

Election to form Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Regional, and State Hluttaws

Officials and political parties must prepare to hold a multiparty democratic general election successfully.



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presides over the coordination meeting of the Union government yesterday.

SENIOR General Min Aung Hlaing highlighted that the general election will be held to form the relevant Hluttaws, providing ethnic groups and representatives of various social strata with the opportunity to participate.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said so at the coordination meeting of the Union government at the SAC Chairman Office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Speaking at the meeting, he noted that it is necessary to take measures to forge security, peace and stability for political parties to conduct canvassing.

He stressed that the government must prepare to successfully hold the

election under the law. Election must be conducted to constitute Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and regional and state Hluttaws under the law.

The Senior General unveiled that the Myanmar Electronic Voting Machine (Myanmar EVM) process is being implemented to ensure that voters can cast their votes easily and transparently, guarantee accurate election results, eliminate invalid votes, prevent fraudulent activities, and maintain transparency to prevent electoral fraud.

With regard to criminal cases, he underscored that regional and state authorities, along with officials at all levels, must take strict and decisive action to uncover

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Salient points from the speech delivered by the Senior General at the Union government meeting

1. The general election will be held to form the relevant Hluttaws, providing ethnic groups and representatives of various social strata with the opportunity to participate.
2. It is necessary to take measures to forge security, peace and stability for political parties to conduct canvassing.
3. Opportunities must be created for the people to increase their incomes as well as raise the GDP of the nation.
4. The government has one more plan to establish a university in Ayeyawady Region in the coming academic year to emphasize teaching and training of agriculture and livestock breeding to students.
5. One more Polytechnic Institute will be built in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area to enable the offspring of service personnel from the area to pursue polytechnics.

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NATIONAL

Communities Urged to Unite Against Armed Groups to Safeguard Peace and Security

RESIDENTS must work together to prevent the presence of armed groups in order to reduce acts of terror, as these groups undermine peace and stability in the region and threaten residents' security.

(Excerpt from the speech given by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with members of the Kayah State government, state-level departmental officials, town elders and locals on 4 September 2024)



National Objectives for 78th Anniversary of Union Day 2025

1. To strive for the perpetual development of the Union through the Union spirit, patriotic values, a sublime state of mind and a genuine nationalist spirit.
2. To encourage collaborative efforts among all ethnic nationals to pursue dialogue for durable peace and to end armed conflicts.
3. To collectively advance cooperation amongst all national people, the government, and Tatmadaw to ensure stability and the rule of law.
4. To enhance collaborative efforts to ensure nationwide stability and tranquillity, enabling the successful conduct of multiparty general elections.
5. To promote balanced development across all regions and states, as well as enhance health, education and job opportunities for ethnic nationals.

Mottos for 78th Union Day 2025

1. When all ethnic national brethren stand in unity, hand in hand, the Union will firmly stand.
2. Drifting in one boat, on the same voyage we float; Bound together in communion, the heart of the Union.
3. United in heart and soul, Marching towards the Union's goal.
4. Let's build peace to achieve prosperity.
5. Strong in unity, Ethnic national brethren ensure the nation's strength.

Gold Market Rate as of 3 February 2025

THE price of one tical (16.329325 grammes) of gold with density of 19.25 grammes per cubic centimetre and above is K5,450,000, as established by the Mineral (Gold) Reference Price Determination Committee.



Yangon hosts second direct medicine sale event; More centres to open in Bago Region

THE Myanmar Pharmaceutical and Medical Equipment Entrepreneurs Association organized the second direct sale of medicines by pharmaceutical companies to the public at 9 am on 3 February at the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization (Myan-Trade) in Pabedan Township. The event aims to make it easier and more convenient for people to

find and purchase medicines in one place. The direct sale of medicines will run for five days, from Monday to Friday, 3 to 7 February, featuring a variety of medicines from 61 pharmaceutical companies. The event will be open daily from 9 am to 4 pm. Doctors and pharmaceutical experts will be present at the ex-

hibition to provide consultations and guidance to assist buyers in purchasing medicines. This month, more direct medicine sales centres will be opened in Bago Region. The Association previously organized the first direct sales of medicines in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, and Bago in July and August 2024. — Myo Min Thura/MKKS



The second direct medicine sale in progress yesterday.

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)

Election to form Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, Regional, and State Hluttaws

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and eliminate online gambling and scams, and other criminal activities within their respective areas.

Moreover, he continued that effective measures will be taken against those involved in drug-related cases and other crimes. If any responsible officials within these territories are found to be involved in these crimes, they will also face strict legal action. Therefore, it is essential for all concerned to adhere to and implement these directives seriously.

The Senior General disclosed that according to the Natural Disaster Management Law, losses of citizens due to violence and armed insurgency are also covered by natural disaster risk criteria. Therefore, the government will provide support to displaced persons, ensuring that they are listed in the register. The registration process must ensure that all displaced persons in the relevant regions are included, and no one is left out of the register. A systematic collection of land-based data must be conducted, and efforts should be made to provide efficient and effective support.

Moreover, the Senior General emphasized that as Myanmar has lesser productivity in the agriculture sector and GDP than ASEAN member states and other countries, it is necessary to encourage agricultural production to raise the GDP of the State.

He added that opportunities must be created for the people to increase their incomes as well as raise the GDP of the nation.

The Senior General said he has severally urged the cabinet to meet the target cultivation in the agriculture sector and raise the per-acre yield of oil crops. If the country is sufficient in cooking oil, it can reduce spending on foreign exchange, adding the ministries, and regional and state governments are required to efficiently spend the allocated



The Union government coordination meeting being attended online by the Nay Pyi Taw Council chairman and chief ministers from regions and states.

budgets within the specified periods.

He underlined that relevant farmers, manufacturers, and regional and state government officials must collaborate in conducting production research and market research to ensure the development and progress of agricultural and MSME enterprises with efforts to seek market shares abroad.

The Senior General urged all to research to increase the quality of agricultural products such as mango, strawberry, damson, coffee and other crops in relevant regions. Meanwhile, efforts must be made to ensure increased production of cotton, bamboo, rubber, pulses and beans, maize, sunflower and sesame to seek foreign market shares.

He instructed authorities of states and regions to set model villages, towns and districts to enhance the production of MSME products by honouring them with model awards for agriculture and

livestock products.

He guided that relevant government organizations have to set records on work processes, and strong and weak points which will be historical records in the future.

In the education sector, the Senior General spotted that officials need to manage convenience of students to take forthcoming examinations and efficiently utilize long summer holidays.

After the establishment of Polytechnic Universities in four regions and states including Nay Pyi Taw, he unveiled that the government has one more plan to establish a university in Ayeyarwady Region in the coming academic year to emphasize teaching and training of agriculture and livestock breeding to students. Moreover, one more Polytechnic Institute will be built in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area to enable the offspring of service personnel from

the area to pursue polytechnics.

The Senior General underscored that it is essential for the uplift of the education sector as well as the sports sector in order to strengthen patriotism.

In the health sector, he called on health staff members to provide healthcare services for the people while contributing to the development of education and social sectors.

The Nay Pyi Taw Council chairman and chief ministers of regions and states reported on their discussions in relevant sectors.

Also present at the meeting were SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win, Union ministers, Union-level dignitaries and officials together with the Nay Pyi Taw Council chairman, chief ministers of regions and states through videoconferencing. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Tabu Hla Dam boosts irrigation for 29,570 acres of summer paddy in Taikkyi

THE irrigation water is distributed from the two main canals of Tabu Hla dam to 29,570 acres of summer paddy, the reliable fields of farmers, in Taikkyi of Yangon Region, according to

Taikkyi District Department of Irrigation and Water Utilization Management.

The left and right canals of Tabu Hla dam started distributing irrigation water for summer

paddy on 1 January, and the operation will continue until the end of April.

