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Chairman of State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets President of Republic of Tatarstan Mr Rustam Nurgaliyevich Minnikhanov



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets President of the Republic of Tatarstan Mr Rustam Nurgaliyevich Minnikhanov on 25 June.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, together with Military Attaché Brig-Gen Kyaw Soe Moe and delegation members, met President of the Republic of Tatarstan Mr Rustam Nurgaliyevich Minnikhanov on the evening of 25 June.

The President welcomed and greeted the Senior General and delegation members at the President Office in Kremlin. After an exclusive meeting at the President Office, they exchanged gifts. Next, the Senior General

signed in the guests' book.

The Senior General and the President of the Republic of Tatarstan presented their delegations in attendance to each other at the parlour of the President Office. They then held talks.

Also present at the meeting together with the Senior General were SAC Member Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun, Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, the Nay Pyi Taw Council chairman, Mayor Dr Maung Maung Nang, Deputy Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic

Relations U Than Aung Kyaw, Russian-Myanmar Friendship Association Chairman Brig-Gen Aung Thaw (Retd) and officials. The President of the Republic of Tatarstan was accompanied by cabinet members and officials.

Both sides cordially discussed strengthening of Russia-Myanmar diplomatic ties and bilateral friendship, the President of the Republic of Tatarstan's visit to Myanmar in 2013 and discussion of economic cooperation, political changes in Myanmar, the SAC's handling of terrorist acts in line with the international laws and existing

domestic laws for ensuring the rule of law and protecting the people and future tasks, promotion of trade and investment cooperation to improve bilateral relations and cooperation in oil and gas extraction, industrial development, education and economy.

After the meeting, the President of the Republic of Tatarstan hosted a dinner in honour of the delegation led by the Senior General.

The President of the Republic of the Tatarstan and the Senior General extended greetings and had dinner together with

those present.

During the dinner, the traditional music of the Republic of Tatarstan performed traditional songs and dances. The Senior General then presented cash awards and a basket of flowers to the troupe. After dinner, they had a documentary photo taken.

In the evening, the Senior General and delegation members visited Kremlin in the capital of Kazan. They visited Blagoveshenskiy Church and Kul Sharif Mosque, where they were conducted by monks and officials. The Senior General asked what he wanted to know.—MNA

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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
Ministry of Health and Sports
Order No 265/2021

2nd Waning of Nayon 1383 ME
26 June 2021

THE Ministry of Health and Sports hereby announced the order by exercising the authority stipulated in Sub-Section (b) of Section 21 of the Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases Law.

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports has taken preventive measures against Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in real-time. Therefore, people from Lashio Township of Shan State need to stay at home due to the number of confirmed patients on the rise in the township.

2. Hence, the people residing in Lashio Township of the Shan State are involved in the Stay-at-Home programme.

3. The people inclusive of the Stay-at-Home programme of the township need to abide by the following disciplines:

 - (a) Reside at their homes only (except for the persons going to government departments, organizations, companies, factories and workplaces for serving duties);
 - (b) Arrange only one person from each house to go out shopping;
 - (c) Arrange only two persons per house to go to hospitals and clinics;
 - (d) Wear masks if they go outside the houses;
 - (e) Allow ferries and registered vehicles to transport returnees from workplaces to pass the wards;
- (f) Allow one person only in addition to the driver in a vehicle for shopping in the ward and two persons except for the driver to go to hospitals or clinics;
 - (g) Abide by the standard operating procedures (SOP) for trucks to ensure smooth flow of commodities in the township;

4. People need to inform the relevant ward administration bodies about seeking approvals to go outside the houses if they have reasons to raise the limited number of participants in the measures and other emergency issues mentioned in sub-paragraph (b), (c) and (f) of Paragraph 3. The relevant administrative bodies need not allow ingoing and outgoing persons, except officials and those returnees from duty.

5. Action will be taken against those who fail to abide by the order under the existing laws.

6. The order came into force at 4 am on 27-6-2021.

Dr Thet Khaing Win
Union Minister

The government, the political parties, and all citizens need to work in concert to fulfil the nation’s needs

EMPHASIS must be placed on generating hydropower without environmental impacts. Efficient use of water and sufficient electrification will help develop the nation. River water pumping projects must be implemented to improve the agricultural tasks. The government, the political parties, and all citizens need to work in concert to fulfil the nation’s needs.

(Excerpt from the speech to the State Administration Council meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 25 May 2021)

The delegation led by Chairman of State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits PJSC “Kazan Helicopters” factory in Kazan, capital of Republic of Tatarstan



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is viewing around the PJSC Kazan Helicopters factory in Kazan, capital of the Republic of Tatarstan on 25 June.

THE delegation led by Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, accompanied by Military Attaché Brig-Gen Kyaw Soe Moe and officials, visited the PJSC “Kazan Helicopters” factory in Kazan, capital of the Republic of Tatarstan on 25 June evening.

The Senior General and the delegation arrived at the PJSC “Kazan Helicopters” factory and were welcomed and conducted

round the production process by Assistant Executive Director Mr Kiyamov Marat Rinatovich and officials. The Senior General asked them questions

on topics of interest. Then, the Senior General visited the flight simulator room for helicopters and took part in flight simulation activities.

Then, the Senior General and the assistant executive director exchanged gifts. The PJSC “Kazan Helicopters” factory was established in 1940 and was an affiliate of Russian Helicopters owned by Rostec Corporation. The factory has manufactured more than 12,000 helicopters including Mi-4s, Mi-8s, Mi-14s, Mi-17s and Ansats and exported them to more than 100 countries. The factory entered a joint company with Russian Helicopters, which later became the main shareholder of it, and carried out the development of the prototype for Mi-38 medium multipurpose helicopters and their mass production. The company won more than 27 honorary certificates and medals between 1945 and 2020. — MNA

Union Minister Dr Charlie Than inspects Yeni Paper Mill

UNION Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than made an inspection tour to the waste paper pulp and paper factory established in Yeni Paper Mill jointly operated by government and private entrepreneurs in Yeni Township of Bago Region yesterday. During the visit, the in charge of the factory briefed the operations of the factory and the Union Minister said it should use quality raw materials and focus on the production of finished products which meet

the fixed standards. He also added that it also should emphasize the operations not to affect the natural environment. It needs to conduct capacity-building programmes for the ability of employees and arrangements of fire extinguishers for fire safety. Then, the Union Minister inspected the preparations for the resumption of the pulp factory, which produces 2,400 tonnes per day, and garment factories running with more than 4,000 workers. — MNA



Chairman of State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends Tatarstan traditional Sabantuy summer festival



Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends the ceremony marking the traditional Sabantuy summer festival of the Republic of Tatarstan as a special guest at the invitation of President Mr Rustam Nurgaliyevich Minnikhanov of Tatarstan yesterday morning.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attended the ceremony marking the traditional Sabantuy summer festival of the Republic of Tatarstan as a special guest at the invitation of President Mr Rustam Nurgaliyevich Minnikhanov of Tatarstan yesterday morning.

Also present at the ceremony together with the Senior General were member Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun and Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo of the SAC,

senior officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, members of the delegations, the president of the Republic of Tatarstan, Deputy Prime Minister Mr Nigmatullin Rustan Kamilevich, the Mayor of Kazan, officials, local and foreign guests and residents.

The Senior General and the delegation arrived at the Maidan Square in Kazan, where the event took place, and they were welcomed traditionally by the chairman of the tourism board of the Republic of Tatarstan and the chairman of the city devel-

opment committee. Then, the Senior General and the delegation viewed the display of local traditional products, traditional sports competitions, the traditional bazaar and funfairs. Residents greeted the Senior General and the delegation cheerfully by performing traditional dances and music and officials explained local traditions and customs. The Senior General asked them questions on topics of interest.

When the ceremony began at the square, the president of the Republic of Tatarstan cor-

dially greeted participants and delivered a welcoming speech. Then, to mark the opening of the ceremony, cultural dances and music and dances depicting traditional customs were performed and participants took part in the festivities cheerfully by enjoying the performance.

The Sabantuy summer festival is a traditional festival organized in successive eras during the free period when farmers in Tatarstan have successfully sowed seeds for their crops but are still waiting for the harvest-

ing season. The festival is held in rural areas during the first week of June, in small towns during the second week, in cities during the third week and in Kazan during the fourth week of the month. The festival features funfairs, sports competitions and bazaars participated by all ethnic groups and promote friendship among them. A festival is also a beautiful event in which local products, traditional products and foodstuffs and traditional dances are on display. Worthy prizes are also offered for excellent performances especially in traditional wrestling contests, in which a car is offered to the first prize winner. The festival is held only one day in a town and local and foreign guests participate in the event on a grand scale.

Then, the president of Tatarstan hosted a luncheon in honour of the Senior General and the delegation and delivered a greeting speech. After the speech, the Senior General spoke words to thanks for the opportunity to participate in the traditional festival as a special guest and learn lovely traditions and customs and prayed for the health and prosperity of all ethnic groups in the Republic of Tatarstan before enjoying the luncheon together. —MNA

Delegation led by Chairman of State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits Kazan Higher Tank Red Banner Command School in Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan

THE delegation led by Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, accompanied by Military Attaché Brig-Gen Kyaw Soe Moe and officials, visited Kazan Higher Tank Red Banner Command School in the capital of Kazan, the Republic of the Tatarstan, yesterday morning.

