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Myanma Thanaka to be conserved as
cultural heritage



Although Thanaka trees can be seen across the nation, they are primarily grown in the country's central dry zone. The plants are grown in Ayadaw township with more than 100,000 acres. The township boasts 75 per cent of the Thanaka plantation of the country. PHOTO: ZEYAR HTET (MINBU)

ALL the elderly and young love to apply Thanaka on their cheeks. No woman does not like Thanaka. Even with the arrival of modern beauty products, Thanaka remains the reigning cosmetic of choice among women and children.

Thanaka can cool the skin, and provide protection from the sun, and its fragrance makes people fresh. The courtiers and female farmers wear Thanaka. Most Myanmar girls apply Thanaka after bathing, or they wear it whenever they go to pagodas or religious occasions.

Thanaka can protect the human body from heat-related problems. Those working under direct sunlight can use Thanaka as sun protection. The fragrance of Thanaka can also

cure headache, dull pain, neck pain and nasal congestion. If the women suffer from menses, they can apply Thanaka with the turmeric. If they have high body temperature, they can take liquid Thanaka with the nectar of Mesua Ferrea. Suppose the men suffer from headache, dull pain, toothache and blurred vision due to urinary disease. In that case, they can take liquid Thanaka by grinding the root of Thanaka.

Although Myanmar girls grind Thanaka in longitudinal, the courtiers grind in a vertical way to get the smoother Thanaka paste. Moreover, the girls dry Thanaka to make powder. There is a tradition in the middle part of Myanmar in order to offer Thanaka to the Buddha at the

bonfire. Such culture emerged from the Bagan era.

Thanaka is hard and in yellow colour. The dried Thanaka weighs 61 pounds per cubic foot. Therefore, the Thanaka is used as a driving lever in grinding oil or paddy, carving, and measuring tools.

The Thanaka is called Limonia acidissima in the botanical term, including in Rutaceae Family and is in the same group with Aegle marmelos, orange, lemon, lime and clausena. Thanaka trees can grow together with Terminalia oliveri, Tectona Hamiltonian, Acacia leucophloea, Eastern gooseberry, Acacia catechu, Diospyros burmanica and so on. The stem of the tree is about 3ft.

Although Thanaka trees

can be seen across the nation, they are primarily grown in the country's central dry zone. The plants are grown in Ayadaw township with more than 100,000 acres. The township boasts 75 per cent of the Thanaka plantation of the country. The Thanaka plantation is also expanded in Pakokku, Yesagyo, Shwebo, Budalin, Yinmabin, Monywa, Myinmu and Pauk townships.

Therefore, the people should work together to ensure that Myanmar's Thanaka, which has been preserved as a traditional culture since the time of the ancient Myanmar Kings, exists as a gift and a symbol of Myanmar and remains a part of Myanmar's cultural heritage. — Zeyar Htet (Minbu)/GNLM

Over 4,000
objects on
display at
National Museum
(Yangon)

THE National Museum (Yangon), located on Pyay Road, displays historical and cultural items in many exhibition rooms. According to the museum officials, a total of 4,041 items are displayed at the museum in 2021.

The National Museum (Yangon) was opened in Jubilee Hall in 1952. Then, it was transferred to a bank building in Pansodan Street in 1970. It was moved again to its present location on 66/74, Pyay Road, Dagon Township, on 18 September 1996. The museum was developed on 3.804 acres of land.

There are many exhibition rooms at the National Museum (Yangon) like Myanmar Epigraphy and Calligraphy Hall, Thihathana Throne hall, hall on Yadanabon era, Royal Regalia hall, Myanmar urban culture hall, hall of natural history and pre-historic time of Myanmar, gallery of Myanmar arts, theatre of performing arts, hall of paintings, hall of Myanmar ancient costumes, hall of ethnic culture, hall of Buddha and hall of ASEAN.

The museum is closed on Monday and on public holiday days. It opens from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. The entrance fee is K500 per local and K5,000 per foreigner. The monks, nuns and students can visit for free.—Soe Myint Aung/GNLM

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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.

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.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Anti-Terrorism Central Committee
Declaration of Terrorist Groups
Notification No 2/2021
12th Waning of Tagu 1383 ME
8 May 2021

The Anti-Terrorism Central Committee has issued this order with the approval of the State Administration Council in exercising sub-section (e) of Section 6 and sub-section (b) of Section 72 of the Anti-Terrorism Law.

1. Unlawful Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw-CRPH and National Unity Government-NUG formed by CRPH constantly incited Civil Disobedience Movement-CDM participants to commit violent acts. Many riots occurred in many places of the country due to their incitements. They perpetrated bombing, arson, manslaughter, and intimidation to disrupt the state administrative machinery due to the influence of the leaders of CRPH and NUG. Moreover, NUG established People Defence Force-PDF. Violent acts occurred in the name of regional defence forces instigated by NUG and PDF. It is found that their acts to join CDM, threatening non-CDMs, inciting students and teachers not to go to schools, supporting terrorist acts and perpetrating such terrorist acts violate Section 3 (b) and Sub-section 13 of the Counter-Terrorism Law – acts with the intent to cause fear in public, to force Government or any internal and external organization to do an illegitimate act or to refrain from doing a lawful act, and other acts, stipulated by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No 23 on 4 June 2014.

2. Therefore, unlawful associations – Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw-CRPH, National Unity Government-NUG, People Defence Force-PDF and all their subordinates have been declared as terrorist groups.

Chairman
Anti-Terrorism Central Committee

22 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 26 May, total figure rises to 143,318

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **143,318** after **22 new cases** were reported on 26 May 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **132,264** have been discharged from hospitals. —MNA

The people need to get wider knowledge with skills

The people need to get wider knowledge with skills. An education motto mentioned: “The national discipline starts from the school”, which forges the conscious and nationalistic spirit. The constitution stipulates that every citizen shall compulsorily learn basic education. As such, priority must be given to creating the chances for every citizen to learn the education and enhance the education qualification.

(Excerpt from the speech to the Management Committee meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 21 May 2021)

Ceremony held for School Enrolment Day in Taunggyi

THE state-level ceremony for School Enrolment Day of 2021-2022 was celebrated at No (5) B.E.H.S in Taunggyi Township of Shan State (South) yesterday.

Union Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe, Shan State Administration Council Chairman Dr Kyaw Tun and Deputy Minister U Zaw Win opened the ceremony by cutting the ribbon.

Then, the Union Minister and Shan State Administration Council Chairman respectively remarked.

The Union Minister handed over the note books and school textbooks to the Taunggyi district education officer. At the same time, Dr Kyaw Tun gave similar items to the Loilem district education officer.

The other officials also

provided books and school textbooks to the respective district/township education officers, school heads, school board of trustees and students’ parents.

Then, the Union Minister and party inspected the school enrolment processes in the school compound.

The Union Minister and party also inspected No (11) B.E.H.S and No (1) B.E.H.S of Taunggyi Township. They met the teachers, including headmasters, to give proper instructions.

The Union Minister and party then met the higher education staff at Taunggyi University and basic education staff at No (5) B.E.H.S. They discussed matters related to the school and university buildings, teaching methods and administrative processes. — MNA



Insurance Business Regulatory Board of MoPF holds 27th regular session (3/2020)



THE 27th regular session of the Insurance Business Regulatory Board-IBRB (3/2020) under

the Ministry of Planning and Finance was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, IBRB Chair Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win said the

insurance industry plays a key role in Non-Bank Financial Industry (NBFI). The officials make efforts to ensure stable and sustainable economic growth by purchasing Risk-free Financial Product like government treasury bond or implementing proper projects with the savings of banks and premium revenue of insurance industries.

The IBRB will decide on the issuance of permits for new insurance, corporate insurance agent permits, exam fees for insurance agent candidates and insurance services of financial institutions.

Then, the officials coordinated the discussion, and

the Chairman concluded the meeting.

Although the country operated the Myanma Insurance in the past, the government granted permits to local private insurance companies in 2013. Moreover, it also permitted foreign insurance companies in 2019. Currently, 25 local insurers and 11 foreign insurers have been granted licences to operate 32 types of insurance.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the insurance firms also offer COVID-19 benefit to their customers as financial support if they are infected by COVID-19 and hospitalized. — MNA

Plan to draft five-year national strategic plan for the rights of persons with disabilities

A coordination meeting to draft the five-year national strategic plan for the rights of persons with disabilities took place at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement yesterday.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine said it is necessary to successfully classify the disabled grade and register the persons with disabilities in order to implement the five-year plan.

To be able to provide assistance to disabled persons effectively, the five-year plan must be finalized, she added.

