THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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

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

SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win offers certificates, titles to members of the Sangha who passed 75th (Diamond Jubilee) Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination

State Administration Council Vice-Chair Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win and the congregation take the Five Precepts from the Vice-Chairman Sayadaw of the Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Ovadacariya Committee yesterday.

A CEREMONY to honour 152 members of the Sangha who passed the 75th (Diamond Jubilee) Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination organized by the Department of Religious Affairs was held in conjunction with the certificate presentation at Maha Pasana Cave on Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill in Yangon yesterday morning.

Secretary of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Presiding Patron of Minkyaung Pahtamapyan Buddhist Learning Centre Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Dr Bhaddanta Candima Bhivamsa read the Saraniya Ovadakatha.

Union Minister for Religious Affairs U Ko Ko supplicated the religious affairs.

Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win offered titles and certificates to Ashin Jotikalankara and Ashin Vasavalankara from Mingun Tipitaka Nikaya Monastery on Moemeik Hill of Sagaing, Sagaing Region, who passed the Mula Abhidhammika exam.

SAC Member Dr Kyaw Tun also presented titles and certificates to Ashin Visuddha from Tipitaka Maha Gandawin Nikaya Monastery in Dagon Myothit (East) Township and Ashin Indakalankara of Mingun Tipitaka Nikaya Monastery on Moemeik Hill of Sagaing who passed Mula Abhidhammika exam and Ashin Gandama from Mingun Tipitaka Nikaya Monastery on Moemeik Hill of Sagaing who passed the Dighanikayakovida exam respectively.

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Myanmar Gazette

Heads of Service Organizations confirmed and appointed

1. The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of Dr Than Naing Tun as Director-General of the Department of Livestock and Aquacultural Research under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation after the one-year probationary period.

2. The State Administration Council has appointed U Kyaw Soe, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Civil Aviation under the Ministry of Transport and Communications, as Director-General of the same department on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

Announcement for local and foreign well-wishers to donate cash to cyclonic storm Mocha victims

1. AN announcement has been issued that well-wishers wishing to make donations for people who fell victim to the extremely severe cyclonic storm Mocha which hit Myanmar on 14-5-2023 can donate cash to Myanmar account OA-011834 and foreign account 1DA-0300086.
2. In this announcement, it is duly mentioned that our commitment to receiving donations extends to additional electronic payment systems and mobile payment systems. Further updates and notifications will be made in due course.
3. It has been announced that donations can be made to the previously announced phone number and to the account that was opened, and since it can be confusing to donate with a phone number, we have already made it possible to donate with a QR code instead of the phone number.
4. Donations can be made through KBZ Pay or Wave Money. If you wish to donate, please scan the QR codes provided by both KBZ Pay and Wave Money.

5. People make donations through CB Pay, AYA Pay and OK $, which are widely used to enhance convenience for donors.
6. To donate, please scan the QR code and enter the code provided within it.
7. The well-wishers can contact the following persons for further information: -

Nay Pyi Taw	Yangon	Mandalay
Daw Lei Lei Aye Director-General Department of Disaster Management 067-3404050 09-2021491	U Than Soe Director Department of Disaster Management Office of Yangon Region Department 09-250123885	U Aye Min Thu Director Department of Disaster Management Office of Mandalay Region Department 09-420708827
U Win Shwe Deputy Director-General Department of Disaster Management 067-3404048 09-254170011	Daw Than Than Win Deputy Director Department of Disaster Management Office of Yangon Region Department 09-420740160	
Daw Phyu Phyu Win Director Department of Disaster Management 067-3404316 09-43054844		

National Disaster Management Committee

Regional administration key to long-term interests of respective regions and country

— Administrative officials assigned in the region need to perform their duties conscientiously and correctly in the long-term interests of their own region and the country.

— If local authorities are absent to warn against unlawful acts, it will be terrible impacts on the interests of the region and the country in the future.

(Excerpts from the speech delivered by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at a meeting with businesspersons of the hotels and tourism sector in Thandwe, Rakhine State on 20 January 2023)

SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win offers certificates, titles to members ...

FROM PAGE-1

Union ministers U Ko Ko, U Myint Kyaing and Dr Thet Khaing Win, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein, Lt-Gen Thet Pon of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Zaw Hein and officials offered titles and certificates to two monks for Dighanikayakovida, eight monks for Dighabhanaka, eight monks for Vinaya Kovida, 37 monks for Vinayadhara, seven monks for Ubhato Vibhanga Kovida and 85 Ubhato Vibhangadhara exams respectively.

The Vice-Senior General and party listened to a sermon delivered by SSMNC Vice-Chair Chief Patron of the new Masoeyein Monastery in Mandalay Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Kesara Bhivamsa and shared merits gained.

Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe, council member Dr Kyaw Tun, Union ministers and party donated rice and alms to the monks who passed the 75th (Diamond Jubilee) Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination.

A total of 152 monks passed the 75th (Diamond Jubilee) Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination. So, three monks secured the Dighanikayakovida title, eight monks Vinaya Kovida title, seven monks Ubhato Vibhanga Kovida title, four monks Mula Abhidhammika title, eight Dighabhanaka title, 37 monks Vinayadhara title and 85 Ubhato Vibhangadhara title.

During the 75 years, 15 members of the Sangha have been offered the Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida title and seven members of the Sangha, Tipitakadhara title. — MNA/TTA

The Vice-Senior General offers the Mula Abhidhammika title.

The Vice-Senior General offers the Mula Abhidhammika title.

The Vice-Senior General, his wife and the congregation present alms rice and offerings to the recipient Sayadaws.

SAC Member Dr Kyaw Tun presents the Dighanikayakovida title.

Union Minister U Ko Ko offers the title to the recipient Sayadaw.

It is necessary to conduct training for athletes to have systematic skills and techniques as well as advanced techniques for international Olympic sports events: Vice-Senior General

SUFFICIENT providing of nutritious foods for servicemen from the institute and trainees is very important to fully implement the objectives of the institute, said Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win in inspecting the Defence Services Self-Defence and Sports Institute in Yemon Cantonment yesterday afternoon.

State Administration Council Vice-Chair Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice-Senior General Soe Win views the training session in Taekwondo at the Defence Services Self-Defence and Sports Institute in Yemon Cantonment on 23 May 2023.

At the Defence Services Self-Defence and Sports Institute in Yemon Cantonment, the commandant reported on the implementation of four military building tasks, and conducting the training courses in training years.

In his instructions, the Vice-Senior General said that conducting the training courses on basic and advanced sports and self-defence to Tatmadaw members from the Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) aims to turn out selected Tatmadaw athletes and outstanding soldier athletes as selected players of Myanmar national team so as to contribute to the enhancement of Myanmar's sports standard. During the period from 1997-98 to 2022-23, 37 self-defence and sports courses were conducted to turn out 412 Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) selected players and Myanmar national selected players.

The Vice-Senior General instructed the commandant to turn out selected national players via Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) selected players for bringing honour to the State during his assigned term and to set records on his endeavours during the period. In turning out the selected players, it is necessary to conduct training for athletes to have systematic skills and techniques as well as advanced techniques for international Olympic sports events. Sufficient provision of nutritious foods for servicemen from the institute and trainees is very important to fully implement the objectives of the institute. Hence, manageable-scale livestock farming tasks must be done in line with the policies of the State.

The Vice-Senior General views the training session in the football ground.

The Vice-Senior General and party viewed training of trainees in Taekwondo, boxing and volleyball events in the gymnasium and training sessions for trainees in the football ground. Then, he viewed round the training aid for sports events.

