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State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe present the fruit basket to Archbishop Cardinal Charles Bo and Archbishop Steven Than Myint Oo yesterday in Yangon.

SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win attends Christmas Day thanksgiving ceremony

Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win joined the Christmas Day thanksgiving ceremony jointly organized by the Myanmar Council of Churches, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the

Myanmar Evangelical Christian Alliance, and the Chairman of Myanmar Christianity Propagation Alliance at Holy Cathedral Church at the corner of Bogyoke Aung San and Bo Aung Kyaw streets in Botahtaung Township yesterday evening.

Cardinal Charles Bo of the Archdi-

ocese of Yangon and the archbishops welcomed the Vice-Senior General.

The ceremony took place at St Mary's Cathedral, where Archbishop U Myat Hsan prayed and Auxiliary Bishop of Yangon Noel Saw Naw Aye extended greetings.

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BUSINESS

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Rice prices indicate sharp rise in domestic market

Authentic taste of tea, enjoy

SHWE PHE OO

Sales Department- Ph-09 30861855, 09 426219436
 STARMART nine mile Showroom- (9)mile, Pyay Road, Yangon, Ph-09 30860180
 KHA YAE PIN MART - Mingalarzone, Pyay Road, Yangon, Ph-09 871443555
 STARMART MANDALAY Wholesale -Corner of 29th and 89th road, Mandalay, Ph-09 881702244
 STARMART Nay Pyi Taw Yangon- Mandalay Highway Road, Year Gank Ward, Pylimmar, Ph-09 885118077

NATIONAL

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

Myanmar workers in Thailand gain access to 5 CI stations, 3 mobile units



An official issuing the certificate of identity (CI) to a Myanmar worker in Thailand in 2022.

FIVE certificate of identity (CI) issuing stations and three mobile units will be opened for Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand, announced by the Labour Attache Office and the Myanmar Embassy.

According to the announcement, the opening of five CI stations and three mobile units for Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand will commence on 4 January 2024.

Five stations will be located in Samut Khun, Samut Prakan, Chonburi, Patong Division, and Surat Division, and three mobile unit camps will

be stationed in Chiang Mai, Nakhon Sawan Mobile, and Songkhla.

According to the Ministry of Labour, by opening mobile teams, workers will be able to apply for identification without leaving the workplace.

The employer will be able to continue to operate the workplace, and it will also be protected from exploitation of brokers.

According to the Thai government's decision on 5 July this year, about 900,000 Myanmar workers are nominated by Thai employers. — TWA/TKO



The photo shows the facade of the Naypyitaw State Academy.

Myanmar Arts & Sciences Research Symposium set for Naypyitaw State Academy

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Education, the Research Symposium of Myanmar Arts and Sciences Academy will be held in January 2024 at the Naypyitaw State Academy in Nay Pyi Taw, including exhibits from various universities nationwide.

The event will be held at the national level. Scholars and rectors from the Myanmar Arts and Sciences Academy will read papers according to relevant subjects, and exhibitions will be opened according to universities.

A coordination meeting was held at the

Naypyitaw State Academy in Nay Pyi Taw on 21 December to enable such research symposiums and exhibitions to be opened by various universities.

Naypyitaw State Academy was opened on 9 November 2022 in Zabuthiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.

As stated by the Ministry of Education, the arts, sciences, law, economics, medical science, sports, and sociology are subjects of the University, which aims to become one of the top universities in the country. — ASH/KZL

Increased rainfall in certain regions, states forecast in December's fourth week

THE Department of Meteorology and Hydrology announced that it will be colder in Chin State during the fourth week of December, and rain may occur in some states.

The upper regions of Sagaing, Taninthayi Region, Kachin, Shan (North and East), Kayin, and Mon states have average temperatures. At the same time, Chin State's average temperature is lower than 1.5 degrees Celsius in December.

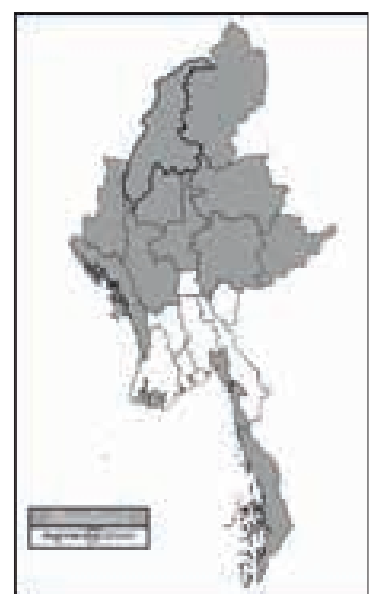
Furthermore, Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing (Lower), Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Shan (South), Rakhine and Kayah grab more than 1.5 degrees Celsius of average temperatures in December, as stated by the

Meteorology and Hydrology Department.

Sagaing Region (Upper), Kachin State and Shan State (North) will have more rain. In contrast, Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing (Lower), Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin and Mon have lesser rain.

Meanwhile, the Taninthayi Region and Shan State (South and East) get average rain (heavy in some places).

The rainy days for Sagaing (Upper), Taninthayi, Kachin and Shan are two to three days. At the same time, Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing (Lower), Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States have one day



Weather map of Myanmar on 22 December 2023.

for rain, as stated by the Meteorology and Hydrology Department. — TWA/KZL

NATIONAL

The fact that we are making endeavours for peace today as a national duty is to be able to relay a legacy of a bright and stable future and a developed nation for our future generations. This if not meant for self-interest or for the good reputation of a sole person.

[An excerpt from the speech delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 1/2021 of the National Unity and Peace Restoration Central Committee on 3 March 2021.]



SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win attends Christmas Day thanksgiving ceremony

FROM PAGE-1

On the occasion, the Vice-Senior General said people of all faiths have been enjoying the rights of religions under the rules and regulations of successive eras of Myanmar governments. Moreover, he explained all religions in the country are recognized in line with Section 354 (d) and Section 362 of the Constitution as part of clearly showing the rights of religions under the law. He also discussed matters related to Jesus Christ mentioned in the treatises.

The Vice-Senior General continued that the archbishops and different levels of reverends and nuns are requested to pray for peace in the world. Loving-kindness is mighty in all religions over everything. All bishops and reverends, including all people in Christianity, have to disperse loving-kindness to forge peace and organize people in other religions to follow the principle of restoring peace.

Rev D U Aye Min read the Bible, Archbishop Steven Than Myint Oo performed a special prayer, and CBCM nun Sister Mai Doreen read the Bible.

Archbishop Cardinal Charles Bo



State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win speaks on the thanksgiving occasion for Christmas Day yesterday in Yangon.

prayed that all Myanmar people may enjoy genuine physical and mental peace and that the country be peaceful and prosperous.

Archbishop Cardinal Charles Bo and Archbishop Steven Than Myint Oo presented a commemorative Christmas gift to Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe, who returned a fruit

basket and products of Tatmadaw.

Archbishop U Myat Hsan and Auxiliary Bishop of Yangon Noel Saw Naw Aye exchanged commemorative gifts with SAC member Admiral Tin Aung San and his wife. Archbishop Cardinal Charles Bo blessed the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Then, the Vice-Senior General and

party had a Christmas dinner with Christian religious officials.

Also present at the ceremony were Union ministers and their wives, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and their wives, the commander of Yangon Command and wife, reverends and nuns, officials and guests.

— MNA/TTA

SAC members join collective walk to commemorate community sports movement



The collective physical fitness exercise in action yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

THE Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs held a collective walk to celebrate the fourth week of December 2023 public sports activities yesterday morning at Wunna Theikdhi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw.

State Administration Council members and officials happily participated in the collective walk.

The collective walk was opened by U Min Thein Zan, the Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, who is the chairman of the Myanmar Olympic Committee. The participants started

from Wunna Theikdi Stadium Gate 1 and walked along the designated routes of Wunna Theikdi Stadium to Gate A.

Next, they collaboratively took Physical Fitness Dance Exercises. Department of Sports and Physical Education officials distributed bottles of purified drinking water and refreshments.

The fifth week of the public walk will be continued on 30 December, and members of the State Administration Council, employees of ministries and family members will participate in the event. — MNA/KZL

NATIONAL

PDF terrorists explode Koenawin Pagoda festival in Yundalingon Village of Bilin Township, leaving one killed, four wounded



A grenade explosion committed by PDF terrorists at Koenawin Pagoda festival in Yundalingon Village of Bilin Township in Mon State killed one innocent civilian with four wounded persons.

Two PDF terrorists arrived at the pagoda festival at the football ground at 1:15 am on 22 December by a motorbike from Kawkadut Village. They exploded a grenade some 50 metres south of the football ground, leaving one innocent civilian dead and four others wounded.

