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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.

Senior General: The Saopha palace was rebuilt by the government and Tatmadaw without losing original works as a symbol of the national unity



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing speaks on the inauguration occasion of the Hsenwi Saopha Palace cultural museum in Shan State on 11 April 2023.

AS part of a historical building and symbol of national unity in the Hsenwi region, the Saopha palace was renovated by the government and Tatmadaw for fulfilling the wish of the local people, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the inauguration ceremony of Saopha Palace of Hsenwi Saopha Hkun Hsang Tone Hung as the Hsenwi Saopha

Palace cultural museum yesterday morning.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General said that history cannot be destroyed and it is necessary to take lessons from the past to initiate a better system for the nation. The Senior General expressed his concept that the history of Saophas should be exposed and maintained. Hence, the Saopha palace was rebuilt by the government and Tatmadaw

without losing original works as a symbol of national unity. Likewise, the Mongpun Saopha Palace is being renovated whereas arrangements are being made to rebuild the Kengtung Saopha Palace. These buildings are expected to attract local and foreign travellers for the development of the regions.

Sao Hom Hpa, son of North Hsenwi Saopha Hkun Hsang Tone Hung, served military and

civil duties to benefit the Union. He signed the Panglong Agreement on 12 February 1947. He reoccupied Lashio from White Yebaw troops and Red Communist troops and handed it over to the government in March 1948. He served as Magway District Deputy Commissioner and Major at No 14th Battalion, Burma Rifle. Hence, the Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu title was conferred to the Saopha on the Independence Day

of 1949.

As part of a historical building and symbol of national unity in the Hsenwi region, the Saopha palace was renovated by the government and Tatmadaw to fulfilling the wish of the local people. The Senior General expressed his pleasure in hearing the news that the Saopha palace will be turned into the historical museum for public observation.

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Shwegugyi Pagoda ancient inscriptions attract pilgrims during Thingyan holidays

THE ancient inscriptions from the 11th to 14th century (Bagan to Pinya periods) are gathered at Shwegugyi Pagoda in Kyaukse Township, Mandalay Region, and pilgrims can observe them during long holidays of the Thingyan Festival.

King Anawrahta, who founded the first Myanmar Empire and made Buddhism widespread under his reign, constructed 11 Ledwin districts (Pinle, Pynmana, Myittha, Yamon, Myingontaing, Panan, Tamoat, Thintaung, Makara, Tapyaktha and Khanlu) as fortified cities in Kyaukse plain where Samon, Sama, Zawgyi, Panlaung and Dohtawadi rivers are flowing. Those fortified cities are three in Myittha Township, five in Kyaukse Township and three in Sintgaing Township.

Tamoat old town, one of 11 districts, was located near Nyaungpinzauk village in the

Kyaungpingon village-tract in the east of Panlaung River. The 25-acre wide fortress featuring a horseshoe arch was built. Tamoat Shwegugyi Temple is located near Nyaungpinzauk village on Kyaukse-TadaU Road, six miles away from the north of Kyaukse in the southeast of Tamoat old town.

It is one of nine cave temples built by King Anawrahta along the Panlaung River in the early Bagan period. King Narapatisithu rebuilt it as a double-storey cave temple in the late 12th century during the Bagan Period. The temple was decorated with inscriptions outside the temple (the grotesque art, animals and birds, humans, Nat, Brahma, and Kinnara characters). During the 684 ME Pinya period, a new temple was built with stupas and artefacts in the reign of King Oatsana, according to a pagoda history book noted



Pilgrims are seen at the Shwegugyi Pagoda.

by historian Maung Win Maung (Tammawady).

Tamoat Shinpin Shwegugyi Pagoda is reconstructed, uncovering mural paintings inside in artefacts, 2 feet six inches head and 10 feet high cemented stupa, floral design ogre and base-relief sculpture built by King Anawrahta, floral designs at four moats of

the pagoda, head of the horse, a statue of a lion with two bodies and one mouth, a statue of an elephant head and bird body, cock, elephant, deer, horse, crocodile, fish, 550 Jataka tales sculpture, stupa, cemented scriptures, stupas, the 12th century cemented designs and Tamoat Shinpin Shwegugyi Pagoda. Ancient arts

from 11 to 14 AD during the Bagan-Pindaya periods are showcased at the temple. It is written to raise awareness of the history of the temple for pilgrims from various regions so that they can flock to the temple during the long holidays of the Thingyan Festival. — Thet Maung (Kyaukse)/EM



Visitors are pictured being keen in the inscriptions from the 11th to 14th century (Bagan to Pinya periods) of the Shwegugyi Pagoda.



Full-dress rehearsal held for opening ceremony of Thingyan Pandal in Mandalay



The full-dress rehearsal for the Mandalay City Maha Thingyan Pandal in progress yesterday. **PHOTO: AI-MDY**

THE full-dress rehearsal for the opening ceremony of the Mandalay City Maha Thingyan Pandal was held on the evening of 11 April at the pavilion on 26 Street between 71 and 72 streets in Mandalay.

First, the participants took their seats in various designated places and Thingyan reading, ribbon cutting and Myoma silver swan paying respects were rehearsed.

In addition, more than 900 people including 500 students and dance troops from the Mandalay City Development Committee and the National Culture and Arts University participated in the full-dress rehearsal along with the Thar Bonaing Myanmar traditional music band (Saing) by playing, singing and dancing with the Thingyan songs named "Chan Aye Zay Myee Mandalay Thingyan" and "Mahn Taung Yeik Kho". — Maung Aye Chan/KZL

Four new cases of COVID-19 reported on 11 April, total figure registers 634,105

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases registered 634,105 after four new cases were reported on 11 April 2023 according to the Ministry of Health. The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached 614,596.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country remained unchanged at 19,490 on 11-4-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic. — GNLM

MSMEs key to accelerating country's economic growth

- As it is necessary to encourage businesses in which the majority of people are engaged in to achieve economic development of the country, the government has been offering assistance for MSMEs.
- Promoting MSMEs aims to accelerate economic growth of the country, to substitute imports and to export local products.
- It is necessary to encourage manufacturing of products with the use of domestic raw materials.

(Excerpts from the speech delivered by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at a meeting with district and township departmental officials, town elders, MSME businesspersons from Homalin District, Sagaing Region on 15 January 2023)

Senior General: The Saopha palace was rebuilt by the government and Tatmadaw without losing original works as a symbol of the national unity

FROM PAGE-1

Thanks for rebuilding the Hsenwi Saopha palace

Town elder U Sai Myo Nyunt, chair of the Saopha Palace reconstruction cooperation committee, spoke words of thanks for the reconstruction of the Saopha Palace.

SAC member Dr Kyaw Tun, Shan State Chief Minister U Aung Zaw Aye, Quartermaster-General Lt-Gen Kyaw Swa Lin, Commander of North-East Command Maj-Gen Naing Naing Oo, Hsenwi Township Shan Literature and Culture Committee Chairman U Sai Myint Tun and town elders cut the ribbon to open the Saopha palace cultural museum.

The Senior General unveiled



The Senior General and dignitaries are pictured after unveiling the Saopha Palace cultural museum yesterday.



waxing of Tagu, 1277 ME, 1916 AD. Japan occupied Hsenwi in 1940. US aircraft bombed the Hsenwi-Namtu bridge and Hsenwi town in 1944, leaving large damage. The historical Saopha palace of Saopha Hkun Hsang Tone Hung also collapsed. In accord with the guidance of the Senior General, the Saopha Palace construction started on 5 December 2019, and the new one is 63 feet left from the old one. Today, the Saopha Palace cultural museum was successfully opened with the attendance of the local people. — MNA/TTA

the plaque of the building and sprinkled scented water on it.

The Senior General paid homage to the ancient Buddha images worshipped by successive Hsenwi Saophas in the museum and viewed round ancient cultural heritage, utensils of successive Saophas, documentary photos and construction records and left necessary instructions to officials.

An official of the Shan Literature and Culture Association presented a picture and domestic products as gifts in commemoration of the opening ceremony to

the Senior General, who returned the gifts.

After the ceremony, the Senior General and wife and party doused Thingyan water on departmental officials, people's militia troops and local people.

Hsenwi Saopha Palace was built as a replica of Mandalay Palace by North Dassadhammaraja Nijodha Maha Minkhaung Hkun Hsang Tone Hung in 1910. Suffering from a stroke, the Saopha passed away at 1 am on the 2nd

The Senior General sprinkles water on locals.



