

Message of Greetings sent by Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister of Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to ceremony to mark International Workers' Day
1 May 2023

Esteemed workers

I extend my message of greetings with the best wishes for all ethnic national brethren including migrant workers in foreign countries together with the whole massive workers in Myanmar to be physical and mental well-being with auspiciousness as today is a significant occasion of the International Workers' Day honouring the workers throughout the world.

In retrospect, International Workers' Day is a historic day which must be valuable for workers who possessed the rights of workers by overcoming uncountable difficulties. Hence, 1 May 1889, was designated as International Workers' Day from 1 May 1890. From then on, ceremonies to mark International Workers' Day have been held across the world. Myanmar started annually marking International Workers' Day on 1 May 1938.

Esteemed workers

As the development of a country depends on boosting productivity and enhancement of the service qualification, a special emphasis is being placed on protecting the massive workers who are manufacturing quality products with physical and mental strengths, enabling workers to enjoy entitlements and peaceful and prosperous workplaces and ensuring the betterment of worksite relations between employers and employees.

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

1. Priority will be given to fully realizing peace, stability and rule of law throughout the Union to safeguard the socioeconomic life of the people.
2. People-centred development work that enhances socioeconomic well-being will be undertaken to ensure the country's prosperity and food security.
3. Processes will further continue to consolidate a genuine, disciplined multiparty democratic system and build a Union based on democracy and federalism.
4. Priority will be accorded to work aligned with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, in order to achieve enduring peace for the entire nation.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

Myeik region accommodates some 2,000 acres of shrimp farms, some 600 of which follows Good Aquaculture Practices

TANINTHAYI Region is home to industries which emphasize production of marine products to earn incomes through exporting them to international markets, especially to the Thai market. As it is a long coastal region, Taninthayi Region hosts fish and shrimp farms of local businesspersons. Shrimp farms and shrimp processing factories are being operated in Kattalu Village of Kyunsu Township, Taninthayi Region, as part of efforts to create job opportunities for local people as well as to improve socioeconomic life of the locals.

Pyae Pyo Tun International Company Ltd also operates production of marine products, especially shrimps from its shrimp farms and processing factories. The company manages shrimp farming process, sanitation of the farms and production process of export shrimp products.



A file photo shows shrimp farms being operated in Taninthayi Region. PHOTO : KANU

In order to accelerate the work process of the farms, officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation and local authorities give encouragement to such a business in order to produce shrimps for local consumption and export purpose.

Some 2,000 acres of shrimp farms are being operated in Myeik region, some 600 acres of which are following Good Aquaculture

Practices-GAP, said U Hla Than, Chair of Taninthayi Region Livestock Breeding Federation.

Moreover, officials of the Department of Fisheries and Pyae Pyo Tun International Company

Ltd disclosed that an inspection team from the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) has inspected the shrimp farms through the video inspection system.

Pyae Pyo Tun International Company Ltd produces some 35 tonnes of shrimps from 450 acres of shrimp farms on a yearly basis. Shrimps can be netted three times a year. In Kyunsu Township, Khaing Zin Yaw modern seawater shrimp farm is also being operated for export purpose.

Livestock breeding industries and foodstuff manufacturing industries need to take systematic records on production process, finishing stage, storage, inspection and sale. They have to arrange monitoring the chemical residue in the products as well as possibility of animal infection at marine products including fish and shrimps. — GNLM/TTA

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Visitors invited to Kyaukgu Umin Temple in Bagan ancient cultural zone

THE Kyaukgu Umin Temple in Bagan-NyaungU ancient cultural region is opened to the public from 9 am to 6 pm, according to the Department of Archeology and National Museum (Bagan



Kyaukgu Umin Temple in Bagan ancient cultural zone.



The tunnel of Kyaukgu Umin Temple. PHOTO : DIPAR LINN



Branch).
The Kyaukgu Umin Temple is located near the bank of Ayeyawady river about two miles east from NyaungU in Mandalay Region and it is 278 feet above the sea level.
The temple is constructed for those who take meditation. There are small chambers for meditation inside the cave. There is 9 feet high rocky altar at the entrance to the Kyaukgu

Umin tunnel, and a 22 feet high stone Buddha statue is placed on that altar. Moreover, the images of Shin Sariputara and Shin Moggallana monks were curved beside the Buddha image.
The six shale buildings in Bagan-NyaungU ancient cultural zone are Kyaukgu Umin built in AD 11th century, Nan Phaya in AD 12th century, Shwezigon Pagoda in AD 11th century, Pitaka chamber at the foot of Tuyin Hill in AD 11th century, two poles of Thabbyinnyu bell in AD 11th century and NanU pagoda (No 934) in southwest of Dhamma Razaka pagoda.
The Kyaukgu Umin temple, one of the six pagodas made of shale rocks, is a must for the travellers to Bagan-NyaungU, said U Aung Kyi Tun, pilgrim from Phonetawpyae village of Natmauk township in Magway Region. — Dipar Linn/KTZH

71 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 30 April, total figure registers 634,877

MYANMAR'S COVID-19-positive cases rose to 634,877 after 71 new cases were reported on 30 April 2023 according to the Ministry of Health.
Therefore, a total of 10,362,523 laboratory samples were examined and the confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 634,877. The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached 614,845 including 27 new recoveries. The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at 19,492 on 30-4-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic.
The country has vaccinated 31,004,206 people aged 18 and above for COVID-19 vaccines and 6,849,386 people aged under 18 till 29 April 2023.

Status of COVID-19 vaccination (as of 29 April 2023)

People aged 18 and above who received vaccines	31,004,206
People under 18 years old who received vaccines	6,849,386

According to the research, it is found that people who have been vaccinated do not suffer severely from the disease, need not be hospitalized and are unlikely to die. If they have received booster shots, the death rates can be reduced more.
As such, people need to follow the new normal way of living with COVID. Hence, all people above five have to fully receive COVID-19 vaccination inoculated by the Ministry of Health free of charge. Six months after the vaccination, they have to take booster jabs at relevant health centres and ward/village administration offices without fail.
Moreover, they have to wear masks while in closed chambers and public places. They need to often wash their hands with soap and water or the hand gel containing alcohol (at least 60 per cent) for 20 seconds. People need to follow the social distancing rule and avoid crowds as much as possible.
While not wearing masks, if they cough and sneeze, they need to cover their mouth and noses with elbows in line with the personal hygienic ways. COVID-19 information can be browsed on the internet page moh.gov.mm of the Ministry of Health. — GNLM

Request to the public

1. THE Ministry of Health is continuously analyzing infection of Covid-19 not only in global countries and neighbouring countries but in Myanmar and is carrying out necessary prevention and control of the pandemic.
2. According to the press release of the World Health Organization on 20 April 2023, infection rate of Covid-19 is rising in Myanmar's neighbouring countries such as India, Thailand, Bangladesh and other regional countries as from January 2023, with infection of variant XBB. 1.16 (Arcturus).
3. It was found that infection of Covid-19 has been slightly increasing in Myanmar from the early April 2023.
4. According to the surveys and monitoring till today, variant XBB. 1.16 of Covid-19 is spreading 1.27 folds quicker than previously found variants but the former does not cause higher violent infection, situation of medical treatment at hospital and dead rate. But, suffering from the variant can be affected by current drugs. The drugs being used in Myanmar are effective over the prevention of the disease. Booster dose of vaccines can reduce infection of the disease, intensification and dead rate.
5. As such, all the people especially the aged and those suffering from chronicle diseases are –
(a) to specially take care of receiving Covid-19 vaccine and booster dose,
(b) to follow primary ways for prevention of Covid-19 pandemic with social distancing and wearing masks to go to the public places and closed sites,
(c) to take necessary treatment by contacting nearby health centres as quickly as possible if suspect symptoms of the pandemic are found,
(d) to follow the health protocols released by the Ministry of Health not to spread the virus to others and quarantine themselves at home.

Ministry of Health
23-4-2023

Sports can uplift prestige of State and its nationalities

- The sports are a national duty to uplift the prestige of the State and the nationality with the concept to polish the image of the nation as part of competing with the opponents without giving up till the last second.
- The victory and fame of an athlete automatically uplift the prestige of the country and themselves.

*(Excerpts from the speech delivered by State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the opening ceremony of the Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) Sports Competition 2022 on 14 November 2022)*

Message of Greetings sent by Chairman of State Administration Council Prime Minister of Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to ceremony to mark International Workers' Day 1 May 2023

FROM PAGE-1

In order for the government to especially protect the interests of workers, Section 24 of the Constitution (2008) of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar stipulates “The Union shall enact necessary laws to protect the rights of workers” whereas Section 31 mentions “The Union shall, to the extent possible, assist to reduce unemployment among the people.”

The State Administration Council is implementing the roadmap and objectives for the economic development of the nation and enhancement of the socioeconomic life of the people, the point “to assure support for the sustainability of Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) that prioritizes import substitution, export production, and the use of domestically produced raw materials, and order to increase domestic production and generate employment opportunities” was inserted into the economic objective with the aim of uplifting the social life of workers and booming the State economy, and successful implementation of such an objective much depends on the strength of workers.