On arrival at Defence Services Orthopaedic Speciality Hospital (500-bed) in Mingaladon Township, the Vice-Senior General viewed round officers, other ranks and families receiving medical treatments at the hospital, asked about their health conditions and presented foodstuffs and assistance.

The Vice-Senior General presented cash awards for health staff serving duties at the hospital to officials. — MNA/TTA

The Vice-Senior General comforts patients at the Defence Services Orthopaedic Speciality Hospital (500-bed) in Mingaladon Township.

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DPM MoTC Union Minister inspects Mocha-hit areas in Rakhine State

STATE Administration Council Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Minister for Transport and Communications Admiral Tin Aung San arrived at Sittway University yesterday and inspected the cleanup activities and repairing works together with Union Minister Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and Rakhine State Chief Minister U Htein Lin.

During the inspection, he instructed the need to complete the repair works in time before the opening of universities and prepare the learning activities as usual.

Then, the Deputy Prime Minister and party went to the construction sites of a double-layer Bailey bridge at Thechaung Bridge on Sittway-Palinpyin road and a single-layer Bailey bridge at the location of Darpaing Bridge.

Deputy Prime Minister Admiral Tin Aung San inspects the construction of the Darpaing Bridge in Sittway yesterday.

These bridges were destroyed during Cyclone Mocha on 14 May and the Ministry of Construction saved the construction materials on 16 May. The ministry constructed the Thechaung Bridge as a 140-ft long double-layer Bailey bridge while the Darpaing Bridge a 60-ft long single-layer Bailey bridge on 18 May. The operations were completed on 22 May and the people and vehicles can use the bridges as usual.

The Sittway-Palinpyin road is a Class A inter-village road. The IDP camps are also located there and the road connects nine villages including Palinpyin village.

At noon, the Deputy Minister and party watched the departure of Kaladan 4, 5 and 6 vessels that carry construction materials and foodstuffs from Phaungtawgyi jetty of Myanma Port Authority in Sittway.

The Kaladan 4 vessel carries 198.7 tonnes of construction materials and foodstuffs to Kyauktaw and Ponnagyun townships while Kaladan 5 to Rathedaung and Maungtaw townships with 195.6 tonnes and Kaladan 6 to Pauktaw, MraukU, Minbya and Myebon townships with 248.93 tonnes.

The Thechaung Bridge.

The vessel carrying relief supplies is seen ready for leaving for Rakhine State.

During the coordination meeting on rehabilitation processes held at the State Government Office, the officials of respective committees reported on the arrival and distribution of foodstuffs and matters related to power, transportation, water, education and health issues.

Then, the Deputy Prime Minister gave proper instructions and concluded the meeting.

Of 1,233 mobile stations of four telecom operators in Rakhine State, 904 stations failed due to Cyclone Mocha. Over 400 telecom staff from regions and states including locals conducted the maintenance of underground and aboveground fibre cables, microwave links, downtown cable network and mobile communication stations. To date, 647 mobile stations (79.16 per cent) have been repaired and communication services have resumed in Rakhine State. — MNA/KTZH

104 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 23 May, total figure registers 638,220

MYANMAR'S COVID-19-positive cases rose to **638,220** after **104** new cases were reported on 22 May 2023 according to the Ministry of Health.

Therefore, a total of **10,588,357** laboratory samples were examined and the confirmed COVID-19 cases reached **638,220**.

The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **617,095** including **104** new recoveries.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country registered **19,494** on 23-5-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic. COVID-19 information can be browsed on the internet page moh.gov.mm of the Ministry of Health. — GNLM

National Security Adviser Lt-Gen Yar Pyae leaves for Russian Federation

The Myanmar delegation headed by Lt-Gen Yar Pyae is seen at Yangon International Airport before leaving for the Russian Federation yesterday.

SAC Member Union Minister for the Ministry of the Union Government Office National Security Adviser Lt-Gen Yar Pyae led the delegation and left for the Russian Federation yesterday evening by air to attend the 11th meeting of high-ranking officials on security issues to be held in Moscow from May 23 to 25 at the invitation of Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Mr Nikolay Patrushev.

SAC Member Union Minister for the Ministry of the Union Government Office National Security Adviser Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and delegation were seen off by officials from the Ministry of the Union Government Office at Yangon International Airport. — MNA/TS

Political parties allowed to be established continue applying for registration

THOSE who want to establish a political party are applying to the Union Election Commission by stating the name of the party they want to establish.

To date, 13 groups have applied for the right to establish a party. Out of the groups that applied for this, five political parties have been allowed to be established.

Among the five political parties allowed to be established, the Democratic Forces Labour Party applied to the Commission yesterday to register as a political party under the Registration of Political Parties Rule 7 within 30 days from the date of approval for the establishment of the party.

The five political parties that were allowed to be established have already applied for registration, and the Union Election Commission is processing the verification. — MNA/KZL

MoFA Union Minister meets MISIS Boards members

UNION Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe delivered the speech at the meeting with the members of the Senior Advisory Board and the Executive Board of the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS), which was held at the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies' Meeting Room in Yangon yesterday.

Union Minister U Than Swe holds talks with members of the MISIS boards yesterday in Yangon.

In his opening remarks, the Union minister explained the implementation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in accordance with the Road Map and the objectives defined by the State Administrative Council and, discussed the current international affairs. He also shared information on cooperation with the regional organizations and international communities on natural disaster relief for the people of Cyclone Mocha-affected areas.

Then, the Boards' members of the MISIS reported to the Union Minister on the current activities undertaken by the Institute and briefed on academic-related matters from the scholar's perspectives. Based upon their discussions, the Union minister provided the necessary guidance for the future activities of the Institute.

Present at the meeting were the members of the Senior Advisory Board and the Executive Board of MISIS, the directors-general and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — MNA

Public Notice for Submitting Objection

1. According to the application of the Myanmar Farmers' Development Party with its headquarters located at No C/10, Myotaw Street II, Ward 10, Chantha Shwepyi Housing, Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon Region, to the Union Election Commission to be established and registered as a political party, the name of the party, the flag and emblem to be used by the party and the public objection were advertised in the daily newspapers released on 18-3-2023.

2. There was an objection to the party flag and emblem to be used by this organization, and the Union Election Commission found that it violated Rule 8 (a) of the Registration of Political Parties, so it was revised.

3. Therefore, if someone wants to object to the mentioned party flag revised and prepared by the Myanmar Farmers' Development Party, they can object to the Union Election Commission with valid evidence within seven days from the date of this announcement to the public under Rule 14 (d) of the Registration of Political Parties.

Flag of the Myanmar Farmers' Development Party

Emblem of the Myanmar Farmers' Development Party

Union Election Commission

Public Notice for Submitting Objection

1. Under Section 5 of the Political Parties Registration Law, Union Development Party, with its headquarters located at No 261, corner of Hninzi Street and 21st Street, Aungthaya Ward, Pobbathiri Township, Zeyathiri District, Nay Pyi Taw, submitted to the Union Election Commission on 19-5-2023 that the party's name, flag and emblem will be used as described.

2. Therefore, those who want to object to the mentioned party name, flag and emblem that will be used by the Union Development Party, can object to the Union Election Commission with valid evidence within seven days from the date of this announcement. It is announced to the public under Rule 14 (d) of the Registration of Political Parties.

