

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.

SAC Member DPM Union Defence Minister General Mya Tun Oo attends Chin National Day ceremony

THE ceremony of the 75th Anniversary (Diamond Jubilee) Chin National Day was held at the Chin State government office in Haka yesterday morning and State Administration Council Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Minister for Defence General Mya Tun Oo spoke on the occasion.

SAC Member Dr Hmu Htan, Union ministers, the Chin State chief minister, the North-West Command commander, deputy ministers and officials attended the ceremony.

Firstly, Chin State Chief Minister Dr Wong Hsun Htan read the message from SAC Chair Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing followed by the Diamond Jubilee Chin National Day speech by Department of Labour Director-General U Hone Kee.

Then, SAC Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Defence Minister General Mya Tun Oo presented K20 million for the diamond jubilee celebration to the chief minister of Chin State.

Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan and Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Aung Gyi gave sports accessories, seeds and fertilizers to state government officials.

Afterwards, the Deputy



State Administration Council Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Minister for Defence General Mya Tun Oo presents cash donations for the diamond jubilee celebration to Chin State Chief Minister Dr Wong Hsun Htan in Haka yesterday.

Prime Minister and party enjoyed the traditional dance performance of the Chin Traditional Culture Troupe. In the afternoon, the Deputy Prime Minister met

officials of state, district and township-level staff from the education and health sectors at the state government office.

SAC Member Deputy Prime

Minister Union Defence Minister General Mya Tun Oo met the staff and medical superintendent of Haka General Hospital and provided medical devices

and supplies to them. He also met locals who are undergoing medical treatment at the hospital and provided nutritious food for them. — MNA/KZW

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL
MIFER Union Minister receives Regional Director of UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO)
PAGE-3

NATIONAL
Hot air balloon ride over Bagan, Ayeyawady River enchanting visitors
PAGE-7



CURRENT AFFAIRS
MoC issues mandatory rules for EVs importation and showrooms
PAGE-11



Over 1,000 pilgrims visit Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival daily

OVER 1,000 pilgrims from various parts of Myanmar visit Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda daily during Pagoda Festival in Sagu township in Minbu district of Magway region, and there are more pilgrims on public holidays, according to the Shwesettaw Pagoda Board of Trustees. The Pagoda Festival was opened on 25 January 2023.

The festival is crowded with pilgrims making donations, taking baths and relaxing in Mann creek and taking

memorable photos during the Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival.

“This year, the number of visitors to the Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival is over 1,000 a day. At weekends and on public holidays, there are about 4,000 pilgrims and nearly 700 cars. The festival period is from the 5th Waxing of Tabodwe up to the first day of the Myanmar New Year. There are about 600 guest rooms and over 400 shops,” said U Thein Hlaing, vice-chairman of the Shwesettaw Pagoda Board of



Visitors are seen enjoying elephant rides at the Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival.

Trustees.

Similarly, visitors flock to the Mann creek elephant camp during Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival and it is more crowded on public holidays, according to assistant manager of elephant camp U Htet Naing Aung. — Maung Maung (Minbu)/MKKS

Old Hanthawady city’s southern rampart under excavation



Excavation and reconstruction are underway for the ancient Hanthawady city's southern rampart.

EXCAVATION of old Hanthawady city’s southern rampart is carried out under the guidance of the Bago Region Government. The work is being done by PSE-Bagan Co Ltd under the supervision of the Bago Region Department of Archaeology and National Mu-

seums starting from 10 December 2022.

The old city of Hanthawady was established by King Bayintnaung, who founded the second kingdom of Myanmar. There was a moat surrounding the rampart and there were five gates on each side of the

city rampart.

PSE Bagan Co Ltd is reconstructing the old city wall with K148.55 million from the Bago regional government fund. The work is expected to be completed on 15 March 2023. — Aung Phyu Lin-Min Htet Kyaw/KZW

No new case of COVID-19 reported on 21 February, total figure stands at 633,901

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases stood at **633,901** after **no** new case was reported on 21 February 2023 according to the Ministry of Health. The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **614,370**, including **one** new recovery.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at **19,490** on 21-2-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic. — MNA

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.

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

Economy drives improvement of political and defence capacities

A country must have economic, political and defence capacities. The economic driving force will help the improvement of political and defence capacities.

(The excerpt from the speech made by Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with MSME businesspersons from Mon State on 18 October 2022)

MIFER Union Minister receives Regional Director of UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO)

UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations Dr Kan Zaw received the delegation led by Ms Debora Comini, Regional Director of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) at the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, they shared views on current UNICEF's implementation programmes in Myanmar and discussed the further cooperation workplan between Myanmar and UNICEF. Officials from the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations were also present at the meeting. — MNA



Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw receives Ms Debora Comini, Regional Director of UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) yesterday.

Kanpaikti town in Waingmaw Township changed its name to Kanpaiti

THE name of Kanpaikti town in Waingmaw Township of Myitkyina District of Kachin State was changed to “Kanpaiti” under Notification 110/2023 of the Ministry of Home Affairs on 14 February 2023.

The Kanpaikti town is bordering with China and the word Kanpaiti means Kan-dry, pai-destroy and ti-location in the Chinese language. According to Myanmar spelling, Kan-good luck, pai-property of Union, ti-peace, existence and so it means Kanpaiti – the place is full of peace and prosperity. Therefore, Kachin Special Region 1 Perpetual Peace Federation Chairman U Za Khone Taint Yein tabled a motion to the State Administration Council Office with the attitude and approval of the

chief minister of Kachin State, local ethnic people and towns elders to use the name – Kan-

paiti nationwide, and the name was changed after reviewing in accord with the procedures.

The Myanmar-China border trade post is located in Kanpaiti town and it will become a devel-

oping border town of the Union soon.

Former Kanpaikti was organized with three wards with Notification of the Ministry of Home Affairs on 12 January 2011 and Kanpaikti sub-township with one town, three wards, three village-tracts and 30 villages.

The word sub-township was removed to be under the provision of Section 51 of the 2008 Constitution and it became “Kanpaikti town” after it was reconstituted into “town” on 22 May 2014 by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Former Kanpaikti town was just a village in the Wawtchone village-tract of Waingmaw Township and located 6,534 feet above sea level and is 208.59 square miles in area. — MNA/KTZH



A bird's-eye view of the entrance to Kanpaiti town.

Public Notice for Elimination of Violence

1. Declaring themselves to be “for the people”, the so-called CRPH, NUG and PDF terrorist groups are lawlessly killing Buddhist monks, civil servants including schoolteachers, and members of the general public, as well as looting and robbing.
2. Not encouraging, supporting, or assisting “CRPH”, “NUG”, and “PDF” terrorists, who are intimidating and killing people and committing destructive activities, is to protect the lives and property of the general public.
3. Giving information secretly to the authorities on terrorists and on the possession and transport of weapons/ammunition is tantamount to protecting the lives and property of innocent people.

MoC Deputy Minister inspects construction of EV charging stations

CHAIRMAN of the Operation/Use of Electric Vehicles and Infrastructure Implementation Committee Deputy Minister for Construction U Win Pe inspected the location for the charging station to be built by Yangon Aerodrome Co Ltd at Yangon International Airport on 20 February.

Responding to the explanation by the person in charge, the deputy minister instructed responsible personnel to obtain approval from the steering committee if different from the prescribed design, to ensure no delay for basic facilities to be ready when electric vehicles are used.

The deputy minister also inspected the construction of the charging station under construction by Myanmar Brilliance Auto Co Ltd at Aung Min-



Deputy Minister for Construction U Win Pe and party inspect the drainage system on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway.

gala Express Bus Terminal and gave necessary instructions.

Next, the deputy minister and party inspected the charg-

ing station under construction by Earth Renewable Energy Co Ltd at Milepost 1/0 on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway.

He also viewed the completion of the traffic island drainage system of the Under Pass at the intersection between the

Yangon-Mandalay Expressway and Milepost 32/1 of the bypass of Bago.

In the afternoon, the deputy minister and party inspected the construction of the charging station at Milepost 115/0 Phyu bus rest stop, the completion of the traffic island drainage system at Milepost 132/0 Under Pass, and the strength and capability condition of the Parami Bridge at Milepost 174/3 on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway. In the evening, the deputy minister and party inspected the construction of the charging station at Milepost 201/0 Nay Pyi Taw C-junction, the entrance road to the Maravi-jaya Buddha Image from the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway Milepost 204/0, and greening work along the road and road-sides. — MNA/TS

Construction of manufacturing road, development undertakings inspected in Shwemayin area

YANGON Region Development Affairs Minister Yangon City Development Committee Chairman (Mayor) U Bo Htay on 19 February inspected the completion of a culvert in connection with the extended concrete road between Pyay Road and the entrance road to Yangon University (Hlaing Campus), the completion of Inter Lock Pavement on the Inyalay bund bike lane, landscaping and weeding in Inya Lake.