Esteemed workers

The government assists in domestic manufacturing for development, shaping the country from importer to exporter, enhancement of the basic education sector, turning out qualified human resources, producing qualified skilled labours, conducting vocational courses in rural areas, and sustainable development of MSME businesses to improve socioeconomic life of the people and generating jobs.

The National Skills Standards Authority-NSSA has been formed to produce skilled workers in line with the advancement of new technologies aimed at emerging a massive worker with competitive capability in the international arena so as to develop the qualification and skills of workers who are a primary drive in the manufacturing sector. In so doing, the government is implementing the work procedures on assessment for skills and recognition.

Esteemed workers

The government, employers and employees are striving together for operating factories and industries including garment industries based on labour forces in continuity for booming the State economy and creating employment opportunities. On the other hand, the government allows foreign companies and ethnic entrepreneurs to operate the businesses on the basis of cutting, making and packaging (CMP) and foreign investment in Myanmar under the Myanmar Investment Law.

Labour attachés have been assigned in Thailand, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea where the majority of Myanmar workers work providing entitlement to those Myanmar migrant workers abroad in line with the laws of relevant countries. Moreover, Myanmar embassies in relevant countries protect those Myanmar workers.

Myanmar is exercising provision 87 of the ILO for freedom of formation and organizing of associations for safeguarding the rights of employees, improvement of relations between employers and employees, systematic and free formation of employee organizations and enjoying entitlements including health and social security for employees in addition to worksite safety. In accord with the Labour Organization Law 2011, the government allowed 3,015 employee organizations and

28 employer organizations and cooperates with them in all measures.

Esteemed workers

Aimed at contributing to the economic development of the State with increasing productivity for enabling workers who are the primary productive force of the State to enjoy social life security and healthcare services, three workers’ hospitals, 96 social security clinics, 58 departmental dispensaries, one traditional medicine clinic, 36 private hospitals and clinics and two mobile medical units are providing medical treatment to the insured workers and issuing monetary compensation.

Workplace safety and health entitlements are verified and supervised at factories, workshops and workplaces, and knowledge-sharing talks are focused on workplace safety and the health of workers.

Procedures are being implemented to minimize child labour, especially in the force to work in the worst form, effectively protect child workers who are legally allowed to work, seek proper work for child workers from dangerous workplaces, and create chances for them to attend vocational courses.

The arbitration council, arbitration panel and negotiation teams have been formed to solve the problems and to manufacture more products through co-ordination in the workplaces between employers and employees, to strengthen cooperation, to obtain good results in workplaces, decline disputes and improve mutual trust in the workplaces.

Esteemed workers

Now is the time to apply geographical conditions and the nature of climatic conditions of Myanmar to develop the country in harmony with the socioeconomic improvement of citizens. The government’s focus on the interests of the State and the ethnic people is shaping a better State and socioeconomic life in line with the motto: “Keep Moving Forward to Achieve Our Goal.”

In this regard, it is necessary to strive for seeking the best ways and means to practically serve the interests of the entire people. As Myanmar is endowed with a lot of natural resources, the role of workers must be relied on for the improvement of business and manufacturing at home with the encouragement of the government.

Cooperation of workers with the government may reflect enhancement of manufacturing for the long-term development of the country, socioeconomic security of the people, peace and prosperity of the State and food security as well as improvement of health, education and social sectors in synchronization.

In conclusion, the government is implementing the objects in all sectors in order to turn out human resources required in restoring the internal peace, shape the market economic system and build a modern, developed Union based on democracy and federalism. As the massive workers which is a primary force make concerted efforts for the enhancement of fraternity and unity with the Union spirit so as to contribute to the peace and stability as well as the rule of law for the whole Union for ensuring socioeconomic life security of the people, I would like to send this message of greetings by recognizing the endeavours of the workers.

AGTI Diploma Course No 19 concludes at NYRD Degree College (Yangon)



Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung speaking at graduation of AGTI diploma course No 19 at NYRD Degree College (Yangon) on 29 April.

CONCLUSION of AGTI Diploma Course No 19 of Nationalities Youth Resource Development Degree College (Yangon) in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township, Yangon Region, was held on 29 April at the convocation hall of the Degree College.

During the event, Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-

Gen Tun Tun Naung said that the Ministry has been working effectively and successfully on the development of border areas and human resource development.

These degree colleges in Yangon and Sagaing train the ethnic youths from the border areas to become good civil serv-

ants for the development of social economic life in their areas, he stated.

Since its establishment in Yangon, 2,716 ethnic youths in total have been nurtured to turn out 546 Bachelor of Arts graduates, 1,292 Bachelor of Science graduates, 135 BTech holders, and 743 engineering diploma

holders.

He said that due to the efforts of the students along with the support provided by the relevant ministry, 71 students have obtained MA degrees, 146 MSC degrees, 15 PhD, 301 BE, 15 ME, and 452 BTech degrees.

Next, the Union Minister presented the outstanding

award to the student in engineering subject, and the representatives from 18 ministries presented appointment letters to 81 graduate students.

In the afternoon, the Union Minister looked around the stand of stadium in the 2022-2023 fiscal year approval fund, the four-storey engineering workshop, greening the campus, and mushroom cultivation on the degree college campus.

The Union Minister met with officials, and the principal explained administration and academic measures, and agricultural and livestock sectors.

The Union Minister fulfilled the needs of the degree college and rewarded the staff and students.

In the evening, the Union Minister and the Yangon Region Chief Minister hosted a dinner in honour of the graduates.

— MNA/KZL

Thukha Susan, Kaungzay social security clinics opened to mark International Workers' Day

THUKHA Susan social security clinic located at No 1259 on Pale Road, Ward 10, Shwepyitha Township, Yangon Region and Kaungzay social security clinic located at No 862, Maha Bandoola Road, Ward 14, Shwepyitha Township were commissioned into service yesterday morning to commemorate the International Workers' Day.

Union Minister for Labour Dr Pwint San opened the clinics and inspected there.

The Social Security Board under the Ministry of Labour has 1,211,371 insured workers from 34,878 registered workplaces in 116 townships.

A total of 863,533 insured workers from 13,988 workplaces in Yangon Region, are receiving healthcare services

from the Social Security Board.

The Social Security Board provides healthcare in three workers hospitals and 96 township clinics, 60 departmental clinics, one traditional medicine clinic, 12 clinics which have signed a contract with the private sector through the Fee For Service system, 24 hospitals/clinics providing outpatient treatment services through the Capitation Payment system, and nine hospital/maternity rooms providing maternity services in addition to two mobile medical vehicles.

In order to provide better health services to insured workers, officials are contracting with private hospitals and clinics.

Currently, SSB has signed contracts with 26 private hos-



Union Minister for Labour Dr Pwint San formally opens Thukha Susan social security clinic in Shwepyitha Township on 30 April.

pitals/clinics for providing healthcare to the insured workers using the Capitation Payment system.

Healthcare service for workers covered by SSB will be open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm daily. — MNA/KZL

Toddy fruit, seasonal crops flow into Mandalay market



A vendor sells nuts of toddy fruits in Mandalay. PHOTO : MIN HTET AUNG

TODDY fruits which are seasonal and medicinal ones flowed into Mandalay’s consumer market, and seven nuts of toddy fruits fetch K1,000.

U Kaw San, a seller of toddy fruit from Shante village, Meiktila Township, said a toddy fruit contains around three nuts, and it is juicy and the best to eat at present.

In Mandalay Region, Meiktila Township is the first to produce toddy fruits, and TadaU is last to produce the fruit in the season. There are more than 10 to 20 vendors from the regions who are selling at the southern archway of Bawdigon Pagoda and along the northern road of Mandalay University (Main

Campus).

A bunch comprises some 20 toddy fruits. It costs about K2,500 as transport charge to Mandalay. Toddy plants can bear about one and a half months when the sellers can bag more than K1 million as an extra income.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/KZW

YGEA entrepreneurs hold meeting for gold price stability

ENTREPRENEURS from Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association-YGEA held a meeting at its head office on Shwebontha Street, Pabedan Township, Yangon Region, on 28 April to stabilize the gold price.

U San Lwin, the patron of the association, gave an opening speech.

Then, U Myo Myint, chair of the association, said that gold speculators and rumors can rise the gold price. It is necessary for goldsmiths and gold merchants to work together to maintain the gold market, he revealed.

In addition, all must take

care not to make wrong transactions due to money laundering, he added, urging all to trade around K2.9 million per tical of gold.

Next, association members U Nay Myo Htet and U Aung Kaung Myat, who attended the gold price maintenance meeting held on 26 April, recounted their meeting experiences on stability of gold prices.

After that, the general secretary of the association, U Win Myint, requested all not to trade illegal items and not to make sales of gold at higher than the set price.—Myo Min Thura/KZL



Gold entrepreneurs in Yangon Region hold meeting on 28 April.

