

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

NATIONAL PAGE-3



SAC Chair PM's wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla attends 20th anniversary of Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation

NATIONAL PAGE-4



Vice-Senior General Soe Win comforts Tatmadaw members and families, MPF members, people's militia (local) at military hospital in Aungban

NATIONAL PAGE-6



Yangon announces Thingyan water pavilion construction application process

BUSINESS PAGE-7



Yangon's Wahdan rice depot sees inflow of summer non-premium rice

Myanmar border trade with China swells to US\$3 bln in 11 months

The figures reflected a significant increase of \$317.1 million this FY compared to that of the year-ago period.

THE border trade value between Myanmar and China soared to over US\$3.055 billion as of 1 March of the current financial year 2023-2024, from \$2.738 billion recorded year on year, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics showed.

The figures reflected a significant increase of \$317.1 million this FY compared to that of the year-ago period.

Myanmar conducts cross-border

trade with neighbouring China via Muse, Lweje, Chinshwehaw, Kampaiti, and Kengtung. The Muse border registered the highest trade figure of \$1.96 billion.

The trade values stood at \$703.066 million via Chinshwehaw, \$164.872 million via Kampaiti, \$120.576 million via Lweje and \$102.252 million via Kengtung, respectively.

Myanmar has been carrying out

border trade with the four neighbouring countries – China, Thailand, Bangladesh and India.

Export items are agricultural produce, livestock products, fisheries products, minerals, forest products, manufacturing goods and other goods. In contrast, capital goods, intermediate goods, manufacturing goods, and raw materials for CMP enterprises are imported. — NN/EM



The Lweje border trade post: A hub for export and import trade activities on the Myanmar-China border.

Myanmar to establish diplomatic relations with Uganda

MYANMAR Ambassador U Aung Soe Win of the Myanmar Embassy to Malaysia met Uganda High Commissioner

Ms Betty Oyella Bigombe at the latter's office in Kuala Lumpur on 11 March, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During their meeting, they discussed the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and

cooperation in the areas of economy, trade, agriculture, and the prevention of human trafficking. — ASH/MKKS

NATIONAL

Myanmar's Ambassador to the Russian Federation attends Gastro Camp Buryatia Project

MYANMAR'S Ambassador to the Russian Federation U Thit Lin Ohn, attended the Gastro Camp Buryatia Project held in the city of Ulan-Ude in the Buryatia region from 7 to 11 March, at the invitation of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Tourism.

During the visit, the ambassador, accompanied by the Minister of Tourism of the Buryatia government, visited the world-famous Lake Baikal and various tourist spots, museums, modern factories, hotels, tourism training centres, as well as Buddhist temples in the Ulan-Ude city. Then, together with the head of the local government, he also observed martial arts and traditional martial arts competitions before participating in the traditional Russian food exhibition and dinner organized by the tourism centre.

Additionally, during the visit, the ambassador met members of the local government led by Mr Alexey Sambuevich Tsydenov, at the government office. They discussed measures related to Myanmar-Russia friendship, strengthening cooperation between the two nations, increasing Russian tourists to Myanmar, boosting exports of aqua and agricultural produce to Russia, developing the garment industry, providing more scholarships for Myanmar citizens, and improving investment. — ASH/TH



The photo shows the meeting between Myanmar's Ambassador to the Russian Federation U Thit Lin Ohn and Buryatia region government head Mr Alexey Sambuevich Tsydenov and party.

Public notice for submitting objection

1. THE Trustees of the Peace Party, with its headquarters located at No 99, Kyaikwaing Pagoda Road, Ward 3, Mayangon Township, Yangon Region, applied on 13 March 2024 to be allowed continuity to exist and register as a political party under Section 5 of the Political Parties Registration Law. In the application, the party name, flag and emblem will be reportedly used as described.
2. Under Rule 14 (d) of the Registration of Political Parties, it is hereby announced to the



The flag of the Trustees of the Peace Party.



The emblem of the Trustees of the Peace Party.

public that those who wish to object to the name of the party, the flag and the emblem to be used by that organization may submit their objection to

the Union Election Commission with valid evidence within seven days from the date of this announcement.
Union Election Commission

Appointment of Guinea Bissau's Ambassador agreed on

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the proposed appointment of Mr António Serifo Embaló as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Beijing, People's Republic of China.

Mr António Serifo Embaló was born on 5 May 1963. He obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Economics from Verna Economic University, Bulgaria, in 1993. From 1994, he served as Director of Transport and Travel

Agency Affairs of the National Tourism Administration. He became Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development from 2016 to 2017 and Minister for Energy, Industry and Natural Resources from 2018 to 2019. He became a member of Parliament from 2019 to 2020. Since 2020, he has been serving as an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Guinea Bissau to the People's Republic of China based in Beijing.

Mr António Serifo Embaló is married with three children. — MNA

Appointment of United Arab Emirates' Ambassador agreed on

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the proposed appointment of Mr Mutaz Abdullah Abduljaleel Mohamed Al Faheem as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Yangon.

Mr Mutaz Abdullah Abduljaleel Mohamed Al Faheem was born on 5 May 1979. He obtained a Master's degree in Political Science from Leiden University, the Netherlands and joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the UAE in 2003. He had served in various capacities at both headquarters and abroad. He served at the UAE Embassy in the Hague, the Netherlands, from

2004 to 2009; at the UAE Embassy in Warsaw, Poland, from 2009 to 2013; at the Economic Affairs and International Cooperation Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from 2013 to 2014; at the Finance and Administrative Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from 2014 to 2015, at the UAE Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, from 2015 to 2018. He also served as Head of Division at the East Asia and Pacific Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2018 to 2019. Since 2019, he has been serving as Deputy Director-General at the East Asia and Pacific Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr Mutaz Abdullah Abduljaleel Mohamed Al Faheem is married and has two sons. — MNA

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise



၂၀၂၄ ခုနှစ် ကမ္ဘာ့စားသုံးသူအခွင့်အရေးများနေ့
(World Consumer Rights Day 2024)



မျှတအလေးမူ တာဝန်ယူ၊ စားသုံးသူအကျိုးပြု ဉာဏ်ရည်တူ
(Fair and Responsible AI for Consumers)

၂၀၂၄ ခုနှစ်၊ မတ်လ ၁၅ ရက် (သောကြာနေ့)

Advertise with us/ Hot Line : 09251022355, 09255597511

NATIONAL

SAC Chair PM's wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla attends 20th anniversary of Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation

DAW Kyu Kyu Hla, wife of the State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister and Honorary Patron of Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAFF), attended the 20th anniversary of MWAFF, which was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the event, Chairman of the Myanmar Women's Committee Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Soe Win expressed gratitude to the members of MWAFF for active participation in women empowerment activities.

He also highlighted the strengthening of women's participation in addition to women's organizations under the MWAFF in implementing the women empowerment policies and mechanisms, as well as in the prevention of violence against women and young girls, resilience to natural disasters, and gender equality.

Afterwards, Honorary Patron Daw Kyu Kyu Hla pre-



Wife of the SAC Chair and PM, MWAFF Honorary Patron Daw Kyu Kyu Hla poses for the group documentary photo together with participants at yesterday's event in Nay Pyi Taw.

sented good volunteer awards to members of Mon State, Bago Region, Mandalay Region and Shan State women's affairs committees with over 20 years of service.

Moreover, Honorary Patron Daw Khin Thet Htay, Union Minister Dr Soe Win, and patrons and the MWAFF chairperson presented good volunteer awards to chairpersons and secretaries

of the region and state women's committees, including Nay Pyi Taw.

Finally, attendees posed for a group documentary photo and observed the recorded photos

displayed at the event.

