UPLIFT THE PRESTIGE OF PEOPLE IN THE MON STATE FOREVER

PAGE-8 (OPINION)

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Message sent by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister of Republic of Union of Myanmar Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to ceremony to mark 49th Anniversary of Mon State Day

19 March 2023

Esteemed ethnic national brethren in Mon State

I disperse Metta (loving-kindness) with wishes on the significant occasion of the 49th Anniversary of Mon State Day which falls on 19 March 2023, today, for all Mon ethnic national brethren in the Mon State and other regions and entire national people across the nation to have health and happiness with auspiciousness.

Mon ethnics are residing in the Mon State similar to other ethnics with the Union Spirit along the history by preserving traditions and customs as well as cultural heritages.

Mon ethnics are the earliest ones who entered and lived in Myanmar. They had established the Thudhammawady State near Thaton region before the enlightenment of the Lord Gotama Buddha, managing the propagation and preservation of language, religion, literature, culture and fine arts from the Thuwunnabhumi era to date. It is a State with a fine tradition that had emerged famous his majesty kings who emphasized Buddhist missionary measures, wise members of the Sangha and wise men, literature scholars and courageous heroes.

Mon ethnics had joined the Burma Independence Army together with ethnic national brethren of the Union since its establishment for anti-British colonialists and independence struggles as part of showing the solidarity of all national races with the national spirit.

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Republic of 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.

Only when local people exert to do their businesses will they undertake regional development: Vice-Senior General

THOSE entrepreneurs have to pay back the loans during the set period dutifully, said Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win at the meeting with MSME businesspersons, departmental officials and local people in Pindaya of Danu Self-Administered Zone, Shan State (South) yesterday morning.

Chairman of Danu Self-Administered Zone Administration Body U Arkar Lin and Chief Minister of Shan State U Aung Zaw Aye reported on regional matters of the zone and the progress of MSME businesses and their development measures.

SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy C-in-C of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win addresses the meeting with MSME businesspersons, departmental officials and local people in Pindaya of Danu Self-Administered Zone, Shan State (South) on 18 March 2023.

Local businesspersons also presented reports on the manufacturing of value-added products using domestic foodstuffs and difficulties in the work process. Deputy ministers discussed the distribution of quality seeds of crops, seeking loans for businesses, formation of cooperative societies, training courses on vocational techniques to operate MSMEs and encouragement of local authorities to MSME businesses.

The Vice-Senior General coordinated measures on reports of businesspersons and attended to the needs.

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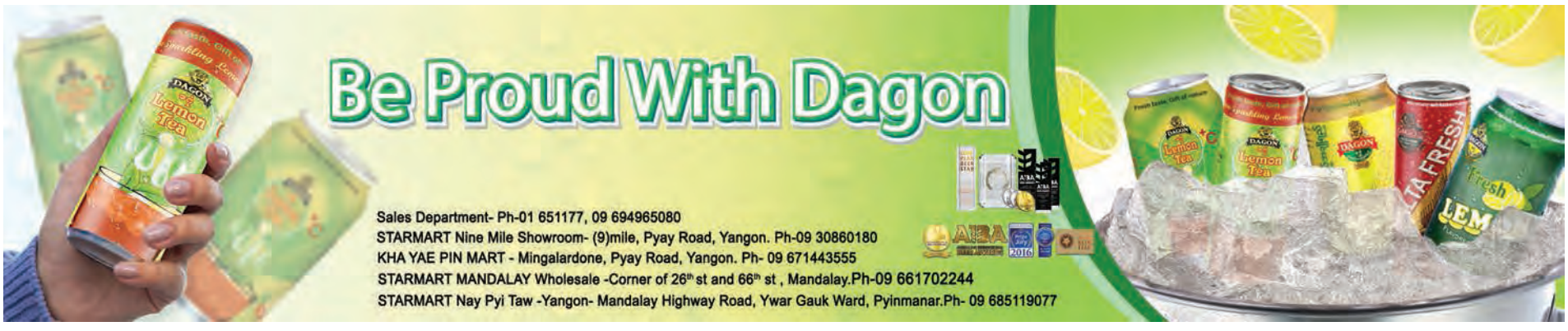

Objectives of 78th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day

— 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 safeguard the national interest of the State, lives and property of people, and to put a strenuous effort on respective corners in times of natural disasters.
— 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.

Red-carpet show for "A Red Blanket" film

A premiere for the film "A Red Blanket" was launched at Star Cinema of the Myawady Media Centre in Yankin Township of Yangon Region yesterday.

The event was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein, the region cabinet, the chairman and members of Myanmar Motion Picture Organization, officials of the centre, the director, film stars and film-making members, invitees and media.

The movie "A Red Blanket" is based on a true story. The story was written by Tin Than Oo, and Tin Aung Soe (Pan Myo Taw) while the script by Myo Myint Yan Naung. It takes two hours and 40 minutes and is directed by Director Tin Aung Soe (Pan Myo Taw). It was filmed in Kachin State focusing on the pace and affection to hail the 78th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day.

The film will also honour the military sacrifice, affection and perpetual peace marking the coming 78th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/KTZH

The red-carpet show for the film "A Red Blanket" in action yesterday. **PHOTO : KANU**

58th Myanma Gems Emporium continues its second day

THE second day of the 58th Myanma Gems Emporium continued yesterday at Maniradana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw.

Foreign and local jewellers observed pearls, jewels and jade lots on display at the event.

They inspected pearls from Lot 1 to 150 for sale at the emporium and placed bids inside the tender boxes.

The tender proposals for pearl lots No 1 to 150 were opened, and officials announced a total of 147 lots were auctioned.

On the third day, pearls from Lot 151 to 295 will be sold to international and domestic gem merchants through the open tender system. — Aye Aye Thant/KZW

Gem traders are seen keen in pearl lots and gem lots displayed at the 58th Myanma Gems Emporium yesterday. **PHOTO : KO KO AYE**

5 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 18 March, total figure rises to 633,991

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **633,991** after **five** new cases were reported on 18 March 2023 according to the Ministry of Health.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **614,472**, including **nine** new recoveries. The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at **19,490** on 18-3-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic. — GNLM

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Manufacturing is crucial for MSMEs

THE MSME industry has four sectors namely manufacturing, trade, service and others. There will be no trade without manufacturing. There will be no services without trade. Therefore, manufacturing is crucial.

(Excerpts from the speech delivered by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the SAC meeting 9/2022 held on 11 November 2022)

Message sent by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister of Republic of Union of Myanmar Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to ceremony to mark 49th Anniversary of Mon State Day

19 March 2023

FROM PAGE-1

The Day 19 March when Taninthayi Division No 1 was transformed was unanimously designated as the Mon State in 1974 in accord with the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and the commemorative day of the state has been held annually 49 times based on traditions, culture and customs of the ethnics.

According to the geographical conditions, the Mon State is located south of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and north of the Taninthayi coast. It shares borders with the Kayin State and Thailand in the east, the Bay of Bengal and the Mottama Gulf in the west, the Taninthayi Region in the south and the Bago Region and the Kayin State in the north, as a focal point of the waterway and land roads.

The Mon State is endowed with favourable weather, teeming with hilly areas, rivers and creeks in addition to lush and green forests, and historical cultural heritages. Being a location adjacent to the long sea coastal line, the state possesses plentiful land and water natural resources and industrial raw materials. The state should take pride in enjoying sound foundations for the improvement of the national economy and promotion of the socioeconomic life of local ethnic people.

A large number of ancient pagodas including the wonderful Hsandawshin Kyaiktiyo pagoda are located in the Mon State. As missionary laypersons and Shin Arahan strived for the perpetuation and propagation of genuine Buddhism, it can be distinctly known that historical records mentioned that the Thuwunnabhumi region became a region of initiated propagation of Buddhism.

Mon ethnics have been steadfastly preserving the language, literature, cultural traditions and customs of their State and ethnics in successive eras. Hence, the new generation of youths needs to take over the responsibilities for further preservation and protection of literature, language, culture and historical heritages.

