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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

Biodiversity-rich Natmataung (Mt. Victoria) National Park enchants tourists

By NyaungU Phee

MYANMAR is rich in natural resources. It is one of the most awe-inspiring places for tourists in the region. As Myanmar will reopen international passenger flights on 17 April 2022 (the Myanmar New Year Day), Myanmar's tourism will revive with ecotourism and recreational tourism activities. Natmataung National Park was listed as ASEAN Heritage Park and is located in the Kanpetlet city of Chin State. The park and Natmataung (Mount Victoria) captivate visitors as a biosphere reserve with



COVID-19 pandemic, tourists flocked to Natmataung National Park every year, and Kanpetlet city was bustling with visitors.

Once popular tourist spot - Natmataung National Park

The visitors can enjoy Chin State's mountain ranges with astonishing scenic views and a sea of clouds. Another attraction is local food which is different from urban areas. Natmataung National Park is rich in plants, animals and ecosystems. The breathtaking view of Mount Victoria, traditional businesses of ethnic people, rice wine, beef, natural greenery and blooming flowers such as orchids and Rhododendron, and the rich biodiversity of the National Park are drawing the attention of the tourists and researchers.

Natmataung National Park listed as ASEAN Heritage Park

Natmataung National Park has been regarded as a forest reserve to conserve the biodiversity and natural environment

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Natmataung National Park was listed as ASEAN Heritage Park and is located in the Kanpetlet city of Chin State. **PHOTO: OAKTHA**

a picturesque view of floral biodiversity.

Myanmar is typically crowded with tourists during its New Year Thingyan Festival. The seasonal Padauk (Pterocarpus macrocarpus) and Nguwah flower (Cassia fistula) bloom in the summer. The hill region

possessing the stunning view of the blooming flower makes the country shine. If there had been no pandemic, it would have been packed with local visitors and tourists during the high tourist season. The visitors enjoy visiting Chin State with the chilling and scenic view. Prior to the

Pyin Oo Lwin
NAN MYAING
Pure Arabica Coffee

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Biodiversity-rich Natmataung (Mt. Victoria) National Park enchants tourists

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saefawiefaiwefiunder the Forest Law from 1936. The warden's office was opened in 1995 to preserve the ecology and manage the park. It was intended to establish the National Park according to Notification No 60/97 dated 23 July 1997 and was recognized on 2 December 2010 according to No 164/2010. It was listed as ASEAN Heritage Park on 20 September 2012.



Objectives behind the recognition of ASEAN Heritage Park

That ASEAN Heritage Park is surrounded by Kanpetlet, Matupi and Mindat townships, covering 176,202 acres – 29,495 acres in Kanpetlet Township and 133,907 acres in Mindat Township and 12,000 acres in Matupi Township, respectively. The objectives behind the recognition of ASEAN Heritage Park are to promote greater awareness of preserving the hill ecosystem, habitats of native animals and the wetland areas, generate income from the ecotourism business, and enhance the local community's livelihood.

National Park - home to various species and animals

Natmataung National Park has recorded the highest temperature of 32 degrees centigrade and the lowest of 3°C, and annual rainfall is approximately 65 inches. Mount Victoria is estimated at 10,200 feet above sea level. Quartz and other precious stones can be found in its surrounding hill regions. It is the highest mountain in Chin State. It has four significant ecosystems — mountain, forest, freshwater, and grassland. Its wild animals and rich biodiversity in hill evergreen forest, pine forest, Hill Savannah/Meadows and Hill Forest captivate tourists.

Nation's pride with native floral species

The park is home to oak species, hazel species, Rhododendron, pine trees, petal beans, cinnamon, bay leaf, cherry and other species in the evergreen forest, recording over 1,000-2,500 plant spe-



Kanpetlet city, where Natmataung National Park's warden office is located, belongs to an eight-mile birdwatching camp, 10.5 miles camp, Hlaingdote camp, an awareness place of the old city and Mindat outpost, 16-mile camp on the roadside of Mindat-Matupi, with 29 staff to preserve the biodiversity and manage the park. **PHOTOS: OAKTHA**

cies. There are rare native floral species found only at Natmataung National Park; Rhododendron burmanicum, Rhododendron cafferanum, Roscoea australis and Potentilla montisvictoriae.

Conserving biodiversity habitat

The mammals such as swine, jackals, deer, leopard, clouded leopard, leopard cat, civet, bearcat and pangolins inhabit the park. Wildlife animal hunting is protected with four surveillance stations. It is home to 35 mammal species, 155 insect species, 106 amphibian species, 345 bird species, 77 butterfly species, 914 plant species, 202 orchid species and 108 herbal plant species.

Trip to Natmataung National Park

Natmataung National Park was recognized as the ASEAN Heritage Park on 20 September 2012. As it is located in southern Chin State, there is a transport facility. It takes an hour flight for the Yangon-NyaungU trip and only five hours for road transport from NyaungU to Kanpetlet city. It is an hour's drive 13 miles away from Kanpetlet city to the National Park. The visitors

can enjoy the alluring scenic view from two hour-trekking tours from the car terminal to the top of Mount Victoria (3.5 miles trip). The tourists prefer this trekking tour plan. Furthermore, there is also an Express bus service from Yangon to Kanpetlet to facilitate the transport for the local visitors and tourists.

Conserving the animal species at the National Park

Kanpetlet city, where Natmataung National Park's warden office is located, belongs to an eight-mile birdwatching camp, 10.5 miles camp, Hlaingdote camp, an awareness place of the old city and Mindat outpost, 16-mile camp on the roadside of Mindat-Matupi, with 29 staff to preserve the biodiversity and manage the park. Despite the shortage of proficient staff in technical skills, the national heritage is being protected and maintained. Awareness campaigns to protect wild animals and endangered species are being conducted. Patrolling, collecting the plant and animal species survey, land use assessment, border assessment, erecting the awareness signboards, prohibited signs, and notice signs.

Fire safety measures are also implemented to protect wild animals' lives, prevent habitat loss, and restore natural habitats activities. The residents have been holding homemade improvised arms with licences (Tumi guns) from the past generations, and hunting activities are closely monitored in the park.

Continuous efforts for the ecotourism boom



The region's socio-economic development relies on manufacturing, livestock, agriculture, tourism, and traditional businesses. The residents in Kanpetlet town are engaged in cultivating the elephant foot yam, tea leaf, coffee bean and tourism business. The southern Chin State has prospects for economic development. Ecotourism, including trekking tour to Mount Victoria, appealing mountain views, exciting bird species, evergreen forest and floral beauty of Rhododendron and native orchid species, tradition and customs of the ethnic people can effectuate the economic development of Chin State. The sustainability of the ASEAN Heritage Park can build the country's image, enhance the economic benefits and promote the quality of life for the local community. As a result, all the stakeholders concerned must work together in the conservation activities. The ecotourism boom is also expected.

Sustainable Park that preserves natural resources

The forest warden and the staff also face squatting, shifting agriculture and timber harvesting, exploitation of herbal plants and Rhodo-

dendron and hunting, illegal land use, resulting in a considerable impact on the tourism businesses. The participation of the locals plays a pivotal role in tackling such problems and preserving the park's natural beauty.

Natmataung National Park welcomes tourists

Chin State is endeavouring for economic development with good infrastructures and

striving to attract investments. The picturesque beauty of hills, the sunrise view and the mountain breeze are the tourist attraction of Chin State. Enhancing the management of the mountain ecosystem and carrying out research on biodiversity contribute to ecotourism and generate incomes for the residents. Thus, the related departments and local and foreign institutions under the government's guidance must cooperate with the local community to preserve the natural resources of the National Park. Chin State's signature is Rhododendron flowers like cherry in Shan State. Chin hills surrounded by Rhododendron trees enchant the visitors with traditional rice wine. Kaladan and Manipur rivers flow into Chin State with its mountainous geography is standing proudly for the ecotourism businesses. This article is written for Natmataung National Park. Its rich biodiversity and floral beauty are also recognized as one of the ASEAN Heritage Parks to warmly welcome tourists and local visitors.

Translated.

What Federalism is

FEDERALISM is a concept to share the authority with regions, states, ethnics and national races in unison, and it is integration as well as sharing of rights. Political parties, including ethnic parties, are representing the people.

