

All experienced Myanmar traditional medicine practitioners exert efforts to improve Myanmar traditional medicine

The speech of honour sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar

21 December 2023

FIRST and foremost, I would like to extend my warm greetings to all officials, Myanmar veteran traditional medicine practitioners, related experts and guests

from regions and states in attendance to today's Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar for enjoy-

ing all auspiciousness and physical and mental well-being.

The Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference and Myanmar

Traditional Medicine Seminar are held yearly, and this year's occasion will be the 22nd. In 2023, I am glad to hear that

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Practitioners must emphasize improvements in traditional medicines for healthcare services with potent therapies

AS an art of traditional medicine of countries and nationals are basically different, fundamental theories and own characteristics of Myanmar's traditional medicine must be preserved as an intangible cultural heritage of the country, said Vice-Senior General Soe Win.

Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win, who is also in the capacity of Patron of the Leading Committee for Organizing the 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar, delivered a speech at the launching of the 22nd conference and seminar at Myanmar International Convention Centre-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

At the conference, he highlighted that experienced traditional medicine practitioners will have the chance to exchange experiences and knowledge on Myanmar traditional medicine with new generations.



State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win views round the exhibits at the event yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

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Five national objectives of 76th Independence Day

1. To uphold “Our Three Main National Causes” – Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of national solidarity and Perpetuation of sovereignty, which are national interests and national politics
2. To ensure the promotion of a comprehensive education sector that produces human resources with perfect abilities like intelligence, skills, and talents in building a Union based on democracy and federalism.
3. To make efforts to hold free and fair elections under the law and ensure the right to vote across the nation
4. To foster public cooperation for state stability and strengthen the multiparty democratic system at the end of acts of terrorism
5. To promote agriculture and livestock-based MSMEs

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Announcement No 53/2023

9th Waxing of Nattaw 1385 ME
21 December 2023

Allowing The Party for People to be registered as political party

AS of 21 December 2023, The Party for People, with its headquarters located at Building No 4/361, 12th Kaya Street, Thingangyungyi Ward, Mingaladon Township, Yangon, has been allowed to register under Section 9 of the Political Parties Registration Law. The registration number of The Party for People is 46.

Sd/ Thein Soe
Chairman
Union Election Commission

Myanmar-led ASEAN Ladies Circle hosts Coffee Morning ceremony in Malaysia

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Coffee Morning ceremony of the ASEAN Ladies Circle, led by Myanmar, was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 18 December.

The ASEAN Ladies Circle's Coffee Morning event

was held at the JW Marriott Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

To promote Myanmar culture and tourism, the steps of making traditional Myanmar lacquerware, pictures

of Patheon parasol and traditional Myanmar cultural items were shown at the ceremony.

At the ceremony, guests were served various traditional Myanmar foods, and traditional Myanmar cultural dances were performed. — MNA/KZL

Daily entertainment of Bazaar Stage by famous singers at 16th Flower Festival

WARDEN of PyinOoLwin National Lake Garden U Zaw Min stated that the daily entertainment of Bazaar Stage is per-

formed by famous singers at the 16th Flower Festival.

The festival is being held from 16 December to 14 Janu-

ary and flower festivals, entertainment and market festivals are also included.

“The opening ceremony was held on 16 December and the entertainment started on 17 December. Many famous singers are performing. The playground for children is also along with the market festival day,” U Zaw Min Tun mentioned.

It is also reported that local products, clothes, handicrafts and souvenirs shops are also included in this year's National Park Flower Festival.

PyinOoLwin National Lake Garden covers 436.96 acres — 366.96 acres of land and 70 acres of water. The National Lake Garden was built in 1924 and has now been leased for 15 years to the Htoo Group of Companies starting from 2010. — ASH/TRKM



A singer performing at the Bazaar Stage of the 16th Flower Festival



The 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Conference and Seminar in progress yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Conference & Seminar continues

THE 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners' Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar kicked off Thursday at MICC II in Nay Pyi Taw.

Union Minister for Health Prof Dr Thet Khine Win, who presided over the event, talked about the four proposals to be submitted at the conference, cooperation with related professionals and international traditional medicinal universities and organizations for the development of traditional medicine to develop safe and high-quality traditional medication, and urged the traditional medicine

producers to produce safe and effective medications to gain the trust of the public.

Then, the relevant representatives discussed the four proposals and recorded the instructions mentioned in the video messages sent by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win, in his capacity as Patron of Organizing Committee on 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners' Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar. — MNA/KTZH

NATIONAL

Unity must be accomplished by common action for a common cause to serve the common interest. This kind of unity must be like an act of making a common endeavour for the achievement of common objective and benefit such as the independence and interest of the entire nation and people. A mere utterance of craving for unity will not be paid off. There must be common action, common interest and common objective. That is exactly what should be called as "unity".

[An excerpt from the speech delivered by Bogyoke Aung San at the Congress of AFPFL on 23 January 1946.]



All experienced Myanmar traditional medicine practitioners exert efforts to improve Myanmar traditional medicine

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veteran traditional medicine practitioners from various parts of the country will hold discussions at the 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar with the aim of developing the Myanmar traditional medicine arena in all aspects.

The art of Myanmar's traditional medicine, with a prolonged history in thousands of years, has flourished with firm development as Myanmar's cultural heritage. Myanmar people have been using Myanmar traditional medicines in successive eras. Based on four Naya such as Desana, Bhesijja, Vija and Nakhhatta, as the basic subjects of the art of Myanmar traditional medicine, the records on treatment with the use of traditional medicines can be seen in palm leaves, folded papers and literary and medical treatises in Tagaung, Sri Ksetra, Bagan, Inwa and Konbaung eras. Moreover, significant records can be found that experienced traditional medicine practitioners in ancient eras provided healthcare services to the kings, royal families, court of counsellors, military generals and people. In addition, more than 70 per cent of Myanmar people reside in rural areas, and they are still relying on the use of traditional medicines for their health conditions daily.

The government is striving to enhance the health sector so that everyone can enjoy health and fitness. Hence, the establishment of traditional medicine hospitals and clinics has been extended one after another across the nation in order to fully provide healthcare services to the people with Myanmar traditional medicines, which are Myanmar's cultural heritage medicinal subjects.

Modern medical science is developing in all countries around the world, and they are using natural medicines on



a broader scale. In line with the concept of food as medicine and medicine as food, the proper ratio of tastes in foods as a basic knowledge of Myanmar traditional medicine can be consumed to have a healthy chance for a long lifespan. As such, it is necessary to preserve Myanmar's traditional medicine, and people should consume foods in proper ratios under Myanmar's traditional medicine techniques.

I would like to urge all to cooperate with international organizations in order to enhance Myanmar's traditional medicine standards the practitioners handed over to new generations in successive eras and modernize the art of traditional

medicine, study technologies and share knowledge and experiences in all aspects for enabling Myanmar traditional medicine to stand tall in the international arena. In so doing, the government will assist in its process.

Under the guidance of the State, the Ministry of Health leads the process of allocating research funds annually to conduct research works. The Department of Traditional Medicine needs to exert the research process on therapies of Myanmar traditional medicine, methods of medications and herbal plants to be evidence-based medical education, up from experience-based medical education.

At a time when many global coun-

tries are facing infection of COVID-19, the Department of Traditional Medicine under the Ministry of Health systematically researched Withama fever medicine aligned with the Myanmar traditional medicine treatises to produce a potent medicine to cure the symptoms of COVID-19 successfully. It is delightful that traditional hospitals and clinics use such medicine in treating patients of COVID-19 as well as seasonal flu. The government encourages the long-term existence of MSME businesses based on domestic raw materials in producing traditional medicines with guarantees. I urge all to systematically conduct research on Myanmar traditional medicines like Withama fever medicine to win the people's trust and reliance and aim to export safe and quality Myanmar traditional medicines to the international market in addition to the domestic market.

