

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

India to import Myanmar's black gram, pigeon pea in two months



Export cargoes seen being loaded onto the overseas-going merchant vessel at Yangon Port.

INDIA is reportedly to bring in 400,000 tonnes of pigeon pea (tur) and one million tonnes of black gram (urad) from Myanmar in two months (January and February) in 2024 to curb rising prices in the domestic market, citing a report by the Economic Times.

India is forecast to face a decline in pulse output compared to that of the previous year. Subsequently, India is bound to import pulses. India's gov-

ernment extended the stock limit on pulses to avoid price hikes and have fair prices for the consumers until the end of December 2023 from 30 October.

Additionally, India eased the import tax on pigeon peas in March and raised imports from Africa and Myanmar, causing the price to rise compared to last year.

As pigeon pea (tur) is commonly consumed across India, there are 4.5 million tonnes of pigeon pea annual

requirements, Bimal Kothari, chairman of the India Pulses and Grains Association, stated.

There will be no sudden price increase upon pulses import, Kothari stated.

India is the primary market for Myanmar's pulses. Myanmar's commercial attaché in Kolkata, India, suggests preparations for a consignment of 1.4 million tonnes of those pulses to India in January and February. — NN/EM

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800 guesthouses, 400 stalls built for Mann Shwesettaw Festival

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Fuel shortage drives commodity transport costs upsurge

MPPA gearing up fuel oil sales for summer paddy farmers

MYANMAR Paddy Producers Association (MPPA) is preparing to sell 4 gallons of fuel oil per acre for summer paddy farmers in cooperation with the Perpetual Company Limited (TPC).

Under the guidance of the Myanmar Rice Federation, the MPPA made this scheme in order for those farmers of summer

paddy to facilitate purchase.

For purchase, U Kyaw Lin Maung, executive of the MPPA (Nyaungdon), can be contacted through phone number 09 794490626, U Tun Lin Aung (Thayawady) through 09 5360745, U Thein Soe Oo (Mawgyun) through 09779789544, Daw Cho Cho Aung (Darka) through 09

449450900, MPPA office through 01 2314995 and 01 2314841, the MPPA notified.

The farmers need to present information on types of tractors, harvesters, water pumps, the volume of oil gallons, the number of acres and the location and name of the farmers.

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Farmers prepare to grow paddy with transplanter.

NATIONAL

IN Magway Region's Minbu District, specifically Minbu (Sagu) Township, for the Mann Shwesehtaw Pagoda Buddha Pujaniya Festival, approximately 800 guesthouses and 400 stalls will be constructed to accommodate pilgrims and provide shopping opportunities, according to U Tun Tun Win, the Minbu District Administrator in Magway Region.

The Mann Shwesehtaw Pagoda Buddha Pujaniya Festival is scheduled to commence on 14 February, starting on the 5th waxing of Tabodwe in the Myanmar calendar year 1385, and the festival will run for 64 days.

"The festival is set to begin on 14 February 2024. Pilgrims not only from Magway but also from central Myanmar traditionally attend the Mann Shwe Set Taw Festival. Therefore, approximately 800 guest houses will be constructed to provide temporary accommodation for the pilgrims, and around 400 temporary shops



800 guesthouses, 400 stalls built for Mann Shwesehtaw Festival

will be opened to offer convenient food options. All construction projects are currently underway. Hence, we would like to inform everyone to come and visit the festival. All pilgrims can enjoy the

festival happily and peacefully," said U Tun Tun Win.

During the Mann Shwesehtaw Pagoda Festival, the Shwesehtaw Mann Chaung Recreation Camp near the pagoda in Minbu

(Sagu) Township will be opened in conjunction with the festival.

Preparations are reportedly underway to allow pilgrims to take a short ride on elephants at the elephant camp, bathe

and relax in the Mann Creek, and enhance preparations for the elephants' dance show and reception programmes, as well as the exhibition of the elephant museum. — ASH/TKO

500-bed Yangon Speciality Hospital performs 35th liver transplant operation



Photos show the successful surgical operation and post-operative patient update on 18 December 2023.

UNION Minister for Health Prof Dr Thet Khaing Win, accompanied by relevant officials, comforted the recipient of the 35th liver transplant operation and donor at the Yangon Speciality Hospital, a 500-bed facility, on 18 December.

The operation for a 29-year-old male patient commenced at 7 am on that day with the extraction of the required part of the liver from his cousin, the donor, and the operation ended at 3:30 pm.

The liver transplant operation was conducted with the collaboration of Prof Dr Zaw Than Tun, Director-General of Medical Research Department, along with the department heads and directors-general of the department concerned, Prof Dr Sai Aung Nyunt Oo, Prof Dr Win Win

Sway, Prof Dr Mu Mu Naing, Prof Dr Win Win Kyaw, Dr Sway Htet, Prof Dr Aung Cho Tun, Dr Thida Aung, retired Professors Dr Tin Tin Mar and Dr Kyi Kyi San, Medical Superintendent Dr Aung Lin Aye of the 500-bed Yangon Speciality Hospital, Associate Prof Dr Maung Maung Swe, Specialist Dr Yin Mu Yar, Specialist Dr Thazin Than, skilled nurses and medical workers.

The Union minister also met Professor Kwang Woong Lee and Dr Jaeyoon Kin from Seoul National University Hospital and expressed gratitude for cooperating with the Professors/Specialists, nurses and medical treatment team leaders in the liver transplant operation.

The first two liver transplant operations were conducted at the

new Yangon General Hospital in 2004 and 2009. After the Yangon Speciality Hospital was established, it completed 34 liver transplant operations – once in 2015, four times in 2016, six times in 2017, 11 times in 2018 and 10 times in 2019.

Similarly, the Mandalay General Hospital conducted 14 liver transplant operations – three times in 2017, seven times in 2018 and four times in 2019, while the Yangon General Hospital performed three operations in 2019.

The operations were suspended during the outbreak of COVID-19, and now they are resumed. Such operations enable patients to receive treatment locally and save on the medical expenses of going abroad for treatment. — MNA/KTZH

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

NATIONAL

Committee on Prevention of Recruitment of Child Soldiers holds 2/2023 meeting

STATE Administration Council Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Minister for Defence Admiral Tin Aung San, Chairman of the Committee on the Prevention of Recruitment of Child Soldiers, presided over the committee's 2/2023 meeting yesterday.

Speaking at the event, the Deputy Prime Minister said the government and CTFMR (Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting) signed the Plan of Action for preventing child soldier recruitment on 27 June 2012 to remove Tatmadaw (Army) from the list of the UN Secretary-General.

Tatmadaw discharged 1,057 child soldiers after signing the Plan of Action with CTFMR to date.

Moreover, Tatmadaw is recruiting newcomers in line with the committee's prescriptions, laws, rules and regulations and CTFMR.

He added that education programmes are launched by cooperating with the ministries concerned, and the work progress will be reported to CTFMR.

Attendees then coordinated discussions before the committee chairman concluded the meeting. — MNA/KTZH



SAC Member Deputy Prime Minister MoD Union Minister Admiral Tin Aung San chairs the meeting 2/2023 of the Committee on the Prevention of Recruitment of Child Soldiers yesterday.

MIFER Union Minister receives UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office (Bangkok) Regional Director

UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic

Relations Dr Kan Zaw received Mr Francis Pio Smith, Regional

Director, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Bangkok, and the team at the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday.

They cordially discussed matters relating to the ongoing cooperation programmes and exchanged views on the future cooperation between Myanmar and UNFPA.

Officials from the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations were also present at the meeting. — MIFER



UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Director Mr Francis Pio Smith calls on Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw yesterday.

MoFA Deputy Minister receives UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office (Bangkok) Regional Director

U Lwin Oo, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, received Mr Francis Pio Smith, Regional Director, Asia and Pacific Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Bangkok, on 19 December 2023, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

They exchanged views on matters related to UNFPA

programmatic engagement and the possible ways for the Government of Myanmar and UNFPA to cooperate in the future.

Also present at the meeting were Mr Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative for Myanmar, and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — MNA



MoFA Deputy Minister U Lwin Oo receives the UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office (Bangkok) Regional Director yesterday.

