LEND A HELPING HAND TO VULNERABLE PERSONS

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

SAC Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla visit PyinOoLwin Station family water-splashing pandals

State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is pictured splashing water on senior Tatmadaw officers at the Defence Services Academy family water-throwing pandal in PyinOoLwin yesterday.

ON the occasion of the second day of 1383 ME Myanmar Traditional Maha Thingyan, Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, accompanied by senior Tatmadaw officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Commander of the Central Command Maj-Gen Ko Ko Oo and officials, watched officers, other ranks, their family members and cadets happily enjoying the water festival at the PyinOoLwin station family water-splashing pandals.

The Senior General, wife and party were welcomed by officers, other ranks, their family members and cadets of the PyinOoLwin Station. They watched the performances of the family coral dance troupes and the singings of the cadets and vocalists.

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Health
Order No 83/2022

14th Waxing of Tagu 1383 ME
14 April 2022

THE Ministry of Health has issued this order by exercising its authority under Sub-section (b) of Section 21 of the Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases Law.

1. The Ministry of Health issued an order 56/2022 on 15-3-2022 to allow the gathering of up to 400 people starting 16-3-2022, exclusive of the exceptional cases to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 disease.
2. Currently, as the COVID-19 positivity rate, infection rate and mortality rate have dropped significantly, the ban on mass gatherings will be revoked starting at 00:00 hour on 17-4-2022 (Myanmar New Year Day).
3. The people need to continuously follow the orders and directives issued by the Ministry of Health. Failure to comply with the orders and directives will result in legal action under the existing laws.

Dr Thet Khaing Win
Union Minister

Shwesettaw Pagoda bustling with pilgrims during New Year holidays

An aerial view of Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda. **PHOTO: ZEYA HTET(MINBU)**

Visitors are seen enjoying water festival. **PHOTO: ZEYA HTET(MINBU)**

ACCORDING to the Shwesettaw Pagoda Board of Trustees, Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda, a historical and famous pagoda in Minbu (Sagu) Township of Magway Region, is bustling with pilgrims during the Thingyan New Year holidays.

"In the previous days, there used to be about 1,000 pilgrims a day, but not as many as now. I think pilgrims come here before the first day of Myanmar New Year. The current days are the Thingyan Water Festival holiday, and the Shwesettaw Pagoda will close on the first day of the Myanmar New Year. You know that the hostels are full," said the vice-chair of the Shwesettaw Pagoda Board of Trustees.

Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival is held every year from the 5th waxing day of Tabodwe up to the first day of the Myanmar New Year. This year, hostels are not allowed to stay overnight, but only from 6 am to 6 pm. Medical (Covid) certificates, CSC cards and household registrations will be examined at the Hlaytin Bridge before entering the pagoda festival. — Zeya Htet (Minbu)/GNLM

Rakhine traditional incense grinding, water festival commence

The Rakhine traditional incense grinding event is in progress. **PHOTO LINLATT KYEL**

THE Rakhine Literature and Culture Association (Yangon) and Rakhine social organizations organized a traditional Rakhine incense grinding and water festival at the Rakhine State Religious Hall on the Martyr's Road in Bahan Township, Yangon, yesterday morning.

It aims to strengthen friendship among all ethnic nationalities and all citizens to make Thingyan an honourable cultural festival, identify Rakhine traditional cultural Thingyan based on Buddhism and build and promote the unity of all Rakhine people and Rakhine Traditional Cultural Thingyan in Myanmar,

First, the incense grinding festival was held, and Rakhine Nationals and Rakhine Literature and Culture Association in Yangon participated in it.

After that, the Rakhine traditional culture Thingyan festival was celebrated with religious recitations and prayers.

Patron Dr Aye Chan of the organizing committee on Rakhine traditional incense grinding and pagoda water festival gave an opening speech on the origin of the Rakhine Thingyan.

Then, Chairman U Than Maung of the Rakhine Literature and Culture Association (Yangon) and Chairman U Ba Thein of the Rakhine State Dhamma Hall delivered speeches.

Next, the Rakhine cultural groups sprayed scented water on the Buddha statues.

The festival was initially held in 2004 in Yangon Region, with Rakhine ethnic people participating.

The Rakhine traditional water festival originated in 568 BC during the reign of King Sandathuriya and King Dhanyawady of Rakhine State.

The people sprayed the scented water on the Buddha image on behalf of Lord Buddha. — Ko Ko Zaw/GNLM

SAC Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior ...

The Senior General and his wife view the coral dance performance at the event.

FROM PAGE-1

They encouraged the water-throwing activities of the cadets, officers, other ranks and families at the Defence Services Academy Water-splashing Pandal.

Then, the Senior General, his wife, and the party enjoyed throwing water at cadets and senior officers from the Defence Services Academy. They awarded coral dance troupes, performers, officers, other ranks and family members cash prizes.

Afterwards, the Senior General, his wife and the party arrived at the Defence Services Technological Academy family water-splashing pandal, viewed the entertainment of cadets and coral dance troupes and splashed water on the cadets and senior officers. They presented the entertainers, officers, other ranks and families with cash awards. — MNA

The Thingyan coral dance demonstration.

Cadets enjoy the Thingyan water festival.

State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice-Senior General Soe Win visits water-throwing pandals of Office of Commander-in-Chief (Army)

The Vice-Senior General views the Thingyan coral dance at the Maha Thingyan Pandal of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) on the second day.

OFFICERS, other ranks and family members of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), including Thingyan lovers, participated in the water festival at the water-throwing pandals in the office compound on the second day of Thingyan (Akya).

State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win enjoyed the performances of renowned singers and choral dance troupes at the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army, Navy and Air) Pandal together with the SAC members, the Union ministers, the deputy ministers, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and their wives yesterday.

Similarly, the Vice-Senior General and party visited the Seinpan and Makyiyeik pandals near the accommodation for couples in the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) compound in the evening. They also enjoyed the performances of famous artistes and dance groups, played water together with military members and provided Satuditha. — MNA

Water-splashing activities in progress.

Thingyan dance demonstration.

Through the annals of history, our national races nestled in the Union

BASED on the geological features of where they belong, our people who are of different races, languages and religions have been nestled in the serene shelter in the past. Our country is a Union that stands tall with a prosperous identity, territorial integrity and sovereign State reality.

Through the annals of history, our national races nestled in the Union and Tatmadaw also put an effort into the execution of the word, "Union" by the National Hero, General Aung San.

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

SAC member Daw Aye Nu Sein visits departmental, military water-throwing pandals in Sittway Township

STATE Administration Council member Daw Aye Nu Sein, accompanied by Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr Aung Kyaw Min, Commander of Western Command Maj-Gen Htin Latt Oo and other officials, visited the water-throwing pandals in Sittway Township of Rakhine State yesterday.

First, SAC member Daw Aye Nu Sein and the party went to the 8th Sittway Rakhine traditional Thingyan festival opening ceremony in Mizan Ward of Sittway Township.

During the visit, she made a New Year greeting speech, and the officials highlighted the aims of the ceremony.

Then, the Rakhine State government provided K25 million to the Sittway Rakhine traditional Thingyan organizing committee, and the officials presented cash awards to the committee and dance troupes. SAC member Daw Aye Nu Sein and the party then visited the Maha Thingyan pandals of the General Administration Department, Ministry of Science and Technology, Laywadi of Sittway Station, Ministry of Health and Central Pandal at U Ottama Park.

