eastern countries, such as China, where "there is a huge fashion audience."—Xinhua ■

Oil prices climb as traders assess supply risks

OIL prices advanced on Friday as traders weighed supply risks.

The West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for April delivery added 1.72 US dollars, or 1.7 per cent, to settle at 104.70 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude for May delivery increased 1.29 dollars, or 1.2 per cent, to close at 107.93 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange.

"The news from Russia and Ukraine with respect to the peace talks no longer sounded nearly as optimistic as it did before, which has doubtless prompted the market to reassess the situation," Carsten Fritsch, energy analyst at Commerzbank Research, said Friday in a note.

"Wednesday's fore-

cast from the International Energy Agency (IEA) is also likely to have had quite an impact," he said.

In its monthly report released on Wednesday, the IEA said "the prospect of large-scale disruptions to Russian oil production is threatening to create a global oil supply shock."

It estimated that three million barrels per day of Russian oil output could be shut in from April "as sanctions take hold and buyers shun exports." The Paris-based energy watchdog also revised its oil demand forecast from the second quarter noticeably down to take account of lower global economic growth caused by the high commodities prices and sanctions against Russia.—Xinhua ■

Number of active US drilling rigs up this week

THE number of active drilling rigs in the United States increased to 663 during the week ending on 11 March, up by 13 from the previous week and 261 from last year, according to the weekly data released Friday by Houston-based oilfield services company Baker

Hughes.

These active drilling rigs included 527 oil rigs operating in the US oil fields, down by 8 from the previous week; 135 gas drilling rigs, up by five from last week; and one miscellaneous rig, unchanged from last week.

The rigs included 635

land drilling rigs, three inland water rigs, and 12 offshore drilling rigs, all unchanged from last week.

Of them, 33 are directional drilling rigs, 607 are horizontal drilling rigs and 23 are vertical drilling rigs.

So far, the Permian

Basin in western Texas and eastern New Mexico has been the largest source of shale oil production growth in the United States, having become an engine of supply growth outside the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in the past years.—Xinhua ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MAERSK NUSSFJORD VOY.NO. (210W/211E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MAERSK NUSSFJORD VOY.NO. (210W/211E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20-3-2022 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AWPT 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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Xi stresses joint China-US efforts for world peace, tranquillity

CHINA and the United States must not only guide their relations forward along the right track, but also shoulder their share of international responsibilities and work for world peace and tranquillity, Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Friday.

Xi made the remarks in a video call with US President Joe Biden at the latter's request.

Noting the international landscape has experienced new major developments since their first virtual meeting last November, Xi said the prevailing trend of peace and development is facing serious challenges, and the world is neither tranquil nor stable.

"The Ukraine crisis is not something we want to see," Xi said.

The events again show that



Biden and Xi began speaking at 13:00 GMT on Friday, the White House said. PHOTO: XINHUA

countries should not come to the point of meeting on the battlefield. Conflict and confrontation are not in anyone's interest, and peace and security are what the international community should treasure the most, he added.

"As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and the world's two leading economies, we must not only guide the China-US relations forward along the right track, but also shoulder our share of

international responsibilities and work for world peace and tranquillity," Xi said.

President Biden said that 50 years ago, the United States and China made the important choice of issuing the Shanghai

Communique. Fifty years on, the US-China relationship has once again come to a critical time. How this relationship develops will shape the world in the 21st century.

He reiterated that the US does not seek a new Cold War with China; it does not aim to change China's system; the revitalization of its alliances is not targeted at China; the US does not support "Taiwan independence"; and it has no intention to seek a conflict with China.

The US is ready to have candid dialogue and closer cooperation with China, stay committed to the one-China policy, and effectively manage competition and disagreements to ensure the steady growth of the relationship, said President Biden.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US military aircraft crashes in Norway

A US plane with four crews taking part in a NATO exercise crashed in northern Norway on Friday, confirmed Hovedredningsentral (HRS), or the Joint rescue coordination centre, in Northern Norway, reported Xinhua.

The Bell-Boeing V-22 Osprey, a twin-engine vertical take-off military aircraft, was on a training mission when it went missing shortly after failing to arrive at its planned destination of Bodo.