In conclusion, the Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar are held annually as an important sector for the development of Myanmar's traditional medicine and traditional drugs. I would like to thank the Ministry of Health and related ministries, experts and those from the traditional medicine arena for successfully organizing the Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar. I sent this message of honour to all representatives with best wishes for carrying out healthcare services to the people and further improvement of traditional medicine sector through friendly and united coordination and discussions in harmony.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing
Prime Minister
Chairman of the State Administration Council

NATIONAL

Practitioners must emphasize improvements in traditional ...

FROM PAGE-1

In contrast, new-generation practitioners must promote Myanmar's traditional medicines further in line with the current era.

He stressed that traditional medicine practitioners and producers must assess the progress of medicines to cooperate with those from ASEAN countries in exchange for subjects and manage bilateral trade of medicines.

The Vice-Senior General underscored that Myanmar people in successive eras have been using traditional medicines for healthcare services since the time of their forefathers, and it is sure that they will use them in the future.

He added that Myanmar's traditional medicine, namely Withama fever medicine, was used at traditional medicine hospitals and clinics through systematic research.

Currently, the Vice-Senior General highlighted that as the government is encouraging the traditional medicine sector, Myanmar traditional medicine prac-



The inaugural event of the 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar in progress yesterday.

tioners are being trained at the diploma course level, graduate level, and master's degree level.

He continued that Myanmar traditional medicine practitioners cooperate with international organizations such as BIMSTEC and Mekong while participating in international traditional medicine conferences and seminars and hosting similar conferenc-

es and paper-reading sessions yearly.

The Vice-Senior General stressed the need to preserve the art of Myanmar traditional medicine as a national heritage, to further provide healthcare services to the people with traditional medicines, to develop human resources for traditional medicines, conduct more research on

traditional medicines, produce safe and potent traditional medicines, modernize the Myanmar traditional medical education and medicines and hand over therapies and medicines of experienced practitioners to new generations.

At the opening ceremony, the Vice-Senior General, President U Myint Oo of Myanmar

Medical Council, and members of the advisory board to the Traditional Medicine U Myint Lwin formally opened the conference and seminar.

The video message sent by SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the conference and seminar was shown. (The full text of the message of the Senior General is separately reported on pages 1 & 3)

The attendees were presented with a video clip on the development of traditional medicines by the Department of Traditional Medicine.

The launching ceremony was also attended by SAC members, Union ministers, the chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council, deputy ministers, senior military officers, departmental heads, ambassadors from foreign embassies, the president of Myanmar Medical Council, officials and those from Myanmar traditional medicine arena. After the ceremony, the Vice-Senior General visited the exhibition of traditional medicines. — MNA/TTA

Counter-argument to false information

Misinformation: Unequal electricity supply in Wakema allegedly favours offices, entrepreneurs



Screenshot validates wrong reports.

AYEYARWADDY Times has spread false information on social networking sites that only departmental offices and business operators in Wakema, Ayeyarwady Region, receive electricity regularly, while other urban areas are supplied with electricity alternately.

Regarding the news, an official from Wakema said that electricity is regularly supplied to public service offices and departments, including hospitals, dispensaries, schools, and other places in a rotating system. No entrepreneurs have to pay money to get electricity supply.

Terrorists have detonated electricity supply facilities and electricity towers, intending to harm the socioeconomic life of the people and destroy the stability of the region. The malicious media is spreading fake news about the electricity supply. — MNA/KZL

Misinformation: Mone market allegedly set ablaze in Tatmadaw's heavy weapon attacks

MALICIOUS media outlets have been spreading false information on social networking sites saying that the entire market of Mone, Kyaukkyi Township, Bago Region, was destroyed by heavy weapons of Tatmadaw on 20 December.

According to enquiries from officials and reports from residents, 210 of the 238 shops

in the market were set on fire when a gas cylinder exploded in one shop in the market at 2:20 pm. Tatmadaw has never fired and attacked public places of residence and has constantly protected the lives and property of the people from the attacks of terrorists. All are the misinformation, as stated by Tatmadaw. — MNA/KZL

Security forces accused of burning houses in Madaya, Wuntho townships

MALICIOUS media is spreading false news that security forces burned the houses in the villages in Madaya township of Mandalay Region and Wuntho township of Sagaing Region on 20 December and that security forces entered Wungyi village yesterday morning and set fire to the houses in the village.

Regarding the news security officials from relevant areas, the security forces are servicing regular security duties there, and

no security forces have entered the villages.

Tatmadaw has never done anything that would damage the villages and houses where the people live and has constantly protected the lives and livelihoods of the people from the attacks of terrorists.

Malicious media outlets are making up fake news stories and circulating them to mislead the security forces and the local people and instil fear amongst the public. — MNA/KZL

NATIONAL

Youth & Literary Fine Arts Festival Organizing Committee Chair MoI UM visits festival's second day

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, as Chairman of the Organizing Committee on Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival, participated in the second day of the festival yesterday.

First, the Union minister watched the youths' talk show, "Youths and Optimism", launched by the presenter and artistes of MRTV-4 Channel, and cordially met participants.

The talk show focused on the benefits received from reading, State development programmes through the literary and fine arts sector, ways

to overcome the challenges that the youths encounter, advantages of optimism and development of five essential strengths.

The event also featured entertainment programmes. The Union minister then observed the festival grounds and cordially met students, youths and people. — MNA/KTZH

Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn views round the exhibition yesterday.



THE water starts to dry up and the soil is dry and cracked in a crisis of central Myanmar, PyinOoLwin and Shan plateau regions.

The environmentalists amplify their voices concerning the solution to a drought that might occur in the PyinOoLwin and Shan plateau region and are considering how this issue is likely to become set worse.

Then, they find out that the root of the problem is Eucalyptus, that are much faster growing than most other trees in cultivation. Environmentalist U Sithu Lwin claimed that the main reason water is drying up in PyinOoLwin and Shan Hill region is the Eucalyptus monoculture.

Thirsty tree (or) Eucalyptus tree

The Eucalyptus trees are much faster growing than most other trees in cultivation. They can be used as raw materials in the production of marine paint, paper and wood veneer. The Eucalyptus can be supplied quickly so they are grown most. The disadvantage of the Eucalyptus tree is that it can absorb a lot of water up to eight feet below its roots just in a second. That can

dry up the lakes and streams and lead to lower groundwater levels. These trees quickly absorb water from the soil, leaving other plants thirsty and malnourished. They also absorb the soil fertilizer and mineral elements. They emit toxic and the leaves that do not easily wilt produce heat. Therefore, other plants under or around the Eucalyptus trees cannot survive. The trees are not

shady and are highly flammable species so they are very harmful to the environment, the environmentalists said.

Abandoned land

Dr Kyaw Than Tun, an environmentalist, pointed out that the real culprit that will dry up the fertile soil in PyinOoLwin and the Shan plateau, which rely only on fresh groundwater, is the

presence of Eucalyptus trees.

In addition, in the tropical zones such as central Myanmar and mountainous areas, the thirsty tree is very dangerous because of its excessive water absorption and heavy use of fertilizers and soil, and it can affect drought-tolerant Thanaka and palm trees in tropical regions in the middle parts of Myanmar and also tea, mulberry and silkworm

farming industry in hilly regions.

The regions where the Eucalyptus trees are grown face water shortage, desert and Ecosystem changes so they should not be grown in dry and arid areas and hilly regions of the country, said the agriculturalists.

Paradise of thirsty trees

In reality, the Eucalyptus trees and forests should be established just in the low-lying areas and flood-prone areas to help retain water. If they are planted in the lower parts of Myanmar such as the Ayeyawady Region, Rakhine State and Taninthayi Region which face floods yearly, these areas will become paradise for these thirsty trees, the environmentalists said.

Therefore, the environmentalists and researchers suggested that it should no longer be suitable to grow Eucalyptus trees that highly absorb water and salts in hilly regions and water-stressed areas. Today, freshwater is scarce in the world, and it should put these thirsty trees in suitable places to prevent flooding in a world where natural disasters are on the rise.

Translated: KTZH

Water runs dry, the impact of Eucalyptus trees

By ASH



A distant view shows Hanlin Hill protected public forest designated on 11 March 2022 in Ywangan Township of southern Shan State.

