

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. IX, No. 6, 7th Waning of Tagu 1384 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Friday, 22 April 2022

Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

Myanmar Government to Accelerate Energy Projects Amid Power Shortages; Says Sanctions End Up Hurting Foreign Investors, Local Workers and Businesses More

THE Myanmar Government will accelerate the development of hydrocarbon and renewable energy even as it repairs power lines damaged by terrorists while seeking to increase foreign investments despite the threat of fresh economic sanctions, the Ministry of Information (MoI) and Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations (MIFER) announced today.

MoI Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn and MIFER Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo issued the joint statement in response to recent media reports about energy shortages in the country and exits of some foreign energy companies, and fresh sanctions against Myanmar announced in recent months.

Addressing Energy Shortages in Myanmar

The recent temporary shortage of power was caused by a surge in global liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices, exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, a weaker kyat currency as well as terrorist actions linked to the People's Defence Force (PDF). Apart from advocating a boycott of utility payments since 2021, PDF terrorists blew up power lines from the Lawpita hydroelectric plant in Kayah State. These actions contributed to outages which caused hardship to ordinary citizens and small businesses in particular.

However, despite earlier civil unrest, the country has largely achieved national stability since the second half of 2021. Myanmar Government, under the direction of the State Administration Council (SAC) that was formed on 2 February 2021, is focusing efforts on various mitigating actions regarding the country's energy situation:

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Mandalay bean market bustling in post-Thingyan period



At present, black grams and pigeon peas are exported to India; green gram, sesame, peanut, heirloom bean, rice bean and butter bean are shipped to China, and corn is mostly delivered to Thailand, fetching high prices on the back of strong demand.

THE Mandalay market saw big sales of the beans and pulses, primarily exported to foreign trade partners in the post-Thingyan period.

It is bustling with the sellers and buyers when the market has resumed its trade activity in the post-Thingyan period. The black gram, pigeon peas, maize, sesa-

me, peanut, kidney bean, butter beans and heirloom beans are being sold well, said U Soe Win Myint, an owner of the Soe Win Myint warehouse in Mandalay.

"The market is crowded with the sellers and buyers. Surprisingly, this year is the edible oil from Shan State's soybean. Soybean oil production will also help



minimize the need for imported oil, like sunflower oil. Consumers should use healthy soybean oil. Shan State's soybean prefers in the market rather than Myanmar soybean varieties," he elaborated.

At present, black grams and pigeon peas are exported to India; green gram, sesame, peanut, heirloom bean, rice bean and butter bean are shipped to China, and corn is mostly delivered to Thailand, fetching high prices on the back of strong demand.

Meanwhile, the edible oil prices remain stable at K8,000

per viss for peanut oil and sesame oil, K5,500-K6,000 per viss for sunflower oil and K6,500-K7,000 per viss for soybean oil.—Ming Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Myanmar Government to Accelerate Energy Projects Amid Power Shortages; Says Sanctions End Up Hurting Foreign Investors, Local Workers and Businesses More

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- (i) With the relative stabilization of global energy prices, the Government is seeking to increase the use of natural gas for local power generation.
- (ii) The Government will step up the repair of power infrastructure damaged by terrorists and increase security measures.
- (iii) It will accelerate power generation in the country from oil and gas sources through new investments, partnerships and actions such as conversion to use of existing facilities:
 - the new Shwe Gas Pipeline was completed on 12 June 2013 and will generate about 330 MW of regular power.
 - Conversion of some fertilizer plants (which use gas as feedstock) for immediate generation of 30 MW of electricity and accelerating works on other gas-fired power generators or waste-heat projects. A total of about 100 MW of electricity has been generated in Kyaukphyu using 20 million cubic feet of gas currently. After pipeline maintenance, this will expand to 30 million cubic feet per day and generate 195 MW.

(iv) Major energy projects with China

As its largest neighbour and economic partner, China will play an increasingly important role in energy-related developments in Myanmar.

- With regard to the China-Myanmar pipeline project involving China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), the gas pipeline portion was completed at the end of 2013, and the oil pipeline portion was completed in April 2017. The project, which also includes a crude oil terminal, is CNPC's largest investment in Myanmar, and a centerpiece of China's Belt and Road Initiative in the country.

- 3 Chinese companies – Union Resources and Engineering Company (41%), Yunnan Energy Investment (39%) and Zhefu Holding Group (1%) – are partnering with Myanmar's Supreme Group (19%) to develop the 1,390 MW Mee Lin Gyaing Project. This facility in the Ayeyawady region involves an LNG-fired power plant, an LNG terminal, a high voltage transmission line and gas pipelines to Yangon. It has been approved by the Myanmar Investment Commission. Currently, in the early stages of design and construction, it is expected to start commercial operation in 2027.

Myanmar Government is also proposing to include this high-priority energy project – with an estimated investment value of USD 2.5 billion – in the list of early harvest projects of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) to enhance bilateral cooperation so as to accelerate its progress.

(v) Increase investments in renewable energy

- Solar Energy: More than half of the 40-MW Letpanhla and 30-MW Nyaungbin Gyi solar projects have been completed. To achieve national renewable energy goals, 13 solar power projects which will generate 370 MW have been launched.

While three more solar power projects which will generate 390-megawatt are also planned, special efforts are being made to promote floating solar projects, rooftop solar projects, and small and medium-sized projects wherever possible.

Tenders are also being called for 18 solar power projects that can generate 635 MW. These are in addition to ongoing negotiations for 11 solar projects which will generate 300 MW that have been invited. Negotiations are underway to sign an agreement for one of them.

- **Hydroelectric Power** – With more than 60 hydropower dams, hydroelectricity is a key source of energy in the country. The Government is negotiating to purchase about 120 MW of electricity from the Tapin (1) hydropower project soon. The Government will emphasize proper environmental and social impact assessments before approval. Project designs must address such impact and communicate plans and benefits to the relevant communities in order to allay future concerns.

Myanmar plans to achieve national electrification by 2030 and generate 9% of electricity from renewable sources such as hydro and solar power.

Reported Exits of Foreign Oil and Gas Companies

The Ministers said the withdrawal by France's TotalEnergies from the Yadana field and a related gas transportation project will be effective on 20 July 2022. The former's 31.24% stake has been allocated proportionately to the remaining partners in the joint venture.

After the withdrawal of TotalEnergies, Thailand's PTTEP International Limited (PTTEPI) will hold 37.0842% participating interest, while Unocal Myanmar Offshore Company Limited, a subsidiary of Chevron Corporation (Chevron) of the United States, will hold 41.1016%, the highest participating interest in the project. Since the first shipment in 1996 about 70% of production from this project, or about 768 million standard cubic feet per day currently, has been sold to Thailand, with the rest designated for domestic power generation.

“As this is a change of ownership, operations are not affected. The Yadana field has the largest known Myanmar offshore hydrocarbon reserves. However, production there has declined since the end-2021 following 20 years of post-pla-

teau output. Production at this field to date has reached 85% of the recoverable reserves,” the Union Ministers said. TotalEnergies is not seeking compensation for the withdrawal.

The Union Ministers said that while Chevron had stated it would exit investments from Myanmar, the Government has to date not received any formal notification from the company.

A third foreign energy company, Woodside Petroleum Ltd of Australia, has recently withdrawn from the A6 Natural Gas Project in Rakhine State. Its stake has been taken over by its project partner the MPRL E&P Group of Companies. Operations are also not affected.

Myanmar's Energy Sector Remains Attractive

Despite being one of the world's oldest oil producers (exports started in 1853), Myanmar's upstream sector is still in its infancy due to sanctions, opaque regulatory policy and insufficient investment.

“Although proven energy reserves are still relatively modest, unofficial estimates are extremely promising. Such fields with potential, which are also in proximity to large demand centres in Thailand and China, have attracted the interest of several major players. Hence, the Government continues to speed up its reform and has held a number of successful international bids for such hydrocarbon fields,” the Union Ministers said.

Response to Fresh Economic Sanctions Against Myanmar

The Ministers said that external pressure and fresh economic sanctions by several Western countries in recent months may have raised concerns among some foreign investors.

“Economic sanctions may have a more negative impact on private sectors than on the Government. Domestic and foreign businessmen and their enterprises, local workers, suppliers and consumers end up suffering the most.

Some sizeable projects that had been approved have commenced construction. Due to the economic sanctions, promoters of some of these projects are now facing obstacles in transferring foreign currency. This has affected the progress of the projects.

Should these projects be terminated due to sanctions, their investors must repay tax exemptions they enjoyed on top of project costs incurred. Otherwise, their investments will remain in the pending state. Hence, investors may end up leaving Myanmar not because of an unfavourable investment environment but because of external pressures.

Myanmar is committed to providing a secure, accessible and conducive investment environment. We do not wish to see investment withdrawals.

Although the international community publicly discourages economic cooperation with Myanmar, we continue to attract foreign investments. Many of our foreign partners choose to work quietly with us, away from the glare of external publicity, fully recognizing Myanmar's economic potential as well as its unique challenges,” the Union Ministers said.

Energy Sector Remains Priority For Total Investments

The Ministers also gave an update on investments in Myanmar in the last two fiscal years. During fiscal 2020-2021 (12 months ended October) and fiscal 2021-2022 (interim budget of 6 months ended March), a total of 82 projects in 12 sectors with investments totalling USD 4.32 billion were approved (USD 3.79 billion in fiscal 2020-2021 and USD 530.775 million fiscal 2021-2022.)

Manufacturing accounted for most projects among 12 sectors in fiscal 2020-2021. However, the Power sector received a substantially higher amount of total approved investment of USD 3.12 billion for 6 projects during this period, underscoring the attractiveness of the sector.

Foreign Investments

Most of the countries investing in Myanmar are Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Thailand and South Korea. In the fiscal year 2020-2021, a total of 15 projects were from China, and 14 projects were from Singapore.

In 2021-2022 FY, there are 18 projects from China and 6 were from Hong Kong.

