



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing speaks on the Thanksgiving occasion organized by Christian Councils of Churches of Myanmar at St Mary's Cathedral Church in Botahtaung Township, Yangon Region, yesterday.

Religions need to bring peace and prosperity to the society

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing noted that the government is committed to resolving issues encountered within the society through peaceful co-existence, specifically through dialogue to achieve success.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attended the Christmas Thanksgiving and Fellowship Dinner organized by Christian Councils of Churches of Myanmar at St Mary's Cathedral Church in Botahtaung Township of Yangon Region yesterday evening.

Religious leaders from respective faiths have to guide their followers toward knowledge, wisdom, and positive mindsets.

Also present at the dinner were Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, wife of the Senior General, Council Joint Secretary General Ye Win Oo and his wife, council members and their wives, Union ministers and their wives, senior Tatmadaw officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and their wives, the Yangon Region Chief Minister, the commander of Yangon Com-

mand, the mayor, bishops from Myanmar Council of Churches, Myanmar Christ Mission Cooperation Board (MCMC) and Myanmar Evangelical Christian Alliance, officials from Interfaith Dialogue Group and guests.

The Senior General, his wife and dignitaries were welcomed by Archbishop Cardinal Charles Bo and officials.

At the ceremony, Archbish-

op Stephen Than Myint Oo extended greetings.

All attendees sang a song of choir titled "Prosperous Myanmar".

In his greetings, the Senior General said that individuals have rights to freedom of faith in accord with the provisions mentioned in the 2008 Constitution.

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Salient points in the speech delivered by the Senior General at the Christmas Thanksgiving and Fellowship Dinner

1. Despite differences, individuals need to follow tolerance and forgiveness and avoid behaviours of extremism and bigotry.
2. The government is committed to resolving issues encountered within the society through peaceful co-existence, specifically through dialogue to achieve success.
3. The political issue, in a way, should be resolved through political means, and demands must be addressed through political methods but not handled in armed struggle. Just as no human society accepts armed terrorism, individuals must oppose such actions.

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2025 Prescriptions for Myanmar

By U AC

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Pinlaung tea leaves receive orders from Yangon Region

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Door-to-door cooking oil delivery system serves 6,000 households daily in Yangon Region

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Youth: Balancing Self-Interest with Charity for Nation-Building

- All youths should balance self-interest with a spirit of charity.
- They must strive for personal improvement while fostering a commitment to public welfare and nation-building efforts.

(Excerpt from the speech given by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the ceremony of presenting awards to outstanding students who passed the matriculation examination 2024 with distinctions in all subjects on 22 July 2024)

Charity Art Show in Mandalay showcases over 100 paintings



Artists creating paintings at Charity Art Show in Mandalay. **MIN HTET AUNG (MANDALAY SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)**

THE “Charity Art Show,” an exhibition and sale of stunning paintings, was held yesterday at Mingalar Mandalay Hotel in Mandalay, attracting art lovers from across the city.

“This event is a collaborative effort between the Myanmar Art Centre and Mingalar Mandalay Hotel. It features live painting demonstrations, discussions on creating artwork inspired by Myanmar culture, and a sale of paintings. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to charitable organizations in Mandalay,” explained Ma Thet, Managing Director of the Myanmar Art Centre.

She added, “The exhibition showcases the work of 40

artists, with over 100 paintings on display and available for purchase. Prices range from K200,000 to K20 million. The event runs from 21 to 22 December and aims to build stronger connections between artists and the Mandalay community”.

Artist U Soe Win Aung commented, “As part of the exhibition, I will be conducting a drawing session as part of the live painting activities. This event is highly beneficial as it draws in art enthusiasts,

children, and students from fine art schools, providing them with opportunities to learn and explore”.

Art exhibitions like this serve as a platform for the next generation of art enthusiasts to study the works of accomplished artists. They not only provide exposure but also enrich knowledge about art and inspire the emergence of exceptional talents. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)/KZL

Myanmar Gazette

Duty-Assignment of Permanent Secretary/Director-General

THE State Administration Council has concurrently assigned U Kyaw Swe Lin, Director-General of the Office of the Union Minister, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, to the duties of Permanent Secretary and Director-General of the same ministry.

Five National Objectives for 77th Anniversary of Independence Day 2025

1. To address armed conflicts and differing perspectives lawfully, ensuring non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty
2. To safeguard the State with unity and strength of all citizens, guided by the spirit of the Union
3. To conduct a free, fair, and credible general election to establish a genuine, disciplined democratic system
4. To promote balanced development across all sectors of the Union through the collective strength of the entire people
5. To collectively advance politics, the economy, defence, national identity, and spirit with perseverance, diligence, and dedication, guided by the motto: “Keep Moving Forward to Achieve Our Goal”

Gold Market Rate as of 22 December 2024

THE price of one tical (16.329325 grammes) of gold with a density of 19.25 grammes per cubic centimetre and above is K5,250,000, as established by the Mineral (Gold) Reference Price Determination Committee.

The people are urged to receive vaccination of COVID-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of COVID-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increase of death rate due to the disease.

NATIONAL

THE door is open to all ethnic armed groups at all times for the sake of peace in the State. They are always welcomed to resolve the differences, not by military means, but through dialogue. Only when the entire population makes collective endeavours to achieve peace and stability, rule of law and socio-economic development, will Myanmar be able to stand tall in the world as a modern and developed country.

(An excerpt from the message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister Senior General Thadue Maha Thray Sithu Thadue Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing on the occasion to mark the Kayin New Year Day held on 11 January 2024.)



Yangon's night beauty. PHOTO BY AUNG KYAW MOE

FROM PAGE 1

He noted that religions need to bring peace and prosperity to the society. Only when humans enjoy peace of mind will the society be peaceful and pleasant.

He underscored that despite differences, individuals need to follow tolerance and forgiveness and avoid behaviours of extremism and bigot.

In Myanmar, he said that it is well known that people of various ethnicities, religions, and beliefs have lived together harmoniously and cooperatively. Despite these differences, unity has been achieved through mutual tolerance, understanding, and respect. It is essential to continue safeguarding and maintaining this unity.

In particular, the Senior General highlighted that religious leaders from respective faiths have to guide their followers toward knowledge, wisdom, and positive mindsets.

He continued that the government is implementing the roadmap, national and political visions to strengthen the multi-party democratic system that the people desire and to return to the correct democratic path.

The Senior General clarified that the government is committed to resolving issues encountered within the society through peaceful co-existence, specifically through dialogue to achieve success.

He underlined that the political issue, in a way, should be resolved through political means, and demands must be addressed through political methods but not handled in armed struggle. Just as no human society accepts armed terrorism, individuals must oppose such actions.

In Myanmar, he emphasized that Buddhism is the most widely practised religion, followed by Christianity. Christian religious organizations and adherents play a crucial role in ensuring the stability and prosperity of the country. Therefore, they are encouraged to actively participate in various sectors.

The Senior General urged all to build

Religions need to bring peace and prosperity to the society



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla accept Christmas gifts and the stone art painting on the Thanksgiving occasion in Yangon yesterday.

a peaceful, harmonious, and beautiful human society with understanding and tolerance towards one another, not only in Myanmar but across the world. The Senior General urged all to work towards this goal, wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and good blessings.

All processes of the ceremony followed. Sister Mary Zin Mar Swe read the Bible while Archbishop Cardinal Charles Bo preached the Dhamma. Rev Dr Aye Min blessed the Republic of the Union

of Myanmar.

Archbishop Cardinal Charles Bo, Archbishop Stephen Than Myint Oo and Rev Dr Aye Min presented Christmas gifts, the message of Christmas blessing and the stone art painting to the Senior General and his wife who returned the Christmas gifts.

In his speech, Archbishop Cardinal Charles Bo said that on this joyous occasion of Christmas, may not only Christians but all of humanity around the world

be filled with the blessings of goodness and happiness that Christmas brings. He wished the Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister, his wife and family, cabinet members, Tatmadaw members and their families, and all the people of Myanmar receive blessings of happiness and prosperity.

