

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

Myanmar, India to forge friendly ties, deepen defence cooperation

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Mr Vinay Kumar, Indian Ambassador to Myanmar, who will return to India after completing his tour of duty in Myanmar at the SAC Chairman's office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, they cordially discussed matters pertaining to bilateral relations, cooperation in trade, economic and investment sectors, cotton production, pharmaceutical manufacturing, promotion of military cooperation between two countries, health assistance for Myanmar Tatmadaw and people, fostering peace

and stability in border areas, remarkable progress of Myanmar on its path to democracy and preparations for successful holding of a free and fair election.

Also present at the meeting were Council Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, Deputy Prime Minister Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe and officials. — MNA/KTZH

SAC Chair PM Senior General Min Aung Hlaing greets Indian Ambassador Vinay Kumar in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.



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Taninthayi Agriculture Dept planning to set up edible oil refinery plant

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Yangon circular train services temporarily suspended during Thingyan Festival

Myanmar exports agri-products worth over US\$3.5B in 11.5 months

MYANMAR'S agricultural exports amounted to US\$3.5 billion in the past 11 and a half months of the current financial year 2023-2024, beginning 1 April,



Neatly organized containers at Yangon Port along the Yangon River.

according to the Ministry of Commerce.

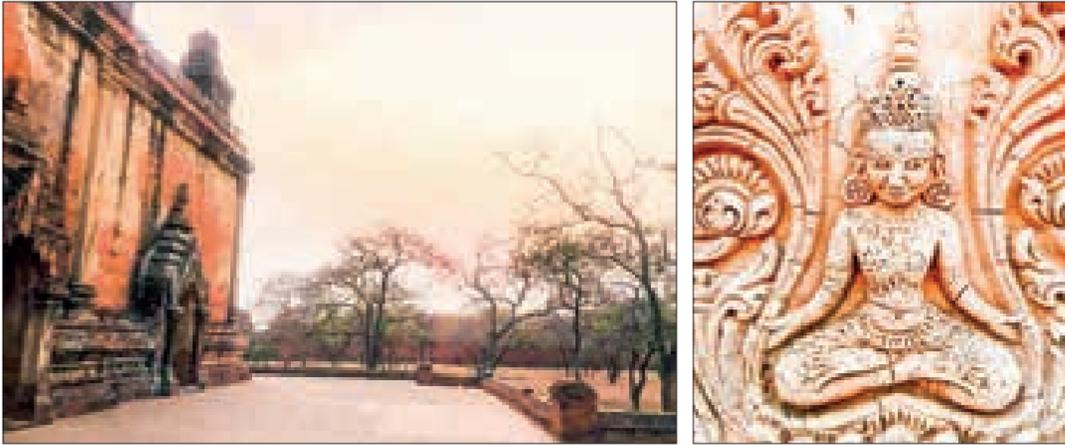
The figures plunged from \$3.75 billion recorded in the corresponding period last FY, reflecting a drop of \$231.92 million.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital goods, intermediate goods, raw materials imported by the CMP enterprises and consumer goods.

Myanmar has been implementing the National Export Strategy (NES) 2020-2025 in order to bolster exports. The priority sectors of the NES comprise agricultural production, garment and apparel, industrial and electronic device, fishery business, forest product, digital manufacturing and service, logistic service, quality management, trade information service, innovation and entrepreneurship sectors. — NN/KK

NATIONAL

Over 20 must-see spots beyond pagodas, MoRAC director reveals



Some artistic works in pagodas and stupas that visitors have hardly seen.

TRAVELLERS to the ancient cultural zone of Bagan should visit over 20 pagodas, stupas and fine arts sites in addition to famous pagodas, suggested U Kyaw Myo Win, director of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture (Bagan Branch).

Just as big sandstones were used as lintel beams in Cambodia's Angkor Wat temple, it is striking to see the similar use of wooden beams in the place of lintel in the western gate of Bagan's Nagayon pagoda.

"Putting one brick layer another on the beam is so artistic that it highlights the skill of the architects of the Bagan

era in Southeast Asia over 1,000 years ago," he said.

Moreover, Pagoda No 1026 inside the Lawka Nanda reserve forest, located in a very remote and dense jungle, has a cracked side wall, and he went there himself to survey the urgent need for repair based on the information given by a friend, he added.

