SEEK UNIVERSAL TRUTHS BASED ON THE RULES OF THE SECULAR WORLD

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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The Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council: Five-Point Road Map

1. Priority will be given to fully realizing peace, stability and rule of law throughout the Union to safeguard the socioeconomic life of the people.
2. People-centred development work that enhances socioeconomic well-being will be undertaken to ensure the country's prosperity and food security.
3. Processes will further continue to consolidate a genuine, disciplined multiparty democratic system and build a Union based on democracy and federalism.
4. Priority will be accorded to work aligned with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, in order to achieve enduring peace for the entire nation.
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.

Message from Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Mr Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation on the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation

ON the auspicious occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation which falls on 18 February 2023, the people of Myanmar join me in extending our warmest felicitations and congratulations to Your Excellency and, through you, to the people of the Russian Federation.

It is with much satisfaction to observe that since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1948, our two countries have been enjoying a unique time-tested friendship and partnership defined by mutual respect and understanding. Notwithstanding the changing international landscape, the bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and the Russian Federation remain warm and close. There are also substantive people-to-people ties between our two countries

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Message from Mr Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation to Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation

PLEASE accept sincere greetings on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our states.

Russia-Myanmar ties are developing in an upward direction. We have succeeded in significantly expanding political contacts, and mutually beneficial cooperation in the trade and economic, military and technical, humanitarian and other areas. Russia and Myanmar stand together for building a fair multipolar world order based on genuine equality and the rule of international law.

I am convinced that by joining our efforts, we will manage to further build up constructive bilateral interaction in all spheres. This, no doubt, meets the interests of our people and contributes to strengthening security and stability in the Asian-Pacific region.

I wish You good health and success and to all citizens of Myanmar —peace and prosperity.

Myanmar imports 60,000 tonnes of fertilizer worth $31.075 mln in Jan

MYANMAR imported about 60,000 tonnes of fertilizer worth US$31.075 million in January 2023, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar imported over 40,000 tonnes from China, over 7,800 from Thailand, about 5,000 from the UAE, over 2,500 from the Republic of Korea, over 600 from the US, over 500 from Uzbekistan, over 400 from Viet Nam, about 400 tonnes from Japan, over 300 from Laos, 80 from Malaysia, over 10 each from India and Indonesia respectively by sea. The export volume was down by over 43,000 tonnes compared to that recorded in December 2022.

Meanwhile, the country imported over 8,600 tonnes of fertilizer worth $3.02 million through a cross-border channel last month, with about 4,500 tonnes from China, over 620 from Thailand and over 3,000 from India.

The prices of fertilizer moved in the range between K72,000-162,500 per 50-kilogramme bag depending on the brand (Myanma Awba, Thai Grow How, Pale, MPE and Thai Myinpyan) and types of fertilizer in the last week of January 2023. The prices remained unchanged in early February.

Additionally, the prices of Malarmyaing brand Cypermethrin 10 per cent insecticide 100 cc and 500 cc were K3,100 and K13,800 per bottle. —TWA/EM

Fertilizer bags are being loaded onto the ship. **PHOTO: GREEN WAY**

Objectives of 78th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day

- To serve primary duties of Tatmadaw for successfully safeguarding Our Three Main National Causes, and protecting the State Constitution and shielding the genuine disciplined multiparty democratic system
- To emphasize agreements in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) as much as possible for the restoration of the durable and perpetual peace across the nation as ceasing of armed conflicts is an actual requirement for realizing the multiparty democratic system
- To render assistance in protecting the national interests of the State, in safeguarding the life and property of the people and in participating in relevant sectors with utmost efforts whenever natural disasters fall
- To provide the necessary assistance by Tatmadaw for holding a free and fair multiparty democratic general election upon completion of undertakings in accord with the provisions of the state of emergency for the emergence of the Union based on democracy and federalism.

Messages of felicitations exchanged between Heads of States, Prime Ministers and Ministers on 75th Anniversary (Diamond Jubilee) of Myanmar-Russia Diplomatic Ties

ON the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation on 18 February 2023, messages of felicitations were exchanged between Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Mr Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and Mr Mikhail Mishustin, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, U Than Swe, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Mr Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, Union Minister for Office of the Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Mr Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation.

Message from Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Mr Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation ...

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with many Myanmar scholars having pursued and many more still pursuing their studies in Russia. Myanmar always considers Russia an important and reliable partner. We highly value and appreciate Russia's consistent support for Myanmar, both bilaterally and multilaterally, particularly during its difficult times.

I am pleased that the exchange of high-level visits and the increasing engagement and cooperation in various fields at different levels have yielded tangible results for our two countries and peoples. I fondly recall my visit to the Russian Federation in September 2022 where we both agreed to further enhance our bilateral relations and multifaceted cooperation in the mutual interests of our two peoples. I am convinced that the bonds of friendship and cooperation in trade, investment, tourism and cultural sectors will be elevated to new heights with the inauguration of the Myanmar Consulates-General in St. Petersburg and Novosibirsk in the near future.

The year 2023 is an opportune time not only to commemorate the historic milestone in our bilateral ties but also to reflect and invigorate our bilateral relations and mutually beneficial cooperation. A series of commemorative events and activities planned to be held on both sides throughout the year will also pave the way for the further advancement of our bilateral relationship. At this important juncture, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Myanmar to work more closely with the Government of the Russian Federation to further strengthen our bilateral relations and expand cooperation in all spheres of common interest that will contribute to the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Availing myself of this auspicious occasion, I wish Your Excellency good health, happiness and all success in your future endeavours, as well as continued progress and prosperity of the Russian Federation and its people.

Please accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Message from Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Mr Mikhail Mishustin, Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation on the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation

ON behalf of the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and myself, I take great pleasure in conveying our cordial greetings and congratulations to Your Excellency and, through you, to the government of the Russian Federation as we celebrate the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation on 18 February 2023.

The USSR was one of the first countries that Myanmar established diplomatic relations with soon after it gained independence in 1948. Since then, the amicable ties and constructive cooperation between our two countries have strengthened across many areas of common interest.

I truly believe that this special occasion offers us a great opportunity to work together to further consolidate our friendship and usher in a new era that will maximize the vast potential to strengthen our bilateral cooperation. I look forward to an even greater enhancement of our bilateral cooperation through our joint efforts in the coming years for the mutual benefit of our two countries and peoples.

Taking this opportunity, I convey my sincere best wishes to Your Excellency for your personal well-being and happiness as well as for the continued progress and prosperity of the Russian Federation.

With the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Message from Mr Mikhail Mishustin, Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation to Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation

ON behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation and from me personally, I am sending You greetings on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I would like to emphasize that Russia-Myanmar relations are based on the principles of friendship, partnership, mutual respect and consideration of the interests of each other. The cooperation in trade and economic, science, technology and humanitarian areas is developing gradually. Joint projects are being carried out in the energy sector, industry, transport infrastructure, education and high technological spheres.

I am convinced that our active collaboration at the governmental level will contribute further to expanding practical cooperation and promoting new mutually beneficial initiatives. It fully meets the interests of the Russian Federation and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I wish You, dear Mr Min Aung Hlaing, good health and new success in Your responsible activity, happiness and well-being to all citizens of Myanmar.

Existing Constitution provides ethnic rights

OUR country is formed with eight major national races and more than 130 ethnic nationals. All ethnic nationals have an equal term of rights. The existing Constitution mentions the rights of ethnic affairs. Our government will continue efforts for enabling ethnic people to have deserved rights and entitlements.

(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Central Committee Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the 7th Anniversary of Signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on 15 October 2022)

Message from U Than Swe, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Mr Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation

IT is with immense pleasure that I extend my warmest congratulations and sincere wishes to Your Excellency on the momentous occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation, which falls on 18 February 2023.

