

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

Junior military medical officers urged to enhance leadership capacity



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing returns the salute of the cadet battallions at the Defence Services Medical Academy in Yangon yesterday.



The Senior General presents the Best Cadet Award.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing yesterday morning delivered an address at the passing out parade at the parade ground of the 24th Intake of Defence Services Medical Academy in Yangon.

The Senior General took a salute from the cadet battalions and inspected the graduation cadet company.

The Senior General presented the Best Cadet Award to Cadet Aung Kyaw Min, Excellent Award in Training to Cadet Saw Pyae Aung and Excellent Award in Studies to Cadet Naing Ye Hla.

On the occasion, the Senior General delivered a speech. He said: As Tatmadaw is ready to assist the people whenever natural disasters occur, medical

officers and military personnel of the Directorate of Medical Services actively participated in the rescue, relief, and rehabilitation process of the storm victims.

CRPH, NUG, and PDF terrorists committed the persuasion of health staff, in-

cluding medical doctors and nurses, to be CDMs with pressure and intimidation to stop the mechanism of healthcare services of the State. Moreover, those terrorists set fire to hospitals and dispensaries.

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National-level committee meeting on resettlement, closure of IDP camps held

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Naga traditional New Year Festival to be celebrated on 15 Jan

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7 special criminal appeal cases, 6 special civil appeal cases passed judgements; 5 special civil appeal cases heard

A special appeal tribunal consisting of Chief Justice of the Union U Thar Htay and Judges of the Supreme Court of the Union Daw Khin May Yi, U Thaung Naing, Daw Thin Thin Nwet and Daw Pyone Pyone Aye was convened Monday morning at the Supreme Court of the Union and passed judgements for seven special criminal appeal case Nos 1/2023 (Yangon), 2/2023 (Mandalay), 3/2023 (Kachin), 4/2023 (Kachin), 5/2023 (Kachin), 6/2023 (Rakhine) and 7/2023 (Yangon) and, six special civil appeal cases – Nos 49/2022 (Mon), 50/2022 (Mon), 29/2023 (Shan), 30/2023 (Shan), 34/2023 (Ayeyawady), and 36/2023 (Mandalay).

In addition, a total of five special civil appeal cases — Nos 26/2022 (Mandalay), 7/2023 (Bago), 18/2023 (Yangon), 37/2023 (Shan) and 38/2023 (Magway) were heard. — MNA

U Tin Yu concurrently accredited as Ambassador of Myanmar to Oman

THE Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Tin Yu, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, concurrently as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Sultanate of Oman. — MNA

Readiness for Youth & Literary Arts Festival on 76th Independence Day

THE Youth and Literary Arts Festival will be held at Wunna Theikdi Gymnasium B in Nay Pyi Taw in commemoration of the 76th anniversary of Independence Day from 20 to 22 December.

The festival aims at sharpening the intelligibility and critical thinking of youths, motivating the young people to read books and publications, know the advantages of literature, uplift patriotic spirit, prestige and integrity through literature and fine arts, adore the independence of the nation with the knowledge of independence struggle and sufferings in the colonial era, enjoy peace, stability and beautifying scenes of the nation with development activities as well as panoramic rural scenes to have the soul

for adoring the relevant regions and states, and easily know endeavours of relevant ministries through the displays of booths at the event.

The preparations such as displaying of books and journals for the festival, photos of “Hlapa Thaya Pyi Myanmar” (Beautiful and Pleasant Myanmar) colour photo contest, traditional food shops of ethnic people, bookshops, arrangement of booths by 15 ministries, ceremonial procedures for the opening ceremony and rehearsals of artistes and students for entertainment programmes were conducted yesterday.

The festival grounds will be open to the public from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm from 20 to 22 December. — MNA/KTZH

Commissioning ceremony held for graduate cadets of DSMA 24th Intake

THE commissioning ceremony of the 24th Intake of Defence Services Medical Academy (DSMA) was held yesterday morning at the DSMA convocation hall, and it was attended by Lt-Gen Lin Aung, Military Appointment-General of the office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, Acting Commandant of the DSMA Brig-Gen Zaw Marn Phyto and graduating cadets.



The 24th Intake Commissioning Ceremony in progress yesterday.

On the ceremony agenda, Lt-Gen Lin Aung, senior military officers and the Acting Commandant of the DSMA took their places on the stage,

and then Lt-Gen Lin Aung presented the certificate of commissioning to each of the graduating cadets.

After handing over the certificate, Lt-Gen Lin Aung gave a speech, and the ceremony ended. — MNA/TKO

Defence Services Medical Academy convenes 24th convocation



The 24th Convocation of the Defence Services Medical Academy in progress yesterday in Yangon.

THE convocation of the 24th intake of the Defence Services Medical Academy (DSMA) was held at the DSMA convocation hall yesterday.

Acting Commandant Brig-Gen Zaw Marn Phyto, Rector Brig-Gen Khin Aung Tun, and

faculty members attended the ceremony. The convocation ceremony began with the National Anthem. Subsequently, the rector announced the commencement of the convocation and led the graduates in pledging to abide by the code of conduct.

Following this, the rector presented certificates to the graduate cadets, allowing them to wear academic regalia corresponding to their degrees, and signed the convocation record book. After the acting commandant delivered the convocation speech, the ceremony concluded.

The honours and academic awards conferred upon these cadets were determined through an assessment process involving the rector, professors, and department heads of the DSMA, along with rectors, professors, and examiners from medical universities nationwide.

DSMA's curriculum is aligned with other medical universities, ensuring that credit and distinction align with the broader medical curriculum. — MNA/NT

COVID-19 report, 18 December 2023

NEW TESTS	NEW CASES	CASUALTIES
14,196	Seven	Nil

NATIONAL

Junior military medical officers urged to enhance ...

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They carried out bomb attacks several times while committing threats, bullying with pressure and killing medical doctors, nurses and health staff.

Taking lessons from the worst incidents committed by terrorist groups over health staff, military medical officers and service personnel have to safeguard the people with healthcare services of medical knowledge as well as security awareness and political knowledge in the health sector.

As they are military medical officers and junior leaders, they have to uplift their leadership capacity. They must dutifully accomplish the assigned missions with correct leadership over subordinates and be courageous and gallant junior leaders.

They must apply medical knowledge taught by the DSMA and experience in providing healthcare services to ethnic people, Tatmadaw members, and families and raising their health awareness.

The Senior General urged them to build themselves up with physical and mental strengths and noble spirit to become medi-



The Senior General and his wife warmly greets graduation cadets at the dinner yesterday.

cal scientists and capable officers on whom the State and Tatmadaw rely.

After saluting the cadet companies, the Senior General left the parade ground.

Also present at the parade

were Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, wife of the Senior General, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Zeya Kyawhtin Sithu Moe Aung and wife, Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Zeya Kyawhtin Sithu Tun Aung and wife, senior mili-

tary officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, officials, parents of graduated cadets and faculty members of DSMA.

Next, the Senior General met with outstanding cadets at the Headquarters of the DSMA

and spoke words of honour.

In the evening, the Senior General attended the graduation dinner of the 24th Intake of DSMA, which took place at the convocation hall of the DSMA in Yangon. — MNA/TTA

SAC Member observes fertilizer spreading ceremony

STATE Administration Council Member Mahn Nyein Maung attended yesterday's fertilizer spreading ceremony for summer paddy fields financed by the State's economic development funds in Kyaunggon Township, Ayeyawady Region. The ceremony took place on 7.36 acres owned by U Soe Min Aung and three acres belonging to U Than Aung at Yaungpyitkwin Village in Kyaunggon Township.

The SAC member also met with local farmers and discussed the monsoon paddy harvest and cultivation of summer paddy. He observed a solar-powered water pumping system. He then proceeded to Tagundaing Village in Kyaunggon Township to inspect the construction of a 130x30-foot two-storey school building funded by the Union Funds. He talked

with town elders, teachers, and residents, offering support.

Later, he oversaw the collection of biographic and biometric data of the residents and household lists, issuing national registration cards by the Ministry of Immigration and Population. He handed out the finished citizenship scrutiny cards to the residents.

He travelled to Kyaiklat Township in Pyapon District to visit Wilmar Myanmar Riceland Kyaiklat Limited. He observed the milling and drying of rice and instructed the company officials to cooperate with farmers through contract farming. He also inspected the winches used at the port and the electricity generation process utilizing paddy husk-fuelled boilers. — MNA/NT



SAC Member Mahn Nyein Maung attends the fertilizer broadcasting event in Kyonpyaw District.

NATIONAL

National-level committee meeting on resettlement, closure of IDP camps held

THE second coordination meeting of the National-Level Committee on Resettlement and Closure of IDP camps 2/2023 was held yesterday afternoon at the Ministry of Border Affairs hall in Nay Pyi Taw. The Chairman of the National-Level Committee on Resettlement and Closure of IDP camps mentioned that the national committee has successfully initiated and executed the resettlement process for internally displaced persons and the closure of temporary shelters at various stages. The committees at both the state and work committee levels have efficiently completed the tasks over the last eight months, and plans for future activities will be thoroughly discussed in this



The Second coordination meeting of the National-Level Committee on Resettlement and Closure of IDP camps 2/2023 in progress yesterday.

meeting.

