

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR



The 2023 Monsoon Market Fair showcasing industrial products and electric vehicles (EVs) captivates visitors at the People's Square in Yangon yesterday.

2023 Monsoon Market Fair showcases industrial products, EVs in Yangon

THE inauguration of the 2023 Monsoon Market Fair, featuring exhibitions of industrial products and electric vehicles (EVs), took place yesterday at Yangon's People's Square. Yangon

Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein delivered the opening speech, marking the commencement of the event.

The fair saw the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Industrial Products Exhibi-

tion and Electric Vehicle (EV) Exhibition, attended by Yangon Region Development Affairs Minister (Mayor) U Bo Htay, Region's Minister for Commerce U Myo Myint Aung, representatives of the Indus-

trial Zone Committee, Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation Chairman U Aung Kyaw Oo, President of the UMFCCI U Aye Win, among other officials.

Following the opening, the Yangon Region chief minister, Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Zaw Hein, and officials explored the showcased industrial products, electric vehicles (EVs), and charging infrastructure.

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Myanmar's food security assured: MRF President affirms ample rice reserves

"The recent surge in rice prices is driven by unfounded rumours that prompted panic buying despite the reality of ample rice reserves."



MYANMAR Rice Federation President U Ye Min Aung has provided resolute reassurance regarding Myanmar's food security, highlighting the nation's self-sufficiency in rice production. He conveyed, "The country possesses a substantial rice reserve from both the current and previous years,

eliminating concerns about food insecurity." In an interview with The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM), U Ye Min Aung emphasized that Myanmar's rice supply is abundant, dispelling worries about any immediate shortage.

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NATIONAL

Successful conclusion of ADMM-Plus Counter-Terrorism tabletop exercise bolstering regional security



The ADMM-Plus Experts Working Group on Counter-Terrorism Tabletop Exercise concludes successfully in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

THE ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter-Terrorism (EWG on CT) tabletop exercise hosted by Myanmar from 2 to 4 August 2023 successfully concluded at Park Royal Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Myanmar and Russian senior military officers led the discussions on the military operation plan with an exercise held on 3 August, and senior military officers from other countries actively participated in the discussions.

Delegates from ASEAN and dialogue partner countries Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam together with co-chairs Myanmar and Russia joined the exercise.

On the morning of the third-day exercise, those delegates observed the skill demonstration of the special task force squad members of Myanmar Tatmadaw at the local training depot and continued their tabletop exercise in the afternoon. In the evening, they were served with dinner.

The delegates visited the Defence Services Museum, the National Museum, and the Gems Museum. They also visited Up-patasanti Pagoda and Maravijaya Buddha Image.

Such a tabletop exercise was an exercise hosted by Myanmar and Russia as co-chairs for the counter-terrorism among seven defence and security co-operation areas among ASEAN countries and dialogue partner countries. — MNA/TTA

Yoe Yoe Lay Express to run Kyaikto-Yangon route for free this month

THE Kyaikto-Yangon free trip has been announced as a special plan for the rainy season by Yoe Yoe Lay Express for the whole month.

The highway travel service has informed travellers that the trip will be offered at 10 am, 11:30 am and 12:30 pm with free tickets for the entire month of August.

Yoe Yoe Lay Express clarified in the announcement that the free shuttle programme will only run the Kyaikto-Yangon route and other routes will not be included in the programme.

Yoe Yoe Lay Express is a service company that also carries passengers and goods between Yangon, Mawlamyine, Hpa-an, Kyaukse and Chaungzon. — TWA/KZL



Myanmar's food security assured: MRF Chairman affirms ample rice reserves



Workers arrange rice bags for efficient distribution.

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The Myanmar Rice Federation has also unveiled plans to offer rice at affordable rates, with a scheduled sale set for 7 August. The federation's announcement outlines its commitment to ensure accessibility to rice varieties through competitive pricing. These offerings will be available at a wholesale centre on Wahdan Road and similar establishments at the Bayintnaung Market.

Specific pricing details for different rice varieties per 108-pound bag have been disclosed: Shwebo Pawsan will be sold at K110,000 to K120,000 per 108-lb bag, Ayeyawady Pawsan K94,000 to K97,000, Aemahta (10%) K65,000 and

Aemahta (25%) K60,000.

To streamline distribution, individuals can procure rice by presenting their national identity cards. Under this arrangement, the federation aims to allot one bag of Pawsan and one bag of Aemahta per month to those holding valid citizenship scrutiny cards. Government and corporate employees seeking to make purchases can follow the process outlined in the announcement, including contacting the provided email address with the necessary verification documents.

U Ye Min Aung underscored the federation's commitment to stabilize the rice market by offering competitively

priced rice. This endeavour will continue throughout August and September until the influx of newly harvested rice into the market. He emphasized, "The recent surge in rice prices is driven by unfounded rumours that prompted panic buying, despite the reality of ample rice reserves."

"Rice reserve was also sold last year. Households could buy one bag each of rice by showing some documents. The price of rice they sold was some K5,000 per bag less than the market price. At that time, if we gave K5,000 extra money to rice shops in the market, the shop would transport bags of rice to the buyer's house," Daw Wah Wah Ei from Kyimyindine Township told her experiences in buying bags of rice last year to the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

"If people have a chance to buy bags of rice at the set price from the agents of relevant wards and townships rather than purchasing at the wholesale depots, it will be more beneficial for the consumers. Now, transport cost is not convenient for consumers," a rice dealer from Sangyoung Township told the GNLM.

In 2022, the Myanmar Rice Federation sold out Shwebo Pawsan, Ayeyawady Pawsan and 90-day rice slightly cheaper than the market prices. In the domestic market, Shwebo Pawsan paddy was traded at K3 million per 100 baskets in July but K3.5 million in August. —GNLM/TH/KTZH

Plans underway to perform online registration, e-payment for MSMEs

THE Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection under the Ministry of Industry has started issuing temporary registrations to entrepreneurs of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and is working to operate online registration and electronic payment systems.

Registration certificates for MSME entrepreneurs will be issued as per the business size criteria under the MSME Law after redrafting the law.

In addition, plans are also underway for the application of MSME registration certificates through online registration and e-payment systems

through the MSME Web portal.

The information will be redistributed to the entrepreneurs upon completion, and by the time the law is drafted, MSME entrepreneurs will need to register according to the requirements.

It is also known that efforts are being made by the DISI to enact the Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises Development Law.

During the operation, a temporary registration certificate for MSMEs will be issued if they apply for a new SME member card through the MSME Online Registration system. — ASH/CT



Union Industry Minister Dr Charlie Than addresses the 2/2023-2024 coordination meeting of the Machinery Supervisory Committee in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.



2023 Monsoon Market Fair showcases industrial products, EVs in Yangon

FROM PAGE-1

The Market Fair and Exhibition encompass a diverse range of displays like industrial products from 29 industrial zones in the Yangon Region, local products from various regions, including Nay Pyi Taw Council, MSME exhibits, technological gallery by Myanmar Computer Federation, UMFCCI and alliance associations, Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs' Association, displays from various

associations and private entrepreneurs.

The event also features sales of essential items such as Myanmar Rice Federation and Retailers Association of Rice products, Myanmar Oil Dealers' Association offerings and cooking oil, vegetables, and fruits from the Yangon City Development Committee.

Visitors can enjoy engaging activities like affordable restaurants, dance performances and



(Top & above photos) : Crowds explore booths as youths engage with intriguing displays by the Myanmar Computer Federation.