According to Jan Eskild Severinsen, press officer at the HRS, debris was discovered at 21:17 near Gratadalen, a valley south of Bodo known for its numerous caves.—Xinhua ■

Taliban welcomes UN's continued Afghanistan presence

THE Taliban Friday welcomed a UN Security Council resolution formally extending the world body's presence in Afghanistan, although the government of the hardline Islamist group remains unrecognized by the international community.

Thursday's resolution — which avoids using the word "Taliban" — allows the UN to continue work in Afghanistan, still reeling after decades of war and whose economy was devastated when the international community cut off aid as the group took power last year.—AFP ■

East Timor votes in presidential election



Supporters from the Fretilin party attend a campaign rally in support of East Timor President Francisco Guterres. PHOTO: AFP

EAST Timor's citizens were at the polls on Saturday to elect a new president, hoping the most competitive election in the history of Southeast Asia's youngest country will end a protracted political impasse.

Voters lined up outside polling stations at the crack of dawn to choose between a record 16 candidates led by two revolutionary heroes in incumbent Francisco "Lu-Olo" Guterres and former president and No-

bel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos-Horta.

Following temperature checks and hand sanitization, they were ushered to the polling booths where they dabbed their fingers in ink to show they had voted. Several mothers carrying babies were among those eager to elect a new president.

"I hope the leader that I have voted for can pay more attention to the education, infrastructure and farming sectors. I am very happy that I've voted for a candidate based on my consciousness," 35-year-old Filomena Tavares Maria told AFP outside the polls that opened at 7 am (2200 GMT) and are due to shut at 3 pm.

Preliminary results are expected later today but an official result will be announced sometime next week.—AFP ■

Over two million Ukraine refugees cross into Poland



People from Ukraine arrive at Medyka, Poland, 26 February 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA /ZHOU NAN

POLAND'S border guards said Friday that more than two million refugees had crossed into the EU member from neighbouring Ukraine since the 24 February Russian invasion.

"At 9:00 am the number of refugees from Ukraine exceeded two million. It is mainly women with children," the guards said

on Twitter. "Border guard officers are the first Poles to bring them assistance after the border crossing. Often simple words of support mean the most," they added. Poland has received more than half of the refugees fleeing Ukraine. Others have fled to fellow neighbours such as Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. On Thurs-

day, the UN refugee agency UNHCR said more than 3.1 million people had fled Ukraine since the invasion. "Hour by hour, minute by minute, people are fleeing the terrifying reality of violence in Ukraine. Unless the conflict ends, this heart-breaking crisis is set to grow. We need peace, now," the agency said.—AFP ■

At 8th anniversary of Crimea’s annexation, Putin terms Ukraine war as ‘heroic’ mission



President Vladimir Putin addressed tens of thousands of supporters at a Moscow rally marking the eighth anniversary of Russia’s annexation of Crimea **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin on Friday termed the war waded on Ukraine as a “heroic” mission by his country’s army during a patriotic rally at a Moscow stadium. Putin made the remarks at a rally held at Luzhniki Stadium here to celebrate the

8th anniversary of Russia’s annexation of the Ukrainian Black Sea peninsula of Crimea in 2014. As Putin prepared to take the stage, speakers praised him as fighting “Nazism” in Ukraine – the pretext used by Moscow for staging its invasion, reported DW.

According to the agency, People waved the Russian national flag and flags bearing the letter Z, a “pro-war symbol”. In a verbal attack at the rally, Putin termed opponents as “gnats” trying to weaken the country at the behest of the West and spoke of the “necessary self-purification of society.” Russian forces launched military operations in Ukraine on 24 February, three days after Moscow recognized Ukraine’s breakaway regions, Donetsk and Luhansk as independent republics followed by the announcement of a “special military operation” to “demilitarize” and “denazify” Ukraine. The Russian Defence Ministry said the special operation is targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure only and the civilian population is not in danger.— ANI ■

Ukraine’s positions at peace talks with Russia remain unchanged: Ukraine’s presidential advisor

UKRAINE’S positions at the peace talks with Russia remain unchanged, Ukrainian Presidential Advisor Mykhailo Podolyak said on Friday.

“Our positions remain unchanged: a ceasefire, the withdrawal of troops and strict security guarantees with specific formulas,” Podolyak, who is also a member of the Ukrainian delegation to the peace talks with Russia, tweeted.