The Senior General, his wife and dignitaries together with guests had the dinner hosted by the Christian Church Associations of Myanmar. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Residents Urged to Prioritize Public Safety Amid Armed Terrorist Threats

ARMED terrorists have been launching attacks by using residential homes and administrative buildings in towns and villages as cover, where they have forcibly settled. They aim to shield themselves from Tatmadaw counterattacks while also persuading temporarily displaced persons to return to their native areas and recruiting new members. That enables terrorists to use civilians as human shields. Tatmadaw is committed to safeguarding the sovereignty of the State and will respond to these threats based on intelligence and prevailing conditions. Therefore, residents in areas where terrorists have taken control must prioritize their safety and protect themselves from being exploited by these groups.

(Excerpt from guidance given by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to Shan State cabinet members and state-level departmental officials on 3 September 2024)



Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presses the button to unveil the stone plaque and signboard of the centennial hall.

Priority should be given to rural communities relying on agriculture for livelihoods

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing stressed that the university's objective is to equip agricultural producers with the knowledge and skills in food production technologies that are beneficial to them, the nation, and the environment, ensuring sustainable practices.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attended the ceremony to inaugurate the centennial hall of Yezin University of Agriculture in conjunction with the centennial celebration at the university yesterday morning.

Council Joint Secretary General Ye Win Oo, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Min Naung and Union Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe cut the ribbon to mark the 100th anniversary of Yezin Uni-

Yezin University of Agriculture equips agricultural producers with the knowledge and skills in food production technologies.

versity of Agriculture.

The Senior General unveiled the stone plaque and signboard of the centennial ceremony.

The Senior General and party visited the centennial multi-purpose hall.

Along the route to the convocation hall where the centennial celebration of the university would be held, students and ethnic people welcomed the Senior General and attendees.

The Senior General and party watched a documentary video clip on the history of the university.

Speaking on the occasion,

the Senior General said that it is necessary to widely disseminate practical and scientifically-based agricultural knowledge that will bring about effective results to rural farmers, and turn out agricultural graduates, as well as mid-level agricultural technicians and basic-level skilled agricultural workers.

Currently, the government is implementing the three main processes of 'education, research, and technology dissemination'.

In carrying out these processes, he underlined that priority should be given to ensuring

that the benefits of these efforts are effectively supported for rural communities, who rely most on agriculture for their livelihoods.

Therefore, in addition to the previous agricultural institutes that awarded agricultural diplomas, as of the 2023-2024 academic year, 85 high schools across the country have also been opened to offer agricultural subjects.

Furthermore, he said that it is gratifying to learn that the universities are working hard to identify and train outstanding individuals from these agricultural institutes and high schools, to develop them into agricultural

professionals.

The university's objective is to equip agricultural producers with the knowledge and skills in food production technologies that are beneficial to them, the nation, and the environment, ensuring sustainable practices.

Moreover, the university aims to help individuals understand the strengths and weaknesses of the nation's agricultural and human resource foundations, so that experts can effectively apply their expertise to improve and address any shortcomings.

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Priority should be given to rural communities relying on agriculture for livelihoods

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The total area of crops in the country, which is 33 million acres, is being prioritized for important crops to ensure domestic food security, expand exports, and increase the production capacity to substitute imports. Efforts are being made to achieve the target output rate.

Over the course of a century, the university has produced a significant number of highly skilled and knowledgeable individuals who are trusted by the nation. These include 13,197 graduates with a degree in agricultural science, 673 with a master's degree, 85 with a doctoral degree, 70 with postgraduate diplomas, and 11 with M Phil degree. Due to the ability to produce such graduates, the country has benefited greatly from their contributions.

The Senior General presented an award for production of

Yezin Super Rice (YSR-1) to the Director General of the Agricultural Research Department.

The Union minister explained the centennial celebration of the university and presented a commemorative gift to the Senior General.

The Senior General and party enjoyed song and dance entertainment of students from the university and presented a flower basket to them. He cordially greeted retired rectors, pro-rectors of the university.

After the ceremony, the Senior General visited the exhibition to mark the centennial celebration of the university.—MNA/TTA

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits the exhibition displayed at the centennial celebration of the Yezin University of Agriculture.



MoC Union Minister inspects Myanmar-Korea Friendship (Dala) Bridge construction progress

UNION Minister for Construction U Myo Thant, accompanied by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein, yesterday inspected the construction of the Myanmar-Korea Friendship (Dala) Bridge, connecting Yangon and Dala.

Initially, they examined the completion status of two approach bridges along Strand Road on the Yangon side and the progress of the approach bridge along Phoneygi Road. They assessed the requirements and provided guidance for ongoing works.

Consultants explained the progress achieved, the upcoming implementation plans, and efforts to complete the project on time. Director General U Kyaw Kaung Cho of the Bridges Department supplemented the discussion with additional clarifications. Coordination was made to address the needs and



Union Minister U Myo Thant views round the construction project site of Myanmar-Korea Friendship (Dala) Bridge in Yangon yesterday.

guide the work accordingly.

The Union minister travelled by boat to inspect the main bridge's central pylon (Pylon-1) on the Dala side, reviewing the detailed construction progress and instructed all involved to complete the project within the scheduled timeframe.

The Myanmar-Korea Friendship (Dala) Bridge features a modern cable-stayed

Bago Region CM inspects restoration of Bago City's urban character, cultural heritage

BAGO REGION Chief Minister U Myo Swe Win inspected work processes to restore Bago City's urban character and preserve its ancient cultural heritage on 21 December.

He viewed round the restoration of the Hanthawady city wall, the Theinni Gate, and the Toungoo Gate, as well as the construction of landscaping and a moat circular road. He instructed officials to systematically uncover the city walls, prevent damage to the brickwork, and carefully record and preserve the excavated ancient artifacts by type, while maintaining the site continuously and installing warning signs where necessary. The aim is to allow the public to enjoy and experience the ancient cultural heritage while relaxing.

Afterwards, he inspected the comprehensive upgrade of the ancient and historic Leikpya (Butterfly) Lake in

Bago City, as part of the regional government's plan. He instructed the officials to extend the lake circular road and to maintain and enhance the beauty of the lake, which serves as a destination for both health and family recreation.

The chief minister then inspected the construction of a replica of the 16-horse chariot used by King Bayintnaung, in the original design and size, in Maekhon village, Bago Township, as planned by the regional government.

He also visited the Myoma Market in Bago to assess the direct sales shops set up by farmers and breeders with the aim of stabilizing local commodity prices, enabling people to buy and consume meat, fish, and eggs at affordable prices every day. He instructed the responsible officials to ensure that there is no shortage of basic commodities. — Regional IPRD/TH

NATIONAL

MoRAC Union Minister meets with Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustee members

UNION Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture, U Tin Oo Lwin, visited the Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday. At the southern archway of the pagoda, he offered flowers and cool water to the Buddha image under the Bo tree and observed the Shwedagon Pagoda's history and pilgrimage guidance services.

The Union minister met with members of the Shwedagon Pagoda Trustees' Board at their office. U Htein Win, the alternate chairman, and other board members provided updates on the ongoing offering ceremonies of gold plates for the Shwedagon

Pagoda for 2024-2025 financial year, as well as accomplishment of directives issued by the Head of State. The Union minister inspected the religious buildings in the pagoda precinct.

Additionally, the Union minister joined the 51st Buddha Pujaniyaya festival, Dhamma Pujaniya, and Sangha Pujaniya ceremonies, along with the offering of alms and rice at the Botahtaung Pagoda.

The ceremony was presided over by the Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, Aggamaha Pandita, Aggamaha Saddhammajoti-



kadhaja Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Candima Bhivamsa, along with other eminent monks.

Following the ceremony, the Union minister and his wife, regional ministers, departmental officials, trustees, and donors offered alms, including rice and other items, to 108 members of the Sangha and 36 nuns. — MNA/TMT

Union Minister U Tin Oo Lwin presents donations to Chairman of SSMNC Thanlyin Minkyaung Sayadaw Bhaddanta Candima Bhivamsa at Botahtaung Pagoda in Yangon yesterday.



A tea leaf picker at the Pinlaung farm.