“We distributed water of Tabu Hla dam to 29,570 acres of summer paddy in Taikkyi, Okkan

and Aphyauk townships in Taikkyi District. Our department’s main duties are flood prevention and irrigation water supply. The summer paddy cultivation rate increases year by year, and we can also supply enough water. Therefore, the socioeconomic status of farmers develops and the GDP of the country also grows. We are happy for it, and we accelerate the dam water irrigation maintenance to expand the summer paddy cultivation this year under the guidance of the regional government,” said U Tun Tun Oo, assistant director of the department.

A total of 201,000 acres of summer paddy have been targeted for Yangon Region. The region cultivated 250,896 acres of summer paddy last year, and it completed 207,287 acres until the first week of February this year. There were 29,174 acres of

summer paddy in Taikkyi District last year, and the estimation is 29,570 acres this year.

Dams such as Tabu Hla, Paunglin, Lagunpyin, Mahuya, Ngamoeyeik, Kalihtaw, Taunglonemyaung, Bantbwaygon and Zarmaiinn irritate the summer paddy fields and supply water for Yangon Region.

Among the nine dams, Tabu Hla Dam boasts the highest water storage capacity at 197,600 acre-feet and provides the most irrigation water in the region.

In 17 townships of eight districts of the region, 90-day, Sin Thukha, Yadana Toe and glutinous rice are the most commonly grown varieties, whereas 15 types of summer paddy are cultivated. Meanwhile, the Tabu Hla Dam supplies water to 29,570 acres of summer paddy in the region. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/KTZH



Irrigation water from Tabu Hla Dam flows to summer paddy fields in Taikkyi Township, Yangon Region. PHOTO: KANU

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 3 February 2025)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the South Andaman Sea and South Bay and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 4 February 2025: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, and Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, and Kayin States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain in Taninthayi Region and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 4 February 2025: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 4 February 2025: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 4 February 2025: Generally fair weather. — DMH

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

A slight earthquake of magnitude (3.8) Richter Scale with its epicentre inside Myanmar (about 15 miles northwest of Zabuthiri), latitude 19.91°N, longitude 95.92°E, depth (10) kilometres, about (16) miles northwest of Nay Pyi Taw seismological observatory was recorded at (02) hours (14) minutes (01) seconds MST on 3 February 2025. — DMH

Department of Meteorology and Hydrology
Seismological Division
Nay Pyi Taw
Tel 067-3411269 Fax 067-3411253

Epicenter

Earthquake Information	
Date	3.2.2025
Time (MST)	02:14:01
Magnitude	3.8 (Slight)
Latitude	19.91°N
Longitude	95.92°E
Depth	10 km
Region	About 15 miles NW of Zabuthiri (Naypyidaw).

For More detail Information
<https://www.moezala.gov.mm/>

COVID-19 report, 3 February 2025

NEW TESTS

2,624

NEW CASE

NIL

CASUALTIES

NIL

Myanmar National Centre for Diseases Control
Department of Public Health

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

‘Thanlwin’ hospital ship provides medical services in Hainggyikyun

THE Tatmadaw Hospital Ship Thanlwin, accompanied by mobile specialist medical teams comprising consultants, doctors, and nurses, has been providing healthcare services to residents along the Taninthayi coastal region, as well as to communities near Cocokyun Township in Yangon Region and Hainggyikyun in Ayeyawady Region.

The mobile medical team set up a temporary base at the Tatmadaw Hospital at Hainggyikyun to provide healthcare services to 619 residents from the town and nearby villages.

The treatments included general medical consultations for 125 patients, surgical care for 43 patients, obstetric and



Hainggyikyun residents receiving healthcare services and surgical operations.



gynaecological care for 27 patients, paediatric treatments for 48 children, orthopaedic care for 110 patients, ear, nose, and throat treatment for 50 patients, ophthalmology services for 138 patients, and dental care for 78 patients.

Moreover, five patients underwent general surgery, 35 received eye surgery, 50 had X-ray examinations, 47 were tested using ultrasound, 47 underwent ECG heart screenings, and 50 had laboratory tests. Furthermore, arrangements were made for 13 patients requiring further treatment to be referred to nearby Tatmadaw hospitals. — MNA/KTZH

3-day illegal trade crackdown confiscates goods worth K250M



Confiscated illegal items across regions and states.

UNDER the supervision of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, continued efforts to combat the illicit trade are being made effectively by the law.

On 31 January and 2 February, the combined teams nabbed two trucks (worth approximately K30 million) carrying 0.4602 tonne of illegal teak and 0.549 tonne of illegal timber (val-

ued at K2.025 million) on Myaing-Pakokku road in Pakokku Township, a Scania bus (worth approximately K30 million) carrying foodstuffs (worth K15.947 million) without official documents at the Thanlwin bridge combined checkpoint and smuggled foodstuffs (valued at K96.6 million) that were piled up by the side of road in Mawlamyine Township. The action

was conducted under the Forest Law and Customs procedures.

On 3 February, the combined on-duty teams seized 73 barrels of illegal diesel (worth K11.096 million) at the 929 jetty in Monywa township, an unregistered Toyota Wish (estimated value of K16 million) at the Kantalu combined checkpoint in Sagaing township, 2.908 tonnes of illegal hardwood and 0.472 tonne of other illegal timber (valued at K1.77 million) in Nyaunglebin and Pyay districts, and a Sunglong bus (estimated value of K40 million) carrying foodstuffs (worth K6.56 million) without official documents near Shwethanlwin Tollgate in Phayagyi. The action was taken under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law, the Export-Import Law, and Customs procedures.

The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported that 10 arrests were made on 31 January, 2 and 3 February and illegal goods worth approximately K250 million were seized. — MNA/MKKS

Counter-argument to false information

Subversive media defames Tatmadaw

MALICIOUS media outlets intentionally spread false reports that Tatmadaw carried out an airstrike on 1 February night in Taloke, Myingyan Township in Myingyan District, Mandalay Region.

According to a regional security official, such news was invalid, and security forces conducted routine security measures. Meanwhile, terrorists launched drone attacks dropping bombs, killing and injuring civilians.

Subversive media outlets intend to circulate false claims to mislead the public about security forces carrying out security duties. — MNA/KTZH

This screenshot validates misinformation.

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanmar Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

NATIONAL

MSME Expo to honour 31 exhibitors across six categories



This picture shows the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Expo being held in the previous year.

THE 78th Union-Level Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Expo that will take place near Uppatasanti Pagoda, Nay Pyi Taw from 10 to 14 February 2025, will present 31 awards in six categories, Daw Nyein Aye, deputy director-general of the Small Scale Industries Department.

Businesses showcasing One Region One Product (OROP), export businesses, import-substituting businesses, agriculture and livestock-based businesses and value-added products using locally sourced raw materials, and products from regions and states can be observed. It will also bring networks for business people to produce value-added products. About 53 MSME entrepreneurs are expected to showcase over 200-300 products at the MSME expo.

“Participants will be awarded under six categories; Micro Enterprises, Small Enter-

prises, Medium Enterprises, small-scale industries such as food processing, consumer goods, weaving and handicraft businesses, OROP from 15 Nay Pyi Taw, Regions and States and performance of cooperatives, including first price worth K3 million, second price worth K2 million and third price worth K1 million,” said Daw Nyein Aye.

Additionally, awards for small-scale entrepreneurs include four modal awards for food products, consumer goods, traditional weaving products and handicrafts valued at K1.5 million each. The winner of the OROP award will receive K3 million, she continued.

Displays of local products of the representatives of each region and state, traditional food, MSME products and musical performances will be featured as well. — ASH/KK



This photo displays the Myathabeik Pagoda hosting the Buddha Pujaniya festival along with an alms rice offering event in the previous year.

Myathabeik Pagoda to host Buddha Pujaniya festival, alms rice offering event

THE Buddha Pujaniya festival and alms rice offering ceremony will take place at Myathabeik Pagoda in Thaton Township, Mon State, according to U Soe Myint, Chairman of the Myathabeik Pagoda’s Board of Trustees.