As working committees address resettlement issues, tasks aligned with the financial year will be coordinated with the respective state governments and the ministries involved in the working committee. State

governments were advised to allocate funds to provide essential assistance to internally displaced persons. Following this, the Vice Chairman of the National Committee and Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement, Dr

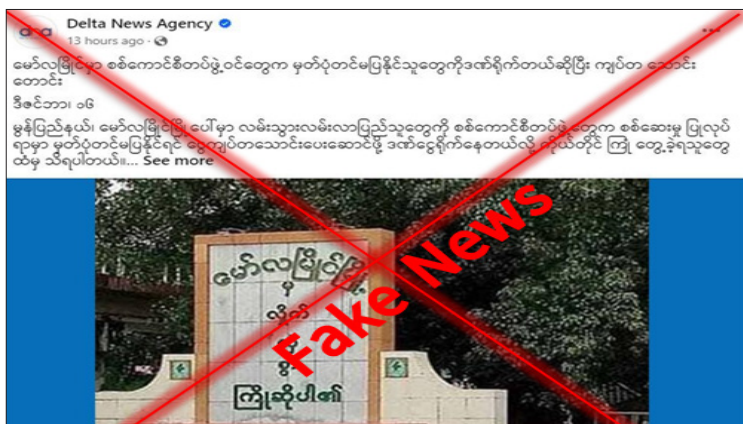
Soe Win, discussed the provision of relief materials and food for IDPs in temporary shelter camps or settlements. He also emphasized initiatives such as social support and the commencement of vocational courses and clarified the cur-

rent situation, outlining measures to support those who have returned to their original places of residence.

Subsequently, the chairpersons of the working committee, along with the relevant regional and state government members and security and border affairs ministers, explained the completed work and outlined plans for the sector. Members of the national-level committee, who continued attending the meeting, along with working committee members and officials from the state-level committees, discussed their recommendations, with the chairman and vice-chairman of the national committee coordinating the briefings. — MNA/KZW

Counter-argument to false information

Delta News Agency spreading misinformation on military inspections in Mawlamyine



Screenshot validates false claims.

THE Delta News Agency, a malicious media outlet, has been found engaging in the dissemination of misinformation on social networking sites. The agency alleges that security troops are conducting pedestrian checks in Mawlamyine, Mon State, and threatening to impose a K10,000 fine on individuals failing to present their ID cards.

Contrary to these claims, residents in Mawlamyine report no specific troop-led inspections in the area. The assertion that a fine is imposed for failure to show

registration is deemed false. On public holidays, Saturdays, and Sundays, random checks at intersections are observed, conducted by multi-departmental teams, without any incidents of monetary demands.

In light of these findings, it can be reasonably concluded that the malicious media outlet is intentionally spreading misinformation on social networking sites, aiming to instil anxiety and disrupt the daily activities of the people. — MNA/KZW

Malicious news outlet falsely claims Tatmadaw helicopter crash: Official denial and accusations of misinformation

THE Ayeyarwaddy Times, a malicious news outlet, intentionally published fake news claiming that a Tatmadaw Mi-35 helicopter crashed near Warsardi Village of Waingmaw Township in Myitkyina District, Kachin State, on 17 December, quoting an unidentified source.

However, an official from the respective military command confirmed that the information about the helicopter

crash was false and intentionally delivered inaccurately.

Additionally, Tatmadaw (Air)'s jets and helicopters effectively perform their military duties harmoniously with Tatmadaw's military columns on the ground.

The malicious news media is spreading misinformation and fake news regularly, intending to undermine the public's trust in Tatmadaw. — MNA/ TMT



Screenshot validates misinformation.

Khit Thit media spreads falsehoods about Tatmadaw's actions

KHIT Thit Media, a malicious media outlet, is spreading untrue information on social media, alleging that Tatmadaw burned and destroyed Aungtha village in Debayin township on the morning of 17 December.

According to reports, Tatmadaw forces were not near

the village that day, rendering the news entirely false.

Hence, deceitful platforms on social media, including Khit Thit Media, purposefully circulate misinformation to foster misconceptions against Tatmadaw and undermine the peace and stability of the State. — MNA/TRKM



False news alert on Debayin township.

NATIONAL

Photos awarded at “Hlapa Thaya Pyi Myanmar” colour photo contest



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn presents the second prize to U Than Naing Oo (Ngephe).

THE awarding ceremony of the “Hlapa Thaya Pyi Myanmar” (Beautiful and Pleasant Myanmar) colour photo contest marking the 76th Independence Day 2024 was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

It was attended by Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Tin Oo Lwin, Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman U Than Tun Oo, Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Tint, Nay Pyi Taw Council members, the Permanent Secretary, departmental heads, panel of judges and award winners.

Speaking at the event, Union Minister U Maung Maung

Ohn said the photo competition was organized to expose the essence of independence like development, pleasant and stable condition of the country, unity of ethnic people and traditional cultures, significant signs, regions and persons in the fight for independence. A total of 175 contestants participated in the contest, with 688 entry photos.

He then talked about the objective of holding the photo contest and appreciated the young people for participating in the competition.

He also added that the photos expose creative art and that the people might be proud of their country, independence, and sovereignty through these photos.

Then, Photo Selecting Team Chairman Director Pachi Soe Moe briefed the attendees on the selection process.

The officials then presented awards to the winners of the photo contest.

First prize winner U Win Toe expressed words of thanks on behalf of the recipients.

Afterwards, the Union minister had a documentary photo taken together with relevant officials and winners.

The Union Minister and party then viewed the award-winning photos and displayed photos at the event.

A total of 18 prizes — first, second, and third—and 15 other special awards were presented at the event. — MNA/KTZH

MoSYA UM inspects 76th Independence Day Commemoration Youth and Literary Arts Festival preparation

U Min Thein Zan, Union Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, Deputy Ministers U Myo Hlaing and U Zin Min Htet, Director-General of the Sports and Physical Education Department U Tun Myint Oo and officials inspected Nay Pyi Taw Wunnatheikdi Gymnasium B yesterday morning where the Youth and Literary Arts Festival will be held to commemorate the 76th Independence Day.

The Union minister and party then inspected the Sports and Youth Affairs Ministry’s gallery, which has been prepared to display photos of sports activities, portraits of the country’s proud gold medal winners, journals and magazines to ensure that those who come to the festival can enjoy playing sports games and records of activities related to the youth sector, documentary photos of the opening of the vocational training course. Quiz questions, the E-sports ex-

hibition, and the officials were instructed to make any necessary adjustments for requirements. Subsequently, the Union Minister enjoyed the events, which will demonstrate judo, Vovinam, cane ball, Taekwondo, Wushu, boxing, martial arts, gymnastics, volleyball and fitness dance demonstration teams and worked carefully to ensure that the demonstration sports teams could demonstrate uniformly and gave the instruction to the administrators/coaches to follow the rules of their sports teams strictly.

The Union minister then watched the match between the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs team and the Ministry of Border Affairs team in the first round group match of the Inter-Ministry Under-25 football (female) tournament to commemorate the 76th Independence Day. — MNA/TS



Union Minister U Min Thein Zan and party inspect the preparations for the Youth and Literary Arts Festival.

Myanmar participates in 22nd India International Mega Trade Fair 2023-2024

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Myanmar and Australia are participating in the 22nd India International Mega Trade Fair (IIMTF 2023-24), held in the Science City of Kolkata, India.

The 18-day 22nd IIMTF 2023-24 lasts from 15 December 2023 to 1 January 2024.

The Mega Trade Fair is India’s largest international



trade fair, and the event features 1,200 booths from 17 countries and 22 States of India.

At the trade fair, Afghani-

The 22nd India International Mega Trade Fair 2023-2024 in progress in India.

stan and Bangladesh attended it as partner countries, Iran and Thailand were focal countries and Myanmar and Australia were highlighted countries. The 22nd IIMTF 2023-24 opening ceremony was held on 16 December.

Myanmar Consul-General U Tin Moe attended the opening ceremony as the guest of honour. — ASH/KTZH

NATIONAL

Myanmar set to re-start local oil refineries soon

STATE Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing emphasized that oil refineries, which have ceased operations for various reasons, must resume functioning to address the domestic energy shortage.

The Senior General conveyed this message during his inspection tour of the progress in re-operating the No 1 Oil Refinery (Thanlyin) of the Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise, located in Thanlyin Township, Yangon, on 17 December.

He suggested considering

the total costs of importing gasoline and comparing them to the expenses if local oil refineries are re-operated to produce the necessary energy for domestic use.

In his briefing, the Senior General prioritized the resumption of functions at the No 1 Oil Refinery (Thanlyin), with plans for subsequent upgrades. He stressed the importance of implementing necessary tactical steps to re-operate the Thanlyin Oil Refinery as soon as possible, as it is expected to fulfil domestic energy requirements effectively.

— TWA/TMT



No 1 Oil Refinery (Thanlyin).