DJs, and access to outlet booths and showrooms by car through inner circle road. The 2023 Mon-

soon Market Fair will run from 4 to 6 August, open from 9 am to 7 pm. Reasonably-priced food

stalls will be available for visitors and booth employees. — Hsan Kyaw Oo (IPRD)/TS

NATIONAL

Urgent emphasis on mitigating profound patient impact due to medical negligence



The front view of a private hospital in Yangon captured in the photo.

MORE attention must be paid as the negligence of medical professionals can lead to huge impacts on the patients said Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win, who is also Chairman of the Central Committee on Private Healthcare Services at the committee's Thursday meeting in Nay Pyi Taw.

He also urged all to inspect buildings, 24-hour services and intensive care, operation theatres, labour room and lab for the safety of the patients.

The healthcare workers must have a medical licence/nurse-midwifery licence granted by the respective medical council/nursing and midwife council. They must not breach

any existing law. The foreign doctors/nurses also need special practising licences from respective councils for part-time services.

The government also permitted to launch of kidney transplants, dialysis, cardiac surgery and examination, cancer radiation therapy and blood transfusion at private hospitals. Currently, it grants permission to 5,124 general clinics, 1,002 special clinics and 270 general hospitals.

It also encourages to open the private health institutions successfully through a smooth process, special emphases are being made in order not to occur delays in licence issuance processes. — Htun Htun/KTZH

Revolutionizing rice mills: Gasifiers set to power 1,391 units in Bago Region

IN a groundbreaking initiative, paddy husk fuel gasifiers are set to revolutionize the energy landscape of Bago Region, with plans to install these sustainable power sources in all 1,391 rice mills across the area. U Tin Oo, a key figure in the Bago Region government, confirmed this ambitious endeavour to meet the electricity demands of the region.

Efforts by the Bago Region government are centred on constructing paddy husk fuel gasifiers capable of catering to the region's electricity needs. Though currently operational in 30 rice mills, the plan is to implement these gasifiers across all the mills in the region.

U Tin Oo emphasized the comprehensive approach, stating, "We're taking proactive

steps in Bago Region to support the electricity demand through rice husk fuel gasifiers and solar energy adoption in industrial zones and MSME businesses. With all 1,391 rice mills equipped and operational with paddy husk gasifiers, we're well-prepared for this transformation."

Beyond rice mills, other industries are also adopting paddy husk fuel gasifiers to address power scarcity. This approach is already being practised in parts of the country facing power supply challenges.

Nationwide, 412 paddy husk fuel gasifier businesses have registered as private industries. This includes 319 gasifiers integrated into rice mills and an additional 21 used in various industrial processes. This strategic shift not only addresses energy



Paddy husk fuel gasifiers are poised to transform the energy landscape of Bago Region's rice mills.

requirements but also plays a role in mitigating climate change through efficient biomass gas production.

The Ministry of Science

and Technology is committed to assisting MSME entrepreneurs and experienced experts to ensure the seamless implementation of systematic gasifiers

throughout the nation. This collaborative effort will lead Myanmar towards a more sustainable and self-sufficient energy future.

— ASH/KZL

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Myanmar's South Sea pearls fetch high demand at auction in Chinese gems market

MYANMA Pearl Enterprise (MPE) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation has announced the successful auction of Myanmar's South Sea pearls in the esteemed Chinese gems market. Collaborating with the South Asia Future Investment Group, MPE orchestrated the sale of these coveted pearls through a meticulous tender system.

The highly anticipated event took place in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China, spanning two days on 26 and 27 July. Distinguished by the presence of 61 trading organizations and approximately 150 merchants hailing from prominent Chinese provinces like Shenzhen, Beijing, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, Hong Kong,

and Mongolia, the auction attracted substantial attention.

Evidencing the allure of Myanmar's South Sea pearls, these gem enthusiasts expressed their satisfaction with the pearls' exceptional quality by bidding generously, leading to impressive prices. Adding an immersive touch to the event, Myanmar's South Sea pearls were showcased through captivating introduction videos, tailored for the discerning Chinese merchants.

In an effort to further deepen the engagement, the event also extended a special invitation to the Chinese merchants, urging their participation in the upcoming Myanmar Gems and Pearls Emporium, slated to grace Nay Pyi Taw in October. — MNA/KTZH



Collaborating with the South Asia Future Investment Group, MPE orchestrated the sale of these coveted pearls through a meticulous tender system. Captivating snapshot showcasing coveted pearls from the Myeik islands.

Illegal industrial materials, consumer goods, foodstuffs and vehicles confiscated



Confiscated illegal goods.

THE on-duty team under the supervision of Kayin State Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force nabbed five kinds of goods worth K22.22 million including 400 kilograms of cotton fabric printed and 20 blocks of rubber that exceeded the Import Declaration (ID) from a Nissan Diesel truck (approximately K60 million) heading to Yangon from

Myawady in Hpa-an township on 2 Augusts. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

Additionally, a combined on-duty team conducted inspections at the 4th-Mile combined checkpoint in Taunggyi on the same day and captured a Fuso Diesel truck (estimated value of K30 million), headed to Taunggyi from Kengtung, carrying 22

kinds of amusement equipment worth K8,421,992 including a set of amusement equipment that was different from ID. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

On the same day, the combined teams impounded 85 kinds of goods worth K601,712,386 including 413 kilograms of Trixon master antenna television satellite and 10 lighting poles that exceeded the 61 days of VPA from four containers at the Myanmar Industrial Port Terminal and a Nissan diesel (approximately K60 million) carrying three kinds of goods worth K11,516,128 near Zayetkwin village on No 2 highway. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

A total of 11 arrests were made on 2 August, with an estimated value of K793,870,506, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/ MKKS

Drugs seized in Lewe, Nawnghkio townships

A combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force stopped and examined a motorbike driven by Kyaw Htwe near Aungkalein village in Lewe township on 3 August and captured 6,000 stimulant tablets.

The police searched a Toyota Corolla near a tollgate

in Pahak ward of Nawnghkio at 5:30 pm on 1 August and captured 46,000 stimulant tablets from the luggage of a passenger, Aung Aung Win (aka) Aung Aung.

Offenders are prosecuted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. — MNA/MKKS



An arrestee is seen along with seized drugs.

Six new cases of COVID-19 reported on 4 August, total figure registers 641,082

MYANMAR'S COVID-19-positive cases rose to **641,082** after **six** new cases were reported on 4 August 2023 according to the Ministry of Health. Therefore, a total of **11,045,530** laboratory samples were examined to date and the confirmed COVID-19 cases reached **641,082**. The total number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country reached **619,872** including **two** new recoveries. The death toll from COVID-19 in the country registered **19,494** on 4-8-2023 with no new death reported from the pandemic. COVID-19 information can be browsed on the internet page moh.gov.mm of the Ministry of Health. — GNLM

CURRENT AFFAIRS



Devotees embark on a pilgrimage to the Great Kyaiktiyo Pagoda.

Over 162K tourists visit Great Kyaiktiyo Pagoda January-July 2023

THE board of trustees of the Great Kyaiktiyo Pagoda in Mon State stated that 4,638 foreign tourists and 157,574 domestic tourists visited the pagoda from January to July this year.

According to the list of the board of trustees, the pagoda accepted 450,000 visitors in the last pilgrimage season, al-

though hundreds of thousands of pilgrims visit each year. The period for the festival of the Great Kyaiktiyo Pagoda was set for seven months, starting on the full moon day of Thadingyut till the full moon day of Kason (Buddha day), and pilgrims are allowed to visit throughout the year.