Thiri Mingala Dhamma Yadana three-storey building opened at Thiri Mingala Mansu Shan Monastery in Lashio, golden umbrella, pennant-shaped vane, and jewelled diamond orb hoisted atop Culamuni Pagoda on the building

THE ceremony to open Thiri Mingala Dhamma Yadana three-storey building at Thiri Mingala Mansu Shan Monastery in Lashio contributed by well-wishers under the auspices of Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was held in conjunction with hoisting golden umbrella, pennant-shaped vane, jewelled diamond orb hoisted atop Culamuni Pagoda on the building yesterday morning.

It was attended by Abbot of Mansu Shan monastery Agga Maha Ganthavacaka Pandita Agga Maha Kammathanacariya Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Dr Puññananda and



The Senior General and his wife present offerings to the Mansu Shan Monastery Sayadaw yesterday.

ferred meals to members of the Sangha and donated offerings.

At Lashio Airport, the Senior General inspected the progress in upgrading the runway of the airport. Union Minister for Transport and Communications Admiral Tin Aung San and officials reported on the progress of works.

After hearing the reports, the Senior General said Lashio Airport plays a key role in the enhancement of trade with China. Hence, it must be upgraded to admit cargo planes in order to contribute to the running of domestic airlines.

The Senior General inspected the upgrading of the airport and gave instructions



The gemmed diamond orb is seen being conveyed.



The Senior General cuts the ceremonial ribbon to open the three-storey building.

members of the Sangha, the Senior General, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, entourage and local people.

The Senior General paid homage to the Buddha image in the Dhammayon of the monastery.

The Prime Minister and his wife offered the jewelled dia-

mond orb, alms and cash for nine prerequisites to the Sayadaw of the Mansu Shan monastery, who returned Dhamma gifts and a certificate of honour.

The Senior General, wife and party conveyed the golden umbrella, the pennant-shaped vane, the jewelled diamond orb and religious objects to be

enshrined onto the decorated float.

The Senior General, the Council Joint Secretary and the SAC member Dr Kyaw Tun formally opened the three-storey building.

The Senior General and party fixed the golden umbrella, the pennant-shaped vane, and

the jewelled diamond orb atop the pagoda. They then sprinkled scented water on the religious objects to be enshrined.

Then, a Eugenia plant was grown in commemoration of the successful completion of the ceremonies.

Afterwards, the Senior General, his wife and party of-

on the timely completion of the projects on schedule.

At North-East Command Headquarters, the Senior General, wife and party sprayed Tatmadaw members and families of the headquarters with Thingyan water and hailed the New Year. — MNA/TTA



The Senior General inspects the upgrade of the runway at Lashio Airport.

Dance competition, award ceremony held for MoHA Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival

IN the Maha Thingyan Festival that falls in 1384 of the Myanmar Era, a competition of traditional Myanmar Thingyan festival choreographed dance group and dance group from the Ministry of Home Affairs was held at the water-splashing pavilion of the MoHA located at No 38 Office, Nay Pyi Taw at 6:30 pm on 10 April.



State Administration Council Member Deputy Prime Minister MoHA Union Minister Lt-Gen Soe Htut speaks on the occasion of the Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival in Nay Pyi Taw on 10 April.

State Administration Council Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Soe Htut and wife, Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Toe Yi and wife, Deputy Minister Chief of Myanmar Police Force Maj-Gen Zin Min Htet and wife, Permanent Secretary U Khine Tun Oo and wife, directors-general, senior officials and their wives, officials, staff and their family members, choreographed dance

group and dancer group attended and enjoyed the ceremony.

The Union minister gave his opening speech at the ceremony, and the party led by the Union Minister and wife watched the competition of choreographed

dance groups and dancer groups.

Then, the award ceremony continued and officials led by MoHA Union Minister Lt-Gen Soe Htut and wife presented the awards to the choreographed dance group and dancer group

that won the competitions.

Twelve female choreographed dance groups and 12 male choreographed dance groups from the office of the MoHA Union Minister, the Myanmar Police Force, the Gener-

al Administration Department (GAD), the Bureau of Special Investigation, the Correctional Department and the Department of Fire Services under MoHA, participated in the completions. — MNA/CT

Lively Thingyan Festival underway in Myitkyina

WITH six water festival pavilions including the central pavilion, arrangements are being made to hold a grand and lively event of the 1384 Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival in Myitkyina, the capital city of Kachin State.

A central pavilion have been built in Myitkyina City, from Sumprabum Road to Samar Road Junction (to Jade Traffic Point).

Six water festival pavilions and entertainment pavilions of local business groups are being built along Samar Road from Jade Traffic Point.

Regarding the preparations for the Thingyan Festival, U Hla Moe, Executive Officer of Myitkyina Township Development committee, said that the central pavilion was built with a steel structure of 170 and 65 square feet to accommodate 400 spectators and took a month to build.

He clarified that 3 temporary water tanks with a capacity of 12,000 gallons of water have been built in the central pavilion for water availability, and it will be possible to sprinkle about 150,000 gallons of water per day. Similarly, four departmental



food pavilions, big boats and fragrance-spraying pavilions have been built along Sumprabum

Road, where the central pavilion and walking Thingyan are located, which can feed 1,500 people daily.

To obtain water, city water supply pipelines and wells have been excavated, two temporary water tanks with a capacity of 250,000 gallons have been built, and arrangements have been made to spray about 300,000 gallons of water per day.

In addition, people will be able to play water happily with entertainment programs at the water festival pavilion 6 of local businessmen's groups on Samar Street, under the guidance of

the Thingyan Festival Steering Committee.

Similarly, in the central pavilion, there will be beautiful dances and modern music performances in the morning and evening.

In the evening, departmental organizations and 13 groups from the city will perform with their own songs, and bands.

Choreographed group dance competitions with CD music will also be held every day according to the specified category, and choreographed dance troupes will be given the honour they deserve.

The Kachin state government will hold this year's Myanmar traditional water festival, the Thingyan festival, in a more crowded manner than in previous years. During the Thingyan period, the first ordination ceremony and the opening of meditation centres were held for the employees. On the first day of Myanmar's new year, ceremony for paying respects to elders and, a fish release ceremony, will be held. — Kachin IRPD/KZL



Preparations in progress for the Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival in Myitkyina yesterday.

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MoI Union Minister inspects rehearsals, preparations for Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn views the rehearsals and preparations for the Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan yesterday.

THE opening ceremony of Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan will be held along the road between Nay Pyi Taw Mayor Thingyan

pavilion situated on Pynmana-Taungnyo road to Nay Pyi Taw City Development Committee guesthouse on 13 April.

Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, who is also the chairman of the Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thing-

yan Organizing Committee, Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung, Director-General U Ye Naing and depart-

mental officials inspected the rehearsals and preparations in the Thingyan festival zones.

First, the Union Minister viewed the arch for opening the Thingyan festival and rehearsals of the dance groups dancing and singing the song "Thingyan Moe".

Then, the Union Minister called on all those concerned to take all the necessary measures so that people can play with water freely and safely during the Thingyan festival. Finally, the Union minister watched singing and dancing rehearsals at the central pandal. — MNA/KZW



People are seen at the venue of the Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan.

Fire brigade members to serve near large lakes of Yangon Region during Thingyan

DURING the Maha Thingyan Festival in 2023, fire brigade personnel will work near large lakes in Yangon Region, according to the Yangon Region Fire Service Department.

Firefighters will be on duty starting from 13 April (Thingyan Akyo Day) in Kandawgyi, Inya Lake, and Thardukan Lake in Yangon Region.

Two Assault Boats from Tamway and Thakayta Townships Fire Stations will stand by in Kandawgyi.

One boat will be led by the assistant fire chief, and one boat driver and two fire brigade members will serve the duty.

Two Assault Boats from Hlaing and Sanchaung Townships Fire Stations will stand by in Inya Lake.

One boat will be led by the assistant fire chief, and one boat driver and two fire brigade members will serve the duty.

Two Assault Boats from Shwepyitha and Hmawby Townships Fire Stations will stand by in Thardukan Lake.

One boat will be led by the assistant fire chief, and one boat driver and two fire brigade members will serve the duty.

During the Maha Thingyan period, officials keep watch on people who come to the big lakes and remind them not to go into the lake.

In case of danger, search and rescue operations will be carried out by the troops.