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CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

(+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 255597511

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 251022355
marketing@gnlm.com.mm
subscription@gnlm.com.mm

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gnlmnews@gmail.com
newsroom@gnlm.com.mm
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NATIONAL



The photo shows the Botahtaung Pagoda in the night view.

Gold foils offering to grace whole structure of Botahtaung Pagoda

THE Pagoda Board of Trustees has announced the tender for supplying gold foils to the Botahtaung Pagoda and its encircled small pagodas.

Interested parties are invited to acquire the tender

form along with the terms and conditions for a fee of K10,000 each, available from 22 December to 2 January at the office of the Botahtaung Pagoda Board of Trustees. Tender will include sup-

plying bronze frames and bronze plates in addition to gold foils. The deadline for submitting application forms is 11 am on 3 January. — TWA/MKKS

MoPF disburses K1.773 bln of loan to 21 edible oil millers in 4 months

THE Ministry of Planning and Finance provided K1.773 billion of loans to 21 cooking oil millers in regions and states, including the Nay Pyi Taw Council area, between July and October 2023.

The ministry called for a loan proposal for the first time



Oil milling machines are seen at a mill in Magway Region.

in line with rules and regulations of the Project Management Unit and Private Finance Initiative and made loan disbursement, according to a meeting 5/2023 of the Development Loan Management Task Force for Oil Mills.

Second proposals have been invited. Applicants are under scrutiny. The meeting highlighted the need to finance millers who meet loan criteria shortly.

The State is endeavouring to ramp up oil crop outputs to ensure edible oil security in the domestic market and disbursing loans at reasonable interest rates for oil millers to upgrade milling machines. — TWA/KK

MoC unveils first copyright registration agent course in Jan 2024

THE Ministry of Commerce is organizing the first session of the Copyright Registration Agent Course, scheduled to take place over eight days starting 8 January 2024.

Individuals interested in participating in the course should download the application form from ipd.gov.mm and submit it to ipdtraining2022@gmail.com by 26 December 2023. The course fee is K300,000, and the list of approved participants will be published on ipd.

gov.mm on 2-3 January.

Participants who meet the eligibility criteria must complete the course and pass the qualification examination to obtain the certificate of completion. It's emphasized that individuals aspiring to work as copyright registration agent should not be government employees.

For further information, inquiries can be directed to 067 430571, said the Ministry of Commerce. — TWA/TMT



The coordination meeting on drafting bylaws for registration of rights related to literature and arts was conducted in August 2022.

ME in Tokyo introduces 2% salary income tax to Myanmar workers in Japan

ON 21 December, the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo announced the salary income tax for Myanmar workers in Japan, which will be set at two per cent.

For Myanmar nationals working in Japan with an average monthly income of 200,000 yen, a 4,000-yen income tax will be imposed. However, with a relief amount of 2,000 yen, the actual monthly income tax payable will be 2,000 yen.

The statement added that if the monthly average income falls below 200,000 yen, the income tax for workers will be based on a 150,000 yen monthly average income, resulting in a 3,000-yen income tax. With a relief amount of 2,000 yen, the net monthly income tax

payable will be 1,000 yen.

Additionally, the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo will issue income tax receipts. Taxpayers can apply for a certificate of income tax paid at the embassy within a specified

period, and upon application, the embassy will provide a certificate detailing the income tax amount and average income amount, as outlined in the announcement. — TWA/TKO



The photo shows Myanmar workers at a factory in Japan.

Myanmar, China ink MoU for scientific, technological cooperation in citrus

CHINA'S Tropical and Subtropical Cash Crop Research Institute, Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Myanmar Representative Office of the Chamber of Commerce of Dehong Prefecture, Myanmar Seed Association and Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding on scientific and technological cooperation in citrus, tropical and subtropical cash crops industry on 18 December 2023.

Additionally, the MoU will cover tropical and subtropical crops such as arabica, macadamia, vegetables, and chilli. The

cooperation will include training, field trips, research activities and trade. Deputy Director Mr Zhou Xianyan of the Tropical and Subtropical Cash Crop Research Institute, Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Director, Mr Li Qigui of Myanmar Representative Office of the Chamber of Commerce of Dehong Prefecture, chair U Maung Win Maw of Myanmar Seed Association and chair U Soe Than Mindin, vice-chair U Kyaw Thu and secretary U Tin Aung of the Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association were present at the MoU signing ceremony. — NN/EM

MGMA to open Basic Sewing Machine Operation Training Course Batch 231 in Jan 2024

MYANMAR Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA) will conduct a Basic Sewing Machine Operation Training Course (Batch 231) from 1 to 19 January 2024 at Myanmar Garment Human Resources Development Training Centre (MGHRDC).

The course will provide practical approaches and technical know-how of sewing machines, different sewing methods, labour laws and practices. This train-

ing will also build the network between those engaged in garment factories and those hunting jobs from regions outside Yangon to create job opportunities for residents. Thus, the training will also help find employment. Those who wish to attend the training can enrol through the following contact numbers: 09 940858350, 09 450723262, 09 9403912570, 09 784085794 and 09 969865024. — NN/EM



Some state-owned beekeeping stations have 6,200 beehives in 31 townships and over 950 private beekeeping businesses with nearly 200,000 beehives.

Myanmar's honey export bags over US\$2.16 mln in 8 months

MYANMAR shipped more than 1,400 tonnes of honey with an estimated value of over US\$2.162 million to foreign trade partners in eight months of the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April, according to the Apiculture Division under the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department.

Myanmar sends 1,291.12 metric tons of honey to external markets by sea and 150 MT to neighbouring countries through the border.

Myanmar exports honey to the Republic of Korea, Japan, the US and Singapore. Myanmar's beekeeping businesses are primarily found in Sagaing

Region, Mandalay Region, Magway Region and Shan State.

Myanmar produces sesame honey, jujube honey, Niger honey, sunflower honey, lychee honey and flower honey.

Honey is utilized as a traditional medicine in the country. Additionally, it also generates foreign income from exports.

Myanmar's honey fetches US\$2,500-\$3,000 per tonne in the international market.

Some state-owned beekeeping stations have 6,200 beehives in 31 townships and over 950 private beekeeping businesses with nearly 200,000 beehives.

Moreover, two million acres

of crops are yearly benefited pollination. The beekeeping businesses near the crop fields contribute to the successful yield of the crop as well as quality bee production.

Myanmar annually produces about 7,000 tonnes of honey, with a production capacity of 70 pounds per beehive.

Over 1,900 tonnes of honey were shipped to external markets in the 2022-2023 FY (April-March), with an estimated value of over \$2.8 million.

Myanmar exported 1,853.74 tonnes to foreign markets by sea and 63.44 tonnes to neighbouring countries via cross-border. — NN/EM

CBM sells US\$22.15 mln to oil importers in five days

CENTRAL Bank of Myanmar (CBM) injected US\$22.15 million into the fuel oil sector between 18 and 21 December.

The CBM sold \$9.72 million for fuel oil importing companies on 18 December and \$12.43 million on 21 December.

Yet, the CBM concealed the exchange rate in selling dollars. Currently, the CBM set the reference exchange at K2,100 against a US dollar, and the market trading rate is K3,369.96 on 20 December.

The fuel oil prices stood at K2,445 per litre of Octane 92, K2,545 for Octane 95, K2,185 for diesel and K2,240 for premium diesel on 21 December.

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

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

Therefore, the committee is effectively steering the fuel oil storage and distribution sector to prevent an oil shortage in the domestic market and ensure price stability for energy consumers.

The committee is inspecting the petrol stations to see whether



The office building of the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM).

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

As per the statement, 90 per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally. The domestic fuel price is highly correlated with international prices. The State is steering the market

to mitigate the loss between the importers, sellers and energy consumers. Consequently, the government is trying to distribute the oil at a reasonable price compared to those of regional countries.

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

OPINION

Efficiently use renewable energy to reduce global warming

THE COP28 Agreement has underscored the imperative for global action to combat climate change, calling on Parties to triple renewable energy capacity and double energy efficiency improvements by 2030 in order to create a safe and sound environment.