Domestic Investments

In the last two fiscal years, a total of 93 domestic investment projects (61 in fiscal 2020-2021 and 32 in fiscal 2021-2022) in 12 sectors valued at 2,248.7 billion kyats (1,171.8 billion kyats in fiscal 2020-2021 and 1,076.9 billion kyats in fiscal 2021-2022, respectively) were approved.

A total of 50 projects were from the Manufacturing sector, which is the leading domestic investment category, followed by the Services sector, which recorded 14 approved projects, while Hotels and Tourism sector was third with 11 projects.

To build the Union based on Democracy and Federal System

TO build the Union based on Democracy and Federal System, furthermore, the EAOs need to cultivate an attitude in which a Union Spirit regarding the entire Union as one family as well as one home without doing unilateral propositions, and need to partake in the peace process as soon as possible.

(Excerpt from Speech Delivered by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing at the Parade of the 77th Anniversary Armed Forces Day on 27th March 2022.)

State Administration Council enacts Law Amending the University for Development of National Races Law

THE State Administration Council enacted the Law Amending the University for Development of National Races Law as the SAC Law 38/2022 on 21 April 2022, signed by Chairman of the State Administration Council Senior General Min Aung Hlaing under Section 419 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

The amended law mentioned that the word “university council” shall be substituted with the word of “committee” in Sub-section (c) of Section 2 of the law.

Sub-section (c) shall be added with Sub-sections (d) and (e) that the ministry means the Ministry of Border Affairs and the department, the Department of Education and Training of the ministry.

Section 4 of the law mentioning the authority of own title and seal shall be substituted with the own title, own theme and own seal.

Section 6 of the law shall

be substituted with the vision of the university: Union national race youths to be the youths with Union spirit in unison among all ethnics while studying; to turn out good educational personnel with free from party politics and good morale and moral ethic; enhance necessary leadership skill in developing the living standard of people in the border region; to culture, the spirit for research works in order to achieve success in development tasks for ethnic people; and the Union national race youths to become the youths for upholding Our Three Main National Causes—non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetual perpetuation of sovereignty.

Moreover, the law shall substitute the words in Sections 7, 8, 17, 21 and 23 and Sub-sections from Sections 10, 12, 13, 15 and 17 and revoke Sections 9, 19 and words from Section 22. — MNA

MoIC Union Minister and Chairman of the Task Force for the facilitation of ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar through the AHA Centre receives Cambodian delegation



MoIC Union Minister U Ko Ko Hlaing receives Mr Kung Phoak, Cambodian Secretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

U Ko Ko Hlaing, Union Minister for the Ministry of International Cooperation and Chairman of the Task Force for the facilitation of ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar through the AHA Centre received a Cambodian delegation led by Dr Kung Phoak, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Head of the office of the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair at 11:45 am on 21 April 2022 at the Ministry of International Cooperation, Nay Pyi Taw.

The meeting was attended by U Kyaw Myo Htut, Deputy Minister from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, U Chan Aye, Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Directors-General from ASEAN Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During the call, U Ko Ko Hlaing said that Myanmar ex-

pects patience, understanding and strong support from ASEAN for the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus and expressed Myanmar’s willingness and readiness for the effective implementation. The Union Minister then suggested that both ASEAN and Myanmar need to purely emphasize on the humanitarian assistance and to be practical in the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus. The Union Minister also reiterated that Myanmar has been prioritizing the no one left behind policy and conducting vaccination programmes for EAOs as well, and therefore, all of the works and initiatives that come from ASEAN and External Partners should be in line with the process and framework of Myanmar’s Government.

Dr Kung Phoak expressed sincere appreciation to Myanmar’s Government for the ar-

range of the visit and for candid and frank discussions at the meetings. Dr Kung Phoak informed that Cambodia respects Myanmar’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and has been finding all possible ways to assist Myanmar, not with the intention to interfere in other countries’ domestic problems. He then said that Cambodia has a similar historical background to Myanmar and understands the complexity of internal problems, and Cambodia is ready to assist Myanmar in the way both ASEAN and Myanmar are comfortable. He further stated that Cambodia is willing to reinstate ASEAN’s Integration with the participation of all member states in every platform as well as to show others that Myanmar has been accommodating in all possible ways and means for the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus.—MNA

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

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

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

Daily newspapers available online

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

Union Ministers U Maung Maung Ohn, U Aung Naing Oo give interviews to reporters from foreign news agencies



Mol Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn.



MIFER Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo.

UNION Ministers U Maung Maung Ohn and U Aung Naing Oo virtually replied to queries raised by reporters from AP, Reuters, the South China Morning Post and Straits Times, China Central Television (CCTV), People's Daily and Xinhua news agencies at the respective halls of the Union Minister's offices yesterday morning.

In his introductory speech, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn expressed special thanks for replying to the queries of the media at the interviews and

for their interest in the issues of Myanmar.

The Union minister said that he would answer the questions together with Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo.

He highlighted that today's press statement would be used after 12:15 pm Myanmar standard time. Generally, the energy and economic sectors are inter-related, and some development can be seen in Myanmar. The prices of oil and natural gas trig-

gered by the Russia-Ukraine conflict are remarkably increasing globally. With regard to the internal affairs of Myanmar, lesser development of infrastructures, depreciation of Myanmar kyat currency, financial problems and destruction of terrorists to some power lines cause harmful impacts on Myanmar people.

Currently, it is necessary to solve the energy requirement problems to ensure the nation's peace and stability. At the same time, new economic sanctions

were recently imposed against Myanmar. Many media mentioned the departure of some foreign oil and natural gas companies from Myanmar. The two Union ministers will reply to the queries on these problems at the interviews in rotation.

Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo expressed his delight for meeting the media. He said that he would discuss progress in the current economic sector and energy sector of Myanmar.

Significantly, he pledged

to explain the statements related to the exchange rate of currency in Myanmar. The current government is facing challenges that are different from previous governments. It faces economic sanctions and instabilities in some regions and states. It affects the economy of the nation.

However, the country is in a situation to open the sectors as the COVID-19 pandemic is under control. The pandemic caused a delay in the State economy. At present, the development of the State economy is prolonged. The current government emphasizes the electricity supply to the country at full capacity. Efforts are being made to stabilize the State economy, emphasizing the rapid implementation of the energy sector with new projects.

No matter how severe the challenges are, the government decides to overcome these challenges so as to convene the election in 2023. It will continuously strive for stabilizing the economy and gaining development of the nation, he added.

— MNA

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Arrangements under implementation to facilitate disabled in tourism

AS more tourists can travel according to the different types of tourism, it will be considered more convenient for the disabled as well, said Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung during the meeting on Barrier-Free Tourism for All yesterday.

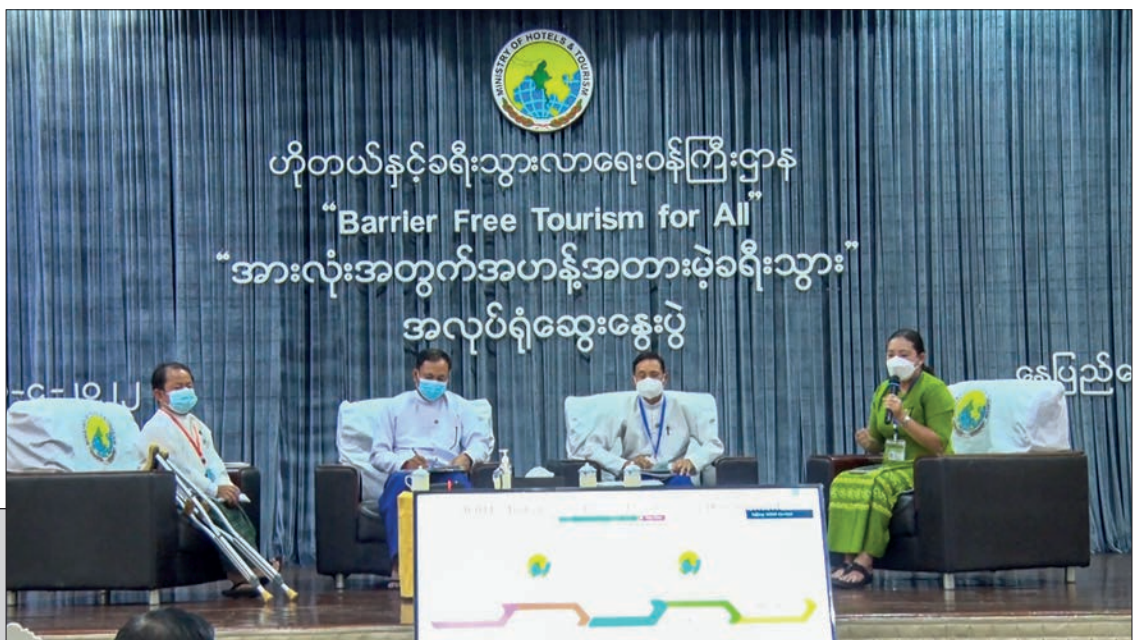
He elaborated that people make visits from their native to somewhere with social, cultural and economic intentions, arrangements for hotels/buildings for the people with disabilities, preparations to ease architectural barriers, following health rules and travel restrictions in such doing and further

cooperation works with ministries concerned, associations, entrepreneurs and experts to implement the Barrier-Free Tourism Pilot Project.

Then, meeting attendees reported on their respective sectors by dividing them into four groups.

Then, Director-General U Maung Maung Kyaw briefed all on reviews to be implemented, and the Union minister concluded the meeting. — MNA

A Barrier-Free Tourism for All workshop in progress.



MoALI Union Minister joins 23rd Governing Council Meeting of CIRDAP

THAILAND hosted the 23rd Governing Council (GC-23) Meeting of the Center on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) virtually yesterday.

A Myanmar delegation led by Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo and Director-General U Kyaw Swe Lin of the Planning Department joined the meeting.

Thailand Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives Mr Alongkorn Polabutr read out the rural development programmes, achievements and challenges of CIRDAP in 2019-2021. They approved the suggestions of the 33rd meeting of the CIRDAP executive committee, discussed the cooperation works on rural development



programmes in each country and set the time and place for the next meeting.