Attendees at the 10th Annual General Meeting of the Myanmar Container Trucking Association pose for the documentary group picture.

New branches of container trucking associations to streamline border goods transport

THE branches of container trucking associations will be established to facilitate the goods transportation processes at border areas, said U Soe Naing, Chairman of the Myanmar Container Trucking Association, at the 10th Annual General Meeting of the association held on 16 December at the UMFCCI.

“The association has facilitated members’ truck rental

services and work processes despite increasing prices of spare parts, maintenance costs and fuel prices. Moreover, it conducts awareness campaigns for drivers to ensure systematic driving skills and provides life insurance for 1,000 drivers. The association arranged safe car parking stands and supervised not to transport illegal goods. Similarly, it welcomes the new members and arranges to es-

establish branches of container trucking associations to facilitate goods transportation at border areas,” he added.

The association plays a crucial role in production, trading, distribution, service, imports, and manufacturing sectors and the flawless flow of trade and goods.

It was established in 2009 and runs with over 2,000 trucks. — TWA/KTZH

Fluctuation of garlic price: Shan garlic set as K5,000 higher than Kyukok per viss

PRICES of both the Shan garlic and Kyukok garlic in the Yangon market declined after both highest on 3 November. However, the price of Shan garlic returns to a peak after 45 days. For the time being, the price of Shan garlic is K5,000 higher than that of Kyukok per viss, the report states.

On 27 October this year, Shan garlic was priced at K9,800 per viss and Kyukok was priced at K8,000 per viss. On 3 November, one viss of Kyukok garlic skyrocketed to K17,000 whereas one viss of big-sized Shan garlic was K15,000 in the market.

A few days later, those prices moderately declined fluctuating between K10,300 and K11,800 of Shan garlic per viss on 23 November while Kyukok garlic prices were downward trending to K10,800-K11,000 per viss on 6 December.

Nevertheless, garlic prices have

increased again these days. One viss of Shan garlic is ranging between K15,000 and K17,000 per viss while the Kyukok garlic is priced at K12,500 per viss.

According to the archived statistics, Shan garlic was priced at K2,900-K4,200 and Kyukok garlic was K3,300 per viss on 16 December 2022. It is observed that only the garlic price broke records trending upward in late 2023.

In detail, Kyukok garlic usually enters market in May and therefore, at the moment, the leftover Kyukok garlics are floating at a steady price. Thus, Shan garlic, with fewer stocks in the market than Kyukok, is priced higher at K5,000 per viss than that of Kyukok.

In fact, Shan garlics have been cultivated during these months and they will be arriving in the market in the upcoming months.



Sale of Shan garlics seen in the market.

Generally, chilli and garlic are high-priced goods among kitchen commodities with a value at Kyat in five digits per viss. Notwithstanding, average housewives claim no concerns over the high prices of chilli and garlic since both of them have to be used only a few amounts in their cooking formulas. — TWA/TMT

Myanmar travellers to Malaysia required to complete MDAC

THE Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur has announced that starting from 1 January 2024, all travellers, including Myanmar citizens visiting Malaysia, must complete the Malaysia digital arrival card (MDAC). The Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs has stated that the system will undergo a trial period from 1 to 31 December.

According to the new policy, all foreign travellers are required to apply for the Malaysia Digital Arrival Card (MDAC) on the website <https://imigresen-online.imi.gov.my/mdac/> of the Malaysian Immigration Department.

However, holders of diplomatic passports, special passport holders, and individuals with permanent residence permits and long-term residence permits in Malaysia are exempted from the requirement to apply for the Malaysia Digital Arrival Card (MDAC). — TWA/TRKM

Pigeon pea price plunges remarkably in five days



Pigeon peas seen thriving in a plantation.

WITH the FOB price on a downward trajectory, the pigeon pea price was down by K110,000 per tonne in the domestic market. Traders stressed that the pigeon pea price dropped to K3.04 million per tonne on 18 December from K3.15 million

per tonne on 14 December.

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

According to the Ministry of Commerce, Myanmar exported more than 1.06 million tonnes of various pulses, with an estimated value of over \$895 million, to foreign countries in the past seven and half months during the 2023-2024 financial year beginning 1 April.

Myanmar's pulses exports topped over US\$1.47 billion from over 1.9 million tonnes in the past FY 2022-2023, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated. — NN/EM

Yangon palm oil wholesale reference price stable for week ending 25 December

ACCORDING to the Supervisory Committee on edible oil import and distribution, the wholesale reference rate of palm oil for the Yangon market this week ending 25 December 2023 was fairly changed with only a single-digit difference.

The wholesale price was registered at K4,815 per viss last week, ending 17 December. This week's rate was set relatively the same at K4,810 per viss.

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

Nevertheless, the market price is way higher than the reference price.

To deal with overcharging, the Consumer Affairs Department under the Ministry of Commerce informed the consumers of lodging the complaints for overcharging through the call centre's hotline in late August. The Department urged consumers not to buy palm oil at high prices.

The Department is making concerted efforts to steer the high volatility in palm oil prices in the retail market and offer fairer prices to consumers in coordination with the Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers Association and oil importing companies.

The complaints for overcharging can be lodged over hotline 1535 of the call centre of the Consumers Affairs Department or sent to the Facebook Page of the Department and the region and state departments concerned. The domestic palm oil consumption is estimated at 1 million tonnes per year. The local palm oil production is just about 400,000 tonnes. About 700,000 tonnes of palm oil are imported yearly through Malaysia and Indonesia to meet domestic demands. — NN/EM

MoC issues CO for free customs tariff online

THE Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce issues the Certificate of Origin CO (Form D) to the products originating in Myanmar through the online CO application system to claim preferential tariff treatment under the free trade agreements.

As per the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), e-ATIGA Form D Data Ex-

change will be fully implemented through the ASEAN Single Window for customs tariff relief among the ASEAN starting from 1 January 2024. After processing some cases, a hard copy of Form D will be issued during the system breakdown.

At present, according to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership -RCEP, a free trade agreement, the CO

can be sought for the products originating in Myanmar and designated to be exported to Cambodia, Thailand, Brunei, Laos, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia from 1 August 2023, the Trade Department notified.

Those traders can earn approved exporter status through the online CO Application System (<https://onlineco.myanmar-tradenet.com>) starting 1 August

2023.

The RCEP agreement between the ten-member states of ASEAN, Australia, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand came into effect in January 2022. Exporters can apply for CO Form RCEP for the products designated to be sent to China starting 1 November 2022 to enjoy customs trade relief. — NN/EM

Myanmar workers advised against carrying banned items for national image

THE Government Overseas Employment Agency has once again emphasized the importance for Myanmar citizens working in Korea under the Employment Permit System (EPS) to refrain from carrying prohibited items. Despite prior notifications to EPS workers entering the Republic of Korea, instances of individuals bringing banned items to Incheon Airport have been observed on 14 December.

The agency reported that some re-entry workers were found carrying prohibited items



One hundred and forty-eight Myanmar workers from Yangon at Incheon Airport in S Korea.

into Incheon Airport, resulting in the confiscation of these items and imposition of fines. In light of these incidents, workers are reminded to avoid carrying prohibited objects at the airport to safeguard Myanmar's image and ensure the smooth entry of workers into the Republic of Korea.

It is emphasized that individuals found carrying prohibited items to South Korea may face fines ranging from 3 million to 5 million won and could also be subject to a ban on entering the country. — TWA/TKO

OPINION

Strike a balance: Ensuring fair commodity prices for businesses and consumers

MAINTAINING stable commodity prices, especially for essential items like basic foodstuffs, is crucial for people's convenience in their daily lives. Recognizing this, the government has established committees to regulate commodity prices, focusing on essential items.

Committee officials have decided to grant businesspersons licences to distribute palm oil to designated places or domestic markets. This includes overseeing the full import volume of palm oil and ensuring compliance with procedures by rice exporters. The Union Commodity Price Stability Committee collaborates with key organizations such as the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry-UMFCCI, the Myanmar Rice Federation, the Myanmar Oil Dealers Association, the Myanmar Oil Millers Association, and the Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry to set prices for the purchase of monsoon paddy in 2023 and prepare for the enactment of the rice and paddy law.

The committee's current priority is to ensure stability in the prices of rice, cooking oil, and kitchen crops used in families' daily routines. As such, strenuous efforts are being made to alleviate the burden of high commodity prices on families and society's basic needs.

In addition to the Union Commodity Price Stability Committee, regional governments and relevant departments must collaborate to boost production in the agriculture and livestock sectors, which are pivotal in manufacturing basic foodstuffs. Support is also provided to encourage manageable-scale agriculture and livestock farms.

Scrutinizing the root causes of rising commodity prices, particularly rice and cooking oils, is essential for systematically supervising all commodity price measures. Only when these committees and relevant departments take effective measures to stabilize commodity prices can people's daily lives become more convenient.

Officials must monitor public sentiment regarding commodity prices to stay informed about the current situation. Mandated officials should be empowered to combat aggressive business practices driven by selfish motives. Sharpening the decisions and actions of these officials will contribute to ensuring that society benefits from reduced commodity prices.