First, the Senior General and party were welcomed by acting Principal Colonel Alexander Urin of the school and officials.

The acting Principal explained a brief history of the school, accommodation for foreign students, giving of training with real tanks only after training with Tank simulator to cover training cost and prevent tank performance, giving

of swimming and diving training to handle tanks well as skilled swimming and diving are required in emergency and landing operations. The Senior General asked what he wanted to know.

Next, the Senior General and the acting Principal exchanged emblems and gifts.

Kazan Higher Tank Red Banner Command School was founded in 1919. It is a historic 102-year-old school. The school trains up to platoon commanders, company commanders and battalion commanders. Training includes driving as well as physical health and fitness, military skills and other versatile skills. Upon completion of training, company commanders have already been trained to command and control the battlefield. If necessary, they will be able to lead a



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and acting Principal Colonel Alexander Urin of the Kazan Higher Tank Red Banner Command School are exchanging emblems and gifts.

tank battalion. Officers who have completed their training can drive and handle various kinds of tanks. The school is turning out leaders with good command and

control. It was the school where Russian Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Army General V.V Gerasimov also completed his training. Of the officers who

have completed their training at the school, there have been over 100 officers with a rank of major general and above and 10 gallantry medalists. — MNA

Titles and certificates conferred on Sayadaws who passed written test of 73rd Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination



State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Vice-Senior General Soe Win and congregation are taking the Five Precepts from Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Bhaddanta Suddhamasara Bhivamsa, Vice-Chair of Ovadacariya of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection exam board yesterday.

A CEREMONY to confer titles and certificates on Dighanikayakovida, Vinayakovida and Ubhatovibhingakovida title recipient monks who passed the written test of 73rd Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination sponsored by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture of the Republic of Union of Myanmar took place at Maha Pasana Ordination Cave at Kaba Aye hill-ock, Mayangon Township, Yangon Region at 8 am yesterday.

Present were Sayadaws led by Chairman of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhammajotika Principal of Bhamo Monastery in Mandalay Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa, Ovadacariya Sayadaws of 73rd Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination board, Tipitaka Dhammabhandagari-ka Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Sayadaws, Tipitaka Pucchaka Sayadaws, supervisory Sayadaws, invited members of the Sangha, Dighanikayakovida, Vinayakovida and Ubhatovibhingakovida title recipient monks who passed the written test of 73rd Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination, Vice Chairman of State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe, SAC Member U Moungh Har and wife, Union Minister for Information U Chitt Naing, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko and wife, Union Min-



The Vice-Senior General presents Dighanikayakovida title and certificate to Ashin Visuddha of Tipitaka Mahagandawin Nikaya Monastery, Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon Region and Ashin Pantavalankara of Mingunmoemeik Konmyay Tipitaka Nikaya Monastery in Sagaing.

ister for Health and Sports Dr Thet Khaing Win and wife, Chairman U Hla Soe of Yangon Region Administration Council (YRAC) and wife, Lt-Gen Thet Pon and senior military officers of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), the commander of Yangon Command, officials, Sasana Nuggaha title holder donors, donors of meals for monks who took part in the religious examination and guests.

First, students of Fine Arts high school sang a religious song and 108 bells around the cave were rung for nine times.

The congregation led by the Vice-Senior General received the Five Precepts from Vice-Chair of Ovadacariya of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination board Principal Sayadaw of Moegaung Monastery, Hin-

thada, Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Bhaddanta Suddhamasara Bhivamsa.

Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa read out the Saraniya Ovada of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee.

The Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture supplemented on religious matters.

The Vice-Senior General presented Dighanikayakovida title and certificate to Ashin Visuddha of Tipitaka Mahagandawin Nikaya Monastery, Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon Region and Ashin Pantavalankara of Mingunmoemeik Konmyay Tipitaka Nikaya Monastery in Sagaing.

U Moungh Har, Union ministers, the chairman of YRAC, Lt-Gen Thet Pon, the Yangon command commander and officials

presented Dighanikayakovida title and certificate to Ashin Ananda Panditalankara of Mingun Tipitakanikaya Monastery, Sagaing, Vinayakovida titles and certificates to Ashin Mingalacara of Mingun Tipitakanikaya Monastery, Sagaing, Ashin Nandi Malankara and Ashin Suman-gala of Tipitaka Mahagandawin Nikaya Monastery, Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon Region and Ubhatovibhingakovida titles and certificates to Ashin Obhasa (Wetlet), Ashin Pannasiri (Hsisai), Ashin Mantalalankara of Mingun Tipitakanikaya Monastery, Sagaing, Ashin Pannasira (Hsisai), Ashin Mantalalankara, and Ashin Cadimalankara and Ashin Pannasamilankara of Tipitaka Mahagandawin Nikaya Monastery, Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon Re-

gion. Secretary of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Principal Sayadaw of Thanlyin Minkyaung Pathamabyan Learning Centre Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Dr Bhaddanta Candima Bhivamsa delivered a sermon and the congregation led by the Vice-Senior General shared the merits gained. Offertories were presented to the title recipient Sayadaws.

The annually held Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination emerged in 1948 when the country regained independence as the idea to raise religious scholars who could memorize the Three Pitaka was conceived at the Sixth Buddhist Synod. Candidates can enter the written test of the Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination only after passing the oral test. Only monks or novices who have already passed the Pali Pahtamapyan (First Grade) examination or Vinayavidu level or Samanaekyaw (Third Grade) or Cetiyingana or Sakyasiha examination can sit for the Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination. During the 73 times of the examination, fifteen Sayadaws including the first Tipitakadhara Dhammabhandagarika Mingun Sayadaw Ashin Vicittasara Bhivamsa passed it. Eleven living Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida title recipient Sayadaws and seven Sayadaws who have memorized the Three Pitaka are serving the interest of the Sasana.—MNA

Chairman of State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing answers questions raised by Russia 24

Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, currently in the Russian Federation, answers the questions raised by Mr Fedor Lukyanov, anchorperson of the International Review programme of Russia 24 at an interview. The following is the interview.

Q: The international community is criticizing the current government of Myanmar for violating human rights and violently cracking down on the public protesters. How will you act to overcome the political crisis in your country? Do you have any plan to hold elections again in line with democratic norms to bring back a civilian government?

A: It is right. Such difficulties unexpectedly emerged when efforts are being made to develop democracy in Myanmar. As we responded to violent acts in taking action against such measures, we faced various blames due to misunderstanding over us. I'd like to say protests are generally staged against a government in a democracy. Such event may happen in every country. There are many examples of similar events. But, if ordinary protests may be transformed into terror acts and attacks, relevant responsible security organization needs to respond to such acts not to harm the people as well as not to undermine the rule of law. If their acts are beyond the restrictions, we need to take action against them under the law. Whoever commits the acts beyond the restrictions, we will take action under the law. So, we don't have any refusal over the event. In fact, such an event is based on malpractices in the elections performed in a practice of democracy. Although such an event could be cleared in the early stage, the problem happened due to the absence of holding the dialogues to address the malpractices. I have declared the five-point road map as our future plans since we took the office. If the state of emergency and appropriate processes would have been completed, I have given a promise to hold an election democratically with-



Russia 24 interviews Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

out fail. But, the country needs to be peaceful and stable. The situation must have completion of necessary preparations for the forthcoming election. If so, I'd like to say the election will be held without fail.

Q: Do you find it difficult to give an exact deadline for the election now?

A: It depends on the peace and stability of the current situation. Our constitution stipulates a declaration of the state of emergency for one year. If the work process is not accomplished, I must report to the responsible organization to extend the six-month term two times. It may be one year or two years. Roughly, I'd like to say the election would be held within two years. I can reply so. Now, our country does not reach cent per cent peace and stability. So, we need to consider it. Now, it is too early to say it but the election may be held within two years.

Q: We have learnt that the whole world takes interest in Myanmar as it serves as both a militarily and economically strategic location for South-east Asia and South Asia. Looking at Yangon, how do you act to ensure peace and

stability there? Who is mainly responsible for this? What connections do you have with them?

A: It depends on the outlook of the western bloc. Our country is located in a strategic position of geographical conditions in Southeast Asia. Our country sharing a border with the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal is close to powerful China and India. They are interested in the geographical condition of our country. They are interested in our country on the political ground. In the post-independence period, Myanmar exercised parliamentary democracy at first. When the Revolutionary Council has emerged, the country marched forward in the socialist programme. At that time, the people aspired to the multiparty system. In 1988, the unrests happened and then, the government fell in 1988. Then, the Tatmadaw maintained the country under control. So, we walk along the path of democracy the people aspired. In 2011, we march onward the way of democracy. They are interested in the politics of democracy, geographical condition of the country and political ground. So, I review that generally, the western countries

wish to interfere in the internal affairs of our country.

Q: Under current global political circumstances, power rivalry and confrontation between China and the US are intensifying significantly. These two powerful countries want Asian countries to cooperate so that they can be under the influence of the countries they like. Asian countries themselves are found to be cooperating with the countries they have good diplomatic relations with. What is your opinion about this political setting?