In Khayanwa Village in Twantay Township, the mayor inspected construction of a manufacturing road in Shwemayin area and construction of a bridge across Khayanwa Creek, and laying of concrete from Khayanwa Village to Kwinpauk Village.—MNA/KZL



Yangon Mayor U Bo Htay and party are on the inspection tours in Yangon Region.

Second day of 51st Myanmar Health Research Congress continues



The second day of the 51st Myanmar Health Research Congress is in progress yesterday in Yangon.

THE second day of the 51st Myanmar Health Research Congress organized by the Ministry of Health was held at the Department of Medical Research in Yangon yesterday.

In the morning session, a total of 22 papers were read out.

During the event, Director-General Dr Myat Wunna Soe of the Department of Medical Services, Director-General of Medical Research Department Dr Zaw Than Tun, Director-General of Traditional Medicine Dr Su Su Dwe, Rector of the University of Medicine 1 Prof Dr Kyaw Shwe, Rector of the University of Medicine 2 Prof Dr Aye Aye Khin, Rec-

tor of University of Public Health Prof Dr Hla Hla Win and Prof/Department Head of University of Medicine 1 Prof Dr San San Htay chaired the morning session and relevant experts, researchers and resource persons attended it.

In the afternoon, Myanmar-Korea Joint Symposium 2023: Clinical Significance of Molecular Techniques: A Focus on TB and Hepatitis B was held.

Deputy Director-General of Medical Research Dr Hlaing Myat Thu and Prof Jae Hun Cheong of Korean Pusan National University presided over the afternoon session and Chairman of the Board of International Tu-

berculosis Research Center of Korea Dr Sun Dae Song made a greeting speech.

Then, Section Head Dr Jeong Seok Lee of the Korean International Tuberculosis Research Centre, Specialist (Microbiology) Dr Wint Wint Nyunt, Prof Jae Hun Cheong of the Pusan National University and Director Dr Wah Wah Aung of the Medical Research Department discussed the topics related to Pyrazinamide resistance, MDR-TB, Hepatitis B virus and liver cancer among others.

The congress will be held for five days until 24 February. — MNA/KTZH

Kalihtaw Dam supplies water to Nyaunghnapin agriculture and livestock zone

THE Nyaunghnapin Agriculture and Livestock Zone in Yangon Region supplies the needed vegetables, meat and fish for the region and is running intending to export the surplus products. Meanwhile, the Kalihtaw Dam makes dam water distribution to the zone, according to the Irrigation and Water Utilization Department.

The Director's Office of Irrigation and Water Utilization Department is working on the agriculture, drinking water and flood preventive measures in the region and also focusing on the access to water in Hlegu township and Nyaunghnapin agriculture and livestock zone Hmawbi township.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation constructed the Kalihtaw Dam to supply water to

the zone in 2001-2002. The water is also supplied to the zone from Ngamoeyeik Dam in addition to the Kalihtaw Dam just about five miles from the zone.

"There are three zones in Nyaunghnapin agriculture and livestock zone. We are carrying out the measures such as the construction of new dams and maintenance works on the buildings yearly to supply irrigation water to over 9,000 acres. According to the soil type of the zone, the people have to pump the water from the well or artesian well via M canals when the underground water level is up or they can have access to water through a direct water pumping system from the water canal," said U Nyan Soe, assistant director of the department.

The Kalihtaw Dam has 76



An aerial view of the Kalihtaw Dam. PHOTO: KANU

square miles of catchment areas with a water storage capacity of 26,000acre feet. The main canal is 5.4 miles in length and

the branch canal is 194 miles in length. The dam sees high water flows yearly and distributes enough water to about

9,838 acres of farmlands in the Nyaunghnapin agriculture and livestock zone. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/KTZH

Illegal lead, foodstuffs, consumer goods, industrial materials, raw industrial materials and vehicles confiscated



Confiscated illegal goods at Yangon International Airport.

A combined team led by the Myanmar Police Force under the supervision of the Tanintharyi Region Anti-Illicit Trade Task Force conducted inspections on 19 February.

Officials captured 3080 visses of lead worth K169.4 million without official documents that were hidden on a vehicle (estimated value of K17 million) heading to Myeik from Dawei on the health road in Dawei township. The action was taken under the Myanmar Mines Law.

On 20 February, the on-duty inspection teams seized four kinds of goods including 440 kilogrammes of gas spring that were not mentioned in the Import Declaration (ID) and K14,339,125 worth of 1450 kilogrammes of barium sulfate without an import licence and necessary docu-

ments from two containers at the Myanmar Industrial Port container checkpoint, K21,621,600 worth of furniture that exceeded the Import Declaration (ID) from a container at the Asia World Port Terminal container checkpoint and six walkie-talkie units and 20 old mobile phones without official documents at the Yangon International Airport. The action was taken under Customs procedures.



Seized items in Kayin State.

In addition, officials at the Thanlwin Bridge (Hpa-an) combined checkpoint confiscated K11.64 million worth of foodstuffs, seven Honda Wave Alpha motorbikes, two Honda PCX 160 motorbikes and three Honda Click 160 motorbikes worth K27.6 million without official documents from a Golden Dragon bus (estimated value of K65 million). The action was taken under Customs procedures.

The patrol of the on-duty combined team at the Yepu permanent checkpoint made inspections and nabbed K12,575,000 worth of foodstuffs and consumer goods from a vehicle (estimated value of K11 million) stopped near the bypass in Hseni township. The action was taken under Customs procedures. Therefore, 13 arrests (estimated value of K351,725,725) were made on 19 and 20 February, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

CRIME NEWS

Over K2.6 bln worth of stimulant tablets, weapons captured in Monghsat

OVER K2.6 billion worth of 6,500,000 stimulant tablets were captured in Monghsat township in Shan State (East), Myanmar Police Force stated.

Acting on the tip-off, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force searched a cattle farm of U Ah Char in Pontut village in Monghsat township at 6:30 pm on 20 February and arrested the farm workers, Ma Ah Char and Ma Nar Htee, with a 12-volt shotgun and 100 grammes of crushed stimulant tablets.

After interrogation, the Police Force searched the house of U Ah Char, the cattle farm owner, in Parhoe village in Monghsat township at 7 pm and captured 6,500,000 stimulant tablets together with four .22 guns, an M-16 rifle, a 12-volt shotgun, 16 magazines and 27 assorted bullets.

The police have taken legal action against the offenders. — MNA/MKKS

Drugs seized in Myawady, Kengtung and Taunggyi townships

A combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force searched a suspected Kyaw Zin Phyo (aka) Saw Ko Phyo on Ayethaya street 2 in the No 4 ward in Myawady at 12:15 pm on 20 February and seized 9,750 stimulant tablets.

At 7:30 am on the same day, Police Force searched a motorbike driven by Lawchar accompanied by Ahju near Wamkwan village in Kengtung township and found 2,400 stimulant tablets.

At 5:30 pm, Police Force searched the house of Kyintae (aka) Loutkyin in Ayethaya in Taunggyi township and captured 60,000 stimulant tablets.

The offenders have been prosecuted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. — MNA/MKKS

Interview with a representative from the ASEAN Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on Myanmar's stance and cooperation with ASEAN in the implementation of the ASEAN five-point consensus

Continued from yesterday

THERE are some ASEAN Member States that hold negative views against Myanmar by sidelining her and limiting its representation to the ASEAN Summit and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Such unprecedented action against Myanmar is unilateral and in breach of the ASEAN Charter. ASEAN Member States are obligated and obliged to strictly adhere to the ASEAN fundamental principles of consultation and consensus, especially in times of rising geopolitical competition and major power rivalries.

The world media turns a blind eye to the inhumane and ruthless killings of monks, innocent civilians, public servants, students and children, and violent activities being committed by the NUG, CRPH and PDF which have been officially declared terrorist groups by the Government of Myanmar encouraging for more terrorism, radicalism in the country due to fake news, disinformation and misinformation about Myanmar by the media.

It is essential that ASEAN and the international community need to understand the realities of Myanmar pragmatically and cooperate closely with the Myanmar government. However, the last ASEAN Summit held in November 2022 in Cambodia adopted the ASEAN leaders' Review and Decision on the Implementation of the five-point consensus derailing from the ASEAN Spirit and ASEAN Way as the review fails to take into account the progress and cooperative efforts by the State Administration Council in ASEAN Community Building efforts and the review and decisions purely aim to put undue pressure on Myanmar. As such, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar released a Press Statement pointing out the flaws of the so-called review and 15 points of decisions by the ASEAN Summit on 11-11-2022.