Flag of Union Development Party

Emblem of Union Development Party

Union Election Commission

Myanmar's Information Minister attends 18th Asia Media Summit

Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn speaks on the opening occasion of the 18th Asia Media Summit in Indonesia on 23 May 2023.

MYANMAR delegation led by Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn attended the opening ceremony of the 18th Asia Media Summit held at Grand Hyatt Hotel Ballroom in Denpasar City in Bali of Indonesia yesterday.

At the opening ceremony, Vice-President of Indonesia Dr K H Ma'ruf Amin, Director of Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) Ms Philomena Gnanapragasam, President Director of Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) Mr Iman Brotoseno, Executive Secretary and Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Ms Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana and AIBD Vice-President Mr Razal Giovanni Aportadera Jr gave the speech of greeting respectively.

Then, at the ministerial level discussion of the Summit, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn, Minister for Information of Cambodia Dr Kheiu Kanharith, Minister for Information and Broadcasting of Bangladesh Dr Hasan Mahmud, Minister for Communications and Information of Samoa Mr Toelupe Poumulinuku Onesemo and Deputy Minister of the Prime Minister's Office of the Republic of F'iji Sakiusa Tubuna led the discussion on the topic of Role of Media in Economic Recovery.

During the event, the Union minister said the Vaccination Management Information System was drafted systematically in Myanmar for COVID-19 vaccination processes for the public. The containment of the disease and public awareness campaigns were also conducted in a timely manner. The COVID-19 relief fund was established and disbursed low-interest loans to the small and medium-scale enterprises affected to resume their industries as quickly as possible and it was informed to the public in a timely manner.

He also added that the loan was also granted to the most affected enterprises in the movie, music, theatrical and press sectors at the same time. A new media development department was formed recently to revitalize the private media which were on the verge of collapse due to COVID-19. COVID-19 is under control in Myanmar to a certain extent and the initial programmes to revive the economy are being implemented.

The Ministry of Information organized State-level ceremonies like the film academy awards ceremony that attract more public interest and success than before the period of COVID-19.

Moreover, the severe cyclonic storm Mocha hit the country through the areas near Sittway of the Rakhine coast with winds up to 135 miles per hour on 14 May but the country arranged preventive measures and preparations to overcome the disaster with a minimum of losses.

The state-owned and privately-owned media outlets released the notices in time and it saved thousands of lives.

The country will keep cooperating with international organizations in media cooperation works.

Then, the Union minister attended the ministerial meeting relating to the information sector of Asia-Pacific regions and a working luncheon hosted by the information department of Indonesia and AIBD. During the meeting, the Union minister put forward the attacking danger of fake news and misinformation and AIBD responsible persons and attendees responded with their understanding that collaborative efforts will be made to curb fake news and produce true news and information instead.

The discussion was continued in the afternoon and the attendants of information-related ministers, deputy ministers, heads of broadcasting stations in and outside the Asia-Pacific Region, representatives from government and private broadcasting institutions, media professionals, decision-makers and the officials of AIBD cordially discussed the cooperation with modern technologies in the broadcasting sector.

The 18th Asia Media Summit was co-chaired by AIBD and TVRI from 21 to 25 May. About 350 representatives from 38 countries within and outside the Asia-Pacific Region. The gala dinner and award-giving ceremony were held at Grand Hyatt Hotel in the evening. The Union minister attended the event and took part in the presentation of awards such as the Best TV Programme Award, the Best Radio Programme Award, the Special Jury Award on TV Programme, and the Award for Sustainability and Green Technology.

The Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) was established in August 1977 under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The AIBD currently works with 26 Full Members (countries) and 50 partner organizations in Asia, Pacific, Europe, Africa, Arab States and North America. The MRTV of the Ministry of Information became a full member of AIBD in 1997.

The Asia Media Summit is held annually: the 14th Asia Media Summit was held in China in 2017 while the 15th Asia Media Summit in India in 2018, the 16th Asia Media Summit in Cambodia in 2019, the 17th Asia Media Summit held in Malaysia online in 2022 and the 18th Asia Media Summit in Indonesia in 2023. The Asia Media Submit was not held in 2020 and 2021 due to the outbreak of COVID-19. — MNA/KTZH

The office building of the Internal Revenue Department in Yangon.

e-Registration Management System launched for taxpayers

THE Internal Revenue Department announced that the e-Registration Management System will be launched for taxpayer registration commencing on 23 May.

The Internal Revenue Department implemented the e-Registration Management System for taxpayers, intending to make the process easier and faster for the public. By using the e-Registration Management System, taxpayers can make the registration through the Internet without having to go to the tax office.

In addition, companies, organizations, non-profit organizations and individual private entrepreneurs are requested to use the e-Registration Management System beginning on 23 May.

The e-Registration Management System have to be uniformly adopted in the taxpayer registration processes. — TWA/MKKS

OPINION

Guarantee that people enjoy safety and security

THE safety of the people to be free from dangers is one of the duties that governments at different levels must serve to take responsibility for protecting the life and property of citizens, organizations and institutions in the territory of the nation against intimidation and coercion.

In order to take coverage of challenges which are larger and larger in the security sector for the people, relevant government institutions and organizations have to conduct investigations so as to successfully handle the possible threats. As such, it is necessary to manage reforms in these institutions and shape the best work establishment. In so doing, they have to coordinate with each other and carefully make a deliberation over the possibly-earned benefit and expenditure concerning the procedures.

The safety and security sector for the people is crucial for attracting travellers to the regions in enhancing the tourism sector and for a drive to increase the productivity of residents from relevant areas. On the other hand, such a sector is very important for economic development but it faces a lesser budget amount, restrictions in sources and deficiency of data system.

The security organizations for the people comprise law enforcement bodies, fire extinguishing bodies and emergency medical teams. These bodies need to carefully handle drug abuse, invasion, squatter, burglary, disturbance, juvenile delinquent, illegal residences, noise, undisciplined disposal, inappropriate social measures, unruliness and other inappropriate social movements.

Generally, the security organizations for the people have to serve the duties of protecting the people to enjoy the fruits of safety measures against dangerous events which consist of distinct dangers, possible injurious cases, crimes or loss and damage in natural disasters.

In practice, these institutions may face difficulties to prevent criminal cases and international terror acts committed by groups depending on geographical conditions, languages or financial situations. It may be difficult to handle these cases based on technical skills and administrative measures. As such, political institutions, public organizations and the majority of services have to closely cooperate with each other in giving security guarantees to the people and maintaining a peaceful and stable environment leading to a booming economy.

The safety and security sector for the people is crucial for attracting travellers to the regions in enhancing the tourism sector and for a drive to increase the productivity of residents from relevant areas. On the other hand, such a sector is very important for economic development but it faces a lesser budget amount, restrictions in sources and deficiency of data system.

In successive eras, people and the country have been facing terrible threats to their safety and security but they could overcome these challenges successfully through collaborative efforts in cooperation with law enforcement bodies and local authorities. Naturally, more and more challenges will come out in the society. So also, it is sure that the people would never degrade their concerted efforts to overcome these challenges. ■

ARTICLE

If we meet COVID again

By Saya Norm

FOUR years had passed. The pandemic seems completely disappeared from the planet. Death by covid-19 infections has dropped substantially in many countries.

Most people get vaccinated against the deadly disease and some had even booster jabs. World Health Organization made an announcement to end the declaration of COVID as a pandemic disease this May. The world became a beautiful and pleasant place again. Social animals came out of the house and gathered in public places. Bazaars, supermarkets, pagodas, swimming pools, beaches and tourist attraction sites were crowded.