The annual Buddha Pujaniya festival is held on the full moon day of Tabodwe and features a traditional Myanmar Htamane-making competition, a township-wide rice offering ceremony, an oil light-offering ceremony, and a bustling market fair with numerous stalls within the pagoda’s precincts.

“As in previous years, the Buddha Pujaniya festival will include the recitation of the Maha Pathana and an alms rice offering event for invited members of the Sangha. These activities will take place from the full moon

day to the third waning day of Tabodwe,” U Soe Myint added.

During the festival, the Buddha’s sermons will be recited on the pagoda’s platform. Additionally, at 5 am on the full moon day, monks will consecrate the pagoda at the mountain summit by offering flowers, candle lights, joss sticks, and 1,000 food offerings.

Following this, donors will offer Htamane, rice, and other food items to over 680 monks from 174 monasteries and more than 70 nuns from 36 nunneries in Thaton Township. This offering will take place at the foot of the mountain, beginning at 7 am.

At 4 pm, food donations for the public will begin, along with the lighting of 9,000 oil lamps along the path leading up to the pagoda. — ASH/MKKS

Moeyungyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary seeks ASEAN Heritage Park status

THE Bago Region Government has revealed that efforts are underway to designate the Moeyungyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary in Bago Township, Bago Region, as an ASEAN Heritage Park.

In support of this designation, initiatives will be implemented to raise public awareness about the sustainable use of Moeyungyi Lake’s wetland resources and ecosystem services. Additionally, community-based conservation efforts will be enhanced to ensure the long-term preservation of the natural ecosystem.

The Moeyungyi Lake, which spans 25,600 acres, has become



This photo depicts visitors touring the Moeyungyi Wetland.

a seasonal refuge for various migratory bird species this year. Among them are the lesser whistling duck, gadwall, cotton pygmy goose, tufted duck, black-headed ibis, ruddy shelduck, northern pintail, Asian openbill, black-winged stilt, river tern, and spot-

billed pelican. Notably, rare bird species such as the glossy ibis have also been observed.

According to records, the

Moeyungyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary is home to 120 mammal species, 28 species of amphibians and reptiles, 33 insect species, 77 resident bird species, 44 species of fish, and 74 species of aquatic plants during the winter season.

As an inland wetland area, the Moeyungyi Lake serves as a critical habitat for migratory birds and endangered bird species. It is also an important site along the East Asia-Australasia Flyway network, offering a well-preserved natural ecosystem with rich biodiversity. Additionally, the sanctuary holds great potential for nature-based ecotourism. — ASH/KNN

Wood Science
& Technology
course launches
15-18 Feb

MYANMAR Forest Products and Timber Merchants Association and University of Forestry and Environmental Science (Yezin) will jointly offer a Wood Science and Technology course on 15-18 February 2025 on the seventh floor of UMFCCI Tower in Yangon from 9 am to 4:30 pm.

The objectives of the course are to effectuate the development in the forest products sector and wood-based industrial development under the National Export Strategy (2020-2025).

The Rector of the University of Forestry and Environmental Science (Yezin) will teach trainees technical and general knowledge of timber and wood-based materials. The trainees must be associated with the wood science industry. They must at least have passed in high school education. Interested individuals can register for the course by 7 February 2025. Travel costs and lunch will be covered as well. Individuals can enquire about details through the contact numbers of the association at 09 254314709 and 09 250013944. — NN/KK

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CBM infuses over \$124M, THB13.8M,
and CNY4.8M into financial markets
in Jan 2025



US dollars and Thai baht banknotes displayed at the foreign exchange counter.

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) pumped \$124 million, 13.8 million baht and 4.8 million yuan into financial markets in January 2025.

It announced on 31 January 2025 to sell 10 million yuan to importers and sold five million baht on that day.

CBM injected \$20 million into the fuel oil sector on 30 January, \$20 million on 24 January, 800,000 yuan on 21 January, 1.91 million baht on 20 January, \$150,000 and 1.14 million yuan on 17 January, one million baht on 16 January, over \$25.35 million and 369,000 yuan on 15 January and over \$1,600 and 556,000 baht on 14 January into the financial market.

CBM announced on 13 January to sell \$25 million to fuel oil importers soon after selling 600,000 yuan on that day. CBM injected \$3.9 million on 11 January, 714,000 yuan on 10 January, \$2.2 million on 9 January, \$256,000 on 8 January again after sales of over \$2.15 million on 7 January, \$25 million and 2.8 million baht on 6 January, 510,000 yuan on 3 January, \$25 million, over 670,000 yuan and 2.45 million baht on 2 January into the financial market.

CBM pumped \$144 million, 321 million baht and over 12 million yuan in December 2024, over \$59 million, over 280 million baht and 8.78 million yuan in November and over \$91 million, over 610 million baht and 9.8 million yuan in October into the financial market.

CBM aims to curb the instability in the foreign exchange market and the currency devaluation. According to CBM's notification on 15 March, it has been collaborating with law enforcement agencies to combat and prosecute those who attempt to manipulate the currency market under the existing laws. CBM allowed authorized dealers (private banks) to operate online foreign exchange trading freely as per the market rate depending on supply and demand, starting from 5 December 2023. — NN/KK

YGN palm oil wholesale rate continues to decline

THE wholesale reference rate of palm oil for the Yangon market declined further to K7,165 per viss this week from 3 to 9 February, according to the Supervisory Committee on Edible Oil Import and Distribution.

The prices decreased from K7,245 per viss for the previous week ending 2 February and K7,255 recorded for the previous week ending 26 January.

The Supervisory Committee on Edible Oil Import and Distribution under the Ministry of Commerce has been closely observing the FOB prices in Malaysia and Indonesia, adding transport costs, tariffs and banking services to decide the wholesale market reference rate for edible oil every week.

Despite the reference price, the mar-



Bottles of cooking oil neatly arranged for sale inside the supermarket.

ket price is way too high.

The committee notified that any person who is involved in price gouging and oil storage to attempt market manipulation will face legal action under the Essential Goods and Services Law.

The department is working together with the Myanmar Oil Dealers' Association and the cooking oil importing companies to offer affordable rates of imported palm oil for consumers.

The complaints for overcharging can be lodged over hotline 1535 of the call centre of the Consumers Affairs Department or sent to the Facebook page of the department and the region and state departments concerned.

The domestic consumption of palm oil is estimated at one million tonnes per year. The local palm oil production is just about 400,000 tonnes. About 700,000 tonnes of palm oil are yearly imported through Malaysia and Indonesia to meet domestic demands. — NN/KK

OPINION

Shape a peaceful, just and harmonious nation in fraternity

FRATERNITY is essential for society to create a peaceful, just, and harmonious world for all people globally. Only when everyone embraces the spirit of fraternity can society become peaceful and conducive to shaping a safe and secure future for generations to come. Diverse groups worldwide, including those across Myanmar, must foster fraternity among themselves to share a common future.

With regard to the importance of fraternity in society, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has remarked: “Let us

reaffirm our commitment to bridging divides, fostering religious understanding and co-operation among people of all cultures and beliefs. Together, let us forge a path towards a more peaceful, just and harmonious world for all.” It is essential for everyone to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by people of all religions and beliefs to humanity. Dialogue among religious groups plays a crucial role in fostering greater awareness and understanding of the shared values uniting all people. Moreover, it is important to emphasize the need for greater awareness of diverse cultures and religions, as well as the promotion of tolerance, which involves societal respect and acceptance of religious and cultural diversity, including freedom of religious expression.

As such, global people must emphasize tolerance, a pluralistic tradition, mutual respect, and the diversity of religions and beliefs to promote human fraternity. All people worldwide should encourage activities that foster interreligious and intercultural dialogue to enhance peace, social stability, respect for diversity, and mutual understanding. This effort aims to create an environment conducive to peace at the global, regional, national, and local levels. In recognition of this, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 4 February as the International Day of Human Fraternity through resolution 75/200.

