

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

1,000 endangered star tortoises to be set free in their natural habitat



Rare and endangered star tortoises thriving in their natural habitat at the Shwesettaw Sanctuary in Myanmar.

A TOTAL of 1,000 star tortoises, endemic species, conserved at Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary in Minbu (Sagu) Township of Minbu District in Magway Region will be released to their native habitat, according to U Aung San, assistant director of the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Branch of the Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary.

Star tortoises in the Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary are a native species



found only in the central tropical region of Myanmar. The names of the Myan-

mar Star Tortoise (or) Burmese Star Tortoise are locally called Mya Yellow, Taungpon and Natt tortoises. Starting in 2004, they were bred in Mandalay Yadanabon Park, Lawkananda Sanctuary, Minsone Mountain Sanctuary, and Shwesettaw Sanctuary.

The Department of Forest, Wildlife Group and the Turtle Survival Group raised fences to conserve the rare species in the Mandalay Yadanabon Park, **SEE PAGE-7**

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Petrol prices edge up while diesel prices decline slightly

Myanmar exports 76,000+ tonnes of rubber worth US\$94 mln in 5 months

MORE than 76,594 tonnes of Myanmar's rubber were exported to foreign countries in the past five months (April-Aug) of the current financial year 2023-2024, with an estimated value of US\$94.48 million, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar's annual rubber production is estimated at 300,000 tonnes. Seventy per cent of rubber produced in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries. The rubber production in the FY 2022-2023 reached over

360,000 tonnes, more than 200,000 tonnes of which were shipped to foreign trade partners.

Myanmar aims to achieve rubber exports of 300,000 tonnes in the current 2023-2024 financial year beginning 1 April, as per the association.

Global demand for rubber, rubber production in the South-east Asian nations and the market supply are contributing factors to Myanmar's rubber prices.

The rubber price in Mon State, a major rubber-producing state in Myanmar, is related to those factors as well, the traders elaborated.



An industrious worker preparing rubber for export.

Rubber is commonly produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber season data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar, with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region with 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres.

Myanmar bagged more than US\$449 million in revenue in rubber exports in the 2020-2021 FY and \$264.442 million in the 2019-2020 FY. — NN/EM

NATIONAL

24th Central-Level Myanmar Traditional Cultural Performing Arts Competition successfully concludes

THE 24th Myanmar Traditional Cultural Performing Arts Competition (Central Level) continued for the seventh and final day at designated venues in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

A drama theatrical performance troupe competition (amateur-level/first class) was held at the training theatre of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, featuring the Min Naing Soe theatrical performing troupe, representing Mon State, in an amateur-level performance of Mahawthahta Jataka (first class).

Members of the State Administration Council (SAC), Union-level officials, deputy ministers, ministers for ethnic affairs

and ministers for social affairs from various regions and states, advocates-general, relevant officials, departmental staff, and parents of contestants attended

the competition.

The 24th Myanmar Traditional Cultural Performing Arts Competition (Central Level) concluded successfully on 30

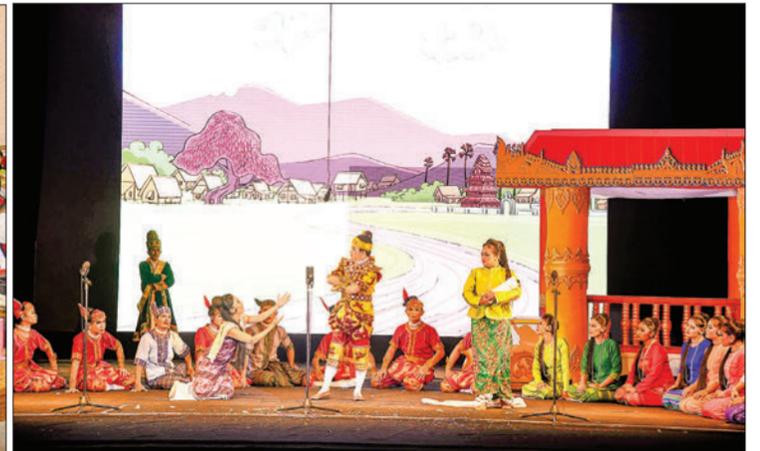
October.

The award ceremony for the 24th Myanmar Traditional Cultural Performing Arts Competition (Central Level) will be held at the

Myanmar International Convention Centre-2 (MICC-II) in Nay Pyi Taw on 31 October and will be broadcast live on MRTV. — MNA/MKKS



A drama theatrical performance troupe from Mon State participates in the competition, enjoyed by SAC members and dignitaries among others yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.



YR Tourism Committee boosts local employment with hotels, guesthouse licences



The 2/2023 meeting of the Yangon Region Tourism Committee is in progress.

THE Yangon Region Tourism Committee has issued licences for hotels and guesthouses, contributing to the creation of local job opportunities for 184 individuals.

During the 2/2023 meeting of the regional tourism committee held on 24 October, business licenses were granted to six hotels, along with one hotel construction permit, one guesthouse license, and one guesthouse construction permit.

These hotel and guesthouse businesses have a combined investment value of K23,111 million, and they are investments

made by Myanmar nationals.

Furthermore, the committee also granted 102 tourism licences for domestic operations and 65 tourism business licences for overseas activities.

In the previous Regional Tourism Committee meeting 1/2023, six hotel business licenses and one guesthouse construction permit were approved.

As of October 2023, the Yangon Region Tourism Committee has approved an investment value of K33,178 million for the hotel sector, leading to the creation of job opportunities for 309 people. — TWA/CT

Myanmar’s enchanting golden deer sanctuary in Minbu awaits visitors

THE pilgrims to famous pagodas in Minbu (Sagu) Township can visit the endangered golden deer farm at Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary, according to the Shwesettaw Pagoda Board of Trustees.

The conservation of golden deer started in 2012 with five male and seven female deer from Nay Pyi Taw Safari Park and Bagan Lawkananda Park. At present, there are 16 male

and 30 female deer, totalling 46 deer. They are fed with water convolvulus in the morning and other tender leaves or supplements in the evening. The members of the pagoda board of trustees carefully look after the deer.

“The star tortoises and golden deer are the world’s most endangered species. Moreover, the Myanmar golden deer is the resident species

found only in our country. Therefore, we have to conserve them to avoid extinction and ensure to rise deer population. During the Shwesettaw pagoda festival and open season, the visitors to well-known tourist areas in Minbu (Sagu) can also observe the golden deer at Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary,” said U Thein Hlaing, vice-chair of the pagoda board of trustees. — Zeyar Htet (Minbu)/KTZH



A herd of endangered golden deer is seen at the Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary.

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 increasing of death rate based on the disease.

NATIONAL

Myanmar, China decide to strengthen promotion of law enforcement, security cooperation

STATE Administration Council Member Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Yar Pyae organized an informal meeting with Member of the State's Council of the People's Republic of China and Minister for Public Security Mr Wang Xiaohong in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Moreover, they held the seventh Myanmar-China ministerial meeting on law enforcement and security cooperation.

At the meeting, they discussed peace and tranquillity in border areas of the two countries, the promotion of law enforcement and security cooperation, attendance to the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang) and China-ASEAN police academies forum, implementation of the



An informal meeting between SAC Member Union Home Affairs Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and Member of the State's Council of the People's Republic of China and Minister for Public Security Mr Wang Xiaohong in progress yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

five-year plan of Action on the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (2023-2027), launching of operations against human trafficking, online fraud, cybercrime, money laundering, cross-border gambling, drug cases, cooperation in Lancang-Mekong security and law enforcement activities.

Moreover, they cordially discussed bilateral relations in arresting Chinese fugitives, communication among law enforcement organizations, joint research on crimes at border areas and other matters related to law enforcement, information, training, MoU on the tranquillity of border areas, law enforcement and security cooperation and real-time information exchange between the two ministries. — MNA/KTZH

DRD initiates gravity flow system with treatment plant and water pipeline network project in hilly region



The signboard on water treatment plant and water pipeline project in hilly region project is unveiled in Kyauktaw Village in Yaksawk Township, Shan State (South).

GRAVITY flow system with treatment plant and pipeline network will be launched in mountainous regions in 2024, according to the Department of Rural Development.

There are 23,783 villages in Shan State, and the project will be implemented in Kyauktaw Village in Yaksawk Township, Konechanhtet Village in Nyaungshwe Township, and

Sintaung Village in Loilem Township. The project will provide clean drinking water for the village at any time. To prevent the spring water from drying up, the residents must not clear and burn the forest trees and preserve the spring water for the long term.

The project will be implemented with the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special

Fund, and the state government will also provide support. The purpose of providing clean drinking water to all rural residents of Myanmar was drafted in 2017 and approved in 2030.