Is Covid-19 clear? No. Mutated variants of SARS-CoV-2 named Omicron variants are waiting ready to start the next level pandemic The decision of WHO to remove COVID from the pandemic list is, I think, too speedy. There should be a transitional monitoring period for the certainty of worldwide infection. At present, most people think that Omicron is weaker than the delta variant. The renowned research centres announced that death by current Omicron variants is ninety per cent lower than by delta variants.

Moreover, many people assume that the COVID-causing SARS-CoV-2 virus attacks only the respiratory tract because SARS means 'severe acute respiratory syndrome'. In practice, it attacks not only the respiratory tract but also the organs with rich ACE-2 receptors and leaving complications. (See the picture). Long COVID, a situation with complications that last for three months or more is very popular among sufferers and medical scientists.in Western countries. They are finding ways to manage the situation successfully up-to-date and have not succeeded yet. Both Omicron and delta variants could leave Long COVID and it became a head-aching problem.

After four years, the virus was almost gone. People got vaccinated to stay safe and the World Health Organization declared the virus over. The world is now much better and safer. **ILLUSTRATION FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ FREEPIK**

No mask, no hand washing and no social distancing are seen in many places in Myanmar because of a lack of good health knowledge and it is very horrible.

Is Omicron really weaker? It is too early to make such a remark. Recently, Omicron variants BA 5.2 and BF7 (WHO approved) had taken millions of lives in one of our neighbouring countries. During this outbreak, incinerators in many cemeteries of that country worked 24/7 but couldn't catch up with the arrival of dead bodies. And its economic growth had collapsed. Mortality in Omicron infection is lower than delta's but the former is more dangerous. Why? Because anyone with Omicron infection, regardless of vaccination status or whether or not they have symptoms, can spread to others. In addition, Omicron can cause reinfection, even in people who have recovered from Corid-19.

The longer the virus continues to circulate, the greater the chances of a new mutation emerging. That is why we are very difficult to get out of the vicious cycle. Whether we like it or not, we must continue to live in the new normal lifestyle.

Even for the fully vaccinated person, there is no full guarantee to be free from COVID yet so anyone should follow the old COVID prevention rules such as Social distancing, hand washing and mask-wearing. They are natural, practical, affordable and easy to follow for everyone. Most infections are originated from airborne or touch. A sneeze can travel about 8 meters (27 feet) depending on the temperature, humidity, the size of the droplet expelled and the lung capacity of the sneezing person. The travelling distance of respiratory droplets is between three to six feet in most cases thus people should stay away at least six feet from each other.

Avoiding man-to-man contact is the best way to reduce infection. Going to public places such as bazaar is inevitable, wearing the mask is the second-best way. Masks with a respirator is most suitable but even cheap surgical mask can block respiratory droplets going outside and coming inside. They prevent easy touching of hand to mouth, nose and eye of the wearer. Hand washing is an additional protection method to remove the virus that is carried when we go outside.

However, these three procedures couldn't prevent the infection 100 per cent, they could reduce the risk of infection and lower the amount of virus that infects thus survival chance is increased and symptom severity is decreased. For a fully immunized person (even if that one had a chronic disease) they may assure to save live. Although the Omicron variants have increased infectability and some fatality, modern medicine now has potent antivirals (e.g., Palaxovid) which are more reliable than in delta waves. But they are available only on prescription and should be used in well-equipped hospital environment. It doesn't mean you are helpless. There are herbs for COVID which saved many lives in previous episodes. King of bitters (Say Khar Gyi), Giloy (Sindon Manwe) and Cinnamon (Thit Kyan Poe) have antiviral properties and are recommended by renowned research centres. In my experience, a combination of these three herbs helps relieve the symptom severity within five days and complete recovery within seven days in most mild to moderate COVID infections. Giloy has ACE-2 receptor blocking property and further research should proceed.

When we try to prevent COVID, proper response of the immune system is vital. To get sufficient protection from vaccination, it must work well. To overcome the COVID infection, it must work properly, avoiding two extremes of overdoing and underdoing. The proper function of this system relies on good nutritional support. Some vitamins and minerals such as C, D3, E, Zinc and selenium are part of this. Taking them from food sources is preferred but during the outbreak, we should take them as supplements for sufficient therapeutic doses. Some naturopathic practitioners added quercetin, NAC, Omega-3 and probiotics to the list. Not so bad.

We are still in the middle of the COVID era. Omicron had changed its genetic sequence in 26 positions at spike protein and enhanced transmissibility as well as circumvention of the immune system (even in immunized persons). When it will enhance its virulency is unpredictable. In fact, Omicron is still travelling worldwide and producing mutants with unseen properties on a small scale. The world experienced that this small-scale flame later became a big flame in the past. So we shouldn't be negligent about COVID and keep always alert. Removing COVID from the pandemic list won't mean that the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been eliminated. Scientists hope COVID to follow the path of seasonal flu and new infections to occur at a fairly constant rate, as opposed to the big, unpredictable waves we have experienced so far.

Nonetheless, COVID is continued to live. But the good arsenals, good knowledge of the pandemic and ongoing studies could be helpful you don't have to worry so much.

We can face it with the collective efforts of proper vaccination, following COVID prevention rules, taking balanced nutrition (including supplements), and keeping good sleep and a calm mind. If someone is infected, unfortunately, there are better drugs and treatments than before. If we meet COVID again, Let's face it efficiently with every way and means we have. ■

WHO members approve $9 billion budget

The portion of funding from mandatory membership fees – "assessed contributions" calculated according to wealth and population – had dwindled to below one-fifth, with the rest coming from "voluntary contributions".

THE World Health Organization on Monday won basic approval for a US$6.83 billion (S$9.19 billion) budget over the next two years, including a 20 per cent hike in mandatory membership fees.

As the United Nations health agency kicked off its annual decision-making assembly, member states in a key committee approved the budget without objection.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus hailed the move as "historic and a big milestone".

The budget still needs to be approved by all the member states at the end of the 10-day event, but this is basically a formality.

The decision comes after 2022's assembly agreed to a dramatic overhaul of WHO funding.

Shaken by the Covid-19 pandemic, countries agreed on the need to provide more reliable and stable funding.

The WHO is largely financed by its 194 member states.

The portion of funding from mandatory membership fees – "assessed contributions" calculated according to wealth and population – had dwindled to below one-fifth, with the rest coming from "voluntary contributions".

This left WHO with limited leeway to respond to crises like Covid-19, the war in Ukraine and other health emergencies.

Last year's assembly agreed to gradually increase the membership fee portion to 50 per cent by the 2030-2031 budget cycle at the latest.

The 2024-2025 budget cycle marks the first incremental increase, with countries agreeing to hike their assessed contributions by 20 per cent from the 2022-2023 budget.

In return for the funding shift, WHO has begun implementing 96 reforms, including towards more transparency on its financing and hiring and broader accountability.

Dr Tedros told the assembly earlier Monday that WHO so far had implemented 42 of the requested reforms "and 54 are ongoing".

SOURCE: AFP

Shaken by the Covid-19 pandemic, countries agreed on the need to provide more reliable and stable funding. A child runs past a wall mural depicting healthcare workers wearing face masks along a road in New Delhi, India on 21 March 2021. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ SAJJAD HUSSAIN /AFP**

Relief materials from Thailand arrive for storm-affected people

THE Thai private sector, the Thai Red Cross Society and the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Association in Thailand donated humanitarian aid of temporary tents, shelters, solar lamps, rescue kits, insecticidal mosquito nets, and foodstuffs including canned fish and instant noodles by two Royal Thai Air Force C-130 planes which arrived at Yangon International Airport yesterday.