Manufacturers play a crucial role in this endeavour by selling their products at fair prices. Practically, they should analyze the impact of commodity prices on people's daily lives and balance the need for their profits. Based on compassion, they have to try hard to achieve this balance which will lead to improve the daily lives of the people and a more equitable marketplace.

Scrutinizing the root causes of rising commodity prices, particularly rice and cooking oils, is essential for systematically supervising all commodity price measures. Only when these committees and relevant departments take effective measures to stabilize commodity prices can people's daily lives become more convenient.

Losing Interest In Using Money-saving Apps

IN the realm of personal finance, the quest to help individuals spend less money has proven to be a challenging venture. As the clock ticks towards 1 January, the day Intuit will officially shut down the budgeting app Mint, it joins a long list of startups that once aspired to capitalize on promoting financial responsibility. The fundamental issue, it seems, lies in the fact that a scant number of people actively seek assistance with their budgets, and even fewer are willing to pay for such services. This trend is evident in the demise of other budgeting apps like Simple, Clarity Money, and Finn, which all faced closure despite initial promises.

Mint customers now find themselves in search of alternatives to track their spending without shelling out subscription fees, leading to a recalibration of expectations in the landscape of budgeting apps. Catherine Van Weele, a marketing coordinator from San Diego, expresses disappointment in discovering that many replacements come with a subscription cost.

Now, let us delve into the struggles of budgeting apps, exploring the demise of Mint and the broader challenges faced by such services in a world where financial responsibility competes with more engaging pursuits, such as trading meme stocks or learning languages through popular platforms. Ultimately, the article emphasizes the growing need for effective tools in financial planning, even as the landscape shifts toward subscription-based models and banks enter the arena with their own offerings.

There is a hard truth about the business of personal finance: It's pretty tough to make money by helping people spend less money. When Intuit shuts the budgeting app Mint down on 1 January, it will join a packed graveyard of startups that have tried and failed to cash in on financial responsibility. The problem with budgeting apps, it turns out, is that few people really want help with their budgets, and even fewer are willing to pay for it.

Simple (2009-21), a digital budgeting app, was acquired by



Spanish banking group BBVA for \$114 million and closed six years later. Clarity Money (2016-21) closed three years after selling to Goldman Sachs Group. And there is Finn (2017-19), JPMorgan Chase's homegrown app that sought to help millennials track their spending with emojis.

The fallout means Mint customers searching for a new place to track their spending for free or anyone who wants to turn to budgeting apps to manage their money better should lower their expectations. If they want an app that will survive, they will either need to pay to subscribe to a competing service or manage money themselves with a spreadsheet or pen and paper.

Catherine Van Weele, a 23-year-old marketing coordinator in San Diego, spent the past week researching replacements for Mint. She said it was disappointing to learn that most existing alternatives charge a subscription fee.

For now, she has settled on using the expense tracker attached to her brokerage account from Fidelity, even though it doesn't have all of the flexibility she liked with Mint.

"I understand that you need to pay for an app...or you're the product, but that's definitely a barrier for me," Van Weele said.

Minting everything but money

Mint launched with a lofty vision of using technology to help people make better financial decisions.

There is little evidence such services move the needle much for people who aren't already engaged with their finances. Despite developers' best efforts, no app or service has figured out a way to make managing your day-to-day finances as engaging as trading meme stocks on Robinhood or learning a new language on Duolingo.

"Someone is going to become really, really rich if they can figure out how to get unmotivated people interested in really thinking about money," said Utpal Dholakia, a marketing professor at Rice University who has studied people's relationships to money.

The team behind Mint felt the drudgery of managing money just needed a Silicon Valley makeover. The service was designed to be a dashboard of your financial life, linking all your bank and credit card accounts and automating much of the analysis of your spending. It was also free. The market for budgeting software at the time was dominated by Quick-

en, spreadsheet software then

owned by Intuit that was sold in a box and came with a 92-page user manual.

Many Mint customers were like Julio Perez, a 35-year-old event planner in New York City.

He spent a few weeks trying to get the hang of the programme in 2016 but dropped it after getting frustrated by constantly having to manually edit transactions incorrectly categorized by the algorithm.

"It didn't assign things in ways that always made sense to me," said Perez, who prefers using a spreadsheet.

The costs of managing funds

Mint made money from referral fees when users signed up for new bank accounts or credit cards that appeared in ads on the site. But the people most likely to log into the app and see the ads were among the least likely to need the products that were advertised, Dholakia said.

Emily Luck, a 31-year-old from Williamsburg, Va, diligently checked Mint at least once a week since she made a joint account with her husband in 2012. She said she never clicked on an ad.

"We just have one credit card, and we're not interested in opening a bunch of other ones, so I just ignore them," Luck said. Financial data aggregators

such as Mint pay to connect to each account customers want to view on their platform. This costs between \$6 and \$7 for a customer annually, said Aaron Patzer, who founded Mint in 2006.

"A big reason this industry has been stuck is because the aggregation challenge has been so difficult and expensive," said Val Agostino, a former Mint executive who launched Monarch Money, a competitor, in 2021.

That challenge has become more complex as more people open multiple financial accounts.

Rocky Mark Juan, a 36-year-old from the Bay Area, said he has at Mint. That list includes his four checking accounts, brokerage accounts, mortgage, student loans, and 14 credit cards. He has used Mint almost daily since 2011 and trained his budget's algorithm to recognize subcategories as specific as "boba" tea.

"I'm one of those obsessed users," he said.

These rising costs, coupled with low engagement, mean most of these businesses have now either thrown in the towel or are trying to make more money from existing customers. Rocket Money and YNAB (An American multi-platform personal budgeting programme based on the envelope system), two other popular budgeting apps, switched to subscription models in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Newer companies in the space, such as Monarch Money and Tiller, charged subscription fees from the beginning.

Banks offer their own tools

Despite the failure of the free budgeting apps, the need for better ways to plan your money continues to grow. Households save less and borrow a lot more on costly credit cards than they did 20 years ago, federal data show.

Some banks are hoping to fill that need and can afford to offer similar features at no cost. Bank of America launched a financial planning tool in 2020, and JPMorgan Chase introduced Wealth Plan in 2022. Since Wells Fargo

rolled out LifeSync to its retail bank last month, it has already reached one million users, said Evelyn Varner, the executive behind the new budgeting tool.

"Nobody wants to track an expense item for expense item tracking," she said.

An app that scolds you to keep your wallet in your pants will never be as exciting as trading stocks, buying concert tickets, or scrolling social media, said Patzer, Mint's founder.

"It's not the dopamine hit of Instagram and YouTube. It's adult stuff. It's responsibility."

All in all, the landscape of money-saving apps faces a harsh reality as Intuit's decision to shut down Mint adds to the graveyard of failed startups attempting to make a profit from fostering financial responsibility. The challenges lie not only in the reluctance of individuals to seek help with their budgets but also in their unwillingness to pay for such assistance. The demise of once-promising apps like Simple, Clarity Money, and Finn underscores the difficulty sustaining free budgeting services. Mint users now find themselves navigating a market where subscription fees are prevalent, prompting some, like Catherine Van Weele, to compromise on features in favour of free alternatives. Despite the struggles of budgeting apps, the demand for effective financial planning tools persists. While some banks are stepping in to offer no-cost solutions, the shift towards subscription models among existing apps suggests a need for sustainable revenue sources. In the ever-evolving world of personal finance, the quest for a universally engaging approach to managing day-to-day finances remains challenging, leaving financial responsibility in the realm of adult obligations rather than the dopamine-driven allure of social media or stock trading.

Analysis revealed that bowel cancer cells can exist in two major states, fast-growing or slow-growing, and that healthy cells can push bowel cancer cells towards the slow-growing state. Because

SOURCE: ANI

Reference: *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 November 2023

Here is why chemotherapy becomes less effective, finds study

Two studies conducted by UCL and Yale reveal that chemotherapy efficacy diminishes as healthy cells prompt cancer cells to slow their growth.

ACCORDING to two research from UCL and Yale, chemotherapy becomes less effective when healthy cells encourage cancer cells to grow more slowly.

In the two trials, which were supported by Cancer Research UK and published in *Cell*, researchers employed mini-tumours and the most recent single-cell analysis technologies to begin to understand the mystery of why healthy cells in a patient's colon cancer tumour may contribute to bad outcomes.

Bowel cancer kills over 900,000 people a year and is the second highest cause of cancer mortality worldwide. In the UK, it accounts for 10 per cent of all cancer deaths.

In the first study, UCL researchers used the latest single-cell analysis technologies to measure how 1,107 mini-tumours derived from mice responded to changes in both their genes and their environment.