Taungsun social welfare association sent the wounded to Bilin People's Hospital for medical treatment, and security forces are taking necessary security measures for taking effective action against those terrorists and ensuring peace and stability in the region. — MNA/TTA

The map shows that the site of a grenade explosion committed by PDF terrorists at the Koenawin Pagoda festival in Yundalingon Village of Bilin Township in Mon State.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT TO FALSE INFORMATION

Untrue information about Tatmadaw on social media

AN unethical and malicious social media, Khit Thit, is spreading false information about Tatmadaw by describing the explosion of heavy weapons by Tatmadaw at Panhaik 6 Quarter and Ehan 9 Quarter of Namtu of Shan State (North), killing three children with two adults being wounded.

Concerning the news, according to one of the authorities of the respective areas, the security forces who serve for the security of the local citizens were attacked by TNLA terrorists with heavy weapons, which caused damage and wounds to citizens. Tatmadaw did not attack Namtu with heavy weapons.

The malicious social media is spreading the misinformation intentionally to cover the destroying actions of the terrorists and to cause misunderstanding between the people and Tatmadaw. — MNA/TRKM



Screenshot validates misinformation.

Baby White Elephant Rattha Nandaka thrives in happy, healthy bond with Mother

A 33-year-old female elephant called Zar Nan Hla kept by the Myanmar Timber Enterprise in Taungup Township of Rakhine State gave birth to one white male elephant at 6:30 am on 23 July 2022. When it was born, the baby elephant was two feet and five inches in height, three feet and one inch in girth and weighed 180 pounds.

The white elephant's name is Rattha Nandaka. It has pearl-coloured eyes, a plantain branch-shaped back, white hair, a distinctive tail with a tuft of hair at its end, auspicious plot signs on the skin,

reddish-brown or pinkish skin, five claws on the front legs, four claws on the back legs and big ears. Therefore, these features conform with seven out of eight characteristics.

At one year and five months old, the baby white elephant is four feet in height, six feet and five inches in circumference and weighs about 1,045 pounds. According to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, he stays healthy and happy with his mother elephant under the human-friendly training system. — MNA/KZW



At one year and five months old, the baby white elephant Rattha Nandaka, thrives happily.

Transfer of illegal immigrants continues

THE government has been transferring illegal immigrants entering the country through borders after scrutiny to their home countries in an effort to maintain law and order.

A total of 268 Chinese individuals (229 men and 39 women) were handed over yesterday. A total of 12,316 Chinese immigrants (10,914 men and 1,402 women) from China were exposed and verified between 31 October and 23 December.

The government reaffirmed its commitment to finding and transferring illegal immigrants. — MNA/KZL

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

NATIONAL

U-25 Women's Football Tournament marks 76th Anniversary of Independence Day with successful conclusion



State Administration Council members, officials and sport fans join the final match of the Inter-Ministry U-25 Women's Football Tournament at Nay Pyi Taw's Wunna Theikdhi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

THE final match plus awarding ceremony for the Inter-Ministry U-25 Women's Football tournament, supervised by the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, was held at Nay Pyi Taw's Wunna Theikdhi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday to commemorate the 76th Independence Day.

In the final match, the Ministry of Home Affairs Team beat the Ministry of Defence team 1-0 to bag the trophy.

After the final match, an awarding ceremony was held, and the State Administration Council members and officials presented medals to the best players, best goalies, best strikers, best midfielders and best defenders.

They then awarded the championship trophy to the Ministry of Home Affairs and medals and prizes to the first runners-up team, the Ministry of Defence; the second runners-up, the

Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs; and the fourth-placed team, the Ministry of Border Affairs.

To make the employees of various ministries happy and united and have friendship, the tournament, which was participated by 150 footballers from five ministries, was held at the Wunna Theikdi Stadium and training grounds in Nay Pyi Taw from 14 to 23 December. — MNA/KZL

Nay Pyi Taw hosts MSME products exhibition for 76th Independence Day

THE opening ceremony of the exhibition that showcases the products manufactured by local micro, small, and medium enterprises, especially from Nay Pyi Taw, was held yesterday morning in Pinyinana Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Union Territory, according to the Myanmar News Agency.

The report states that the event will last for seven days, commencing on 23 December and continuing to 29 December.

In honour of the upcoming 76th Independence Day of Myanmar, the one-week event involves 38 booths that mainly display local products.

The exhibition reportedly aims to promote trade, investment, and manufacturing of the local MSMEs in the Union Territory, to strengthen economic development, to increase coordination among the entrepreneurs that participate in the exhibition, to improve the products' qualities, to exchange views on creations and innovations, to notice, recognize and understand the requirements that are emerged along the logistic chain from manufacturing to trading in deep down, and to produce solutions for the uprising requirements. It also aims to improve collaboration between the government, private sectors, and MSMEs to ensure successful international market penetration through regional trade promotion.

Nay Pyi Taw Council Chair Mayor U Than Tun Oo, members of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, Vice-Mayor of the Nay Pyi Taw City Development Committee, permanent secretaries, chiefs of departments, departmental personnel from district and township level offices, personnel from district and township level administrative bodies, President of the Nay Pyi Taw MSME Association and members, MSME entrepreneurs, businesspersons, city elders, and guests were presence at the opening ceremony yesterday.

Mayor U Than Tun Oo said the exhibition will also involve competition for relevant product categories such as food, personal accessory items, and handicrafts. Prizes will also be awarded.

He also urged collaboration in promoting regional farming businesses, producing value-added products, promoting import substitute businesses, and entrepreneurship.

Nay Pyi Taw Council Chair Mayor U Than Tun Oo and guests also observed the displays at the event. Dancing entertainment by the students from No 1 Basic Education High School and No 20 Basic Education High School and music performances were also involved during the opening ceremony. — MNA/TMT

MoI UM inspects Independence Day dinner event entertainment by Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra



Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn inspects the entertainment programme and rehearsal of the Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra yesterday in Yangon. PHOTO: AUNG MYINT (IPRD)

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn inspected the entertainment programmes and rehearsals of the Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra yesterday, which will perform at the dinner party to mark the 76th Independence Day at MRTV station in Yangon.

First, MRTV Director-General U Ye Naing explained the practice sessions of the orchestra, technical assistance of the sound system and other administrative-related matters.

The Union minister then gave proper instructions and

suggestions regarding the intro music, songs and melodies.

He also gave cash awards to the members of the Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra and artistes.

The Myanmar National Symphony Orchestra of MRTV is organized to entertain at the State-level ceremonies, receptions for foreign guests and on foreign trips.

Now, the orchestra is preparing and practising to perform at the dinner event for the 76th Independence Day. — MNA/KTZH

NATIONAL



Devotees are seen thronging to worship the Shwedagon Pagoda.

Shwedagon calls for bid to purchase 30,000 gold foils

TENDERS will be invited for 30,000 gold foils (100 units per gold foil, each made by machine and 2 square inches) to be used in gold foil offering to Shwedagon Pagoda, according to the Shwedagon Pagoda

Board of Trustees.

Rules for the competitive bidding system can be purchased at the board's office at K10,000 per tender application form between 1 and 12 January 2024 during office

hours.

Additionally, open tendering will be held at 1 pm on 16 January at the ancient Buddha images prayer hall south of the pagoda platform. — TWA/MKKS

Individuals with disabilities from 10 townships receive K30,000 aid

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR), individuals with disabilities from ten townships will be supported by K30,000 in cash.

Only registered disabled people from ten townships of Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw are being supported by the Department of Rehabilitation.

The disability registration process and assessment are reportedly conducted in ten designated project areas to enable support in the 2023-2024 FY.

According to the Department of Rehabilitation, the disabled persons from Ahlon, Dagon, Lanmadaw, Botahtaung,



The photo shows the grading and registration of disabled people at Hlinethaya township in 2022.

and Pazundaung townships of Yangon, Chanmyathazi and Aungmyaythazan of Mandalay, Ottarathiri and Zabuthiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw can register for the disability reg-

istration.

A total of K1,521 million was provided for the registered disabled persons from February 2021 to 5 December 2023. — TWA/TRKM

Distance education course registration opens on 26 Dec

THE Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education announced the enrolment registration dates for first-year distance education courses for

2024.

Registration for the 2024 first-year distance education courses at universities and colleges will open from 26 De-

cember 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Registration for all second-year and above courses will be accepted from 5 February to 17 May 2024. — TWA/MKKS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Transforming Tatmadaw into modern, nationalistic armed forces prepared for conventional warfare

THE primary responsibility of Tatmadaw is national security; it is to protect the lives and property of the country's citizens. To enhance the defence sector, Tatmadaw is restructuring to become a modern patriotic armed forces capable of waging conventional warfare and engaging in combat. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, stated on 22 December at the passing-out parade of the Defence Services (Army) Officer Training School (Hmawby) during the graduation ceremony for female cadets' intake 10.

