

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR



Rubber piles await transport from Mon State to Yangon depot for export to China and Malaysia.

CBM injects US\$77.38M, 850M Thai baht in Feb

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US\$77.38 million and 850 million Thai baht in February.

The CBM pumped \$13 million on 1 February into the financial market, \$5 million and 50 million Thai baht on an online trading platform for the exporters and importers on 2 February, \$11 million and 200 million Thai baht on 5 February, \$8 million on 8 February, \$5.38 million on 14 February, \$9 million and 200 million Thai baht on 15 February, \$8 million and 200 million Thai baht each on 19 and 26 February and \$10 million on 27 February.

The CBM sold \$68.33 million, 313.5 million Thai baht and 4.2 million Chinese yuan in January 2024.

The exchange rate for Thai baht, Chinese yuan and US dollar settled in those transactions is not revealed.

The reference exchange rate set by the CBM is K2,100 against a US dollar, while it is valued at some K3,630 at the over-the-counter market at present. The exchange rates currently stand at K101 per Thai baht and K490 per Chinese yuan.

The CBM allowed the authorized dealers (private banks) to operate online forex trading freely as per the market rate depending on supply and demand, starting from 5 December.

Additionally, the outward remittance procedures must adhere to the rules and regulations specified by the Foreign Exchange Supervisory Committee. — NN/EM

Kyaikmaraw rubber sheets meet export standards for China, Malaysia

Agriculture-based products, rubber sheets, are manufactured into finished products in Kyaikmaraw Township, Mon State. The excellent quality refined rubber sheets, which support the local economy, are being exported to China and Malaysia.

U Zaw Htoo, one of the leading operators of the MSME rubber industry in Kyaikmaraw Township, who is a rubber trading entrepreneur, started working in

the rubber trading business in 2020, has opened rubber trading depots in Mudon, Peinnegon and Kyaikmaraw and buys and distributes local rubber raw materials.

U Zaw Htoo said that this year, the rubber market has increased more than last year, so the demand for local rubber sheets is strong, and the price is good, and a refined rubber sheet costs K6,000 to K7,000, or about K1,800 per pound, U Zaw Htoo said.

The rubber plates are packed according to the weight of the rubber and sent to the depot in Yangon for sale. Next, they are exported to China and Malaysia.

If local people can produce more quality rubber sheets through small rubber farms in Kyaikmaraw Township, the economy will improve, and the MSME business sector will prosper more. — Mi Cho (Kyaikmaraw)/KZL

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Myanmar-India auto tech collaboration spotlighted at Mach Auto Expo 2024

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Camera traps capture 25 rare species, including Bengal tigers, in Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary

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Mon State's yellow konjac sees strong overseas demand

NATIONAL

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Martial Law Order No 1/2024

4th Waning of Tabodwe 1385 ME
28 February 2024

- In order to effectively provide security, the rule of law and community peace, the State Administration Council has transferred the executive and judicial power (Martial Law) to the Commander of the Northern Command to exercise martial law in the following townships of Shan State under the Northern Command under Article 419 of the Constitution.
 - Momeik Township
 - Mabein Township
- Depending on the changing situation in the region, the commander shall exercise Martial Law by himself or shall transfer the power to the regional military commanders.

By order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Order No 26/2024

4th Waning of Tabodwe 1385 ME
28 February 2024

Retirement from duty allowed

THE State Administration Council has allowed U Than Tun to retire from the duties of a Member of the Union Election Commission, according to his health conditions, under Section 419 of the Constitution.

By order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Martial Law Order No 2/2024

4th Waning of Tabodwe 1385 ME
28 February 2024

- Under the State Administration Council's Martial Law Order 1/2024 dated 28 February 2024 (4th Waning of Tabodwe 1385 ME), the State Administration Council has transferred the executive and judiciary power to the Commander of the Northern Command to exercise Martial Law under Section 419 of the Constitution to enforce security effectively, the rule of law and community peace in Momeik and Mabein townships of Shan State.
- Local administrative bodies at different levels under the Martial Law area shall carry out their respective tasks under the command of the Commander of the Northern Command.
- The Commander of the Northern Command shall designate the military regions in the Martial Law area. He shall appoint the commanders of military regions by issuing Martial Law orders with the approval of the Chairman of the State Administration Council.
- The Commander of the Northern Command shall accomplish the following tasks by himself, or military region commanders or an appropriate person or a body to which he transferred the power.
 - Administration**
 - security issues
 - social issues
 - trade issues
 - transport issues
 - Judiciary**
 - Formation of courts:** The Commander of the Northern Command and Regional Control Command shall decide criminal cases that occur during the Martial Law period at courts formed under the existing law or Military Tribunal.
 - Deciding cases at the Military Tribunal:** Criminal cases can be heard and decided by the Military Tribunal in a summary way.
 - Punishment:** The following punishments shall be sentenced by a Military Tribunal under the existing laws for anyone who is found guilty of crimes mentioned in Appendix (A) as follows: -
 - Death sentence
 - Prison sentence with hard labour for unlimited years
 - The highest punishment designated in accordance with respective crimes
 - Approval:** The decisions and sentences handed down by the Military Tribunal shall be final. However, a death sentence shall be approved only with the approval of the State Administration Council Chairman.

An unlimited prison sentence shall be approved with the approval of the Commander of the Northern Command. Following are the rights for exercising the rights for approval.

- Abolishing a decision of a case
 - Commuting a sentence
 - Changing a sentence to another lesser one
 - Approving the conviction
- Appealing:** No appeal for decisions or convictions handed down by the Military Tribunal.
 - Applying for reversal of decisions:** If a death sentence is handed down by a Military Tribunal, applying to the State Administration Council Chairman can be made for reversal of the decision within 15 days from the day of conviction. Reversal for other punishments can be applied to the Commander of the Northern Command within 15 days after the convictions. The State Administration Council Chairman or the Commander of the Northern Command shall reverse the decision. Following are the rights for exercising power for reversal of the decision.
 - Abolishing a decision of a case
 - Commuting a sentence
 - Changing a sentence to another lesser one
 - Approving the conviction
 - The Chairman of the State Administration Council or the Commander of the Northern Command not only can exercise the rights mentioned in the above clause (6) but also can increase the punishment.
 - The Commander of the Northern Command shall form an advisory body for Martial Law to get assistance for performing their duties.
 - The Commander of the Northern Command shall report to the Chairman of the State Administration Council on the situation in the Martial Law area.

By order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Appendix (a)

Crimes to be heard by Military Tribunal

- High treason (Section 122 of the Criminal Procedure Code)
- Attempt to excite disaffection towards the Government (Section 124-A of the Penal Code)
- Sabotage or hinder the performance of the Defence Services of the Union or law enforcement organizations (Section 124-C of the Penal Code)
- Disrupts or hinders Defence Services and Government employees (Section 124-D of the Penal Code)
- Section 505 of the Penal Code

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NATIONAL

DPM MoD Union Minister receives Interim UNRC, HCT



The UN Resident Coordinator for Myanmar and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim calls on SAC Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Defence Minister Admiral Tin Aung San yesterday.

STATE Administration Council Member, Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Defence Admiral Tin Aung San received United Nations Interim Resident Coordinator for Myanmar and Interim

Humanitarian Coordinator Mr Marcoluigi Corsi at the lobby of the Union Minister's office yesterday morning.

They cordially and frankly exchanged views on humanitarian aid and cooperation

with the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting-CTFMR to prevent minors from serving in the military and the people's military service. — MNA/TS

DPM Union Minister meets MoFA officials, staff members

DEPUTY Prime Minister and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe met officials, ambassadors, directors-general, and staff members from the departments concerned at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister U Than Swe highlighted that this meeting was the second meeting for the staff to present difficulties they face openly and put forward suggestions; government staff need

to fulfil their duties efficiently; and learning capacity, hard work, good communication, fair and just governance and good management are essential to create a happy and successful workplace.

Afterwards, attendees presented their needs and suggestions, and officials from relevant departments explained the conditions that could be fulfilled. The Deputy Prime Minister concluded the meeting after coordinating the necessary matters. — MNA/TS



Deputy Prime Minister MoFA Union Minister U Than Swe addresses the meeting yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

MoSWRR Union Minister attends Myanmar-Thailand meeting on human trafficking

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement Dr Soe Win participated in the 29th Myanmar-Thailand Case Management Meeting on Repatriation and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking. The event, jointly organized by the Ministry of Social Welfare and its Thai counterpart, took place at the Park Royal Hotel in Yangon Region.