During the meeting, Union Minister U Tin Htut Oo said the country makes efforts in line with the policies of the State Administration Council on food security and the

poverty gap between the rural and urban. The government also organized the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development to conduct such measures. Primary vocational training such as agriculture and livestock breeding is being provided. It also constructs the

rural road, arranges to ensure access to water and electricity to improve the socio-economic status of rural people in the respective fiscal year.

Moreover, he also exchanged views on the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, recovery processes

in the post-COVID-19 period and cooperation works with member countries to adopt the digital communication technology of CIRDAP.

The CIRDAP is housed in Dhaka of Bangladesh and now grown up with 15-member countries — Bangladesh, Myanmar, Laos, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Iran, India, Fiji and Pakistan.

It is formed to cooperate between member countries in the rural development activities of the developing countries. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation of Myanmar became its member in 1995.

All member countries except Afghanistan joined the virtual meeting. — MNA

MoH Deputy Minister receives Cambodian delegation



DEPUTY Minister for Health Dr Aye Tun received a delegation led by Secretary of State for Cambodian Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Dr Kung Phoak yesterday morning.

During the meeting, the meeting expressed thanks to Cambodia for donating medicines and medical supplies to Myanmar to prevent COVID-19.

The MoH deputy minister receives the Cambodian delegation yesterday.

The two parties cordially discussed matters related to COVID-19 prevention measures in Myanmar; the status of COVID-19 vaccination activities under the National Vaccine Deployment Plan, COVID-19 immunization record processed through the Vaccine Management Information System (VMIS, implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination in the country as per humanitarian principles, terrorists' attacks targeted at health workers, ASEAN's COVID-19 vaccine supplies to Myanmar and bilateral cooperation in the health sector. — MNA

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

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

Companies imported 27.04 tonnes of masks via international seaports yesterday.

Officials from 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 to prevent COVID-19, and contact persons for enquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website – www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA

A lorry loaded with imported anti-Covid items is seen transporting them to states/regions.



20 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 21 April, total figure rises to 612,697

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **612,697** after **20** new cases were reported on 21 April 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **591,544** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at **19,434** without more casualties. —MNA

COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various states, regions

DOCTORS and nurses from People's 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 disabilities, ethnic armed groups, people with chronic diseases, people in IDP camps and over 12-year-old students, respectively.

Yesterday, doctors and nurses from People's hospitals, medical teams from the Tatmadaw, relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers gave COVID-19 vaccines to 8,273 people from



Locals get vaccinated against COVID-19 in Bago Township in Bago Region.

fifteen townships Shan State (North), 9,823 from sixteen townships in Mon and Kayin States, 335 people from Tamway Township in Yangon Region, 30,128 people from twenty-six townships in Ayeyawady Region, 8,490 people from ten townships in Rakhine State, 48,200 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region, 720

people from four townships in Bago Region, respectively. Similarly, healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 122 students from five township in Shan State (North) yesterday.

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

Myanmar keeps four breeding spots for endangered star tortoises

FARMING of the critically endangered star tortoises has started at the Minsonetaung Sanctuary in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region since 1999 with 12 star tortoises. The population increased by over 3,500 in 2017. The Forest Department was able to protect the endangered species from extinction, according to the Minsonetaung warden's office.

After trial breeding, about 750 tortoises were set free into the forest between 2013 and

2017. In 2030, 100,000 tortoises are expected to be released. Minsonetaung Sanctuary will have 4,000 tortoises released.

There are four breeding spots of the star tortoise in Myanmar – Minsonetaung Sanctuary (Natogyi), Shwettaw Sanctuary (Minbu), Lawkananda Sanctuary (NyaungU) and Yadanabon Zoological Gardens (Mandalay). Tortoise farming commenced in 2000. — Htay Myint Aung/GNLM



CRIME NEWS

Drugs worth over K590 million seized in Indaw Township

THE police seized over K590 million worth of drugs in Indaw Township, according to the police statement.

The combined inspection team consisting of Sagaing region police members examined a Nissan diesel 12-wheeler vehicle driven by Chantha on the Shwebo-Myitkyina Road heading to Mohnyin township from Mandalay near Kyarin village, Indaw Township at 4:30 pm on 20 April. It

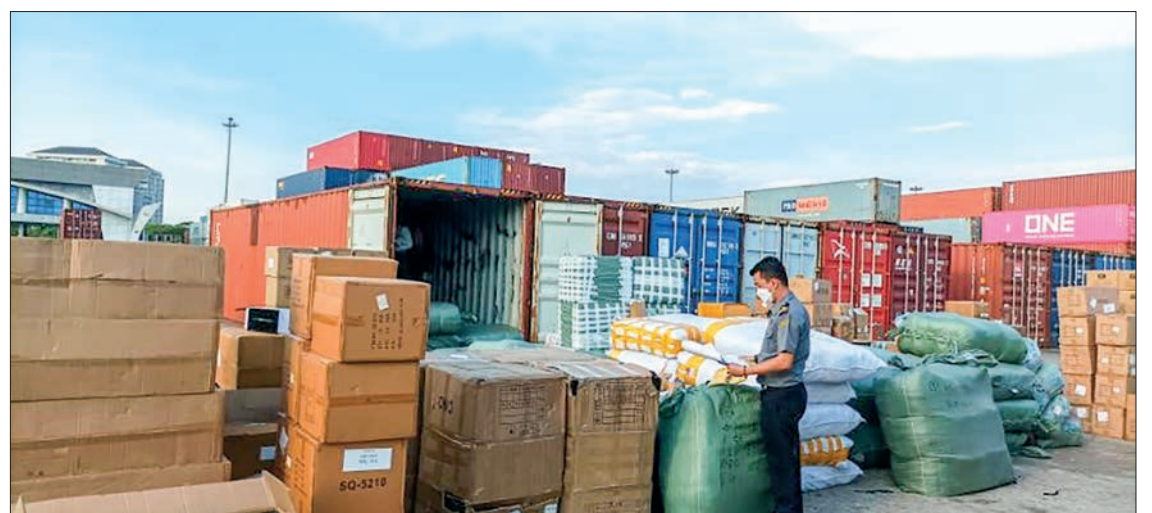
seized 108,300 ecstasy tablets and 12.474 kilogrammes of heroin, totalling over K590 million.

According to the inspection, these drugs are heading to Kachin State from Mandalay Region, and the police are investigating to arrest further suspects. The action is taken against the detained person under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Law. — MNA



An arrestee is pictured along with seized drugs and vehicle.

Illegal timbers, home appliances, consumer goods and vehicles seized



Seized commodities at the Myanmar Industrial Port

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

On 17 and 18 April, inspection teams led by the Rakhine State Department of Forest seized 6.1828 tonnes of illegal timbers (approximately K432,796) during inspections in Taungup Township and Gwa Township in Rakhine State.

On 17 April, a combined inspection team led by the Customs team on duty at the Myanmar International Port

(Thilawa) seized undocumented cosmetics (approximately K60,165,000) under the Customs Law.

On 18 April, a vehicle carrying 0.6376 tonne of illegal teak (estimated value of K25,191,280) was arrested at the Milestone (0/3) on Kyaukain village road, in Hlegu Township, Yangon North District by inspection teams led by the Department of Forest.

In addition, a variety of photo albums and weaving materials (estimated at K12,533,400) on 19 April and clothes and home

appliances (estimated value of K15,800,000) on 20 April, which were not declared in the import declaration form were seized at the Myanmar Industrial Port Container Checkpoint.

On 21 April, 3.0482 tonnes of illegal teak were seized in Bago District and Toungoo District in Bago Region, and action was taken under the Forest Law.

Therefore, 12 arrests (approximately K115,036,936) were made from 17 to 21 April, according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee. — MNA

LOCAL BUSINESS

Singapore top source of FDI in Myanmar last mini-budget period

TWO Singapore-listed enterprises brought in large investments of US\$297.349 million into Myanmar in the past mini-budget period (October 2021- March 2022). They included the expansion of capital by the existing enterprises, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration's statistics showed.

Singapore companies mainly invest in urban development, real estate, power and manufacturing sectors.

China stood as the second-largest investor this FY, with an estimated capital of \$142 million from three projects. Hong Kong SAR is ranked third in the investment line-up with more than \$109 million.

Those enterprises listed from China (Taipei), India, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Seychelles, Nepal and France also made investments in six months.

DICA's statistics indicated that the Myanmar Investment Commission gave the green light to 49 foreign projects, with an estimated capital of \$647.127 million in the past mini-budget period.

Those enterprises are to

execute in agriculture, livestock and fishery, manufacturing, power, energy, hotel and tourism, and other service sectors.

Fourteen Singapore-listed enterprises brought in US\$429.336 million into Myanmar last financial year 2020-2021, including the expansion of capital by the existing enterprises, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration's statistics showed.

Singapore stood as the largest foreign investor in Myanmar in the previous years, pulling in the FDI of \$1.85 billion in the FY2019-2020, \$2.4 billion in the FY2018-2019, \$724.4 million in the mini-budget period (April-September, 2018), \$2.16 billion in the 2017-2018FY, \$3.8 billion in the 2016-2017FY, \$4.25 billion in the 2015-2016FY, \$4.29 billion in the 2014-2015FY, \$2.3 billion in the 2013-2014FY and \$418 million in the 2012-2013FY respectively.

Additionally, after a top investor, Japan, Singapore emerged as the second-largest foreign investor in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone. — KK/GNLM

Salt prices likely to extend rise in coming months



The torrential rain in March 2022 damaged the salt yard, resulting in the price rise of K320 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes).

SALT prices are expected to remain high in the coming months, according to salt farmers.

The torrential rain in March 2022 damaged the salt yard, resulting in the price rise of K320 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes).

Erratic weather happened in March. Typically, March is crucial for salt production in April and May.

It takes about ten days to salt. The unseasonal rain hindered salt harvesting and processing. Also, it negatively af-

ected production.