Drugs seized in Yamethin, Tachilek townships

A combine team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force checked a motorcycle driven by Kalar near Shwenattaung Village in Yamethin Township on 29 April and seized 2,000 stimulant tablets. Acting on a tip-off, the police searched his house located in Yontaw Village and captured 8,000 more stimulant tablets on that day.

On 28 April, the author-

ities from the checkpoint in Meyang Village in Tachilek Township searched Toyota Hiace vehicle driven by Kyaw Win Aung and seized 39 kilos of caffeine, a kilo of vanillin and 26 moulds and nine mould heads used to produce stimulant tablet. The suspects have been prosecuted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. — MNA/KZW



Kalar arrested together with stimulant tablets in Yamethin Township on 29 April.

Illegal teak, industrial materials, consumer goods, auto parts and vehicles confiscated



Illegal teak logs seized in Mawlaik Township on 30 April.

UNDER the supervision of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, effective action is taken to prevent illegal trade. On-duty teams under the management of Kayin State Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force, a team inspected warehouses in Hpa-an and seized four items including 850 cartons of Singha beer worth over K59.3 million without official documents. Another team at Thanlwin bridge checkpoint searched a vehicle heading to Yangon from Myawady and seized two items including 40 used 32-inch-TVs and that the Kinglong Mini Bus

was worth over K69.03 million without official documents. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

On 28 April, assigned customs teams under the management of the Customs Department seized 25 items of goods including 10 B/N Excavator And Bulldozer Spare Parts Sprockets and 7,568 Excavator And Bulldozer Spare Parts Bucket Bushes worth more than K82.09 million from two containers without import licences at Asia World Container Checkpoint. Action was taken under the Customs procedures.

Similarly, an inspection team under the management of Bago Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force on 30 April conducted an inspection in Taikkyi Township and seized a Skart vehicle worth K450,000 without official documents. The action was taken under the law.

On 30 April, an inspection team from Monywa Myoma police station under the management of Sagaing Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force conducted an inspection at Kyweye combined checkpoint in Monywa and seized a Voxy vehicle worth K6 million. The action was taken under the export/import law. Another inspection team in Mawlaik seized 2.382 tonnes of illegal teak worth over K7.8 million in Hmawku reserved forest near Namkhanpat creek in Mawlaik. The action was taken under the forest law.

Therefore, seven arrests (estimated value of K158,365,733) were made on 27, 28 and 30 April, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/KZW

Outstanding students visit Pathein’s landmarks



OUTSTANDING Grade 11 students of 2023 academic year visited famous places of Pathein followed by attending the honorary reception ceremony yesterday morning.

First, they visited Shwemokhtaw Pagoda and officials explained them the history of the pagoda.

The students observed the Pathein city water supply works in Mayanchaung Village and officials explained the water treatment operations through Ngawun River.

Then, Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister U Tin Maung Win and officials warmly welcomed the students who came to study at Pathein umbrella workplace in Pathein.

In the afternoon, an honorary reception ceremony was held for the students.

After that, the outstanding students had the lunch together with the Regional Chief Minister and officials.

The students also visited Shwemyin Pathein Halawa snack industry and Ngwehsaung elephant camp. — Region IPRD/KZL

Outstanding students visit Pathein Parasol industry on 30 April.

Outstanding students from Bagan camp tour Mount Popa herbal park, natural plants

OUTSTANDING students from Bagan camp in NyaungU Township, Mandalay Region, went on a study tour of Mount Popa yesterday afternoon.

Officials from Township Education Department and General Administration Department of Kyaukpadaung Township, the chair of board of trustees of Mount Popa and members welcomed the students.

Students look around the Mount Popa and took documentary photos. At the Mount Popa Herbal Park of the Forest Department, they observed bird and butterfly species as well as tree species.

Finally, students arrived at Popa Mountain Resort, enjoyed the landscapes and they took documentary photos. — MNA/KZW



Outstanding Students from Bagan having meals on excursion tour in Mt Popa on 30 April.

Outstanding students form Taunggyi Camp visit Inlay lake



Outstanding students tour Inlay Lake to observe traditions of ethnic people on 30 April.

OUTSTANDING students from Taunggyi camp visited Inlay Lake yesterday morning.

First, they arrived at old Inlay Khaungdine Camp in Hupin Hotel and officials explained the venues and buildings where the past outstanding student camp was held. Next, they learned Kayla farm, a traditional agricultural farm in Inlay region.

And, they arrived at Sein Thamadi silver-smith industry in Heya Ywama and the owner of the industry U San Lin explained the processes of operating silver-smith industry and gave gifts to the students. Next, the students paid homage to the PhaungdawU Pagoda.

Finally, military personnel from the No 4 Mobile Relations Company under the Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare entertained the students with songs and dances at Daw Khin Thein Hall of Taunggyi BEHS No 1. — MNA/KZW

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanmar 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.
News and Periodicals Enterprise

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.

Rice and broken rice exports in first half-month of 2023–2024 FY drop



Bags of rice being uploaded onto vessel for export purpose at the wharf.

IN exports of rice and broken rice during the first half-month of April in the 2023-2024 financial year, Myanmar earned a higher price than the same period in 2022-2023 FY, but the export tonnages as well as the export earnings decreased, according to the announcement.

The foreign market prices per tonne of rice and broken rice rose from US\$334.12 and \$307.32 in the 2022-2023 FY to \$450.1 and \$379.27 in the 2023-2024 FY, respectively.

During the first 14 days

of the 2023–2024 FY, a total of 44,062.5 tonnes of rice and rice products worth US\$18.259 million were exported abroad. Likewise, in the same period of the 2022–2023 FY, a total of 109,616.4 tonnes of rice and rice products valued at US\$35.429 million were shipped.

Therefore, despite the increase in the foreign market price, in the first 14 days of this financial year, the export of rice and rice products decreased by 65,553.9 tonnes, which was worth US\$17.17 million less

than the same period of the previous year.

In the financial year 2023-2024, 2.5 tonnes of rice and rice products will be shipped abroad, aiming to earn US\$1 billion as foreign export revenue, the Myanmar Rice Federation announced. Exports of rice and broken rice to foreign countries will be reportedly limited to 150,000 tonnes per month in order to stabilize the domestic rice price and prevent shortages. — TWA/CT

Temporary road closures announced for consecration at Shwedagon Pagoda, rice offering ceremony

THE government of Yangon Region declared the temporary closure of certain roads during the rehearsal on 30 April and the actual ceremony on 2 May. The closure of roads will commence at 4 am and will remain effective until the culmination of the event.

During the ceremony, Pyay Road will be closed from Hanthawady roundabout to Bogyoke Aung San Road, U Wisara road from Hanthawady roundabout to Shwedagon Pagoda Road, Shwedagon Pagoda road from U Htaung Bo road to U Wisara junction, Ahlon Road from Baho Road to Shwedagon Pagoda road and Myoma Kyaung road from Ahlon Road to Minye Kyaw Swa Road.

Vehicles heading southwards along Pyay Road are

required to make a right turn at the Hanthawady roundabout and proceed towards Upper Kyimyindine Road. Similarly, vehicles travelling northwards on Pyay Road should turn left to Bogyoke Aung San Road and proceed towards Lower Kyimyindine Road. For those travelling towards U Wisara Road, they are advised to proceed from Hanthawady roundabout towards Upper Kyimyindine Road. Vehicles en route to Shwedagon Pagoda Road have to drive from U Htaung Bo Road to Bahan roundabout, and those heading towards Ahlon Road should follow Baho Road. As for vehicles travelling towards Myoma Kyaung Road, they have been instructed to take the diversion towards Minye Kyaw Swa Road.—TWA/KZW



An aerial view of Hanthawady roundabout in Yangon.

Palm oil prices continue to decline

AT the end of April 2023, the wholesale price of palm oil was only around K6,000 per viss, according to the Yangon oil market.

Delivery order (DO) prices at the Yangon oil tank were K6,150 and K6,100 per viss on 27, 28 and 29 April.

The Yangon reference wholesale price of palm oil from 24 April to 1 May is K4,680 per viss, down by K110 per viss from the previous week. Palm oil prices are declining in Yangon as well as in various regions. The recent market price in Yangon is only K1,400 per viss higher than the wholesale reference price.

On 27 February 2023,



Palm oil being filled to barrel from the tank.

the market price of palm oil was around K2,600 per viss higher than the reference wholesale price of K4,600 per viss.

The reference wholesale price for a tonne of imported oil

(CIF) arriving at Yangon Port this week is K4,680 per viss; with a foreign price of US\$1,063 and an average exchange rate of K2,488.

In 2022, the average import of oil was only

around 40,000 tonnes per month, but in April 2023, more oil was imported from abroad, and the price of oil in the Yangon oil market fell.

At the end of February 2023, when the wholesale price of palm oil at the tank was around K7,400 per viss, and around K80,000 per jerry can at the lowest, depending on the brand. At this time, despite the price drop at the oil tank, a jerry can of palm oil only costs K66,500.

There are speculations that the price of palm oil may not be lower than K6,000 per viss, hesitating most oil traders to hoard palm oil in large quantities. — TWA/CT

Two investment projects allowed by Yangon Region Investment Committee



Yangon Region Investment Committee Office.