During the meeting, the Union minister underscored the significance of bilateral cooperation between the two nations, considering it as a positive example for the region. The primary objective of the gathering was to implement the memorandum of under-

standing aimed at combating human trafficking.

Under this initiative, the ministry offers support

amounting to US\$500 for victims. The Thai government

plays a crucial role by providing shelter to trafficked victims from Myanmar, assisting them in securing employment, and offering support and compensation.

Ms Sarah Binyoh, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Thai Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, stressed the detrimental impact of human trafficking on human rights and integrity. She affirmed the Thai government's proactive stance in preventing and combatting this issue, aligning with international human rights standards.

The meeting concluded with the approval of 13 decisions. — MNA/NT



Attendees of the 29th Myanmar-Thailand Case Management Meeting on Repatriation and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking.

NATIONAL

DPM MoFA Union Minister receives Interim UNRC and HC

DEPUTY Prime Minister and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe received Mr Marcoluigi Corsi, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim (UN RC/HC ai), yesterday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they discussed matters on existing

cooperation between the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations agencies. — MNA

DPM Union Minister U Than Swe receives Mr Marcoluigi Corsi, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim (UN RC/HC ai), yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.



Myanmar-India auto tech collaboration spotlighted at Mach Auto Expo 2024



The photo shows the opening ceremony of the Mach Auto Expo 2024.

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reported that discussions on investment opportunities and potential cooperation in automotive technology between Myanmar and India took place at the 13th Mach Auto Expo 2024 in Ludhiana City, Punjab Province, India.

The Myanmar ambassador to India participated in the event and presented informa-

tion on the trade and investment status between Myanmar and India, focusing on small and medium enterprises, as well as the machinery and equipment market.

The expo took place from 23 to 26 February. Ambassador U Moe Kyaw Aung attended the opening ceremony on 23 February as a special guest, alongside the Chief Executive

Officer of Invest Punjab. Ambassadors and diplomats from Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Burundi, Mongolia, and Ethiopia, along with Indian officials and entrepreneurs, were also in attendance.

The Mach Auto Expo 2024 featured 650 booths from 12 countries, showcasing over ten thousand products and services. — ASH/ TMT

Counter-argument to false information

Malicious media accuses Tatmadaw of detaining 107 men in Kyaukpyu

THE malicious media Khit Thit intentionally spread false information, saying the security forces arrested 107 young Muslim men aged between 18 and 35 from Kyauktalone camp in Kyaukpyu Township of Rakhine State on 27 February.

A relevant security official reported that the arrest of 107 Muslim men aged 18-35 from Kyauktalone camp was not valid.

AA insurgents threatened the people not to cooperate with Tatmadaw and to work with them, accused villagers of being informers and torched the villages. Tatmadaw conducts recuse work with Muslim organizations, and so the malicious media outlets inten-

tionally spread misinformation, claiming that Tatmadaw gathers Muslims as new conscription. — MNA/KTZH



Screenshots of Khit Thit media validate its fake news stories.

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- 6. Cause fear, spread false news, agitate a Government employee directly or indirectly to commit a criminal offence (Section 505-A of the Penal Code)
- 7. Cases against the Unlawful Associations Act
- 8. Cases against weaponry act
- 9. Murder cases
- 10. Death cases
- 11. Rape cases
- 12. Robbery cases
- 13. Banditry case

- 14. Corruption cases
- 15. Cases against the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law (1993)
- 16. Cases against the Protection of Public Properties Act
- 17. Cases against the Protection of Public Property Law (1963)
- 18. Cases against the News and Media Law
- 19. Cases against the Printing and Publishing Law
- 20. Cases against the Myanmar Immigration (provisional) Act (1947)
- 21. Cases against the Electronic Communications Law
- 22. Cases against the Ward or Village-tract Administration Law
- 23. Cases against the Counter-Terrorism Law

NATIONAL

Camera traps capture 25 rare species, including Bengal tigers, in Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary

THE camera traps recorded 25 rare species, including Indian (or Bengal) tigers, after 90 days of placement in Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary in Homalin Township of Sagaing Region.

The Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary is home to 57 species of mammals. They include 332 bird species, 67 fish, 77 species of amphibians and crawling animals, 432 plants, 19 herbal plants, 14 types of bamboo, eight types of canes, 23 aquatic plants, 18 grass and 16 orchids, as well as other rare animal species and roofed turtles.

“The survey on wild animals, including rare species in Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary, was conducted early this year. The survey shows Indian or Bengal tigers, Sun bear and Himalayan bear species and also elephant, clouded leopard, cat species and Gaur. Although we installed 50 camera traps in previous years, there were only 24 this time as we mainly fo-



ocused on the tiger population. It recorded 25 rare species, including two bear species, Sun bear and Himalayan bear, bearing V and U shape on the chest. We need to consider if the species that we recorded last year are not found this year. We found two further species this year. The new findings prove that we are conserving the natural protected areas in momentum, and we are also proud of it,” said U Win Hlaing, a sanctuary warden.

The camera trap was placed in Nameisuu area of



Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary to record the animals in the sanctuary for 90 days. The



Photos show Indian (or Bengal) tigers (L), Sun bear (Above) and Gaur (Below) from Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary. PHOTO: OFFICE OF HTAMANTHI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY.

rare species, including the tiger, were recorded from day trips, camping and Nanyanyin camp in February 2023. The Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary stretches

where Shanni and Naga ethnic people reside.

Conservation of the amphibians and natural environment as a national task can promote socioeconomic status and nature-based tourism.

There are 748 biosphere reserves in 131 countries, including 23 transboundary sites. Myanmar has 59 nature reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and botanical gardens, and eight ASEAN heritage sites listed. Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary was recognized as an ASEAN heritage park on 8 October 2019. The camera traps captured 25 species, including Indian (or Bengal) tigers. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/KTZH

ADVERTORIAL

Dapein (1) Hydropower Station of Datang Held an Apprenticeship Ceremony for Myanmar Employees

IN mid-February, Dapein (1) Hydropower Station of Datang in

Myanmar held an apprenticeship ceremony for Myanmar employ-

ees, in order to accelerate the cultivation of a Myanmar talent

team and trigger the initiative for diligent supervision of masters and learning of apprentices. The main venue was set up in Dapein (1) Hydropower Station, and the employees on vacation attended this ceremony in various regions.

The HR Department, Production Department and Safety Supervision Department of Dapein (1) Hydropower Company Limited illustrated the requirements for the apprenticeship training assessment, one-to-one list and training programme. Chinese and Myanmar masters signed apprenticeship agreements with apprentices. Leaders of the Company raised the expectations and opinions on apprenticeship. Training by pairing and one-to-one apprentice-

ship agreements is conducive to the cultivation of Myanmar employees and professionals, communication between Chinese and Myanmar employees, and acceleration of closed construction of the power station, featuring unattended operation but with a few employees on duty.

At the next stage, the Company will take flexible measures such as apprenticeship to facilitate the professional training and ability improvement of Chinese and Myanmar employees, drive the local talent team development, lay a solid talent basis to accomplish the annual key tasks and transition of the Company, and make contribution to Chinese and Myanmar overseas talent systems.



NATIONAL

Mon State's yellow konjac sees strong overseas demand



A konjac plantation in Mon State.

KONJAC (elephant yam) produced in Mon State are being bought at a handsome price by foreign buyers due to their ex-

cellent powder yield and good glucomannan content.

In Mon State, the yellow konjac is mainly cultivated. Yellow

konjac produced in Mon State is widely traded in the market due to its good quality and demand from foreign buyers.

Konjac are used as raw materials in producing noodles, artificial meat, food products such as jelly, industrial raw materials, and beauty products. It is also a popular raw material in traditional and modern medicine manufacturing as it is a natural gift that is particularly suitable for health. In the past, the konjac that grew naturally were dug up and eaten. Now, due to the demand from abroad, they have been systematically cultivated and exported abroad.

During a meeting with konjac producers on 26 February, the Mon State chief minister said that the government is providing necessary support from all sides for the cultivation of konjac as a new crop of the state and the production of konjac-based value-added products.

He also urged the producers to increase the volume of the good-quality crop to be able to

distribute it at an affordable price locally while making attempts to penetrate overseas markets.

In Myanmar, Chin State produces konjac most, and Mon State is the second largest producer. As for the production of dried konjac, a total of six dry konjac powder factories in Mon State — four in Ye Township and two in Mawlamyine's Kyauktan Industrial Zone — are registered with the Mon State Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection.

Dried konjac and konjac powder enjoy good market demand, and five varieties of konjac are grown in Myanmar. But white, red and yellow varieties of the crop are mainly cultivated locally.