Then, MWAFF Chair Dr Thet Thet Zin gave a speech at the 20th annual meeting of MWAFF.

The annual meeting will last until 15 March. — MNA/KTZH

Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control holds 1/2024 meeting



The first meeting of the Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control in progress yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

STATE Administration Council Member Union Minister for Home Affairs Chairman of the Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control Lt-Gen Yar Pyae addressed the 1/2024

central committee meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the event, he said drugs are a grave threat to all humankind of the world, and the drug transitions are

related to arms smuggling, violence, money laundering and transnational crimes and also affect the regional stability and the rule of law measures.

The insurgent groups at-

tempted to stir up unrest in the country and conducted drug production and transport. They also imported the drugs using various ways as the precursor and related materials cannot be produced in the country.

The government is accelerating its momentum, aiming to develop the country and fighting against drugs as a national task.

He then talked about the launching of 39 operations to combat the drugs from 2013 to 2023 and now Operation 39/2024 (2024) in 2024 across the nation as the man-made drug (synthetic drug) is the main threat in the world.

He also mentioned the close cooperation with UN, neighbouring countries, ASEAN states, Mekong regions, BIMSTEC members, and international organizations in addition to Yangon-based UN-ODC, AFP, DEA, NNCC and

ONCB to carry out anti-narcotics activities.

He continued that the 2017 report released by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, headed by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, stated that the ethnic armed group AA was involved in drug trafficking. Moreover, AA members were found in the drug trafficking groups, and it was found out about eight times.

The drug seizures from AA were announced only in the country, and they should be announced internationally through the anti-narcotics partner countries and embassies.

Then, he concluded the meeting after hearing the presentations of the vice-chairs, joint secretary of the central committee and other attendees. — MNA/KTZH

NATIONAL

Vice-Senior General Soe Win comforts Tatmadaw members and families, MPF members, people's militia (local) at military hospital in Aungban



State Administration Council Vice-Chair Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win encourages the patient at the military hospital in Aungban, Shan State (South), yesterday.

VICE-CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief

(Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win comforted officers, other ranks and families, members of Myanmar Police Force and

people's militia (local) members receiving medical treatment at the military hospital in Aungban of Shan State (South) yesterday

morning.

At the meeting hall of the hospital, the hospital commandant reported on healthcare

services given to Tatmadaw members and families, MPF members, people's militia (local) members and requirements.

After giving the necessary instructions, the Vice-Senior General fulfilled the needs.

At the hospital, the Vice-Senior General individually asked about the health of those patients who were wounded while serving the State defence and security duties and presented foodstuffs.

He also presented cash awards and gifts to health staff from the hospital through officials.

In the afternoon, the Vice-Senior General had lunch together with senior officer instructors and senior officer trainees at the Command and General Staff College. — MNA/TTA

SAC Chairman's Office Ministry 3 Union Minister receives ICRC Resident Representative

THE Ministry of State Administration Council Chairman's Office 3 Union Minister U Aung Kyaw Hoe received Resident Representative Ms Elena Ajmone Sessera of the International Committee of the Red

Cross (ICRC) office in Myanmar at the ministry's office yesterday.

They exchanged views on healthcare services in conflict areas, compliance with international humanitarian law and humanitarian aid. — MNA/TS



The ICRC Resident Representative calls on Union Minister U Aung Kyaw Hoe yesterday.

MoI Union Minister receives Russia's NPP A-Engineering LLC Company delegation

THE delegation led by Chief Commercial Officer Mr Alexei Shoshin of NPP A-Engineering LLC Company of Russia called on Union Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

They discussed the construction of an edible oil production line that will produce 35,000 tonnes per year from various oil crops in Myanmar, the expansion of oil crop cultivation for sufficiency in domestic consumption, the production of animal feed and fuel pellets made of by-pro-



Union Minister Dr Charlie Than holds talks with the Russian delegation yesterday.

ducts from edible oil refining, technical assistance for edible oil refining process, purchase of edible oil refining machines, repair and packaging, opening

of training courses, installation and test operation of machines throughout the manufacturing chain among others. — MNA/TS

Global NEW LIGHT of MYANMAR

www.gnlm.com.mm



CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

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

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

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

Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.
gnlmnews@gmail.com,
newsroom@gnlm.com.mm
www.gnlm.com.mm

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email aunghuya@gnlm.com.mm with your name and title.

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

111,471 students take Chemistry, 17,208 students take Geography on 4th day of 2024 matric exam

THE 2024 matriculation examination (new curriculum) continued its fourth day yesterday. A total of 111,471 students sat for the Chemistry subject exam, and 17,208 students

took the Geography subject exam across the nation, including overseas exam centres. This year, a total of 841 exam centres, including 11 overseas exam centres and 830 exam

centres at home, are open for students. Altogether, 125,870 students registered to sit for the matriculation examination, and 111,471 students sat for Chemistry with 14,399 ab-

sentees. Meanwhile, a total of 20,651 students registered for Geography, and 17,208 students sat for Geography with 3,443 absentees. The number of students sitting for exams

accounted for 83.33 per cent, according to the figures of the Ministry of Education. — MNA/KTZH



Gyobingauk Township, Bago Region.



Kengtung Township, Shan State (East).



Manaung Township, Rakhine State.



Maubin Township, Ayeyawady Region.



Monywa Township, Sagaing Region.



Ngapali, Rakhine State.



Pinlaung in Pa-O Self-Administered Zone.



Hpa-an Township, Kayin State.



Yanangyoung Township, Magway Region.

Fisheries Dept collaborates to protect rare Spinner dolphins in Ayeyawady Region

U Phone Maw, in-charge of the Thameehla Island Sea Turtle Conservation Camp under the Fisheries Department (Ayeyawady Region), announced that the department will partner with environmental and wildlife conservation organizations to safeguard the rare Spinner dolphin species found near Kyakan Beach in Ngaputaw Township, Ayeyawady Region.

Fifteen Spinner dolphins were accidentally entangled in fishing nets on Kyakan beach near Mawtinsun Pagoda at approximately 2 pm on 12 March. All fifteen dolphins were swiftly released back into the sea.

“Fifteen dolphins were inadvertently trapped in the fishing nets. They were all released back into the sea within 15 minutes of realizing the accidental capture. As it is currently

the time of the pagoda festival, we released them back into the sea alive. None of them perished. They are not Irrawaddy dolphins; they belong to the rare Spinner species,” stated U Phone Maw.

These Spinner dolphins have been congregating in a group in the waters between Leik Island and Mawtinsun since late February. — ASH/ TMT



NATIONAL

Yangon announces Thingyan water pavilion construction application process



The photo shows the Yangon's Central Pavilion of the Thingyan Festival on 13 April 2023.

IT has been announced that requests for permission to construct water-playing pavilions for the Thingyan festival (the traditional water festival of Myanmar New Year) can be submitted to the Yangon Region Government starting on 15 March.

Permission will be granted based on factors such as

the type and size of pavilions, water availability and traffic conditions.

Applications, attached to recommendation letters from respective township and district administration bodies, must be submitted to the Engineering Department (Roads and Bridges) of the Yangon City Development Committee by

31 March. Construction may commence only after obtaining permission from the Yangon Region government.

Application forms can be obtained from the Engineering Department (Roads and Bridges) of the YCDC. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered. — TWA/TKO

Visitors rush to book Thingyan tour packages

EAGER local visitors have already booked some tour packages for Thingyan, which is due to arrival in April, according to travel companies and visitors.

“There are ticket bookings for Thingyan. Advanced bookings have already been made at Chaungtha and Ngwehsaung, and they are likely to be larger in the second half of the month. People go on vacations in Thingyan because it has long holidays,” said an official from a travel company.

