

**BIMSTEC MEETING**

# Lanka faces criticism for inviting junta FM

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka has invited the new foreign minister of Myanmar's junta to a regional meeting next month, sparking accusations on social media that Colombo is tacitly endorsing the military coup.

There has been no formal international recognition of the regime which toppled Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1 although Wunna Maung Lwin, the junta's newly appointed foreign minister, has met virtually and physically with some regional counterparts.

Sri Lanka's invitation, seen by AFP, is for an April 1 virtual meeting of the foreign ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand under the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

"The 17th ministerial meeting will greatly benefit from your Excellency's valued participation, and I look forward to our close engagement over the course of the meeting," Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena says in the letter.

Myanmar activists bombarded the Sri Lankan foreign ministry's social media platforms to slam the decision.

"Shame on you!!!," said Twitter user SweZun. "You invited a member of the Burmese Military Terrorist group to your BIMSTEC meeting... You are shamelessly legitimising Terrorist group..."

"Sri Lanka supporting to terrorist group is the worst shameless behaviour after China," said another Twitter user.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted the civilian government last month. Close to 2,000 people have been arrested and the death toll has climbed to more than 60, as Myanmar security forces attempt to quash the resistance.



A Tibetan holds a placard as she is detained by police officers during a protest held to mark the 62nd anniversary of the Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, outside the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi, India yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**First Quad summit on March 12**

India yesterday said the first summit of the so-called Quad framework will take place virtually on March 12. The leaders of India, Australia, Japan and the United States will address "regional and global issues of shared interest, and exchange views on practical areas of cooperation towards maintaining a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region," a statement by India's foreign ministry said. The summit will also cover supply chains, emerging and critical technologies, maritime security, and climate change, the statement added.

**China's Taiwan invasion by 2027?**

China could invade Taiwan within the next six years, as Beijing accelerates its moves to supplant American military power in Asia, a top US commander said Tuesday. "I worry that they're (China) accelerating their ambitions to supplant the United States and our leadership role in the rules-based international order... by 2050," said Washington's top military officer in Asia-Pacific, Admiral Philip Davidson. "Taiwan is clearly one of their ambitions before that. And I think the threat is manifest during this decade, in fact, in the next six years," he told a US Senate committee. Taiwan split from China at the end of a civil war in 1949 and exists under the constant threat of invasion by the mainland.

**Covid hits Italy life expectancy**



Average life expectancy in Italy has been shortened by almost one year to 82.3 years because of the coronavirus pandemic, national statistics office Istat said yesterday. Italy has been one of the countries worst hit by the pandemic, and the first in Europe. Earlier this week, it surpassed the milestone of more than 100,000 deaths. Before the pandemic took its toll, life expectancy across Italy had risen from 81.7 years in 2010 to 83.2 years in 2019, putting the country near the top of European Union tables. The bloc's average stood at 81 years in 2018.

**Moscow to host Afghan talks**

Russia plans to hold a conference on Afghanistan in Moscow later this month, the TASS news agency said on Tuesday, but the US State Department did not confirm American attendance. The TASS report comes after the United States shared with Afghan officials, Taliban leaders and others a draft peace plan calling for replacing the government with a power-sharing interim administration pending elections under a new constitution. TASS said the Russian Foreign Ministry planned to hold the conference on Afghanistan on March 18, but gave no further details.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

# 'Shoot till they are dead'

Some Myanmar police say they fled to India after refusing orders

REUTERS, Champhai

When Tha Peng was ordered to shoot at protesters with his submachine gun to disperse them in the Myanmar town of Khampat on Feb 27, the police lance corporal said he refused.

"The next day, an officer called to ask me if I will shoot," he said. The 27-year-old refused again, and then resigned from the force.

On March 1, he said he left his home and family behind in Khampat and travelled for three days, mostly at night to avoid detection, before crossing into India's northeastern Mizoram state.

"I had no choice," Tha Peng told Reuters in an interview on Tuesday, speaking via a translator. He gave only part of his name to protect his identity. Reuters saw his police and national ID cards which confirmed the name.