During the visit, they enjoyed the performance of artistes and dance groups and presented the cash awards to them. — Tin Tun (IPRD)/ GNLM

SAC members, Union ministers attend Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival

STATE Administration Council members Jeng Phang Naw Taung, Saw Daniel and Dr Banya Aung Moe, Union Minister at Union Government Office (2) U Chitt Naing, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Ko Ko Hlaing, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko and guests and their wives attended the Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival held by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The SAC member, Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Soe Htut and his wife, Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Soe Tint Naing and his wife, the permanent secretary and his wife and officials and staff from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Myanmar Police Force, General Administration Department, Bureau of Special Investigation, Department of Prisons, and the Fire Services Department and family members welcomed the SAC members and Union ministers.

Afterwards, the Ministry of Home Affairs personnel performed traditional Myanmar Thingyan dances.

The SAC members, Union ministers and their wives, staff, family members and guests enjoyed the water festival keeping in line with COVID-19 prevention guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health. — MNA

20 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 14 April, total figure rises to 612,480

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 612,480 after 20 new cases were reported on 14 April 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 591,192 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at 19,434 without casualties. —MNA

Interfaith Friendship Organization (central) donates food on Thingyan occasion

THE Opening Ceremony of the 1383 ME Myanmar Traditional Maha Thingyan Festival and the Food Donation Ceremony hosted by the Interfaith Friendship Organization (Central) of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar was held yesterday morning at the west parking lot of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon.

The ceremony was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein, Yangon Region Government Ministers, Chairman, Deputy Chairmen and officials of the Myanmar Interfaith Organization and families.

The Thingyan Festival was opened by the Chief Minister, the Chairman of the Organization, Deputy Chairman U Zaw Zaw Naing (Hindu), Deputy Chairman U Aung Zaw Win (Muslim), and Joint Secretary Daw Khin Khin May (Christian) by cutting the ribbon.

Afterwards, the chief minister and party splashed the water with Thabyay leaves on the attendees. Vegetable biryani, Shwe Yin Aye, and purified drinking water were donated at the Food Donation Ceremony.

It is reported that the organization will donate pea butter rice, Shwe Yin Aye and purified water will be donated at 15 April; Biryani, Shwe Yin Aye and distilled water on 16 April; and Mohinga, Shwe Yin Aye, and water on 17 April. — Ko Ko Zaw, Kyaw Soe Win/GNLM

MoTC Union Minister attends opening ceremony of ministry's Maha Thingyan Pandal

UNION Minister for Transport and Communications Admiral Tin Aung San and his wife, accompanied by deputy ministers, permanent secretaries, heads of departments and their wives, attended an opening ceremony of the Maha Thingyan Water Festival Pandal at the Myanma Railways headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw on 13 April.

In the afternoon, the Union minister and party attended the pre-festival celebration of the traditional Myanma Thingyan Water Festival held in the hall of the Office No 5 of the Ministry Office.

The MoTC Union Minister, his wife and dignitaries watch the coral dance at the opening event.

The staffers performed Thingyan dances, and the Union minister and his wife awarded the coral dance troupes and sprinkled Thingyan water on them.

Next, the Union minister and party visited Office No 2 and No 29 and then arrived at the Myanma Railways Headquarters Maha Thingyan Water Festival Pandal.

Young dancing troupes performed Thingyan dances with Thingyan songs, and the Union minister and his wife presented awards to coral dance troupes.

Afterwards, guests and staff families happily played water to usher in the Thingyan Water Festival days.—MNA

Construction Union Minister opens ministry's Maha Thingyan Pandal

UNION Minister for Construction U Shwe Lay attended the opening ceremony of the ministry's Maha Thingyan Pandal in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

First, the Union minister and deputy ministers cut the ribbon to inaugurate the water-throwing pandal and watched the performances of coral dance troupes together with the departmental staff.

The ministry also held a free food event for the staffers and family members. — MNA

The MoC Union Minister cut the ceremonial ribbon to launch the ministry's Maha Thingyan Pandal.

MoEE holds 1383 ME Myanmar traditional Maha Thingyan ceremony

THE Ministry of Electricity and Energy held the ceremony of the 1383 ME Myanmar traditional Maha Thingyan on the second day of the festival yesterday, following COVID-19 rules and regulations in Nay Pyi Taw.

Union Minister U Aung Than Oo and his wife, Deputy Minister U Thant Sin and his wife, the directors-generals, directors and staff from the departments of the Union Minister Office, invitees happily participated in the ceremony, and coral dance troupes representing departments and enterprises entertained with dances and songs.

At the ceremony, the Union minister and those present splashed water on each other and gave cash awards to coral dance troupes. — MNA

The MoEE Union Minister views the Thingyan coral dance on the second day event.

Bago Region chief minister participates in Walking Thingyan in Bago

IT is reported that the second day of the traditional Myanmar Thingyan Festival is celebrated in Bago, Bago Region, on 14 April.

Bago Region Chief Minister U Myo Swe Win, the Region Ministers and officials participated in the Walking Thingyan near the water-throwing pandals in front of the Maha Thingyan Central Pandal in the Bago Region.

The regional government warmly greets those who come to the Thingyan Central Hall to receive food on a daily basis.

Under the leadership of the Bago Region Government, the traditional Myanmar Maha Thingyan festival is held with Walking Thingyan and food donations.

Singers: Moe Aung Yin, Pu Suu, Issanni, and Pwint Nadi Maung are also performing in the Thingyan festival, according to the officials. —MNA

Revellers throng Yangon Mayor's Maha Thingyan Pandal

YANGON city including Yangon Mayor's Maha Thingyan Pandal hosted heavy crowds on the second day of the Thingyan Festival (Akya).

The artistes and Thingyan choral dance troupes presented their performances at the Yangon Mayor's Maha Thingyan Pandal the whole day.

The pandals, Satuditha and boats filled with water were also arranged along the Maha Bandoola Park and the revellers participated in the water festival also at the pandals of respective districts and townships.

Moreover, the Shwedagon Pagoda and other famous pagodas were also crowded with pilgrims and the donors offered food and snacks, including Shwe Yin Aye and drinking water. —Ko Thaik/GNLM

Revellers are seen at the Walking Thingyan.

Yangon Mayor's Maha Thingyan Pandal.

Yangon Walking Thingyan.

Yangon Walking Thingyan.

Crowds seen enjoying water festival second day in Nay Pyi Taw

Performances are presented to the public at the Nay Pyi Taw Mayor's Maha Thingyan Pandal.

PAGODAS in Nay Pyi Taw Council, including Nay Pyi Taw Uppatasanti Pagoda, Dartuzaya Datpaungsu Pagoda, Hlaykhwintaung Pagoda, were bustling with people doing good deeds and donating food and snacks. Revellers participated in the water festival on the second day of the Myanmar Traditional Maha Thingyan Festival yesterday.

Famous artistes and dance troupes were also seen performing dances and singing songs at the water-splashing pandals of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) and the Nay Pyi Taw Mayor. The pandals were crowded with people enjoying the festival and the food offered.