A woman who had made

preparations to take a vacation in the Thingyan period said she had booked a trip to Chaungtha Beach to relax with her family.

“Thingyan has long holidays, so visitors usually flock to beaches. That is why I have already booked. We are planning to go to Chaungtha for relaxation,” said Ma Yati from Botahtaung township.

In addition to Bagan, Kalaw, Inlay, Taunggyi, Chaungtha, Ngwehsaung and the beaches near Yangon, domestic travelers have also taken day trips to

newly developed destinations and overseas trips in recent years.

In Myanmar's tourism industry, the domestic tourism sector has sharply increased, and foreign tourist arrivals have also mounted in 2023. By November 2023, local visitor arrivals were 8.85 million, and foreign tourist arrivals again reached more than one million, enormously increasing year on year, according to the statistics of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. — MT/ZS

FDIs in Myanmar surpass US\$651 mln in 2023-24FY

ACCORDING to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), a total of 63 foreign investments, amounting to US\$651.9 million, were recorded in the 2023-24 financial year. The majority of these investments were in the industries and electricity sectors.

China and Thailand were the main contributors to foreign investments, with most

investments coming from these countries. In the same financial year, there were 69 Myanmar citizen-owned investments worth K1,287.3 billion, surpassing the anticipated K990 billion.

In the 2022-23 financial year, Myanmar received over \$1.64 billion in foreign direct investments, primarily from Singapore, China, and Thailand, as per the statistics. — TWA/TMT



Workers from a garment factory in Yangon seen working on 12 May 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA

New three-seater fuel-battery tricycles introduced in Hpa-an

G7 Motorcycle Showroom in Hpa-an, Kayin State, has imported and introduced three-seat hybrid motorized tricycles that run on gasoline and batteries to Myanmar.

The three-wheelers, imported from Viet Nam, have four 60V batteries that can be charged while driving for those who don't want to use petrol.

“Most of the buyers are from Hpa-an. We imported these trikes to try to sell them. All the buyers are for private use. It has high torque. With the charging

function, the batteries can be recharged while driving,” said an official from the showroom.

When fully charged, it can run the whole day at average speed and is priced at K2.8 million with a two-year warranty.

It is available for cash on delivery in Hpa-an metro, and those wishing to see it for themselves before buying are invited to the showroom at No 4, Ohntaw street, Hpa-an, near the Clock Tower, Kayin State. — Htet Oo Maung/ZN

Registration fees for 16th EPS-TOPIK accepted from mid-March

ACCORDING to the Public Overseas Employment Agency via Employment Permit System (POEA-EPS), examination fee payments via the online application for the 16th Korean language test (EPS-TOPIK) will be accepted by receipt numbers from 19 March.

Registration fees for all fe-

males in the service sector will be accepted on 19 March and for all males in service, manufacturing, construction, and agricultural and livestock breeding sectors from 20 March to 5 April, at POEA office, Pinlon hall, 43rd quarter, Dagon Myothit (North) Township from 9 am to 3 pm.

The fee is US\$28 or equiv-

alent in Myanmar kyats, and a passport copy and payment number are required for both males and females, while a matriculation certificate and graduation or diploma certificate from any university are also required for females. Examination roll numbers will be issued to those who have paid the registration

fees, and these cards must be brought on the examination dates. The list of eligible persons and the examination dates will be announced later.

Applicants are requested to assist in making payments by properly queuing in a disciplined manner on the prescribed date, and only men wearing shirts and

longyis (sarong) and women wearing Myanmar dress will be allowed to enter the premises.

After passing the test, they must undergo a medical check-up, and only those who are medically fit will be allowed to apply for a job. It doesn't guarantee that all job seekers will get a job, it said. — MT/ZN



Yangon's Wahdan rice depot sees inflow of summer non-premium rice

The photo depicts rice sacks being organized at the Yangon Wahdan rice depot.

NEW summer rice of non-premium quality started flowing into Yangon's Wahdan rice depot in the second week of March, Ko Kyaw engaged in the rice depot told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

Monsoon non-premium rice fetches K85,500 per sack, whereas summer Thuka rice variety is worth only K81,500 per sack. Therefore, the demand for summer rice is higher than that for monsoon rice in

the market due to fairer prices.

Monsoon non-premium rice (90-day short matured rice) is valued at K98,000-K100,000 per sack. Pawkywe rice price is around K100,000 per sack. The prices of premium Pawsan rice from Ayeyawady are declining. The prices of premium Pawsan rice varieties move in the range between K122,000-K160,000 per sack depending on producing areas

(Pyapon, Bogale, Mawgyun, Myaungmya, Shwebo). The sticky rice prices are K85,000-K105,000 per sack. Pawsan rice price showed a decrease of K1,000-K1,500 per sack compared with the prices registered in late February. Meanwhile, the price of sticky rice is down by K10,000.

The rice prices decreased in the second week of March, yet they were higher than those of the previous year, Ko Tin

Aye, a rice trader, addressed.

The prices stood at K55,000 per sack of summer non-premium rice, K61,000 for 90-day short-matured rice and K70,000-K90,000 for Pawsan rice in the second week of 2023. The prices were K1.92 million per 100 baskets of premium Pawsan and K1.6 million for non-premium paddy, as per the figures of a rice mill in Wakema Township.

This year, the actual market value of paddy is way higher than the reference prices, so the prices have not been revealed officially, said a rice trader. The paddy prices were approximately K3.3-K3.4 million per 100 baskets of Pawsan and K2.4-K2.5 million for non-premium paddy in March 2024. The mature Pawsan paddy produces 70 baskets per acre.

Therefore, it generates K2.3 million per acre as per the prevailing market price, U Soe Tint, a farmer working 20 acres in Satkyun village in Bogale Township, told the GNLM. Pawsan paddy price hit K3.5 million per 100 baskets in February 2024 and then plunged this month.

As both paddy and rice prices rose compared with those of last year, the farmers might reap a handsome profit. — TWA/KK

Fisheries Dept seeks bids for 57 confiscated fishing vessels



The general front view of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

FIFTY-SEVEN confiscated fishing vessels detained by the Fisheries Department will be sold by tender in their current condition, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

Of 57 vessels, seven are in Kawthoung district, five in Bokpyin district, 15 in Myeik district, five in Dawei district, 23 are in Pyapon district, and two in Yangon Region. Observation can be

made by making contact with respective fisheries departments.

Bidders will have to purchase a payment order cheque at Myanma Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw as earnest money for each vessel and submit it to the tender working committee by 26 March before the bid, the tender accepting and scrutinizing working committee and tender working committee said in the announcement.

"I've bought the application form. I'm interested in it. This plan will benefit the country's revenue as well as businesspeople," said a businessperson who has prepared to apply for the tender. Application forms and rules are available at K5,000 each at the head office of the Fisheries Department in Nay Pyi Taw, Pannita Street, from 8 to 25 March, during office hours. — Thit Taw/ZS



Gold ornaments seen being arranged for sale at the jewellery outlet in Yangon.

Pure gold price hits record-high to K4.1 mln per tical

WITH spot gold price rallying to around US\$2,170 per ounce, domestic gold price reached a fresh new peak of K4.12 million per tical (0.578 ounce or 0.016 kilogramme) on 14 March 2024.

Meanwhile, the US dollar is exchanged at approximately K3,650 in the grey market.

Meanwhile, the Yangon Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) set the preference price at K3.7985 million per tical, indicating a large gap of around K320,000 per tical with the actual market value.