The donated provisions were handed over to Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe by Thai Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Mongkol Visitstump.

Yangon Region government's Minister of Social Affairs U Aung Win Thein and officials from the Disaster Management Centre and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the handover event.

Union Minister U Than Swe receives the humanitarian aid from Thai Ambassador Mr Mongkol Visitstump at Yangon International Airport yesterday.

The humanitarian aid donated by the Thai private sector, the Thai Red Cross Society and the Thailand-Myanmar Friendship Association will be sent and distributed to the people in the areas affected by Mocha. — MNA/TS

Opening ceremony of Aerospace Museum, handover ceremony of world's first cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin Bronze Statue held at Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University

THE opening ceremony of the Aerospace Museum and the handover ceremony of the world's first cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin statue were held at Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University in Meiktila Township of Mandalay Region yesterday.

The ceremonies were held to receive the bronze statue of the world's first cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin donated by the Russian Federation, to promote the existing Myanmar-Russia relationship and create a site for the young students to study the history of aerospace and educational development of Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University.

The documentary group photo of the opening event of the Aerospace Museum and the handover of the world's first cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin Bronze Statue.

Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr Myo Thein Kyaw attended the events together with Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Myo Aung, governmental officials, Russian Ambassador to Myanmar Dr Nikolay Listopadov, the rector, faculty members and students of the university.

During the opening ceremony of the Aerospace Museum, Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Myo Aung, Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Kyaw Kyaw Min and Permanent Secretary Dr Sai Kyaw Naing Oo of the Ministry of Science and Technology cut the ceremonial ribbon to launch the event.

Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Kyaw made an opening speech and Russian Ambassador Dr Nikolay Listopadov remarked during the handover ceremony of the world's first cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin statue.

Then, the Union minister and Russian ambassador pressed the electric button for the statue, observed the museum and had a documentary photo taken together with officials. — MNA/KTZH

Cyclone Mocha batters 62,836 acres of crops

A total of 62,836 acres of cultivated crops were destroyed in Cyclone Mocha-hit Rakhine State as well as in Magway Region, Mandalay Region, Sagaing Region, and Ayeyawady Region, which were partially affected by the storm.

A total of 605 acres of banana trees, 1,345 acres of betel nut trees, 58 acres of betel trees, 231 acres of thatch, five acres of chicken drumsticks and 1,709 acres of orchards from Rakhine State, 109 acres of summer paddy 49,569 acres of summer sesame, eight acres of winter sunflowers, 22 acres of sunflower and 6,766 acres of green gram from Magway Region, 350 acres of summer sesame and 17 acres of green gram from Mandalay Region, 902 acres of summer sesame and 1,065 acres of green gram from Sagaing Region, and 75 acres of banana trees from Ayeyawady Region were battered by the storm. — MNA/KZL

Cyclone Mocha kills 531,913 animals

A total of 531,913 animals including 4,209 buffaloes, 7,666 cows, 2,295 pigs, 738 goats and 517,005 chickens were killed in the event of Cyclone Mocha in Rakhine State and its affected areas: Bago, Magway and Ayeyawady Regions.

The Cyclone killed 4,206 buffaloes, 7,593 cows, 2,283 pigs, 738 goats and 489,205 chickens from 10 townships in Rakhine State, 24,500 chickens in Bago Region, three buffaloes, 73 cows and 12 pigs from six townships in Magway Region, and 3,300 chickens from two townships in Ayeyawady Region. —MNA/KZL

Tatmadaw (Navy) transports supplies to people in Mocha-hit Rakhine State

Relief supplies and machinery are loaded onto the naval vessel to deliver them to Rakhine State.

A 56-metre landing craft from the Tatmadaw (Navy) carrying 114.6022 tonnes of hardwood docked at the Essar jetty in Sittway yesterday morning to deliver the necessary relief materials to the areas affected by Cyclone Mocha in Rakhine State.

Similarly, another 56-metre landing craft from Tatmadaw (Navy) carrying eight troops from the Directorate of Military Engineering, one construction vehicle WA-320 Wheel Loader, and three MI-2 Excavators totalling 35 tonnes were transported to Sittway from Angumaw port.

The delivery of relief items has been properly handed over to the officials and will be distributed to the people affected by the storm as soon as possible. — MNA/KZL

Tatmadaw (Air) continues transporting foodstuffs, relief items to Rakhine State

THE relief materials and food items contributed by families of Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) and well-wishers and relief supplies provided by the National Disaster Management Committee for local communities affected by the natural disaster in Rakhine State are being transported by Tatmadaw aircraft, helicopters and vessels.

Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) families' donated foodstuffs and clothes were transported from Nay Pyi Taw airport to Sittway airport one time by Tatmadaw plane.

The ATOM and MPT communication accessories, food, solar panels, batteries, clothes, generators and rescue equipment were also transported from Mingaladon Airport to Sittway Airport four times by Tatmadaw plane.

Officials in the respective areas received relief supplies and will continue to distribute them to storm victims. — MNA/KZW

Relief goods are loaded onto the Tatmadaw aircraft to transport them to Rakhine State.

Tatmadaw senior officers, officials assist in rehabilitation work in Rakhine State

UNDER to Section 11 of the Natural Disaster Management Law, the State Administration Council declared the areas damaged by Cyclone Mocha as areas affected by natural disasters and appointed senior military officers to carry out rehabilitation activities in the areas mentioned in the announcement.

Lt-Gen Lu Aye from the office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), currently in Kyaukpyu, Rakhine State, to perform rehabilitation tasks, and officials inspected the restoration work in schools and monastic schools damaged by Cyclone Mocha and donated offerings to monks.

Lt-Gen Lu Aye cordially greets students during his inspection tours in Kyaukpyu.

Likewise, Lt-Gen Aye Win from the office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), who arrived in Buthidaung, Maungtaw District, met the township-level natural disaster management committees and departmental personnel at the meeting hall of the Buthidaung General Administration Department to discuss the situation of damage caused by the storm and the distribution and support of relief materials for the people affected by the storm, and he coordinated the necessary matters.

In addition, Maj-Gen Aung Myo Tun from the office of the Commander-in-Chief, currently in Rathedaung to perform rehabilitation tasks, and officials observed the distribution of food and clothing supplies and clean water at the Laykan village-tract and fulfilled the requirements.

Furthermore, Maj-Gen Soe Naing Oo from the office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), currently in Thandwe, and responsible personnel examined the departmental buildings that were damaged by the storm and coordinated the necessary activities to carry out restoration work as soon as possible.

Additionally, Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Soe, who arrived in Myebon, MraukU District, and officials inspected the collective cleaning work carried out by rescue and relief teams at the damaged basic education high schools in Thaetan and Myebon. Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Oo, currently in Manaung, and responsible persons visited the schools hit by the storm to donate CI sheets provided by using the Rakhine State government fund and observed the medical team providing healthcare services to locals at the Manaung Public Hospital.

Similarly, Brig-Gen Win Ko Ko, currently in Tiddim, Chin State, and responsible personnel presented the CI sheets for the basic education high school in Saungpee Village that was damaged by the storm and visited the mission there to donate rice, cooking oil, salt and beans. Brig-Gen Khin Maung Aye, who arrived in Matupi, and officials also donated rice, cooking oil, salt and beans to the Theravada Buddhist monastery there.