In Myanmar, a large number of konjac plants are growing in shady and moist places in Kayin, Kachin, Shan States, Sagaing, Taninthayi, Bago, Ayeyawady, and Magway Regions. — TWA/TH

Palm oil wholesale reference price edges up this year

DESPITE the FOB price dip, the wholesale reference price for palm oil is set higher this year than last year amid the kyat depreciation against the US dollar.

The wholesale reference price in February 2023 moved in the range between K4,310 and K4,600 per viss. The wholesale price in February 2024 inched higher to K5,180-K5,380 per viss in February 2024.

The FOB price for palm oil was US\$870 per tonne on 26 February 2024, which decreased from \$970 per tonne on 28 February 2023. The palm oil market price hit K7,000-K7,400 per viss in late February 2023. This year, there is access to buy palm oil at reference prices in each region and state, driving the market price to drop compared with that of last year. — TWA/KK



A ship loaded with palm oil seen entering Myanmar in 2022.

Fresh jaggery prices surpass sugar prices

THE price of new jaggery (palm sugar) in Yangon's Bayintnaung Market has recently soared to K5,800 per viss for wholesale, as reported by jaggery wholesale traders.

On 24 February, NyaungU white jaggery was priced at K5,000 per viss, but by 26 February, it had increased to K5,800. Subsequently, on 27 and 28 February, new NyaungU white jaggery remained at K5,800 per viss, while Mahlaing new jaggery ranged from K5,000 to K5,200, Pakokku old jaggery was priced at K5,400-K5,500, and Yesakyo white old jaggery was between K5,700 and K5,800.

On the same days, the price of sugar rose to K4,100 per viss. However, jaggery remained K1,700 per viss more expensive than sugar. Previously, both sugar and NyaungU white jaggery were priced at K3,700 per viss. In the Bayintnaung jaggery wholesale market, retail prices were reported at K2,500 for 25 ticals and K10,000 per viss, according to consumers.

As the sugar production season nears its end at sugar factories, domestic sugar prices have surpassed K4,000 per viss and are predicted to reach K5,000 when traders sell it in the market, according to sugar purchaser Ko Kyaw, as reported by The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

On 27 February, sugar prices in the Mandalay market were K3,980 per viss, while molasses was priced at K2,200 per viss, according to market information. In contrast, on 23 February 2023, sugar prices in the Yangon market were K3,050-K3,080 per viss, NyaungU white jaggery



Jaggeries are arranged for sale in the market.

was K2,700-K2,850 per viss, Mahlaing jaggery was K2,600-K2,650, Pakokku raw jaggery was K3,000, and Yesakyo white jaggery was K3,650 respectively. Therefore, sugar prices in the Yangon market at the end of February this year were only K100 higher per viss than last year.

When sugar prices are at K900 per viss, one tonne of sugarcane arriving at the factory is priced at K38,000. In 2023, one tonne of sugarcane was K150,000, while sugar prices ranged from K3,600 to K3,700 per viss. During sugar production at the factory, sugar prices rose to K4,100 per viss. Therefore, more earnings are expected during the sugarcane harvesting season in 2024. Along with the increasing price of sugar, the cultivation of sugarcane is also expanding, and more sugar factories are being constructed. Sugarcane productivity per acre in Myanmar is only 30 tonnes, whereas in India, it is 150 tonnes.

However, jaggery production is less likely to expand. Thus, jaggery prices in the domestic beverage market remain higher than sugar, making ordinary sugar palm jaggeries popular within the market, according to a jaggery seller interviewed by the GNLM. — TWA/ TMT

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THE Shwe Padauk Fish Market in Hline Township distributes over 400,000 tonnes of freshwater and saltwater fishery products across the nation, including Yangon, the commercial city of Myanmar. Therefore, the market can create over 2,000 job opportunities.

The market receives freshwater fish and prawns as well as saltwater fishery products from the Yangon, Ayeyawady and Bago regions. The entry of fishery products is the highest between January and April. The freshwater fishery products such as Rohu, Striped catfish, Mrigal carp and so on, and over 30 livestock and natural marine products and about 100 saltwater products enter the market, whereas some freshwater and saltwater products are directly transported to factories and cold storage.

“People excavate fish ponds by the end of February. If so, the inflow of freshwater will be high. Especially in summer, the fish are captured and transported to the market as a preventive measure against the impact on fish in summer. It is okay for the consumers. People competitively distribute to the Yangon market and also to countryside areas, so the fish market was alive with normal financial circulation previously. But it isn't easy this year.



Photos show the bustling scene of the Shwe Padauk Fish Market. PHOTO: KANU

We can transport to countryside areas only 30 per cent. Today, the big-sized prawns reenter the market, and the prawns worth K32,000 get only K28,000 when we distribute in Yangon. The fish

prices are also falling. However, the market and financial circulation are normal as freshwater and saltwater products are entered and distributed. The fish market is also linked with the

cold storage factories, so the wholesale centres and fish farmers are convenient for proper exports. Wholesale centres and fish farmers get profits due to the market circulation despite the

challenges. The Shwe Padauk Fish Market creates jobs for over 2000 workers daily,” said U Maung Naing, joint secretary 2 of the market development committee.

Wholesale centres offer K20 per viss of marine product for one labour and permit between 10,00 and over 5,000 visses. Depending on the products, the labourers can earn K10,000-K20,000 while the basic salary is over K300,000. There are about 2,000 general workers in the market daily. The market is also crowded with 250,000 buyers and sellers and about 150 trucks daily.

The market has eight buildings, 444 shops, and 120 vendor stalls. There are also 10,000 gallons of water tankers at eight market buildings, and the water is used for the cleanliness of the market. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/KTZH

Shwe Padauk Fish Market creates over 2,000 jobs daily

Traders eye domestic market amid export loss

FRUIT traders are facing losses while exporting watermelons to China, prompting them to turn to the domestic market.

Transportation on rough roads affected the quality of the watermelons. Therefore, there is no chance to earn a higher price.

“The price for the 855-watermelon variety is unlikely to rise. Extreme weather and transportation on rough roads damaged watermelon's quality. There are transport hurdles on the Kengtung, Mongla and Bhamo channels. Therefore, the traders started to eye the domestic market. The prevailing export price cannot cover transport and other general costs. The duty fee at the border post is 35,000-40,000 yuan per truck of watermelon,” traders elaborated.

The traders suggested that the suppliers observe market conditions depending on supply and demand factors.

“The quality loss leads to export loss. The transport hurdles, suspension at borders, and extreme weather on China's side are contributing factors to the inferior quality. Another factor is the change in consumer behaviour owing to the economic crisis of the coronavirus pandemic,” said a trader.

Of 100 watermelon trucks heading to China, only ten can cover the freight cost. The traders struggled with two to three-digit losses.

At present, watermelons and muskmelons are mostly delivered to China through the Lweje and Mongla road channels.



A vendor arranges watermelons at a fruit shop.

Myanmar's watermelon is primarily exported to China. However, fruit traders emphasized that they are facing prolonged challenges amid the pol-

icy changes in China.

In early February last year, tight inspections by Chinese Customs hindered truck transport. That is why only 20-30 trucks

were able to pass the checkpoint despite high demand.

Consequently, watermelon was sold out at the depots on the Chinese side, and more than 500 trucks queued in line on the Myanmar side.

In 2021, the COVID-19 restrictions hindered Myanmar's watermelon and muskmelon exports to China. Chinese Customs Regulation increased delay. Long delays of trucks caused harm to watermelon quality, and only one in five trucks heading to China remained undamaged with quality watermelons.

The traders need to consider delivery time, price and profitability, as watermelon is a perishable fruit while trying to explore new markets beyond China. — NN/EM

OPINION

Emphasize the chance of life turning point at the matric exam

WITH the imminent arrival of the matriculation examination, students are diligently gearing up for the pivotal event scheduled to take place from March 11 to March 19, 2024. Across the nation and in various international exam centres, students are fervently preparing for this significant academic milestone that holds the potential to shape their futures.

As the exam date approaches, matriculation students are currently immersed in a period of intense revision, poring over the lessons and notes accumulated throughout the academic year. The focus is on a comprehensive review of class notes, lectures from teachers, and the selection of key lessons for efficient revision. Recognizing the importance of this period, daily newspapers published by the Ministry of Information feature subject-wise clarifications provided by university professors, offering valuable insights for matriculation students.

