

Enormous whale stranded on Chaungtha Beach: A spectacle of nature unfolds

A GIANT whale was discovered on Chaungtha Beach, Chaungtha, Patheingyi District in Ayeyawady Region at 5 pm on 20 August.

Officials of the Department of Fisheries found an enormous whale with a length of 10.7 feet, a girth of five feet, and a fin of about three feet, on the beach in front of the Thiri Hotel in Chaungtha while conducting a field survey for fisheries along the beach.

The massive whale was released safely into the sea with the cooperation of officials and local people under the leadership of the head of the Fisheries Department of Chaungtha.

The Department of Fisheries has issued a prohibition on the capture, purchase, collection, and trade of aquatic animals, including rare and endangered species of whales.

However, these fish species are still being caught in the sea and sold and purchased in some areas. — Kyaw Kyaw (IPRD)/KTZH



Community effort: Locals and officials unite to rescue stranded giant whale on Chaungtha Beach, Patheingyi District in Ayeyawady Region.

Collaborative initiatives aim to double fish and shrimp production

IT is necessary to work together for doubling the production of fish and shrimp farming to replenish the decreasing fish resources ensuring adequate nutritious fish for local consumption, said Dr Aung Gyi, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

He made that remark at his meeting with officials of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation in Insein Township of Yangon on 19 August.

During the meeting, he also underscored that the businessmen should strictly comply with the safety of consumers and the quality of exports, to



Workers at the fishery processing line in action.

ensure not to affect the environment and extend the scope of good aquaculture (GAQP) practices.

Moreover, all should cooperate in

preventing harmful fishing techniques that affect the ecosystem including illegal fishing and destruction of water resources.

He then proceeded to a factory of Eastern Power International Ltd in Insein Township to inspect the storage processes and export of fish and shrimp.

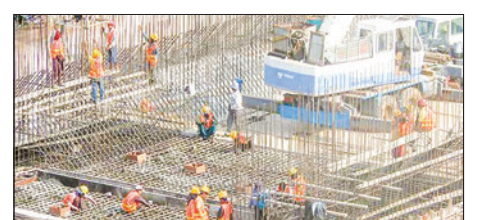
Myanmar produced 1509.16 tonnes of freshwater and saltwater fish and shrimp in April 2022-July 2023 with 322.69 tonnes by fish farms, 39.67 tonnes by collective fish farms, 235.72 tonnes by open fishery and 918.08 tonnes by saltwater fishery. — MNA/KTZH

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Union Information Minister visits solar cell manufacture base, steel factory in Yunnan

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MoEP invites tenders for Shweli-3 Hydropower Project investment

NATIONAL

Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring peace and stability and the full rule of law across the whole Union, and on successfully conducting a free and fair multiparty democratic general election.
2. Continued efforts will be made to promote the State economy and enhance the socioeconomic situation of all people through expediting manufacturing businesses rooted in agriculture and livestock to benefit the entire National people.
3. Priority will be given to achieving peace as the essence of the State and stabilizing the results of the peace process in alignment with the agreements in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) to the extent possible.
4. Work processes will be accelerated to ensure a strong disciplined and authentic multiparty democratic system and build a Union founded upon democratic and federal systems.
5. Work will be undertaken to ensure accuracy and fairness in the general election to prevent eligible voters from losing their rights, and upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multi-party democratic elections will be held, and State duties will be handed over to the elected government.

“The Only Mom” becomes first Myanmar film to be premiered on Netflix

THAI director Chartchai Ketnust, who shot the Myanmar film "The Only Mom," said that the film was allowed to screen for the first time on a movie application, Netflix.

The Brave Empire Film Production presented the film "The Only Mom" in 2019. The film was directed by Thai director Chartchai Ketnust, and Naing Nai, Wutt Hmone Shwe Yi, Daung, and child actor Pyae Pyae, acted in the film.

An official from the Myanmar Motion Picture Organization said that although the organization was not aware of the permission to show "The Only Mom" on Netflix, the production company has the right to sell its films outside.

"The Only Mom" is a film that was shown not only in Myanmar but also in other Asian countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Viet Nam, and other countries.

"The Only Mom" film was described as one of the scariest horror films in Myanmar and received good reviews for the talents of the actors along with the filmmaking, sound, and background music.

The film "The Only Mom" earned K1,000 million at the box office within nine days of its release and was considered the



An advert of the film "The Only Mom".

highest-grossing Myanmar film of all time. Now, it has earned US\$4.8 million worldwide and is a successful Myanmar film.

"The Only Mom" film won six regional awards at the Asian

Academy Creative Awards 2019 held in Singapore and is the first Myanmar film to be shown on a film application, Netflix, which has achieved great international success. — TC/CT

Myanmar Gazette

Transfer and Appointment of Heads of Service Organizations

1. The State Administration Council has transferred and appointed U Nyan Tun, Director-General of the Economic Department of the Office of the State Administration Council, as Director-General of the Staff Office of the State Administration Council from the date he assumes charge of his duties.
2. The State Administration Council has appointed Daw Nyein Nyein Win, Deputy Director-General of the Administration Department of the Union Auditor-General Office, as Director-General of the same department on probation from the date she assumes charge of her duties.

SAC Information Team to hold 22nd Press Conference

THE Information Team of the State Administration Council will hold a press conference at the assembly hall of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw at 2 pm on 22 August. — MNA

COVID-19 report, 21 August 2023

NEW TESTS	3,909
NEW CASES	2
CASUALTIES	0

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

NATIONAL

DPM Union Defence Minister returns to Yangon after successful Moscow engagements

A delegation led by member of the State Administration Council (SAC) Deputy Prime Minister Union Minister for Defence Admiral Tin Aung San returned to Yangon by air yesterday. The delegation returned after participating in the International Military-Technical Forum (ARMY-2023) and the 11th International Security Conference (XI Moscow Conference on International Security) in Moscow, the Russian Federation.

During their stay in Moscow, Admiral Tin Aung San, along with Russian Defence Minister Army General Sergey Shoigu, unveiled a memorial statue named "Allies of Myanmar Warriors". This statue commemorates Myanmar's cooperation during World War II and signifies the strong historical and cultural ties between the two nations' armies.

The Deputy Prime Minister's delegation also engaged in discussions with Russian of-



Deputy Prime Minister Union Defence Minister Admiral Tin Aung San (C) is seen on his arrival from the Russian Federation at Yangon International Airport yesterday.

icials, including Deputy Minister of Defence Colonel General Alexander Fomin. These discussions focused on enhancing cooperation in various areas,

bolstering military technology collaboration, and facilitating academic exchanges.

The visit included participation in the opening cer-

emonies of ARMY-2023 and the 11th International Security Conference. During the latter event, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State

Administration Council, emphasized ASEAN unity for peace in the Asia-Pacific region and discussed Myanmar's political development through his video message.

The delegation also visited Patriot Park, where they explored military equipment displays and met with company officials. They paid homage to the Shwezigon Pagoda replica and observed exhibits showcasing captured foreign military equipment.

The visit concluded with a gesture of respect to the Myanmar Monastery in Moscow, where the delegation paid their respects to the abbot Sayadaw and engaged in traditional offerings.

This diplomatic mission underscores the ongoing strategic partnership between Myanmar and Russia, reinforcing historical bonds and exploring avenues for future collaboration. — MNA/TS



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn (second from right) is seen being welcomed back at Yangon International Airport yesterday.

MoI UM returned from 7th China-South Asia Exhibition, 27th China (Kunming) Export/Import Expo

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn and party, who visited the People's Republic of China at the invitation of the Provincial Governor of Yunnan

Province of the People's Republic of China and attended the 7th China-South Asia Exhibition, the 27th China (Kunming) Export/Import Expo and the 2023 Greater Mekong

Subregional Economic Corridor Forum events, returned to Yangon from Kunming, China, by air yesterday afternoon. — MNA/KZW

Census to be taken for 15 days in October in selected 20 townships

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Immigration and Population, the 15-day trial census will be taken at the 100 collection plots in 20 townships in regions and states starting from 1 October.

The data that has been collected up to now is being entered into the e-ID Biographic Registration System and the House-

hold Registration Software Programme.

Up to 10 August 2023, the data of over 51 million people and over 13 million households has been entered into the software. Moreover, the biometric data of more than 700,000 people have been collected up to 10 August 2023. — TWA/MKKS



The photo shows the Interim Census surveyed in Kyunsu township, Myeik district in Taninthayi Region in 2019.

NATIONAL

Union Information Minister visits solar cell manufacture base, steel factory in Yunnan



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn views round the steel factory of Yunnan Quijing Chenggang Iron and Steel (Group) Co Ltd in China on 20 August 2023.