Currently, unrests and terror acts, breaking the law and disturbances tarnish the image of some parts of the Mon State in fine traditions and are dangerous for the country. It is necessary to beware of those who commit disintegration of the country and destroy the peace, stability and development of the region, and all are to make collaborative efforts for protecting the state and the nation.

Esteemed ethnic national brethren

The State Administration Council, in its tenure, is striving for achieving success in implementing the political, economic and social objectives and the five-point roadmap.

While especially trying to restore internal peace and implement the nationwide ceasefire, the government is cementing friendly relations with international organizations and foreign countries.

Although the government is striving for ensuring stability and peace with development in all aspects, everybody knows peace and stability of the nation are turning to disintegration due to the unwillingness of foreign countries and international organizations to see the development of Myanmar, exile groups under influence of foreign countries and perpetrator organizations to the State and the people, and those who commit the utter devastation with their selfishness to grab the power discarding the State interest. As such, our citizens and all ethnic national people are responsible for protecting the nation against destructive acts.

As peace and stability, security and rule of law play a key role in the development of the nation, all ethnic national people making efforts for ceasing the armed conflicts are to join hands with the government to emerge the Union based on democracy and federalism they aspire to.

The government is carrying out the socioeconomic development of the entire nation in all aspects. To do so, the country needs to have monetary capital, manpower, natural resources and above and underground and above and underwater resources for the development of the State economy across the nation as well as health, education, the widened scope of knowledge, morale activeness of the people and high ambition. On the other hand, everybody needs to take care of the important role of creativity and human resources with good morale and discipline, rather than monetary and natural resources.

All difficulties, crises and challenges our country and all our ethnic nationals face today originated in the colonial era. It is necessary for all people to review that the government is still solving these difficulties, crises and challenges within many decades from the post-independence era to date.

It is necessary to take lessons from the bitter events of the countries which escaped from the colonial yoke in the post-World War II but built themselves in unison with remedying injuries in the colonial era and enjoyed fruits of development. Hence, now is the time to practically undertake the development of the nation by ending the political and armed conflicts our country is facing.

At present, our country is in time of a state of emergency, and everybody knows internal and external terrorists are making utmost attempts to destroy the country in various ways without legal, ethical and disciplinary acts for causing utter devastation to the country.

They are committing unrest and violence, setting fires, murdering, blowing up and robberies without relentlessness while attempting acts to cause wrong concepts and outlooks with toxic ideas in various ways and means of media platforms in various measures such as social, education, health, culture and religious affairs. Hence, people need to avoid their physical and mental violent acts.

People need to take care of their acts through rationality such as spreading rumours for causing misunderstanding and wrong attitudes among the people and seeking political benefit in manipulating the people in order to raise the emotions of the people with negative views. Under the title of resistance, they utilize the lives of supporters and those who do not understand anything so as to attempt to seek the benefit of grabbing power and seeking selfishness by cheating under the various titles. So, all need to expose those persons.

In conclusion, I sent the message as a gesture of honouring the 49th Anniversary of Mon State Day with the best wish for all ethnic national citizens and individuals actually loving the State and the national, including ethnic national brethren from the Mon State, to actively participate in their respective sectors in ensuring peace and stability of the State and restoration of perpetual peace, strengthening the genuine, disciplined multiparty democratic system and building the Union based on democracy and federalism.

Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu
Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing
Prime Minister
Chairman, State Administration Council

Only when local people exert to do their businesses will they undertake regional development: Vice-Senior General

FROM PAGE-1

In his address, the Vice-Senior General said that the development of the economy depends on peace and stability as well as rule of law in respective regions. So, local people need to restore peace and stability in cooperation with relevant security forces. Only when local people try hard to do their businesses will they undertake regional development.

The Vice-Senior General continued to say that MSMEs have to use domestic materials to produce value-added products. It needs techniques, capital, inputs and human resources. Human resource is the most crucial in all businesses.

The Prime Minister adopted the policy that all Tatmadaw members at different levels must pass at least primary level education and then middle school level education. If so, they will have the capacity to handle modern military equipment and arms. So, the KG+9 education scheme is being implemented for all school-age children. Only if they have completed the KG+9 scheme will they have the capacity to join higher education as well as vocational training.

Vice-Senior General Soe Win presents offerings to Dr Bhaddanta Khemañana and members of the Sangha at the Cetigyi Monastery in Pindaya yesterday.

The government had disbursed more than K6 billion to 2,822 persons in the Danu Self-Administered Zone. The Prime Minister also disbursed K5 billion to local ethnic entrepreneurs. Those entrepreneurs have to pay back the loans during the set period dutifully. If not, businesspersons will plunge into debt.

The Vice-Senior General highlighted that inputs comprise fertilizers, water, fuel and electricity. The development of businesses in growing paddy depends on the production of quality strains of paddy seeds, using modern agricultural technology and quality milling of paddy.

Relevant ministries mention their websites for conducting vocational and skill courses. Danu region has to produce quality rice. Depending on quality, rice can fetch double or triple prices. As the Danu region is attractive to foreign tourists, it is necessary to register traditional products for systematic production. Not only the government but local people and relevant departments need to strive for the development of the Danu Self-Administered Zone.

The Vice-Senior General viewed domestic products, foodstuffs, personal goods, industrial products and traditional goods.

While in Pindaya, the Vice-Senior General paid homage to the Buddha images at ShweUmin natural cave pagoda and made cash donations. Then, he visited Cetigyi Monastery in Pindaya and donated alms to Dr Bhaddanta Khemañana and members of the Sangha and sought words of advice.

The monastery admits 16 lecturer Sayadaws and some 100 student novices. — MNA

Vice-Senior General Soe Win warmly greets locals (left) and views the products displayed at the meeting yesterday.

Daily newspapers available online

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Hotline - 09 454237515
ADVERTISING & MARKETING
(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 251022355
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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newsroom@gnlm.com.mm, gnlmnews@gmail.com
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DPM MoTC Union Minister inspects departments under Myanma Posts and Telecommunications in Yangon

STATE Administration Council Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Minister for Transport and Communications Admiral Tin Aung San inspected the Services Department and Circulation Department and Bayintnaung Data Centre of Myanma Posts and Telecommunications in Yangon yesterday.

On arrival at the Services Department and Circulation Department, the Union minister highlighted the key role of telecommunications in the daily life of the public, readiness for emergency maintenance, preparations and rehearsal for fire prevention.

He then stressed the need to increase the income for the country through the state-owned Myanma Posts and Telecommunications and to fulfil the communication needs of the country. Then, the Union minister inspected the operation procedures of the department.

At the Bayintnaung Data Centre, the Union minister said it should offer effective 24-hour services for data in this IT era. It should manage the document security and security system of the Data Centre. It should take into account the fact that the use of the Data Centre will increase in the future for the developing economy, administration and social sectors.

Finally, the Union minister provided foodstuffs to the staff. — MNA/KTZH

Deputy Prime Minister Union Transport & Communications Minister Admiral Tin Aung San is pictured during his inspection tours of Myanma Posts and Telecommunications in Yangon yesterday.

Two examinees take Optional Myanmar on final-day matric exam

TWO examinees sat the Optional Myanmar subject in Yangon and Mandalay regions on the ninth day of the 2022-2023 matriculation examination yesterday.

A total of two examination centres are open for two students who took the exam out of two applicants, accounting for 100 per cent.

In Yangon Region, one examinee took Optional Myanmar on the final day of the matriculation examination.

The Yangon University Rector and Regional Education Officer Deputy Director-General U Kyaw Moe Tun, the district administration body chairman and officials viewed and encouraged the only one student who sat for Optional Myanmar at the exam centre of BEHS No 2 Sangyoung Township. — MNA/MKKS

A student is seen sitting for the Optional Myanmar subject yesterday. **PHOTO : KANU**

Five EV chargers arrive at Yangon International Airport

Officials check the imported EV chargers at Yangon International Airport.

FIVE Linchr-brand 60 kV EV chargers for battery electric vehicles arrived at Yangon International Airport on 18 March.

The chargers were imported by Essential Motor Co Ltd with the permission of the National-Level Steering Committee on the Development of Electric Vehicles and Related Industries.