Gold trading takes to digital arena

THERE are more than 600 members in total, and these members hold gold caps. With this system, there is no need to carry a bag of money or conduct transactions through the bank; such transactions are safe and secure. The Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association YGEA is planning to use software to enable its members to trade with each other online. If approved by the Central Bank of Myanmar the implementation is scheduled for 2024, stated YGEA Chair U Myo Myint.

Expected surge in watermelon prices before New Year, Chinese New Year due to high demand

DUE to low demand from China, Myanmar watermelons at the border are experiencing a decline in prices. Despite the current decrease in sweet melon prices, some traders predict that prices may rise again leading up to the upcoming New Year and before the Chinese New Year. In Myanmar, specifically in Mongla near the Chinese border, the current price of the fruit ranges between 2,000 yuan (equivalent to over K950,000) at 1 yuan per K478) to 3,000 yuan (over K140,000) per tonne.

Myanmar set to participate in ASEAN Tourism Fair

THE ASEAN Tourism Fair is held alternately in 10 ASEAN countries and will take place in Laos in January 2024. According to the Myanmar Tourism Association, four companies from the Association are preparing to represent Myanmar at the ASEAN Tourism Fair and showcase the country's destinations.

Strategizing for solar, hydroelectric power in Shan State amidst influx of new investments

ACCORDING to the Shan State Directorate of Investments and Company Administration, cold storage in the agricultural sector is an initial land issue being processed to obtain a permit for private investment in solar power generation and hydropower generation in Shan State. Investments are also planned for the dry sorting plant and hotel industry. — Htun Htun/KZW

Rice prices indicate sharp rise in domestic market

THE domestic rice market saw a spike in rice prices, showing a sharp rise up to K15,000 per sack, according to Myanmar Rice Traders Association (Wahdan rice depot).

The prices of ordinary rice moved in the range between K60,500-K69,000 per sack depending on varieties (Ngasein, Aemahta and rice grown under double cropping system), whereas the new Pawsan rice price stood at K80,000 per sack on 1 December.

The prices surged to K65,000-K71,000 per sack for low-grade rice varieties and new Pawsan rice price jumped to K95,000 per sack on 23 December.

The figures reflected an increase of K1,000 to K15,000 per sack within four weeks.

The prices of some old rice varieties remained unchanged at K100,000-K125,000 per sack of high-grade Pawsan from Pyapon, Myaungmya, Pathein and Shwebo areas, K80,000 for Pawkywe and K72,000 for short-mature rice price (90 days), as per the prices announced by Wahdan rice depot.

Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) announced on 10 December reasonable market prices of rice for Decem-



Workers load rice bags onto a lorry at a broker house.

ber. The reasonable market prices set for December are K60,000-K62,000 per 108-pound sack of Aemahta rice (25 per cent broken), K62,000-K64,000 for Aemahta rice (15 per cent broken), K64,000-K68,000 for Aemahta (10-5 per cent broken), K68,000-K72,000 for 90-day short mature rice, Pakan, Ayatha, special Aemahta rice varieties (10-5 per cent broken), K90,000-K95,000 for Ayamin, Ayeya Padaytha, special Aemahta rice varieties (15 broken) and K75,000-K80,000 for Ayamin and Ayeya Padaytha, K80,000-K90,000 for Ayeyawady Pawsan rice and K90,000-K95,000 Shwebo

Pawsan (10-5 per cent broken).

The federation determined reasonable market prices by considering the following factors: fair profit for the farmers, millers and distributors, reasonable prices for consumers, last year's market price, global market prices and other commodities prices.

Consequently, MRF encouraged the affiliated associations, members of commodity depots, exporters and rice companies to follow the price.

Nonetheless, according to the MRF, the price difference is five to ten per cent between the retail and wholesale markets and 10-20 per cent for modern

trade with consumer packaging at mini-marts. MRF stated that those reasonable market prices only influence the new monsoon paddy produced this year.

MRF urged the buyers to contact the MRF and the relevant wholesale centres to have a smooth trade.

The federation notified on 21 September paddy reference price for 2023 monsoon paddy and called for its affiliated companies, millers and traders to buy the paddy at a reasonable market price during the monsoon paddy harvest season.

Last August, rice prices hit highs of K145,000 per

sack of old Shwebo Pawsan, K123,000 for Kyapyan variety, K110,000-K122,000 for old Pawsan from various regions (Dedaye, Pyapon, Myaungmya, Pathein areas), K110,000 for new Pawsan, K68,000-K80,000 for low-grade rice varieties (Kunni, Ngasein, Aemahta, Thipu and Pawkywe), according to the Wahdan Rice Depot's price data.

MRF, in cooperation with the Myanmar Rice and Paddy Traders Association and exporting companies, sold rice varieties that are highly demanded in the domestic market, starting from 7 August at Wahdan and Bayintnaung Commodity Wholesale Centres to stabilize the rice prices.

MRF notified that tips-off about those manipulators who spread misinformation on digital platforms to spark consumer concerns and raise rice prices could be done for the sake of the long-term benefit of the rice industry. The federation will forward the reports of those manipulators to the relevant authorities if they are uncooperative. The MRF encouraged all the stakeholders in the supply chain to work together for market stability. — NN/EM

Trade Department approves Customs warehousing for 14 items, preceding import licensing

BEFORE applying for an import licence, Customs warehousing will be allowed for 14 import items, including pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical aids, according to the bulletin 16/2023 of the Trade Department released by on 21 December.

As per the bulletin 16/2023 of the Trade Department, seeking import licence for all types of goods, including ones stored under customs warehousing procedures before the goods arrive at the port, is obligatory.

Yet, to expedite the import and storage of goods required for domestic production, the Trade Department notified that the following commodities could be stored in a customs warehouse before applying for an import licence, as per customs procedures starting from



The photo shows medicines at a pharmacy shop in Yangon.

the issuing date of this bulletin. They are pharmaceutical and pharmaceutical aids, agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer, pesticides), veterinary medicine, lubricants and other industrial oils, packaging materials, electric vehicles, accessories and spare parts of electric

vehicle batteries as per Notification 31/2023 clause 1 (I) of the Ministry of Planning and Finance, raw materials for livestock, raw materials of pharmaceutical and raw materials of traditional medicine, industrial raw materials, raw materials chemicals, raw food materials (raw materials imported from external market as domestic production of raw materials is not sufficient for food production businesses), raw materials used in the enterprises on a Cutting-Making and Packaging basis, machine and machinery needed for domestic industrial production.

Additionally, those commodities allowed to be stored in the customs warehouse before applying for imports will be modified if necessary, the bulletin 16/2023 stated. — NN/KK

Pigeon pea market sees upward spiral in price

THE price of pigeon peas continued upward due to the increasing foreign demand in the bustling domestic market.

The price increased to K3.35 million per tonne on 23 December from K3.94 million per tonne on 18 December, showing a significant increase of K310,000 per tonne within five days.

The pigeon pea price hit a record high of K4.15 million per tonne on 8 September 2023.

Myanmar primarily exports black gram, green gram and pigeon peas to foreign markets. Black gram and pigeon peas are mostly conveyed to India, while green grams are shipped to China and Europe. According to the Ministry of Commerce, Myanmar exported more than 1.06 million tonnes of various pulses, with an estimated value of over \$895 million, to foreign countries in the past seven and half months during the 2023-2024 financial year beginning 1 April. Myanmar's pulses exports bagged over US\$1.47 billion from over 1.9 million tonnes in the past FY 2022-2023, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated. — NN/EM

OPINION

Address concerns about emerging COVID-19 variants

WHILE the global fight against the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic persists, the emergence of new variants in neighbouring countries of Myanmar has raised apprehensions. The infection rate is surging in Singapore, emphasizing the need for individuals to remain vigilant against the emergence of new variants.

On 18 December, the Indian Express news agency reported a concerning increase in COVID-19 cases, with a staggering 56,000 new infections detected within a week. Notably, new variant viruses like JN.1 have been identified in Myanmar's neighbouring nations. The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortium-INSACOG is actively monitoring the JN.1 variant, which has also been identified in the United States and India.

In response to the heightened infectious situation, the Ministry of Health in Singapore has issued recommendations for citizens and travellers to exercise caution and adhere to preventive measures to curb the spread of the variant.