People release fish safely in Thardukan Lake in Shwepyitha Township on New Year's Day in Myanmar.

During the Maha Thingyan in 2022, there were no casualties in the large lakes in Yangon Region, according to a fire brigade official. — Myo Min Thura/KZL

Illegal timbers, foodstuffs, industrial raw materials, petroleum products and vehicles confiscated

AN on-duty team at the Mayanchaung permanent checkpoint in Mon State under the supervision of the Customs Department confiscated 2,000 kilogrammes of textile that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) worth K18.06 million from a Hino 500-series truck (estimated value of K45 million) heading to Yangon from Myawady on 8 April and 230 cartons of Lipovitan-D without official documents worth K3.45 million from a Higer express bus (estimated value of K28 million) heading to

Yangon from Mawlamyine on 9 April. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

The combined teams under the management of Sagaing Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force captured 13,000 gallons of crude oil worth K104 million without official documents on Mandalay-Monywa Road on 8 April and a total of 0.498 tonne of illegal timbers worth K327,650 in Minkon village of Sagaing region on 10 April. The action was taken under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law

and the Forest Law.

On 10 April, the combined teams seized a total of 16,728 tonnes of illegal teaks, 1,967 tonnes of hardwood and 2,263 tonnes of other timbers worth K7,305,646 in Bago, Toungoo and Thayawady districts. The action was taken under the Forest Law.

Therefore, nine arrests (estimated value of K262,213,296) were made on three consecutive days from 8 to 10 April, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS



Confiscated illegal items at the Mayanchaung permanent inspection checkpoint.

LOCAL BUSINESS

Seintalone mango fetches 120-180 Yuan per 16-kg basket

MYANMAR'S popular Seintalone mango has started to be conveyed to China, fetching 120-180 Yuan per 16-kilogramme basket, fruit traders from Muse said.

At present, quality influences price in the mango market. The prevailing price is pretty good at the beginning of the mango season.

Additionally, the Seintalone mango price hit a record high in the domestic market and a mango basket of 40-55 pieces (16 kilos) is priced at K50,000.

"The opening price is good this year. The price of mango is estimated at K50,000 per 16 kilos. The unpacked mango is not offered at a good price. It is traded at 120-180 Yuan per 16-kg basket," a fruit trader

involved in the Muse depot said. Mango growers are asked to maintain quality control, fruit

traders said. The growers are battered by the high cost of cultivation

input and market reputational risks every year. Last year, low use of cultivation input brought

down quality, causing postharvest diseases such as stem end rot and black spot in fruit.

Some traders did not even cover the cultivation cost due to the inferior quality of Seintalone mango.

Of about 200 mango varieties that originated in Myanmar, Seintalone, Shwehintha, Padamyar Ngamauk, Yinkwe, and Machitsu varieties are primarily grown. The foreign market prefers Seintalone varieties.

Ayeyawady Region possesses the largest mango plantation acres, having about 46,000 acres. Bago Region is the second largest producer with 43,000 acres and Mandalay has 29,000 acres of mango. There are over 24,000 acres in Kayin State, over 20,400 acres in Shan State and over 20,000 acres in Sagaing Region, according to the association. — NN/EM



A consumer is seen shopping for mangoes.



YGEA to offer AML/CFT awareness course on 1 May free of charge

YANGON Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) will conduct an awareness course for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) on 1 May free of charge.

On 1 January, the YGEA offered this course. Under Chapter 2 Section 3 (G) of the directive 2/2022 issued by the Central Board on Anti-Money Laundering of the Ministry of Home Affairs, precious metal dealers' licences will be granted only if the completion certificate of the AML/CFT course is presented.

On 1 April, the YGEA handed over 21 applications for precious metal dealers' licences to the registration board in Pabedan, Lanmadaw and Latha townships.

YGEA Chair U Myo Myint handed over 21 applications for

precious metal dealers' licences to the authorities concerned from the General Administration Department and the respective registration boards of Lanmadaw (1 application), Latha (1 application), Pabedan (19 applicants).

YGEA has been offering awareness courses for anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing since December 2022. It has completed four batches with over 400 trainees so far.

To seek precious metal dealers licence, those engaged in precious metal dealing are required to present, two licence-sized photos, a copy of the citizenship scrutiny card, a certificate of business permit, a permit from the Myanmar Investment Commission, capital investment and a company registration copy and if precious metal dealer compa-

ny is foreign-owned or a joint venture, biography of dealers, name of the enterprise, contact number, current location, proof of address by ward or village administrator, police verification certificate are required to be presented.

Moreover, commitment certificates stating that the dealers will attend the AML/CFT course, law and by-laws, directives and awareness courses, the completion certificate of the AML/CFT course, banking statement of account with a minimum deposit of K5 million and bank statement and certificate issued by the YGEA to the mining business working on a small-scale, medium-scale and large-scale as per the directive of the Monitoring and Steering Committee on Gold and Currency Market. — NN/EM

Prices of fuel oil, gold and dollar on 11 April 2023

Fuel Oil Price (Yangon)

Octane 92	K2,235
Octane 95	K2,315
Diesel	K2,125
Premium Diesel	K2,205

All of the prices are based on per litre.

Gold Price

High-purity gold in the gold market	K2,965,000 per tical
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US Dollar Vs Kyat

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

The above prices may change from time to time.

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OPINION

Follow traditions and ethics in enjoying the Maha Thingyan festival

ALL nationalities wish to enjoy auspiciousness on New Year's Day from the old one. Maha Thingyan festival is the most famous, attractive and crowded one among other festivals in all seasons. Myanmar's Thingyan festival is a tangible cultural heritage of the nation. During the Maha Thingyan festival, people douse each other happily.

Currently, Myanmar era 1384 will come to an end. At the same time, the new Myanmar era 1385 will come. The Maha Thingyan festival will start in Myanmar on the 10th waning of late Tagu 1384 ME (14 April) and finish on the 12th waning of late Tagu 1384 ME (16 April). Afterwards, the 13th waning of early Tagu 1385 ME (17 April) will be Myanmar New Year's Day.

People in Myanmar yearly perform various meritorious deeds during the Maha Thingyan festival period with auspiciousness by making donations such as serving the people from four corners of the nation with refreshments, offering meals to members of the Sangha, taking Sabbath, cleansing the Buddha images with water, listening to the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha, initiating themselves into the monkhood, serving senior citizens with bathing and shampooing, paying respect to elder persons and parents, releasing fish into the water as well as cattle into the pastureland.

In fact, the Maha Thingyan festival has been a happy, lovely and pleasant one for years. All participants in the festival need to take care of

Myanmar culture. They all have to control themselves to avoid moves of rudeness and careless activities. It is because the Maha Thingyan festival aims to change the old year to the new one in a smooth and happy manner.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture urges the people to join the Maha Thingyan festival with dos and don'ts in society to be free from unacceptable dangers. This year, plans are underway to arrange walking Thingyan activities in Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon on a grand scale. Moreover, the walking Thingyan activities will comprise Thanaka Thingyan, ethnic Thingyan and youth game Thingyan for the happiness of the young and old people.

All Thingyan revellers should not forget the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Their happy moves must be in line with the health protocol of Covid-19 issued by the Ministry of Health. They all need to take tolerance, patience and compassion among themselves in order to create a happy society in line with the traditions, customs and ethics of relevant regions and ethnicities during the traditional Maha Thingyan period.

All Thingyan revellers should not forget the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Their happy moves must be in line with the health protocol of Covid-19 issued by the Ministry of Health. They all need to take tolerance, patience and compassion among themselves in order to create a happy society in line with the traditions, customs and ethics of relevant regions and ethnicities during the traditional Maha Thingyan period.

Refreshing Thingyan, Cheerful Thingyan, Peaceful Thingyan

Maha Thingyan (Water Festival) will fall at 06:12:08 in the evening on 14 April (Friday) 2023 (10th waning of Tagu 1384 ME).

King Taningangwe Planet (Sun) called "Barnuyaza", who wears a glittering costume and holds an axe and sickle while riding a cow Lauthaba, is going to the west from the southeast. Pyaukkardaewi Angel who has accomplished her turn passes the head of Brahma to Rathakadaewi Angel and she receives it while sitting in a squatting position. Nandadaewi Angel wearing a vibrant and colourful costume is waiting for Thagyamin (Sakra-King of Devas). In 1384 ME Thingyan, the Atat Day (final day) of Thingyan falls on Sunday. This being so, Sunday can be traditionally regarded as Atasar Day.