The import of these chargers is exempted from Customs tariffs. — MNA/MKKS

Illegal foodstuffs, consumer goods, industrial materials and vehicles confiscated

THE on-duty teams under the supervision of the Customs Department made inspections and captured six kinds of goods including 10 Westar watches and 10 Bilano couple watches worth K14,762,000 without official documents from the luggage at the Yangon International Airport on 11, 12, 14 and 15 March, two kinds of goods including two HP 15.6" laptops that were not included in the personal allowance worth K7,056,000 and 3,765.5 metres of polyester laminated worth K11 million that were different from Import Declaration (ID) at the Yangon International Airport (Import Desk), 180 kilogrammes of washing machine hose pipes and 43,000 kilogrammes of bolts and nuts that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) worth K80,014,200, 21 kinds of goods including 26,290 kilogrammes of dried konjac chips that were different from the Export Declaration (ED) and 400 Minigao children bicycles that were taken over 61 days of VPA worth K101,788,848 from six containers at the Myanmar Industrial Port Terminal checkpoint and six kinds of goods including five hand trolley capacities that were taken over 61 days of VPA at the Asia World Port Terminal container checkpoint on 15 and 16 March. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

In addition, a combined team at the Mayanchaung permanent checkpoint conducted 40 cartons of Wai Wai instant rice vermicelli and 1,800 litres of Gaysorn vegetable oil worth K6.7 million without official documents from a Hino bus (approximately K30 million) heading to Yangon from Ye on 15 March and 100 cartons of M-150 energy drink and 45 cartons of Wai Wai instant rice vermicelli worth K4,275,000 without official documents from an Ankai bus (approximately K40 million) heading to Mandalay to Mawlamyine on 16 March. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

On 16 March, an unregistered Nissan March car worth K2.5 million was captured on Hledan road in Kamayut township and the action was taken under the law.

On 17 March, an on-duty team at the Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine) checkpoint seized 1290 litres of two-shrimp palm oil worth K3.618,000 without official documents that were stacked to carry to Thaton township at the Mottama township side. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

Therefore, 20 arrests (estimated value of K350,274,448) were made on 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17 March, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Low-grade paddy price increases slightly

A farmer is pictured reaping summer paddy with a combine harvester in Ottwin Township, Bago Region.

THE prices of low-grade summer paddy moved up this year.

Paddy prices stood at K1.55 million per 100-baskets of short-mature paddy (90 days), and K1.45 million for paddy grown under the intercropping system in recent days. The price soared to K1.6 million per 100-baskets of short-mature paddy (90 days) in the Wakema area. Along with summer paddy, the prices of other paddy varieties moved slightly up to K1.52-1.92 million per 100 baskets on 17 March. The figures showed an increase of K20,000-100,000 per 100-baskets depending on the varieties.

Summer paddy is soon to be harvested abundantly. The growers are closely observing the offering prices of the millers and traders for now.

The rice prices vary depending on the qualities. Low-grade rice was worth around K55,000 per bag, while broken rice fetched K40,000 per bag and the price of high-grade rice touched a high of K70,000 per bag. The low-income consumers save food costs by reducing the quality of the rice instead of the one that they were supposed to purchase.

The low-income family are concerned about the possible price rise in the coming months.

Rice varieties that were shipped to foreign markets are not consumed locally. Old monsoon rice, including the Pawsan variety, is still found in Yangon markets.

The Global New Light of Myanmar quoted a housewife as saying, "the authorities concerned need to govern the rice market to avoid spiralling inflation. The consumers are expecting a win-win situation for clients and suppliers. — TWA/EM

YCDC to cast lots for its over 380 billboards

THE Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) will launch a drawing-lots system for over 380 billboards hired out by the YCDC.

The YCDC-owned 45 and 15 square feet 380 billboards will be hired for 2023-2024FY and it received 8,033 applications for 148 billboards. It drew lots of applicants on 15, 16 and 17 March.

Billboards will be classified into five groups depending on the number of applications, designated from A to E. Moreover, the lease is required to make a firm contract no later than 31 March.

Therefore, those who won the lots must submit their names for each billboard in the attached files. — TWA/KTZH

Vacant billboard advertisement is seen in Yangon Region.

Japan offers 206 labour demand letters to over 800 Myanmar workers

THE Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo announced that Myanmar had received 206 demand letters from Japanese companies for Myanmar migrant workers.

The Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo verified those 206 demand letters for 821 people – 312 males and 509 females — between 1 and 15 March and the information for the letters were sent back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Those demand letters were sent by the Ministry of Labour through the MoFA and verified in a timely manner.

The verification process was performed by checking whether the labour supervision company in Japan and the recruitment factories and companies are officially established in Japan, and by sending back the verification and findings on the documentary evidence and opinions to the MoL via the MoFA.

Myanmar workers despatched to Japan in 2022 were seen at Yangon International Airport.

It is learnt that licenced overseas recruitment agencies will send Myanmar workers for that job offer letters. — TWA/KTZH

DISI launches e-commerce platform for Myanmar products

THE Department of Industrial Supervision and Inspection under the Ministry of Industry cordially invited vendors to display their products on the e-marketplace for the Myanmar Products Platform.

This e-marketplace platform will help leverage the commercial capabilities of State-run enterprises, Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and industrial zones and promote their products. It will connect buyers and sellers. It has also been linked with delivery systems and payment gateways such as digital payments.

This platform was implemented with a view to effectuate the development of MSMEs, build strong market linkages for the MSMEs and engage actively in digital platforms.

Those vendors who like to link with the platform can contact the DISI by 28 April. — TWA/EM

LOCAL BUSINESS

Myanmar ships 22,900 tonnes of rubber to external markets in Feb

A worker hangs rubber sheets to dry. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

APPROXIMATELY 22,900 tonnes of Myanmar's rubber were shipped to foreign countries in February 2023, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar exported over 20,600 tonnes of rubber worth US$24.103 million by sea and over 2,290 tonnes of rubber worth $2.606 million through border channels.

The majority of rubber exports went to China (14,250 tonnes). It was also shipped to Japan (over 480 tonnes), the Republic of Korea (about 200 tonnes), Bangladesh (about 200 tonnes) and India (138 tonnes).

The export volume in February was up by 6,000 tonnes compared to that of January. The prevailing prices stand at K1,275 per pound of sundried rubber (Local 3) and K1,295 per pound of Ribbed Smoked Sheet, according to the Mawlamyine Commodity Centre.

Global demand for rubber, rubber production of the Southeast Asian nations and the market supply highly affected the rubber prices of Myanmar.

The rubber price in Mon State, a major rubber production state in Myanmar, is positively related to those factors as well, the traders elaborated.

Rubber is commonly produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber season data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar, with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region with 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres.

Myanmar's rubber production is annually estimated at 300,000 tonnes. Seventy per cent of rubber produced in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries.

Myanmar bagged more than US$449 million in revenue from rubber exports in the previous financial year 2020-2021. — NN/EM

Gold spot price elevates YGEA reference price to over K2.34 mln per tical

A customer buying gold necklaces at a gold shop in Yangon.

YANGON Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association hikes reference rate to over K2.34 mln per tical (0.578 ounce or 0.016 kilogramme) with the gold spot prices rising.

On 1 March, gold spot prices hit US$1,833 per ounce and YGEA's price was K2,159,500 per tical. As the gold spot price rallied to $1,989 per ounce in the international market, the reference price of the YGEA jumped to K2,343,300 per tical on 18 March. The figures indicated an increase of $156 per ounce and over 180,000 per tical within three weeks.

Despite the YGEA's reference price, pure gold climbed to K2,980,000 per tical in the unofficial market, showing a large gap of over K630,000 per tical with the reference price.

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 K2,870 in the unofficial forex market. The gold spot prices and dollar exchange rates influence the domestic gold price.

The soaring dollar exchanging 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.

Under the guidance of the Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods, the Monitoring and Steering Committee on Gold and Currency Market was formed on 21 January 2022 as gold and currency market stability play a crucial role in the trade facilitation.