ON 28 April, the Yangon Region Investment Committee granted approval for two investment projects with a total amount to K2.5 billion and US\$ 1 million respectively.

One enterprise invested by Myanmar citizen and one foreign investment enterprise are expected to generate a total of 163 employment

opportunities for the local workforce. As per the report, the endorsed businesses include the export of value-added raw materials of rubber and the production of cartons to be sold to domestic market accounting for 100 per cent.

Furthermore, the deliberations encompassed presentations from 17 companies that raised general issues, four of which were granted permission to augment their aggregate fixed capital by a sum of \$2.738 million. —TWA/KZW

Comprehensively understand rights and responsibility in workplaces

INTERNATIONAL Workers Day called May Day initiated a new era of workers in the international community for uplifting their socioeconomic life. Consequently, generations to generations of workers are giving a helping hand to each other for protecting the massive number of workers who are manufacturing quality products with physical and mental strengths.

The development of a country depends on boosting productivity and enhancement of the service qualification, a special emphasis is being placed on enabling workers to enjoy entitlements and peaceful and prosperous workplaces and ensuring the betterment of worksite relations between employers and employees.

In Myanmar, the Constitution (2008) emphasizes the interests of workers in its provisions: Section 24 of the Constitution expresses that “The Union shall enact necessary laws to protect the rights of workers” and Section 31 “The Union shall, to the extent possible, assist to reduce unemployment among the people.”

Currently, workers have a chance to enjoy rights and entitlements in relevant workplaces allowed by businesspersons as well as the government but they have to take responsibility for dutifully serving the assignments to accomplish all missions with might and main. They have to understand their right and responsibility. If so, workplaces, where they work, will be peaceful and prosperous forever.

the country, the government helps them seek deserved entitlements.

In accord with the Labour Organization Law 2011, the government has allowed 3,015 employee organizations and 28 employer organizations and cooperates with them in all measures. As part of contributing to the economic development of the State with increasing productivity for enabling workers to enjoy social life security and healthcare services, three workers’ hospitals, 96 social security clinics, 58 departmental dispensaries, one traditional medicine clinic, 36 private hospitals and clinics and two mobile medical units are providing medical treatment to the insured workers and issuing monetary compensation.

Currently, workers have a chance to enjoy rights and entitlements in relevant workplaces allowed by businesspersons as well as the government but they have to take responsibility for dutifully serving the assignments to accomplish all missions with might and main. They have to understand their right and responsibility. If so, workplaces, where they work, will be peaceful and prosperous forever.

Brief Information on Omicron Subvariant XBB.1.16 (Arcturus)

By Dr Than Lwin Tun

THE omicron is a variant of SARS CoV-2 virus which is the virus that causes COVID-19. The omicron variant has a large number of mutations in the spike protein of the virus, which is part of the virus that allows it to enter human cells.

The omicron subvariant XBB.1.16, known as “Arcturus”, has been listed by the WHO as a variant under monitoring since 22 March 2023. Experts say this variant has a higher transmissibility rate than previous strains but doesn’t appear to be more dangerous.

All viruses, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, change over time. Most changes have little to no impact on the virus’s properties. However, some changes may affect the virus’s properties, such as how easily it spreads, the associated disease severity, or the performance of vaccines, therapeutic medicines, diagnostic tools, or other public health and social measures.

In June 2020, the WHO Virus Evolution Working Group was established with a specific focus on SARS-CoV-2 variants, their phenotype and their impact on countermeasures. This later became the Technical Advisory Group on SARS-CoV-2 Virus Evolution. In late 2020, the emergence of variants that posed an increased risk to global public health prompted WHO to characterize some as variants of interest (VOIs) and variants of concern (VOCs) in order to prioritize global monitoring and research and to inform and adjust the COVID-19 response. From May 2021 onwards, WHO began assigning simple, easy-to-say labels for key variants.

Considerable progress has been made in establishing and strengthening a global system to detect signals of potential VOIs or VOCs and rapidly assess the risk to public health. It remains critical that these systems are maintained, and data are shared, according to good principles and in a timely fashion, as SARS-CoV-2 continues to circulate at high levels around the world. While monitoring the circulation of SARS-CoV-2 globally, it also remains essential to

monitor their spread in animal populations and chronically infected individuals, which are crucial aspects of the global strategy to reduce the occurrence of mutations that have negative public health implications. In March 2023, WHO updated its tracking system and working definitions for variants of concern, variants of interest and variants under monitoring.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has upgraded XBB.1.16 to a “variant of interest”, due to its estimated growth advantage over other circulating COVID-19 subvariants, and its ability to evade the immune system. Because of these characteristics, “XBB.1.16 may spread globally and contribute to an increase in case incidence,” the WHO warned in its latest weekly epidemiological update. XBB.1.16 was first detected in India on 23 January 2023, where it is believed to have fuelled a recent surge in cases. The variant is also gaining traction in the United States, where it currently accounts for 7.2 per cent of COVID-19 cases.

Anecdotal reports from paediatricians in India suggest that Arcturus may be associated with “itchy” or “sticky” eyes, as well as a high fever and cough – particularly in children who are infected. Other viruses can also trigger conjunctivitis or pink eye, but until now, this symptom had been relatively rare among COVID-19 patients. In Northern Hemisphere countries, which are currently entering spring, it could also potentially be confused with hay fever.

According to Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, US, XBB.1.16 may also be associated with a higher-grade fever than other variants.

Variants of interest

Besides XBB.1.16, WHO is currently tracking one other COVID-19 variant, XBB.1.5, as a “variant of interest” (VOI) – one containing genetic changes predicted or known to affect characteristics such as infectiousness, immune system evasion, or disease severity. VOIs must also be demonstrated to have a growth advantage over other circulating variants in more than one WHO region, or some other evidence



A new omicron subvariant is gaining ground in the US XBB.1.16, or “arcturus,” was responsible for nearly 12% of new COVID-19 cases this week. PHOTO: FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE ONLY/ VALERIA MACON/AFP/FILE

to suggest they pose an emerging risk to global public health.

So far, XBB.1.16 has been reported in 31 countries, and during the week ending 2 April 2023, it accounted for 4.2 per cent of SARS-CoV-2 sequences uploaded to the international GISAID database – up from 0.5 per cent during the week ending 5 March 2023.

XBB.1.5 has been reported in 96 countries and currently accounts for 50.8 per cent of sequences, which is an increase from 46.2 per cent during the week ending 5 March.

Six other variants and their descendants are being monitored as “variants under monitoring” (VUM), meaning they contain genetic changes suspected to affect viral behaviour and may be showing early signals of faster spread, but the impact of these changes remains uncertain.

Speaking at a press conference on 29 March 2023, Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO’s COVID-19 Technical Lead, reminded journalists that the world remains in a pandemic and a public health emergency of international concern – even though we are in a much better situation than we were three years ago.

Viral evolution

“One of the big uncertainties we face going forward is the virus itself,” Van Kerkhove said. “It hasn’t settled into a predictable pattern. It continues to evolve.

“One of the variants that we are looking at... is XBB.1.16. It’s actually very similar in profile to XBB.1.5. It has one additional mutational mutation in the spike protein, which in lab studies shows increased infectivity, as well as potential increased pathogenicity. So, it’s one that we are monitoring because it has potential changes that we need to keep a good eye out on.”

At that time, only about 800 sequences of XBB.1.16 had been uploaded to the international GISAID database from 22 countries – mostly India.

Enhanced transmissibility

Currently, there are no reported laboratory or country reports associating the VOI and VUMs with increased disease severity, although a recent laboratory study, which has not been peer-reviewed, suggested that XBB.1.16 may have an effective reproduction number (the expected number of new infections caused by an infectious individual) that is 1.27-fold higher

than the original XBB variant, and 1.17-fold higher than XBB.1.5, “suggesting that XBB.1.16 will spread worldwide in the near future”, the authors said. However, the study found that the ability of these variants to evade the immune system was comparable.

While the ability of SARS-CoV-2 to evolve, become more transmissible, and trigger new symptoms is alarming, at the current time there is nothing to suggest that XBB.1.16 is more dangerous than the many other Omicron variants currently in circulation. Even so, it remains important to stay vigilant, to try to avoid getting infected and to stay updated with the recommended schedule of COVID-19 vaccines.

Overall risk assessment

Based on its genetic features, immune escape characteristics and growth rate estimates, XBB.1.16 may spread globally and drive an increase in case incidence. From reports from India and other countries, no early signals of increases in severity have been observed. As XBB.1.16 has spread to 33 countries, disease severity is being monitored carefully. Taken together, available evidence does not suggest that XBB.1.16

has additional public health risks relative to the other currently circulating Omicron descendent lineages.

The severity and clinical considerations

An analysis of infections from India did not report any differences in hospitalization and oxygen requirement for XBB.1.16 as compared to other circulating lineages (Dr Rajesh Karyakarte’s, BJ Government Medical College, Pune). In terms of clinical considerations, there has been a slight rise in bed occupancy in some states in India (2-4 per cent). However, these levels are much lower compared to the level recorded during the Delta wave or Omicron BA.1/BA.2 wave (6). Disease severity is not higher compared to previously circulating variants. The antiviral Sotrovimab exhibits antiviral activity against XBB.1.16, similar to other XBB subvariants.