The deputy minister noted that the five-year plan was drawn based on the eight prin-

ciples of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. So, It was recognized by the international community. Upon completion of approval, the plan must be inserted with the work procedures for the implementation process.

An official reported on health, education, jobs and employment, social protection, natural disasters, state of emergency, ASEAN enabling master plan (2025), Myanmar sustainable development plan (MSDP), Incheon strategy and policies, strategies and projects drawn by the relevant ministries with regard to the five-year strategic plan. — MNA



4th AIPACODD meeting held virtually



THE 4th ASEAN Inter Parliament Advisory Council on Dangerous Drugs-AIPACODD was virtually organized at the international convention centre of Bandar Seri Begawan in Brunei on 24 May.

The delegations from ASEAN countries, Myanmar's Pyidaungsu Hluttaw office, Ministry of Home Affairs and Union Attorney-General Office joined the meeting.

During the meeting, the Chair of AIPA, Brunei, first made an opening speech and representative of United Nations Office on Drugs and

Crimes (UNODC) discussed progress in drug-eradication efforts.

Then, the respective Parliaments of ASEAN briefed all on law amendment for drugs, challenges, cooperation work with ASEAN member countries, international cooperation, prosecution and drug seizures.

Moreover, the leaders discussed the responses towards drug-free ASEAN and the draft version of the decision to a better situation.

The decisions will be approved at the AIPA General Assembly. —MNA

State Administration Council Press Release

Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who arrive in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries with worries because of incitement and intimidation of NLD members, the extremists who support that party, CRPH unlawful association, incitement of CDM and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since after 1 February 2021 when the Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibility.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of CRPH unlawful association and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in their areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. As those who evaded from their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from evaded areas to various regions of Myanmar.
4. Information was released that if those who evaded to various areas except the persons who committed any kinds of crime wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord, the citizens abroad are to contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates without facing action taken in accord with the law.

Information Team
State Administration Council

Enrolment of students continues at basic education schools for 2021-2022 academic year

BASIC education schools under the Department of Basic Education for the 2021-2022 academic year across Myanmar started school enrolment on 24 May morning.

School heads and teachers help parents and guardians of students enrol their children at respective basic education schools in Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw and in regions and states from 9 am to 3 pm. Moreover, local authorities and dutiful people perform security measures for schools and students.

Stationery, school textbooks and notebooks, as well as COVID-19 protective equipment, were presented to students.

Service members of the local medical battalion sprayed for disinfection at the school buildings used as quarantine centres in providing treatment to COVID-19 patients. —MNA



Sayadaws, locals receive COVID-19 vaccine

TATMADAW keeps launching COVID-19 vaccination programmes for the elderly over 65, departmental officials, locals, including Venerable Sayadaws in their respective military command areas.

Venerable Sayadaws and nuns and local people in Taunggyi, Nyaungshwe, Hopong, Hsihseng, Kalaw and Pekhon, Shan State (South) were vaccinated against COVID-19 by Tatmadaw medical teams comprising doctors, health workers of civilian hospitals at the respective designated areas yesterday. — MNA



Tatmadaw provides treatments to over 220,000 outpatients

TATMADAW keeps providing healthcare services for the patients at the military hospitals and temporary treatment hospitals in the townships of regions and states.

The Tatmadaw medical teams comprising Tatmadaw doctors, specialists, medical assistants, and nurses have been giving medical treatments to the people in order to solve their difficulties in healthcare services. A total of 220,872 outpatients and 66,865 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics, medical assistants and nurses have conducted 10,318 major operations and 5,271 minor operations. The senior doctors gave intensive treatment in the severe cases.

These hospitals managed the birth of 13,058 babies to date. Of those, 5,292 cases are done in the caesarean section and 7,766 cases in ordinary delivery.

In addition to providing medical care to patients in need of hospitalization, Tatmadaw is making arrangements for the well-being of hospitalized patients and caregivers. — MNA



Fake news spreader arrested for tarnishing image of security forces



SECURITY forces perform the duties of the State peace and stability, the rule of law and security for the life and property of the people day and night. In contrast, destructionists commit the spreading of rumours and fake news in various ways with attempts to discredit the people.

The fake news was spread

that security forces inspected a vehicle carrying seven men, including Ko Win Di, in front of the New Day filling station in Setsan Ward of Pazundaung Township in Yangon Region at about 9:45 pm on 24 May and seized an iphone 12 Promax from Ko Win Di.

In the incident, Ko Win Di from No 47 in Ward 8 of Bo Saw Naung Road in Dagon Myothit (East) Township and six friends went to a restaurant in Pazundaung Township on 24 May evening. At about 9:45 pm, they drove and left there. On arrival at the New Day filling station,

the security forces searched their vehicle and allowed them to proceed due to lack of any suspicions. Those persons spent the night at Comet Hotel on Upper Pazundaung Road in Pazundaung Township where iphone 12 Promax of Ko Win Di lost. So, Ko Win Di accused the security forces of beating him and seizing his phone in searching the car and spread the fake news to tarnish the image of the security forces.

The process is underway to open a lawsuit file against the fake news spreader under the law. —MNA

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Rubber export generates \$240 mln revenue in five months

MYANMAR'S rubber export earned more than US\$240.74 million in the first five months (Oct-Feb) of the current financial year 2020-2021, the Ministry of Commerce's data showed.

Mon State's rubber market data showed that the price of domestic natural rubber jumped to nearly K1,000 per pound as global rubber is in a bull market.

Natural quality rubber was priced at K750 per pound in late January 2021, whereas it soared to above K900 per pound (for RSS1 and RSS3) in May.

Myanmar's natural rubber price tracks the global rates, Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association (MRPPA) stated. The pandemic hinders international producers. Consequently, natural rubber prices went into a bear market in 2020. However, the natural rubber hit up to K1,000 per pound at the end of 2020.

Myanmar's rubber is priced lower than the international rate owing to raw material variability. Rubber price stood at US\$2,600 per tonne in 2020-end in global market, whereas Myanmar rubber fetches only \$2,100 per pound.

Uniformity is an important quality measure. Tyre manufacturers do not need to change the formula in the production process



Mon State's rubber market data showed that the price of domestic natural rubber jumped to nearly K1,000 per pound as global rubber is in a bull market.

because of raw material risks. Product uniformity can bring sustainable development for both sides. If there is no raw material variability and risk factor, the price will automatically go up, MRPPA stated.

Myanmar's rubber body is endeavouring to export its natural rubber with the country of origin labelling to external markets. Nevertheless, illegal exports are happening, and it contributes to revenue losses, according to MRPPA.

Thailand is buying Myanmar's natural rubber at a good price through the black market in Payathonezu, Kawthoung and Myeik towns. As a result of this,

the government needs to control illegal rubber exports strictly, MRPPA stated.

Thailand re-exports those illegally imported rubber under its origin label. That is why we want to earn the country of origin label, according to MRPPA.

Additionally, natural rubber is estimated at K1,300 per pound in Thailand, whereas Myanmar's rubber is priced about K400 lower than their prices.

Myanmar's rubber has raw material variability. It may lead to quality compliance issues, process inconsistency, productivity problem and high input cost. Meanwhile, Thailand's rubber is priced at a premium due to

quality and consistency. Thailand's rubber fetches US\$2,500 per tonne, while the global rate is at \$2,200 per tonne.

Rubber is primarily produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber season's data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar. Mon State accounts for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region with 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres. About 300,000 tonnes of rubber is produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber made in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to

Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries, according to the MRPPA.

About 300,000 tonnes of rubber are produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber made in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Korea, India, Japan, and other countries.

At present, Myanmar is exporting only rubber sheets owing to a lack of machinery and technology. Export rubber varieties include synthetic rubber, ribbed smoked sheet RSS 1,3,5, Myanmar Standard Rubber MSR-20, Technically Specified Rubber TSR-20, and Crepe Rubber.

About 150,000 tonnes of rubber was exported in the 2017-2018 financial year. Myanmar shipped over 190,000 tonnes of rubber, with an estimated value of \$250 million, in order to external markets in the 2018-2019 financial year, an increase of 41,000 tonnes which helped boost earnings by \$60 million compared to the year-ago period, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar exported over 200,000 tonnes of natural rubber to foreign countries last FY2019-2020, generating an income of over \$200 million. — KH/GNLM

Lemon growers in Kyaukse happy with good sale of lemon fruits

THE lemon growers are quite happy with a good sale of lemon fruits in Kyaukse town, Mandalay region, said a local lemon grower.