The objectives of the committee are inspecting and prosecuting market manipulation, checking if there is compliance with payment rules or not in the domestic market, and proceeding against those unscrupulous traders who intend to interfere with the free and fair operation of the market under the existing laws, by-laws and regulations in line with the official directives, illegal foreign currency holding, illegal trade and taking legal actions against price manipulators. — NN/EM

Prices of fuel oil, gold and dollar on 18 March 2023

Fuel Oil Price (Yangon)

Octane 92	K2,035
Octane 95	K2,120
Diesel	K2,090
Premium Diesel	K2,170

All of the prices are based on per litre.

Gold Price

The reference price of high-purity gold set by YGEA	K2,343,300 per tical
High-purity gold in the gold market	K2,980,000 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 t	K2,860 to K2,875

The above prices may change from time to time.

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OPINION

Uplift the prestige of people in Mon State forever

MON ethnics have been steadfastly preserving the language, literature, cultural traditions and customs of their State and ethnics in successive eras. Hence, the new generation of youths needs to take over the responsibilities for further preservation and protection of literature, language, culture and historical heritages.

The Mon State is endowed with favourable weather, teeming with hilly areas, rivers and creeks in addition to lush and green forests, and historical cultural heritages. Being a location adjacent to the long sea coastal line, the state possesses plentiful land and water natural resources and industrial raw materials. The state should take pride in enjoying sound foundations for the improvement of the national economy and promotion of the socioeconomic life of local ethnic people.

> Mon State Day designated in 1974, transformed from the Taninthayi Division No 1 on 19 March is a significant day for the people residing in the Mon State. Such a commemorative day will be a torchlight for their lives and will bring happiness and prestige to their lives forever.

Mon ethnics are residing in the Mon State similar to other ethnics with the Union Spirit along the history by preserving traditions and customs as well as cultural heritages. Local people in the Mon State are peacefully doing their businesses such as agriculture and livestock, production of raw rubber materials, mining works and fishery industries.

Currently, unrests and terror acts, breaking the law and disturbances tarnish the image of some parts of the Mon State in fine traditions and are dangerous for the country. It is necessary to beware of those who commit disintegration of the country and destroy the peace, stability and development of the region, and all are to make collaborative efforts for protecting the state and the nation.

Politically, governments may change one after another to govern all parts of the nation under the constitutions. It is undeniable. The status of people never changes. Hence, relevant governments are responsible for managing all measures of the Union as well as for fulfilling the needs of local people including all ethnicities.

People and all parts of the Mon State are waiting for the aid of the governments to improve their socioeconomic life comprising their businesses and to develop their regions. Currently, the government is building necessary infrastructures such as the plan to construct the international airport in the Mon State. For example, such an international airport will benefit the local people and the Mon State with the development of various sectors such as tourism, transport and so on.

Mon State Day designated in 1974, transformed from the Taninthayi Division No 1 on 19 March is a significant day for the people residing in the Mon State. Such a commemorative day will be a torchlight for their lives and will bring happiness and prestige to their lives forever. ■

WHO Sees COVID Posing Similar Threat to Flu This Year

THE COVID-19 pandemic could settle down this year to a point where it poses a threat similar to flu, the World Health Organization said Friday.

The WHO voiced confidence that it will be able to declare an end to the emergency sometime in 2023, saying it was increasingly hopeful about the pandemic phase of the virus coming to a close.

Last weekend marked three years since the UN health agency first described the situation as a pandemic — though WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus insists countries should have jolted into action several weeks before.

"I think we're coming to that point where we can look at COVID-19 in the same way we look at seasonal influenza," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan told a press conference. "A threat to health, a virus that will continue to kill. But a virus that is not disrupting our society or disrupting our hospital systems, and I believe that that will come, as Tedros said, this year."

The WHO chief said the world was in a much better position now than it has been at any time during the pandemic.

"I am confident that this year we will be able to say that COVID-19 is over as a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC)," Tedros said.

5,000 a week

The WHO declared a PHEIC — the highest level of alarm it can sound — on 30 January 2020, when, outside of China, fewer than 100 cases and no deaths had been reported.

But it was only when Tedros described the worsening situation as a pandemic on 11 March that year that many countries seemed to wake up to the danger.

"Three years later, there are almost seven million reported deaths from COVID-19, although we know that the actual number of deaths is much higher," Tedros said.

He was pleased that, for the first time, the weekly number of reported deaths over the past four weeks has been lower than when he first described COVID-19 as a pandemic.

But he said more than 5,000 deaths reported per week was 5,000 too many for a disease that can be prevented and treated.

Data emerges

The first infections with the new coronavirus were recorded in late 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

"Even as we become increasingly hopeful about the end of the pandemic, the question of how it began remains unanswered," Tedros said, as he turned to address data that recently came to light concerning the early days of the pandemic.

The data, from the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, relates to samples taken at the Huanan market in Wuhan in 2020.

Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's technical lead on COVID, said they showed molecular evidence that animals were sold at the market, including animals susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 — the virus that causes COVID-19 disease.

The information was published on the GISAID global science initiative database in late January, then was taken down again — but not before some scientists downloaded and analyzed it and informed the WHO last weekend.

SOURCE: AFP

With Italy's tourist numbers set to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2023, some towns are bringing in measures to limit the impact of over tourism. Tourists enjoy a gondola ride on the Grand Canal by the Rialto bridge in Venice, Italy, 18 September 2021. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

ARTICLE
BOOKRACK

Book Title	-	Sit Ahtwin Ga Sayawun Burma Surgeon & Burma Surgeon Return
Translator	-	Tint Dai
Publishing House	-	Seikku Cho Cho
Publication Date	-	August 2022 (2nd Edition)
Price	-	K4,000

Sit Ahtwin Ga Sayawun
Burma Surgeon and Burma Surgeon Return (By Gordon S. Seagrave)

WHEN first published, the original name was not mentioned. However, when arrangemenrs were started to make, it was found by the publishing house that the translation was done from the two books — Burma Surgeon and Burma Surgeon Return written by Dr Seagrave. But this is a summarized translation.

Dr Seagrave was born to missionary doctor parents. Dr Seagrave practised medicine while performing missionary duties inBurma for many years. This being so, this book depicts the experience of a surgeon who is kind hearted. In addition, this book is a record of the surgeon's experience in performance of his missionary duties. The story is based on the bitter experiences the surgeon has undergone during World War II. He hass been to the China-Burma border, the area bordered by the three nations — China, India and Burma as well as the India-Burma border.

This book under review has four parts. Part 1 is about the beginning of his medical career, the Burma Road, the deadly plague and malaria and the aeroplanes whereas Part 2 deals with the commencement of the war, the life under General Stealwell, the diaries, the withdrawal, crossing over the mountains and Assignment Assam. Part 3 discusses the Ramga Training Centre on the long return journey, the ordeal of those fleeing to escape from the war, the early offensives and the experiences of operation at Myitkyina Aerodrome while Part 4 has its focus on the return to Namhkam, the goodness of peace etc.

Once started to read this book, the readers cannot stop reading till the end. This is really entertaining because of the excellent skill of the translator named Sayagyi Tint Dai, a luminary in the field of translation.

He used very short sentences as follows: Yangon, 1902. I am five years old. Then, he wrote a bit longer sentences like these: After waging the Second Anglo-Burman War, the British occupied up to Toungoo Town in Lower Burma, and so, the grand father of our grand father had already built a big mansion. And then, he wrote a not very long sentence as follows: an Irish with a heavy build would come up to the verandah, stamping heavily. That Irish man would make me sit on his lap to listen to his adventures in the jungle. The translator has used various sizes of sentences to avoid boring the readres and to have a variety of sentence patterns to make his translations attractive and entertaining.

The Iris man used to tell the main actor his experiences with the Royal Irish Army and the Canada Cavalry as well as his stories of narrow escape from the enemy like how the bullets went him past only to hit the book shelf near him when he was in Shan State.

Since boyhood, the main actor was determined to practise medicine in the border areas in Myanmar while also carrying out the missionary duties. So, in 1922 he left America for Burma together with his better half and the daughter. This was an ordeal. What was worse was that the time he left for Burma coincided with the spread of the Second World War.