Myanmar and the Russian Federation have maintained and cherished long-standing cordial relations and close cooperation over the past seventy-five years. It is also a matter of profound satisfaction that Myanmar and Russia enjoy close collaboration in regional and international frameworks, including ASEAN, ASEM and the United Nations.

As we celebrate the diamond jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic ties, I look forward to enhancing our coordination and cooperation in bilateral, regional, and multilateral contexts in the years ahead to serve the interests of our two nations and peoples. On this note, I express my willingness to make joint efforts with Your Excellency to consolidate the friendly and cooperative relations between our two ministries and countries.

Taking this opportunity, I convey my warm wishes to Your Excellency for your personal well-being, and happiness, and for the lasting prosperity of the people of the Russian Federation.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Message from Mr Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to His Excellency U Than Swe, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation

PLEASE accept heartfelt greetings on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

The bilateral ties are gradually developing in a wide range of areas on the basis of traditional friendship, mutual understanding and respect, which have been formed between our countries during the last decades. We are glad to note the building up of a trustful political dialogue and practical cooperation in priority areas that have been evidenced by the meeting of the two heads of state on the margins of the 7th Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September of 2022.

We attach great importance to strengthening interaction between our foreign ministries on urgent issues of the global and regional agenda, and coordination efforts in multilateral organizations and fora. Myanmar's intention to join the activity of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Economic Union has created a new vector of collaboration. We are convinced that this all contributes to security and sustainable development in the South East Asia and Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

I sincerely wish You, dear U Than Swe, and all your colleagues in the MFA of Myanmar good health and success in your work.

Message from Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government and National Security Advisor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Mr Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation on the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation

ON behalf of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and on my own, I am pleased to extend my congratulations on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of our diplomatic relations on 18 February 2023.

On this auspicious occasion, may I reiterate that the Myanmar-Russian cooperation is based on the solid traditions of friendship and mutual respect through the test of time. During the past more than seven decades, our countries have achieved significant success in multi-sector cooperation through cordial ties as a strategic partnership.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to emphasize that our bilateral interaction and practical cooperation in several areas including the defence, trade and economic, science and technology sectors are strengthening for the benefit and well-being of our peoples.

I wish to reaffirm the commitment to further advance and deepen our cooperation in all spheres and to strive of promoting security, peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and global agenda in a cooperative manner.

With all my heart, I wish you, Mr Nikolay Patrushev, good health, well-being and success as well as happiness and prosperity to all Russian people.

Message from Mr Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation to Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government and National Security Advisor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the occasion of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Russian Federation

PLEASE accept the greetings on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries.

Myanmar-Russia ties traditionally have a friendly character and are based on mutual respect for the interests of each other.

I am convinced that the cooperation between Moscow and Nay Pyi Taw in the field of security will contribute both to the prosperity of our people and to the maintenance of stability in the whole Asia-Pacific region.

I look forward to meeting You personally in Moscow on 23-25 May 2023 on the margins of the XI International meeting of high representatives responsible for security matters to continue our constructive dialogue.

I wish You good health, well-being and further success in Your professional activity.

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Order No 23/2023

13th Waning of Tabodwe 1384 ME
17 February 2023

Substitution and Appointment of SAC Member

THE State Administration Council has substituted State Administration Council member Pugin Kanglian with Dr Hmu Htan under Section 419 of the Constitution.

By Order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Order No 24/2023

13th Waning of Tabodwe 1384 ME
17 February 2023

Appointment and Duty Assignment of Deputy Minister

THE State Administration Council has appointed and assigned U Aye Kyaw to the duties of Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Electrical Power under Section 419 of the Constitution.

By Order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Myanmar Gazette

Appointment of Head of Service Organization confirmed

THE State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of U Lwin Aung as Director-General of the Department of Administration of the Office of the Anti-Corruption Commission after the one-year probationary period.

The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increasing of death rate based on the disease.

NSPNC meets working group of political parties

The meeting between the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee and the working group of political parties is in progress yesterday.

THE meeting of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee and the working group of political parties was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Member of the State Administration Council Union Minister at the Union Government Office Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, NSPNC members, leader of the working group of political parties Shan Nationalities Democratic Party Chair U Sai Aik Pao and representatives of the working group attended the meeting.

NSPNC Chair Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and leader of the working group of political parties SNDP Chair U Sai Aik Pao delivered opening speeches. Regarding the reconstitution of political party clusters, they discussed and negotiated the possibility of reorganizing the working group of the political party clusters once the political parties are registered under the Political Parties Registration Law.

Afterwards, the opinions obtained from the discussions between the two sides were recorded as a collection of opinions. Then, the leader of the working group of political parties SNDP Chair U Sai Aik Pao gave words of thanks and NSPNC Chair Lt-Gen Yar Pyae gave the concluding remark. Books on Myanmar affairs, world affairs and ethnic affairs published by the Ministry of Information were presented before posing for the documentary group photo. — MNA/KZW

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish **"Letter to the Editor"** that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

MoFA Union Minister receives Chinese Ambassador

Ambassador Mr Chen Hai of China to Myanmar calls on Union Foreign Affairs Minister U Than Swe yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

UNION Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe received Mr Chen Hai, Ambassador of China to Myanmar, at 1:30 pm on 17 February 2023 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they cordially exchanged views on matters pertaining to the further consolidation of the existing Pauk-Phaw relations, acceleration of the implementation of Myanmar-China mutually beneficial bilateral projects, continuous provision of constructive support towards Myanmar's Peace Process, maintenance of peace and stability along the border area between Myanmar and China. They also cordially exchanged views on regional and international matters of mutual interest as well as for closer collaboration between the two countries in regional and multilateral contexts including ASEAN and the United Nations. – MNA

Task Force of Working Committee to address impact of COVID-19 on national economy meets

The Task Force of the Working Committee to address the Impact of Covid-19 on the National Economy holds its 1/2023 meeting in the hybrid system yesterday.

THE Task Force of the Working Committee to address the Impact of COVID-19 on the National Economy meeting 1/2023 was held in a hybrid manner yesterday morning at the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, Yangon Region Office.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Wah Wah Maung, Deputy Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations who is also the leader of the task force. Members of the task force as well as credit supervisors from states and regions and representatives from the Ministries and Organizations also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, it was discussed the provision of a loan amount of K158.4438 billion for 5,990 companies and enterprises which include the sectors such as agriculture, livestock, manufacturing, restaurant, fisheries, hotels, tourism and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), including CMP enterprises. Success Story Survey will be conducted for monitoring and evaluation process of loan-received companies and enterprises.

The meeting also discussed the collection of loans including interest amounts and the preparation of the Success Story Survey. —MNA

Delegates visit MLC Projects on second day of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Diplomatic Tour

Delegates take the documentary group photo during their second-day MLC Diplomatic Tour yesterday.

ON the second day of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Diplomatic Tour, the delegates from the Embassies of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Member Countries – Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam – visited MLC projects in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In the morning, delegates visited Ayechantha Model Village in Tatkon Township and were received by officials from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development and villagers. Delegates observed road, water and electricity access, the weaving factory, school and library constructed under the MLC Early Harvest Project.

The MLC delegation donated various books to the library of Ayechantha Middle School.

Afterwards, the MLC delegation proceeded to the Water Lab under the "Assessment of Toxic Organic Contaminants in Mekong River Basin of Myanmar" Project implemented by the Yezin Forest Research Institute with the MLC fund in Zeyathiri Township.

Officials and technicians of the lab explained the work of the project.

Next, delegates left for Yezin Agricultural University. They were received by the director-general, rector and officials from the university at the convocation hall.