Q - Could you please explain Myanmar's position on the appointment of the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair?

A - As a gesture of goodwill and cooperation with ASEAN, Myanmar is carrying out appropriate measures including facilitating the appointment of the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy and his visits as stated in points 3 and 5 of the consensus.



Chairman of the State Administration Council, Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on 24-4-2021 held at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Indonesia.

appropriate measures including facilitating the appointment of the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy and his visits as stated in points 3 and 5 of the consensus.

In appointing the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair, it is critical for ASEAN to cooperate with the Myanmar government given the in-depth understanding of Myanmar's history and the reality of internal politics, and to make constructive proposals based on mutual understanding, mutual respect, fairness and equality in order to facilitate Myanmar's efforts in implementing the five-step future plan.

For the appointment of the very first Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair in 2021, ASEAN proposed the nominations of Mr Virasakdi Futrakul, former deputy foreign minister of Thailand, Mr Hassan Wirajuda, former foreign minister of Indonesia and Mr Razali Ismail from Malaysia. The Myanmar Government sent a letter of approval on the appointment of Mr Virasakdi Futrakul, former deputy foreign minister of Thailand as the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on 6-7-2021. However, the 2021 ASEAN Chair changed the nomination of Special Envoy to Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam. Therefore, the appointment procedure of the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair has been delayed due to the changes in nomination from ASEAN although Myanmar replied with its approval of the former deputy foreign minister of Thailand.

Myanmar conveyed its official positions on the appointment of the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair and highlighted that a Special Envoy shall not be a cabinet member of the Member State holding the ASEAN Chairmanship, the Special Envoy must be an independent person free from political influences in order to perform the duties freely. In this regard, Myanmar sent a letter of objection to the ASEAN Chair on the appointment of a foreign minister as the Special Envoy.

However, the list of previous nominees as the Special Envoy had been revoked at the 54th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and the name of Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam was presented as the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair. In showing Myanmar's cooperation with ASEAN in the implementation of the five-point consensus as much as possible, Myanmar finally accepted the nomination of Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam as the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair at the separate meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers on 4-8-2021.

At the meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers, the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar reiterated three official positions of Myanmar in the appointment of the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair; (1) the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair must conduct official communications and work closely with the Myanmar government, (2) Myanmar will not accept new proposals beyond the five-point consensus, (3) the appointment and the role of the Special Envoy should be aligned with the ASEAN principles, particularly non-interference in the internal affairs of member states and ASEAN should uphold the core principle of making decisions through consensus. The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar requested the Chair of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting to put on the record above-mentioned Myanmar's positions in the meeting minutes.

Q - How is Myanmar facilitating the implementation of the ASEAN five-point consensus?

A - The Government of Myanmar has been in close cooperation with the Special Envoy of successive ASEAN Chairs for implementing the ASEAN five-point consensus while striving for peace and tranquillity in the country. The Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council has been laid down prior to the formulation of the five-point consensus in order to restore democracy in Myanmar. Moreover, the Chairman of the State Administration Council himself is leading the efforts for lasting peace in the entire nation in line with the Five-Point Road Map. Those endeavours for peace by the State Administration Council clearly demonstrate the Myanmar Government's commitment to the cessation of violence as mentioned in point No. 1 of the five-point consensus.

During Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022, Myanmar also accepted the appointment of Mr Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Cambodia as the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair. Myanmar facilitated the first visit of Mr Prak Sokhonn to Myanmar from 21 to 23 March 2022 as well as his second visit from 30 June to 2 July 2022. During these visits, the Myanmar side arranged meetings for the Special Envoy in order to meet with government officials, political parties and the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) which were available for the meeting. Besides, the two visits of Dr Kung Phoak, Head of the Office of the Special Envoy, were also facilitated by the Myanmar Government.

Considering Myanmar's cooperation in the appointments of the Special Envoy and strenuous domestic efforts for achieving lasting peace, it is obvious that the Government of Myanmar has been actively implementing the important points of the five-point consensus. Another significant progress in the implementation of the five-point consensus is the Myanmar Government's cooperation at the States and Regions levels for the provisions of the ASEAN humanitarian assistance through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA) Centre.

The provisions of humanitarian assistance to Myanmar through the AHA Centre have been implemented in two phases. The Myanmar Task Force led by the Union Minister for International Cooperation was established for facilitating the smooth policy coordination and practical delivery of executing the goals of the AHA Centre successfully on the ground. As of now, Phase 1 which is the provision of life-saving assistance has been successfully completed, and the Myanmar Government is in close cooperation with ASEAN for Phase 2 which is the provision of life-sustaining assistance. Thus, allegations of "no significant progress in implementing the ASEAN five-point consensus" are unfounded, absolutely baseless and far away from reality.

SEE PAGE-7

Hot air balloon ride over Bagan, Ayeyawady River enchanting visitors

TEMPLES and pagodas in the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone are packed with homegrown visitors and international travellers. The hot air balloon ride to enjoy astonishing views of the Bagan zone, sandflat and Ayeyawady River is one of the popular attractions in the zone.

The hot air balloon ride business over the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone has been suspended for two years. When the COVID-19 cases significantly dropped, Myanmar's tourism sector restarted in the 2022 high tourism season. Bagan was crowded with visitors during

public holidays and religious festivals such as Thadingyut and Tazaungdaing.

In order to enjoy a breathtaking view of the vast Bagan heritage site, visitors are increasingly interested in hot air balloon rides. At present, four companies are providing hot air balloon ride service. This month, we operated the service two to three times. The visitors enjoy taking documentary photos to keep the unforgettable memories and walking in the zone to see the amazing scenic view of Bagan.

The hot air balloon ride



An aerial view of the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone is seen together with a hot air balloon and visitors on board. **PHOTO: KANU**

service costs US\$150-170 or K300,000-420,000 per person. One balloon can carry 16 passengers. About two to four balloons run by three companies are flying every day. In early 2023, four tourism companies offered that service. This month, Balloon Bagan Company (BOB), Oriental Blue Min Company (OB) and Shinthanthu Company are running this business. The OB Company will suspend its business in the last week of February, while the BOB Company will stop its service on

11 April 2023. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, each company provided service for about 176 passengers per day with seven hot air balloons, when tourists flocked to the cultural zone. When the business restarted in the 2022-2023 financial year, the number of passengers was not as high as before. Businesses are making efforts to offer premium service for visitors in the upcoming season. The number of pilgrims in the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone

dropped from the second week of February. Hoteliers are forecast to receive a growing number of visitors in the upcoming Thingyan holidays which will fall in April. This year, the zone attracted many tourists from Russia, China, Japan, France, Italy, Germany, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. Holiday-makers are enthusiastic to enjoy the fantastic view of the sandflat and Ayeyawady River beyond the Bagan Cultural Heritage Site. – Nyein Thu (MNA)/EM

Interview with a representative from the ASEAN Affairs Department,...

FROM PAGE-6

Q - Could you please explain how Myanmar continues to cooperate with ASEAN?

A - As a dutiful ASEAN Member State, Myanmar firmly stands on ASEAN norms and principles enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) and the ASEAN Community Vision Blueprints by fulfilling the membership obligations such as financial and institutional responsibilities. Despite unilateral and unfair actions taken against Myanmar by a few ASEAN Member States through ASEAN mechanisms, Myanmar will continue working

closely with all Member States in maintaining the region's peace and stability which is crucial for the region's economic development. Nevertheless, Myanmar will continue working with ASEAN family members to promote and strengthen ASEAN Centrality and ASEAN Unity. Nowadays, regarding the internal affairs of Myanmar, unilateral and unfair actions and pressures have been taken against Myanmar by a few ASEAN Member States through ASEAN mechanisms which are beyond and against the provisions and fundamental principles of the ASEAN Charter. These unprecedented measures could severely affect the ASEAN Cen-

trality and ASEAN Unity as well as the ASEAN credibility in the establishment of a rules-based community. To prevent the infiltration of great power rivalries and influences into the region, it is a crucial time for ASEAN to keep promoting the ASEAN Spirit, existing good practices and cordial relationships between ASEAN countries and among the peoples of ASEAN rather than advocating the self-interest and political ambitions of individual member states. Since the inception of ASEAN, ASEAN has made a number of historic achievements towards regional peace, stability and prosperity over the past 55 years through maintaining strong

cooperation and unity among the countries in the region and promoting cohesiveness, and harmony for economic and socio-cultural developments. ASEAN countries must overcome various challenges and difficulties by promoting the ASEAN Way, ASEAN Unity, ASEAN Spirit and the "Unity in Diversity" with a deeper understanding and appreciation of different political systems, and economic development of each ASEAN Member State. Myanmar will be consistently observing and complying with the ASEAN principles and procedures enshrined in the ASEAN and will be fully cooperating with ASEAN for the realization of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025

with the Whole-of-Government Approach through effective coordination among different ministries and relevant agencies at the national level. Therefore, it is proving that Myanmar is a responsible, proactive and constructive member of ASEAN, and it is an undeniable fact that Myanmar has the capacity, capability, and motivation to assume a greater role in ASEAN. (This interview is an unofficial translation of the Myanmar version of the interview which appeared in the daily newspapers (Kyemon-The Mirror and Myanmar Alin) published on 10 February 2023.) ■

Accelerate research and development tasks for the improvement of society

CONDUCTING research is inseparable from undertaking development measures in all arenas of society so as to improve specialized activities such as manufacturing, farming, learning, serving and so on.