As soon as he arrived at the Namkam Hosiptal where he was assigned, he was disappointed with the shabby beds and dirty old wooden buldings. There were no pillows and blankets on the old wooden beds. The hospital floor was stained with the blood and puses and the syrup liquid. Steps were to be taken with great care not to break the wooden planks.

The writer also wrote about the peculiar and odd traditional customs and the cultural mores of the indigenous races of Burma. The human skulls were laid dowm under the water to make a bridge, he wrote. The corpses were piled up on the roads for all to see. He also recounted his experiences in practicing of medicine in Burma. Additionally, he also presented the difficulty he had in conducting his missionary duties. ■

Book Title	-	King Mindon and the Historical Legacy
Writer	-	Taik Soe
Publishing House	-	Ahmay Ooyin
Publication Date	-	January 2020 (1st Edition)
Price	-	K3,500

King Mindon and the Historical Legacy

"HISTORY is learnt not to be a gullible guy", said Prof Dr Than Tun. Anticipation of the progress involving the state of affairs cannot ignore history, which is existential and has traditions and things to adhere to. Additionally, history has things to imitate, and thus, history has value in addition to learning lessons from it. Therefore, history is worth studying. This book is about King Mindon, who is the father of King Thibaw, the last monarch of the Konbaung Dynasty. King Mindon ruled Myanmar when it was under the joint rule of the British and Myanmar.

This book has three parts – Part 1 deals with the prosperity of the people whereas Part 2 and Part 3 are about Yadanabon City and the journey of the last decade. In addition, the readers can enjoy the stories about the ceremony to hoist the sacred umbrella of Shwedagon Pagoda, the idiosyncrasies of Shin Min Nu aka Namadaw Mel Nu, the principles and practices of Kinwun Mingyi, the tragedies of Hlaing Hteik Khaung Tin, U Yam and Sarsu Saryin, U Ponnya and Prince Tapai and last but not the least the downfall and the demise of Chief Queen Su Phaya Lat. As a special section, the readers can have knowledge of the historical legacy left by King Mindon.

Part 1 deals with the interesting story of how King Mindon became the King upon the demise of King Thayawady in 1846. He has not trodden on a path paved with flowers in his journey to the throne. Upon the demise of King Thayawady, Bagan Prince ascended to the throne, beating his rival princes. In the later era of the Konbaung Dynasty, i.e., during the reign of King Bagyidaw, there broke out a war between the British and Burma resulted that Tenasserim and Arakan falling under the British. Bagan King indulged in drinking, womanizing and gambling, not interested in the affairs of the state. The British unjustly occupied MV Yay Nan Yin Tha belonging to Bamar. Unable to bear the unjust action, the Burmese troops started firing, which led to the British's waging of Anglo-Burman War II. During the Second War, Bassein and Pegu fell under the British, thereby resulting in the British troops invading Burma up to Allan. The way the Pagan King responded to the British displeased Price Mindon and Prince Kanaung, creating divisions and discords among the ministers and the royalties. As a consequence, there had arisen a great rebellion, which ousted the Pagan King, and Prince Mindon had become the King. Since then, the Kingdom started to prosper. Pious and kind-hearted, King Mindon was much liked by his subjects. Additionally, he could have established friendly ties with the British. The readers will be impressed with his smart management of political, economic and foreign affairs.

Part 2 is about the affairs of Yadanabon City. Unwilling to obey the command of their uncle Prince Kanaung, the two princes called Myinkun and Myingondine were so rebellious as to assassinate their uncle Prince Kanaung. The readers will learn how King Mindon managed to overcome the issues domestic and foreign. Part 3 and the supplement are also as interesting as Part 1 and part 2. Ironically, the pious King was a polygamist, keeping 49 queens, who gave birth to 66 princesses and 51 princes. The book also contains the history of the Golden Palace of Mandalay. ■

TECH/SCI/ENVIRON

WORLD

Microsoft seeks EU nod for Activision Blizzard bid with new offer

MICROSOFT said on Friday that it has offered formal commitments to the EU in its bid to persuade the bloc to approve its $69-billion takeover of video game giant Activision Blizzard.

Last year, Xbox-owner Microsoft launched a move to create the world's third biggest gaming company by revenue by purchasing the owner of hit games "Candy Crush" and "Call Of Duty", triggering antitrust concerns.

The European Commission, EU executive and the bloc's powerful antitrust authority, had been due to make a decision before 25 April but said it will now extend this deadline until 22 May.

Xbox-owner Microsoft last year began a bid to takeover Activision Blizzard to create the world's third biggest gaming company by revenue. **PHOTO: EMMANUEL DUNAND / AFP/FILE**

This will give Brussels more time to contact companies that may be concerned about the deal as well as users after Microsoft sent the commitments to the EU.

Neither Microsoft nor the commission would give details of the pledges submitted on Thursday.

The company has insisted the takeover will benefit customers and dismissed concerns about competition. Sony, Microsoft's bigger rival, strongly opposes the merger.

Microsoft has recently agreed deals with many companies to give access to games, including the smash hit "Call Of Duty" franchise.

"We have stood behind our promise to bring Call of Duty to more gamers on more devices by entering into agreements to bring the game to the Nintendo console and cloud game streaming services offered by Nvidia, Boosteroid and Ubitus," a company spokesperson said.

"We are now backing up that promise with binding commitments to the European Commission, which will ensure that this deal benefits gamers into the future," the spokesperson added.

Company executive Brad Smith was in Brussels last month for talks with EU officials, after which he said he was "more optimistic" about the deal's approval but he dismissed calls for Microsoft to sell hit games like "Call Of Duty".

Microsoft however faces a bigger hurdle from British regulators. — AFP

Spain outlaws cruelty to animals

SPAIN'S parliament on Thursday gave the green light to an animal welfare law, while also amending the penal code to bring in stiffer penalties for abuses.

"This is a very important day because parliament has passed the first animal rights law," since Spain returned to democracy following the 1975 death of dictator Francisco Franco, said Social Rights Minister Ione Belarra of the hard-left Podemos party.

The law ends "the impunity of animal abusers in an achievement that responds to the sensibilities of our fellow citizens," she said.

The legislation makes it obligatory for anyone adopting a dog to undergo "training" and imposes a ban on leaving a dog alone for more than 24 hours.

It also makes it obligatory for owners to sterilize cats in a bid to control births and avoid the abandonment or killing of unwanted litters.

Changes to the penal code also stiffen penalties for animal cruelty, ranging from 18 months in prison if the animal needs veterinary treatment or up to three years if the animal dies under "aggravating factors".

Until now, the toughest sentence was 18 months behind bars if an animal died.

The legislation mainly relates to pets and doesn't include animals raised for slaughter. Nor does it concern hunting dogs, sparking a rift within the government. Although Podemos had wanted hunting dogs included, the Socialists of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez did not. — AFP

Spain outlaws cruelty to animals. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

France reports 910 dolphins washed up on Atlantic coast

Members of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) NGO hold a banner behind dead dolphins retrieved in the sea during a demonstration to denounce non-selective fishing in front of the European Parliament, in Strasbourg, eastern France, on 14 March 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

AT least 910 dolphins have washed up on France's Atlantic coast since the start of the winter, an oceanographic institute reported Friday.

Over the past week alone, more than 400 of the marine mammals were found stranded along the coast, an "unprecedented" number, the Pelagis oceanographic observatory based in the western city of La Rochelle said in a report.

The figures were still provisional, it added.

Early examinations of the dolphins showed that some of them had been dead for days, and others for several weeks.

Most of them showed injuries consistent with being caught in fishing nets, other fishing equipment or boat engines.

Between 2017 and 2020, the average number of washed-up dolphins during the winter was 850. Most of them died in February and March, when dolphins usually move closer to the coast looking for food and are more likely to come in contact with fishing operations. — AFP

China develops vacuum storage cabinet to keep quantum chips "fresh"

CHINESE researchers have developed a vacuum storage cabinet to keep quantum chips "fresh", and used it in the country's first quantum chip production line, according to a Science and Technology Daily report.