Visitors are entering from the country and abroad during the festival season, especially from neighbouring Thailand. As part of the rainy season special promotion, the Yoe Yoe Lay Express will provide the Kyaikto-Yangon-Kyaikto trip three times a day for free for the convenience of transporta-

tion for those who visit Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, saving the cost of the pilgrimage for visitors.

Although it is a rainy season, hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, and stalls near the square of the pagoda are open as usual, and truck services are also running regularly for devotees. — TWA/CT

Above 1,300 unclaimed prizes from 42nd Aung Bar Lay Lottery to bolster national revenue

THE Ministry of Planning and Finance's Internal Revenue Department declared that more than 1,300 unclaimed prizes from the 42nd Aung Bar Lay Lottery, which commenced on 1 September 2022, will now be counted as national revenue.

These outstanding prizes, totalling 1,369 in number, consist of K20 million, K5 million, three K2 million, five K1 million, 14 K300,000, 33 K200,000, 451 K100,000, and 861 K50,000 prizes, respectively.

Lottery ticket holders can claim their prizes by submitting their tickets to the Aung Bar Lay branch offices in Yangon and Mandalay until 31 August 2023, as mentioned in its official statement. — TWA/CT

Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok: Former MoU workers to repeat U-Turn process

THE Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok has issued an announcement stating that former MoU workers seeking to re-enter Thailand will need to undergo the U-Turn process once more. Under the MoU system, Myanmar workers were provided with PJ-type passports valid for five years to work in Thailand.

The statement emphasized that MoU workers must return to Myanmar after working in Thailand for four years. If they

wish to return to Thailand under the U-Turn system, they must go through the U-Turn process again in Myanmar. Some MoU workers with passports expiring in one year have not returned to Myanmar and have remained in Thailand until the expiration date.

Additionally, the embassy announced that workers renewing expired passports at the embassy will require to pay a fixed fine of 3,650 baht as a damage or loss fee. — TWA/CT



Some Myanmar workers came to work in Thailand through the MoU process in 2022.

Thai Embassy approves 23 local travel firms for Thai visa services in Myanmar



Foreign tourists immersed in exploring the vibrant landscapes of Thailand.

IN a significant development, the Thai Embassy has greenlit operations for 23 travel companies within Myanmar to facilitate Thai visa services, as confirmed through an official statement released by the Embassy. This move comes after a meticulous selection process conducted by the Thai Embassy, wherein, out of an extensive pool of more than 400 Myanmar-based compa-

nies vying to offer Thai visa services, a carefully chosen 23 were approved.

Among the esteemed travel enterprises endorsed by the Thai Embassy to provide visa services are names such as Precious Moments Travel & Tour Co Ltd, Myanmar Than Thar Travel & Tour Co Ltd, Htoo Travels Co Ltd, and a host of others. This selection marks a significant milestone

in the travel sector, presenting applicants with the convenience of acquiring Thai visas through these approved service providers, eliminating the need to personally visit the embassy and endure lengthy waiting periods.

The established visa service companies will cater to a variety of visa categories, with application fees ranging from US\$35 to US\$2,000, contingent on the specific type of visa sought. This delegation of responsibilities to the selected companies ensures efficient and streamlined visa services, greatly benefiting individuals hailing from diverse regions, particularly those residing in proximate locales along the Thai border.

The newfound option to apply for Thai visas through these authorized travel companies is anticipated to usher in greater ease and accessibility for applicants. — TWA/CT

LOCAL BUSINESS

Surging demand from China boosts Chaste tree seed prices

MANDALAY market sees bustling trade activity of the Chaste tree seeds on China's robust demand, pushing up the price, Mandalay traders emphasized.

The Chaste seeds have been abundantly

flowing into Mandalay market from the last week of July. Chinese traders offer K42,000 per viss of Chaste seeds. The sellers are doing a roaring trade, U Soe Win Myint, an owner of the Soe Win Myint commodity

depot, said.

"Chaste tree is naturally grown in the central Myanmar regions. It is commonly found along Ayeyawady and Chindwin riverbanks in tropical regions. They grow best in sandy soil. It is utilized in pharmaceutical and cosmetic manufacturing. It is a lucrative herb. Residents earn extra income from this. There is an old saying that an ignorant person walks over a pot of gold. Our country is rich in natural resources," he elaborated.

The Chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) produces berries in July and August. The Chaste seeds are ex-



Myanmar began the exportation of Chaste seeds to China on a trial run ten years ago. Thereafter, it grasped a strong market share in China. The photo displays Chaste trees adorned with berries.



Chaste tree is naturally grown in the central Myanmar regions. It is commonly found along Ayeyawady and Chindwin riverbanks in tropical regions.

ported to foreign markets. Myanmar began the exportation of Chaste seeds

to China on a trial run ten years ago. Thereafter, it grasped a strong market

share in China. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub printing House)/EM

38th Trade Expo Indonesia welcomes Myanmar's businesspersons

MYANMAR businesspersons are invited to join the 38th Trade Expo Indonesia, the international B2B-focused hybrid trade show, that will be held between 18 and 22 October and organized by the Ministry of Trade, Indonesia, according to the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

The trade show brings up the theme of Sustainable Trade for Global Economic Resilience. Food and beverages, cloth and textile, chemical, energy and industrial products, digital services, beauty care service, hospital equipment, healthcare services and home appliances will be showcased.

Those enthusiastic af-

filiated associations, entrepreneurs, potential buyers, importers and investors can register through www.tradeexpoindonesia.com. For further details, they can contact Ms Irman on Ph: (+62) 8176440307, Email: irman_dwn@yahoo.com, Mr Matthew Ph: (+62) 821 2246 4727, Email: eston.p2c@kemendag.go.id and Mr Puja Bastara - Ph: (+62) 811 2228 112, Email: pujabastara@kemendag.go.id. Those who want to attend the trade show are encouraged to send their name, position, and name of their institution, company or business on the company letterhead to the UMFCCI's expo division via Email: itpc.umfcci@gmail.com or dial 01-24-314344~49 (Ext: 301) at the soonest. — NN/EM

Myanmar pulses exports surge, garnering US\$430 mln over four months



Multiple beans and pluses seen in the market.

MYANMAR shipped more than 550,000 tonnes of pulses, with an estimated value of over \$430 million, to foreign countries over the past four months during the 2023-2024 financial year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The pulses exports by seaborne trade amounted to \$362.39 million (over 462,894

tonnes), whereas over 88,907 tonnes of pulses worth \$77.079 million were sent to the neighbouring countries through land borders between 1 April and 28 July 2023, totalling \$439.469 million from exports of over 551,802 tonnes.

Myanmar's pulses exports crossed over US\$1.4 billion from over 1.9 million tonnes in the

past FY 2022-2023, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated.

Myanmar mainly exports black gram, green gram and pigeon peas to foreign markets. Of them, black gram and pigeon peas are mostly conveyed to India while green grams are shipped to China and Europe.

India has growing demand and consumption requirements for black gram and pigeon peas. According to a Memorandum of Understanding between Myanmar and India signed on 18 June 2021, India will import 250,000 tonnes of black gram and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon peas for five consecutive years from 2021-2022 financial year to 2025-2026 FY. This G-to-G pact will not affect

the pulses' annual quota set by India. Myanmar's exporters are also entitled to deliver the pulses to India under that annual quota.

The prevailing prices are K2.377 million per tonne of black gram (urad) and K3.2425 million per tonne of pigeon pea (tur).