The YGEA called for traders to make gold transactions below the reference price and to avoid spread of false news and price manipulation. Those dealers attempt to market, owing to the spreading of misleading information. The authorities concerned are making efforts to deal with market abuse. Inspecting and prosecuting market manipulation are underway.

The dollar gaining up to K4,000 drove the gold price up to a record high of K4 million per tical in late August 2023. — NN/EM

OPINION

Apply AI for raising consumer rights worldwide

ON the annually celebrated World Consumer Rights Day, observed on 15 March, the global focus converges on promoting consumer rights, protection, and empowerment. Facilitated by Consumers International, this day fosters collaboration among 200 consumer advocacy members spanning over 100 countries.

In 2024, the organization has designated 'Fair and responsible AI for consumers' as the thematic core, intending to harness the power of artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance consumer well-being while ensuring accountability and responsibility in addressing consumer challenges.

Given the rapid evolution of technology and the dynamic shifts in political and administrative landscapes, the imperative to safeguard consumer rights in accordance with the contemporary era becomes paramount.

The universal acknowledgement that everyone is a consumer underscores the call for respecting consumer rights to prevent infringements that undermine their self-interest. Elevating consumer rights through the application of advanced AI technology is advocated as the means to inaugurate a new chapter in the realm of consumer rights, wherein actions align with the principles of fairness, responsibility, and accountability.

department of Consumer Affairs.

In the context of AI shaping products and services, the success of emerging AI technologies, particularly generative AI chatbots, assumes a dominant role in the digital landscape. These chatbots, integral to customer service and support, increasingly incorporate sophisticated AI systems to replicate human conversation. Technology giants are already implementing generative AI in online search experiences, aiming to enhance consumer interactions worldwide while mitigating concerns related to fake news, personal violations, and discrimination.

A critical aspect of the 2024 initiative is addressing bias in consumer affairs to ensure the development and deployment of fair and responsible AI technology. By focusing on generative AI chatbots, the campaign aims to enhance consumer services and support, emphasizing the need for ethical considerations in technology adoption.

The universal acknowledgement that everyone is a consumer underscores the call for respecting consumer rights to prevent infringements that undermine their self-interest. Elevating consumer rights through the application of advanced AI technology is advocated as the means to inaugurate a new chapter in the realm of consumer rights, wherein actions align with the principles of fairness, responsibility, and accountability.

I AM lying down on a table, and a machine is scanning my body to check how healthy I am. Above me, a machine is making a soft buzzing sound, and it is using special X-rays to figure out the amount of fat, bone, and muscle in my body.

The news is not so good. According to the scan, I have eight kilogrammes of extra body fat for someone who is 33 years old. Also, my upper body doesn't look like I've been to the gym in a while. The scan tells me that I should try to become leaner and stronger. Recently, while playing tennis, I realized that my ability to do aerobic exercise has decreased a lot.

Clearly, I need to become more fit. The problem is my job involves sitting a lot, and I don't always have time to exercise. This got me thinking: what if there were ways to make my workouts more effective or even get fitter without moving much? I've heard about the possibility of getting fitter by sleeping more or using special shoes to run faster. Some people even talk about a magic "exercise pill" or building muscles just by thinking about it. So, I decided to explore some easy ways to improve my fitness, starting with the simplest exercise hack: breathing.

For a long time, yoga lovers have recommended breathing through the nose, and scientists are now studying how it affects exercise performance. The reason behind this is a substance called nitric oxide (NO) that is produced in the nose and inhaled while breathing through it. NO might help the heart and blood vessels because it widens the blood vessels, allowing more blood flow.

While studies have linked NO with improved exercise endurance in older, inactive individuals, the boost in these studies came from supplements, not just breathing. Although comparing nose and mouth breathing suggests that breathing through the nose is a more efficient way to get oxygen into the bloodstream, it's not clear if it can make activities like running to catch a bus easier.

But don't give up on breathing exercises just yet. One method with a long history is respiratory muscle training, or "weight training for the breathing muscles", according to E Fiona Bailey at the University of Arizona. Inspired by intense interval training and resistance exercises, Bailey designed experiments where participants used a device called Powerbreathe to



PHOTO CREDIT: NEW SCIENTIST

take five sets of six breaths, making them apply more force with their diaphragm. In a recent trial, participants who did this for six weeks gained endurance and even saw lower blood pressure. Bailey explains, "We're strengthening the diaphragm, which makes exercise feel less tiring. It may also improve breathing during exercise and extend workout time." Devices like Powerbreathe can be purchased online, allowing anyone to try this technique at home, although figuring out the right intensity level is a challenge Bailey is currently working on.

I tried breathing exercises before, and they helped me sleep better. Sleep is essential for our health, and I wondered if better sleep could also make me more fit. So, I turned on Zoom and talked to Matthew Morrison, a researcher at the Australian Catholic University, about how sleep might affect elite athletes' performance.

Morrison explained that many of us don't get enough sleep, and just bringing our sleep back to a normal level might make us stronger and improve our ability to run or do other exercises. When we sleep, our bodies do important maintenance work, like fixing tissues and creating energy for our muscles. Lack of sleep can affect this process, making us less efficient in using oxygen during activities like running.

Studies show that only getting four hours of sleep a night for five nights can reduce the energy produced by our body's tiny structures called mitochondria. Insufficient sleep also lowers testosterone levels and changes the release of growth hormone, both

From Breathing to Sleep, Mindset to Technology

By Min Zan

important for recovering from exercise.

Another problem with not getting enough sleep is that it can make us weaker. Morrison explained that it slows down the creation of new proteins in our muscles, leading to muscle atrophy. A study in the Netherlands also found a connection between chronic lack of sleep and lower muscle mass. This tells us that a good night's sleep is crucial for any fitness routine.

There's also a connection between our mind and our fitness. Alia Crum from Stanford University says that our beliefs about exercise can affect not only our motivation but also the benefits we get from it. In a study, she showed hotel-room attendants that their daily work activities counted as exercise, and they reported a decrease in body fat and blood pressure, even though nothing else had changed in their lives.

So, in summary, getting enough sleep is important for our fitness because it helps our bodies repair and grow. Also, our thoughts about exercise play a big role in how we benefit from it. Remember, a good night's sleep is a key part of staying healthy and fit!

New research tells us that how we think about our strength can affect our muscles. A study at Ohio University looked at adults who had their wrists not moving for a week, making their muscles weaker. Those who imagined their muscles being strong every day had 50 per cent less muscle loss.

In a recent study by Alia Crum, she found that having a different mindset can make daily activities like housework or walking more helpful. People who used smartwatches to count their steps, even if they thought they were not active, felt happier, better about themselves, and even measured better in aerobic fitness.

Surprisingly, our gut might also play a role in helping us exercise. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that specific bacteria in the gut influenced how mice ran. When these bacteria were given to the mice, they wanted to exercise more. It's not clear if this works the same way in humans, and more research is needed to understand how the gut affects our physical performance.

This is important because many people find it hard to motivate themselves to exercise. A study in Scotland and England

found that only 20 per cent of adults aged 40 to 65 did vigorous exercises like sports or going to the gym for more than 15 minutes a month.

However, this doesn't mean these people are not active during the day. Thanks to wearable devices, we now know that any activity using more energy than sitting quietly is good for our health. While high-intensity activities have the most impact, every step we take is beneficial for our heart health. Many studies show that even light activities for at least five hours a day can significantly improve our health. So, whether it's exercise classes or just walking, all kinds of movement count!

Adding a bit more intense movement to our daily lives can be really good for our health, especially if we do it regularly. Emmanuel Stamatakis from the University of Sydney found that even short bursts of intense movement, like walking quickly for just one minute a few times a day, can reduce the risk of heart problems. These quick bursts had similar benefits to regular, intense exercise.