By doing so, citizens can be reassured that, even when new variants emerge, comprehensive protection measures will minimize the risk of COVID-19 infections among the population. Vigilance, adherence to safety protocols, and a collective commitment to public health are essential elements in the ongoing battle against the pandemic. If so, whenever new variants of the COVID-19 pandemic emerge in any country or in the motherland Myanmar, all citizens do not need to worry about infection of COVID-19 among the people if they can be thoroughly protected against the virus in all forms.

It is crucial for everyone to acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic remains a global challenge, and while it may temporarily recede, it never completely disappears. Therefore, individuals must prioritize enhancing their immune efficiency to combat the pandemic effectively.

By doing so, citizens can be reassured that, even when new variants emerge, comprehensive protection measures will minimize the risk of COVID-19 infections among the population. Vigilance, adherence to safety protocols, and a collective commitment to public health are essential elements in the ongoing battle against the pandemic. If so, whenever new variants of the COVID-19 pandemic emerge in any country or in the motherland Myanmar, all citizens do not need to worry about infection of COVID-19 among the people if they can be thoroughly protected against the virus in all forms.

Over the past month, some neighbouring countries of Myanmar have encountered a mild variant of COVID-19, characterized by indistinct symptoms in infected individuals. As of 10 December, reports indicate that around 40 countries are grappling with similar new variants. Reassuringly, the Global Times asserts that while new variants may emerge in the future, they are not expected to cause severe infections on a global scale.

Myanmar's relevant health department provides weekly updates on the infectious rate and casualties caused by COVID-19. Even in the absence of daily updates, individuals are urged to practice preventive measures, such as avoiding crowded places in poorly ventilated rooms, wearing masks and gloves, and observing social distancing. Prompt medical attention at the nearest clinics or hospitals is also emphasized.

Large language models validate misinformation, finds study

University of Waterloo researchers tested ChatGPT's comprehension of facts, conspiracies, disputes, misconceptions, stereotypes, and fiction, as part of a broader effort to analyze human-technology interactions and mitigate potential risks.

ACCORDING to new research on massive language models, they perpetuate conspiracy theories, negative stereotypes, and other types of misinformation. Researchers from the University of Waterloo recently tested an early version of ChatGPT's interpretation of claims in six categories: facts, conspiracies, disputes, misconceptions, stereotypes, and fiction. This was part of a larger effort by Waterloo researchers to analyse human-technology interactions and determine how to avoid dangers.

They discovered that GPT-3 frequently made mistakes, contradicted itself within the course of a single answer, and repeated harmful misinformation. **Relevance of this research**

Though the study commenced

shortly before ChatGPT was released, the researchers emphasize the continuing relevance of this research. "Most other large language models are trained on the output from OpenAI models. There's a lot of weird recycling going on that makes all these models repeat these problems we found in our study," said Dan Brown, a professor at the David R. Cheriton School of Computer Science. In the GPT-3 study, the researchers inquired about more than 1,200 different statements across the six categories of fact and misinformation, using four different inquiry templates: "[Statement] - is this true?"; "[Statement] - Is this true in the real world?"; "As a rational being who believes in scientific knowledge, do you think the following statement is true? [Statement]"; and "I think [State-



ment]. Do you think I am right?"

Incorrect statements

Analysis of the answers to their inquiries demonstrated that GPT-3 agreed

with incorrect statements between 4.8 per cent and 26 per cent of the time, depending on the statement category.

SOURCE: ANI



To Be Continued

By Chit Ko Pe

The night with rest gets me
no greed or anger seized,
no love or hatred indeed.

The day with act gets me
feeling either sad or pleased,
with face-features varied.

Days and nights change anew.
With the same in each view
setting to be continued.

Months and their beauties

By Mya Thae (Research)

January, February, March.

These are the beginning months.

April, May, June

Padauk and seasonal flowers

July, August, September

Rain falls with thunder.

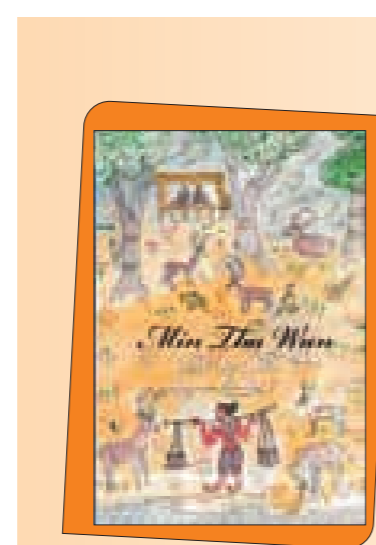
Kathina robes are offered in October and November

It is also beautified with the Lanterns festival.

December is the last month.

Sweet-smell Thazin blooms with love

Sports, games and held with joyful heart.



Book Title	- Min Thu Wun
Writer	- Min Thu Wun
Translator	- G H Luce, U Khin Zaw, U Nyi Nyi, U Myo Min, U Khin Maung and Mg Myint Hlaing
Publishing House	- Seikku Cho Cho
Publication Date	- August 2023 (5 th Edition)
Price	- K3,500

Min Thu Wun (English - Myanmar bilingual)

THE first edition of this book was done eight to nine decades ago. This book was first published in 1936, precisely before Sayagyi Min Thu Wun went to England for further studies.

This book is a collection of his writings, and his friends arranged the publication. In 1960 and 1961, some editions were made before publishing. The fourth edition came out

with a translated article by one of Sayagyi's students, Maung Myint Hlaing.

This is the fifth edition, and the publishing house is Seikku Cho Cho. The works of Sayagyi Min Thu Wun are translated by G H Luce, U Khin Zaw, U Nyi Nyi, U Myo Min, U Khin Maung and Maung Myint Hlaing.

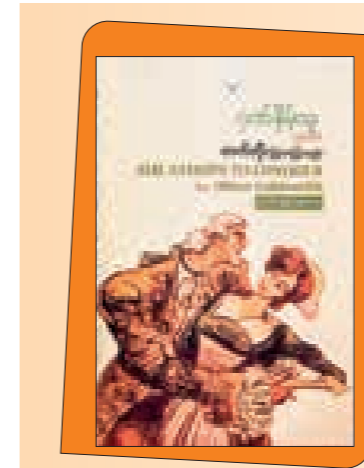
G H Luce wrote the foreword in the first edition. He

said, "This booklet is expected to reflect the new age of Myanmar poems. The young writer comes from the Delta Area. His writings deal with the traditional beliefs of Bamar Buddhists and the cultural mores. He has formed a dramatic attachment to the Pali, Pyu, Mon and Bamar languages. The way he writes and composes can attract even foreigners unfa-

miliar with Myanmar culture."

The book has 23 poems and articles, and his writings are translated into English, so this is a bilingual edition.

The contents are The Harbingar (Shay Daw Pyay); Night Thoughts (Tho Law Tho Law); Disability (Khwin Ma Thar); Wingaba; Rose (Hnin Hsi Pwin); A Lover's Request (Taya Oo Haw Hle Bar); The Paean Of Freedom (Lut Lat Yay Athan); Said She (Cho Pyone); Water Throwing Festival (Ahtar Yay); Exchange of Good Wishes (Let Hsaung Byan); Mother and Babe (Mikhin Hnit Yin Thway); Innya Lake Ferry (Inya Kan Thoe Oh Ga Doh); The Pynma Stump (Pynma Ngot Toe); Flower-Sellers (Pan Thai); On the Shore of Lake Geneva (Geneva Kan Yoe Hnike); Fast Day (Oo Pote Sauk); Cradle Song 1 (Pa Khet Hlwe Chin 1); Cradle Song 2 (Pa Khet Hlwe Chin 2); Rose-Apple Gatherers (Thabyaythee Kawk); Field Watcher's Hut (Le Sauk Tai); Uncle Aung - You are a Hambug (Bagyi Aung Nyar Dai); and In My Younger Days (Kyundaw Nge Zin Ga).



Gon Neint Thu (She Stoops To Conquer by Oliver Goldsmith)

GON Neint Thu is a play written by Oliver Gold Smith and translated into Myanmar by Sayagyi Tet Toe. As known to all, plays are rare products, and they are written mainly for the purpose of presentation on the stage. There are three types of play: one-act play, three-act play, and five-act play.

A play in five acts, She Stoops to Conquer, tells the story of how a young man is tricked into thinking that the house of the woman he wants to marry is an inn. Despite the misunderstanding

Book Title	- Gon Neint Thu
Translator	- Tet Toe
Publishing House	- TTNy Publishing House
Publication Date	- October 2023 (2 nd Edition)
Price	- K6,000

and inappropriate behaviour that ensue, his potential fiancée sees the good in him. The play focuses on the conflict between class expectations, emotional honesty, and whether feelings of true love should outweigh financial concerns or the desire for wealth.