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67 million children missed out on vaccines because of Covid: UNICEF

SOME 67 million children partially or fully missed routine vaccines globally between 2019 and 2021 because of lockdowns and health care disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the United Nations said Wednesday.

“More than a decade of hard-earned gains in routine childhood immunization have been eroded,” read a new report from the UN’s children’s agency, UNICEF, adding that getting back on track “will be challenging.”

Of the 67 million children whose vaccinations were “severely disrupted,” 48 million missed out on routine vaccines entirely, UNICEF said, flagging concerns about potential polio and measles outbreaks.

Vaccine coverage among children declined in 112 countries and the per cent of children vaccinated worldwide slipped 5 points to 81 per cent — a low not seen since 2008. Africa and South Asia were particularly hard hit.

Growth in childhood immunization

“Worryingly, the backsliding during the pandemic came at the end of a decade when, in broad terms, growth in childhood immunization had stagnated,” the report said.

Vaccines save 4.4 million lives each year, a number the United Nations figures could jump to 5.8 million by 2030 if its ambitious targets to leave “no one behind” are met.

“Vaccines have played a really important role in allowing more children to live healthy, long lives,” Brian Keeley, the report’s editor in chief, told AFP. “Any decline at all in vaccination rates is worrying.”

Before the introduction of a vaccine in 1963, measles killed approximately 2.6 million people each year, mostly children. By 2021, that number had fallen to 128,000.

But between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of children vaccinated against measles fell from 86 per cent to 81 per cent, and the number of cases in 2022 doubled compared to 2021.

Declining vaccine confidence

The slide in vaccination rates could be compounded by other crises, Keeley warned, from climate change to food insecurity. “You’ve got increasing number of conflicts, economic stagnation in a lot of countries, climate emergencies, and so on,” he said. “This all sort of makes it harder and harder for health systems and countries to meet vaccination needs.”

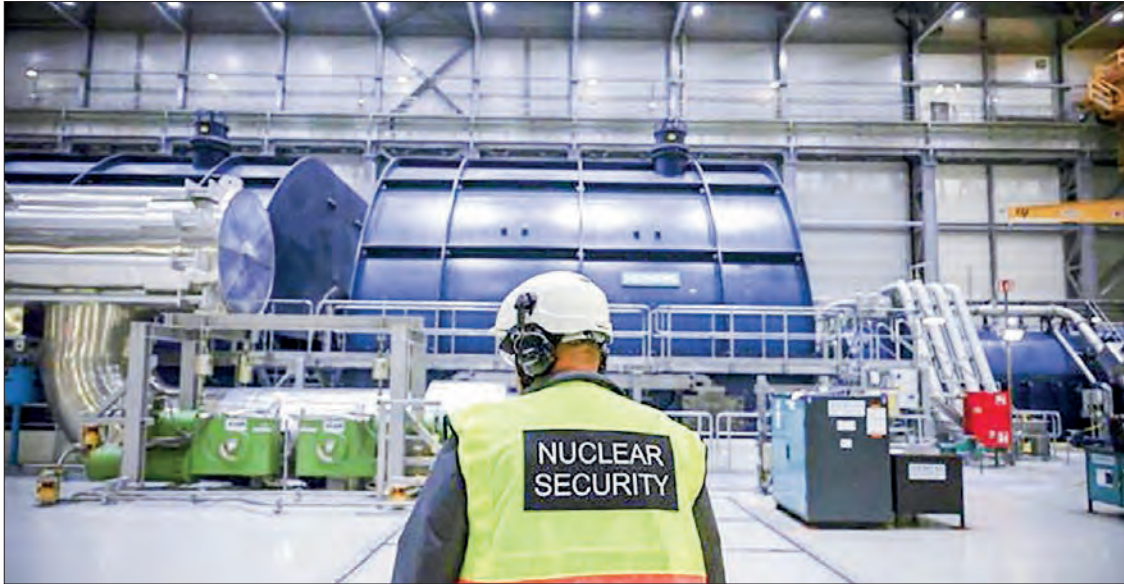
Source : AFP



UNICEF said that of the 67 million children whose vaccinations were “severely disrupted” by the pandemic, 48 million missed out on routine vaccines entirely. PHOTO: AFP

TECH/ENVIRON WORLD

Small reactor startups vie to push US into new nuclear era



The future of the industry will likely rely on small modular reactors — or SMRs — similar to the ones currently powering submarines. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/AFP**

SEVERAL American startups are working on building a new generation of small reactors that could push nuclear energy into a new phase, with support from the US government.

During a recent hearing before the House Appropriations Committee, US Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm restated the “importance of nuclear energy” for the current administration regarding America’s power supply.

But despite the Biden administration’s stated support for nuclear power, there are no new projects underway for any traditional nuclear reactors.

In fact, today’s 93 remaining

legacy reactors — which provide around 18 per cent of the country’s electricity — are ageing fast; six reactors have already been decommissioned since 2017.

The future of the industry will likely rely on small modular reactors — or SMRs — similar to the ones currently powering submarines.

SMRs have been promoted as a cheaper option than legacy reactors, with shortened construction time and less fuel needed to power them, which translates into less nuclear waste.

“I’ve spoken to many utility CEOs and many of them simply stated that they plan to build SMRs and not large reactors,”

says William Freebairn, Senior Managing Editor at S&P Global.

Many SMRs will replace coal plants in remote locations where “the ability to place a really large unit is very limited,” he added.

Although SMR technology has been under development for decades, momentum is picking up due in no small part to the push from the government, and the recent adoption of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which will provide tax credits of up to 30 per cent of investments.

Several US companies are currently working on their own SMR or AMR (Advanced Modular Reactor) designs. — AFP

Colombia urges evacuation near volcano

AUTHORITIES in Colombia on Saturday recommended that towns closest to a rumbling, notorious volcano be evacuated, ahead of a possible eruption.

The Disaster Risk Management Office said it was moving to evacuate communities that are located within 15 kilometers (nine miles) from the main crater of three that make up the Nevado del Ruiz volcano in the Colombian Andes.

Seismic activity has increased at the volcano, which killed 25,000 people in an eruption in 1985.

That blast was the worst natural disaster in Colombian history and one of the deadliest

volcanic eruptions of the 20th century.

There has recently been a “significant increase in seismic activity,” the ministry of mines said in a statement while Colombia’s SGC geological service warned of a “probable eruption within days or weeks.”

The 5,300-meter (17,400-foot) colossus in western Colombia is one of the many volcanoes along the Ring of Fire, a path around the Pacific basin characterized by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes. On November 13, 1985, it erupted and emitted so much heat that it melted the snow that caps the mountain. — AFP



The Nevado del Ruiz volcano, part of the Andes Mountains about 129km (80 miles) from Colombia’s capital of Bogota, spews ash on 30 March 2023. **PHOTO: COLOMBIAN GEOLOGIC SERVICE HANDOUT/AFP**

Twitter to allow media publishers to charge users per article



This illustration photo taken in Los Angeles on 20 April 2023, shows Elon Musk’s blue tick next to his name on a smartphone. **PHOTO: AFP**

AFTER blue tick verification, now billionaire Elon Musk announced that Twitter will allow media publishers to charge users on a per article basis with

one click and this is going to start from May.

On Saturday, Elon Musk tweeted, “Rolling out next month, this platform will allow

media publishers to charge users on a per article basis with one click. This enables users who would not sign up for a monthly subscription to pay a higher per article price for when they want to read an occasional article. Should be a major win-win for both media orgs & the public.”

This news came few days after the announcement regarding the accounts which are blue tick verified. The changes which Musk has made on Twitter after his takeover are crazy. Adding another pointer to his updates is about getting verified accounts prioritised. He tweeted, “Verified accounts are now prioritized.” — ANI

Google prevented 1.43 mn apps on Google Play in 2022

GOOGLE said that it prevented more than 1.43 million apps from entering the Play Store, as they violated its policy. “In 2022, we prevented 1.43 million policy-violating apps from being published on Google Play in part due to new and improved security features and policy enhancements — in combination with our continuous investments in machine learning systems and app review processes.

We also continued to combat malicious developers and fraud rings, banning 173K bad accounts, and preventing over USD 2 billion in fraudulent and abusive transactions,” Google said on Thursday via a blog.

Google also said it has

“raised the bar for new developers to join the Play ecosystem with phone, email, and other identity verification methods, which contributed to a reduction in accounts used to publish violative apps”.

“We continued to partner with SDK providers to limit sensitive data access and sharing, enhancing the privacy posture for over one million apps on Google Play. With strengthened Android platform protections and policies, and developer outreach and education, we prevented about 500K submitted apps from unnecessarily accessing sensitive permissions over the past 3 years,” the blog post read. — ANI

HEALTH/WELLNESS:
WORLD

Warm-up time can contribute to creating more equitable workplace

A new research showed that employees who are not in positions of power can enhance creativity when given time to “warm up” to a task by engaging in the creative task more than once.