Every business or workplace depends on improvement and active movement of research and development. Investment in research and development undertakings will bring better results and advantages to the relevant societies. A lack of research and development will lead to a loss for all.

Currently, the Ministry of Health organizes the 51st Myanmar

Hence, all scholars, experts and researchers are to seek good research results from the research papers, research posters and symposiums from the 51st Myanmar Health Research Congress and to successfully strive for ensuring the longevity of everybody free from diseases in accord with the objective of the Ministry of Health.

Modern molecular techniques contribute a great deal to exposing new therapies in the treatment and new medicines in conformity with global advancements. In this regard, researchers from Myanmar and the Republic of Korea are scheduled to exchange their views and knowledge about the clinical significance of molecular techniques which will highlight tuberculosis and hepatitis diseases.

Nowadays, the globe has been facing violent infection and the outbreak of the pandemic due to variant viruses and genetic changes of Covid-19 and Dengue Fever. As such, it is necessary to strive for improvement of research capability so as to keep genetic changes under surveillance on time and perform prevention and treatment measures. The government pledges to continuously provide necessary assistance and encourage cooperation with the international community.

The government allows cash assistance for conducting the research projects on a yearly basis for the implementation of research grants being conducted by the Ministry of Health and has allotted K677.3 million of the fund for operating 173 research projects initially selected by the research proposal initial verification body in 2022-23 financial year.

Hence, all scholars, experts and researchers are to seek good research results from the research papers, research posters and symposiums from the 51st Myanmar Health Research Congress and to successfully strive for ensuring the longevity of everybody free from diseases in accord with the objective of the Ministry of Health.



The Solution Why We Should Teach Critical Thinking

By Yin Nwe Ko

IN MY article that was mentioned here a few months ago, I presented creative thinking in Education. In that article, I emphasized that thinking skill has not been popular in Myanmar until the beginning of the 21st century. Most teachers in Myanmar have already known four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Now, almost every teacher becomes aware of the presence of thinking skills and their importance vividly. There are several types of thinking skills viz. convergent thinking, divergent thinking, critical thinking, creative thinking, etc. Among them, I would like to emphasize the third one in this article.

Critical thinking is a term used by educators to describe forms of learning, thought, and analysis that go beyond the memorization and recall of information and facts. In common usage, critical thinking is an umbrella term that may be applied to many different forms of learning acquisition or to a wide variety of thought processes. In its most basic expression, critical thinking occurs when students are analyzing, evaluating, interpreting, or synthesizing information and applying creative thought to form an argument, solve a problem, or reach a conclusion.

Critical thinking entails many kinds of intellectual skills, including the following representative examples:

- Developing well-reasoned, persuasive arguments and evaluating and responding to counterarguments
- Examining concepts or situations from multiple perspectives, including different cultural perspectives
- Questioning evidence and assumptions to reach novel conclusions
- Devising imaginative ways to solve problems, especially unfamiliar or complex problems
- Formulating and articulating thoughtful, penetrating questions
- Identifying themes or patterns and making abstract connections across subjects

Critical thinking is a central concept in educational reforms that call for schools to place a greater emphasis on skills that are used in all subject areas and that students can apply in all educational, career, and civic settings throughout their lives. It's also a central concept in reforms that question how teachers have traditionally taught and what students should be learning — notably, the 21st-century movement, which broadly calls on schools to create academic programs and learning experiences that equip students with the most essential and in-demand knowledge, skills, and dispositions they will need to be successful in higher-education programmes and modern workplaces. As higher education and job requirements become competitive, complex, and technical, proponents argue, students will need skills such as critical thinking to successfully navigate the modern world, excel in challenging careers, and process increasingly complex information.

Critical thinking also intersects with debates about assessment and how schools should measure learning acquisition. For example, multiple-choice testing formats have been common in standardized testing for decades, yet the heavy use of such testing formats emphasizes—and may reinforce the importance of—factual retention and recall over other skills. If schools largely test and award grades for factual recall, teachers will therefore stress memorization and recall in their teaching, possibly at the expense of skills such as critical thinking that are vitally important for students to possess but far more challenging to measure accurately.

Among many interesting and useful research, here is the one conducted by Dr Li Li who is the Associated Professor in Language Education and Director of M.Ed. in TESOL in Graduate School Education at the University of Exeter. My esteemed readers might enjoy reading and seeing what she emphasized critical thinking in education.

In her recent talk at a second language education conference, she asked roughly 100 attendees in the room, whether they have received training in critical thinking. Surprisingly, only a handful of people raised their hands. One might find this disappointing, given that the concept of critical thinking is so important in academic study. On the one hand, it might be true that very little systematic training is provided to second language teachers and learners. On the other, few teachers and learn-

ers consciously make the pedagogical link between language learning activities and critical thinking. Rather, they pay more attention to language form and function, such as grammar rules, lexical collocation, successful communication, and even pragmatism.

Also, many of these attendees might have perceived the concept as more closely related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) subjects, rather than a language subject. In fact, her research finding suggests the majority of second language teachers do not believe critical thinking is associated with language learning. Teachers' beliefs about integrating critical thinking in second language learning are one of the most influential factors towards the lack of in-depth exploration of the topic in the field.

Why should teachers integrate critical thinking into language teaching?

You all see an example:

In an economic undergraduate course, Year 1 students are required to discuss in a group whether the provision of grammar (academically exclusive state-funded) schools should be expanded from an economic perspective. In this discussion, students need to demonstrate the following skills:

Skills	Focus	Example
Explanation	Illustration of knowledge; Recognition and recall of facts	Illustration of knowledge; Recognition and recall of facts
Comprehension	Demonstration of understanding of the topic; Summarising information provided by individuals	Students need to collect all the relevant information. They need to understand how this information is useful
Application	Application of knowledge in a situation different from the original learning context	Students need to apply economic theory to an educational matter
Analysis	Analysis of the information to determine the significance of it in their argument; Establish a link between information	Students provide analysis of the possible reasons for and against the expansion of grammar school, using evidence to support their analysis
Synthesis	Synthesis of different arguments and reasons, with evidence to support the claims; Combination of various elements	Students consider different ideas and categorise them
Evaluation	Provision of judgements and decisions based on criteria and rationale	Students present their arguments collectively

In this task, it is evident that students need to demonstrate a good depth and breadth of understanding of the topic, conduct sound and consistent critical analysis, and present clear development of relevant arguments using a good range of sources.

It looks like these skills are not closely related to language learning. However, few would disagree that they use language to express themselves, collaborate, take a stance and solve a problem. There is an interrelated relationship between language and the thinking process. If we consider EFL (English as a Foreign Language is learning English in a non-English-speaking country) or ESL (English as a Second Language is learning English in a country where English is dominantly spoken or the official language) learners, in particular, they will see the significance of offering critical thinking skills in language learning because of the close connection between language development (e.g., the depth and breadth of vocabulary use) and thinking.

Thinking skills involve some micro-skills, such as analysis, reason-

ing, evaluation of materials and judgments, challenging assumptions and perspectives, and proposing new ideas and solutions. To enhance these skills, teachers can focus on the following:

- Deliberate practice of analysis: the usage of words, grammar structure, coherence of a paragraph, supporting evidence in the essay
- Evaluation of the stance-taking: find out the writer's perspective, evidence, and biases
- Synthesis: compare and contrast several materials, arguments, and points of view

These are achievable through task-based or problem-based learning by creating more opportunities for collaboration. When students talk, they share and evaluate information. When the tasks are problem-oriented, students are more motivated to find a solution collaboratively, using the language as a tool to communicate, negotiate and present. Besides, this offers students a 'thinking space' to practice what they would like to say collectively.