Pinlaung tea leaves receive orders from Yangon Region

IT is time that tea leaves have been short of supply and Pinlaung-produced tea leaves have received orders the most from Yangon Region.

Over the next months, cleaning work will start in tea farms and tea leaves will fall down in foggy weather so the supply of tea leaves has been short and the price has been high.

“Now, tea leave production is low. But the price is high. The supply is unable to provide adequately to meet the demand. Tea leaves have received continual orders. Most are from Yangon Region. It is expected that tea leaf prices will continue climbing up in coming months and fall in monsoon only,” said Ma Mu Mu Tin Yi, a tea farmer from Pinlaung Township.

This year's tea leaf production was good as young tea plumules grew much due to high rainfall.

“The production was larger this year because there were continual rains, which helped young leaves increasingly grow. Even in winter, there is rain sometimes. High rainfall can help the growth of the tea leaf production,” she added. In southern Shan State's Ywangan, due to the difficulty of sun-drying tea leaves in July, farmers produced fresh tea leaves more and the fresh tea leaf trade was good. — Thit Taw/ZS

National Library (Yangon) hosts pre-Christmas activities, weekly storytelling for children

A pre-Christmas activity programme for children was held on 21 December at the Children's Library of the National Library (Yangon), located in Pabedan Township, Yangon Region, according to sources from the National Library (Yangon).

The programme began at 1 pm and included various activities for children, such as storytelling sessions featuring Christmas tales, collaborative crafts where children created Christmas tree and star decorations, and a talk on the benefits of tree planting to enhance the children's knowledge.

The National Library (Yangon) also shared that its Children's Library organizes weekly storytelling sessions every Saturday. These sessions welcome external storytellers who



Photo of children participating in the pre-Christmas event in Children's Library.

engage with children by narrating stories and conducting interactive discussions based on the themes and characters from the stories.

Additionally, documentary films donated by the Yangon Film School (YFS) are

screened weekly for the public at the Audio/Video studio on the first floor of the National Library. The screenings take place every Saturday at 12:30 pm, featuring one documentary film each week, and are free of charge. — ASH/ TRKM

NATIONAL

Lavender plantations near Pinlaung to become photo sightseeing tour destination soon



LAVENDER plantations near Pinlaung in the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone of Southern Shan State have become a popular destination for domestic tourists. According to local sources, the plantations attract 300 to 500 visitors daily, primarily from Taunggyi and Kalaw.

Located near Phayaphyu Village in Naungtaya of Pinlaung Township, the lavender patches were originally cultivated as part of Thailand’s Mae Fah Luang project.

Efforts are now underway to develop the site into a Photo Sightseeing Tour destination to draw more visitors.

Travellers from Taunggyi can reach the plantations by taking the Taunggyi-Aungban-Naungtaya route and turning off at the Nyanpin Village junction before arriving at Phayaphyu Village. Visitors from Kalaw can use the Kalaw-Tikyit-Naungtaya route to access the site. — ASH/KZL

Workshop on traditional ethnic music and dances held at NUAC (Yangon)

A workshop on the traditional music and dance of the Kayin, Mon, and Rakhine ethnic groups was held at the National University of Arts and Culture (Yangon) in the second week of December.

During the event, Kayin ethnic scholar Saw Myint Thu compared the colonial-era Maung Roh don dance with its modern counterpart, while scholar Saw Wunna Tun discussed the composition and vocal techniques of the Yaway Nyar song. Mon ethnic scholar Min Han Win Aung demonstrated the process of crafting and playing the Mon crocodile musical instrument, and scholar Mi Mya Than explained the ancient Mon duet dance and the Sama Kwet dance. Rakhine ethnic scholar Saw Khin Nu outlined the foundational elements of Rakhine traditional dances and elaborated on the four styles of dance across four historical eras.

Students from the uni-



A workshop emphasizes traditional dance of Kayin, Mon and Rakhine ethnics.

iversity showcased traditional music and dances of the Kayin, Mon, and Rakhine ethnic groups, followed by an engaging a Q&A session and discussions with attendees.

The Rector of the university awarded certificates of appreciation and gifts to Rakhine ethnic musician and dance artistes, as well as gifts to participating students. Additionally, Mon traditional musician Min Han Win Aung and his wife, Mi Thi Thi Htwe, donated a Mon crocodile musical instrument to the university, for which the Rector presented a certificate of appreciation.

The workshop was attended by faculty members, departmental heads, Kayin, Mon, and Rakhine musicians and dancers, as well as teachers and students of the university. — ASH/TKO

Well Marked Low-Pressure Area Condition

22 December 2024 19:00 MST Today

ACCORDING to the observations at 17:30 hours MST today, the Well Marked Low-Pressure Area over westcentral Bay of Bengal still persists. It is likely to move west-southwestwards and reach to southwest Bay of Bengal (North Tamil Nadu and South Andhra Pradesh Coasts) India, during 24 December 2024. — DMH



Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers and Oil Entrepreneurs Association is selling cooking oil under door-to-door system.

Door-to-door cooking oil delivery system serves 6,000 households daily in Yangon Region

THE Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers and Entrepreneurs Association has reported receiving up to 100,000 daily orders for cooking oil (palm oil) through their call centre. Approximately 6,000 households benefit from a door-to-door delivery service each day.

“To provide convenience for workers in industrial zones, we have introduced a door-to-door cooking oil delivery system,” said U San Lin, Chairman of the association. “The system has proven effective during the trial period, ensuring direct distribution to consumers. For others, we use an oil purchase booklet system to ensure smooth access, which has also been highly efficient”.

The delivery service caters to about 6,000 households daily, reaching up to 150,000 households monthly.

This door-to-door system, launched on 31 July 2024, is supervised by the Yangon Region Government in collaboration with the Yangon Region Consumer Affairs Department and the Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers and Entrepreneurs Association. It aims to support households struggling to access cooking oil shops and provides a convenient and quick delivery solution. — ASH/TMT

Protect rights of children as the best investment

EVERY country is responsible for prioritizing the best interests of children by investing in the development of qualified human resources. These interests include enhancing children’s well-being, fostering their development, and ensuring their protection. In other words, it is essential to create opportunities for children to enjoy their rights as outlined under the law fully.

The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November to protect and promote the welfare of children worldwide. It is a landmark treaty among other human rights conventions. A total of 196 United Nations member states have signed the convention, and these countries are actively working to implement children’s rights to the best of their abilities.

Children are like wax, capable of being cast. They have the right to experience and enjoy everything society offers. It is everyone’s responsibility to nurture children systematically by creating learning opportunities and fostering an environment that supports their development, as this is an investment in shaping the future of society. Protecting the rights of children from birth to youth is not only the duty of governments but also the shared responsibility of all adults. This serves as both a national obligation and a humane duty, shaping the future of the State.

issues such as violence against children, sexual harassment, forced labour, child trafficking, child abuse, challenges faced during armed conflicts, limited opportunities for children with disabilities and so on. To ensure effective protection, both children and their caregivers must cooperate with law enforcement agencies.

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Current State of Affairs

I doubt anyone with a basic understanding of economics would dispute negative economic growth for this calendar year. We cannot simply take the official accounts and take the balance of trade surplus as an accurate indicator of the economy. With severe restrictions on imports, this current account is always likely to be in surplus. Yet imports continued to flow in like a tidal wave across a large number of porous borders. Without considering these unofficial statistics, we will not be able to judge the economy correctly and we would be misinterpreting the economic signals on most fronts.

With the dearth of credible economic statistics being publicize, it does not help but accentuate the bombardment of negative news coming out via fake news circles encamped within the perimeters of Chiang Mai, Thailand. How would we be able to take the correct remedy, if we do not know of genuine facts and figures?

Yet, we are still dragging each other down, oblivious to the fact that other countries, especially those neighbouring us, are treating us like dirt. We cursed and swore at our leaders online, attacked Myanmar’s own brands, businesses and companies if there was the slightest hint of them supporting our own government and Tamadaw and shoved our competitors into the trench vengefully for even the slightest of mistakes. Myopic, as blind as a bat, tunnel vision would come to our minds. Do they not know that our destiny is all tied by the same red passport that we have to hold when we get out of this land?