Heavy rain in March and a high fuel rate caused the price to rise.

Additionally, the current salt price is four times higher than the year-ago period. The salt farmers said the shortage of sun-dried salt and raw materials drove the price up.

As a result, the salt prices will continue increasing in May. The shortage of supply is likely to happen, the salt farmers analyzed.

Mon State, the second-larg-

est producer in Myanmar, yearly produces 40,000 tonnes of sun-dried salt, beyond magnesium chloride (MgCl₂), iodized salt (I₂) and table salt (NaCl).

The 2019-2020 statistics of Mon State salt production businesses showed that there are 14 iodine salt processing plants and one factory each for magnesium chloride (MgCl₂) and table salt (NaCl) production, with the production capacity of 60 tonnes of magnesium chloride, 204 tonnes of table salt and 12,132 tonnes of iodized salt. — NN/GNLM

Hand painting attracts visitors to Bagan cultural zone



The majority of pilgrims in the Bagan cultural heritage zone, NyaungU Township, are found to have a temporary hand tattoo done at the shops opened in the pagoda precinct, allowing the hand painters to thrive.

A painter Daw Khaing Zar Tun said that the majority of pilgrims in the Bagan cultural heritage zone, NyaungU Township, are found to have a temporary hand tattoo done at the shops opened in the pagoda precinct, allowing the hand painters to thrive.

Bagan cultural heritage zone, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was eerily empty due to the tight restriction period of the COVID-19. Those engaged in local tuk-tuk transportation and rental business (boat, horse-riding, car, e-bike, cycle and motorcycle services), hotels and guesthouses, restaurants and souvenir shops suffered from this. The businesses relying on tourism were earlier closed amid the COVID-19 negative impacts in the past two years. Starting from Thingyan Festi-

val this year, domestic tourism has recovered. It helps revive the small businesses such as horse-riding businesses, motorcycle and electric bike rental businesses, hotels, motels, guesthouses and the souvenir businesses, a hand painter U Tin Soe explained financial hardship in the difficult time.

Beautiful hand paintings attract visitors. The maximum price of hand painting costs K5,000. It lasts one day to a week, depending on paint quality. This hand painting business is an excellent opportunity for locals in NyaungU Township.

Those workers involved in the lacquerware business are also executing hand painting, Ma Pan Myat Hla, a hand painter at Shwezigon pagoda, said. — Ko Htein (KPD)/GNLM

OPINION

Polish image of the country with high cultural dignity

MYANMAR'S forefathers have been preserving own culture and customs from time immemorial till today. As such, today's youths have to carry on the preservation of the Myanmar culture for further strengthening.

Culture can be defined as the activities of politeness, advancement of social standards, and customs in traditional preservation. Plentiful tangibly and intangibly cultural properties can be seen across the nation. Preservation of cultural properties is an act

of shaping the future of the State as well as of the youths. Indeed, culture is a measurement of the existence of a country and its image. The concerted efforts to ensure the presence of cultural properties are the obligation to grant its safety. The youths with a widening knowledge of preserving their own culture will have the high capacity to build the nation and the people to meet the high living standard.

are indications of a loss of culture. That is why all the Myanmar youths need to improve their lifestyles according to the country's traditional culture, transforming the rudeness into politeness, lack of fear into the deserved fear for harming the cultural properties and preventing violation of the existing laws.

Indeed, culture is a measurement of the existence of a country and its image. The concerted efforts to ensure the presence of cultural properties are the obligation to grant its safety. The youths with a widening knowledge of preserving their own culture will have the high capacity to build the nation and the people to meet the high living standard.

In fact, the arena of culture and its definition is very wide. The people's daily routine concerning software and hardware activities of the society are inclusive of cultural activities that polish the image of the respective countries and citizens, similar to the acts of offspring who descended from the parents and families with high dignity and prestige.



An underrated and overrated two short Articles published 20 years apart

By Dr Myint Zan

An 'underrated' article 'Ivory hip prostheses for ununited fractures of the neck of femur' by Dr San Baw (February 1970, *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery, British Volume*)

IN JANUARY 1960, my father first used the ivory hip prosthesis on the then 83-year-old Burmese Buddhist nun Daw Punya. Fast forward from January 1960 to September 1969. A conference of the British Orthopaedic Association (BOA) was held from 23 to 27 September 1969 at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. My father presented his paper 'Ivory femoral head prostheses for ununited fractures of the neck of femur' at the conference. But sadly, at least to me as a son and for the historical record as well, only a 311-word summary was presented to the BOA, was published in Volume 52 B (No 1) of *The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* (British volume) (1970).

Five years after the publication of an abstract of my late father's paper presented at the BOA conference of September 1969 was published in the February 1975 issue of the same journal, an article written by my late father was published in full. The title is 'The Transarticular graft for Infantile pseudarthrosis of the Tibia a New Technique' in (1975) Volume 57 (1), *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* (hereafter JBJS) from pages 63 to 68. My father reported about a new treatment he devised in lay persons' terms for the development of extra shin bone in children. Fourteen patients who were then children during the period of July 1964 to November 1972 were successfully treated with that new method.

In the 1975 JBJS, clinical case studies of treatment with a new technique for 14 children with extra shinbones were published in full. Ironically, clinical case studies of treatment with ivory hip prostheses from January 1960 to about June 1969 with 88% success of about 100 patients ranging from the ages of 24 to 87 were published only as an abstract in the JBJS. (These facts are in the Abstract).

In 2017 a former student of mine from the Faculty of Law, Multimedia University, Malacca,

Malaysia, Ms Teo Ju-li, sent me an email from Edinburgh, the United Kingdom. Ju-li was studying then for her Master of Laws (LL.M) at the University of Edinburgh. She visited the Museum of Surgery in Edinburgh and saw an ivory prosthesis on display at the Museum.

I wrote to the personnel of the Museum of Surgery, and I thank them for sending me a few photos of the ivory prosthesis on display inside a glass case. The display 'card', at that time in 2017, incorrectly stated that the ivory prosthesis was from Malaysia. I wrote to the Museum that it was from Burma, and they corrected the description. Underneath the ivory prosthesis displayed at the Museum of Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, is this brief description:

'Ivory hip prosthesis (around 1970)'

Doctor San Baw, a Burmese orthopaedic surgeon, first used an ivory hip replacement in 1960. The patient was an 83-year-old Buddhist nun. Over 20 years, he performed about 300 such operations. He found that 90% of patients could walk, squat, and play football within a few weeks.

A few specimens of ivory prostheses, including one where the 'biological bonding' between bone and ivory in the hip of a deceased patient, can be seen on display at the Mandalay Orthopaedic Hospital. The biological bonding between bone and ivory or creeping substitution of the bone by ivory is displayed in a glass case. This specimen was taken from the hip bone of the cadaver of a deceased person (with their prior consent and those of their relatives). The deceased person had his or her hip bone replaced by an ivory prosthesis by my late father.

Since only a 311-word summary of my late father's article can be discerned in an obscure place in the JBJS of February 1970, no other academic journal has cited or referred to the abstract of the paper 'Ivory femoral head pros-

theses for ununited fractures of the neck of femur'. There have been four academic journal citations (google scholar check, 29 June 2021) of the article by my late father on congenital pseudarthrosis of the tibia published five years later in the February 1975 issue of JBJS. Hence, in context, my late father's article on ivory prostheses is an underrated article.

An Overrated Article: Antony Flew's 'Theology and Falsification' (first published 1950) and republished 40 times!

The late Antony Flew (11 February 1923 to 8 April 2010) was a younger contemporary of my late father, Dr San Baw, by about seven months. Flew was and is many

Doctor San Baw, a Burmese orthopaedic surgeon, first used an ivory hip replacement in 1960. The patient was an 83-year-old Buddhist nun. Over 20 years, he performed about 300 such operations. He found that 90% of patients could walk, squat, and play football within a few weeks.

times more well-known the world over than my late father. So was his 1100-word article 'Theology and Falsification' first published in the now-defunct and even then-obscure journal *University* (affiliated with the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom).

Compared to the now-defunct undergraduate journal where Flew's article was first published, *The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* (British volume) (now *Bone and Joint Journal*) has been publishing continuously since 1948, and by no means was it an 'ephemeral' journal in 1970 or now in 2022.

A Myanmar Orthopaedic surgeon informed me around 2005 that my father's new treatment for infantile pseudarthrosis of the tibia is mentioned in *Campbell's Operative Orthopaedics* though I have not been able, so far, to verify it myself. I also do not know which edition of the above four volumes treatise was 'San Baw's

technique' (a new technique to treat the development of extra shin bone in children) mentioned. I also do not know whether or not my late father's more important pioneering work with ivory hip prostheses made it into the august pages of *Campbell's Operative Orthopaedics*.

Antony Flew stated in his Preface to the 2000 reprint of 'Theology and Falsification' in *Philosophy Now* that it 'has some claim to have been the most widely read philosophical publication of the second half of the 20th century. Flew also stated that his article was translated into seven languages. If yours truly were to translate it into Burmese (but he may not do

too much'.

The late Stephen Hawking (8 January 1942-14 March 2018) 'outed' himself as an atheist in the book *The Grand Design* co-written with Leonard Mlodinow. This took place more than 20 years after Hawking had 'teased' millions of his readers about 'knowing the mind of God' in the last sentence of his bestseller *A Brief History of Time*, first published in April 1988.

My impression is that there was less publicity when Stephen Hawking stated he was an atheist around 2010 than when Flew abandoned his 60 plus years old 'belief' in atheism starting from around 2004. Although Antony Flew changed his mind regarding (a)theism about six years or so before he passed away, he probably would still claim that his 'Theology and Falsification' was a 'jewel' of an article.