What does Atasar mean? To quench the thirst for knowledge of Atasar, here is a brief explanation. Atasar Day falls on Sunday in 1384 ME. For instance, those who are born on Sunday are the ones who need to do good deeds, especially for good health and well-being as Atat Day falls on Sunday.

It is a tradition that Myanmar

people welcome Thingyan Min with an Atar pot which is filled with water and springs of seven kinds of flora representing seven days of the week on the first day of Thingyan (Akyo Day). Additionally, King Taningangwe Planet (Sun) called "Barnuyaza" is sent off. Those people born on the day that coincided with Atat Day are assigned to this. The ascending time of Maha Thingyan will fall on Sunday (16 April 2023) at 10:16:49 pm. Those people wearing clean, tidy and neat clothes offer flowers, water, candles and fragrant sticks to Buddha, do good deeds and share merit to Thingyan Min by saying, Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu (Well-Done). Consequently, it will bring success and positive outcomes to those merit makers in the shadow of angels, as per the treatise, the disclosure of the Buddha. If those born on Sunday failed to do so, they better have traditional Thingyan Rice dedicated to serving during Thingyan Atat Day and also make charity to others. Those who fail to do both actions will attract bad luck this year. Yet some Myanmar considered this as Sunday born cannot prevent ill fortune this year. Traditions, beliefs



Human beings and deities existed at the same time. Thagyamin (Indra, highest spirit Nat), and Brahma argued about the events regarding weddings, donations, and charity among others every two days. This way, Sunday and Monday, Tagu-Kason seasons and one year-two years appeared. Thagyamin commanded the Calendar era as well.

and customs concerning Atasar things are presented fleetingly.

After that, I would like to share the history of Thingyan. When we peek back to the beginning of the Badda World where

Buddhism conceived that five Buddhas arise. Brahma vividly plunged into a human world to enjoy the earth's scent or to be resurrected in new life. Those Brahma who enjoyed the earth's

scent breathed into new life and developed as offspring in the womb as their skin was burnt and peeled. Then, they are turned into Mainma (female) and Yaukya which was later called Yaukkya

(male).

Then, falling in love comes naturally and makes love. This way, their bright aura and energy diminished. Therefore, they were too terrified to ask for energy to cover the darkness. On the full moon day of Tabagan (Sunday), the sun appeared. Thanks to the sun called "Thuriya", the fear of human beings faded away. Taningangwe (sun), which has 150 Yojana in circumference, is called accordingly. During the time of sunset, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune emerge simultaneously along with the moon which has 49 Yojana. As the moon appears as it is wished for, it is called Sanda (meaning wish).

Human beings and deities existed at the same time. Thagyamin (Indra, highest spirit Nat), and Brahma argued about the events regarding weddings, donations, and charity among others every two days. This way, Sunday and Monday, Tagu-Kason seasons and one year-two years appeared. Thagyamin commanded the Calendar era as well.

By Kaung Aung

Once, Thagyamin and Brahma argued about which day will be the world's calamity astrologically for one and two years. They asked Kavalamain, who was skilled in the Vedas, what is right. The loser will be beheaded. The Kavalamain decided Thagyamin is right after careful calculation. As a result of this, Brahma's head was cut off. If Brahma's head was thrown into the ocean, the water would dry up. If it is thrown into the sky, there will be a drought. If it is placed onto the ground, it will catch fire and the plant will die. Seven goddesses (Nanda, Kanya, Zanhi, Gawratha, Mahawraka, Yathaka, Pyaukka) take turns holding the Brahma's head in their hands. Two of them take care of the head, in turn, every 30 days.

A washing hair event was held to wash away the sins. Donation events have been held to offer Thagyamin since the beginning of the earth. Charity events, religious events to have a safe and auspicious year, and applying turmeric and pouring water are also carried out during Thingyan Atat Day.

Following this belief, Myanmar people annually hold events such as Pali chanting around the city by Sayadaw to share merits on Myanmar New Year Day, donation events, releasing animals, paying respect to elders by cutting nails, washing their hair, bathing them, celebrating feasts, taking a sabbath and offering flowers, water, candles, scented sticks to pagodas and temples.

During the auspicious Thingyan festival, people should refrain from intoxicants. Similarly, disrespectful behaviour and rude conversation between parents and children and among siblings should be avoided. Moreover, both killing individuals out of anger and getting into a conflict and arguments need to be avoided. As Thingyan is an auspicious occasion,

Persons in Buddhism follow four virtues practices; love, compassion, joy and equanimity during the Thingyan period. Upholding the virtue will bring peace to Myanmar indeed.

Translated.

Emotional companionship linked to physical well-being: Research



"Since the COVID-19 pandemic, relationships have been facing unprecedented challenges, turbulence, and change," says Dr Don. PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/PIXABAY

PHYSICAL health is influenced by social ties, although the nature of this link is not specified. According to a new study pub-

lished in Social Psychology and Personality Science, impact of your close relationships may alter how your body operates.

Previous smaller-scale stud-

ies have examined the connection between relationship conflict or satisfaction with stress levels and blood pressure. The new research examines the effects of positive and negative relationship experiences on the body, as well as how these experiences and health outcomes change from day to day.

"Both positive and negative experiences in our relationships contribute to our daily stress, coping, and physiology, like blood pressure and heart rate reactivity," says lead author Brian Don of the University of Auckland. "Additionally, it's not just how we feel about our relationships overall that matters; the up's and downs are important too."

Daily check-ins via their smartphone

Over the course of three weeks, 4,005 participants completed daily check-ins via their

smartphone or smartwatch, providing assessments of their blood pressure, heart rate, stress, coping. Every three days, participants also shared reflections on their closest relationship, detailing their positive and negative experiences.

Researchers found that, on average, people with more positive experiences and fewer negative experiences reported lower stress, better coping, and lower systolic blood pressure reactivity leading to better physiological functioning in daily life. By contrast, variability - or daily ups and downs - in negative relationship experiences like conflict were especially predictive of outcomes like stress, coping, and overall systolic blood pressure.

Dr Don notes that one broader implication of this study is that it is important to consider how outside stressors - such as the

COVID-19 pandemic - can affect people's relationships, and therefore their physical health.

"Since the COVID-19 pandemic, relationships have been facing unprecedented challenges, turbulence, and change," says Dr Don.

"What this means is that the COVID pandemic may have health implications not just because of the virus itself, but also indirectly as a result of the impact it has on people's relationships.

That is, because the COVID-19 pandemic has created considerable strain, turbulence, and variability in people's relationships, it may indirectly alter stress, coping, and physiology in daily life, all of which have important implications for physical well-being."

Physiological effects

Researchers cautioned

against interpreting the study as proof that relationship experiences have physiological effects. Instead, the findings contain associations from daily life that illustrate how relationships and physical health are often intertwined. Causal conclusions, Dr Don says, must be reserved for experimental studies.

In the future, Dr Don suggests that researchers look beyond outcomes like blood pressure and heart rate reactivity to gain a fuller understanding of how relationships may affect health. "It would be useful to examine other physiological states, such as neuroendocrine or sympathetic nervous system responses as outcomes of daily positive and negative relationship experiences, which may reveal different patterns of associations."

SOURCE: ANI



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 11 April 2023)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is generally fair over the West central Bay and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 12 April 2023:

Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Sagaing Region and Chin, Northern Shan States and partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4 - 6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain or thundershowers in Taninthayi Region. **FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 12th April 2023:** Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 12th April 2023: Partly cloudy.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Nay Pyi Taw ready to hold Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival in 4 zones

THE Nay Pyi Taw Thingyan festival will include walking Thingyan and Thanaka Thingyan, and it will be held in four zones.

Starting at 9 am on the eve of the Thingyan, the Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan will take place in four zones from near Nay Pyi Taw Mayor Grand Thingyan Pavilion on

Pyinmana-Taungnyo road to the intersection of Nay Pyi Taw City Development Committee guesthouse.

In the four zones, the walking Thingyan, the Thanaka Thingyan, and the Ethnic Thingyan are included to preserve Myanmar culture, and international-level beauty and entertainment programmes

and youth game Thingyan programmes for youth and children are also included.

Food stalls, pavilions to donate refreshments and entertainment programmes are also arranged at the Nay Pyi Taw walking Thingyan, and the entrance fee is set at K3,000 for adults and K1,000 for children. — TWA/CT



Nay Pyi Taw Mayor Thingyan Pandal.