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

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs arrives back in Nay Pyi Taw after paying a working visit to China at the invitation of the Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister

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

The Myanmar delegation

led by the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs arrived back in Nay Pyi Taw from China by air at 2 pm on 2 April 2022. The Myanmar delegation was welcomed at the Nay Pyi Taw Airport by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Myo Htut and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.—MNA



The MoFA Union minister is welcomed back by the deputy minister and officials yesterday.

Unboxing Investment Facilitation Toolkit 2022 held aiming to promote, streamline investment for better Myanmar economic community



The Unboxing Investment Facilitation Toolkit 2022 launching event in progress.

THE Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations introduced the investment facilitation tools under the “Unboxing Investment Facilitation Toolkit 2022” in Yangon on 1 April.

It aims to support the in-

vestment sector, upgrade online services, reduce the burdens, provide investment aftercare services, streamline and simplify the procedures, and transparency.

During the ceremony, Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo

talked about the economic impacts of COVID-19 in late 2019, 2020 and 2021, the ministry's efforts in drafting the SMART Programme and the launching of four services to the economic community provided in line with the objectives of the SMART

Programme.

He also highlighted at the event DICA Online Solution (DOSo), Standard Operation Procedures for One-Stop Service, Cost of Doing Business in Myanmar Survey Report 2022 and DICA Info Android Mobile Application.

He then added that these services would provide practical functions for the investors and those intending to invest in the country. The ministry develops online services to offer proper services via an online platform in line with the trend, and the new online systems will be launched soon. The cooperation of government and private will promote the investment sector.

Then, Directorate of Investment and Company Administration Director-General U Thant Sin Lwin explained the Investment Facilitation Tools and benefits, and another Director

made a PowerPoint presentation for details.

The four services were DICA Online Solution (DOSo), which is the very first online service of Myanmar, where the people make online appointments to enquire about investment matters, SOP of OSS of the Myanmar Investment Commission that provide procedures to apply for licences and permits from the government, Cost of Doing Business in Myanmar Survey Report 2022 that provides information regarding data of land, building, worker, tax and export/import documents in regions/states and DICA Info Mobile Application that offers activities and announcements of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, investment data and the frequently asked questions-FAQs and answers for business people. — MNA

135 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 2 April, total figure rises to 611,809

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 611,809 after 135 new cases were reported on 2 April 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 589,842 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,432 after 1 died. —MNA

MoALI launches new Department of Livestock and Aquaculture Research

THE opening ceremony of the Department of Livestock and Aquaculture Research was organized in Nay Pyi Taw on 1 April.

The new department was launched according to the Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister's instruction at a meeting to develop Nay Pyi Taw on 17 August 2021.

First, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo and officials cut the ribbon and pressed the button to inaugurate the building and signboard.

In his opening speech, the Union Minister said the government makes efforts to develop the farm, livestock and fish sectors using modern techniques and gain proportionate development in all sectors. The new department was launched for the livestock sector to carry out these operations practically and



The MoALI Union minister and officials are pictured for the launching event of the new Department of Livestock and Aquaculture Research.

was also a new chapter for this sector. The SAC also encouraged the development of the farm, livestock, and fish, and research plays a vital role in these sectors.

The Union Minister also highlighted the need to transfer

the applied research to those who really need it, study the advantages and disadvantages of international research, and develop the technical analysis and applied research for the countries.

The new Department of Livestock and Aquaculture Research was opened in the Department of Agriculture Research compound, and a total of 14 research centres- seven livestock research centres and

seven marine research centres were transferred to the new department.

Then, the Union Minister and party went to Post Harvest Technology Division in Yezin Agricultural University and inspected the packaging processes and value-added products manufacturing procedures.

The Zeyathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw boasts of Agricultural University, University of Veterinary Science, University of Forestry and Environmental Science, Agriculture Research Department, Forest Research Department, Post-Harvest Technology Division, Farm Machinery Training Centre, Agriculture and Rural Development Training centres and new Department of Livestock and Aquaculture Research. The ministry also tries hard to launch a new department of mechanized farming research. — MNA

MIFER Deputy Minister attends 1st Meeting of High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision

THE First Meeting of the High-level Task Force on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision was organized in

Jakarta, Indonesia, from 31 March to 1 April 2022.

Myanmar delegation led by Eminent Person (EP) Dep-

uty Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Than Aung Kyaw and High-Level Representative

(HLR) Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to ASEAN U Aung Myo Myint joined the meeting.

Cambodian Deputy Minister Dr Chem Widhya of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and former Chair of Malaysia Human Rights Commission Tan Sri Hasmy Agam co-chaired the event.

During the meeting, they discussed rules and regulations and work plans of the working committee on drafting ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision, participation of officials concerned in drafting ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision, measures to strengthen ASEAN capacity, implementations of ASEAN Community 2025 and other points to add in ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision.

Then, the deputy minister made some suggestions to carry out the measures in line with the directives of ASEAN leaders, holding high-level task force meetings, priorities in implementing the ASEAN Community Post-2025 Vision and other work plans.

He also discussed the measures to analyze the facts that will be added to ASEAN Community Post-2025 Vision and other related matters.

The High-Level Task Force serves as an advisory group to develop a vision and process that will shape the key to ASEAN's future integration, considering the need to address the geopolitical tensions beyond 2025, strengthen the socio-economic impacts of natural disasters and the pandemic, and ASEAN-centred regional cooperation. — MNA



The Myanmar delegation take the documentary group photo in the first Meeting of the High-Level Task Force on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision in Jakarta, Indonesia on 1 April 2022.

Coord meeting on Yuan/Kyat direct use in Sino-Myanmar border trade held

A coordination meeting on Yuan/Kyat direct payment in the Myanmar-China border trade sector was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar Daw Than Than Swe explained the Yuan/Kyat payment procedures, guidelines for Yuan/Kyat payment, designated banks, implementation works, Yuan/Kyat accounts, difficulties of banking sectors and reports of merchants regarding ED export incomes.

Then, Joint Secretary of the Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods Brig-Gen Yan Naung Soe discussed the bilateral cooperation of China and Myanmar to resolve the difficulties in Yuan/Kyat direct payment, export and benefits of the use of Yuan/Kyat direct payment.



The coordination meeting on the Yuan-Kyat direct settlement in the Sino-Myanmar border trade in progress.

Then, the Bank of China Hong Kong Limited, Yangon Branch and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Limited, Yangon Branch, presented challenges during the trial period. The officials of designated banks, relevant banks and associations coor-

minated the discussion. The Central Bank of Myanmar permitted the Yuan/Kyat direct payment in Sino-Myanmar border trade and allowed the Myanmar Economic Bank, ICBC, Yangon Branch and BOC, Yangon Branch. This move aims to boost

bilateral cross-border trade, facilitate trading and bilateral transaction, lessen the reliance on the US dollar, draft economic plans based on the bilateral trade data and increase the use of domestic currency. The bilateral trade be-

tween China and Myanmar was conducted starting in December 2021. The Central Bank of Myanmar cooperated with the Muse-Namhkam Border Trade Chamber of Commerce, Kunlong-Hopan-Chinshwehaw-Laukkai Border Trade Chamber of Commerce, Trade Department and Customs Department under the lead of the Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods.

The CBM allowed other private banks to serve as designated banks to streamline the Yuan/Kyat direct payment sector, such as CB Bank PCL, Ayeyawady Bank, UAB Bank and Myanma Apex Bank.