The fourth round of negotiations between Ukrainian and Russian delegations started on Monday via video link. On Wednesday, Podolyak said that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky may hold talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in the coming days. Podolyak



People walk by a building damaged by shelling amid Russian invasion of Ukraine in Kyiv on 17 March 2022, as Russian troops try to encircle the Ukrainian capital as part of their slow-moving offensive. **PHOTO: SERGEI SUPINSKY / AFP**

said on Thursday it would take between a few days and a week and a half for Ukraine and Russia

to reach a peace agreement, the Ukrainian online media outlet Liga.net reported.—Xinhua ■

As war rages on, Ukraine, Russia agree on nine humanitarian corridors

UKRAINE and Russia have agreed on nine humanitarian corridors for Friday (Local Time) that may start from Ukraine’s Mariupol, Sumy, Trostyanets, Lebedyn, Konotop, the settlements of Krasnopillya, and Velyka Pysarivka. Moreover, Ukraine

plans to deliver humanitarian aid to Balakleya and Izyum in the Kharkiv Oblast, reported The Kyiv Independent.

As the Russia-Ukraine war inches towards completing one month, Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba spoke to the

European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and discussed the preparations of the 5th EU sanction package on Russia. They also spoke on providing aid to the Ukrainians who fled the war-torn country and sought refugee in European nations.—ANI ■

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Following are the latest developments of the situation:

Putin, Macron discuss situation in Ukraine over phone

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin discussed the situation in Ukraine during a telephone call with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Friday.

The Russian president explained that the country’s armed forces were doing everything possible to save civilian lives and open humanitarian corridors for the safe evacuation of the population, in response to concerns raised by the French leader.

The leaders also talked about the developments with regard to the ongoing peace negotiations, and discussed Russia’s approach toward possible agreements.

The French leader expressed concern over the situation in Mariupol, and called for an immediate ceasefire, local media reported.

Russia says it’s made progress in negotiations

RUSSIAN presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky, also the head of the Russian delegation in several rounds of talks with Ukraine, said Friday that the two sides have moved closer to agreement on the key issue of Ukraine dropping attempts to join NATO and adopting a neutral status.

According to Russian media reports, he said that the two sides are now “halfway” on issues regarding the demilitarization of Ukraine, though their positions on the management of Donbass still differ.

Ukrainian FM says ready for fresh talks with Russian counterpart

UKRAINIAN Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said that he is ready for fresh talks with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, the Ukrainian news outlet Ukrayinska Pravda reported Friday.

“I am ready to talk to him, I am ready to have a serious, substantive conversation with him,” Kuleba was quoted as saying.

Kuleba emphasized that the possible meeting should focus on finding solutions to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

On 10 March, Kuleba and Lavrov met in Turkey on the sidelines of an international forum in the presence of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

Russian missiles destroy aircraft repair plant in Lviv

Ukraine’s Lviv city mayor Andriy Sadovyi said that the Russian missiles struck an aircraft repair plant in Lviv on Friday, according to The Kyiv independent, a Ukraine media outlet.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian air forces said that fourteen Russian aerial units were destroyed on 17 March.

Ukraine’s air defence destroyed seven aircraft, one helicopter, three UAVs, and three cruise missiles, according to Ukraine’s Air Force command.

Fighting reaches centre of Mariupol

Some 130 people have been rescued so far from a theatre in the besieged city of Mariupol that was hit by a Russian air strike, but “hundreds” more are still trapped under the rubble, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said, as Mariupol’s mayor said that fighting for the strategic Black Sea port has reached the city centre.

Some 350,000 people remain trapped inside the city in horrific conditions, aid workers say.

SOURCE: AFP/ANI/XINHUA

Pauk Sa wins third prize in 2022 Asian Billiard Championship

MYANMAR billiard player won the third prize in the 2022 Asian Billiard Championship as the quarter-finals, semifinals and final were held on 18 and 19 March.

In the quarter-finals, Myanmar players Pauk Sa and Min Si Thu Tun faced each other and Pauk Sa won by 4-1.

In the semi-finals, Pauk Sa met world champion Advani of India and competed in nine matches.

Pauk Sa did his best, but Advani, who has won the World

and Asian Championships several times, won with experience.