A second thing that teachers can do is to improve classroom language use. My research suggests that students can develop thinking

WHO chief to 'push until we get the answer' on Covid origins

THE World Health Organization will continue pushing until it finds an answer to how the Covid-19 pandemic started, the agency's chief said Wednesday following a report suggesting it had abandoned the search.

Solving the mystery of where the SARS CoV-2 virus came from and how it began spreading among humans is considered vital for averting future pandemics.

Yet an article on the Nature website Tuesday said faced with a lack of cooperation from China, where the outbreak began in late 2019, the WHO had given up on the search.

"We need to continue to push until we get the answer," agency chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters, referring to the search for the origins of the virus.

"Knowing how this pandemic started is very, very

important and very crucial," he said.

He said he had recently sent a letter to a top official in China "asking for cooperation, because we need cooperation and transparency in the information... in order to know how this started."

The two main theories that have been hotly debated have centred on the virus naturally spilling over from bats to an intermediary animal and into humans, or escaping due to a lab accident.

The Nature report suggested that the WHO has "quietly shelved the second phase of its much-anticipated scientific investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic".

It quoted Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO expert leading the agency's Covid response, saying that "there is no phase two".

SOURCE: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 21 February 2023)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 22 February 2023: Light rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi regions and Kachin, Eastern Shan and Mon states. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions and Rakhine State and 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 (3 - 6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated to scattered rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 February 2023: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 February 2023: Generally fair weather.

LOCAL BUSINESS

Mandalay market sees brisk sales of pulses on foreign demand

THE Mandalay market is bustling with pulses trade and the prices of the main export pulses are on the rise, according to the Mandalay wholesale centre.

The newly harvested pulses near Mandalay city are entering the Mandalay wholesale centre in the third week of February. The traders are doing a roaring trade on the back of strong demand from India and China.

At present, the prices stood at K2,107,500 per tonne for pigeon peas, K1,866,000 for black grams and K1.8 million for green grams.

Myanmar bagged over US\$1.1 billion from more than 1.4 million tonnes of pulses exports over the past ten months in the current financial year 2022-2023 (April-March). The pulses export volumes were 182,697.772 kilogrammes of



Traders are pictured evaluating varieties of beans and pulses in the Mandalay market.

pigeon pea (\$142.435 million), 588,382.866 kilos of black gram (\$484.05 million) and 487,568.261 kilos of green gram (\$353.155 million).

Myanmar primarily exports black gram, green gram and pigeon peas. Of them, black gram and pigeon peas are mainly sent to India while green grams are

shipped to China and Europe. India has growing demand and consumption requirements for black grams and pigeon peas. According to a Memorandum of Understanding between Myanmar and India signed on 18 June 2021, India will import 250,000 tonnes of black gram and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon peas (tur) from Myanmar for five consecutive years from 2021-2022 financial year to 2025-2026 FY. This G-to-G pact will not affect the pulses' annual quota set by India. Myanmar's exporters are also entitled to deliver the pulses to India under that annual quota.

Myanmar yearly produces approximately 400,000 tonnes of black gram and about 50,000 tonnes of pigeon peas. Myanmar is the top producer of the black gram that is primarily demanded by India, while pigeon peas, green grams and chickpeas are cultivated in Australia and African countries besides Myanmar. — NN/EM

Prices of fuel oil, gold and dollar on 21 February 2023

Fuel Oil Price (Yangon)

Octane 92	K2,130
Octane 95	K2,200
Diesel	K2,165
Premium Diesel	K2,245

All of the prices are based on per litre.

Gold Price

The reference price of high-purity gold set by YGEA	K2,161,800 per tical
High-purity gold in the gold market	K2,861,000 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	K2,865 to K2,880

The above prices may change from time to time.

Domestic gold market stagnant

THE domestic gold market is sluggish, said U Myo Myint, chair of the Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

“The market is flat for now. Yet, the price moves up and down tracking the gold spot price.”

On 2 February, gold spot prices hit US\$1,955 per ounce and YGEA's reference price was K2,303,200 per tical. As the gold price declined to \$1,838 in the international market, the reference price was reduced to K2,165,400 per tical on 21 February.

Despite the YGEA's refer-

ence price, the pure gold spiked at K2,857,000 per tical in the unofficial market, showing a large gap of K690,000 per tical.

YGEA calculated the price depending on the Central Bank of Myanmar's reference exchange rate of K2,100, with some addition, while the US dollar is exchanged at K2,860 in the unauthorized market.

The price of gold in the domestic market is highly correlated with the gold spot prices and dollar exchange rate.

The soaring dollar exchange rate at over K4,500 drove the pure

gold price up to a record-high of K3.7 million per tical in late August 2022.

For the gold price to decline, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation has been selling gold ingots under the competitive bidding system in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw.

With an aim at reducing gold prices, the YGEA and Mandalay Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association sold gold bullion supplied by the executive members and the members as well. — NN/EM



The picture shows a gold jewellery outlet in Yangon.

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Double
Academy
awardee
actor/director
Thiha Tin
Soe dies of
heart attack

TWO-TIME Academy Award-winning actor and director Thiha Tin Soe died of a heart attack on 21 February.

The 55-year-old actor died on the way to Sanpya hospital in Thingangyun Township.

“Academy Award-winning actor Ko Thiha Tin Soe died of a heart attack today and I express my deepest condolences to your family. Go ahead Ko Thiha... I have had no chance to meet you again despite our appointment. Rest in peace... I share my merits for every good deed I have done... Say Sardu, Ako...” actor Wailu Kyaw posted on his social network.

“55-year old director and actor Thiha Tin Soe died at Thinhangyun hospital on 21 February. He won academy awards for director and main actor with the Ngaye Thar movie in 2000. Rest in peace, actor Thiha Tin Soe,” the vice-president-1 of the Myanmar Motion Picture Organization posted on his Facebook.

Actor Thiha Tin Soe is famous for his unique character in movies featuring revolution against the colonialists. He won the best director award and best actor award in 2000 for the Ngaye Thar movie.

His wife academy-award winner actress Zin Mar Oo died of lung cancer on 11 March 2021 and his brother director Nyarna Tin Soe also die of a heart attack on 1 November 2022. —TWA/KTZH



The photo shows an electric vehicle charging in Guangdong Province in South China on 27 October 2022. PHOTO: XINHUA

MoC issues mandatory rules for
EVs importation and showrooms

THE Ministry of Commerce released a directive stating the rules for the importation of battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and showrooms.

During the pilot project, the importing companies of EVs must register with the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration. They have to submit the sales contract with each EV manufacturer.

The importers must abide by the standards and import quota set by the national-level steering committee on the development of electric vehicles and related business.

The companies also need to pay K50 million at the designated banks and present the bank guarantee. Those showroom operators must present a certificate of non-tax delinquency

provided by the Internal Revenues Department and need to add K100 million to a special account of the authorized banks as a guarantee.

Only vehicles with left-hand drive can be imported. The models for private vehicles are set to be one year older than the current year. The showroom operators can import the vehicles in line with the auto import policy issued every year.

Additionally, motorcycle showrooms also need a bank certificate with a K50 million deposit at the authorized bank. The imported motorcycles must be the ones manufactured within two years. The showroom operators will face legal actions under the existing law if they do not adhere to the rules stated in the directive. — TWA/EM

MAEX makes right issues
for existing shareholders

MYANMAR Agro Exchange Public Co Ltd offered K1,500 per unit in right issues to its existing security holders, according to its recent notification.

Prior to listing on the Yangon Stock Exchange, the investors holding 10 shares can purchase one unit in the right issue, in accordance with stanza 59 in articles of the incorporation and stipulation in Section 63 (c) of the Myanmar Companies Law.

Shareholders are notified of the rights issue through SMS. They can respond whether they want to buy those shares or not via the link provided in the message by 10 March. Those shareholders

who want to purchase shares themselves have to deposit 50 per cent of the share value by 31 March and the remaining must be paid by 31 May.

Those who fail to make the second payment are entitled to hold appropriate share units which are equivalent to their initial deposit, according to the decision of the board of directors, as per the notification.

The security holders who did not reply in the set period are not allowed to buy the equities. Stock dividends for the 2022-2023 financial year will be equally paid out to those who purchase shares in rights issues before the share dividend notice. — TWA/EM



A potential investor is seen observing the Yangon Stock Exchange.

High price of broken rice pushes up livestock product prices

INCREASING broken rice prices pose a burden on livestock businesses so the prices of livestock products significantly rise.