Within Myanmar society, the matriculation examination is regarded as a transformative juncture in the lives of students. Success in this examination opens up a plethora of options for their future endeavours, ranging from pursuing higher education at universities or colleges to entering the workforce for income generation. Even for those already employed, the possibility of continued learning through distance education exists, providing opportunities for personal and professional growth.

It is emphasized that the journey towards success in the matriculation examination begins long before the exam period. Students are encouraged to cultivate a habit of continuous learning from childhood, engaging with school education and general knowledge throughout their academic journey. This approach minimizes the need for last-minute cramming, allowing students to approach exams with a more relaxed and confident mindset.

In this crucial phase of private study time, the importance of a good night's sleep is underscored. Restful nights contribute to fresh and powerful brains, ideal for effective studying and lesson review. Both students and parents share the responsibility of maintaining good health conditions to ensure students are physically and mentally

prepared for the examination. Equipping students with efficient time management techniques is also highlighted, guiding them on how to utilize the allotted time wisely and prioritize questions during the examination.

Within Myanmar society, the matriculation examination is regarded as a transformative juncture in the lives of students. Success in this examination opens up a plethora of options for their future endeavours, ranging from pursuing higher education at universities or colleges to entering the workforce for income generation. Even for those already employed, the possibility of continued learning through distance education exists, providing opportunities for personal and professional growth.

In light of these considerations, it is imperative for all matriculation students to approach the examination with careful emphasis, recognizing its potential to serve as a life-altering turning point. The outcome of the matriculation examination can influence their educational and career paths, making it a crucial milestone in their journey towards a promising future.

MYANMAR Literature is a repository of historical records that bequeath art and social events of the nation and its people. It assumes the form of the soul of the country. It also serves as an essential and effective pivot of communication for the promotion of national interests. The progress and diminution of the interests of a nation depend much upon the literary standard of that nation.

It is for this reason that successive governments take up the duty of continued preservation of the literary heritage. No one can deny that Myanmar Literature has been provided with a solid foundation since the Bagan period. According to the historical records, we roughly know that Myanmar novels began to turn up in 1904; Myanmar magazines started to come out around 1910; and newspapers (in Myanmar) began to appear in or around 1875.

In this way, successive governments have carried out literary development activities in one way or another. Historically speaking, there were such periods as Tagaung, Pyu, Bagan, Pinya, Innwa, Taungoo, Nyaungyan and Konbaung under Myanmar monarchs. After the exile of King Thibaw, we saw the colony period and Japanese occupation. They were followed by the post-independence period (known as the AFPFL Government or Parliament Era) and the Revolutionary Council period. (Burma Socialist Programme Party Era), the State Law and

Order Restoration Council, the State Peace and Development Council period and the Democracy period.

Throughout the past era of Myanmar Kings, Literary development activities flourished in accordance with the conditions of those ages and systems that then prevailed. Although the development process of Myanmar Literature was retarded and neglected in the British time and Japanese occupation, a group of devoted literary men continued the task. From the post-independence period onwards, Sarpay Beikman (Institute), formerly known as Burma Translation Society (BTS), has been playing an important role in carrying out the task of literary development.

Starting essentially as a translation society, Sarpay Beikman has become truly a publishing house with a wide variety of functions. Among them, the objective 'To hold cultural talks and to exhibit cultural shows regularly during the non-raining period of the year' is included in the main functions. In order to implement this function, besides the publishing tasks, the institute had to conduct public lectures and talks and hold public classes on different subjects not usually taught in ordinary schools (including universities and colleges) during the Parliament period.

In cooperation with the then Ministry of Union Culture, the institute sponsored talks and shows at the outdoor theatre on the Pyay Road grounds. Often, as many as 1,000 people attend-

Paper Reading Sessions Beneficial to the Literary World

By Maung Swe Ngae



The Paper Reading Session on Translation (from Myanmar to English) occurred on 2 and 3 November 2019. It can rightly be called the 27th occurrence of its kind. Similarly, it signifies the fifth translation event so far. PHOTO: GNLM

ed those events, which had become a Friday evening highlight in Rangoon's (Yangon's) cultural life. These open-air performances were held weekly from early November until the advent of the monsoon in May.

Such events paved the way for holding paper reading sessions in the present time. Formerly, the paper reading

sessions were known as 'Symposia' or 'Literary Seminars'. The papers on both arts and science read out at the paper reading sessions conducted by Sarpay Beikman are quite beneficial not only to the literary world but also to the social life of the people.

The papers dealing with various subjects are reliable

for reference as scholars and famous writers compile their papers through research works. According to the records, paper reading sessions on 23 subjects were held under the aegis of the Ministry of Information between 1969 and 1992. After eight years elapsed, the last literary seminar or paper reading session on translation was held on

19 and 20 June 2000 at the Sarpay Beikman Printing Plant on Pyay Road, Yangon, previously known as the historic Sorrento Villa, where the post-war government mapped out national reconstruction and development projects. It was known as the 24th session.

Another five paper reading sessions were held in the De-

mocracy Period. Although they were called seminars or symposia at the outset, from 1947 onwards, scholars came to use the term 'Paper Reading Session'. The following will serve as something for knowledge: -

1. Seminar on Children's Literature (1965)
2. Seminar on Science Literature (1967)
3. Seminar on Library Science (1968)
4. Seminar on Translation Literature (1969)
5. Seminar on Literature on Drama (1970)
6. Seminar on Biography (1971)
7. Collective Paper Reading Session on International Books Year (1972)
8. Seminar on Children's Literature (1973)
9. Paper Reading session on the History of the Fourth Estate (1974)
10. Paper Reading Session on Knowledge Literature (1977)
11. Paper Reading Session on Short Story (1978)
12. Paper Reading Session on Travelogue (1979)
13. Paper Reading Session on Novel (1979)
14. Paper Reading Session on Myanmar Poems (1981)
15. Paper Reading Session on Myanmar Prose (1981)
16. Paper Reading Session on Specific Studies (1983)
17. Paper Reading Session on Reference Books (1984)
18. Paper Reading Session on Literary Criticism (1985)
19. Paper Reading Session on

- Essay (1986)
20. Paper Reading Session on Translation (1987)
21. Paper Reading Session on Traditional Folk-tales (1987)
22. Paper Reading Session on Classics (1991)
23. Paper Reading Session on Literature for Patriotism (1992)
24. Seminar on Literature for Translation (2000)
25. Paper Reading Session on Political Literature (2016)
26. Paper Reading Session on Contemporary Histories (2016)
27. Paper Reading Session on Translation (2017)
28. Paper Reading Session on Myanmar Art Form, Myanmar Traditions and Myanmar Outlook (2019)
29. Paper Reading Session on Translation (from Myanmar to English) (2019)

All the seminars and paper reading sessions were conducted by Sarpay Beikman except the session on translation (from Myanmar to English) which was held in 2019 and was organized by the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD) under the Ministry of Information. Each title shall be presented in future.

Reference: -

1. ယမင်းစာပေဗိမာန် စာတမ်းများ တရားစာစာင်း ရန်ကုန်၊ စာပေဗိမာန်၊ ၂၀၀၇ (၀၀၀အကြိမ်)
2. Maung Swe Ngae, Through the Window of Sarpay Beikman, Yangon, Naing Ngant Gon Yi, 2021

Abdominal fat can influence brain health, cognition in high Alzheimer's risk patients: Study

A study published in the journal Obesity revealed that in individuals with a family history of Alzheimer's, the amount of fat in abdominal organs like the pancreas, liver, and belly is linked to brain volumes and cognitive function.

ACCORDING to researchers at Rutgers Health, the impact of abdominal fat on brain health and cognition is often greater in middle-aged men at high risk of Alzheimer's disease than in women.