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn paid a visit to the high-quality solar cell manufacture base of Yunnan Runyang Century Photovoltaic Technology Company in Nanhai industrial zone of Quijing Jingkai

District of Yunnan on 20 August. The project was started in February 2023 covering a total area of 210,000 square metres of construction area. It will include 36 factories that will generate 550 Mega watt respectively. Cur-

rently, the construction of three factories was completed and the transmission of the first phase was begun on 1 July.

The Union minister headed to the steel factory of Yunnan Quijing Chenggang Iron and

Steel (Group) Co Ltd. The factory was established in 2004. The Chenggang Group currently operates 16 business units employing over 10,000 employees. The group has been leading businesses out of 100 top businesses in Yunnan for 10 successive years. The products of Chenggang are being used in large projects like Baihetam hydropower station, the world's second-largest hydropower station, Changghni international airport, Shanghai-Kunming high-speed railway, Xikum.

The Union minister yesterday received Mr Yi Homs, CEO of China International Cooperation Association of SMES Executive Director of Global Business and discussed the future of e-commerce in digital businesses of China-Southeast Asia and South Asia.

The Mekong-Lancang countries, Japan, England, India and Korea discuss the information received and exchanged

regarding their businesses, culture, transportation and trading at the Web Portal.

The Union minister coordinated the discussion and raised questions that he wanted to know.

On arrival at the RUIHEJC Company established in 1994, the Union minister heard the brief of services of the company regarding the providence of information and technology for transport systems based on on-line logistics channels.

Moreover, it runs a two-way transport system including cross-border transport, expresses way, rail and sea routes.

The company is situated in the Yunnan Province, a strategic position of South Asia and Southeast Asia, and offers services in China and implements a "one-junction, two-ocean" strategy with new land and sea routes with access to the Indian Ocean via Myanmar. — MNA/KTZH

Illegal industrial materials, foodstuffs, consumer goods and vehicles confiscated

THE Customs on-duty team captured eight kinds of goods worth K10,394,560, including 2,740 parts of Gis insulating sheath, one part of Gis terminal for BG and one brand new goods nameplates that exceeded the 61 days of VPA, from luggage at the Yangon International Airport (Import Desk), a Toyota Hilux car (approximate value of K17 million), parked at the junction of Thit-saintpin at the Milepost 98/4 on Yangon- Myawady Pyidaungsu Highway near the Mayanchaung permanent checkpoint, carrying

5,400 bags of Wai Wai instant rice vermicelli without official documents and a Toyota Hilux car (estimated value of K17 million), parked at the Milepost 99/4 on Yangon-Myawady Pyidaungsu Highway, carrying ownerless 460 litres of Gaysorn vegetable cooking oil without official documents on 18 August and eight kinds of goods worth K14.245 million, including 19 professional nail lamps and 140 kilogrammes of Durian snacks, that were piled up at the detour between Naungsai village and Namong

village at the Yepu permanent checkpoint on 19 August. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

Similarly, the on-duty teams conducted inspections on 19 August and impounded a Hino Ranger car and a Mitsubishi Canter vehicle (approximately worth K58 million) carrying eight kinds of goods worth K21.8 million, including 2,400 bags of Wai Wai instant rice vermicelli without official documents, on Kyarkalay-Zathapyin-Mawlamyine road in Hpa-an township,

four kinds of goods worth about K4.5 million, including 76 cartons of Lactasoy soy milk without official documents from a warehouse at the Asia street in Myawady and 24 jerrycans of palm oil (Two-Shrimp brand) worth K1,209,600 without official documents from a warehouse near Padamyar filling station in Myawady on 19 August. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

On the same day, a combined team under the Shan State Illegal Trade Eradication

Trade Task Force confiscated a Mitsubishi Canter vehicle (approximately worth K45 million) carrying 12,000 packages of Bamboo tissue worth K3.6 million without official documents near Kengphaung village on the outskirts of Kengtung. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

Therefore, 28 arrests (estimated value of K196,021,560) were made on 18 and 19 August, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

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The concrete work for the outlet channel in the Shweli-3 Hydropower Project in Progress.

MoEP invites tenders for Shweli-3 Hydropower Project investment

THE Ministry of Electric Power's Department of Hydro-power Implementation has announced the initiation of tenders for interested investors in the Shweli-3 Hydropower Project situated on the Shweli River near Mongmit in Shan State (North).

Investors are welcome to participate in the tender for the

Shweli-3 Hydropower Project, encompassing tasks such as ongoing implementation, power generation, maintenance, and eventual re-transfer, under the private investment IPP/BOT framework.

Tender documents can be acquired at the Department of Hydropower Implementation (Office No 27) in Nay Pyi Taw

from 21 August to 11 September during working hours (10 am to 3 pm) on weekdays except for public holidays, at a cost of K500,000.

Each company is allowed to assign only one representative for obtaining the tender form, and the deadline for tender submissions is set till 1 pm on 24 September. — TWA/CT

Surge in onion prices detected at Bayintnaung market

THE price of onion peaked at K3,100 per viss on 21 August at Yangon's Bayintnaung wholesale market despite an influx of 150,000 visses of onions, Ko Swe, a seller at Nyaungpinlay market, who daily comes to buy the onions at Bayintnaung market, told the Global New Light of Myanmar.

The prices range between K2,500 and K3,150 per viss of onions depending on sizes and producing areas on 21 August 2023, which increased from

K2,200 per viss on 24 July.

The prices stood at K2,150-2,700 per viss in the corresponding period last year. Yet, the price jumped to K3,100 per viss on 23 August 2022.

Both the Yangon market and depots in onion-producing areas see the price rise.

The traders are preparing to send the onions to the Myawady border as road repair is being undertaken. Some traders are buying them for the Chinese market. — TWA/EM



Vendors are seen displaying onions at the Pakokku market on 21 August 2023.

Soaring sesame seed prices propel increase in oil prices

THE sesame seed price is heading for one-month gains, driving the sesame oil price up in the domestic market.

Myanmar's sesame seeds are highly demanded by Chinese buyers and some traders who keep the stocks in hand at present. The prices stood at K280,000-K330,000 per 45-viss bag of black sesame (Samone variety), K330,000-368,000 per bag of white sesame and K270,000-K275,000 per bag of brown sesame on 21 July. The price skyrocketed to K320,000-400,000 for black sesame, K420,000-K440,000 for white sesame and K320,000-K350,000 for brown sesame on 21 August.

With the sesame seed price rising, the organic sesame oil price moved up to over K16,000 per viss.

Black sesame oil has a strong smell and bitter flavour. It fetches a good price on account of the highest oil yield.

There are 7.37 million acres of oil seed in the country, with



Some growers are seen making bunches of harvested sesame crops.

an estimated yield rate of 96.22 million baskets. Sesame plantations account for 50 per cent while peanut acreage constitutes 30 per cent. Myanmar shipped over 180,000 tonnes of sesame

worth US\$236.33 million to foreign markets in the 2020-2021 financial year.

Oil production is estimated at 114 visses per acre of peanuts, 56 visses per acre of sesame, 67

visses per acre of sunflower and 140 visses per acre of hybrid sunflower respectively.

There are 2.8 million acres of peanut plantation (with the production of 319.2 million visses of

peanut oil), 3.7 million acres of sesame (207.2 million visses of sesame oil) and 600,000 acres of sunflower (40.2 million visses of sunflower oil) in the country, totalling 7.6 million acres (566.5 visses of oil).

Sesame is primarily grown in Sagaing, Magway and Mandalay regions. There were 433,324 acres of monsoon sesame, 541,869 acres of winter sesame and 35,819 acres of summer sesame in the 2022-2023 FY in the Sagaing Region.

The sesame cultivation cost approximately K300,000 per acre in 2022, reaping a profit of K400,000. The cultivation cost doubled and the income also increased to K1 million per acre in 2023.

Rainfall deficits in June 2023 affected sesame crops in some areas. Yet, the growers receive a handsome profit from high prices, Ko Win Oo, a trader from Mahlaing Township, told the Global New Light of Myanmar. — TWA/EM

LOCAL BUSINESS

Price of premium Shwebo Pawsan rice soars to K145,000 per sack in domestic market

THE price of high-grade Pawsan rice from the Shwebo area rocketed to K145,000 per sack on 21 August 2023, according to Myanmar Rice Wholesale Centre (Wadan).

The Central Bank of Myanmar's issuance of the new K20,000 note on 23 July shook up the forex market. Consequently, rice is among those inflated commodities.

Before the CBM's notification regarding the issuance of the K20,000 note, the Shwebo Pawsan rice fetched only K112,000 per sack on 23 July 2023. Then, the rice price rallied to K145,000 per sack on 21 August, showing a sharp rise of K33,000 per sack in the past one month.