Application for political party establishment rights ongoing

PEACE Alliance Party, which wants to establish a political party under Section 3 of the Political Parties Registration Law to compete in the multiparty democratic general election, applied yesterday to the Union Election Commission for the right to establish a political

party under the law and regulations.

To date, there are a total of 65 parties, including 15 parties that have applied under Section 3 of the Political Parties Registration Law and 50 parties that have applied for the right to continue to be established as

political parties and for registration under Section 25 of the Political Parties Registration Law,

The Union Election Commission is now processing verification for the group that has applied for permission to establish a party. — MNA/KZL

Daily newspapers available online

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

NATIONAL

MoIP UM receives UNFPA Regional Director



Union Minister U Myint Kyaing holds talks with UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office (Bangkok) Regional Director Mr Francis Pio Smith yesterday.

U Myint Kyaing, Union Minister for Immigration and Population received Mr Francis Pio Smith, Regional Director of the Asia and Pacific Regional Office based in Bangkok from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Thailand and a delegation at the Ministry office in Nay Pyi Taw at 2 pm yesterday.

The Ministry of Immigration and Population and UNFPA had a frank exchange of views regarding ways to continue cooperation between MoIP and UNFPA, and UNFPA's Reproductive Health, youth sector HIV and AIDS in supporting gender equality and gender-based violence work. Due to the need to correct population figures,

both sides exchanged views cooperation with the Ministry on population activities, establishing capacity to respond to the needs of Myanmar's population and family planning, raising awareness about the population problems of developing Myanmar and possible strategies to deal with these problems, assisting in solving Myanmar's population problems in various ways that meet the needs and promotion of population-related work programmes, The meeting was attended by Deputy Ministers U Htay Hlaing and Dr Myo Thant, the directors-general of the Department of Immigration and Population and responsible officials. — MNA/TS

MoFA Director-General signs condolences book for late Emir of Kuwait

DIRECTOR-GENERAL of the Strategic Studies and Training Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Zaw Phyo Win signed the book of condolences for the death of His Highness Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, the Emir of the State of Kuwait, yesterday morning at the Kuwait Embassy in Yangon. — MNA/KZW



MoFA Director General U Zaw Phyo Win signs the condolences book yesterday in Yangon.

Counter-argument to false information

Misinformation: More than 20 residents arrested by Tatmadaw

FALSE news is circulating on social networks that more than 20 local people 11 men and ten women from Kyaukpyu Township, Gonchwin District, Rakhine State, have been detained by Tatmadaw for no reason.

Upon contacting a relevant official about the news, it was found to be incorrect; no security teams in

the township had performed security duties, and it was a fabricated report.

Terrorism-promoting media outlets have been writing and spreading false news on social media to mislead the local population into misunderstanding Tatmadaw and security measures. — MNA/KZL



Fake news alert: malicious media falsely reports heavy weapon attack on No101 Light Infantry Division

THE news outlet Khit Thit, known for its pro-terrorism stance, is deliberately spreading misinformation on social media by falsely reporting that terrorists attacked the No 101 Light Infantry Division in Pakkoku and a security outpost in west Hponekan Village, claiming the use of 200 improvised heavy weapons and resulting in

the death of ten security forces.

Upon thorough on-ground investigations, it was determined that the terrorists haphazardly fired improvised heavy weapons, which landed near residential villages and caused explosions. However, the claim of ten security forces being killed in the incident is untrue. These malicious

news outlets with pro-terrorism tendencies are consistently fabricating and circulating false news to obscure the actual acts of terrorism committed by terrorists.

Their motive appears to involve conducting psychological warfare against Tatmadaw security forces. — MNA/TMT

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NATIONAL

When it comes to environmental conservation, no one puts e-waste in a corner

By KTZH

TECHNOLOGIES are growing at a very fast pace in the world and the use of electronic devices has increased tremendously. Our lives are also becoming ever more electrified. There are new phones, laptops, televisions, DVD players, cameras, generators, freezers, CD players and other items on the market. They are discarded by their owners due to their short lifespan.

E-waste refers to discarded electronic devices. The UN defines e-waste as any discarded product with a battery or plug, and features toxic and hazardous substances such as mercury, that can pose severe risks to human and environmental health.

The negative effects that electronic waste has on both the environment and public health. Have you ever thought that e-waste can affect both the environment and public health? How many kinds of e-waste are there in your house?

In today's age, people are constantly changing their electronic devices every year for better and faster models. But what happens to your old devices? If you think it is OK and very easy to throw away the e-waste, it is not as simple as you think. E-waste can be toxic, is not biodegradable and accumulates in the environment, in the soil, air, water and living things.

E-waste contains toxic substances

E-waste also contains toxic and hazardous materials such as mercury, cadmium, lead, nickel, beryllium, chromium, chemical flame retardants, etc. They can



The photo illustrates stacks of discarded electronic gadgets and devices.

also lead to air pollution, water pollution and soil pollution.

When electronic waste is dismantled, shredded, or melted, it releases numerous toxins that cause air pollution and damage respiratory health.

When toxins released from e-waste enter soil, it is likely that they will reach groundwater, and then nearby ponds, lakes and so on. These chemicals can change the pH of the water, which kills freshwater organisms, damages ecosystems, and even causes health issues to the animals who drink this water.

Moreover, the improper disposal of e-waste in regular landfills or in places, where both heavy metals and flame retardants can seep directly into the soil, causing contamination of underlying groundwater or crops that may be planted nearby or

in the area in the future. They can remain there for a very long time. These chemicals will also affect the soil's pH, composition, and temperature, and ultimately affect the plants and wildlife in the area.

Additionally, the toxic components contained in e-waste are also dangerous to human beings such as brain, heart, liver, kidney and skeletal system damage and so on.

Public awareness

Each year, International E-Waste Day is held on 14 October, aiming to reflect on the impacts of e-waste and the necessary actions to enhance circularity for e-products.

According to the United Nations, in 2021 each person on the planet will produce on average 7.6 kilogrammes of e-waste, meaning that a massive 57.4



Factory sewage discharge raises environmental concerns.

million tons will be generated worldwide. Only 17.4 per cent of this electronic waste, containing a mixture of harmful substances and precious materials, will be recorded as being properly collected, treated and recycled.

Additionally, the UN said eight kilogrammes of e-waste per person will be produced worldwide in 2023. This means 61.3 million tonnes of electronic waste is discarded within a year. The digits show increasing e-waste amount year by year.

Therefore, effective waste management is important to

maintain a healthy environment for proper growth and survival. So, the people should know the three Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle. Moreover, it should educate the people on current measures of disposal, if not, the growing stream of e-waste will worsen.

How to reduce e-waste

In our country, Myanmar, people first choose to repair products and then resell them to second-hand agents when they are not easy to repair. It is rare to dispose of electronic products even if they are end of life. Therefore, there might be piles of e-waste in their houses. There are no widespread educational papers, articles, extension services etc. for electronic waste disposal in Myanmar. Therefore, there should be the systematic structures, management and strategies for this issue. Some organizations conduct awareness campaigns locally for waste mostly for plastic, dry or wet waste. There should be also more campaigns for e-waste management.

The simplest and easiest solution to e-waste is to arrange to take your e-waste to a recycling firm. The benefits of doing so are enormous. Recycling remains the most effective way to keep e-waste from damaging our environment and our health. That's a message we all need to keep repeating.

If we really love the next generations and our planet Earth, we must take action to protect the environment before it is too late.

Reference: Geneva Environment Network

YCDC tackles systematic waste disposal in industrial zones

A meeting was conducted at the 12-storey building of the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) to raise awareness and initiate action plans for the systematic disposal and reduction of waste from industrial zones.

U Cho Tun Aung, Head of the Department of Urban Envi-

ronment Conservation and Water and Sanitation stated, "Our department is actively managing the daily waste generated by the city, utilizing machinery and staff to ensure systematic disposal and reduce air, water, and soil pollution. Previously, we employed the on-call system, which resulted

in undisciplined waste disposal by certain industries. We have since implemented more organized waste disposal methods. Our staff must ensure the proper execution of their cleanliness-related tasks."

Dr Aung Myint Maw, Deputy Head of the department, ex-



The photo shows one of the industrial zones in Yangon.

plained the Action Plan project and discussed upcoming activi-

ties outlined in the Action Plan. — TWA/ TRKM

NATIONAL

Fuel shortage drives commodity transport costs upsurge



Trucks in the Bayintnaung Wholesale Market.