According to the Department of Rural Development, the project will be carried out in collaboration with relevant departments and organizations. — TWA/CT

Telematics system to be debuted for enhanced safety on Yangon-Mandalay Expressway

THE Ministry of Construction released the notification that the companies that want to submit tenders for telematics system must send them by 6 November while the Command Centre will apply a telematics system to ensure the safety of passenger buses on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway.

The telematics system will be conducted by the Expressway Maintenance, Repair and Supervision Team, Department of Highways under the Ministry of Construction and the Myanmar citizen private

companies have been invited to submit tender proposals.

Telematics systems can launch digital maps, communication links, image processors, and vehicle positioning and can place tracking devices of new behavioural and attentional demands on drivers.

Those who want to submit tenders have to send the applications to the Office of the Director (Civil), the Expressway Maintenance, Repair and Supervision Team at the C-junction, Nay Pyi Taw. — TWA/MKKS



The photo shows vehicles rolling on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway.

NATIONAL

Tatmadaw restores control of Thantlang Township through counter-terrorism operations against CNF, CDF insurgents

TATMADAW took back Thantlang township in the evening of Thadingyut full moon day on 29 October after launching Counter-Terrorism Operations against the CNF and CDF terrorists who committed ambush on security forces members and departmental staff, arson attacks in Thantlang township, killing innocent people, asking for money, destroyed the houses and State-owned buildings and other destructive elements to destroy the government mechanism.

The terrorists launched attacks in Thantlang township with the use of excessive force on Tatmadaw convoy and township-level police members starting February 2023, and the security forces had to retrace to the southern part of the township due to the weather conditions and ground security despite their best counter-attacks. Moreover,

they controlled the entire township area, blocked the security members and made threats to the Thee-River Crossing Bridge. Therefore, Tatmadaw troops re-occupied the Thee-River Crossing Bridge about four miles from Haka township in August as the first stage and regained the entrance of Thantlang from the bridge for the second stage while Thantlang township public construction office and CB Bank for the third stage, and Thantlang Sayyongon and basic education high school for fourth and final stages. Tatmadaw conducted systematic operations step by step to lessen the amount of damage to houses and buildings. After 90 days, on the full moon day of Thadingyut, 29 October, Tatmadaw took control over the entire township. During the attacks, the terrorists used religious buildings, schools, township general

hospitals and departmental buildings covered with bricks as bunkers and opened fire on Tatmadaw members. Moreover, the CNF and CDF members reinforced their members using motorcycles and vehicles and used the locals as human shields. Therefore, Tatmadaw followed the Rules of Engagement-ROE and started the operations systematically so as not to affect the residents and destroy the religious buildings, schools, hospitals and departmental buildings. On 29 October, the terrorists launched arson attacks and mine attacks on houses and departmental buildings and moved back, and the security forces launched security measures in the vicinity area of Thantlang township.

During the armed engagement with CNF and CDF terrorists, some security forces members were injured and it



An aerial perspective of devastated structures in the wake of terrorist attacks on Thantlang.

also seized 18 arms and ammunition, magazines, bombs, bodies of terrorists and other explosives.

So-called CNF and CDF terrorists piled up bricks in religious buildings, schools, hospitals, business offices and houses while desks in classrooms, used

bunkers, and the township hospital also seemed to be used as a buffer in the attacks.

Therefore, the authorities arranged to remove the debris and mines so the residents to enter their township, repair the schools and launch rehabilitation programmes in the township as quickly as possible.

Similarly, the combined armed groups of KIA, MNDAA and TNLA also attacked the military stations and security outposts in the northern and north-east of Shan State such as Lashio, Hsenwi, Kutkai, Muse, Kyukok, Monekoe, Hpawng Hseng regions, Kunlong, Chinshwehaw and Laukkai and also killed the civilians and launched destructive elements to affect the border trade and transport on 27 October 2023 and so there are still armed engagements until 30 October. — MNA/KTZH



CNF and CDF terrorists dig themselves in the compound of TBC Church in Thantlang.



CNF and CDF terrorists use the public construction office building as bunkers and fortifications in Thantlang.

TNLA terrorist attack leaves two children dead, one seriously injured in Namhkam

A report said that TNLA terrorists had launched an unprovoked attack on Namhkam in Shan State (North), using improvised rockets. The attack resulted in an explosion

in the Thayagon neighbourhood, leading to the tragic death of two innocent children and the serious injury of another child.

At approximately 5 am

on 27 October, TNLA terrorists attacked Namhkam with rockets fired from a location about 3,000 metres south of the town. The attack resulted in the tragic deaths of two in-

nocent children, aged 12 and nine, and the serious injury of a four-year-old child due to an explosion in the Thayagon ward.

The injured child was re-

portedly taken to Namhkam People's Hospital for medical treatment, and the security forces are continuing to carry out security tasks in the area.

— MNA/KZW

NATIONAL

High Gentian root demand creates job opportunities for locals (Interview)

By Aye Aye Moe Hlaing (Myanma Alinn)

MYANMAR is rich in natural resources including medicinal plants. Some herbal roots are used locally while some are exported to foreign countries. The Gentian root is one of the export items.

The exploration of Gentian root is widespread at Phoe Saung Hill in the north west of Tatkon of Nay Pyi Taw and it also creates job opportunities for locals. Therefore, we interviewed U Min Min who runs Gentian root digging operation from Thahtay gone Ward of Kyathay-aing Village-tract of Tatkon of Nay Pyi Taw.

Q: First, please tell me how this Gentian root is useful.

A: It is useful to us in many ways. From the point of traditional medicine, the Gentian root is bitter, digestible, and causes bowel obstruction, wormlike drops and muscle strength. It also prevents Biliary atresia. The physicians recognize the Gentian root as the most useful for strength out of the medicines with a bitter taste. Moreover, it breaks the blood clots, makes the abdomen bloat and releases the trapped wind. It can also cure bruises, flatulence, delusion, cough and phlegm.

If we grind the root and boil it by adding salt, and if we take it, it can pass out the menstrual blood and rotten menstrual blood from the body and the skin

will glow. Moreover, the women can drink the liquid after grinding the root, they will not suffer from menstrual disorder. Then, it can mix one tical of Gentian root, one tical of liquorice, two ticals of baked salt and one tical of tamarind paste, and they can be treated for whooping cough in children. Moreover, the root can cure muscle stiffness and nervous system diseases.

Q: Where are these roots grown?

A: They grow in tropical climates. They like high temperatures. If we dig the roots, small pieces of some parts of the roots were left in the ground and so they become plants again. They can be called natural plants or Padethapins. They prefer sandy soil. They do not grow in subtropical regions. The production rate is very low in Shan State. It is better with the weather of Nay Pyi Taw.

Q: Please explain the Gentian root-digging industry and job opportunities for locals.

A: This kind of job does not need any capital. It is just a job opportunity for those who don't have jobs. In their season, a person can earn about K10,000 per day. If a person gets three visses of roots, they might get K7,500 when the market price is K2,500. One group can get K60,000-K100,000. Even one viss makes fine profits when the price is on the rise. Those from near our area resell at our

shop, Shwe Pyi Tan.

The workers reap good profits. A lot of people have dug the root recently. A large amount of root is dug at Thankhe Hill and Htantawkyi. The Leikpya root is sold to China directly. There is no demand in Myanmar. They mostly purchase Bommaravaka, Gentian root and Elephant Foot Yam in the long run. These plants will not be endangered. Even if we pile them, they will not damage. Therefore, it is a win-win solution for sellers and buyers and creates good job opportunities.

Q: As you said the roots are directly exported to China, I want to know how the condition is in the Chinese market.

A: The Chinese mainly purchases herbal plants and it is OK as there is no worker shortage problem. We receive Gentian root demand from China and we always check the rise and fall of Chinese currency.

Q: Do you export it to China directly?

A: I do not export it to China directly but to the wholesale centre in Mandalay. The Mandalay wholesale centre exports the roots to China. Previously, the roots were used just locally and we sent them to Yangon. The market is not huge.

Q: Does the Chinese side buy other kinds of herbal plants in

addition to Gentian root?

A: Yes, it does. They buy various kinds of herbal plants including Rauvolfia, Gentian root, Cissus discolor Blume, Paris polyphylla, fan palm and Leikpya root. They mainly buy Gentian root and Elephant Foot Yam. The Rauvolfia is exported to India. The China side started buying the Gentian root in 2023. There is always a proper market.

Q: How about the local Gentian root market?