I would assert and claim that though forgotten in an obscure two pages of JBJS and not republished even once, say on the 50th anniversary of its publication (of the abstract) in February 2020 (as was with Flew's article for at least the 41st time in its 50th anniversary in 2000), my late father's (abstract) of an article on ivory prostheses, notwithstanding the different fields of study, is as original as, if not more original, than Flew's 'Theology and Falsification'. My late father spent a year between 1959 to 1960 researching the physical, mechanical, chemical and biological properties of ivory. In the process, he consulted a physicist, a biochemist, a zoologist, and an ivory sculptor before using it on an 83-year-old Buddhist nun Daw Punya in January 1960. And at least from 1960 to 1965, when he obtained some grants for his research from the then government of Burma, at times, he had to use some of his own funds for his research.

The 311-word summary of his paper, which was read at the BOA in September 1969, was a product of over ten years of research, dedication, hard work, goodwill, inge-

nuity and display of compassion and scientific spirit for the welfare of humanity. I might add that during the time my late father was using ivory hip prostheses from the early 1960s to early 1980s and even after my father passed away, from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, a few of his now aging junior colleagues in Rangoon (Yangon) and Mandalay continued to insert ivory prostheses on patients (maybe up to 30 to 50 patients), there was no (no) killing of elephants (at least in Burma/Myanmar).

Since Antony Flew's 1100-word article of 1950 has been reprinted 40 times, perhaps even some orthopaedic surgeons might have heard about Anthony Flew and read his 'Theology and Falsification'. Ironically, there is a possibility that though they have heard of Anthony Flew and perhaps had read 'Theology and Falsification', some or at least a few orthopaedic surgeons the world over may not have heard of Dr San Baw and his pioneering work with ivory prostheses.

What philosophical, albeit not (non) falsifiable, theological' (pun intended, Flew's article is titled 'Theology and Falsification') solace can one take regarding what one considers to be an unfair situation?

In 1982 or 1983, this writer recalls seeing a particular episode of an American 'sit-com' (situational comedy) series called *One Day at a Time*. In one episode (around) 14-year-old boy told the single Mum (not the boy's Mum) 'Ann Romano' played by the late actor Bonnie Franklin (6 January 1944-1 March 2013), that 'Life's not fair'. Ann Romano replied: 'And Don't you forget it'.

This article also commemorates the 2nd San Baw Honorary Lecture in Orthopaedic Innovation delivered by Dr Rickard Branemark at the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States on 21 April 2022.

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of Service Organizations confirmed, appointed

1. The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of Prof Dr Thein Zaw Lin as Rector of the University of Traditional Medicine (Mandalay) of the Department of Traditional Medicine under the Ministry of Health after the one-year probationary period.
2. The State Administration Council has appointed the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names from the date they assume charge of his duties.

Name	Appointment
(a) Dr Myintzu Min	Rector
Pro-Rector	Mohyin University
Mohyin University	Department of Higher Education
Department of Higher Education	Ministry of Education
Ministry of Education	
(b) U Khin Maung Swe	Director-General
Deputy Director-General (Construction)	Department of Bridge
Department of Bridge	Ministry of Construction
Ministry of Construction	



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 21 April 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 22 April, 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in (south and east) Shan State, scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, northern Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah States and isolated in the remaining regions and states. Degree of certainty is (80%).

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 to fairly widespread rain or thundershowers in upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

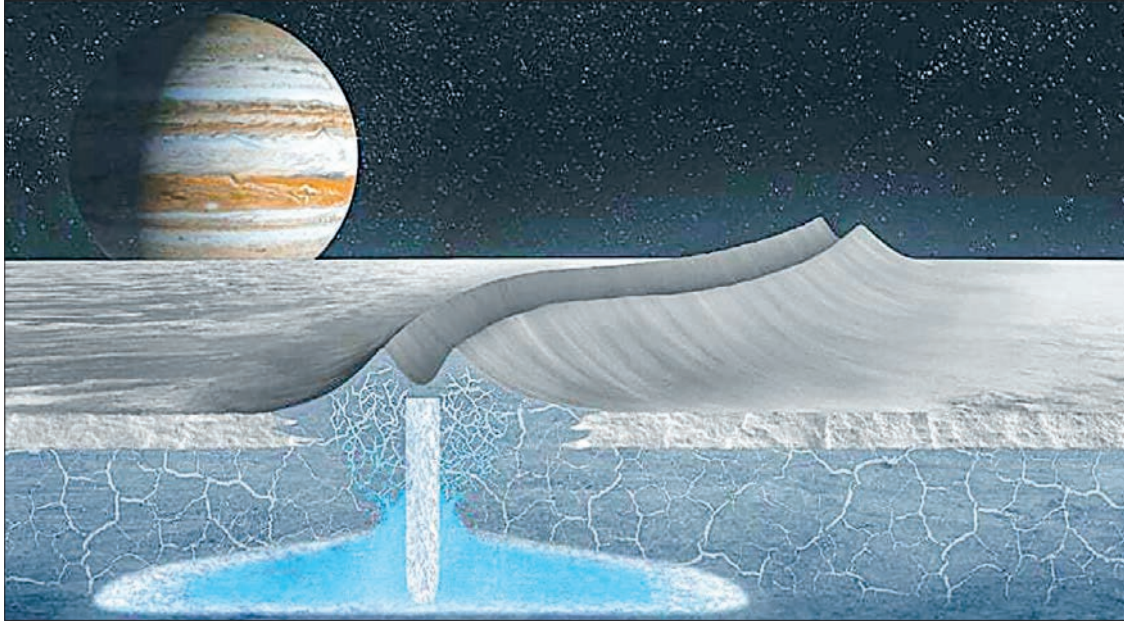
FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 April 2022: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 April 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 April 2022: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

SCI/ENVIRON WORLD

Water on Jupiter's moon closer to surface than thought: study



An artist's rendering, provided by Stanford University, shows how double ridges on the surface of Jupiter's moon Europa may form over shallow, refreezing water pockets within an ice shell. **PHOTO: STANFORD UNIVERSITY/AFP**

RIDGES that criss-cross the icy surface of Jupiter's moon Europa indicate there are shallow pockets of water beneath, boosting hopes in the search for extra-terrestrial life, scientists said Tuesday.

Europa has long been a candidate for finding life in our solar system due to its vast ocean, which is widely thought to contain liquid water — a key ingredient for life.

There is a problem: the ocean is predicted to be buried 25-30 kilometres (15-17 miles) beneath the moon's icy shell.

However water could be closer to the surface than previously thought, according to new research published in the journal

Nature Communications.

The finding came partly by chance, when geophysicists studying an ice sheet in Greenland watched a presentation about Europa and spotted a feature they recognised.

"We were working on something totally different related to climate change and its impact on the surface of Greenland when we saw these tiny double ridges," said the study's senior author Dustin Schroeder, a geophysics professor at Stanford University.

They realized that the M-shaped icy crests on Greenland looked like smaller versions of double ridges on Europa, which are the most common feature on the moon.—AFP

Dung power: India taps new energy cash cow

INDIA is tapping a new energy source that promises to help clean up smog-choked cities and is already providing a vital revenue stream for poor Indian farmers: truckloads of bovine manure. Cows are venerated as sacred creatures by the country's Hindu majority. They also have pride of place in India's rural communities, where they are still regularly used as draught animals.

Rural households have long burned sun-dried cattle droppings to heat stoves, a practice that continues despite government efforts to phase it out with subsidised gas cylinders.

Villages on the outskirts of the central Indian city of Indore are now being handsomely rewarded for handing over their mounds of bovine waste in a pilot project to help meet the city's

power needs.

"We have a very good quality dung, and we keep the dung clean to ensure it fetches the best price," farmer Suresh Sisodia told AFP.

The 46-year-old has sold nearly a dozen truckloads of fresh manure at the equivalent of \$235 per shipment — more than the monthly income of the average Indian farming household.—AFP



Villages on the outskirts of the city of Indore are now being rewarded for handing over their mounds of bovine waste in a pilot project to help meet the city's power needs. **PHOTO: AFP**

Solar project planned in northern Australia to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

A massive solar farm proposed for northern Australia would reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 480 million tonnes, an environmental assessment has found.

The renewable energy company Sun Cable recently lodged

its environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Australia-Asia PowerLink with authorities in the Northern Territory (NT). The proposed 30 billion Australian dollar (22.3 billion US dollar) project would transmit solar energy harvested in the NT to Singapore

via undersea cables. According to the EIS, it would reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 480 million tons, equivalent to the average electricity used by over 2.5 million Australian homes each year over the project lifespan.—Xinhua

TOP NEWS STORIES

DR Congo plans elephant safe-zone after church intrusion

CONSERVATIONISTS in DR Congo said Tuesday they would create a safe "corridor" for elephants in a district where one caused a commotion by entering a church's grounds on Easter Sunday.

District administrator Ferdinand Tshikala Etshindo told AFP the pachyderm had been spotted several days ago near Lukula in the west of the vast central African country.

"On Easter Day (April 17) it surprised worshippers outside the church" of Saint Theresa in the nearby diocese of Boma, causing panic, he said.

He said the elephant injured a man of 20 in the belly. An AFP correspondent said the man was taken to hospital.

Authorities in the capital Kinshasa sent the director of the ICCN national parks service Arthur Kalonji to the area after the incident.

On Tuesday, Kalonji told reporters he wanted to turn "this elephant intrusion into a source of revenue by creating ecological corridors" for the beasts to roam and graze.

The conservation zone "will be managed in such a way as to allow visitors to see the elephants, for a fee," he said.—AFP

After life of trauma, Liberian lab chimps settle into retirement

FLOATING on a river boat near a Liberian island, vet Richard Ssuna watches intently as animal carers wade towards the shore hurling fruits and imitating chimpanzee calls as they go.

The beach is empty, but the sound of rustling and chimpish grunts begins to fill the green undergrowth. Slowly, an ape knucklewalks out onto the beach to grab some food.

He's a high-ranking member of his troop, explains Ssuna, as more chimpanzees follow. The younger ones gambol and hoot in delight as carers throw them bananas, palm nuts and cassava.

Sixty-five chimps are spread across six uninhabited river islands near the Atlantic Ocean, about 55 kilometres (34 miles) south of the West African country's capital Monrovia.