Nonetheless, the majority seem to have fallen into the trap of those instigators who want the country to fail and the economy wrecked because these campaigners no longer share our destiny. Holding passports of the Western countries (US, UK, Australia, etc.) they called for upheaval and continuing revolution, bestowing distrust among our nationals and promoting the mass murders of one another. Without unity on the inside, we

will always be the lowest of the rock-bottom class people in view of other countries.

I do not want to dwell much on the Tatmadaw fronts. Reading the ‘Lashio Incident’ would probably help you better understand the circumstances.

Murphy’s Law

Worst things always happen at the worst possible times! That’s what the Murphy’s Law said. Even you can convince yourself easily; on the day you have left the umbrella at home, there will be a downpour. When you are eating KFC with your fingers, there will be an itch on your body that you cannot possibly reach or scratch. Sounded familiar?

When the country is feeling despondent on the economic, security and military fronts, suddenly, once in a century flood will extensively inundate our farmlands and homes. The impact is going to last beyond this year. The standard of living has already gone down due to kyat depreciation and excessive inflation. What more could we possibly suffer?

Notwithstanding, the recovery efforts are going to be long and arduous. Families are already in desperate need of help. NNCP terrorist groups claimed they were all for the people, and then they all vanished from sight once the floods came in. Donations they collected are all for themselves only. There is even a news report of them shooting at Tatmadaw soldiers on the flood rescue missions. I don’t know if Kipling would be able to say the same phrase now, if he were alive: “I love the Burman with the blind favouritism born of first impression. When I die, I will be a Burman”. What an irony, considering how things are now.

Getting the Inflation Wrong

CBM and MOF stated the last FY inflation officially at 27 per cent. When the price of the eggs, e.g., has gone up from around K100 the year before to nearly K500 now, you know the figure is a hogwash. With the US dollar rates going up nearly 300 per cent within the last three years, you know for sure, that the imported



inflation is somewhere around that figure. (Fret not, inflation in the UK, from 2019 to 2022 was six times the average figure of the previous ten years)

Electricity bills are going up from September 2024 onwards. The diesel and petrol are heading north all the time. These two costs would be passed on to the prices of locally produced goods and services.

The danger here is that inflation is becoming unanchored; with no third party or credible confirmation on inflation figures, the headline figure becomes flexible without any targeted number by CBM or the MOF. This long period of inflation would lead to both individuals and companies, expecting more price rises in the future.

Researchers from the Western world have proven that an

By U AC

unexpected 1 per cent increase in CPI or RPI (Consumer/Retail Price Index) produces a 0.7 per cent rise in inflationary expectations for the future and the fact that the unexpected increase continued to exert influence over future pricing decisions.

Once this expectation has set in, it would become even more difficult to control inflation. A dire warning for the CBM/MOF perhaps, but getting the truth out, setting the targets and garnering support, especially from the business community would be an excellent start. Else, the future looks grim.

Pulse of the Foreign Believers

One Singapore businessman who has been operating in Myanmar for the past thirty years complained of having to fund the

operations out of his savings and having no new products to sell to customers because of the ban on imports.

One Indian businessman who is a major exporter of beans and pulses as well as the owner of several restaurants, whines of the same issue. He has made Myanmar his home since his father’s time. Now, his moans have become meows and he decided to spend more of this time back in India and elsewhere.

One Frenchman, who is a permanent resident of Myanmar, has deserted Myanmar after his 20-year-old travel and tour businesses had to remain shut, due to the absence of any inbound European tourists into Myanmar. To rub salt into his wounds, his boutique hotel in Inlay which he wanted to put up for sale, was devastated so much by recent

floods that he is back in Myanmar to clean up and repair the damages. An irony perhaps, for someone who loves Myanmar much.

The ‘last to arrive and the first to leave’ Japanese are still trying to find buyers for their factories in Thilawa and around Yangon, to abandon Myanmar.

Koreans are also moaning in distress, complaining incessantly of incurring losses year after year and difficult economic environment, especially on the import and money transfer fronts.

The Chinese want certainty in the political situation and the scarcity of information is making all of them nervous, especially those credible ones by government news agencies.

Bringing the Confidence Back

A good proportion of investments and consumption in a

country depends on the confidence that businesses and people have in that country and its economy. So, what’s the recipe to increase confidence across the board?

(1) Communication: We need the top leaders and ministers from the government to talk about the State of the Union at least every month. Many like me believe in the current leaders and trust that they are doing their best for the country. With a little bit of top-down communication, these followers cannot help but feel motivated about the need to move in the same direction as the government and help accomplish its policies. Best of all, they could help persuade others who lean towards the dark side to get themselves back to the mainstream, thereby reducing terrorism and destructive behaviours along the way.

(2) Moral leadership: If you look at Facebook and TikTok right now, Myanmar pages are full of impoliteness, impertinence, impudence and insolence, highlighting the lack of moral guidance and leadership from elderly statesmen and alike. Akin to Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong giving moral guidance for the civil service and general population, we also need moral leaders who cared enough about the social apathy and lack of concern about the deterioration of moral values and standards, across the board. We need those who are not chicken out to talk about these degrading moral principles in public and media.

(3) We need timelines and specific actions: Instead of using wishy-washy phrases such as the government is doing what is necessary, the ministry is doing the needful, the department is carrying out the essentials, would it not be a change for the better, if timelines and specific actions are included. Instead of just saying we will try to bring peace in Mandalay, e.g., would it not be building more confidence

if the public heard that the Mandalay Region would be free of terrorists by the end of the year, by hook or by crook? Or something equivalent perhaps.

With such confidence being built up, businessmen or people with savings would no longer be buying gold and USD. Foreign investors would not be thinking of turning their back on Myanmar. The general population would be more supportive of the government’s actions. More people would start re-investing and hiring people. These confidence-building exercises alone would be a much-needed uplift to the economy, without costing anything to the State.

When would be the right time for youth?

The current Thai Prime Minister is 38. Singapore’s Prime Minister is 48. Last year, when Cambodia’s Ambassador to Myanmar left the country, he was 34. The new Ambassador is 39 years old. I believe you be hard-pressed to find any ambassadors or ministers of Myanmar below the ripe old age of 60. The majority of them have been on this earth for more than six decades. Being older may equate to being wiser with better judgement, but it also means that they would be unwilling to make changes, slow in decision making, ‘cheugy’ in technology and reluctant to upset the status quo. Worst of all, they are likely to be ‘yes’ men and avoid publicity, challenges and controversies.

Even in a recent election in a statutory board (council), the people wanting to occupy the top posts are 73 and 71 years old. Both of them are competing with another 50-year-old, whom they deemed to be young to take on the responsibility. Opportunity for youth only exists in books and words in Myanmar perhaps.

Would it not be better if the youth were given a chance to face challenges while being guided by the experience? Would it not be preferable for the country to generate youthful and contemporary ideas from the qualified youth (around 50 years old)?

Probably I have to repeat the phrase of the day from Trump - Well, we have concepts of a plan (to promote youths)!



NATIONAL

Illegal items worth over K1 bln seized across nation on 19, 20, 21 Dec

SUPERVISED by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, action is being taken under the law against illicit trading across the nation.

On 19 December, combined teams managed by the Customs Department conducted inspections at the Asia World Port Terminal container checkpoint and seized one type of industrial material (worth K553 million) in 12 containers without legal documentation, and six types of unofficial industrial material (worth K2.1 million) at Yangon International Airport (Import). Action was taken according to Customs procedures.

Additionally, on 20 December, combined teams managed by the Sagaing Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force



Confiscated illegal items in regions and states.



Ten types of food products (estimated value K30 million) without legal documents, along with one Nissan Diesel truck and one Mitsubishi Canter truck (estimated value K120 million), were also seized in Kengtung Township. The actions were taken according to the Customs Law.

Similarly, combined teams managed by the Kayin State Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force seized one type of industrial material (estimated value K25.2 million) and one Hino truck (estimated value K35 million). The action was taken under the Customs Law.