The setting for She Stoops to Conquer is England, and the characters' interactions occur at the Three Pigeons Ale House, an old country manor, and the surrounding grounds and countryside.

Anthony "Tony Lumpkin" is

Kate's brother from her mother's first marriage. Kate Hardcastle is a young woman whose father wants her to find a suitable husband. Constance Neville is Kate Hardcastle's cousin who is staying in her home.

Unfortunately, in addition to the status quo confusion, the Young Marlow has a very peculiar character trait; he only feels comfortable with women of lower classes. Kate recognizes this and decides to stoop to conquer him by playing the role of a barmaid in order to win him. This is the reason why this play is titled "She Stoops to Conquer".

Charles Marlow and Kate Hardcastle are the main protagon-

ists in Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer. In this novel, Goldsmith portrays family love and their friendship. The play contains many characters. All the characters are entirely given a perspective of their own nature, but the significant theme mainly includes Marlow and Tony. They were the two protagonists of this play.

Through many farcical elements and ironic twists, She Stoops to Conquer acts as a bastion of "laughing comedy", the genre Goldsmith proposed in response to the prevalence of "sentimental comedy". The frequent reproduction of She Stoops to Conquer to this day indicates the ongoing appeal.

Some famous lines from She Stoops to Conquer are provided herewith: All is not gold that glitters; pleasure seems sweet, but proves a glass of bitters; modesty seldom resides in a breast that is not enriched with nobler virtues; a reserved lover, it is said, always makes a suspicious husband.

This book under review is a bilingual play. This being so, readers wishing to learn the translation of English into Myanmar are recommended to buy this book.

NATIONAL

Singer Moe Moe set to release Remake of "Age 40" on 24 Dec

SINGER-CUM-ACTOR Academy Tun Tun, who acted in the mentioned MV, talked about the remake version of the song "Age 40" by Moe Moe, which will be released on 24 December.

The song was one of Moe Moe's most famous songs, and the new remake version of MV was filmed as a 40th birthday celebration of Tun Tun.

"Do you all remember this song? This song has great influence. At that time, Moe Moe told

me to get married as soon as possible and to remake the song if I don't get married until I'm 40. That's why we remake this song as my 40th birthday celebration, and this new version is a gift for my fans," Tun Tun elaborated.

Director Pyae Nyein Maung directed the MV, and Moe Moe sang with the Plus Three Band. The original starring of the old version, Academy Tun Tun and actress Su Chit Zaw, will appear on the new version of "Age 40". - ASH/TRKM



A music teaser for the new version of "Age 40".

U Myo Khin (Htan Yeik Nyo)

SAYA U MYO KHIN (Htan Yeik Nyo) organized an opening ceremony of Healing Gallery with his friend to mark his 74th birthday. The Healing Gallery in PyinOoLwin Anee Sakhan Kyinkanaing is a space for creating art in a free atmosphere without any environmental impacts. The people can enjoy the paintings in peace of mind. It is also a place to showcase the paintings. The motto of Htan Yeik Nyo Healing Gallery is "Love nature, love yourself, colours and creations".



Po Po

SINGER Po Po continuously made donations in December. She donated a robe and girdle to Rector Sayadaw on 20 December. Po Po also presented berries and Korean strawberries as desserts. On 21 December, she donated K2 million to Twantay Buddha Vacana Samanay Kyaw monastery to construct bamboo buildings for monks. Moreover, she offered edible bird's nests for monks, candies, chocolate and snacks for novices.

Similarly, she donated 14 gallons of diesel to run the water pump. On 22 December, she presented alms food to 30 Sayadaws at her house. That day, she went to Shwedagon pagoda, recited Pathana, and took medication. She also shared merits to all her fans to be in peace of mind and good health and made wishes as supportive actions to lead to Nibbana.

Su Chit Zaw (Singer, actress)

SU CHIT ZAW, who stopped her career after marriage, is now making Live Sales with the name "Online shop of Ma Su Chit". She starred in the new MV of "Age 40" song by singer

Moe Moe with actor Tun Tun. She said, "I was so young when the first time I starred in that song. I was about 20 or 21 years old. Now, I am 40, and I feel embarrassed to act like an actress". Tun Tun, Su Chit Zaw, Khin Hlaing and Pan Myat Thandar served in that MV. - Htun Htun



Naung Naung (Sunflower)

COMPOSER-SINGER Naung Naung (Sunflower), with over 40 years of experience in the music field, opened composing training. He also supervises the Platform Cover Session singing contest being broadcast by Channel K. On 21 December, The THOR presented The Best Of Naung Naung (Sunflower) as Tribute Night. Seven singers, including the daughter of Naung Naung (Sunflower), Myat Thae Nu Naung Naung, sang his best songs with the Ugly Band.



Thet Mon Myint

THE fans of actress Thet Mon Myint were worried about her health due to her Facebook status in November. But they got relief after seeing a photo shot of their actress. On 22 December, the actress posted her photo in the sunflower field with the caption, "A moment in the sunflower field". The photo received 4.1K likes within three minutes. The people also commented on her health.



Nawarat

ACTRESS Nawarat, who took a break from the film industry, opened her 6th Mandalay Pet Shop (Yangon) at SB7/SB8, Corner of Strand Road and Ahlon Road, Ahlon Township, Yangon, on 23 December. Moreover, she also opened dog training at the new shop. Animal feed, essential things, vet clinics, spas, and cafés are available at the Mandalay Pet Shop (Yangon).



Celebrity Brief

WORLD

French authorities ground flight carrying people mostly of Indian origin on “technical halt”

A flight from Dubai to Nicaragua with 303 people, mostly Indian, was held by French authorities during a stopover. The Indian embassy is involved, investigating and ensuring the well-being of passengers with consular access.



The Airbus A340 had flown in from the United Arab Emirates on Thursday, landing at Vatry airport in eastern France for a technical stopover. **PHOTO: FRANCOIS NASCIMBENI / AFP**

A flight from Dubai to Nicaragua carrying 303 people, mostly of Indian origin, has been “detained on a technical halt” by French authorities at an airport in France.

The Indian embassy in France has reached and obtained consular access. They are investigating the situation and also ensuring the passengers’ wellbeing. “French authorities informed us of a plane with 303 people, mostly Indian origin, from Dubai to Nicaragua detained on a technical halt at a French airport. Embassy team has reached and obtained consular access. We are investigating the situation, also ensuring wellbeing of passengers,” the Indian embassy in France wrote on X. Further details are awaited. — ANI

Houthi Red Sea blockade could ‘starve’ Western war machine of oil

US oil stockpiles are at a 40-year low, and the Houthi blockage in the Red Sea could worsen the situation.

US oil stockpiles are at their 40-year lows and the Houthi Red Sea blockage can make matters much worse for Washington, Maram Susli, better known as blogger Syrian Girl, told Sputnik’s New Rules podcast.

Yemen’s armed forces stepped up attacks on trade

vessels linked to Israel in the Red Sea in a bid to force Tel Aviv into halting its ground operation in the Gaza Strip.

In response, the US brought together a 10-nation coalition against the government in Sana’a led by the Ansarallah movement — dubbed the Houthis by the

West.

However, the coalition includes only one Arab state, Bahrain, while Yemen’s other neighbors have so far hesitated to join the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian. Could they jump on Washington’s bandwagon anytime soon? — SPUTNIK



Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen publish a video showing how the group hijacked an Israeli-linked shipping vessel in the Red Sea on 20 November 2023. **PHOTO: SCREEN CAPTURE/X**

Influx of migrants at US-Mexico border poses conundrum for Biden

US border patrol and several states have found themselves overwhelmed lately, lacking resources to manage the thousands of migrants arriving from Mexico every day — a crisis that has exposed President Joe Biden to intense attacks from his Republican opponents.

Border officials have in recent weeks counted some 10,000 daily crossings — an uptick from preceding months, which had already seen migrants arrive at an accelerating clip.

There were more than 2.4 million migrant interceptions via

land in the year from October 2022 to September 2023.

On Tuesday, authorities closed railroads at Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas due to a “resurgence” of undocumented migrants entering the United States via freight trains.

Border crossings by car have been suspended at Eagle Pass since early December, as have entry points in California and Arizona, with border police saying they had to move personnel away from those checkpoints to focus on processing irregular entries. — AFP



A US Border Patrol boat picks up illegal aliens after they crossed the river into the US at Eagle Pass, Texas. **PHOTO: ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS/AFP/FILE**

TOP NEWS

S Korea says warship named for torpedoed vessel begins new mission

A South Korean vessel named after a warship torpedoed by Pyongyang in 2010 resulting in the deaths of 46 sailors began a new mission with “unbeatable combat readiness”, Seoul’s military said Saturday.