A: Our country is a member of ASEAN. For the first point, we are a member state of the United Nations. We regained independence in 1948. We have experiences of the colonial era. I have already said Myanmar sharing a border with India and China. According to our country's history and geopolitics we passed, we exercised the non-aligned foreign policy. Later, we practised the independent and active foreign policy and then friendly relations policy with all countries and the policy based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence. So, Myanmar has friendship countries only but

enemy ones. As you refer, the USA is also Myanmar's friend but it is in some far distance. But, our neighbouring China and India are our close friends. Whatever it may be, we must emphasize the neighbouring relations. Any country cannot deny it. The neighbouring relations must not be improper. We have mutual cooperation with them. We also do cooperate with other countries. We have relations with the USA but both countries are in some distance due to various reasons. The politics with them is also cool due to the far distance. Hence, they are slightly strange in comparison with our neighbouring countries. But we decided to join hands with all the countries amicably. Moreover, being a member of ASEAN, we do the process in line with the practices of ASEAN.

Q: We say the US is a distant friend and China a close friend. How about Russia?

A: Russia is very friendly among the friend countries. You ask me for the United States only, so I referred to China and the USA. Russia is our old and good friend. Despite being the far distance in the political ground, the souls of both countries are so close. Both countries are in a far distance but minds are close. Both countries have common historical conditions. We are similar in struggling. So, I'd like to metaphorize Russia as our perpetual friend.

Q: Since the mid-19th century before the official establishment of the Russia-Myanmar friendship, Russian diplomatic delegations visited Myanmar which also sent its delegations. During that period, both countries have understood each other. As you said, we are really intimate friends. Meanwhile, bilateral

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cooperation has improved. Are you satisfied with such progress and success? While seeking full cooperation, there can be processes yet to be implemented. When it comes to Russia-Myanmar cooperation, how much process can there be to be carried out? I would like to know what you will do about this.

A: Russian-Myanmar relations have been good throughout history. In the 1990s, relations were better, especially in mili-

tary-technological cooperation. It is very encouraging. Myanmar is a developing country. At a time when we are trying to develop our country, we need abundant human resources. A lot of our citizens have been sent to Russia for their studies. There are over 7,000. Many outstanding persons have emerged from training here. They are participating extensively in nation-building tasks. When it comes to the collaboration sector, the mili-

tary-technological cooperation that I have said is the deepest. There are also joint ventures. Yet, what we need to do more is bilateral contacts, trade, global tourism, culture and cooperation in sports, education and health. Russia has a very high health standard. I see those fields as very wide. I intend to do everything I can do within my capacity. I think we will have a better future.

Q: Among the sectors you

talked about, I have come to review that tourism is such a promising sector. At a time when Russia has stopped tourism activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are a lot of Russian people willing to travel. If Russia has the chance when the preventive measures go well, Russian people will come to Myanmar by grabbing that chance. Thank you for answering my questions.

A: Well. If we have a lot of

contacts, we will have more intimacy and trust. This is why more cooperation is necessary for various sectors to have more contacts between the two peoples. Then, we will have greater trust and better friendship. Humans are building up things with trust and confidence. I expect Russian investment in Myanmar. I also hope for a situation where international tourists can come to our country as early as possible. Anyhow, I will do my best.

Seized narcotics worth over \$667 mln burnt in major cities on int’l day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking

NARCOTIC drugs worth over 667 million US dollars were burned in Yangon, Mandalay and Taunggyi yesterday, marking the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Some 62 kinds of narcotic drugs and precursor chemicals and 60 kinds of related materials which were confiscated this year were destroyed at the ceremonies which were held following the COVID-19 guidelines set by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

The drug burning ceremony in Yangon was attended by Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Soe Htut, in his capacity as Chairman of Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC),

Chairman of the Yangon Region Administration Council U Hla Soe and members, officials from the Myanmar Police Force and representatives from the international organizations. A total of 22 narcotic drugs and 3 precursor chemicals worth K 320.16 billion (over US\$ 200.10 million) confiscated from Yangon Region, Ayeyawady Region, Rakhine State and the lower part of the country were destroyed at the ceremony.

The ceremonies held in Mandalay and Taunggyi were attended by the Chairmen of the State/Region Administration Council, military officials, Myanmar Police Force officials and representatives from international organizations.



With the guidance of the Chairman of the State Administration Council, drug control activities are carried out by the Tatmadaw, Myanmar Police Force and the Anti-Narcotics Police have stepped up efforts to seize and destroy large quantities of narcotics and chemicals. —MNA

Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo inspects investment activities in Rakhine State



UNION MINISTER for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo visited the hotel construction site of Inn Pauk Wa Co., Ltd, in Sittway Township, Rakhine State in the morning of 26 June 2021. In his inspection tour, the company’s manager briefed the current business operations and future investment plan of the company.

Then, the Union Minister inspected the construction site and he also coordinated and facilitated the requirements of the company.

After that, the Union Minister proceeded with the land reclamation of BXT International Co., Ltd in Sittway Township and the director of the company reported the current business activities and raised some implementation issues encountered by the company. After hearing the report, the Union Minister coordinated and assisted the needs of the company. — MNA

783 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 26 June, total figure rises to 152,356

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 152,356 after 783 new cases were reported on 26 June 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 135,050 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at 3,290 after 8 died. —MNA

Combine strengths of health staff to fight against danger of COVID-19

READFUL COVID-19 pandemic imposes threats to the global people until today. Moreover, some countries are facing the third wage of a pandemic while some nations are encountering the impacts of the fourth wage.

As the government is taking preventive measures against the COVID-19 pandemic with momentum, health personnel from private hospitals and clinics need to cooperate with the government to work in concert for providing health care services to the COVID-19 positive patients.

In fact, it is necessary to efficiently deploy the health staff from both the government and private sectors in implementing public healthcare services. Thanks to the government's permission, private health services have to take responsibilities for giving high-quality healthcare services to the people at fair charges.

Some health staff members from the private sector were injected with the COVID-19 vaccine on priority. On the original agenda, vaccination will cover those from the private health sector.

The government has allowed private health services holding work licences to admit COVID-19 positive patients for providing treatment. Moreover, they need to supply human resources for health, medicines and medical equipment to the COVID-19 treatment centres to operate the smooth process of healthcare of the patients.

In addition, private hospitals are allowed to conduct the testing and care for the positive patients by applying the COVID-19 antigen (RTD) test and RT-PCR technology. Hence, they have to report the results from the medical examinations and findings of confirmed cases to the authorities on time.

Private entrepreneurs have the chance to import the quality and potent COVID-19 vaccine from the global countries as well as Asian countries for distribution and vaccination in line with the work guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Only when cooperation measures between the government and the private sector are strengthening, will they contribute to the national healthcare system so as to provide quality healthcare services to the people.

All the health personnel including medical doctors and nurses from military and civilian sectors need to combine their strengths in order to fight against the pandemic to create a safe and sound health situation for the people.

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The Southern Ocean

Than Htun (Myanmar Geosciences Society)

THIS is the fourth article and continuation of the previous article, 'The World Ocean'. The Southern Ocean, also known as the Antarctic Ocean or the Austral Ocean, comprises the southernmost waters of the World Ocean, generally taken to be south of 60° S latitude and encircling Antarctica. As such, it is regarded as the second-smallest of the five principal oceanic divisions. Over the past 30 years, the Southern Ocean has been subject to rapid climate change, which has led to changes in the marine ecosystem.

By way of his voyages in the 1770s, James Cook proved that waters encompassed the southern latitudes of the globe. Since then, geographers have disagreed on the Southern Ocean's northern boundary or even existence, considering the waters as various parts of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans, instead. However, according to Commodore John Leech of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), recent oceanographic research has discovered the importance of Southern Circulation, and the term Southern Ocean has been used to define the body of water which lies south of the northern limit of that circulation. This remains the current official policy of the IHO, since a 2000 revision of its definitions including the Southern Ocean as the waters south of the 60th parallel has not yet been adopted.

The maximum depth of the Southern Ocean, using the definition that it lies south of 60th parallel, was surveyed by the Five Deeps Expedition in early February 2019. The expedition's multibeam sonar team identified the deepest point at 60° 28' 46"S, 025° 32' 32"W, with a depth of 24,390 ft. The expedition leader and chief submersible pilot Victor Vescovo, has proposed naming this deepest point in the Southern Ocean the "Factorian Deep", based on the name of the manned submersible DSV Limiting Factor, in which he successfully visited the bottom for the first time on February 3, 2019.

Recent history

The first person to sail single-handed to Antarctica was the New Zealander David Henry Lewis, in 1972, in a 30 ft steel sloop *Ice Bird*. A baby, named Emilio Marcos de Palma, was born near Hope Bay on 7 January 1978, becoming the first baby born on the continent. He also was born further south than anyone in history.

The MV Explorer was a cruise ship operated by the Swedish explorer Lars-Eric Lindblad. Observers point to *Explorer's* 1969 expeditionary cruise to Antarctica as the frontrunner for today's sea-based tourism in that region. Explorer was the first cruise ship used specifically to sail the icy waters of the Antarctic Ocean and the first to sink there when she struck an unidentified submerged object on 23 November 2007, reported to be ice, which caused a 10 by 4 inches gash in the hull.

British engineer Richard Jenkins designed an unmanned surface vehicle called a "sail-drone" that completed the first autonomous circumnavigation of the Southern Ocean on 3 August 2019 after 196 days at sea. The first completely human-powered expedition on the Southern Ocean was accomplished on 25 December 2019 by a team of rowers led by captain Fiann Paul (Iceland).

Geography

The Southern Ocean, geologically the youngest of the oceans, was formed when Antarctica and South America moved apart, opening the Drake Passage, roughly 30 million years ago. The separation of the continents allowed the formation of the Antarctic Circumpolar Current.