Delegates visited the mini-exhibition on the MLC projects implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation followed by the briefing on three projects implemented by the Yezin Agricultural University which are (1) Establishing Agricultural Libraries Network between Universities within Lancang-Mekong Area (Library), (2) Establishing of Agricultural Extension Laboratories (Audio Visual and Media Production Laboratory) and (3) Establishing of Agricultural Biotechnology Laboratory and Research Network between Universities within Lancang-Mekong Area. Then, delegates visited project sites at the university.

In the evening, the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation National Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the dinner for the MLC Delegation at M-Gallery Hotel. — MNA

MoBA Union Minister virtually meets Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region of India

The virtual meeting between Union Border Affairs Minister Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region of India is Shri G. Kishan Reddy in progress.

THE virtual meeting of Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region of India Shri G. Kishan Reddy was held at the meeting room of the Ministry of Border Affairs yesterday evening.

At the meeting, they discussed the peace and stability of border regions of the two countries, transport and communications, issues related to socioeconomic development and further promotion of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Phyo Thant, the permanent secretary, the director-general, officials, the minister-counsellor charge d'affaires and first secretary of the India embassy, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region of India, officials of the Ministry of External Affairs and Myanmar Ambassador to India U Moe Kyaw Aung attended the meeting. — MNA/KZW

Virtual workshop marking 75th Anniversary of Myanmar-Russia diplomatic ties held

THE Far Eastern Federal University of the Russian Federation organized a virtual workshop marking the 75th Anniversary of Myanmar- Russia diplomatic ties yesterday.

At the event, University Vice-President Dr Evgeny Vlasov, Myanmar Ambassador to Russian Federation U Lwin Oo, Russian Ambassador to Myanmar Dr Nikolay Listopadov, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Science and Technology Dr Sai Kyaw Naing Oo, Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Aung Ko made opening speeches respectively.

They also discussed the enhancement of bilateral relations, economic growth, human resource development and cooperation in improving the socio-economic status using nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

The event was also joined by Director-General Dr Aung Swe Tun of the Ministry of Education, U Myo Myint, from the Russia-Myanmar Association of Friendship and Cooperation and experts and representatives from the political, economic and education sectors. – MNA/KTZH

The workshop to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of Myanmar-Russia Diplomatic Relations is held virtually yesterday.

Commemorative photos displayed for 75th Anniversary Myanmar-Russia Diplomatic Relations

IN marking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Myanmar-Russia diplomatic relations on 18 February, the Information and Public Relations Department in Zabuthiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory displayed documentary photos of the meeting between Heads of States of the two nations and bilateral cooperation between Myanmar and Russia on the billboard as of yesterday morning.

The public is also informed documentary photos on bilateral cooperation, meetings of Heads of State of both countries, policies of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the endangerment of narcotic drugs, exclusive events of news, job opportunities and providing knowledge. Government staff and locals are keen to observe the display on the billboard. —Nilar (IPRD)/TS

No new cases of COVID-19 reported on 17 February, total figure registers 633,877

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases stood at 633,877 after no new cases were reported on 17 February 2023 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached 614,356, including one new recovery.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at 19,490 on 17-2-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic. —MNA

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LOCAL BUSINESS

Domestic fuel oil price remains on upward trend

THE domestic fuel market sees a small change in prices yet it stays on an upward trajectory.

This month, the market sees a price swing every day. On 17 February, the prices touched a high of K2,185 per litre of Octane 92, K2,260 for Octane 95, K2,240 for diesel and K2,320 for premium diesel.

The domestic fuel prices are set depending on the price index set by Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS), the pricing basis for many refined products in southeast Asia, according to the Supervisory Committee on Oil Import, Storage and Distribution of Fuel Oil.

Last August 2022, the oil prices peaked at K2,605 per litre for Octane 92, K2,670 for Octane 95, K3,330 for premium diesel and K3,245 for diesel.

The committee is therefore governing the fuel oil storage and distribution sector effectively not to have a shortage of oil in the domestic market and to ensure price stability for energy consumers.

The Petroleum Products Supervision and Inspection Department, under the guidance of the committee, is issuing the daily reference rate for oil to offer a reasonable price to energy consumers. The reference rate in Yangon Region is set on the MOPS's price assessment, shipping cost, premium insurance, tax, other general cost and health profit per cent.

The rates for regions and states other than Yangon are evaluated after adding the transportation cost and the retail reference rates daily covered on the state-run newspapers and are posted on the media and official website and Facebook page of the department daily starting from 4 May.

As per the statement, 90 per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally. The domestic fuel price is highly correlated with international prices. The State is steering the market to mitigate the loss between the importers, sellers and energy consumers. Consequently, the government is trying to distribute the oil at a reasonable price compared to those of regional countries.

A car is seen being filled with fuel oil at the petrol station in Yangon.

Some countries levied higher tax rates and hiked oil prices than Myanmar. However, Malaysia's oil sector receives government subsidies and the prices are about 60 per cent cheaper than that of Myanmar. Every country lays down different patterns of policy to fix the oil prices. Myanmar also poses only a lower tax rate on fuel oil and strives for energy consumers to buy the oil at a cheaper rate. – NN/EM

Kyinsankyawt border sees abolition of driver-substitution system

The Kyinsankyawt-Wang Ding border post.

DRIVER-SUBSTITUTION system has been put an end at Kyinsankyawt checkpoint of Muse trade zone for Sino-Myanmar trade from 18 February 2023, said Sai Khin Maung of Khwarnyo Fruit Trading Centre.

Consequently, drivers are allowed to directly pass the border point with their own trucks, by holding a valid border pass.

"Myanmar's truck drivers were given the go-ahead to pass Kyinsankyawt road part from 18 February 2023. They must hold blue border pass documents. That being so, there is no longer short-haul driver service on China's side," Sai Khin Maung continued.

Earlier, China banned Myanmar trucks and drivers to enter its side owing to the COVID-19 protocols and only Chinese short-haul drivers have been allowed to transport the goods. Thereafter, Myanmar trucks have been given green light for border-crossing through the Kyinsankyawt-Wang Ding trade channel under the driver-substitution system starting from 16 May 2022.

There was no responsibility and accountability if goods were damaged under the driver-substitution system. Therefore, Myanmar exporters choose short-haul driver services and bear high freight costs.

China shut down all the checkpoints linking to the Muse border amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the checkpoints, Kyinsankyawt has resumed trading activity from 26 November 2021.

Trade activity at the Muse-Mang Wein border, which performed the majority of trade between Myanmar and China, resumed on 14 January 2023. However, only six-wheel trucks driven by Myanmar drivers are allowed to pass the Mang Wein crossing. Other trucks and travellers are still not entitled to enter the border.

Additionally, other goods except for agricultural products (watermelon, muskmelon), minerals and fisheries products are allowed to be sent to China through that border. Meanwhile, China gives the go-ahead to the imports of construction goods, electrical appliances, medical devices, industrial equipment, consumer goods, household goods and food products only through that border.

Myanmar has opened five border trade posts with China – Muse, Lweje, Kampaiti, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung. The majority of the trade is carried out through Muse post, Ministry of Commerce's data indicated. – NN/EM

Prices of fuel oil, gold and dollar on 17 February 2023

Fuel Oil Price (Yangon)

Octane 92	K2,185
Octane 95	K2,260
Diesel	K2,240
Premium Diesel	K2,320

All of the prices are based on per litre.

Gold Price

The reference price of high-purity gold set by YGEA	K2,148,900 per tical
High-purity gold in the gold market	K2,848,000 per tical

US Dollar Vs Kyat

A US dollar set by the Central Bank of Myanmar	K2,100
A US dollar in the forex market	K2,850 to K2,865

The above prices may change from time to time.