Currently, some ethnic groups in Myanmar are engaged in armed conflicts driven by differing attitudes, leading to numerous deaths, injuries, and the destruction of infrastructure. These groups must assess whether their actions are benefiting society. They need to consider the most effective solutions to resolve the issues at hand. While initial actions may have seemed appropriate, they no longer align with the current situation.

It is essential for them to reassess their circumstances and choose the best course of action for the nation and its people. In this context, it is crucial to initiate dialogue and hold roundtable discussions, fostering a spirit of fraternity among all parties for the future of the nation. Building this sense of unity is vital for the well-being of future generations.

Where Is the Love?

Hla Myet Chell (International Law)



Love is not passive but requires action, from small daily acts of kindness to large-scale peacebuilding efforts. It fosters empathy, understanding, and can counteract hatred and violence. ILLUSTRATION: CONCEPT ART

EVERY day, we hear the word “love” — spoken in conversations, sung in songs, seen in movies and celebrated in literature. All major religions and spiritual teachings remind us of the importance of love. From the biblical command to “Love others as you love your own heart” to the Buddhist principle of compassion, love is universally presented as the foundation of human harmony. Yet, despite these teachings, our world remains plagued by war, conflict, and division. Why is there such a profound disconnect between the ideals of love and the reality of human behaviour?

One poignant reminder of this disconnect comes from the lyrics of the song “Where Is the Love?” by Black Eyed Peas, which challenges us to reflect on the state of

the world we live in, asking questions like, “Can you practise what you preach?” In a world where hatred and violence often seem to dominate, love remains a powerful, yet underutilized, force.

The Universality of Love

Love is a force that transcends all barriers—cultural, religious, and geographical. It is a universal language, uniting humanity across the globe, and has been celebrated by countless spiritual leaders and philosophers throughout history. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, ‘The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others,’ highlighting that love is not about personal gain, but about selflessness and service to others. Similarly, Nelson Mandela taught that ‘No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or

his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.’ These timeless insights remind us that love is not simply an emotion — it is a transformative power, capable of bridging divides, healing wounds, and bringing lasting peace to our world.

Buddhism, for instance, teaches metta, or loving-kindness, as a core discipline. Practising Metta involves cultivating an unconditional, inclusive love for all beings, even those who may have wronged us. This practice challenges individuals to transcend ego and fear, fostering compassion that can heal divisions.

The Consequences of a Love-Deficient World

As of 2024, the world continues to grapple with an unprece-

dent number of violent conflicts. Over 110 armed conflicts are being monitored globally, marking the highest number of violent disputes in recent decades. These conflicts have left an indelible mark on women and children. Over 473 million children — more than one in six globally — now live in areas affected by conflict. Similarly, nearly 600 million women and girls are enduring the ravages of war, with the number increasing by 50 per cent over the past decade. By the end of 2024, 47.2 million children had been displaced due to conflict and violence. In conflict zones, 70 per cent of women experience sexual violence, a staggering figure that is double the global average.

The trauma faced by women and children underscores the dire need for action to protect the most vulnerable in these regions. Such grim realities reflect a world where love and compassion are overshadowed by greed, hatred, and power struggles. The lack of love manifests in systemic injustices, exploitation, and the perpetuation of cycles of violence. As the Dalai Lama aptly stated, “Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.”

The Power of Love to Heal and Transform

Throughout history, love has been heralded as the ultimate force for healing and unity. The Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh once said, “Through love, we recognize the suffering of others as our own and nurture understanding.” This perspective highlights love’s transformative power, emphasizing that it fosters empathy and shared humanity, even in the darkest times.

The teachings of Maya Angelou echo this sentiment: “Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope.” His words underscore the vital role of love in our collective survival and well-being. In the face of war and division, love serves as a counterweight, enabling individuals and communities to heal and rebuild.

Even in modern conflict zones, love finds a way to manifest. Stories of individuals risking their lives to protect others, communities supporting displaced families, and survivors forgiving their oppressors serve as testaments to the enduring power of love. For instance, Huda Sha’arawi, an Egyptian feminist, defied societal norms and dedicated her life to advocating for women’s rights and empowerment, showing how love for justice can transcend cultural boundaries. Similarly, Carlos Arredondo, during the Boston Marathon bombing, risked his own safety to save the lives of strangers, embodying how love and empathy can drive selfless action in the face of tragedy. These acts remind us that love is not passive; it is an active force capable of overcoming hatred.

Why Love is the Answer

In a world rife with division, love emerges as the antidote to conflict and suffering. Love is not just a feeling; it is an active choice and a transformative force. By choosing love, we create ripples of empathy and understanding that counteract hatred and violence.

Acts of love, no matter how small, have the power to bridge divides and heal wounds. Stories of solidarity — such as neighbours helping each other in times of crisis or communities uniting after tragedies — remind us of love’s capacity to restore hope. Desmond Tutu’s words ring true: “Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

Moreover, love is at the heart of peacebuilding efforts. Diplomats, activists, and leaders who prioritize empathy and forgiveness can foster dialogue and reconciliation. Love compels us to see the humanity in others, even those we might perceive as adversaries.

Let’s Rediscover Love

If we want to create a world where love triumphs over conflict, we must begin with ourselves. Love must extend beyond words and manifest in our actions. It requires us to challenge our prejudices, listen to those who are different from us, and work toward common ground.

The teachings of love from religions and philosophies are not outdated ideals; they are more relevant than ever in today’s divided world. They remind us that while conflict and hatred may dominate the headlines, love remains hu-

manity’s greatest strength and hope.

So, where is the love? It’s in the choices we make every day — to be kind, to forgive, to understand, and to stand together. By embracing love as a way of life, we can begin to heal a fractured world and pave the way for a more peaceful future.

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Study offers new hope against chronic pain for dialysis patients

A new study finds that pain coping skills training (PCST) significantly reduces chronic pain and improves quality of life for dialysis patients, offering a non-opioid alternative to traditional pain management methods.

PEOPLE receiving haemodialysis for kidney failure frequently feel chronic pain associated with their disease, which can be difficult to manage with opioid medication and other traditional treatments.

A new study finds that offering these patients pain coping skills training (PCST) significantly reduced their suffering and improved their quality of life.

Twenty-two New Mexicans — many of them Native American — participated in UNM’s arm of the study, said Mark Unruh, MD, Chair, UNM Department of Internal Medicine

“This is particularly important for these patients since the therapeutic choices for pain management are limited and the use of opioids has been shown to be associated with poor outcomes in this group.”

The randomized controlled study enrolled 643 participants from 16 medical centres and 103 dialysis clinics in The HOPE Consortium, an ongoing multi-site study exploring new treatments for dialysis patients.

“New Mexico played a large

role in the trial,” he said. “We served as the primary outcomes measurement core and New Mexico had a supplement to recruit from rural clinics with a focus on our underrepresented populations.”

Multiple factors likely contribute to dialysis-related pain. Patients tend to be older and living with arthritis, diabetes, peripheral neuropathy and back pain, he said.

“Dialysis by itself may contribute, either directly or indirectly, like having uremic toxins in your bloodstream,” Unruh said. “The process of going to dialysis and having a needle stuck in your arm may be challenging for some people to deal with.”

Doctors face challenges in treating dialysis-related pain because patients have kidney failure. “We are kind of loathe to use nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents, and in general we avoid opioids,” he said. “Certain opioids are better than others, but a lot of them are cleared in part from the kidneys. You kind of have your hands tied.”

SOURCE: ANI



The study highlights the potential of PCST in improving clinical care for these patients. ILLUSTRATIVE IMAGE: PIXABAY

SCI/ENVIRON WORLD

Electric cars take 96% of Norway market in January

ALMOST 96 per cent of new cars registered in Norway in January were electric, close to the Scandinavian country's goal of selling only zero-emission vehicles as of this year.

According to the Norwegian Public Roads Administration (OFV), electric vehicles accounted for 95.8 per cent of new cars registered last month.

Including rechargeable hybrid models, the share of electric cars rose to 96.8 per cent.

A total of 9,343 new cars were sold in January, of which 8,954 were all-electric.