Also, Brig-Gen Tint Swe, currently in Maungtaw, and the responsible persons observed the damaged conditions of schools, residences, and departmental buildings in Maungtaw. Then, they went to the Hlaphoekhaung temporary resettlement camp to inspect the damage caused by the storm. — MNA/CT

School enrolment day ceremony for 2023-2024 academic year held

THE ceremony for the school enrolment day for the 2023-2024 academic year was held at the hall of No 1 Basic Education High School in Zeyathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning.

Students from No 6 Basic Education High School of Zabuthiri Township opened the ceremony by singing the song entitled 'School Enrolment Weekend'.

Then, Union Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe, in his address, said that measures are being taken to ensure that all school-age children go to school, to turn out educated individuals equipped with comprehensive knowledge and skills, and to make sure that children finish at least middle school (KG+9). Starting from the 2016-2017 academic year, the KG+12 education system is being implemented and new curricula for G 9 and G 12 will be introduced in the coming 2023-2024 academic year.

The school enrolment day ceremony for the 2023-2024 academic year in progress in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, attended by Union Minister Dr Nyunt Pe.

Next, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman U Tin Oo Lwin delivered a speech. Then, the Union minister, the Nay Pyi Taw Council chairman and members, the permanent secretary and the directors-general from the Ministry of Education presented texts, exercise books, ball-point pens, pencils and uniforms to officials.

Finally, students from No 1 BEHS Zeyathiri Township performed the "Zar Ti Marn" song. — MNA/KZW

Students and parents throng for school enrolment in schools across states and regions

Zabuthiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw.

Yangon.

Minbu (Sagu) Township, Magway Region .

Hpa-an District, Kayin State.

Khamaukkyi, Taninthayi Region.

Wuntho, Kawlin District of Sagaing Region.

NyaungU, Mandalay Region.

Pathein, Ayeyawady Region.

Biggest fines under EU privacy law

THE European Union rolled out its mammoth data privacy regulation five years ago this week, and has since handed down billions in fines.

Ireland's data watchdog smashed the record for an individual fine on Monday when it demanded 1.2 billion euros ($1.3 billion) from Meta over its transfers of personal data between Europe and the United States.

Here are some of the worst offenders of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):

Mark Zuckerberg's social media firm — owner of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp — has racked up roughly two billion euros in fines. Breaches by Meta have included a mega-leak of some 533 million phone numbers and emails, mishandling children's data and repeatedly failing to give a legal basis for its data collection.

Meta, along with the likes of Google, Twitter and LinkedIn has its European headquarters in Ireland, a low-tax regime that has courted big tech.

The Irish privacy watchdog has been reluctant to hand down big fines but said in a statement on Monday that the EU's central authorities had ordered it to collect 1.2 billion euros from Meta.

Austrian campaign group NOYB said it had spent millions in a decade-long legal battle to force the Irish watchdog to tackle the case.—AFP

The European Union made a law called the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) five years ago to protect people's personal information. **PHOTO: LIONEL BONAVENTURE /AFP**

Beauty brand Lush unveils new Green Hub but business comes first

Workers dip orchid leaves into soap and hang them to dry in the soaps department at Lush cosmetic company in Poole, England, on 9 May 2023. **PHOTO: ADRIAN DENNIS/AFP**

KNOWN for its colourful shampoo bars and fruity bath bombs, UK-based cosmetics brand Lush has opened the doors of its new Green Hub as part of efforts to expand its in-house circular recycling.

The facility at Lush's Poole headquarters in southern England sees its signature black plastic pots granulated into plastic pellets before being remoulded, while a special unit treats wastewater.

Since its early days, Lush — now a staple of the British high street — has pledged its commitment to reducing its environmental impact and ethically sourcing ingredients.

But business remains a key driver of its decisions.

"We're keen environmentalists but we're not fools. If the customers want this, then we'll strive to provide this," Mark Constantine, CEO and Lush co-founder, said in an interview with AFP.

Constantine was among six friends, including his wife Mo, who founded Lush in 1995.

Recognizable by the strong fruity smells of its stores with market-like stalls, Lush sells two-thirds of its products "naked", without packaging, among them handmade soap bars and henna hair dye blocks.

Some products, such as moisturizers and body lotions, are sold in black pots, which customers are encouraged to bring back for recycling.—AFP

French short-haul flight ban comes into force

FRANCE has banned domestic flights for journeys possible in less than two-and-a-half hours by train, under a government decree published Tuesday.

Although the move was included in a 2021 climate law and already applied in practice, some airlines had asked the European Commission to investigate whether it was legal.

The change will mostly rule out air trips between Paris and regional hubs such as Nantes, Lyon and Bordeaux, with connecting flights unaffected.

Critics have noted that the cutoff point for comparable train journeys is shy of the roughly three hours it takes to travel from Paris to Mediterranean port city Marseille by high-speed rail.

The law does specify that train services on the same route must be frequent, timely and well-connected enough to meet the needs of passengers who would otherwise travel by air — and able to absorb the increase in passenger numbers.

People making such trips should be able to make outbound and return train journeys on the same day, having spent eight hours at their destination.

The government had already secured Air France's compliance with the plan in exchange for a 2020 coronavirus financial support package.—AFP

Air France already dropped certain short haul routes in exchange for state aid during the coronavirus pandemic. **PHOTO: JULIEN DE ROSA / AFP/FILE**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V FORTUNE COOKIE VOY.NO. (10)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V FORTUNE COOKIE VOY.NO. (10)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-5-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **IBTT** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BEN LINE AGENCISES (S'PORE PTE LTD)

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V TI2 APPLE VOY.NO. (021E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V TI2 APPLE VOY.NO. (021E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-5-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** 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 TI2 LOGISTICS PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V SINAR BANDA VOY.NO. (285N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BANDA VOY.NO. (285N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-5-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINES

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Russian PM arrives in China for talks with Xi, business forum

RUSSIAN Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has arrived in China, Moscow's foreign ministry said, for a visit in which he will meet with President Xi Jinping and ink a series of deals on infrastructure and trade.

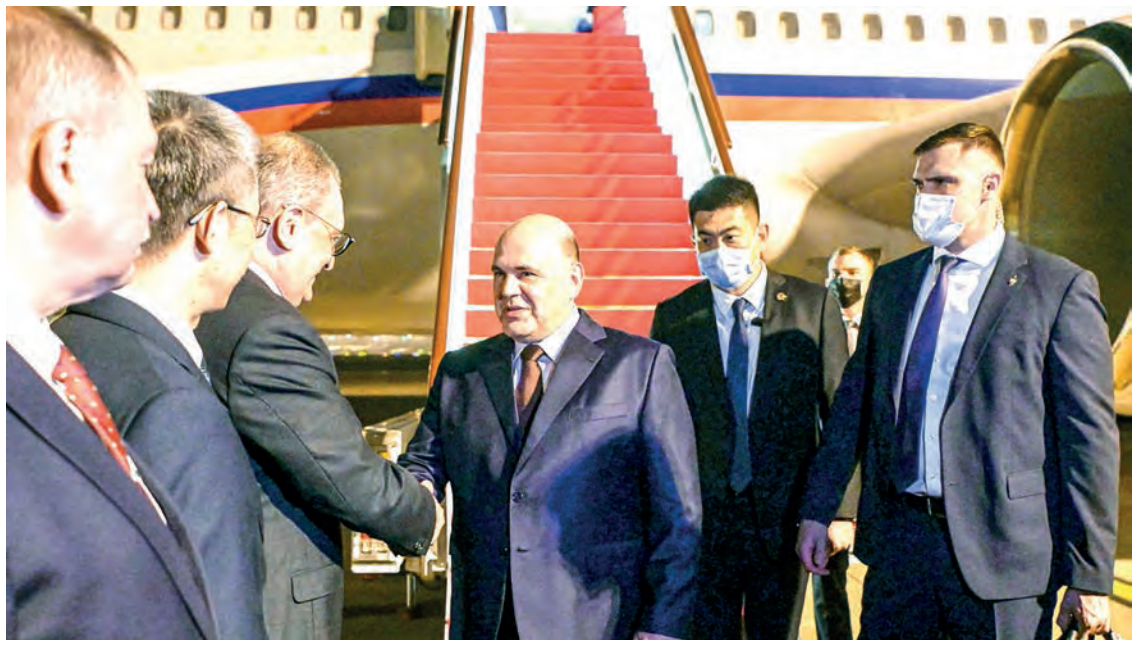
Mishustin arrived late Monday in Shanghai, the ministry said, where he was greeted at the airport by Moscow's ambassador to China Igor Morgulov and Beijing's top diplomat to Russia Zhang Hanhui.