In addition, Thingyan lovers and water splashers were also seen happy at the Walking Thingyan Festival held in the Nay Pyi Taw Water Fountain Park. Many holidaymakers relaxed at the Hlaykhwintaung Beach Resort, Kyi Taung riverside, and Awaiya Beach Resort in Pyinmana Township. To thoroughly enjoy the water festival, relevant authorities were providing security and carrying out awareness-raising campaigns to ensure safety during recreation. A visitor at the Kyitaung riverside said, "I have come here with my family, and we will visit other places worth visiting; I would like to urge friends to visit Nay Pyi Taw during this Thingyan."

Small makeshift tents were also built in the townships, wards, and villages in the Nay Pyi Taw Council Territory to splash water and donate food and snacks.

The Myanmar traditional Maha Thingyan is held to welcome a new year by pouring water to remove the dirt from the old year and prevent it from entering the new year. It is a traditional festival that people celebrate with love in the country. — Myo Sett Thit/GNLM

Nay Pyi Taw.`

Hlaykhwintaung.

Paunglong. **PHOTOS : KO GYI KYAW**

Lend a helping hand to vulnerable persons

THE Myanmar society dubs the persons with disabilities as the disabled persons with capability as part of showing their white mindsets regarding the human rights and avoiding discrimination against the vulnerable ones.

Currently, Myanmar emphasizes the improvement of the role of persons with disabilities in line with this year's theme: "Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world."

It is expected to soonest approve the five-year national strategic plan for the rights of persons with disabilities (2022-2027) drawn in accord with the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) and the ASEAN Strategic Action Plan 2025 signed by Myanmar. Implementing these plans will have to create opportunities for persons with disabilities effectively.

> As persons with disabilities become vulnerable due to inborn impacts or accidental events, it is necessary to uplift their morale, not be disappointed in their lives, and enhance their courage to stand tall in society to do everything.

Despite unavoidably accepting the life of vulnerability, persons with disabilities do not give up on the impacts of life and pour out their strenuous efforts for survival in order to stand tall among others in society. As such, not only the government but those from the environs of persons with disabilities need to give a hand to them and look after them in all aspects not to face discrimination. To do so, it is important to accurately compile the list of persons with disabilities residing across the nation for providing necessary assistance to them.

At present, the government is classifying persons with disabilities and registering them. The pilot project for these measures will cover Pobbathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, Hlinethaya Township in Yangon Region, Nyaunglebin Township in Bago Region and Hpa-an Township in Kayin State. In so doing, emphasis will be placed on the registration of the persons with disabilities for strictly compiling the population with disabilities, as the 2014 census showed there were 2.3 million of the population with disabilities in Myanmar, accounting for 4.6 per cent.

As persons with disabilities become vulnerable due to inborn impacts or accidental events, it is necessary to uplift their morale, not be disappointed in their lives, and enhance their courage to stand tall in society to do everything. For example, the barrier-free zones have been established at the Nay Pyi Taw Myoma market and the water fountain park in Nay Pyi Taw. Indeed, a helping hand from society will be an encouragement for their physical and mental life.

■■■

SDGs have made the world smaller – Entering into an era getting pressure from other countries

By Suzuka Yoshida

SINCE the beginning of the 21st century, the world has been moving towards one goal: "Sustainable Development Goals, abbreviated as SDGs", which was adopted at the 2015 United Nations General Assembly. All UN member states, including Myanmar, have agreed upon the SDGs as new goals to succeed in the Millennium Development Goals set out from 2001 to September 2015.

The purpose of the SDGs is to develop while satisfying the current generation's needs without eating up the assets needed by future generations. It means that we should do business so that the whole society will develop now and, in the future, aim at the realization of a society where no one is left behind, and you do not think only about yourselves. One hundred sixty-nine targets linked to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are aimed to be achieved in the 15 years from 2016 to 2030, are shown as follows: -

THE 17 GOALS SDGs;

- Goal 1. No Poverty
- Goal 2. ZERO HUNGER
- Goal 3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
- Goal 4. QUALITY EDUCATION
- Goal 5. GENDER EQUALITY
- Goal 6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
- Goal 7. AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
- Goal 8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
- Goal 9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
- Goal 10. REDUCE INEQUALITIES
- Goal 11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
- Goal 12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
- Goal 13. CLIMATE ACTION
- Goal 14. LIFE BELOW WATER
- Goal 15. LIFE ON LAND
- Goal 16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
- Goal 17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

↑ Many people are putting this mark on their jacket as a badge and feeling a small world.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As you can see, the goals necessary to improve the lives of the people are lined up. There are 169 targets linked to 17 goals, each of which is related to others, so it is not a matter you can select a goal from them and work on it.

The people are happy if all goals can be achieved, but in order to actually realize them, not only the government but also the private sector, including companies, investors, beneficiaries (people), etc., need to make efforts.

For example, the Goal 1, "NO POVERTY", does not mean that the rich should bless the poor with food and money, but the establishment of a system to monitor the wages of the people, to establish honest statistics and education to read them, to carry out equal access to resources and new technologies, educational opportunities, health services to maintain health, housing and financial services for the extremely poor living on less than $ 1.25 a day. You should call for political efforts, such as building a policy framework that considers rights and gender and the efforts of the private sector.

The world is facing critically serious issues such as the recent rise in energy prices and fluctuations in exchange rates in a couple of months. If there is an education system to understand the situation when the causes occurred overseas and began to affect the people, the private sector and the government will be able to cooperate and solve it easier.

How to meet moving goalposts of the public satisfaction?

Moreover, in the present age, when the means of obtaining information on the Internet have diversified, it is possible to instantly know the situation in other countries as if looking through a glass. Then, for example, boycotts will appear, saying, "I will not buy the products exported by the nation that keeps the people in poverty and does nothing." Citizens' activists think that disregarding foreign acts that violate the SDGs will make it far from achieving the goals of the SDGs worldwide. This is why the government, people and businesses of the international community criticize the actions of other countries.

The people also complain that they are unlucky, comparing their lives with other countries. Dissatisfaction is focused on the government. Therefore, the government has endless responsibilities as if it faces a moving goalpost.

Until the 20th century, poverty was an internal issue that the country had to tackle with. However, now and days, foreign countries are pressing your country to solve. You may want to tell them not to intervene. In this way, even though the national circumstances and backgrounds are completely different, the fact that setting the same goals imposes a strict evaluation on Myanmar.

Therefore, it is better to think that another new rule has been added to the international community after the publication of the SDGs.

Rather than getting angry at the moving goal post, the government should explain the situation to the people and ask for cooperation, which will reduce their worries. The people also have some understanding and calm down. Isn't it the result of raising the SDGs to have such mutual understanding?

The goals of the SDGs have made our world smaller. What a cramped world! But nobody can go back. The Myanmar people's feet have stepped into the small world, and other nations have done.

Reference:
https://sdgs.un.org/goals
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXpZ-b4Qskg

■■■

Pfizer eyes Covid vaccine for all variants before 2023

A COVID-19 vaccine effective against multiple variants is possible before the end of 2022, the head of US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer said Wednesday.

Chairman Albert Bourla said the firm was also working on producing a vaccine that could provide good protection for a whole year, meaning people would come back annually for boosters, as with influenza shots.