Last 14 June, the price of pigeon peas hit a record high of K3.33 million per tonne. The black gram price peaked at K2.461 million per tical on 14 June.

Black grams that India primarily purchases are commonly found only in Myanmar, whereas pigeon peas, green gram and chickpeas are grown in African countries and Australia, Myanmar Pulses, Beans, Maize and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association. — NN/EM

Daily newspapers available online

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OPINION

Breastfeeding: An essential path to optimal growth for infants

BREASTFEEDING is of great importance for the health and survival of children under six years old but global rates of exclusive breastfeeding fall short of World Health Organization recommendations. Less than half of infants worldwide receive exclusive breastfeeding during this critical period. Breast milk provides all the necessary energy and nutrients for infants, fulfilling over half of their nutritional requirements in the first year and up to one-third in the second year.

The benefits of breastfeeding extend beyond infancy. Breastfed children tend to perform better on intelligence tests, have a reduced

To achieve the global target of 70 per cent exclusive breastfeeding by 2030 and enhance child survival and development outcomes, it is crucial to ensure access to maternity protections and encourage breastfeeding support at work. Hence, all walks of life must collaborate to create an enabling environment to support breastfeeding mothers, leading to brighter and healthier futures for the world's children.

make breastfeeding at work, work," highlights the importance of greater support for breastfeeding in all workplaces. Progress has been made in increasing exclusive breastfeeding rates over the past decade, rising by 10 percentage points to 48 per cent globally.

Family-friendly workplace policies have proven beneficial for working women, their families, and employers. These policies lead to economic returns by reducing maternity-related absenteeism, retaining female workers, and cutting hiring and training costs.

World Breastfeeding Week, celebrated every August, honours the dedication of breastfeeding mothers who play a key role in nurturing the next generation. Breastfeeding remains the ultimate child survival and development intervention, protecting infants from common infectious diseases, strengthening their immune systems, and providing essential nutrients for optimal growth and development. Exclusive breastfeeding significantly reduces the risk of infant mortality.

Breastfeeding mothers deserve admiration for their selflessness and sacrifice. They juggle earning incomes and nurturing their children while prioritizing their families over personal interests. Their dedication shapes future generations with a positive impact on the world.

To achieve the global target of 70 per cent exclusive breastfeeding by 2030 and enhance child survival and development outcomes, it is crucial to ensure access to maternity protections and encourage breastfeeding support at work. Hence, all walks of life must collaborate to create an enabling environment to support breastfeeding mothers, leading to brighter and healthier futures for the world's children.

risk of obesity and diabetes in later life, and their mothers experience a lower risk of breast and ovarian cancers. However, the promotion of breast milk substitutes remains an obstacle to improving breastfeeding rates worldwide.

A significant issue contributing to low breastfeeding rates is the lack of essential maternity protections for working women. Shockingly, over half a billion working women worldwide lack access to necessary support in national laws. Only 20 per cent of countries mandate employers to provide paid breaks and facilities for breastfeeding or expressing milk.

In an effort to address these challenges, World Breastfeeding Week's theme, "Let's

make breastfeeding in all workplaces. Progress has been made in increasing exclusive breastfeeding rates over the past decade, rising by 10 percentage points to 48 per cent globally.

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By Yin Nwe Ko

MARS, also known as the Red Planet because of the rust-coloured, oxidized iron minerals in its ground and atmosphere, is a cold, dry and uninhabitable place. Temperatures there can drop to around 150 C, there's very little water and the atmosphere, which is 96 per cent carbon dioxide, is too thin to block ultraviolet radiation from space.

These problems alone would make human existence on Mars very challenging. But there's much more to add to the difficulty – such as soil that's highly toxic to humans, and the huge distance from home. Since Mars is on average 225 million kilometres away from Earth, if something went wrong for the people living there, help would take several months to arrive (currently about nine months).

Long ago, Mars may have been more similar to Earth than it is today. So far, six robotic Mars rovers have landed on the planet to search for signs of life. They've found evidence of ancient magma, a river delta, a lake and organic molecules preserved in rocks and dust. What seems certain is that Mars was once much wetter than it is now.

Scientific research also suggests that the early atmosphere of Mars was thick enough to create a greenhouse effect. This combination of warmth and water could have once harboured life on the now inhospitable planet. Nowadays, Mars has much less water

than Earth. The water that's been discovered on the planet is either in the form of ice at the planet's north and south poles or in the form of saltwater, trapped under the ice at the planet's south pole.

Nevertheless, the harsh conditions on Mars haven't stopped Elon Musk, CEO and chief engineer at SpaceX and CEO of Tesla Motors, from making plans to create a self-sustaining Martian city, supported by solar-powered, hydroponic farms. Musk sees the project as "a futuristic Noah's ark" that would involve sending people and animals to permanently live on Mars.

In reality, life on Mars would involve serious challenges. As Musk said in an interview in April 2021 with X Prize Foundation founder Peter Diamandis, "Honestly, a bunch of people probably will die at the beginning." Apart from the low temperatures, lack of water, radiation and toxic soil, there are huge storms. Every 26 months, the planet has a dust storm season, during which fine dust particles block the sunlight for months. Human survival would mean having to live in artificial habitats like ecosystems, where people would be sealed in and protected from the harsh conditions outside.

It seems there's still some way to go before humans can call Mars home. Robotic mining for water and fuel could be the key to making this possible, but that's

unlikely to happen before 2050, according to Professor Serkan Saydam of the University of New South Wales Sydney.

"Everything is all about water," Professor Saydam comments.

has embarked on an extraordinary endeavour: exploring and eventually colonizing Mars. This bold mission represents a giant leap for mankind, as we strive to extend our reach beyond Earth and

civilizations marvelled at the mysterious red object in the night sky, often associating it with gods or otherworldly beings. As our scientific knowledge advanced, so did our understanding of Mars.

decades, with several successful robotic missions paving the way for human exploration. Rovers like Spirit, Opportunity, and Curiosity have provided us with invaluable insights into the planet's

Dreams Of Man About Mars



An artist's illustration showing SpaceX BFR spaceships standing at the Red Planet outpost "Mars Base Alpha." (L); NASA's illustration of Ingenuity Helicopter flying on Mars. (R) **ILLUSTRATION: CFP/SPACEX**

"Innovation in robotics and autonomous systems are clearly important so that we have the water ready and the hydrogen separated and ready for when human beings land."

In recent decades, humanity

unravel the mysteries of the Red Planet. With each passing year, our understanding of Mars grows, and our ambition to set foot on its dusty surface intensifies.

The fascination with Mars can be traced back centuries. Ancient

Through the lens of telescopes and the lens of rovers, we have come to appreciate its unique features, such as massive volcanoes, expansive canyons, and polar ice caps.

The quest to reach Mars has gained momentum in recent

geology, climate, and potential for harbouring life. These missions have shown us that Mars was once a world with flowing water, an essential ingredient for life as we know it.

However, the dream of send-

ing humans to Mars remains a daunting challenge. The journey itself poses immense physical and psychological risks. The distance between Earth and Mars fluctuates between 34 million and 250 million miles, depending on their positions in their respective orbits. The journey could take anywhere from six to nine months, exposing astronauts to prolonged periods of microgravity, radiation, and isolation.

Yet, despite these challenges, the allure of Mars continues to captivate the human imagination. Numerous space agencies, including NASA, SpaceX, and others from around the world, have been working tirelessly to develop the technology and infrastructure necessary for manned missions to Mars. Their efforts range from designing advanced spacecraft capable of interplanetary travel to creating sustainable habitats that could support human life on the Martian surface.