With a northern limit at 60°S, the Southern Ocean differs from the other oceans in that its largest boundary, the northern boundary, does not abut a landmass (as it did with the first edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas*). Instead, the northern limit is with the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans.

One reason for considering it as a separate ocean stems from the fact that much of the water of the Southern Ocean differs from the water in the other oceans. Water gets transported around the Southern Ocean fairly rapidly because of the Antarctic Circumpolar Current which circulates around Antarctica.

The Southern Ocean has typical depths of between 13,000 and 16,000 ft over most of its extent with only limited areas of shallow water. The Southern Ocean's greatest depth of 23,740 ft occurs at the southern end of the South Sandwich Trench, at 60°00'S, 024°W. The Antarctic continental shelf appears generally narrow and unusually deep, its edge lying at depths up to 2,600 ft, compared to a global mean of 436 ft.

Natural resources

Manganese nodule

The Southern Ocean probably contains large, and possibly giant, oil and gas fields on the continental margin. Placer deposits, accumulation of valuable minerals such as gold, formed by gravity separation during sedimentary processes are also expected to exist in the Southern Ocean. Manganese nodules are expected to exist in the Southern Ocean. Manganese nodules are rock concretions on the sea bottom formed of concentric layers of iron and manganese hydroxides around a core. The core may be microscopically small and is sometimes completely transformed into manganese minerals by crystalization. Interest in the potential exploitation of polymetallic nodules generated a great deal of activity among prospective mining consortia in the 1960s and 1970s.

Natural hazards

An iceberg being pushed out of a shipping lane by (L to R) USS Burton Island (AGB-1), USS Atka (ABG-3), and USS Glacier (AGB-4) near McMurdo Station, Antarctica, 1965

Icebergs can occur at any time of year throughout the ocean. Some may have drafts up to several hundred meters; smaller icebergs, iceberg fragments and sea-ice (generally 0.5 to 1 m thick) also pose problems for ships.

Sailors know latitudes from 40 to 70 degrees south as the "Roaring Forties", "Furious Fifties" and "Shrieking Sixties" due to high winds and large waves that form as winds blow around the entire globe unimpeded by any landmass. Icebergs, especially in May to October, make the area even more dangerous. The remoteness of the region makes sources of search and rescue scarce.

Drake Passage is situated between South America's Cape Horn (Chile) and South Shetland islands of Antarctica and one of the most dangerous and roughest water way in the world.

Environment

Changes to the ocean's physical, chemical, and biological systems have taken place because of climate change, ocean acidification, and commercial exploitation. The Southern Ocean is subject to all international agreements regarding the world's oceans; in addition, it is subject to these agreements specific to the Antarctic region: International Whaling Commission (prohibits commercial whaling south of 40 degrees south [south of 60 degrees south between 50 degrees and 130 degrees west]); Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (limits sealing); Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (regulates fishing).

Climate change

The Southern Ocean is one of the regions in which rapid climate change is the most visibly taking place. In this region, small perturbations in temperature lead to major environmental perturbation. The effects of climate change in the Southern Ocean are expected to manifest themselves in a regional and diverse manner. This will include changes in the climate and weather patterns across different time-scales with alterations to the long interdecadal background signals such as the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO). Increasing ocean temperatures and changes in the extent and seasonality of sea ice affect the biological productivity and community of this ecosystem. The magnitude and exact manifestation of these changes could lead to different populations of the same species responding and adapting differently to climate change depending on the region of the Southern Ocean they inhabit.

Biodiversity

Animals

A variety of marine animals exist and rely, directly or indirectly, on the phytoplankton in the Southern Ocean. Antarctic sea life includes penguins, blue whales, orcas, colossal squids and fur seals. The Antarctic fur seal was very heavily hunted in the 18th and 19th centuries for its pelt by sealers from the United States and the United Kingdom. Antarctic krill is the keystone species of the ecosystem of the Southern Ocean, and is an important food organism for whales, seals, leopard seals, fur seals, squid, icefish, penguins, albatrosses and many other birds.

Birds

The rocky shores of mainland Antarctica and its offshore islands provide nesting space for over 100 million birds every spring. These nesters include species of albatrosses, petrels, skuas, gulls and terns. The insectivorous South Georgia pipit is endemic to South Georgia and some smaller surrounding islands. Freshwater ducks inhabit



South Georgia and the Kerguelen Islands.

The flightless penguins are all located in the Southern Hemisphere, with the greatest concentration located on and around Antarctica. Four of the 18 penguin species live and breed on the mainland and its close offshore islands. Another four species live on the subantarctic islands.

Fish

There are relatively few fish species in few families in the Southern Ocean. The most species-rich family are the snailfish (Liparidae), followed by the cod icefish (Nototheniidae) and eelpout (Zoarcidae). Together the snailfish, eelpouts and notothenioids (which includes cod icefish and several other families) account for almost 9/10 of the more than 320 described fish species of the Southern Ocean (tens of undescribed species also occur in the region, especially among the snailfish). Southern Ocean snailfish are generally found in deep waters, while the icefish also occur in shallower waters.

Mammals

Seven pinniped species inhabit Antarctica. The largest, the elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*), can reach up to 8,818 lb, while females of the smallest, the Antarctic fur seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*), reach only 331 lb. These two species live north of the sea ice, and breed in harems on beaches. The other four species can live on the sea ice. Crabeater seals (*Lobodon carcinophagus*) and Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) form breeding colonies, whereas leopard seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) and Ross seals (*Ommatophoca rossii*) live solitary lives. Although these species hunt underwater, they breed on land or ice and spend a great deal of time there, as they have no terrestrial predators.

There are 10 cetacean species found in the Southern Ocean; six baleen whales, and four toothed whales. The largest of these, the blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), grows to 79 ft long weighing 84 tonnes. Many of these species are migratory, and travel to tropical waters during the Antarctic winter.

Sources:

1. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*
2. *The world factbook*

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“Rebuild Better Together”

“လူမှုစီးပွားဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ကောင်းမွန်ဖို့ ဝိုင်းဝန်းကြိုးပမ်းတည်ဆောက်ဖို့”

I say what I see:

By Oung Moun Moun

ALL workers, public or private, have to toil for their livelihoods daily. Of them, essential workers are of crucial importance not just for their living but for any country they are living in and for its people as well. What they are doing their jobs means that they are providing essential services to the people.

Here, I like to quote the definition from Section 2(f) of the Settlement of Labour Disputes Law (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 5/2012). It defines essential workers as follows: water supply services, electricity services, fire services, health services, and telecommunication services.

Suppose any of these services might be interrupted, it would undoubtedly endanger the life, health or security of the public. No definite interruption could be allowed in performing these essential services. For instance, hospitals without medical doctors and nurses or medical staff could not be able to serve the people. Simply!

Another example can signify the paramountcy of the public utility services for any human community, both the small or the large. This sector embodies public transport, port, post, telex or fax, information and communication technology, petroleum or petroleum products distribution, garbage and human excrement disposal or sanitation, electricity production, transmission and distribution, and public financial service.

As I expressed earlier, all essential services workers, including public or private healthcare and utility personnel, should consider in the first place the people they are serving and perform their tasks professionally in order to avoid any interruption like involving in ‘strike’ or CDM.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report
(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 26 June 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is weak to moderate over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 27 June 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and Magway regions, scattered in Lower Sagaing Region and Kayah State, fairly widespread in Bago, Taninthayi regions and (Northern and Southern)Shan, Rakhine, Mon states and widespread in the remaining regions and states with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of increase of rain in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 June 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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

FORECAST FOR Mandalay AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 June 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Union Minister Dr Thet Khaing Win inspects COVID-19 treatment centres, general hospitals in Yangon

UNION Minister for Health and Sports Dr Thet Khaing Win inspected the quarantine facilities of Yoma Yeiktha Quarantine centre for the returnees from foreign countries in Dagon Seikkan Township of Yangon on 25 June.

During the inspection, the Union Minister instructed the preparations for quick transfer of patients in real-time and emergency ward before the transfer; management from the control room for the health condition of patient and duty assignments for volunteers.

Then, the Union Minister inspected the ICU and HDU for severely ill COVID-19 patients at Yangon General Hospital in Lanmadaw Township.

The Union Minister and party also met the Professors and in charges of the new general hospital and discussed the systematic treatment and regular



medical services for normal diseases in addition to COVID-19.

The Union Minister and other officials also met the officials of YCDC at the COVID-19 treatment centre set up at Myanmar

Convention Centre in Mayangon Township yesterday. The Union Minister inspected the preparations to open the COVID-19 treatment centre and health officials of YCDC clarified the

completed procedures. Then, the Union Minister highlighted the plans to provide the needed medicines, the appointment of daily minimum wage workers and other arrangements for the

patients.

Then, the Union Minister visited the COVID-19 treatment centre (Mayangon) of Inya centre and inspected the arrangements of Oxygen, systematic medical checkups and other preparations for COVID-19. He also instructed the health officials to offer proper medical services, follow the medical ethics and infection control procedures.