The prices of chicken, chicken egg and duck egg rallied. The egg prices soared to K350 per piece for duck eggs and K250 per pc for chicken eggs in 2023, Daw Khaing from Sangyoung Township, told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

Earlier, people consumed eggs to reduce food costs. Now, the price has become high, she added. The broken rice, which is used as feedstuff, is priced at K40,000 per bag. Similarly, the prices of sesame beans, rice and bean by-products are relatively higher. The broken



The picture shows eggs displayed in the market.

rice price doubled in two years. Battery hens need good feed and supplements. As ducks are set free in the field, the growers can save some feed costs.

The high price of eggs pushed up the price of fried rice with eggs, which is a popular breakfast for low-income people. Yet, the demand for eggs

dropped compared to the previous years.

The prices of eggs stood at K65-70 per piece in mid-August 2012 and increased to K110-130 per piece in 2013. The chicken price was K4,400 per viss then. The feed was valued at K360 per viss of rice bran, K1,200 for sesame meal, K1,000 for bean

by-product and K400 per pyi (eight condensed milk cans) of broken rice.

After a decade, the prices were exorbitantly high at K1,500 for broken rice, K900 for rice bran, K2,700 for bean by-product, K2,400 for sesame meal, K250-350 per piece of egg and K7,000 per viss of chicken.

When the egg price was around K100 in 2013, China imported eggs into the upper Myanmar regions. Chicken eggs from Taunggyi are mainly supplied to the Yangon market. The duck eggs are entering the Yangon markets from delta regions, Kayan, Thongwa, Waw, Thanatpin areas and Mon State. Those duck eggs from the Mawlamyine area fetch higher prices than those of the delta regions. — TWA/EM

ECONOMY
WORLD

Japan keeps economic view, notes
wholesale inflation slowing in February

THE government on Tuesday retained its monthly assessment that the Japanese economy is “picking up moderately” despite some weakness while changing its wording on wholesale prices for the first time in about a year to reflect slower price growth.

In the economic report for February, the Cabinet Office maintained its assessments of 11 key components of the economy, ranging from private consumption and corporate spending to production and exports.

Corporate goods prices “are rising at a slower pace recently,” the report said, a change from the previous month’s expression that they are “rising”. The last time the Cabinet Office modified its wording on the segment was in March 2022. Wholesale prices “remain at high levels compared with a year earlier but are flat from the previous month,” a gov-



A customer shops for groceries at a supermarket in Tokyo on 27 January 2023. PHOTO: AFP

ernment official said.

The prices of goods traded between companies tend not to affect consumer prices immediately, and economists expect consumer inflation to remain at high levels for some time. The office said consumer prices are “rising”, leaving its wording un-

changed from January.

The report came after data released last week showed Japan’s economy rebounded in the October-December quarter but lacked strength, with gross domestic product increasing an annualized real 0.6 per cent. — Kyodo

S Korea’s automotive export keeps
rising for 6th month in January

SOUTH Korea’s automotive export kept rising for the sixth consecutive month last month due to robust demand for eco-friend-

ly vehicles, government data showed Monday.

Car shipment soared 21.9 per cent from a year earlier to

4.98 billion US dollars in January, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy.

It continued to grow since August last year, marking the highest-ever January figure.

The number of exported vehicles was 200,825 in January, up 11.3 per cent from a year earlier.

Export value of eco-friendly cars jumped 42.3 per cent to 1.79 billion dollars, while the number of exported eco-friendly vehicles surged 29.8 per cent to 57,000. Both figures were record highs last month. The number of vehicles manufactured in local factories gained 13.2 per cent over the year to 306,738 in January on the back of the eased supply disruption of semiconductors used to make cars. — Xinhua



Visitors look at a hydrogen-powered vehicle displayed at the Hyundai booth at a ‘Hydrogen and Mobility expo’ at the Kintex exhibition centre in Ilsan, near Seoul on 2 July 2020. PHOTO: ED JONES / AFP

Visitor arrivals in
Macao double year on
year in January

VISITOR arrivals in Macao surged 101.3 per cent year on year to 1,397,748 in January 2023, the Macao Special Administrative Region’s (SAR) statistical agency said on Monday.

The figure represented a month-on-month rise of 259.0 per cent, which was ascribable to the easing of anti-epidemic measures for entry into Macao and the Chinese Lunar New Year holiday, showed the latest report from the Statistics and

Census Service.

Overnight visitors and same-day visitors soared by 234.5 per cent and 29.1 per cent year on year to 816,199 and 581,549, respectively. The number of visitors from the Chinese mainland increased by 54.5 per cent year on year to 991,641 while visitors from China’s Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan region leapt by 704.3 per cent and 139.0 per cent year on year to 356,958 and 18,868, respectively. — Xinhua



Visitors look at a replica of a London bus at the Londoner hotel resort in Macau on 16 December 2022. PHOTO: EDUARDO LEAL / AFP

Australia’s Sydney Airport
reports 78.8% traffic recovery to
pre-COVID-19 level

AUSTRALIA’S Sydney Airport on Tuesday released a monthly report on its traffic performance, saying that a total of 3,120,000 passengers passed through the airport in January, which marked a 78.8 per cent recovery compared to the pre-COVID-19 level.

According to the report, domestic passenger traffic totalled 1,887,000, representing an 82.4 per cent recovery compared to

January 2019, while 1,233,000 international travellers passed through the airport, registering a 73.9 per cent recovery. The airport also revealed the top 10 nationalities of passengers taking flights. In January, Australians took the top spot, followed by New Zealanders and United States passengers. Chinese nationals were the seventh largest group among the total passengers. — Xinhua

Botswana becomes 45th AU member to ratify African continental free trade agreement

BOTSWANA has deposited its instrument ratifying the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement with African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, local media reported.

The southern African country becomes the 45th African Union (AU) member to ratify the AfCFTA.

Botswana President Mokgweetsi Masisi presented the document to Faki at the 36th Ord-

nary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Sunday.

In an interview with Botswana Television, Radio Botswana and Botswana Press Agency

following a ceremony, Masisi said Botswana is committed to the success of the AU flagship project.

“The AfCFTA agreement ratification would enhance Botswana’s trade with the rest of

Africa,” Masisi said, adding that the government would facilitate and enhance businesses in Botswana to make sure that they take advantage of the wider market presented by the AfCFTA. — Xinhua

HSBC says pre-tax profits slip to \$17.5 bln in 2022

BANKING giant HSBC on Tuesday announced a dip in 2022 pre-tax profits last year, calling the ongoing impact of Covid-19 the main factor in its financial performance.

The Asia-focused lender said it made \$17.5 billion before tax, down more than seven per cent on-year, while reported revenue increased four per cent to \$51.7 billion.

In a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange, HSBC detailed the tough global economic climate international banks are facing.

It cited renewed virus outbreaks in Hong Kong and mainland China as denting last year's economic growth.

It added that global uncertainty sparked



A man uses his phone outside the headquarters of HSBC bank in Hong Kong on 21 February 2023. Banking giant HSBC on 21 February announced a dip in 2022 pre-tax profits last year, calling the ongoing impact of Covid-19 the main factor in its financial performance. PHOTO: AFP

by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, elevated inflation and rising interest rates contributed to a difficult financial environment that it expects will spill

into 2023's earnings and even eclipse the toll of the pandemic.

"We are already seeing... a cost of living crisis affecting many of our cus-

tomers and colleagues," Mark Tucker, the group's chairman said in a statement.

However, after-tax profits rose \$2 billion

to \$16.7 billion, while fourth-quarter pre-tax profit nearly doubled from \$2.5 billion to \$5.2 billion.

"All of our businesses grew profits in 2022, and we maintained our strong capital, funding and liquidity positions," Tucker added.

The bank said last year reflected "a strong overall financial performance", and announced a full-year dividend of \$0.32 per share.

At an event last month, Tucker said China's reopening and latest measures to stabilize its turbulent property market "will be positive for both its economy and the global economy".

The lender has vowed to accelerate a multi-year pivot to Asia and the Mid-

dle East, and its ambitions to lead Asia's wealth management market has shown early signs of success.

In November, the bank agreed to sell its Canadian division for \$10.1 billion, saying it would use the funds to invest in its core business and return cash to investors.

The Canadian sale comes after a months-long campaign by HSBC's biggest shareholder and Chinese insurance giant Ping An to cut costs and shift more resources to Asia.

Ping An has argued that spinning off HSBC's Asian operations will unlock shareholder value amid tensions between China and Western powers, though the bank has rejected the move. — AFP

Thailand's auto exports soar in January

THAILAND'S auto exports soared in January as semiconductor supplies improved, data showed on Tuesday.

Car exports climbed 24.28 per cent from a year earlier to 86,786 units in January, following a 10.17 per cent rise registered in the previous month, ac-

cording to the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI).

In January, car production rose 4.02 per cent from a year earlier to 157,844 units, boosted by a 7.43 per cent hike in export orders, Surapong Paisitpattanapong, FTI's automotive industry club vice-president and

spokesman, told a news conference.