A: The current market price of fresh Gentian root is K2,500 per viss. It was K3,500 per viss in the past. We firstly transport to Mandalay wholesale centre. The dried root fetches K6,000/7,000 per viss currently. The worker gets between K1.5 million and K2 million in one season. A person gets at least three visses per day. If they go to the forest, they can get five, 10 or 15 visses. Their families also are OK. We get a good price per viss but we have to dry three or four visses of wet root. The roots are rarely damaged. The price is high if the Chinese demand is on the rise and so such a situation creates good job opportunities for the workers. Some go into the forest together with their families and friends carrying lunch boxes to dig the roots.

Q: How sustainable is the Gentian root industry?

A: There is always a market



Pieces of Gentian roots. PHOTO: KAUNG HTET ZAW (KYEMON)

for this industry. We do not need to do anything special. We buy the fresh roots and dried ones. Then, we pack them. They are durable and can be stored. The operation runs depending on the rise and fall of Chinese currency so it can exist generation to generation.

Q: How does the Gentian root benefit the wholesale centre, exporters and workers?

A: For the wholesale centre, exporters and workers, there should be focal demand. No matter what the business is, it is convenient for all if there is firm market. It is OK as we have demand from China. If there is a market for this industry, it will be more convenient. We expect a better market.

Q: What would you like to add for those who have the same business as you as the Gentian root make profits?

A: One of my friends also operates that business. He can also make profits. I welcome other businesspersons. I also try to create further job opportunities for all who gather the roots.

Translated/KTZH

Confiscated illegal items; Timbers, ceramics, foodstuffs, animal medicines, and vehicles

THE Customs on-duty teams under the management of the Customs Department made inspections on 28 and 29 October and impounded an unregistered Honda Fit (approximately K6 million) that parked near the detour of Moppalin-Soppanu-Ingabo road at the Mayanchaung permanent checkpoint, a Nissan Caravan, a Toyota HiAce car and a Dong Feng tractor head with a trailer

(approximately worth K84 million), headed from Myawady to Yangon and from Thaton to Bago, carrying five kinds of goods worth K11.8 million, including 450 kilogrammes of variety of chinaware and 5,400 kilogrammes of porcelain pillar at the Mayanchaung permanent checkpoint and six kilogrammes of powder (supposed to be drugs) worth K90 million from luggage at the Yangon

International Airport (Import Desk). The action was taken under Customs procedures.

A total of 39.212 tonnes of illegal teak worth 17,880,324 in Toungoo district on 28 October and 0.521 tonne of illegal teak worth K343,860 in Bago district were seized on 30 October and action was taken under the Forest Law.

A combined team captured a total of 4.101 tonnes of illegal

teak worth K5,742,520 from a Toyota Dyna car (estimated value of K25 million) between Milepost 8/4 and 8/3 on Yangon-Mandalay expressway in Hlegu township on 29 October. The action was taken under the Forest Law. The combined team under the supervision of the Sagaing Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force nabbed 13 kinds of animal medicines worth K3.99 million, including

1,737 boxes of smuggled Gut Boost (animal tonic) in Sagaing township on 30 October. The action was taken under the National Drug Law.

A total of 13 arrests were made on three consecutive days from 28 to 30 October, with an estimated value of about K244.759 million, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

NATIONAL

Price of new Pakokku green gram plunges



A female farmer is seen harvesting green grams in the plantation.

IN the Yangon beans and pulses market, the price of new green grams dropped from K3,080 to K3,250 per viss in the second week of October from K2,830 to K2,920 per viss on 27 October. The price per viss has decreased by K250, and the current price of a tonne of green gram is approximately K1,700,000. Compared to the previous price, the cost has fallen by K140,000 per tonne.

In the market, the price of a tonne of black gram RC was K2,918,000, that of pigeon peas (red gram) was valued at K4,075,000, and chickpeas were priced at K5,800 to K6,100 per viss. Consequently, the price of green grams is the lowest among them. While the price

of Pakokku green gram has declined, the price of green gram (Kayan Shwewah variety) remains unchanged at K3,630 per viss.

During the first five months of the 2023–2024 financial year, 720,900 tonnes of pulses worth US\$586 million were exported. The exports included 279,300 tonnes of black grams valued at \$214 million and 222,600 tonnes of green grams valued at \$149 million.

On 27 October 2023, the price of a tonne of exported beans was reported to be \$1,045 to \$1,065 for black gram RC, \$1,350 to \$1,370 for pigeon peas (red gram), and \$750 to \$770 for regional green grams. — TWA/CT

5,000+ acres of monsoon long-staple cotton harvested in Mandalay Region

ACCORDING to the records of the District Department of Agricultural Land Management and Statistics, 7,867 acres of monsoon long-staple cotton were planted in Mandalay Region: 4,027 acres in Kyaukse Township, 1,500 acres in Singaing Township, and 2,340 acres in Myittha Township. Out of these, 5,670 acres of monsoon long-staple cotton have been harvested.

The cost of one acre is about 700,000 Kyats, including seeds and inputs, and the most cultivated varieties by farmers are Ngwechi 6, Ngwechi 9, and Indian (Raka) varieties.

The primary cotton-growing villages in Kyaukse District are Kin Village and Kyaukphya

Village, Loon Kyaw Village, Dai Village, and Myanady Village in Myittha Township, and Sunye Village and Meethwayphote Village in Singaing Township.

In terms of yield, about 400–500 visses are produced per acre. In the previous year, cotton was priced at K3,300 per viss, cotton wool at K7,300 per viss, cottonseed at K1,400 per viss, and cottonseed oil at K5,500 per viss. As for the current price, cotton is being traded at K3,300 per viss, cotton wool at K8,500 per viss, cottonseed at K1,500 per viss, and cottonseed oil at K7,500 per viss. The price tends to drop slightly during the cotton season. — TWA/CT



A plantation of cotton in Phyoukseikpin Village in Kyaukse District.

YRTC now accepting complaints against YBS bus lines via Viber



Some YBS buses operating in the city centre of Yangon.

THE public can file a complaint along with photos or video records through Viber if they observe YBS bus lines operating in Yangon violating the rules, as stated by the Yangon Region Public Transport Committee (YRTC).

Anyone who observes violations in YBS bus lines,

such as overtaking, reckless driving, running a red light, and driving with the side door open, can report via Viber.

In the past, complaints about violations by YBS bus lines were exclusively handled by phone. Currently, Viber complaints will be accepted, and necessary action will be

taken.

Passengers can reach the YRTC through phone numbers 09-448147149, 09-448147153, and 09-448147154 to report YBS bus lines that breach the rules, providing a photo or video record with the time, date, and the name of the bus stops. — TWA/CT

COVID-19
report,
31 October 2023

NEW TESTS

1,888

NEW CASE

One

CASUALTIES

0

Prices of kitchen crops hit new highs in post-Thadingyut Festival

THE prices of onion, garlic and potato hit new peaks at Bayintnaung Wholesale Commodity Centre, Yangon, in the post-Thadingyut holidays.

The price of onion rose to K2,200-3,400 per viss on 30 October from K1,700-K3,200 per viss on 26 October 2023.

Since 27 October, the prices of garlic have continued to rise. The Kyukok garlic fetched K9,500-K10,000 per viss on the morning of 30 October. Garlic from the Shan State area is priced around K8,700-9,800 per viss in the wholesale market. Similarly, the price of potatoes moved up to K2,700-2,750 per viss on 30 October.

The supply of kitchen crops decreased in the Bayintnaung market and the market was quite sluggish, the depot owners said.

India hiked up onion export tax so the price has risen in the onion-importing country Bangladesh. There is news spreading of India's possible purchase of onions from Myanmar in the domestic market.

The market was slow-moving during the Thadingyut holidays. The prices in regions outside Yangon are also likely to go up, following the price rise in Yangon, traders pointed out.

Kyukok garlic and potatoes imported from China have already flowed into the domestic market and they are sent to the Yangon market via the Mandalay market. The prices are pretty high.

The onion prices reached a record high in history at K5,100 per viss in early December 2022. — TWA/KK



The photo shows the onion market in Pakokku area on 30 October.

Petrol prices edge up while diesel prices decline slightly



A sign displaying fuel oil prices is seen at the petrol station in Yangon.

OCTANE 92 and 95 petrol prices increased a bit yet diesel prices dipped in late October.

The fuel oil prices stood at K2,065 per litre of Octane 92 and K2,160 for Octane 95, K2,310 for diesel and K2,420 for premium diesel on 29 October. The prices gained to K2,080 per litre of Octane 92, K2,190 for Octane 95, K2,240 for diesel and K2,350 for premium diesel on 30 October.

The figures indicated an increase of K30 per litre in petrol prices and a decrease of K70 in diesel prices.