Analysis revealed that bowel cancer cells can exist in two major states, fast-growing or slow-growing, and that healthy cells can push bowel cancer cells towards the slow-growing state. Because

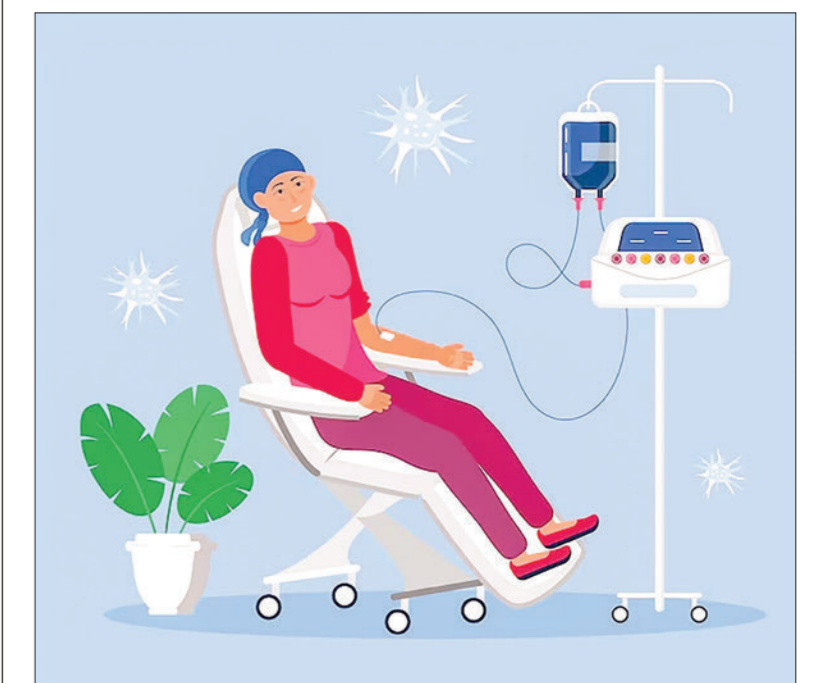
chemotherapies target fast-growing cells, these slow-growing cancer cells are more likely to be resistant to treatment.

Dr Chris Tape, a senior author of the studies from UCL Cancer Institute, said: "Recent research has shown that bowel cancer patients with more healthy cells in their tumour, including cells called fibroblasts that are involved in wound healing, often have a poor prognosis.

But what we didn't know until now was why this is the case. Our research suggests that because chemotherapies target fast-growing cells, cancer cells that have their growth slowed down by healthy cells are no longer sensitive to chemotherapy."

In the second study, the team sought to confirm their findings in human cells, using over 2,500 mini-tumours grown from donated tissue from bowel cancer patients who had undergone surgery.

Results showed that factors such as patient age and the specific mutations a tumour carried did not affect how the cancer responded to chemotherapy.



Results showed that factors such as patient age and the specific mutations a tumour carried did not affect how the cancer responded to chemotherapy. PHOTO: ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ FREEPIK

NATIONAL

Naga traditional New Year Festival to be celebrated on 15 Jan

ACCORDING to U Nay Min Thu, the committee secretary overseeing the Naga traditional New Year Festival, this year's celebration is scheduled for 15 January 2024 in Nanyun, located in the Naga Self-administered Zone of Sagaing Region.

The Naga traditional New Year Festival rotates between Leshi, Lahe, and Nanyun. After being hosted in Leshi last year, the upcoming festival is

set to take place in Nanyun, as announced by U Nay Min Thu.

The primary objective of the New Year festival celebration is to foster stronger bonds of friendship and goodwill among the Naga community, emphasized U Nay Min Thu. The Naga New Year Festival was scaled down in 2020 and 2021 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. — ASH/TRKM



The Naga New Year Festival in the previous year.

Over 10,000 Myanmar pilgrims visit Bodh Gaya this year

MORE than 10,000 Myanmar tourists travelled to pay homage to Bodh Gaya, according to a local travel agency.

"There were not many travellers in 2022 after Covid-19. Normally, there used to be 35,000 to 50,000 pilgrims every year. About 15,000 visitors went there in the post-COVID-19 period. It will be over 10,000 this year," said Ma Phyu Mar Ko from a local travel agency on Gaya Trips.

Bodh Gaya is situated in the Indian state of Bihar and has been managed by the Indian federal government since 28 May 1953, under the 1949 Places of Worship Act.

The most prominent tourist destinations to visit include Bodh Gaya, Varanasi, Sankissa, Agra (Taj Mahal and Red Fort), New Delhi, the vault of Buddha's sacred relics, Akshardham temple, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, Lumbini, Kushinagar, Vaishali and other places. — Thit Taw/ZN



One of the serene worshipping destinations in the Bodh Gaya.

MoHT UM attends St Petersburg International Travel Forum

MYANMAR delegation led by Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Thet Thet Khine left for St Petersburg, the Russian Federation on 11 December to attend St Petersburg International Travel Forum.

The forum was jointly held by the Economic Development Ministry of Russia, St. Petersburg Government Committee for External Relations of Saint Petersburg, the St Petersburg Tourism Development Committee, the St Petersburg Convention Bureau, Roscongress and the tourism entrepreneurs' Association from 13 to 15 December.

On 13 December, the Union Minister attended the discussion under the topic of Russia Friendly: Inbound Tourism in a Multipolar World at St Petersburg Business Hotel and discussed the progress in the tourism industry of Myanmar, potential bilateral cooperation in



Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine meets the chairman of the Committee for External Relations of St Petersburg.

tourism and the Welcome Russia Programme in Myanmar for Russian tourists.

Then, the representatives from Spain, Jordan, India, the UAE, Qatar and Viet Nam discussed implementing international and regional projects,

visa and currency systems and promoting the tourism industry.

On 14 December, the Myanmar delegation attended the plenary session held at Four Seasons Hotel, and the Union minister talked about the promotion of Myanmar-Russia bi-

lateral relations in the tourism sector; various tourism-related businesses being operated in the country as the visitors can visit Myanmar the whole year round, increase in numbers of tourist arrivals mostly from Thailand, China, Japan and Korea, the expectation to attract travellers from ASEAN countries, China, India and Russia, Myanmar-Russia direct flight, visa relaxation for Russian tourists, cooperation with St. Petersburg government to hold Myanmar-Russia Tourism Forum and willingness to work closely between governments and private sectors.

The Union minister also attended the awarding ceremony of the MICE award in the same evening.

On 15 December, the Union minister and party visited The State Heritage Museum. They met Mr Vyacheslav Kalganov, Vice-Chairman of the Committee for External Relations of St.

Petersburg and Mrs Nana Gvichia, Vice-President of the St Petersburg Tourism Development Committee at Smolny Hall of St Petersburg Government.

During the meeting, they openly discussed projects to be implemented under the MoU on tourism cooperation, promotion of Myanmar-Russia tourism and travel exchanges, development of human resources for Myanmar tourism industry, support of Russia, holding of Myanmar-St Petersburg virtual forum and launching of tourist packages between private entrepreneurs.

The Myanmar delegation led by the Union Minister arrived back in Yangon on 17 December. The forum is a focal corridor for government and private sectors to draft projects considering the outcomes of accomplished actions within one year.

Over 1,000 participants from over 40 countries attended the forum. — MNA/KTZH

NATIONAL

Union Budget funds Inlay Lake conservation, 80% completion reached



Captivating images showcase traditional leg-rowing boats and the beauty of Inlay Lake.



ACCORDING to U Kyaw Kyaw Oo, the Assistant Director of the Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department in Shan State, the project for the conservation of Inlay Lake, located in Nyaungshwe Township, southern Shan State, has been

carried out with K700 million from the Union Budget this year. Currently, 80 per cent of the entire project has been completed. Conservation works on Inlay Lake are conducted annually. For the 2023-24 financial year, the maintenance and conserva-

tion efforts involve the construction of three dredges, clearing floating islands (comprising flowing aquatic plants, mud, and rubbish), and excavating silt. The report indicates that 80 per cent of these tasks have been finished.

U Kyaw Kyaw Oo mentioned, "We were allocated K700 million from the Union Budget for the environmental conservation, preservation, and maintenance of Inlay Lake. Construction of three dredges, representing 40 per cent project

completion, is underway. Another aspect includes the dredging of silt, with a target of digging up 50,000 silt traps for the entire year. We have finished 38,900 silt traps, leaving approximately 11,000 others, amounting to 78 per cent completion."

Therefore, the progress includes 40 per cent completion of the construction of three dredges, 78 per cent completion of silt dredging, 30 per cent completion of clearing weeds, and 58 per cent completion of clearing floating islands. The initial projection aimed to complete clearing 100 acres of weeds and 120 acres of floating islands throughout the year. Currently, 30 per cent of the former and 65 acres of the latter have already been completed, respectively. — ASH/TMT

Confiscated illegal items: Teak, fuel oil, industrial materials and vehicles

THE joint on-duty teams managed by the Mandalay Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force nabbed an Isuzu light truck (approximately K35 million), travelling from PynOoLwin to Mandalay, carrying 600 gallons of diesel valued at K6 million without official documents at the 16th-Mile Kyaukchaw checkpoint, a Dongfeng tractor head with a trailer (estimated value of K120 million) carrying 6,000 gallons of diesel (handmade) worth K43 million without official documents near Myitnge bridge on the outskirts of Mandalay and three kinds of goods worth K19.87 million including 969 gallons of diesel valued without official documents at the Milepost 358/4 in Amarapura township on 15 December. The action was taken under the Customs procedures.