"When you arrive in Bagan, other places you should visit and observe include Nat Hlaung Kyaung temple, Shwegugyi, Pahtoethamya, Watkyi Lake Gupyaukgyi, Myinkaba Gupyaukgyi, Phayathonzu, Thanpynswa, Tayote Pyay Min or King Nara Thiha Patae, Thambula,

Meenyeinkon pagoda, Zanthee pagoda group, Wuthtanataw pagoda group, Myaybontha pagoda group, Khayminga pagoda group, Yaohnna pagoda group, Inn Phayagyi, Hsinphyushin pagoda compound, Nagayon pagoda, Apelyadana and Phyatsa Shwegu, Kyaukku and Kyaukmyatmaw," he suggested.

Visitors to Bagan have rarely been there as they have been busy paying homage to famous pagodas, and these suggested places are suitable not only for pilgrimage but also for observing and enjoying the fantastic ancient fine arts of the Bagan era, he added. — MT/ZN

Jungle adventure tour to Kyaiktiyo Wildlife Sanctuary available

FOREST House Camp, the organizer of trips, offers jungle adventure tours to Kyaukpyu Mountain and Natthamee Waterfall within the Kyaiktiyo Wildlife Sanctuary, located in Kyaikto Township, Mon State.

Travellers who wish to visit the aforementioned locations must first go to Kimpun Camp at the foot of Kyaiktiyo Mountain in Kyaikto Township, Mon State, to arrange adventure tour services with the Forest House Camp company.

"We will pick you up at Kimpun Camp. From there, you will proceed to Kyaukpyu Mountain Camp and spend the night on the mountain. Breakfast will be served in the morning. At Kyaukpyu Mountain, you will

enjoy a stunning view of Kyaikto Township and the Sittoung River, and you will have the opportunity to witness both sunset and sunrise scenes. After breakfast, we will continue the journey to Forest Camp. From there, we will take you to other waterfalls and recreation areas. Dinner is included. You may bring your own food, but please note that beef, alcohol, and tobacco are not allowed," said U Aung Pyae Sone, owner of Forest House Camp.

During the trip, arrangements will be made for sleeping bags, tents, and hammocks for overnight camping in the jungle. Additionally, diving can be enjoyed at the Natthamee Waterfall. — ASH/TKO



Kyaukpyu Mountain and Natthamee Waterfall seen in Kyaiktiyo Wildlife Sanctuary.

Moeyungyi Sanctuary hosts 30,000+ wintering birds, 123 species

MORE than 30,000 birds and 123 species of wintering birds from the Central Asian Flyway and the East Asia-Australasian Flyway have arrived in Moeyungyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary in Bago Region, according to Daw Thin Thin Yu, staff officer of Moeyungyi Wildlife Park.

Bird species from the North Pole of the world enter their wintering pastures in different countries from nine routes, and the wintering birds from the Central Asian Flyway and East Asia-Australasian Flyway usually enter Myanmar in mid-October before retreating to the North Pole in early April.

"Moeyungyi Sanctuary and its surrounding wetlands are frequented by wintering birds every year as they migrate from two major global flyways. Myanmar

offers abundant feed and water resources, providing ample grazing grounds for these birds, which is why they consistently return to hibernate here. During winter, the northern regions of the world freeze over, and daylight hours shorten, resulting in scarcity of food and water. Thus, they seek refuge in countries with plentiful resources. Our department en-

sures the preservation of these birds to sustain their population over time. As per the list compiled in February of this year, there are 123 bird species, with more than 34,000 individuals living and grazing. Among the bird species frequently observed in Myanmar, Asian Openbill, Anatidae, water chicken, Andaman Teal, and black-winged stilt birds have en-

tered the Moeyungyi Sanctuary early this winter," said Daw Thin Thin Yu.

According to the list collected last February, there are 53 species of water birds and 70 species of indigenous birds, totalling 123 species, with 16,600 hibernating birds and 18,000 endemic birds, making a total of 34,600 birds.

Wintering birds migrate

into Myanmar through Siberia, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Russia, China, and 13 other countries along the East Asia-Asia-Australasian Flyway, while a total of 307 bird species are also entering Southeast Asian countries via the Central Asian Flyway, traversing through 30 countries.