The price index set by Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS), the pricing basis for many refined products in southeast Asia, weighs on the domestic fuel prices, according to the Supervisory Committee on Oil Import, Storage and Distribution of Fuel Oil.

In August 2022, the oil prices hit the highest of K2,605 per litre for Octane 92, K2,670 for Octane 95, K3,330 for premium diesel and K3,245 for diesel.

The committee is therefore steering the fuel oil stor-

age and distribution sector effectively so as not to have a shortage of oil in the domestic market and to ensure price stability for energy consumers.

The Petroleum Products Regulatory Department, under the guidance of the committee, is issuing the daily reference rate for oil to offer a reasonable price to energy consumers. The reference rate in the Yangon Region is set on the MOPS's price assessment, shipping cost, premium insurance, tax, other general costs and health profit per cent.

The rates for regions and states other than Yangon are evaluated after adding the transportation cost and the retail reference rates daily cover on the state-run newspapers and are posted on the media and official website and Facebook page of the department daily starting from 4 May.

The committee is inspecting the fuel stations whether they are overcharging or not. The authorities are taking action against the retailers of fuel stations under the Petroleum

and Petroleum Products Law 2017 if they are found overcharging rather than the set reference rate.

As per the statement, 90 per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally. The domestic fuel price is highly correlated with international prices. The State is steering the market to mitigate the loss between the importers, sellers and energy consumers. Consequently, the government is trying to distribute the oil at a reasonable price compared to those of regional countries.

Some countries levied higher tax rates and hiked oil prices compared to that of Myanmar. However, Malaysia's oil sector receives government subsidies and the prices are about 60 per cent cheaper than that of Myanmar. Every country lays down different patterns of policy to fix the oil prices. Myanmar also levies only a lower tax rate on fuel oil and strives for energy consumers to buy the oil at a cheaper rate. — NN/EM

1,000 endangered star tortoises to be set free...

FROM PAGE-1

Lawkananda Sanctuary, Minsone Mountain Sanctuary, and Shwettaw Sanctuary in cooperation with the Department of Forest,

Wildlife Conservation Society and the Tortoise Generation Survival Group. Moreover, the adult star tortoises are also released to their native habitats.

"We released 1,750 star tortoises between 2004 and 2019. We will release 1,000 star tortoises in 2022 and 2023. We release tortoises aged three to five years

old into their natural habitat," he said.

Illegal hunting, poaching and illicit wildlife trade have been the principal factors contributing

to the critical endangerment of the star tortoises and the staff of Shwettaw Wildlife Sanctuary conserve over 2,000 star tortoises. — Zeyar Htet (Minbu)/KTZH

OPINION

Raise Intellectual Property Rights: Empowering creators

ON 31 October 2023, a significant development took place as the government announced the enforcement of the Industrial Design Law and the Copyright Law. These laws, which were initially approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 18 October 2019, mark a pivotal moment in safeguarding the rights of creators and inventors.

Intellectual property rights play a crucial role in protecting the fruits of creators' labour, whether they originate from literature, music, fine arts, or the realm of technology. These laws serve as the guardians of creators' rights, preserving their innovative production processes and creative designs, and ensuring their ownership of new and distinct products and structures. The significance of IP rights extends beyond national borders. These rights are instrumental in foreign trade, investment, trade promotion, and scientific and technological collaboration. As we find ourselves in an era of rapid technological advancement, government agencies, entrepreneurs, and private individuals must enhance their understanding of IP laws and apply this knowledge in their day-to-day activities to stay ahead of the competition. Obtaining product registration grants business owners the invaluable right to a trademark. Similarly, it empowers them to protect the content of their advertisements, images, and literary and artistic works under the umbrella of the Copyright Law.

A robust IP rights framework not only fosters economic growth but also attracts foreign investments. Thanks to these rights, both private businesses and government agencies gain access to cutting-edge technologies, thus enhancing their productivity and contributing to the growth of the economy. Entrepreneurs, creators, and private entities can fully enjoy the IP rights granted to them by the law.

For those who breach these rights, legal consequences await. Violators must be mindful of their actions, which entail the illicit appropriation of newly-created fine arts, technologies, production processes, and other innovative works, often driven by selfish motives and without regard for the original creators' interests.

Only when individuals can bask in the rewards of their creative endeavours, safe in the knowledge that their rights are protected, will they be motivated to continue innovating. As the IP rights laws come into full effect, creators and inventors will undoubtedly be inspired to produce newer and more innovative works.

The implementation of the Industrial Design Law and the Copyright Law is a significant milestone for creators and inventors as not only fosters innovation but also plays a pivotal role in economic development and foreign investment attraction. The protection of IP rights serves as the cornerstone for progress, ultimately leading to a more vibrant and dynamic creative landscape.

ACCORDING to the confirmed shreds of evidence, ancient medical practice was existed 10,000 years before. But modern medical practice was well developed only.

In the 19th and 20th centuries with foundations of genetics, germs theory and antibiotics therapy. In the 1950s, the structure of DNA was uncovered and then the human genome project was completed in 2003. With the help of modern technologies, man had better known about the relationship between genes and major chronic diseases. Since the dawn of the Age of Genetics, the common opinion has been that DNA determines so much of who we are — from eye and hair colour to susceptibility to certain addictions, disorders, and even cancer.

However, until the end of the 20th century, almost all different medicines assumed that gene-related diseases were untreatable. Also in traditional Myanmar medicine, those diseases are defined as Wootnar (disease of compensation) and Kannar (disease of karma) and put them on the list of impossible to cure.

To this day, millions of people believe they are victims of heredity and attribute poor health to inevitable biochemical mechanics rather than a combination of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual causes. There is no doubt that some diseases, such as Huntington's chorea, beta thalassaemia, and cystic fibrosis, can be blamed entirely on one faulty gene. But single-gene disorders affect less than two per cent of the population; the vast majority of people come into this world with genes that should enable them to live a happy and healthy life. The diseases that are today's scourges — diabetes, heart disease, and cancer — short-circuit a happy and healthy life. These diseases, however, are not the result of a single gene, but of complex interactions among multiple genes and environmental factors.

The confusion of people occurred with the misunderstanding of two words; correlation and causation. Let's see the difference between those words based on a given situation. An ignition key, for example, can ignite the car to operate and the word correlation can be used in this scenario. The key is correlated



Mind Over Genes

By Saya Norm

with the control of the car. But the key can't control the car without the help of a man.

The person who turns the key actually controls the car. The genes related to causing diseases are the same phenomenon. The specific genes are correlated with an organism's behaviour and characteristics. But these genes are not activated until something triggers them. The notion that genes control biology is a supposition that has yet to be proven and, in fact, has been undermined by the latest scientific research.

The science of epigenetics, which literally means "control above genetics", has profoundly changed our understanding of how life is controlled. Epigenetic research has established that DNA blueprints passed down through genes are not set in concrete at birth. The genes are not destiny. Environmental influences including nutrition, stress, social engagement and emotion can modify those genes without

changing their basic blueprints. In this article, I'd like to emphasize the role of mental activity. One of the most important mental activities is social communication. An epigeneticist Steve Cole discovered that whole sectors of genes look markedly different in lonely people versus people who are socially secure.

In fact, social isolation is the best established and most robust social or psychological risk factor for disease out there. Nothing can compete. Of the 19,000 human genes, lonely and not lonely people showed sharply different gene expression responses in 209 genes, many of which play roles in inflammatory immune responses. That is why, among HIV carriers, lonely ones succumb so much faster to the disease than socially active ones. A similar result was also seen in the health comparison between poor kids and well-off kids. The poverty influence only didn't affect their health but kids' perception of their vulnerability and their

perception of how scary the world is, did. Thus, poor kids showed more asthma attacks and other health problems.

Ultimately, belief modification can induce rapid changes in gene activity.

When individuals raise their levels of optimism and deepen their social connections, they not only raise their level of happiness but also dramatically improve every single business and educational outcome tested for. Belief is important in healing because it plays a significant role in the mind-body connection and the overall well-being of an individual. Why belief is important in treating major diseases?

There are reasons which are crucial in the healing process. Those reasons are like these.

- Belief fosters hope and optimism which are essential components of the healing process. Hope provides individuals with the strength and determination to persevere

to treatment plans, adopting healthy lifestyle changes and seeking appropriate support. Belief can provide the necessary resilience and determination to overcome challenges and setbacks along the healing path.

- The mind and body are intricately connected and our thoughts emotions and beliefs can have a profound impact on our physical well-being. Positive beliefs and attitudes can boost the immune system, reduce stress and improve overall health. On the other hand, negative beliefs and pessimistic attitudes can hinder healing and exacerbate illness or symptoms. By cultivating positive beliefs and maintaining a hopeful mindset individuals can facilitate their own healing process.