THE transport cost of goods has surged significantly, attributed to challenges in acquiring fuel, as reported by truck drivers from the Bayintnaung Wholesale Market.

While the expense of transporting goods between Yangon and Patheingyi has risen, the cost between Yangon and Hinthada has remained steady.

For instance, the trans-

port charge for a 20-viss bag of chilli from Yamethin to Yangon's Bayintnaung Wholesale Market is K4,000 and has not changed, according to a chilli trader.

Transporting sugarcane from Shan State to Yangon costs between K130 and K170 per viss, depending on the distance. Conversely, delivering perishable goods like cabbages and tomatoes is priced at K200 per viss for swift delivery.

As noted by Ko Myint, an onion and potato trader, the transport cost for onions from Myingyan to Yangon has increased to K155 per viss for fast delivery. On the other hand, transporting onions from Seikphyu to Yangon costs K120 per

viss for standard delivery.

In the delta area, where highway roads are typically around 100 miles long, only 10 gallons of fuel are required for a one-way route. The report highlights that drivers face no fuel procurement difficulties along this route. However, longer expressways spanning 300 and 400 miles present challenges in refuelling.

A significant increase in transport costs is observed in moving chilli from Yangon to Myawady, escalating from K175 per viss to K550 due to road blockades along the journey. Only small vehicles can navigate through such situations, resulting in limited chilli deliveries. — TWA/TMT

150 Myanmar workers sent to S Korea under EPS on 19 December

ON 19 December, the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul announced the arrival of 150 Myanmar workers in the Republic of Korea under the Employment Permit System (EPS).

The labour attaché from the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul greeted them at Incheon Airport, offered necessary assistance, and provided guidance on the procedures they should follow. — TWA/MKKS

Free bamboo construction training programme to be launched in January 2024

A training programme on the utilization of bamboo in construction, jointly organized by the Vocational Skills Development Programme (VSDP) and Housing Now, will be free of charge starting in January 2024.

Individuals, regardless of gender, who wish to attend the course must fall within the age range of 17 to 35 and have completed at least primary education at the middle school

level. The trainees will have to cover all expenses related to the course. The course is 12 months, and participants will receive certificates of completion upon finishing the programme.

Interested applicants can inquire in person at Monkey Joint, Ownchan Lanthit, City Bypass Road, and Bago during office hours, or they can email zin.zinn@gmail.com. — TWA/TRKM



The photo depicts two Myanmar workers at the workplace in Malaysia.

Myanmar workers in Malaysia required to pay income tax

THE Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, has announced that Myanmar labourers must pay a six-month income tax from October 2023 to March 2024 at the rate of two per cent.

The statement highlights that the income tax payment by Myanmar citizens residing

abroad contributes to education, health, transport, and other public services for citizens at home.

Additionally, the statement mentions that taxpayers can enjoy tax relief when purchasing houses, land, apartments, and vehicles at home by presenting

the certificate of income tax payment.

Myanmar embassies in Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia have communicated that Myanmar citizens living and working in these countries must fulfil their income tax obligations. — TWA/TRKM



The pamphlet on the use of bamboo training.

Strong demand by feedstuff factories elevates corn price

CORN prices are bouncing back in the domestic markets on the back of the demand by feedstuff factories. The prices increased to K1,110-K1,130 per viss on 19 December from K1,050-K1,070 per viss on 1 December.

Myanmar exports corn to China and Thailand through the border. Also, it delivers it to China, India, Viet Nam, and the Philippines by sea at the present time, according to the Myanmar Corn Industrial Association.

Thailand nodded corn imports under zero tariff (with Form-D), between 1 February and 31 August. However, Thailand imposes a maximum tax rate of 73 per cent on corn imports to protect the rights of their growers if the corn is imported during the corn season of Thailand.

China has been purchasing Myanmar's corn through cross-border trade under the opium substitution programme. Legitimate corn trade between Myanmar and China commenced at the end of 2022. A total of 112 Myanmar companies have been permitted for corn exports.

Myanmar shipped 903,699 tonnes of corn worldwide as of 1 December in the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April, bagging US\$271.321 million, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated.

Myanmar exported more than two million tonnes of corn to foreign trade in the 2022 corn season. The majority of them were sent to Thailand, and the remaining went to China, India, the Philippines and Viet Nam.

The corn is cultivated in Shan, Kachin, Kayah and Kayin states and Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. Myanmar has three corn seasons — winter, summer and monsoon. The country produces 2.5-3 million tonnes of corn every year. — NN/EM



A documentary group photograph of the introductory event in Nanning, China.

Myanmar to showcase its products at 2nd Guangxi New Silk Road New Year E-commerce Festival & 2024 Online Shopping Festival in China

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Myanmar products that will be showcased at the 2nd Guangxi New Silk Road New Year E-commerce Festival and the 2024 Online New Year Shopping Festival in Nanning, Guangxi Autonomous Region, China, were introduced by the Myanmar Consulate-General.

Myanmar products are set to be featured at the E-commerce

Festival Gala during the festivals scheduled from December 2023 to February 2024. U Kyaw Soe Thein, Myanmar Consul-General in Nanning, mentioned in his interview with Guangxi Television that items such as jewels, coffee, tea, dried tea leaves, honey, soft drinks, wine, beer, and Mohinga soup and rice noodles — traditional Myanmar food — will be showcased during the festivals.

Additionally, Myanmar handicrafts like jewel paintings, gold embroidery paintings, and sculptures will be part of the display.

Business people from Myanmar have received invitations to participate in the E-commerce event, providing them opportunities to collaborate with e-commerce companies in the Guangxi region. — ASH/KZW

Weekly market update of dry groceries at Bayintnaung Wholesale Centre

FOR a week from 13 to 19 December 2023, the prices of Shan garlic, sugar, sugarcane and jaggery rose, while the prices of black gram, pigeon pea and onion dipped at the Bayintnaung Wholesale Centre.

Onion

The Bayintnaung Wholesale Market saw the supply of 900,000 visses of onions from various regions on 19 December. The wholesale prices moved in the range of K2,400 and K4,500 per viss depending on the quality, size and producing areas (Seikphyu, Myingyan and Myittha) that day.

Garlic

The garlic prices from Aungban, Shan State, touched

highs of K14,000-K15,200 per viss depending on varieties and qualities, whereas Kyukok garlic fetched K12,200 per viss on 19 December. Shan garlic price was volatile, showing an increase of K1,500 per viss.

Potato

Chinese potato prices dipped to K2,400 per viss on 19 December from K2,800 per viss registered on 16 December.

Chilli pepper

The wholesale prices of chilli peppers were K7,500-K10,500 per viss for long chilli pepper and Mohtaung variety on 19 December. Those red chillies processed in cold storage fetched K14,800-K15,500 per viss. The price of bell peppers is K14,500

per viss.

Rice

The prices hit K68,000 per sack of non-premium monsoon rice, K95,000 for short-mature old rice (90 days), K82,000 per

sack of old rice grown under the intercropping season and K100,000 for Pawkywe variety. The high-grade old Pawsan rice prices were K130,000-170,000 per sack depending on the produc-

ing areas (Ayeawady, Shwebo) on 19 December. The new Pawsan rice from the Shwebo area was K140,000 per sack.

Palm oil

For a week from 18 to 24 December 2023, the wholesale reference price of Yangon Region was set at K4,810 per viss.

Pulses

The prices of various pulses stood at K2,928,000 per tonne of black gram (Fair Average Quality/RC), K3,208,000 per tonne of black gram (Special Quality/RC), K3,005,000 per tonne of pigeon pea (red gram) RC, K3,750 per viss of green gram (Shwewah) and K6,000 — K6,150 per viss of chickpea in Yangon's wholesale markets. — TWA/KK



A housewife seen shopping for dry groceries at a retail outlet.

OPINION

Promote legitimate trade and eliminate illicit practices

IN the orchestration of a market-driven economic system within any nation, key stakeholders, including the government, business entities, and consumers, play pivotal roles. The government, in particular, assumes the responsibility of eradicating illegal trade practices, aiming to augment the state's revenue, safeguard tax and revenue streams, and ensure the safety of commodities free from potential hazards for the populace.