Granting permits to private banks and Myanma Economic Bank will provide various options to the traders in making Yuan/Kyat direct payments. — MNA

Second batch of 500,000 AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines arrives in Yangon

OF the one million doses of COVID-19 AstraZeneca brand donated by Thailand to the people of Myanmar for use in the COVID-19 vaccination project, 500,000 doses and 500,000 needles arrived at Yangon International Airport by Thai Airways at 9:15 am yesterday. The handover ceremony of the vaccines and needles to the Myanmar Red Cross Society was held at Yangon International Airport. General Secretary of Myanmar Red Cross Society Prof Dr Htin Zaw Soe, Deputy General Secretary Dr Tin Tun Aung, Deputy Director of the Public Health Department, Yangon Region Dr Aye

Mon Mon Kyaw, and officials, Charge d'affaires Mrs Kanokwan Pengsuwan from the Thai Embassy in Myanmar and the embassy officials attended the event. The COVID-19 vaccine received from this donation will be widely distributed to relevant regions, states, and rural areas where vaccination coverage is still weak. The Ministry of Health is stepping up its efforts to ensure that a hundred per cent of the COVID-19 vaccine is fully vaccinated in the targeted groups. As of 2 April, 27.01 million people have been inoculated in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territo-

ry and respective regions and states, and 1.09 million people have been jabbed against COVID-19. As of 1 April, the ministry had injected 49.96 million COVID-19 vaccines into people across Myanmar. Repeated doses of the COVID-19 vaccine can reduce the risk of severe disease. All target groups must receive a full dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, as it can significantly reduce hospital admissions and deaths from the disease. Therefore, the public is urged to actively participate in completing the entire course of the COVID-19 vaccine. — MNA



Officials receive the second batch of 500,000 AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines donated by Thailand.

Govt to approve EOI applicants to export maize grains to China if they meet rules

ACCORDING to the Working Task Force, the companies that apply for EOI to export maize grains to China will be submitted to Chinese officials if they meet the requirements. The officials sign the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) health agreement with China to export maize grains. Therefore, it has already been announced that the Expression of Interest (EOI) must be submitted to the Working Task Force no later than 31 March for the companies to export the maize grains in line with the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Protocol and to scrutinize the annual registration. Any company must adhere to the following rules: to submit the export quality dryer machine or warehouse business in person or a joint venture agreement for

a specific period; to submit the documents if the applicants have experience in exporting maize grains to China (or) other countries; to follow the Chinese rules and regulations, and to be an organization to ensure food safety and use the contract farming and good agriculture practice-GAP if necessary. The Working Task Force will examine the EOI applications that meet these rules, and the Consumer Affairs Department and MITS will conduct field studies on dryers and warehouses. The companies that meet the rules will be recommended to China by Agriculture Department. The Working Task Force is organized by officials of the department concerned, UMFCOI and the Myanmar Corn Industrial Association. — NN/GNLM

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Announcement of Online e-Visa Reopening

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

Ministry of Immigration and Population

Daily newspapers in circulation on New Year holidays alternatively

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

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

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

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

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

News and Periodicals Enterprise

Sixteen container ships to arrive in Yangon Port during Thingyan holidays



One of the container ships is seen berthing at Yangon Port. PHOTO : KA NU

SIXTEEN container vessels will arrive from 9 to 17 April, the April Thingyan holidays, when the Myanmar Port Authority and ports are providing services to expedite the import of containers by sea as soon as possible.

Supervised by the Myanmar

Port Authority in cooperation with the shipping lines and importers, the service of container vessels is facilitated at the port of Yangon with an average turnaround time of three days, which has increased the number of shipments and handlings.

According to the Myanmar Port Authority, there will be 52 vessels from 14 shipping lines this month, and 16 container ships will call at 16 ports during the nine days of the Thingyan holiday. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM

Illegal timbers, unregistered vehicles seized in some townships

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

The inspection teams led by the Police Force under the management of the Sagaing Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force carried out inspections. They seized an unregistered Nissan Diesel 10-wheel vehicle, a 16-wheel vehicle (estimated at K30,000,000), a Toyota Caldina car without a licence (estimated at K2,000,000) and an unregistered motorbike (estimated at K250,000) totalling K32,250,000. Action is taken under the Import and Export Law.

Similarly, a combined inspection team led by the re-

gional Forest Department with the management of the Bago Region Anti-Illegal Trade Task Force carried out inspections. It seized 5.4492 tonnes of illegal teak, timbers and other wood (estimated value of K538,000),

and action was taken under the forest law.

Thus, five arrests were made on 2 April (estimated at K32,788,000), according to the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee. — MNA



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

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

Yesterday, a vehicle transported seven tonnes of disposable masks imported by one company via the Chinshwehaw trading post. A total of 23 tonnes of dis-

posable masks were imported on 1 and 2 April.

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

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

Heroin, ecstasy tablets seized in some townships

A combined inspection team consisting of members of the Anti-Drugs Police Force conducted inspections in Satemu village, Phakant Township, at 3:35 pm on 1 April.

A search of a motorbike driven by Aung Maing turned up 108,300 ecstasy tablets. A combined inspection team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force inspected an Alphard car driven by Kyaw Min (aka) Bala and a Toyota Wish vehicle driven by Thuya Aung on the road of Moemeik to Mabaine in Moemeik Township. It seized 2.2 kilo-

grammes of heroin in the Alphard car, and 1.32 kilogrammes of heroin in the Toyota Wish car.

Similarly, a combined inspection team consisting of members of the Anti-Drugs Police Force inspected a house of Ma Aye Kyin in No (2) Ward in Tangyan Township and seized 2,000 ecstasy tablets and 0.003 kilogramme of heroin.

They are prosecuted under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to the Myanmar Police Force. — MNA/GNLM

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

THE third day of the 2022 Matriculation Exam was held yesterday morning, with 281,249 students sitting for the mathematics subject exam. This year, the Ministry of Education opened 20 foreign exam centres and 1,238 local

exam centres. According to the Ministry of Education, 281,249 students out of 312,424 students registered to take the exam took the mathematics subject exam, accounting for 90.02 per cent. — MNA

Students are seen sitting for the exam in Mandalay Region.
PHOTO : MIN HTET AUNG



Katha Township. **PHOTO : KATHA DISTRICT IPRD**



Kalay District. **PHOTO : KALAY DISTRICT IPRD**



Bahan Township. Photo : Aung Myint (IPRD)



Intaw town. **PHOTO : AUNG KHAING (IPRD)**



Ingapu Township. **PHOTO : MANN KYAW (INGAPU IPRD)**

COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various states, regions

DOCTORS and nurses from public hospitals, Tatmadaw medical teams, healthcare workers and volunteers are working hard to give COVID-19 vaccines in different states and regions. The vaccination programme is one of the essential activities in preventing, controlling, and treating COVID-19 disease. COVID-19 vaccine is administered daily to target groups regardless of race or religion, including Buddhist monks and nuns, local people over the age of 40, students, religious leaders, prisoners,

people with disabilities, ethnic armed groups, people with chronic diseases, people in IDP camps and over 12-year-old students, respectively. On 1 and 2 April, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams from the Tatmadaw, relevant healthcare workers, in collaboration with volunteers, gave COVID-19 vaccines to 6,277 people from fifteen townships in Shan State(North), 5,357 people from 11 townships in Mon and Kayin States, 16,276 people from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 8,260 people from nine

townships in Rakhine State, 2,276 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region, and 380 people from three townships in Bago Region, respectively. Similarly, healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 78 students from Muse and Namhkam townships in Shan State (North) on 1 and 2 April. It is reported that officials from the respective Regional Military Headquarters visited the site and coordinated the necessary work. — MNA



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

Avoid committing corruption in sector-wise measures

CORRUPTION is dangerous one in society. Those who commit corruption and accomplices are designed to attempt to destroy society. Hence, the people from the society need to wipe off the crime brokers in corruption cases. Everybody needs to understand the direct and indirect ways and means of committing corruption cases. The Myanmar society avoids the four basic kinds of corruption in line with Buddhism—Chandagati Dosagati, Mohagati and Bhayagati—defying that it commits bias and does inappropriate things based on friendship and loving, anger, irrationality and frightening. Those who commit corruption would lead the unexpected abodes in the vicious circle.

Not only the government but the people should not commit any kinds of corruption based on the aforesaid Gati. Those who commit corruption can be identified as selfish, which assails the whole society. They are the common enemy of the people. Hence, everybody needs to analyze themselves whether their daily acts are designed to commit corruption for all.

For example, the government currently strives for the development of the nation. In this regard, electricity is playing a key role in modernizing the whole of Myanmar. But, generating capacity of power plants is down due to various reasons. That is why the government manages the supply of electricity to the people on a daily basis.