A total of 15 cases of illegal items (estimated value K1.019 billion) were seized between 19 and 21 December. — MNA/TRKM

seized one unregistered motorcycle (worth K400,000) in Monywa, and the action was taken under the Import and Export Law.

On 21 December, the Bago Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force also confiscated 2.624 tonnes of teak (estimated value K2.3 million) in Toungoo District, and action was taken under the Forest Law.

Moreover, combined squads managed by the Shan State Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force

inspected the Kengphawng combined checkpoint and confiscated four types of food products (estimated value K171 million) without official documentation, as well as one Hino Profia truck (estimated value K80 million).

36 deaths and 136 injured in YBS accidents from January to 15 December this year

ACCORDING to statistics released by Yangon Region Public Transport Committee (YRTC), 136 people were injured and 36 people dead in YBS accidents as from January to 15 December this year.

Under monthly statistics of YBS accidents in 2024, seven were injured with four deaths



A YBS traffic accident.

in January, two were injured with four deaths in February, 22 were injured with four deaths in March, two were injured with two deaths in April, five were injured with four deaths in May, three were injured with three deaths in June, 32 were injured with seven deaths in July, 15 were injured with two deaths in

August, eight were injured with two deaths in September, 26 were injured with one death in October, one was injured with one death in November and 13 were injured with two deaths in December.

A total of 12 pedestrians and 10 bicyclists were among facilities from the road accidents.

There are 51,486 recorded cases by the traffic rules enforcement task force and there are total 5,318 cases transferred from Yangon Bus Operator (YBO) from January to November 2024.

According to yearly statistics of YBS accidents, there are 55 cases in 2021 with 66 injuries and 23 deaths, 88 cases in 2022 with 93 injuries and 38 deaths, 78 cases in 2023 with 117 injuries and 35 deaths and 70 cases with 136 injuries and 36 deaths as from January to 15 December 2024. — MT/ZS

Rattan products gain popularity in Mandalay

MYANMAR handmade rattan products have been popular in Mandalay, according to rattan products trading market.

Currently, pillows and hats made of rattan have been sold well and the number of rattan customers have grown as rattan products have good quality.

“Rattan pillows and rattan hats are now best-seller items. Price of rattan products are high and their quality is good, making the number of customers grown. And rattan table, rattan chair and rattan flower vest shelf are now widely used by restaurants and hotels. Rattan bed and rattan throne are also bought for donation to monasteries. In Mandalay, the number of rattan product customers is large,” said a rattan products trader in Chanmyathazi Townhsip.

In Myanmar, rattan is made into consumer products, household products and decoration accessories for hotels and restaurants as Myanmar traditional handicrafts and not



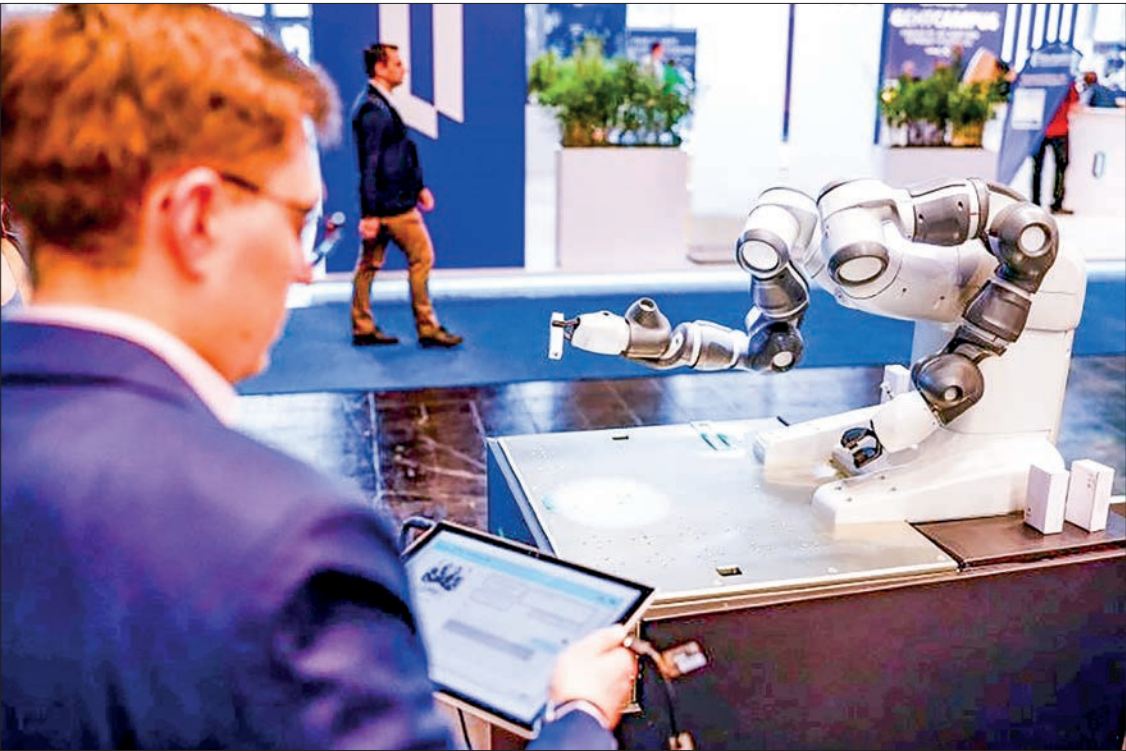
Some rattan products being displayed in Mandalay.

only in domestic market, rattan products have also gained popularity abroad, according to the local rattan industry.

Organized by Bago Region Government, a basic course on rattan and bamboo handicraft making technique was conducted in this year, aiming to help the local handicraft industry to be able produce value-added products, enhance the livelihood of families and improve job opportunities. — Thit Taw/ZS

Germany’s dual training turns to AI, digitalization amid worker shortage

Germany’s dual vocational training lasts two to three and a half years, depending on profession.



Manufacturers see potential for artificial intelligence in the sector.
PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ AFP/FILE

THE German vocational education, known for its dual training system, has been deemed a key driver of the country’s economic development.

The system, which combines theory taught in public schools with job training at private companies, has also adapted to the development of the digital age, focusing on artificial intelligence (AI) and other innovations.

The dual vocational training typically runs between two and three and a half years, depending on the chosen profession, according to Germany’s Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK).

The program is generally accessible to everyone. However, KMK suggested that most trainees start their training with a secondary school diploma or even a university entrance qualification.

Under the dual system, trainees split their time between vo-

cational schools and companies.

Germany’s Ministry of Education and Research reports that there are currently around 330 recognized occupations that require formal training. The training process, examinations and certifications are standardized nationwide across all industries, which ensures that apprentices receive consistent training regardless of the region or company. According to data from German Economic Institute (IW), the median monthly salary for professionals with vocational training in 2023 stands at some 3,500 euro (US\$3,700), with some occupations earning even over the average monthly salary of 4,300 euro (about 4,500 dollars) for full-time workers.

Vocational careers in Germany, ranging from skilled trades and sales to agriculture, enjoy societal respect. Also, many apprentices can pursue university degrees. — Xinhua

Indonesians embrace return of plundered treasure from the Dutch

IN the mid-19th century, Dutch colonial officials climbing an Indonesian volcano spotted an ancient statue meant to serve as protection against misfortune, looted it, and took it to the Netherlands.

Today, the volcanic rock likeness of the Hindu god Ganesha, bearing four arms and the head of an elephant, stands tall inside Indonesia’s National Museum in the capital Jakarta.

The country is repatriating hundreds of similarly pillaged treasures, reclaiming parts of its history lost to looting under its former colonial ruler from the late 17th century to independence in 1945.

“We fully support it because it is part of preserving our culture,” said 23-year-old banker Devi Aristya Nurhidayanti, standing in front of the Ganesha statue. — AFP

Stone tablet engraved with Ten Commandments sells for \$5 million

A stone tablet carrying engravings of the Ten Commandments sold for \$5 million at auction on Wednesday, Sotheby’s announced.