Similarly, the prices of other rice varieties are on an upward trend. The prices of old Pawsan rice hit K110,000-122,000 per bag depending on producing areas (Myaungmya, Patheingyi, Pyawbwe and other regions), while rice prices stood at K98,000 per bag of Kunni, K70,000 for Ngasein, K68,000-69,000 for Aemahta, K100,000 for Pawkywe, K70,000 for rice grown under intercropping system and K110,000 for new Pawsan rice variety, as per the price data released by Myanmar Rice Wholesale Centre (Wadan).

Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) notified on 7 August that it would sell off 170,000 rice sacks in August, comprising 50,000 rice sacks of Aemahta variety, 20,000



Efficient loading: Rice bags being loaded onto the lorry for domestic distribution.

sacks of Pawsan rice and 100,000 sacks of short matured rice Aemahta variety (90 days). The federation will increase the sales quota when necessary.

The MRF launched a subsidy scheme for Pawsan and Aemahta rice varieties on 7 August at Wadan and Bayintnaung Commodity Wholesale Centres.

Additionally, the MRF is preparing to designate shops in some townships such as Hlaingthaya, Shwepyitha, Insein, South Dagon, North Dagon, South Okkalapa, North Okkalapa, Dala, Twantay, Hmawby and Mingaladon and operate mobile market trucks, as per the public suggestions. The MRF will keep the consumers apprised of that scheme.

The MRF will systematically

distribute 50 sacks of Aemahta rice per retail shop in Yangon Region every two weeks. The retail shops can register with the MRF for that and door-to-door service will be included after making payment with KPay.

The rice prices are set at K110,000-120,000 per sack of Pawsan from the Shwebo area, K94,000-97,000 for Pawsan from Ayeyawady, K65,000 for Aemahta (10 per cent broken) and K60,000 for Aemahta (25 per cent broken) respectively.

The consumers are entitled to buy a rice sack of Pawsan rice and a rice sack of Aemahta rice per month, presenting the citizenship scrutiny card.

Moreover, the staff from the government departments, fac-

tories and companies can buy the rice with an official letter by sending a purchase letter to admin@mrf.com.mm.

For further detail, consumers can contact the MRF through phones 09 400067260, 09 400067270 and Wadan Depot via phones 01 8221448, 01 8220131, 01 8210287 and the Bayintnaung depot via number 09 769029428.

Myanmar has achieved self-sufficiency in rice and only the excess rice is exported systematically. At present, rice crops are being harvested in the northern Bago Region and central Myanmar Region. With the electricity supply improving, rice mills could run operations fully. Therefore, the production meets the consumption for sure. Nev-

ertheless, those unscrupulous are spreading malicious rumours and fake news to trigger consumers' concerns and spark panic buying. The federation hereby requested on 28 July the consumers to stop panic buying and buy the rice when one needs.

Myanmar Rice Federation will endeavour to stabilize the rice price and steer the market for the right price and the right product. The MRF will join hands with the rice millers, rice traders and companies. The federation called on them to balance the short-term and long-term benefits in trading, as per the MRF's notification dated 24 April.

Individuals and family entities can contact the rice wholesale centres for fair price and right product. For any difficulties, please contact the office of the MRF, as per the statement.

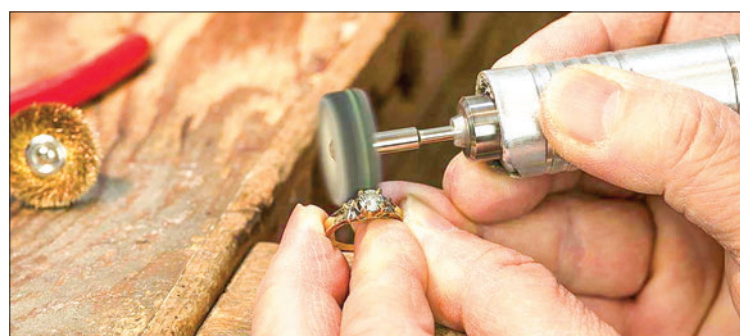
Myanmar Rice Federation notified on 24 April that tips-off about those manipulators who spread malicious rumours on digital platforms in order to spark concerns of the consumers and raise the rice prices can be done for the sake of long-term benefit of the rice industry. The federation will forward the reports of those manipulators to the relevant authorities if they refuse to be persuaded. The federation encouraged all the stakeholders in the supply chain to cooperate with them as well. — NN/EM

YGEA set to provide 28th gold training course for free in September

YANGON Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) will conduct gold training course (28th batch) free of charge at its office at No 42/50 on Shwebontha Street, Pabedan Township in the coming September (2-11 September).

Additionally, the YGEA will also offer an awareness course (9th Batch) on anti-money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT).

The respective experts will share education and knowledge about gold mining, gold refining,



A demonstration session of the previous gold training course.

gold trading, opening gold shops and refineries, gold mortgage, gold rate calculation, gold/silver

coins and jewellery and opening gold shops.

Those enthusiasts can take

out enrollment forms free of charge at the office of the association. As the number of trainees is limited, they should contact YGEA's contact numbers 09 450049282 and 09 251992727 for further details.

The precious metal dealers' licences can be sought only with the completion certificate of the AML/CFT course under Section 3 (G) in Chapter II of the directive 2/2022 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs' Central Body on Anti-Money Laundering.

The YGEA handed over 21 applications for precious metal dealers' licences to the registration board in Pabedan, Lanmadaw and Latha townships on 1 April. U Myo Myint, chair of the YGEA, handed over 21 applications for precious metal dealers' licences to the authorities concerned from the General Administration Department and the respective registration boards of Lanmadaw (1 application), Latha (1 application), Pabedan (19 applications). — NN/EM

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump runaway favourite in Iowa poll of likely Republican caucusgoers

FORMER US President Donald Trump leads comfortably in a poll of likely Iowa Republican caucusgoers, whose results were released on Monday.

A new Des Moines Register/NBC News/Mediacom Iowa Poll shows that 42 per cent of likely Iowa Republican caucusgoers would support Trump as president in 2024, compared with 19 per cent for his closest challenger, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

In third place is Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina with nine per cent. Former US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley and Trump's Vice-President Mike Pence both are at six per cent. Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie is at five per cent, followed by entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy with four per cent.

Seven other candidates are polling at two per cent or lower.

The first-in-the-nation caucuses will take place in Iowa on 15 January 2024. — Xinhua

ASEAN, China to strengthen electronic trading to reduce digital gap in Southeast Asia

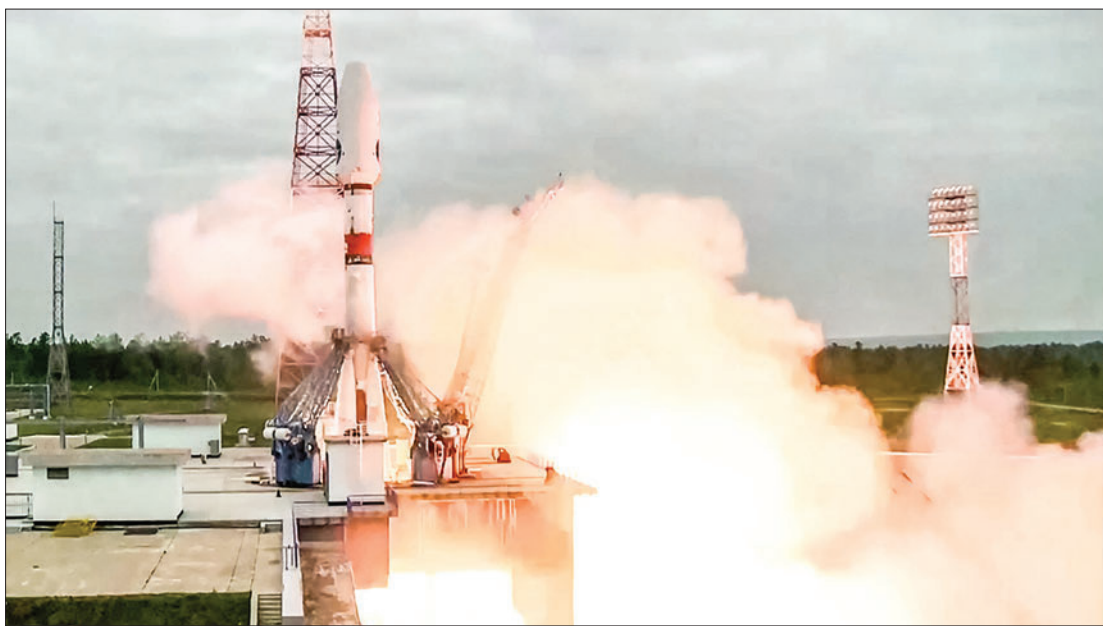
ASEAN has agreed to boost its electronic trading cooperation with China in an effort to reduce the digital economy gap in the Southeast Asia region, an Indonesian minister said Monday.