The researchers from Origin Quantum Computing Technology Co Ltd in east China's Anhui Province used high-vacuum storage technology to develop the storage cabinet that can provide an ideal storage environment for quantum chips to maintain their computing capability.

"The superconducting material in quantum chips is highly sensitive to the environment and easily reacts with oxygen and water in the air, just as food is oxidized and decays when exposed to air," said Jia Zhilong, head of the chip R&D team of Origin Quantum. — Xinhua

HEALTH/PANDEMIC WORLD

Global cocaine supply hits record levels: UN drug agency

Crew from the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton intercept a homemade submarine in the eastern Pacific on 18 July 2015. The US Coast Guard said it seized $181 million worth of cocaine from the vessel, but even more drugs sank during the bust. **PHOTO: LANOLA STONE / COAST GUARD VIA AFP/FILE**

COCA cultivation hit a record high by soaring 35 per cent from 2020 to 2021, a UN report showed Thursday, amid new cocaine trafficking hubs emerging in southeastern Europe and Africa.

Bolivia, Colombia and Peru — which have historically dominated the production of coca leaves — altogether cultivated an area of more than 300,000 hectares in 2021, the Vienna-based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said.

Once harvested, a paste — obtained by mixing chopped leaves with lime, cement, gasoline, and ammonium sulfate — is usually taken elsewhere to be turned into cocaine.

Global cocaine manufacture reached an estimated 2,000 tons in 2020, continuing a "dramatic uptick" in production that began in 2014, when the total was less than half of today's levels, the report said.

The temporary disruptions of worldwide drug markets caused by the Covid-19 pandemic thus had "little impact" on longer-term trends, with global cocaine supply surging to record levels underpinned by growing demand, it added.

While steadily rising numbers of users are in part due to population growth, the report said it was also indicating a "rising prevalence of cocaine use". — AFP

US maternal mortality rate rose sharply in 2021: report

THE US maternal mortality rate surged in 2021, the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, with Black women more than twice as likely to die than white women, according to a report released on Thursday.

A total of 1,205 women died in the United States during pregnancy or shortly after giving birth in 2021, up from 861 in 2020 and 754 in 2019, the National Centre for Health Statistics (NCHS) said.

The US maternal mortality rate is the highest among high-income nations, and the number of deaths in 2021 was the most since the mid-1960s.

"The most powerful country in the world should not be accepting this as a reality. This is a crisis," said White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

Pro-life activists celebrating outside the US Supreme Court in Washington DC on 24 June 2022, after the court overturned the landmark 'Roe vs Wade' decision. On 24 June 2022, the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, the landmark piece of legislation that made access to an abortion a federal right in the United States. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/AFP**

There were 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2021, up from 23.8 per 100,000 in 2020 and 20.1 per 100,000 in 2019, the NCHS said. The maternal mortality rate for Black women in 2021 was 69.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, 2.6 times the rate for white women, which was 26.6 deaths per 100,000.

The World Health Organization defines maternal mortality as a death while pregnant or within 42 days after delivery from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management.

The NCHS report did not provide any reasons for the surge in US maternal deaths in 2021 or the disparity between Black women and white women.

But medical experts said the Covid pandemic was a significant factor, along with socioeconomic conditions and a long-standing lack of access to quality pre- and post-natal care for many Black women. — AFP

Sanofi, joining other drug makers, slashes US insulin price

FRENCH pharmaceutical giant Sanofi announced on Thursday it would cut the US price of its most prescribed insulin by 78 per cent, falling in line with two other major drug makers.

Eli Lilly announced this month it would cut the US price of its insulin by 70 per cent and Novo Nordisk followed suit by saying it would lower the price by 75 per cent.

The moves come after US President Joe Biden urged insulin manufacturers to lower the price of a life-saving drug needed by millions of Americans living with diabetes.

"Insulin costs less than $10 to make, but Americans are sometimes forced to pay over $300 for it," Biden said.

Sanofi, Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk dominate the insulin market in the United States.

Sanofi said it would cut the list price of Lantus, its most widely prescribed insulin in the United States, by 78 per cent from 1 January 2024.

The company said it would also cap out-of-pocket costs at $35 per month for people with insurance. "Sanofi believes that no one should struggle to pay for their insulin," Olivier Bogillot, Sanofi's head of US general medicines, said.

"We are proud of our continued actions to improve access and affordability for millions of patients for many years," Bogillot said in a statement. — AFP

Sanofi said it would cut the list price of Lantus, its most widely prescribed insulin in the United States, by 78 percent from January 1, 2024. **PHOTO: AFP**

Pakistan reports first polio case of 2023

PAKISTAN reported its first polio case of 2023 after a three-year-old boy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district became the latest victim of the disease, confirmed the country's health ministry, Pakistan-based Dawn newspaper reported.

The case has been reported at a time when delegations of the French Agency for Development (FAD) and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) are in the country to analyse efforts to eradicate the disease.

The health ministry in a statement issued on Friday said the FAD and BMGF delegations met the federal health minister to discuss avenues for cooperation in social protection and health, with a focus on polio eradication.

The head of the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) for Polio, Dr Shahzad Baig, said an investigation is ongoing to identify whether the child received the vaccination or the parents refused vaccination. "However, it is clear that the child was not fully protected and that is why attacked by the virus," Dr Baig said while talking to Dawn. — ANI

ECONOMY
WORLD

Italy's Meloni revives contentious Sicily bridge plan

The idea of the bridge can be traced back to the ancient Romans, but modern attempts to launch the project have repeatedly failed. **PHOTO: AFP**

ITALIAN Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's cabinet passed a decree Thursday relaunching a controversial project to build a huge, multibillion-euro bridge linking Sicily to the mainland.

Meloni's right-wing coalition sees the bridge as key to boosting Italy's influence in the region and reviving the economy in the country's poorer south, despite doubts over its structural viability, environmental impact and cost.

At 3.2 kilometres (two miles) long, the bridge "will represent the flagship of Italian engineering," said Transport Minister Matteo Salvini. The idea of the bridge can be traced back to the ancient Romans, but modern attempts to launch the project have repeatedly failed due to the great expense and the challenges of erecting a structure linking Messina to Reggio Calabria in an area prone to earthquakes.

The last blueprint, which dates back to 2011, would be "adapted to new technical, safety and environmental standards," Salvini said.

Former premier Silvio Berlusconi, whose government had strongly backed a plan for the bridge in the 2000s, on Thursday said the engineering feat would "connect Sicily not just to Calabria, but to Italy and the whole of Europe".

Construction could begin in mid-2024, said Berlusconi, whose party belongs to the coalition.

Parliament has 60 days to convert the decree into law. —AFP

Protesters rally against Japan's increasing arms trade

HUNDREDS of Japanese gathered outside the venue of a military equipment fair near Tokyo on Wednesday to protest Japan's move to intensify its arms trade.

The three-day event, or DSEI Japan 2023, kicked off Wednesday at the convention centre of Makuhari Messe in Chiba Prefecture, east of Tokyo.

"No war!" "No war preparation!" "Say no to traders of death!" More than 300 people, in strong protest against Japan's intensified weapons trading, shouted slogans at the gathering, which was followed by a protest speech.

A man protests in front of the convention centre of Makuhari Messe in Chiba Prefecture, Japan, 15 March 2023. **PHOTO: ZHANG XIAOYU/ XINHUA**

The crowd lay on the ground after the speech, in an attempt to oppose the trade of weapons in a country that boasts of "exclusive defence" using the "body language of death".

"After 2027, Japan's defence spending will account for two per cent of its gross domestic products, making it the world's third largest defense-spending nation. It will also have counter-attack capabilities, which makes the Constitution null and void," said Koji Sugihara, representative of the Network Against Japan Arms Trade, a local citizen's group. — Xinhua

Crypto-linked bank failures fuel regulation debate

THE global cryptocurrency industry has been slammed by setbacks, scandals and high-profile failures in recent months, sparking a regulatory rush to protect consumers from fraud and scams.