Everybody wishes to consume electricity as usual for operating their daily routine works. But they have to accept the situation the country is facing a shortage of electricity this summer. They have to do everything under the electrification management plan of the government. In Yangon Region, the people are moving acts under the three-shift electrification timetable per day. So, they can do something when the electricity is supplied, and they can break their works when the power is out depending on the timetable. They have to accept the situation in which officials arrange the plans as much as they can.

On one hand, officials need to avoid any kinds of corruption in electrification. Most of the people do not comprehensively understand the electrification process. Electrical officials should handle the shifting of power supply for the people righteously without bias. They should not take bribes to change the power lines to others who do not reach their turns yet. In fact, everybody needs to restrict their souls not to exchange their wishes with bribes as an indelible act of life in committing corruption.



A third of the world remains totally unvaccinated against COVID: Tedros

A THIRD of the world's population has yet to receive a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine, including a shocking 83 per cent of all Africans, said the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday.

"This is not acceptable to me, and it should not be acceptable to anyone", said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "If the world's rich are enjoying the benefits of high vaccine coverage, why shouldn't the world's poor? Are some lives worth more than others?"

He announced that to tackle future threats on a par with the virus that has now taken well over six million lives, and infected more than 483 million people, he said WHO was launching a new strategy to scale up genomic surveillance, for deadly pathogens that had "epidemic and pandemic potential".

He also unveiled the updated Strategic Preparedness, Readiness and Response Plan for COVID-19.

The COVID end game?

"This is our third strategic plan for COVID-19, and it could and should be our last", he said, laying out three possible scenarios for how the pandemic could evolve this year.

The most likely scenario is



Israel has set up large COVID-19 vaccination centres such as this one in Tel Aviv. PHOTO: AFP

that the virus continues to evolve, but the severity of disease it causes reduces over time as immunity increases due to vaccination and infection, he stated.

"Periodic spikes in cases and deaths may occur as immunity wanes, which may require periodic boosting for vulnerable populations. In the best-case scenario, we may see less severe variants emerge, and boosters or new formulations of vaccines won't be necessary."

But, in the worst-case scenario, a more virulent and high-

ly transmissible variant could emerge, sooner or later, and against this new threat, people's protection against severe disease and death, from prior vaccination or infection, "will wane rapidly", Tedros warned.

Addressing this situation would require significantly altering the current vaccines and making sure they get to the people who are most vulnerable to severe disease, he said.

The UN health agency chief laid out five strategic areas governments need to focus on, and

invest in:

- Surveillance, laboratories, and public health intelligence
- Vaccination, public health and social measures, and engaged communities
- Clinical care for COVID-19, and resilient health systems
- Research and development, and equitable access to tools and supplies
- And finally, coordination, as the response transitions from emergency mode to long-term respiratory disease management.

"We have all the tools we need to bring this pandemic under control: we can prevent transmission with masks, distancing, hand hygiene and ventilation; and we can save lives by ensuring everyone has access to tests, treatments and vaccines".

Equitable vaccination remains the single most powerful tool at the world's disposal, to save lives, Tedros reminded.

Striving to vaccinate 70% of the population of every country remains essential for bringing the pandemic under control, with priority given to health workers, older people and other at-risk groups.

Crisis hotspots

Over 24 million people will need humanitarian assistance this year in Afghanistan, said Tedros, and they face displacement, drought, food insecurity and malnutrition, COVID-19, and many other health challenges.

Women and girls are especially at risk, he added, from lack of access to health services, and lack of access to education, describing last week's failure to backtrack on opening middle and high schools for girls as "very troubling". For the millions whose lives and basic healthcare is at risk due to the raging conflict in

northern Ethiopia, Tedros, whose family roots are in Tigray, welcomed last week's declaration of a humanitarian truce in the region - between Tigrayan leaders and Government forces, in order to allow in vital aid - saying he hoped it would lead to the rapid restoration of public services, including electricity, telecommunications, banking and healthcare.

Tigray aid held up

"However, a week has passed since the truce was announced, but no food has been allowed into Tigray yet, he said. "Every hour makes a difference when people are starving to death. No food has reached Tigray since mid-December, and almost no fuel has been delivered since August of last year. "The siege of six million people in Tigray by Eritrean and Ethiopian forces for more than 500 days, is one of the longest in modern history. Sustaining WHO's response to all of these emergencies, from the COVID-19 pandemic, to Ukraine, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and more, requires the generosity of donors."

Under WHO's Global Health Emergency Appeal for 2022, he noted that \$2.7 billion was needed "to save lives and alleviate suffering around the world".

SOURCE: UN

Singapore reopens borders after two-year Covid closure

SINGAPORE fully reopened its borders to all vaccinated visitors Friday after a two-year coronavirus closure, with arrivals saying it felt "wonderful" to travel again without onerous restrictions.

The aviation hub, a key gateway for people arriving in Asia, joins other countries in the region that have recently dropped travel curbs as they shift to living with Covid-19.

Previously, only travellers from a handful of places could enter Singapore without quarantining but from Friday all vaccinated arrivals just need a negative Covid test.

The city-state's Changi Airport

The city-state's Changi Airport buzzed with activity as passengers streamed out of the arrival area, while hundreds were lining up in the departure zone to make trips outside Singapore.

"It's wonderful," Aldo Pizzini, a 63-year-old Italian businessman who had flown in from Milan, told AFP.

"I took the first opportunity to fly today, (now) that much of the restrictions are lifted... We are coming back to normality."

Diana Mathias, who is from French Guiana and lives in Abu Dhabi, was visiting Singapore for a holiday with her mother.

"I feel really happy because it's a long time since I flew," she said.

The 38-year-old said she was a "bit stressed" at the prospect of doing a lot of paperwork to travel again but in the end found the process "really easy".

Borders also reopened fully in neighbouring Malaysia on Friday, and thousands of cars and motorcycles flooded across a one-kilometre (0.6 mile) causeway that separates it from Singapore.

The causeway, one of the world's

busiest land borders, had already partially reopened last year although some curbs were still in place.

The main airport serving Kuala Lumpur was busy as foreign tourists arrived.

Previously tourists were barred from entering Malaysia, a popular destination due to its white-sand beaches and lush rainforests, but vaccinated travellers can now do so with only a negative Covid test.

Bo Lingam — group CEO of leading regional carrier AirAsia, which is based in Malaysia — predicted a "surge" in people flying.

The reopening of borders is "a joy for me and our AirAsia staff who had to face a lot of hardship during the pandemic", he told AFP.

"From today, it is all about flying the blue skies and an end to our planes sitting on the tarmac."—AFP



Flight attendants walk past a giant lollipop display at Changi Airport in Singapore. PHOTO: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 2 April 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 3 April 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Kachin, and eastern Shan states, fairly widespread in Southern Shan State, scattered in Upper Sagaing, and Taninthayi regions and Northern Shan, Kayah and Kayin states and isolated in the remaining regions and states. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough seas are likely at times in Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly winds may reach (30-35) mph. Sea will be slight to moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (6-9) feet in Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts and (4-7) feet in Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coast.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of scattered to fairly widespread rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin and Shan states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 April 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 April 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 April 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Philippines to host SpaceX's first Starlink in Southeast Asia

THE Philippines announced on Thursday its plan to host US private space company SpaceX's Starlink project, making it the first Southeast Asian country to avail of the technology for better telecommunications services.

Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said SpaceX's proposed project will provide internet services in the Philippines using its Low Earth Orbit satellite network constellation called Starlink.

Lopez said the launch of SpaceX's Starlink in the country will enable a much faster broadband speed, better connectivity, more capacity for telecommunications service, and more affordable rates for consumers, particularly in areas where connectivity has been difficult or impossible.—Xinhua ■

UN starts task force for company climate targets

THE United Nations launched a task force Thursday to pressure businesses to keep their emissions-cutting promises instead of masking progress with feel-good "greenwashing".

The group will draw up standards for measuring the credibility of claims by non-state groups -- including cities and companies -- that they are cutting the carbon emissions driving devastating climate change.

The 16-member group of experts will be chaired by Canada's former environment minister Catherine McKenna and includes various academics and leaders from business, finance, energy, politics and NGOs.