In middle-aged individuals with a family history of Alzheimer's disease, the amount of fat in their abdominal organs (pancreas, liver, and belly fat) is related to their brain volumes and cognitive function, according to the study

published in the journal Obesity. The study was written by Sapir Golan Shekhtman, a PhD student at the Joseph Sagol Neuroscience Centre at the Sheba Medical Centre in Israel and led by Michal Schnaider Beeri, director of the

Herbert and Jacqueline Krieger Klein Alzheimer's Research Center at Rutgers Brain Health Institute. The research, conducted on 204 healthy middle-aged Alzheimer's-dementia offspring, investigated fat depots in the pan-



The study suggests a potential sex-specific connection between distinct abdominal fat and brain health, particularly in middle-aged males at high risk of Alzheimer's. ILLUSTRATION: IMAGE FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/PIXABAY

creas, liver and abdomen measured with MRI. "In middle-aged males at high Alzheimer's disease risk — but not females — higher pancreatic fat was associated with lower cognition and brain

volumes, suggesting a potential sex-specific link between distinct abdominal fat and brain health," said Beeri, who is the Krieger Klein Endowed Chair in Neurodegeneration Research at BHI and a faculty member of the Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Ageing Research. Obesity is a risk factor for lower cognitive functioning and higher dementia risk, with different associations between sexes. The research findings highlight the importance of investi-

gating the interrelationships of fat depots, brain aging and cognition in the context of sex differences. Additionally, the study challenges the conventional use of body mass index (BMI) as the primary measure for assessing obesity-related cognitive risks. The researchers said BMI poorly represents body fat distribution and does not necessarily account for sex differences. "Our findings indicate stronger correlations compared to the relationships between BMI and cognition, suggesting that abdominal fat depots, rather than BMI, is a risk factor for lower cognitive functioning and higher dementia risk," said Shekhtman. SOURCE: ANI

NATIONAL

Kyaikto hospital achieves first splenectomy in 15 years

KYAIKTO Township People's Hospital successfully saved a patient with a ruptured spleen in time from a life-threatening situation.

A young woman from Dai Tut village was admitted to the hospital with left-sided abdominal pain after she fell off a motorbike while getting on with a chair on her head and injured her abdomen on 26 February.

Despite initial good signs, her abdomen gradually swelled, and her symptoms worsened with low blood pressure, blurred vision, cold limbs

and pale face, leading to the diagnosis of bleeding from a ruptured spleen.

As she needed a blood transfusion, the hospital rang the Kyaikto Blood Donors Association for assistance and with their help, the donors were found.

"After securing blood donors, we explained the situation to her relatives and asked them whether they would prefer an operation or a referral. It is dangerous because the patient might not survive the journey to the district hospital, which is at least



Medical staff members participate in the surgical operation in Kyaikto People's Hospital on 26 February 2024. **PHOTO: KYAIKTO PEOPLE'S HOSPITAL**

one hour's drive away. We checked with the experienced senior nurse and

became frightened as no one in the hospital had ever done or experienced

such an operation," said the hospital's announcement.

Since an emergency splenectomy was the only chance to save the patient's life, hospital staff had no choice but to carry out the surgery.

"As soon as the abdomen was cut open, blood poured out like a tsunami. We were struck dumb. As we had previously diagnosed, it was a spleen rupture," explained the hospital.

This splenectomy was recorded as the first of its kind in the 15-year history of Kyaikto People's Hospital, and it was a successful operation. — MT/ZN

Taninthayi Kyunsu Township to start 10.8MW hydropower, solar projects



Attendees, including the Taninthayi Region's chief minister, seen at the feasibility study signing ceremony.

THE Taninthayi regional government has announced that projects to generate 10.8 megawatts of electricity from hydropower and solar energy will commence in Kyunsu Township, Myeik District, Taninthayi Region.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 26 February between the Taninthayi regional government and Myanmar Renewable Energy Company Limited to initiate preliminary studies for the projects at the earliest opportunity.

Despite the presence of the Nawarat Lake hydroelectric power plant in Kyunsu Township, additional power generation projects are being pursued due to inadequate electricity distribution.

As Kyunsu Township in Myeik District, Taninthayi Region, is remote and isolated, plans are underway to provide electricity since it is not currently connected to the national power grid. — ASH/TKO

ME in South Korea offers twice weekly in-person attestation

TO apply for attestation from the Myanmar Embassy in the Republic of Korea, applicants can come to apply in person for two days a week, the embassy announced on 27 February.

Myanmar nationals who have been working in the Republic of Korea and want to seek attestation for documents from My-

anmar at the embassy in Seoul can come in person from 2 pm to 4 pm every Tuesday and Thursday, along with an original notary copy of notarized documents (for example-copy of certification of matriculation exam), passport copy and ID card copy.

They can take it on the appointment date issued by the embassy, in

person or through a person on their behalf.

Power of attorney is required to take the attestation through a represented person within the appointment date, said the embassy.

Myanmar workers have been sent to the Republic of Korea under the POEA-EPS system, and there is growing at-

tention among Myanmar workers to going to work in that country. In the 16th TOPIK Test, the 7th marking employment system, which will be held in 2024, recruitment of Myanmar workers will be extended in the Republic of Korea's service industry, and both males and females are eligible to join the test for the first time. — MT/ZS

Interest surges in Yangon for electric tricycle sales plan

THE plan to sell electric three-wheelers in Yangon Region has attracted the interest of many people, according to EV tricycle dealers.

If these electric three-wheelers are allowed to operate in more townships in Yangon, their market can expand further, they commented.

"Public interest in EV tricycles is growing. Some are making enquir-

ies. Some are ordering. Customers use the electric three-wheelers as school ferries and rice bag carriers. Some are eager to use them, but the licence is not granted in Yangon City except for Thanlyin and Insein. If EV tricycles are allowed in some Yangon townships, our business would be swarming with buyers. There are many buyers from two per-

mitted townships," said an official from Jinpeng Three Wheelers Trading Company in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township.

The Jinpeng EV tricycle currently on sale is a Chinese-made vehicle that is rechargeable with both home and power meters and can run all day if charged for eight hours, according to the company.

"It's sourced from

China, often with unique specifications. Prices fluctuate based on brand, reaching up to K12.9 million. Charging options include standard or power meters, requiring a 60-amp plug. An overnight charge of eight hours enables morning usage with varying mileage capacities. The range spans 68 miles or an entire day," he explained. — Thit Taw/ZN

NATIONAL

PDF terrorists abduct faculty members of Dawei Technological University

TERRORISTS, operating under the name of the People's Defence Force, forcibly entered Dawei Technological University and captured three faculty members, including Pro-rector Dr Kyaw Aung, yesterday.

Following the initial attack by the terrorists on security forces 100 metres south of Payarmel Village in Dawei Township, Taninthayi Region, the security forces responded, causing the terrorists to retreat.

Terrorists managed to flee to a location south of the village. Subsequently, they abducted faculty members from the university.

Currently, security forces are engaged in rescue operations to retrieve the captured faculty members safely.

Security forces have pledged to take effective action against the terrorists under anti-terrorism laws and other relevant statutes, as their actions violate international conventions, including the Geneva Convention. — MNA/NT



The map shows the place of faculty members captured by terrorists.

Confiscations of illegal items: Timbers, crude oil, consumer goods, industrial materials, motorbikes and vehicles

DURING inspections on 26 February, the joint teams under the Magway Region Region Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force nabbed a total of 1.390 tonnes of illegal timbers worth K87,000 in Pwintphyu township, seven related things worth K6.227 million, including 400 gallons of unlawful crude oil in Thayat township and two unregistered vehicles valued at K10.5 million at the Ayeyawady bridge and at the checkpoint on the outskirts of Magway township. This enforcement was carried out under the Forest Law, the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law and the Export and Import Law.

On 26 February, the joint teams supervised by the Mandalay Region Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force impounded 15 kinds of consumer goods valued at K88.758 million, including 270 baby bicycles (made in China) without official documents from a Mitsubishi Fuso truck (approximately worth K38 million) travelling from Mongla to Mandalay at the Milepost 387/4 on Yangon-Mandalay. The action was conducted under Customs procedures.

On 27 February, an unregistered Toyota Landcruiser worth

K15 million was seized at the Kantalu combined checkpoint, and 35 bags of wheat (each bag containing 45 kilogrammes) worth K3.85 million without official documents were captured at the Yadanabon combined checkpoint in Sagaing. The action was taken under the Export and Import Law.

Additionally, on the same day, a total of 0.685 tonne of illegal teak worth K291,588 was captured in Thayawady district, and 9.744 tonnes of illegal timbers worth K2.551,448 were confiscated in Pyinmana, Lewe and Oattarathiri districts. The action was taken under the Forest Law.

A total of nine kinds of goods valued at K144.38 million, including 1,808 square meters of Porcelain tiles that were different from the items mentioned in the ID, were confiscated from the Import Declaration (ID) from seven containers at the Myanmar Industrial Port on the same day. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported that 13 arrests were made on 26 and 27 February, with an estimated value of K309.646 million. — MNA/MKKS

K2 bln worth of caffeine seized in Pyigyidagun Township



An arrestee seen with seized restricted chemicals in Pyigyidagun Township, Mandalay Region.