Stamatakis suggests making daily activities a bit more vigorous. For example, walking up the stairs

faster, carrying groceries instead of using a trolley, or putting more energy into gardening or housework can help. Having a dog or being in a colder environment, like turning the thermostat down, can also be helpful because even shivering counts as exercise.

If doing physical activity seems challenging, there might be future options to get the benefits of exercise without moving much. Scientists are working on developing pills that mimic the effects of exercise, but they're not available yet.

Technology can also play a role in boosting fitness. Special shoes, like the Nike Vaporfly, can make running more efficient, especially for fast runners. However, for slower runners, the benefits are not as significant. For female runners, a supportive sports bra can improve performance by seven per cent.

For those less interested in traditional exercise, electronic muscle stimulation (EMS) devices can help build muscles without leaving the couch. These devices use electrical impulses to stimulate muscles and can improve strength and thickness, even if you're not very active.

In brief, there are easy and surprising ways to improve strength and stamina, whether you exercise regularly or not. Making small changes in daily activities and exploring technology options might make a big difference. Even if goals seem ambitious, with the right mindset, improvements are possible.

Reference: *New Scientist* 1 July 2023

Paris 2024 hopes to be model for lower-carbon Olympics

THIS year's Paris Olympics will use renewable energy, serve lots of vegetarian meals and heavily restrict plastic bottles, but can an event involving so much construction and international travel ever be environmentally sustainable?

After an extravagant FIFA football World Cup in Qatar in 2022 that featured air-conditioned stadiums, the Paris Games are hoping to present a more sober model for global sports events.

"I hope Paris 2024's efforts to reduce its impacts can demonstrate that it is possible to do things differently," Georgina Grenon, director of environmental excellence for the organizing committee, told AFP in a recent interview.

One of the main differences

be the number of heavily polluting plane journeys linked to the Games and "we haven't yet sold all the tickets," she added.

An outside consulting firm will be tasked with auditing the impact of the travel, the construction, catering and sports equipment, with final figures set to be published in October.

Diesel savings

The key to reducing Paris' carbon footprint was contained in the city's original bid.

Organizers promised to use either existing or temporary venues for 95 per cent of the sports events, meaning they could avoid building new stadiums from scratch.

The only major new-build projects have been an aquatics centre, a mid-sized venue in Paris for the badminton and gymnastics, and the athletes'



Workers operate at the site of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games athletes' village in Saint-Ouen, outside Paris, on 30 August 2022. PHOTO: EMMANUEL DUNAND/AFP/FILE

es will be in the overall carbon emissions, with organizers aiming for half of the amount generated by the 2012 Olympics in London and the 2016 edition in Rio de Janeiro.

Paris 2024 initially set a target equivalent to 1.58 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, but that ambition has been lowered to around 1.75 million tonnes.

"Something we are uncertain of today is the (carbon impact of) spectators," said Grenon when asked if the latest target can be met.

One of the key factors will

village in the deprived Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis.

Contractors for the village had to agree to reduce the emissions resulting from their buildings by 30 per cent compared with standard constructions, meaning many of them experimented with low-carbon concrete and wood.

Other changes include connecting up all the sports venues to the electricity mains supply, meaning stadium operators don't rely on diesel generators for power.

SOURCE: AFP

NATIONAL

Mine explosion damages railway in Kyaukdaga Township



AROUND noon on 13 March, an explosion occurred on the railway between Tawkywein Station and Kanyutkwin Station in Kyaukdaga Township, Bago Region.

Local officials and members of the security forces, including Myanmar Railways employees, promptly inspected the area affected by the explosion. They discovered damage to the under-construction rail-

way, including a 10-foot rail-tract and concrete sleepers that were broken.

It is evident that these destructive acts were carried out to disrupt passenger and goods transport. Efforts are underway to repair the damaged rail section.

Since 1 February 2021, various terrorist groups have planted mines near railway areas and stations 130 times,

exploded railway bridges 50 times, and set fire to stations and employee housing 12 times.

The government is actively working to improve railway infrastructure and upgrade the rail transport system to enhance public travel and freight transport. However, terrorists persist in their destructive acts, endangering lives, instilling fear among travellers, and hindering railway upgrade efforts. Consequently, they face widespread condemnation from the public. — MNA/TKO

The damaged railway section in the aftermath of the blast on 13 March 2024.

Confiscation of illegal items: Timbers, crude oil, foodstuffs, industrial materials, consumer goods and vehicles

ON 12 March, the on-duty team confiscated goods worth K9 million, including 5,280 boxes of instant noodles found near a rubber plantation in Bhamo township. This enforcement action was conducted under Customs procedures.

On the same day, a Sunlong bus worth approximately K30 million, travelling from Hpa-an to Yangon, was seized at the Nyaungkhashay x-ray station. The bus was carrying goods valued at K21.87 million, including 1,320 bags of Fineline fabric softener and 15,000 pieces of Neo glass-tempered glass without official documents. This action was also taken under Customs procedures.

Similarly, a Mitsubishi Fuso tractor head with a trailer, estimated at K67.5 million, was intercepted at the Ywathagyi Dry Port. The vehicle, travelling from Mawtaung to Yangon, was transporting 15,080 kilogrammes of pears from China valued at K17.116 million, which were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID). The team took action under Customs procedures.

Additionally, a Nissan Condor truck, valued at approximately K25 million, was seized at the

Mayanchaung permanent checkpoint. The car, travelling from Hpa-an to Yangon, was carrying 185 bags of Siamvic PVC resin worth K8.061 million that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID). This action was also taken under Customs procedures.

During inspections on 12 and 13 March, the combined teams confiscated 30 gallons of crude oil and 13 related items used in illegal oil drilling, valued at K3.737 million in Minhla township. They also seized a three-wheel motorbike carrying 30 air compressor pipes used in illegal oil drilling, worth K1.691 million, near the Mann oil field gate 2 on the Minbu-Saku road. Action was taken under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law and the Public Property Protection Law.

Illegal timber weighing 7.041 tonnes, valued at K3.596 million, was seized in Monywa and Kanbalu townships on 13 March, with the action being taken under the Forest Law.

The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported 13 arrests on 12 and 13 March, with an estimated value of K187.574 million. — MNA/MKKS



Confiscated illegal goods.

Counter-argument to false information

False news: Young people in Yangon Region summoned by name to serve in military

KHIT Thit, a malicious news media, spread false claims that four to 50 youths per ward and villages in townships of Yangon Region were summoned with their names and that Tatmadaw randomly selected youths in some neighbourhoods and took them away.

According to the statement of an official of the Yangon Region People's Military Servant Summoning Team, the reports that Tatmadaw picked up young people in some communities and randomly selected young people in Yangon Region with their names on them are inaccurate.

From the day the People's Military Service Law came into force, malicious news media and people who don't want peace in the community have



The screenshot validates misinformation of Khit Thit malicious media.

been spreading propaganda to create a lack of stability and peace with fake news. — MNA/KZL

Advertise
with us/ Hot Line:
09251022355, 09255597511

France passes law to protect children from suspected abusive parents

The National Assembly and the Senate both endorsed the bill, addressing concerns about existing loopholes in the judicial system that could leave children vulnerable during prolonged investigations.

FRANCE'S parliament Tuesday passed legislation to systematically suspend parental authority for those being investigated for incest or domestic violence, and withdraw it fully if they are sentenced.

The lower-house National Assembly gave its green light to

the bill on Monday, and so did the upper-house Senate on Tuesday.