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OPINION

Seek universal truths based on the rules of the secular world

IN SOCIETY, everybody can analyze that there are many people who urge somebody to practice good deeds only and define the disadvantage of evil acts and sins. Actually, even they cannot abide by ethics of the society and break many provisions of the secular world.

For more than 2,600 years, the Lord Buddha Gotama preached five principles of the secular world. Anyone regardless of religion should follow the five principles of the secular world: not to kill someone, not to steal something, not to commit adultery affairs, not to tell lies and not to drink liquor.

If everybody follows such kinds of social ethics, any crime, any dispute and any conflicts never happen in the world. Consequently, all the global people can live in peace, fraternity and prosperity. These principles can remove hatred and jealousy and cultural compassion, empathy, tolerance and patience. It is the best result of complying with social principles.

The essence of society as well as the life of human beings is to uphold compassion, empathy, sympathy and mercy over others while removing malpractices from the souls of the global peoples. In fact, everybody tells what good deeds are and what bad ones are but they comprehensively know what is good or bad. They tell something based on their knowledge through reading and their life experiences. They do not know what is good and bad in the secular world through in-depth knowledge which comes out from the physical and mental analysis, assessing and overviewing the virtual nature of the human body.

If someone breaks one of these principles, undesirable crimes will occur. The subsequences of these events will trigger hatred among the people and sow a grudge in the souls of global peoples. Today's events happening across the world are also based on the consequences of breaking these five principles exposed by the Lord Buddha.

As such, anyone should not give guidelines to each other to practice something about how to do, what to do, why to do and when to do it. It is not useful. Practically, they all need to follow the aforesaid principles to be able to forge compassion and disperse love-kindness to the global people. Those who exercise the five principles of the Lord Buddha will enable forging the four cardinal virtues.

The essence of society as well as the life of human beings is to uphold compassion, empathy, sympathy and mercy over others while removing malpractices from the souls of the global peoples. In fact, everybody tells what good deeds are and what bad ones are but they comprehensively know what is good or bad. They tell something based on their knowledge through reading and their life experiences. They do not know what is good and bad in the secular world through in-depth knowledge which comes out from the physical and mental analysis, assessing and overviewing the virtual nature of the human body.

Whatever it may be, if all the global peoples understand the cause and effect as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the five principles of the secular world preached by the Lord Buddha, they will be able to shape the universe peacefully and prosper.

■

ARTICLE

Russia and Myanmar – the 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations

Time-Tested Friendship

By Nikolay Listopadov
Russian Ambassador to Myanmar

TODAY, on the 18th of February, 2023, Russia and Myanmar celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the history of which dates back to the 19th century. At that time, Burma was looking for the support of Russia in its fight against British aggression.

According to available information, the first step towards approaching

the Russian Empire was made by the Burmese government in 1873 when a message with the wish of establishing diplomatic relations was conveyed to St. Petersburg through a Russian traveller. A letter addressed to Chancellor Alexander Gorchakov, signed by Royal Minister of Foreign Affairs Kinwun Mingyi, was sent in 1875,

in which the Burmese government expressed its desire to establish friendly relations with the Russian Empire. In his letter of response, Chancellor Gorchakov informed that he had brought the content of the received letter to the notice of Russian Emperor Alexander II.

In 1876, Burma was visited by a Russian diplomat and orientalist, Peter Pashino. Presenting his considerations on the benefits of establishing ties with Burma, he highlighted the following thoughts in his note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "The main fact that catches the eye of every unbiased traveller is that Russia, being a powerful country in Europe's eyes, apart from that, has some especial and incredible charm in the whole internal Asia. King of Burma Mindon – one of the active supporters of such a view – even ordered to translate the history of Peter the Great for him, then he studied it to perfection and wished to resemble him at any cost".

It is surprising, but nowadays, 250 years later, these observations sound very topical. The Burmese authorities passed

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin on 7 September 2022.

two letters via Peter Pashino: one for Alexander Gorchakov, and another for Defense Minister Dmitry Milyutin, revealing

the desire to send young Burmese men to get an education at Russian military universities. But this intention was not implemented.

Since the beginning of the year 1886, Burma became a colony as a part of

British India. The Englishmen even refused to grant an exequatur to a non-staff consul of Russia to Rangoon, appointed by the Russian government in 1889. Nevertheless, the latter fulfilled his duties, providing necessary assistance to

the captains of Russian ships, entering the Rangoon port.

Having received its independence in 1948, Burma was among the developing countries, with which the Soviet Union maintained close relations. It was evidenced by the exchange of visits at the highest level. In October-November of 1955, Prime Minister U Nu visited the USSR and, in December of the same year, a delegation headed by the member of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR Nikita Khrushchev and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Nikolai Bulganin paid a visit to Burma. An agreement between the USSR and Burma on the construction of a technological institute and a hotel in Rangoon as well as a hospital in Taunggyi was signed in January 1957. These facilities were put into service in 1961. They became visible symbols of the Russian-Myanmar friendship and are still effectively used. In 1967, a large irrigation dam "Kyetmauktaung" was added to them.

In September of 1965, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of Burma General Ne Win paid a state visit to the USSR, where he met with Soviet leaders – L. Brezhnev, A. Kosygin and A. Mikoyan. In the 1970-s and 1980-s, Soviet-Burmese relations were not notable for a large scale of cooperation, but they remained friendly, without being aggravated by any problems and disputes.

Our country repeatedly came to help Burma during difficult times. In the spring of 1953, the USSR gave Burma valuable support in the UN, where Rangoon filed a complaint against the Guomindang aggression. At the end of the 1950-s, the Soviet Union purchased a big amount of Burmese rice, when difficulties with its sales occurred because of the USA dumping measures towards its rice surplus on the global market.

Our country did not and does not support the sanctions and restrictions imposed by the USA and its allies against Myanmar. It is obvious that, in the first place, ordinary people suffer from these sanctions, while the social and economic development of the country slows down.

At present, Myanmar faces a number of domestic and foreign policy issues. Many of its problems, for instance, in Rakhine State, date back to the colonial past. Mostly, it is the result of the British colonial policy under the motto "divide and rule".

The US and other Western states have chosen the path of exerting tough sanction pressure on Nay Pyi Taw, accusing the Myanmar military of committing "all deadly sins" without proper understanding of the peculiarities of the national development and intentionally keeping silent about the problems of the genesis of the current internal political situation in this country.

Russia, in its turn, respects the right of people to determine their destiny by themselves. It does not interfere with the internal affairs of other countries under far-fetched pretexts. Moscow has always urged the confronting forces in Myanmar to solve problems through dialogue, by peaceful means, based on national reconciliation.

People in Russia, which is a multiethnic and multiconfessional country, understand the difficulties that Myanmar has to deal with. We do understand that

the main task of the Myanmar government is to maintain the territorial integrity of

the state and to ensure peace and security in it.

I sincerely believe that the deepening of Russia-Myanmar cooperation meets the long-term interests of the two countries and their people. Contacts at the highest and high levels give an impulse to this process. The meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chairman of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, which took place at the margins of the 7th Eastern Economic Forum in September of 2022, became a significant milestone on this path. In August of 2022, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed bilateral cooperation with his counterpart U Wunna Maung Lwin in Nay Pyi Taw.

Interaction between business communities of the two countries has been increasing during the last few years. Russian and Myanmar entrepreneurs find new mechanisms and forms of cooperation. As a result, the bilateral trade turnover is gradually growing.

In December of 2022, the 3rd session of the Intergovernmental Russian-Myanmar commission on trade and economic cooperation was conducted in Nay Pyi Taw under the direction of its co-chairmen – Minister of Economic Development Maksim Reshetnikov from the Russian side and Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Kan Zaw from the Myanmar side. As a result, a number of bilateral documents were signed, which are aimed at bringing Russia-Myanmar cooperation to a qualitatively new level in different areas.