Globally, governments are placing considerable emphasis on combating illegal trade, recognizing its potential to disrupt macroeconomic stability. A case in point is Myanmar, where efforts are underway to bolster the production of value-added goods for increased export, coupled with systematic measures against the illegal importation of goods. Relevant departments are poised to adjust tariffs, adhere to international procedures, and fortify

domestic industries for sustained longevity.

The ramifications of illegal trade are far-reaching, ranging from fiscal losses and erroneous trade data to destabilizing the banking system and the nation's monetary circulation. Illegally imported goods not only hinder market competition for domestic products but also precipitate a reduction in foreign investment, loss of employment opportunities, and pose risks to public health through the use of illicit medicines, counterfeit foodstuffs, and cosmetics, as well as the consumption of expired products. This, in turn, undermines the crucial roles of manufacturing and trade in propelling the state's economy.

TO streamline processes for legitimate business activities, the government has instituted online platforms such as the MyCO

system for company establishment, Myanmar Trade Net 2.0 for export and import registration, MACCS system for declaration filing, and the Online Matching system for domestic and international monetary transfers. These initiatives aim to minimize illegal trade by fostering efficient online interactions among relevant departments, with the ongoing introduction of the national single windows system further advancing legal trade measures and suppressing illicit trade activities.

Ensuring the success of these endeavours requires heightened awareness among businesspersons regarding systematic trade management under the law. By doing so, legal trade can flourish progressively with the prospect of competing with imported goods in the domestic market. In contrast, illegal trade is successfully rooted out for the collective benefit of the populace.

Furthermore, government departments should actively seek valuable suggestions from businesses and organizations to continually refine and enhance the legal trade process. In this collaborative effort, a seamless and thriving legal trade environment can be fostered to boost the State economy, effectively sidelining illicit practices.

PYINOOLOWIN was founded as a British Hill Station with a name as "Maymyo". The name Maymyo translated as "May Town" came from Colonel May of the 5th Bengal Regiment, who in 1866 established the town as a holiday location for the British Army Officers based in Mandalay.

Today, it has become an increasingly popular weekend getaway destination for the country's expanding middle class. Due to its moderately cool climate, even other wealthy families moved there to settle down permanently to enjoy the wholesome benefits of the surrounding environment.

Cool all year round

The town is situated on the cool Shan Plateau, about 42 miles northeast of the old Nay Pyi Taw in Mandalay Region. PyinOoLwin is cool all year round, and many old colonial houses and office buildings remain to have a central fireplace for warmth throughout the colder months.

The land around PyinOoLwin is extremely fertile; therefore, plums, pineapples, damsons and strawberries are most suitable for all to grow here on an industrial scale.

There is also a handsome variety of exotic trees and flowers, with their smell that alluring efforts to attract people to shape into flower gardens with beautiful names such as Cherry City and Flower City.

The other benefit awarded to the relentless business people is the development of PyinOoLwin into a Coffee City on the fact that its soil is most suitable for growing coffee trees.

The hope for the emergence of increasing coffee production in the coming five to seven years

is based upon the business persons who are enthusiastic to start managing coffee production systematically.

There, the eucalyptus plants are rife with full blossom, so the town is often referred to as "Pan-Myo-Daw", meaning City of Flowers. Adventurous visitors travelling from Mandalay to PyinOoLwin can wait on the side of 34th Street and listen to the cries of "Maymyo Maymyo" so as to hail a pickup truck to ascend to the famous Burma Road, which was of such strategic importance to China together with the West during the Burma campaign in World War II.

Taking refreshments

Alternatively, one can reach Maymyo Town by bus, train, taxi or private car. At the 21-Mile Station halfway up, one can stop to enjoy the view of Mandalay City below and take refreshments at the various food stalls.

Beside hailing a taxi or renting a bicycle, visitors to PyinOoLwin can get around the town by horse and cart, referred to locally as "wagons". Though one may at first believe these to be purely a touristic mode of transport, these wagons have actually been around PyinOoLwin since colonial times and today, now known to all the brightly-painted cart led by a horse with its head garlanded in petals.

One is more likely to see the smart Burmese cadets from the PyinOoLwin Town's elite Maymyo Military Academy around the town than the usual tourists. Many visitors embark upon one of the famous Burma Railway tours, taking the Mandalay-Lashio train into Shan State over the Gokhteik Viaduct and trekking in Hsipaw is

PyinOoLwin

By U Win Sein

PyinOoLwin boasts a diverse array of exotic trees and flowers, creating enticing flower gardens like Cherry City and Flower City, while its fertile soil has led to its transformation into a thriving Coffee City.



Unique horse carriages and British colonial houses make PyinOoLwin stand out from the rest of the towns in Myanmar. **PHOTOS: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS**

the most adventurous.

British colonial presence

The British colonial presence remains at Pyin Oo Lwin in the form of a variety of well-preserved colonial buildings and a Botanical Garden with flowerbeds identical to those found in a traditional English country garden.

The gardens were laid out by the former Governor of Burma, Sir Harcourt Butler and designed by Mr Alex Rodger of the Forest Office in 1915-modelled on the fashion of Kew Garden just outside London.

They are now called the "Kandawgyi National Botanical

Garden". Little tribute was paid to its origins, and a large plaque informing visitors, which the government minister to thank for the recent renovations, which have spruced up in front of the ground and added a handful of other attractions.

The Garden is huge (342



Kandawgyi National Garden at PyinOoLwin.

acres), but it is. It is possible to hire a cart to explore it in comfort, visiting features such as the petrifried wood museum, orchid garden, walk-in aviary, and view the town.

The Pwegauk Waterfall is well worth a visit, as are the Peikchin-Myaung Caves, only 15 miles away and Anisakan Falls on the way back to Mandalay.

Visiting Maymyo in 1950, the travel writer Norman Lewis compared the English and French methods of colonial adoption of Southeast Asia. In contrast, Lewis found the French could achieve "an acceptable practice" in the Vietnamese town of Dalat. He found the "well-ordered surroundings of Maymyo, too.

British, describing it as "very clean", hard-working, hardworking-playing nationals are slightly timid. Journalist Andrew Marshall was similarly underwhelm-

ing when he arrived in the 1990s, writing that much of the town".

into boulangeries and fine liquor stores and visit the Purcell Clock Tower, the chimes like Big Ben on the hour. Outside the centre is the Candacra Hotel, the finest piece of colonial architecture in PyinOoLwin.

Red-brick mansions
The British put up street after street of red-brick mansions with mock Tudor facades and strategic private hedges - middle-class dream homes rising from the jungles of Southeast Asia. The houses looked unpleasent, and cycling past their choking weekend drive-ways felt eerie.

Sparkling clean Chelsea Tractors roll through the front gate of which the prime families in their Sunday finest, with barely longyi or streak of Thanaka in sight; there are signs around the park prohibiting the chewing of betelnuts; however, one imagines that the "no" sign in PyinOoLwin for them to be tempted to accuse that such sign a filthy habit anyway.

In the town, visitors can pop

into boulangeries and fine liquor stores and visit the Purcell Clock Tower, the chimes like Big Ben on the hour. Outside the centre is the Candacra Hotel, the finest piece of colonial architecture in PyinOoLwin.

Candacraig served us as a hospital during World War Two and, before that, was a residence for the bachelors employed by the Burmah Trading Company, dubbed the Raj Chummy by Paul Theroux when he visited for his book The Great Railway Bazaar in 1970.

For years, the hotel was closed and believed to be haunted by ghosts. Through journeys from Lonon to Kyoto, he was shocked by the change that time had wrought on the world. Not so in Burma, where the lack of change was "Shameful to behold".

WHO calls on governments for urgent action to invest in Universal Health Coverage

THE World Health Organization (WHO) has published the 2023 global health expenditure report, which sheds new light on the evolution of global health spending at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Released ahead of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day, the report reveals that in 2021 global spending on health reached a new high of US\$9.8 trillion or 10.3 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP). Nevertheless, the

distribution of spending remained grossly unequal. Public spending on health had increased across the world, except in low-income countries where government health spending decreased and external health aid played an essential supporting role.