"We've never seen this before... If the rest of the year continues like this, we will very soon be close to the 2025 goal," OFV

director Oyvind Solberg Thorsen said in a statement.

"But if we want to cross the finish line with 100 per cent electric cars, it will be necessary to maintain the incentives that make it profitable to choose an electric car over other other models," he added.

Of the 50 most-sold models, only two were non-electric, the first of which came in 33rd place.

In Norway, electric cars are exempt from many taxes, making them competitive against heavily taxed internal combustion cars.

They have also benefitted from toll exemptions, free parking in public car parks, and the use of public transport traffic lanes. — AFP

China's submersible and research vessels fine-tuned for future deep-sea missions



China's manned deep-sea submersible Jiaolong completes its 300th dive in the Western Pacific Ocean, on 18 August 2024. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

CHINA'S manned deep-sea submersible Jiaolong and research vessel Dayang Yihao (Ocean No 1) are set to complete major upgrades in preparation for deep-sea exploration missions this year, according to the country's oceanic affairs administration.

Jiaolong, named after a mythical sea dragon, is capable of diving to depths exceeding 7,000 metres. The China-made underwater ship has explored

waters in the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean and Atlantic Ocean.

Its upgrades are currently in progress, and technicians have already completed major enhancements to its critical components, including the lithium battery system.

The sea dragon-inspired submersible is scheduled to undergo tank tests in February and sea trials in the South China Sea in March.

Major upgrades on Ocean

No 1 include the installation of remotely-operated underwater vehicles, which will enhance its capabilities and provide reliable support for future deep-sea resources survey and development, said the administration.

Ocean No 1 is China's first modern comprehensive ocean-going scientific research vessel. With over four decades of service, it has conducted 27 oceanographic scientific expeditions. — Xinhua



(FILES) A charging box for electric cars is pictured at a Moller Bil Volkswagen car dealership outside the Norwegian capital of Oslo, on 25 September 2024. **PHOTO: AFP**

Chinese experts help Guinea-Bissau farmers harvest high-quality rice

AS China is marking the Spring Festival — The Year of the Snake, a team of Chinese rice-planting experts is observing the holiday with a unique mission in central Guinea-Bissau.

The Geba River meanders through the Bafata region, its banks lined with lush green trees.

Bafata is currently in the dry season. Yet, even during periods of drought, its tranquil waters sustain fertile lands, creating more than 25,000 hectares of irrigated rice fields. This region is often hailed as Guinea-Bissau's "rice granary."

During a visit to a local farm, a Xinhua correspondent saw villagers sowing rice with the guidance of Chinese experts.

Some bent over to plant sprouted seeds, while others carefully arranged the young rice shoots. Not far away, a tractor was rumbling between the plots.

Rice cultivation in Guinea-Bissau follows two distinct seasons: the dry season and the rainy season. The dry season planting period aligns each year with the Chinese Lunar New Year. To ensure the agricultural schedule remains on track, experts from the Chinese Agricultural Technical Assistance Team in Guinea-Bissau follow a unique agenda during the Spring Festival celebrations.

All members of the 12th Chinese Agricultural Technical Assistance Mission in Guinea-Bissau hail from China's



Zheng Junjie (L), head of the 12th Chinese Agricultural Technical Assistance Team in Guinea-Bissau, assesses the progress of land levelling with Sana Camara, director of the Carantaba farm, at the farm in Gabu region, Guinea-Bissau, on 29 January 2025. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

central Hubei Province. Embracing the traditions of their hometown, they began their New Year's Eve preparations on Tues-

day by cleaning their residence, hanging red lanterns and colourful banners, and pasting festive couplets on their doors. Amid the

preparations, they warmly welcomed local villagers who came to share in the celebrations and extend their New Year's greetings.

At noon, they gathered for a New Year's Eve feast, sharing the moment with their families in China through video calls to exchange greetings.

On Wednesday morning, after enjoying a hot bowl of noodle soup, the experts headed to the Carantaba farm in Gabu region to assess the progress of land levelling before sowing. The only road to the farm is a rugged trail: muddy during the rainy season and dusty in the dry season, but they have long since grown accustomed to the journey. — Xinhua

Former Diamond Princess passengers mark 5 yrs since COVID outbreak

FORMER passengers of the Diamond Princess liner laid flowers Monday at Yokohama port in remembrance of the 13 people who died following the mass COVID-19 outbreak onboard five years ago.

The outbreak of infections on the ship in February 2020 led to thousands being quarantined after it docked at the port near Tokyo. Japan stopped accepting foreign cruise ships the following month for the next three years.

The government was criticized for forcing passengers to remain on board for a long time despite the limited medical facilities. Authorities also faced difficulties finding medical facilities for patients as the number of infections swelled.

Passengers infected with the disease started disembarking on 14 February after the ship's 3 February arrival, with most others starting to leave 19 February and the process only completed on 1 March.

The ship's lack of strict quarantine measures such as confin-

ing passengers to their cabins immediately after the first case of the coronavirus was confirmed is also believed to have contributed to the spread of infections.

In the memorial event, a board inscribed with the words "Never let such a tragedy happen again" was displayed, with the dates of the deceased's hospitalizations and deaths read out.

Ryohei Nakata, who was among those infected onboard together with his wife, has attended the memorial every year. "Such a terrible disaster must never happen again. A proper investigation is necessary," the 78-year-old said.

A nationwide association of former passengers continues to urge the government to conduct a thorough investigation of the incident, including interviewing passengers and crew.

Tadashi Chida, an 81-year-old former passenger from Sapporo and joint head of the association, expressed concerns that the incident was fading from public memory.



Tadashi Chida (2nd from front), joint head of a nationwide association of former passengers of the Diamond Princess, throws flowers into the sea at Yokohama port on 3 February 2025, during a memorial event which marked five years since the liner arrived at the port and was hit by a mass COVID-19 outbreak onboard. **PHOTO: KYODO**

"Five years have passed, and I fear it will be forgotten. We need to reconsider how we should reflect on this mass outbreak," he said. The Diamond Princess departed Yokohama on 20 January 2020, with a passenger who had disembarked in Hong Kong testing positive for COVID-19 on 1 February. Of the 3,711 passengers and crew on board, 712 became infected and 13 died, with an additional fatality occurring after a passenger returned home to Australia. — Kyodo

Beyonce finally wins top album at Grammys, as Lamar shines



Beyoncé accepts the Best Country Album award for "Cowboy Carter" from Taylor Swift onstage during the 67th GRAMMY Awards at Crypto.com Arena on 2 February 2025 in Los Angeles, California. **PHOTO: AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES/AFP**

BEYONCE on Sunday finally won the Grammy for the year's best album for her culture-shaking "Cowboy Carter", as rapper Kendrick Lamar posted a clean sweep on a night that served as a love letter to fire-ravaged

Los Angeles.

Chappell Roan, Charli XCX, Doechii and Sabrina Carpenter emerged as big winners at the performance-heavy gala, while heavyweights Taylor Swift and Billie Eilish went

home empty-handed.

Beyoncé's win for "Cowboy Carter" now makes her the most nominated, most decorated artist at the awards show ever — as well as the first Black woman to claim the top prize in this century.

The triumph was all the more relevant as the 43-year-old's ambitious, historically rooted album elevated and showcased the work of Black artists in country music, whose rich contributions the industry has repeatedly sidelined.

"I just feel very full and very honoured," she said, her husband Jay-Z and daughter Blue Ivy cheering from the crowd of A-listers at Crypto.com Arena.

She dedicated the prize to Linda Martell, a pioneering Black country musician featured on the album. — AFP

China's 2025 Spring Festival box office breaks records

CHINA'S film industry set a new milestone during the 2025 Spring Festival holiday, with box office revenue from 29 January to 1 February reaching a record 5.75 billion yuan (about US\$802 million), surpassing the previous high of 5.73 billion yuan set in 2021.