- The placebo effect refers to the phenomenon where a person experiences a positive response to a treatment simply because they believe it will work even if the treatment itself doesn't have any pharmacological effects. This highlights the power of belief in influencing the body's response and healing process. Believing in the efficacy of a treatment can activate the body's natural healing mechanisms and enhance the overall outcome.

Gene alone can't decide your destiny. Even when you've inherited genes from your biological parents, they might or might not be active in your own markup.

A condition in which a gene is activated, in other words, gene expression can be affected by your experience and even by your thoughts and feelings. More recent discoveries show that the epigenome can and does change during your entire lifetime. Alterations are made in response to your environment, which includes your surroundings, life experiences, diet, personal behaviour and even beliefs.

It is true that problems caused by our behavioural genes can be fixed by our minds. We can experience personal empowerment. By assessing our thoughts and then through editing and reversing negative thoughts, we can manifest a healthy, happy and harmonious life. It is mind-over-genes matter.

Rare lungs cells play important role in cystic fibrosis: Study

These ionocytes, first discovered in human lungs and airways five years ago, have been of particular interest to cystic fibrosis (CF) researchers.

A new study from the University of Iowa found that pulmonary ionocytes, which are rare lung cells, aid in the absorption of water and salt from the airway surface. This cell behaviour is the polar opposite of what was expected, and it could have implications for cystic fibrosis (CF) lung disease.

Scientists discovered ionocytes, a type of cell seen in fish gills and frog skin, in the lining of human lungs and airways five years ago. These pulmonary ionocytes piqued the interest of cystic fibrosis researchers because, despite accounting for only about one per cent of all cells in the airway lining, they carry around half of the total amount of CFTR, the protein that is faulty in cystic fibrosis. CFTR channels that are present in airway secretory cells are known to secrete chloride ions out of the cell and into the thin layer of liquid that covers the airway surface. This airway surface liquid plays a vital role in defending the lungs against harmful germs and particles.

Because water "follows" salt, the outflow of chloride ions promotes hydration of the airway surface. In contrast, the new study found that CFTR channels in ionocytes do the opposite; they absorb chloride ions and promote moisture absorption. "The key feature that allows ionocytes to absorb chloride is the ionocyte-specific barttin chloride channel on the opposite membrane of the cell from the CFTR channel," says Ian Thornell, PhD, UI research assistant professor of internal medicine and senior author of the new study published in the 16 October issue of *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*. "Together, these two channels form a conduit for chloride through the ionocyte that helps drain the liquid lining the airways into the body."

SOURCE: ANI



ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/FREEPIK

TECH/ENVIRON WORLD

Error-prone AI chatbot dog leads Japan's elderly astray

Osaka authorities introduced "Dai-chan" this year, claiming it to be the first of its kind in a country with a significant ageing population.

A cartoon canine AI chatbot designed to cheer up and inform lonely older residents of western Japan is in the doghouse after providing error-laden responses.

Powered by generative artificial intelligence, "Dai-chan" was this year launched by Osaka authorities who called it the first of its kind in a country where one in 10 people is age 80 or older.

But the chatbot, which features a Shiba Inu cartoon dog

and answers in the Osaka dialect, has shown itself far from faithful to the truth.

When a user asked about the World Expo planned in Osaka in 2025, the dog incorrectly responded that the event was cancelled.

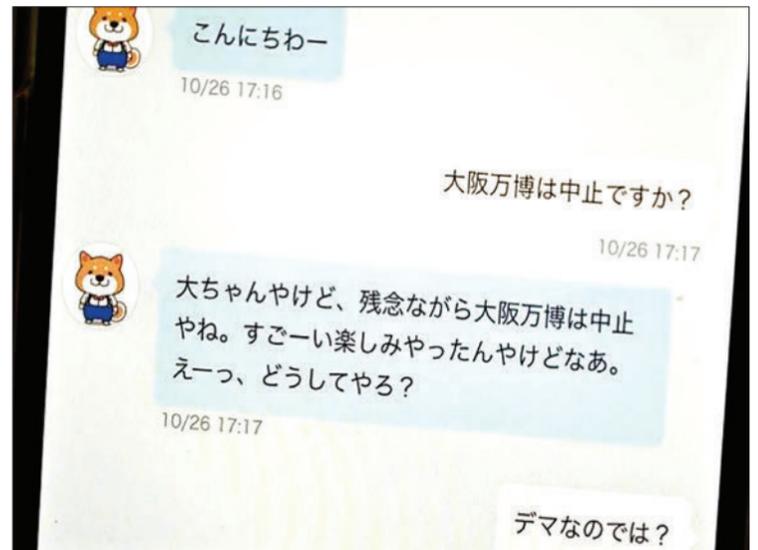
That answer gained public attention, with Japanese newspapers and broadcasters reporting on the dog who got the wrong end of the stick.

"Dai-chan, you're good," one social media user joked.

Despite slow progress and budget challenges, the world fair is still scheduled to go ahead.

Among other incorrect answers, Dai-chan said the "G7 foreign ministers' meeting will be held on 4 November" rather than the slated 7-8 November.

Asked by an AFP reporter if the mooted Sapporo Olympic Games will be pushed back, the bot dog said: "The Sapporo Olympics is postponed! It's not cancelled so I look forward to it!" — AFP



A text conversation with generative AI chatbot "Dai-chan" on the messaging app Line, with a wrong answer about the Osaka Expo being cancelled. **PHOTO: AFP**

Grandma chimps offer clues for evolution of menopause in humans

A recent paper in the journal *Science* suggests that chimpanzees should also be included in this category and provides insights into the evolutionary reasons behind menopause in women.

HUMANS and some whales are the only known species in which females live long after they stop being able to reproduce.

A new paper in the journal *Science* on Thursday argues that chimpanzees should now be added to the list, and offers clues about the evolutionary imperatives behind menopause in women.

"Chimpanzees have been studied in the wild for a long time, and you might think there's nothing left to learn about them," senior author Kevin Langergraber of Arizona State University told AFP. "I think this research shows us that's not true."

The vast majority of mammal females produce offspring



The study, led by senior author Kevin Langergraber from Arizona State University, challenges the belief that there's nothing more to learn about chimpanzees, even though they've been extensively studied in the wild. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

until the end of their lives, but humans experience a decline in reproductive hormones and the permanent cessation of ovary function around age 50.

Females of five species of toothed whale, including orcas and narwhals, similarly survive well beyond fertile age. — AFP

Robot maker dreams of turning sci-fi into reality

RYO Yoshida has monster-sized dreams for his driveable, "Gundam"-like robot, even though its huge size makes it hard to park and the \$3-million price tag will crush most wallets.

An imposing 4.5 metres (14.7 feet) high and weighing 3.5 tonnes (7,716 pounds), "Archax" can be moved and operated by

a pilot who clammers up to the high-tech cockpit.

"I want to make people's dreams come true, the dream people once had as a child, which is to get on board a robot and control it just like science fiction movies," said Yoshida, CEO of the start-up Tsubame Industries.

"This is a product to help people taste a bit of that world," the 25-year-old told AFP at the Japan Mobility Show where his monster was a star of the show.

When manoeuvred in the vehicle mode, "Archax" is capable of moving at 10 kilometres (six miles) per hour, according to the company. — AFP

Despite record low ice, nations again fail to agree Antarctic reserves

A multinational group on Antarctic conservation failed to break a years-long deadlock and agree new marine reserves in the region, despite record low ice, environmental groups said Friday.

The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources ended a fortnight of meetings in Australia once again unable to reach a deal on three new marine protected areas (MPAs).

The proposed sanctuaries around Antarctica would safeguard nearly four million square kilometres (1.5 million square miles) of ocean from human activities, in the largest act of ocean protection in history.

"It's frustrating that discussions for MPAs have been ongoing for more than a decade and utterly disappointing that CCAMLR has been unable to make significant progress again, particularly following a year of unprecedented and concerning change for Antarctica," said WWF's Antarctic conservation manager Emily Grilly.

The areas were first proposed in 2010, before being scaled down in 2017, in an attempt to win more support.

But their creation has persistently been blocked by China and Russia, including most recently at the commission's June meeting in Chile. — AFP



The proposed sanctuary would ban fishing in a vast area in the Weddell sea, protecting key species including Adelie penguins. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Official Swedish dictionary completed after 140 years

The ambitious lexicographic project began in 1883, and after nearly a century and a half, it is now finished. During this time, 137 full-time employees have contributed to its creation.