Countries have agreed they must cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius to avert the worst impacts. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says this requires carbon-neutrality by mid-century. But UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that state pledges will not be enough if regional authorities, polluting companies and the banks that finance them do not pull their weight.—AFP ■

Aussie researchers trial micro-dose vaccines against Japanese encephalitis

AS dozens of cases of Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) have been detected across Australia in recent weeks, researchers at the University of Queensland and the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute (QIMR Berghofer) have designed a way to stretch limited vaccines further.

The discovery, revealed on Friday, has opened up trials for a method of JEV vaccine delivery that could stretch supplies as much as four times further.

Luis Furuya-Kanamori from University of Queensland said the research was only in the preliminary phase, but the initial results were encouraging.

"Participants were given a

micro-dose of an existing vaccine into the top layer of the skin rather than in the deeper layers," he said.

Initial tests on 11 participants showed that after eight weeks they had all experienced good antibody levels, equivalent to that of a full, normal dose, and had experienced no severe side effects. "What it means is this potential approach could lower the cost of JE vaccination and protect four times as many people per vaccine vial."

JEV is a potentially deadly virus transmitted by mosquitos that causes high levels of human disease in many countries including India, the Philippines, and Viet Nam.—Xinhua ■



The vaccine was safe and immunogenic but antibody response in HIV-infected children was not as high as in uninfected children.
PHOTO: KYODO/FILE

UN-Habitat initiates new award to spur urban sustainable development

THE United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has initiated the Shanghai Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities to boost urban sustainable development across the globe.

"The Shanghai Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities will be inaugurated at World Cities Day in Shanghai on 31 October 2022," said Maimunah Sharif, UN-Habitat executive director, during the first session of the Executive Board in 2022 held Wednesday in the Kenyan capital Nairobi.

Sharif appreciated the efforts made by the Chinese

government to support the establishment of this new award.

According to UN-Habitat, the award, initiated by UN-Habitat, China's Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the Shanghai Municipal Government and led by UN-Habitat, will be selected once a year, with a comprehensive award to reward cities with outstanding overall performance in urban sustainable development and several theme awards to reward cities that have made outstanding progress in a certain aspect of urban sustainable development.—Xinhua ■



The world is developing at an unprecedented scale. Over the next 20 years, urban population in developing countries will double to four billion. **PHOTO: STR/AFP**

Indigenous lands key to climate goals in Latin America: report



By fighting for their lands, Indigenous peoples are fighting to save the planet. **PHOTO: IUCN/AFP**

BRAZIL, Colombia, Mexico and Peru will not be able to meet their 2030 climate goals if they do not protect indigenous communities' lands, according to a report released Thursday.

To achieve the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the international community must take into account indigenous peoples and local communities, said the report by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and Climate

Focus.

In Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, the lands of indigenous peoples and other local communities capture more than twice as much carbon as non-indigenous ones, the report found.

In addition, 92 per cent of these forested lands serve as net "sinks" — they store more carbon than they emit — due to their traditional and sustainable practices as well as the fact that they are largely untouched forest. —AFP ■

Nepal PM Deuba applauds India's COVID-19 response

NEPAL Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba hailed his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi's leadership, saying Kathmandu has seen his visionary and effective management of the COVID-19 pandemic while also receiving the first vaccine aid as well as medicines, equipment and logistics.

The two Prime Ministers jointly launched multiple projects which are likely to boost connectivity between the two countries while they expressed hope that the key initiatives being taken by them would take India-Nepal relations to new heights.

"I admire the progress that India is making under the visionary leadership of PM Modi. We've seen India's effective manage-



A health worker collects a swab from a man during a COVID-19 test in New Delhi, India, on 6 November 2020. PHOTO: PARTHA SARKAR/XINHUA/FILE

ment in battling COVID-19 and Nepal received the first vaccine aid from India as well as medicines, medical equipment and logistics to combat the virus," he said.

He further said that both the

countries had friendly talks and fruitful discussions on various aspects of India-Nepal relations.

"We had friendly talks and fruitful discussions on various aspects of India-Nepal relations. We shared our perspectives on

further strengthening our friendly ties," he said at Hyderabad House.

Both PMs first inaugurated a 35-km long cross-border rail link from Jayanagar in Bihar to Kurtha in Nepal and also a passenger train service built under India's Grant Assistance in a joint address at Hyderabad House. Deuba is on a three-day India visit.

"PM Deuba and I also agreed to give priority to trade and cross-border connectivity initiatives in all respects. The beginning of the Jayanagar-Kurtha rail line is part of this initiative. Such schemes will make a great contribution to the smooth, hassle-free exchange of people between the two countries," said PM Modi.—ANI ■

Japan eases COVID-19 warning against travel to 106 nations

JAPAN on Friday eased its travel warning for 106 nations including the United States and India over the coronavirus pandemic, no longer recommending Japanese nationals against travelling to the areas.

The Foreign Ministry lowered its travel advisories for those countries also including Britain, France and Germany from the second-highest Level 3 on its four-point scale to Level 2, under which Japanese citizens are asked to refrain from all non-

essential overseas travel.

Meanwhile, 56 nations and regions remained under the Level 3 warning, including 40 in the Middle East and Africa, 10 in Europe and six in Latin America.

"Although the situations are different among nations and areas, the number of new COVID-19 infections and deaths has been on a decreasing trend globally, and risks of dying and developing serious symptoms have been reduced on the back of progress in vaccinations," Foreign Min-



Japan on Friday eased its travel warning for 106 nations including the United States and India over the coronavirus pandemic, no longer recommending Japanese nationals against travelling to the areas. PHOTO: KYODO

ister Yoshimasa Hayashi said at a press conference. Hayashi also cited gradual easing of re-

strictions on economic activities and travelling overseas in many countries.—Kyodo ■

West part of Shanghai begins lockdown amid COVID resurgence

THE western part of Shanghai, China's financial and business hub, began to be locked down Friday to carry out mass COVID-19 testing, as new infections with the novel coronavirus has been resurging recently. Across the mainland, 7,229 people were confirmed to be infected with the virus on Thursday, while 4,502 new cases were recorded on the same day in Shanghai, with a population of around 24.9 million, according to Chinese health authorities. China said it would lock down each half of Shanghai to minimize the impact on business activities. The lock-

down in the eastern area was lifted on Friday. Many Japanese people live in the western part of the city.

The Communist-led government has pledged to continue its radical "zero COVID" policy, including imposing lockdowns on cities when outbreaks occur and quarantining travellers from abroad, even after the end of the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics. Until next Tuesday, citizens in districts to the west of the Huangpu River, which passes through Shanghai, will not be allowed to leave their homes in principle.—Kyodo ■



Community workers prepare to distribute rapid antigen test kits in east China's Shanghai, 26 March 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA/GAO FENG

NEWS IN BRIEF

Thailand reports new daily record of 28,379 COVID-19 infections

THAILAND on Friday reported 28,379 new COVID-19 cases over the past 24 hours, the highest daily rise so far, bringing the total tally to over 3.65 million.

The daily case tally has been rising for three consecutive days and renewed the record of 27,560 new infections set on Thursday, according to the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), the country's COVID-19 task force.

The capital Bangkok reported 3,350 infections during the last 24 hours, according to the CCSA.

This came as the Southeast Asian country further eased entry rules amid efforts to revive the tourism sector. Starting Friday, international visitors to Thailand will no longer be required to show negative COVID-19 test results 72 hours prior to their departure, but they still need to undergo the RT-PCT test upon arrival.—Xinhua ■

Amid rising COVID-19 cases, Chinese Taipei shuts 39 schools

AMID a spike in COVID-19 cases, Chinese Taipei on Friday declared the closure of 39 schools.

School closures and class cancellations were announced in 10 counties in cities due to COVID infections, reported Taiwan News.

Many teachers and students were reportedly infected as new COVID cases are being reported in multiple locations across Chinese Taipei.

39 schools have announced either the closure of the whole campus or the suspension of specific classes, reported Taiwan News.

Chinese Taipei on Friday reported 104 local COVID cases, most in 281 days, according to the Central Epidemic Command Centre (CECC).

CECC head Chen Shih-chung also confirmed 132 imported cases. The command centre did not report any new deaths, leaving the COVID death toll at 853.—ANI ■

NEWS
IN BRIEFIraq's oil export
revenue hits
monthly high since
1972: ministry

IRAQ exported more than 100.56 million barrels of crude oil in March, bringing in revenues of 11.07 billion US dollars, the highest monthly revenue since 1972, the Iraqi oil ministry said on Friday.