A total of five tonnes of restricted chemical (caffeine), valued at K2 billion, was seized in Pyigyidagun Township, Mandalay Region, as reported by the

Myanmar Police Force. Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprising members of the Anti-Drug Police Force conducted a search of

a warehouse rented by Kyaw Soe (aka Ah Lyan) in Pyigyidagun Township at 4:30 pm on 23 February. Police seized five tonnes of prohibited chemical (caffeine) worth K2 billion from 200 sacks, which were illegally stored.

The offender admitted that the seized prohibited chemical (caffeine) was intended to be transported from Mandalay to Shan State (North). Legal action has been taken against the offender, and an ongoing investigation aims to arrest other perpetrators involved in the case. — MNA/MKKS



Confiscated illegal porcelain tiles at the Myanma Industry Port.

K390M worth of Ice seized in Tachilek

A total of 49 kilogrammes of Ice (Methamphetamine) valued at K390 million was seized in Tachilek Township of Shan State (East), as reported by the Myanmar Police Force.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprising mem-

bers of the Anti-Drug Police Force conducted a search of the Isuzu box truck driven by Sai Chit Oo Wai accompanied by Sai Nyunt Shwe, travelling from Mongsat to Tachilek at 7 pm on 23 February. Police seized 49 kilogrammes of Ice (Metham-

phetamine).

The police force arrested Sai Kam Hla, Sai Pi and Sai San Htun (aka) Sai Htun (aka) Naunt Htun, who was involved in drug trafficking, with a Crown at 7:30 pm on the same day.

After interrogation, police

seized 60 grammes of Ice from the house of Sai San Htun (aka) Sai Htun (aka) Naunt Htun in Wamlon village in Tachilek Township.

The offenders admitted that the seized Ice (methamphetamine) were to be transported

from Kyethi Township of Shan State (South) to Tachilek Township of Shan State (East).

Legal action has been taken against the offenders, and an ongoing investigation aims to arrest other perpetrators involved in the case. — MNA/MKKS

ECONOMY WORLD

South Korea birth rate falls to all-time low

South Korea's birth rate hit a record low last year, despite significant government efforts to boost childbirth. With one of the world's lowest birth rates and longest life expectancies, the country faces a demographic challenge.



The bustling neighbourhood of Myeong-dong is visited by roughly two million people each day. **PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS**

SOUTH Korea's birth rate fell to a record low last year, the government said Wednesday, despite having poured billions of dollars into efforts to encourage women to have more children and maintain population stability.

The country has one of the world's longest life expectancies and lowest birth rates, a combination that presents a looming demographic

challenge.

Neighbouring Japan is grappling with the same issue, and on Tuesday the fast-ageing nation announced that the number of births there had also dropped to a new low in 2023.

South Korea's fertility rate — the number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime — dropped to 0.72 in 2023, down nearly eight per cent from 2022, according to

preliminary data from Statistics Korea.

This is far below the 2.1 children needed to maintain the current population of 51 million, which at these rates will nearly halve by the year 2100, experts estimate.

The government has spent vast amounts on trying to encourage more babies, offering cash subsidies, babysitting services and support for infertility treatment.

But the birth rate has continued its chronic decline.

"The number of newborns, birth rates, and crude birth rates (newborns per 1,000 people) are all at the lowest point since 1970" when data collection began, said Lim Young-il, head of the Population Census Division at Statistics Korea.

Lim told reporters that South Korea's 0.72 birth rate is the lowest among OECD nations, while the average age to give birth is 33.6, the highest in the OECD. — AFP

AI the new obsession for venture capital investing

AFTER the earthquake of ChatGPT's phenomenal success a year ago, Silicon Valley investors have gone into overdrive with artificial intelligence, looking for the newest blockbuster idea in an ocean of hype and overpromising.

OpenAI sparked a generative AI craze with ChatGPT, which can pen stories, create pictures, write computer code and more from simple text prompts.

Stung by the struggles of cryptocurrency and other faded Silicon Valley fads of recent

years, venture capitalists have quickly doubled down on AI, a new promised land in the never-ending quest for big tech riches.

For the big investors, "if it's not AI, it's not worth it," Denis Barrier, co-founder of venture capital firm Cathay Innovation told AFP after meetings with several investment fund handlers.

"Funds are looking to make big moves," Barrier said.

"And that's pretty unlikely outside AI in the next few years." — AFP



ChatGPT



OpenAI sparked a generative AI craze with ChatGPT, which can pen stories, create pictures, write computer code and more from simple text prompts. **PHOTO: AFP**

Papua New Guinea confident vast LNG project will go ahead

PAPUA New Guinea's petroleum minister on Wednesday brushed aside claims that a multi-billion-dollar liquefied natural gas project was struggling to secure funding, telling AFP he had received assurances from partner TotalEnergies that things are on track.

Petroleum Minister Jimmy Maladina said the French energy giant was "very comfortable" about securing funding for the roughly US\$12 billion Papua LNG project, despite European banks' increased reluctance to fund new fossil fuel projects.

Maladina said TotalEnergies was looking for financing options "worldwide", and he suggested non-governmental groups were "trying to in-

fluence European banks" to blacklist the project, but insisted they "have not been too successful".

French media recently reported Credit Agricole and a string of Australian and European banks were unwilling to invest.

The issue comes at a sensitive time for the project, with a final investment decision expected this year.

In all, Papua LNG would include several wells, a processing plant, a pipeline stretching hundreds of kilometres (miles) and liquefaction units.

Throughout its lifetime, the project is expected to produce the equivalent of about one billion barrels of oil, according to TotalEnergies.

It is seen as pivotal for the economic development of Papua New Guinea, one of the poorest countries in the Pacific.

But critics say that will only help pump yet more Earth-warming carbon into the atmosphere and stoke dependence on fossil fuels.

In a statement, TotalEnergies said that "for some years European banks have been under pressure not to finance any new fossil projects." — AFP



ExxonMobil PNG Limited operates PNG LNG on behalf of five co-venture partners. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/CHIYODA CORP/FILE**

China to make housing development plans for 2024, 2025

This strategy aims to maintain a balance between supply and demand, ensure a rational market structure, and prevent sharp market fluctuations.

CHINA'S Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development on Tuesday requested local authorities to make housing development plans for 2024 and 2025.

The ministry issued a circular asking local authorities to estimate housing demand on the basis

of demographic changes, scientifically arrange land supplies and channel funds to these property projects in line with housing demand. Such an approach is adopted to secure the equilibrium of supply and demand and a reasonable structure in the real estate

market, and to prevent drastic fluctuations in the sector, it said.

The ministry stressed the importance of both providing sufficient affordable housing and meeting the needs of housing upgrades when making housing development plans. — Xinhua



Photo taken on 9 September 2020 shows the view of the skyscrapers of the Central Business District (CBD) in Beijing, capital of China. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

AstraZeneca makes Shanghai its fifth global strategic hub

SHANGHAI has become the fifth global strategic hub for the British pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, joining hubs in the United States, Sweden and UK, the company announced at the 2024 Shanghai Bio-Pharmaceutical Industry International Development

Conference that opened on Monday.

The Shanghai hub is a global strategic centre that integrates research and development (R&D), commercial and production operations. It plays an important role as a strategic launching pad for AstraZeneca's global

strategy, R&D and long-term development, the company noted.

"For over three decades, AstraZeneca has been deeply rooted in China, with Shanghai at the heart of our strategic endeavors," said Pascal Soriot, chief executive officer of AstraZeneca.

"We see great opportunity for Shanghai and the Yangtze River Delta region to leverage its international capabilities to globalize local innovations, for instance by promoting global recognition of Chinese clinical research data," noted Soriot, adding that AstraZeneca remains committed to further exploring the vast Chinese market. — Xinhua



The offices of multinational pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca PLC in Macclesfield, Cheshire, UK, 21 July 2020. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

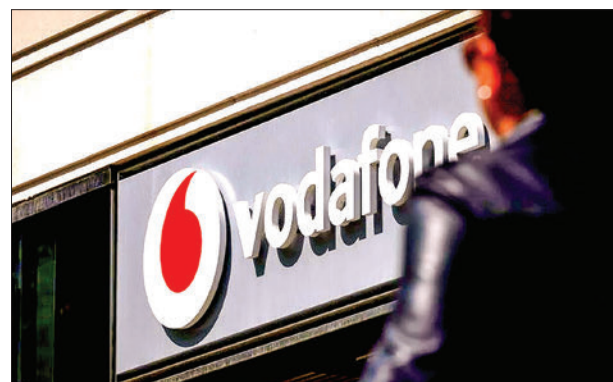
Vodafone in talks to sell Italian unit to Swisscom

Vodafone has been exploring market consolidation in Italy and views the potential deal with Swisscom as offering the best value creation, upfront cash proceeds, and transaction certainty for its shareholders.