“This is important because when people with more power are able to express their creative ideas more than those with less power, it leads to a rich-get-richer dynamic that reinforces or exacerbates these power differentials,” said Brian Lucas, assistant professor in the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations and co-author of “Low Power Warm-up Effect: Understanding the Effect of Power on Creativity Over Time,” forthcoming in the July issue of Journal of Experimental Social Psychology.

“Understanding ways to

boost the creativity of lower power workers can help them navigate this low-power disadvantage, generate more creative ideas and promote a more equitable workplace,” Lucas said.

In the study, Lucas and his co-authors found that although low-power individuals are less creative than high-power individuals at the beginning of a creative task, they can eventually catch up and match high-power individuals’ creativity.

This is because the creative task provided feelings of autonomy and liberation that eventually help them overcome their low-power disadvantage, the researchers said. Lucas and his co-authors conducted three studies to reach their conclusion.

In the first study, they divided



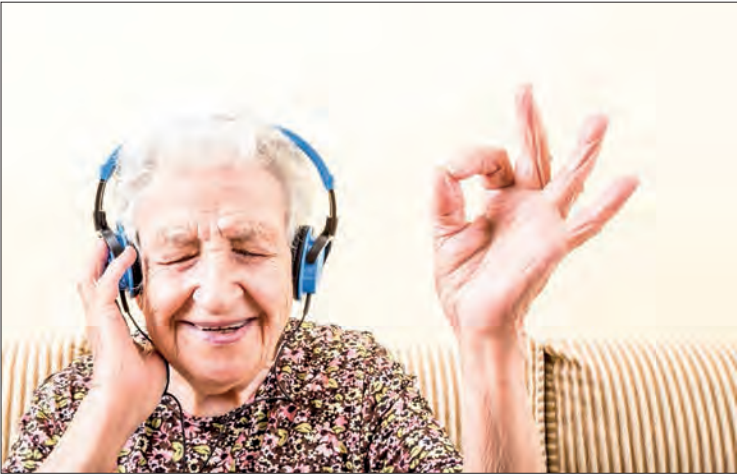
Although low-power individuals are less creative than high-power individuals at the beginning of a creative task, they can eventually catch up and match high-power individuals’ creativity. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ANI**

the creative idea generation session into two rounds consisting of a one-minute “warm up” followed by a second round in which the participants could take as long as

they wanted. Participants were randomly assigned to a high-power condition or a low-power condition, and feelings of power were induced with a role manipulation

where participants were given a leadership role and control over resources (high power) or an employee role with no control over resources (low power). — ANI

Musical expertise makes adults better listeners by keeping brain young



By analyzing their brain activity, the researchers revealed two mechanisms that old musicians adopt to counteract ageing: functional preservation and functional compensation. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ISTOCKPHOTO/ANI**

THE world’s population is ageing at an unprecedented rate. Ageing can cause numerous forms of cognitive impairment, presenting a significant burden

on families and society. As a result, it is critical to develop effective strategies to promote healthy ageing. One promising approach is musical

training, which is accessible to the majority of the population. Besides the musically rewarding and aesthetic experience of musical training, it also provides potential benefits to the brain, especially for the elderly.

In a study published as a cover story in Science Advances, a research team led by Dr. DU Yi from the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences found that long-term musical training could mitigate and even counteract age-related decline of audiovisual speech-in-noise perception in older listeners, through functional preservation of youth-like activity patterns in sensorimotor areas, supplemented by functional compensation in frontoparietal and default mode network (DMN) regions. — ANI

‘Genetic therapy can lower tau protein which causes Alzheimer’s disease’

A world-first trial at UCL and UCLH has found a new gene therapy for Alzheimer’s disease that is able to safely lower levels of the harmful tau protein known

to cause the disease. The trial, led by consultant neurologist Dr Catherine Mummery (UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology & the National

Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery), represents the first time a ‘gene silencing’ approach has been taken in dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. — ANI

NEWS IN BRIEF

European paediatricians sound alarm over medicine shortage

PAEDIATRICIANS from European countries have raised the alarm over a shortage of medicines for children including antibiotics and asthma treatment, warning it was endangering health. In a letter addressed to health ministers and seen by AFP on Saturday, the doctors stressed it was “urgent to find a fast, reliable and lasting solution” to the problems facing stocks in Europe.

“The health of our children and our youngsters is in danger because of the lack of medicines throughout Europe,” they wrote. The letter was addressed to the health ministers of Austria, France, Germany, the Italian region of South Tyrol and Switzerland.

It was co-signed notably by Andreas Werner, president of the French Association of Ambulatory Pediatrics, his German counterpart Thomas Fischbach and Laura Reali, head of the European Confederation of Primary Care Paediatricians. — AFP

Bariatric surgery might cut risk of obesity-related cancers: Study

ACCORDING to a study to be presented at Digestive Disease Week (DDW) 2023, just 4% of patients with obesity who underwent bariatric surgery developed obesity-associated cancer in a 10-year follow-up, compared to 8.9% of those who did not have a weight-loss treatment.

“The primary benefit people consider when they think about bariatric surgery is weight loss and the accompanying physical and psychological benefits, such as improved blood pressure and diabetes,” said Dr. Vibhu Chittajallu, the study’s lead author and a gastroenterology fellow at Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals. “This study adds to the building evidence that the significant weight loss associated with bariatric surgery may have a protective effect against cancer formation as well.” — ANI

ECONOMY WORLD

German economy stagnates, teeters on brink of recession

GERMANY is teetering on the brink of recession after official data Friday showed growth stagnating in the first quarter despite expectations for a slight rebound, as the energy crisis weighed on Europe's top economy.

Gross domestic product came in flat from January to March, according to preliminary figures from federal statistics agency Destatis.

If the economy had recorded a contraction again — after shrinking 0.5 per cent in the final quarter of 2022 — it would have entered a “technical recession”, defined as two consecutive quarters of negative growth.

However, the flat reading could still be revised to a contraction when final figures are released.

The industrial power-

house, which had long been heavily reliant on Russian energy, was hit hard after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine sent gas prices surging.

Analysts and the government predicted for months that soaring inflation, particularly sharp rises in the cost of energy, would push the economy into a winter downturn.

But expectations changed in recent weeks as Germany's vast industrial sector rebounded on the back of falling energy prices and the reopening of the key Chinese market after long Covid lockdowns.

While the economy appears to have avoided the worst, the first quarter reading was below expectations from analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet for an expansion of 0.2 per cent. — AFP



A drop in gas prices, which shot up after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has helped keep Germany's economy out of a recession. An employee of Uniper Energy Storage inspects the above-ground facilities of a natural gas storage facility at the Uniper Energy Storage facility in Bierwang, southern Germany on 10 June 2022. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Italian tourism sector expects return of Chinese tourists on May Day holiday

THE Italian tourism sector is expected to see a boom from the return of Chinese visitors around the upcoming May Day holiday.

“The Chinese return has been long-awaited here in Italy, and it's bringing huge benefits to our tourism industry,” said Cristiano Varotti, chief representative of the Italian National Tourist Board (ENIT) in China.

The global tourism industry has seen a rebound since

China relaxed its travel restrictions earlier this year, and resumed group tours for up to 60 destinations including Italy.

A five-day holiday that starts on April 29 is adding more momentum to soaring demand. The latest data from Chinese travel agency Trip.com Group shows that mainland outbound travel bookings for the holiday have multiplied by 18 times year-on-year. — Xinhua

BOJ review under Ueda may help end overreliance on monetary easing



The Bank of Japan maintained its monetary policy in its first decision under new governor Kazuo Ueda. **PHOTO: JIJI PRESS/AFP**

NEW Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda is keeping market expectations alive that he will slowly put the central bank on a path toward an exit from his predecessor's overreliance on unconventional monetary easing.

At Ueda's first policy-setting meeting, the BOJ decided to conduct a broad review of monetary policy over the past quarter of a century to learn its lessons and prepare for future policy maneuvers.

Ueda, the first postwar governor hailing from academia, denied the view that the review is linked to any specific policy

change for now, but added the BOJ will take appropriate steps based on economic developments, even before the assessment concludes over the next 18 months or so.

BOJ watchers are drawing a contrast with Ueda's predecessor Haruhiko Kuroda, who often made surprise policy moves that jolted financial markets.

They expect a more predictable and realistic BOJ under Ueda, a former university professor well-versed in monetary policy, given his increased focus on economic data and better messaging that will make it easier for those outside of the

central bank to get a picture of what the bank will do next.

“The review will give the BOJ the justification to tweak policy in the future,” said Yuichi Kodama, chief economist at the Meiji Yasuda Research Institute.

“Mr Ueda wants to make the BOJ more data-driven and better understood, knowing that his predecessor faced difficulty in communicating with the markets,” Kodama said. “That said, the scrapping of the yield cap program, if it happens, may end up coming as a surprise because communicating it beforehand will be difficult.” — Kyodo

US regulators admit mistakes were made ahead of regional bank failures

THE US Federal Reserve called for greater banking oversight while admitting to its own failures in a widely-anticipated report published Friday into the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) last month.