In the first and second rounds, Advani won, but Pauk Sa won again in the third and fourth rounds.

After that, Advani won two games in a row, but Pauk Sa won two games and drew four, and the ninth and final match was decisive.

In this match, Advani won by 100-48 to reach the final.

In the other semi-final, Siswala (India) beat Prabut (Thai-

land) by 5-4.

In the final, two Indians met and Advani defeated Sivala 6-2.

Two Myanmar billiards players competed in this competition and Pauk Sa won the joint third prize and Min Si Thu Tun reached the quarter-finals.

In turn, the other two Myanmar snooker players competed in the Asian Snooker Championships, with Aung Phyo winning the joint third prize and Win Ko Ko advancing to Round of 16. — Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

Candy wants fan involvement as race to buy Chelsea heats up

NICK Candy has vowed to involve Chelsea fans if the British property tycoon succeeds in his bid to buy the troubled Premier League club.

Candy is believed to have submitted a bid of over £2 billion (\$2.6 billion) for his boyhood team before Friday's deadline and he promised to give fans a 'golden share' ownership stake.

On a frantic day at Stamford Bridge, former Liverpool chairman Martin Broughton and World Athletics president Sebastian Coe also lodged a joint bid.

Chicago Cubs owners the Ricketts family followed suit, while LA Dodgers co-owner Todd Boehly's consortium also made a confirmed bid.

There are reported to be several other firm bids on the table, but Candy is a front runner.



Chelsea's assets have been frozen as a result of sanctions targeting Russian owner Roman Abramovich. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Candy issued a lengthy statement in confirming the submission of his bid, vowing to write off the loan to Chelsea Pitch Owners to safeguard the Blues' future at Stamford Bridge.

The 49-year-old has promised a total renovation of the stadium, where his property

expertise could come to the fore.

Candy has teamed up with South Korean firms Hana Financial Group and C&P Sports Group in his Blue Football Consortium. "Chelsea is one of the most iconic and successful professional football clubs in the world, with a rich heritage, global following, and a highly valuable brand," Candy said.

"Football clubs are vitally important community and cultural assets, and this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to give football back to the fans and put them at the heart of the operations and strategy of a leading global football club.

"I believe Chelsea has all of the fundamentals to become the most valuable and respected sports club in the world and a force for the greater good in everything it does."—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.

Messi left to pick up pieces at PSG after jeers and Champions League failure

A season that started with such feverish excitement is turning out to be nothing short of a fiasco in Paris for Lionel Messi, who suffered the ignominy of being booed by his own supporters last weekend. Unhappy Paris Saint-Germain fans targeted the Argentine as well as Neymar during the 3-0 win over Bordeaux that followed the club's spectacular Champions League

elimination at the hands of Real Madrid. "We understand their disappointment, their feeling of hatred," admitted PSG defender Presnel Kimpembe. Adored in Barcelona, from where he made a tearful exit last August, the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner suddenly found himself in a position he had never previously experienced during his remarkable club career.—AFP ■

Swiatek, Sakkari set up Indian Wells WTA title clash



Greece's Maria Sakkari on the way to a WTA semi-final victory over defending champion Paula Badosa of Spain in the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells. PHOTO: AFP

MARIA Sakkari ended Paula Badosa's bid for a repeat title at Indian Wells on Friday, beating the defending champion to set up a final clash with former French Open winner Iga Swiatek.

Greece's Sakkari triumphed 6-2, 4-6, 6-1 to end Badosa's bid to become the first woman since Martina Navratilova in 1990-91 to win back-to-back Indian Wells titles.

Poland's Swiatek beat two-time Grand Slam winner Simona Halep 7-6 (8/6), 6-4.

Ranked fourth in the world, Swiatek was already assured of rising to a career-high third in the world. Either she or sixth-ranked Sakkari

can claim the No. 2 spot with a victory in Sunday's title match.

"Really it's over my expectations," said Swiatek, who said she came into the prestigious event in the California desert doubtful she could follow up her fourth career title in Doha with another deep tournament run.

But she rallied from a break down in each set and saved two set points in the first-set tiebreaker to notch a 10th straight WTA match win.

"It was really intense," Swiatek said, "really physical. I think we had the longest rallies I played here."—AFP ■