BRITISH telecoms giant Vodafone is in advanced talks to sell its Italian unit to Switzerland's Swisscom, agreeing on a preliminary price of eight billion euros (\$8.7 billion), the companies said Wednesday.

Vodafone, which previously rejected offers from French billionaire Xavier Niel's Iliad group, said it has "engaged extensively with several parties to explore market consolidation in Italy".

But the potential transaction with Swisscom "delivers the best combi-



Vodafone may sell its Italian unit to Swisscom after rejecting merger offers from French billionaire Xavier Niel's Iliad group. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

nation of value creation, upfront cash proceeds and transaction certainty for Vodafone shareholders". The two companies, however, cautioned in separate statements that there was no certainty the transaction will ultimately be agreed. — AFP

Google CEO slams 'completely unacceptable' Gemini AI errors

GOOGLE CEO Sundar Pichai on Tuesday slammed "completely unacceptable" errors by its Gemini AI app, after gaffes such as images of ethnically diverse World War II Nazi troops forced it to stop users from creating pictures

of people.

The controversy emerged within weeks of Google's high-profile rebranding of its ChatGPT-style AI to "Gemini", giving the app unprecedented prominence in its products as it competes with OpenAI

and its backer Microsoft.

Social media users mocked and criticized Google for the historically inaccurate Gemini-generated images, such as US senators from the 1800s that were ethnically diverse and included women. — AFP

Changing Trade Names of Pesticides

Aventine Limited would like to change the trade names of the following pesticides which are registered by Shanghai E-Tong Chemical Co., Ltd (China).

No.	Old Trade Name	New Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Reg. No.
1.	Yonta Myann Shinn	Armo Zenith Super	Atrazine 20 % + Mesotrione 7 % + Nicosulfuron 3 % OD	P2023-5401
2.	Yonta Yone Kyi	Armo IC	Chlorfenapyr 10 % + Indoxacarb 5 % SC	P2023-5306

And we would like to invite any objection for the above changing trade names within (14)days of the publication of this notice to the Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogon, Insein.

Distributor : Aventine Limited

No.126(A), Kabaraye Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, Myanmar.

ROLLING UPDATES WORLD

Europe's defence official says 'there are Western special forces in Ukraine': Reports

Macron's comments came after a conference on Ukraine in Paris, where he mentioned the possibility of sending troops but did not indicate a consensus among Western leaders.



Macron delivers a speech to open a conference in support of Ukraine with European leaders and government representatives at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris, on Monday. **PHOTO: POOL / AFP**

REMARKS of French President Emmanuel Macron on a possible deployment of Western troops to Ukraine were aimed at creating deterrence and ambiguity toward Russia, and "everyone knows" that Western special forces are in Ukraine, an unnamed senior European defence official told Financial Times on Tuesday.

"Everyone knows there are western special forces in Ukraine — they've just not acknowledged it officially," the

official said.

After a Paris-hosted conference on Ukraine on Monday, Macron said Western leaders had discussed the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine and had neither reached a consensus on the matter nor ruled out the possibility.

Several NATO countries, including Germany, Italy, Poland, Finland and Hungary, have since distanced themselves from Macron's comment, emphasizing that they have no

intention of deploying troops on the ground in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday that Moscow had taken notice of the French president's remarks and was well aware of his position regarding the need to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia, adding that some countries that participated in a meeting held in Paris on Ukraine held a quite "wise assessment of potential dangers" of being involved in the conflict. — SPUTNIK

TOP NEWS

US House panels subpoena Attorney-General for records on Biden's mishandling of classified docs

THE chairmen of the House Judiciary Committee and Oversight Committee on Tuesday issued a subpoena demanding that US Attorney-General Merrick Garland provide all documents on Special Counsel Robert Hur's investigation of President Joe Biden's "willful" mishandling of classified information.

According to the cover letter accompanying the subpoena and signed by Congressmen James Comer and Jim Jordan respectively, the US Justice Department to date has not provided either records related to Hur's investigation or a deadline when it expects to produce all of the requested material. The initial request to provide the documents was made on 12 February, according to the letter. — SPUTNIK

EU+ countries receive over 1.1 mln asylum applications in 2023

EU+ countries — the 27 EU member states plus Norway and Switzerland — received 1.14 million applications for international protection last year, reaching a seven-year high, according to a report issued by the Malta-based EU Agency for Asylum on Wednesday.

The agency said the number of applications was up by

18 per cent over 2022, "a level reminiscent of the 2015-16 refugee crisis."

According to the report, Syrians continued to lodge the most applications, with Afghans remaining the second. Applications from Syrians were up by 38 per cent compared to 2022, while those from Afghans were down by 11 per cent. — Xinhua



Ukrainian refugees line up to file for residency permits at the Department of Foreign Police in Prague, Czech Republic, on 2 March 2022. **PHOTO: MICHAL CIZEK/AFP/FILE**

Nissan plans self-driving taxi service in Japan

NISSAN is planning to launch a self-driving taxi service in Japan in the financial year starting April 2027, the auto giant said Wednesday.

The company said it will begin trials of the commercial service in the upcoming financial year from April, using minivans in an area of Yokohama, south of Tokyo.

"Local communities have been facing several mobility

challenges, such as driver shortages, which are a result of an ageing population," Nissan said in a statement.

It plans to work with local authorities and transport operators on the venture to "provide a broad range of new services that enable free movement".

Japan is far from the only place with autonomous vehicles on the roads, but its gov-



Nissan has been testing business models for self-driving mobility services in Japan and abroad since 2017. **PHOTO: NISSAN**

ernment has set acceleration of the technology as a key priority as it faces labour shortages and an ageing population in need of transport.

Since last year, road traffic laws have allowed "Level 4" self-driving vehicles to operate on public roads in certain circumstances. Vehicle autonomy is classified along a scale from 0-5, with 5 indicating essentially total autonomy. — AFP

SPORTS

Paris Olympics security plans stolen from train

A bag containing a computer and two USB memory sticks holding police security plans for the Paris Olympic Games was stolen on Monday evening from a train at the capital's Gare du Nord station, police sources said Tuesday.

The bag belonged to an engineer from Paris City Hall, the police said, confirming a report by BFM television, adding that he had put the bag in the luggage compartment above his seat.

As his train was delayed, he decided to change trains at which point he discovered the theft.

The engineer said his work computer and two USB sticks contained sensitive data, in particular the municipal police's plans for securing the Olympics.

An investigation is being conducted by the regional transport police.

Paris City Hall was not able to immediately comment when contacted by AFP. — AFP

With the Games starting on 26 July, approximately 2,000 municipal police officers will be deployed, alongside around 35,000 security forces expected to be on duty each day.



A bag containing police security plans for the Paris Olympic Games has been stolen from a train at Gare du Nord station. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Fiery duel decides Games of the Future Champion and world's top robot battle team

THE show ended with a fiery duel that determined the champion of Games of the Future and the strongest team of Battle of robots in the world. The final took place on Monday, 26 February, at the Kazan Circus.

Sixteen teams from nine countries competed for the Trophy, and the tournament began with the 1/8 finals. The losers of the first round later entered the ring once more to determine the final position from the 9th to 12th places, and who will remain in the final four. The best machines had four duels each. — en.gofuture.game

Five-goal Haaland crushes Luton as Man City make FA Cup quarter-finals



Manchester City striker Erling Haaland scored five times against Luton. **PHOTO: AFP**

MANCHESTER City's Erling Haaland scored five times as the FA Cup holders ran riot in a 6-2 rout of Luton in the fifth round on Tuesday.

Aided by Kevin De Bruyne's trio of assists, Haaland completed his treble

inside the first 40 minutes at Kenilworth Road.

Jordan Clark struck twice to briefly reduce Luton's deficit to just 3-2.

But any Luton hopes of an incredible comeback were ruthlessly erased by Haaland

as the Norway striker scored twice more after the interval to send City into the quarter-finals.

Mateo Kovacic netted to cap City's second six-goal haul this season after their 6-1 thrashing of Bournemouth in the Premier League in November.

Haaland now has 27 goals in all competitions this season, making a mockery of the critics who took a swipe at him after a misfiring display in a recent draw against Chelsea.

It was the second time Haaland had hit five goals in a single game for City after his heroics in the Champions League last 16 second leg win against RB Leipzig in March 2023.

Saluting De Bruyne's role in his demolition of Luton, Haaland said: "Kevin is massive. It's a pleasure playing with him. We know what we both want from each other." — AFP

USA to face Brazil in Copa America warm-up

THE United States will take on five-time world champions Brazil in a warm-up friendly ahead of the Copa America, US Soccer confirmed on Tuesday.