Collaboration in the sphere of energy is successfully developing.

An intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the field of peaceful use of atomic energy was signed on February 6, 2023, while an Informational Center of Atomic Technologies was inaugurated in Yangon, which has the goal to inform the general public of the benefits of using nuclear energy.

Security, primarily, the fight against terrorism threat, is an important area of Russia-Myanmar interaction. In November of 2022, Russia and Myanmar as co-chairs successfully held the first session of the Joint committee on combating terrorism in the framework of "ADMM Plus".

Many researchers noted and are still emphasizing the spiritual affinity, which exists between Russian and Myanmar people and can also be seen in the genuine interest towards culture, literature and art of each other. The Myanmar people know much about Russia. It is worth visiting book shops in Yangon, where one can see the works of Russian writers such as Alexander Pushkin, Lev Tolstoy, Fedor Dostoyevsky, Anton Chekhov, Mikhail Sholokhov, Ilya Erenburg and many others. There are books about the history and modern life in Russia. The interest of the Myanmar youth in studying the Russian language is growing. Several hundreds of students study it at three universities.

In Russia, specialists in Myanmar studies are trained at the Institute of Asia and Africa countries under the M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University as well as at the St. Petersburg State University. The enrollment of Russian students in studying the Burmese language will be resumed at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations this year.

The Russia-Myanmar Friendship Society plays a useful role in broadening humanitarian contacts. The Myanmar-Russia Friendship Society is also established in Myanmar.

Russia does not pursue any self-serving interests in Myanmar and wants to see it as a stable and successfully developing state. Relying on the common achievements, our country intends to further expand mutually beneficial cooperation with Myanmar in all areas, to closely interact with the UN and other international and regional organizations. In their turn, people in Myanmar consider Moscow as

an important partner, who plays an indispensable role in the world and in the region, cooperation with which allows to pursue more independent foreign policy. It all serves as a basis for a good future for Russia-Myanmar relations.

(The views in the article are only those of the author)

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

New embossed number plates installed on over 1,700 YBS buses as of 14 February

A total of 1,730 YBS buses installed new embossed number plates from 1 to 14 February as the Department of Road Transport Administration directed State-owned departmental vehicles, highway vehicles, city buses, taxis and trucks to be fitted with embossed number plates before 31 March.

YRTC member 1 U Khin Maung Htwe said that all YBS buses would change their current number plates into new embossed number plates during the specified period and those which would not change are to be revoked of operational permission.

The newly-installed embossed number plate has a good security system with the addition of township symbol numbers and it can prevent the installation of fake numbers.

YBS buses are pictured at the city bus station.

According to YRTC, there are 5,760 YBS buses but only about 3,800 vehicles are under operation.

In addition, YBS buses owned by private owners have to be converted to a public company and those who are not following will get their licence to fill CNG and operate bus lines revoked. — TWA/MKKS

SkyNet to air new programme of comedy contest

THE comedy competition programme will be broadcast on SkyNet TV channel starting in April, said Director U Ye Min Oo of Shwe Thanlwin Media Company Limited at the press lunch event which took place in Shwe Htut Tin Compound, Yangon on 16 February.

The newly aired comedy contest is intended to develop the field of comedy art, to bring forth a new generation of comedy artists, and to make the audience enjoy, he added.

As of the coming April Thingyan holiday, the competition programmes are planned to be broadcast through Free-to-Air channels – Channel 9 and SkyNet DTH channels: Myanmar Arts Channel and Hadaya Channel.

A total of 16 comedian pairs will participate in the contest and the contestants are free to come up with their own funny stories, and a censorship system will also be included.

The winning teams will get K1.5 million as the first prize, K0.5 million as the second and K0.3 million as the third. — TWA/CT

Solar power system to be used in EV charging stations

UNION Minister for Electric Power U Thaung Han mentioned that solar energy will be used in the newly built electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

It is reported that charging stations for electric vehicles will be built and the power required for the stations will be mainly used from solar energy.

The Union minister said that the power that will be released in the current period will be connected to the National Grid and transmitted according to the Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) established by MOEE.

EV chargers 60 kW (10 sets) and 200 kW (two sets) to be used in BEV charging stations under implementation by the Steering Committee on National-level Development of Electric Vehicles and Related Industries, arrived in February.

EV chargers will be installed at the No 3 Tollgate of the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway, Pyu bus station, Nay Pyi Taw junction bus station, and the Thabyaygon Market in Zabuthiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw.

Permission was granted to place seven EV charging stations each on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway and in Nay Pyi Taw. Fifty-one chargers will be installed in 38 EV charging stations, it is learnt.

Forty BYD E2 model electric vehicles have been imported into the country to date. The test run will be carried out with 20 EV cabs at the Yangon International Airport and the Nay Pyi Taw Thabyaygon Market. — TWA/CT

An initial testing of the solar power system is shown in the picture.

Untimely rains cause trees to fall in some townships of Yangon

Fire brigade members are in action to clear the fallen tree in Yangon yesterday.

MEMBERS of the Fire Services Department cleared the broken trees in some townships of Yangon due to untimely rains on 17 February, it is learnt.

Trees fell on the ground and the stopped cars in Mingala Taungnyunt, Thingangyun, and Dagon Myothit (East) townships causing roads blocked due to untimely rains, strong winds and hail in Yangon on the afternoon of 17 February.

Due to the interactions between the warm air from the Bay of Bengal and cold air from high-pressured areas, there were untimely rains, thunderstorms, lightning and hails in some regions and states between 16 and 18 February, announced the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH).

Rains are likely to be scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi regions, Shan (North), Kayin and Mon states. In addition, thundershowers are likely to be spotted in Mandalay, Kachin and Rakhine with an 80 per cent certainty of rainfall. — TWA/MKKS

HEALTH/PANDEMIC WORLD

Spain passes law for Europe's first 'menstrual leave'

Spain's Minister for Equality Irene Montero (left) says the move is a step toward addressing a health problem that has been largely swept under the carpet. **PHOTO: AFP**

SPAIN'S parliament approved Thursday a law granting paid medical leave to women suffering severe period pain, becoming the first European country to advance such legislation.

The law, which passed by 185 votes in favour to 154 against, is aimed at breaking a taboo on the subject, Spain's left-wing government has said.

Menstrual leave is currently offered only in a small number of countries across the globe, such as Japan, Indonesia and Zambia.

"It is a historic day for feminist progress," tweeted Equality Minister Irene Montero, who says the move is a step toward addressing a health problem that has been largely swept under the carpet. The legislation entitles employees experiencing period pain to as much time off as they need, with the state social security system — not employers — picking up the tab for the sick leave. As with paid leave for other health reasons, it requires a doctor's approval, though the length of sick leave is not specified in the law.

About a third of women suffer from severe menstrual pain, according to the Spanish Gynaecology and Obstetrics Society.

"Periods will no longer be taboo," Montero said after the law was initially approved by the cabinet in May 2022.

"No more going to work with pain, no more taking pills before arriving at work and having to hide the fact we're in pain that makes us unable to work."

Politicians, unions divided

But the legislation created divisions among both politicians and unions.

The CCOO, one of Spain's main trade unions, welcomed the move as a major "legislative advance" to recognize a problem that has been "ignored" until now.

But the UGT, Spain's other main union, warned it could stigmatize women in the workplace and indirectly hinder their "access to the labour market", a stance echoed by the main right-wing opposition Popular Party (PP). — AFP

Mixed results for Moderna mRNA flu vaccine trial

US biotech company Moderna said Thursday it had mixed results from a large-scale trial of its mRNA flu shot, based on the same technology used in its successful Covid-19 vaccine.