The on-duty team supervised by the Customs Department seized two kinds of goods worth K2 million, including ten sets of UNICO POE switches and a Holy Stone Drone (used) without official documents from luggage at the Yangon International Airport (Import Desk) on 16 December. The action was conducted under Customs procedures.

On 18 December, the combined teams captured 3.026 tonnes of illegal teak worth K998,580 in the Toungoo district. The action was conducted under the Forest Law.

Eight arrests were made on 15, 16 and 18 December, with an estimated value of K226,868 million, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS



Seized illegal items.

K51.87 bln worth of drugs, prohibited chemicals seized in Shan State, Yangon

THE Myanmar Police Force seized K51.87 billion worth of Ice (methamphetamine) and restricted chemicals in Shan State and Yangon region, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team of Anti-Drug Police Force members searched an Alphard driven by Yan Naing Soe (aka) Yan Naing, accompanied by Ma Ei Ei Khin (aka) Ma Ei, and Ma May Oo Ko Ko (aka) May Oo Kyi Lin, seizing 65 kilogrammes of Ice (methamphetamine) at 1:30 pm on 3 December.

After interrogating them, the Police Force also arrested Nay Lin Htun (aka) Naw Nor (aka) Kyaw Soe and Soe Htun, second lieutenants from the AA involved in drug trafficking, in Shwepyitha township at 12 pm on 4 December.

Similarly, police arrested Htun Lin (aka) Pyone Cho, a lieutenant from the AA, with 865 kilogrammes of Ice at a warehouse in Shwepyitha township at 12:30 pm on the same day. Zaw Min Htwe (aka) Than Win and Ma Thin Myat Swe (aka) Yin Yin Hla were arrested at the Aungmyingala



Seven offenders seen alongside confiscated drugs and vehicles.

highway bus terminal compound at 7 pm on the same day. Afterward, police arrested Thar Gyi (aka) U Hla Win, who received the drugs in Yangon and transported them abroad via sea, at a hotel in Toungoo at 2 pm on 6 December, seizing 1,140 kilogrammes of Ice and 800 kilogrammes of Caffeine (restricted chemicals) from a Canter box owned by Thar Gyi (aka) U Hla Win in South Okkalapa township at 10:30 am on 7 December.

The combined team also arrested Soe Paing (aka) Soe Soe, Htay Lin Zaw, Kyaw Htay Soe, sergeant U Kyaw Han and privates Kyaw Lin San and U

Htun Nu from the AA, along with a Taninthyi 1 cargo ship carrying drugs, at the Sinma Laik Shipyard in Kamayut township at 2 pm on 9 December.

It was revealed that the 2.07 tonnes of seized drugs were intended for transportation abroad after being transported from Shan State to Yangon, managed by Colonel Kyaw Myat Oo (aka) Tha Tha (aka) Wai Tha Htun from the AA.

The police have taken legal action against the drug-smuggling gang, and an investigation is underway to identify the perpetrators of the crime chain. — MNA/MKKS

ECONOMY WORLD

Cambodia's economy remains robust in 2023 despite weakening global demand, slowdown in real estate

CAMBODIA'S economic growth remained strong in 2023 despite weakening global demand and a slowdown in real estate, a government official and experts have said.

Economy and Finance Minister Aun Pornmoniroth said the economy was expected to grow by 5.6 per cent in 2023, pushing up the Southeast Asian country's gross domestic product (GDP) to 32.17 billion US dollars.

"For 2024, Cambodia's economy is forecast to achieve a growth rate of around 6.6 per cent, which will increase the GDP to 35.16 billion US dollars," he told the parliament during a 2024 budget law debate in mid-November.

Pornmoniroth, who is also a deputy prime minister, said the kingdom's GDP per capita was estimated at 1,917 US dollars in 2023 and would rise further to 2,071 US dollars in 2024.

Cambodia's economy main-



This photo taken on 17 November 2023 shows tourists visiting the Angkor Wat temple in Siem Reap province. **PHOTO: AFP**

ly relies on garment, footwear and travel goods exports, construction and real estate, tourism and agriculture.

He said that in 2024, the industrial sector, mainly garment and construction, is predicted to surge by 8.5 per cent, while

the service sector, mainly tourism, transport, telecom, trade and real estate, is expected to increase by 6.9 per cent, and

agriculture is projected to rise by 1.1 per cent.

He added that the country's inflation is forecast at 2.5 per cent in 2024, the same rate as that of 2023, if the price of oil on the international market returns to its normality.

Mey Kalyan, advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia and chairman of the Cambodia Development Resource Institute, said the country's economy had done extremely well in the pre-COVID-19 era, with an economic growth of 7.1 per cent in 2019, according to the World Bank.

"Sadly COVID-19 hit us badly afterward, as has happened to every country, thus the growth has declined significantly until 2023, when the growth is estimated to be around 5.3 per cent to 5.6 per cent by respectable institutions. Nevertheless, this projected growth is the best in the last three years," he told Xinhua on Monday. — Xinhua

Kenya, EU ink 'historic' trade deal

KENYA and the European Union on Monday signed a long-negotiated trade agreement to increase the flow of goods between the two markets, as Brussels pursues stronger economic ties with Africa.

The Economic Partnership Agreement will give Kenya duty-free and quota-free access to the EU, its biggest export market, while European goods will receive progressive tariff reductions.

The agreement is the first broad trade deal between the EU and an African nation since 2016 and follows a spending spree by China on lavish infrastructure projects across the continent.

"Although today represents a moment of monumental promise, it is also the beginning of a historic partnership for historic transformation," Kenyan President William Ruto said at a ceremony

attended by European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen in Kenya's capital Nairobi.

"The core of this arrangement is to put real money into the pockets of ordinary people," said Ruto.

EU chief von der Leyen said the partnership was a "win-win situation on both sides" and called on other East African nations to join the pact, which came after years of negotiations that concluded in June.

"We are deepening trade ties and building up our economic resilience," she said.

"We are opening a new chapter in our very strong relationship and now our effort should be focused on implementation," von der Leyen added.

Both the Kenyan and the European parliaments must ratify the deal before it comes into force. — AFP

BOJ set to retain monetary easing with focus on end to negative rates



Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda arrives at the central bank's headquarters in Tokyo on 18 December 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE Bank of Japan is widely expected to maintain ultralow interest rates at a two-day policy meeting starting Monday, with board members set to assess whether the price and wage hike cycle is on track to deliver

the central bank's two per cent inflation target sustainably.

Financial markets are looking for clues as to when the BOJ will move toward normalizing monetary policy by ending negative rates and scrapping its

yield curve control programme that keeps borrowing costs depressed at rock-bottom levels.

The BOJ currently sets short-term interest rates at minus 0.1 per cent while guiding 10-year Japanese government bond yields to around zero per cent. In the previous policy meeting in October, the Policy Board maintained that overall framework but decided to allow 10-year yields to rise above the previously rigid 1.0 per cent ceiling.

Governor Kazuo Ueda told a parliamentary session prior to the last policy meeting of 2023 that the coming year will be "more challenging," prompting market players to interpret that as a sign that the BOJ is moving toward an exit sooner than previously thought, sending the yen surging versus the US dollar. — Kyodo

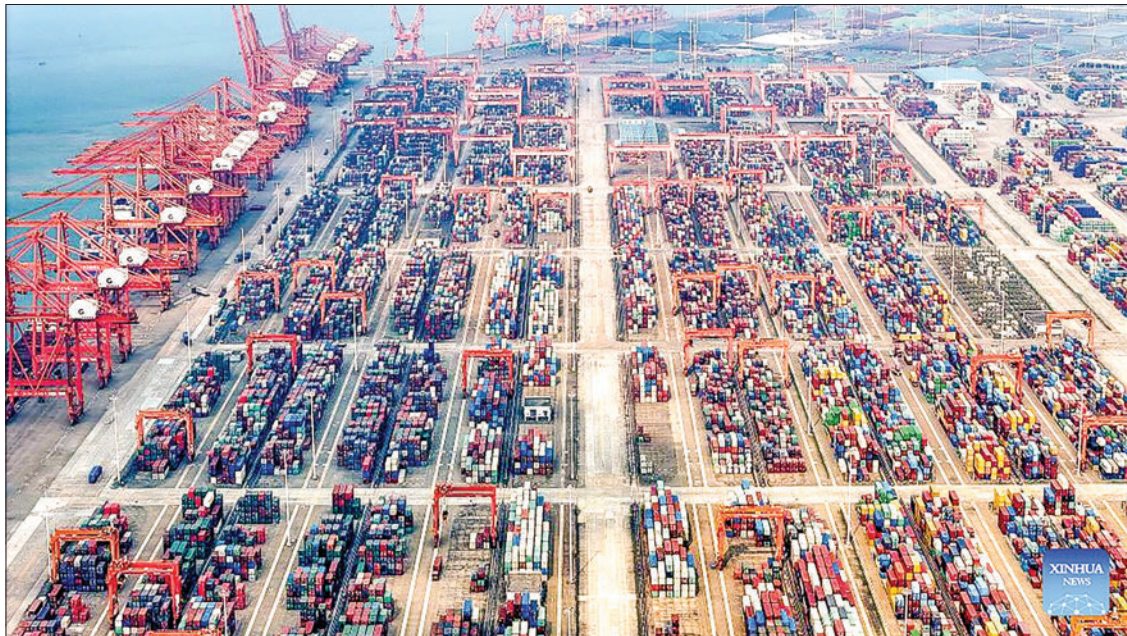
China promotes integrated development of domestic, foreign trade

CHINA, the world's second-largest consumer market and the world's biggest goods trader, is striving to accelerate the integrated development of both domestic and foreign trade.