The report was one of two published Friday by Federal regulators highlighting recent issues with US oversight of the banking sector.

SVB's failure on March 10 after taking on too much interest-rate risk caused shock waves throughout the banking sector, and led to the failure of New York-based Signature Bank and the merger under pressure of Swiss investment banking giant Credit Suisse



The SVB Private logo is displayed on an ATM outside of a Silicon Valley Bank branch in Santa Monica, California on 20 March 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

with regional rival UBS.

“Following Silicon Valley Bank's failure, we must strengthen the Federal Reserve's supervision and regu-

lation based on what we have learned,” Federal Reserve vice chair for supervision Michael Barr wrote in a statement accompanying the report. — AFP

Intel, Samsung hammered as chips demand plummets

THE crucial semiconductor industry, that powers everything from personal computers, smartphones to fighter jets, suffered a dismal first quarter as demand plummeted for chips.

Intel on Thursday posted a massive fall in sales for the first quarter of 2023 because of a steep drop in the demand for semiconductors, especially those for PCs.

Rising prices, a global chip glut and poor demand for hardware also punished Intel's rival Samsung Electronics, which earlier on Thursday reported its worst quarterly profits in 14 years.

Intel's revenue fell 36 per cent to \$11.7 billion in the three-month period and the

semiconductor giant posted a loss of \$2.8 billion, its biggest ever for a quarter.

The loss and sales collapse were slightly less catastrophic than expectations, and the stock rallied three per cent in post-session trading.

"Intel is heavily dependent on the PC market and as we still seem to be seeing a slow-down in the PC market, consumer PCs especially, I would expect Intel to be having challenges," said Alan Priestley, an analyst at Gartner.

Intel is one of the world's leading semiconductor makers that makes a wide range of products, including the latest generation chips along with Taiwan's TSMC and South Korea's Samsung. — AFP



Visitors walk past South Korean multinational conglomerate Samsung stand at the Mobile World Congress, the telecom industry's biggest annual gathering, in Barcelona in February this year. PHOTO: AFP

Caterpillar shares fall despite strong results



Revenues rose across Caterpillar's three industrial divisions, with especially strong growth in North America compensating for much more modest increases in Asia and the Pacific. PHOTO: AFP

CATERPILLAR reported higher profits Thursday and offered an upbeat outlook on industrial

conditions, but shares fell amid worries over weakening global growth.

The maker of equipment for the construction, oil and gas and mining sectors reported \$1.9 billion in profits in the first quarter, up 26 per cent from the year-ago period on a 17 per cent jump in revenues to \$15.9 billion.

"We have a healthy level of demand," Chief Executive Jim Umpleby said on a conference call with analysts. "We feel good about the market conditions."

Revenues rose across Caterpillar's three industrial divisions, with especially strong growth in North America compensating for much more modest increases in Asia and the Pacific. — AFP

Tax rises fuel merchants' discontent in impoverished Gaza

HIKES in import and export tariffs imposed by the Islamist rulers of the Gaza Strip since last year have fuelled discontent among merchants in the impoverished, blockaded territory. In March, Gaza's Hamas rulers imposed new duties on the import of fruit and the export of fish.

Although the fruit levy was later reversed after traders went on strike, the seafood duty re-

mains. Traders refusing to pay risk having their perishable goods stalled at crossing points from the enclave.

The increases are the latest in a series of new levies on goods entering and exiting the coastal territory where 2.3 million Palestinians struggle to survive.

In July 2022, Hamas imposed tax increases on 24 other items including bottled water and cer-

tain clothes, forcing traders to remove some brands from the market when shoppers could not afford the newly inflated prices.

Wassim al-Hilu, a food importer-exporter and member of Gaza's chamber of commerce, said Gazans are already saddled with taxes paid to Israel -- which collects a range of fees on behalf of the Palestinian Authority (PA). — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Spain to invest 1.3 bn euros in vocational training

SPAIN will invest 1.3 billion euros (\$1.43 billion) in vocational training to fight youth unemployment, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Saturday.

The measure will create 824 new training centres for digital skills, 45,000 vocational training places and 1,500 classrooms for technology and entrepreneurship, he said.

It will be approved at a cabinet meet next week he added, during a Socialist party event in the northern city of Pamplona.

Boosting vocational training is the best way to reduce youth unemployment "which remains one of the main ills of our labour market," Sanchez said. — AFP

GSK profit slides on Haleon split, Covid drug sales slump

BRITISH drugs giant GlaxoSmithKline on Wednesday said net profit dropped 17 per cent in the first quarter after the demerger of its health care unit Haleon and lower Covid treatment sales.

Profit after tax fell to £1.5 billion (\$1.9 billion) compared with the first three months of 2022, GSK said in a statement. Revenue dropped more than three per cent to £7 billion.

Sales of its Covid antibody treatment Xevudy slumped 98 per cent to £31 million, offset by strong growth in other areas, including shingles and meningitis.

GSK, under chief executive Emma Walmsley, is seeking to concentrate on development of new drugs after overseeing the split of Haleon. "We are very focused on our upcoming launches... and on continuing to strengthen our pipeline" of drugs in development, she said in the statement.

The company on Tuesday said the EU's drug watchdog will study a new treatment for a common type of womb cancer for potential approval in the European market. — AFP

Buddha statue found in Egypt points to ancient India links

A statue of Buddha has been discovered in Egypt’s ancient seaport of Berenice on the Red Sea, shedding light on trade ties with India under the Roman empire.

A Polish-US mission discovered the statue “dating back to the Roman era while digging at the ancient temple in Berenice”, an antiquities ministry statement said on Wednesday.

The find has “important indications over the presence of trade ties between Egypt and India during the Roman era”, the head of Egypt’s supreme antiquities council Mostafa al-Waziri said.

The statue, with part of its right side and its right leg missing, measures 71

centimetres (28 inches) in height and portrays Buddha with a halo around his head and a lotus flower by his side.

Waziri said Berenice was one of the largest seaports in Roman-era Egypt, and was often the destination for ships from India laden with spices, semi-precious stones, textiles and ivory.

Egypt has unveiled many major archaeological discoveries in recent years, amid attempts to revive its vital tourism industry after years of political unrest and the Covid pandemic.

However, critics say the flurry of excavations has prioritised finds that grab media attention over hard academic research.

The crown jewel in the government’s plans is the long-delayed inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum at the foot of the pyramids in Giza.

The government plans to attract 30 million tourists a year by 2028, up from 13 million before the pandemic. — AFP

A handout picture released by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities on 27 April 2023 shows a statue of Buddha uncovered in Egypt’s ancient seaport of Berenice, now known as Medinet el Haras, shedding light on the ancient trade ties with India under the Roman empire. **PHOTO: HANDOUT/AFP**



G-7 agree to pursue “responsible AI” amid rapid spread of ChatGPT use



Digital and technology ministers from the Group of Seven industrial countries attend the final day of a two-day meeting in Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture, eastern Japan, on 30 April 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE Group of Seven advanced nations on Sunday agreed to promote “responsible” use of artificial intelligence as they seek to harness rapidly developing technologies such as AI bot ChatGPT that could be highly beneficial but also pose privacy concerns and risks of being misused.

As exchanges of data be-

come a key part of global trade, digital and technology ministers from Japan, the United States and European nations also affirmed during their two-day meeting in eastern Japan the need to establish an international arrangement to enhance the free flow of trusted data across national borders.

The gathering took place as the fast-moving pace of AI development has highlighted the need for international standards to govern the technology, with ChatGPT, made by U.S. venture OpenAI, grabbing global attention since the launch of its prototype in November.

ChatGPT, whose users reached 100 million around the world in less than three months, was trained on massive amounts of data, enabling it to process and simulate human-like conversations with users.

“Given that generative AI technologies are increasingly prominent across countries and sectors, we recognize the need to take stock in the near term of the opportunities and challenges of these technologies and to continue promoting safety and trust,” the G-7 ministers said in a joint declaration adopted after they wrapped up their talks in Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture. — Kyodo

About 1 in 5 US high school students witnesses community violence: CDC

ABOUT 1 in 5 high school students in the United States has seen violence first-hand among people who are not related, including homicides involving guns, CNN on Friday cited a new report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which calls community violence “a sig-

nificant public health concern.” In 2021, the most recent year for which data were available, 19.9 per cent of high school students reported ever witnessing community violence and 3.5 per cent reported carrying a gun during the past year, according to the CDC’s biennial Youth Risk Behavior

Surveillance reports, released on Thursday.

The data also showed that students who witnessed community violence were more likely to report carrying a gun, engaging in substance use and considering or attempting suicide, noted CNN in its report. — Xinhua

Singapore ‘should avoid economic contraction’: PM

SINGAPORE is expected to post slower economic growth this year but it “should avoid an outright contraction”, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said Sunday.

The Southeast Asian city-state’s economic performance is often seen as a barometer of the global environment because of its reliance on trade with the rest of the world.