Moeyungyi Sanctuary covers an area of 25,600 acres and was established as the Moeyungyi Nature Reserve in 1988 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Birdwatching enthusiasts and researchers can observe the highest number of wintering birds from November to February at Moeyungyi Sanctuary. Located six furlongs away from Pynpongyi village, along the Yangon-Mandalay Highway, it is situated 42 miles from Bago City. — ASH/TH



Some hibernating birds are seen at Moeyungyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary in Bago Region.



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing addresses the State Administration Council meeting 2/2024 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Initiating quick-win processes, such as agriculture and livestock sectors, will contribute to the development of manufacturing, said Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

The State Administration Council meeting 2/2024 took place at the meeting hall of the Chairman of the State Administration Council Office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon, with an address by SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

In his speech, the Senior General underlined that the SAC could pull up the State economy from the minus to the plus trend since its establishment, but it needs to achieve deserved success as expected. As the incomes from the trade process comprise the manufacturing of products and the production of natural resources, it is important to manufacture products, he noted.

He said the current government has been emphasizing the production of agriculture and livestock sectors concerning the majority of citizens and the most fundamental situation of manufacturing in the nation by encouraging all to meet the target production of paddy, pulses and beans, oil crops and industrial crops.

The Senior General underscored that although Myanmar exports oil and natural gas to China and Thailand, these West-

Quick-win processes in agriculture and livestock sectors to contribute to manufacturing development

Salient points from the speech of the Senior General at SAC Meeting 2/2024

- Initiating quick-win processes, such as agriculture and livestock sectors, will contribute to development of manufacturing.
- The western countries impose sanctions against Myanmar for not spending the incomes from export of oil and natural gas.
- The government could pay back US\$2.2 billion of foreign debts within three years.
- People from the regions with needs of peace and stability have to join hands with security forces as public participation is of importance in restoring peace and stability.

ern countries impose sanctions against Myanmar for not spending their income on the export of oil and natural gas. But, the government could develop the nation to some extent amid these difficulties.

But, he continued that during the three years, the government could pay back US\$2.2 billion of foreign debts, the majority of which were based on capital finance borrowed by previously successive governments.

In more than 14 million acres of monsoon paddy, he highlighted that although mon-

soon paddy is expected to yield 100 baskets per acre, it actually produces more than 78 baskets per acre of monsoon paddy in the 2023-24 financial year, declining 22 baskets than the target.

The Senior General expressed his view that if other main crops, such as maize, pulses, beans, and other crops, can meet the target production, the State's economy will increase significantly.

He noted that Myanmar's main business depends on agriculture and livestock industries to manufacture value-add-

ed products in the agro-based industry. He elaborated that if existing sound foundations and human resources are utilized for the development of agriculture and livestock, production will change.

The Senior General stressed the need to allow the extraction and sale of underground and aboveground natural resources and forest resources under relevant disciplines.

He clearly said that as the government is striving to ensure a systematic multiparty democratic system, armed terror acts

cannot be deployed on the route of democracy.

The Senior General reviewed all discussions and stressed the need for people from the regions with needs of peace and stability to join hands with security forces, as public participation is essential in restoring peace and stability.

Council members reported on development for agriculture tasks, needs of farmers, plans for sharpening the patriotic spirit of student youths during the long summer holidays, development of the tourism industry and fostering peace and stability in relevant regions.

SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win discussed the quick process of restoring peace and stability in the regions with public participation.

The meeting was also attended by SAC Vice Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win, Secretary Lt-Gen Aung Lin Dwe, Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, council members and officials. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Senior General attends 2024 Inter-State/Region U-25 Men's Football finals



SAC Chair Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presents the championship trophy to the Yangon Region team at yesterday's tournament.

THE final match plus awarding ceremony of the 2024 Inter-State and Region U-25 Men's Football Tournament was held at Wunna Theikdhi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing enjoyed the matches and joined the awarding ceremony. Yangon Region team beat

Kachin State team 2-1 in the final match. As both teams were advancing to the finals, they put pressure on each other and competed fiercely, but they did not score a goal until the end of

the game, so they continued to play overtime. In the 4th minute of overtime, the Yangon Region team took the lead. Afterwards, the Kachin State team fought hard to regain the equalizer at

the 24-minute mark.

In the penalty shootout, the Yangon Region team defeated the Kachin State team 3-2.