The lemon tree is a perennial plant that grows well in well-drained soils. If the lemon is well-planted, the plant will bear the fruits for nearly the whole year. It

is also a kind of plant that earns the growers a daily income because the yield is high, and the fruits can be sold almost every day.

"This time, there is hot weather, and the cold drink makers come to buy the lemon right in the farmland. I also sell the fruits in the market daily. The price of

the lemon fruit is K100-150 per one depending upon the lemon size," said Ko Thar, a lemon grower and seller from Tada Lae village.

Lemon is fresher and more fragrant. It is approximately 6 cm in diameter. Lemon is also used as an ingredient in cooking, and when used in drinks and sauces, it creates a fresh taste.

If lemon is grown, it should be planted 5 to 8 feet apart, depending on the soil type and sunlight. After growing the lemon tree, the extra weeds and twigs have to be cleared to improve tree growth. The growers need to take care of the tree, spraying the pesticide and fertilizer if it is necessary. There are two types of lemon plant, including the grafting plant. After eight months of grafting, the lemon plant will start to blossom. After one year, the tree can yield the fruits for selling the latter in the market. — Thet Maung (Kyaukse)/GNLM



The lemon tree is a perennial plant that grows well in well-drained soils. If the lemon is well-planted, the plant will bear the fruits for nearly the whole year.

Myanmar's rice export drops by about 400,000 tonnes this year

THE volume of rice exported between 1 October and mid-May in the current financial year 2020-2021 crossed over 780,000 tonnes, a decrease of over 400,000 tonnes compared to that of the same period of last FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar has exported rice to more than 30 countries. From 1 October to 14 May, the country exported a total of 1.4 million tonnes of rice and broken rice. It generated an estimated income of US\$ 524.214 million, including 787,626.6 tonnes of rice and 589,415.330 tonnes of broken rice. During the same period of last FY, the country exported a total of 1.85 million tonnes of rice and broken rice. It generated an estimated income of \$539.715 million.

Myanmar primarily exports rice and broken rice to China, while the broken rice is exported chiefly to Belgium, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF). Myanmar is mainly exporting rice to EU and African markets via maritime trade and China through Muse border trade. Although the rice export has dropped in the last FY2019-2020, the export of broken rice has increased and earned over \$84 million more.

According to MRF, Myanmar has been accelerating its effort to increase rice and broken rice export by an average of 10 per cent annually.

In 2019-2020FY, 16 per cent of rice exports were across land borders, while 84 per cent was exported by sea. — Aye Maung/GNLM

1st UN nuclear ban meeting may be postponed until after NPT review

THE first meeting of parties to a UN treaty banning nuclear weapons, set to be held next January, may be pushed to the spring so that it takes place after a rescheduled UN conference on nuclear nonproliferation, diplomatic sources said Tuesday.

The review conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, held every five years in New York, has already been pushed back multiple times from its original date of April last year to August this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, but there are talks of postponing it again to the beginning of next year.

The Treaty on the Prohibi-

tion of Nuclear Weapons, which is the first international pact outlawing the development, testing, possession and use of nuclear weapons, came into effect in January this year with the support of many non-nuclear states.

Its first meeting, which must be held within one year of coming into force, is currently scheduled for January next year in Austria. Japanese survivors of the 1945 atomic bombing are also expected to attend.

With the momentum for nuclear disarmament waning due to the pandemic, the international community stands at a critical juncture concerning whether nuclear-armed states

will curb their nuclear expansion. As it will be unrealistic to hold both conferences in January next year, proposals have been made to postpone the first meeting of the nuclear ban treaty by several months or hold the meeting in January as scheduled but postpone substantive discussions until after the NPT review conference.

There are strong calls among countries supporting the nuclear weapon ban treaty to hold the NPT conference as soon as possible, with many likely eager to also observe the discussions at the review conference attended by the nuclear powers. — Kyodo News ■



Photo taken 26 May 2021 shows the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, western Japan, with the Atomic Bomb Dome seen in the background. **PHOTO: KYODO**

DR Congo volcano aftershocks rattle residents, damage buildings



Residents displaced by the 22 May, 2021 Mount Nyiragongo volcanic eruption wait to register to receive some aid distributed by a local politician and businessman in Goma on 26 May, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

AFTERSHOCKS from the Mount Nyiragongo volcano in eastern DR Congo rattled the nearby city of Goma on Wednesday, four days after its eruption, badly damaging several buildings and prompting hundreds of residents to flee.

The tremors were felt throughout the night. Two powerful shocks from Africa's most active volcano caused terrified people to run out of their homes.

The seismic monitoring agency RSM in neighbouring Rwanda, whose border runs close to Goma, said it had detected a 5.1-magnitude quake at 5:46 am (0346 GMT), followed

by a 4.1-magnitude tremor at 6:12 am.

Authorities shut down the market, shops and several building sites as a precaution.

The United Nations says 32 people have died and at least 5,000 are feared to be homeless after the volcano erupted on Saturday.

The UN humanitarian affairs office OCHA said 24 of the victims were burned alive by lava, adding that 40 adults have been reported missing.

By the time the eruption ended on Sunday the volcano had spewed out two rivers of molten rock, one of which came

to halt on the edge of Goma after obliterating villages in its wake.

The lakeshore city of 1.5 million people lies around a dozen kilometres (eight miles) from the volcano.

A two-storey building on a road to the southwest of the city partially collapsed overnight, but without apparently causing any casualties. Two other buildings were badly damaged, while another building in the city's Katindo district had completely collapsed. Property damage was also reported in Gisenyi, a Rwandan town on the other side of the border, according to social media. — AFP ■

Dutch judges in 'emotional' visit to MH17 plane wreckage

DUTCH judges visited the shrapnel-pierced wreckage of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 for the first time Wednesday in an "emotionally loaded" day for the trial of four suspects in the crash.

Torn shreds of the front of the plane, which was shot down in 2014 over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board, have been reconstructed on a wire cage at Gilze-Rijen air base in the Netherlands.

The trial of three Russians and a Ukrainian over the downing of the Boeing 777 began in March 2020 but has moved slowly due to legal arguments. The suspects are being tried in absentia.

"We realise that this visit to the reconstruction of MH17 as part of the official criminal process will be very emotionally loaded for relatives," presiding judge Hendrik Steenhuis said.

"This is a reconstruction of an aircraft in which their loved ones were underway to a destination that they never reached because the aircraft crashed during the flight and all on board perished."

The judges inspected the outside of the painstakingly re-assembled wreckage, still coated in Malaysia Airlines' white, red and blue paint, and then climbed up a ladder to look inside at the damage.

"The bench have not had a previous opportunity to view the reconstruction," judge Steen-

huis said.

"Therefore the bench will now first, and alone, walk around the reconstruction and other parts of the wreckage to get a first impression."

Lawyers for the prosecution and defence, who have previously been allowed to see the debris, were then allowed to do the same.

Torn apart

The jet was travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it was shot down over part of eastern Ukraine controlled by pro-Russian rebels. All passengers and crew on board were killed.

An international investigation concluded that a BUK missile that had originally come from the Russian army's 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade based in the city of Kursk was responsible.

The wreckage was put together after being transported back from war-scarred eastern Ukraine by rail and plane to the air force base in the Netherlands. A Dutch-led air safety investigation concluded the plane was torn apart by some 800 "high energy objects" from the missile.

The probe concluded some of the people on board may have known for up to 90 seconds after the missile hit. The trial opened in March 2020 but has been delayed by legal arguments, with the main body of evidence only due to start being heard in June.— AFP ■

Solving accommodation problem of people contributes to nation-building tasks

NATURALLY, three basic needs, namely food, clothing, and shelter, are the most important for people's daily lives. So, they are striving for ensuring the sufficiency of three basic needs along with their lives. In fact, people are worried about how to solve three basic needs in their respective families.

As part of solving the problems of shelter, which can also be called accommodation, the government and private sectors implement housing projects in all regions and states, not only for the people but for service personnel. Hence, housing projects mushroom in major populous cities such as Yangon, Mandalay and

Nay Pyi Taw Council Area for providing housing apartments to the people who do not have their own housings.

In so doing, advanced housing projects, affordable housing projects and low-cost housing projects are implemented to sell apartments at various prices to the people as well as in-service personnel and retired ones.

Moreover, the Department of Urban and Housing Development under the Ministry of Construction and private entrepreneurs are taking responsibilities for the construction of rental housing projects for the public and retired service personnel in Dekkhinathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Council.