The average selling price for crude oil in the month was 110.09 dollars per barrel, according to a ministry statement, citing statistics from the State Organization for Marketing of Oil.

A total of 99.11 million barrels were exported from oil fields in central and southern Iraq via the Port of Basra, and about 1.44 million barrels from the northern province of Kirkuk via the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean, the statement said.

It added that the average crude oil exports in March reached 3.24 million barrels per day.—Xinhua ■

Glasgow apologizes
for role in slave
trade

GLASGOW authorities Thursday apologized for the city's role in the Atlantic slave trade, saying the "tentacles" of money from the practice reached every corner of Scotland's biggest metropolis.

The apology comes as Britain increasingly reckons with the legacy of its colonial past in the wake of global Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests.

It follows the release of an academic study Glasgow City Council commissioned about the city's connections to the trade in human beings.

"Follow the Atlantic slavery money trail and its tentacles reach into every corner of Glasgow," council leader Susan Aitken told colleagues at a meeting. "It's clear what this report tells is that the blood of trafficked and enslaved African people, their children and their children's children is built into the very bones of this city."

One of the report's main findings was that 40 out of 79 lord provosts or mayors from Glasgow were connected to the Atlantic slave trade between 1636 and 1834.—AFP ■

China's Shaanxi launches first int'l freight
train via China-Laos Railway

NORTHWEST China's Shaanxi Province on Wednesday launched its first freight train to the Laotian capital Vientiane, travelling via the China-Laos Railway.

The train loaded with 630 tonnes of condiments, worth nearly 1 million US dollars, departed from the city of Baoji and will exit China via the Mohan Port in the country's southwest Yunnan Province, and this entire journey will take seven days, according to the China Railway Xi'an Group Co., Ltd.

"Our company used to trade with many ASEAN countries mainly through rail-sea transport. But in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, it is difficult to guarantee timely delivery and safety of cargo transportation,"



A freight train heading for the Laotian capital Vientiane, travelling via the China-Laos Railway, is about to leave a logistics base in Baoji City, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, 30 March 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA/RAN XINGJIE**

said Liu Haitao, deputy general manager of the cargo supplier in Baoji.

"With international freight trains plying on the China-Laos Railway, goods can be delivered

to Vientiane quickly and conveniently following the integrated customs declaration and acceptance in Baoji comprehensive bonded zone," Liu said.

This would effectively help enterprises to accurately connect with the ASEAN international market and achieve high-quality development, Liu added. Apples, kiwi fruits and other agricultural products from Shaanxi, as well as tropical fruits from Southeast Asia, will also be transported via the international freight train routes.

The China-Laos Railway, which kicked off operation on 3 Dec, 2021, stretches over 1,000 km, linking Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan Province, with the Laotian capital Vientiane.—Xinhua ■

Spain, Portugal
present plan for cutting
electricity costs

SPAIN and Portugal on Thursday sent Brussels their joint proposal for lowering electricity prices in the Iberian peninsula, Spain's ecology minister said.

The move came a week after the European Union agreed that Spain and Portugal could deviate from the bloc's rules on energy pricing to ease the impact of energy prices on consumers.

The decision to grant them "special treatment" came after their efforts to convince Brussels to decouple electricity prices from the gas market fell on deaf ears.

"We have a joint proposal... and we're working with

the European Commission" to push it through, Teresa Ribera told reporters.

The proposal involves capping the price of gas used for the generation of electricity to the equivalent of "30 euros (\$33)" per megawatt hour, she said.

Such a cap, which would significantly reduce the price of electricity on the wholesale market in both countries, "is one of the technical elements of the proposal we need to discuss" with Brussels, she said.

Prices are particularly high in the Iberian peninsula, with both Spain and Portugal heavily dependent on gas to produce electricity.—AFP ■



Portugal's largest utility, EDP-Energias de Portugal. **PHOTO: EDP/AFP/FILE**

Ukraine war a limited
threat to European banks in
short-term: EBA

Banks would be affected by "lower economic growth", which could reduce demand for loans, the EBA said **PHOTO: PHILIPPE LOPEZ/AFP/FILE**

THE European Banking Authority (EBA) said on Friday that the war in Ukraine would have a limited impact on European banks initially but there were clear medium-term risks.

"First-round (direct) risks stemming from the Russian invasion of Ukraine are not a fundamental threat to the stability of the EU banking system but second-round (indirect) effects may be more material," the EBA said in its latest risk report.

It said European banks' direct asset exposures to Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were concentrated in just a few countries and a limited number of banks, mostly through their subsidiaries in these countries. But it warned the war could have more significant consequences in the longer

term on banks in the European Economic Area – the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Banks would be affected by "lower economic growth", which could reduce demand for loans, the EBA said.

Western sanctions on Russia and Belarus could hinder clients' ability to service their bank loans, as could counter-sanctions imposed by Moscow and Minsk.

Market volatility, the impact of the war on supply chains and the risk of cyberattacks were also factors of concern, it added.

In the fourth quarter of 2021, European banks reported exposures – loans, advances and debt securities – of €76 billion towards Russian counterparties and €11 billion towards those in Ukraine.—AFP ■

Japanese trade agency optimistic about Chinese market

ALTHOUGH some parts of China have been hit by a resurgence of COVID-19 infections, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) said it remains optimistic about the Chinese market and Japan-China economic cooperation.

Kenji Mizuta, president of JETRO's Shanghai representative office, said that JETRO has always had firm confidence in China's enormous market.

The agency will work concertedly to combat the epidemic and hopes that Japanese companies will be able to resume offline operations soon, he said.

He added that JETRO will continue to organize Japanese enterprises to participate in the China International Import Expo in Shanghai this year.



Aerial photo taken on 3 March 2021 shows containers piled up at the Ningbo Zhoushan Port in Ningbo, east China's Zhejiang Province. **PHOTO: XINHUA/WENG XINYANG**

Shanghai reported 358 confirmed locally transmitted COVID-19 cases and 4,144 asymptomatic carriers on Thursday.

The megacity in east China on Monday began its two-phase enforcement of temporary closed-off management to track possible infections and curb the spread of the virus.—Xinhua ■

Ukraine eyes Romanian port for key farm exports



Constanta is the largest port on the Black Sea, handling more than 67 million tonnes of exports in 2021. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

FACED with a Russian blockade of its own ports, Ukraine is seeking to export the farm goods

that many countries depend on via the Romanian Black Sea port of Constanta.

The solution is crucial both to Ukraine's economy and to entire populations that rely heavily on its wheat and sunflower oil.

Bucharest has confirmed that discussions are underway with Kyiv, pointing out that Constanta already handles some imports to Ukraine and exports from it. Before the war, Ukraine accounted for 12 per cent of global wheat exports, 15 per cent of maize and 50 per cent of world sunflower oil.

"We and our partners are looking for alternative logistical routes to export our goods via European ports, including Constanta," Ukrainian Agriculture Minister Mykola Solsky said recently.—AFP ■

Fukushima bullet train services return 2 weeks after big quake

EAST Japan Railway Co. on Saturday resumed bullet train services between Koriyama and Fukushima stations that were suspended following a powerful earthquake in north-eastern Japan more than two weeks ago.

Tohoku Shinkansen trains will run at a reduced speed of up to 160 kilometres per hour, half their maximum speed, between the two stations in

Fukushima Prefecture and the number of services will be kept at about 50 per cent of normal, according to the company, also known as JR East.

With the resumption, direct Yamagata Shinkansen Line services to and from Tokyo became possible. The line had only been operating between Fukushima and Shinjo in Yamagata Prefecture in the wake of the M7.4 quake on 16 March, which left

three people dead and more than 200 injured across more than 10 prefectures. The quake, which struck off the coast of Fukushima, caused one Tohoku Shinkansen bullet train carrying 78 people to derail in Shiroishi, Miyagi Prefecture.

The 16 of the train's 17 cars derailed in the incident, injuring four people, with one car moving about one metre off the side of the tracks.—Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkey hikes energy prices for industries, households

TURKEY announced on Friday a massive hike in energy prices because of the country's heavy reliance on energy imports amid a global surge in prices.