Next, an awarding ceremony was held, and officials presented cash awards plus medals to the best athletes, the fourth-placed Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory team, the third-placed Kayin State team, and the second-placed Kachin State team.

State Administration Council Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo presented individual medals to the player of the Champion team, Yangon. The Senior General then congratulated the Yangon Region team, who won the first prize, presented them with a cash award and a pennant trophy, and greeted the athletes warmly.

The 2024 Inter-State and Region U-25 Men's Football Tournament has held since 15 March, with the aim of developing Myanmar football and bringing out outstanding Myanmar national team athletes. — MNA/KZL

Central Committee addresses illegal immigration concerns

THE Central Committee on Repatriation of Illegal Immigrants held meeting 1/2024 at Areindama Hall of the Headquarters of Myanmar Police Force in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

State Administration Council Member Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, who also chairs the central committee, attended the meeting alongside responsible officials.

The chairman stated that since the committee's establishment on 8 November 2023, it has played a crucial role in identifying, evaluating, and fa-

ilitating the repatriation of illegal migrants to their respective home countries in accordance with the law.

The authorities handle illegal immigrants under the Myanmar Immigration (Emergency Provisions) Act from 1947. The committee has facilitated the relocation of 53,089 undocumented migrants from 24 countries between 5 October 2023 and 25 March 2024. Among them, 51,010 were Chinese nationals.

Considering the diplomatic ties between Myanmar and the



Union Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae presides over the meeting 1/2024 of the Central Committee on Repatriation of Illegal Immigrants yesterday.

respective countries, as well as various circumstances, such as

immigrants being trafficked or coerced into criminal activities,

the committee refrained from taking punitive action against any individuals. Instead, it collaborated with the relevant embassies to facilitate the relocation of these immigrants.

As of 25 March, 84 undocumented foreigners who were detained in Myanmar prisons have been returned to their respective countries.

After the chairman's speech, attendees provided updates on ongoing processes. The meeting concluded with the chairman delivering closing remarks. — MNA/NT

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NATIONAL



The Indian ambassador calls on Deputy Prime Minister Union Foreign Affairs Minister U Than Swe yesterday.

DPM MoFA Union Minister receives Indian Ambassador

DEPUTY Prime Minister and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe received Mr Vinay Kumar, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of India to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, who has completed his tour of duty in Myanmar, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the call, the Deputy Prime Minister and Union Min-

ister commended the Ambassador's contributions towards further strengthening the bilateral ties during his tour of duty. They cordially exchanged views on matters pertaining to the promotion of the traditional bonds of friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation, as well as the progress of the ongoing development projects between the two countries. — MNA

Plans underway for Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan

THE Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan Organizing Committee and subcommittees held a coordination meeting on Friday at the Ministry of Information.

At the meeting, Chairman of Organizing Committee Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn said 20 decisions were made at the 1st committee meeting held on 15 March.

This year, the event will present entertainment programmes with Korean K-Pop artistes and famous artistes, in addition to one pavilion of the

Russian Embassy, and the Myanmar-China Friendship Association will also participate in it. The Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan aims to bring happiness to government employees and the people. Moreover, it is a signal to the unity of ministries and staff, as well as the people and the government.

He then called for the active participation of people and departmental staff in celebrating the Thingyan Festival.

Then, Committee Vice-Chair Nay Pyi Taw Mayor U Than Tun Oo, secretary of the committee Deputy Minister for

Information U Ye Tint and project director of Brilliant Aura Co Ltd, Coordinator for the Walking Thingyan MRTV Deputy Director-General U Myo Myint Aung and relevant departmental officials discussed the preparations, designated locations for pavilions, security measures, access to water, electricity, regulatory matters, group dances and healthcare services. Discussions continued entertainment of female vocalist Nika Dubik of Tavrida-Art of Russian Federation together Myanmar vocalists. — MNA/KTZH



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn chairs the coordination meeting for Nay Pyi Taw Walking Thingyan.

Machine-made brick trade thriving despite slight price drop

THE price of machine-made brick, which has been widely used for construction these years, has fallen slightly, but the sales have been good, according to the market.

The machine-made brick sale has been better as a result of an increase in the number of sellers, and the decline in price is a result of a growing number of brick manufacturers and an abundance of supply. Demand and supply are in balance.