In 2021, about 11 per cent of the world's population lived in countries that spent less than US\$50 per person per year, while the average per capita spending on health was around US\$4,000

in high-income countries. Low-income countries accounted for only 0.24 per cent of global health expenditure, despite having an 8 per cent share of the world's population.

Investments in health need to continue

The record spending on health in 2021 demonstrated how countries prioritized public health during the pandemic even as economies and societies reeled from the massive disruptions it caused.

However, the report also highlights that the scale of growth in public spending on health observed during this period is unlikely to be sustained, as countries shift focus to handle other economic priorities such as slowing growth, high inflation rates and increased debt servicing obligations associated with rising indebtedness.

"Sustained public financing on health is urgently needed to progress towards universal health coverage. It is especially critical

at this time when the world is confronted by the climate crisis, conflicts and other complex emergencies. People's health and well-being need to be protected by resilient health systems that can also withstand these shocks," said Dr Bruce Aylward, WHO Assistant Director-General, Universal Health Coverage, Life Course.

Data on health service providers

The 2023 global health expenditure report also draws on

disaggregated spending data by health service providers from 50 countries. Spending at hospitals, ambulatory care providers and pharmacies accounted for most health spending across all income groups (65 per cent - 84 per cent). While spending by all types of health service providers increased in most countries, more rapid growth was seen in spending by preventive care providers than other types of providers.

SOURCE: WHO



A new and important aspect of this year's global health expenditure report is the insights into health capital investments, which is essential to the functioning of health systems, now and into the future. **PHOTO: WHO**

NATIONAL

MPPA gearing up fuel oil sales for summer paddy farmers

FROM PAGE-1

Currently, fuel prices stand at K2,445 per litre of Octane 92, K2,545 for Octane 95, K2,185 for diesel and K2,240 for premium diesel.

The price index set by Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS), the pricing basis for many refined products in Southeast Asia, influences the domestic fuel prices, according to the Supervisory Com-

mittee on Oil Import, Storage and Distribution of Fuel Oil.

Following the high MOPS price index, last August 2022, the oil prices hit the most elevated of K2,605 per litre for Octane 92, K2,670 for Octane 95, K3,330 for premium diesel and K3,245 for diesel.

Therefore, the committee is effectively steering the fuel oil storage and distribution sector to prevent an oil short-

age in the domestic market and ensure price stability for energy consumers. Consequently, the committee has been issuing the daily reference prices for fuel oil.

The authorities are taking action against those retailers of fuel stations under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law 2017 if they are found overcharging rather than the set reference rate. — NN/EM

Myanmar attends Belgian Pro League at ASEANCHAM EU and ACA Football Partners' Business Networking Reception

MYANMAR participated in a business networking reception jointly hosted by ASEANCHAM EU and ACA Football Partners at Dakota Arena in Deinze, Belgium, on 17 December, inaugurating the Belgian Pro League, as reported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The event results from the ASEAN-Brussels Committee's initiative to strengthen ties between the Southeast Asian bloc and European businesses through football diplomacy. Ambassador U Soe Lynn Han of Myanmar delivered the opening speech at the reception. After the opening ceremony, he officially kicked off the match between KMSK Deinze and SL 16 by placing the ball onto the field.



The business networking reception in progress on 17 December in Belgium.

Among the attendees were Ms Stephanie d'Hose, President of the Belgian Senate, Mr Andries Gryffroy, Vice-President of the Senate, and Ms

Leila Fernandez-Stembridge, Head of the Southeast Asian Division at the European External Action Service. — ASH/NT

MNHRC inspects Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blinds, Yangon Education Centre for the Blind (Khawel Chan)



MNHRC Commissioners seen during their inspection tour on 19 December.

THE inspection team, led by Commissioners U Kyaw Soe, Dr Than Myint, Dr Myint Thu Myaing and U Tin Aung from the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC), inspected the Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blinds, Yangon Education Centre for the Blind (Khawel Chan), Mayangon Township, Yangon Region on 19 December 2023.

The inspection team inspected the Yangon Education Centre for the Blind (Khawel Chan) under the MNHRC Law and procedures whether the students in the School can get fundamen-

tal rights, including the status of COVID-19 vaccination and healthcare services, food supply, adequate dormitories, availability of Citizenship Scrutiny Card, provision of purified drinking water, support programme for physical and mental development, as well as the right to education, vocational training and music training, communication with their families and freedom of religion and status of the taking second semester examination.

MNHRC will send recommendations to the relevant department on the findings during the inspection visit. — MNHRC

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Music maestros receiving obeisance in the previous year.

Myanmar Music Association to pay respects to veteran musicians

MYANMAR Music Association (Central) Chairman U Lwin Myint said the 13th annual ceremony to pay respects to senior musicians will be held on 30 December. This event is held every year, and about 120 veteran musicians will be honoured this year.

“This year is the 13th time

that the ceremony of respect-paying will be held. We will hold the ceremony on 30 December. Musicians will pay respects to older musicians. Officials from the association will later pay respects to some veteran musicians at their homes as they can't attend the event. The venue

for the event will be at Sky Star Hotel, Tamway,” U Lwin Myint said.

The Myanmar Music Association (Central) will pay respect to over 75-year-old musicians who are former singers, composers, recorders, guitarists and so on. — ASH/KZL

NATIONAL

Yangon-Mandalay railway detonated by terrorists



MR employees diligently repairing damaged rail sections for the smooth and fast public transport.

PDF terrorists attacked with landmines near bridge No 736, Mileposts 353/3 and 353/4, between the Minsu Station and Kyaukse Station, Kyaukse Township, Mandalay Region, yesterday.

Due to the damage to the concrete sleepers on the bridge

approach and the shifting of the tracks, the railway sections between Minsu and Kyaukse were temporarily closed. The No 5 Up Yangon-Mandalay passenger express train arrived and stopped at Myitthar Station at 7:20 am yesterday.

Security forces and officials

went to the scene of the mine explosion promptly and carried out the area security and mine clearance.

Insurgent groups have committed 130 mining and destruction of railways and train stations, 46 mining of train bridges, and 12 burning of station buildings

and staff homes in the entire Myanmar railway network from 1 February 2021 until now.

To make public travel and freight transport convenient, smooth, and fast, the national government plans and implements project activities to improve the railway infrastructure

and upgrade the train transport system.

Insurgents have repeatedly committed damage to state-owned locomotives, coaches and goods, so people strongly oppose and condemn the brutality of these terrorists, according to the statement. — MNA/KZL



Debris in the aftermath of mine blasts perpetrated by terrorists.

Confiscated illegal items: Timbers, industrial materials, machinery, motorbikes and vehicles

THE combined team managed by the Mandalay Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force impounded five kinds of goods worth K64.2 million, including 18 Lenovo Intel laptops without official documents, at the GI coach station in Mandalay on 17 December. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

The on-duty team supervised by the Nay Pyi Taw Council Territory Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force nabbed two unregistered vehicles (Nissan Elgrand and Mitsubishi Elardis) valued at K34 million in Pobbathiri township on the same day. The action was conducted under the Export and Import Law.

On 18 December, the combined teams confiscated 11.569 tonnes of illegal timbers worth K1.735 million and a Kamax three-wheel motorbike (estimated value of K1.5 million) in Pakokku township, 0.534

tonne of illegal timbers valued at K267,200 in Minhla township, 2.421 tonnes of illegal timbers valued at K164,026 in Pwintphyu and Salin townships and 1.247 tonnes of illegal timbers worth K106,674 in Natmauk and Taungtwingyi townships. The action was conducted under the Forest Law.

Also on 18 December, the joint teams captured two Volvo machines (approximately worth K240 million) without official documents at the Sakhata 8 combined checkpoint in Shwebo township and two unregistered motorbikes (estimated value of K 400,000) in Kanbalu township. The action was taken under the Export and Import Law.

Fifteen arrests were made on 17 and 18 December, with an estimated value of K342.373 million, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

Displaced students from conflict areas, including Kawlin and Htigyaing, invited to join IBEC

INTERNATIONAL Buddhist Education Centre (IBEC) has invited students who are losing their right to education as they fled from flights in their native, including Kawlin and Htigyaing, to learn at the school. Many contacts were received, according to the school.

Dr Venerable Sobhita founded the school located on Sagaing Hill in Sagaing Region, and this special education programme is being implemented with the approval of the district education officer.