"I hope, clearly by autumn… that we could have a vaccine" that worked against not only the dominant Omicron but all known variants, he said.

"It is a possibility that we have it by then. It is not a certainty," he told a media briefing organized by the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) big pharma lobby group.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is one of the most effective against Covid-19.

Though, like other jabs, it has seen waning effectiveness against the now-dominant Omicron variant of the virus, it still offers strong protection against serious disease, hospitalisation and death.

IFPMA director general Thomas Cueni said the world had to learn to live with the virus that causes Covid-19 disease, saying: "We are beyond the time when you can eradicate SARS-CoV-2."

Bourla said there was a risk of vaccine fatigue, predicting that few people who have so far declined the chance to be vaccinated would change their minds, and suggesting that fewer people would come back for fourth doses than came forward for a third booster dose.

"What the world really needs is a vaccine that will last a year. I think this is what will become the optimal public health solution," he said. "It's way more easy to be administered and have the population be compliant with that.

"It is very challenging, technically, to do it with this virus — but we are working on it."

SOURCE: AFP

MYANMAR Daily Weather Report

(ISSUED at 7:00 pm Thursday 14 April, 2022)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the Northwest, West central and southwest Bay of Bengal and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 15 April, 2022: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Kachin State, fairly widespread in Kayah State, scattered in upper Sagaing Region and northern Shan State and isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, Taninthayi Regions and (south and east) Shan, Chin, Kayin, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of scattered rain or thundershowers in upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Shan, Kayah States.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 15 April, 2022: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 15 April, 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 15 April, 2022: Partly cloudy.

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Inlay region receives numerous visitors during Thingyan holiday

INLAY Lake and Nyaungshwe Town in Shan State are receiving numerous local tourists during the Maha Thingyan holiday period. More than a thousand pilgrims and vacationers from across the country are paying homage daily to the PhaungdawOo Pagoda in the Inlay Lake, according to U Than Win, Vice-Chair of the Pagoda Board of Trustees.

PhaungdawOo pagoda, which usually receives around four hundred pilgrims, is now crowded during the holiday period. The pagoda has now set the visiting hours from dawn to six pm due to the increasing visitors, he said.

Inlay region is renowned not only for the PhaungdawOo pagoda but also for the Alotawpaut Pagoda, Inntein Pagoda, 100-year-old Ngaphe Chaung ancient monastery, weaving houses, silversmith, floating farms, and the Minethout Bridge, which all can be accessible by a boat.

Visitors to the lake come through Nyaungshwe town, Minethoutinn village, Nanpan Town, Lwinyeint village and Khaungtine village. — Nay Myo Thurein/GNLM

People flock to Ngwehsaung Beach

THE Ngwehsaung Beach, located in Ngwehsaung Town of Pathein District of Ayeyawady Region, was crowded with visitors on the second day of Thingyan (Akya).

The locals received a high income from the large crowd of visitors. According to the vendors, although the vendors did not earn well last year for declining visitors, their transitions are good again this year for heavy crowds.

The Ngwehsaung Beach received many visitors daily before the Thingyan holidays. The place was also packed with visitors on the second day of Thingyan (Akya).

Officials provided necessary measures to ensure travellers' safety and inspected the vendors selling at the designated places and throwing rubbish systematically. — Ngwehsaung (IPRD)/ GNLM

Goyangyi Island (Tortoise Island) packed with visitors on Thingyan Akya Day

THE beach of Goyangyi Island, Ngayokekaung township, Pathein District in Ayeyawady Region, was full of visitors to relax on Thingyan Akya Day.

The number of visitors is increasing on the beach during the Thingyan period, and hotels, motels, and guesthouses are overcrowded, according to officials at the hotels and bungalows. On Akya day of Thingyan, shops and restaurants on the beach had good sales earning extra income. Officials ensure that visitors relax peacefully, beach vendors sell their wares properly, and then cruise boats carry no overload of people.—Pyone Maung Maung (Ngayokekaung)/GNLM

Islands in Kawthoung bustling with Thingyan holidaymakers

IN addition to locals, travellers from various parts of the country visit islands in Kawthoung during the Thingyan holidays. The Kawthoung harbour was seen busy with groups of travellers and speed boats yesterday.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kawthoung tourism sector was suspended, and as the government has resumed the tourism sector under the COVID-19 rules and regulations at present, the seaside of Kawthoung is bustling again with holidaymakers.

Travellers are pictured prepping for Island trips.

According to the tour companies, the tours include day trips and overnight trips on islands, and most people usually make day trips, especially during the Thingyan holidays.

Kawthoung tourism is famous for its splendid beaches on Nyaungoophee Island, Saturn Island, Myinkhwa Island, Kyatmauk Island (Heart-shape island), Zardetgyi Island, Khayinkhwa Island, Paradise Island, which are all located in the Andaman Sea.—Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)/GNLM

Pedigree, genetic improvement approach to enhance production

MYANMAR'S economy depends on agriculture and livestock. In order to boost exports of fish and seafood quality and preserve the fishery resource for sustainable utilization, a research based on pedigree and genetic improvement approach is promising to enhance Myanmar's fishery sector, according to Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

Some regional countries showed a remarkable rise in income from the fishery exports. Myanmar has export prospects due to the abundant fishery resource. Genetic management to improve the production of native fish and shrimp and commercially valued fishery products are required. The success of the livestock sector will help increase the market shares of the fishery products among ASEAN countries. Viet Nam's freshwater fish and shrimp farming businesses can produce about 120,000 fish per acre. Myanmar has a capacity to farm 80,000 fish (rohu, carp and seabass) per acre. An advanced fishing culture is required for the growth rate and environmental assessment.

The country is striving for livestock sector development, a critical economic sector, by shifting from traditional farms to advanced aquaculture systems. The effort is to keep abreast of the developments in the regional countries.

Additionally, the Dubai market prefers eel and Lepidocephalichthys berdmorei (Burmese loach). However, research activities and genetic management for those species whose qualities are decreasing and those endangered fish species are to promote the sustainable economic growth of the country and the economic benefits for the breeders. Myanmar's fishery products that EU countries eye is also needed to increase the quality for the future fishery prospects.

"Those stakeholders in the supply chain must identify the market opportunities and trends to effectuate the fishery sector development. Earlier, Saudi Arabia and Dubai buyers were not interested in the striped snakehead and Burmese loach. Now, they are into those species. The market of rohu, carp, sea bass and other freshwater and saltwater species have limited market access only.

Therefore, genetic research and analysis in line with advanced technology are required.

The breeders must choose the commercially valued species by following the trend. Freshwater shrimps were once famous. Now, those species are extinct. Genetic improvement is required as artificial breeding harms the quality after three to four years. International countries are maintaining genetic improvement. Fish and shrimp research centre is underway in Myanmar to disseminate the information to the breeders and implement the pedigree and genetic modification for the fishery sector development», said Dr Toe Nanda Tin, senior vice-president of the MFF.

The country is striving for livestock sector development, a critical economic sector, by shifting from traditional farms to advanced aquaculture systems. The effort is to keep abreast of the developments in the regional countries.