Tha Peng said he and six colleagues



all disobeyed the Feb 27 order from a superior officer, whom he did not name.

Reuters could not independently verify his or other accounts gathered near the Myanmar-India border.

The description of events was similar to that given to police in Mizoram on March 1 by another Myanmar police lance corporal and three constables who crossed into India, according to a classified internal police document seen by Reuters.

The document was written by Mizoram police officials and gives

biographical details of the four individuals and their account of why they fled. It was not addressed to specific people.

"As the Civil disobedience movement is gaining momentum and protest(s) held by anti-coup protesters at different places we are instructed to shoot at the protesters," they said in a joint statement to Mizoram police.

"In such a scenario, we don't have the guts to shoot at our own people who are peaceful demonstrators," they said.

Myanmar's military junta, which staged a coup on Feb. 1 and deposed the country's civilian government, did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Around 100 people from Myanmar, mostly policemen and their families, have crossed over a porous border into India since the protests began, according to a senior Indian official.

# BRUTAL CRACKDOWN ON MYANMAR PROTESTERS

## UNSC rebukes junta

AFP, Yangon

The United Nations Security Council yesterday condemned the violence used by Myanmar's military against peaceful anti-coup demonstrators as authorities swooped on striking workers in the Southeast Asian country.

The nation has been rocked by protests since military ousted and detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi last month.

Security forces have responded with an increasingly brutal crackdown involving tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets, as well as isolated incidents of live rounds.

The statement saying the Security Council "strongly condemns the use of violence against peaceful protesters" was the second time in just over a month that its 15 members, including China, spoke in unison on Myanmar's crisis.

Thousands of government workers across the country have been participating in a civil disobedience movement aimed at choking state institutions and paralysing the economy. The movement has resulted in hospital disruptions, bank closures and empty ministry offices.

Meanwhile, a lobbyist recruited to represent the junta internationally is set to pocket a \$2 million fee, according to documents filed to the US Justice Department seen Wednesday by AFP.

Israeli-Canadian lobbyist Ari Ben-Menashe and his Montreal-based firm Dickens and Madson signed a contract with the regime on March 4.

Part of their remit is "to assist in explaining the real situation in the country", while lobbying to get sanctions lifted.



Asylum seeking migrants weep as they are escorted out of a hideout by a Texas State Trooper after they crossed the Rio Grande river into the United States from Mexico on a raft in Penitas, Texas, on Tuesday. Officials have noted a surge in immigration at the southern border since Biden entered the White House in January. PHOTO: REUTERS

# 'What Meghan wants, Meghan gets'

UK royal family hints at contesting racism claims as Queen vows to address issue

AFP, London

Britain's royal family has begun a fight back against explosive racism claims made by Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, indicating the couple's comments will not go unchallenged as the country divides into partisan camps.

A keenly awaited statement from Queen Elizabeth II issued Tuesday was conciliatory towards her grandson and his mixed-race spouse after they had an interview with US chat show host Oprah Winfrey.

But it also stressed that "some recollections may vary", as the Buckingham Palace vowed to look into the couple's assertion that an unidentified royal had asked how dark their unborn son Archie's skin would be.

"Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much loved family members," Elizabeth stressed. The row is being watched worldwide, in the United States where the couple now live and across the multi-racial Commonwealth, which the queen heads, dragging Britain's most famous family further into a debate about racism and the country's colonial past.



The UK government is refusing to get involved in the family's biggest crisis since the very public collapse of the marriage of Harry's parents, other than to praise Elizabeth's stewardship of the country and the 54-nation Commonwealth.

But pointedly, Downing Street has declined to disown remarks by junior foreign minister Zac Goldsmith, who accused former army captain Harry of "blowing up his family".

"What Meghan wants, Meghan gets," added the Conservative politician, who is a close ally of Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Senior minister Jacob Rees-Mogg denied there

were any wider ramifications for the 94-year-old queen, who has reigned over Britain and 15 Commonwealth realms including Australia and Canada since 1952.