The high figure was notched despite questions around the tablet’s authenticity: no one has claimed it is the original, of Biblical fame, but some experts expressed doubts around its purported provenance, dating between the years 300 and 800 CE.

Another ding against the 115-pound (52-kilogramme) slab, said to be discovered in 1913 in what is now Israel, is that it only contains nine of the 10 commandments considered holy by both Jews and Christians. Excitement around it prevailed, however, as bids eventually raced up to \$4.2 million, with the final sale coming in at \$5 million including fees. — AFP

Sony ups stake in Japanese publisher Kadokawa in entertainment push



Sony, originally an electronics maker, expands animation offerings, driven by growth in music, games, and movie businesses.
PHOTO: REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE/ TESTED-STORE/ YOUTUBE

JAPANESE tech conglomerate Sony Group Corp. will increase its stake in major game and anime publisher Kadokawa Corp to strengthen the strategic partnership and expand their entertainment businesses globally, the two companies said Thursday.

The companies said Sony

will acquire 50 billion yen (\$318 million) worth of new shares to be issued by Kadokawa in January to raise its stake to around 10 per cent from the current 2 per cent and become the largest shareholder in the publisher. Sony previously acquired shares in the company in February 2021.

They will strengthen collaboration in their entertainment operations and discuss initiatives to adapt Kadokawa’s content into live-action films and TV dramas globally, co-produce anime works and expand the publisher’s global distribution.

The decision comes as Sony, the maker of the popular PlayStation game console, has sought to ramp up its animation offerings in recent years. The company, which began as an electronics maker, has transformed into an entertainment giant with growth driven by its music, games and movie businesses. Kadokawa’s animation portfolio includes popular anime series such as “Bungo Stray Dogs” and “Oshi No Ko,” while its gaming subsidiary FromSoftware Inc. has developed popular titles such as the action role-playing game “Elden Ring.” — Kyodo

ECON:WORLD

Shanghai Port sees annual container throughput exceed 50 million TEUs

SHANGHAI Port became the first in the world to see the annual container throughput exceed 50 million 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) on Sunday.

The port has ranked first globally for 14 consecutive years in terms of annual container throughput.

According to Yang Yanbin, deputy general manager of the production and business department of the Shanghai International Port (Group) Co., Ltd, the growth of container throughput indicates that China's complete industrial system and manufacturing capability continue to empower global trade.

Seen as a window of China's opening up and collaboration with the world as well as an engine boosting trade and exchanges, Shanghai Port saw its annual container throughput top 1 million in 1994.

Yang noted that the growth in container throughput at Shang-

Shanghai Port's high-quality services attract global ships, with ship-to-ship transfers reaching 60 per cent in 2024, enhancing its global hub status.

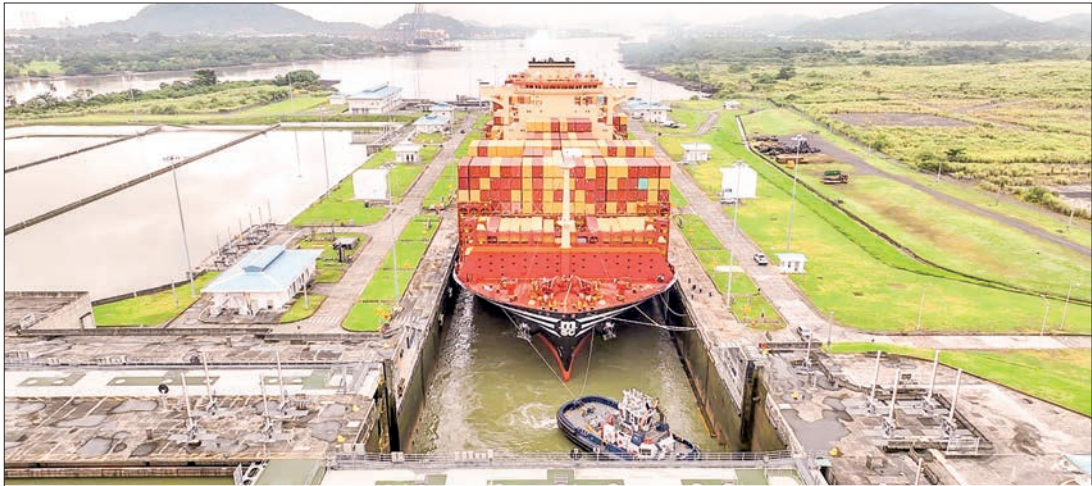


hai Port was driven not only by the rise in export-heavy containers but also by an increase in international transfer containers and ship-to-ship transfer volumes.

"The port's robust functionality and high-quality services attract large cargo ships from around the world," he said, adding that the proportion of ship-to-ship transfers at the port is expected to reach a record 60 per cent in 2024, which highlights the continued enhancement of Shanghai Port's role as a global hub. At present, the Shanghai Port boasts nearly 350 international ship routes reaching more than 700 ports in over 200 countries and regions around the world. — Xinhua

The "Xin Shanghai," a vessel operated by China COSCO Shipping Corporation Limited, is berthed at Yangshan Port, east China's Shanghai, 18 December 2024. PHOTO: FANG ZHE/XINHUA

Trump threatens to take back control of Panama Canal



The Panama Canal is owned and operated by the Central American nation, but US President-elect Donald Trump has made waves about excessive shipping fees and has threatened to demand control of the vital waterway be returned to Washington. PHOTO: PANAMA CANAL AUTHORITY/AFP/FILE

INCOMING US president Donald Trump on Saturday slammed what he called unfair fees for US ships passing through the Panama Canal and threatened to demand control of the waterway be returned to Washington.

He also hinted at China's growing influence around the canal, a worrying trend for

American interests as US businesses depend on the channel to move goods between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

"Our Navy and Commerce have been treated in a very unfair and injudicious way. The fees being charged by Panama are ridiculous," he said in a post on his Truth Social platform.

"This complete 'rip-off' of

our Country will immediately stop."

The Panama Canal, which was completed by the United States in 1914, was returned to the Central American country under a 1977 deal signed by Democratic president Jimmy Carter.

Panama took full control in 1999. — AFP

BRIEF: ECON

Sri Lanka exits sovereign default: official

SRI Lanka's Secretary to the Treasury Mahinda Siriwardana said on Saturday that the country officially exited sovereign default.

Siriwardana said in a post on X that there is no room for repeating past policy mistakes driven by rigid ideologies, dogmatic beliefs, or misleading narratives, which often result in unsustainable and unrealistic policies. With economic stability now achieved, Siriwardana stressed the need to focus on measures that promote inclusive and sustainable growth. He said these efforts are crucial for creating jobs and generating income to help rebuild the lives of all Sri Lankans.

Siriwardana's statement followed Fitch Ratings' decision to upgrade Sri Lanka's rating to "CCC+," highlighting the achievement as the result of a long and challenging journey involving painful reforms and a highly complex debt restructuring process. — Xinhua

Uzbekistan's foreign trade turnover totals 59.4 bln dollars in January-November

UZBEKISTAN'S foreign trade turnover reached US\$ 59.4 billion in January-November, up 3.6 per cent year-on-year, according to the country's statistics agency.

Exports reached 24.2 billion dollars, while imports stood at 35.1 billion dollars in the period, increasing 4.4 and 3 per cent respectively.

The largest part of Uzbekistan's foreign trade was recorded with China, which accounted for 19 per cent of the total. Russia ranked second with 18 per cent, followed by Kazakhstan with 6.5 per cent. — Xinhua

Sri Lanka to prioritize electrical, mechanical industries

Priority will be given to electrical, electronic, and mechanical projects, as they can be launched quickly and provide immediate economic benefits.