The initiative was endorsed during a consultative meeting between ministers of economy from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries with the Ministry of Commerce of China on Monday in Semarang, Indonesia's Central Java province.

The meeting was part of the 55th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting held on 17-22 August.

China has become the fourth-largest source of foreign investment among ASEAN partners, said Indonesia's Trade Minister Zulkifli Hasan, highlighting significant economic impacts ASEAN can gain through cooperation with China.

He said the meeting also elaborated on the reports of the implementation of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area. — Xinhua



(FILES) In this grab from a handout footage taken and released by the Russian Space Agency Roscosmos on 11 August 2023, a Soyuz 2.1b rocket with the Luna-25 lander blasts off from the launch pad at the Vostochny cosmodrome, some 180 kilometres north of Blagoveschensk, in the Amur region. **PHOTO: HANDOUT / RUSSIAN SPACE AGENCY ROSCOSMOS / AFP**

Russia's space agency head vows to continue Moon race

THE chief of the Russian space agency Roscosmos on Monday advocated for Russia to stay in the lunar race, a day after announcing its mission had crashed.

"In no case should the lunar programme be interrupted, that would be the worst decision," Yuri Borisov said in an interview on television.

The Luna-25 mission was meant to mark Moscow's return to independent Moon exploration in the face of financial troubles and corruption scandals and growing isolation from the

West.

But on Sunday, Roscosmos announced the probe had crashed during pre-landing manoeuvres.

"Interrupting the lunar programme for almost 50 years is the main reason for the failure" of Luna-25, Borisov said.

"The invaluable experience that our predecessors accumulated in the 1960s and 1970s was practically lost" during the interruption of the programme, he added.

Borisov explained the crash was due to an issue with the

spacecraft's correction engine.

The engine supposed to put the spacecraft into pre-landing orbit "worked for 127 instead of the planned 84 seconds. This was the main cause of the probe's crash," Borisov explained.

A special commission has begun looking into the exact causes of the incident, Borisov also said.

Moscow last landed a probe — Luna-24 — on the Moon in 1976, before shifting away from lunar exploration in favour of missions to Venus and building the Mir space station. — AFP

Japan panel OKs Alzheimer's drug, paves way for formal approval

A Japanese health ministry panel on Monday gave the green light for the manufacture and sales of an Alzheimer's drug developed by Japanese pharmaceutical company Eisai Co and US firm Biogen Inc, paving the way for its formal approval.

Lecanemab, the drug's generic name, is poised to be the first in Japan to both treat the underlying cause of Alzheimer's disease and slow its symptom progression.

Alzheimer's is the most prevalent form of dementia, and it is projected that by 2025, around seven million people in



Photo shows image of Alzheimer's drug lecanemab. (Image courtesy of Eisai Co.) **PHOTO: KYODO**

Japan will be affected, representing approximately one in five individuals aged 65 and above.

The drug is a special type of antibody that targets a protein called amyloid beta, which is considered the cause of the disease.

The plaque-like protein accumulates inside the brain and destroys nerve cells.

The new drug is for early-stage treatment of Alzheimer's and for people with mild cognitive impairment.

The US Food and Drug Administration formally approved

the drug, branded Leqembi, on 6 July.

The treatment is likely to be expensive when made available in Japan, given Eisai has set its price in the United States at \$26,500 per year.

Eisai said clinical trials demonstrated the new drug curbed the progression of symptoms, such as worsening memory and impaired judgment, by 27 per cent compared with a placebo.

However, some patients given the drug experienced side effects like brain edema and bleeding, it said. — Kyodo

OPINION

Initiate preparations for rural water supply

AS Myanmar approaches the midpoint of its five-month monsoon season in August, there is a growing concern about the diminishing natural water source as the monsoon's departure is expected in approximately two months. The imminent risk of losing the valuable rainwater abundance brought by the monsoon season emphasizes the need for prudent water management to meet daily needs.

With the monsoon season waning, meticulous planning becomes imperative for authorities and departments, particularly in Myanmar's upper regions, to ensure the provision of safe water. The persistently water-scarce regions, especially during the dry summer months, necessitate a strategic approach from relevant departments to secure a consistent supply of both drinking water and water for irrigation during this critical period.

The commitment of the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development's Department of Rural Development to provide access to safe water for all rural residents by 2030 remains resolute. To achieve this ambitious goal, water supply projects have been systematically implemented over fiscal years. Funding has

been sourced from allocated budgets, maintenance funds, state allocations, contributions from UNICEF, and regional and state government funds.

In the previous fiscal year 2022-23, a notable accomplishment was the successful completion of 1,202 water supply projects. While the original budget supported 869 projects, additional support from the state and collaborative efforts with UNICEF led to funding for 56 and 80 projects, respectively. Furthermore, maintenance was carried out on 197 existing projects. These initiatives significantly eased water challenges faced by residents in arid regions.

Looking ahead, the ministry's projections outline the execution of 669 projects in the upcoming 2023-24 fiscal year, spanning villages in regions, states, self-administered division, and zones. Currently, 19 projects have already been successfully concluded, with 11 projects actively in progress. Additionally, the maintenance of 11 water supply facilities catering to rural communities is underway in order to reduce the shortage of water in all

seasons.

The undeniable importance of water for human survival underscores the responsibility of governments to ensure equitable water access for both urban and rural populations. This approach not only enhances their quality of life standard but also prevents water-related ailments arising from dehydration. A Myanmar saying which goes: "prevention is better than cure" holds true here — governments and individuals must prioritize the provision and efficient utilization of water resources without loss and waste, fostering the overall well-being of society and nurturing a promising future for generations to come.

IT is said that an act of human beings' worship probably arose from their fears many moons ago. People always sound frightened of natural disasters, wild beasts, poor health, catastrophes, and foes. Thus, it is certain that most of them will count on anything else or anyone else as much as they possibly could in order to absolutely lead a fear-free life. First of all, perhaps they would believe in the gods of fire, river, tree or whatever, who were pictured just in their mind's eye. Those gods included 'deva' in Pali, which means 'spirit' in English as well as 'Nat' in Myanmar, as a vital part. Almost all Myanmar people have handed down the ancestor worship of Nats from generation to generation for ages. Whatever is said about Nats, I have always been a firm believer in Nat worship to some extent too. I like to consider them as if they were my very grandparents, who were still alive even though they died allegedly an unnatural death for thousands of years. How the Myanmar people trust in Nats is found in shrines to Nats, 'Natkyauing' or 'Natsin' in Myanmar, little houses frequently built before or in houses, under big trees, and at the front or back of villages.



The earliest practice of worshipping Nats is generally supposed to have stemmed from the Myanmar people's devotion to Eidwin Min Mahagiri. The name Eidwin Min Mahagiri says a guardian of houses and lord of a great mountain. Shwephyin brothers are as well-known as Mahagiri Nat's Brother and Sister. Legend has it that the Muslim traders were shipwrecked off Thaton and the two brothers, Byatwi and Byatta, among those traders came near ashore the city riding a plank. Afterwards,

The Greatest Festival in Myanmar

By Hu Wo (Cuckoo's Song)



The Taungpyone Festival is annually held in Taungpyone Village, Matara Township, Mandalay Province in Wagaung Month in the Myanmar calendar, usually corresponding with August in the English calendar, for eight days or so in honour of Taungpyone Spirit Brothers. PHOTO: VIA TOURISM.GOV.MM

the younger brother Byatta arrived at Bagan where he served under King Anawrahta as a flower carrier. He rode a steed daily to get to Mt Popa over 30 miles south of Bagan, pluck and offer flowers to the king when returned. Over there, he and a girl known as Me Wunna, a so-called floral ogress, fell in love with each other and she gave birth to twin sons, named Shwephyin Gyi and Shwepyin Lay after that their placentas were put to wash in vessels. When they both grew up, they also served under Anawrahta the King and made an effort to bring the Buddha's eyetooth residing in Gandhala (now China). On the return journey to the palace, the king's royal elephant stopped and knelt at a certain place in Taungpyone village. Over there, he had a pagoda built and it was named Sutaungpyae Phaya, meaning a pagoda of wishes. After the pagoda was done, the king went there to take a close look at that pagoda and then found a small empty space of

time (Dudiyanae-Cadogan) on the 9th, Night Meeting of the Royal Council (Nyanyilagan) on the 10th, the Ritual Shower (Choeyaedawthone) on the 11th, Enthronement Ceremonies (Nantatpweymyar) on the 12th, Hare Hunting (Yondho) on the 13th, Felling a Htein Tree (Htein khote) on the 14th, and Gilding of the Statues (Shwebonesin) on the full-moon day. Festivalgoers get the festival started by paying respect and the invocation to the Nats on Day 1 and Day 2, where spirit mediums or 'Natkadaw' take the role of announcers who sing specially composed songs for the Nats or 'Natchin', which describe the lives of Nats very often. The Burmese traditional orchestra or 'Nat-hsaing' plays the Nat music seemingly in harmony with medium dances. On Day 3, there are Nat guardians, Nat chieftains, Baung-saung-amat (one minister with a long hat in the monarchy sys-

tem), Tho-saung-miphaya (one queen with some kind of hat in the monarchy system) and so on that have to get together in the night meeting of the royal council without fail. In the ritual shower of Day 4, a ceremony of washing the idols of twin Nats, they are carried on the royal palanquin or 'Wartaw' by men of guardian militia, the procession also being led by the Nat chieftain, the dignitaries, gong players to play music and lines of guards dressed up as the army of Lord Anawrahta. On that day, the festival ground is said to be most crowded with Nat Pwe-goers by the board of trustees. The enthronement ceremonies of Day 5 are occupied by chief mediums and Nat believers in particular. Any chief medium across the country had better go and participate in these ceremonies at least every three years or something. Otherwise, they are believed to be in fewer or no supernatural powers on Nats.