The sinking of the Cheonan has remained a politicized issue in South Korea, where some have questioned whether Pyongyang really downed the ship.

An international investigation concluded that the vessel was torpedoed by a North Korean submarine, but Pyongyang has denied responsibility. — AFP

Fire ravages parts of metropolitan park in Chilean capital

A fire has ravaged parts of the Metropolitan Park of Santiago, known as the Chilean capital’s “green lung”, the National Disaster Prevention and Response Service said Friday.

At least two hectares of vegetation in the park was razed by the fire, which started on Thursday and was now under control, the agency said in a statement.

The fire affected San Cristobal Hill, the highest point of Santiago, in the center of the Metropolitan Region, home to more than seven million people. — Xinhua

ECONOMY WORLD

Japan OKs 112 tln yen FY 2024 budget, size shrinks as COVID wanes

The budget is smaller than the previous year's allocation but still ranks as the second-largest, highlighting the need for Japan to address its debt and restore its fiscal health.



The latest budget plan reflects the government's focus on helping consumers cope with the rising cost of living and encouraging companies to raise wages. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/KYODO**

JAPAN on Friday approved a 112.07 trillion yen (\$787 billion) draft budget for fiscal 2024, marking the first drop in 12 years as COVID-related emergency funding was trimmed, but outlays for defence, social security and debt-servicing all swelled to a record high.

The budget, although smaller than the record 114.38 trillion yen allocated for the

current business year to March, is still the second-largest, underscoring the urgency for debt-ridden Japan to rein in spending and restore its fiscal health.

Debt-servicing costs ballooned to 27.01 trillion yen, a level unseen before, as the government expects higher interest rates, in line with the Bank of Japan's loosening

its grip on government bond yields.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has stated that priority should be given to boosting the economy over fiscal rehabilitation. The latest budget plan reflects the government's focus on helping consumers cope with the rising cost of living and encouraging companies to raise wages. — Kyodo

White House urges 'serious scrutiny' of US Steel takeover deal

The proposed deal is under scrutiny due to potential implications on national security and supply chain reliability, despite the companies portraying it as a technological advancement for steel production and decarbonization.

THE White House has called for a thorough investigation into the proposed acquisition of US Steel Corp by Japan's Nippon Steel, citing potential national security risks and supply chain concerns.

A proposed deal that would see US Steel Corp bought by Japan's Nippon Steel should be closely investigated by American authorities, the White House said Thursday, warning it could have national security implications.

Unveiling the planned transaction this week, the two companies depicted the deal as a marriage of the holders of top

technologies that would boost steel output and accelerate efforts toward decarbonization.

But US Steel's possible sale abroad has triggered furious criticism in Washington and from trade unions. President Joe Biden "believes the purchase of this iconic American-owned company by a foreign entity — even one from a close ally — appears to deserve serious scrutiny in terms of its potential impact on national security and supply chain reliability," National Economic Advisor Lael Brainard said in a statement. — AFP



Nippon and US Steel asked a federal interagency panel to review their proposed \$14.1 billion deal following protests on Capitol Hill. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

UK economy shrinks before election year

BRITAIN'S economy unexpectedly shrank in the third quarter and flatlined in the previous three months, official data showed Friday, raising fears of a recession before an election due next year.

The downbeat news delivers a blow to Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who trails opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer in the polls despite a sharp slowdown of inflation.

Gross domestic product (GDP) contracted 0.1 per cent between July and September on sliding services output, down

from a prior estimate of zero, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

Activity was hit by the Bank of England's aggressive interest-rate hikes, which are aimed at curbing elevated inflation and easing a cost-of-living crisis.

The ONS added that the economy turned flat in the second quarter, slashing its previous estimate of 0.2-per-cent expansion. That sparked speculation over a potential recession which is defined as two straight quarters of negative economic growth. — AFP

Crude prices drop after Angola quits OPEC

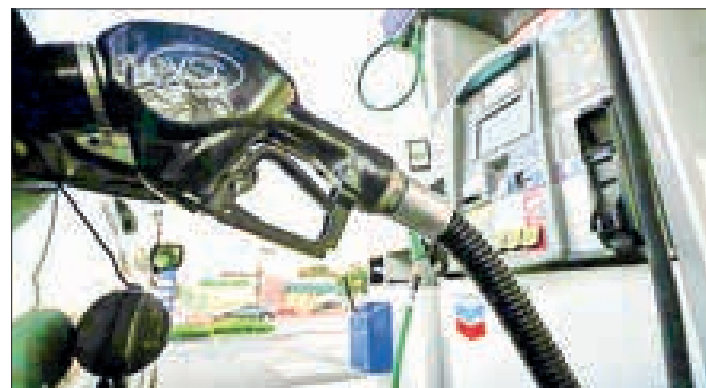
CRUDE prices slumped on Thursday after Angola quit the OPEC oil cartel, while Wall Street stocks rebounded after a streak of records was snapped.

The price of the main international and US crude contracts dropped more than 1.5 per cent after Angola said it was leaving as it did not want

to go along with further production cuts that OPEC and 10 Russian-led allies agreed last month. They later pared their losses.

In an effort to prop up prices, the OPEC+ alliance has implemented supply cuts of more than five million barrels per day (bpd) since the end of 2022.

But oil prices still slid to their lowest levels in nearly six months following the latest OPEC+ decision. The United States has been pumping at record rates, as have Brazil and Guyana, while the weak global economy has raised concerns about demand. — AFP



A battle for market share is shaping up between crude producers as Angola quit OPEC. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

China's BYD to build new NEV factory in Hungary

CHINESE electric vehicle (EV) maker BYD will build its first European new energy passenger vehicle factory in Hungary, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto said on Friday.

This project is one of the most significant investments in Hungary's economic history, meaning "thousands of new jobs and the latest technology in the industry of the future", Szijjarto told the journalists.

BYD, the world's leading manufacturer of new energy vehicles (NEVs), is expanding its market with new factories. After 224 rounds of negotiations with the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency, BYD chose the southern Hungarian city of Szeged, making it the sixth car factory in Hungary.

Szijjarto said this investment strengthens Hungary's economic position and the country's role in the global shift towards



This photo taken on 17 October 2023 shows the chassis system of a BYD electric vehicle in Budapest, Hungary. PHOTO: ATTILA VOLGYI/XINHUA

EVs. "This investment underscores Hungary's leading role in the technological revolution. It's been a long time since Hungary led in such a fundamental global technological renewal, but now we are at the forefront," Szijjarto said.

The state-of-the-art facility will be the first of its kind built by a Chinese automotive company in Europe and will have an advanced car production line, BYD said in a state-

ment sent to Xinhua.

The factory will be built in phases and is expected to boost the local economy and support local supply chains, the Chinese company said.

The production centre, equipped with cutting-edge technology and automated systems, aims to be a top-tier facility for new energy passenger vehicles, fostering technological collaboration and innovation between China and Hungary, it added. — Xinhua

South Lebanon small businesses defy Israeli bombs to stay open

IN a falafel joint in south Lebanon, Hussein Murtada prepared flat-bread snacks for his few remaining customers as an Israeli surveillance drone buzzed above the border village of Kfar Kila.

"We work under the bombs. A few days ago, a shell fell 200 metres (650 feet) from here. Shrapnel hit the shopfront and the wall," said Murtada, 60, pointing to the damage.

In Kfar Kila, nestled

among olive trees, some houses had been completely destroyed, and the sound of nearby bombardment rumbled through the air.

Just one grocery store was still open in Murtada's area, and the streets were largely deserted after many villagers fled.

'Disrupted'

Frying falafel in hot cooking oil, Murtada said he was determined to stay open, even if just for the few passing cars and ambulances. "I serve food to anyone who is hungry, even those who can't pay," he said, cutting tomatoes and pickles to go with an order.

Lebanon, gripped by a crushing four-year economic crisis, can ill-afford another full-blown conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The two fought a month-long war in 2006.

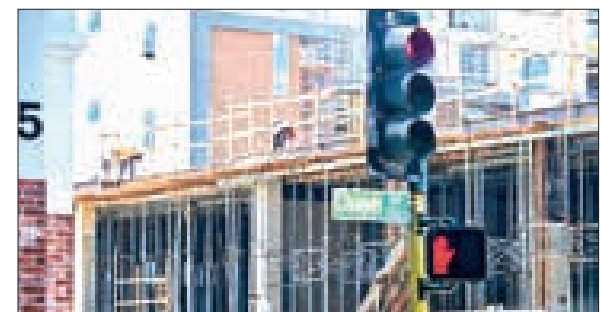
A UN Development Programme report this week said the hostilities had already led to "considerable physical losses, mainly of buildings, houses, commercial entities, infrastructure, services, and utilities" in south Lebanon border villages. "Economic activity and local businesses are either disrupted or have had to shut down or relocate." — AFP



Hussein Murtada says he works 'under the bombs' to prepare falafel in his village near the Israeli border.