The potential benefits of a successful Mars mission are vast. Beyond scientific discoveries and the expansion of human knowledge, colonizing Mars could serve as a stepping stone for future space exploration. Establishing a presence on Mars would provide invaluable experience and test the limits of human endurance in a hostile environment, ultimately preparing us for even more ambitious journeys deeper into the cosmos.

Moreover, the pursuit of Mars holds promise for addressing some of the challenges we face here on Earth. Advances in technology and resource utilization necessary for

survival on Mars could have practical applications for sustainability, energy production, and environmental conservation back home. Furthermore, the exploration of Mars may unlock new insights into the origins of life and the potential for habitable environments beyond our own planet.

However, it is crucial to approach the journey to Mars with great care and responsibility. As we venture into the unknown, we must prioritize the protection and preservation of the Martian environment. Strict protocols must be in place to prevent contamination by Earthly microbes that could jeopardize the search for indigenous life on Mars. Ethical considerations should guide our actions to ensure that we explore Mars in a manner that is respectful and mindful of the planet's delicate ecosystems.

In sum, the exploration and colonization of Mars represent an audacious undertaking that pushes the boundaries of human achievement. The allure of the Red Planet, with its secrets and potential, fuels our determination to reach beyond our home planet. Through relentless innovation, international collaboration, and a commitment to responsible exploration, humanity may one day witness the remarkable sight of a human setting foot on Mars—a monumental step that will shape our future and redefine our place in the universe.

Reference: Spotlight Magazine June 2022

Drumming may help children with autism manage their emotions

This research is considered groundbreaking as it is the first of its kind to demonstrate how drumming positively affects the brain and can help children with autism and other social and emotional difficulties.



Drumming for an hour a week can help autistic children learn in school. **PHOTO: UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER**

BLONGIE drummer Clem Burke said adding drumming to the UK school curriculum could be a "game changer" for autistic children after a study found as little as 90 minutes a week offered benefits.

A study conducted as part of the Clem Burke Drumming Project found children with the condition who learned to play the drums showed better control of

their emotions and fewer signs of hyperactivity, inattention and repetitive behaviour.

"This landmark study is the first of its kind to show how the brain responds positively to drumming and how it can help children with autism and other social and emotional difficulties," said Burke.

"Given the pressure schools are currently facing trying to deal

with a huge rise in the number of children experiencing social and emotional problems and learning difficulties, adding short drumming sessions to the curriculum could be a game-changer at minimal cost and effort."

US veteran musician Burke played at Glastonbury last month with Blondie, the legendary post-punk band that has been fronted by singer Debbie Harry

since 1974. **Unmet needs**

British schools have more than 166,000 children with autism, an eight per cent increase on 2020, government figures show. Although 70 per cent are in mainstream schools, research has found three-quarters of parents do not feel their child's needs are fully met.

As part of the study, pub-

lished in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal last year, those aged 16-20 with no drumming experience were given two 45-minute lessons each week for two months. They had MRI scans before and after the sessions, while their guardians were asked by the researchers about recent behavioural difficulties.

SOURCE: AFP

SCI/TECH WORLD

Spain worries over 'lifeless land' amid creeping desertification



The ruins of the Church of Mediano, normally submerged in the waters of the Mediano reservoir, are now visible due to the ongoing drought. **PHOTO: AFP**

ONGOING droughts and an over-exploitation of land for both agriculture and industry have stoked fears in Spain over the creeping spread of "sterile soil" which could devastate Europe's kitchen garden.

"There used to be a holm oak forest here.. but now the land is barren," says Gabriel del Barrio, pointing to a hill where only stunted shrubs remain.

Wearing dusty trainers and with a canvas hat on his head, this specialist in desertification has been worriedly monitoring the daily degradation of the landscape in Almeria, in the southern Andalusia region.

"Spain is not going to be a desert with dunes like in the Sahara, that's morphologically impossible," explains del Barrio, a researcher at EEZA, the exper-

imental center for research into arid zones.

But desertification, which is characterized by a severe "degradation of the soil" causing it to lose its productive capacity, "is worrying", he says.

In the dock are the usual suspects: global warming, which is driving rising temperatures leading to water evaporation that causes more wildfires, but also human activity, which is the biggest culprit, notably due to intensive farming.

Despite its very dry climate, Almeria has transformed itself into Europe's vegetable garden through its 40,000 hectares of greenhouses — its "Sea of Plastic" — which produce thousands of tons of tomatoes, peppers, courgettes and cucumbers all year round. — AFP

Cyprus cats to get COVID meds

UNUSED coronavirus medication for humans will be made available to treat cats in Cyprus, where they have been dying in their thousands from feline COVID, officials announced Thursday.

The government gave the green light in line with a recommendation from the agriculture ministry.

A strain of coronavirus—feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), not transmittable to humans—has been wreaking havoc on the prolific cat population of the Mediterranean

island.

"Stocks of preparations that were used to treat human coronavirus cases and are no longer used can be made available," the cabinet said in a statement.

The medication in the form of anti-COVID pills will be supplied through the veterinary services.

Animal activists have warned that Cyprus was turning into an island of dead cats, assessing the disease has likely killed much of its million-strong population.

But the island's veterinary association argues that reports of up to 300,000 cats dying is an exaggeration, putting the number at under 10,000.

Legend has it that a Roman empress, Helena, first brought cats to Cyprus to combat poisonous snakes about 1,700 years ago

But archaeological evidence of cats' domestication on the island dates back to 9,500 years ago at the Neolithic village of Shillourokambos, where the remains of a cat and a human were found deliberately buried together. — AFP



The medication in the form of anti-COVID pills will be supplied through the veterinary services. **PHOTO: AFP**

Loch Ness struggles with Scotland's shifting climate

AROUND Scotland's Loch Ness, famous for hosting a mythical monster in its murky depths, another prolonged dry spell earlier this year has heightened fears of a different kind.

The drier than usual start to 2023, alongside other gradual climate shifts, is having implications for everything from native wildlife and species — including Scotland's famous salmon population — to farming and power production.

"Water is becoming a commodity that's becoming scarce in this part of the world," salmon fisherman Brian Shaw told AFP during a visit early last month, as Scotland reeled from its hottest June on record.

"Everybody's looking to use the water for their own needs."

Figures released in May by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) confirmed what seasoned observers could already see: Loch Ness's fresh waters — Scotland's largest by volume — had dropped to their lowest level in decades.

It had not been this shallow — with a depth of around 109 centimetres (3.5 feet) at a hydroelectric dam halfway along



Environmental experts are warning residents and businesses must adapt to the changing weather patterns. **PHOTO: AFP**

its eastern shore — since the early 1990s.

"It's held at this level for several months now," Gordon Mangus, 84, who grew up near

the legendary lake and now serves as its harbour master, noted. "We are used to rain, but we are not used to having quite such dry spells." — AFP

Half million youths give pope rock star welcome in Lisbon



Thursday's welcoming ceremony marked the pope's first mass event with participants at this year's World Youth Day. **PHOTO: AFP**

HALF a million young people chanted, cheered and shouted on Thursday as they packed a Lisbon park to give Pope Francis a rock star welcome at the official opening ceremony of a global Catholic youth festival.

"I am pleased to see all of you, and also to hear the delightful noise you are making! This makes me share your infectious joy," the Argentine pope told the crowd in his native Spanish.