As of 2 February, box office revenue from the holiday had reached seven billion yuan. The reading for the first six days of the holiday, driven mainly by popular domestic productions, is already nearing the record box office of 8.02 billion yuan set during the 2024 Spring Festival holiday.

Bringing the total box office revenue since the beginning of 2025 to nine billion yuan, the figure has solidified China's position as a global leader in box office revenue for 2025.

"The moviegoers' enthusiasm indicates vibrant consumption during the holiday as well as the consumers' confidence in

domestic productions," said Rao Shuguang, president of the China Film Critics Association.

The Spring Festival, traditionally a peak and lucrative period for moviegoing, saw fierce competition among major releases. This year, the Spring Festival holiday was extended by one day to eight days, running from 28 January to 4 February.

Leading the pack was the animated fantasy "Ne Zha 2", which earned over 3.1 billion yuan in just five days after it landed in movie theatres, according to data released by the box office tracker Beacon.

The sequel, trailing the success of the 2019 hit "Ne Zha", which raked in a revenue of over five billion yuan, impressed audiences with its stunning visuals and engaging storyline, earning an 8.6 rating on Douban, a popular Chinese film review platform. — Xinhua

Cambodia’s tourism makes US\$3.63 bln revenue in 2024

CAMBODIA’S tourism earned gross revenue of US\$3.63 billion in 2024, up 17.8 per cent from \$3.08 billion in a year earlier, according to the Ministry of Tourism’s report on Sunday.

The kingdom received 6.7 million international tourists last year, up 22.9 per cent from 5.45 million in the year before, the report said, adding that the top five market arrivals to the kingdom last year were Thailand, Vietnam, China, Laos and the United States.

The tourism sector contributed about 9.4 per cent to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2024, up from 7.5 per cent in the year before, the report added.

Tourism is one of the four pillars supporting Cambodia’s economy.



A Cambodian guide (R) explains details to tourists visiting the Bayon temple at the Angkor complex in Siem Reap on 18 September 2024. PHOTO: AFP

The country has four world heritage sites, namely the Angkor Archaeological

Park in northwest Siem Reap province, the Temple Zone of Sambor Prei Kuk in central

Kampong Thom province, and the Temple of Preah Vihear and the Koh Ker archaeological

site in northwest Preah Vihear province. Besides, it has a pristine

coastline stretching in the length of about 450 kilometres in four southwest provinces of Sihanoukville, Kampot, Kep and Koh Kong.

Thourn Sinan, chairman of the Pacific Asia Travel Association Cambodia chapter, predicts a modest growth in tourist arrivals to Cambodia in 2025 due to the current geopolitical climate, political changes in the United States, and various crises impacting global travel.

“Without a concerted effort to restructure our tourism products and improve air connectivity, as well as an urgent need for effective destination marketing campaigns, I anticipate only modest growth for 2025,” he told Xinhua.

“Cambodia has immense potential, but we must take proactive steps to attract visitors,” he added. — Xinhua

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tourist arrivals in Nepal up in January

FOREIGN tourist arrivals in Nepal grew in January, the Nepal Tourism Board said on Sunday.

As many as 79,991 foreigners visited Nepal in the reporting month, up from 79,100 over the same period last year.

The tourism revival was 98 per cent compared with the number in 2019, when 81,273 tourists arrived in the first month of the year, Mani Raj Lamichhane, director of the board, told Xinhua. — Xinhua

Uzbekistan exports peppers worth US\$8.9 mln in 2024

UZBEKISTAN exported peppers worth US\$8.9 million in 2024, the country’s Statistics Agency said on Monday.

Last year, Uzbekistan exported 6,400 tonnes of peppers worth \$8.9 million, according to a report posted on the agency’s website.

Among the countries importing Uzbek peppers, Kazakhstan ranked first with 2,300 tonnes, followed by Kyrgyzstan and Russia with 1,400 tonnes and 835 tonnes respectively. — Xinhua

M’bishi likely to say in mid-Feb. whether to join Honda-Nissan merger

THE chief of Mitsubishi Motors Corp said Monday that the Japanese automaker will make a final decision on whether to join a planned merger between Honda Motor Co and Nissan Motor Co in mid-February or later, pushing back the plan from the end of January.

The delay comes as Honda and Nissan, which is the largest shareholder of Mitsubishi Motors, said last week that they would release the details of their plan by the end of January but postponed it to mid-February. — Kyodo

Canada to file WTO claim against Trump tariffs

OTTAWA will file a World Trade Organization claim against US President Donald Trump’s tariffs and also seek redress under a regional free trade deal, a Canadian official said Sunday.

“The Canadian government clearly considers these tariffs to be a violation of trade commitments that the United States has taken,” the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told a briefing.

After weeks of threats, Trump on Saturday signed off on 25 per cent tariffs on all Canadian imports except energy resources, which will be hit with a 10 per cent levy.

“We will obviously pursue the legal recourse that we believe we have through the agreements that we share with the United States,” the official said, citing the WTO and US-Mexico-Canada agreement (CUSMA) that Trump himself signed in 2018.

A review of the pact, which a Canadian official called a “gold standard agreement”, was due to be held next year.

Ottawa also unveiled on

Sunday a list of 1,256 American goods it plans to target in a first round of counter tariffs worth Can\$30 billion starting on Tuesday.

The list includes cosmetics, appliances, tires, tools, plastics, furniture, coffee, wines and spirits, dairy and fruits.

Officials said the Canadian tariffs do not target specifically Republican states, but aim to put pressure on lawmakers with influence over Trump, who are more likely to be Republicans.

A second round of counter tariffs could be announced in the coming weeks, when total amount of the products targeted would rise to Can\$155 billion (US\$106 billion).

“Our hope is that the actions we have taken already will be sufficient to persuade the United States that it has gone down the wrong path and that they will reach out to work with us on how to get back to a more normal state,” an official said. — AFP



Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks during a news conference 1 February 2025 on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Vietnamese manufacturing sector's
output falls for first time in four months

NEW orders of the Vietnamese manufacturing sector decreased for the first time in four months during January due to weakening customer demand, according to a report released by S&P Global Market Intelligence on Monday.

The S&P Global Vietnam Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index posted 48.9 in January, down from 49.8 in December and below the 50.0 no-change mark for the second successive month.

Business conditions in the sector deteriorated in the opening month of 2025 amid renewed falls in both output and new orders, said the report. — Xinhua

Egypt's processed food exports hit record
US\$6.1 bln in 2024, up 21%

EGYPT'S processed food exports hit a record US\$6.1 billion in 2024, marking a 21-per-cent growth compared to 2023, the country's Food Export Council (FEC) said on Sunday.

"This is the highest export value in the history of the sector, reaffirming the competitiveness of Egyptian food products in global markets, supported by government efforts to enhance non-oil exports," said FEC Chairman Mahmoud Bazan in a statement.

Arab countries remained the top importers of Egyptian processed food, with purchases worth about US\$3.28 billion, accounting for 54 per cent of the total exports in 2024, up 20 per cent from 2023, according to the statement. — Xinhua

Stocks drop, dollar rallies as Year
of the Snake starts with bite

STOCK markets in Asia and Europe sank and the dollar surged Monday after Donald Trump signed off huge tariffs on China, Canada and Mexico, and warned the European Union would be hit "pretty soon".

Less than two weeks after moving back into the White House, the US president on Saturday made good on warnings that he would resume his hardball tactics, sparking fears of trade wars that could hamper the global economy.

The move will see 25 per cent levies on imports from Canada and Mexico and 10 per cent duties on Chinese goods.

Analysts at Oxford Economics said the tariffs could see Mexican inflation surge to six per cent annually, from 4.2 per cent in December, while the peso sank seven per cent.

Chief EY economist Gregory Daco said Canada's economy could shrink 2.7 per cent this year and 4.3 per cent next



A financial data screen in Tokyo shows the 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average plunging over two per cent on 3 February 2025. **PHOTO: KYODO**

year.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said tariffs were "promises made and promises kept by the president".