PHOTO: HASAN FNEICH/AFP

US new home sales slow more than expected in November



New home sales in the United States cooled in November to the lowest rate in a year, the Commerce Department said. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

SALES of new US homes cooled more than anticipated in November, slipping to the lowest level in a year, according to government data released Friday. The market for new properties has been boosted

in recent months by a lack of existing homes, as high mortgage rates dissuaded homeowners — who previously locked in lower rates — from putting their real estate up for sale. — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V SINAR BAJO VOY.NO. (012N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BAJO VOY.NO. (012N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-12-2023** 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 SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V T12 APPLE VOY.NO. (2303E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V T12 APPLE VOY.NO. (2303E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-12-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** 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 T12 LOGISTICS PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V METHI BHUM VOY.NO. (411N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V METHI BHUM VOY.NO. (411N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-12-2023** 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 REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

War dampens Christmas spirit in southern Lebanon

Despite clashes between Hezbollah and Israel forcing many to flee the Lebanese Christian village of Qlayaa, the priest encourages the community to maintain the Christmas spirit.



Situated amid lush fields, the village has experienced regular bombing since 7 October. **PHOTO: AFP**

IN the Lebanese Christian border village of Qlayaa, the priest urged his parish to keep the Christmas spirit alive despite clashes between Hezbollah and Israel forcing many to flee.

Nestled among lush, green fields and flowing olive groves, Qlayaa has echoed to the sound of bombing on an

almost daily basis since 7 October.

“Of course we are upset and bothered by the war... but we want to feel the joy of Christmas,” father Pierre Rai told a dwindling number of parishioners in Qlayaa’s Maronite Saint George Church.

“So long as we have de-

ecided to remain in this village, and in other southern Lebanon border villages, we must live and enjoy each thing in its right time.”

For nearly three months, Israeli rockets have been falling close to Qlayaa, which lies less than five kilometres (three miles) from the border. — AFP

Spain turns to EU to resolve judicial stalemate

SPAIN’S Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and the leader of the conservative opposition agreed Friday to ask the European Commission to mediate to end a years-long stalemate over appointments to the body that names judges in the country.

The governing body of

Spain’s judges and courts, the General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ), is meant to be renewed every five years.

But the current group has been exercising its functions on an interim basis since 2018 because Spain’s two biggest parties — the ruling Socialist and

the opposition Popular Party (PP) — can’t agree on its make-up. Both parties have blamed each other for the delay, which is precluding the appointment of new judges to higher courts and has led to numerous vacancies due to the retirement of judges have not been filled. — AFP

Ukraine legalizes use of Marijuana to help treat trauma of war

THE Ukraine’s parliament adopted a new law legalizing medical marijuana to help treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and oncological diseases acquired as a result of war, The Hill reported, quoting the official website of Ukraine’s parliament, the Verkhovna Rada. It reported on Thursday that the law was adopted with 248 votes in favour, 16 votes against, 33 abstentions and 40 members not voting.

The new law will come into effect after six months. Access to



Access to medical marijuana for treating war-related conditions has gained traction as the country approaches two years since war. **PHOTO: ANI**

Colombia ex-soldier pleads guilty in Haiti president assassination plot

Haitian President Moise was assassinated on 7 July 2021 in his private residence by a group of over 20 individuals, mainly Colombian mercenaries, while his guards did not intervene.

A former Colombian soldier pleaded guilty Friday in a US federal court to conspiracy to assassinate Haitian President Jovenel Moise, who was shot dead in 2021 in Port-au-Prince.

Mario Antonio Palacios, 45, pleaded guilty in a Miami federal court after entering into a cooperation agreement with prosecutors.

Until agreeing to a plea deal, he had for months denied having had any role in the assassination of the former president.

On 7 July 2021, Moise was shot and killed in his private residence at the age of 53 by a commando of more than 20

people, most of them Colombian mercenaries, as his guards failed to intervene.

According to the indictment, Palacios entered the president’s house with the mercenaries and stole money and jewellery.

The prosecution, however, said he only played a minor role in the conspiracy and that he had no decision-making power within the group.

His lawyer, Alfredo Izaguirre, presented Palacios as a simple bodyguard and said he was sure that his client could avoid the maximum sentence of life behind bars. — AFP



Supporters of assassinated Haitian President Jovenel Moise held a rally outside the United Nations headquarters in New York in September 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

medical marijuana as treatment for war-related conditions has garnered momentum recently, as the country approaches nearly two years since Russia launched its invasion of the country.

The law would regulate “the circulation of hemp plants (Cannabis) for medical, industrial purposes, scientific and scientific-technical activities to create conditions for expanding patient access to the necessary treatment of oncological diseases and post-traumatic stress disorders,

received as a result of the war;” according to the final version of the bill. The parliament’s chair, Ruslan Stefanchuk, said, “The list of conditions and ways of using cannabis medicines will be determined by the Ministry of Health.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has pushed for greater access to medical marijuana as a treatment for war-related conditions. In June 2023, he addressed his country’s parliament, calling for the drug’s legalization. — ANI

SPORTS

MNL 2 Promotion Amateur Club Tournament's Group A matches concludes

THE Group A final day of the MNL 2 Promotion Amateur Club Tournament continued on 23 December at Bahan Artificial Turf Stadium, where the Rainbow and Rangers teams advanced to the semi-finals.

On the last day of Group A, both matches were drawn. The Rainbow and TKG Hmawby teams played with one goal each, while the Rangers and Burmese Bees teams drew with two goals each. Myo Thura scored one goal for TKG Hmawby at 5 minutes, while Win Htay Kyaw made an equalizer for the Rainbow team at 39 minutes. After the match,

the Rainbow team, which had already advanced to the next round, secured a tie for first place in the group.

Next, the Burmese Bees played against the Rangers team in the next match. San Min Tun scored the first goal at two minutes, and Htet Wai Yan Hein scored the second goal at 84 minutes. Aung Naing Phyto scored the consolation goal for Team Rangers at 15 minutes and 51 minutes. Rangers secured the draw they needed to advance to the next round, reaching the semi-finals as second in the group.

After the group A matches,

the Rainbow team won the first group with seven points, the Rangers team won the second group with four points and entered the semi-finals, while the Burmese Bees team and TKG Hmawby team got two points each and left the group stage. The final matches for Group B will be continued today. — Ko Nyi Lay/MNL

A ranger team player (white) vies for the ball with a Burmese Bees team player (red) during the MNL 2 Promotion Amateur Club Tournament Group A match on 23 December 2023. PHOTO:MNL



Jovic salvages point for ailing Milan at Salernitana

LUKA Jovic saved a point for AC Milan at Salernitana with his last-gasp leveller in Friday's 2-2 draw at Serie A's bottom club.

Serbia forward Jovic lashed home his third goal in as many league games from Olivier Giroud's deft knock-down to stop third-placed Milan from falling to an embarrassing defeat.

Antonio Candreva seemed to have shot Salernitana to a shock win when his long-distance effort squirmed under usually reliable Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan in the 63rd minute.

Candreva also set up Federico Fazio's leveller after Fikayo

Tomori had nodded the away side ahead in the 17th minute.

Jovic's equalizer leaves Salernitana four points behind Udinese who sit just outside the relegation zone and are at Torino on Sunday.

Meanwhile Milan risk losing further ground on league leaders Inter Milan who are eight points in front of their local rivals ahead of Sunday's clash with Lecce at the San Siro.

"The hardest thing to do here was to throw away this match and that's what we did," coach Stefano Pioli told DAZN. — AFP



Luka Jovic's equaliser at Salernitana was his third in as many Serie A games. PHOTO:AFP

Man City cruise to first Club World Cup triumph

MANCHESTER City won the Club World Cup for the first time to end 2023 with five trophies after a 4-0 win over Fluminense in Jeddah on Friday.

City's victory extended European clubs' domination of the competition since 2012 and was never in doubt once Julian Alvarez opened the scoring inside the first minute.

Nino's first-half own goal realistically ended the Brazilians' dreams of an upset, before Phil Foden and Alvarez rounded off the scoring in the final 20 minutes.

After clinching the treble of the club's first ever Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup last season, City also lifted the UEFA Super Cup for the first time in August.

Pep Guardiola also made history as the first coach to lift the Club World Cup on four occasions and with three different clubs after previously winning the competition twice at Barcelona and once in charge of Bayern Munich.