Under the theme “Education is shared with those in need”, the programme, which aims to help displaced children to continue their learning and to help all school-age children to learn peacefully and freely with no discrimination, is being carried out amid challenges, according to the school.



A general view of the International Buddhist Education Centre.

Upon enrolment, the IBEC Sayadaw has instructed the school education board to help displaced children in any possible way, as they are facing difficulties in continuing their learning by communicating with respective or-

ganizations and departments. Due to many contacts, the school is making sure to accept students systematically in accordance with education policies, focusing on the right to education, which is crucial. — Thit Taw/ZS

ECONOMY WORLD

Japan keeps economic view as firms upbeat, inflation eases

THE government on Tuesday maintained its view that the economy is recovering at a moderate pace in its monthly report for December, citing an improvement in corporate sentiment and slowing inflation.

The Cabinet Office said Japanese firms' views on business conditions are "improving", an upgrade from its November report. Consumer prices, a key gauge of inflation, have been "rising at a moderate tempo recently", the first change in wording since May 2022.

Assessments of other key components of the economy were retained, ranging from private consumption and business investment to industrial output and exports.

The latest monthly eco-



A sign for the "Black Friday" sale is posted in a department of an electronics chain store in central Tokyo on 24 November 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

nomics report came as the Bank of Japan's Tankan report for December showed last week that confidence among manufacturers and nonman-

ufacturers continued to improve. The uptick was partly because they have been able to pass on higher costs to consumers in line with recovering demand after the COVID-19 fallout. — Kyodo

Panama says its canal produced record revenue despite drought

THE Panama Canal delivered \$2.5 billion to the national treasury for last year's operations, the government said Monday, despite record-low water levels that limited ship transits.

About six per cent of global maritime trade passes through the canal each year, and the Panama Canal Authority earns money from tolls and services

rendered to ships.

This year's contributions are the highest amount that the Panamanian state has received from the Canal, inaugurated by the United States in 1914.

The Canal Authority earlier said it had received \$3.3 billion in total revenue in the period from 1 October 2022 to

30 September 2023, \$319 million higher than a year earlier.

Of that amount, after deducting operating costs, it passed along \$2.5 billion to the Panamanian government.

In 2023, 510 million tonnes of cargo passed through the Panamanian waterway, eight million less than in the previous year. — AFP



A cargo ship navigates through the Panama Canal in the area of the Cocoli Locks in Panama City on 25 August 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Viet Nam's capital market sees strong growth amid macroeconomic stability: media report

THE Vietnamese capital market has shown strong growth on the back of the stable macroeconomic situation, local media has reported.

However, improvements should be made in margin trading and securities blockade before transaction, foreign ownership limit, extension of foreign room, and equal access to information, Vietnam News Agency reported on Monday citing Ketut Ariadi Kamusa, a senior financial sector specialist at the World Bank, as saying.

Carolyn Turk, World Bank

country director for Viet Nam, said competent agencies should enhance coordination to develop the capital market, which holds huge growth potential.

According to the State Securities Commission of Viet Nam, the Southeast Asian country looks to upgrade its stock market from a frontier status to an emerging market by 2025.

The status upgrading requires close cooperation between the market regulator and the management agency of the banking sector, Turk said.

— Xinhua

Second-hand clothes finally take off in Japan



This picture taken on 17 October 2023 shows customers browsing through items sold as part of the Uniqlo Pre-owned Clothes Project at the brand's Harajuku store in Tokyo. **PHOTO: AFP**

A second-hand pop-up store in Tokyo by casual clothing giant Uniqlo was a first for the Japanese firm, but also a sign that a local aversion to used garments may finally be fading.

Uniqlo is a major player in an industry blamed for immense carbon emissions and other pollutants like microplastics.

It has ridden a wave of consumers buying, and throwing away, ever more clothes.

But in Japan, the world's third-biggest clothes market, growing awareness of the sector's huge environmental impact has yet to spark much interest in second-hand options.

Uniqlo's Aya Hanada said

the 10-day pop-up in the hip Harajuku district, where second-hand clothes were a third of their original price — with some dyed for a "vintage" look — showed attitudes were changing.

"I think the feeling of resistance to used clothing has disappeared in Japan, mainly among young people," said the 45-year-old, who works for the firm's recycling programme RE.Uniqlo.

The change is in part thanks to the internet, she told AFP outside one of Uniqlo's major stores, which allows customers to access items "without having to go all the way to a second-hand clothing store." — AFP

At Stockholm auction, vintage Ikea goes high-end

AT a chic Stockholm auction house, 122 carefully-curated items with unusual provenance went under the hammer on Monday evening: vintage furnishings from flatpack furniture retailer Ikea was sold for a total of 37,000 euros (\$40,000).

Collectors' interest has blossomed over the years for Ikea pieces that

have become design icons, as the Swedish company — normally known for more budget-friendly piece — celebrates its 80th anniversary this year.

Inside the showrooms at Stockholm's Auktionsverk, the world's oldest auction house, a tubular sofa, a lacquered chest of drawers and even a pair of "space age" lamps take

pride of place.

The pieces, which date from the 1950s to the 1990s, are all marked with the stamp of the famous Swedish brand known around the world for its DIY furniture.

"I've been working in the auction industry for almost 30 years, and if somebody when I started would have said that 'One day you will host an Ikea auction in a very nice showroom', I would have said 'No, no, that's absolutely that's not possible'," laughed Li Pamp, head of the auction house. "Ikea has in many ways been controversial," she noted, citing the company's history of copying and following trends and "criticized for environmental and sustainability reasons." — AFP



Vintage IKEA furnitures are on display in the showroom of Swedish auction house "Stockholms Auktionsverk" on 15 December 2023 in Stockholm. **PHOTO: AFP**

Deutsche Bahn launches sale of logistics unit



An S-Bahn train leaves the main railway station (Hauptbahnhof) in Berlin on 22 November 2023, as the sun sets over the German capital. The S-Bahn is operated by S-Bahn Berlin GmbH, a subsidiary of Deutsche Bahn. **PHOTO: AFP**

DEUTSCHE Bahn on Tuesday said it had launched the sale process for its logistics subsidiary Schenker as the German rail operator looks to "focus on its core business".

No financial details were disclosed, but German media have said the

sale could be worth up to 20 billion euros (\$22 billion).

The company said in a statement it had launched a "transparent process for potential buyers".

"The DB Group will retain all proceeds from

a sale, a large part of which will be used to reduce debt" — estimated at more than 30 billion euros — it said. State-owned Deutsche Bahn announced in late 2022 that it was preparing to spin off the logistics subsidiary. — AFP

S Korea's Wrtn Technologies aims to become Asia's biggest AI portal

SOUTH Korea's artificial intelligence (AI) portal startup Wrtn Technologies said on Tuesday that it aimed to become Asia's biggest AI portal service provider based on expectations that the AI industry would be centred on AI platform providers.

"Wrtn continues to target Asia's top generative AI platform provider spanning Japan, the Middle East and Southeast Asia by going beyond its status as the local No 1 generative AI platform," Wrtn Chief Executive Lee Se-young told a press conference in Seoul.

The number of monthly active users (MAU) for Wrtn has grown 35 times to over 1.4 million from March, tantamount to a week-over-week growth

rate of around 10 per cent for the past nine months.

Lee said the generative AI market finished its first phase, which was driven by AI model developers such as OpenAI, and transit itself into a second phase in which AI platform providers would start to emerge as a portal to link a rising number of AI applications and large language model (LLM) generative AI models. "It resembles the early web service market," said Lee. "When considering how such websites as real estate or stock information sites in the early days of the web market were reorganized after the emergence of a portal, the generative AI market will see lots of (AI) applications absorbed into the mega (AI) platforms." — Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SITC HUIMING VOY.NO. (2322S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SITC HUIMING VOY.NO. (2322S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-12-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SITC CONTAINER LINE CO., LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY.NO. (211N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY.NO. (211N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-12-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

Notice for changes of distributor and trade name

We, **Xuzhou Fengwei Chemical Factory**, would like to change the distributor and trade name of the following product, which registered under Pesticide Registration Board, Myanmar, from **Myanmar Golden Sun Crop Science Co., Ltd** to **Friends Helper Co., Ltd**. If any objection or enquiry, please contact to Co-Secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, Department of Agriculture, West Gyogone, Insein Township, Yangon from here to next two weeks.