Pilgrims shrieked and waved as the 86-year-old pontiff, surrounded by bodyguards, slowly drove by on his pope-

mobile through the 26-hectare (64-acres) hillside Eduardo VII park.

"We are the pope's youths!" they chanted as flags of national groups from Canada, Brazil, Latvia, Mexico, Spain, and other countries fluttered around them.

Local authorities put the crowd size at 500,000.

The ceremony featured dance and song performances, including one by Portuguese fado star Mariza, a willowy singer with bleached blonde hair, who got a smile and a thumbs-up from the pontiff at the end

of her set.

Many pilgrims had waited for hours under a blazing sun to get a view of the pope, singing and dancing to pass the time.

"It's very impressive. It's intense! The atmosphere is great!" said Geoffroy Garcia-Benito, a 17-year-old student from Angers in western France as he held a French flag.

It marked the pope's first mass event with participants at this year's World Youth Day, which is actually a six-day international Catholic jamboree. — AFP

Brand founded by Millie Bobby Brown of 'Stranger Things' tops vegan beauty list

THE pandemic has completely upended beauty habits, with consumers gradually moving towards more authentic products and brands.

Natural ingredients, eco-responsible packaging and holistic beauty are now central to consumer priorities, but they're not the only factors driving decisions.

Shoppers are also keen to use vegan products that guarantee animal welfare, and which are now being spearheaded by numerous cosmetics brands, such as Florence By Mills, currently considered the most popular in the world – on social networks at least.

To establish this ranking, Easy Vegan Recipes compared various factors, such as the number of followers, likes, or views, as well as shares, comments, and overall engagement for each brand on Instagram and TikTok.

Each category was scored out of 10 to give an overall result out of 100. As such, it's Florence By Mills, created in 2019 by the *Stranger Things* star Millie Bobby Brown, that tops the list with a score of 70.1. The skincare and makeup brand has a community of over three million followers on Instagram, and boasts one of the highest engagement rates. — AFP



Florence By Mills, created in 2019 by the 'Stranger Things' star Millie Bobby Brown, has a community of over three million followers on Instagram, and boasts one of the highest engagement rates. **PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/FLORENCE BY MILLS**

'Happy mothers': S Korean couple beat same-sex barriers to parenthood

SOUTH Korea has spent billions of dollars on policies to boost its birth rate. But when Kim Kyu-jin and her wife wanted to have a baby, they had to fly to Belgium.

Legally, South Korea considers Kim single, despite her 2019 wedding — ceremony in Seoul, legal registration in New York City — because the country does not recognize same-sex unions. Seoul city authorities declined to register her marriage.

So when the happy couple decided they were ready to have a baby, their domestic options were limited: single people are typically deemed ineligible to adopt and sperm banks are designed for heterosexual married couples with fertility issues.

But Kim Kyu-jin and her wife Kim Sae-yeon — they share the same last name by coincidence — decided to try anyway and, thanks to IVF using donor sperm



When Kim Kyu-jin (R) and her wife Kim Sae-yeon decided they were ready to have a baby, their domestic options were limited. **PHOTO: JUNG YEON-JE/AFP**

in Belgium, Kyu-jin is now eight months pregnant.

The couple plan to have the baby in their home country, at the hospital where Sae-yeon is a doctor and have decided to speak

publicly to raise awareness of same-sex parenthood in South Korea. Many Koreans believe they should "end unhappiness in our generation by not having children", Kyu-jin said. — AFP

Too much red meat increases risk of colon cancer for women, suggests UK study

RESEARCH in the United Kingdom has found more evidence to suggest that cutting out red meat could significantly reduce the risk of cancer, finding that women who eat a red meat-free diet show lower rates of a certain type of colon cancer.

Carried out by an international team of researchers from the University of Leeds and the University of the Basque Country in Spain, the team set out to look at the effect of red meat, poultry, fish or vegetarian diets on the risk of colon and rectal cancer.

The researchers gathered data from 32,147 women aged 35 to 69 years old in England, Wales and Scotland who were taking part in the the United Kingdom Women's Cohort Study and followed for an average of 17 years. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

EU, Norway, Iceland lift post-Fukushima import curbs on Japanese food

THE European Union, Norway and Iceland on Thursday lifted import restrictions they imposed on food products from parts of Japan after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear plant disaster, which occurred in the country's northeast. As a result of the changes, the number of countries and regions maintaining import controls due to radioactivity safety concerns is down to nine, with Switzerland expected to follow suit on 15 August. As many as 55 economies had restrictions in place at one stage.

The removal of requirements for Japan to test for radionuclides and provide safety certifications for some seafood and agricultural products is welcome news for producers in Fukushima, as



File photo shows (from L) Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen attending a press conference after an EU-Japan summit in Brussels on 13 July 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

well as those in the nine other affected prefectures: Miyagi, Yamagata, Ibaraki, Gunma, Niigata, Yamanashi, Nagano, Iwate and Shizuoka.

The EU had been gradually easing its restrictions over recent years, leaving wild mushrooms, some fish species and wild edible plants among the last food items subjected to testing. The 27-nation European bloc announced its decision to end the measures based on scientific grounds on 13 July during an EU-Japan summit in Brussels, Belgium, attended by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

The EU's decision comes after the International Atomic Energy Agency concluded in early July that Japan's plan to release treated radioactive water from the damaged Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea is consistent with international safety standards, and will have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment. But in a statement made on 13 July, the EU called on the Japanese government to continue monitoring domestic products for radioactivity, with a particular focus on "fish, fishery products and seaweed close to the release site of the contaminated water;" and to also make the results public. — Kyodo

NEWS IN BRIEF

Malaysia's manufacturing outlook remains weak

ANALYSTS have foreseen Malaysia's manufacturing sector to stay weak ahead due to the slowing global economy.

Kenanga Research said in a note that the weaker purchasing managers index (PMI) reading in July was in line with its expectation that the manufacturing condition in Malaysia will remain weak in the third quarter. According to the research house, this is expected to weigh on Malaysia's third-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) growth outlook, which it forecast to moderate sharply to 3.4 per cent from an estimated six per cent in the second quarter. — Xinhua

Turkish inflation ticks up in July at 47.83%

TÜRKIYE'S annual inflation climbed in July to 47.83 per cent, up sharply from 38.2 per cent, official data showed on Thursday.

The new figure, in line with expectations, comes a week after the central bank more than doubled its year-end forecast to 58 per cent from 22.3 per cent after years of doubts from independent economists about the official rate. — AFP

Tibet sees record air passenger volume in July

SOUTHWEST China's Tibet Autonomous Region logged a new record in single-month passenger throughput in July since the opening of civil aviation in the region in 1965.

In July, seven civil airports in Tibet handled a total of 770,000 passenger trips, an increase of 31.6 per cent year on year. Meanwhile, the region's civil aviation also achieved a new record by handling 5,936 flights in July, up 2.4 per cent year on year, according to the Tibet branch of the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

Tibet is rich in tourism resources, with its majestic mountains and rivers, magnificent grasslands and forests, and profound ethnic and religious cul-

ture. The region has seen surging passenger arrivals after China

adjusted its COVID response.— Xinhua



Shigatse Peace Airport, Shigatse Heping Airport, or Shigatse Air Base, is a dual-use military and civilian airport serving Shigatse, the second largest city in Tibet Autonomous Region, China. **PHOTO: PEOPLE DAILY**

Weak economy leaves more jobless in Germany in July

GERMANY'S weak economic performance has "left its mark" on the country's labour market as the number of jobless people rose by 62,000 month-on-month to almost 2.62 million in July, the German Federal Employment Agency said Tuesday.