Turkey's state-run BOTAS Petroleum Pipeline Company said natural gas prices for industries rise by 50 per cent and those for households by 35 per cent starting 1 April.

The natural gas price for electricity production increase by 44.3 per cent, it added.

Global consumers have been exposed to exorbitant energy prices because of the extraordinary fluctuations in the energy markets since the beginning of 2021, BOTAS noted.

Meanwhile, electricity prices for industrial use are raised by between 20.01 per cent and 26.37 per cent, Turkey's Energy Market Regulatory Authority said Friday.

Over 70 per cent of Turkey's energy needs are reliant on imports, making the country vulnerable to fluctuating energy prices.—Xinhua ■

Lebanon, Armenia agree to open flight route run by Armenian airline

LEBANON and Armenia agreed on Friday to open a flight route run by an Armenian airline between the two countries, the National News Agency reported, citing a Lebanese minister.

"Both Lebanese and Armenian national carriers will be operating regular flights to and from Lebanon, which will hopefully bolster relations between the two countries," said Lebanese Public Works and Transport Minister Ali Hamieh, without specifying the starting date of the new route. FlyOne Armenia, the country's low-cost airline, will operate three flights per week from Armenia's capital Yerevan to Lebanon's capital Beirut, and vice versa, according to Hamieh.—Xinhua ■

Sentiment among large Japanese manufacturers drops for 1st time in 7 quarters as costs spike

BUSINESS sentiment among large Japanese manufacturers deteriorated for the first time in seven quarters in March, as energy and raw material costs surged due to the situation in Ukraine and the downside effects of COVID-linked supply chain issues, the Bank of Japan's (BOJ) said in its Tankan report Friday. The sentiment index gauging confidence among large manufacturers such as automakers and electronics manufacturers fell from 17 booked three months ago to 14, marking the lowest level since June 2021, the report showed.

The index for large non-manufacturers, meanwhile, including the service sector, edged down from 10 in the previous survey in December, to nine, owing to antiviral restrictions that were applied to numerous businesses in the majority of Japan's 47 prefectures when a quasi-state of emergency was declared in a bid to curb the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant of the coronavirus.—Xinhua ■



Photo taken 2 April 2022, shows a Tohoku Shinkansen bullet train arriving at Tokyo Station having departed from Fukushima. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Pope apologizes to Canada’s Indigenous for abuse at church-run schools



The pontiff said he hoped to travel to Canada in July. **PHOTO: VATICAN MEDIA/AFP**

POPE Francis apologized Friday for abuse committed at church-run residential schools in Canada, telling Indigenous delegations at the Vatican it caused him “pain and shame”.
“I ask for God’s forgiveness for the deplorable conduct of these members of the Catholic Church,” he said, following meetings this week with survivors from the First Nations, Metis and Inuit aboriginal groups.
After hearing “stories of suffering, deprivation, discriminatory treatment and various forms of abuse,” Francis said he joined the Canadian bishops “in asking you for forgiveness”.
The pontiff, 85, said he hoped to travel to Canada for the country’s St Anne’s Feast Day on 26 July.
“This year, I hope to be with you on those days,” he said.
Francis heard first-hand this week of centuries of abuse committed at the schools and the delegations had pressed him for an apology for a scandal that rocked the Catholic Church.
Some 150,000 First Nations,

Metis and Inuit children were enrolled from the late 1800s to the 1990s in 139 residential schools across Canada, as part of a government policy of forced assimilation.
They spent months or years isolated from their families, language and culture, and many were physically and sexually abused by headmasters and teachers.
Francis slammed Friday the “ideological colonization” of which “so many children have been victims”.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Taliban hoist giant flag in Afghan capital, eight months after return

The Taliban raised a giant white flag of their movement on a hill overlooking the Afghan capital Thursday in a ceremony held nearly eight months after they returned to power.
Several hundred Taliban, many armed, attended the ceremony presided over by Abdul Salam Hanafi, a deputy prime minister, on the hill in Wazir Akbar Khan, near the mostly deserted diplomatic enclave in Kabul.
Measuring 40 metres (130 feet) wide and 26 metres high, the white flag is decorated with the Islamic profession of faith in black letters.
Some of those in attendance showed their joy by touching or grabbing the flag before it was raised.—AFP ■

Former Brazilian judge Sergio Moro ends campaign for president

Sergio Moro, a former anti-corruption judge and leading third-party candidate in Brazil’s presidential election, announced Thursday he is ending his campaign.
Moro had emerged as a key “third way” candidate against poll-leading former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on the left and far-right presidential incumbent Jair Bolsonaro ahead of October’s election. But with polls placing him at only eight per cent, the 49-year-old opted to end his campaign and “facilitate negotiations between political forces of the democratic centre in search of a single presidential candidacy.”—AFP ■

Hungary’s Orban faces first united opposition in tight vote



For the first time in its 12 years in office, Orban’s Fidesz party is facing a united opposition coalition at the ballot box. **PHOTO: AFP**
AFTER a tense campaign dominated by Russia’s invasion of neighbouring Ukraine, Hungarians will vote in a general election on Sunday with polls giving the edge to incumbent nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban.
But for the first time in its 12 years in office Orban’s Fidesz party will face a united opposition coalition.
Fidesz’s poll lead is narrow and “all options are on the table”, Bulcsu Hunyadi, analyst with the independent Political Capital institute, told AFP.
Hunyadi says the “mobilization in the last few days” will be key in turning out the estimated half a million undecided voters in the country of 9.7 million.
On Friday Orban, 58, will hold a final rally in the town of

Szekesfehervar, less than a hour from the capital Budapest, while his rival from the opposition coalition Peter Marki-Zay will hold his last event in the capital on Saturday, just a few hours before polls open the next morning.
Orban will doubtless use the opportunity to drive home his message that he represents “peace and security”, in contrast to the “dangerous” opposition – slogans which chime with Fidesz’s huge election posters.
Propaganda machinery
While going along with support for Kyiv at an EU level, Orban’s government has refused to let weapons for Ukraine cross its territory and, says Hunyadi, has managed to boil the war down “to one very basic question: whether Hungary should be involved or remain out”.
“This message has been much more effective than the opposition’s criticism of the government” for its closeness to Russia.—AFP ■



Mountain guides transport supplies including oxygen and fuel to a camp at the altitude of 7,028 metres, at Mount Qomolangma in Southwest China’s Tibet autonomous region, on 8 May 2020. **PHOTO: XINHUA/FILE**

Veteran French climber seeks new Everest route and record

A 70-year-old French climber is aiming to become the oldest person to climb Mount Everest without supplemental oxygen and at the same time find a new, safer route.
Marc Batard wants to explore a new way around the lethal Khumbu Icefall that all climbers must cross to reach the world’s highest peak from the Nepal side.
The treacherous, ever-shifting expanse of glacial ice that requires climbers to navigate crevasses over rickety ladders has claimed more than 40 lives.
In 2014, a huge block of ice broke off a hanging glacier and barrelled down into the icefall, killing 16 Nepali guides in one of

the worst tragedies at Everest.
“Too many people have died there,” Batard told AFP in Kathmandu before setting off. “This project is not only for me. I am very happy to climb Everest again. But I want to use my reputation to do some good things... This new route is not easy but it is safer,” he said.—AFP ■

IAEA chief to head mission to Ukraine’s Chernobyl nuclear power plant

INTERNATIONAL Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Rafael Grossi said on Friday that he would head an assistance and support mission to Ukraine’s Chernobyl nuclear power plant “as soon as possible” to help ensure the facility’s safety.

It “will be the first in a series of such nuclear safety and security missions to Ukraine,” Grossi tweeted.

He also told a press conference in Vienna later on Friday that the IAEA mission would be in Chernobyl “very, very soon.”

The IAEA chief has just returned from Ukraine and Russia, during which he held discussions with officials on both sides about ensuring the security of Ukraine’s nuclear facilities.

The IAEA said on Thursday the agency had been informed



The defunct nuclear power plant still uses electricity to keep spent fuel at manageable, safe temperatures. PHOTO: RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY/XINHUA

by Ukraine that Russian forces that had been in control of the Chernobyl plant were leaving the facility and had transferred control of the plant to Ukrainian personnel.