Moderna's experimental mRNA-1010 flu shot is "quadrivalent", meaning it targets four strains of flu: A/H1N1, A/H3N2, B/Yamagata and B/Victoria — selected based on recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Massachusetts-based company said that its flu shot generated an immune response against influenza A strains that was equal or superior to that of already licenced vaccines.

However, it fell short of the already approved vaccines against strains of the less-common influenza B, Moderna said in a statement.

"Today's results represent an important step forward in the development of mRNA-based influenza vaccines," Moderna president Stephen Hoge said.

"We have already updated the vaccine that we believe could improve immune responses against influenza B and will seek to quickly confirm those improvements in an upcoming clinical study." —AFP

The Massachusetts-based company said that its flu shot generated an immune response against influenza A strains that was equal or superior to that of already licenced vaccines. **PHOTO: AFP**

E-pharmacies under radar; Union Health Ministry to initiate stern action

THE Union Health Ministry is likely to take strong action against the misuse of drugs by the E-pharmacies including their closure, official sources said on Thursday.

"The E-pharmacies are currently following that business model which can be problematic for patients who are ordering medicine online, their data privacy at risk and possibility of misuse of drugs," sources told ANI.

The Drugs Controller-General of India has served show cause notices to illegal E-pharmacies selling medicines on the internet. The show cause notices were issued by DCGI on 8 February to the online pharmacies and online platforms in which they were asked to respond within two days or face strict action without any further notice on the sale and distribution of the drugs in the country.

According to the official sources from the Union Health Ministry, E-pharmacies are violating various sections of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) issued show-cause notices to over 20 online pharmacies and online platforms, that includes some big players as well in the industry such as Tata1mg, Practo, Apollo Amazon, Flipkart, etc.—ANI

Currently, there are close to 50 e-pharmacies in India and estimates peg the market size (2019) at $ 0.5B - approximately 2-3 per cent of the total Indian pharmacy sales. **PHOTO: INVESTINDIA.GOV.IN/ANI**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Venezuela seizes 47 tonnes of drugs in 2022

VENEZUELAN authorities seized a total of 47 tonnes of drugs during 2022, the head of Venezuela's National Anti-Drug Superintendence (Sunad) Richard Lopez Vargas said Thursday.

The official detailed in an interview for state-owned Venezolana de Television that already this year, more than two tonnes of drugs have been seized by the South American country. Lopez Vargas said that Venezuela is recognized by international organizations as free of illicit crops and one of the nations with the lowest prevalence of narcotics consumption. The Sunad head also said that with the recent reestablishment of relations between Colombia and Venezuela, the exchange of information between the two countries may allow "an increase in drug seizures" in the region. –Xinhua

Türkiye-Syria death toll passes 41,000 as UN appeals for quake aid

THE death toll from the earthquake that has devastated parts of Türkiye and Syria exceeded 41,000 on Friday as the United Nations appealed for $1 billion to address a growing humanitarian crisis.

Eleven days after the quake – now one of the 10 deadliest in the past 100 years – Turkish rescuers pulled a 17-year-old girl and a woman in her 20s out of the rubble. "She looked to be in good health. She opened and closed her eyes," coal miner Ali Akdogan said after participating in the rescue of Aleyna Olmez in Kahramanmaras, a city near the quake's epicentre. –AFP

ECONOMY
WORLD

China remains Germany's biggest trade partner in 2022

This photo taken on 11 July 2022 shows a scene of the welcome ceremony for the 10,000th trip made by China-Europe freight train operated by the China-Europe Railway Express (Chongqing) in Duisburg, Germany. **PHOTO: REN PENGFEI/XINHUA**

CHINA was Germany's biggest trading partner in 2022 for the seventh year in a row, figures published Thursday showed, as policymakers worry about economic over-reliance on Beijing.

Goods worth 297.9 billion euros ($318.9 billion) were exchanged between the two countries last year, up 20 per cent despite the continuing impact of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the federal statistics agency Destatis. Germany's trade deficit with China -- the difference between the larger value of imports and smaller exports -- hit 84.3 billion euros, the largest figure since the statistics body's records began in 1950. Imports from China rose to 191.1 billion euros in 2022, an increase of 33 percent on the previous year. Meanwhile, the value of exports largely stagnated, increasing just three percent in 2022 to 106.8 billion euros. The meagre figure saw China slip two places to fourth in the ranking of export destinations for German goods. The United States, Germany's second most important trading partner overall, was the number one destination for items "made in Germany", sucking up 156 billion euros worth of imports.—AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

China's tech-boosted economic recovery to deliver solid rebound

IN a science and technology park in north China's Tianjin municipality, dozens of mechanical arms moved along a production line, while busy robots carrying components weaved around. Each day more than 2,000 sets of power batteries were turned out, which would be used for nearly 200 electric vehicles. The scene is a sharp contrast to three years ago when production of the line was suspended from time to time in the Tianjin Lishen Battery Joint-Stock Co, Ltd due to an order shortage. Lishen started providing power batteries for the Dongfeng Motor Corporation four years ago, delivering about 53,000 sets by last year. In 2023 alone, however, it is estimated that 45,000 sets will be supplied.—Xinhua

Nigerian president moves to try to ease cash crisis

NIGERIA'S President Muhammadu Buhari on Thursday defended a currency swap that sparked protests and cash shortages, but ordered old, small denomination 200 naira notes to remain in circulation in a bid to ease scarcities.

Nigeria has been struggling with a shortage in physical cash since the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) began to swap old bills of the local naira currency for new, re-designed ones, leading to a shortfall in banknotes.—AFP

Japan logs record trade deficit of 3.5 tril yen in January

A cargo vessel loads cars at a port in Imizu, Toyama Prefecture on the Sea of Japan on 17 August 2022. **PHOTO: KYODO**

JAPAN registered its largest-ever trade deficit of 3.5 trillion yen ($26 billion) in January after energy import prices jumped and export growth slowed, with record red ink logged with major trading partner China, the Finance Ministry said Thursday.

The nation had a deficit of 2.82 trillion yen in August last year due to surging import costs for energy and other raw materials.

In January, imports surged 17.8 per cent to 10.05 trillion yen, boosted by coal, liquefied natural gas and crude oil, according to the ministry's preliminary report. Exports rose 3.5 per cent to 6.55 trillion yen, helped by US-bound cars.—Kyodo

Stronger-than-expected retail sales data suggest US consumers remain resilient to rising interest rates, putting pressure on the Federal Reserve to keep hiking. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Paris stock market joins London on record high over recovery hope

THE Paris stock market hit an-all time high Thursday after London's record-breaking run on economic recovery hopes as inflation eases away from sky-high levels.

The Paris CAC 40 index jumped 1.1 per cent to a record 7,387.29 points, beating a peak hit last year by just a few points.

It comes after London's benchmark FTSE 100 index struck a record at 8,047.06 points Thursday, a day after passing 8,000 for the first time.

Indices are rising as traders expect central banks, notably the Federal Reserve and Bank of England, to soon bring an end a policy of raising interest rates aimed at cooling inflation. This was weighing on the dollar Thursday, analysts said.

Official data this week showed annual inflation rates easing in Britain and the United States, although they remain around historic-high levels. Traders are cheering other data releases, including strong US jobs and retail numbers, in addition to strong earnings from some of the world's biggest companies in recent weeks. Net profit at European aircraft manufacturer Airbus soared to a record level in 2022 despite supply chain problems limiting its ability to increase production.—AFP

Nestle, Absolut owner to hike prices again amid high costs

SWISS food giant Nestle and liquor group Pernod Ricard, owner of Absolut vodka and Jameson whiskey, announced fresh price hikes on Thursday due to inflation even as consumers across the world face a cost-of-living crunch.