Rights groups have criticized loopholes in the judicial system that until now have left children at the potential mercy or even in the custody of an alleged abuser during a drawn-out investigation.



Child protection activists and victims emphasize the need for broader societal action to prevent abuse. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/AFP/FILE**

Under the new law, parents under investigation for alleged sexual abuse or any other crime against their child automatical-

ly see all their parental rights suspended, including being able to look after their child or have them to stay.

This was previously only the case if a probe had been opened into an alleged crime by one parent against the other. — AFP

US actor Olivia Munn reveals breast cancer diagnosis

ACTOR Olivia Munn revealed Wednesday that she had undergone a double mastectomy after being diagnosed with breast cancer.

The “X-Men: Apocalypse” and “The Newsroom” performer took to Instagram to tell followers her news, just days after she attended the Oscars ceremony with her partner, comedian John Mulaney.

The 43-year-old said the cancer had been discovered almost a year ago after her doctor noted she was at elevated risk for the disease and suggested she undergo an additional scan, 12 months before a routine screening.

“I wouldn’t have found my cancer for another year — at my next scheduled mammogram,” she told followers.

After initial tests, a biopsy was ordered.

“The biopsy showed I had Luminal B cancer in both breasts. Luminal B is an aggressive, fast moving cancer,” she wrote, adding that the double mastectomy was performed 30

days later. “I went from feeling completely fine one day, to waking up in a hospital bed after a 10-hour surgery the next,” she wrote in a post, with photos taken apparently during her treatment. — AFP



Hollywood actress Olivia Munn has revealed she has undergone surgery and treatment after being diagnosed with breast cancer last year. Munn at the 2009 Electronic Entertainment Expo. **PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/FILE**

Kyoto seeks to guard geishas from tourist ‘paparazzi’

KYOTO is cracking down after locals complained that Instagram-obsessed tourist “paparazzi” are harassing the Japanese city’s famous, immaculately dressed geisha.

Real-life geisha, or “geiko” (“women of art”) as they are known locally, work for a living — as they have for centuries — in teahouses in Kyoto’s picturesque Gion district where they perform traditional Japanese dance, music and games.

However, like other major tourist attractions around the world such as Bruges in Belgium, Venice in Italy, or Rio de Janeiro’s Sugarloaf Mountain,



Dressing up in kimonos is also popular among tourists excited to get the perfect Kyoto shot. **PHOTO: YUICHI YAMAZAKI / AFP**

locals are fuming.

Residents are fed up with visitors sometimes rudely demanding selfies with or other-

wise bothering the geiko, who wear smart kimonos and white make-up, with their hair styled in an elaborate bun. — AFP

‘Le Freak’s Nile Rodgers wins Swedish music prize

US disco legend Nile Rodgers, whose hits include “Le Freak” and “Good Times”, won Sweden’s 2024 Polar Music Prize with Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen, the jury said on Tuesday.

Marie Ledin, managing

director of the prize, called Rodgers “a ground-breaking pioneer”.

Rodgers, 71, and Bernard Edwards, who made up the band Chic, co-wrote “Le Freak” about not getting into a 1977 New Year’s Eve party at New

York City’s hip disco Club 54, despite a special invitation from legendary singer-supermodel Grace Jones.

The song went on to become the biggest selling single in the history of the iconic Atlantic Records label. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

Global patent filings fall for first time in 14 years: UN

INTERNATIONAL patent filings declined last year for the first time in 14 years due to higher interest rates and economic uncertainty, the UN said Thursday, with India among the few countries bucking the trend.

A total of 272,600 international patents were filed in 2023, marking a 1.8-per cent decline from a year earlier, the United Nations' World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) said in its annual overview.

"We believe that this reflects the currently adverse environment for innovation and entrepreneurial activity," WIPO's chief economist Carsten Fink



The World Intellectual Property Organization is one of the 15 specialized agencies of the United Nations. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/VIOLAINE MARTINE/WIPO**

told reporters in Geneva.

Economic uncertainties and especially higher interest rates last year were seen as key reasons for the decline.

However, Fink stressed, the decline should be seen as "a cyclical phenomenon".

"We think that IP filings will pick up again once the external environment improves."

WIPO Director-General Daren Tang agreed, noting that likely declining inflation rates could provide more business confidence and innovation investments, "setting the stage for a recovery in international IP filings later this year".

"Despite these shorter-term dips, longer-term trends show IP use rising steadily in an increasingly global, digitalized economy and spreading across the globe as economies around the world develop," he said in a statement.

Surging growth in India

WIPO's complex system of registering international patents involves multiple categories, including global trademarks and design filing systems.

In the main category, the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), China continued to top the rankings, with 69,610 filings, slipping 0.6 per cent from 2022. — AFP

Italy plans 1-bln-euro AI investment fund

ITALIAN Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on Tuesday announced a one-billion-euro investment fund to promote artificial intelligence projects and called for "ethical rules" to govern the technology's use.

She was speaking at an event in Rome, two days before

her country hosts a meeting of G7 technology ministers where AI will be top of the agenda.

The new investment fund, which would include new money as well as existing funds, was intended as seed money to attract further investment, she said, with the goal of creating

"an Italian way to develop AI".

Meloni said Italy was also working on its own legislation, complementary to the EU's world-first law currently under development, to "establish some principles" and also identify how to boost homegrown companies. — AFP



The Colosseum is an elliptical amphitheatre in the centre of the city of Rome, Italy, just east of the Roman Forum. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS**

Iran, Turkiye sign MoU to establish free trade area

IRAN and Turkiye have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a free trade area between the two countries, the Head of the Maku Free Zone Organization, Hossein Garousi, said on

Tuesday, adding that the project would be completed in the near future, Ednews reports via Sputnik.

"Studies on the establishment of a joint free economic area between Iran and Turkiye

are ongoing and corresponding memorandums of understanding have been signed. The project will be finalized soon," Garousi said in an interview with Iranian news agency IRNA. — SPUTNIK

Kenyan farmers struggle with erratic weather

IT is another planting season in Kenya, where farmers start preparing their farms in March, coinciding with the onset of the long rains that last until May. However, as farmers across the East African country prepare their farms, uncertainty over the rains lingers in their minds.

The Kenya Meteorological Department, in a recent update, indicated that the rains would be above average throughout the season and may lead to flooding. Additionally, the period would be accompanied by higher-than-normal temperatures, with some regions expected to record temperatures over 30 degrees Celsius.

As farmers prepare their fields for planting, many are

concerned that the heavy rains would harm their crops, while higher temperatures would lead to more pests and diseases.

The erratic weather, including drought, has become typical in Kenya, leaving farmers struggling with the impacts of climate change. "Last year, I lost part of my harvest due to the El Nino rains that started in October and lasted through December. Even before I could recover, we are told that we are going to have another season of enhanced rainfall," said Joseph Korir, a maize farmer in Uasin Gishu County, located about 330 kilometres northwest of Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, in a recent interview with Xinhua. — Xinhua



People walk past a section of a damaged road in Tana River County, Kenya, 1 December 2023. **PHOTO: LI YAHUI/XINHUA**

Boeing says employees must take ‘immediate’ action on safety measures

Boeing is working on a comprehensive plan to address these concerns, as mandated by the FAA’s recent order to implement a quality control framework within 90 days.

UNITED States (US) aeronautics giant Boeing, facing increased scrutiny after a series of safety incidents and manufacturing issues, is directing employees to take “immediate actions” to improve operations, according to a message the company sent to its workforce on Tuesday.

The guidance, from Boeing’s head of commercial aviation Stan Deal, comes after an audit by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) – undertaken after a close call on an Alaska Airlines flight in January – found instances of non-compliance at the manufacturer.