No	Old Trade Name	New Trade Name	Active ingredient	Registration Type	Registration Number
1	Tan Kho Shin 240 SC	FW-Pin Than 240 SC	Chlorfenapyr 240 g/l SC	Provisional	P2020-4959

Friends Helper Co., Ltd

Address: No.65, Sein Lae Kanthar Street, FMI City, Hlaing Tharyar Township, Yangon. Ph.no - 09421111797

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

Xi urges all-out search, rescue, relief efforts after 6.2-magnitude earthquake



Rescuers are in operation at Caotan Village of Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County in Haidong City, northwest China's Qinghai Province, 19 December 2023. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping has urged all-out search and rescue efforts and proper arrangements for affected people to ensure the safety of people's lives and property after a 6.2-magnitude earthquake jolted Jishishan County in northwest China's Gansu Province at midnight Monday.

So far, the earthquake has caused 100 deaths in Gansu Province and 11 deaths in Qinghai Province, and damaged some infrastructure such as water, electricity, transportation and communications.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, asked local authorities to rescue and treat the injured people in a timely manner to minimize casualties, and closely

monitor the earthquake situation and weather changes to prevent secondary disasters.

He also urged allocation of relief supplies to the affected regions as soon as possible, repair of damaged infrastructure such as electricity, communications, transportation and heating, and proper accommodation of the affected people to ensure their basic living needs. The State Council is requested to send a working group to the disaster-stricken areas to guide the earthquake relief work. The Chinese People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police Force should actively cooperate with local governments to carry out emergency rescue and disaster relief, and do their utmost to ensure the safety of people's lives and property. — Xinhua

UN political chief calls for exploring "all available diplomatic avenues" to restore Iran nuclear deal

THE international community must exhaust "all available diplomatic avenues" to restore the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program, the UN political chief told the Security Council on Monday.

Rosemary DiCarlo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, said that the hopefulness that accompanied the plan's adoption eight years ago is now "quite diminished."

"The participants are responsible for its fate," she said, but whether the plan succeeds or fails matters to everyone in the world, especially at the current dangerous juncture in global security. Iran must reverse steps inconsistent with its nuclear-related commitments under the plan, while the United States needs to lift or waive its sanctions.

"The United Nations will continue to urge the participants to exercise maximum restraint and to exhaust all available diplomatic avenues to restore the Plan," she added.

She also provided an overview of actions relating to the restrictive measures set out as part of Council Resolution 2231 (2015), which endorsed the JCPOA.

DiCarlo said, "The secretary-general still considers that the JCPOA represents the best available option to ensure that the Iranian nuclear programme remains exclusively peaceful."

Verification and monitoring of the JCPOA by the International Atomic Energy Agency has been "seriously affected by Iran's cessation of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA," she said, citing the agency's latest report. — Xinhua

Volcano erupts in southwest Iceland after weeks of earthquakes

A volcano erupting close to an Iceland power plant shot geysers of molten lava into the dark winter sky Tuesday after weeks of intense seismic activity southwest of Reykjavik.

The eruption only three kilometres (1.8 miles) from the evacuated fishing port of Grindavik on the Reykjanes peninsula began Monday at around 10:17 pm (2217 GMT) after an earthquake "swarm" of small tremors, the Icelandic Meteorological Office said.

After weeks of warnings from scientists, the authorities built reinforcements around the Svartsengi geothermal plant, which is just two kilometres from the eruption.

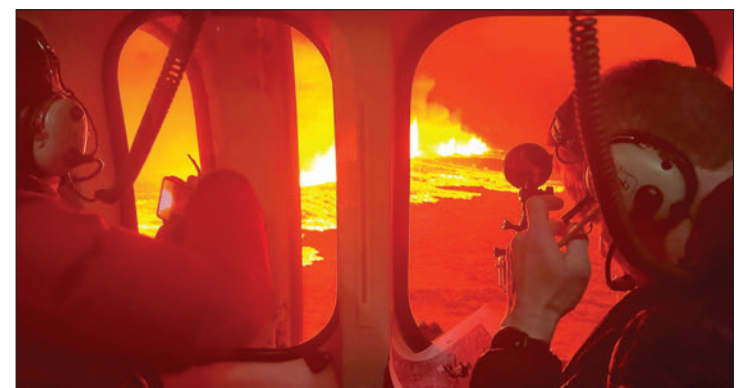
It supplies electricity and water to 30,000 people on the peninsula. Live-streamed footage of the eruption showed glowing orange jets of lava spewing from a gash in the ground, surrounded by billowing clouds of red smoke against the dark morning sky. The December sun only rises at around 11:00 am in the area just south of the Arctic Circle.

"We hope for the best but it is clear this is a considerable eruption," Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir wrote on Facebook. For weeks, the Nordic country had been anticipating an eruption in the area some 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the capital, prompting the authorities to evacuate thousands of people and close the Blue Lagoon geothermal spa famed for its turquoise waters.

The meteorological office estimated that the volcano had opened a fissure about four kilometres (2.5 miles) long, with

the southern end just three kilometres away from the fishing port of Grindavik. By 3:00 am, the meteorological office said the intensity of the eruption had stabilized and "the activity is decreasing", although it was unable to estimate how long it would last.

"We now wait to see what the forces of nature have in store," Iceland President Gudni Johannesson wrote on X, formerly Twitter. He added that protecting lives and infrastructure was the priority. — AFP



This handout image shows emergency personnel and scientists in a Icelandic Coast Guard helicopter overflying an volcanic eruption on the Reykjanes peninsula three kilometres north of Grindavik, western Iceland on 19 December 2023. **PHOTO: ICELANDIC COAST GUARD / HANDOUT / AFP**

SPORTS



Girona's players celebrate victory at the end of the Spanish league football match between Girona FC and Deportivo Alaves at the Montilivi stadium in Girona on 18 December 2023. Girona won 3-0. **PHOTO: AFP**

Girona grab back top spot in La Liga

LA Liga's surprise package Girona moved back to the top of the table after sweeping aside Alaves 3-0 on Monday, with Ukrainian Artem Dovbyk scoring twice.

Girona, part-owned by the owners of Manchester City, opened up a two-point lead over Real Madrid after a straightforward victory.

Dovbyk, 26, opened the scoring on 23 minutes and Girona doubled their lead

through Portu's angled shot from the edge of the penalty area.

Alaves had little resistance to offer their opponents and when Yan Couto was tripped in the penalty area, Dovbyk stepped up to add a third goal from the penalty spot in the 58th minute, his 10th of this Liga campaign. Girona, who have only lost once all season, travel to Real Betis on Thursday when Alaves host Real. — AFP

Man City fined over chaotic scenes in Spurs match



Manchester City's Croatian midfielder (8) Mateo Kovacic (L), Manchester City's Norwegian striker (9) Erling Haaland (2L) and Manchester City's Portuguese defender (3) Ruben Dias (R) appeal to English referee Simon Hooper during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, northwest England, on 3 December 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

MANCHESTER City have been fined £120,000 (\$152,000) after their players surrounded referee Simon Hooper in the closing moments of their 3-3 draw with Tottenham earlier this month.

Hooper made the contentious call to bring play back after he initially played advantage following Emerson Royal's mistimed challenge on Erling Haaland. Haaland was able to get back to his feet and produce a through ball which sent Jack Grealish away, but Hooper blew his whistle to end a promising attack. It sparked an animated reaction from City's players, with top-scorer Haaland in particular incensed.

Haaland expressed his frustration again at full-time and lat-

er made clear his bemusement with a post on social media site X, formerly known as Twitter.

The Football Association has now fined City after they admitted their players behaved in an improper way.

"Manchester City FC have been fined £120,000 after their players surrounded a match official at the Premier League game against Tottenham Hotspur FC on Sunday 3 December," an FA statement said. "Manchester City FC admitted that they failed to ensure their players did not behave in an improper way during the 94th minute.

"An independent regulatory commission imposed this sanction following a hearing". — AFP

Spain's La Liga and Football Federation to make VAR conversations public in New Year

FOOTBALL fans in Spain will be able to listen to discussions between referees and the VAR (video referee) after an agreement announced between the Spanish Football League (La Liga) and the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) on Tuesday.