Nestle, which makes Nespresso capsules, Maggi bouillons, KitKat chocolate bars and Purina pet food, said sales rose by 8.4 per cent to 94.4 billion Swiss francs (95.5 billion euros, $102.3 billion) in 2022.

Nestle, which makes Nespresso capsules, Maggi bouillons, KitKat chocolate bars and Purina pet food, said sales rose by 8.4 per cent to 94.4 billion Swiss francs (95.5 billion euros, $102.3 billion) in 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

But its real internal growth — a measure of sales volumes — was up just 0.1 per cent year-on-year, much lower than in 2021, suggesting that consumers were buying fewer of its products.

"Last year brought many challenges and tough choices for families, communities and businesses," Nestle chief executive Mark Schneider said. "Inflation surged to unprecedented levels, cost-of-living pressures intensified and the effects of geopolitical tensions were felt around the world," he added, referring to the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.—AFP

Cambodian, Singaporean conglomerates to develop modern logistics hub in Phnom Penh

Dr Robert Yap, Executive Chairman, YCH Group. The company offers supply chain consulting, warehousing, freight forwarding, and transportation services. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ YCH GROUP**

CAMBODIA'S key logistics provider WorldBridge Group and Singapore's home-grown supply chain solutions company YCH Group will jointly build a modern logistics complex in Phnom Penh, with support from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), according to a press statement on Thursday.

The two companies signed a collaboration agreement with the IFC on Wednesday in Singapore, the statement said, adding that the two logistics providers would develop a Cambodia SuperPortTM or the Phnom Penh Logistics Complex.—Xinhua

Commerzbank profits jump before return to German stock elite

GERMANY'S second-largest lender Commerzbank said on Thursday its net profit tripled in 2022 as the bank prepares for reentry into the Frankfurt Stock Exchange's blue-chip DAX index.

The group said it made a bottom-line profit of €1.44 billion in 2022, up from €430 million the previous year.

The result showed Commerzbank's "turnaround is a success" after years of poor performance and restructuring efforts, CEO Manfred Knof said in a statement.

Commerzbank, like its German rival Deutsche Bank, remained in the black last year despite the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and one-off impacts linked to its Polish subsidiary.—AFP

Bitcoin tops $25,000 to hit eight-month high

BITCOIN hit an eight-month high to surge past $25,000 on Thursday as the volatile cryptocurrency rises despite pressure from US regulators.

The digital coin has soared by 50 per cent since the start of the year, though it remains far off its peak of $68,992, which it reached in November 2021. Bitcoin reached $25,249 on Thursday, its highest point since June and the first time it topped $25,000 since August.

A more optimistic outlook for the world economy is propping up the markets, including cryptocurrencies, with Paris and London stock exchanges hitting all-time highs on Thursday.

"While regulatory crackdowns continue to drive some unease, there's clearly a growing sense of relief that the worst is behind it for the industry and 2023 could be a much better year," said Craig Erlam, analyst at online trading platform OANDA.—AFP

UK bank NatWest posts bumper profits but shares tank

BRITISH bank NatWest on Friday posted a jump in annual profits as it trimmed costs and the sector benefitted from rising interest rates. Its share price tanked almost seven per cent, however, despite NatWest announcing a big buyback of shares, with analysts blaming profit-taking after the bank's stock value climbed strongly in the final quarter of 2022. There is also a fear that the sector could face a surge in bad loans with Britain facing a cost-of-living crisis as UK annual inflation remains above 10 per cent despite recent easing. European lenders have reported bumper earnings after central banks worldwide hiked rates in efforts to bring inflation under control. Retail banks in turn have raised rates on loans, including mortgages.—AFP

NatWest's share price tanked despite its bumper earnings results. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V MITRA BHUM VOY.NO. (137W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MITRA BHUM VOY.NO. (137W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-2-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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GLOBAL AFFAIRS

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Russian diplomacy to focus on ending Western hegemony: FM

RUSSIA'S upcoming new foreign policy concept will focus on terminating the West's monopoly in international affairs, the country's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday.

International affairs should be determined not by the West's "selfish interests", but on "a fair, universal basis of a balance of interests as required by the UN Charter", Lavrov said at Russia's State Duma.

"The United States and its allies are obsessed with a maniacal desire to revive the neo-colonial, unipolar world order to interfere with the objective process of the formation and rise of new world centres," he said.

Washington and its allies are waging "an all-out hybrid war against Russia that has been prepared for many years" in order to defeat Russia on the battlefield, destroy its economy, cordon off the country and turn it into an "outcast", Lavrov added.

However, all of the West's attempts to isolate Russia have failed, he stressed. — Xinhua

The building of Russia's State Duma is seen in this picture. **PHOTO: STATE DUMA PRESS RELEASE VIA XINHUA/FILE**

Key security conference in Munich has Ukraine in focus

THE Munich Security Conference opens on Friday, bringing world leaders together ahead of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine as Kyiv steps up pleas for more weapons.

US-China ties will also be in focus at the three-day gathering, with tensions sky-high after Washington shot down an alleged Chinese surveillance balloon over US territory. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and France's President Emmanuel Macron will speak at the opening event, focused on Ukraine.

US Vice-President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, China's top diplomat Wang Yi and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg will also be attending. Coming just days ahead of the February 24 anniversary of Moscow sending its forces into Ukraine, the conflict will top the agenda, with Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba representing Ukraine.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky is now ramping up pleas for Western fighter jets. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Ukraine's Western backers, led by the United States, have given it a huge amount of weapons and pledged a barrage of others, including heavy battle tanks long sought by Kyiv to counter Russia's offensive.

President Volodymyr Zelensky is now ramping up pleas for Western fighter jets, though Ukraine's allies have so far been cool on the subject.—AFP

Moscow will respond if EU decides to confiscate Russia's frozen assets: Deputy FM

RUSSIAN Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said Thursday that Moscow would respond if the European Union (EU) decides to confiscate the country's frozen assets, TASS news agency reported citing the official. Grushko said that Russia would take "all the necessary measures to protect its legitimate interests" if the EU decides to go through with the decision. He called the actions of the EU "completely illegal," adding that many countries are uncertain whether such a move would be in line with international norms.–Xinhua

WORLD: TOP HEADLINES

Japan to create new visas to attract foreign talents

The new method for highly skilled professionals, to be implemented in April following a public comment process, would include foreign researchers and engineers with an annual income of at least 20 million yen (148,000 US dollars), and a master's degree or more than 10 years of work experience. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE Japanese government announced Friday that it will establish a new, simplified track for granting special visas to high-income earners and graduates of high-ranking foreign universities as the global race for talented workers intensifies.

The new method for highly skilled professionals, to be implemented in April following a public comment process, would include foreign researchers and engineers with an annual income of at least 20 million yen (148,000 US dollars), and a master's degree or more than 10 years of work experience.

The government also decided to make it easier for "young people with high potential" to seek jobs in Japan.

A foreigner who has graduated from a university ranked in the top 100 in two world ranking lists designated by the Immigration Services Agency of Japan within the last five years and have at least 200,000 yen (1,480 US dollars) upon arrival in Japan will be granted a "designated activities" visa that will enable him or her to stay for up to two years for the purpose of job seeking.—Xinhua

N Korea warns of "strong counteractions" for US-S Korea drills

NORTH Korea on Friday denounced planned joint military drills by the United States and South Korea, warning that they would face "unprecedentedly persistent and strong counteractions" from Pyongyang, according to state-run media. "With just apprehension and reason," the North regards the planned exercises as "preparations for an aggression war," the official Korean Central News Agency quoted a spokesperson for the country's Foreign Ministry as saying in a statement.–Kyodo

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

King Charles faces 'not my king' protest on walkabout

Demonstrators hold placards reading 'Not My King' as King Charles III meets well-wishers in Milton Keynes. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

KING Charles III on Thursday encountered a group of anti-monarchy activists while on walkabout in the city of Milton Keynes north of London.