Yangon Region and Township Sangha Maha Nayaka Sayadaws are seen at the coordination meeting yesterday.

Above 10,000 monks to consecrate Shwedagon Pagoda in May's first week

THE consecration ceremony of the Shwedagon Pagoda will be held by 11,111 monks in the first week of May, according to the Yangon Region government.

At the meeting held on 11 April at the office of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein submitted transport arrangements and

the offering of a day meal and alms rice to Sangha who attend the consecration ceremony of Shwedagon Pagoda.

The meeting was attended by the chairman of the Region Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee and committee members, the chairman of the Township Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee and Trustee Sayadaws. — TWA/MKKS

Pigeon pea price rebounds to K2.4 mln per tonne

PIGEON pea price bounced back to K2.4 mln per tonne on 9 April in Yangon markets after a two-week fall.

Only the pigeon pea price is rising in the Yangon market. The price of black gram RC was K2,070,000 per tonne on 8 April.

The prices peaked at K2.1 million per tonne of black gram RC on 31 August 2022 and K2,175,000 per tonne of pigeon pea on 19 September 2022. The prevailing price of black gram RC has not reached a record high of K2.1 million per tonne. Yet, the pigeon pea price on 9 March 2023 has regained the highest price recorded in 2022.

The green gram prices touched a high of K3,915-4,030 per viss on 13 February 2023. The price remains unchanged at K3,750 per viss between 23 March and 8 April.

Before the Thingyan holidays, the chickpea prices were K4,600-4,800 per viss. The price peaked at K2.8 million per tonne.

The FOB price of pigeon peas was US\$925/945 per tonne on 18 March 2023. The prices

climbed to \$950-970 per tonne on 8 April. Similarly, the FOB prices of black gram RC increased to \$860-880 per tonne on 8 April 2023 from \$785-805 per tonne on 31 August 2022.

Both the domestic pulses prices and FOB prices move up in recent days. The prices of black gram (urad) and pigeon pea (tur) in India are also rising. The urad fetched 7,500 rupees per quintal while the pigeon pea is priced at 8,200 rupees per quintal. The price is expected to climb up to 8,000 rupees for urad and 9,000 rupees for tur. The authorities concerned from India are closely observing the market to reduce the price hike in the pulses market depending on the stocks and imports.

Authorities in Myanmar are also monitoring the market and actions are being taken against the price manipulators on unreliable sources.

India's government is endeavouring to reduce the inflation burden on the people despite the needs of the market demand. — TWA/EM

MAI to extend Yangon-Chennai-Yangon flights on 6 May

A new Yangon-Chennai (formerly Madras)-Yangon route will be reportedly extended on 6 May by MAI Airlines.

The flight will run three times a week every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and will depart from the Yangon International Airport at 8 am and arrive in Chennai at 11:15 am (local time). The Chennai-Yangon flight number 8M 631 will depart from Chennai at 11:15 am and arrives in Yangon at 3:15 pm. The price of the flight ticket is currently set at US\$260.

The MAI Airlines currently operates the Yangon-New Delhi-Yangon flight and the Yangon-Bodh Gaya flight three times a week, while the Yangon-Singapore-Yangon route is operated once a week. — TWA/CT



UMFCCI to loan K70 bln to oil mills, livestock industries



The photo shows an edible oil mill.

THE oil mills and livestock industries will have K70 billion loan from the State economic promotion fund, according to the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry-UMFCCI.

K50 billion is to be loaned for the development of oil mills and K20 billion for the development of livestock industries.

In addition, if agricultural and livestock industries require additional loans, ways to increase the amount of loans will be sought. The loans are provided to develop and expand domestic businesses, agriculture and livestock sectors. — TWA/MKKS

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HEALTH/WELLNESS: WORLD

New Zealand highlights vaccination, isolation, masks to reduce COVID-19 impact this winter

COVID-19 prevention measures are highlighted to reduce the pandemic impact for the coming winter, New Zealand Minister of Health Ayesha Verrall said on Tuesday.

Verrall told a press conference that being up to date with vaccinations, staying home if unwell and wearing masks in healthcare settings remain key to minimizing the impact of COVID-19 and reducing pressure on New Zealand's health system over winter.

She said that mandatory measures for cases to isolate for seven days and retain the

compulsory use of masks for visitors to healthcare settings will remain this winter.

Meanwhile, to help prepare the health system for the coming winter, the New Zealand government has added 32 new health sector roles to the Straight to Residence pathway of the Green List.

"The world is currently facing a global health worker shortage, so it is vital that New Zealand's immigration settings present a competitive offer to attract health workers to our shores," said Immigration Minister Michael Wood. — Xinhua

Viet Nam to ramp up vaccination amid high risk of importing wild polio virus

VIET Nam is accelerating efforts to vaccinate children against polio amid a global surge in a variant of the poliovirus, Vietnam News Agency reported on Tuesday.

The National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology has urged local health authorities to administer polio vaccinations to children, especially those born in 2021 and 2022, the two years when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred.

As a result of social distanc-

ing practices to limit the spread of COVID-19, childhood immunization rates for polio have dropped to the lowest level in the past 20 years, putting millions of children at risk of exposure to the preventable disease, said the epidemiology institute under the Ministry of Health.

Viet Nam uses two types of the vaccine in the fight to eradicate polio, oral polio vaccine (OPV) and inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) given as a shot in the leg or arm. — Xinhua

England's health service set for 'catastrophic' doctors' strike



Demonstrators hold placards as they take part in a protest by junior doctors, amid a dispute with the government over pay, outside of Saint Mary's Hospital in Manchester on 15 March 2023. PHOTO: AFP

THE public health service in England was on Tuesday braced for "the most disruptive industrial action" in its history as junior doctors walk out over pay and working conditions.

The National Health Service (NHS) has been hit by waves of strikes in recent months as soaring inflation eats into wages and pandemic backlogs coupled with staff shortages increase workloads.

But the four-day walkout by junior doctors threatens to be the most serious action yet, with national medical director of NHS England Stephen Powis warning it will pile "immense pressures" on the service.

"This is set to be the most disruptive industrial action in NHS history, and the strikes tomorrow will bring immense pressures, coming on the back of a challenged extended bank holiday weekend for staff and services," he said on Monday.

"Emergency, urgent and critical care will be prioritized but some patients will unfortunately have had their appointments postponed."

Up to a quarter of a million appointments could be postponed, according to the NHS Confederation, which represents the whole healthcare system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Family doctors are reported by British media to be closed for appointments for up to a week, as GPs are drafted in to provide cover for junior doctors.

The NHS Confederation's Matthew Taylor told Sky News the strikes "are going to have a catastrophic impact on the capacity of the NHS". The service has been "preparing extensively" for the strikes, said Powis, but added that the task was made "much more difficult" due to the "sheer numbers" of appointments that need to be rescheduled. The walkout will begin at seven am (0600 GMT) on Tuesday and run until the morning of 15 April. — AFP

Pharma CEOs say US abortion pill ruling threatens drug development



People wait in line to enter the J Marvin Jones Federal Building and Courthouse in Amarillo, Texas, on 15 March 2023. US abortion opponents are hoping for a national ban on a widely used abortion pill when their lawsuit against government drug regulators is argued Wednesday in the Texas court of a deeply conservative judge believed to be sympathetic to their cause. Galvanized after the US Supreme Court ended the nationwide right to abortion last June, anti-abortion forces are now targeting the prescription drug mifepristone in their campaign to win a total ban on the practice. PHOTO: AFP

HUNDREDS of pharmaceutical executives on Monday condemned a US judicial ruling outlawing a leading abortion pill, saying it threatens the development of needed medications in the United States.

Some 400 executives, including Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla and top management at Novartis, Biogen and Merck, signed a letter criticizing Friday's ruling by Texas federal judge Matthew Kacsmaryk that could block access to mifepristone nationwide.

"The decision ignores decades of scientific evidence and legal precedent," said the letter slamming Kacsmaryk's move

to bar the drug 23 years after it was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"Judge Kacsmaryk's act of judicial interference has set a precedent for diminishing FDA's authority over drug approvals, and in so doing, creates uncertainty for the entire biopharma industry," it added.

The letter described a reliable FDA as essential to high-risk investments on new treatments.

"Adding regulatory uncertainty to the already inherently risky work of discovering and developing new medicines will likely have the effect of reducing incentives for investment,

endangering the innovation that characterizes our industry," the letter said.