But their joy in feeding belies a dark past.—AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Greece aims to 'coexist' with Covid



An outdoor restaurant in Santorini Island in Greece. **PHOTO: AFP**

GREECE aims to "coexist" with Covid-19, its health minister said Wednesday as the country prepared to further relax restrictions to boost its key tourism industry.

"After two years of pandemic, we are in a different management phase... the phase of coexisting with the virus," Health Minister Thanos Plevris told a news conference.

New cases and intensive care hospitalisations were falling and 85 per cent of adult Greeks are vaccinated, the minister said.

Greece, whose economy depends on tourism for around a quarter of national income, in February scrapped mandatory screening tests for travellers who hold a European vaccination certificate.

And vaccine passes will no longer be required in restaurants, bars and shops from 1 May, while mandatory masks indoors will be scrapped from 1 June.—AFP

J & J cususpends COVID vaccine sales guidance

US pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson on Tuesday trimmed its forecasts on sales and adjusted earnings per share (EPS) in 2022 due to appreciation of the US dollar, and suspended COVID-19 vaccine sales guidance due to a global supply surplus and demand uncertainty.

Johnson & Johnson expects to report 94.8 billion to 95.8 billion US dollars of sales in 2022, lower than a projection of 95.9 billion to 96.9 billion dollars made in January.

The company also lowered its forecast of yearly adjusted EPS in 2022 to the range of 10.15 to 10.35 dollars from an earlier estimate of 10.4 to 10.6 dollars.—Xinhua

2 Au. states to end COVID-19 home quarantine rules

AUSTRALIA'S two most populated states, New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, are expected to end one of their last major COVID-19 regulations within the coming days.

At present, people in the two states who have been in close contact with a COVID-19 case must remain in home isolation for seven days.

It is a rule which has hampered many businesses, especially in the retail and hospitality sectors, as they struggle to retain their staffing levels and there have subsequently been reports of groups lobbying politicians to allow those in quarantine to return to work.

Now, as the latest wave of the Omicron BA.2 variant trends downward, the NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet and his Victorian counterpart Daniel Andrews have reportedly been preparing to announce ending home quarantines.—ANI

Record 54% of Japan students not eager to study due to COVID: survey

A record 54.3 per cent of students at elementary, junior high and high schools in Japan said they lacked motivation to study last year, a private survey showed Wednesday, apparently reflecting the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in stifling social interaction.

The figure compared with

45.1 per cent in 2019, the year before the pandemic began in Japan, and 50.7 per cent in 2020 after COVID-19 broke out. Such data was first collected in 2015.

The study was conducted by the Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute and the Institute of Social Science at the University

of Tokyo. It collected answers by mail and other means from around 10,000 students ranging from fourth graders to high schoolers between July and September in 2021.

Kaoru Sato, a professor of the sociology of education and social research at the university, attributed the drop in motivation to reduced interaction among students at schools.

"COVID-19 has limited their interaction and the leisure activities they do together, while (restrictions such as) eating silently during lunch have taken the fun out of school life," Sato said.

Record figures were seen for all grade levels, with 43.1 per cent of fourth- to sixth-graders expressing a lack of motivation to study and 58.6 per cent of junior high school students having the same view. Among senior high schoolers, 61.3 per cent said they are not eager to learn.—Kyodo



An enrollment ceremony is held for new students at an elementary school in Nagoya, central Japan, on April 6, 2022. **PHOTO: KYODO**

New Omicron subvariant gains foothold as US loosens mask requirement

WHILE Omicron subvariant BA.2 remains the dominant strain in the United States, a new subvariant is gaining its foothold in the country, according to the latest data of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The new strain, called BA.2.12.1, makes up about a fifth of new COVID-19 cases in the country, according to data released Tuesday by the CDC.

The data increased from 11.4 per cent a week before, and 6.9 per cent two weeks prior,

CDC data showed.

The majority of COVID-19 cases in the United States -- around 75 per cent -- are still caused by BA.2., which has become the country's dominant variant since late March.

But BA.2.12.1, along with another subvariant of Omicron, called BA.2.12, contributed to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in New York State, according to the State Department of Health.

Both variants are sub-lineages of BA.2, which now accounts for 80.6 per cent of COVID-19 infections in New York. The subvariants have been estimated to have a 23 per cent to 27 per cent growth advantage above the original BA.2 variant, said the New York State Department of Health.

The United States is now averaging about 35,000 new infections daily, up 19 per cent from the previous week and 42 per cent from two weeks prior, CDC data show.—Xinhua



A traveller walks into an entrance at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia, the United States, 14 April 2022. **PHOTO: TING SHEN/XINHUA**

ECONOMY

WORLD

Japan logs 5.4 tril. yen goods trade deficit in FY 2021



Photo taken in July 2021 shows buyers selecting tencha tea leaves, the raw ingredient for making matcha, at the Japan Agriculture Cooperatives' tea market auction site in Joyo, Kyoto Prefecture. **PHOTO: KYODO**

JAPAN posted a goods trade deficit of 5.4 trillion yen (\$42.4 billion) in fiscal 2021 after logging a surplus the previous year, amid increased energy imports inflated by high prices, the Finance Ministry said Wednesday.

The deficit was the highest since fiscal 2014, when the country's fuel imports for thermal power plants were elevated

with all nuclear power plants offline in the wake of the 2011 nuclear disaster triggered by a massive earthquake and tsunami in Japan's northeast.

Imports grew 33.3 per cent from the previous year to 91.3 trillion yen, the highest since fiscal 1979 when comparable data became available, with imports of petroleum up 97.6 per cent, those of coal up 113.4

per cent and those of liquefied natural gas up 58.8 per cent.

Exports advanced 23.6 per cent to 85.9 trillion yen, also the highest since fiscal 1979, as auto exports as well as those of iron and steel products rose with the economy gradually recovering amid the coronavirus pandemic.

By country, exports to the United States grew 23.9 per cent to 15.4 trillion yen for the first increase in three years on more shipments of auto parts and chip-manufacturing devices.

Imports from the country surged 28.3 per cent to 9.5 trillion yen for the first increase in three years as well, on an increase in the value of imports of medical products, liquefied petroleum gas and grains including corn.

Exports to China, Japan's biggest trading partner, grew 14.9 per cent on the back of shipments of semiconductor-making equipment, among other items.

Imports gained 14.9 per cent as well on increased purchases of communication devices.—Kyodo

Inflation hits pocketbook of 76 pct of Brazilians, says survey

SOME 76 per cent of Brazilians say their financial situation has been "very affected" or "affected" by inflation, according to a survey released Wednesday by the National Industry Confederation.

Only 12 per cent of the population said they were "hardly affected" or "not affected" by price increases in Brazil.

At the same time, 54 per cent of those surveyed said their financial situation was "very affected" by the pandemic, up from 45 per cent in November of last year. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the official inflation index rose to 11.30 per cent in the 12 months ending in March. The survey showed 87 per cent of Brazilians believe that prices for goods have "increased a lot" in the past six months, and



A woman points to a screen at a stock market in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 12 March 2020. **PHOTO: XINHUA/RAHEL PATRASSO**

64 per cent said they cut spending over the same period, as against 74 per cent in November.

The survey queried 2,015

people over 16 years of age from 1 to 5 April across the country. The margin of error is two percentage points.—Xinhua

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Receding pandemic boosts US industry, inflation still high: Fed

AMERICAN firms are seeing increased business as Covid-19 cases decline across the world's largest economy, even as they struggle with rising prices and scarce staff, the Federal Reserve said Wednesday.

The central bank's latest "beige book" survey of business conditions depicted an environment that remains challenging for industries as they seek a return to normal following the pandemic downturn, in an economy that has grown too hot.

"Consumer spending accelerated among retail and non-financial service firms, as Covid-19 cases tapered across the country," according to the report, which is based on information collected nationwide through 11 April.

However, "inflationary pressures remained strong" and companies are "continuing to pass swiftly rising input costs through to customers," the report said.—AFP

China ratifies international forced labour conventions

CHINA'S lawmakers on Wednesday announced that it ratified two international conventions against forced labour, months after United Nations experts voiced concerns over the country's treatment of ethnic and religious minorities.

On Wednesday, China's top legislature approved the ratification of the International Labour Organization's Forced Labour Convention, as well as the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, according to an official announcement.—AFP

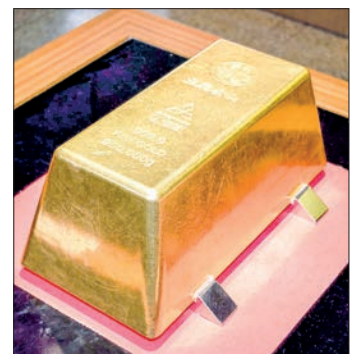
World's largest gold bar in Japan surges in value amid Ukraine crisis

AS the Ukraine crisis fuels instability and causes commodity prices to skyrocket, the world's largest gold bar has increased in worth to over 2.2 billion yen (\$17.1 million) — more than five times its value when it first went on display at a central Japan theme park in 2005.

The 250-kilogramme gold bar is exhibited at the Toi Gold Mine theme park in Izu, Shizuoka Prefecture. The gold bar was smelted by the park operator's parent company in 2005, and Guinness World Records certified it the world's largest in the same year.

The bar went on public display in July of 2005, when it was valued at around 400 million yen.

As of Wednesday, 1 gramme of gold was worth 8,969 yen including tax, according to gold bar manufacturer Tanaka Kikinzoku Kogyo K.K. Gold is generally seen as



Supplied photo shows the world's largest gold bar, which is displayed at the Toi Gold Mine theme park in Izu, Shizuoka Prefecture. **PHOTO: TOI GOLD MINE/KYODO**

a safe-haven store of wealth in times of crisis, and its value has risen amid instability caused by the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine.