A group of protesters held up distinctive yellow placards with the message "Not my king", joining a crowd waving Union Jack flags. The demonstration was organized by "Republic", a group calling for an end to the monarchy and an elected head of state in Britain.

Local newspaper the Milton Keynes Citizen reported that Charles "ignored the small banner-waving group" of 20 or so protesters.

Republic's leader Graham Smith wrote on Twitter: "I asked Charles why he's wasting money on the coronation. He didn't want to answer." "We're determined to get the message across that it's OK to protest against the royals," he added.

Republic has announced it will hold a protest at the coronation on 6 May.

The death of Elizabeth II in September has prompted questions over the future of the royals under Charles and his queen consort Camilla, as the family has been rocked by criticism from Prince Harry and Meghan Markle and sex crime allegations against Prince Andrew.—AFP

Tensions brew in Germany over refugee arrivals

Diggers are clearing the ground for the new refugee centre. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE main road through the northern German village of Upahl is lined with wooden placards, their bright letters standing out against the grey sky and muddy fields. "Upahl says no", reads one. "Think of our children!" says another. They are referring to a planned centre for 400 asylum seekers in the town, which itself has a population of just 500.

Like many communities across Germany, the district of Northwestern Mecklenburg, where Upahl is located, has witnessed an increase in arrivals of refugees and asylum seekers in recent months. Almost 218,000 asylum applications were filed in Germany last year -- more than twice as many as in 2020 and the biggest number since the influx of 2015-16. In 2022, the largest number of people seeking asylum hailed from war-torn Syria and Afghanistan, followed by Türkiye and Iraq.—AFP

Was Neruda poisoned? Probe members say inconclusive

TWO members of a scientific panel that investigated the mysterious death of Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda told AFP that they could not determine whether or not the Chilean poet and diplomat had been poisoned. The panel of scientific experts delivered a report into Neruda's death to Chilean judge Paola Plaza on Wednesday, with the country on tenterhooks waiting to find out its conclusions.

Researchers Hendrik and Debi Poinar, from McMaster University in Canada, told AFP that their examination of one of Neruda's molars confirmed the presence of dangerous botulism-causing bacteria, but was ultimately inconclusive as to how it entered his system.—AFP

Pablo Neruda, pictured in 1971 alongside his wife Matilde Urrutia, while he was Chile's ambassador to France, was a much-loved poet and Nobel laureate. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

US envoy to Afghanistan apologizes for 'inappropriate' tweets

THE top US diplomat to Afghanistan on Thursday apologized for tweets that suggested struggling Afghan women might find inspiration in African American history and culture -- particularly the BlackGirlMagic social media movement.

US envoy Karen Decker tweeted that several of her posts earlier in the week went "awry" despite her "best intentions" when she suggested Afghan women could learn from examples such as pop culture icons Beyonce and Lizzo. Her comments sparked online indignation from users who objected to the seemingly tone deaf comments about the plight of Afghan women, who have seen their rights severely curtailed since the ultra-conservative Taliban swept back to power in 2021.—AFP

Japan's Indigenous peoples fight stigma to reclaim identities

IN a forest in northern Japan's Hokkaido, Atsushi Monbetsu kneels on the moss in the thick morning fog and begins to pray in a language that has nearly disappeared.

"Kamuy", he begins, addressing the gods of the Ainu Indigenous people, as he starts a small fire with birch bark.

"An Ainu man is now entering your forest, wishing to hunt deer," he says. Soon after, he spots an animal, makes a clean kill and offers prayers for its soul.—AFP

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Australia to spend $4.8 billion on 2032 Olympic venues

The Gabba stadium will be revamped for the 2032 Olympics. **PHOTO: AFP**

AUSTRALIA said Friday it will spend Aus$7.0 billion (US$4.8 billion) on venues for the 2032 Brisbane Olympics, including a new 17,000-seat arena and a revamp of the Gabba stadium.

The Queensland capital was awarded the 2032 summer Olympics and Paralympics two years ago, returning the Games to Australia for a third time after Melbourne 1956 and then Sydney 2000.

Queensland's state government will pump Aus$2.7 billion into redeveloping the Gabba, expanding its seating by 8,000 to 50,000.

In addition, Brisbane's city centre will get a new Aus$2.5 billion 17,000-seat indoor stadium, paid for by the federal government. It will include a drop-in swimming pool that can be removed after the Games to create a live events venue.—AFP

Arsenal seek swift response to take title fight to Man City

ARSENAL have no time to lick their wounds after losing top spot in the Premier League to Manchester City as the Gunners aim to snap a four-game winless streak at Aston Villa on Saturday.

City must end Nottingham Forest's five-month unbeaten run at the City Ground in the league if they are to maintain their momentum towards a fifth title in six seasons. Liverpool's trip to Newcastle could have big implications on who finishes in the top four come the end of the season, while there is a huge relegation six-pointer at the bottom as Leeds visit Everton. AFP Sport looks at some of the key talking points ahead of the weekend's action.

Arteta still believes

Arsenal's unbeaten home record came to end on Wednesday as City stormed the Emirates 3-1 and went top for the first time since November in the process. After dropping just seven points in their opening 19 league games, Arsenal have let eight slip away in the last three following defeat at Everton and a controversial 1-1 draw with Brentford.—AFP

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council: Twelve 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 prioritize 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.
(d) To ensure peace, stability, rule of law, and the safe and smooth functioning of transport networks across the Union.

2. Economic affairs

(a) To enhance development based on agriculture and livestock using modern production techniques and to 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 assure support for the sustainability of Micro-, Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) that prioritize import substitution, export production, and the use of domestically produced raw materials, in order to increase domestic production and generate employment opportunities.
(d) To advance the socioeconomic life of the people, in order to ensure the country's prosperity and food security.

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 people and preserve and safeguard their faiths, beliefs, culture, and characteristics of patriotic nationalism.
(c) To strengthen basic health care in order to achieve the emergence of a health system that enhances the longevity and health of the entire nation.
(d) To comprehensively promote the education sector to make it capable of producing the human resources necessary for building a modern, developed, and progressive democratic nation.

MFF Men's Referee Workshop 2023 closing ceremony held

Referees and Myanmar Football Federation officials pose for a group photo at the closing ceremony of the MFF Men's Referee Workshop 2023 at Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon on 17 February 2023. **PHOTO: MFF**

THE closing ceremony of the MFF Men's Referee Workshop for 2023, which was jointly opened by the Myanmar Football Federation and the Referee Committee, was held yesterday morning at the press conference hall in Thuwunna Stadium.

General Secretary of the Myanmar Football Federation U Ko Ko Thein, CEO of Myanmar National League U Soe Moe Kyaw, Chairman of the Myanmar Referee Committee U Tun Hla Aung, officials from Myanmar Football Federation, male referees, and futsal referees attended the event.

At the ceremony, Myanmar Football Federation and Myanmar National League officials gave guidance to the referees. Afterwards, a referee who attended the workshop expressed his gratitude.

The MFF Men's Referee Workshop For 2023 was held for five days from 13 to 17 February, and officials discussed the changed football laws during the workshop. — KZL

Saudis join race to buy Manchester United - report

SAUDI Arabia has joined the race to buy Manchester United ahead of Friday's nominal deadline, according to a report in Britain's Daily Telegraph, raising the stakes in what could be the most lucrative deal in sports history. The American Glazer family, who completed their takeover of the 20-times English champions in 2005, announced in November that they were open to a sale or investment. British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe's Ineos company officially joined the race to buy the club last month -- the only bidder to publicly declare an interest so far.—AFP