The Swedish Academy Dictionary (SAOB), which serves as the comprehensive record of the Swedish language, has been completed after 140 years. The final volume was sent to the printer's last week. **PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPHER JOHAN NILSSON (@JOHANJNILSSON/INSTAGRAM/AFP**

THE definitive record of the Swedish language has been completed after 140 years, with the dictionary's final volume sent to the printer's last week, its editor said Wednesday.

The Swedish Academy Dictionary (SAOB), the Swedish equivalent of the Oxford English Dictionary and drawn up by the Swedish Academy which awards the Nobel Prize in Literature, counts 33,111 pages across 39 volumes.

"It was started in 1883

and now we're done. Over the years 137 full-time employees have worked on it," Christian Mattsson told AFP.

Despite reaching the major milestone, their work is not completely done yet: the volumes A to R are now so old they need to be revised to include modern words.

"One such word is 'allergy' which came into the Swedish language around the 1920s but is not in the A volume because it was published in 1893," Mattsson said.

"Barbie doll", "app", and "computer" are among the 10,000 words that will be added to the dictionary over the next seven years.

The SAOB is a historical record of the Swedish language from 1521 to modern day. It is available online and there are only around 200 copies published, used mainly by researchers and linguists.

The Academy also publishes a regular dictionary of contemporary Swedish. — AFP

'Too hot outside': Saudis take to walking, jogging in malls

THE shops have not yet opened, but the air-conditioned concourse of a Riyadh shopping mall is crowded anyway — a haven for walkers and joggers grateful for somewhere cool to exercise.

The early-morning crowd includes 55-year-old engineer Mohammed Sultan, in a white T-shirt and black trainers, doing laps around the mall trailed by his niqab-wearing wife.

"It's too hot outside to exercise. The weather here is cold and does not cause thirst," Sul-



Women exercising in a mall in Riyadh. **PHOTO: HAITHAM EL-TABEI / AFP**

tan says, noting that even in October, the end of the hot period in Saudi Arabia, daytime tem-

peratures can still approach 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). — AFP

Iraq dig unearths 2,700-year-old winged sculpture largely intact

A dig in northern Iraq has unearthed a 2,700-year-old alabaster sculpture of the winged Assyrian deity Lamassu, which was found largely intact despite its large dimensions.

Only the head was missing and that was already in the collection of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad after being confiscated by customs officers from smugglers in the 1990s, the dig's French leader Pascal Butterlin said. "I never unearthed anything this big in my life before," Butterlin said of the 18-tonne sculpture measuring 3.8 by 3.9 metres (about 12.5 by 12.8 feet). "Normally, it's only in Egypt or Cambodia that you find pieces

this big.

"The attention to detail is unbelievable," said the professor of Middle East archaeology at the University of Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne.

Erected at the entrance to the ancient city of Khorsabad, some 15 kilometres (10 miles) north of the modern city of Mosul, the sculpture shows the Lamassu, an Assyrian deity with a human head, the body of a bull and the wings of a bird.

It was commissioned during the reign of King Sargon II who ruled from 722 to 705 BC and erected at the city's gates to provide protection, Butterlin said. — AFP



This 2,700 year old relief uncovered by archaeologists in northern Iraq depicts a lamassu, an Assyrian deity portrayed with a human head, the body of a bull and the wings of a bird. **PHOTO: ZAID AL-OBEIDI / AFP**

TikTok removed 4 mln 'violative' videos in EU last month

TIKTOK said Wednesday it pulled four million "violative" videos in the EU in September, in its first transparency report since a new law against illegal and harmful content came into force across the bloc.

The figures were given as part of TikTok's obligation under the EU's new Digital Services Act (DSA) for major online platforms to provide a transparency report every six months.

TikTok did not previously release monthly removal data for the bloc as a whole, leaving the significance of the September figure unclear until compared with future reports.

The DSA, which came into effect in August, threatens very large online platforms and search engines with fines that can go up to six per cent of global turnover for violations.

TikTok and 18 other platforms fall into that category for heightened EU scrutiny, because they have at least 45 million monthly users in the bloc.

Others include: Meta's Facebook and Instagram; Alphabet's YouTube and Google Search; X, formerly known as Twitter; Microsoft's Bing search engine and LinkedIn; Apple's AppStore; Alibaba's AliExpress; and Wikipedia. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

Oil sinks on easing fears of Mideast regional war

WORLD oil prices sank Monday as traders hoped a region-wide conflict could still be avoided as Israel said its forces killed dozens of Hamas militants in clashes in Gaza.

Equities rose in Europe and on Wall Street as the sliding oil market lifted hopes that the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England will opt for no-change when they announce their latest interest-rate decisions on Wednesday and Thursday respectively.

Crude futures pared Friday's near three per cent gains as Israel's military continued air and ground operations in Gaza.

Ground battles raged inside the northern Gaza Strip on Monday and Israeli tanks were seen on the outskirts of its largest city in the war against the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

'Highly volatile'

"Oil prices are coming under pressure... despite an intensification of the Israel-Hamas war," said Tickmill analyst James Harte. Despite Israel stepping up



(FILES) Oil-storage tanks are seen from above in Carson, California, on 25 April 2020. PHOTO: AFP

its advances into Gaza, "for now markets appear to be looking beyond the reports on the view that the conflict looks likely to remain contained.

"Although this view is keeping oil prices lower for now, the

situation remains highly volatile and any sign of the conflict spilling over into a wider Middle East conflict should see oil prices firmly bid," said Harte.

Israel's intensifying land and air campaign since Hamas's 7

October attacks has heightened fears for the 2.4 million civilians trapped inside besieged Gaza, where the Hamas-ruled health ministry says more than 8,300 have died. Dozens of Israeli tanks rolled into the fringes of Gaza

City, eyewitnesses said, after a night of heavy clashes in nearby areas where the army said it had killed dozens of fighters and Hamas also reported fierce fighting.

The Israeli land forces are supported by heavy fire from fighter jets, drones and artillery that the army said had struck more than 600 targets within 24 hours, up sharply from 450 a day earlier.

Instead of a broad offensive, officials have currently opted for targeted attacks on a day-to-day basis, tempering worries of an all-out war that could drag in Iran and even the United States.

The limited escalation also provided some support for equities, as a bit of bargain hunting after sharp falls last week, which sent the S&P 500 into a correction, or a drop of 10 per cent from its recent peak in July.

"Entering the 'correction zone' has triggered some buy-the-weakness interest predicated on the speculation that the market is due for a bounce," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. — AFP

Facebook, Instagram to offer paid ad-free Europe subscriptions

META announced on Monday that Facebook and Instagram users in Europe will be able to buy subscriptions to use the social networks without any advertising from next month.

"To comply with evolving European regulations, we are introducing a new subscription option in the EU, EEA (European Economic Area) and Switzerland," it said in a statement.

The company has taken the decision after a series of tougher European Union rules intended to rein in big tech, including the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

The EU's rules are a risk to Meta's lucrative revenue from advertising since they seek to curb its use of users' data without consent.

Meta said European users can subscribe for a fee of 9.99



This picture taken on 12 January 2023 in Toulouse, southwestern France shows a smartphone and a computer screen displaying the logos of Instagram app and its parent company Meta. PHOTO: AFP

euros (\$10.50) a month on the web, or 12.99 euros on mobile phones using iOS and Android systems.

Users will still be able to enjoy the platforms for free with advertising, but the information of those who pay "will not be

used for ads", Meta said.

Only people aged 18 and over will be able to buy subscriptions. Meta believes that taking this move will assuage EU regulators' concerns over its data collection and how ads are targeted. — AFP

Laos to adopt stronger measures to address inflation, weak kip

THE Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) Central Committee has resolved action to adopt stronger measures to rein in inflation and stabilize the value of the Lao currency kip to ease the impacts on the public.

The Party's 11th Central Committee adopted the resolution at its seventh session, which took place in Lao capital Vientiane on 23 to 26 October, Lao national Television reported on Monday.

Chaired by the Party General Secretary Thongloun Sisoulith, the meeting agreed on measures not only to tackle economic challenges but also to push for speedier recovery from the flooding that occurred in many parts of the country this year.

The sectors concerned

were instructed to formulate plans to deal with possible bushfires and to do more to promote agricultural production, in order to reduce imports of items that can be grown or produced in Laos.

The meeting also noted the complex changes taking place in the region and globally that are affecting the Lao economy.

Although Laos has suffered economic and financial distress over the past year, with high inflation, continuing depreciation of the kip, extreme weather events and drug trafficking reported across the country, the government has been able to sustain economic growth of 4.2 per cent and prevent the country from being dragged into default. — Xinhua

Pakistan gears up efforts to implement agricultural projects

PAKISTAN has geared up efforts to implement agricultural projects, the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives said on Sunday.