SRI Lanka's Industrial Development Board (IDB) plans to prioritize the electrical, electronic, and mechanical sectors when allocating land for new industries in the future, local media reported on Sunday quoting IDB Chairman Ravi Nissanka. Nissanka stated that the IDB has been gathering business proposals through a recently launched initiative. The board intends to develop an action plan to allocate land to the most promising

proposals, he said. Priority will be given to projects in the electrical, electronic and mechanical sectors, as these industries can be launched quickly and are expected to provide immediate economic benefits to the country, he said. — Xinhua

Sri Lanka's IDB plans to prioritize electrical, electronic, and mechanical sectors for new industrial land allocations, says Chairman. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ SRI LANKA EXPORT DEVELOPMENT BOARD**



Stellantis backtracks on plan to lay off 1,100 at US Jeep plant

STELLANTIS confirmed Saturday it was reversing a decision to lay off 1,100 workers at its Jeep plant in the US state of Ohio, following the ouster of embattled chief executive Carlos Tavares. "No employees will be placed on indefinite layoff on 5 January 2025, due to the previously announced shift reduction. Employees are expected to return to work as scheduled after the new year," a Stellantis spokesperson told AFP.



Stellantis confirmed Saturday it was reversing a decision to lay off 1,100 workers at its Jeep plant in the US state of Ohio, following the ouster of embattled chief executive Carlos Tavares. **PHOTO: AFP** The decision comes as "Stellantis continues to re-assess its strategy in North

announced the job cuts at the plant in Toledo, Ohio in early November, saying it was part of an effort to "re-gain its competitive edge" amid struggles with falling sales. Stellantis, a 14-brand group that includes Chrysler, Peugeot and Fiat, had planned to trim operations at the Toledo South Assembly Plant from two shifts to one. Another 400 employees were to be transferred to a "third-party service provider." — AFP

Japan to order Google to stop violating antitrust law

JAPAN'S competition watchdog plans to order US IT giant Google to halt violations of the country's antitrust law, sources familiar with the matter said Sunday. The watchdog suspects that Google has unfairly pressured smartphone manufacturers to pre-install its search app, the sources added. The Japan Fair Trade Commission determined that Google, which holds a dominant share of the online search market, has unfairly hindered competition, according to the sources. The watchdog has already notified the company of possible disciplinary measures and will decide on them after hearing its response, they said. Google allegedly requires smartphone manufacturers using its Android operating system to pre-install Google apps, including the Chrome browser, as a condition for offering the Google Play Store, the sources said. — Kyodo

US egg prices soar to yearly high amid bird flu, holiday demand

EGG prices across the United States have surged to their highest levels of the year, driven by widespread bird flu outbreaks and increased demand during the holiday season. National wholesale prices for large eggs reached US\$4.07 per dozen on Friday, marking a dramatic increase from 1.1 dollars early this year, according to data from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The price surge, driv-

en by the impact of highly pathogenic avian influenza on commercial egg layer flocks, has been particularly severe in coastal markets, with California and New York experiencing the most significant increases. The industry has seen devastating losses in laying hens, with 36.8 million table egg layers lost across 12 states in 2024 alone due to bird flu and facility fires, according to the USDA. — Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SOL PIONEER VOY.NO. (058N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SOL PIONEER VOY.NO. (058N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-12-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon. Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel. No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day. Phone No: **2301185** Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority
Agent For:
M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PARNIA VOY.NO. (SCY1175)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V PARNIA VOY.NO. (SCY1175)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-12-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon. Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel. No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day. Phone No: **2301185** Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority
Agent For:
M/S LAND AND SEA INTERMODAL LOGISTICS SDN BHD LINE

ROLLING UPDATES: WORLD

Putin on World War 3: Dangers growing but no need to scare anyone

Russian President Vladimir Putin downplayed the idea of a world war, cautioning against creating unnecessary fear.

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin on Sunday, when asked if current events amounted to a world war 3, advised against sowing scare but admitted that dangers were growing and Russia's opponents were escalating the situation.

"You know, there is no need to scare anyone. There are many dangers, they are growing. We can see what our current opponent is doing — they are es-

calating the situation. If that's what they want, fine," Putin told Russian journalist Pavel Zarubin.

"We will always respond to any challenge. Always. When our current opponents and possible partners hear, understand and realize this, then I believe the understanding will emerge that it is necessary to seek compromises," the president said. Russia will build ties with other counties only on the basis of the interests of the

Russian state, the president also emphasized.

"If we establish relations with someone, we will do so only on the basis of the interests of the Russian state," he told the journalist. Answering the question regarding the possibility for improving relations between Russia and the United States, Putin said that "everything can be done, if there is a desire."

At the same time, Putin



Russia will build ties with other counties only on the basis of the interests of the Russian state, the president also emphasized.
PHOTO: SPUTNIK

noted that Russia is "ready to find compromises, but not to the detriment of our own interests." — SPUTNIK

‘Finally, we made it!’: Ho Chi Minh City celebrates first metro

THOUSANDS of selfie-taking Ho Chi Minh City residents crammed into train carriages Sunday as the traffic-clogged business hub celebrated the opening of its first-ever metro line after years of delays.

Huge queues spilled out of every station along the \$1.7 billion line that runs almost 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the city centre — with women in traditional "ao dai" dress, soldiers in uniform and couples clutching young children waiting excitedly to board.

"I know it (the project) is late, but I still feel so very honoured and proud to be among the first on this metro," said office worker Nguyen Nhu Huyen after snatching a selfie in her jam-packed train car.

"Our city is now on par with the other big cities of the world," she said.

It took 17 years for Vietnam's commercial capital to reach this point. The project, funded largely by Japanese gov-



The \$1.7 billion line runs almost 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the centre of Ho Chi Minh City which authorities hope will help alleviate congestion in the traffic-clogged city.
PHOTO: AFP

ernment loans, was first approved in 2007 and slated to cost just \$668 million.

When construction began in 2012, authorities promised the line would be up and running in just five years.

But as delays mounted, cars and motorbikes multiplied in the city of nine million people, making the metropolis hugely congested, increasingly polluted and time-consuming to navigate. — AFP

Millions flock to India's Goa for exposition of St Xavier's relics

AN exposition of the sacred relics of St Francis Xavier, the famed 16th-century Jesuit missionary, has been held in the southwestern Indian city of Old Goa, in a once-in-a-decade event attracting millions of Catholics and tourists from across Hindu-majority India and other countries.

The remains of Xavier, who was born in 1506 in what is now Spain and died in 1552 in China, lie in the former capital of the Portuguese Indies from where he departed for his missionary work in the Malay Archipelago and Japan. Christians account for only 2.3 per cent of India's population, the last official census in 2011 showed. But there are many old Christian communities in the southern state of Goa. Xavier has been respected as the patron saint of Old Goa, which was once called "Rome of the Orient," also by non-Catholic locals. — Kyodo



Farmers during a protest rally on the square outside the EU Council in Brussels, where agricultural ministers of 28 EU member states gathered to discuss a crisis in the dairy and cattle farming sectors of the European agricultural industry. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK/FILE**

Agrarian countries uniting against murder of agriculture in Europe by Ukraine: Orban

THERE is an alliance of agrarian countries, which seeks to prevent the murder of European agriculture by Ukrainian imports, for this one has to fight the lobbyists, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said.

"Ukraine's entry into the European Union — if everything is as it is now —

will simply kill the Hungarian agriculture, we won't make it. It will be better to simply close the shop. And not only here, but also in France. And there are those who want to make money on Ukrainian imports to Europe, we need to fight them, we need to push them aside and develop a schedule that would save Hungarian and Eu-

ropean farmers," Orban said at a press conference.

According to the politician, now "a very powerful union of agrarian countries is being created, which wants to rationalize Ukraine's approach to the European Union so that we are not killed by everything that arrives here, it requires serious negotiations." — SPUTNIK

SPORTS

Usyk beats Fury in heavyweight championship rematch

OLEKSANDR Usyk won his heavyweight championship rematch against Tyson Fury by unanimous decision overnight on Saturday to stay unbeaten across two divisions and cement his place among the greats.

The Ukrainian, who forced the pace and repeatedly tagged his IBF title rather than face challenger Daniel Dubois.

By beating Fury in May, "The Cat" had already joined the likes of Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis and Mike Tyson as undisputed heavyweight, and the first of the four-belt era.

"He's my best friend," he said



Britain's Tyson Fury reacts during his heavyweight world championship rematch against Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk at the Kingdom Arena in Riyadh on 22 December 2024. PHOTO: AFP

Fury with his accurate left hook, was awarded the fight 116-112 by all three judges, handing Fury his second straight loss.