With regard to the development of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, local authorities grant to arrange municipal measures such as sanitation and beautifying tasks while providing necessary assistance to the general public and retired service personnel residing at apartments of housing projects in Nay Pyi Taw for their convenient accommodation. In Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, housing buildings are under construction with 614 square feet area of each

rental apartment for the general public and 650 square feet area for the State service personnel and retired staff members.

Meanwhile, housing projects are being implemented in satellite towns of Yangon City as well as Mandalay City to fulfil needs of accommodation to the people, service personnel and retired service personnel with the aim of declining the number of people and service personnel who are unaffordable to own housings and apartments due to various reasons.

Nonetheless, solving the accommodation problem of people is sure to contribute much towards the endeavours of nation-building tasks.



Countries mull WHO reform and how to rebuild post-Covid world

VACCINE sharing, strengthening the WHO and adopting a pandemic treaty were among proposals from world leaders Monday on how to halt the Covid-19 pandemic and prevent future health catastrophes.

The World Health Organization kicked off the main annual gathering of its 194 member states with all eyes on the global response to Covid-19 – and what concrete steps can be taken to avert future pandemics.

“We are at war with a virus,” United Nations chief Antonio Guterres told the opening of the 74th World Health Assembly (WHA).

“We need the logic and urgency of a war economy, to boost the capacity of our weapons,” he said. With the Covid-19 crisis still raging and wealthy nations hoarding most doses of life-saving vaccines, the WHO’s main decision-making body has plenty to discuss.

The assembly, being held virtually until June 1, will focus heavily on efforts to rein in the pandemic and on calls to revamp the entire global health approach to help prevent future Covid-like catastrophes.

There is much at stake, with

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus saying this year’s WHA was “arguably one of the most important” in the UN health agency’s history.

‘Not over’

“The pandemic is not over,” he said, pointing out that just during the first hour or so of the assembly, nearly 1,000 people had died worldwide from Covid.

He called for strong actions to rein in Covid-19, which has already killed more than 3.4 million people globally, and prepare for the next pandemic threats ahead.

“This is not the time for incremental improvements or tinkering at the edges,” he told the assembly. “This is the moment for bold ideas, bold commitment and bold leadership, for doing things that have never been done before.”

A number of mainly European countries are calling for significant strengthening of the WHO, which has been pushed to the brink by Covid. They want to boost its independence, flexibility and funding.

The WHO “must be the heart, the compass, of our global health approach,” French President Emmanuel Macron told the assembly.



World leaders and WHO officials address the UN agency's main annual gathering, where they are debating reform and Covid / World Health Organization. PHOTO: AFP

“This organization must be robust in times of crisis, it must be flexible enough to react to emergencies,” he said.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel meanwhile said “the priority must be to enable the world to respond to a pandemic threat as rapidly as possible,” and voiced support for the creation of a global health threats

council.

Despite a palpable sense of urgency, fears abound that countries will not go far enough.

There are particular disagreements over proposals to boost the WHO’s powers, and to hand it more independence to investigate and sound the alarm about serious health threats. On Tuesday, ministers and diplo-

mats will discuss the findings of three separate independent panels that assessed aspects of the global pandemic response.

More independence

Finding that countries and institutions had been woefully unprepared to deal with the crisis, the panels argued for a total overhaul of the global alarm system.

A draft resolution to strengthen the organization is calling for the creation of a new working group to study and streamline the various recommendations and create concrete proposals for the 2022 WHA to consider.

And it urges the creation of a pilot project, which would be voluntary at first, where countries would submit to regular reviews by other member states of their pandemic preparedness, in the same way they undergo reviews of their rights situations before the UN Human Rights Council.

However, it stops short of explicitly backing the experts’ recommendation to hand the WHO broader powers to launch investigations.

Experts have also highlighted the importance of boosting confidence in the WHO’s independence, which has taken a hit as countries have traded blame over the crisis and accused the organization of taking sides.

One way of doing this, they suggested, would be to limit the WHO director-general’s time in office to a single seven-year term, instead of the current possible two five-year terms.

Source : AFP

Indian Covid-19 variant found in at least 53 territories: WHO



Spaniards practise yoga at the beach in Barcelona on Sunday after the lifting of coronavirus emergency. PHOTO: AFP

THE coronavirus variant first detected in India has now been officially recorded in 53 territories, a World Health Organization report showed Wednesday.

Additionally, the WHO has re-

ceived information from unofficial sources that the B.1.617 variant has been found in seven other territories, figures in the UN health agency’s weekly epidemiological update showed, taking the total to 60. The report said B.1.617 had

shown increased transmissibility, while disease severity and risk of infection were under investigation.

Globally over the past week, the number of new cases and deaths continued to decrease, with around 4.1 million new cases and

84,000 new deaths reported — a 14 per cent and two percent decrease respectively compared to the previous week. The WHO’s European region reported the largest decline in new cases and deaths in the past seven days, followed by the southeast Asia region.

The numbers of cases reported by the Americas, Eastern Mediterranean, Africa, and the Western Pacific region were similar to those reported in the previous week. “Despite a declining global trend over the past four weeks, incidence of Covid-19 cases and deaths remain high, and substantial increases have been observed in many countries throughout the world,” the document said.

The highest numbers of new cases in the past seven days were reported from India (1,846,055 — down 23 per cent); Brazil (451,424 — up three percent); Argentina (213,046 — up 41 per cent), the Unit-

ed States (188,410 — down 20 per cent), and Colombia (107,590 — down seven per cent).

Variant detection

The update gave information on the four mutations classed as variants of concern: those first reported in Britain (B.1.1.7), South Africa (B.1.351), Brazil (P1) and India (B.1.617).

When counting up the total number of territories reporting each variant, the WHO added together those from which it had official and unofficial information. B.1.1.7 has now been reported in 149 territories; B.1.351 in 102 territories and P1 in 59 territories. The WHO split up figures for the B.1.617 variant into three lineages (B.1.617.1, B.1.617.2 and B.1.617.3).

The first has been reported in a total of 41 territories, the second in 54 and the third in six: Britain, Canada, Germany, India, Russia

and the United States.

Together, lineages of the B.1.617 variant were officially recorded in 53 territories and unofficially in another seven.

The update also listed six variants of interest that are being monitored.

One was first discovered in multiple countries, two of them were first found in the United States, while the three others were first discovered in Brazil, the Philippines and France.

“Virus evolution is expected, and the more SARS-CoV-2 circulates, the more opportunities it has to evolve,” the report said.

“Reducing transmission through established and proven disease-control methods... are crucial aspects of the global strategy to reduce the occurrence of mutations that have negative public health implications.”

Source : AFP

Public information

Yangon Region Administration Council is working with relevant departments to help the businesses in the region. People are informed to contact the following phone numbers to get assistance for their small and medium-scaled businesses and investments which are facing some delays and working to do new businesses.

Phone numbers: 01 830 1975, 01 830 2175

Yangon Region Administration Council

The Global New Light of Myanmar

www.gnlm.com.mm

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09 454 237 515

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01 860 4530



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 26 May 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (16:30) hrs MST today, the Very Severe Cyclonic Storm “YAAS” over the Northwest Bay of Bengal has crossed near South of Balasore, North India Coast and moved to North-Northwestwards and weaken into a Severe Cyclonic Storm. It is forecast to move Northwestwards and weaken gradually into a Cyclonic Storm during next (6) hrs and into a land depression during next (12)hrs. Monsoon is strong over the Andaman Sea, South Bay and Eastcentral Bay of Bengal and weather is cloudy elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 27 May 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway regions, fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw, Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Shan, Kayah states and widespread in the remaining regions and states with isolated heavyfalls in Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi regions and Rakhine, Kayin, Mon states. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Occasional squalls with very rough seas will be experienced in Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coast. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40-45) mph. Squalls with rough seas are likely at times Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35-40)mph. Wave height will be about (13 -15)feet in Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coast and about (8-12)feet in Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of thundery activities in the Central Myanmar areas. **FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 May 2021:** Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 May 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR Mandalay AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 May 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

Japan newspaper sponsoring Olympics joins cancellation chorus

JAPAN'S Asahi Shimbun newspaper, an official Tokyo Olympics sponsor, called for the Games to be cancelled on Wednesday, in the latest sign of opposition less than two months before the opening ceremony.

The call comes with public opinion in Japan firmly against holding the Games this summer, and after prominent business leaders voiced their concern in recent weeks.

Organizers insist however that the Games are on, saying an extensive rulebook will keep athletes and the Japanese public safe.

The Asahi daily's editorial



A Japanese newspaper that is an Olympic sponsor has called for the Games to be cancelled. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

urged Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to "make a calm, objective assessment of the

situation and make the decision to cancel this summer's Olympics".