“The use of machine-made bricks is larger than cement brick. Machine-made brick is stronger. Some manufacture bricks in summer and pile them in monsoon. Previously, we sold about ten truckloads, but now we sell just about five

truckloads. Actually, sales are normally active during this period. Normally, we predict the sales are better during monsoon

season. In the monsoon season, the price of brick normally gets higher, K20-K30, but raw material production becomes low

because bricks can't be dried when it rains. Now, the supply is larger, and the number of sellers is also larger. But the price de-

clines,” said an official from Ko Aung Zaw Min machine-made brick trading in Taikkyi township.

Typically, machine-made brick prices are high during the monsoon.

“Machine-brick production has about 10,000 in monsoon season, and the current production is about 30,000. For example, brick manufacturers make 100 bricks in monsoon season and 300-400 bricks in summer, so the price gets higher and the sale is better in monsoon season,” he said. — Thit Taw/ZS



Workers seen at the brick production site.

NATIONAL



The photo shows the water monitoring sensor.

Expansion of water monitoring sensors planned

THE Department of Meteorology and Hydrology states that water monitoring devices will be installed nationwide in due course to aid with flood control.

Although both human and automatic systems are utilized to monitor water levels, most river water monitoring stations currently rely on human operation rather than automation.

“There are 18 river water monitoring stations along the Ayeyawady River. The river’s

conditions are then monitored and reported every day. It is typically tested at 6:30 am, 12:00 pm, and 6:30 pm three times a day. Recently, plans have been made to install water monitoring sensors at all stations due to the necessity for real-time information due to changing weather conditions. Here, some stations will need to be replaced and installed, while some will need to be installed brand-new. This financial year, it will be put

into effect,” said an official from the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology.

As a river water monitoring work, the water monitoring works launch at 14 significant rivers across the country, including 18 river water monitoring stations along the Ayeyawady River, eight stations along the Chindwin River, one station along Sittoung River and two stations along the Thanlwin River. — ASH/MKKS

Bayintnaung market records 3-day 4,800 tonnes of black gram transaction

A total of 200 containers (4,800 tonnes) of black grams comprising 160 containers of black grams (Fair Average Quality) and 40 containers of black grams (Special Quality) were transacted at the Bayintnaung commodity wholesale centre in the past three days of market opening.

The black gram was offered K3 million per tonne. The total trading value of 4,800 tonnes was K14.4 billion.

Additionally, 95 containers (2,280 tonnes) were also traded between 18 and 23 March. The trading volumes were registered at 65 containers of black grams in January, 160 in February and 560 in March, respectively, totalling 785 containers.

Similarly, 280 containers of pigeon peas were transacted, with 155 in January, 50 in February and 75 in March. The non-governmental organizations of pulses notified the traders not to attempt market manipulation.



A consumer seen evaluating black grams at the market.

India, the leading importer of Myanmar’s pulse, is also controlling the market to stop the price rise potential.

The pulse price is relatively stable in March. Black gram price was only K2.9 million per tonne in the last week of March, plunging from K3.5 million per tonne on 5 February. The prices stood at K3,830 per viss of green grams and K5,425-K5,700 per viss of chickpeas on 28 March. — TWA/KK

Major rivers, including Ayeyawady, to rise in April

THE Department of Meteorology and Hydrology stated that the current water level may rise in some major rivers, including the Ayeyawady River, in April.

It is stated that the water level of the Ayeyawady River

may rise by three to four and a half feet in the townships of Myitkyina, Bhamo, Shwegu, Katha, Thabeikkyin, Mandalay, Sagaing, Myinmu, Pakokku, and NyaungU. Additionally, in the townships of Chauk, Minbu,

Magway, Aunglan, Pyay, Seiktha, Hinthada, and Zalun, the water level may increase by one and a half to two and a half feet.