Canada said it would file a World Trade Organization claim against the United States, while Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum announced that retaliatory tariffs would be imposed on US products.

China's trade ministry said Beijing would take "corresponding countermeasures".

While the decision had been well-flagged, equity markets took a hefty hit, with all three main indexes on Wall Street turning negative at the end of Friday trade. — AFP

SoftBank, OpenAI agree to set up
joint venture for AI services



SoftBank Group CEO Masayoshi Son (L) and Sam Altman, the head of OpenAI, speak at an event in Tokyo on 3 February 2025. **PHOTO: KYODO**

SOFTBANK Group CEO Masayoshi Son said Monday that his tech investment company and artificial intelligence giant OpenAI have agreed to establish a joint venture to promote AI services for corporations.

The new 50-50 venture, named SB OpenAI Japan, will utilize massive quantities of data stored in systems of client

companies and offer optimal management solutions, Son said in a speech at an event in Tokyo.

"We will launch from Japan the world's first advanced AI services for large corporations," Son said, adding that they plan to expand AI use in the future to the government and other areas such as the medical and educational sectors.

Joining Son at the event, Sam Altman, the head of OpenAI, expressed excitement about the new project, saying, "We have been talking about doing this for so long."

The two companies said last month that they will form a new company with Oracle Corp., which will invest at least \$500 billion in AI infrastructure in the United States under the Stargate Project.

Calling SB OpenAI Japan the Japanese version of the Stargate Project, Son said SoftBank will become the venture's first customer and pay around \$3 billion annually to utilize the services across its group, which includes mobile payment service operator PayPay Corp.

SoftBank will also dispatch about 1,000 employees to the new company to help launch the new service, while OpenAI will send some engineers, he said. — Kyodo

S Korea's industrial
output grows 1.7% in 2024

SOUTH Korea's industrial output grew in 2024 due to a recovery in semiconductor production, statistical office data showed Monday.

The production index in all industries, which excludes the agriculture, livestock and fishery sector, gained 1.7 per cent in 2024 compared to the previous year after rising 1.0 per cent in 2023, according to Statistics Korea.

The index increased 0.4 per cent in the fourth quarter on a quarterly basis, rebounding from decreases of 0.3 per cent in the second quarter and 0.4 per cent in the third quarter.

Output in the mining and manufacturing industry advanced 4.1 per cent last year, turning around from a decline of 2.6 per cent in the previous year.

The rebound was attributable to higher production in semiconductors and medical supplies that offset lower out-

put in electrical equipment and primary metal products.

Manufacturers posted an average capacity ratio of 72.9 per cent in 2024, up 1.0 percentage point from a year earlier.

Production in the service industry expanded 1.4 per cent in 2024 after climbing 3.2 per cent in the prior year.

Output in the transport and warehousing and the finance and insurance sectors gained ground, offsetting a decline of 2.2 per cent in the wholesale and retail sectors last year.

The retail sale index, which reflects private consumption, dropped 2.2 per cent in 2024 compared with the prior year, marking the fastest reduction in 21 years since 2003.

The index dwindled 0.5 per cent in the first quarter, 0.8 per cent in the second quarter, 0.6 per cent in the third quarter, and 0.6 per cent in the fourth quarter on a quarterly basis. — Xinhua

ROLLING UPDATES
WORLD

Saudi crown prince, Syria’s interim president meet
on ties, latest developments

SAUDI Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud and Syria’s interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa reviewed in Riyadh on Sunday bilateral relations and the latest developments in Syria.

The two sides discussed ways to enhance Syria’s security and stability, as well as opportunities for cooperation across various sectors, and exchanged views on regional developments and ongoing efforts to address them, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The Saudi crown prince congratulated al-Sharaa on assuming the presidency of Syria and wished him success in fulfilling the aspirations of the Syrian people.

For his part, al-Sharaa expressed his gratitude to the crown



Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud (R, front) shakes hands with Syria’s interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa (L, front) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2 February 2025. PHOTO: SPA/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA

prince for his good wishes and the kingdom’s supportive stance towards Syria and its people.

Al-Sharaa arrived in the Saudi capital on Sunday for his first official visit abroad. He has led the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group since 2017 and played a key role in the offensive that led to the overthrow of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024 and the establishment of the Syrian transitional government. He has been the country’s de facto leader since Assad’s ouster.

Syria’s Military Operations Administration announced on 29 January the appointment of al-Sharaa as president during the transitional period, granting him authority to establish an interim legislative council until a permanent constitution is ratified. — Xinhua

Rising floodwaters force evacuations
in eastern Australia

FAST-MOVING floodwaters rose Monday in northeastern Australia after forcing many to flee, blacking out homes, and sweeping away a chunk of a critical bridge.

Storms have already dumped more than a metre (39 inches) of rain in two days in parts of Queensland, engulfing homes, businesses and roads in muddy waters, authorities said.

Aerial footage showed rural communities surrounded by the floodwaters, cut off from nearby roads.

“We are going to see widespread rain and

storms spread across much of northern Queensland,” the state’s premier, David Crisafulli, warned in a news conference.

“We remain prepared for the ongoing prospect of more rain and the likelihood of more flooding, both flash flooding and riverine flooding,” he said. Emergency services carried out 11 “swift water rescues” overnight, the premier said.

Areas of flood-hit Townsville, a popular coastal tourist destination that lies near the Great Barrier Reef, had been declared a “black zone”, he said. — AFP



A handout photo taken on 2 February 2025 and released by the Queensland Fire Department on 3 February 2025 shows an aerial view of the flood-affected Bruce Highway and adjoining areas around Bowen, Queensland. PHOTO: QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT/AFP

News in brief

Lukashenko officially declared winner in
Belarusian presidential elections

BELARUSIAN Central Election Commission on Monday officially declared Alexander Lukashenko’s victory in the latest presidential elections with 86.82 per cent of the votes.

For other candidates, Sergei Syrankov received 3.21 per cent, followed by Oleg Gaidukevich (2.02 per cent), Anna Kanopatskaya (1.86 per cent) and Alexander Khizhnyak (1.74 per cent). Around 3.60 per cent of voters voted against all candidates.

The presidential elections were held in Belarus on 26 January. The turnout was 85.69 per cent. — Xinhua

Uganda sets up Ebola isolation units after
outbreak in capital

UGANDA with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) has set up an 84-bed Ebola isolation and treatment facility in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, following the virus outbreak in the east African country, a health official said Monday.

Henry Kyobe Bosa, incident commander at the Ministry of Health, told Xinhua by telephone that the unit in Mulago National Referral Hospital will manage suspected and confirmed cases of the Sudan Ebola virus disease (SVD).

“We have set up an Ebola isolation unit at Mulago and deployed a [pre-trained] national emergency medical team to manage the cases at the facility,” Bosa said. “The development of this isolation facility, the training and deployment of the emergency team has been supported by WHO in collaboration with the World Bank.”

Another isolation unit in Mbale should be up and in operation by the end of Monday, according to Bosa. — Xinhua

SPORTS

Harbin Asian Winter Games to promote growth of winter sports in Asia, says IOC member

AS the torch relay of the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin started on Monday, torchbearer Yu Zaiqing, an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, noted that the Games will promote the growth of the winter sports population in Asia.

"Torch relay carries forward the Olympic spirit, leading more people to have a deeper understanding of sports," Yu said. "This is the second time for Harbin to host the Asian Winter Games after the 3rd edition in 1996. The Games is much-anticipated with improved venue facilities and even more excellent performance of athletes."

According to organizers, the 9th edition of the Asian Winter Games is the largest in terms of participating delegations and athletes.

Yu said, "I am delighted to see more athletes competing in the Asian Winter Games. Southeast Asian and West Asian countries and regions tried their best to



Yu Zaiqing (L), vice-president of the Chinese Olympic Committee and an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, delivers a speech at the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) 42nd Congress held in Bangkok, Thailand, 8 July 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA

cultivate winter sports athletes despite unfavourable climate factors, showing their passion for winter sports."