Thus, pedigree and genetic improvement research will help enhance the fishery sector. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM

Gold transactions must be done depending on CBM reference exchange rate: YGEA

GOLD transactions will be undertaken depending on the Central Bank of Myanmar's reference exchange rate, according to Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

According to the provisions stipulated in Sections 11, 12 and 13 of the Foreign Exchange Management Law, the foreign exchange earned by locals in Myanmar must be deposited in accounts at the authorized dealers and exchanged for the local currency at the Central Bank of Myanmar's reference rate of K1,850 within one working day, according to the notification released on 3 April.

Thus YGEA called for an urgent meeting on 8 April. The panel determined to carry out gold transactions depending on the CBM's reference exchange rate.

The US dollar stands at K2,000 in the unofficial black market, while the CBM reference rate is K1,850. Consequently, the gold price is likely to drop a bit.

The YGEA's office is closed during the Thingyan holidays between 9 and 17 April. Therefore, the data on the daily gold prices cannot be released.

The pure gold fetched K2.041 million per tical (0.578 ounce, or 0.016 kilogramme) on 7 April before the urgent meeting.

The domestic gold price is highly correlated with the global gold price, YGEA stated.

During the end of September 2021, a dollar value hit an all-time high of over K3,000 in the gold exchanges and consequently, the pure gold reached a record high of K2.22 million per tical in history. — NN/GNLM

Gold jewellery is seen at one of the outlets.

Seeking import licence after goods arriving at the port not allowed from 20 April

ACCORDING to the Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce, seeking an import licence prior to the goods arriving at the port is required starting from 20 April 2022.

In a bid to have a smooth trade flow, the MoC earlier allowed the importers to make shipments before customs regulations. Import licence can be held even on the day when the goods arrive at the port. If the importers have not received any permit, customs regulation was previously valid prior to arrival processing.

However, some importers took advantage of that process and applied for an import licence only after the goods arrived. According to the Import/Export regulation 2015 notification (93/2015) of the Ministry of Commerce dated 22 October 2015, some goods that require an import licence for export must not have arrived before the import permit.

Additionally, as per the notification of the Ministry of Planning and Finance, customs regulation must be in line with the notification (50/2020) of the Ministry of Commerce dated 8 July 2020, stating that the goods that require import licence must not be shipped prior to the permit, except the goods which require customs warehousing procedures.

Those companies that failed to seek import licence prior to those goods arriving at the port, except those related to the customs warehousing procedure, will face legal actions in compliance with the export/import laws.

Some companies and entrepreneurs still violate the rules to avoid unnecessary loss regardless of the notification. The importers cannot seek import licence only after the arrivals of the goods starting from 20 April 2022. MoC notified the importers again on 5 April 2022 of the legal actions for violations under the export/import law. — NN/GNLM

NEWS IN BRIEF

South Korea raises interest rate to tame inflation

South Korea's central bank on Thursday raised its key interest rate to the highest level since August 2019 to tame rising inflation, especially soaring energy costs linked to the Ukraine crisis.

The Bank of Korea (BOK) raised the borrowing cost to 1.5 per cent — its third hike in less than a year — after keeping it at a record low for two years during the coronavirus pandemic.

The latest decision comes as Asia's fourth-largest economy recovers from a Covid-induced slowdown with a rebound in demand, while struggling with rising fuel and raw material prices.

"Inflation has accelerated while the recovery of the global economy has somewhat moderated, affected by the Ukraine crisis," the central bank said in a press release — AFP South Korea's consumer prices jumped 4.1 percent in March from a year earlier, the fastest pace in more than a decade. Thursday's policy meeting had been closely watched as it came after the US Federal Reserve raised its interest rate for the first time since 2018 to tame prices.—AFP ■

Tax data reveals Olympics ignited Chinese winter sports fever

The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics have brought a wave of winter sports fever in China, leading to a rapid increase in the sales revenue of related sectors, data from the country's tax authorities showed.

In March, the sales revenue of the sports industry in Chongli District in the city of Zhangjiakou, Hebei Province and Beijing's Yanqing District, both housing venues for the 2022 Winter Olympics, surged 65 per cent and 62.6 per cent year on year, respectively, according to the tax data released by the State Taxation Administration.

In the first quarter, the cumulative sales revenue of the sports industry in the two areas logged rapid yearly growth of 35.2 per cent and 68.9 per cent, the data showed.—Xinhua ■

Singapore's GDP grow by 3.4 pct on year in Q1

SINGAPORE'S Ministry of Trade and Industry announced on Thursday morning that based on advance estimates, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 3.4 per cent year on year in the first quarter of 2022, moderating from the 6.1 per cent growth in the previous quarter.

On a seasonally-adjusted basis, the Singapore economy grew by 0.4 per cent quarter on quarter, compared to the 2.3 per cent growth in the previous quarter.

In a breakdown, Singapore's manufacturing sector expanded by six per cent year on year in the first quarter, moderating from the 15.5 per cent growth in the previous quarter. The continued growth was supported by output expansions in all clusters, except for the chemicals cluster.

In this photo taken on 14 September, 2021 migrant workers are pictured working at a construction site in Singapore. PHOTO: AFP

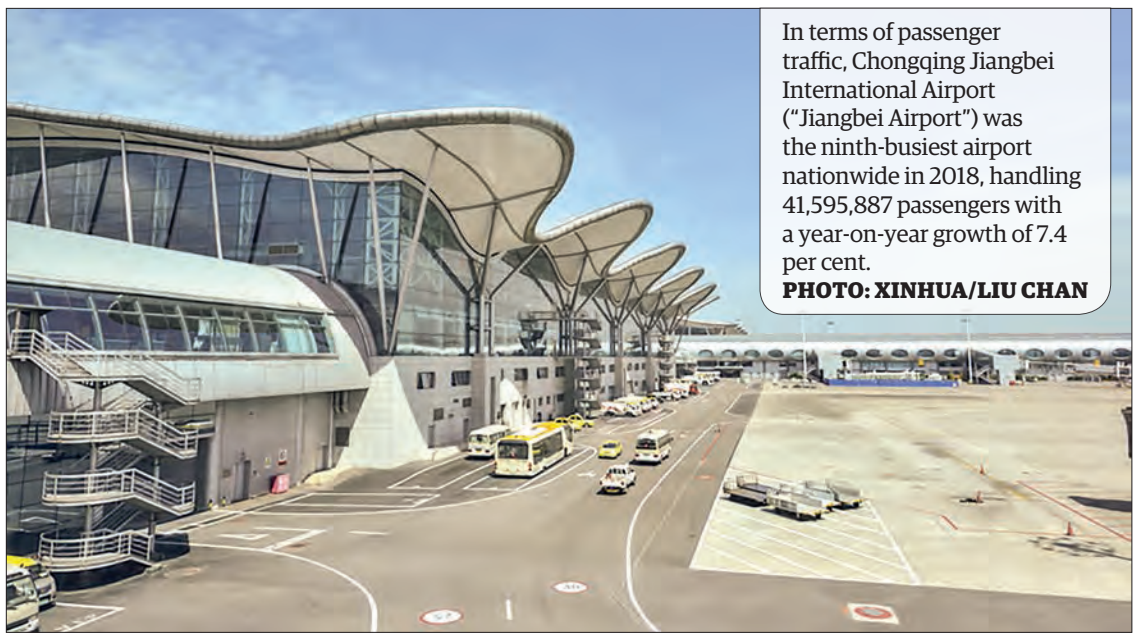
The construction sector grew by 1.8 per cent year on year in the first quarter, following the 2.9 per cent growth in the previous quarter. In absolute terms, the value-added of the sector remained 25.3 per cent below its pre-COVID-19 level in the first quarter of 2019, as activity at construction worksites continued to be weighed down by labour shortages.