Introducing a circular released recently by the General Office of the State Council that raised 18 measures to speed up the integrated development, officials of multiple departments said that it is necessary to open up the domestic market as well as the international market, encourage foreign trade enterprises to switch to domestic sales, and domestic trade enterprises to engage in foreign trade.

"Our understanding of the integration of domestic and foreign trade is to adhere to integrated development and help enterprises walk on two legs," Vice-Minister of Commerce Sheng Qiuping said at a press conference held in Beijing on Monday.

"An important goal of the integration of domestic and foreign trade is to improve the development capabilities of enterprises' domestic and foreign trade integration by improving



This aerial photo taken on 24 November 2023 shows the automatic container terminal at the Qinzhou Port in Qinzhou, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

systems and mechanisms, building common platforms, and optimizing public services so that enterprises can adapt to changes both in the domestic and international markets smoothly," Sheng said.

According to the circular, measures will be taken to accelerate the alignment of rules and systems for domestic and for-

foreign trade involving standards, examination, accreditation, and oversights.

Efforts should also be made to promote the connection of market channels for domestic and foreign trade, the circular said, adding that the business environment for the integrated development of domestic and foreign trade will improve with

measures including intensifying the protection of intellectual property rights, improving credit systems, and enhancing logistics facilitation. The circular also noted strengthening fiscal and financial support efforts.

Technical trade measures with standards and conformity assessments are significant factors affecting international

trade, and differences in domestic and international standards can result in inevitable differences in certification procedures, scope of applications, and evaluation methods.

In light of this, Yao Lei, an official with the State Administration for Market Regulation, China's market watchdog, said at the press conference that the department will vigorously promote the consistency of domestic and international standards and strengthen the mutual international recognition of conformity assessment.

Sheng added that the measures not only support foreign trade companies to expand the domestic market so that high-quality foreign trade products can enter the domestic e-commerce platforms, shopping malls, and supermarkets, but they also support foreign trade companies to expand their market overseas by giving full play to the role of new foreign trade formats and models such as market procurement, cross-border e-commerce, and overseas warehouses. — Xinhua

Nippon Steel to buy US Steel for \$14 bln in all-cash deal



File photo taken in May 2019 shows a sign of Nippon Steel Corp at the building housing the company's headquarters in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO**

NIPPON Steel Corp will buy United States Steel Corp for about \$14.1 billion in an all-cash transaction, the two companies said Monday.

Nippon Steel will make the

major US steelmaker a wholly-owned subsidiary once the deal is closed in the second or third quarter of 2024, subject to approval by the US firm's shareholders and US regula-

tors, they said.

The offer price of \$55 per share represents a 40 per cent premium on the US company's closing price of \$39.33 on Friday, Nippon Steel said.

The deal will increase the Japanese company's global crude steel production capacity to about 86 million tonnes per year and pave the way for achieving its goal of 100 million tonnes per year, it said.

The deal comes as the demand for steel products is declining in Japan due to its shrinking population and manufacturers moving out of the country.

Nippon Steel plans to expand by tapping into the world's biggest economy, where it expects an increase in demand for high-grade steel, it said. — Kyodo

Renewables to exceed half of German electricity use in 2023

MORE than half the electricity consumed in Germany in 2023 will have been generated from renewables for the first time, the German Association of Energy and Water Industries (BDEW) said on Monday.

According to preliminary figures, Germans will consume a total of around 517 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity this year, compared with 540 billion kWh in 2022.

Some 52 per cent of that will come from renewables, compared to 47 per cent in 2022, the agency said.

"The figures show that we are on the right track," said Kerstin Andreae, chair of the BDEW executive board.

Germany is aiming to obtain 80 per cent of its electricity from wind and solar power by 2030.

But plans to decarbonize

energy production in Europe's biggest economy were thrown into disarray by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the subsequent cut to sorely needed gas supplies from Russia.

The government brought mothballed coal-fired plants back online to take the pressure off gas-based electricity production.

The reactivated coal plants will operate until March 2024.

Germany is set to generate 508 billion kWh of electricity in 2023, the BDEW said.

Of that, a quarter (26 per cent) will come from coal.

In 2022, the pollutant fossil fuel accounted for almost a third of electricity production.

Germany is sticking by its pledge to exit coal completely by 2030 but doubts persist. — AFP

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

N Korea test-fires most advanced ICBM with US in range



A woman walks past a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul on 18 December 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

NORTH Korea on Monday test-fired its most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile that has the potential to reach the United States, extending a record-breaking number of weapons tests this year and triggering further international condemnation.

South Korea said the North fired an ICBM that used solid fuel, which makes

missiles easier to transport and faster to fire than liquid-fuelled versions.

Monday's launch was the third time the North had tested a solid-fuel ICBM, after launches in April and July, which analysts said signalled consistent efforts to improve the technology.

North Korea had said the previous two were "Hwasong-18" missiles but did

not immediately comment on Monday's launch.

The United States, South Korea and Japan all quickly condemned the missile test, stating it was in breach of United Nations Security Council resolutions and would make the Korean peninsula less secure.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol ordered an "immediate and overwhelming" countermeasure, and called for a joint response with the United States and Japan.

Japan's defence ministry said the ICBM had a potential range of more than 15,000 kilometres, which would cover all of the United States. It followed a short-range missile launch on Sunday night.

"(The launches are) not only a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions but also a threat to peace and stability of the region and we strongly condemn," Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said.

The United Nations Security Council has adopted many resolutions calling on North Korea to halt its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes since it first conducted a nuclear test in 2006.

— AFP

Hundreds evacuated as flood disaster unfolds in northeastern Australia

STRANDED residents sheltered on a hospital roof as flash floods swamped northeastern Australia on Monday, with raging waters severing roads and flushing crocodiles into towns.

Rescue teams evacuated more than 300 people overnight, police said, and military helicopters were despatched to help inundated areas cut off by the floods.

Damage was reported along an expanse of coastline that stretched about 400 kilometres (250 miles) across northern Queensland state. Resort manager Cassie Hounslow said entire houses were submerged in Mossman, a small inland town at the foot of the heritage-listed Daintree rainforest.

"Houses have gone under. I mean some houses have been fully engulfed," she told AFP.

Tumbling boulders triggered by a landslide had "smashed one of the roads", Hounslow said, and a major highway out of Mossman was "pretty much bugged", she said.



This handout taken and released on 18 December 2023 courtesy of Jonty Fratus shows a crocodile being wrangled from floodwaters in the Northern Queensland town of Ingham. Flash floods swamped northeastern Australia on 18 December, with raging waters severing roads and flushing crocodiles into towns. **PHOTO: HANDOUT / COURTESY OF JONTY FRATUS / AFP**

With another deluge expected Monday, Queensland Treasurer Cameron Dick said the unfolding disaster would have a "billion-dollar impact" on the state.

'Sea of mud'

Nine people, including a seven-year-

old patient, huddled for safety overnight on the roof of a hospital in the largely Aboriginal settlement of Wujal Wujal.

"We know that those people are in a desperate way now," said Kiley Hanslow, the chief executive of the Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council. — AFP



X (formerly Twitter) CEO Elon Musk raises a fist during the Atreju political meeting organized by the young militants of Italian right wing party Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) on 16 December 2023 at the Sant'Angelo Castle in Rome. **PHOTO: AFP**

EU launches 'illegal content' probe into Elon Musk's X

THE EU on Monday announced "formal infringement proceedings" against Elon Musk's X platform under a law cracking down on illegal online content, after identifying disinformation related to Hamas's 7 October attack in Israel.

The action against the company formerly known as Twitter is the first against a major online platform since Brussels implemented the Digital Services Act (DSA), a sweeping piece of European Union legislation that strengthens online companies' responsibility for content moderation.

"Today's opening of formal proceedings against X makes it clear that, with the DSA, the time of big online platforms behaving like they are 'too big to care' has come to an end," said the bloc's digital enforcer, EU commissioner Thierry Breton.

"We will now start an in-depth investigation of X's compliance with the DSA obligations concerning countering the dissemination and amplification of illegal content and disinformation in the EU, transparency of the platforms and design of the user interface."

The European Commission said a preliminary information-gathering investigation it launched against X in October, which included looking at "the dissemination of illegal content in the context of Hamas' terrorist attacks against Israel", led to Monday's probe.