The unemployment rate

in Europe's largest economy climbed to 5.7 per cent in July, according to the agency. "The German labor market is robust, but the economic development in the coming months is associated with high uncertainties," the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs said in a statement.

The pace of employment growth in Germany slowed in recent months and came to a complete halt in June with 45.7 million residents in employment, according to provisional calculations published Tuesday by the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis).

After a technical recession with two consecutive quarters of economic contraction, Germany's gross domestic product stagnated at 0.0 per cent in the second quarter of 2023, according to preliminary figures.

"There are slightly positive trends in private consumption

and investment, but this is not enough, and it is anything but satisfactory," Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck said on Friday, citing structural problems such as a shortage of skilled workers as an important factor. — Xinhua

German industrial orders leap in June

GERMAN industrial orders jumped in June for the second month in a row on the back of major contracts despite the downturn dragging on Europe's top economy, official data released Friday showed.

New orders, closely watched as a predictor of future industrial activity, rose by 7.0 per cent month-on-month after 6.2 per cent in May, federal statistics agency Destatis said.

The indicator again surpassed its level before March, when it fell by 10.9 per cent, the biggest monthly drop since April 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic throttled the economy. The rebound was a rare ray of light for Germany, which slipped into recession



New industrial orders in Germany jumped by seven per cent in June, offering a rare ray of light for the economy. PHOTO: AFP

sion around the start of the year due to surging energy

prices, inflation and interest rate hikes that have

knocked demand. "Another big surprise, this time on

the upside," said LBBW analyst Jens-Oliver Niklasch.

"Was the recession in the end only a bad dream? At least the collapse in March is over. We could look to the second half more at ease if the early indicators weren't so weak."

June's rise was driven by "several big orders", without which the indicator would have fallen by 2.6 per cent, the economy ministry said.

The mechanical engineering industry saw a robust 5.1-per-cent rise in orders, while European aircraft maker Airbus landed the biggest-ever order for civil aircraft with a 500-plane deal from low-cost Indian carrier IndiGo. — AFP

Japan PM tells ministers to get Osaka Expo preparations on track

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Friday instructed relevant ministers to hasten preparations for the World Exposition in Osaka in 2025, as progress in the construction of pavilions for the event is far behind schedule.

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura told reporters after meeting with Kishida that the premier called for "smooth coordination" between participating countries and domestic constructors. — Kyodo

China says it will remove tariffs on Australian barley



China imposed tariffs on Australian barley and other commodities in 2020 at the height of a bitter dispute with the then-conservative government in Canberra. PHOTO: AFP

CHINA said Friday it will remove extra tariffs on Australian barley, in the

latest thawing of ties between the two after years of tensions.

"The Ministry of Commerce has ruled that it is no longer necessary to continue to impose anti-dumping duties and countervailing duties on imports of barley originating in Australia in view of changes in the Chinese barley market," the department said in a statement.

China slapped hefty levies on key Australian exports such as barley, beef and wine in 2020, leveraging its economic muscle at the height of

a bitter dispute with the former conservative government.

It also stopped imports of some of Australia's most significant export commodities, including coal, curbing billions of dollars in trade.

China had been angered by Canberra's legislation against overseas influence operations, its barring Huawei from 5G contracts and its call for an independent investigation into the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP

Amazon profit beats expectations on booming sales

AMAZON on Thursday reported a quarterly profit that trounced market expectations, driven by strong sales helped by its annual Prime discount event.

The tech giant said it made a profit of \$6.7 billion in the recently ended quarter, eclipsing earnings

forecasts. "It was another strong quarter of progress for Amazon," the company's chief executive Andy Jassy said in an earnings release. Amazon shares were up more than seven per cent to \$138.79 in after-market trades that followed the release of the earnings figures.

Net sales revenue at Amazon increased 11 per cent to \$134.4 billion, compared with \$121.2 billion in the same quarter a year earlier, the earnings report showed.

The e-commerce colossus boasted of having its "biggest Prime Day event ever" in July, with

subscribers to the Amazon service worldwide ordering more than 375 million items. "The upturn in Amazon's commerce business is an encouraging sign for the back half of the year," said Insider Intelligence principal analyst Andrew Lipsman. — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO WISDOM VOY.NO. (096N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ISEACO WISDOM VOY.NO. (096N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5-8-2023 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.

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ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD



Vietnamese Vice-President Vo Thi Anh Xuan (R) holds an interview with Kyodo News in Hanoi, Viet Nam, on 3 August 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Viet Nam considers Japan top economic partner: vice-president

VIET NAM considers Japan its top economic partner and appreciates its official development assistance, the biggest among those provided to the Southeast Asian nation by developed countries, Vietnamese Vice-President Vo Thi Anh Xuan said Thursday.

Xuan, in an exclusive interview with Kyodo News, attributed the remarkable development of Viet Nam-Japan ties to the frequent visits of their leaders.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

“Viet Nam has always considered Japan its top strategic partner, and in terms of bilateral economic cooperation, Viet Nam also considers Japan its top economic partner,” she said.

“Even during hard times, the two sides have found ways to conduct regular exchanges, both officially or unofficially,” helping

Viet Nam and Japan strengthen relations, Xuan said, referring to the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Hanoi in May last year and held talks with his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Minh Chinh. This year, Chinh met Kishida in Hiroshima, Japan’s western city, in May on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit. — Kyodo

Lebanon marks 3 years since catastrophic Beirut blast

LEBANON on Friday marks three years since one of history’s biggest non-nuclear explosions rocked Beirut. Yet nobody has been held to account as political and legal pressures impede the investigation.

On 4 August 2020, the massive blast at Beirut’s port destroyed swathes of the Lebanese capital, killing more than 220 people and injuring at least 6,500. Authorities said the disaster was triggered by a fire in a warehouse where a vast stockpile of industrial chemical ammonium nitrate had been haphazardly stored for years.

Three years on, the probe is virtually at a standstill, leaving survivors still yearning for answers. The main activist group representing families of those killed has called for a protest march on Friday after-

noon, converging on the port.

“This is a day of commemoration, mourning and protest against the Lebanese state that politicises our cause and interferes in the judiciary,” said Rima al-Zahed, whose brother was killed in the explosion.

“The judiciary is shackled, justice is out of reach, and the truth is shrouded,” she told AFP. The blast struck amid an economic collapse that the World Bank has dubbed one of the worst in recent history and which is widely blamed on a governing elite accused of corruption and mismanagement.

“Lebanese men and women, I am thinking of you,” French president Emmanuel Macron, who had flown to the Lebanese capital days after the tragedy, said Friday on Twitter, recently rebranded as X.—AFP



A combination of pictures created in August 2023 and August 2020 of Beirut’s Gemmayzeh neighbourhood. **PHOTO: AFP**

Russia says thwarted Ukraine attacks on Black Sea naval base, Crimea



Sailors stand at attention on the deck of a Russian Black Sea Fleet warship during the Navy Day celebrations in Novorossiysk. **PHOTO: AFP**

RUSSIA said Friday it had thwarted Ukrainian sea and air drone attacks on a naval base in the Black Sea and the Crimean Peninsula.

The number of attacks in the sea has increased from both sides since Moscow exited a deal last month that had allowed Ukrainian grain exports via the shipping hub during the conflict between the two countries. “Tonight, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with the use of two unmanned sea boats, attempted an attack on the

Novorossiysk naval base of the Russian Armed Forces,” the defence ministry said on Telegram.