The bar's value has also risen due to the Japanese yen's recent weakness against the US dollar, which is the international index for the globally traded metal.—Kyodo

Italy signs deal on buying more gas from Angola

ITALY on Wednesday penned a deal with Angola to ramp up gas supplies from the southern African country as it urgently scrambles to break away from Russian gas over the Ukraine war. A declaration of intent was signed to develop “new” natural gas ventures and to increase exports to Italy, a statement from the Italian foreign minister announced. “Today we have reached an-

other important agreement with Angola to increase gas supplies,” Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said in the statement. “Italy’s commitment to differentiate energy supply sources is confirmed,” said Di Maio at the end of a two-and-a-half-hour long visit to Luanda. Prime Minister Mario Draghi wants to add Angola and Congo-Brazzaville to a portfolio of suppliers to substitute Russia, which

provides about 45 per cent of Italian gas. “We do not want to depend on Russian gas any longer, because economic dependence must not become political subjection,” he said in an interview with the Corriere della Sera daily published on Sunday. “Diversification is possible and can be implemented in a relatively short amount of time — quicker than we imagined just a month ago,” he said.



The Transmed pipeline brings gas from Algeria to Italy via this section in Tunisia. PHOTO: AFP

Draghi was due to go himself but after testing positive for Covid-19 sent Di Maio and Ecological Transition Minister Roberto Cingolani in his place. Cingolani described the deal as “an important agreement that gives impetus to the partnership between Italy and Angola in the fields of renewables, biofuels, LNG (liquefied natural gas) and training in technology and environment”.—AFP

Mexican lawmakers pass lithium nationalization plan

MEXICAN lawmakers on Tuesday approved a plan to nationalize the exploration and mining of lithium, a vital material in the production of batteries for electric cars, cellphones and other technology.

The mining law reform submitted by President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador puts the metal’s exploitation in the hands of a state company, without the participation of private firms.

The plan was passed in the Senate with 87 votes in favour and 20 against, a day after it was approved by the lower house of Congress.

Lopez Obrador told reporters that eight concessions already granted to companies for lithium exploration would be re-



Mexico plans to nationalize the mining of lithium, a vital material in the production of electric car batteries. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

viewed to see “if the procedures were followed”.

He mentioned a contract with the company Bacanora, controlled by China’s Ganfeng Lithium, as one that needed to be scrutinized. Previously, the government has said the concessions would remain valid as long as the companies make the nec-

essary progress towards starting production.

“We’re going to develop the technology (to exploit the deposits) or acquire it, but the lithium is ours,” said Lopez Obrador, who was elected in 2018 with a vow to overhaul Mexico’s “neoliberal” economic model.—AFP

Airline shares take off on bullish United outlook

SHARES in European airlines took off Thursday after United Airlines forecast surging travel demand as the pandemic impact fades on the aviation sector. British Airways parent IAG and low-cost rival EasyJet saw their share prices soar by about six per cent nearing midday in London.

France’s Air France-

KLM stock jumped around four per cent in early afternoon deals in Paris and Germany’s Lufthansa gained a similar proportion in Frankfurt. Overnight, US carrier United Airlines forecast “the strongest second-quarter revenue guidance in company history” despite logging another Covid-induced loss for the first

quarter. The news also sent United shares leaping in after-hours trade. “The European aviation sector is benefitting from the general improving sentiment related to the pandemic recovery which has clearly helped restore faith in some of the most hit segments of the economy,” XTB analyst Walid Koudmani told AFP.—AFP

Nestle sales rise in first quarter after price hikes

NESTLE reported better-than-expected sales in the first quarter on Thursday after the Swiss food giant raised prices to cope with soaring global inflation, and signalled that more hikes were coming.

Inflation has surged since last year as economies emerged from Covid lockdowns, prompting

companies to raise prices for their products.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has caused energy and commodity prices to rocket even higher this year, with world food prices hitting an all-time high in March.

Nestle, which makes everything from chocolate to coffee to baby and pet food, said its sales

grew 5.4 per cent to 22.2 billion Swiss francs (21.5 billion euros, \$23.4 billion) in the first three months of the year compared to the same period in 2021.

“We stepped up pricing in a responsible manner and saw sustained consumer demand,” Nestle chief executive Mark Schneider said in a results statement.—AFP

INVITATION FOR PRICE QUOTATIONS

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received financing from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of the National Community Driven Development Project (NCDDP). The IDA No of the financing agreement is No 56870. The Department of Rural Development (DRD) of the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, in its role as implementing agency of the NCDDP, intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of this financing towards eligible payments under the Purchase Order/Contract for the following packages. DRD now invites eligible suppliers to express their interest in supplying the following items:

Reference No.	Lot	Description	Unit	Estimated Quantity
G-98	1	Supply and Installation of a CCTV Security system in the YANGON and NAYPYITAW WAREHOUSE	Sets	3
G-176	1	Video Conferencing Equipment for the State and Regional Offices	Sets	17

Expressions of Interest must be submitted in a written form to the email address below and clearly indicate the full coordinates of the interested supplier and one or more of the reference number(s) here above.

Eligible suppliers having expressed interest will receive an INVITATION TO QUOTE (ITQ) including all useful information to prepare the Quotation(s). Only electronic copies of the ITQ will be sent to the e-mail address (es) indicated in the Expressions of Interest.

Sealed Quotations will be submitted to the address below at the latest at the deadline date and time indicated in each of the ITQ listed above, after which no Quotations will be accepted. For the ITQ comprising different Lots, Quotations will be evaluated on a Lot by Lot basis and the contracts awarded to the quotation with the lowest evaluated price per Lot.

Suppliers will be selected following the Shopping Method as per the “Guidelines for Procurement of Goods, Works and non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers” dated January 2011.

Please submit your Expression of Interest for receiving the Invitation to Quote (ITQ) to: Project Director Daw Nyo Nyo Win, NCDD Project Secretariat, Department of Rural Development, Office No 36, Nay Pyi Taw. Telephone (95-67) 418604. For detailed information please contact U Kyaw Swa Aung Director, Procurement and Logistic Section, Mobile phone 0943434333 or office phone 067418637, Email: procurement@ncddpmyanmar.org. For more information on the NCDD Project please also visit Website: www.cdd.drdmyanmar.org.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Crowds flock to first papal audience at St Peter's since 2020



The 85-year-old pontiff was met with cries of "Long live the pope" as he arrived in his white popemobile into the square still decorated with 40,000 flowers. **PHOTO: AFP**

THOUSANDS of pilgrims from around the world gathered at the Vatican Wednesday as Pope Francis held his first weekly audience in St Peter's Square since coronavirus hit in early 2020.

The 85-year-old was met with cries of "Long live the pope" as he arrived in his white

popemobile into the square still decorated with 40,000 flowers laid out for last weekend's Easter celebrations.

"Even if we are Orthodox, we wanted to come: God is the same for all of us, no matter what branch you are," said Dan Stella, on holiday from Romania.

Some of the crowd waved flags from Croatia, Portugal, Spain, France — and Ukraine, a country for which the pope has repeatedly prayed since the Russian invasion nearly two months ago.

On Wednesday, the pontiff thanked Poland for taking in the bulk of the estimated five million Ukrainians who have fled in Europe's worst refugee crisis since World War II.

"May God reward you for your goodness," he said.

The pope's weekly audience traditionally draws thousands of people but has not been held in the vast St Peter's Square since February 2020, when coronavirus hit.

Francis initially delivered his audiences via video link from the Apostolic Library, before holding them in the San Damaso Courtyard in the Vatican, where numbers could be limited.—AFP

UK's PM arrives in India for hard sell on anti-Russia action

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson arrived in India Thursday touting job-creating investment but facing long odds to get his reluctant counterpart Narendra Modi to back Western action against Russia.

Johnson arrived in western Gujarat — Modi's home state — where he is scheduled to meet business leaders and take a cultural tour of the historic Ahmedabad city — the ancestral home to half of the Anglo-Indian population in Britain.

He will leave for New Delhi to meet his Indian counterpart on Friday, providing Johnson some respite from the "partygate" controversy over his criminal violation of pandemic lockdown rules.

Johnson will miss a parliamentary vote on Thursday into whether he deliberately misled the House of Commons in previously denying any Downing Street rule-breaking — normally a resigning matter.

The India trip has been

twice postponed because of Covid flare-ups in each country, and was briefly in doubt again this week when the vote was announced, with opposition leaders insisting Johnson stand down.

But UK sources said it was seen as too important to put off again. Downing Street said it would seal two-way investment deals worth more than £1 billion (\$1.3 billion), creating almost 11,000 jobs in Britain.

The visit will "deepen the strategic trade, defence and people-to-people ties between our two countries", Johnson told parliament before flying out of London.

Downing Street said the visit would yield new partnerships on defence, artificial intelligence and green energy, along with investment deals in areas including robotics, electric vehicles and satellite launches.—AFP



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson visits Gujarat on Thursday and New Delhi on Friday. **PHOTO: SAJJAD HUSSAIN/ AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Finnish MPs open debate on joining NATO

FINLAND'S parliament on Wednesday opens debate on whether to seek NATO membership, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked a surge in political and public support for joining the military alliance.

Despite Russia warning of a nuclear build-up in the Baltic should Finland and neighbouring Sweden join the military alliance, Finland's prime minister said that her country would now decide quickly on whether to apply for membership.

"I think it will happen quite fast. Within weeks, not within months," Prime Minister Sanna Marin said last week.

Sweden is also discussing whether to submit a membership bid following Russia's 24 February invasion.—AFP

Chanters in Cyprus carry on 'rich heritage' of Byzantine music

CHANTING resonates through a church in the Cypriot resort town of Ayia Napa, darkened but for a few low lights and mobile devices displaying the singers' Byzantine melodies.

"This music aims to touch people's souls," said Thomas Anastasiou, 35, a Greek Cypriot chanter from a nearby district. "Singing with people around us is something very important for us."

The UN's cultural agency UNESCO inscribed Byzantine chant on its list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity in late 2019 following its nomination by Greece and Cyprus.

UNESCO describes the tradition as a "living art that has existed for more than 2,000 years", and an integral part of Greek Orthodox Christian worship and spiritual life, "interwoven with the most important events in a person's life", from weddings to funerals and religious festivals.