Day-6 hunting of hares is a rite in memory of the living Shwephyin brothers who would go hare-hunting during their lifetime. Day-7 felling the Htein tree, a large hardwood tree bearing winged fruit pods, denotes that both Shwephyin brothers and residents disapproved of a Guardian of the Htein who beat Anawrahta as a bogus buffalo to a sudden death once, and therefore, the brothers cut it down a vendetta against him, as the legend says. Gilding Day-8 is considered the last festive day on which, like the first festival days, the entire festival ground will be crawling with not only Nat devotees but also fun seekers, as well as teeming with stalls of every kind that sell food, fruit, flowers, toys, clothing, tools, crafts or trinkets, restaurants, and side-shows practically without any space. It is widely known that these Nat palaces and domains are owned by a palace-guard-

ian-ancestry family only. That means there has been a saying in the Myanmar Nat field, 'Spirit Thagyar in the upper, Twin Spirits in the lower' (Ahtetma-both-agar, Outpyaema-minnappar). How great is the Taungpyone Festival!

There is a masterpiece of Taungpyone Nats, written to the letter by a Myanmar female writer. That was the novel, 'Smile As They Bow' (Pyoney-waele-gadokhandawmupa Yey-waele-gadokhandawmupa) by Nu Nu Yi Innwa, who has been around as a novelist throughout the country. This world-famous novel has been described on the curriculum in the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS), London University, England since 2014. Moreover, the novelist was awarded the Man Asian Literary Prize for her novel, one of the five shortlists, in 2007. The book was published in English under that name, in Hyperion Books, USA, in September 2008. The subject matter of this novel is based upon the eight Taungpyone festival Days into one chapter each, portraying the people's hereditary obligations or propitiation of Nats, various lives of mediums, musicians or 'Hsaing-saya', beggars and histories of Taungpyone deities, new thoughts and feelings of the author. If you read that novel, you will feel for certain as though you had got to the Taungpyone Festival in the flesh.

Sad to say the facts and figures of Myanmar Nats are still transcendental, that is, their retold myths are occasionally analogous with each other to such an extent. Similarly, the pantheon of Nats comes in a great many varieties. 'Thagyamin' is mostly accepted to be the king of spirits, and 'Thurathati' to be their queen, both of whom come from religious spirits. According to spirit mediums, there are 37 Inside Nats, 37 Outside Nats, and 37 Additional Nats; 111 in total are divided into such three groups, where the usages 'inside' and 'outside' are categorized by Nat statues in and out of Shwesigon Pagoda Wall built in Bagan. Among the persons who had undertaken Nat-list research, Myawady Min Gyi U Sa was well and truly acknowledged by scholars. Wungyi Padaethayaza had also written 37 Nat songs or 'Nat-

than-ae'. U Phoe Kyar, a Minister of National Education in the colonial era, wrote out a thesis on Myanmar Nats in the name of '37 Min' (37 Spirits) too, in which you will be able to know all the Myanmar Nats in depth. Speaking as a Nat-lover, I hope that the next historical research projects need to be conducted on Myanmar Nats by academics so that the narration of the Nats may become much more valid and more reliable than before little by little.

Today is the Scientific Age, hence most people, needless to say, find it easy to accept that seeing is believing. As for me, I believe fifty-fifty in Nats not because I have already got the cult of spirits due to my parental belief in Myanmar deities but because I was not yet born in the time that they might have been existing in the human world. It was the first largest worship of Nats that the reverence for Mahagiri Spirit Couple was thrown Nat Pwes by poor and rich at the hands of King Thaylekyauing in the 4th century AD. And again, the Shwepyin Brothers had subsequently been venerated as patron saints at the hands of King Anawrahta in the 11th century AD. At the hands of King Bayintnaung, however, an extreme Nat worship was abandoned at the King's behest, in that cattle got overkilled for Nat food or 'Nat-sadaw', as far as I can remember. Nevertheless, the Nat worship was, to my knowledge, reallocated in King Alaungphaya's and Colonial times. It is not strange that most youth of today do not believe in 'Nat-devas' at all. A hard core of Nat believers tends to worship spirits to have good luck in their socio-economic, educational, martial, and health-related issues. If Nats existed in this world, they would be the likes of our grandfathers and grandmothers by now. However, unbelievers see those Nats, I have unquestioning faith in them.

Resources:

1. *Instant English (Bawathit U Aung Kyaw)*
2. *Colourful Myanmar (Khin Myo Chit)*
3. *The Nats of Myanmar (Sally Bamford)*
4. *Google Search*

TECH/ENVIRON WORLD

Jakarta orders civil servants work from home to improve air quality

THOUSANDS of public employees in Indonesia's capital, or half of its civil servants, were told to work from home starting Monday in a two-month trial aimed at improving the city's air quality, a government notice said.

Jakarta and its surrounding cities form a megalopolis of about 30 million people, and its airborne concentration of the tiny particles known as PM 2.5 recently surpassed other heavily polluted cities such as Riyadh, Doha and Lahore.

Activists blame the high levels of toxic smog on clusters of factories and coal-fired power



An aerial view taken on 20 August 2023 shows buildings and houses under hazy skies in Jakarta. Jakarta and its surrounds form a megalopolis of about 30 million people, and its airborne concentration of the tiny particles known as PM2.5 has outpaced other heavily polluted cities such as Riyadh, Doha and Lahore of late. **PHOTO: AFP**

plants near the capital, but the government has dismissed such claims, arguing that Jakarta's recent worsening air pollution was mainly due to weather and traffic.

The official notice, a copy of which was seen by AFP, says that the work-from-home scheme was related to efforts to reduce traffic congestion in the city during the ASEAN summit next month as well as to "decrease air pollution levels in Jakarta".

It ordered 50 per cent of civil servants employed by the Jakarta administration to work from home between 21 August and

21 October, and said up to 75 per cent of the capital's government workers would work from home during the ASEAN summit between 4 and 7 September.

Jakarta employed around 50,000 civil servants as of July, according to the regional civil service agency.

Acting Jakarta governor Heru Budi Hartono told reporters on Sunday that local governments in satellite cities surrounding Jakarta were also considering similar work-from-home arrangements for civil servants, although for a shorter period. — AFP

Tropical Storm Hilary brings record rain to California

TROPICAL Storm Hilary drenched Southern California with record rainfall, shutting down schools, roads and businesses before edging in on Nevada on Monday.

California Governor Gavin Newsom had declared a state of emergency over much of the typically dry area, where flash flood warnings remained in effect until Monday morning.

The Los Angeles branch of the National Weather Service said overnight that multiple daily rainfall records in the region had been broken.

With people already on edge ahead of the storm's arrival, a 5.1-magnitude earthquake jolted the southern California town of Ojai, but there

were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

The deluge from Hilary swamped roads, transforming highways into rivers and stranding some motorists.

The start of the public school year was widely delayed for a day, with class postponed in several school districts, including San Diego, Los Angeles, Pasadena and Palmdale.

At its peak a Category 4 hurricane — the second-most powerful on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale — Hilary was downgraded to a tropical storm as crossed into the United States from Mexico and later to a post-tropical cyclone. — AFP



Motorists deal with a flooded road and stuck vehicles during heavy rains from Tropical Storm Hilary in Palm Springs, California, on 20 August 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

German bionic robots shine at 2023 World Robot Conference



A robotic arm for surgery is pictured at the 2023 World Robot Conference in Beijing on 16 August 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

GERMAN industrial automation company Festo displayed its bionic swift and butterfly robots, demonstrating their flight capabilities, at the ongoing 2023 World Robot Conference in Beijing.