The paper said it "cannot accept the gamble" of holding the event, despite organizers' assurances it will be safe.

It also accused International Olympic Committee leaders, including vice-president John Coates, of being "self-righteous" and "clearly out of step" with the Japanese public.

When asked last week if the Games could be held even during a virus state of emergency, Coates said "the answer is absolutely yes".

Tokyo and other parts of Japan are currently under a state of emergency, which is expected to be extended this week until June 20.

"Saying 'yes' without demonstrating any clear grounds for it once again drove home the self-righteous image of the IOC," the Asahi editorial said.

Two prominent figures in Japanese business have also voiced opposition to the Games in recent weeks. Masayoshi Son, head of tech investment behemoth SoftBank Group, tweeted on Sunday: "Do the IOC have the right to decide if it's held or not?"

"If you think about what people have to put up with, we might have a lot more to lose" if the Games go ahead, he added. — AFP ■

As Covid cases rose, so did hospital hacks in France

AT 2:00 am on a day in early February, the deputy director of the main hospital in the southwestern French town of Dax took an urgent call from a normally unflappable colleague in the IT department.

"He's usually very calm, but I could tell in his voice that there was something very unusual," Aline Gilet-Caubere told AFP from her office.

The technician reported how personnel working overnight were suddenly unable to use their computers, which were flashing up a ransom note saying the hospital's systems had been hacked and encrypted.

The attackers made a classic demand: they would provide a key to reverse the damage upon payment in Bitcoin, and they supplied email addresses to arrange the transfer.

"We imagined we were a

sanctuary as a hospital, with our role, that no-one would dare (target us)," Gilet-Caubere said. "But not at all, in fact. That's part of the psychological shock."

Unwilling and unable to pay, hospital managers had no choice but to order a return to the pre-internet, pre-computer era.

In the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, paper records reappeared. Doctors took up pencils again and scribbled notes.

A manual system using stickers and flowcharts kept track of patients as they moved around.

There was no telephone system or email.

Payroll and supplier data were lost. All of the roughly 110-120 different software platforms run in the hospital were out-of-order. — AFP ■

EU and AstraZeneca battle in court over vaccine delays



Since the AstraZeneca row the EU has switched to the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine as its mainstay. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

THE European Commission will confront drugs giant AstraZeneca in a Belgian court on Wednesday over coronavirus vaccine delivery shortfalls that hampered efforts to kickstart inoculations across the bloc.

Lawyers for both sides are due to appear before a judge in the French-speaking court in Brussels from 09:00 am (0700 GMT). Another hearing is scheduled for Friday, the court said.

The EU is suing the Brit-

ish-Swedish pharmaceutical group in a bid to force it to deliver 90 million more doses of its Covid-19 vaccine before July.

The deadline for the contract was set for mid-June, according to the Commission, and the EU says the company will face financial penalties if it does not meet this deadline.

AstraZeneca delivered only 30 million doses in the first quarter out of the 120 million it was contracted to supply. For the current quarter which runs until June 30, it plans to deliver only 70 million of the 180 million initially promised.

A Commission official close to the case told AFP this month that AstraZeneca was currently delivering doses at a rate of only 10 million per month, well below the planned pace. — AFP ■

Horse-whisperer hopes Morocco films return at full gallop

HORSE master Joel Proust hopes his stallions will soon return to the movie sets in Morocco that made his name, ranging from Hollywood epics to "Game of Thrones".

The North African nation's dramatic desert sands and palm-filled valleys traversed by camel herds have long provided stand-ins for big-budget film sets needing Middle East

locations, but coronavirus restrictions have hit the industry hard.

Last year was "difficult", Proust said, at an equestrian centre on the outskirts of Marrakesh, where the thundering of hooves announces the sudden arrival of a herd.

The horses -- including Arab-Barbs, Friesians and Spanish purebreds -- gallop, trot and

play dead as they follow their instructor.

The 65-year-old Frenchman has for four decades choreographed equestrian action scenes for some of the biggest movies shot in Morocco.

They include Oliver Stone's swashbuckling "Alexander" in 2004, and Ridley Scott's Crusade-epic "Kingdom of Heaven" in 2005. — AFP ■



Separate ransomware attacks have knocked out computer systems in more than half a dozen French hospitals, forcing them to return to using pen and paper. **PHOTO: AFP**

Pacific readies for ‘Super Blood Moon’ celestial show

STARGAZERS across the Pacific Rim can cast their eyes skyward on Wednesday night and behold a “Super Blood Moon”, as the heavens align to bring a rare celestial twin treat.

The first total lunar eclipse in two years is happening at the same time as the moon is closest to Earth, in what astronomers say will be a once-in-a-decade show.

If the skies are clear, anyone living between Australia and the central United States will be able to see an enormous, bright, orangey-red moon.

The main event will be between 1111-1125 GMT -- late evening in Sydney and pre-dawn in Los Angeles -- when

the moon will be entirely in the Earth’s shadow.

The moon will darken and turn red -- a result of sunlight refracting off the Earth’s rim onto the lunar surface -- basking our satellite in a sunrise- or sunset-tinged glow.

Unlike a solar eclipse, the phenomenon will be safely visible to the naked eye.

This eclipse will be different because it happens during a “super moon”, when the moon passes a mere 360,000 kilometres (225,000 miles) from Earth.

At that point, it can appear 30 percent brighter and 14 percent larger than at its farthest point -- a difference of around



The supermoon near the London Eye Capsules in London, U.K on September 28, 2015. PHOTO: JOSEPH OKPAKO/2015 /AFP/FILE

50,000 kilometres (30,000 miles).

“Interest has been high,” said Andrew Jacobs curator of astronomy at Sydney Observa-

tory, who is hosting a Covid-safe viewing event with telescopes and expert speakers. “I’m expecting a clear night.” — AFP ■

Urban ‘heat islands’ hit Black Americans twice as hard: study



So-called urban heat islands expose black Americans in US cities to twice as much additional warming during the summer as whites.

PHOTO: AFP

SO-CALLED urban heat islands expose Black Americans in US cities to twice as much additional warming during the summer as

whites, a discrepancy with potentially serious health implications, researchers said Tuesday.

From June through August

in 175 cities accounting for 65 per cent of the US population, districts inhabited mostly by white residents experienced, on average, an extra 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming due to heat-trapping concrete, dark tarmac, and air-conditioning exhaust, they reported in Nature Communications.

Black residents, by contrast, endured temperatures soaring more than 3C above surrounding non-urban areas.

“We find that people of colour in the US live in neighbourhoods with higher surface urban heat island intensity than non-Hispanic white in 97% of these cities during summer

days,” co-author Tirthankar Chakraborty, a researcher at Yale University’s School of the Environment, told AFP.

US government statistics on heat-related deaths in the United States from 2004 through 2018 show a death rate roughly 50 per cent higher among non-Hispanic blacks compared to non-Hispanic whites, suggesting that added exposure may translate into dire health consequences.

The heat gap between rich and poor city dwellers was not quite as large: people living below the poverty line resided in areas 2.5C warmer on average, while those with incomes at least twice the poverty line only saw an increase of 1.8C. — AFP ■

Chimps learn ‘handshakes’ according to social group: study

CHIMPANZEES develop specific handshake-like gestures depending on their social group, according to the results of a 12-year observational study published on Wednesday that sheds light on the animals’ complex social structures. Chimps are often referred to as being the most “humanlike” non-human species, given their propensity to perform complicated tasks, such as tool use, which were long thought to be the sole preserve of mankind.

Edwin van Leeuwen, an expert in animal behaviour at the University of Antwerp and the city’s Royal Zoological Society, studied dozens of chimpanzees



Chimps are often referred to as being the most ‘humanlike’ non-human species. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

sheltered at Zambia’s Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage Trust over a 12-year span. Despite a large

turnover in the chimpanzee population due to deaths and births, Van Leeuwen was able to observe

specific and repeated hand gestures among chimps in two distinct groups. The gesture, known as the grooming handclasp, involves “each of the participants simultaneously (extending) an arm overhead and the other (clasping) the other’s wrist or hand or both clasping each other’s hand,” according to the results of his study, published in the journal Royal Society Biology Letters.

Through years of observation, Van Leeuwen found that palm-to-palm grasping was “substantially more pronounced” in one group, or society, of chimps than the other. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

2,000 rally in Georgia against massive dam project

AROUND 2,000 people rallied in Georgia on Monday against plans to construct two giant hydropower plants which critics say pose major environmental risks.

Locals and environmental activists have long fumed about plans to build the plants in Georgia’s western Rioni Valley, pointing to seismic and environmental risks.

