

MYANMAR MILITARY-BACKED BUSINESSES

Meta to ban all firms from its platforms

AFP, Bangkok

Facebook parent Meta will ban all pages and accounts belonging to Myanmar military-backed businesses, it said, expanding its restraints on the country's armed forces.

Myanmar's secretive military has extensive business interests, with tentacles in industries as diverse as beer, tobacco, transportation, textiles, tourism and banking.

Activists and rights groups say they funded crackdowns and abuses even before the February coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi and launched a bloody crackdown on dissent.

In late February Facebook removed all accounts linked to the military, also known as the Tatmadaw, citing the junta's use of deadly force against anti-coup demonstrators.

It also banned military-linked firms from advertising on its platforms.

Meta "will now also remove Pages, Groups and Accounts representing military-controlled businesses", it said in a statement on Tuesday.

The decision was "based on extensive documentation by the international community of these businesses' direct role in funding the Tatmadaw's ongoing violence and human rights abuses in Myanmar", it said.

It would use the report from a 2019 UN fact-finding mission into the military's economic interests "as the basis" for its actions, it added.

The pages of Myawaddy Trading Ltd, Myawaddy Bank and Myanma Beer -- all included in the 2019 report -- were inaccessible as of yesterday.

A page for a film production company allegedly run by the daughter of junta chief Min Aung Hlaing was also blocked.



Newly elected German Chancellor Olaf Scholz receives applause during a session of the German lower house of parliament Bundestag to elect a new chancellor, in Berlin, Germany yesterday. Inset, outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel arrives for the session of the German lower house of the parliament Bundestag in Berlin.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MORE NEWS

UK, Australia join US diplomatic boycott of Beijing Olympics

Australia and Britain will join the United States in a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, their prime ministers said yesterday, as other allies weighed similar moves to protest at China's human rights record in Xinjiang.

KSA rejects French claim of Khashoggi suspect arrest

French authorities were yesterday seeking to confirm the identity of a man arrested on suspicion of playing a key role in the 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi after Saudi Arabia insisted the suspect was a victim of mistaken identity.



US hits Iran with new sanctions for rights abuses

The United States slapped fresh sanctions on a dozen Iranian officials and entities for "serious" human rights abuses Tuesday, ahead of the expected resumption of nuclear talks with Tehran after they halted last week without any concrete progress.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Omicron spreads to 57 nations

WHO warns hospitalisations set to rise, says existing vaccines should work against the new Covid variant

AGENCIES

The Omicron variant has been reported in 57 nations and the number of patients needing hospitalisation is likely to rise as it spreads, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

The WHO, in its weekly epidemiological report, said more data was needed to assess the severity of disease caused by the Omicron variant and whether its mutations might reduce protection from vaccine-derived immunity.

"Even if the severity is equal or potentially even lower than for Delta variant, it is expected that hospitalisations will increase if more people become infected and that there will be a time lag between an increase in the incidence of cases and an increase in the incidence of deaths," it said.

On November 26, the WHO



declared the Omicron variant, which was first detected in southern Africa, a variant of concern. It is the fifth SARS-CoV-2 strain to carry such a designation, reports Reuters.

The number of reported Covid-19 cases in South Africa doubled in the week to December 5 to more than 62,000 and "very large" increases in incidence have been seen in Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and Lesotho, it said.

The spread of Omicron, coupled with enhanced testing and low vaccination rates may have played a role, it added.

Referring to the risk of reinfection, the WHO said: "Preliminary analysis suggests that the mutations present in the Omicron variant may reduce neutralising activity of antibodies resulting in reduced protection from natural immunity."

Meanwhile, WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan said in an interview on Tuesday: "We have highly effective vaccines that have proved effective against all the variants so far, in terms of severe disease and hospitalisation... There's no reason to expect that it wouldn't be so" for Omicron.

However, Ryan acknowledged that it was possible that existing vaccines might prove less effective against Omicron.

India among top nations in inequality: report

NDTV ONLINE

India stands out as a "poor and very unequal" country, with the top 1 percent of the population holding more than one-fifth of the total national income in 2021 and the bottom half just 13 per cent, according to a report.

The report, titled "World Inequality Report 2022", has been authored by Lucas Chancel, co-director of the World Inequality Lab, and coordinated by several experts, including French economist Thomas Piketty.

It further said India is now among the most unequal countries in the world.

The report pointed out that the average national income of the Indian adult population is Rs 204,200. While the bottom 50 percent earns Rs 53,610, the top 10 percent earns more than 20 times (Rs 1,166,520).

"While the top 10 percent and top 1 percent hold respectively 57 percent and 22 percent of total national income, the bottom 50 percent share has gone down to 13 percent.

"India stands out as a poor and very unequal country, with an affluent elite," it said.

According to the report, average household wealth in India stands at Rs 9,83,010. It observed that the deregulation and liberalisation policies implemented since the mid-1980s have led to "one of the most extreme increases in income and wealth inequality observed in the world". It also said gender inequalities in India are very high.

"The female labor income share is equal to 18 percent. This is significantly lower than the average in Asia," the report said.



Israeli security forces arrest a young woman from a school in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, yesterday, following a reported stabbing attack.

PHOTO: AFP



DECEMBER 9

1961 - Tanganyika became independent within the Commonwealth, with Julius Nyerere as PM; the following year it became a republic. 1987 - The first riots of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, erupted on the Gaza Strip. 2016 - South Korea's President Park impeached in parliamentary vote.

SOURCE: REUTERS

Biden-Putin talks 'positive'

Says Ukraine amid military buildup on border

AGENCIES

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that a video call between US President Joe Biden and Russian leader Vladimir Putin was "positive".

"I think it is positive that the president of the United States spoke with the president of Russia," Zelensky said, a day after Biden warned Putin of "strong" Western economic retaliation for any Russian attack on ex-Soviet Ukraine.

Speaking at a news conference, Zelensky also hoped that Ukraine and Russia could agree a new ceasefire and prisoner exchanges when their representatives held talks on the conflict in Ukraine's easterly Donbass region yesterday.

"In general, I think it is positive that the president of the United States spoke with the president of the Russian Federation," Zelensky said.

"The most important thing that we see now is that there is a personal real reaction

and personal role of President Biden in resolving this conflict, the war in the east of our state."

Meanwhile, British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss warned yesterday it would be "a strategic mistake" by Moscow to invade Ukraine, amid concern at a Russian troop build-up on the border.

The message, delivered during a wide-ranging speech and question-and-answer session in London, follows similar warnings from Western capitals as tensions on the Ukrainian frontier. Moscow has deployed up to 100,000 troops there in recent weeks, sparking fears of a major war in eastern Europe, reports AFP.

On Tuesday, President Joe Biden warned Russian President Vladimir Putin in a video link call of "strong" Western economic blowback against any attack on Ukraine.

The Kremlin leader demanded guarantees that the Nato alliance keep clear of Russia.

ATTACK IN NIGERIA

23 people burn to death

AFP, Abuja

Gunmen in Nigeria attacked a bus in the country's northwestern Sokoto state, causing a fire that killed 23 people, police and the governor's spokesman said yesterday.

It was unclear why the bus was attacked but heavily armed criminals, known locally as bandits, have for years terrorised northwest and central states in Africa's most populous nation.

"23 people lost their lives," said the governor's spokesman Muhammad Bello.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Chattogram City Corporation. Tiger Pass, Chattogram. www.ccc.gov.bd. Memo No. 46.11.1600.002.14.21.0021. Dated: 07-12-2021. Tender Notice-CCC/ADP-1230Cr./2021-22. 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.

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