Mifepristone has been used as part of a two-drug regimen by 5.6 million women since 2000.

But the drug's future has become the latest uncertainty in the wake of the US Supreme Court's June 2022 ruling outlawing national abortion rights.

Kacsmaryk, a conservative appointee of former president Donald Trump, said in his order that the FDA had used "unsound" reasoning at a time when it "faced significant political pressure" to greenlight the medication. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

China, India “two exceptions” to global slowdown this year: World Bank chief



People line up outside the IMF and World Bank Spring Meeting registration office in Washington, DC, on 10 April 2023.

PHOTO: DANIEL SLIM / AFP

CHINA and India are “two exceptions to the slowdown” that the global economy is expected to experience this year, World Bank Group President David Malpass has said.

Malpass made the remarks in a media call ahead of the In-

ternational Monetary Fund and World Bank Spring Meetings week, according to a press release posted at the worldbank.org on Monday.

“Global growth is expected to be weak this year, slowing to two per cent from 3.1 per cent in 2022.

For the US, we’re expecting a slowdown to 1.2 per cent from 2.1 per cent in 2022,” said Malpass.

“Several factors are weighing on the second half outlook: Oil prices have jumped back above 80 US dollars a barrel. The recent banking sector stress dampens activity. And inflation pressures persist. The US month-over-month core inflation has been rising over the last five months,” he said.

“I’ll note two exceptions to the slowdown: China and India. China’s GDP growth is rebounding to over 5 per cent in 2023, with strong private investment,” said Malpass.

“I note the stability of China’s currency and the countercyclical nature of its monetary policy,” he said. “India continues to be one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world. We’re looking for growth of 6.3 per cent in their FY23/24,” said Malpass. — Xinhua

Thailand’s investor confidence plunges in March

THAILAND’S investor confidence plunged in March from a positive to a neutral level as the local stock market fluctuated and weakened over concerns about the US and European banking crises, a survey showed Monday.

The country’s investor confidence index (ICI), which anticipates the market condition over the next three months, fell 21 per cent to 95.65 in March from a month earlier, according to Thai Capital Market Organizations (FETCO).

Only institutional investors’ confidence remained positive in March, while all other types of investors, retail, proprietary, and foreign, were less optimistic, FETCO Chairman Kobsak Pootrakool said in a written statement.

Respondents viewed the Southeast Asian country’s upcoming general election as the most supportive factor, followed by the Fed’s easing pace of interest rate hikes and rebounds in local tourism.

However, investors were most concerned about the fund outflow, followed by slowing Thai exports and the Fed policy rate hike to tame inflation.

Kobsak noted that the movements of key global central banks, notably the United States, Europe, and the United Kingdom, on using their policy rates to tame inflation remain under attention.

While locally, all eyes were on the pre-election political situation and the export contraction as a result of trading partners’ slowing economies, he said. — Xinhua

Markets track higher as investors await US inflation data

ASIAN and European markets mostly rose Tuesday after an Easter break that thinned trading volumes in the region, with focus now turning to the release of US inflation data later in the week.

The consumer and wholesale price reports due follow Friday figures that showed a continued healthy rise in jobs creation, reinforcing expectations of another Federal Reserve interest rate hike next month.

But the jobs report also soothed concerns that the world’s top economy was slowing too fast and could be on course for a recession, after last week’s sub-par manufacturing and services sector activity numbers.

However, analysts warned

that the 236,000 jobs announced Friday could mark the last report to top 200,000 for some time and that it could turn negative within months.

“It does appear the US payrolls have seemingly steadied the ship after the market got a bit out-of-step with, or at least over-extrapolating, an imminent recession from the gloomy... data last week,” said SPI Asset Management’s Stephen Innes.

Wall Street provided a broadly positive lead, with all three main indexes recovering from early deep losses. The Dow and S&P 500 chalked up gains though the Nasdaq finished marginally lower.

Still, most of Asia enjoyed an



Signage of Singapore Exchange Limited (SGX) is pictured outside the company headquarters in Singapore on 23 March 2023. PHOTO: AFP

upbeat day.

Tokyo, Seoul and Sydney rose more than one per cent while there were also gains in

Hong Kong, Singapore, Seoul, Mumbai, Wellington, Taipei and Bangkok, though Shanghai and Taipei dipped.

London, Paris and Frankfurt rallied in the morning as trade resumed post-Easter.

China recovery ‘on track’

Data out of China showed consumer prices rose less than expected in March and factory costs dropped, suggesting there remains some weakness in the world’s second-largest economy even as it reopens after the lifting of Covid restrictions.

It does, however, provide the People’s Bank of China with room to unveil further growth-boosting measures.

The “economic recovery is on track but not strong enough to push up prices”, said Zhang Zhiwei at Pinpoint Asset Management.— AFP

Cuba announces surprise reversal of US dollar deposit ban

CUBA’S government on Monday announced a surprise lifting of its ban on US dollar deposits in banks, reversing a policy which had been in place across the communist island nation since June 2021.

“From this moment on, financial and banking institutions will accept cash deposits of US dollars in bank accounts,” said a Central Bank of Cuba (BCC) resolution published Monday in the country’s Official Gazette.

The Cuban government had announced the ban almost two years ago, saying at the time that the move was due to continuing difficulties caused by the ongoing US embargo. The policy reversal comes as the island faces its

worst economic crisis in three decades, with mounting shortages of food, medicines and fuel worsening in recent weeks.

However it is also seeing its vital tourism industry pick up following a collapse during the

pandemic, which the government cited as one of the reasons for the move on Monday. Cuba has been subject to broad US sanctions since 1962, hindering its government’s ability to transact in dollars.— AFP

China consumer inflation falls below 1% in March

CHINA'S consumer price inflation fell below one per cent in March, official figures showed Tuesday, a sign of weak demand as the world's second largest economy tries to recover from its pandemic-driven slump.

The March consumer price index (CPI) — the main gauge of inflation — came in at 0.7 per cent, down from the one per cent seen a month earlier, according to the country's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Beijing is targeting an average inflation rate of three per cent for 2023, which is still far below the current rates of many developed economies.

Analysts had expected a faster pace in March, with economic activity picking up again after the abandonment of zero-Covid restrictions at the end of 2022.

The producer price index (PPI), which measures the cost of goods leaving factories,

shrank for the sixth consecutive month, with prices falling 2.5 per cent — indicating lower margins for businesses.

“Economic recovery is on track but not strong enough to push up prices,” Zhiwei Zhang of Pinpoint Asset Management wrote in a note.

“This suggests the economy is still running below its potential,” he added, suggesting the data made an interest rate cut more likely.

Fresh fruit prices rose 11.5 per cent year-on-year, and pork, the most consumed meat in the country, jumped 9.6 per cent.

The cost of fuel for transport fell 6.4 per cent.

Globally, commodity and food prices are rising, though China has remained relatively unscathed by increases linked to the war in Ukraine.

“We think consumer price inflation will rebound in the coming months as the labour



A customer shops for vegetables at a supermarket in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province on 11 April 2023. PHOTO: STR / AFP

market tightens again,” analysts from Capital Economics said in a note.

“But it will be well below the government's ceiling of around three per cent, and the increase

in inflation will be far smaller than what was seen elsewhere when they opened up.” —AFP

Italy eyes more trade cooperation as guest country of honour at 3rd CICPE



This photo taken on 10 April 2023 shows a view inside the venue of the third China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE) in Haikou, capital city of south China's Hainan Province.

PHOTO: XINHUA/PU XIAOXU

ITALY on Tuesday unveiled a dazzling pavilion at the ongoing third China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE), eyeing more China-Italy trade cooperation.

As the guest country of honour at this year's CICPE, currently being held on the resort island of Hainan, Italy built the pavilion in an area of about 1,800 square metres and has 147 brands participating in the expo, both figures more

than double that of last year's edition.

Maria Tripodi, Italian undersecretary of state to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, said that the expo marks a new phase of opening up and international communication, and that she expects Italian participants to win applause and recognition from the Chinese market.

Italy also set up a booth

for the China-Italy Chamber of Commerce, displaying Italian products like jewellery, garments, accessories and gelato machines.