Usyk's win takes him to 23-0 with 14 knockouts and extends one of the all-time best careers that includes Olympic gold and undisputed champion at cruiserweight.

"He's a great fighter, it's a great performance," Usyk, 37, said of Fury, who was unbeaten over 35 fights until he lost their four-belt unification bout in May.

"Unbelievable 24 rounds for my career".

Only the WBA, WBO and WBC belts were on the line this time after Usyk, focused on the lucrative rematch, relinquished of Fury. "I respect this guy because I think he's a really tough opponent. Tyson Fury makes me strong".

But the defeat opens up an uncertain future for the 36-year-old Fury, now 34-2-1, who announced his retirement in 2022 only to return to the ring.

"I thought I've won both fights, but then again I've got two losses on my record now, so there's not much I can do about it," said the Briton, who refused to discuss his next steps. Promoter Frank Warren also called the judges' decision "nuts". But Usyk dismissed his complaints.

"Uncle Frank, I think is blind... crazy man," joked the Ukrainian. — AFP

Myanmar to open at home in third round of AFC Asian Cup qualifiers



Myanmar's current national team formed earlier this year. PHOTO: THAW GYI

MYANMAR'S national football team is set to begin the third round of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifiers with a home match. The group-stage matches will commence in March 2025 and conclude in March 2026, following a home-and-away format.

Myanmar has been drawn into Group E alongside Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. According to the match schedule, Myanmar will face Afghanistan at home on 25 March 2025, Pakistan away on 10 June 2025, Syria at home on 9 October 2025, Syria away on 14 October 2025, Afghanistan away on 18 November 2025, and Pakistan at home on 31 March 2026.

The third round consists of 24 teams divided into six groups, with only the top team from each group advancing to the finals. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL



Thiago Emiliano da Silva is a Brazilian professional footballer who plays as a centre-back for and captains Campeonato Brasileiro Série A club Fluminense. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Thiago Silva says retirement not on mind

FORMER Brazil captain Thiago Silva said Saturday that he has not yet considered retirement, despite acknowledging that he is nearing the end of his career.

The 40-year-old Fluminense defender admitted that the final months of 2024 had been "challenging" but expressed hope for a brighter 2025.

"It hasn't been an easy period but thankfully everything in the end has worked out," Silva told reporters. "Now, we need to plan well for next season to avoid repeating the mistakes we made this year."

Fluminense endured a disappointing 2024 season, finishing just four points above Brazil's top-flight relegation zone.

Silva grappled with a series of injuries after rejoining his former club in July, including a heel issue that sidelined him for six games in September and October.

He also acknowledged the difficulty of being apart from his wife and two children, who remained in London after Silva parted ways with Chelsea in May. — Xinhua

First Singaporean golfer at Masters hopes 'not be in awe' of heroes

AMATEUR Hiroshi Tai cites Green Jacket winners Hideki Matsuyama and Scottie Scheffler among his golfing heroes and is hoping "not to be in awe" of them when he becomes the first Singaporean to tee off at the US Masters in April.

"Being from Asia, Hideki Matsuyama is a big role model for how he carries himself on and off the golf course," the 22-year-old Tai told reporters in his home city at the weekend.

"Scottie Scheffler has been playing very well, and he is mentally very strong."

"I hope not to be in awe of them when we meet," added Tai, who studies business administration at the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he made headlines earlier this year capturing college golf's biggest prize.

Tai's victory in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championship in May secured

his invitation for a Masters debut in the most elite field of any of the four majors.

The prestigious victory put Tai's name in lights alongside previous NCAA champions such as Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson and Bryson DeChambeau.

It also gave him his first taste of a major with an entry to this year's US Open at Pinehurst, where he missed the cut by four strokes after solid rounds of 75 and 74. — AFP



WORLD

PM Modi interacts with Indian workers at Gulf Spic Labour Camp in Kuwait

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday visited the Gulf Spic Labour Camp in Kuwait, where he interacted with Indian workers and highlighted their contribution to the country's development.

PM Modi spoke about the aspirations of Indian workers, linking them to his vision for a "Viksit Bharat 2047" (Developed India 2047). Interacting with the Indian workers, he stated, "I talk about Viksit Bharat 2047 because the labour brothers of my country who have come so far to work also think about how an international airport can be made in his village. This aspiration is the strength of my country."

The Prime Minister also emphasised the hard work of Indian farmers and labourers. "I keep thinking the whole day about how hard our farmers work, how hard our labourers work in the fields," he said. He expressed that seeing their dedication motivates him to work harder, adding, "When I see all these people working hard, I feel that if they work for 10 hours, then I should also work for 11 hours if they work for 11 hours, then I should also work for 12 hours." PM Modi also shared his personal motivation, saying, "Do you work hard for your family or not? I also work for my family, there are 140 crore people in my family, so I have to work a little more."

Further, PM Modi also noted that India now has the cheapest data rates globally, making communication easier for people everywhere. — ANI

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday visited the Gulf Spic Labour Camp in Kuwait. **PHOTO: ANI**

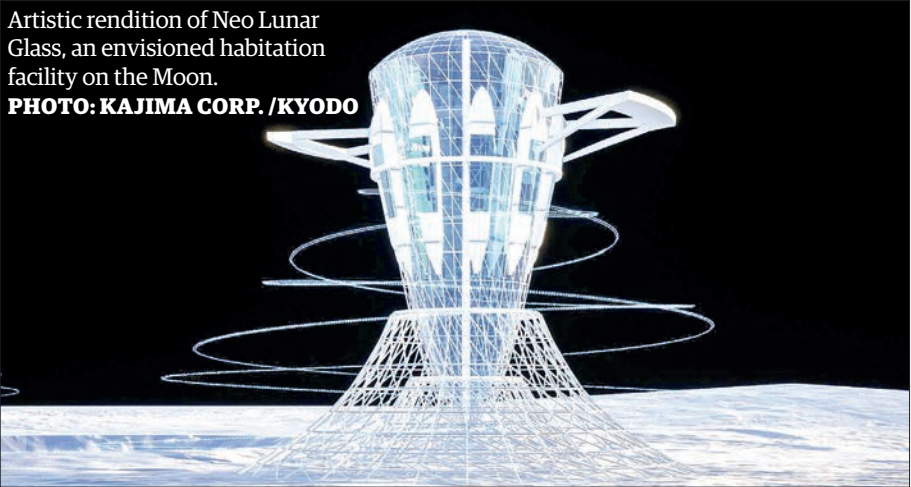
Japanese team launches research to make living on Moon reality

The habitat, designed to house up to 10,000 people, will undergo testing with simulations and scale models.

A Japanese university and construction company have partnered on research to develop a lunar habitat capable of generating artificial gravity, enabling people to live on the Moon under conditions

similar to those on Earth.

Kyoto University and Kajima Corp. aim to construct a ground-based prototype of the "Neo Lunar Glass," a paraboloid structure that generates gravity through rotation, by the 2030s. The technology is expected to address concerns about the adverse effects of prolonged exposure to microgravity on the human body, including bone and muscle loss. "This project demands a significant technological leap, but we aim to achieve it and pave the way for space colonies," said team member Yosuke Yamashiki, a professor of advanced integrated studies in human survivability at Kyoto University. The Lunar Glass structure will be approximately 200 metres in diameter and 400 metres high, capable of housing up to 10,000 people. — Kyodo



Artistic rendition of Neo Lunar Glass, an envisioned habitation facility on the Moon.
PHOTO: KAJIMA CORP. /KYODO

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Brunei launches new programme on diabetes management

BRUNEI has launched a new programme to provide Type 2 diabetes patients with advice on healthy nutrition, exercise, and blood sugar monitoring, local media reported on Sunday.

According to local daily Borneo Bulletin, the programme, named "BALANCE," allows Brunei's Ministry of Health to assess the impact of digital interventions on improving diabetes management, focusing on lifestyle changes and self-management.

Brunei's ministry also rolled out an initiative to promote walking and other forms of exercise to increase daily steps, either individually or in groups, according to the report. — Xinhua