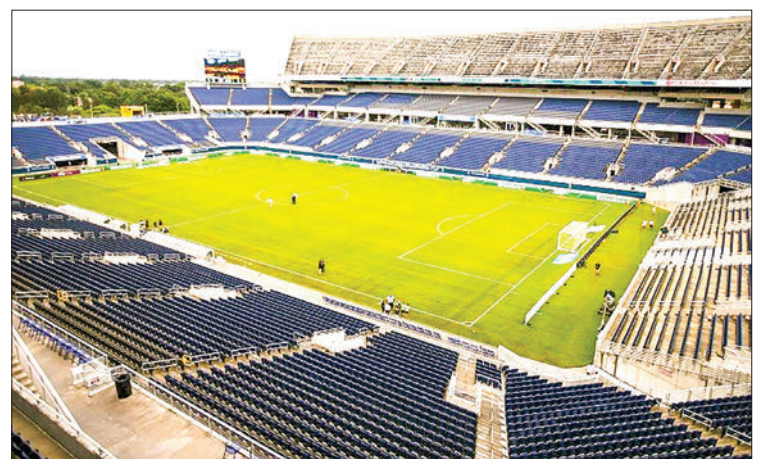
The 12 June fixture will take place at Orlando's Camping World Stadium in Florida as the two teams prepare for the Copa, which is being held in the United States from 20 June to 14 July.

"Getting the opportunity to

play against Brazil is special. When you talk about wanting to challenge ourselves against the best teams in the world, you can't ask for much better than Brazil," US men's national team coach Gregg Berhalter said.

The US kick off their Copa America campaign against Bolivia in Dallas on 23 June.

Brazil open their tournament at Los Angeles's SoFi Stadium on 24 June. — AFP



The Camping World Stadium in Orlando will host a pre-Copa America friendly between the USA and Brazil on 12 June. **PHOTO: AFP**

Europe's defence official says 'there are Western special forces in Ukraine': Reports

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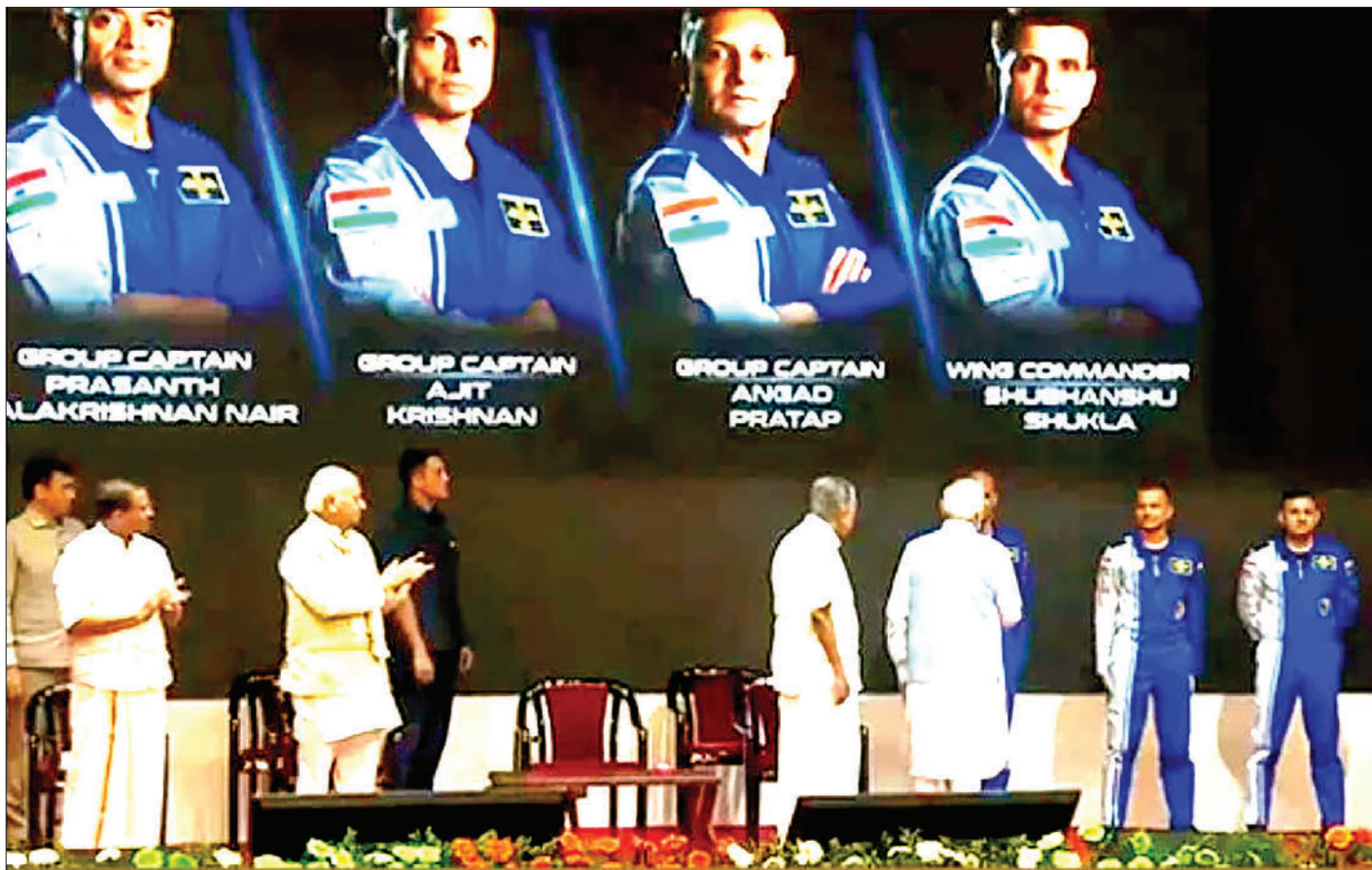
Prime Minister Modi unveils astronauts for its 1st human spaceflight

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the names of the four astronauts selected for India's inaugural human space flight program, Gaganyaan.

P RIME Minister Narendra Modi announced on Tuesday the names of the four astronauts who will be part of India's first human space flight programme, Gaganyaan, slated to be launched in 2024-25.

The four chosen Indian Air Force pilots are Group Captain Prashanth Nair, Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap, and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla. The four astronauts were trained at Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in Russia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a visit to Kerala, reviewed the progress of Gaganyaan mission and bestowed 'astronaut wings' to the astronaut-designates at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre. The Gaganyaan mission is India's first human space flight programme for which extensive preparations are underway at various ISRO centres.

"India's success in the space sector is sowing the seeds of scientific temperament in the country's young generation," PM Modi said in his address at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre. "As India is set to become the top-3 economy of the world, at the same time the country's Gaganyaan is also going to take our space sector to a new height." As per ISRO, Gaganyaan project envisages demonstration of human spaceflight capability by launching crew of three members to an orbit of 400 kilometres for a three days mission and bring them back safely to earth, by landing in Indian sea waters. — ANI



During his visit to Kerala, PM Modi awarded them 'astronaut wings' at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre. PHOTO: ANI

THE HISTORIC GIFT

New York medical school scraps fees after \$1 bln donation

A New York medical school will scrap tuition fees after receiving a "transformational gift" worth \$1 billion from a wealthy benefactor, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine's parent organization said in a statement.

The charitable donation is one of the largest ever publicly received by an educational institution in the United States, and will see the almost \$60,000 undiscounted annual tuition fee become zero.

The school, and its affiliated hospital the Montefiore Medical Centre, are located in the Bronx – New York City's poorest borough, where health outcomes are some of the worst in the state, according to official statistics.

A clip of the announcement being made on campus, posted to social media, showed an auditorium of students reacting rapturously, cheering, screaming and applauding. — AFP

4th release of Fukushima treated radioactive water begins

THE operator of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant on Wednesday started a fourth release of treated radioactive water into the sea, in what will be the last discharge for the fiscal year ending March.

As in the previous rounds, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc will discharge 7,800 tonnes of treated water over about 17 days, having confirmed that the radioactivity level of the latest batch of water meets the standards set by the government and the utility. China, which opposes the water release, has banned Japanese seafood imports since the first discharge



Photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter on 11 February 2024, shows the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Fukushima Prefecture. PHOTO: KYODO

in late August. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said Wednesday that Beijing "firmly opposes" the ocean discharge and requests Tokyo to "stop this wrongdoing." — Kyodo