Paolo Bazzoni, chairman of the chamber, said that China is of great importance to Italian enterprises, and participating in the expo generates more opportunities for Italian brands to enter China and start more businesses in the huge Chinese market. — Xinhua

Airbus deliveries fall as supply chain issues persist

AIRBUS reported Tuesday a drop in aircraft deliveries in the first quarter due to persistent supply chain issues, a setback for the European aerospace giant's ambitious goal for the full year.

Deliveries are a reliable industry indicator about a plane-maker's profitability as customers pay the bulk of their bills when they take possession of the aircraft.

Airbus said it delivered 127 aircraft between January and March, down 11 per cent from

142 a year earlier.

The number means the manufacturer will have to pick up the pace to reach its target of 720 units for the year compared with 661 in 2022. Airbus' suppliers are facing supply problems and struggling to recruit workers.

The slowdown in deliveries is also due to the growing share of A321 planes it must deliver, as the variety of parts needed for the single-aisle aircraft make it more susceptible to supply chain bottlenecks. — AFP

Bottlenecks in Viet Nam's transport infrastructure hinder foreign trade: experts

VIET Nam should consider removing bottlenecks in transport infrastructure as part of the efforts to develop the logistics sector and facilitate foreign trade in the southern key economic region, according to local experts.

The country should also develop inland waterway ports and foster regional connectivity in this region which consists of Ho Chi Minh City and Dong

Nai, Binh Duong, Binh Phuoc, Ba Ria - Vung Tau, Tay Ninh, Long An, and Tien Giang provinces, local newspaper Vietnam News reported on Tuesday.

The region, which accounts for 35 per cent of Viet Nam's GDP and more than 40 per cent of revenues and foreign trade, is in danger of stagnation due to bottlenecks in infrastructure, the newspaper said. — Xinhua

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

NEWS IN BRIEF

7 mln people internally displaced in Ukraine by conflict

AN estimated seven million Ukrainians have been internally displaced by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Interfax-Ukraine news agency reported Monday, citing a senior official.

Out of them, about 4.8 million people were officially registered within government agencies as internally displaced persons (IDPs), said Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk.

Some one million children were forced to leave their homes due to the conflict, but are residing inside Ukraine, Vereshchuk noted. — Xinhua

Two missing after flooding in Israel

TWO people are missing after torrential rainfall caused flooding in southern Israel, police said Tuesday.

The emergency services said that they had stepped up operations to rescue holiday-makers caught by floods during a peak travel period, as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan coincides with Jewish Passover and Christian Easter. — AFP

Five killed in Kentucky bank shooting

A 25-year-old bank employee opened fire at his workplace Monday in Louisville, in the US state of Kentucky, killing five people and wounding at least eight others in a livestreamed attack before police shot and killed him.

After an initial death toll of four, Louisville authorities announced in the evening that a fifth victim, a 57-year-old woman, had died of her injuries.

Police identified the gunman in the latest US mass killing as a white man named Connor Sturgeon and said he was an employee of Old National Bank, located downtown in Kentucky's largest city. — AFP

North Korean leader calls for more 'practical, offensive' war deterrence



This photo taken on 10 April 2023 and released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on 11 April shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (C) gesturing in front of a map (digitally blurred as received from source) while attending the 6th Enlarged Meeting of the 8th Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) at the office building of the WPK Central Committee in Pyongyang. **PHOTO: STR / KCNA VIA KNS / AFP**

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for expanding the country's war deterrence capabilities in a "more practical and offensive" way, state media said Tuesday, to counter what

it called "frantic" aggression by the United States and South Korea.

Pyongyang has opened the year with a flurry of weapons tests, including what state me-

dia has claimed are nuclear-capable underwater drones and the launch of two intercontinental ballistic missiles.

On Monday, Kim attended a meeting of the Central Military

Commission to discuss ways to "cope with the escalating moves of the US imperialists and the south Korean puppet traitors to unleash a war of aggression," Pyongyang's Korean Central News Agency said.

Kim ordered that the country's deterrence capabilities be strengthened with "increasing speed" and in a "more practical and offensive" manner.

North Korea last year declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power, effectively ending the possibility of denuclearization talks.

Earlier this year, Kim ordered the military to intensify drills to prepare for a "real war".

In response, Washington and Seoul have intensified defence cooperation, staging joint military exercises with advanced stealth jets and high-profile US strategic assets. — AFP

Japan PM Kishida to visit Africa ahead of G-7 summit in Hiroshima

PRIME Minister Fumio Kishida is scheduled to visit Egypt, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique during Japan's Golden Week holidays starting late April, ahead of the Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima in May, the government said Tuesday.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno, the government's top spokesman, said at a regular press conference that confirming cooperation with major African countries to tackle

global issues is "significant" for Japan, which holds the G-7 presidency for this year.

With the G-7 summit, which will be held in the prime minister's home constituency, fast approaching, Kishida has expressed his willingness to strengthen ties with the "Global South", a term that collectively refers to developing nations south of the equator.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, many

developing countries, including in Africa, have sought to avoid taking sides.

Matsuno did not elaborate on the itinerary of Kishida's tour to the continent. The Golden Week period runs into early May. — Kyodo

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaks to reporters at the premier's office in Tokyo on 10 April 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**



Russia, Ukraine exchange 100 prisoners each

UKRAINE and Russia said Monday they had returned around 100 soldiers each in the latest prisoner exchange between the two warring countries.

Kyiv and Moscow have periodically carried out prisoner swaps since Russia invaded Ukraine more than a year ago.

"We are returning 100 of our people," the Ukrainian president's chief of staff Andriy Yer-

mak said on Telegram.

"They are military people, sailors, border guards, national guardsmen."

Yermak said the exchange included troops who held out in Mariupol — the devastated port city captured by Russia last spring — and that some were "seriously injured".

He called the exchange "difficult" and thanked officials

for "doing what may often seem impossible".

Yermak posted a video of women in uniform being greeted with flowers. Moscow said it had returned 106 of its servicemen in the exchange.

"As a result of negotiations, 106 Russian soldiers were returned from territories under Kyiv control," the Russian defence ministry said. It said they

will be taken by plane to Moscow "for treatment and rehabilitation".

"All those that were freed will be given the necessary medical and psychological help," the ministry added. The previous Russian-Ukrainian prisoner exchange was last month. Authorities announced on 7 March that 130 Ukrainians were swapped for 90 Russian servicemen. — AFP

Philippines, US kick off largest-scale joint military drills amid criticisms

MORE than 17,000 Philippine and US troops on Tuesday kicked off the most extensive joint military activities in decades in the Philippines amid criticisms that it escalates tension in the region rather than peace and stability.

According to the Philippine military, the 18-day yearly exercise dubbed Balikatan involves 5,400 Philippine and 12,200 US troops, making it the largest iteration of the Philippines-US joint drills conducted in decades. About 100 members of the Australian armed forces join in the exercises, while a dozen countries, including Japan and Britain, are participating as observers.

Balikatan 2023 will be held in several areas including northern Luzon island, Palawan province, Batanes islands, and Zambales province from 11 to 28 April.

The drills will focus on maritime security, amphibious operations, live-fire training, cyber defence, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief preparedness. The Philippines and the United States will deploy complex weapons systems, including a Patriot missile battery and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS).

Hundreds of protesters, including League of Filipino Students members, held a “lightning rally” around 5 am local time Tuesday, a few hours before the official start of the Balikatan exercise in the Philippines. The students urged the Philippine government to trash the military agreements with the United States.

Protesters carried placards



US soldiers place an exercise patch on their uniforms during the opening ceremony of the 'Balikatan' joint military exercise at the military headquarters in Quezon City, suburban Manila on 11 April 2023. PHOTO: AFP

and banners denouncing the drills, urging Filipinos to oppose the joint exercises. Some activists hurled “paint bombs”, defacing the seal of the US Embassy in

Manila to denounce the joint military training.

Another protest was held at the gate of a military camp while the opening ceremony was

underway inside the main headquarters.

Anna Malindog-Uy, vice-president of the Manila-based think-tank Asian Century Philippines Strategic Studies Institute, warned that the staging of Balikatan will create instability and volatility in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region and the wider Asia-Pacific region, adding that the Filipinos will be caught in the crossfire and suffer the most. Roland Simbulan, vice-chair of the Centre for People's Empowerment in Governance of the Philippines, urged the Philippines to focus more on economic relations with all countries rather than spending on arms sales, which implies Balikatan and other joint military activities between the Philippines and the United States. — Xinhua

Iran says rapprochement with Saudi Arabia to positively impact on regional peace, stability

THE Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Monday that the resumption of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia will have positive impacts on regional peace, stability and security, Iranian official news agency IRNA reported.