More than 100 countries, including major players such as the European Union, the United States, and the UAE, which hosts COP 28, have rallied for support to enact this ambitious plan. The proposal aims to accelerate the global transition to sustainable energy sources, garnering widespread backing from numerous nations.

Emphasizing a just and orderly transition, the UN Climate Change News on 13 December highlighted additional measures, including efforts to phase down unabated coal power and eliminate inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. Developed countries are expected to lead these efforts, ensuring an equitable shift away from fossil fuels in energy systems.

Fossil fuels, requiring millions of years for formation, present a finite and environmentally hazardous energy source. As adopting renewable energy is seen as a pivotal step toward creating a safer and more sustainable world, free from the risks associated with fossil fuel dependence, Myanmar must seek the best way to generate electricity from renewable energy as much as possible.

countries, including Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Brazil, New Zealand, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, and Finland, have emerged as leaders in adopting renewable energy, gradually reducing their dependence on conventional fossil fuels.

As global energy consumption continues to escalate annually, the International Energy Agency (IEA) predicted in a report last year that renewable energy would surpass coal as the primary resource for electricity generation worldwide by early 2025. The report mentioned that generating electricity using renewable energy would increase by 2,400 GW across the world from 2022 to 2027. So, such a volume of energy would be equal to the total electricity generated from solar power, wind power and other sources of renewable energy in the last two decades.

Fossil fuels, requiring millions of years for formation, present a finite and environmentally hazardous energy source. As adopting renewable energy is seen as a pivotal step toward creating a safer and more sustainable world, free from the risks associated with fossil fuel dependence, Myanmar must seek the best way to generate electricity from renewable energy as much as possible.

ENTREPRENEURS around the world are trying to turn green tech ideas into viable businesses. Many are working with technology that has been proven to work but is too expensive for widespread use. The challenge is finding ways to bring the costs down enough so that their solutions can be scaled up to effect real change. Here is a collection of innovative companies and inventors who believe they are close to hitting that mark with products ranging from the world's whitest paint to high-efficiency electric batteries made from one of the most plentiful elements on Earth.

Earth-Cooling Paint

In 2020, a team of graduate students led by Purdue University mechanical engineering professor Xiulin Ruan came up with a formula for what Guinness World Records later recognized as the world's whitest paint. While it looks pretty similar to other white paints, the new ultra-white reflects up to 98.1 per cent of sunlight, which means this one can cool down, unlike most paints, which warm buildings.

According to a Purdue study published in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, the new paint can lower surface temperatures by eight degrees Fahrenheit by day and 19 degrees by night. Less heat means lower energy usage and lower greenhouse gas emissions. A compound called Barium Sulfate is what makes the paint so reflective. Different-sized particles of the chemical scatter different wavelengths of light. The Purdue team used particles of various sizes to reflect as much light as possible.

"Products like this ultra-white paint have the potential to make a real difference," says Karema Seliem, associate director of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) technical development at the US Green Building Council.

While Purdue's Ruan says the paint was originally intended as a roof coating, he's been approached by companies in industries ranging from textiles to spacecraft. A new iteration of the paint, developed last year using a different reflective

Innovations That Could Help Save Planet

By Min Zan

chemical, is lighter and thinner than the original (although slightly less reflective), which could make it a practical coating for cars, trains, and aeroplanes. According to a Purdue spokesperson, Ruan and his team have partnered with an unnamed company to manufacture super-reflective paint commercially. The spokesperson, however, declined to say when it might hit the market.

Taking Carbon Out of the Air

Direct air capture (DAC) is a green technology whose time hasn't quite come, but it seems to be getting closer. Chemical filters in DAC units trap CO₂ out of the air. The captured CO₂ can be used to make eco-friendly products like fertilizer or fuel, or it can be pumped underground and trapped permanently in rock. While the technology is proven, it now costs between \$600 to \$1,000 to get a metric ton of carbon out of the air via DAC, and green tech experts think a large market for the process won't spring up until somebody gets the price under \$100. Several companies around the world are competing to be first.

Arguably, the leader in that race is a Swiss company called Climeworks, whose approach mixes trapped CO₂ with water and pumps it underground. The company has attracted big-name investors and clients, including the band Coldplay, which hired Climeworks to take an amount of CO₂ out of the air equal to what the band's current world tour generates.

Climeworks' strategy has been to sign up customers willing to bankroll its efforts to get near the magic \$100 mark. Earlier this year, the company said its Orca plant near Reykjavik,

Iceland, which can extract 4,000 tonnes of carbon, had become the first in the world to achieve "large-scale capture" of CO₂. The work was done for Microsoft, Stripe, and Spotify. Climeworks didn't say how much CO₂ it had captured or at what price, citing confidentiality agreements with its customers, but DNV, a risk management and certification company, said it had independently confirmed the company's claim.

At a conference this year, Climeworks co-founder Jan Wurzbacher, who has expressed confidence his company can at least get the price down to \$200, wasn't specific about the current total cost except to say that it was less than \$1,000 per tonne.

Meanwhile, the company is pressing ahead. In June, Climeworks announced a second Icelandic facility, Mammoth, slated to open early next year, which will have the ability to capture 36,000 tonnes of CO₂. Co-founder Christoph Gebald says the company's new goal is global expansion, beginning with a project in Kenya. "As we look toward 2024, we remain committed to making a climate impact at scale with our necessary DAC technology."

A Very Old Technology, Repurposed

When biomass — agricultural waste like plant husks, stalks, and wood — is burned, or even when it simply decomposes, it releases CO₂ and other climate-changing gases like methane and nitrous oxide into the atmosphere. But if biomass is heated without oxygen, those substances are trapped in a black ashy substance called Biochar. Farmers have known for thousands of years that Bio-



PHOTO: NEWSWEEK 24 NOVEMBER, 2023

char makes good fertilizer. More recently, scientists and entrepreneurs have gotten excited about it as a way to keep CO₂ out of the atmosphere. In addition to fertilizer, Biochar has a range of commercial uses, including animal feed, a source of alternative fuel, and an additive to concrete.

Biochar manufacturing company Biochar Now, for instance, uses a "slow pyrolysis" kiln technology at its Colorado plant to make Biochar, which it packages in different sizes — from particle to chip, depending on the intended use — and sells. "We created a patented technology that is easily scalable," says Biochar Now founder and CEO James Gaspard. Biochar's massive kilns, he says, can produce Biochar at an industrial scale.

Biochar Now is currently partnering with corporations across industries and with government; last December, Boulder County gave Biochar Now a \$100,000 grant to take portable biochar kilns to remote parts of the country where there are large amounts of waste wood, among them wildfire sites. The waste wood will be turned into

Biochar for farmers to sell, keeping it out of landfills where it would generate methane.

Shopping Bags Made of Seaweed

Almost all plastics are made from fossil fuels, so manufacturing them contributes to climate change. And once plastic objects have been used and discarded, they sit around the environment virtually forever. According to the nonprofit Plastic Oceans International, 50 per cent of all plastic produced is for single-use purposes. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, which promotes a "circular economy," in which things are recycled rather than trashed, says there will be more plastic in our oceans than fish by 2050.

For years, entrepreneurs have been trying to develop commercially viable, environmentally friendly alternatives to plastics but with limited success. Corn-based plastics, for instance, are land-intensive and challenging to compost. Other options are expensive to manufacture.

Sway, a small Bay Ar-

sea-based startup sees an opportunity in seaweed — a plant that doesn't take up land or use fertilizer and naturally removes a significant amount of CO₂ from the atmosphere. The company extracts the naturally occurring cellulose from seaweed and turns it into a substance with plastic's lightness, strength, and flexibility. Sway says this can be used in existing plastics manufacturing equipment and biodegrades quickly. The company says that its seaweed materials are only marginally more expensive at commercial volumes than traditional, petroleum-based packaging.