“We have used your feedback, and those from our regulator and customers, to take immediate actions to strengthen our safety and quality,” Deal said.

“These actions are central to a comprehensive plan we will soon deliver to the FAA,” he added, referring to the US regulator’s order earlier this month that Boeing come up with a framework to address quality control within 90 days.

According to Deal, “the vast majority of our audit non-compliances involved not following our approved processes and procedures”. — AFP



Deal stated that feedback from employees, regulators, and customers is being used to strengthen safety and quality measures. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

PwC Australia cuts jobs in wake of tax leak scandal

CONSULTING giant PwC Australia said Wednesday it would slash more than 300 roles as part of a restructuring following a tax leak scandal that plunged the company into turmoil.

The firm was rocked in January last year when it emerged staff had shared information from a confidential government tax briefing to drum up new business.

The scandal sparked a slew of official investigations, forced a string of executives out of the company, and prompted a nation-

wide crackdown on tax advisors.

PwC Australia — one of the Big Four accounting firms — said 329 staff would be made redundant in the next nine months, while 37 partners would be retiring.

The layoffs account for about five per cent of its Australian workforce.

“These changes are being implemented to achieve the optimal structure for our firm moving forward,” the company said in a statement. — AFP

China-Laos Railway handles over 30 mln passenger trips

In both the China and Laos sections of the China-Laos Railway, there has been a notable increase in the average daily number of passenger trains and daily passenger trips.



A China-Laos Railway train departs from Kunmingnan Railway Station in Kunming, southwest China’s Yunnan Province, 14 February 2024. **PHOTO: HU CHAO/XINHUA**

AS of Tuesday, the China-Laos Railway had handled a total of 30.2 million passenger trips since its launch in December 2021, data from the China State Railway Group Co Ltd showed Thursday.

The China section of the railway saw its average daily number of passenger trains

increase from 35 in the initial period to 51, with daily passenger trips soaring from 20,000 to a peak of 103,000. The average daily number of passenger trains handled by its Laos section has increased from four to 12, with daily passenger trips rising from 720 to a peak of 12,808. Looking at transported

cargo, the volume of cross-border transport topped 34.24 million tonnes, including over 7.8 million tonnes of import and export cargo.

The import and export cargo spans over 2,900 categories, including items such as rubber, fertilizers, electrical appliances and automobiles. — Xinhua

Volkswagen’s 2023 profits rise, outlook for this year cautious

GERMAN auto giant Volkswagen yesterday reported a forecast-beating rise in profits for 2023, boosted by higher vehicle deliveries, but gave a cautious outlook for this year.

Net profit rose 13.1 per cent to EUR17.9 billion (USD19.6 billion) from the previous year. Sales rose more than 15 per cent to EUR322.3 billion.

Analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet had forecast profits to come in at EUR15.7 billion, slightly lower than 2022.

In all, Volkswagen delivered some 9.2 million cars to customers in 2023, an improvement of 12 per cent. This was

the first increase in deliveries following three straight years of declines, after production

was disrupted by shortages of key components amid supply chain issues. — AFP



Chief Executive Officer of German carmaker Volkswagen Oliver Blume **PHOTO: AFP**

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

SpaceX to fire up world's biggest rocket in huge test of Mars ambitions

The Super Heavy Booster generates 16.7 million pounds (74.3 Meganewtons) of thrust, nearly double that of NASA's Space Launch System (SLS), which is the world's second most powerful rocket and is currently operational.



People gather as SpaceX Starship spacecraft prototype is transported from the launch site ahead of the SpaceX Starship third flight test from Starbase in Boca Chica, Texas. **PHOTO: CHANDAN KHANNA / AFP**

SPACEX plans on Thursday to attempt another launch of Starship, the world's most powerful rocket that is vital to NASA's plans for landing astronauts on the Moon later this decade — and Elon Musk's hopes of eventually colonizing Mars.

Two previous attempts have ended in spectacular explosions, though that's not necessarily a bad thing: the company has adopted a rapid trial-and-error approach in order to accelerate development, and the strategy has brought success in the past.

Blastoff from the company's launch site in southeast Texas can occur beginning at 7 am local time (1200 GMT), after the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) gave its go-ahead on Wednesday.

SpaceX will run a webcast on its website starting thirty minutes earlier.

When the two stages of Star-

ship are combined, the rocket stands 397 feet (121 metres) tall — beating the Statue of Liberty by a comfortable 90 feet.

Its Super Heavy Booster produces 16.7 million pounds (74.3 Meganewtons) of thrust, almost double that of the world's second most powerful rocket, NASA's Space Launch System (SLS) — though the latter is now fully operational.

Starship's third launch test in its fully-stacked configuration is set to be its most ambitious yet. Besides going higher and farther, objectives include opening and closing Starship's payload door to test its ability to deliver satellites and other cargo into space.

SpaceX also aims to re-light the ship's engines in space, and perform an onboard test that will help pave the way for future Starships to refuel one another in orbit. — AFP

Japan high court rules same-sex marriage ban unconstitutional

A Japanese high court ruled Thursday the country's lack of legal recognition of same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, in a move likely to further mount pressure on the government to do more to protect sexual minorities.

The Sapporo High Court upheld the lower court's landmark verdict in 2021 that said non-recognition of same-sex

marriage violates the right to equality protected under the Constitution but rejected a total of six million yen (\$40,600) in damages sought by three same-sex couples in Hokkaido against the state for emotional distress.

The ruling, the first by a high court among six lawsuits filed at five district courts questioning the government's

failure to allow same-sex marriage, said the unacceptance not only violates Article 14 on the right to equality but also Article 24, which says marriage shall be only on the mutual consent of "both sexes".

The court stated for the first time that Article 24 can be understood as guaranteeing marriage between individuals of the same sexes.

In the lawsuit, the government has argued that the Constitution presumes marriage is only between heterosexual couples.

In rejecting the plaintiffs' claims for damages, the court said, "It cannot be said that discussions at the Diet... regarding provisions not allowing same-sex marriage are clearly in violation of the Constitution."

One of the plaintiffs told a press conference in Sapporo that she was "encouraged by the forward-thinking" ruling. — Kyodo



Plaintiffs hold up a banner following the ruling on same-sex marriage at the Tokyo District Court on 14 March 2024. **PHOTO: KYODO**

OpenAI partners with Le Monde and Prisa Media

OpenAI has partnered with French newspaper Le Monde and Spanish media group Prisa Media to develop news-related features for its ChatGPT AI tool. The partnership allows OpenAI to use content from Le Monde and Prisa Media publications to train its AI models.

OPENAI on Wednesday announced partnerships with French daily Le Monde and Spanish conglomerate Prisa Media, saying it intends to develop news-related uses of its ChatGPT artificial intelligence tool.

OpenAI will be able to use content from Le Monde and Prisa Media publications including El Pais, Cinco Dias, and El HuffPost to train the models powering its artificial intelligence, the San Francisco-based company said in an online post.

"In partnership with Le Monde and Prisa Media, our goal is to enable ChatGPT users around the world to connect with the news in new ways that



CEO of French mass media company Le Monde Louis Dreyfus, poses during a photo session in Paris on 13 February 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

are interactive and insightful," OpenAI chief operating officer Brad Lightcap said in the post. — AFP

SPORTS



Myanmar winger Hein Htet Aung to play on loan at Negeri Sembilan FC

MYANMAR national team winger Hein Htet Aung will play again on loan at Malaysian club Negeri Sembilan FC, as stated by the football club.

Hein Htet Aung was loaned out to Malaysian Super League Club Negeri Sembilan FC for a season after his parent club, Selangor, signed a contract extension earlier this year.