Making the remarks at his first press conference in the current Iranian calendar year, Nasser Kanaani said the Beijing-brokered agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to normalize ties has met with “very positive reactions” in the region, and welcomed at the international level, according to the report.

The agreement would definitely have positive impacts on strengthening regional cooperation, so as to foster peace, stability and security in the region, as well as on boosting trade and economic relations not only between Iran and Saudi Arabia but also with other regional countries, Kanaani noted.

Meanwhile, he said that Iran and Saudi Arabia will exchange ambassadors after the reopening of their diplomatic missions.

China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran announced on 10 March that the latter two had reached a deal that includes the agree-

ment to resume diplomatic relations and reopen embassies and diplomatic missions within two months.

In a meeting in Beijing on Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud signed a joint statement announcing the resumption of diplomatic relations with immediate effect.

Saudi Arabia cut diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016 in response to the attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran after the kingdom executed a Shiite cleric. — Xinhua

China, Japan hold high-level consultations on maritime affairs

CHINA and Japan held the 15th round of high-level consultations on maritime affairs in Tokyo on Monday, exchanging views on maritime affairs in an all-round and in-depth way.

As this year marks the 45th anniversary of the signing of the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the two sides agreed that under the guidance of the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, efforts should be made to review and abide by the spirit

of the treaty, properly handle maritime disputes and differences through dialogue in accordance with the four-point principled agreement between China and Japan, and deepen practical maritime cooperation.

In order to build the East China Sea into a sea of peace, cooperation and friendship, more work should be advanced to build China-Japan relations that meet the requirements of the new era. — Xinhua

S Korea's fire destroys forest, houses amid strong winds

A forest fire in South Korea's northeast coastal city destroyed forest and houses, forcing hundreds of people to evacuate, Yonhap news agency reported on Tuesday citing relevant authorities.

The blaze broke out from a hill in Gangneung, about 170 kilometres east of Seoul, at around 8:30 am local time (2330 GMT on Monday).

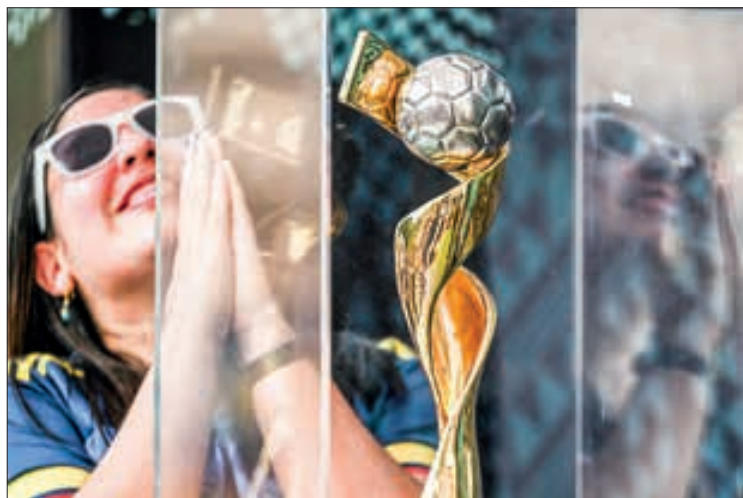
The forest fire rapidly spread to private houses due to strong wind and dry weather. The wind with an instantaneous maximum speed of 30 metres per second blew over the eastern coastal areas. No casualties have been reported yet, but the fire was estimated to have burned around 103 hectares of forest, or the size of about 144 soccer fields, as well as dozens of houses. — Xinhua



This picture taken on 2 April 2023 shows firefighters watching as a helicopter douses a wildfire on Mount Inwang in Seoul. PHOTO: YONHAP / AFP



FIFA predicts 2023 women's World Cup will be 'watershed' moment



A woman poses for a picture during the FIFA Women's World Cup Trophy tour in Cali, Colombia, on 3 April 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

FIFA has predicted the women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand will be a "watershed" moment that propels the game to another level, with the target to eventually rival the men's version.

Women's football is already enjoying a surge in popularity in some countries, and the tournament looks set to spark further global interest.

With 100 days till kick-off, FIFA's chief women's football officer Sarai Bareman told NewsCorp Australia in comments published Tuesday that more than two billion viewers were expected

to tune in, double the previous tournament in France, won by the United States.

Record attendance is also predicted, with 650,000 tickets already snapped up. The next phase of sales opened Tuesday.

Bareman said she believed the event would be a major turning point and a driver for social change, creating role models for young girls and helping promote gender equality.

"People will be saying, 'That was the watershed moment that changed everything and took the game to the next level,'" she said.

"And that's in every aspect

-- commercially, participation, popularity and growth.

"I think people will really look back and choose the women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand as that watershed moment where the growth, which is already exponential, just took off to the absolute next level."

Bareman, a New Zealand-born former Samoan international, said the ultimate goal was to grow the tournament to rival the men's and get females on equal footing in terms of pay.

"We know the men's World Cup is the primary source of revenue for FIFA and football, and that generates in excess of \$US5 billion per edition, and that's a clear target for women's football," she said.

"We want to get to that level. The first World Cup for men was in 1930, it wasn't until 61 years later the first women's World Cup was introduced, we're still in our infancy as a product.

"But we have to look at what's happening in the men's game as an inspiration and a target, for me it's got to be in the billions and we have to keep pushing until we get to that level." — AFP

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council: Twelve Objectives

1. Political affairs

- (a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
- (b) To prioritize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
- (c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active, and non-aligned foreign policy.
- (d) To ensure peace, stability, rule of law, and the safe and smooth functioning of transport networks across the Union.

2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance development based on agriculture and livestock using modern production techniques and to strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To assure support for the sustainability of Micro-, Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) that prioritize import substitution, export production, and the use of domestically produced raw materials, in order to increase domestic production and generate employment opportunities.
- (d) To advance the socioeconomic life of the people, in order to ensure the country's prosperity and food security.

3. Social affairs

- (a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- (b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National people and preserve and safeguard their faiths, beliefs, culture, and characteristics of patriotic nationalism.
- (c) To strengthen basic health care in order to achieve the emergence of a health system that enhances the longevity and health of the entire nation.
- (d) To comprehensively promote the education sector to make it capable of producing the human resources necessary for building a modern, developed, and progressive democratic nation.

Lampard urges Chelsea to emulate 2012 shock run to Euro glory

FRANK Lampard has urged Chelsea to ignore the turmoil enveloping his struggling side as he invoked the memory of the Blues' incredible run to Champions League glory in 2012.

Lampard is back in charge of Chelsea until the end of the season after replacing the sacked Graham Potter last week.

After watching Chelsea crash to a lacklustre 1-0 defeat at Wolves in his first game in charge on Saturday, Lampard takes them to Real Madrid for a daunting Champions League quarter-final first leg on Wednesday.

Chelsea are languishing in 11th place in the Premier League after a dismal campaign that included Thomas Tuchel being sacked in September and Potter lasting only seven months before his dismissal.

The west Londoners have managed to progress to the last eight in Europe despite their wretched domestic form.

Knocking out holders Real would be a major upset, but Lampard knows all about defying the odds in the Champions League.

Lampard captained Chelsea in their unexpected run to Champions League triumph 11 years ago. — AFP

Sapporo may delay Winter Games bid to 2034: Japan Olympic chief

JAPAN could push its Winter Olympics bid back four years to 2034 after corruption scandals related to the Tokyo Games, the country's Olympic chief has warned.

The northern city of Sapporo has been aiming to host the 2030 Games but Japanese Olympic Committee president Yasuhiro Yamashita told reporters that it would be "difficult to move ahead without gaining people's understanding".

His comments come as prosecutors investigate allegations of bribery and bid-rigging at the 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo, which were postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic. Local media reported Yamashita as saying that he would discuss the bid with Sapporo's mayor, who



This photo taken on 20 January 2023 shows a ski jumper taking flight as the city of Sapporo is seen during the Ski Jumping World Cup competition. Japan could push its Winter Olympics bid back four years to 2034 after corruption scandals related to the Tokyo Games, the country's Olympic chief has warned. **PHOTO: KAZUHIRO NOGI / AFP**

won re-election on Sunday ahead of two anti-Olympic candidates. Yamashita said the talks would include the option of bidding to host the Games in 2034 instead of 2030. — AFP