"The research and development of bionic robots represents a process that humans learn from nature. The automation products simulate the motion principles of animals," said Wang Weijuan, a staffer with Festo Business Region Greater China.

The bionic swift robot features a lightweight design of 42

grammes, with a body length of 44.5 Centimetres and a wing-span of 68 cm. Equipped with a GPS system, the flying bionic robot can be utilized in material transportation inside factories, Wang said.

"This year marks the 30th anniversary of Festo officially entering the Chinese market," Wang added.

"The company continues to provide automation technology services for Chinese customers in many fields including the automobile, electronics, water treatment and biopharmaceuticals."

The seven-day conference

that kicked off on 16 August has attracted about 160 robot enterprises from all over the world, showcasing nearly 600 sets of robots. The event has served as a platform for technological and industrial cooperation. Alexander Verl, chair of the Research Committee of the International Federation of Robotics (IFR) and professor at the University of Stuttgart, noted that robot has been widely used in construction, manufacturing and automation. The industrial robot has undergone robust development, while the service robot has a huge potential for growth. — Xinhua

Victorian-era disease hits Scotland's poorest

A disease linked to poverty and malnutrition that once crippled the crowded slums of 19th-century Britain is on the rise in Scotland, according to data published at the weekend.

A total of 442 cases of rickets — a skeletal disease caused by a sustained lack of Vitamin D — were recorded in 2022 compared to 354 in 2018, data from 13 of 14 Scottish health boards showed. “Generally preventable conditions such as these are indicative of Scotland having the lowest life expectancy in the UK,” Chris Williams, the joint chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland, told The Sunday Times newspaper. He also suggested environmental factors such as a colder climate could be behind the increase.

Rickets, which can lead to skeletal deformities such as bowed legs or knock knees,

has been linked to a lack of exposure to sunlight and Vitamin D which is found in foods like oily fish or eggs.

Some 482 cases of the disease, which largely disappeared from Britain more than half a century ago after efforts to improve diet and exposure to sunlight, were found across England. Most of the cases in Scotland were recorded in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area with 356 diagnoses.

Glasgow is one of the most deprived local authority areas in Scotland with 32 per cent of all children in the city were estimated to be living in poverty in 2021-2022, according to Glasgow Centre for Population Health.

According to the latest data from 2019, men living in the most deprived areas of the city on average live 15.4 years less than those in the most affluent parts. — AFP

Half of bus drivers greet each other via hand wave, defying rules

NEARLY half of bus drivers in Japan still exchange greetings waving or nodding when their vehicles pass each other, despite rules banning such gestures to prevent accidents, according to a data analysis group.

An investigation conducted by the Institute for Traffic Accident Research and Data Analysis in nine prefectures across the country found that out of a total of 612 drivers, 292 individuals, or 47.7 per cent, raised a hand or gave a quick nod to their fellow drivers.

It was conducted from August 2022 through February this year in the wake of a fatal bus accident in August 2021 in Kitakyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture in southwestern Japan.

The bus driver involved in the case told an inquiry that he nodded at the driver of another bus and briefly looked at it for “a few seconds.”



File photo taken on 27 March 2023 shows local buses operated by Nishi-Nippon Railroad Co in the city of Fukuoka. PHOTO: KYODO

Having one hand off the steering wheel does not necessarily violate Japan's traffic law, which obliges drivers to operate the wheel, brakes and other vehicle equipment in a “secure” manner, a police official said.

The practice of bus drivers greeting each other while driving was banned by the Tokyo Bus Association in 2003 following a fatal accident of a pedestrian.

The Nihon Bus Association has also advised its member operators to discourage it since 2012.

Even Nishi-Nippon Railroad Co, the parent company of the Kitakyushu-based bus operator that figured in the 2021 accident, said it has been distributing a drivers' manual for “at least more than 15 years”, which states that drivers must not wave or bow. — Kyodo

Kenya's young Maasai reconnect with their culture at Eunoto ceremony

WITH beaming smiles, their hair dyed a red ochre and adorned with a ceremonial headdress of ostrich feathers, the young Maasai men are busy taking selfies.

They have just completed the first day of Eunoto, a traditional ritual marking the transition from young warrior to adulthood.

“Today we are becoming men,” 22-year-old medical student Hillary Odupoy says proudly, wearing sunglasses and a string of pearls across his bare chest.

Aged between 18 and 26, the young men came in their hundreds to the village of Nailare in southwestern Kenya, all from the same generation of “morans” (“warriors” in the Maasai language), a status they have held for a decade.

Many left their homes in the region to work or study in the cities of Kisii or Nairobi, or like Odupoy, further afield in the town of Machakos that lies more than seven hours away by road.



Young Maasai men wearing a ceremonial headdress made of ostrich feathers take part in the Eunoto ceremony in a remote area near Kilgoris, Kenya on 18 August 2023. PHOTO: AFP

“It is one of the biggest ceremonies we have in our life. We can never meet in such multitude. It unites the Maasai community,” explains Odupoy.

All wear red, the sacred col-

our of the Maasai — from their hair which is coated in a mixture of ochre and oil to their traditional plaid cloth shukas.

This rite of passage brings together the families of the mo-

rans as well as local inhabitants and officials, in all several thousand people.

For five days, the Eunoto ceremony features traditional guttural chants, single-file danc-

es on one leg, and the adumu — the famous Maasai jump.

Cows are sacrificed and their blood drunk by the young men, whose hair is shaved from their heads by their mothers.

They then abandon the warrior's sword for the fimbo, the walking stick of the “elders”.

Abandoned rituals

For centuries, Maasai men have gone through three rites of passage which have been inscribed since 2018 on the UNESCO list of intangible heritage in need of urgent safeguarding.

Enkipaata is the transition from boyhood to moran status, Eunoto, the passage to “young elder”, and finally Olng'esherr marks the start of eldership status.

But such traditions of the Maasai, originally semi-nomadic herders living in southwestern Kenya and northern Tanzania, have had to adapt to the changes and demands of modern life. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

China, other BRICS countries report rapid trade expansion in Jan-July



Products are displayed at the commodity service centre for products of the BRICS countries in Xiamen City, southeast China's Fujian Province, 23 June 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

CHINA'S trade with the other four BRICS countries maintained rapid expansion in the

first seven months of the year, official data showed Monday. China's imports and ex-

ports with other BRICS members expanded 19.1 per cent year on year to 2.38 trillion yuan (about 330.62 billion US dollars) during the January-July period, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Exports grew 23.9 per cent year on year to 1.23 trillion yuan while imports rose 14.3 per cent from a year ago to 1.15 trillion yuan, the data showed.

Trade with these countries accounted for 10.1 per cent of China's total foreign trade in the first seven months. The figure was up 1.6 percentage points from a year ago, according to the customs authorities. — Xinhua

Arab League welcomes reunification of Libya's central bank after almost a decade

THE Arab League (AL) on Monday welcomed the reunification of the Central Bank of Libya, which had been divided into two entities due to a yearslong civil war.

"The move will impact the Libyan economy and the living conditions of Libyans in a positive way," the AL said in a statement.

It voiced hope that "this important step will be an in-

centive to unify other Libyan institutions that suffered divisions for years and to put an end to the controversial issues of distributing revenues that have caused conflict among political actors."

"This is an encouraging decision to activate the political process toward the procedures of running the awaited elections," it added.

On Sunday, Siddiq Al-Kaber,

governor of the Central Bank of Libya, made the announcement at the bank's headquarters in Tripoli after meeting with department heads from Tripoli and Benghazi branches.

The bank has been divided into western and eastern branches since 2014.

Libya has witnessed violence and insecurity since the fall of the late leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. — Xinhua

Viet Nam's retail sector forecast to maintain growth, but challenges persist

THE Vietnamese retail sector is expected to maintain 8-9 per cent growth in 2023 despite difficulties, local newspaper Vietnam News reported on Monday.

The main goal set for this year is to promote the strong development of the domestic market, the newspaper cited Tran Duy Dong, head of the Domestic Market Department under the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The retail market competition in Viet Nam has become more intense with the participation of new retailers and operation expansion of existing local and international retailers.

Meanwhile, consumers are more cautious in their spending habits, the newspaper reported, citing a survey by the auditing firm PwC Viet Nam.

Prices of some goods items have increased in the past few months, especially essential

ones such as sugar, cooking oil, instant noodles, and eggs. It is triggered by the increase in prices of electricity, water, and textbooks, as well as tuition fees, airline fares, and the cost of seasonal tourism, the newspaper reported.

Vu Vinh Phu, a retail expert warned that the price rise would inhibit the increase in domestic purchasing power.

In that context, the retailers in Viet Nam have cut costs in the supply chain, thereby reducing the prices of the goods as part of the efforts to stimulate consumption.