On the basis of that information, "the Commission has decided to open formal infringement proceedings against X under the Digital Services Act", it said. — AFP

SPORTS

Shan United clinches fifth MNL points championship undefeated, secures Gold Cup victory once again

THE final match of the 2023 MNL Championship season took place on 18 December at Thuwunna Stadium, featuring a goalless draw between Shan United and Yangon United.

Shan United, the reigning champions, secured an unbeaten record for the entire season by tying with Yangon United in the last match. This victory marked Shan United's third points championship and an unprecedented achievement of winning the championship for four consecutive seasons in the tournament's history. The team had previously won the MNL scoring championship five times in 2017, 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023, remaining unbeaten in the 2019, 2022, and 2023 seasons.

Both teams fielded their core players, facing challenges throughout the match that ultimately ended in a draw. Shan United focused on preventing goals, while Yangon aimed to break Shan United's unbeaten streak. Despite efforts from both sides, the



U Zaw Zaw, President of the Myanmar Football Federation, presenting the championship trophy to the first-prize-winning Shan United team. **PHOTO: THAW GYI**

match concluded without a winner. Shan United's unbeaten record now extends to 56 games since the 2020 season. Head coach U Han Win Aung, who has been in charge since the 2022 season, has maintained an impressive record of not losing any domestic league games under his leadership. The best player award for this match was claimed by Yangon goalkeeper Phone Thitsa Min.

Following the match, the

prize-giving ceremony proceeded. Shan United's striker, Bello, who secured the award for the most goals with 13, received a medal and a prize of K1 million. Dagon Star team, securing the 5th place, was awarded a prize of K10 million. The ISPE, clinching the 4th place, received a prize of K20 million. Hanthawady team, the third-place winner, received an individual medal and a prize of K30 million. Yangon United team, securing

the second prize, received an individual medal and a prize of K40 million. Shan United, the first prize winner, received an individual medal and a prize of K60 million, along with the championship trophy and the gold trophy for maintaining an undefeated record throughout the season. The awards were presented by Yangon Region government ministers, Myanmar Football Federation President U Zaw Zaw, and other officials. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZW

Battling Man Utd hold Liverpool as Arsenal top Premier League



Manchester United's Moroccan midfielder (4) Sofyan Amrabat (2R) and Manchester United's Cameroonian goalkeeper (24) Andre Onana block a shot by Liverpool's Colombian midfielder (7) Luis Diaz (C) during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Manchester United at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on 17 December 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

MANCHESTER United ended Liverpool's perfect record at Anfield on Sunday, holding the Premier League title chasers to a 0-0 draw after wins for Arsenal and Aston Villa.

Jurgen Klopp's men came into the match widely expected to inflict yet more agony on their bitter rivals and boasting 11 wins from 11 games in all competitions at home this season.

Liverpool dominated, hogging nearly 70 per cent of possession and had 34 shots to United's six but they could not break down their stubborn opponents.

Klopp's men finish the day second in the table, a point behind Arsenal's tally of 39 after the Gunners earlier beat Brighton 2-0.

The result was a moral victory for beleaguered United manager Erik ten Hag, whose team last season suffered a 7-0 drubbing at Anfield and came into the match with 12 defeats in 24 games in the current campaign.

United were missing suspended captain Bruno Fernandes while out-of-form Marcus Rashford was once again on the bench. — AFP



US golfer Tiger Woods speaks at a press conference ahead of the Genesis Invitational in the Pacific Palisades neighbourhood of Los Angeles on 14 February 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Tiger encouraged for comeback after knocking off the rust

TIGER Woods says he has been encouraged by his performance in two December events, the first competitive golf for the 15-time major winner since April ankle surgery.

Woods, who turns 48 later this month, had not played since the Masters eight months ago before placing 18th of 20 in the Hero World Challenge two weeks ago.

"A lot of things are aching a lot more than my ankle, which is the way it goes," Woods said. "I'll be able to walk and play. We've been working out hard, been able to recover."

On Sunday, he and 14-year-old son Charlie Woods combined to shoot 61 and grab a share of fifth at the PNC Championship in Orlando, Florida.

They finished on 19-under 125 in the parent-child pairs event to stand six strokes adrift of German winner Bernhard Langer and his son Jason.

Woods had struggled to walk four rounds after severe leg injuries suffered in a 2021 car crash but has said he plans to compete once a month next year thanks to a strong fitness recovery.

"We've been training every day, which is great," Woods said. "It has been nice to knock off a lot of the rust and some of the doubt I've had because quite frankly I haven't hit a shot that counted in a long time.

"So having to post a score and hit shots on the right number, hit shots with consequence, it has been nice."

Woods says his surgically repaired right ankle, which once had him limping through rounds at majors, is no longer such an issue.

"The ankle was fine because it's now fused but other parts were definitely aching," Woods said. "The fact we were able to train right away and get after it, and start hitting balls, it was encouraging." — AFP



UNGA president calls for greater increase in climate finance for adaptation

"A greater increase in climate finance, as it relates to adaptation, has been sorely lacking," Dennis Francis, president of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), has said.

During an interview with Xinhua on the heels of COP28, or the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Francis sorted out two pivotal realms: dealing with "loss and damage" and advancing climate finance for adaptation.

Francis expressed satisfaction regarding the progress made at COP28 in capitalizing the fund for loss and damage, a development he described as "most welcome".

However, Francis stressed the need for more climate finance for adaptation. Given the imbalance in climate funding, he advocated for a shift towards adaptation strategies to build resilience against climate change's effects.

He acknowledged the enduring endeavours of developing countries to highlight this matter on the COP agenda.

"This year, we have seen the initiation of the process of capitalization of that fund," he said, emphasizing its importance in assisting developing countries and the most vulnerable in coping with the financial strains brought on by climate change.

"Only about two per cent of the resources committed to climate change have gone towards adaptation, most of the money has gone to mitigation," the



A woman walks in the venue for COP28, or the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, 12 December 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA

UNGA president lamented.

While acknowledging the importance of mitigation in providing immediate relief to countries impacted by climate change, he stressed that the real challenge lies in adaptation.

"Adaptation will build resilience to climate change," he said, pointing to the necessity of safeguarding public infrastructure for the basic functioning of societies.

In addressing the issue of the 100 billion US dollars commitment to climate finance, Francis said that "100 billion US dollars was a long time in coming and, in fact, has not been fully subscribed. It's close, but it's not been fully subscribed as yet," expressing

hope for its full capitalization soon.

From the perspective of the UN General Assembly, Francis said, "Our interest would be to ensure, first of all, that the resources commitments given are honoured."

He called for ensuring broad geographical access to these resources, particularly for the most vulnerable and fragile countries.

Francis reiterated the UN General Assembly's commitment to seeing that the 100 billion dollars climate finance pledge not only serves as a political statement but translates into tangible and effective support for countries most impacted by climate change. — Xinhua

Russian PM to come to China for 28th regular meeting between Chinese, Russian heads of govt

AT the invitation of Premier of the State Council Li Qiang, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin will be in China from 19 to 20 December for the 28th regular meeting between Chinese and Russian heads of government, foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin announced here on Monday.

In response to a related query, Wang told a daily news briefing that the regular meeting between Chinese and Russian heads of government is a vital mechanism for implementing the consensus reached by the two heads of state and coordinating bilateral practical cooperation in various fields. It has been held every year since its inception in 1996.

During the meeting, the two sides will have an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations, practical cooperation, and issues of common interest, Wang said.

Wang noted that under the strategic guidance of the two heads of state, China-Russia relations have maintained sound and steady development. Next year, the two countries will celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the Year of Culture.

"We look forward to deepening bilateral cooperation, enhancing people-to-people and local exchanges, and deepening China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era through this regular meeting between Chinese and Russian heads of government," Wang said. — Xinhua

Security Council mulls Monday vote on new Gaza ceasefire call

TEN days after an American veto, the UN Security Council could vote Monday on a new resolution calling for an "urgent and sustainable cessation of hostilities" in Gaza, as Washington exhibits growing impatience with key ally Israel.

The vote, initially set for 3:00 pm (2000 GMT), has been rescheduled for 5:00 pm but could be further postponed, possibly until Tuesday, to allow negotiations to proceed and to avoid a new impasse for the council, diplomatic sources told AFP Monday.



Palestinians prepare traditional unleavened bread in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on 18 December 2023, amid continuing battles between Israel and the militant group Hamas. PHOTO: AFP

Earlier this month the United States blocked a previous Security Council resolution that would have called for a "humanitarian ceasefire" in the battered Palestinian territory, where Israel continues its deadly strikes in retaliation for Hamas's unprecedented 7 October attack. But in the General Assembly, the UN's 193 members voted overwhelmingly for a ceasefire, with 153 in favour.

The upcoming Security Council resolution was prepared by Arab countries that had come away from last Tues-

day's General Assembly vote bolstered by such broad international support, though the latest text's fate remains uncertain.

The new draft, introduced by the United Arab Emirates and seen by AFP, calls for an "urgent and sustainable cessation of hostilities to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access in the Gaza Strip."

It also affirms support for a two-state solution in the region and "stresses the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority." — AFP