Yoma Yeiktha COVID-19 treatment Centre can accommodate 1,000 people for quarantine and 576 confirmed patients while 400 patients at Inya Centre and 250 patients at MCC COVID-19 treatment centre. The MCC COVID-19 treatment centre will accept the COVID-19 patients starting 26 June. Currently, Yangon General Hospital and the new general hospital (Yangon) offer medical services to COVID-19 patients. — MNA

Written examination for selection of gazetted officer positions held

THE written examination for selection of 195 gazetted officer positions for 10 Ministries and Organizations, in the Notification No (3/2020) of the Union Civil Service Board, was held under the COVID-19 guidelines in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay, Magway and Mawlamyine on 26 and 27 June.

Chairman of the Union Civil Service Board (UCSB) U Than Swe visited the examination centre in Pubbathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, in-

spected the examination and encouraged the candidates.

A total of 820 candidates sat for the written exam yesterday. The UCSB has been selecting the required qualified officers for each ministry/organization and the selection process is being upgraded to select the right person in the right place based on merit which is one of the priority areas for the Strategic Plan for Civil Service Reform. — MNA



Myanmar delegation visits Kazan city, meets Russian officials



THE delegation led by Chairman of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr Maung Maung Naing, Deputy Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Than Aung Kyaw, Chairman of the Russia-Myanmar Friendship Association Maj Gen Aung Thaw (retired) visited the Tatarstan Investment Development Agency in Kazan city.

During the meeting with Ms Taliya Minullina, CEO of the agency and the Chairman invited to invest in Myanmar.

The delegation also met

the Kazan Deputy Mayor Ms Lodvigova Evgenlyya at City Hall and discussed cooperation between Nay Pyi Taw and Kazan city, development programmes, technical assistance, especially, close cooperation in transport and urban development works, friendship and study tours.

In the afternoon, the delegation led by the Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman and the Mayor visited the IT Park and the Tatarstan Public Friendship Gallery. — MNA

SRIC reviews \$1.5 mln worth one foreign project for endorsement

THE secretary U Than Zaw Oo of Sagaing Region Investment Committee (SRIC), Sagaing Region State Administration Council Chairman U Maung Maung Lin and the members, officials concerned from the related departments and the staff of Hephaestus International Co., Ltd discussed the footwear manufacturing project in Sagaing city with an estimated capital of US\$1.5 million at the SRIC meeting held on 25 June 2021. The project can create 478 jobs for local residents.

Additionally, they also discussed the investment matters and endorsements at the meeting.

U Maung Maung Lin, the chairman of SRIC and Sagaing Region Administration Council, gave the remark that “the investment sector plays a pivotal role in the country’s economic growth. We are welcome the domestic and foreign investment enterprises. The council is focusing on socio-economic development, job opportunities and investment opportunities. We appreciate that Hephaestus International Co., Ltd applied for endorsement of the wholly foreign-owned footwear enterprise on the CMP (Cutting-Making and Processing) basis. I liked to urge the SRIC to endorse the projects under My-



anmar Investment Law”. Afterwards, the chairman made further discussions on the proposed projects and fulfilled the needs with other officials concerned.

The SRIC had the invest-

ment enterprises engaged in the water park and garden, cultivation and manufacturing of crops, crops drying, categorizing and rice milling and processing activities, manufacturing and mar-

keting of concrete pillar, manufacturing of motorcycle parts and accessories, manufacturing of special bamboo furniture, hotel services, packing and wrapping equipment supplier, processing and packaging of sugar cane mud, private school, and poultry business.

According to the Myanmar Investment Law, the Regions and States Investment Committees are allowed to endorse the domestic and foreign proposals, where the initial investment does not exceed K6 billion, or \$5 million aiming to simplify the verification process of investment projects. — IPRD, KK/GNLM

Sino-Myanmar bilateral trade exceeds US\$6 bln in H1

THE value of Myanmar’s trade with China through maritime and sea trade channels amounted to over US\$6.13 billion in the first half (Oct-Mar) of the 2020-2021 Financial Year, including \$3.18 billion worth of exports and \$2.95 billion for import, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar primarily exports agro products to China through the border gates. However, trading in agricultural products is frequently halted on account of China clamping down on illegal trade in border gates. Further-

more, China has been stepping up border control measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 since April-end, hindering the border trade at present.

In a bid to lower trade barriers and offer relief to Myanmar traders through the border trade channel, the Ministry of Commerce, the related departments and the stakeholders have been negotiating with China counterparts.

The two countries are making efforts to set up more border economic cooperation zones and promote border trade.

The value of bilateral trade with China stood at \$12 billion in the 2019-2020 FY, \$11.36 billion in the 2018-2019 FY, \$6 billion in the past mini-budget period, \$11.78 billion in the 2017-2018 fiscal year and \$10.8 billion in the 2016-2017 FY respectively.

Rice, various types of peas, sesame seeds, corn, fruits and vegetables, dried tea leaves, fishery products, rubber, minerals and animal products are exported to China, whereas machinery, plastic raw materials, consumer products and electronic tools flow into Myanmar. — KH/GNLM

YGEA to suspend members not registering daily gold trading for 6 months

THE Yangon Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) will suspend for six months the membership of those who do not register the daily gold trading with the association, according to the association.

This decision was made at the meeting of the YGEA executive committee held on 24 June.

Besides, those who keep the wrong lists will be fined K3,000 per 10 ticals (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilogrammes equivalent with one tical) and those in need of nitric acid should register with the association.

of K1,336,000 per tical on 6 January. It reached the lowest price of K1,316,000 per tical on 28 January. In February, it got the lowest level of K1,340,000 (2 February) and the highest level of K1,410,000 (3 February). In March, the rate fluctuated between the most elevated of K1,391,000 (25 March) and the lowest of K1,302,000 (4 March).

In April, the rate touched the lowest level of K1,389,000 (1 April) and the highest level of K1,455,000 (30 April). In May, the highest gold rate was recorded at K1,709,000 (12 May) and the lowest price was K1,447,000 per tical (3 May), gold traders said.

The YGEA’s monthly meeting held on 19 June was aimed at stabilizing the price. The meeting decided to keep a daily gold trading record.

At present, the international gold price stood at US\$1,781 per ounce while the domestic gold price hit K1,563,000 per tical.

Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association is taking the necessary measures to stabilize the gold price as per the instructions of the bureau of special investigation, according to an announcement of YGEA issued on 17 May.

The local gold price reached the lowest level of K1,310,500 (2 September) and the highest level of K1,314,000 (1 September). In October, the rate ranged between K1,307,800 (30 October) and K1,316,500 (21 October). The rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,312,000 (16 November) and the lowest of K1,278,000 (28 November). In December, the pure yellow metal priced moved in the range of K1,275,000 (1 December) and K1,333,000 (28 December), according to the gold traders.

At present, the association has closed the gold trading to be able to steady the gold price and urged the members to run a cash-only for the gold transaction. Moreover, the illegal importers and those persons who practice overtrading with negligence will be faced with serious legal action.

In January 2021, domestic gold fetched the highest price

With global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic price hit fresh highs in 2019, reaching K1,000,000 per tical between 17 January and 21 February, crossing K1,100,000 (22 June to 5 August), climbing to over K1,200,000 (7 August-4 September), and then reaching an all-time record high of K1,300,000 on 5 September in 2019. — NN/GNLM

Border trade exceeds \$7.4 bln this FY



TRADE between Myanmar and its four neighbouring countries has reached US\$7.4 billion in this financial year as of 16 June, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar shares borders with China, Thailand, India and Bangladesh. During the period, the country’s export via border gates amounted to \$4.8 billion while its import shared \$2.6 billion.

This FY’s border trade decreased by over \$806 million, compared to the same period of

last budget year 2020-2021 when it amounted to \$8.24 billion, the ministry’s figures said. Muse topped the list of border checkpoints with the most trade value of \$3.76 billion, followed by Myawady with 1.23 billion U.S. dollars.

The country conducts border trade with neighbouring China through Muse, Lweje, Kampaiti, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung with Thailand via Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Mawtaung and Maese gates, with Bangladesh via Sittway and Maungtaw and with India

through Tamu and Reed border gates, respectively.

From 1 October 2020 to 18 June this FY, the country’s foreign trade totalled over \$7.43 billion while its sea trade valued at \$14.05 billion, according to the ministry.

Myanmar mainly exports agricultural products, animal products, marine products, minerals, forest products, manufacturing goods and others while capital goods, intermediate goods and consumer goods are imported to the country. — ZWE/GNLM

Business group urges Biden to lift Europe travel ban, revive economies

THE Biden administration is under pressure from a major business group and diplomats to scrap a travel ban on Europeans, as investment from the continent in the United States plunged by nearly a third last year.

While countries in the European Union have reopened their borders to Americans who are vaccinated or test negative for Covid-19, the United States has not reciprocated, to the frustration of the business world.

The US Chamber of Commerce on Friday urged Washington to allow the return of European travelers "as soon as possible."



EU countries have reopened their borders to Americans who are vaccinated or test negative for Covid-19, but the United States has not reciprocated. **PHOTO: AFP**

"The resumption of safe transatlantic travel is critically important for our nation's economic recovery, as in-per-

son business engagements and international tourism will help drive economic growth and job creation for Americans across the country," said Marjorie Chortlin, the chamber's senior vice president for European affairs.

Travellers from the Schengen zone, Britain and Ireland have been banned from entering the United States since March 2020.

Also banned from entry are travelers from South Africa, Brazil, China, India and Iran.

'Interconnected'

The EU ambassador to the United States, Stavros Lambrinidis, told AFP that Brussels is "pushing" for reciprocity, and

emphasizing the positive impact such a move would have on both economies.