The agreement means that in the New Year the two organizations will make recordings of conversations between officials over controversial decisions

available at the end of the day that matches are played.

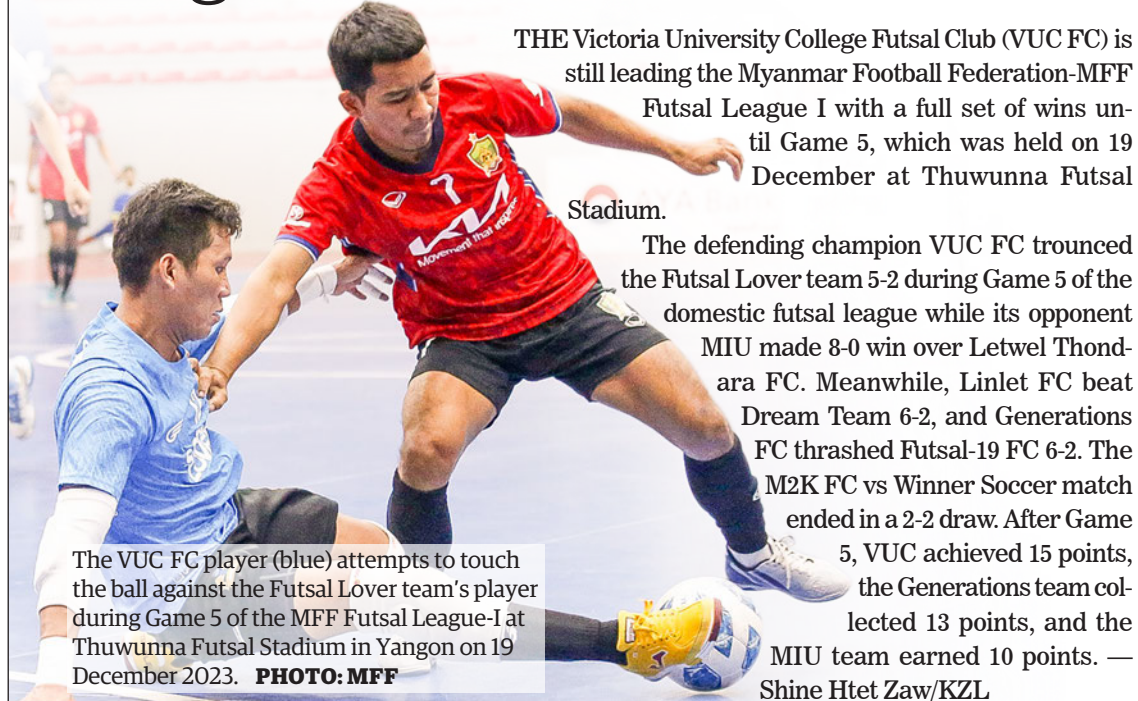
However, these conversations cannot be broadcast live as the rules of the International Football Association Board do not allow it.

"This initiative marks a new scenario of collaboration and joint work between the RFEF and the Referees' Technical Committee (CTA) with La Liga, with the aim of providing refereeing in profes-

sional football and the competitions themselves with greater transparency," announced the RFEF and La Liga in a joint statement.

"With the broadcast of the images and audios once each day of competition has ended, the experience of the fans will be improved and a greater understanding of the referee decisions will be promoted, this improving the competitions as a whole," they add. — Xinhua

VUC FC lead in MFF Futsal League I



THE Victoria University College Futsal Club (VUC FC) is still leading the Myanmar Football Federation-MFF Futsal League I with a full set of wins until Game 5, which was held on 19 December at Thuwunna Futsal Stadium.

The defending champion VUC FC trounced the Futsal Lover team 5-2 during Game 5 of the domestic futsal league while its opponent MIU made 8-0 win over Letwel Thondara FC. Meanwhile, Linlet FC beat Dream Team 6-2, and Generations FC thrashed Futsal-19 FC 6-2. The M2K FC vs Winner Soccer match ended in a 2-2 draw. After Game 5, VUC achieved 15 points, the Generations team collected 13 points, and the MIU team earned 10 points. — Shine Htet Zaw/KZL

The VUC FC player (blue) attempts to touch the ball against the Futsal Lover team's player during Game 5 of the MFF Futsal League-I at Thuwunna Futsal Stadium in Yangon on 19 December 2023. **PHOTO: MFF**



Putin: Russian nuclear triad 95% modernized

THE activity of NATO has increased sharply in general, and US forces, including aircraft, have been deployed to the Russian borders, Russian President Vladimir Putin said while presiding over a Russian Ministry of Defence meeting on 19 December.

“Recently, the activity of the NATO military bloc as a whole has sharply increased. Significant forces from the United States, including aircraft, have been deployed to our borders, and the number of alliance troops in Eastern and Central Europe has increased,” Putin stated.

The aggressive nature of NATO is no longer hidden, the Russian president said, adding that claims to global superiority are directly enshrined in US documents.

Ukrainian Conflict Situation

Russian Armed Forces have the initiative in the Ukrainian conflict and are doing everything they deem necessary, Putin remarked.

“Assessing the current situation on the ground, on the contact line, one can say with confidence that our troops have the initiative. In essence, we are doing what we think is necessary,” he said.



Russian President Vladimir Putin. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK**

The Russian president also noted that the myth about the invulnerability of Western military equipment has been broken on the battlefields of the Ukrainian conflict.

Russia's Nuclear Deterrence

Modern military equipment accounts for 95 per cent of Russia's strategic nuclear forces, Putin said on Tuesday. In light of the current global situ-

ation and the emergence of new “military-political risks,” the importance of a nuclear triad that “ensures the strategic balance of powers in the world” has drastically increased, the Russian president added.

According to him, some 15 Yars and Avangard nuclear missile launch systems will enter service as part of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces. — Sputnik

COVID, flu, RSV cases rise in US ahead of holidays

RESPIRATORY illnesses are ticking up in the United States ahead of holidays with hospital admissions for COVID-19, flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) reaching their highest levels since the start of this year.

The amount of respiratory illness causing people to seek healthcare is elevated or increasing across most areas of the country, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

More than 22,700 new COVID hospital admissions were reported across the country in the week ending 9 December, the highest since February, according to the latest data released by the CDC on Monday.

Nationally, laboratory test positivity for influenza and emergency department visits due to influenza is increasing, according to the CDC.

Seasonal influenza activity is elevated in most parts of the country, with the southeast, south-central, and west coast areas reporting the highest levels of activity, according to the CDC weekly review.

The number of weekly flu hospital admissions continued to increase.

So far, there have been at least 3.7 million illnesses, 38,000 hospitalizations, and 2,300 deaths from flu this season in the United States, according to the CDC. — Xinhua

Yemen rebels vow to keep up Red Sea attacks despite US warnings

THE United States condemned “unprecedented” attacks by Yemeni rebels on Red Sea shipping as the Huthis pledged Tuesday to continue military operations despite the announcement of a new maritime protection force.

The flurry of drone and missile attacks by the rebels, the latest of which targeted two vessels on Monday, threaten to upend global trade flows, with major shipping firms halting traffic through the Bab al-Mandeb strait.

Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin warned Tuesday that the attacks “threaten” the free flow of commerce, a day after he announced a multinational task force to quell Huthi missile and drone attacks.

“Secretary Austin condemned Huthi attacks on international shipping and global commerce as unprecedented and unacceptable, noting the attacks threaten the free flow of commerce,” Pentagon press secretary Major General Pat Ryder said in a statement.

Austin spoke during a virtual meeting with representatives of 43 coun-

tries, as well as the European Union and NATO, to discuss the increased threat to maritime security in the Red

Sea, the statement said.

The Pentagon chief “urged participants to join US-led and other interna-

tional initiatives... to restore security in the Red Sea to deter future Huthi aggression,” the statement added. — AFP



In this image obtained from the US Department of Defence, the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Carney transits the Suez Canal on 26 November 2023. The destroyer on 16 December 2023, shot down more than a dozen drones in the Red Sea launched from Huthi-controlled areas of Yemen, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said. **PHOTO: AARON LAU / US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE / AFP**