Waving Georgian flags, about 2,000 demonstrators marched through the centre of the capital Tbilisi, blocking traffic.

The protesters called for the plan to be scrapped and demanded Economy Minister Natia Turnava’s resignation.

“If our demands are not met, we will stage mass rallies and paralyse the capital,” one of protest organizers, Varlam Goletiani, told journalists.

The plants will be built by a Turkish-owned company, Enka Renewables, which has pledged to invest \$800 million (655 million euros). — AFP ■

Scientists restore partial sight in blind man

SCIENTISTS have for the first time managed to partially restore the sight of a blind patient by altering his cells, according to the results of a groundbreaking study published on Monday. The technique known as optogenetics, which has been developed in the field of neuroscience over the last 20 years, involves genetically altering cells so they produce more light-sensitive proteins.

In some cases of blindness, known as inherited photoreceptor diseases, light-sensing cells in the retina that use proteins to deliver visual information to the brain via the optic nerve progressively degenerate. Scientists in Europe and the US recruited a man who had lost his sight due to an inherited photoreceptor disease 40 years ago and began treating him with optogenetic techniques. — AFP ■

Biden, Putin to hold first summit in Geneva

US President Joe Biden and Russian leader Vladimir Putin will hold their first summit next month in Geneva, both sides said Tuesday, though no breakthrough is expected in the fraught relationship.

The meeting in the wealthy Swiss city -- home to many UN organizations and location of a historic 1985 summit between Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and US president Ronald Reagan -- will be on June 16.

"The leaders will discuss the full range of pressing issues, as we seek to restore predictability and stability to the US-Russia relationship," White House Press Secretary



US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet June 16 in Geneva. Joe Biden with Russia's Vladimir Putin in Moscow in 2011. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Jen Psaki said.

The Kremlin confirmed the

summit details and said in a statement that Putin and Biden

would be discussing "issues of strategic stability," as well as "resolving regional conflicts" and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Biden, making his first international trip as president, will go to Geneva immediately after separate summits with his key Western allies in the G7, NATO and the European Union. The face-to-face meeting with the Kremlin leader comes amid levels of tension not seen for years, with Washington now dialling back its ambitions to little more than establishing a relationship in which both sides understand each other and can work together in specific areas. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US vows to reopen Jerusalem consulate, pledges aid for Gaza

SECRETARY of State Antony Blinken vowed Tuesday to rebuild US relations with Palestinians by reopening a consulate in Jerusalem, as well as giving millions in aid to help the war-ravaged Gaza Strip.

The announcements signalled a clean break with US policy under former president Donald Trump, who had shuttered the diplomatic mission for Palestinians in 2019 and slashed aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Long term, Blinken evoked the "possibility of resuming the effort to achieve a two-state solution, which we continue to believe is the only way to truly assure Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state, and of course to give the Palestinians the state they're entitled to". — AFP ■

EU summit welcomes COVID-19 certificate to unlock travel

EU leaders on Tuesday welcomed the introduction of a bloc-wide COVID-19 pass that they hope will unlock a tourist surge this summer.

The 27 member states want the EU Digital COVID Certificate, to be launched July 1, to turn the page on coronavirus restrictions that have crimped Europeans' cherished freedom of movement.

Coupled with a separate plan to let in fully vaccinated travellers from countries outside the EU, to be defined by the middle of June, Europe believes its vital tourist industry could claw back some of the losses racked up since the start of the pandemic.

European Commission chief

Ursula von der Leyen told a media conference after the summit that more than 300 million COVID-19 vaccine doses will have been delivered by the end of this week, rising to 400 million next month.

"If we continue like this, we have confidence that we will be able to safely reopen our societies," she said, adding the EU was on track to meet its goal of fully inoculating 70% of adults by late July.

"Progressively, we should return to the ability to move freely throughout the European Union," European Council President Charles Michel said.

EU countries and the European Parliament struck agreement last week on the legislation



President of the European Council Charles Michel speaks during a press conference at the end of the council. **PHOTO: AFP**

to come into force mid-June for the COVID certificate. Von der Leyen said all the technological infrastructure would be ready by June 1. The leaders of Greece,

Spain and Croatia, whose economies strongly rely on tourist spending, were particularly effusive about the common document. — AFP ■

'Appointed by God': Samoan leader defiant after vote

DEFYING election results and court rulings, Samoa's veteran leader Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi is determined to cling to power, convinced only divine intervention can end his 22-year rule of the Pacific island nation.

Malielegaoi is not accustomed to losing -- until recently the 76-year-old's authority was virtually absolute in a devoutly Christian nation of 220,000 where respect for one's elders is deeply ingrained. A trained economist, Malielegaoi has cast a long shadow over public life since he was elected to Samoa's parliament in 1980.

As well as being prime minister, he appointed himself foreign minister and chairman of the Samoa Rugby Union -- a high profile role in the rugby-mad nation. But his grip on power is now being challenged by former ally Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, who won a shock majority in a general election on April 9, opening the door to her becoming Samoa's first woman prime minister. — AFP ■

Cyclone batters eastern India, 1.2 million seek shelter



Cyclone Yaas made began around 9:00 am, with officials warning that it would generate waves higher than rooftops in some areas. **PHOTO: AFP**

HEAVY rains and howling winds lashed eastern India on Wednesday as the Covid-stricken country's second cyclone in as many

weeks roared towards the coast, forcing more than 1.2 million people to seek shelter.

Heavy rains and howling

winds lashed eastern India on Wednesday as the Covid-stricken country's second cyclone in as many weeks battered the coast,

forcing more than 1.2 million people to seek shelter.

Many scientists say cyclones are becoming more frequent and severe in the northern Indian Ocean as climate change warms the sea. Last week Cyclone Tauktae claimed at least 155 lives in western India. The latest system, Cyclone Yaas, has forced the evacuation of more than 1.2 million people in the eastern states of West Bengal and Odisha.

The Indian Meteorological Department said landfall began around 9:00 am (0330 GMT) and warned that it would generate waves higher than rooftops in some areas. Coastal areas experienced wind gusts up to 155 kilometres (95 miles) an hour and pounding rain. — AFP ■

US exchanges offer a rich potential target for hackers

CYBERATTACKS have long been seen as a threat to financial markets, but worries are becoming even more acute following a US pipeline hack that set off a public panic and forced the company to pay a ransom.

Financial exchanges that manage daily transactions of tens or hundreds of billions of dollars are an appealing target for hackers.

Major stock exchanges insist they are on top of the issue, but remain mum about what steps they are taking to safeguard their networks.

“Technology and operational resiliency sits at the heart of everything we do,” a Nasdaq spokesperson told AFP.

Likewise, the Chicago Board Options Exchange “takes cybersecurity very seriously and does not discuss our cyber defenses publicly,” an exchange spokesperson said.

New York Stock Exchange President Stacey Cunningham told CNBC the exchange is “constantly working not only with our own teams but with others in the market, with the regulators and other exchanges on ensuring that markets are secure.”

The Chicago Mercantile Exchange, a key trading venue for energy and agricultural products, declined comment entirely. Recent history shows the hacking risk is far from a theoretical problem at financial exchanges. — AFP ■

Japan remains world’s biggest creditor in 2020 for 30th straight yr

JAPAN remained the world’s largest creditor at the end of 2020 for the 30th straight year, although the yen’s appreciation against the U.S. dollar cut the value of its foreign assets, the government said Tuesday.

The country’s net balance of external assets held by its government, companies and individual investors stood at 356.97 trillion yen (\$3.3 trillion), down 0.01 per cent from a year earlier and the first decline since 2017, the Finance Ministry said.

The yen strengthened against the dollar by nearly 6 yen from a year before, reducing the balance by around 22.9 trillion yen, an official told reporters by a ministry estimate. Japan’s total external assets grew 5.1 per cent to a record 1,146.13 trillion



Japan’s Finance Ministry in Tokyo. PHOTO: KYODO

yen as foreign direct and securities investments increased, with the value of foreign securities held by domestic investors rising.

Its overseas liabilities climbed 7.6 per cent to a record 789.16 trillion yen, reflecting more investments in Japan by nonresidents and the higher value of Japanese securities held by foreign investors.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic does not seem to have significantly weakened appetite for foreign investment, the official said, adding that instead it appears that ample funds provided by governments and central banks in their crisis responses led to more transactions to and from overseas. — Kyodo News ■

How Hong Kong chef Vicky Lau embraced her ‘role model’ label

DESPITE the institutional status bestowed by her double Michelin star, Vicky Lau says the battle to improve gender parity in the male-dominated world of professional kitchens is a long way from won -- but small victories bring her hope.