Meanwhile, the services-producing industries expanded by 3.9 per cent year on year, compared to the 4.4 per cent expansion in the previous quarter.

The advanced GDP estimates released on Thursday were computed largely from data in the first two months of the quarter, according to the ministry. These figures are intended as an early indication of the GDP growth in the quarter, and are subject to revision when more comprehensive data become available.

The ministry said it will release the preliminary GDP estimates for the third quarter this May. —Xinhua ■

A hub airport making the aviation industry smarter



In terms of passenger traffic, Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport ("Jiangbei Airport") was the ninth-busiest airport nationwide in 2018, handling 41,595,887 passengers with a year-on-year growth of 7.4 per cent.
PHOTO: XINHUA/LIU CHAN

DIGITALIZATION is reshaping every aspect of people's lives, including their travel. A hub airport in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality is becoming smarter thanks to its persistent efforts in exploring digitalization.

A key part of China's Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle, Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport eyes to create a smart airport by generating power from new digital technologies, said the airport. Smart digital technology is playing unique roles in China's high-quality growth especially in the civil aviation industry, demonstrating the country's economic resilience despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chongqing, a mountain city renowned for its spicy cuisine, is a major high-tech industry cluster and the world's leading laptop production base. A smarter airport will greatly help to sustain the growth of the city and the economic circle, as well as their connection with the rest of the country and the world, said the airport.—Xinhua ■

New Zealand's lobster export benefits from upgraded FTA with China despite COVID-19

NEW Zealand's lobster exporters are optimistic about post-COVID exports to China, boosted by an upgraded free trade agreement (FTA) that entered into force last week. "We are definitely optimistic about post-COVID exports, as Chinese consumers return to restaurants and enjoy celebrating together again," Fiordland Lobster Company General Manager Andrew Harvey told Xinhua on Tuesday. The company is New Zealand's largest exporter of live rock lobsters. Harvey noted that China's National Day Golden Week in October is always one of the most important events on the calendar for lobster exports.

"We're optimistic that it will be again this year, if COVID-19 allows," Harvey said. His company started lobster export to China in the 1990s. A recent good news for New Zealand's export sector is the protocol on upgrading the China-New Zealand FTA taking effect last Thursday. The upgraded FTA makes exporting to China easier and reduces compliance costs for New Zealand exporters by addressing a range of non-tariff issues, such as a six-hour limit on customs clearance of perishable goods and proper storage while pending release.—Xinhua ■

Meat products are seen on shelves at a supermarket in Wellington, New Zealand on 8 April, 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA/GUO LEI**

India's Infosys to exit Russia business

INDIAN software giant Infosys said Wednesday it was "transitioning" out of the Russian market following the Ukraine war and conflict of interest accusations levelled at Rishi Sunak, the British finance minister.

Sunak's wife Akshata Murty holds a nearly $1 billion stake in the IT firm, which was founded by her father N.R. Narayana Murthy and established itself as a global outsourcing behemoth.

Critics have accused Sunak of financially benefiting from Infosys operations in Russia through his wife's stake, even in the wake of stiff British sanctions against Moscow in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

"Given what is going on in the region, we have started to transition all of our work from our centres in Russia to our centres outside Russia," chief executive and managing director Salil Parekh told a media briefing.

"We have no work with any Russian client today and we have no plans for any work with any Russian client going ahead," he added.

Parekh said the company was "very concerned" about the situation in Ukraine and had committed $1 million in humanitarian aid.

But he declined to confirm if the company's board has discussed recent criticism surrounding Murty's stake in the company.—AFP ■

Infosys Technologies campus in Bangalore. **PHOTO: MANJUNATH KIRAN/AFP**

Chinese man gets Japan's 1st skilled worker visa with no time limit

A 35-year-old Chinese man has become the first person to be granted a resident status that effectively allows foreign blue-collar workers to stay in Japan indefinitely, the infrastructure ministry and a supporting organization said Thursday.

Weng Fei, an employee of a construction company in Gifu Prefecture, central Japan, obtained Wednesday the Specified Skilled Worker No. 2 status under a policy introduced by Japan in April 2019 to attract foreign workers and address the country's severe labour shortage.

The system allows foreigners with certain Japanese language and vocational skills to apply for a resident status called Specified Skilled Worker No. 1, which grants working rights in 14 sectors, such as construction, farming and nursing, for up to five years.

Proficient labourers in two sectors — construction and shipbuilding — can further extend their stay by earning the Specified Skilled Worker No. 2 status. It allows holders to bring in family members and has no limit on the number of times they can renew their visa.

Supplied photo shows Weng Fei, a Chinese national who obtained the Specified Skilled Worker No. 2 status while working at a construction company in Gifu Prefecture, central Japan **PHOTO: THE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY/KYODO**

Weng, who first came to Japan in 2010 as a technical trainee to work at his current construction company, was granted the Specified Skilled Worker No. 1 status in 2020.

He later obtained grade 1 in the technical skills test, a national system to certify vocational abilities, meaning he has high-level skills in his field of work needed for positions other than managers.—Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Judge slashes Tesla's damages to ex-employee in racism case

A San Francisco judge on Wednesday slashed the $137 million in damages Tesla was told to pay a former employee in a racial discrimination case down to $15 million but upheld the verdict.

In his ruling, US District Court Judge William Orrick said "the weight of the evidence amply supports the jury's liability findings" but the damages ordered were "excessive," citing constitutional limitations on punitive damages set by the Supreme Court.

Tesla was ordered in October to pay Black former employee Owen Diaz $137 million in damages for turning a blind eye to racism the man encountered at the firm's Silicon Valley auto plant.

Rejecting Tesla's request for a retrial, Orrick said "Tesla's indifference to Diaz's complaints is striking."— AFP ■

E-cig giant Juul to pay $22.5m in underage lawsuit

E-cigarette firm Juul has agreed to pay $22.5 million in a US lawsuit that alleged the company deliberately targeted teenagers and lied about how addictive its products are, Washington state's attorney-general said Wednesday.

The company, whose wide range of exotic flavoured vapes — including mango and creme brulee — made it a byword for e-cigarettes in the United States, did not admit any wrongdoing but agreed to rein in its advertising.

In the latest such multi-million-dollar suit it has settled with a US state, Juul Labs agreed to pull commercials that appeal to young people, including on social media. It will also work to ensure stores in the state are not selling its products to anyone underage.— AFP ■

Volkswagen sees impact of Ukraine war despite profit bounce

Volkswagen also said it delivered some 500,000 fewer cars in the first quarter of 2022 than in the previous year, a 22-per cent drop. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

GERMAN auto giant Volkswagen said Thursday its first quarter operating profit increased significantly in 2022, while warning that the "first effects" of the war in Ukraine were beginning to be felt.

The group's operating profit, a measure of profitability closely watched by investors, rose to 8.5 billion euros ($9.3 billion) over the first three months of the year from 4.8 billion euros in the same period last year, according to preliminary figures.