Global finance was rocked by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank last week, and the digital currency sector was hit hard by the demise of US crypto lenders Silvergate and Signature -- just months after the bankruptcy of troubled crypto exchange trading platform FTX.

Regulators are increasingly keen for oversight of a sector which boomed during the Covid pandemic when many people were stuck at home. — AFP

European banks 'extremely solid': French central bank chief

EUROPEAN banks are in "extremely solid" shape and their situation is not similar to that of some US lenders, France's central bank chief said Friday amid fears of a crisis in the sector.

The failure of two US lenders has raised fears of contagion to the wider sector, with troubled European banking giant Credit Suisse having to borrow up to $54 billion from the Swiss central bank.

"French and European banks are extremely solid," Francois Villeroy de Galhau, who is also a member of the European Central Bank's governing council, told BFM Business television.

"European banks are not in the same situation as certain American banks for a very simple reason which is that they are not subjected to the same rules," he said.

Rules known as Basel III that were created after the 2008 financial crisis to ensure that banks have adequate capital and liquidity have been "effective", Villeroy de Galhau said.

He said 400 European banking groups are subject to the Basel III requirements compared to only 13 in the United States.

Under Donald Trump's presidency in 2019, small- and mid-sized US banks were exempted from the Basel rules, he said, noting that Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, which collapsed last week, were among them. — AFP

A branch of Swiss banking Credit Suisse in Gstaad, Switzerland. **PHOTO: AFP**

Japan egg prices soar amid record 16 mln bird flu cullings

EGG prices are soaring in Japan as the current avian flu season sees a record 16 million birds marked for culling, impacting both the restaurant sector and households already struggling with inflation.

Egg-laying hens make up more than 90 per cent of birds in the process of being culled, according to the agriculture ministry, limiting the supply of eggs and pushing prices higher.

The current bird flu outbreak has spread at an unprecedented pace since the season began in October, with at least 80 cases at poultry firms in 26 of the country's 47 prefectures.

As of 2 March, the wholesale price per kilogramme of medium sized eggs was 335 yen ($2.4) in Tokyo, the highest ever since 1993 when data first became available, according to JA.Z-Tamago Co the egg seller within the JA agricultural cooperative group.

Concerns about shortages are also growing, with an increasing number of restaurants opting to suspend offering egg-based dishes.

It is expected to take at least six months until egg availability recovers to former levels. Once an infection is confirmed at a poultry farm, all its birds are culled, after which the facility is sanitized and quarantine measures are put in place. It can take between three and seven months for such farms to return to raising chickens as normal again. — Kyodo

File photo taken in November 2022 shows eggs sold at Akidai supermarket in Tokyo's Nerima district. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Travelling by China-Laos Railway becomes more convenient with new online ticketing App

PASSENGERS travelling on the China-Laos Railway can now easily book and manage their journeys on smartphones by using a new mobile ticketing application.

The Laos-China Railway Co Ltd (LCRC) on Wednesday launched its ticketing mobile application, marking the China-Laos railway's official entry into an era of online ticket sales.

The launch of the LCR Ticket mobile application adds to the comfort and efficiency of the passengers during their journey.

As the number of passengers travelling on the China-Laos Railway is expanding, the LCRC has developed an APP system for ticketing online to further facilitate ticket purchases.

"In the past I had to stand in line for hours to buy a ticket without knowing whether there will be tickets left or not. It wasted a lot of time," a 25-year-old woman named Tingkham Phetboulom described how difficult it was to get a train ticket, before the App was launched.

"But now with the LCR Ticket App, I can confirm that I will surely get tickets. It's so convenient!"

With a few quick taps on a mobile app, passengers can now book their tickets, make cancellations and check information on train schedules, stations, and routes. — Xinhua

A traditional ceremony is held for the smooth operation of the China-Laos Railway at the Vientiane railway station in Vientiane, capital of Laos, 2 December 2021. **PHOTO: KAIKEO SAIYASANE/XINHUA /FILE**

Gold production plummets in jihadist-hit Burkina

CORPORATE production of gold in Burkina Faso dropped 13.7 per cent in 2022 compared with a year earlier, hit by the closure of five out of 17 mines because of poor security, the mining ministry said.

Industrial output, a measurement that does not take into account the country's many artisanal mines, was 57.67 tonnes last year after 66.8 tonnes in 2021, it said.

Gold is the landlocked Sahel country's biggest export, which means the fall will have a corresponding impact on government and regional income.

The ministry said the closure of the five mines had left "at least" 2,500 workers unemployed.

The country is battling a jihadist insurgency, now in its eighth year, that has killed thousands of civilians, police and soldiers and forced more than two million people to flee their homes. More than a third of the country lies outside the government's control. — AFP

The Global New Light of Myanmar
www.gnlm.com.mm
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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V RATANA THIDA VOY.NO. (243W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V RATANA THIDA VOY.NO. (243W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **19-3-2023** 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:

M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL BLESSING VOY.NO. (2304S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL BLESSING VOY.NO. (2304S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **19-3-2023** 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.

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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 BLPL SHIPPING LINE

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

WORLD: TOP HEADLINES

Türkiye's Erdogan says he will support Finland's NATO bid

TURKISH President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed Friday to ask the parliament to vote on Finland's NATO membership bid, but delayed that of Sweden, saying Finland has taken concrete steps to address Türkiye's security concerns.

"We have observed concrete and sincere steps from Finland in recent times. As a result of Finland's sensitivities towards our legitimate security concerns, we have decided to initiate the approval process" in the parliament, Erdogan said at a press conference with Finland's President Sauli Niinisto in the Turkish capital of Ankara.

With Erdogan's backing, Finland's NATO bid will be forwarded to the Turkish parliament, where the Turkish President's party and ally hold the majority. The parliament will go into recess before mid-April, in the run-up to the country's presidential and parliament elections set for 14 May.

The Turkish president said he hoped Finland's NATO bid could be finalized before the elections.

He stressed he believed that NATO will further strengthen and play a crucial role in global security with Finland's admission. — AFP

Reservists of the Karelia Brigade perform shooting drills in Taipalsaari, Finland, on 9 March 2022. **PHOTO: LAURI HEINO/ LEHTIKUVA/AFP**

Pakistan ex-PM Imran Khan fears arrest as he heads to court

PAKISTAN'S former prime minister Imran Khan said on Saturday he expected to be arrested as he headed to court on graft charges, after days of legal wrangling and pitched battles between his supporters and police.

The 70-year-old former cricket star has been tangled in a slew of court cases, a frequent hazard for opposition figures in Pakistan's mudslinging politics.

"I am going to the Islamabad court right now. I want to tell you all that they have made a plan to arrest me," he said in a video message from the motorway, claiming he was the target of a plot to stop him from standing in elections due by October.

"The point of their attack on my house was not to present me before the Islamabad court. The purpose was to put me in jail."

Khan was ousted in a no-confidence motion last year and has been pressuring the fragile coalition government which replaced him to hold early elections. — AFP

Supporters of Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan gather around his car as he leaves his Lahore residence to appear in court in Islamabad. **PHOTO: AFP**

New Zealand to ban TikTok from MPs' devices: parliament

NEW Zealand will ban Chinese-owned social media app TikTok from lawmakers' devices, officials told AFP Friday, becoming the latest Western nation to act on security fears about the platform.

TikTok will be banned on all devices with access to the parliamentary network, Parliamentary Service chief executive Rafael Gonzalez-Montero said.

The ban will start from 31 March.

Gonzalez-Montero said the risks were "not acceptable in the current New Zealand Parliamentary environment".

"This decision has been made based on our own experts' analysis and following discussion with our colleagues across government and internationally," he added.—AFP

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

UN "doing everything possible" for extension of Black Sea grain deal: official

MARTIN Griffiths, the UN undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said Friday the world body is doing "everything possible" to ensure the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

On 22 July 2022, Russia and Ukraine separately signed a document in Istanbul with Türkiye and the United Nations on grain and fertilizer exports from Ukraine and Russia to ensure supplies to global markets amid the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict. – Xinhua

Majority in neutral Switzerland back closer NATO ties

A year after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a majority in Switzerland now support closer ties with NATO, the government said Thursday – a first in the country known for military neutrality.