The Myanmar winger went to Negeri Sembilan FC on loan

for half of the last season and was able to play well, so the team recruited him again on loan. Hein Htet Aung has been playing for Selangor FC since 2021.

Two Myanmar players will play in the Malaysian Super League next season. The midfielder Kyaw Min Oo will play for PDRM, while winger Hein Htet Aung will play for Negeri Sembilan FC. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

Myanmar football star Hein Htet Aung is seen in action. **PHOTO: NEGERI SEMBILAN FC**



B-girl Liu Qingyi performs en route to winning breaking gold at the Asian Games last year. Liu is expected to be among the Chinese competitors at May's Olympic Qualifier Series in Shanghai. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Shanghai to stage Olympic Qualifier Series in May

A total of 464 athletes are expected to compete, with 288 already confirmed, including Olympic and world champions in BMX freestyle, sport climbing, and breaking.

SHANGHAI will hold the Olympic Qualifier Series for BMX freestyle, skateboarding, breaking and sport climbing in mid-May at the Huangpu Riverside.

According to the organizing committee, the preliminary rounds will take place on 16 and 17 May, and the final rounds will be held on 18 and 19 May, incorporating the concept of “youth, urban and openness”.

A total of 464 athletes are expected to compete in the event, and so far 288 have confirmed their participation in BMX freestyle, sport climbing and breaking (participants for skateboarding to be confirmed by World Skate this week), including a number of Olympic champions and world champions. The organizers said that during the

event, a festival that combines music, art, fashion, street dance and other elements will also be staged in the competition venue.

Tickets are expected to go on sale in early April, with two types of Festival Tickets and Competition Tickets on offer.

“The Series offers a new Olympic immersive experience, where sport is blended with music, art, and culture in a single Urban Park.

“The Huangpu Riverside venue has it all, it is a fantastic place and perfect setup for the inaugural edition of the Olympic Qualifier Series,” said Pierre Fratter-Bardy, associate director of Olympic Games Strategy and Development of International Olympic Committee. — Xinhua

Ito left out of Japan squad amid sexual assault claim

JAPAN coach Hajime Moriyasu said Thursday he wanted to “protect” winger Junya Ito by leaving him out of his squad to face North Korea in home and away World Cup qualifiers this month.

Ito left the Asian Cup last month after Japanese police said he was under investigation over an alleged sexual assault in Osaka last year.

Ito denies the allegation and is suing his accusers for 200 million yen (\$1.3 million) in damages.

The 30-year-old has since

been playing regularly for French club Reims but Moriyasu left him out of his squad to face North Korea in Tokyo on 21 March and Pyongyang five days later.

“I tried to imagine what the surrounding environment would have been like for him in Japan and I didn't think it would be one that would allow him to live and play football in peace,” local media reported Moriyasu as saying.

“It wasn't just him — I didn't think the whole team would have been able to go about their busi-

ness in peace.”

The allegation against Ito emerged as Japan were preparing to play Bahrain in the last 16 at the Asian Cup. He was an unused substitute for the game and left the squad before their 2-1 quarter-final defeat to Iran. Ito has played 54 games for Japan, scoring 13 goals.

“Thinking about the impact on his family, who are the most important, I thought it was best not to call him up now,” Moriyasu added.

“I passed him over to protect him”. — AFP

Messi, Suarez fire Miami into CONCACAF quarters

LUIS Suarez and Lionel Messi were on target as Inter Miami marched into the last eight of the CONCACAF Champions Cup with a 3-1 (5-3 aggregate) win over Nashville on Thursday.

Messi set up Suarez for the eighth-minute opener and then the Argentine found the target himself in the 23rd minute. But the eight-times Ballon d'Or winner was substituted in the 50th minute before his replacement Robert

Taylor made sure of the victory with a 63rd-minute header.

Inter Miami coach Gerardo “Tata” Martino said Messi's withdrawal, when he did not appear to limp or be in discomfort, was due to a concern about his hamstring. “He has an overload in his right hamstring. So we didn't want to take any risks. We tried to see if he could hold on a bit longer but it was bothering him and we preferred to take him out of the



Lionel Messi celebrates with Luis Suarez after scoring in Inter Miami's 3-1 CONCACAF Champions Cup win over Nashville on Wednesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

game,” he said.

“I imagine that for Sunday's game (at DC United) he is not going to be available,” said Martino.

The first-leg in Tennessee had seen Nashville take a two-goal lead before goals from Messi and Suarez inspired a comeback for a 2-2 draw.

And it was the former Barcelona pair that proved to be the difference again as Miami took control from the outset. — AFP



BRICS is regional integration coordinator: Lavrov



BRICS is the acronym for an emerging-market cooperative mechanism that initially includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. This aerial photo taken on 4 May 2023 shows a cargo ship carrying corn imported from South Africa at a port in south China's Guangdong Province. **PHOTO: LIU DAWEI/ XINHUA**

Lavrov emphasized BRICS' role in shaping fair and equal mechanisms for international relations amid intensifying integration processes globally and regionally.

BRICS' working mechanism helps facilitate integration processes in different regions, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Wednesday.

"BRICS ... acts as a potential coordinator of integration processes that are taking place at the regional level," Lavrov said during a meeting at a Moscow-based think tank. As integration processes are intensifying both at regional and global levels, BRICS, already a truly global association, can undoubtedly be a driving force behind effective efforts aimed at forming equal and just mechanisms for the regulation of international relations, said Lavrov.

BRICS is the acronym for an emerging-market cooperative mechanism that initially includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. On 1 January Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Ethiopia joined BRICS, doubling its members from five to 10.

Russia holds the rotating chair of BRICS for 2024. — Xinhua

UK to ban foreign state ownership of British newspapers

THE UK announced Wednesday that it plans to bar overseas governments from owning British newspapers, a move that could scupper the contentious Abu Dhabi-led takeover of the Telegraph Media Group. Stephen Parkinson, a media minister, announced in the upper-chamber House of Lords that the Conservative government would amend proposed legislation so that it "prevents foreign state ownership of newspapers". It follows pressure over the proposed takeover of the Daily Telegraph newspaper and Spectator magazine by a joint venture 75 per cent owned by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, vice president and deputy prime minister of the United Arab Emirates. — AFP

oil demand grows amid Red Sea shipping disruptions: IEA

GLOBAL oil demand is forecast to grow more than expected due to a brighter US economic outlook and rising fuel needs of ships rerouted away from the Red Sea, the International Energy Agency said Thursday.

Commercial ships have been taking longer and costlier journeys around the southern tip of Africa to avoid attacks by Yemen's Huthi rebels in the Red Sea, a vital international trade route. The IEA said world oil demand growth is now forecast to increase by 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd) this year, 110,000 bpd higher than in its previous monthly market report.

"Disruptions to interna-

tional trade routes in the wake of turmoil in the Red Sea are lengthening shipping distances and leading to faster vessel speeds, increasing bunker demand," the IEA said, using a term for the fuel needs of ships.

Global demand is also driven by the "comparatively buoyant economy" of the United States where oil consumption is gaining momentum on rising petrochemical operations, the IEA added. The annual growth in demand, however, remains sharply lower than in 2023, when it reached 2.3 million bpd, on the back of energy efficiency gains and the use of electric vehicles, the Paris-based agency said.



Working oil pumpjacks dot the landscape on oilfields on the outskirts of Taft, Kern County, California, on 21 September 2023. **PHOTO: IMAGE USED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSE /FREDERIC J. BROWN / AFP**

Total demand is forecast to reach 103.2 million bpd in 2024 compared to 101.8 million bpd last year. — AFP