Viet Nam's total goods retail sales and consumer service revenues increased by 10.4 per cent year-on-year in the first seven months of this year to more than 3.5 quadrillion Vietnamese dong (148.3 billion US dollars), according to the General Statistics Office. — Xinhua



This photo taken on 22 May 2023 shows a vegetable vendor waiting for customers in Hanoi. **PHOTO: AFP**

Thailand posts lower than expected second quarter growth

THAILAND registered lower than expected economic growth of 1.8 per cent in the second quarter, official data released Monday showed.

Officials blamed a slowdown in exports, which fell 5.7 per cent year-on-year, for the weak pace.

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) cut its forecast for 2023 to between 2.5 and 3 per cent, citing poor global conditions.

"The growth in the second quarter is lower than expected



(FILES) Builders work at a construction site for a mixed-use development project in the Sukhumvit area of Bangkok on 1 July 2023. Thailand registered lower than expected economic growth of 1.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2023, official data released on 21 August 2023 showed. **PHOTO: AFP**

due to the slowdown of exports which fell for three quarters respectively since last year," said Danucha Pichayanan, secretary-general of the NESDC.

Output from manufacturing fell 3.3 per cent and government spending also dropped 4.3 per cent, the data showed.

The kingdom is stuck in a political deadlock three months after a national election, with no prime minister able to form a government.

Danucha sought to calm investors' fears of looming instability, noting political

demonstrations so far have been small and peaceful.

Just three years ago violent street protests brought capital the Bangkok to a standstill for months.

"If the transition (of government) runs smoothly, investors will be confident and come to invest," he told reporters.

The figures were released ahead of a key vote in Thailand's parliament due Tuesday that could see the deadlock broken, and a new prime minister finally elected. — AFP

Australia's Sydney Airport sees surge of Chinese passengers in July

AUSTRALIA'S Sydney Airport said on Monday that its international recovery had overtaken the domestic part for the first time since COVID-19 travel restrictions eased, as a surge of passengers from China boosted international traffic.

According to the airport's monthly update, 1.30 million travellers passed through the international terminal in July, representing an 89.1-per-cent recovery rate year-on-year, while domestic passenger traffic increased to 2.08 million people, representing an 87-per-cent recovery rate.

In July, Chinese passengers ranked as the No1 overseas vis-

itors for the first time since 2019, and the number of Chinese nationals coming through the international terminal represented a 76-per-cent recovery rate year-on-year, up from 69 per cent in June.

"The underlying result on passenger traffic for July is mixed. The headline result for international passengers is encouraging," said Sydney Airport CEO Geoff Culbert, noting the "strong growth" from China, South Korea and India.

However, the growth was offset by lagging markets like the United States and New Zealand. — Xinhua

South Asian businessmen explore opportunities at China-South Asia Expo

MALIK Hamza, a Pakistani exhibitor, showcased his exquisite brass handicrafts to visitors on Sunday at the seventh China-South Asia Expo. To his joy, he found out that a potential customer was referred to him by a satisfied previous client.

"The art craft is handmade in Pakistan, requiring approximately one week to complete each piece," Hamza said.

The five-day expo, which kicked off on 16 August and ended on 20 August in Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan Province, attracted over 30,000 exhibitors as well as representatives and guests from 85 countries and regions and international organizations.

At a booth showcasing Pakistani jade in the



Visitors select products at the booth of Pakistan at the 7th China-South Asia Expo in Kunming, southwest China's Yunnan Province, 18 August 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA

South Asia Pavilion, Khan Muhammadnasir, a Pakistani representative, engaged in lively discussions with Chinese visitors about product variations and dis-

tinctive features.

To enhance the presentation of his offerings, Muhammadnasir acquired the services of a Chinese translator to assist at the

booth. "The morning has brought good business, and we anticipate even more visitors over the weekend," Muhammadnasir said. — Xinhua

Bread-short Tunisia to restore flour supply to some bakeries

TUNISIA will again supply flour to more than 1,000 non-subsidized bakeries in the North African country after most of them ceased operating, government and industry officials said on Sunday.

The deal could help ease a bread shortage that has worsened over the past two weeks.

Since the beginning of August, European-style bakeries selling baguettes in the former-

ly French-ruled country had been prevented from accessing their quota of subsidized flour, after President Kais Saied said there should be "one type of bread for all Tunisians".

Days later those same bakeries also stopped receiving non-subsidized flour and semolina from the state, which controls the supply of all such essential goods in the country.

Known as "modern bakeries", the shops sell at a higher price and also offer pastries and other breads. More than 3,700 other bakeries sell only subsidized baguettes at a cost of 190 Tunisian millimes (around \$0.07 cents), a price unchanged since 1984.

"It has been decided to resume the supply of flour and semolina to the non-subsidized bakers from 19 August," after which they committed to "respect the laws on the production and sale of bread", the commerce ministry said in a statement. — AFP



People queue in front of a bakery selling subsidized bread in Tunis' Halfaouine district, on 19 August 2023. Tunisia is reinstating subsidized flour supply to more than 1,000 privately-owned bakeries in the North African country after most of them ceased operating, government and industry officials said on 20 August. PHOTO: AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V KOTA HAPAS VOY.NO. (KHPS0393N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V KOTA HAPAS VOY.NO. (KHPS0393N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-8-2023** 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.

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL LINES

MYANMA Port Authority "NOTICE of High Tide"

EXCEPTIONALLY high spring from 20.05 feet to 21.65 feet high above the chart datum are expected to occur in Yangon River during the period of August 30th to September 5th, 2023. Please be noted that it is not serious level of tide because the highest tide level have reached up to 22 feet above the chart datum in year 2014 and 2015, and this notice is normally issued whenever high tide of Yangon River is expected to reach over 20 feet high above the chart datum in order to take precautionary measures to the public living near river foreshore area of Yangon City.

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

Thailand's Pheu Thai announces 11-party alliance to form government

THAILAND'S Pheu Thai Party announced on Monday that it will lead an 11-party alliance in a bid to form a new government, one day ahead of the fresh parliamentary vote on a prime minister.

The alliance, with 314 seats in the 500-member House of Representatives, has gained the support of the Bhumjaithai Party, the Palang Pracharath Party, the United Thai Nation Party, and other smaller parties, Pheu Thai Party leader Cholnan Srikaew told a joint press conference.

Despite the partnership with some political parties in the outgoing government, all parties in the coalition will effectively work together with the Pheu Thai Party for the best interest of the people, Cholnan said.

Each party in the coalition agreed to support Pheu Thai Party's policies announced during the election campaigns as a



Pheu Thai Party's prime ministerial candidate Srettha Thavisin (L) and Pheu Thai's Paetongtarn Shinawatra, youngest daughter of former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, pose for photo at the Pheu Thai party headquarters in Bangkok on 21 August 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

guideline for the country's administration while integrating, adjusting, and enhancing policies from coalition partners, he added.

He noted that the coalition affirmed its resolution to nominate Pheu Thai Party prime minister candidate Srettha Thavisin in a joint session of the National Assembly on Tuesday.

Nominated candidates need support from parliamentarians in the House of Representatives and the Senate combined to win a simple majority vote and become prime minister.

The Pheu Thai Party started to form a new coalition after the eight-party alliance it had left failed to secure the necessary support in the previous two bicameral sittings of the Thai parliament to nominate the election-winning Move Forward Party leader Pita Limjaroenrat as prime minister. — Xinhua

Singaporean PM says recent political scandals will not delay leadership renewal

SINGAPOREAN Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Sunday stressed that the leadership renewal is on track and recent scandals involving political figures will not delay his timetable.

Lee made the remarks while delivering a speech at the city-state's National Day Rally.

In July, Singapore's Transport Minister S Iswaran was under investigation for corruption suspects, while Speaker of Parliament Tan Chuan-Jin and a parliament member resigned over their affairs.

The prime minister vowed to deal with the cases thoroughly and transparently.

Recounting his plan to hand over the power in 2022, but disrupted by the COV-

ID-19 pandemic, Lee noted that his succession plans are back on track as the pandemic shadow fades.

Lee added that his task is to support the country's fourth-generation leadership team and expressed his confidence in Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong.

The prime minister also called on Singaporean people to support Wong and his governing team.

During his speech, Lee promised measures to improve people's well-being, including a seven billion Singapore dollars (over five billion US dollars) package to support low and middle-income people born before 1973, fair and affordable policies for public flats, and building aged-friendly communities. — Xinhua

N Korea's Kim oversees cruise missile launch drill

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw a strategic cruise missile launch drill while visiting a naval unit, state-run media said Monday, with released photographs also showing him boarding a new type of patrol vessel with improved stealth capabilities.

The date Kim visited the unit, belonging to the fleet that covers the Sea of Japan, remains unknown. The official Korean Central News Agency reported on the inspection as South Korea and the United States began a joint large-scale military exercise Monday.