Sway's first project was a plastic substitute that could be used in shopping bags and the thin wrapping used in the packaging that came with online clothing orders. This year, the company was named a winner of the Tom Ford Plastic Innovation Prize, a global competition that awards creators of scalable, biologically degradable alternatives to plastic polybags a \$1.2 million cash prize. The money was split among three winners, with Sway receiving the majori-

ty. Among the categories judged were cost, performance, scale, and social impact. Sway CEO and co-founder Julia Marsh says the recognition "proved that mainstream brands are hungrily seeking solutions that replenish the planet."

Since then, Sway has entered into partnerships with home and lifestyle goods retailer Graf Lantz and footwear brand Ales Grey. Marsh says the company is now scaling up production to commercialize wrappers and pouches for food and beauty. "We see the massive demand for Sway seaweed packaging as an opportunity to help promote regenerative practices, interlinking our success with the health of oceans, communities, and land," she says.

Rust-Powered Batteries

One of the biggest challenges to replacing fossil fuels with renewable sources like solar and wind is how to store energy for long periods. What do you do for electricity on days when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing? Lithium-ion batteries like those in cell phones and electric cars are expensive to make, not good at storing energy for a long time—and sometimes they explode.

"Recent severe weather events, ranging from heatwaves to cold snaps to thousand-year rains, have highlighted the weakness of our electric grid," says Mateo Jaramillo, co-founder and CEO of a Somerville, Massachusetts, startup called Form Energy. "We need new, transformative energy storage technologies capable of cost-effectively storing electricity for multiple days."

Form's solution: batteries that store energy using iron and air. When iron and air combine, they form rust, a process that releases energy. Apply an electric current to rust, and it turns back into iron, trapping energy. Form's batteries are charged by this "reverse rusting." They discharge when air is pumped in: The iron turns to rust, and the stored energy is released.

Iron batteries aren't new, but they've never been practical for small devices or vehicles because they are so heavy. The weight would be much less of an issue for large and permanent iron battery facilities meant for

storing large amounts of energy from a power plant. And iron, unlike lithium, is cheap, plentiful, and non-explosive.

Form says its technology can store energy much longer than existing technology — up to 100 hours — and can bring the price of storing electricity down from the current \$50 to \$80 per kilowatt-hour to less than \$20. Jaramillo says that's because these batteries rely only on abundant, safe, low-cost materials that can be fully sourced in North America.

With \$760 million from investors, Form is building a manufacturing facility in West Virginia that's set to begin operating in mid-to-late 2024. Jaramillo says Form's goals are "Enhancing grid resilience and security, increasing grid reliability and safety, creating good-paying jobs and economically benefiting local communities and ensuring the inventions that secure our energy future are built right here in the United States."

In brief, the global pursuit of sustainable solutions is giving rise to a wave of innovations poised to address pressing environmental challenges. From the development of ultra-reflective paint capable of cooling buildings and reducing energy consumption to groundbreaking direct air capture technology aiming to extract and repurpose carbon dioxide economically, these initiatives showcase the determination of entrepreneurs to make a positive impact on our planet. Repurposing ancient technology, such as Biochar, and exploring unconventional materials like seaweed for eco-friendly alternatives to plastics further exemplify the diversity of approaches being taken. In the realm of energy storage, Form Energy's iron-air batteries offer a promising solution to the intermittent nature of renewable sources, with the potential to revolutionize grid resilience. As these pioneering efforts continue to advance, there is optimism that these innovations will not only transform industries but contribute significantly to the collective goal of safeguarding our planet for future generations.

Reference: *Newsweek* 24 Nov 2023

NATIONAL

Myanmar Youth Affairs Central Committee leaders tour Independence Day commemorative exhibits

U Min Thein Zan, Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Myanmar Youth Affairs Central Committee, and Vice-chairpersons Dr Nyunt Pe, Union Minister for Education, Dr Myo Thein Kyaw, Union Minister for Science and Technology, Dr Soe Win, Union Minister for Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement, deputy ministers and officials viewed round the exhibits displayed by 16 ministries to mark the 76th Independence Day Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival held at Wunna Theikdi Gymnasium B in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival is to be held in high esteem by all citizens to make them aware of the history of Independence Day and the



Union ministers view round the exhibition of 16 ministries at the 76th Independence Day Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival yesterday.

struggle for independence. To further forge national spirit and patriotism among the youths with the power of literature and art, rich in knowledge and correct ideas and nation-building, the festival is held with the objectives of participation and co-operation as much as possible.

The 76th Independence Day Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival was held under the theme "Let's raise awareness to benefit the Union". The festival featured galleries from ministries, entertainment programmes, artistes and discussions. Traditional ethnic food stalls and bookstores are on display, and from 20 to 22 December, it will be held from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm every day, and anyone can visit it for free. — MNA/TS

97 receptionists preliminarily selected for 2023 Myanmar Academy Awards event

ACCORDING to Vice-Chairman U Aye Kyu Lay of the Myanmar Motion Pictures Organization, 97 receptionists have been preliminarily selected for the 2023 Myanmar Academy Awards Ceremony.

Application forms were distributed from 1 to 15 December, and interviews took place on 17 December, resulting in the preliminary selection of 97 candidates from a pool of 300 applicants.

U Aye Kyu Lay stated, "We will conduct a second selection round from the 97 preliminary receptionists on 24 December. For the upcoming Academy Awards Ceremony, ten male and ten female receptionists will be chosen as finalists."

Experienced senior actors and actresses, including Academy Yan Aung, Academy Ye Aung, Academy Khant Si Thu, Academy Aung Khine, Academy May Than Nu, and Academy Soe Myat Thuzar, will serve as judges for the receptionist selection.

In preparation for the Academy Awards ceremony, names of actors and actresses from movies shown in cinemas during 2023, along with the names of the respective movie producers, were requested by 8 December deadline. The 2023 Myanmar Academy Awards Ceremony is scheduled in Nay Pyi Taw. — ASH/TRKM

Youth & Literary Fine Arts Festival enters second day, attracts 10,000+ visitors

THE Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival, commemorating the 76th Independence Day, entered its second day on Thursday, with government employees, teachers, students, youths, and people across the nation joyfully participating in the event.

The students and young people were interested in the booths of ministries concerned and technological universities as they featured Electronic Vehicle maintenance, practical servicing, quiz, simulator to test EVs, issuance of smart cards to citizens aged above 10, cyber-security, ethics to follow in using the internet, smartphone security tips and wireless network security, E-sports and Myanmar traditional puppet show and portrait painting services.

Similarly, the bookshops were crowded with students, youths and book lovers.

The festival also showcased photos of the "Beautiful and Pleasant Myanmar" photo contest, pictures of senior Myanmar writers of 20th century, and stunning places across the country, including the traditional festivals.

Moreover, the festival became more dynamic for its special entertainment programmes, and MRTV also arranged a news studio where people could read news like newscasters and take photos.

The event also included the displays of Nay Pyi Taw Police Force, fun fair games, quizzes, and food stalls for ethnic people.

The healthcare service was also provided in case of emergency health problems.

More than 10,000 people, including students, visited on the second day of the festival, whereas the bookshops sold over K2.7 million of books, and the ethnic food stalls earned over K14 million. — Than Min Aung/Aung Ye Thwin/KTZH



Visitors through the exhibition yesterday. PHOTO: KO GYI HTEIN, PO PYAE SONE

NATIONAL

Investigation, action taken against illegal fuel storage, sales

FUEL oil is continuously delivered and distributed to ensure no shortage in petrol stations, and in addition to repeatedly buying in rows there, re-selling and illegal storage and sales are investigated and arrested.

Officials verified that some people did not sell fuel, transported it to other places with the bowser without permission, and sold more than the specified reference price in some townships of Mandalay Region, Sagaing Region and Yangon Region. Therefore, under the law on petroleum and petroleum products, fines were imposed according to the administrative method, the licence was suspended for a



The photo shows illegal storage of fuel oil in Kyauktan Township.



Officials confiscate illegal storage and sale of fuel oil in Hmawby Township.

limited time, and illegal petrol vendors were temporarily closed.