The boost was down to strong "operating performance" and a positive effect of 3.5 billion euros thanks to hedges against the changing price of raw materials.

The turbulence on commodities markets could be traced back to the "ongoing war in Ukraine", which has pushed up prices, Volkswagen said in a statement.

Supply chain impacts could also be seen, with deliveries from suppliers in Ukraine being limited.

The lack of critical car parts has already forced Volkswagen, along with other German carmakers, to curtail production at some plants, while exports to Russia have been halted.

The course of the war and the impact on Volkswagen "cannot be predicted with sufficient certainty" but risked having a "negative impact" on the Wolfsburg-based group.

Volkswagen also said it delivered some 500,000 fewer cars in the first quarter of 2022 than in the previous year, a 22-per cent drop.—AFP ■

S.Korean president-elect nominates 8 ministers, chief secretary

President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol announces the first eight minister nominees for his incoming Cabinet during a press briefing at the presidential transition committee headquarters in Seoul on Sunday. **PHOTO: YONHAP/ XINHUA**

SOUTH Korean President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol nominated eight more ministers and his chief secretary on Wednesday ahead of his inauguration as president on 10 May. During a press conference, Yoon tapped Park Jin and Kwon Young-se, four-term lawmakers of the main conservative People Power Party, as foreign and unification ministers respectively.

Kim Dae-ki, former presidential chief of staff for policy, was named as Yoon's chief secretary, while Han Dong-hoon, senior prosecutor and one of close confidants to Yoon, was nominated as justice minister. Yoon announced the nomination of Kim In-chul, former president of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies as minister of education who doubles as deputy prime minister for social affairs.

Lee Sang-min, former vice chief of the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, was nominated as interior and safety minister, while Han Wha-jin, honorary researcher of the Korea Environment Institute, was selected for minister of environment.

Cho Seung-hwan, former chief of the Korea Institute of Marine Science and Technology Promotion, was tapped as minister of oceans and fisheries, and Rep. Lee Young of the People Power Party was picked as minister of SMEs and startups.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US-led task force to patrol Red Sea off war-torn Yemen

The United States is to lead a new task force patrolling the Red Sea, senior officials said on Wednesday, less than two weeks after the start of a truce in war-torn Yemen.

The Combined Task Force, involving 34 countries, will cover the Red Sea – a major shipping lane that has witnessed a series of Huthi rebel attacks – and the Gulf of Aden. "The area is so vast we can't do it alone," Vice-Admiral Brad Cooper, the commander of the US Navy's Central Command, the Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet and the task force, told reporters. Cooper declined to discuss Yemen when asked about the reasons for the new task force, which follows similar ventures in and around the Gulf and anti-piracy operations.—AFP ■

Australia asks Solomon Islands not to sign security pact with China

AUSTRALIA on Wednesday asked the Solomon Islands not to sign a proposed security agreement between the Pacific Island nation and China, which Canberra fears could lead to the establishment of a Chinese military presence on the island.

The proposed deal was agreed upon by the two countries on 31 March and established a framework that could allow Beijing to deploy forces to "protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in Solomon Islands," according to a draft official document leaked on social media.—Kyodo ■

Hiroshima resets "peace clock" after US subcritical nuclear tests

The lower digital display of the "peace clock" at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum shows 210 days since the last nuclear test was conducted. **PHOTO: KYODO**

A "peace clock" monument in Hiroshima that counts the number of days since the last nuclear test, has been reset after the city learned the United States conducted two subcritical nuclear tests last year.

The digital number at the clock installed at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was changed from 499 to 209 on Wednesday following revelations that two experiments had been conducted on 22 June and 16 Sept last year in Nevada.

According to the US National Nuclear Security Administration, they marked the first such tests under the administration of President Joe Biden and formed part of three successive tests.

The first was conducted under the previous administration of Donald Trump in November 2020, when the clock was last reset.

Takuo Takigawa, the director of the museum, said it was "very disappointing" to learn of the US tests "amid a global situation where the risk of nuclear weapons use is a concern."

The 3.1-metre-tall clock was donated to the museum by a pacifist organization in 2001, on the 56th anniversary of the Aug. 6, 1945, US atomic bombing of the western Japanese city, in the hope of reducing the number of nuclear tests.—Kyodo ■

Horizon Worlds opened to users 18 and above on December 9th. **PHOTO: SOPA IMAGES / CONTRIBUTOR / GETTY /AFP**

Meta tests sale of virtual goods in metaverse

META, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, will give content creators the opportunity to sell virtual items to users in Horizon Worlds, its main platform in the metaverse, the company said Monday.

"For example, someone could make and sell attachable accessories for a fashion world or offer paid access to a new part of a world," the Californian tech group said in a press release.

The metaverse, touted by Meta and other companies as the future of the internet, consists of a set of parallel "universes" accessed primarily through augmented and virtual reality platforms.

It already exists in a basic way in the form of video games such as Minecraft, Fortnite and Roblox and social platforms such as Horizon Worlds, and VRChat, where people come together not only to play, but also to interact and participate in events. Meta, whose income is overwhelmingly dependent on large-scale targeted advertising, has made it its mission to make a major contribution to the emergence of the metaverse, and is staking out its place in the next battle for the public's attention. —AFP ■

Russian warship 'seriously damaged' in ammunition explosion: state media

This file photo taken on 31 July, 2011 shows the Moskva guided missile cruiser participating in a Russian military Navy Day parade near a navy base in Sevastopol. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

THE Russian navy's Black Sea flagship has been "seriously damaged" by an ammunition explosion, Russian state media said Thursday.

"As a result of a fire, ammunition detonated on the Moskva missile cruiser. The ship was seriously damaged," the Russian defence ministry was quoted as saying, adding that the cause of the fire was being determined and that the crew had been evacuated.

Earlier, the governor of Odessa said that Ukrainian forces had hit the Moskva with missile strikes. "Neptune missiles guarding the Black Sea caused very serious damage to the Russian ship. Glory to Ukraine!" governor Maksym Marchenko wrote on Telegram.

A spokesman for the Odessa military administration, Sergey Bratchuk, said on Telegram that "according to available data, the cause of the 'serious damage' was 'Neptune' domestic cruise missiles". Ukrainian presidential advisor Oleksiy Arestovych said that "a surprise happened" with the Moskva.—AFP ■

Russia accuses US-funded labs of developing bio-weapons

US-FUNDED biological laboratories in Ukraine were engaged in developing components of biological weapons, Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said Tuesday.

"It is impossible not to mention the activities conducted by the United States and its allies near the Russian borders," Medvedev said at a government meeting.

Such activities were not aimed at searching for effective means of protection against dangerous diseases or cooperating with the international community, he stressed.—Xinhua ■

More than 1,000 Ukraine marines have surrendered in Mariupol

Two Russian soldiers patrol in the Mariupol drama theatre in Mariupol as Russian troops intensify a campaign for complete control of strategic port city. **PHOTO: AFP**

RUSSIA'S Defence Ministry said Wednesday that 1,026 Ukrainian servicemen of Ukraine's 36th Marine Brigade had surrendered in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, following an offensive carried out by Russia's armed forces and the militia units of Donetsk. A total of 162 officers and 47 servicewomen were among those who surrendered, and 151 wounded Ukrainian soldiers received immediate medical treatment, Russian Defense Ministry Spokesman Igor Konashenkov said during his daily briefing.—Xinhua ■

NEWS DIGEST

The following are the latest developments:

The critical fight for Mariupol

UKRAINIAN Presidential Advisor Oleksiy Arestovych said Wednesday that the 36th Marine Brigade had broken fighting lines and joined the Azov Battalion in the besieged city of Mariupol. "In general, the city's defense system has grown and strengthened," Arestovych wrote on Facebook.