He will take part in a Russian-Chinese Business Forum and visit a petrochemical research institute in Shanghai, the Kremlin said, as well as hold talks with "representatives of Russian business circles".

That forum has invited a number of sanctioned Russian tycoons — including from the key fertilizer, steel and mining sectors — as well as Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, who handles energy issues, Bloomberg reported.

China last year became the top energy customer for Russia, whose gas exports had otherwise plummeted after a flurry of Western sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine.

On Tuesday there was an increased police presence around Shanghai's Russian consulate and the nearby conference halls where the forum was taking place. —AFP



Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin greeted at the Shanghai airport by Moscow's Ambassador to China Igor Morgulov and Beijing's top diplomat to Russia Zhang Hanhui. **PHOTO: ALEXANDER ASTAFYEV/ POOL/TASS**

India's PM Modi lands in Sydney eyeing economic ties

Indians are the second-largest diaspora community in Australia after the British, with 673,000 Indian-born citizens living in the country of 26 million. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/SBS/AFP**

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew into Australia on 22 May, aiming to strengthen economic ties by tapping into his country's fastest-growing diaspora. Modi landed in Sydney, the last stop on his Asia-Pacific tour, looking to assert India's role as a regional power in the face of China's growing influence.

Indians are the second-largest diaspora community in Australia after the British, with 673,000 Indian-born citizens living in the country of 26 million.

"The diaspora is the most important bridge in the India-Australia bilateral business relationship," said Jodi McKay, national chair of the Australia India Business Council.

"Prime Minister Modi understood that long before Australia was able to grasp that," she told AFP.

Two-way trade between India and Australia was valued at Aus$46.5 billion (US$31 billion) last year and is likely to increase after a free-trade deal came into effect in December.— AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant cut off from power grid

UKRAINE'S occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant has been cut off from the power grid again, its Russian administrators and the Ukrainian atomic agency said on Monday, a potentially dangerous incident that has become more frequent due to shelling.

"Due to a high-tension line being cut, the plant lost its external electricity supply," the Russian administration wrote on Telegram, adding the causes of the outage were being investigated and that back-up diesel generators were keeping it working.—AFP

Florida law puts a brake on hiring of undocumented workers

BENJAMIN Perez cleans houses in Miami for a living. Like tens of thousands of others in the Florida workforce, he toils without legal papers. The future of this off-the-books labor force today sits in limbo due to a recently approved immigration law. Conservative Florida Governor Ron DeSantis on 10 May signed what he called the "strongest anti-illegal immigration bill in the nation" to bar undocumented workers from taking jobs in the southern US state.—AFP

Former East Timorese leader Xanana Gusmao gestures after voting during the general election in Dili on 21 May 2023. **PHOTO: VALENTINO DARIEL SOUSA/AFP**

E Timor independence hero Gusmao's party wins parliamentary election

EAST Timor independence hero Xanana Gusmao's party won the parliamentary election but is short of an outright majority, official results showed Tuesday.

The opposition National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT) led with 41.6 per cent of the votes, while its main rival and incumbent coalition leader Fretilin got 25.7 per cent, according to the electoral commission.

The result of Sunday's election paves the way for a return to power for the 76-year-old Gusmao, East Timor's first president, if he can form a coalition.

If there is no outright winner, the constitution gives the party with the most votes the opportunity to form a coalition.

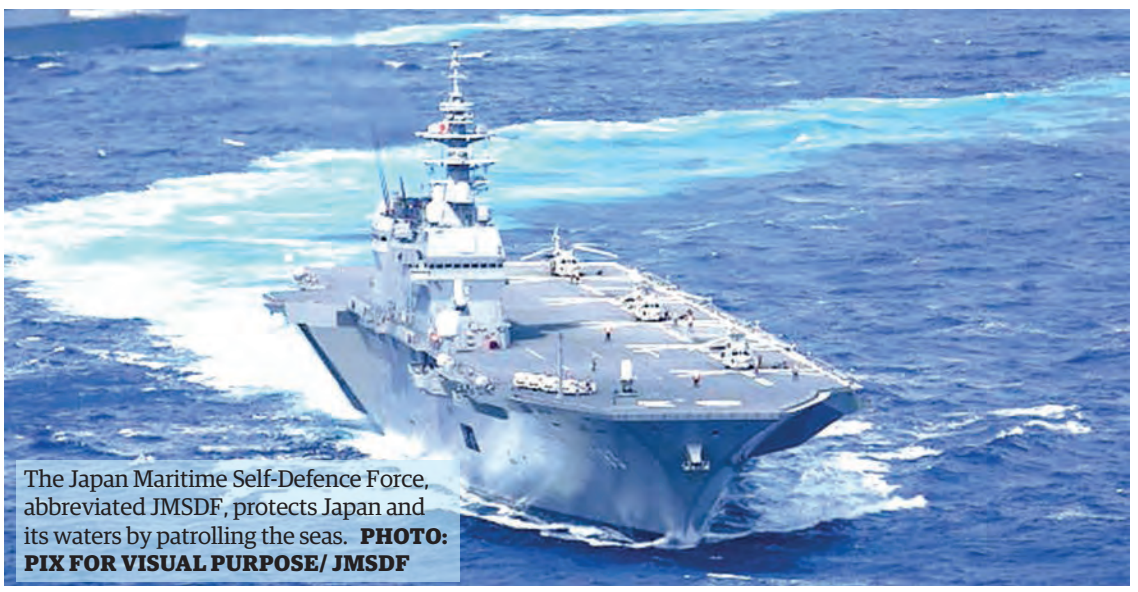
Voters cast their ballots for 65 seats in parliament, hoping to end years of deadlock in Asia's youngest country.

CNRT secured 31 of those seats, and will have to work with one or more of the other 16 parties.

It won the presidential election last year, with Gusmao's ally and Nobel Peace laureate Jose Ramos-Horta taking the post.—AFP

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Japan's lower house approves bill to pool funds for defence spending



The Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force, abbreviated JMSDF, protects Japan and its waters by patrolling the seas. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ JMSDF**

JAPAN'S lower house on Tuesday approved a bill creating a special pool of funds to substantially increase defence spending despite opposition lawmakers' resistance.