"I think she is loved across her realms for that," Rees-Mogg said. "And I don't think interviews with chat show hosts in the United States makes a great deal of difference to that."

However, former Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull said the allegations should pave the way towards his country holding another referendum on abolishing the monarchy.

One of Meghan's complaints was that she had suicidal thoughts during her time in Britain, but received no support, provoking fresh debate about the royal family's ability to connect with ordinary people. A YouGov poll of 4,656 people after the interview aired in Britain indicated almost a third felt the couple was unfairly treated, the same proportion as those who thought the opposite.

Younger people and opposition Labour supporters were more favourable to Harry and Meghan. Older respondents and Conservatives took the royal family's side.

**FUTURE PANDEMIC**  
Coalition eyes new vaccines in 100 days

REUTERS, London

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) yesterday launched a \$3.5 billion five-year strategy to tackle future pandemic risks and set out what it called its "moonshot" plan to ensure new vaccines against emerging disease epidemics within 100 days.

To be able to squeeze vaccine development timelines down to 100 days, CEPI said, researchers and drug developers would need to exploit the capabilities of so-called rapid response platform technologies, such as the mRNA approach used in Covid-19 shots developed by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna for example.

It would also involve working with global drugs regulators to streamline the requirements needed for vaccines to be approved, and linking-up manufacturing facilities to enable rapid production of pandemic vaccines, CEPI said.

# World failing to take green Covid recovery path: UN

Says less than 20 percent of recovery cash is 'green'

AFP, Paris

The world is missing a once-in-a-generation chance to rebuild a sustainable post-pandemic future, the United Nations said yesterday in an assessment showing less than 20 percent of recovery finance can be considered "green".

Although the unprecedented economic slowdown caused by Covid-19 saw greenhouse gas emissions fall dramatically in 2020, institutions from the UN to the International Energy Agency have warned against a fossil-fuel powered rebound.

The UN says emissions must fall nearly seven percent - roughly equivalent to 2020's fall - this decade in order to keep the Paris climate deal's temperature goals in play.

With renewable energy more affordable and scalable than ever, there were hopes that governments would use the opportunity presented by the pandemic to green their economies and to prioritise nature in their recoveries.

But the UN's Environment Programme said that just 18 percent of announced pandemic recovery spending could be considered green, such as renewable or low-carbon energy projects and nature-based solutions.

"We are not yet building back better when it comes to recovery spending," said UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen.



pollution."

The UNEP analysis, co-authored by researchers at the University of Oxford, showed that out of the \$1.9 trillion announced for Covid-19 recovery among 50 major economies, just \$341 billion was earmarked for green projects.

When pandemic rescue packages were factored in, the green gap becomes even starker. Just \$368 billion of \$14.6 trillion Covid-induced rescue and recovery spending in 2020 was green, the report found.

The analysis singled out Spain and Germany for praise with their large subsidies to renewable energy projects, as well as France and Britain for their commitment to increase energy efficiency through building retrofits.

Several nations were named for prioritising "dirty energy", including China and India for announcing expanded domestic coal plans, and the US, Canada, Mexico and Australia for planning additional oil and gas exploration.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

Office of the Inspector General  
Bangladesh Police  
Police Headquarters, Dhaka

**Invitation for e-Tender**

Memo No. 44.01.0000.437.07.032.2021.04 Date: 09-03-2021

For the financial year 2020-2021, e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of

Sl	Description	Tender ID No.	Online tender notice publication date & time	Online tender closing date & time
1.	UPS	556502	10-Mar-2021 13:00:00	08-Apr-2021 14:30:00
2.	Expansion and Modernization of Video conferencing system	556503	10-Mar-2021 13:00:00	08-Apr-2021 14:30:00
3.	Online UPS	556504	10-Mar-2021 13:00:00	08-Apr-2021 14:30:00
4.	Video Wall 2x2 Pannel	556505	10-Mar-2021 13:00:00	08-Apr-2021 15:00:00
5.	E-mail Security Gateway, Device with 05 years license	556506	10-Mar-2021 13:00:00	08-Apr-2021 15:00:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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