"Our economies and people are deeply interconnected, and our vaccination rates are the highest in the world -- it would be crucial to safely open up this side of the Atlantic too as we both kick-start our economies," he said. During President Joe Biden's visit to Europe last week, the EU stressed that the bilateral economic relationship is the largest in the world, making up a whopping 42 per cent of both global GDP and global trade in goods and services.

But beyond trade, huge investments are at stake. — AFP ■

Brazil overcomes risk of fiscal collapse, says economy chief

BRAZIL came close to facing fiscal collapse but the economy is now in recovery and only losses related to the pandemic will burden future generations, Brazilian Economy Minister Paulo Guedes said Friday.

During a Senate hearing held by a congressional commission on COVID-19, Guedes stressed the general improvement in the economy.

"We were hit and we spent a lot of money, but we have been regaining control of the situation. We were sinking fast, but we quickly came out of the abyss and now we are creating jobs," Guedes said.

"Brazil could have been facing a situation of fiscal collapse, but we managed to control that sentiment and we are now normalizing everything

again," he added.

The minister confirmed that emergency pandemic aid for informal-sector workers and the unemployed will be extended for another three months, because by then the entire adult population should have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and the pandemic in Brazil should be under control. — Xinhua ■

Tokyo falls to world's 4th most expensive city for expats: survey



Photo taken with a fisheye lens on May 22, 2019, shows tourists posing for a photo in front of the Kaminari Gate at Sensoji Temple in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO**

TOKYO has ranked the fourth most expensive city for expatriates in an annual cost of living survey by a U.S. consulting firm, dropping one spot from last year.

Turkmenistan's capital Ashgabat topped the list, up from second, while Hong Kong slid to second after being last year's costliest city, Mercer's Cost of Living Survey showed, as countries continue to struggle with the economic, political and health implications from the novel coronavirus.

With more than half of the top 10 most expensive cities in Asia, Zurich dropped one spot to fifth, while Shanghai ranked sixth, up one notch. Singapore fell two places to seventh.

Beirut came in third, up 42

positions due to economic hardship brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, Lebanon's largest financial crisis and a massive port explosion in Beirut in 2020.

Mercer said the pandemic continues to cause unparalleled disruption to international mobility, prompting companies to re-evaluate how they will manage a mobile workforce in a post-pandemic world.

"The pandemic has added a whole new layer of complexity, as well as long-term implications related to the health and safety of employees, remote working and flexibility policies, among other considerations," said Ilya Bonic, career president and head of Mercer Strategy. — Kyodo News ■

Global stocks mostly rise to conclude good week for equities

GLOBAL stocks closed out a strong week with most bourses gaining Friday as markets took a benign view of recent inflation data and greeted progress on a US infrastructure package.

Markets had jumped Thursday after the Bank of England (BoE) maintained its ultra-low interest rates, echoing the views of the US Federal Reserve and

the European Central Bank that inflationary spikes are only temporary.

Traders have for months worried that the blistering global recovery will fan price increases and force rate hikes -- but central bankers have sought to downplay inflation risks.

"That BoE meeting did alleviate fears of a hawkish swing

across the central banks, but ultimately whether the BoE or the Fed are right will come down to the trajectory of inflation over the coming months," IG analyst Joshua Mahony said.

The Dow suffered its worst week since October last week due in part to a shift in messaging from the Federal Reserve.

But equities recovered this week, as investors greeted statements from Fed Chair Jerome Powell and other top central bankers that signaled no plans for an abrupt pivot in their easy money policies.

- Inflation disagreement -

Also this week, a parade of Fed speakers showed "most" are sanguine about inflation, "but some are getting nervous," said Chris Low of FHN Financial. — AFP ■



A US infrastructure improvement agreement is good news for construction and oil companies, among others. **PHOTO: AFP**

Virgin Galactic's stock soars as US grants commercial license

VIRGIN Galactic skyrocketed on Wall Street Friday after US officials approved the first commercial licence to take consumers to space.

Shares of the company founded by Richard Branson were up almost 35 percent at midday at \$53.98 as the Federal Aviation Administration said its approval of Virgin's licence marked "a new chapter in the story of human space flight."

FAA approval came after the agency determined that company's hardware and software functioned well during a test flight.

Virgin Galactic Chief Executive Michael Colglazier cheered the decision, saying FAA approval gives "us confidence as we proceed toward our first fully crewed test flight this summer."



Sir Richard Branson rang the bell of the New York Stock Exchange in October 2019 for the first day of trading of Virgin Galactic Holdings, which has now received approval to fly passengers to space. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

The company still plans three additional test flights, one of which is expected to include Branson himself.

Virgin Galactic is targeting early 2022 to begin commercial service. The company has sold some 600 tickets priced at between \$200,000 to \$250,000.

Earlier this month, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos announced plans to fly into space in July with his company, Blue Origin. A mystery bidder spent \$28 million to join Bezos and his brother in the July 20 launch.— AFP ■

Scaled-down mobile congress returns to Spain

A smaller version of the world's biggest mobile fair opens on Monday in Spain under tight virus controls, with top firms avoiding an in-person presence after the pandemic derailed last year's edition.

The four-day Mobile World Congress (MWC), one of the first big technology conferences staged in Europe since

the start of the pandemic, comes as global smartphone sales are rebounding after slumping in 2020 due to the economic havoc caused by the health crisis.

It will take place both in-person at Barcelona's main conference centre as well as in digital form, with a live performance by US rock legend Jon Bon Jovi and an online

appearance by tech billionaire Elon Musk.

Many major firms like Samsung, the world's top smartphone maker, Nokia, Google and Facebook have pulled out of the in-person event, citing virus concerns although some will take part virtually. China's beleaguered Huawei, whose smartphone business has been battered

by US sanctions, will be the biggest firm with a physical presence at the show.

"It is quite evident that the show will be vastly different from previous years," Mats Granryd, director general of the industry association that stages the congress, the GSMA, told AFP. "It won't have the same buzz as before." Unlike in other years, no major phonemaker is scheduled to present a new flagship device at the event, although some small Chinese and European firms are expected to unveil new phones.

The event – which is usually held in February – will occupy just three halls of the congress centre this year, compared to eight in the past.

The GSMA has limited attendance to 50,000 compared with a normal attendance of around 100,000. It expects 30,000-35,000 people to actually attend, although Granryd warned it was "very difficult" to make forecasts this year. — AFP ■



A man inspects a Huawei Mate X2 at the Mobile World Congress in Shanghai last February. China's beleaguered Huawei, whose smartphone business has been battered by US sanctions, will be the biggest firm with a physical presence at the show in Barcelona. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

US prices rose 3.9% last month from May 2020: govt

PRICES in the United States rose 3.9 per cent in May from the same month in 2020 as vaccines allowed the economy to bounce back from the Covid-19 crisis, government data said Friday.

Much of the increase reported in the Commerce Department's May personal consumption expenditures (PCE) data came from a 27.4 per cent rise in energy prices, while food prices gained 0.4 per cent.

The data showed consumers steering their dollars away from expensive goods and towards restaurants, hotels and recreation activities that had been disrupted during the pandemic, but spending overall increased just \$2.9 billion, less than expected and basically flat from the month prior.

Personal income fell two per cent, less than forecast, in what the report said was due to the fading of government stimulus payments approved in March. Gregory Daco of Oxford Economics said the data indicate consumers will continue to spend throughout the year as receding virus cases allow normal life to resume. — AFP ■

UK regulator to probe Amazon, Google for 'fake reviews'

A UK regulator said Friday it has opened formal cases against Amazon and Google over concerns that the US tech giants are failing to shield consumers from fake reviews.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said that it had concerns the companies were not doing enough to protect customers from fake reviews, in "possible breaches of consumer protection law".

The problem centres on reviews that customers can post online after buying items, with concerns that some businesses are posting fake reviews or paying people to write them -- distorting the star ratings that many consumers rely on.

"We are investigating concerns that Amazon and Google have not been doing enough to prevent or remove fake reviews to protect customers and honest businesses," said the CMA's chief executive, Andrea Coscelli.

The CMA is taking further action after it began a probe last year into how these platforms detect fake reviews, deal with and punish those who post them. — AFP ■

Invitation For Open tender No.(3/2021)

- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Department of Mines invites to submit the tender quotation sale open tender of (5008.574) Metric Tons, (21) Lots of Cathode Copper by United States Dollar as follow,
a) Cathode Copper (108.574) MT (1) Lot, Yangon, Eden Warehouse
b) Cathode Copper (100) MT (5) Lots, Yangon, Eden Warehouse
c) Cathode Copper (200) MT (5) Lots, Yangon, Eden Warehouse
d) Cathode Copper (200) MT (7) Lots, Monywa, Mine Site
e) Cathode Copper (500) MT (2) Lots, Monywa, Mine Site
f) Cathode Copper (1000) MT (1) Lot, Monywa, Mine Site
 - Base price of Cathode Copper (Eden Warehouse, Yangon) shall be based on the London Metal Exchange Copper price on the date of tender opening. The highest proposal amount shall be winning tender.
 - Base price of Monywa, Mine Site Cathode Copper shall be based on the London Metal Exchange Copper price on the date of tender opening. The highest proposal amount (Premium amount added to the LME price and deduction of transportation and handling expenses) shall be winning tender.
 - Tender Closing Date and Time is 21.7.2021 (14:00)PM and Opening Tender is (15:00) PM.
 - Tender documents are available from the Mineral Development Division, Department of Mines, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Office Building No.(19), Nay Pyi Taw and details can be asked to (+95) 067 3409378 and 067 3409372 within the Office hours.
- Tender Committee
Department of Mines
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Japan PM insists emperor not 'worried' about Olympics



Olympic and Paralympic Games' official flags are on display at Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building in Tokyo on June 24, 2021.