At Friday’s press conference, Grossi said he had not discussed with Russian officials

why Russian forces left Chernobyl.

Grossi said the IAEA was still unable to confirm reports that Russian forces were contaminated with radiation at the plant. He added that the general radiation level around the plant was “quite normal.” —Xinhua ■

Kremlin denies US, UK claims that Putin ‘misled’ over Ukraine

THE Kremlin on Thursday denied US and British claims that President Vladimir Putin’s advisers are scared of giving him a true picture of Moscow’s military operation in Ukraine.

Putin launched the military

operation in Ukraine on 24 February citing the “genocide” of Russian speakers there and accusing the pro-Western country of close ties with NATO.

“This shows that neither the Department of State nor the

Pentagon have real information about what is happening in the Kremlin,” Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists.

“They don’t understand President Putin, they don’t understand the mechanism for taking decisions and they don’t understand the style of our work,” he added. Britain’s GCHQ spy agency chief, Jeremy Fleming, said Thursday that “Putin’s advisers are afraid to tell him the truth” about the Russian military’s progress and the degree of Ukrainian resistance.

The White House earlier gave a briefing on declassified intelligence which found that Putin’s relations with his staff had deteriorated.

White House communications director Kate Bedingfield said Putin “felt misled by the Russian military”. —AFP ■



A video grab from handout footage released by the Russian Emergencies Ministry showing a Rosneft fuel depot on fire in Belgorod. PHOTO: RUSSIAN EMERGENCIES MINISTRY/AFP

Ukraine, Russia conduct prisoner swap

UKRAINIAN and Russian forces on Friday exchanged prisoners under an agreement reached by the two countries’ negotiating groups earlier this week, said Kyrylo Tymoshenko, the deputy head of the Ukrainian president’s office.

“The exchange has just

taken place. 86 Ukrainian servicemen, including 15 women, are now safe,” Tymoshenko said on Telegram. The prisoner swap took place in Ukraine’s southern Zaporizhzhia region, Tymoshenko said, without giving the number of captives released by Ukraine.

Ukraine and Russia held their latest round of face-to-face peace talks in Turkey’s Istanbul on Tuesday.

Ukraine and Russia conducted their first prisoner swap last week since the start of the conflict on 24 Feb , Ukrainian authorities said—Xinhua ■

QUICK SUMMARY

Here are the latest developments in the war in Ukraine:

Mariupol evacuation

Residents fleeing the besieged region around southern port Mariupol take a convoy of buses and private cars to reach Ukrainian-controlled Zaporizhzhia.

The fleet’s arrival comes as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says over 3,000 people have been rescued from Mariupol, though it is not immediately clear if he is referring to the bus passengers.

The Red Cross says its own Mariupol rescue effort was forced to turn back after “arrangements and conditions made it impossible to proceed”, but adds its team will try again Saturday.

Ukraine accused of Russia attack

Ukrainian helicopters have carried out a strike on a fuel storage facility in Russia’s western town of Belgorod, around 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the border, according to the local governor.

Vyacheslav Gladkov says on Telegram the air strike was “carried out by two Ukrainian army helicopters, which entered Russian territory at a low altitude”.

Kyiv would not be drawn on whether it was behind the attack, with Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba saying he did “not possess all the military information”.

Peace talks resume

Peace talks between Ukrainian and Russian officials resume via video conference, but Moscow warns that the helicopter attack will hamper negotiations.

Moscow’s chief negotiator Vladimir Medinsky says on Telegram: “Our positions on Crimea and Donbas have not changed”.

UN official to visit Moscow, Kyiv

A top UN official is set to fly to Moscow Sunday, and then on to Kyiv to try and secure a “humanitarian ceasefire” in Ukraine, says the body’s chief Antonio Guterres.

Both Russia and Ukraine have agreed to meet Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Guterres said.

‘Russia preparing powerful strikes’

Zelensky says Russia is preparing “powerful strikes” in the country’s east and south, including Mariupol.

Moscow said in peace talks earlier this week it would scale back attacks on the capital Kyiv and the northern city of Chernigiv.

Ukrainian journalist found dead near Kyiv

According to reports, Ukrainian journalist Maks Levin had gone to Kyiv’s Vyshgorod to document the conflict when he was killed after being allegedly shot by the Russian forces. A Ukrainian journalist went missing more than two weeks ago.

30 countries tap oil reserves

The 31-country International Energy Agency (IEA) agrees to tap national emergency oil reserves again in a bid to calm crude prices that have soared following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

On Thursday, US President Joe Biden announced a record release of US oil onto the market.

Chernobyl radiation

Russian soldiers were likely exposed to radiation while they were occupying the area around the Chernobyl nuclear power station over the past four weeks, Ukraine’s nuclear agency Energoatom says.

The power station, the site of the world’s worst nuclear disaster in 1986, was taken back under the control of Ukrainian forces on Thursday.

SOURCE: AFP

Six men's teams, five women's teams to compete in SEA Games futsal tourney



In March, Myanmar and Thai teams compete in the Thai Invitational Futsal Championship. **PHOTO: FUTSAL THAILAND**

ACCORDING to the SEA Games organising committee, six men's teams and five women's teams will compete in the 31st SEA Games futsal tournament in May 2022.

Viet Nam, the host of the SEA Games, has put a futsal tournament in the football event category. Both men's and women's events will be included.

Myanmar teams will compete in both men's and women's futsal events. The men's competition will be divided into two

groups according to the number of teams competing.

The women's competition will be a five-team round-robin.

Host and defending champions Viet Nam, Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines are included in the men's futsal event.

Likewise, host Viet Nam, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia are placed in the women's event.

Myanmar teams are training hard in the camp for the tourna-

ment. Coach Tin Maung Htay heads the women's team, while the men's team is supervised by Thai coach Bonlat.

The Myanmar National Men's Futsal Team competed in the Thailand Invitational from 15 to 20 March in preparation for the SEA Games and is competing in the current ASEAN Futsal Championship. The Myanmar women's team is scheduled to compete in the Thai Invitational this month ahead of the SEA Games.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

Saudi Arabia drawn with Argentina, Mexico and Poland in World Cup group



Saudi Arabia were drawn on Friday with Argentina, Mexico and Poland in their group for the football World Cup finals in Qatar in November. **PHOTO: GETTY/AFP**

SAUDI Arabia were drawn on Friday with Argentina, Mexico and Poland in their group for the football World Cup finals in Qatar in November.

Herve Renard's team will open their World Cup account against much-fancied Argenti-

na — complete with superstar Ballon d'Or holder Lionel Messi — on 22 November.

The Green Falcons then take on Poland four days later, followed by Mexico on 30 November.

Hosts Qatar, who will open the tournament on 21 November

against Ecuador, are in a group that also contains the Netherlands and recently crowned African champions Senegal.

North African rivals Tunisia and Morocco are both in tough groups, with the former drawn to face reigning world champions France, along with Denmark and the winners of a playoff between Peru and the UAE or Australia.

Morocco will play European powerhouses Belgium and Croatia, as well as an in-form Canada — playing in their second World Cup and their first since 1986. Among the most intriguing of the eight groups of four teams is Group B, containing England, USA and Iran. England will open against Iran in the first World Cup game between the countries.— AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

Iran look to sanction England, US in World Cup showdown



Iran coach Dragan Skocic celebrates after qualifying for the World Cup following his side's win against Iraq in January. **PHOTO: AFP**

HAVING fought to win the respect of Iran's football public, Dragan Skocic now has a World Cup showdown with England and a politically charged clash with the United States to cement his international standing.

England manager Gareth Southgate admitted he knew little about the Iranian team his side will face on the opening day of the World Cup after they were put together in Group B at Friday's draw in Doha. England have been too busy with their own matches, he said.

"We know that they fin-

ished ahead of South Korea and if they have done that we know they have some pretty good players." FIFA has been urged to punish Iran for refusing to let women into a stadium for their last World Cup qualifier against Lebanon this week. But it is unlikely to impact a sixth appearance at the finals. "We will try to advance. I always said we have a very good team and maybe we can advance for the first time," Skocic, a former Croatian international player, told Iranian state news agency IRNA on Saturday.— AFP ■