The 2025 Harbin Asian Winter

Games represents the latest international comprehensive winter sports event held in China since the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. — Xinhua

Goal records turn into mixed blessings as Kane outpaces Haaland

SETTING new goal records seems to be a mixed blessing for record German champion Bayern Munich.

While Vincent Kompany's side appears on its way to possibly breaking its 53-year-old 101-season-goal record in the national league, having harvested 62 goals in 20 games, gaps in its defence are harming the team's progress.

Concerns about the team's international robustness grow when it comes to facing Celtic in two playoff encounters in the UEFA Champions League in mid-February, following three defeats in the competition.

"If we don't follow our guidelines, we are just an ordinary side," midfielder and Germany national team captain Joshua Kimmich said after Bayern nearly gambled away a 4-0 lead in the dying minutes against newly promoted Kiel, ending up with a narrow 4-3 win.

Harry Kane, having outpaced former Dortmund striker Erling Haaland's record of goals after 50 Bundesliga games, seems only a small consolation.

The 31-year-old England captain scored his 55th goal in his 50th league game, while his Norwegian counterpart

ended up with 50 in 50.

"We lack the greed of a top team. Top teams push through over 90 or 95 minutes," Kimmich complained.

Kimmich spoke about a "mental issue" as giving up principles "makes us vulnerable to every other side."

While Kane's goal hunger is praised by teammates and the media, Bayern's open-goal attitude is threat-

ening its goals, such as reaching the 2025 Champions League final on home soil in May.

Conceding 32 goals in 31 competitive games seems a burden, while coach Kompany is demanding an end to the ups and downs after Bayern lost three of its Champions League away games against Villa (1-0), Barcelona (4-1), and Feyenoord (3-0). — Xinhua



Bayern Munich's English forward (09) Harry Kane (2R) scores his team's third goal during the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Bayern Munich versus Holstein Kiel in Munich, southern Germany on 1 February 2025. PHOTO: AFP

Late derby drama keeps Inter on Napoli's heels in tight Serie A title race

INTER Milan were given a let off on Sunday when they snatched a late 1-1 derby draw with AC Milan while league leaders Napoli were held by a late goal at Roma.

Reigning champions Inter remain three points behind Napoli who looked to be heading five clear as they led in Rome until Angelino volleyed in a stunning leveller in the first minute of added time to make the score 1-1.

Angelino's strike gave even more significance to Stefan de Vrij's last-gasp equaliser at the San Siro. The defender forced home Nicola Zalewski's knock-down just as it looked like Tijjani Reijnders' opener would be enough for Milan.

"I can only applaud my team for the way they played, unfortunately they weren't able to get that bit of luck," said Inter coach Simone Inzaghi, who believed his team should have had a penalty in the second half for a foul on Marcus Thuram.

"I can understand the referee not seeing it... but those who are sat down (in the VAR booth) can't not call the referee.

"It's the third or fourth time it's happened and it's starting to annoy me."

Inter dominated but Milan hung on to stay eighth, five points behind Juventus, who beat Empoli 4-1 in the day's early game.

For Milan, Netherlands midfielder Reijnders netted his 11th goal of the season on the rebound at the end of a lightning counter-attack after Yann Sommer palmed out Rafael Leao's low cross.

To lose to that goal would have been a sucker-punch for dominant Inter who had three goals chalked off while Yann Bisseck, Thuram and Denzel Dumfries all hit the post in the second half.

But another Dutchman in De Vrij pounced at the death to silence a packed San Siro.

The stadium was dominated by Milan fans but missed some of its colour due to a police ban on pre-match fan displays as part of a crackdown on the hardcore ultra supporters of the two clubs.

"I don't think we played very well in possession, we had to be more calm on the ball because there were some opportunities," said Reijnders to DAZN.

"If we stay more cool in these kinds of situations we can control the game more, unfortunately that didn't happen tonight."

Napoli were on course for an eighth straight win after Roma old boy Leonardo Spinazzola looped home his first goal of the season in the 29th minute in Rome. — AFP



EU leaders vow to hit back if Trump triggers trade war



France's President Emmanuel Macron (R) speaks with Slovenia's Prime Minister Robert Golob prior to the start of the round-table meeting at the informal EU leaders' retreat at the Palais d'Egmont in Brussels on 3 February 2025. PHOTO: AFP

EU leaders meeting in Brussels Monday warned there would be no winners in a trade war with the United States, insisting they would hit back if President Donald Trump imposes tariffs.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the European Union must show its muscle if US President Donald Trump makes good on his threat to target the bloc with a volley of tariffs.

"If we are attacked in terms of trade, Europe — as a true power — will have to stand up for itself," Macron said.

The leaders of the EU's 27 nations were huddling in the Belgian capital with Britain's prime minister and the head of NATO to discuss efforts to boost Europe's defences faced with an ag-

gressive Russia — as Trump's demands that American allies spend much more.

But the discussions were overshadowed by the US leader's decision to slap tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China — with Trump threatening to target EU next.

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk, whose country currently holds the EU presidency, said everything must be done to avoid a "totally unnecessary and stupid" trade war.

Trump has not hidden his enmity for the EU, accusing it of treating the United States "very, very unfairly" on trade.

After slapping levies on his North American neighbours and China, Trump doubled down on Sunday by

saying he "definitely" planned to target the EU in future.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said a trade dispute would be "bad for the US, bad for Europe", with transatlantic "cooperation" preferable for both sides.

"We can also react," he added, veering from Germany's traditionally cautious approach to transatlantic trade relations. "We need America, and America needs us as well," echoed the EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, adding there were "no winners in trade wars".

On Sunday, the European Commission said it would retaliate "firmly" if Trump hit it and decried his sweeping measures against Canada, Mexico and China. — AFP

Israeli prime minister in Washington for Gaza ceasefire talks

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to begin talks Monday on a second phase of the ceasefire with Hamas as he visits the new Trump administration in Washington.

Before departing, Netanyahu told reporters he would discuss "victory over Hamas", countering Iran and freeing all hostages when he meets President Donald Trump on Tuesday.

It will be Trump's first meeting with a foreign leader since returning to the White House in January, a prioritization Netanyahu described as "telling".

"I think it's a testimony to the strength of the Israeli-American alliance," he said before boarding his flight.

With fragile ceasefires holding in both Gaza and Lebanon — where an Israeli campaign badly weakened Iran-backed Hezbollah — Israel has recently turned its focus to the occupied West Bank, where an operation it says is aimed at rooting out extremism has killed dozens.

Netanyahu said Israel's wartime decisions had reshaped the Middle East and that, with Trump's support, this could go even further.

"I believe that working closely with President Trump, we can redraw it (the Middle East's map) even further and for the better."

Trump, who has claimed credit for sealing the ceasefire deal after 15 months of war, said Sunday that negotiations with Israel and other countries in the Middle East were "progressing".

"Bibi Netanyahu's coming on Tuesday, and I think we have some very big meetings scheduled," Trump said. — AFP

Hamas promised to release Russian citizen Trufanov from captivity in near future

PALESTINIAN movement Hamas will release Russian citizen Alexander Trufanov from captivity in the near future as part of agreements with Israel, Hamas political office deputy head Musa Abu Marzouk told Sputnik.

"One of them, Trufanov, will definitely

be released in the near future. He will be released despite the fact that he is a serviceperson, but it was decided to release him at the first stage of the deal. This is our response to Russia's position on the Palestinian issue," the deputy head said.

The fate of Donbass native Maxim

Kharkin will be decided at the second stage of the deal with Israel, he said, adding that Hamas is ready to return him as priority.

Israel and Hamas, with the mediation of Qatar, Egypt and the United States, agreed on 15 January to a 42-day cease-

fire and declared their intention to finally end the hostilities that have claimed the lives of over 47,000 Palestinians and about 1,500 Israelis over 15 months, spreading to Lebanon and Yemen and provoking an exchange of missile strikes between Israel and Iran. — SPUTNIK