Domestic car sales fell 5.58 per cent in January from a year earlier to 65,579 units, after a 9.02 per cent drop in the previous month due to a semiconductor shortage in some car models, Surapong said. — Xinhua

WTO launches second wave of fishing subsidy talks

THE World Trade Organization set sail Monday on a "second wave" of negotiations on fisheries subsidies, the new head of the talks announced, after months stuck on the rocks.

The second stage is a follow-up to the historic agreement on fishing subsidies reached at the 12th WTO ministerial conference in June last year. But the absence of someone to chair the process, after the departure of Colombian ambassador Santiago Wills at the end of September, led

to paralysis at a crucial point in the talks. Under the June agreement, the global trade body's 164 members committed to keep talking on outstanding issues in order to strike a comprehensive agreement at the next WTO ministerial conference, to be held in the United Arab Emirates in February 2024. But the second wave of negotiations could not start because members struggled to agree on a new chair for the so-called Negotiating Group on Rules overseeing the process. — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY.NO. (1107W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY.NO. (1107W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-2-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V TRIESTE TRADER VOY.NO. (305W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V TRIESTE TRADER VOY.NO. (305W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-2-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S'PORE) PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V KOTA HIDAYAH VOY.NO. (KHDY0336N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V KOTA HIDAYAH VOY.NO. (KHDY0336N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-2-2023** 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.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

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Putin says sanctions creating 'opportunities' for Russian businesses



Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers his annual state of the nation address at the Gostiny Dvor conference centre in central Moscow on 21 February 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday lauded the resistance of Moscow's economy in the face of massive international sanctions, touting "opportunities" for local companies.

In an anti-Western speech delivered days before the anniversary of his Ukraine offensive, Putin said sanctions were failing and called on Russian businesses to "be with the motherland".

"The point of our work is not to adapt to current conditions, but to bring our economy to new frontiers," Putin said during his state of the nation address.

"It is a time not only of challenges, but of opportunities," he added, welcoming what he called the growing "independence" of Moscow's economy from foreign markets.

Addressing businessmen, he said:

"Everyone must understand that the sources of well-being and the future should be only here, in their native country: Russia."

Putin called on them to invest in Russia so that "we will create a country that does not close itself off from the world, but uses all its advantages."

He said Russian companies should "take advantage of this opportunity to increase production of the most demanded products in order to fill niches" freed up after the departure of Western companies.

Russia's GDP contracted by 2.1 per cent in 2022 according to figures released by state agency

Rosstat Monday – far from the apocalyptic predictions from last Spring.

"The Russian economy and management system turned out to be much stronger than the West believed," Putin said.

He accused Western states of wanting to make ordinary Russians "suffer".

"Anti-Russian sanctions are just a means. But the aim is to make our citizens suffer," the 70-year-old leader said.

Western countries imposed unprecedented sanctions on Moscow after Putin launched his operation in Ukraine a year ago. — AFP

France's Macron defends unpopular pensions reform

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday defended his government's hotly contested pensions overhaul in rare comments about the topic.

"Everybody has common sense," he told journalists as he toured the fresh meat section of the massive Rungis wholesale food market south of Paris.

"On the whole, people know that everybody has to work a little longer on average, otherwise we won't be able to properly fund our pensions," he said.

"If we don't create wealth, we cannot then distribute it."

Hundreds of thousands of people have gone on strike or taken to the street on five separate occasions in recent weeks to protest against the

proposed changes.

They include increasing the age of retirement to 64 from 62 and raising the number of years of contributions required to receive a full pension.

The government has argued the changes are necessary to lift France's pensions system out of deficit by 2030.

But Macron, who put the overhaul at the centre of his re-election campaign last year, has largely remained quiet on the topic.

A stormy debate in parliament on the draft bill ended on Friday without even reaching a discussion on its contentious Article 7 on raising the retirement age.

The proposal is next to be examined in the Senate. — AFP

New quake hits Türkiye and Syria, killing six

A 6.4-magnitude earthquake rocked Türkiye's southern province of Hatay and northern Syria on Monday evening, killing six people and sparking fresh panic after a massive February 6 tremor that left nearly 45,000 dead in both countries.

The AFAD disaster response agency reported the deaths as well as nearly 300 hospitalizations, while in Syria the White Helmets aid group said at least 150 people were injured in the Aleppo region.

Monday's quake hit the Turkish town of Defne at 8:04 pm (1704 GMT) and was strongly felt by AFP teams in the nearby city of Antakya. It was also felt in Lebanon.

Türkiye's disaster management agency said on Twitter that a 5.8-magnitude quake followed three minutes later, with its epi-

centre in the Samandag district of Hatay province.

The agency recorded two more tremors with magnitudes of 5.2 around 20 minutes after the first on Monday.

Images from DHA news agency showed a hospital in

Antakya being evacuated, while broadcaster NTV reported that a hospital was evacuated in the city of Iskenderun.

DHA said patients in an intensive care unit were taken by ambulance to field hospitals to continue their treatment. — AFP



An aerial picture taken on 20 February 2023 shows collapsed buildings and houses in Antakya, southern Türkiye. **PHOTO: AFP**

China says deeply concerned over 'out of control' Ukraine conflict

CHINA'S foreign minister said Tuesday that Beijing is "deeply concerned" about the conflict in Ukraine, which is "intensifying and even getting out of control".

China has sought to position itself as a neutral party on the war in Ukraine, while maintaining close ties with its strategic ally Russia.

Beijing has pledged to publish a proposal aimed at finding a "political solution" to end the war ahead of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion on 24

February.

The United States has accused China of mulling arms shipments to Russia, claims Beijing has denied.

"It has been nearly a year since the crisis in Ukraine escalated across the board," Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang said at a conference on global security in Beijing.

"China is deeply concerned that the conflict is intensifying and even getting out of control."

Qin urged the "countries

concerned to stop adding fuel to the fire as soon as possible, to stop shifting the blame to China".

Beijing would "offer Chinese wisdom for the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis, and work with the international community to promote dialogue and consultation, address the concerns of all parties and seek common security," he added.

And regarding the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which China considers its territory and has

vowed to seize one day, Qin urged countries to "stop making an uproar by shouting 'Today Ukraine, Tomorrow Taiwan'".

"The pressures and attempts to contain China, coming from the outside, are getting stronger and stronger, they are getting worse and worse, posing a serious threat to China's sovereignty and security," he said.

China's top diplomat Wang Yi told the Munich Security Conference on Saturday that with regard to the Ukraine conflict,

Beijing was against attacks on nuclear power plants, opposed the use of biochemical weapons and was willing to work with all parties.

Wang is due in Moscow for talks on his final stop of a European tour that has seen him also visit France, Italy, Hungary and Germany.

The Kremlin said on Monday that Wang may meet with President Vladimir Putin during his visit, according to the official TASS news agency. — AFP

UN tries anew to finish treaty protecting the high seas

UN member states embraced “positive energy” Monday as they launched two weeks of negotiations aimed at finally reaching a treaty meant to protect and preserve vast areas of the world’s oceans.

After more than 15 years of formal and informal talks, this is the third time in less than a year that negotiators have converged on New York in what, yet again, is supposed to be a final and conclusive round.

But as the talks, set to run through 3 March, opened on Monday, cautious optimism appeared to be taking hold.

“I hope we’ve come together here with a will to get us to the finish line,” conference chair Rena Lee said as the talks began, adding that “an agreement that is universal, that is effective, that is implementable and that is future-proof is within our reach.”

At the conclusion of the

opening day, she added: “There is a lot of positive energy in this room. So it behooves us to enhance this positive energy, keep our focus, keep our eyes on the prize, and really work to make this (conference) final.”