In the fiendishly competitive arena of Hong Kong’s fine-dining scene, few have had as remarkable an ascent as Lau.

In little more than a



Once in the business, Lau saw how men dominated, especially when it came to ascending ranks or owning top establishments. PHOTO: AFP

decade she has gone from opening a small cafe to running one of the finance hub’s most lauded restaurants.

Earlier this year Tate Dining Room was awarded two Michelins, a belated breakthrough first for Asia’s all-too-overlooked female chefs.

Many chefs love to insist in interviews that awards don’t mean much. Lau, 40, is refreshingly upfront.

“I didn’t get in the industry because I want to have all these accolades. But over time, it did be-

come a goal,” she told AFP.

Asked whether the gender watershed moment of the double Michelin mattered, she replied: “I think it does make a statement, because it encourages a lot of people in our industry to power on.” A former graphic designer who switched mid-career to retrain, Lau said she “really didn’t think twice about being a female and a chef” when she entered the trade.

“It’s kind of ignorance

was bliss at that time,” she smiled, recalling how many at her Cordon Bleu training in Bangkok were women.

Once in the business, she saw how men dominated, especially when it came to ascending ranks or owning top establishments.

As she won attention for her dishes, she initially found it exhausting to continually be asked about her gender, the example she was setting, the role model she had become. — AFP ■

Dutch court to rule in Shell climate case

A Dutch court will give its verdict on Wednesday on a landmark bid by environmental groups to force oil giant Shell to meet greenhouse gas emissions targets in the Paris climate accords.

Dubbed “the People versus Shell”, the case was launched in 2019 by the Netherlands branch of Friends of the Earth, and is backed by six other groups and more than 17,000 Dutch citizens.

Anglo-Dutch multinational Shell says it is making serious efforts to cut gas emissions, but argues that there is no legal basis for the case and that governments are responsible for meeting Paris targets.

“The climate case against Shell is unique because it is the first time in history that judges have been asked to order a company to emit less CO2 by changing its

policy,” Friends of the Earth Netherlands said in a statement.

Judges at the district court in The Hague will start reading the verdict at 1300 GMT.

The case is one of a series around the world in which citizens and campaigners frustrated with inaction on climate change have hauled governments and big polluters before the courts.

The 2015 Paris ac-

cords committed all nations to cut carbon emissions to limit warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels and encouraged them to go down to 1.5 degrees. The campaigners asked the court during hearings in December to order Anglo-Dutch multinational Shell to reduce emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 in order to help achieve that goal. — AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL TRUST VOY. NO. (2015S/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL TRUST VOY. NO. (2015S/E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **27-5-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINES

NEWS
IN BRIEFChina replaces
Germany as UK's
biggest import
market: ONS

CHINA has replaced Germany as the UK's biggest single import market for the first time on record, partly fuelled by demand for Chinese textiles used for face masks and PPE, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Goods imports from China to the UK increased by 66% since the start of 2018 to the first quarter of 2021, ONS's figures showed on Tuesday. — Xinhua ■

Singapore to lift
import restrictions
on food from
Japan's Fukushima

SINGAPORE Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong told Japanese counterpart Yoshihide Suga on Tuesday his country will remove its remaining import restrictions on food from Fukushima Prefecture imposed in the wake of the 2011 nuclear disaster, according to Japan's Foreign Ministry.

Suga welcomed the decision during a 20-minute phone call with Lee, as the leaders also affirmed cooperation in ensuring the fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to developing countries, the ministry said.

Singapore is among 54 countries and regions that placed restrictions on farm and fishery imports from Japan following the triple meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi complex. The list has gradually thinned to 15, and many of those remaining have eased measures in steps.

In January 2020, Singapore lifted its ban on food imports from some municipalities in the northeastern Japan prefecture on condition that the shipments include certification of place of origin and checks for radioactive cesium.

Suga and Lee agreed to work together to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific region, including by stepping up economic and defence cooperation, the ministry said. — Kyodo News ■

Biden global tax proposal faces setback
after Ireland objects

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the fund supports establishing a global minimum tax. PHOTO: XINHUA/FILE

US President Joe Biden's push to get major economies to agree on a 15 per cent minimum tax rate for multinational corporations has hit turbulence after Ireland's finance minister expressed "significant reserva-

tions" about the plan.

The objection from Dublin's finance minister Paschal Donohoe on Tuesday carries weight because Ireland hosts an outsized number of technology and pharmaceutical firms that were

attracted to the country for its lower tax rate.

"We do have really significant reservations regarding a global minimum effective tax-rate status at such a level that it means only certain countries, and certain size economies can benefit from that base -- we have a really significant concern about that," Donohoe told Sky News.

His objections come as finance ministers from the Group of Seven advanced nations are set to meet next week in London, where they could endorse the US proposal.

Biden's administration last week called for agreement on unified tax rate of a minimum of 15 per cent rate in negotiations with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Devel-

opment (OECD) and G20.

The European Union's top economies France and Germany said they would support a tax at that level, and the IMF's leader on Tuesday also offered her endorsement.

A person close to the G7 talks told AFP they expect a political agreement next week, though two other people with knowledge of the matter said member states may opt for a less definitive measure.

Funding infrastructure

Finance chiefs have characterized a minimum tax as necessary to stem competition between countries over who can offer multinationals the lowest rate. They say that "race to the bottom" saps revenues that could go to other government priorities. — AFP ■

Exports to China benefit nearly all U.S. states, industries: USCBC

THE United States' exports to China have benefited nearly all U.S. states and industries, the U.S.-China Business Council (USCBC) said Tuesday during a conference held in Shanghai.

Data released by the council showed that U.S. exports to China grew by about 18 per cent year-on-year to over 123 billion

U.S. dollars in 2020, while its exports to the rest of the world fell by 15 per cent during the same period.

China became the United States' third largest market for exports of goods during the period. China was also among the top five goods destinations for 45 U.S. states, with 35 states

seeing growth in exports to China and nine gaining more than 1 billion U.S. dollars in the growth of export value, said the council.

Among them, Texas showed the largest export value to China, totaling 16.9 billion U.S. dollars, while Louisiana achieved the largest growth, up nearly 120 per cent year on year.

A diverse range of industries has also reported a gratifying increase. In 2020, the major drivers of growth included oilseeds and grains, semiconductors and their components, as well as oil and gas, with export volumes totaling 17.2 billion, 12 billion and 9.2 billion U.S. dollars, respectively. — Xinhua ■

Tunisia pins tourism hopes on 'unafraid' Russians

WITH its economy hit hard by the pandemic, Tunisia is counting on Russians and eastern Europeans to salvage its tourist sector whose employees fear hunger more than Covid-19.

"The need to work is stronger than the fear of being contaminated," said lifeguard Aymen Abdallah, glancing at a half-empty beach in the Mediterranean resort of Sousse where Russians are making a comeback.

"If we don't work, we'll starve to death," added Abdallah, donning sunglasses and a mask.

The lifeguard is relieved to be back at work after an idle eight months. But "normally, the beach would have been full at this time", he sighed.

The North African country reopened its borders to tour operators in late April but then ordered a new week-long partial lockdown at the start of May



Locals are desperately hoping for a resurgence in visitors from all source markets, after a miserable 2020. PHOTO: AFP

because of a spike in coronavirus cases.

Up to 10 flights a week, mostly from Russia and eastern Europe, have in the past

month been touching down at Enfidha, an airport serving Tunisia's tourism towns.

But revenues are down more than 60 per cent on 2019,

before the pandemic hit.

Hotels are authorised to operate at 50 per cent of capacity but are struggling to reach that level. — AFP ■

Lukashenko defiant as UN Security Council to meet over Belarus

A defiant President Lukashenko will address Belarus' parliament Wednesday as international pressure over the country's diversion of an airliner in order to arrest a dissident grows, with the UN Security Council set to meet behind closed doors later.

The speech to parliament will be the first time the Belarusian leader has spoken in public since Sunday's rerouting of a Ryanair flight to Minsk and the subsequent arrest of opposition journalist Roman Protasevich.

After weathering a wave of protests and Western sanctions last year, Lukashenko is facing renewed pressure over the incident, with Western leaders demanding Protasevich's release, and the European Union cutting air links with the increasingly isolated nation.

But a diplomat told AFP it was unlikely the Security Council



Protests were held in Poland calling for the release of Roman Protasevich. PHOTO: AFP

would agree on a collective statement at Wednesday's meeting, because Belarus' unwavering supporter Russia was expected to be in opposition.

Moscow has dismissed the

outrage over the arrest, saying Belarus was acting reasonably and within the law when the plane was diverted.