Russian ships destroyed the naval drones, it said. It was the first such attack targeting the port city. The Black Sea port of Novorossiysk hosts the terminus of a pipeline that carries most Kazakh oil exports through Russia.

The fuel artery’s operator Caspian Pipeline Consortium said it was continuing to ship oil to moored tankers at the terminal, Russian state media reported

Friday. But “a temporary ban has been established on the movement of ships in the port”, said the company, as quoted by Interfax news agency.

Russia’s Black Sea Fleet has been targeted since the beginning of Moscow’s military campaign in Ukraine more than a year ago, but attacks have increased in recent weeks. On Tuesday, Russia’s defence ministry said it foiled a Ukrainian drone attack targeting patrol boats in the Black Sea. — AFP

SPORTS

Man jailed over murder of boxer Tyson Fury's cousin



Burton's death prompted boxing champion Tyson Fury (pictured) to post an Instagram message calling on the British government to clamp down harder on knife crime.
PHOTO: AFP

A 22-year-old man will serve at least 28 years in jail after being found guilty of murdering the cousin of boxing world champion Tyson Fury, a UK judge ruled Friday.

Homeless man Liam O'Prey was found guilty at Manchester Crown Court, northwest England, last month of stabbing to death Rico Burton, 31, during a late-night bar brawl in nearby Altrincham.

The three-week trial heard how O'Prey, 22, attacked Burton with a seven-inch blade, almost severing his major carotid artery in his neck and causing massive blood loss.

Judge Alan Conrad handed the father-of-one a life sentence, with a minimum of 28 years before he is up for parole.

"You were a stabbing waiting to happen," he told the defendant.

"You can blame all manner of things but the fact is you and others like you who chose to carry knives that's the problem."

Burton's death prompted boxing champion Fury to post an Instagram message calling on the British government to clamp down harder on knife crime. The court heard how the fight erupted after O'Prey's friend Malachi Hewitt-Brown was punched by Burton's cousin.

O'Prey was also found guilty of stabbing Harvey Reilly, 17 at the time, during the same incident. Reilly's wounds were not fatal. Cannabis, cocaine and ketamine were found in O'Prey's blood stream. — AFP



Myanmar youth players are seen celebrating in an international tourney. **PHOTO: MFF**

Myanmar engage in Group A of AFF U-23 Championship 2023

MYANMAR U-23 Men's Football Team is falling in Group A against host Thailand in ASEAN Football Federation-AFF U-23 Championship, as stated by the Myanmar Football Federation.

Team Myanmar is placed in Group A with ASEAN powerhouse Thailand, Cambodia, and Brunei. Group B will

see Timor, Malaysia, and Indonesia, while ASEAN powerhouse Viet Nam is in Group C as the Philippines and Laos. The championship will be held from 17 to 26 August in Thailand.

Myanmar will take on host Thailand on 17 August, Cambodia on 19 August, and Brunei on 21 August at

Rayong Stadium. The top three teams from each of the three groups and one of the best second-placed teams will qualify for the semi-finals which will be convened on 24 August.

The final and third-placed matches will be played on 26 August 2023. — KZL

Women's World Cup host Australia eyes men's version in 2034



Australia defender Stephanie Catley (R) celebrates with teammates in Melbourne. **PHOTO: AFP**

AUSTRALIA is interested in holding the men's World Cup in 2034, football's governing body in the country said Friday, as it looks to build off the momentum of hosting the women's version.

Football Australia is keen to use the experience of staging the biggest-ever Women's World Cup, which it is sharing with New Zealand, to put on more major tournaments.

Chief executive James Johnson told reporters that they are "looking at" both the expanded Club World Cup and the men's World Cup.

"Our vision is to be local and global. And the way that we can be at our best in Australia is when we're bringing big global football content, the biggest events in the world, back to our local communities," he said.

"We're seeing that right now with the Women's World Cup, so we see the success of the Women's World Cup as being a stepping stone towards bidding for other competitions.

"There's the Club World Cup in 2029 that we're going to take a look at and then there's the men's World Cup in 2034 that we're also going to look at as well."

Asked by AFP to expand on Football Australia's ambitions of hosting the 2034 World Cup, Johnson added: "Australia will no doubt host a men's World Cup one day.

"And what better way to do that than on the back of the best-ever Women's World Cup". — AFP



South Korea tightens security after series of mass stabbings

SOUTH Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol called on Friday for mobilizing all possible forces and police announced they “won’t hesitate” to use their firearms after a series of stabbings shook the typically low-crime country.

The second mass stabbing in two weeks took place Thursday in Bundang, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) south-east of Seoul, when an attacker drove a car into a pedestrian walkway before attacking people at a department store, police said.

At least two people remain in critical condition, authorities said, while copycat threats were posted online hours after the incident.

“The indiscriminate knife-wielding attack at Seohyeon Station is an act of terrorism against innocent citizens,” Yoon said in a statement released by his office. “The government must mobilize all police forces to make sure the public does not feel anxious,” he said, adding that threatening messages had also appeared on social media.

Hours after the president’s remarks, a high school teacher was reportedly attacked with a knife in Daejeon, around 139 kilometres south of Seoul. The two attacks follow an incident on 21 July, when one person was killed and three wounded in another stabbing in the South Korean capital. — AFP

Moscow: Intervention in Niger should be avoided



Thousands of people rallied to back the coup leaders on the anniversary of Niger’s 1960 independence from France. PHOTO: AFP

INTervention in Niger where rebels came to power after having ousted President Mohamed Bazoum should be avoided, a source in the Russian Foreign Ministry told Sputnik on Friday.

Earlier in the week, Bazoum said in an op-ed of an American newspaper that he has been taken hostage by the military takeover in the country and called on the US and international community

to help restore constitutional order.

The situation with military takeover in Niger is the country’s domestic affair, the source added.

Amid escalating tensions and security concerns following a recent coup in Niger, European nations are evacuating their citizens from the precarious situation in the jihadist-threatened Sahel.

Niger’s newly installed junta has threatened an immediate response to

any “aggression or attempted aggression”, as the clock ticks down on a deadline given by its neighbours to reverse last week’s coup.

It also made diplomatic swipes against international condemnation of the putsch, scrapping military pacts with France and pulling its ambassadors from Paris and Washington as well as from Togo and Nigeria. — Agencies

US aims to deploy troops on tankers to deter seizures by Iran



An Iranian military speedboat patrols the waters as a tanker prepares to dock at the oil facility on Khark Island, Iran, on 12 March 2017. PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ ATTA KENARE/AFP

THE United States is preparing to deploy Marines and Navy personnel aboard commercial tankers transiting the Gulf as part of efforts to deter Iran from seizing ships, a US official said Thursday.

The security forces would provide a further layer of protection for the tankers in addition to the warships and planes operating in the strategically vital area, through which around a fifth of the world’s oil passes.

“There is an effort... to employ security details composed of both Marines and Navy sailors on commercial tankers transiting in and near the Strait of Hormuz as an added layer of defence for these vulnerable ships,” the official told

AFP on condition of anonymity.

An invitation is needed to do so because the ships are private vessels, but “we are undergoing preparations to execute should final agreements be in place to do that,” the official said.

Asked if there are concerns that the deployment could lead to confrontation between US and Iranian forces, the official said that was effectively up to Tehran.

“There should be no interaction at all if Iran plays by the rules and follows international law,” the official said, adding: “If they attack and we have forces on board, we will respond -- as we should.” — AFP