In the current fiscal year from July 2023 to June 2024, several projects were allocated for the agriculture sector, which is on the top priority list of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), according to a statement released by the ministry.

The statement said that Pakistan has vast potential for foreign investments in the field of agriculture as the country is a semi-industrialized economy with a well-integrated agricul-



Farmers harvest paddy in a field in Lahore, Pakistan, on 30 October 2023. Pakistan has geared up efforts to implement agricultural projects, the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives said on Sunday.

PHOTO: XINHUA

tural sector. The sector contributes 22.9 per cent to gross domestic product, creates 37.4 per cent of jobs, ensures food security and provides raw materials for industry.

While gearing up the efforts, the ministry asked relevant ministries to accelerate the implementation so that projects can be completed timely, especially at a time when the SIFC took the lead and agriculture is the top priority besides other key sectors, it added.

The SIFC was established earlier this year to attract foreign and local investments while targeting five key areas which include agriculture, defence production, mining and minerals, information technology and telecommunication, and energy, according to the statement. — Xinhua

Toyota posts record global output, sales in April-Sept period

TOYOTA Motor Corp said Monday it posted record global production and sales figures for a fiscal half in the April-September period, as output picked up on the back of an easing chip shortage.

Toyota built 5.06 million vehicles worldwide in the fiscal first half, up 12.8 per cent from the same period a year earlier, reaching record production levels for the first time in four years.

The improved availability of chips helped the world's largest carmaker by volume sell an all-time high 5.17 million vehicles at home and abroad in the six months that ended in September, up 9.1 per cent from a year earlier.

It is the first time the Japanese automaker saw its production and sales both top the five million mark in a fiscal first half, as it aims to manufacture and sell more than 10 million vehicles for the full year ending in March.

Its output was boosted by increased production in North America and Japan, while in China it dropped 7.3 per cent as sales struggled in the country amid intensifying competition from domestic rivals.



Toyota Motor Corp President Koji Sato speaks in front of a FT-3e electric SUV concept vehicle during a media briefing at the Japan Mobility Show at Tokyo Big Sight hall in Tokyo on 25 October 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Toyota's sales grew on robust demand in Japan as well as overseas, including North America and Europe. Its domestic sales soared 33.8 per cent to 790,168 vehicles and overseas sales climbed 5.5 per cent to 4.38 million units.

Toyota's electric vehicle sales jumped sevenfold to 58,984 units globally for the period after it launched new models to broaden its emissions-free lineup.

The automaker sold 1.83 million electric, hybrid and other types of battery-driven

vehicles, up 38.1 per cent.

Toyota's global production and sales for September were also a record high. Monthly output grew 1.5 per cent from a year earlier to 900,919 units while the sales increased 11.6 per cent to 921,308 cars.

Global sales by Japan's eight major automakers, including Toyota, in the April-September period rose 7.8 per cent on year to 12.30 million units, with seven of the companies recording higher sales. — Kyodo

Chinese electric carmaker BYD posts record quarterly profit

CHINA'S top electric carmaker BYD announced a record quarterly profit Monday, underscoring the firm's growing dominance in a high-tech sector that is fiercely contested by both domestic and foreign competitors.

The Shenzhen-based firm posted a profit of 10.4 billion yuan (\$1.42 billion) for the July-September period, its highest-ever earnings during a single quarter and up 82 per cent on-year, a statement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange showed.

The figure was in line with BYD's previous forecast of between 9.55 billion yuan and 11.55 billion yuan in quarterly earnings.

BYD's cumulative net profit for January-September reached

21.4 billion yuan, more than doubling on-year and surpassing last year's total annual earnings of 16.6 billion yuan.

Electric vehicle demand has soared in recent years in China, which is the world's biggest producer of greenhouse gases in absolute terms.

BYD, whose investors include US investment titan Warren Buffet, wants its sales to be dominated by electric and hybrid vehicles by 2035.

Earlier this year, BYD became the first global manufacturer to pass the five million milestone in electric vehicle production, crowning itself "the world's leading manufacturer of new energy vehicles and power batteries". — AFP



In this photo taken on 11 September 2023, BYD electric cars waiting to be loaded on a ship are stacked at the international container terminal of Taicang Port at Suzhou Port, in China's eastern Jiangsu Province. **PHOTO: AFP**

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

Ground battles rage in Gaza as concern grows for hospitals

GROUND battles raged inside the northern Gaza Strip on Monday and Israeli tanks were seen on the outskirts of its largest city in the war against the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Israel's intensifying land and air campaign since Hamas's 7 October attacks has heightened fears for the 2.4 million civilians trapped inside besieged Gaza, where the Hamas-ruled health ministry says more than 8,000 have died.

Dozens of Israeli tanks rolled into the fringes of Gaza City, eyewitnesses said, after a night of heavy clashes in nearby areas where the army said it had killed dozens of "terrorists" and Hamas also reported fierce fighting. The Israeli land forces are supported by heavy fire from fighter jets, drones and artillery that the army said had struck more than 600 targets within 24 hours, up sharply from 450 a day earlier.

Concern has surged about the widening humanitarian disaster, with fears centred on Gaza hospitals inside Israeli-mandated evacuation zones where medics warn that many patients cannot be moved.

The army said troops overnight "killed dozens of terrorists who barricaded themselves in buildings and



A picture taken from Israel's southern city of Sderot shows an Israeli tank advancing in the north of the Gaza Strip, on 30 October 2023 amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement. **PHOTO: AFP**

tunnels and attempted to attack" while an aircraft struck a building "with over 20 Hamas terrorist operatives inside".

Columns of Israeli tanks and armoured bulldozers were seen churning through the sand, and Israeli snipers took positions inside emptied residential buildings, in footage released by the army.

Israeli tanks were later spotted on the edges of Gaza City, usually the most

densely populated urban area but now emptied of many residents following repeated Israeli evacuation orders.

A witness told AFP the Israeli tanks blocked the strip's major north-south road and had been "firing at any vehicle that tries to go along it".

AFP journalists are not inside Gaza City, following Israeli warnings that the territory's northern areas must be considered a war zone. — AFP

Japan's first fully autonomous vehicle suspended

JAPAN'S first pilot project of a fully autonomous self-driving vehicle has been suspended after a minor accident with a parked bicycle, officials said Monday.

It is the latest blow to efforts worldwide to promote driverless vehicles, a technology with particular potential benefits in ageing Japan.

The driverless bus-like vehicle, similar to an electric golf cart, started operations in Eihei-ji in Fukui prefecture in central Japan in May. This was after Japan last year allowed Level 4 self-driving vehicles on public roads, meaning that they can operate only within a limited area.

On Sunday it hit a bicycle that was parked on a roadside, said local official Norifumi Hiramoto. None of the four passengers was injured and the vehicle developers are investigating the cause, he said.

"We are suspending the operation until the cause of the incident becomes clear," he said. A Fukui police spokesman confirmed the accident caused no injuries. The vehicle, designed to avoid obstacles with sensors and radars, has been driving at a maximum speed of 12 kilometres (7.5 miles) per hour. — AFP

Iran says attacks on US forces due to 'wrong American policies'

IRAN said Monday attacks on US forces in Iraq and elsewhere in the region were a result of "wrong American policies" including support for Israel in its war against Hamas.

US forces have come under repeated attack in Iraq and Syria since Hamas gunmen poured across the Gaza border on 7 October, killing 1,400 people and seizing 239 hostages, according to Israeli officials.

Israel has in response unleashed a withering bombing campaign against the Gaza Strip that the Hamas-controlled health ministry said on Monday has killed 8,306 people.

"The attack on American bases in the region, especially in Iraq, is the result of wrong American policies in the re-

gion, which we hope it will correct," said Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani.

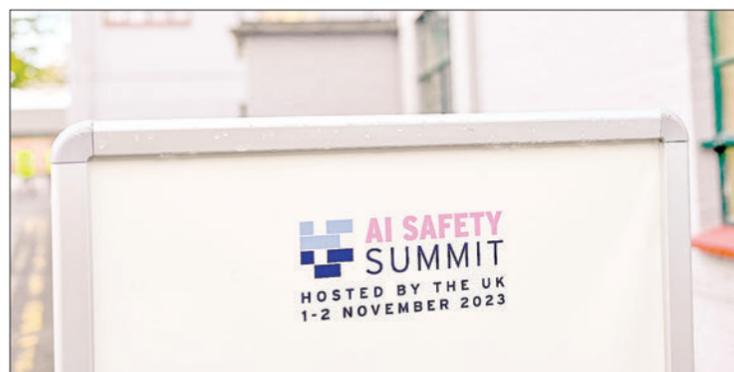
He said the attacks were carried out by groups against "the US presence in the region and seriously opposed to American support for the crimes of the Zionist regime (Israel)".