Illegal Trade Eradication

Task Forces, security forces, and inter-departmental teams are conducting investigations to eliminate the illegal storage,

transport, distribution, and sale of oil in the regions and states. The public can report to relevant officials if they receive

information about illegal fuel storage, transport, distribution, and sales. — MNA/KZL

Confiscated illegal items; Timbers, boats, petroleum products, fuel oil and vehicles

DURING inspections on 19 and 20 December, the combined teams captured a Heinsoe (7) boat (approximately K183.26 million) and a Heinsoe (9) boat (estimated value of K211.85 million) in Twantay Canal and 8,907 gallons of illegal fuel worth K27.115 million in Hmawby township. These actions were taken under the Myanmar Inland Vessel Law and the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law.

The on-duty team supervised by Magway Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task

Force seized 0.5774 tonne of illegal timbers worth K29,738 in Pwintbyu township, 1.025 tonnes of illegal timbers worth K441,262 in Mindon township, three Nissan Diesel bowzers, two Nissan Diesel trucks and a Toyota Surf (approximately worth K262 million) carrying 2,600 gallons of illegal crude oil worth K10.4 million and 12,920 gallons of illegal diesel worth K77.52 million in Yesakyo township on 20 December. These actions were conducted under the Forest Law and the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law.

On 21 December, the combined team confiscated 3,000 gallons of illegal petrol worth K41.4 million at the combined checkpoint in front of the University of Computer Studies in Kalay township. The action was conducted under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law.

Six arrests were made on three consecutive days from 19 to 21 December, with an estimated value of K892,932,020, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS



Confiscated boats seen in Twantay Canal.

Ice, stimulant tablets and heroin worth K10+ bln seized in Mandalay



Three offenders seen alongside seized drugs and motorbikes.

THE Myanmar Police Force reported the seizure of over K10.28 billion worth of illegal substances, including Ice (methamphetamine), stimulant tablets, and heroin in Chanmyathazi township of Mandalay Region.

Acting on a tip-off, a collaborative team from the Anti-Drug Police Force conducted a search at the residence of Aung Kyaw Moe, Ma Theingi Win, and Ma Aye Thida in Chanmyathazi township at 12 pm on 15 December. The operation resulted in the confiscation of

four kilogrammes of Ice, 8,050 stimulant tablets, and two motorbikes.

Subsequent investigations led the Police Force to Aung Htwe's house in Chanmyathazi township at 9:30 pm on the same day, where a staggering 120 kilogrammes of Ice, 4,514,000 stimulant tablets, and 40.7 kilogrammes of heroin were seized.

Legal actions have been initiated against the offenders, and an ongoing investigation is in progress to apprehend all individuals involved in the case. — MNA/MKKS

ECONOMY WORLD

Japan 2023 foreign arrivals top 20 mln already in Nov, 1st in 4 yrs

The rise was driven by a notable increase in travellers from Asia and North America, aided by a weak yen and the resumption of airline services.

THE number of foreign visitor arrivals in Japan in 11 months from January totalled 22,332,000, topping 20 million in a calendar year for the first time since 2019, government data showed Wednesday, a fresh sign of the tourism boom's resurgence in the country following the coronavirus pandemic.

For November alone, the country recorded an estimated 2,440,800 foreign visitors, exceeding the two million mark for the sixth consecutive month, on the back of a significant increase in the number of travellers from Asia and North America amid a weak yen and resumption of airline services, according to

the Japan National Tourism Organization. The monthly figure recovered from a year earlier to a nearly identical level as November 2019, before the outbreak of COVID-19, the data showed.

Japan Tourism Agency Commissioner Ichiro Takahashi said it is possible to reach the target of five trillion yen (\$35 billion) in annual spending by foreign visitors "if the current pace continues in December".

The number of foreign visitors is on the pace to reach around 25 million by the end of the year. The government aims to surpass the highest annual figure recorded in 2019 — 31.88 million — in 2025. — Kyodo



In November, Japan welcomed 2,440,800 foreign visitors, surpassing two million for the sixth straight month. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Google to pay \$700 mln to US consumers, states in antitrust settlement

GOOGLE parent Alphabet has agreed to pay \$700 million as part of an antitrust settlement made public on Monday,



As part of the settlement, Alphabet will make changes to its Google Play app store to reduce competition barriers for developers. **PHOTO: AFP**

with the funds going to US customers of its Android app store and state governments.

Google parent Alphabet has agreed to pay \$700 million as part of an antitrust settlement made public on Monday, with the funds going to US customers of its Android app store and state governments.

Dozens of US states had joined forces in a lawsuit filed in July 2021 that accused Google of abusing its power regarding consumer access to apps on mobile devices running its Android operating system. — AFP

Illegal mining, smuggling threaten Ghana's cocoa industry

GHANA, the world's second biggest cocoa producer, faces a growing risk to its harvest — and blow to its crisis-hit economy — from illegal mining and smugglers, industry officials, farmers and activists warn.

Top producer Ivory Coast

and Ghana, together with other West African neighbours, produce two thirds of the world's supply of cocoa, the main ingredient in chocolate.

Along with gold and oil, the cocoa industry is a mainstay of Ghana's economy and foreign

currency earnings. Any losses in revenue hit hard, as the country struggles to weather its worst economic crisis in decades. But cocoa production is falling victim to illegal mining, mostly for gold and known locally as "galamsey". — AFP

EU court sides with Ryanair over Air France-KLM aid

The top EU court cancelled the approval of a pandemic state aid programme for me Air France-KLM, contested by Ryanair and Malta Air. The General Court found the European Commission "erred" in endorsing France's financial aid to Air France-KLM.

A top EU court annulled on Wednesday the approval of a pandemic state aid programme for Air France-KLM that had been challenged by Irish rival Ryanair and Malta Air.

The General Court ruled that the European Commission "erred" in approving the French government's financial aid for Air France-KLM.

The group received billions of euros (dollars) from the state after the pandemic grounded the aviation sector in 2020 — money that has since been reimbursed, with interest.

The court noted that Ryanair and Malta Air had argued that the measures were "contrary to EU law". — AFP



During the 2020 aviation sector downturn, the group received billions in euros, later repaid with interest. **PHOTO: AFP**

Asian markets track Wall St losses as traders pause after rally

ASIAN markets turned negative Thursday as investors took their foot off the gas after an extended rally fuelled by expectations the Federal Reserve will slash interest rates next year.

A stream of data in recent weeks has shown inflation continues to slow and the jobs market is softening, while other economic indicators suggest the central bank is on course to bring prices under control while averting a recession.

The latest figures on Wednesday showed US consumer confidence bouncing back more than forecast, while home sales came off a 13-year low.

Eyes are now on the release Friday of the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation, which could be key in

the bank's decision-making at its next meeting in January.

The most recent gathering ended with officials indicating they would cut about three times in 2024, sparking a buying frenzy in markets and forcing some policymakers to try to temper expectations.

The data could "hold the crucial tarot cards likely to steer market dynamics into year-end and beyond", said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

"An upside surprise in the figures is crucial to bolster the credibility of the Federal Reserve's efforts to push back against market rate cut expectations. Failure to see an upside surprise could challenge the Fed to counter expectations of a rate cut in March. — AFP



A Walmart store in Los Angeles. PHOTO: MARK RALSTON/AFP

Toshiba delisted in Japan after 74 years as public firm

JAPAN'S Toshiba Corporation on Wednesday was delisted from Japanese stock exchanges, ending its 74-year-long history as a publicly traded company.