The Belarusian transport ministry on Tuesday released

a transcript of communications between Minsk air traffic control and the Ryanair flight, in which the crew was told "you have a bomb on board" and urged it to land in Minsk. — AFP ■

War-ravaged Syria heads to polls with Assad set to win



Some Syrians abroad already voted last week; in this May 20 photograph a Syrian in Lebanon, casts a ballot in Beirut. But Syrians who fled the country illegally -- and so who could not show an exit stamp in their passport -- were barred from voting. PHOTO: AFP

POLLING stations opened Wednesday across Syria for an election where few doubt that Bashar al-Assad will extend his grip on power for a fourth term, in a war-battered country mired in economic crisis.

The controversial vote is the second election since the start of a decade-long conflict, that has killed more than 388,000 people and displaced half the pre-war population.

Huge election posters glorifying Assad have mushroomed across the two-thirds of the country under government rule.

With opponents abroad barred from running and no

voting in the swathes of territory outside his control, Assad faces just two virtually unknown challengers.

The official news agency SANA declared voting had started as planned at 7:00 am (0400 GMT) and state television showed long queues forming in several parts of the country.

Syrians can cast their ballots in more than 12,000 polling centres, and results are expected to be announced by Friday evening, 48 hours after voting closes.

The election takes place amid the lowest levels of violence since 2011 -- but with an economy in free-fall. — AFP ■

Ex-aide set to rip into UK's Johnson at hearing

DOMINIC Cummings, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's controversial former top aide and architect of Brexit, is set to take aim at the government Wednesday during a marathon grilling from lawmakers.

Cummings, who stepped down as Johnson's chief adviser in December, has launched a series of explosive attacks in recent weeks against his former boss's coronavirus policies and financial dealings.

A divisive figure who carved out a uniquely powerful role during the first 18 months of Johnson's government, he has accused the UK leader of lacking competence and integrity and his government of "appalling ethics".

Cummings has previewed

his expected testimony ahead of his much-anticipated appearance in front of a parliamentary committee scrutinising the government's pandemic handling, which is scheduled to begin at 9:30 am (0830 GMT).

In dozens of social media posts, he claimed Johnson had adopted a haphazard approach, initially favouring a so-called herd immunity strategy before belatedly abandoning it when the likely death toll became clear.

If Britain had had "the right preparations + competent people in charge", it could probably have avoided its first lockdown in March 2020 and "definitely" escaped later ones, Cummings wrote, as part of a 59-message Twitter thread. — AFP ■



Cummings (R) has launched a series of attacks against his former boss's coronavirus policies and financial dealings. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Brazil's Lula seeks latest upset: win back the centre

LUIZ Inacio Lula da Silva, who started out a shoeshine boy and became the most popular president in Brazilian history, has racked up a lifetime of improbable victories.

Now, as he eyes a run against far-right President Jair Bolsonaro next year, the 75-year-old leftist leader is seeking another: win back the political center that abandoned him in disgust when he was jailed for corruption in 2018.

It is still early to predict the October 2022 election, but polls show it shaping up as a Bolsonaro-Lula showdown, likely headed for a runoff.

That means the next leader of Latin America's largest economy may well be decided by a battle for the grudging votes of the more than one-third of Brazilians who intensely dislike both. — AFP ■

Italy hails capture of top mafia boss in Brazil

ITALIAN prosecutors and police on Tuesday cheered the capture in Brazil of a leading mafia boss who has skirted justice in Italy for nearly 30 years. Rocco Morabito, number two on the Italian interior ministry's most dangerous fugitives list, was arrested Monday in northeast Brazil.

His capture came almost two years after his audacious escape from a prison in Uruguay, where he was awaiting extradition to Italy. Morabito -- considered a "capo" or captain of the 'Ndrangheta organized crime group -- was found in the city of Joao Pessoa along with another Italian fugitive, following a global operation involving Italy, Uruguay and the United States. Dubbed "the king of cocaine", he has been wanted since 1994 by Italian authorities, who for decades have been trying to slowly chip away at the 'Ndrangheta, the country's most powerful mob syndicate whose tentacles reach far beyond its historical base of the Calabria region. — AFP ■

Myanmar team's World Cup Qualifiers to be held till 15 June

THE Asian Football Confederation (AFC) will host the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup second round qualifiers from 28 May to 15 June. The remaining matches include group matches of team Myanmar. Myanmar will play against Japan on 28 May, Kyrgyzstan on 11 June and Tajikistan on 15 June. North Korea has withdrawn from the second round of the World Cup qualifiers. Myanmar team have already arrived in Japan since 22 May for all the remaining qualifiers as second-round qualifiers are being held in eight groups. According to the group standings before the remaining 57 matches, Syria has 15 points from 5 matches in Group A while the China team scored seven points in four games. The Philippine team scored seven points in five games, and the Maldives scored six points in five games.

In Group B, Guam misses five games while Australia has 12 points from four games. Kuwait and Jordan have 10 points each from their matches, and Nepal has three points from five games in the same group.

In Group C, Chinese Taipei



Myanmar national team players are seen under training on the artificial turf in Japan. **PHOTO: ANTOINE HEY'S TWITTER**

has no point, and Iraq scored 11 points in five games. Bahrain has nine points from five games, while Iran has six points from four games. Next, the Hong Kong team have won five points, and the Cambodian team scored one point in five matches in the group.

In Group D, Saudi Arabia has 11 points from five matches while Uzbekistan has nine points. Next, Singapore has seven points from five games, and

Yemen scored five points in five games. The Palestinian team has four points from six games in the same group.

In Group E, Qatar scored 16 points from six games, and Oman scored 12 points in five games. Afghanistan has four points from five games while the Indian team scored three points in five matches. Bangladesh scored one point in five games in the group.

In Group F, Japan scored 15

points in five matches. Tajikistan garnered 10 points from 6 games, and Kyrgyzstan earned seven points from five games. The Myanmar team scored six points in five games, and Mongolia has three points from five games in the same group.

In Group G, Vietnam scored 11 points in five matches, and Malaysia has collected nine points in five games. The Thai team have earned eight points in five

games, while UAE has six points from four games. Indonesia has no point from five games in the group.

In Group H, Turkmenistan has nine points from five games, and South Korea have eight points from four games. Lebanon scored eight points in five games, while Sri Lanka has not scored in five games yet. North Korea are in Group H with eight points from five games but have dropped out with three games remaining.

According to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Group A matches will be played in China. Group B matches will be played in Kuwait, and Group C matches in Bahrain. Besides, Group D matches will be played in Saudi Arabia, and Group E matches in Qatar. Group F matches will be played in Japan. Group G matches will be played in the UAE, and Group H matches in South Korea. Of the remaining matches, the Japan-Myanmar match will be held on 28 May. The remaining 56 matches will be played on 3, 7, 11, and 15 June.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

Porto prepares as Portugal steps into the Champions League breach once again

AFTER Lisbon last year, now it is the turn of Porto. Once again Portugal has stepped in to save UEFA by offering to host the final of the Champions League, which for the second year running was forced to move away from Istanbul due to the ongoing pandemic.

With its Covid-19 crisis

receding, a proven ability to organize the biggest match in European club football and a good relationship between its national federation the FPF, and the European game's governing body, Portugal turned out to be the only real option to stage Saturday's clash between Manchester City and Chelsea.

"Once again we have turned to our friends in Portugal to help both UEFA and the Champions League and I am, as always, very grateful to the FPF and the Portuguese government for agreeing to stage the match at such short notice," said UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin.—AFP ■



Porto's Estadio do Dragao when it hosted the opening ceremony of Euro 2004. **PHOTO: AFP**

Chin youth player Phun Za Mang selected for Danish U-16 team

PHUN ZA MANG, a Chin youth footballer playing for the Danish first division club youth team, has been selected for the Danish U-16 youth team, according to the Myanmar National League club Chinland FC.

The Danish U-16 team will play a friendly match against the Portuguese U-16 team on 3 and 5 June, and Phun Za Mang has been selected for that matches. Phun Za Mang has also been named in the Danish

U-12 squad and again in the U-16 youth team. He is a member of the youth team of the Danish first division club Esbjerg FB team and also played for the senior team in the 2020-2021 season.

The sixteen-year-old chin player took striker and winger roles and has scored two goals in eight appearances for the Esbjerg FB team. According to the Chinland FC statement, Phun Za Mang immigrated to Denmark from Matupi, Chin State.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM



Chin youth player Phun Za Mang showing tremendous skills in Danish football clubs. **PHOTO: PHUN MANG INSTAGRAM**