If enacted, the law will allow the government to set aside non-tax revenue derived from selling government assets or transferring money from its special accounts in the state budget, specifically for use in defence spending over multiple years.

For fiscal 2023, the first of a five-year period that will see Japan's defence spending reach a combined 43 trillion yen ($310 billion), the government has allocated over 3.38 trillion yen for defence funds.

The bill's passage through the ruling coalition-controlled House of Representatives set the stage for its enactment after it clears the House of Councillors. Major opposition parties remain opposed to the bill, largely because they are against raising taxes to boost the defense budget.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is seeking to bolster Japan's defence capabilities to cope with threats posed by the rise of an assertive China and nuclear-armed North Korea and Russia.

To secure the necessary funding, the government will review how money is spent in areas other than defende, tap non-tax revenue, and raise corporate, income and tobacco taxes. The exact timing of the tax hikes is yet to be determined.— Kyodo

Thai opposition parties ink accord with aim to form coalition govt

THAILAND'S liberal Move Forward party, which won the most seats in the 14 May general election, signed a policy accord Monday with seven other opposition parties aimed at forming a coalition government.

The accord, which includes revoking military conscription but excludes repeal of a law against insulting the monarchy, was signed by parties including the Pheu Thai party, which captured the second-largest number of seats. While they all support Move Forward leader Pita Limjaroenrat as the next prime minister, their coalition deal does not necessarily mean they will lead the next government due to a revised electoral system that favours the establishment.

Pita Limjaroenrat (C), leader of Thailand's opposition Move Forward party, is pictured at a press conference in Bangkok on 22 May 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, who leads the incumbent pro-military government, still has a chance to remain in office because elected members of the House of Representatives and 250 military-appointed senators will determine the new prime minister through a vote expected in July.

In the 2019 general election, Pheu Thai, made up of supporters of ousted former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, failed to form the coalition government, even though the opposition party won the most seats.—Kyodo

Bulgaria breaks two-year deadlock with power sharing govt

AFTER five elections in two years, Bulgarian parties on Monday agreed to form a power sharing government with rotating prime ministers to implement badly needed reforms in the graft-ridden EU nation.

Former EU commissioner for innovation Mariya Gabriel, tasked by the conservative GERB party to lead negotiations, announced the agreement with the anti-graft We Continue the Change (PP).

"We all made a lot of concessions," Gabriel told a news conference in the capital Sofia. The 44-year-old ex-commissioner, who resigned from her post in Brussels last week, will initially be deputy prime minister, under the leadership of 60-year-old researcher Nikolay Denkov of the PP-DB coalition.— AFP

Bulgaria's Prime minister-designate Nikolay Denkov (R) of the anti-graft party We Continue the Change (PP) listens to the former EU commissioner for innovation, Bulgaria's Mariya Gabriel (L) from conservative GERB party addressing media during a joint news conference in Sofia on 22 May 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Air strikes, combat as one-week Sudan truce officially starts

WITNESSES in the Sudanese capital reported clashes and air strikes minutes after a one-week ceasefire was to have come into force to let through life-saving humanitarian assistance.

They reported combat in north Khartoum, and air strikes in the east of the capital shortly after 9:45 pm (1945 GMT) Monday night when the truce was to take effect, with the smell of smoke still lingering after gunfire and explosions rocked the city throughout the day.

The ongoing fighting dampened hopes for a pause to allow in humanitarian aid or let residents flee.—AFP

Fire that killed 19 in Guyana school dorm may have been set 'maliciously'

THE fire at a schoolgirls' dormitory that killed 19 people in Guyana may have been started "maliciously", police said Monday, as anger grew in the small South American country the day after the blaze.

Sunday's inferno gutted a building housing girls aged 11-12 and 16-17.

Guyana Police Commissioner Clifton Hicken said during a press conference Monday afternoon that an "initial investigation suggests... that (the fire) was maliciously set". "Our investigation is continuing," Hicken told reporters, joined by President Irfaan Ali, who declared three days of national mourning.—AFP

SPORT

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Japan's lower house approves bill to pool funds for defence spending

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Myanmar U-20 female player (green) tries to pass the ball against JFA Academy Fukushima U-14 players in the friendly match in Japan on 23 May 2023. **PHOTO: MFF**

Myanmar U-20 girls' team play friendly match with Japan's U-14 boys' team

MYANMAR U-20 girls' football team played a friendly match against Japan's Academy Fukushima U-14 boys' football team in Japan yesterday.

The friendly match was divided into three halves of 30 minutes, and the JFA U-14 team scored 3-0 in the first half, and 1-0 in the second half of the game, and it was a scoreless draw in the third half of the match.

The JFA Academy Fukushima U-14 team played against team Myanmar with a good commpromise as it is a strong team from a powerful Asian football country.

Team Myanmar learned from the strengths of the JFA Academy Fukushima U-14 team in the first half of the game and stopped them in the rest of the game and played with fewer goals in the second and third halves of the game.

JFA Academy Fukushima is one of the academies managed by the Japan Football Association, and players are selected from all over Japan.

Uki Tetsuro, the technical adviser of the Myanmar women's national team, said that whenever the Japanese women's national team trains to strengthen their power play, they often test friendly matches with the JFA Academy Fukushima U-14 team.

The Myanmar girls' squad will stay and train at the J Village National Training Center in Fukushima until 27 May, according to the Myanmar Football Federation. — KZL

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.

Football's racism protocol obsolete: Ancelotti after Vinicius abuse

REAL Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said on Tuesday that FIFA's racism protocol in football was "obsolete" after Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior was abused by Valencia fans.

The 22-year-old forward suffered vile racist taunts at Mestalla on Sunday in La Liga, with three fans arrested by Spanish police on Tuesday.

Referee Ricardo de Burgos Bengoetxea activated the racism protocol after Vinicius squared off with fans, singling out one whom he saw abuse him. FIFA's three-step process involves the match being paused until a stadium announcement is made asking for racist abuse to stop, which happened at Mestalla.

The second step, after any further abuse, is to temporarily take players off the pitch and the third step, if it continues, is to abandon the game and give three points to the opposition.

"The protocol is obsolete," Ancelotti told reporters.

"The protocol had to be applied when the team bus reached the stadium, because the insults started there.

"Two hours before the game, and it was not an isolated case — someone from Valencia said it was — sure, it was not 46,000 people but it was not one or two." — AFP

Saka signs new long-term Arsenal deal

BUKAYO Saka has signed a new long-term contract at Arsenal, saying the Premier League club is the "right place to make the next step" in his blossoming career.

The England forward played a pivotal role in the club's unsuccessful title push this season, scoring 14 goals in all competitions and providing 11 assists.

Saka joined Arsenal as an eight year old and has featured in all of the team's Premier League matches over the past two seasons.

The 21-year-old said he was at the ideal club to improve even further after emerging as one of Arsenal's key players.

"I think I have everything I need to become the best player I can be, and that's why I'm happy to stay here and be here for the future, because I really believe that we can achieve big things," he said on Tuesday.

"For me, it's about achieving my personal ambitions -- how much I push myself and demand from myself each game, week in, week out.

"Then I have all the right people around me in terms of family, and when I come to the training ground, my teammates, the coaching staff."London-born Saka, who made his Arsenal debut in 2018, said the club were moving in the right direction despite missing out on the Premier League title this year.

The Gunners topped the table for much of the season but stumbled in the home stretch as Manchester City collected their third consecutive title.— AFP

Arsenal forward Bukayo Saka has signed a new contract at the club. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**