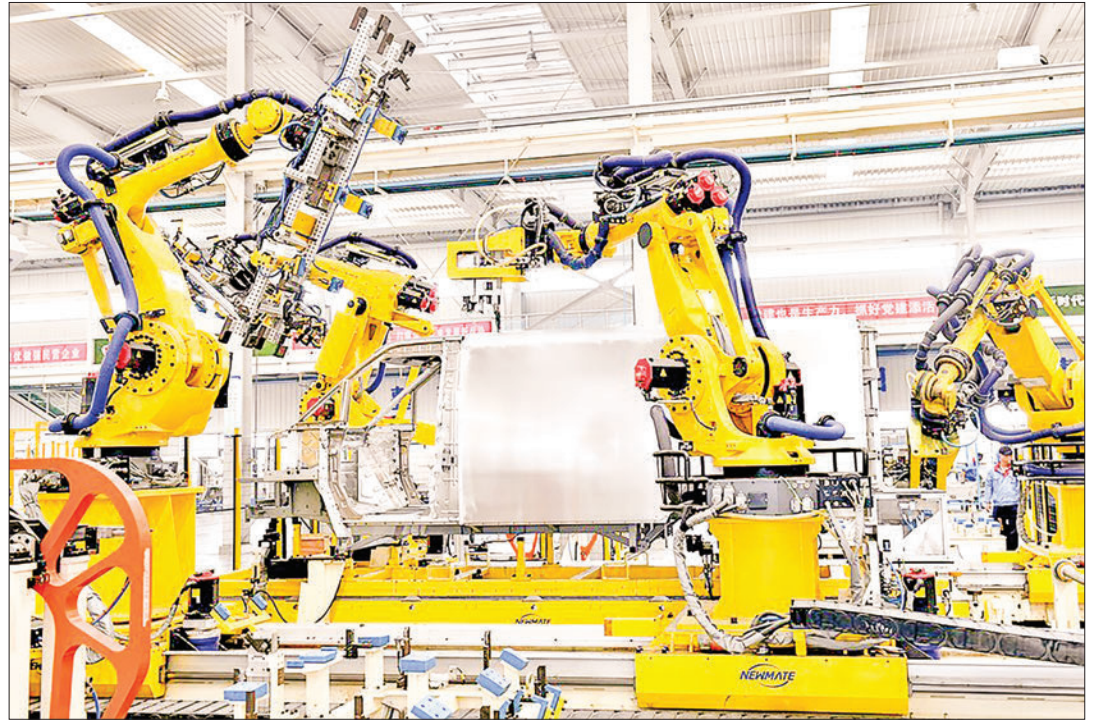
The electronics giant saw its common shares delisted from the Prime Market of the Tokyo Stock Exchange and the Premier Market of the Nagoya Stock Exchange on the trading day.

On their last trading day of Tuesday, shares of Toshiba closed at 4,590 yen (about 31.98 US dollars), down 0.1 per cent from the previous day. "Toshiba

Group will now take a major step towards a new future with a new shareholder," the company said in a statement, as it now aims for reconstruction under a new management team that seeks to relist its stock in about five years.

A two-trillion yen takeover bid for Toshiba by a consortium led by Japan Industrial Partners (JIP) succeeded in September, putting the scandal-tarnished Japanese electronics and energy giant in domestic hands after years of battles with overseas activist investors. — Xinhua

China remains solid bet for global businesses



Robots work on an assembly line of a factory of a private enterprise in Zouping City, east China's Shandong Province, 13 September 2023. PHOTO: GUO XULEI/XINHUA

ANOTHER year is just around the corner and global market watchers are reviewing the year 2023 for China, a year of hard-won, inspiring rebound amid a struggling global economic recovery.

Despite challenges at home and abroad, China has managed to press ahead with its high-quality development, galvanizing the Asia-Pacific re-

gion and the wider world with its solid progress, great potential and immense opportunities.

The Chinese economy has experienced a rebound since the beginning of the year. China's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 5.2 per cent year on year in the first three quarters, marking the strongest performance among the world's major economies.

Steven Barnett, the IMF's senior resident representative in China, said that China remains the biggest engine of global economic growth in 2023, contributing one-third of global economic growth.

"When China grows faster, it really provides a welcome lift for the whole world," Barnett told Xinhua on a previous occasion. — Xinhua

Warner Brothers Discovery explores merger: report

WARNER Brothers Discovery shares slid more than five per cent Wednesday after reports emerged that the media and entertainment giant is exploring a merger with rival Paramount Global.

Warner Brothers Discovery chief executive David Zaslav met with Paramount Global boss Bob Bakish for several hours to discuss the possibility of merging the companies, Axios reported, citing unnamed sources.

The talks — which took place on Tuesday in New York — were described as preliminary, with the outcome uncertain.

Zaslav has also spoken with Shari Redstone, who owns Paramount's parent

company, about the potential for a deal, Axios reported. — AFP



While far from certain, a merger between Warner Brothers Discovery and Paramount Global could spark further consolidation in the media and entertainment industry. PHOTO: AFP

ROLLING UPDATES WORLD



N Korea's Kim warns of nuclear attack if provoked after ICBM launch

Kim praised members of the General Missile Bureau who participated in the Hwasong-18 ICBM drill, stating it demonstrated the nation's nuclear strategy and doctrine.

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un congratulated soldiers involved in a recent intercontinental ballistic missile launch drill and said it demonstrates Pyongyang will not hesitate in launching a nuclear attack if it is provoked with nuclear weapons, state media said Thursday.

The leader encouraged Wednesday members of the General Missile Bureau, who joined the drill of Hwasong-18 ICBM, and said it clearly showed the country's nuclear

strategy and doctrine, the official Korean Central News Agency said.

North Korea launched the ICBM towards the Sea of Japan on Monday, after firing a short-range ballistic missile the previous day. The soldiers were invited to the office building of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea Central Committee.

Kim praised them, saying he was "deeply impressed with the combat efficiency of the company which displayed high mobility and rapid attack ca-

pability in the launching drill," referring to the missile unit.

The Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the ruling party, carried a picture of Kim and his daughter surrounded by the soldiers.

In a separate statement Thursday, Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of the leader, criticized the United States and its allies for escalating regional tensions with their "ceaseless military drills," saying they are "the overall preparations for invasion". — Kyodo

Santa Claus dances with fish in Thailand

SANTA Claus may not travel on a sleigh pulled by reindeer this year as he is having fun dancing with fish at the Bangkok Ocean World in Bangkok, Thailand.

Divers here dressed in Santa Claus costumes perform underwater with various kinds of marine animals, creating a different Christmas vibe for visitors. — Xinhua



A diver dressed in a Santa Claus costume performs at the Bangkok Ocean World in Bangkok, Thailand, 19 December 2023. PHOTO: RACHEN SAGEAMSAK/XINHUA

S Korea court upholds wartime labour damages order for Japan firms

South Korea's Supreme Court has upheld decisions mandating Japanese firms, Nippon Steel Corp and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd, to pay damages for wartime labour.

SOUTH Korea's Supreme Court on Thursday upheld decisions by lower courts ordering two Japanese firms, Nippon Steel Corp and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd, to pay damages to South Koreans for wartime labour.

The rulings came as South Korea-Japan relations have been improving since Seoul announced in March its plan for solving the wartime labour issue, drawing disappointed reactions from the Japanese government and the companies.

They were the first such rulings by the top court since late

2018 when it upheld orders in separate judgements for Nippon Steel, then named Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to pay damages for forced labour during Japan's colonial rule.

In a bid to improve bilateral ties that had deteriorated after the 2018 rulings, Seoul said in March plaintiffs who have won lawsuits over forced labour during Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule would receive compensation from a South Korean government-backed foundation rather than the sued firms. — Kyodo



Families of deceased plaintiffs in lawsuits over wartime forced labour during Japan's colonial rule hold up a banner outside South Korea's Supreme Court in Seoul on 21 December 2023. PHOTO: KYODO

TOP NEWS

Albanian parliament clears path to arrest ex-PM

THE Albanian parliament on Thursday revoked former prime minister Sali Berisha's legal immunity, paving the way for his possible arrest in connection with a corruption investigation.

Berisha has been hit with corruption charges tied to the privatization of a state-owned sports complex "for the benefit of his son-in-law", according to the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Corruption and Organized Crime.

The acts were allegedly committed in 2008 while Berisha — now an opposition leader — was prime minister.