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Automobile connection between Kiev and the city of Chernihiv

THE Ukrainian authorities are working to restore the automobile connection between Kiev and the city of Chernihiv in northern Ukraine, Deputy Head of Ukraine's Presidential Office Kyrylo Tymoshenko said Wednesday.

Work is underway to build temporary passages for automobile transport near the two key bridges destroyed in the Chernihiv region, Tymoshenko wrote on Telegram.

Efforts to clean up the Kyiv-Chernihiv highway from landmines and other explosives are also underway, he said.

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Russia to seek alternative to European energy market

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that Russia will aim to increase the consumption of Russian oil, gas and coal on the domestic market, and increase the supply of energy resources to other parts of the world. "The refusal of a number of Western countries to cooperate normally" and their partial ban on Russian energy resources have already affected millions of Europeans, further provoking an energy crisis and unprecedented inflation, Putin said during a meeting on the development of the Russian Arctic zone.

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Russia's economy is beginning to crack

RUSSIA'S gross domestic product contraction at the end of 2022 would surpass 10 percent and inflation could reach 20 per cent, said Aleksei Kudrin, head of the country's Accounts Chamber, Russia's TASS news agency reported Wednesday.

SOURCE: Xinhua

SUMMARY

Here are the latest developments in the war in Ukraine:

Russia threatens Kyiv

THE Russian military threatens to strike Ukraine's command centres in Kyiv as "we are seeing Ukrainian troops' attempts to carry out sabotage and strike Russian territory," Moscow's defence ministry says.

"If such cases continue, the Russian armed forces will strike decision-making centres, including in Kyiv," the ministry states.

Le Pen for NATO-Moscow rapprochement

FRENCH far-right leader Marine Le Pen says she will back closer ties between NATO and Russia and pull Paris out of the alliance's military command if elected president in an 24 April runoff with Emmanuel Macron.

Following accusations she is too close to Vladimir Putin, Le Pen said a "strategic rapprochement" is needed and questions need to be asked about the role of the alliance after the end of the Warsaw Pact.

Ceasefire seems impossible: UN

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says a "global ceasefire doesn't seem possible", indicating the UN is still waiting for answers from Russia to concrete proposals for evacuating civilians and delivering aid. "That was our appeal for humanitarian reasons, but it doesn't seem possible," said Guterres.

SOURCE: AFP

Int'l Online Taekwondo Competition to be held from 15 to 18 April

THE first international online taekwondo competition organized by the Myanmar Taekwondo Federation will be held from 15 to 18 April.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, local taekwondo competitions have been held online since mid-2020 by the Myanmar Taekwondo Federation.

As it is an online competition, only dance and kickboxing competitions will be held, with 20 countries, including host Myanmar.

Host Myanmar, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Iran, India, Honduras, Bahrain, Mexico, the United States, Australia, Switzerland, Swedish, Greece, Slovenia and Nicaragua will participate in this virtual competition.

Myanmar local clubs include Aung San Club, YTC Club, San Pya Fighter Club, ABC Club, Dragon Club, Shwe Pyi Thar Club, Home & Affairs Club, Kachin Club, Knight Club, Excellence TKD Gym Club, Tiger (PyinOoLwin) Club, Forever Young TKD Club, Better to Best Club and Nay Pyi Taw Club. They will represent Myanmar.

Dance and kick-off competitions will be held with age restrictions. Since the competition is held online, players must submit a video of the match to the event organizers in advance. —Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

Prosecutors call for Maradona medical staff to face trial

Diego Maradona (C during the 1986 World Cup) is widely considered one of the greatest footballers in history. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

PROSECUTORS investigating the 2020 death of Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona have asked that the medical staff who treated him be tried for negligent homicide.

In their request Wednesday, the prosecutors said "omissions" and mismanagement by eight medical professionals in charge of Maradona placed him in a "situation of helplessness" and abandoned him "to his fate" during his home hospitalization, according to the court filing cited by the official Telam news agency.

Maradona died at age 50 in 2020 while recovering from brain surgery for a blood clot, and after decades of battles with cocaine and alcohol addictions.

Neurosurgeon and family doctor Leopoldo Luque and psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov are under investigation over his death as the main people responsible for the health of the former football star.

Six others, including psychologist Carlos Diaz and medical coordinator Nancy Forlini, are also accused. —AFP ■

'Players only human,' says Klopp as Liverpool survive collapse to reach semi-finals

JURGEN Klopp admitted he was relieved to see Liverpool book a Champions League semi-final showdown against Villarreal as the quadruple chasers survived a late collapse in Wednesday's 3-3 draw against Benfica.

Klopp's side already had one foot in the last four after winning 3-1 in the quarter-final first leg in Lisbon. They were on cruise control for long spells in the second leg at Anfield, but had to hold their nerve before advancing 6-4 on aggregate after an uncharacteristic meltdown in the closing stages.

Ibrahima Konate put Liverpool ahead before Goncalo Ramos equalized late in the first half. When Roberto Firmino netted twice after the interval, the tie looked all but over.

However, Roman Yaremchuk and Darwin Nunez struck for Benfica to briefly give the visitors hope of an astonishing escape act, before Liverpool finally restored order.

"When I'm not over the moon about qualifying for the Champions League semi-final, something is really wrong and maybe I should quit!" Klopp said. "The situation was the defence had never played together and it was about details, staying 100 per cent concentrated.

"We were 6-2 up on aggregate. The players are human beings, they were like 'Ok job done'. But Benfica kept fighting and I respect that. "It was not exactly what we wanted but it is absolutely not important. We are through and that's all that matters. I'm really happy." The Reds will face Spanish side Villarreal in the semi-finals as they look to reach their 10th Champions League final and claim a seventh title in the competition.—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.

Australia's Green grabs early lead at windy LPGA Lotte Championship

AUSTRALIA'S Hannah Green mastered blustery conditions to fire a six-under-par 66 and take a one-shot lead after the first round of the LPGA Tour's Lotte Championship in Hawaii on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old rattled off eight birdies and two bogeys to edge clear of the pack on a day where strong winds buffeted the Hoakalei Country Club on Oahu island. "It was quite hard to predict the wind the last few holes," world number 31 Green said. "It was getting pretty gusty. You've got to be pretty patient out there.

"I felt like I hit the ball really well. I don't know how many greens I hit, but all the shots I hit where I wanted them. It's been a while since I've done that." A group of five players are lurking on Green's shoulder after carding five-under-par 67s. That includes England's Jodi Ewart Shadoff, South Korea's Kim Hyo-joo, India's Aditi Ashok, Scotland's Gemma Dryburgh, and Alison Lee of the United States.—AFP ■

Hannah Green lines up a putt en route to a six-under-par 66 at the Lotte Championship in Hawaii on Wednesday. **PHOTO: AFP**