PHOTO: AFP

JAPAN'S prime minister on Friday dismissed claims that the country's emperor is "concerned" the Tokyo Olympics

could spread the coronavirus, saying the comments were the opinions of an imperial household representative.

On Thursday, Yasuhiko Nishimura, the head of the Imperial Household Agency that manages royal affairs, told reporters that Emperor Naruhito is "very worried about the current infection situation of Covid-19", Japanese media reported.

Nishimura said he believed the emperor "is concerned that while there are voices of anxiety among the public, the holding of the Olympics and Paralympics... may lead to a rise in infections".

He noted that he had "not heard such words directly from

his majesty" but believed he "feels that way", Kyodo news agency reported.

While the emperor holds no political power, he is an important symbolic figure in Japan.

But the remarks were dismissed Friday by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who told reporters Nishimura had "expressed his own opinion".

The line was echoed by Olympic minister Tamayo Marukawa and top government spokesman Katsunobu Kato.

Nishimura "was asked to comment on his own feelings about the Olympics, and... (he) discussed his feelings", Kato told reporters. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

New Las Vegas casino bets on post-Covid recovery

A giant new Las Vegas casino opening Thursday is betting that receding fears of Covid-19 will bring a strong recovery in the international gambling hub.

The venue, Resorts World Las Vegas, will have 3,500 hotel rooms and house a 5,000-seat theater where stars like Celine Dion and Katy Perry are scheduled to perform in the coming months. There will also be 1,400 slot machines. Developed by the Genting Group of Malaysia, the \$4.3 billion project will be one of the biggest resorts ever on the Las Vegas Strip, which is home to the Bellagio, Caesars Palace and other famed casinos.

After shutting down during the most severe stretch of the pandemic, Las Vegas casinos reopened in June 2020 with face-mask requirements and other strict protocols. —

AFP ■

Man kills three in Germany knife attack

A man killed three people and left five others seriously injured after a knife rampage in the southern German city of Wuerzburg, Bavarian officials said.

"The attacker was overpowered after the police used firearms," the authorities said on Twitter, without giving details of the suspect's motives.

"There are three dead, five seriously injured and others injured," said Bavaria's interior minister Joachim Herrmann, adding, "it was not certain if the most seriously injured will survive".

The 24-year-old suspect, who is Somali, has lived in Wuerzburg since 2015, he said.

Investigators have found documentation showing the man "was treated in a psychiatric institution", said Herrmann, but added that he could not detail the length of the stay.

"The police investigation will determine if this was an Islamist act or if it was due to the psychiatric state" of the man, he said. — AFP ■

Futuristic Gehry tower opens in World Heritage Arles

RISING high beyond an ancient Roman arena in Arles, a tall, twisted tower created by Frank Gehry shimmers in the sun, the latest futuristic addition to this southern French city known for its World Heritage sites.

The tower, which opens to the public on Saturday, is the flagship attraction of a new "creative campus" conceived by the Swiss Luma arts foundation that wants to offer artists a space to create, collaborate and showcase their work.

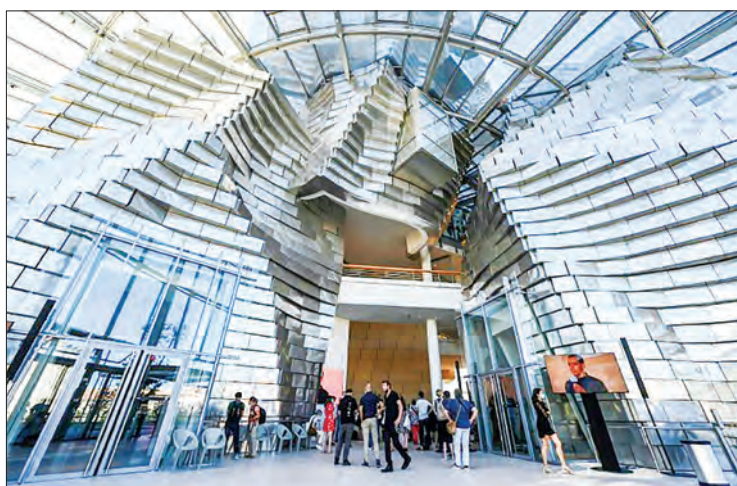
Gehry, the 92-year-old brain behind Bilbao's Guggenheim museum and Los Angeles' Walt Disney Concert Hall, wrapped 11,000 stainless steel panels

around his tower above a huge glass round base.

It will house contemporary art exhibitions, a library, and offices, while the Luma Arles campus as a whole will host conferences and live performances.

From a distance, the structure reflects the changing lights of this town that inspired Van Gogh, capturing the whiteness of the limestone Alpilles mountain range nearby which glows a fierce orange when the sun sets.

Mustapha Bouhayati, the head of Luma Arles, says the town is no stranger to imposing monuments; its ancient Roman arena and theatre have long drawn the crowds.



The tower is the flagship attraction of a new "creative campus" in Arles. PHOTO: AFP

The tower is just the latest addition, he says. "We're building the heritage of tomorrow."

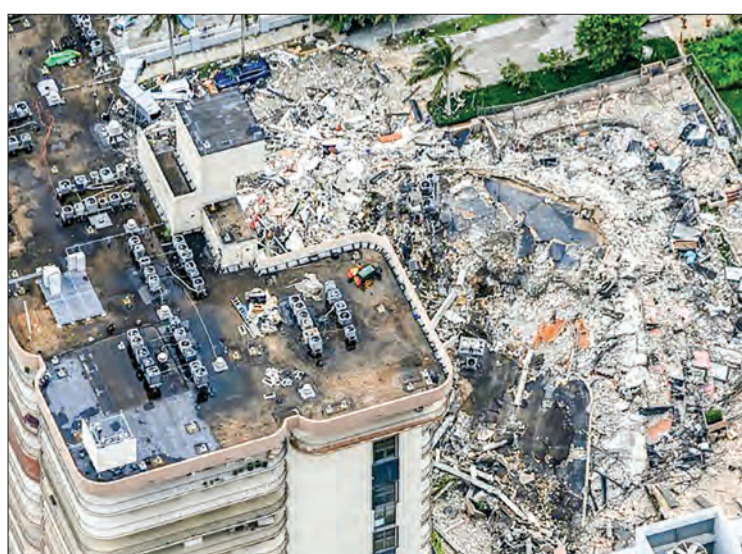
Luma Arles spreads out over a huge former industrial wasteland. — AFP ■

Demands for answers in aftermath of Florida building collapse

RESCUERS are still searching for survivors in rubble of the collapsed Florida apartment tower, but pressure is building -- from families of missing residents to the state's governor -- for answers on how such a disaster could have occurred.

A wing of the oceanfront complex suddenly pancaked on itself around 1:30 am (05:30 GMT) Thursday, with 55 apartments collapsing in a cloud of dust, leaving 159 people still missing on Friday.

Completed in 1981, Champlain Towers South was due to be recertified this year in line with Miami-Dade county safety regulations -- which require a review every 40 years -- and roof work was ongoing as part



Search and rescue personnel working on site after the partial collapse of Champlain Towers in Surfside, Florida. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

of that process.

But county officials stressed there was no indication of a

causal link between the refurbishment work and the collapse, which so far has a confirmed

death toll of four.

In addition to the loved ones of the dead and missing, and those who are suddenly homeless, "there's a lot of other people throughout this community and really throughout Florida who want to know, well, how could a building just collapse like that?" Governor Ron DeSantis said.

He called for a "timely" explanation, adding that families "have a right to know."

Mike Salberg, who is waiting for information on five missing family members, including his parents, echoed the sentiments.

"I want answers," the New Yorker told AFP. "The families are sidelined." — AFP ■

Slovenians mark 30th Independence Day with rival rallies

POLITICAL divisions were on display on Friday as rival rallies were held in Ljubljana to mark the 30th anniversary of Slovenia's independence.

While right-wing Prime Minister Janez Jansa presided over a large official rally in the capital, a few streets away thousands of anti-Jansa activists, backed by unions and the centre-left opposition, held a rival event.

Jansa took office in March 2020 just as the pandemic hit, and critics accuse him of exploiting the emergency to target media outlets that he deems hostile and to corrode democratic institutions.

IT student Matjaz Skerjanc turned out at the opposition event to demand an end to Jansa's government as soon as possible because of what he

called its corruption.

"They have been using the coronavirus crisis to frighten people," he told AFP.

Sasa Jenko Pahor, a woman in her 60s, said she was protesting "because the constitution in our country is not being respected".

The official celebration was held later in the evening, with Jansa welcoming several leaders from neighbouring countries, including his close ally, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, as well as European Council chief Charles Michel.

Thousands of flag-waving attendees gathered for a night of music and speeches in front of the national parliament.

Orban praised Slovenia's "tradition, spirit and pride" as well as its current "courageous leadership".