Kim "praised the ship" that he boarded "for maintaining high mobility and mighty striking power and constant preparedness for combat to cope" with any sudden situation, KCNA said.

He also stressed the importance of promoting the modernization of naval weapons and equipment, including the building of powerful warships and the development of ship-



This undated picture released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on 21 August 2023 shows North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (R) watching a strategic cruise missile being launched from a guard ship marine of the 2nd Surface Ship Squadron of the East Sea fleet, also known as the Sea of Japan, part of a Korean People's naval unit, at an undisclosed location at sea off the coast. **PHOTO: STR / KCNA VIA KNS / AFP**

board and underwater weapons systems to rapidly enhance the navy's combat capabilities.

South Korea's Yonhap News Agency quoted an informed source as saying the test-fired cruise missile was not a "strategic" nuclear-capable one as the size of the vessel was too small for such an important missile launch.

The source added that the missile failed to hit an apparently preset target, the report said Monday.

The KCNA report came amid speculation that Pyongyang is preparing an intercontinental ballistic missile test timed to coincide with the Seoul-Washington joint exercise. — Kyodo

SPORTS

MGF issues handicap index cards to two golf clubs



The ceremony on the issuance of handicap index cards to golf clubs in progress at the office of the Myanmar Golf Federation in Yangon on 21 August 2023. **PHOTO: MGF**

A ceremony to issue handicap index cards related to the world handicap system took place at the Myanmar Golf

Federation at the 9th mile on Pyay Road in Yangon yesterday morning. President of MGF U Ko Ko Aye and

Chairman of World Handicap System Subcommittee U Zarni Win spoke on the occasion.

The MGF president presented handicap index cards to Myanmar Golf Club Captain Dr Cho Tun and WHS Subcommittee Chairman U Zarni Win, to Myanmar Genuine Golfers Club.

The MGF has formed the WHS organizing subcommittee to systematically categorize the course rating and slope rating for the domestic golf courses. Myanmar Golf Club in Yangon and Myanmar Genuine Golfers Club in Nay Pyi Taw cooperate with the federation in steadfastly striving for applying the WHS. So far, the two golf clubs were set a record for the first-ever exercising the world handicap system in the history of Myanmar golf sport. — Ko Nyi Lay/TTA

Lyles hopes 100m success is start of sprint dynasty

NOAH Lyles says he hopes his victory in the 100-metre at the World Athletics Championships will be the “start of a dynasty” as he bids to become the first man to achieve a world sprint double since Usain Bolt in 2015.

Lyles, who already has two world 200-metre titles and will go for a third in Budapest, clocked 9.83 seconds — equaling the fastest 100m time of the season — for victory on Sunday. In a perfectly-timed piece of sprinting, the 26-year-old kept his nerve after a quick start by teammate Christian Coleman to outstrip a field deprived of defending champion Fred Kerley and Olympic gold medallist Marcell Jacobs after both failed to make the final. — AFP



USA's Noah Lyles (L) crosses the finish line to win the men's 100-metre final ahead of Britain's Zharnel Hughes during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest on 20 August 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Myanmar trounce Brunei 4-1 in AFF U-23 Championship

MYANMAR sculpted a big win over Brunei in the AFF U-23 Championship 2023 at Rayong Provisional Stadium in Thailand yesterday.

Myanmar launched a fabulous attack from the start while Brunei stayed in the style of defence. Team Myanmar earned the first goal at 28 minutes with

a score of Naung Naung Soe and ended the first half with a 1-0 result.

In the second half, Swan Htet doubled Myanmar's goal with his superb passes at 47 minutes. Next, the third goal was found at 52 minutes with Moe Swe's goal. Myanmar garnered the fourth or winning goal at 67 minutes

and the goal was beautifully shot by Chit Aye.

Danish made a single consolation goal for Team Brunei at 71 minutes. Team Myanmar celebrated at the final whistle as they played a decent match and produced a solid win over opponents. — KZL

Yangon United embarks for Indonesia to play AFC match



Yangon United players are seen posing for a group photo before departure for Indonesia to compete in the AFC Cup play-off match. **PHOTO: YUFC**

YANGON United left for Indonesia from Yangon International Airport at 10:35 am yesterday to compete in the AFC Cup 2023-2024 play-off match against Indonesia club PSM Makassar, as stated

by Yangon United. Team Myanmar transited at Singapore Changi Airport and continued their journey to Denpasar International Airport in Indonesia.

Following the victory over Brunei club DPMM, Yangon United will take on their away match against PSM Makassar in Bali, Indonesia in the Play-off stage of AFC Cup 2023-2024.

The match will be played at 5:30 pm (MST) on 23 August at Wayan Dipta Stadium. The winner will advance to the Group stage of the AFC tourney. — KZL



Japan PM meets fishery group head over Fukushima water release plan



Photo taken on 19 January 2023, shows tanks storing treated radioactive water on the premises of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Fukushima Prefecture. **PHOTO: KYODO**

PRIME Minister Fumio Kishida talked with the head of Japan's national fisheries federation on Monday, hoping to gain his understanding for the government's plan to start releasing treated radioactive water from the Fukushima nuclear plant.

The meeting came before Kishida is expected to hold a gathering of his Cabinet on Tuesday morning to formally decide when to begin discharging the water from the crippled nuclear complex into the Pacific Ocean. The process is expected to start by the end of August.

The National Federation of Fisheries

Cooperative Associations under its head Masanobu Sakamoto has continued to oppose the water release, saying it would erode the reputation of seafood from Fukushima and nearby areas.

But Kishida hopes to win the group's backing for his administration's efforts to ensure the safety of the water and for its measures to respond to potential reputational damage.

At the outset of their talks at the prime minister's office, Kishida told Sakamoto, "We promise to take full responsibility for implementing necessary

steps so that fishermen can pursue their livelihood with peace of mind for the next several decades".

The government has set up funds worth 30 billion yen (\$206 million) to overcome any reputational damage and 50 billion yen to ease potential economic damage and support local fishermen in sustaining their businesses.

During his visit to the Fukushima nuclear plant on Sunday, Kishida urged the operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc, to ensure the safety of the water release. — Kyodo

Russia says thwarted Ukraine drone attacks near Moscow

RUSSIAN officials said Monday that air defence systems had thwarted several Ukrainian drone attacks near the capital with no casualties reported.

An attempt by Kyiv to carry out an "attack with an aircraft-type unmanned aerial vehicle was foiled" around 6:50 am (0350 GMT), the defence ministry said in a statement.

The drone was "suppressed by means of electronic warfare" and crashed in Pokrovskoye village in the Odintsovo district southwest of the capital, it said, adding there were no casualties.

Another "attack by the Kyiv regime" was thwarted in Istra, northwest of Moscow, it said. It happened at 8:16 am.

The RIA Novosti news agency said flights from two international airports, Vnukovo and Domodedovo, were temporarily disrupted and diverted elsewhere.

Later, Vladislav Shapsha, the governor of the Kaluga region south of Moscow said air defence systems in his region had fended off a drone attack.

"There were no injuries or damage to infrastructure," he announced in a statement on social media.

In recent weeks, two drone attacks were repelled over Moscow's financial district, each causing minor damage to the facades of high-rise buildings. In May, drones were shot down near the Kremlin. — AFP

Danish F-16s for Ukraine an 'escalation': Russian envoy

DENMARK'S decision to supply Ukraine with American F-16 fighter jets to fend off Russia's attack represents an "escalation" of the conflict, Russia's ambassador to Denmark warned Monday.

Denmark and the Netherlands on Sunday announced they would provide the advanced jets to strengthen Kyiv's Soviet-era air force, as it pursues a grinding counteroffensive against Russian forces in the east.

During a visit by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to Denmark on Sunday, Danish Prime Minister

Mette Frederiksen said her country would deliver 19 of the jets, six of them by the end of this year, eight next year and five in 2025.

"The fact that Denmark has now decided to donate 19 F-16 aircraft to Ukraine leads to an escalation of the conflict," Russian ambassador to Denmark Vladimir Barbin said in a statement to AFP.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in July that Moscow would consider the F-16s a "nuclear" threat because of their capacity to carry atomic

weapons.

"By hiding behind a premise that Ukraine itself must determine the conditions for peace, Denmark seeks with its deeds and words to leave Ukraine no choice but to continue the military confrontation with Russia," Barbin said.

"Such a position pushes Ukraine into the abyss and condemns its people to new victims."

Washington had announced its approval of the F-16 transfers on Friday. — AFP



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (L) and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen sit in a F-16 fighter jet in the hangar of the Skrydstrup Airbase in Vojens, northern Denmark, on 20 August 2023.

PHOTO: AFP