The financial centre also has one of the busiest ports in the world which serves as a key link between Asia and the rest of the world.

In his annual May Day message, Lee said there is hope inflation will let up in the second half of the year and that retrenchment numbers “remain manageable”.

“But our external environment remains volatile, fraught with serious geopolitical tensions,” Lee warned, pointing to the risk of recession in the West, where interest rates continue to

be hiked to tame inflation. “The multilateral trading system is being progressively undermined by growing nationalist and protectionist sentiments, affecting international trade and cooperation.” Singapore’s economy expanded 3.6 per cent in 2022, slowing from the 8.9 per cent growth in 2021.

The Monetary Authority of Singapore has said the financial hub’s GDP is expected to grow between 0.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent this year. The city-state will have to adapt to the economic disruption of emerging industries and technologies, Lee added.

“Singapore’s survival depends on us staying open and doing business with the world,” he said.

“This means continually transforming our industries, enhancing existing capabilities and building new ones as we move into growth markets.” — AFP



A pilot boat sails past container vessels at the Pasir Panjang port terminal in Singapore on Tuesday, 3 January 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Pope warns against indifference in Orban’s Hungary

POPE Francis on Saturday warned against “the evils of indifference” while greeting refugees on the second day of a visit to Hungary where Prime Minister Viktor Orban has adopted a tough stance against immigration.

Around 600 refugees — mostly from Ukraine — and poor people gathered at St. Elizabeth’s Church in Budapest to listen to the pope. About a thousand more gathered outside.

After hearing accounts of their lives, including that of Oleg Yakovlev, a father-of-five who fled Ukraine, the pope thanked Hungary “for having welcomed — not only with generosity but also with enthusiasm — so many refugees from Ukraine”.

Orban’s government — in a departure from its usual anti-refugee position — has wel-

comed those fleeing the war in neighbouring Ukraine.

But activists say there is barely a support system in place. Orban’s insistence on maintaining ties with Moscow has also alienated Ukrainians.

The pope stressed the need to show “compassion toward all”.

He urged people to “help to uproot the evils of indifference and selfishness from society, from our cities and the places where we live, and to rekindle hope for a new, more just and fraternal world.”

On Friday, the 86-year-old Argentine stressed “the need for openness towards others”, warning against “withdrawing into oneself” in a speech to Orban and other government officials.

A Ukrainian woman outside the church, who only gave her name as Elena, on Satur-



Well-wishers play music as Pope Francis arrives at St Elizabeth of Hungary Church for a meeting with poor people and refugees during his visit in Budapest, Hungary on Saturday. PHOTO: AFP

day told AFP that she hoped to see the pope “who is a strong advocate of peace”.

“We have no problems here, but obviously when you are waiting to go back, you

don’t immerse yourself too deeply,” the 43-year-old dancer from north of Kyiv said. — AFP

Iran’s Raisi slams US presence in Middle East



About 900 US troops remain in Syria, most in the Kurdish-administered northeast, as part of a US-led coalition battling remnants of IS. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

IRAN’S President Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday slammed the United States’ presence in the Middle East, as he hosted his counterpart from neighbouring

Iraq for wide-ranging talks. Decades-old arch enemies the United States and Iran have vied for influence in Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion toppled

dictator Saddam Hussein. Both helped Iraq to defeat the Islamic State group, and the United States still has 2,500 non-combat troops in the country to provide it with advice and training. About 900 US troops remain in Syria, most in the Kurdish-administered northeast, as part of a US-led coalition battling remnants of IS. And the US Navy’s Fifth Fleet is based in the Gulf state of Bahrain. “We do not consider the presence of foreign forces and foreigners in the region to be useful,” Raisi told a joint news conference in Tehran with Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid. — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pro-Putin bikers launch rally bound for Berlin

HUNDREDS of Kremlin-loyal bikers under the banner of the Night Wolves motorcycle club took to the streets of Moscow Saturday for a “patriotic” rally across Europe. The motorcade headed by club founder and leader Alexandre Zaldastanov, known as “The Surgeon”, aims to complete the rally in Berlin by 9 May. Several participants at the rally waved Russian and Soviet flags. Some had the letter “Z” fixed to their bikes — a symbol of the “Russia’s special military operation” in Ukraine launched in February 2022. Dubbed “the roads of victory”, the rally adopted the traditional slogan of the Russian offensive in Ukraine: “We do not let down our own”. According to organizers, the motorcade plans reach by 1 May the city of Volgograd, formerly Stalingrad, the site of a bloody battle between Soviet and German Nazis troops that marked a turning point in WWII toward victory for the Soviet Union and its allies. — AFP

Thousands protest French government’s immigration plans

THOUSANDS of people, including many undocumented migrants, marched in Paris and other French cities Saturday, protesting planned changes to immigration laws and evictions from the Indian Ocean island of Mayotte. In the French capital,

demonstrators marched behind a banner proclaiming “No to the Darmanin law. Against repression, imprisonment and deportations, for a welcoming migration policy”, a reference to Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin. Organizers said that 2,300

people turned out for the protest in Paris. The immigration bill, which the government has just postponed until the autumn, “is a racist law, which aims to criminalize foreigners” and lead to “more deportations”, said Aboubacar, 31, an undocumented

Malian. “The problem is not immigration, it’s exploitation and rogue bosses,” said the post office sub-contractor who, with colleagues, has been fighting for 17 months to obtain his official documents to live and work in France.

The protesters also took aim at Operation Wuambushi (Take Back) being carried out by the authorities on the French Indian Ocean Island of Mayotte to send back illegal immigrants, most from neighbouring Comoros, currently housed in unsanitary shanty towns. — AFP

Pope warns
against
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In order to win the league a record-breaking six matches before the end of the season, Napoli have to hope closest challengers Lazio do not to win at Inter Milan in Sunday's early kick-off. PHOTO: AFP

Napoli ready to end long wait for Italian title

NAPOLI can finally end a 33-year wait for the Serie A title on Sunday when they take on Salernitana with potentially one more win enough to take them over the line.

Authorities in Naples are steeling themselves for a wave of partying should the current crop of stars emulate Diego Maradona and seal a third Scudetto for Napoli, with fans ready to unleash an explosion of joy after three decades of pent-up frustration.

In order to win the league a record-breaking six matches before the end of the season, Napoli have to hope closest challengers Lazio do not to win at Inter Milan in Sunday's early kick-off.

Luciano Spalletti's side will then seal the deal if they beat Salernitana in what will be a colourful stadium named after their Argentine icon.

Whether it comes on Sunday, midweek against Udinese or the following weekend

against Fiorentina, Spalletti says Napoli need to emulate icon Diego Maradona, the talisman behind their previous two titles in 1987 and 1990, and give fans the chance to let loose in southern Italy's biggest city over May Day weekend.

"It's above all about them who we should be thinking about... Let's think about them because they've had the joy of watching a group of committed players who give everything for them," added Spalletti. — AFP

Barca thrash Betis to stay ahead of rampant Madrid

BARCELONA thrashed 10-man Real Betis 4-0 on Saturday to move a step closer to winning La Liga for the first time since 2019.

Real Madrid beat Almeria 4-2 to cut the gap to eight points earlier on but Barcelona triumphed to restore their 11 point advantage.

Andreas Christensen, Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha struck for Barca at Camp Nou with Guido Rodriguez netting a late own goal to round off the rout. Edgar Gonzalez's early dismissal made it an easy night for Xavi Hernandez's side to protect their lead with six games remaining. — AFP

Ukrainian fencers training for Paris Games ready to boycott Olympics

UKRAINIAN fencers, gathered in Paris for a training camp, say they are outraged that Russians and Belarusians have been readmitted to international competition and will not compete against them. "It was a really shocking decision for all fencing family because nothing changed since the war started," Svitlana Sopit told AFP. "People in my country die every day," she said. "Military fighting for our freedom. We will not compete against Russians. They should not take part because it is unfair and impossible in a civilised world." — AFP

Myanmar women's squad leave for Cambodia ahead of SEA Games Women's Football Event



The Myanmar women's football team pose for the group photo with the coaching staff at Yangon International Airport before departure for Cambodia on 30 April 2023. PHOTO: MFF

MYANMAR women's football team left Yangon International Airport on 30 April and arrived at Phnom Penh International Air-

port, Cambodia on the same day to compete in the Thirty-second South-East Asian (SEA) Games Women's Football event which

will be hosted by Cambodia, according to the yesterday's statement issued by the Myanmar Football Federation.

The Myanmar women's national team will stay and take training in a Phnom Penh hotel with other contending teams, arranged by the host country.

Team Myanmar is placed in the group (A) with the Philippines, defending champion Viet Nam, and Malaysia, and all group matches will be played at the RCAF stadium. Team Myanmar will face the Philippines on 3 May (7:30 pm Myanmar Standard Time), Viet Nam on 6 May (3:30 pm MST), and the Malaysia on 9 May (3:30 pm MST), respectively.

The host country, Cambodia will broadcast the matches live free through social media, the MFF revealed. — KZL

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.