Berisha remained defiant after the vote, which saw 75 of the parliament's 140 members approve the move. "I am stronger than ever," said Berisha as he left the assembly. — AFP

SPORTS

UEFA bid to block Super League broke EU law

UEFA stated that Thursday's ruling by the top European court, which found both UEFA and FIFA guilty of breaking EU law to hinder the formation of a rival Super League, does not imply support or approval for the breakaway competition.



The ruling by the European Court of Justice was based on UEFA rules prior to the changing of them in 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

UEFA said Thursday's ruling by Europe's top court that it and FIFA had broken EU law to stifle the creation of a rival Super League "does not signify an endorsement or validation of" the breakaway competition.

UEFA said Thursday's ruling by Europe's top court that it and FIFA had broken EU law to stifle the creation of a rival Super League "does not signify an endorsement or validation of"

the breakaway competition. UEFA continued: "It rather underscores a pre-existing shortfall within UEFA's pre-authorization framework, a technical aspect that has already been acknowledged and addressed in June 2022.

"UEFA is confident in the robustness of its new rules, and specifically that they comply with all relevant European laws and regulations." — AFP

Liverpool dominate West Ham to reach League Cup semis

LIVERPOOL destroyed West Ham 5-1 on Wednesday to set up a League Cup semi-final against Fulham, easing the frustration of their weekend Premier League stalemate against Manchester United.

Curtis Jones scored twice and Dominik Szo-

boszlai, Cody Gakpo and Mohamed Salah were also on the scoresheet for Jurgen Klopp's dominant team, who were trophyless last season.

No team have won more League Cups than Liverpool, who lifted the trophy for the ninth time in the 2021/22 season. — AFP

OBITUARY

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful "Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un"

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu.

With heavy hearts and submission to Allah's decree, we convey the news of the passing of our beloved mother, Tin Tin Win, also known as Jumma Bi, the cherished mother of [Myint Theingyi Win@Khathija bi + Zaw Lin Soe] and [Myint Ohnmar Win (Aisha Bi) + Myint Zaw], who returned to her Creator on Wednesday, December 19, 2023.

Kindly remember her in your duas. May Allah grant her a place in Jannat-al-Firdos and shower His forgiveness upon her. Ameen!

Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un. "Surely we belong to Allah, and to Him, we shall return."

The Janaza prayer (Janaza Namaz) will be performed at Corona Mosque at 9:30 AM on Thursday, 21st Dec 2023. The mosque is located at 465 Santana Way, Corona, CA-92881.

After the prayer, the burial ceremony will be conducted at the Islamic Corner of Corona Cemetery, 1125 Rimpau Ave, Corona, CA-92879, which is an 8-minute drive from the mosque. The burial will take place at 10:00 AM on Thursday, 21st Dec 2023.

We humbly request your prayers for the departed soul and seek your support during this trying time. May Allah, the Most Merciful, grant her soul eternal peace and elevate her to the highest ranks of Jannah. For further details and inquiries, please contact Zaw Lin Soe at 510-666-7270.

May Allah reward you with goodness.

Luton's Lockyer discharged from hospital after on-pitch cardiac arrest

In response to the cardiac arrest, the 29-year-old has undergone the placement of an implantable cardioverter defibrillator, a small device designed to address individuals with potentially life-threatening heart rhythm abnormalities.

LUTON captain Tom Lockyer has been discharged from hospital after suffering a cardiac arrest during a Premier League match, the club announced on Thursday.

Lockyer collapsed in the second half of Saturday's match at Bournemouth and the game was subsequently abandoned.

The 29-year-old has had an implantable cardioverter defibrillator fitted — a small device used to treat people with dangerously abnormal heart rhythms.

"We are thankful to report that our captain Tom Lockyer has now begun a period of rehabilitation from the comfort of his own home after he was discharged from hospital on Wednesday," Luton said in statement.

"This encouraging news follows a successful procedure that took place on Tuesday whereby Tom



Luton captain Tom Lockyer (right). **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

had an ICD (implantable cardioverter defibrillator) device fitted to prevent a repeat of Saturday's incident."

The Wales defender had surgery to correct an atrial fibrillation after

collapsing during Luton's Championship play-off final win against Coventry in late May.

The club said in their statement that tests had revealed the issue was "different from the atrial

fibrillation".

Lockyer returned to action for the start of the new season and had made 15 appearances in all competitions before Saturday's abandoned match. — AFP



‘Not our strategic priority’: Australia declines US request to send warships to Red Sea

Australia will send 11 more military personnel to the US-led mission but won't deploy surface vessels or aircraft to the Middle East.

AUSTRALIA has rejected a US request to deploy warships to protect commercial traffic in the Red Sea amid increased attacks by Houthi militants from Yemen.

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles has made it clear that the Red Sea is not a strategic priority for Canberra, which is primarily focused on Asia-Pacific affairs.

“We need to be really clear about our strategic focus and our strategic focus is our region,” Marles told Sky News on 21 December. Australia has pledged to send an additional 11 military personnel to the US-led mission, but will not send any military surface vessels or aircraft to the Middle East.

Earlier this week, Defence Minister Lloyd Austin announced a multinational effort, dubbed Operation Prosperity

Guardian, to protect commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea from Houthi attacks.

The Houthis, a Shiite Yemeni militia, have stepped up attacks on Israel-linked ships over Tel Aviv's war with Hamas, threatening to cripple global trade. Israel declared war on Hamas in October after the Islamist group launched a brutal attack on Jewish settlements that killed over 1,300 people.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) launched a large-scale operation in Gaza to thwart Hamas. However, the military effort resulted in massive civilian casualties, prompting the international community to call for a ceasefire. The Houthis said they would continue the naval attacks until Israel halted its assault on Gaza. — SPUTNIK



Houthi military helicopter flies over the Galaxy Leader cargo ship in the Red Sea in this photo released 20 November 2023. **PHOTO: HOUTHI MILITARY MEDIA/FILE**

Israeli FM backs plan to ‘fast track’ Gaza aid via Cyprus

Cyprus is prepared to deliver significant aid through this “maritime lifeline” to provide sustained humanitarian assistance to Gaza civilians, according to Kombos.



Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and his Cypriot counterpart Constantinos Kombos discussed the logistical details of a Cyprus plan to set up an aid corridor for the besieged Gaza Strip. **PHOTO: ELISA AMOURET / AFP**

ISRAELI Foreign Minister Eli Cohen expressed support during his visit to Cyprus on Wednesday for plans to send humanitarian aid to the besieged Gaza

Strip from the Mediterranean island.

Cyprus has proposed establishing a corridor to collect, inspect, and store aid on the island before shipping it to Gaza.

Cohen, after talks with his Cypriot counterpart Constantinos Kombos, emphasised the need for an “organized and well-inspected” transfer of aid.

“We aim to create a fast track for humanitarian aid to Gaza through this corridor,” he told reporters.

The ministers visited a search and rescue coordination centre in Larnaca, discussing logistical details for the plan. Cohen also inspected facilities at Larnaca port, the departure point for aid shipments.

Cyprus was ready to deliver large quantities of aid through this “maritime lifeline” expected to provide “a sustained flow of high-volume humanitarian assistance to the civilians” in Gaza, Kombos said.

“We look forward to your green light for the first voyage,” he told Cohen. Under the plan, the aid would be checked in Cyprus by a joint committee, including representatives from Israel. — AFP

FRONT PASSENGER SEAT SENSOR CONCERNS

Toyota recalls one million US vehicles on airbag concerns

JAPANESE carmaker Toyota announced Wednesday that it was recalling around a million Toyota and Lexus vehicles in the United States, citing concerns about their airbag systems.

The vehicles include some of the manufacturing giant's popular Camry, Corolla, and Highlander lines, with the recall involving concerns about the sensors in the front passenger seat.

These sensors “could have been improperly manufactured, causing a short circuit,” the company said in a statement.

“This would not allow the airbag system to properly classify the occupant's weight, and the airbag may not deploy as designed in certain crashes, increasing the risk of injury,” it added.

Toyota said it would reach out to affected customers by mid-February, and that dealers would inspect the affected Toyota and Lexus models and replace them if necessary “at no cost to owners”. — AFP