The Swiss military academy and the Centre for Security Studies – both attached to ETH Zurich university – publish an annual survey of public opinion on foreign, security and defence policy issues, to evaluate long-term trends. It showed that in January, 55 per cent of the Swiss population favoured closer ties with NATO – up 10 percentage points from the January 2021 survey. – AFP

Central African summit mulls economic outlook, Ukraine

Ukrainian tankers ride a tank on a position near a front line in the Kharkiv region on 2 March amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. **PHOTO: ANATOLII STEPANOV/AFP**

HEADS of state from the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) on Friday began a one-day summit to discuss the region's economy and the impact of the Ukraine war.

Cameroonian President Paul Biya, hosting the meeting, declared the summit open before proceedings went behind closed doors.

The six-nation group gathers the Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo in addition to Cameroon, in a union around a common currency, the CFA franc.

Several of its members are exporters of oil, whose price has been buffeted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

French govt faces no-confidence votes over pensions fight

French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday faced intensified protests and a no confidence motion in parliament after pushing through a contentious pension reform without a vote in the lower house. **PHOTO: JEAN FRANCOIS MONIER/ AFP**

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron's government on Friday faced no-confidence motions in parliament and intensified protests after imposing a contentious pension reform without a vote in the lower house.

The situation presents Macron, who has only made occasional public comments on the matter, with one of his biggest challenges less than one year into his second and final mandate.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne on Thursday invoked article 49.3 of the constitution to impose the pension overhaul by decree, sparking angry demonstrations nationwide that raged unabated on Friday.

French opposition lawmakers on Friday retaliated by filing motions of no-confidence in the government, hoping to repeal the deeply unpopular law, which will hike the retirement age from 62 to 64.

"The vote on this motion will allow us to get out on top of a deep political crisis," said lawmaker Bertrand Pancher, whose motion was signed by independents and members of the broad left-wing NUPES coalition.

The far-right National Rally (RN) filed a second motion. It was expected to get less backing, but the party said it would also vote for the other motion.

They are likely to be debated in parliament on Monday afternoon, parliamentary sources told AFP.

Borne's government is largely expected to survive any vote. The no-confidence motion would need backing from around half the contingent of the opposition right-wing Republicans, a scenario seen as highly improbable. — AFP

WORLD: TOP HEADLINES

China's cyber legislation framework basically formed: white paper

CHINA has formed a cyber legislation framework with the Constitution as the foundation, supported by laws, administrative regulations, departmental rules, local regulations and local administrative rules, said a white paper published Thursday.

The framework is endorsed by traditional legislation, and underpinned by specialized cyber laws governing online content and management, cybersecurity, information technology and other elements, read the white paper titled "China's Law-Based Cyberspace Governance in the New Era," which was released by China's State Council Information Office. — Xinhua

Brazil launches crackdown on gang attacks in northeast

BRAZILIAN security forces waged a crackdown Friday on criminal gangs accused of torching vehicles, shooting up buildings and sowing terror in four nights of attacks on dozens of northeastern cities.

One suspect was killed and 17 arrested in the crackdown on the attacks, which authorities say have been organized by jailed gang leaders as a protest against prison conditions and new restrictions on their activities from behind bars. — AFP

Mexico president calls big rally with election on horizon

MEXICAN President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has called for a big political rally in Mexico City on Saturday aimed at energizing his supporters ahead of key elections next year.

The gathering is seen as the left-wing populist's riposte to opponents of a controversial new election law that he promoted.

The rally is Lopez Obrador's "response to the opposition coming out to protest against his electoral reform," political analyst Jose Antonio Crespo told AFP. Tens of thousands of Mexicans demonstrated on 26 February against a new law reducing the size and budget of the National Electoral Institute (INE), the independent body that oversees elections.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador will rally his supporters at an event 18 March 2023 in Mexico City. **PHOTO: AFP/ FILE**

Critics see the changes — which were approved by the ruling party-controlled Congress last month — as an attack on democracy ahead of the 2024 presidential election. Mexican presidents are barred from serving more than one six-year term, and Lopez Obrador has ruled out trying to change the constitution to stay in office. — AFP

Donors pledge over $850 mln for Venezuelan refugees

INTERNATIONAL donors vowed more than $850 million at a conference in Brussels to help support millions of refugees and migrants who have fled Venezuela, the European Union said on Friday.

The EU and Canada co-hosted the two-day meeting aimed at raising awareness and funds to help tackle what they call one of the world's largest displacement crises.

"Almost 810 million euros ($860 million) have been pledged at the 2023 Solidarity Conference with Venezuelans and their hosts," European crisis management commissioner Janez Lenarcic said.

"I am encouraged by the renewed commitment of the international community."

More than seven million Venezuelans have left their country, propelled by grinding poverty and a political crisis, according to estimates by the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR).

Among the main pledges were $171 million from the United States, $80 million from the EU and $42 million from Canada.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's government had accused Canada and the European Union of convening a "hostile" conference that politicizes migration. — AFP

A Venezuelan family at the Simon Bolivar International Bridge in the Colombian border city of Cucuta on 10 January 2019. **PHOTO: SCHNEYDER MENDOZA/AFP/FILE**

Pakistan ex-PM Imran Khan fears arrest as he heads to court

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

SPORT

Myanmar suffer 0-4 loss to Japan in invitational tourney

MYANMAR U-17 Women's National Team played against Japan's U-17 Women's National Team in the Group C match JENESYS U-17 Women's Football Memorial Cup held under the ASEAN Friendship and Cultural Exchange Program in Okinawa City on 17 March.

Team Myanmar faced a 0-4 loss to Asian powerhouse Japan.

The Japanese team scored three goals in the first half and one goal in the second half.

The Myanmar U-17 Women's National Team will take on the Philippines U-17 Women's National Team on 19 March, and after the group matches, they will continue to compete for ranking on 20 and 21 March. In the Group D match, the Thailand team beat Timor 13-0, and Viet Nam trounce Malaysia 3-0 in Group A. Meanwhile, the Cambodia team snatched the Indonesia team 2-0 in Group B. — KZL

Rybakina topples Swiatek to book Indian Wells final with Sabalenka

Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina on the way to a semi-final victory over world number one and defending champion Iga Swiatek at Indian Wells. **PHOTO: AFP**

ELENA Rybakina again proved too much for world number one Iga Swiatek, denying the defending champion a return to the Indian Wells final with an emphatic 6-2, 6-2 semi-final victory on Friday. Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina, the reigning Wimbledon champion who stunned top-seeded Swiatek in the fourth round of the Australian Open on the way to the final, will now get a chance to turn the tables on Aryna Sabalenka, who beat her in Melbourne to capture a first Grand Slam title.

World number two Sabalenka advanced with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over seventh-seeded Maria Sakkari of Greece. Rybakina, ranked 10th in the world, was all over Swiatek from the opening game, painting the lines with her punishing ground strokes and serving with pinpoint precision. — 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.

Man City's Walker to face no criminal charges over indecent exposure probe

MANCHESTER City defender Kyle Walker will face no further police action over allegations that he indecently exposed himself in a bar earlier this month.

Cheshire police had opened an investigation after The Sun newspaper published security camera footage online of Walker in a bar in Wilmslow, 14 miles south of Manchester, on 8 March.

A spokesperson for Cheshire Constabulary said: "Officers have now concluded their enquiries, which included speaking to those directly involved.

"A 32-year-old man from Prestbury voluntarily attended a police station for questioning on 16 March. "He has been dealt with by an out of court disposal and the matter is now closed."

City boss Pep Guardiola described the incident as a "private issue" that had been dealt with internally. England manager Gareth Southgate said he had "spoken at length" with Walker before including him in his squad on Thursday for Euro 2024 qualifiers against Italy and Ukraine.

Walker has won four Premier League titles among nine major trophies since joining City from Tottenham in 2017 and been capped 73 times by England. — AFP

Kyle Walker (left) will face no further police action over allegations of indecent exposure. **PHOTO: AFP**