Shortly after, the coronavirus pandemic outbreak halted or put limitations on everything from concerts to church attendance.—AFP

QR codes and cranes: Japan embraces modern cemeteries

MASAYO Isurugi settles into a booth on the sixth floor of a sleek Tokyo building, scans an ID card and waits for an automated system to deliver her late husband's ashes.

More and more people in Japan are breaking with traditions on burial and mourning, swapping hometown graveyards for modern takes on cemeteries.

As the 60-year-old waits in one of ten mourning booths on the floor, cranes behind the walls move almost silently and retrieve the "zushi" box with the urn containing her late husband Go's ashes.

Chic wooden doors inside the booth quietly part like an elevator at a luxurious hotel and a gleaming, dark-stone altar emerges with Go's zushi box as its centrepiece, while a photo of him appears on a monitor.

"Initially, I thought maybe these facilities might feel cold and that I might prefer a traditional grave on soil," Isurugi told AFP.

"Now I feel it's better to have a place where I can visit whenever I want and offer prayers, rather than having a family grave that I could rarely visit." Her family considered a traditional cemetery, but it was a two-hour train ride away. The Kuramae-ryoen facility is only brief bus ride from Isurugi's house and she can visit after work. Traditionally in Japan, cremated remains are placed in family tombs used over many generations and tended by the family's eldest sons.—AFP

China's Xi opposes unilateral sanctions on Russia over Ukraine war



Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers a keynote speech via video at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022, on 21 April 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA/HUANG JINGWEN**

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping said "wanton use of unilateral sanctions," as the Asian power has

apparently expressed support for Russia over its aggression against Ukraine.

China stays "committed to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation," Xi said in an online keynote speech at the Boao Forum for Asia, billed as the region's alternative to the World Economic Forum in Davos.

With the war in Ukraine intensifying, China has shied away from condemning Russia while lambasting sanctions imposed mostly by Western nations, including the United States.

China may be unwilling to

join hands with democratic countries in punishing Russia with sanctions as it could benefit from being the only major economy to continue trade with Russia, foreign affairs experts said.

"The Cold War mentality would only wreck the global peace framework," Xi said, "All should follow the path of peace and development, seek win-win cooperation, and contribute to an Asian family of unity and progress together." The Boao forum, hosted by China, was cancelled in 2020 following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. It resumed

in 2021, and this year's gathering started Wednesday.

At the annual forum, held in China's southern island province of Hainan, politicians and business leaders worldwide are discussing topics such as economic reconstruction from the pandemic and China's cross-border infrastructure "Belt and Road" initiative.

Fears are mounting that the world's second-biggest economy is expected to face greater downward pressure as the Ukraine crisis and another wave of COVID-19 infections in China have been disrupting the global supply chain.—Kyodo

RUSSIA - UKRAINE CONFLICT

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Russia controls all of Mariupol

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has hailed 'successful liberation' of Mariupol on Thursday, terming it a success.

He had ordered his forces not to storm the last remaining Ukrainian stronghold in the besieged city of Mariupol, but block. A senior Moscow diplomat has, meanwhile, said that Russia will stop the war when NATO stops puppeteering Ukraine.

President Vladimir Putin on Thursday hailed Russia's "liberation" of Mariupol after Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told him Moscow controlled the Ukrainian port city apart from the Azovstal steel plant.

"Block off this industrial area so that not even a fly can escape," Putin said in a televised meeting, adding it would be "impractical" to storm the huge industrial area, where more than 2,000 Ukrainian servicemen remain according to Shoigu. — ANI

Russia says NATO tries to prolong fighting in Ukraine



Evacuees arrive at a village of prefabricated houses set up in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv. **PHOTO: AFP**

NORTH Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member countries are doing everything to prolong the armed conflict in Ukraine, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said Wednesday.

NATO countries are increasing the supplies of military equipment, weapons and ammunition to Ukraine and pushing Kyiv to continue "aggression" against Donbas, Zakharova said at her weekly briefing.—ANI

Russian ICBM test 'routine' and 'not a threat': Pentagon



A few years ago Russian President Vladimir Putin had boasted of developing a number of "invincible" weapons that can surpass existing system. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

RUSSIA'S test of a new nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile is not seen as threatening to the US and its allies, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

Moscow "properly notified" Washington of the test following

its obligations under the 2011 New START treaty, which placed limits on the two countries' nuclear weapons, said Department of Defence Spokesman John Kirby.

"Testing is routine, and it was not a surprise," Kirby told

reporters.

The Pentagon "has not deemed the test to be a threat to the United States or its allies," he told reporters.

"Of course, the department remains focused on Russia's unlawful and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine," Kirby added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday announced the test of the next-generation Sarmat ICBM, saying it will make the Kremlin's enemies "think twice." "This truly unique weapon will strengthen the combat potential of our armed forces, reliably ensure the security of Russia from external threats and make those who, in the heat of aggressive rhetoric, try to threaten our country, think twice," Putin told the army in televised remarks.—AFP

Gaza militants, Israel in biggest exchange of fire since 2021 war

PALESTINIAN militants fired volleys of rockets from Gaza into Israel, which responded with air strikes in the early hours of Thursday in the biggest escalation since an 11-day war last year.

A rocket from Gaza on Wednesday evening fell harmlessly in a garden in the southern Israeli city of Sderot, police said.

Israel struck back in central Gaza after midnight, witnesses and security sources said, prompting further launches of at least four rockets by militants in the besieged territory.

Israel said its jets had targeted a military post and a tunnel complex "containing raw chemicals used for the manufacturing of rocket engines".

Hamas, the Islamist movement which rules the Gaza Strip, said it had fired surface-to-air rockets at Israeli planes. The exchanges come after nearly a month of deadly violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories, focused on Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount.—AFP

China's Xi opposes unilateral sanctions on Russia over Ukraine war

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SPORT

Myanmar U-22 team to play more than three friendlies in UAE tour

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Football Federation, the Myanmar U-22 team is taking a training in Dubai, UAE in preparation for the 31st SEA Games and will play three or more friendlies there.

The Myanmar squad will be under training in the UAE for about two years before the SEA Games and will play a test match against the UAE clubs.

The U-22 team will take 26 players to the tour; the final selection for the SEA Games.

The team spent a lot of time preparing for the SEA Games,

but no international tournaments have been played yet.

The team is coached by Bulgarian Popov, who helped it win a bronze medal at the 2019 Philippines SEA Games.

Team Administrator U Si Thu Win, Head Coach Popov, Assistant Coaches U Zaw Win Tun and U Aung Aung Tun, Goal Coach U Aung Kyaw Kyaw, Goal Keepers Pyae Phyto Thu, Thu Ya Kyaw, Pyae Phyto Aung, Aung Ko Latt, Defenders Thet Hein Soe, Soe Moe Kyaw, Hein Zayya Lin, Win Moe Kyaw, Ye Min Thu,

Thet Paing Htwe, Aung Wunna Soe, Ye Lin Htet, Naung Naung Soe, Midfielders Zaw Win Thein, Lwin Moe Aung, Lin Htet Soe, Wai Lin Soe, Nan Htike Zaw, Yan Kyaw Soe, Aung Naing Win, and Strikers Ye Yint Aung, Htet Phyto Wai, Win Naing Tun, Myat Kaung Khant, Yar Zar Aung and Than Paing will be with the team ahead of the tourney.

The Myanmar U-22 team will travel directly to Viet Nam via the UAE for the SEA Games, officials said. — Ko Nyi Lay/ GNLM

Ten Hag to become Man Utd manager next season

ERIK ten Hag will leave Ajax to become Manchester United manager next season, the English giants confirmed on Thursday.

The 52-year-old, who has signed a three-year contract, faces a huge task to revive the Red Devils fortunes after a fifth consecutive trophyless season.

The Dutchman becomes the fifth permanent manager at Old Trafford since Alex Ferguson's retirement in 2013 sent the 20-time English champions into decline.

Ten Hag is on course to win his third league title with Ajax and took the four-time European champions to the semi-finals of the Champions League in



Erik ten Hag will become Manchester United manager next season. PHOTO: ANP/AFP

2019 for the first time in 22 years.

"It is a great honour to be appointed manager of Manchester United and I am hugely excited by the challenge ahead," said Ten Hag.

"I know the history of this great club and the passion of

the fans, and I am absolutely determined to develop a team capable of delivering the success they deserve.

"It will be difficult to leave Ajax after these incredible years, and I can assure our fans of my complete commitment and focus on bringing this season to a successful conclusion before I move to Manchester United."

United sit sixth in the Premier League, 23 points behind leaders Manchester City, and are unlikely to qualify for next season's Champions League.

The club have been looking for a permanent manager since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was sacked in October.— AFP

Benzema misses two penalties in Real Madrid win over Osasuna



Karim Benzema missed two penalties in Real Madrid's win over Osasuna on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

KARIM Benzema missed two penalties in seven minutes on Wednesday but Real Madrid still had enough to defeat Osasuna 3-1 as they continued their march towards the La Liga title.

Benzema was looking for his 45th goal of the season but was twice denied by Osasuna goalkeeper Sergio Herrera, who both times dived to his right and both times made the save with Madrid leading 2-1 at El Sadar.

But Osasuna were unable to find an equalizer in the second half and Madrid added a third in injury-time, Vinicius Junior teeing up Lucas Vazquez for an easy finish.— AFP

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

Djokovic survives scare to beat Djere in Belgrade



Novak Djokovic battled to a second-round win in Belgrade. PHOTO: AFP

NOVAK Djokovic battled back from a set and a break down to beat Laslo Djere in his opening match of the ATP event in Belgrade on Wednesday, avoiding a third consecutive defeat.

The world number one trailed 4-3 in the second set but won a dramatic encounter against his fellow Serb 2-6, 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) after three hours

and 21 minutes.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion is playing in just his third tournament of the season after being deported from Australia before the Australian Open over his Covid vaccination status. Djokovic also missed the Indian Wells and Miami Open events in the United States.—AFP