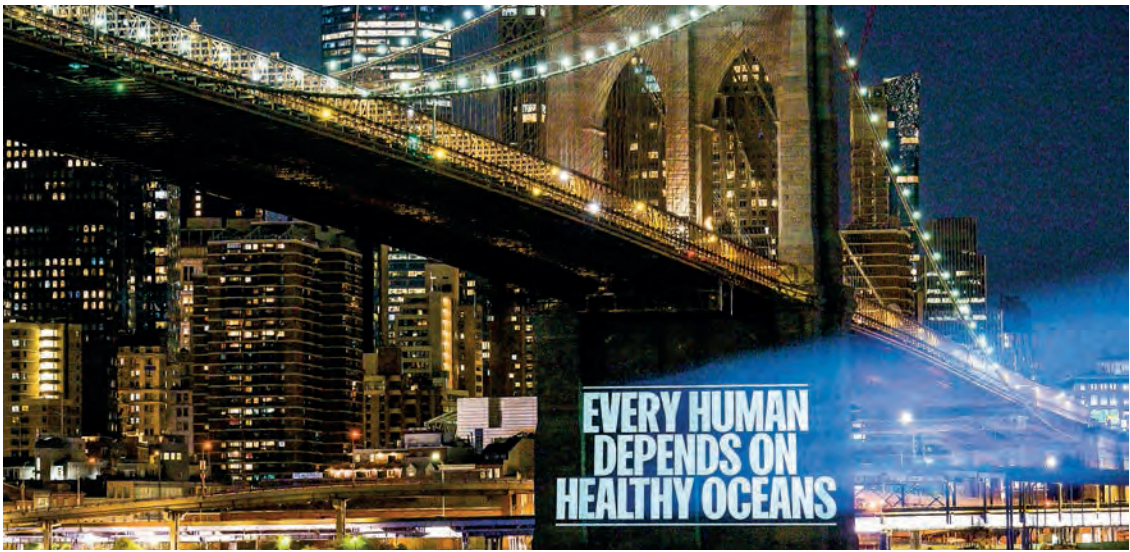
Lee also welcomed actor and activist Jane Fonda, who handed her a petition on behalf of ocean defenders worldwide, with 5.5 million signatures calling for a “strong” treaty.

“We’re losing the ocean. And if we lose the ocean, we lose us,” the 85-year-old told AFP.

“This is the fight that will determine whether there’s a tomorrow for human beings.”

A historic agreement reached in Montreal in December at the United Nation’s COP15 conference on biodiversity is helping fuel the sense of promise.

Countries then committed themselves to protecting 30 per



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 14 August 2022 images are projected by Greenpeace onto the Brooklyn Bridge calling for action to finalize a strong Global Ocean Treaty at the United Nations in New York.
PHOTO: AFP

cent of the world’s lands and seas by 2030 -- a nearly impossible challenge if it fails to include the high seas, of which only about one per cent is now protected.

“We’re optimistic the

COP15 biodiversity agreement will provide the shot in the arm needed for governments to get this important agreement over the line,” Pepe Clarke, Oceans Practice Leader for WWF International, said in a press release.

The high seas begin at the border of countries’ Exclusive Economic Zones, which extend up to 200 nautical miles (370 kilometres) from coastlines. They thus fall under the jurisdiction of no country. — AFP

Thai election to be held in May: PM



Thai prime minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha (C) addresses supporters of the Ruam Thai Sang Chart (United Thai Nation) Party, as the party members rallied for the first time before upcoming elections, at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok on 9 January 2023.
PHOTO: AFP

THAILAND will hold a general election in May, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha said Tuesday, with unofficial campaigning already under way.

The embattled premier, who came to power as army chief in a 2014 coup before taking over as PM after a controversial 2019 election, told reporters he would dissolve parliament in March.

Under Thai constitutional rules, this would mean an elec-

tion some time in May, with 7 May seen by many observers as the most likely date.

“I will dissolve (parliament). I said March so it will be March, so this would fit with May,” he told reporters after a regular cabinet meeting.

With the economy struggling and the vital tourism sector hit hard by the pandemic, the 68-year-old’s popularity has been in the doldrums, but last month he announced a re-elec-

tion bid at a rally.

Prayut will run under the banner of the newly created Ruam Thai Sang Chart party, with current ruling party Palan Pracharath Party (PPRP) last month naming Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan as its candidate for PM in the next election.

Campaign billboards are already popping up around the country and the main opposition party Pheu Thai has been campaigning in its traditional strongholds in the northeast.

Pheu Thai is polling well but the current Thai constitution, drafted under junta rule, gives army-linked parties a strong advantage.

The election will be the first since mass youth-led street protests rocked the kingdom in 2020, with calls for political reform and unprecedented demands for changes to the monarchy, which is heavily protected from criticism under Thai law. Pheu Thai is expected to nominate Paetongtarn Shinawatra — daughter of former premier Thaksin Shinawatra — as one of its candidates for prime minister.— AFP

Russia suspends participation in New START treaty: Putin

RUSSIA is suspending its participation in rather than withdrawing from the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with the United States, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced on Tuesday.

NATO demanded in early February that Russia “return to the implementation” of the New START and allow inspections of its nuclear facilities. That “sounds like some kind

of nonsense amid today’s confrontation,” Putin said in his annual address to the Federal Assembly.

He pointed out the combined strike potential of NATO as Britain and France also have nuclear arsenals that pose a threat to Russia. Meanwhile, Moscow has information that “certain figures in Washington” are considering nuclear weapon tests to develop new types of nuclear weapons.— Xinhua

Govt to screen Japanese-language schools to ensure quality

THE government decided Tuesday on a draft legislation to screen and certify Japanese-language schools to ensure their quality by setting standards including the number of teachers and educational content.

In the legislation, eyed for enforcement in April 2024 after its enactment in the current Diet session, the government

also requires instructors at certified schools to obtain a new national qualification on teaching Japanese. The government’s strengthened surveillance over the Japanese-language schools follows cases of questionable management, such as an operator who was found to be allegedly making illegal job arrangements for foreign students in 2017. — Kyodo



SPORT

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.

Myanmar team striker Win Theingi Tun joins Thai football club



PHOTO: COLLEGE OF ASIAN SCHOLARS

IT is reported that Myanmar women's national team striker Win Theingi Tun has started joining Thai club College of Asian Scholars.

As the third foreign club, Win Theingi Tun left for Thailand on 17 February to play for the College of Asian Scholars, a top Thai women's club, and has

already started training.

The College of Asian Scholars Association signed Win Theingi Tun on a one-season contract, and will only join the Myanmar national women's team when it is about to compete in international competitions.

The College of Asian Scholars team is the team that Khin Malar Tun, the captain of the Myanmar national women's team, previously played.

This year, along with Win Theingi Tun, the team officials tried to recruit Khin Malar Tun again, but it didn't work out.

Win Theingi Tun played for the Indian club Gokulam from October 2021 to May 2022, and after half of 2022, he played for the Indian club Lords FA and achieved success. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

Sprint star Kerley aiming for golden double at world championships

VERSATILE track superstar Fred Kerley Tuesday said his key goal for 2023 was to match Usain Bolt and claim the 100m-200m sprint double at the world championships in Budapest this year.

The American reigning 100m world champion and Tokyo Olympic silver medallist is the star attraction at the Maurice Plant meet in Melbourne on

Thursday, where he will make his season bow.

He is one of only three men in history to run sub-10 seconds for the 100m, sub-20 for the 200m and sub-44 for the 400m, giving him multiple options.

But he opted to focus on the 200m, where gold eluded him at last year's world championships in Eugene.

"Every time I step on the track it should be something fast," the 27-year-old told reporters. "I know my training has been going good, so hopefully it will be a good time.

"Last year (at Eugene) I came up short in the 200, so double gold is the only thing that is on my mind at the moment." — AFP

Azarenka calls for fitting venue for women's tennis finals



VICTORIA Azarenka said Monday that she hopes the WTA Finals will find a "deserving" home, after a couple of years of instability after the women's tennis organization suspended all Chinese tournaments. The former world number one and two-time Australian Open champion also urged an announcement on this year's

venue soon, to allow for better marketing of the tour's flagship event.

The season-ending championships feature the top eight singles players and top eight doubles teams. They were initially meant to be staged in China's southern city of Shenzhen every year for 10 years, starting with the 2019 edition.

The deal with Shenzhen was record-breaking and the inaugural 2019 showpiece awarded singles champion Ashleigh Barty \$4.42 million — which was the highest-ever prize money awarded to a player at any tennis event across both

the men's and women's tours.

But the pandemic and the fallout from the disappearance of Chinese player Peng Shuai — which led to the WTA suspending operations in China — have meant that the tour Finals have not returned to Shenzhen since 2019.

Peng, the former doubles world number one, has not been seen outside China since first making, and then withdrawing, accusations of sexual assault against a high-ranking official.

The WTA championships were cancelled in 2020 and then found a temporary home in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 2021,

and Fort Worth, Texas in 2022.

The WTA Finals in Fort Worth witnessed sparse crowds and were only announced late September — less than two months before the event.

"We need something that is deserving of the Finals," Azarenka, an active member on the WTA Player Council, told reporters at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships on Monday.

"Last couple of years with such a short announcement, absolutely no time for marketing — in my opinion — it's been undervalued." — AFP

Victoria Azarenka of Russia returns the ball to Ipek Oz of Turkey (not pictured) during their women's singles match of the Qatar TotalEnergies Open tennis tournament at Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex in Doha on 13 February 2023. PHOTO: AFP