Riot police intervenes to stop a group of extremists that shortly provoked an incident at the beginning of the anti-government rally in Ljubljana on June 25, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Michel meanwhile stressed the importance of "democracy, freedom and rule of law", adding that "diversity, toler-

ance and mutual respect is our strength, not our weakness".

The evening was rounded off with a speech from Jansa

in which he pledged to guard against "double standards", followed by a firework display.

— AFP ■

US ex-cop sentenced to over 22 years for George Floyd murder



Members of the George Floyd family (from 4thL-R) George Floyd's brothers Philonise and Terrence, nephew Brandon Williams, Reverend Al Sharpton, civil rights lawyer and lead attorney for the George Floyd family Benjamin Crump, and Floyd's brother Rodney pray following the sentencing of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, outside the Hennepin County Government Center on June 25, 2021 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. **PHOTO: AFP**

FORMER policeman Derek Chauvin was sentenced to 22 and a half years in prison on Friday for the murder of African American George Floyd, the killing

that sparked America's biggest demonstrations for racial justice in decades.

The white, 45-year-old Chauvin gave his "condolences" to the

Floyd family in a Minneapolis court, without apologizing, before Judge Peter Cahill handed down a lesser sentence than the 30 years the prosecution had sought.

"This (jail term) is based on your abuse of a position of trust and authority and also the particular cruelty shown to George Floyd," Cahill told Chauvin, who listened impassively.

The decision was read out at the end of a tense hearing in which the court watched a recorded message by Floyd's seven-year-old daughter and heard from Chauvin's mother. The Floyd family's lawyer called the sentencing a "historic" step towards racial reconciliation in the United States. "(It) brings the Floyd family and our nation one step closer to healing by delivering closure and accountability," Ben Crump tweeted. — AFP ■

US, France warn Iran that time running out to revive deal

THE United States and France on Friday warned Iran that time is running out to return to a nuclear deal, voicing fear that Tehran's sensitive atomic activities could advance if talks drag on.

On the first high-level visit to Paris by President Joe Biden's administration, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his French hosts saluted a new spirit of cooperation after four years of turbulence under Donald Trump.

But the two sides said that one key Biden promise -- to return to the 2015 Iran accord that was trashed by Trump -- is at risk if the clerical regime does not make concessions during talks that have been going on for more than two months in Vienna.

Blinken warned that the United States still has "serious differences" with Iran, which has kept negotiating since last

week's presidential election won by hardliner Ebrahim Raisi.

"There will come a point, yes, where it will be very hard to return back to the standards set by the JCPOA," Blinken told reporters, using the acronym for the accord's formal name.

"We haven't reached that point -- I can't put a date on it -- but it's something that we're conscious of."

Blinken warned that if Iran "continues to spin ever more sophisticated centrifuges" and steps up uranium enrichment, it will bring nearer the "breakout" time at which it will be dangerously close to the ability to develop a nuclear bomb.

But Blinken said that Biden still supports a return to the accord, under which Iran had drastically scaled back its nuclear work until Trump withdrew in 2018 and imposed crippling sanctions. — AFP ■



Both US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (L) and France's Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian urged Iran to return to the nuclear accord. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

Colombia leader says chopper hit by gunfire near Venezuela border

COLOMBIAN President Ivan Duque said Friday the helicopter he was flying in near the border with Venezuela was hit by gunfire.

It was the first attack against a Colombian president in nearly 20 years. No one was injured. Colombian authorities did not say if the shots were fired from the Colombian or Venezuelan side

of the frontier.

"It is a cowardly attack, where you can see bullet holes in the presidential aircraft," Duque said in a statement.

Duque said he was flying with the defense and interior ministers and the governor of Norte de Santander province, which borders Venezuela, when

the helicopter was attacked.

Photos released by the president's office showed the tail and main blade of the helicopter had been hit.

The presidential delegation had left the town of Sardinata and was headed to the border city of Cucuta when they came under fire. — AFP ■

Molten footballs to be used for Asian Cup Qualifiers

MOLTEN branded footballs will be used for official matches of the upcoming AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to Qatar and will also be used in all matches played from September 2021 to June 2022, said AFC authorities.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) recently

announced the renewal of its partnership with Molten Corporation, a world-class manufacturer of quality sports balls and equipment, for the 2021 season.

Dato' Windsor John, the AFC General Secretary, said: "Molten is one of the most reputable Asian brands and they

have a long and proud record of supporting Asian football over the years.

"The AFC is delighted to continue our partnership with Molten and we thank them for their steadfast confidence in Asian football. With a trusted partner like Molten, we remain committed to delivering world-

class competitions, as outlined in the AFC's Vision, for the benefit of all our players, teams and passionate fans of AFC football across the world", the AFC General Secretary added.

"We are thrilled that Molten balls will be used in Asia's top-level competition, the AFC Asian Qualifiers –

Road to Qatar. Molten continues to develop and provide the absolute highest quality products with technological innovation for the greater football community to fulfil the brand statement 'For the real game,' Kiyo Tamaki, President & CEO of Molten Corporation, commented.—GNLM

Kieran Tierney signs new long-term Arsenal deal

SCOTTISH left-back Kieran Tierney has signed a new long-term contract at Arsenal, the Premier League club announced on Friday. Tierney, 24, whose new deal reportedly takes him up to 2026, was a rare bright spark in a desperately disappointing season for Mikel Arteta's men, who finished eighth in the English top-flight.

Since joining from Celtic for £25 million (\$35 million) in 2019, Tierney has consistently been one of the Gunners' best performers and has earned his status as a fans' favourite. "The club have been brilliant with me, so I am more than happy to extend it (the contract). I'm absolutely delighted," Tierney told Arsenal's website. "I think the vision of the club, where it wants to go, and the expectations of the

club are why I signed. Where I want to be in football is at the top. There's no doubt about it, we're not where we want to be just now, but we're going in the right direction." Tierney excelled on the left side of a back three as Arsenal lifted the FA Cup in 2020 and he has also featured prominently in that position for his country. His loss to a calf injury was a major factor in Scotland losing their Euro 2020 Group D opener 2-0 to the Czech Republic. Tierney's return helped inspire a much-improved performance in a 0-0 draw against England before Scotland bowed out of the tournament with a 3-1 defeat to Croatia. Arteta hailed Tierney's commitment to the club as "great news" as he tries to turn Arsenal's fortunes around. — AFP ■

Dolberg stars as Denmark outclass Wales to reach Euro 2020 quarter-finals

DENMARK marked the 29th anniversary of their greatest triumph by marching on to the quarter-finals of Euro 2020 on Saturday as Kasper Dolberg scored twice in an emphatic 4-0 win over Wales before an exultant travelling support in Amsterdam.

In the city where Christian Eriksen made his name, it was Dolberg — another former Ajax player — who opened the scoring

with a fizzing strike in the 27th minute. That came after Wales had started so well but Denmark never looked back and Dolberg struck again just after the restart before Joakim Maehle and Martin Braithwaite added more goals late on. Carried by a wave of emotion, Danish dreams are still intact in a tournament that began in such traumatic circumstances for them with Eriksen's collapse in their opening match

against Finland in Copenhagen. They now go on to a last-eight tie in Baku against the Netherlands or the Czech Republic.

Eriksen, still recovering at home after his cardiac arrest, was present in everyone's minds at the home of Ajax, and that combined with a vast Danish support inside the one-third full Johan Cruyff Arena made this occasion like a Danish home game.— AFP ■

'It's not Belgium v Ronaldo' says Vertonghen ahead of Portugal showdown



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) and teammates take part in an MD-1 training session at La Cartuja stadium in Seville on 26 June 2021, on the eve of their UEFA EURO 2020 round of 16 football match against Belgium. PHOTO: LLUIS GENE / AFP

JAN Vertonghen said that Belgium's focus wouldn't just be on Cristiano Ronaldo as the Red Devils prepare to take on Portugal in a Euro 2020 last-16 showdown between two of the tournament favourites.

Ronaldo tops the scoring charts at the Euro with five goals in three group stage matches but Benfica defender Vertonghen has his eyes on the European champions' talented attack as Belgium, the world's top-ranked team, continue their hunt for a first major international honour.

"He's the biggest player in the history of Portugal and we have to respect that, and I respect him a lot, but tomorrow it's not Belgium against Ronaldo, it's Belgium against Portugal and they have a lot of good players," said Vertonghen.

"He's a striker who scores in nearly every match and he's proved that many times.

"He's a phenomenon. He's working hard and training all the time and what he's done so far, he deserves and maybe he can play until he's 40 years

old."

Vertonghen was also full of praise for the Belgium's star forward Romelu Lukaku, who is two goals back in the scoring charts but is in the form of his life.

The 28-year-old pipped Ronaldo to Serie A's player of the season award last campaign despite scoring five fewer goals as he played a key role in Inter Milan winning their first league title in over a decade.

"The only way I can define him is as one of the best strikers in the world," said Vertonghen.

"I've known him since he was 16 years old and he had to deal with a lot of criticism on his game, but the way he has developed from being a strong, quick kid into one of the best strikers in the world is one of the best things I've seen in my career.

"His work ethic is nearly unmatched and everything, every trophy, every individual trophy he gets now wherever he goes is down to that work ethic."— AFP ■



Denmark players celebrate at the end of the UEFA EURO 2020 round of 16 football match between Wales and Denmark at the Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam on 26 June 2021. PHOTO: OLAF KRAAK / POOL / AFP