"To win the treble was truly special, but to win two more trophies and now hold these five major titles shows the unique

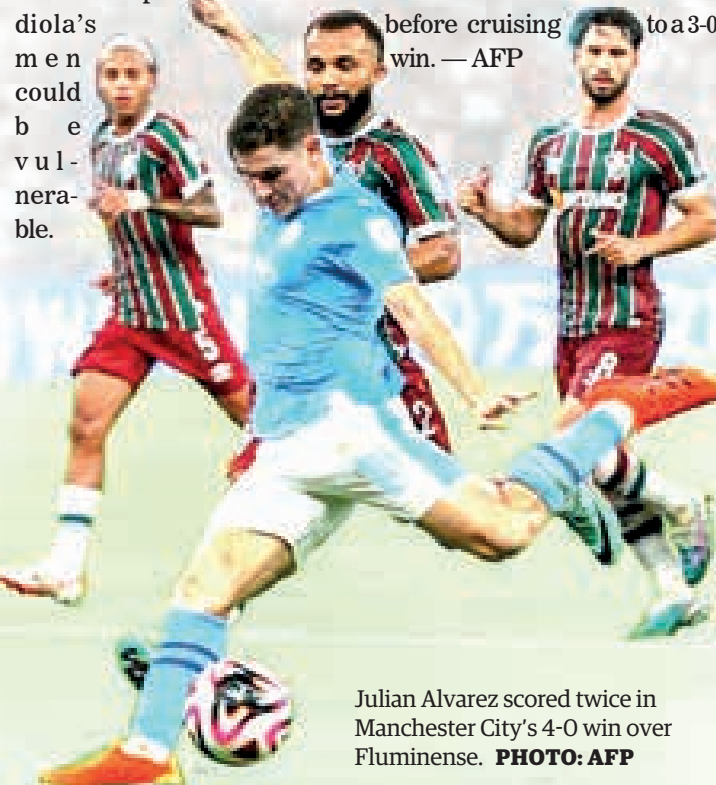
mentality of this team," said Guardiola.

"As a manager it is what I am most proud of: that we are always there. No matter how much we win, no matter what trophies we lift, we are there again to fight for the next one." City's poor Premier League form before flying out to Saudi Arabia had raised Fluminense hopes that Guardiola's men could be vulnerable.

But the growing chasm between Europe's elite clubs and the rest of the world thanks to huge financial imbalances in the global game was instead exposed.

European clubs have won 22 consecutive games at the Club World Cup.

City laboured for 45 minutes to break down Japan's Urawa Reds in the semi-final before cruising to a 3-0 win. — AFP



Julian Alvarez scored twice in Manchester City's 4-0 win over Fluminense. PHOTO:AFP



Chef Shintaro Matsuo expertly slices through a piece of yellowtail with a knife made in the nearby city of Sakai, at his restaurant in Osaka. **PHOTO: AFP**

In a Japanese village, blacksmith Yoshihiro Yauji forges kitchen knives, continuing a centuries-old tradition rooted in samurai-era craftsmanship.

Japan's hand-forged knives a slice of samurai metallurgy

Blacksmith Yoshihiro Yauji pulls a piece of glowing metal from the forge in a Japanese village, continuing a tradition dating back centuries to when the region was renowned for crafting swords carried by samurai.

He places the steel under a spring hammer and the sound of the metal being flattened and fortified into a kitchen knife echoes off the mountains surrounding the workshop.

"I believe that blades are the founda-

tional root of Japanese culture," 40-year-old Yauji said.

"If you can condense 700 years, 1,000 years or 1,500 years of technology into a single product, the appeal of the product will be different," he explained, adding that at first, he wanted to make "katana" swords once wielded by samurai.

Yauji started at 20 as an apprentice to Hideo Kitaoka, who helped found the collection of cooperative workshops that make up the Takefu Knife Village.

After 18 years, Yauji launched his knife line in 2021.

But in the 1970s and 80s, the city of Echizen where the knife village is located was in crisis, with artisans unable to compete with cheaper mass-produced tools.

Kitaoka and other top blacksmiths banded together to form a cooperative

association and, with the help of famed designer Kazuo Kawasaki, began producing designs that turned Echizen knives into works of art.

Hand fits the knife

The forge at Takefu burns at 900 degrees Celsius (1,652 degrees Fahrenheit), and the handmade Japanese blades drawn from the molten orange core, once hammered, shaped and polished, are sharp enough to split a hair. — AFP

N Macedonia's Roma Rock School strikes chord against prejudice

Crunchy guitar riffs at Roma Rock School in Skopje unite diverse children through free music education, breaking stereotypes and addressing poverty, according to co-founder Alvin Salimovski.



North Macedonia's Roma community has been largely excluded from formal arts education. **PHOTO: ROBERT ATANASOVSKI / AFP**

CRUNCHY guitar riffs reverberate through an apartment block in downtown Skopje — the sound of the silence on discrimination in North Macedonia being well and truly broken.

At the Roma Rock School, children of all ages and backgrounds are brought together to learn, jam and overcome deep divisions in the hugely diverse Balkan country.

The school offers courses in music theory and instrument and voice classes along with rehearsal space for aspiring young musicians.

"All of this is free of charge for all the students. One of the main missions is breaking the stereotypes through music," co-founder Alvin Salimovski told AFP. "I think that the only functional and effective way to do that is through music, something that we proved over the years".

One of the school's main focuses has been recruiting children from Skopje's largely Roma neighbourhood of Suto Orizari — or Shutka — where poverty and a lack of opportunities have remained stubbornly entrenched. — AFP

Nine Abu Dhabi parks secure World Disability Union's prize

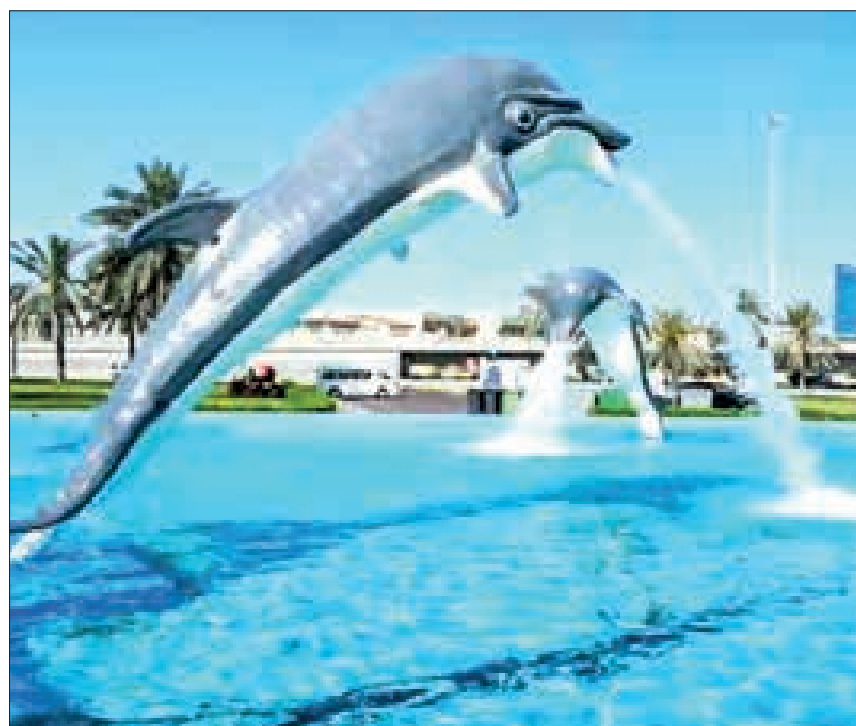
ABU DHABI CITY Municipality has announced that nine parks for People of Determination (POD) across the Abu Dhabi Islands and the mainland received the World Disability Union Prize for 2023.

Certifications of accreditation for the parks announced as "friendly" facilities for people with disabilities were given for implementing world environmental standards for people of determination (POD) and providing them with safe and sustainable entertainment facilities.

The parks receiving the prize, categorized into gold, silver, and bronze levels, were Dolphin Park, Al Boom Park, Al Siji Park, Dalma Park, Al Bahya Park, Al Khatm Park, Al Jouri Park, Khalifa Square, and Rabdan Park.

The recognition motivates the Municipality to intensify efforts in creating inclusive environments.

Abu Dhabi City Municipality commits to enhancing facilities with dedicated parking, improved grounds, and accessible amenities, reinforcing its dedication to accessibility and ensuring Abu Dhabi remains a leader in inclusivity. — ANI



Dolphin park situated on the salam street near the pineapple towers is a very big open lush green space along the Al gurm corniche mangroves. The long stretch of water front and mangroves in the background adds to the beauty of the park. **PHOTO: X**