"You reap what you sow," he said, urging the United States to "stop" backing Israel.

Iran, which backs Hamas financially and militarily, has hailed the 7 October attacks as a "success" but denied any involvement.

Iran army's chief of staff Mohammad Bagheri on Monday said Hamas was "ready for an Israeli ground attack". — AFP

UK prepares to host global leaders' gathering on AI



The "AI Safety Summit" is advertised at Bletchley Park, near Milton Keynes, north of London, on 26 October 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE UK government will welcome foreign political leaders, tech industry figures, academics and others this week for a two-day summit billed as the first of its kind on artificial intelligence (AI).

The gathering, set to be

attended by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, US Vice-President Kamala Harris, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, will focus on growing fears about the implications of so-called frontier AI.

The most advanced generation of AI models, they have prompted concerns around everything from job losses and cyber attacks to humans losing control of the systems they have designed. Sunak and other leaders have increasingly joined the industry itself in arguing current knowledge and regulation of frontier AI is likely insufficient for the challenges it will pose.

"My vision, and our ultimate goal, should be to work towards a more international approach to safety where we collaborate with partners to ensure AI systems are safe before they are released," the British leader said in a speech earlier this week. — AFP

SPORTS

Myanmar Paralympic sports team arrives back

THE Myanmar Para Sports Games stands in the 26th position by holding three bronze medals in the 4th Asian Para Games held in Hangzhou, China, from 19 to 28 October.

The Myanmar Para Sports Contingent took part in three sports events, securing three medals. These medals came from track and field events but athletes from swimming and sitting volleyball events failed to secure medals.

For the Myanmar team, Soe Pay bagged one bronze medal each in the men's 200-metre T64 event and men's 100-metre T64 event whereas Lawla Win won one bronze medal in the women's 100-metre T63/64 event.

After the Asian Para Games, host China stood first with 214 gold, 167 silver and 140 bronze



Myanmar athletes who returned from Asian Para Games, along with welcoming officials, are seen at the Yangon International Airport yesterday. **PHOTO: BALA SOE**

medals. The number of gold medals for the Chinese team exceeded more than 150 medals rather than the opponent teams.

Behind the Chinese team,

Iran stood second with 44 gold, 46 silver and 41 bronze medals, followed by Japan in the third position with 42 gold, 49 silver and 59 bronze medals, South

Korea in the fourth position with 30 gold, 33 silver and 40 bronze medals and India in the fifth position with 29 gold, 31 silver and 51 bronze medals.

The Games comprised more than 500 events of 22 sports with the participation of athletes from 44 countries. — Ko Nyi Lay/TTA

Sabalenka feels 'disrespected' by WTA at 'unsafe' Cancun finale



Belarus's Aryna Sabalenka hits a return to Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina during their women's singles quarter final match of the WTA China Open tennis tournament in Beijing on 6 October 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

WORLD number one Aryna Sabalenka said she feels "disrespected" by tennis' governing body and claimed the hastily-built court being used for the WTA Finals at the Mexican resort of Cancun is "not safe".

Sabalenka eased past Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-0, 6-1 in her group-stage opener on Sunday but that didn't prevent

her from taking aim at the organization.

"I have to say that I am very disappointed with the WTA and the experience so far at the WTA Finals," the 25-year-old from Belarus wrote on Instagram.

"As a player I feel disrespected by the WTA. I think most of us do. This is not the level of organization we expect

for the Finals. "To be honest I don't feel safe moving on this court a lot of the time."

Sabalenka claimed players were not allowed to practise on the court until the day before the opening.

"It's just not acceptable to me with so much on the line and with so much at stake."

Cancun was only confirmed as the host city of the prestigious season-ending championship on 7 September after Saudi Arabia had reportedly been lined up to stage the event. That possibility sparked criticism from US legends Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert among others.

Instead, the tournament has returned to Mexico for the second time in three years, after Guadalajara hosted in 2021.

Sabalenka said her criticism of the event was aimed at the WTA, not local organizers.

"I definitely want to show my appreciation for the local tournament organizers, everyone that built the court at the last minute, and everyone that's working here at the event," she wrote. — AFP

Struggling Ajax hire John van 't Schip as new interim boss

DUTCH giants Ajax, rooted to the bottom of the first division for the first time in their illustrious history, on Monday appointed former player John van 't Schip as interim manager.

His contract runs until 30 June 2025, Ajax said in a statement. Van 't Schip played for Ajax for more than 10 years and has previous coaching experience, notably with the Greek national team. "I am happy that it's done and I am really looking forward to starting at the club where it all began for me," said the 51-year-old in a statement.

"I have a really good feeling from the conversations that I've had with everyone. Ajax needs to get back on a positive sporting path and I'm keen to work towards that," he added.

Ajax are suffering a catastrophic start to the season, earning only five points from eight games leaving them an unprecedented bottom place in the Eredivisie. The four-time European champions had sacked Maurice Steijn earlier this month after a string of bad results. Hedwiges Maduro had been the interim boss. — AFP



Ajax players applaud their fans after the UEFA Europa League Group B football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Ajax at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton, southern England on 26 October 2023. Brighton won the match 2-0. **PHOTO: AFP**



This aerial photo taken on 19 September 2023 shows a solar photovoltaic power project under construction in Zhangye, in China's northwestern Gansu province. **PHOTO: AFP**

Set up renewable energy in developing world: report

RENEWABLE power must be increased more rapidly in developing countries to ensure the energy transition necessary to limit global warming, according to a new report released Monday.

The latest finding came from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), published shortly before the world convenes in Dubai for COP28.

"Given their growing electricity demand and the important role of renewables in addressing the significant energy access deficit in these countries" renew-

ables must be boosted, said IRENA.

Renewable power generation must triple globally by 2030, said one of its key recommendations.

That was required to bring it in line with the ambitious goals set by COP28 President Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber for the UN climate conference held from 30 November to 12 December.

The target set by the 2015 Paris Agreement was to try to cap Earth's temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-in-

dustrial levels.

The world must also mobilize to reach 1,300 billion dollars annually in renewable energy investments by 2030, compared to 486 billion dollars in 2022, said the report.

But to do so it will be necessary to "minimize investment risks and provide access to low-cost financing" in developing countries, it added. To support the Global South in its energy transition, the IRENA report recommended a reform of global financial systems. — AFP

Israel-Hamas conflict could lead to oil price spike: World Bank

THE war between Israel and Hamas could trigger price shocks for raw materials such as oil and agriculture products if the conflict escalates across the Middle East, the World Bank warned in a report Monday.

Oil has already risen six per cent since the latest round of fighting, sparked when Hamas militants from Gaza stormed southern Israel and killed more than 1,400 people, mostly civilians, and seized nearly 240 hostages, according

to Israeli officials.

Israel has responded with an unrelenting bombardment of Gaza, which the Hamas-run health ministry says has killed more than 8,000 people, nearly half of them children. The conflict between Israel and Hamas comes as Russia's war in Ukraine has already put pressure on markets, with that war being "the biggest shock to commodity markets since the 1970s", warned World Bank chief economist Indermit Gill. — AFP



A general view shows the World Bank Group headquarters building in Washington, DC, on 9 April 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Concerns mount for elderly as fewer Japanese under-40s donate blood

THE number of under-40s who have donated blood in Japan in the last decade has declined 33 per cent, according to data from the Japanese Red Cross Society, posing a concern as the country's population rapidly ages.

Despite a partial recovery in donations by teens since the coronavirus pandemic, the Red Cross and health ministry are stepping up efforts to raise awareness, particularly among young people, about the importance of making voluntary blood donations.

In Japan, people aged between 16 and 69 can donate blood. Of the 5.01 million total donations in fiscal 2022, 217,000 were by teens, 696,000 were from those in their 20s and 753,000 in their 30s.

The majority of the donated blood is used in the treatment of people in their 50s and older. The decline in donations by younger generations, if it continues, could pose a serious supply shortage going forward as demand overwhelms the available supply.

The Red Cross partly attributed the decline to the fact fewer high schools are taking part in blood donation campaigns. The ratio of high schools that took part in the donation programme fell to around 20 per cent from some 60 per cent 30 years ago.

The government in June called for additional efforts to educate teens about blood donation in its annual basic policy on economic and fiscal management.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare is considering creating a simple handbook on blood donation to educate students who are not yet eligible on how vital donations are to society, according to officials.

The Red Cross has introduced a smartphone app, where registered members can make blood donation reservations and also earn points that can be exchanged for gifts.

"Many lives are saved by blood donations. We hope to get as many people to cooperate as possible," a ministry official said. — Kyodo