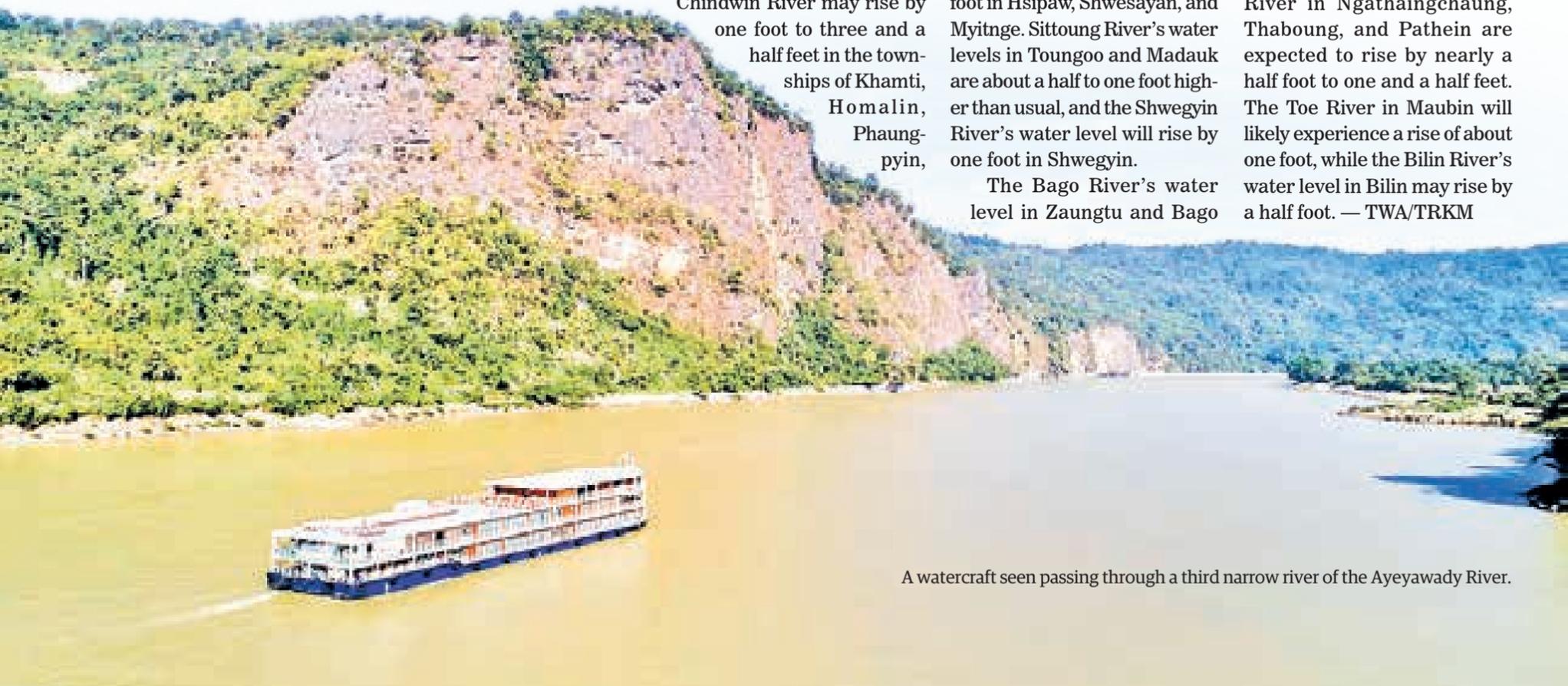
Additionally, the department’s statement mentioned that the water level of the Chindwin River may rise by one foot to three and a half feet in the townships of Khamti, Homalin, Phaungpyin,

Mawlaik, Kalewa, Mingin, Kani, and Monywa.

Similarly, the water level of Myittha River can rise by one foot in Kalay Township. The Dohtawadi River is expected to increase by about a half to one foot in Hsipaw, Shwesayan, and Myitnge. Sittoung River’s water levels in Toungoo and Madauk are about a half to one foot higher than usual, and the Shwegyin River’s water level will rise by one foot in Shwegyin.

The Bago River’s water level in Zaungtu and Bago

may increase by approximately a half foot to one and a half feet. Meanwhile, the Thanlwin River in Hpa-an may rise by one and a half feet, the Thaungyin River near Myawady by a half foot, and the Ngawun River in Ngathaingchaung, Thaboung, and Pathein are expected to rise by nearly a half foot to one and a half feet. The Toe River in Maubin will likely experience a rise of about one foot, while the Bilin River’s water level in Bilin may rise by a half foot. — TWA/TRKM



A watercraft seen passing through a third narrow river of the Ayeyawady River.

Taninthayi Agriculture Dept planning to set up edible oil refinery plant

THE importation of low-quality cooking oil is spotted in the domestic market. Subsequently, Taninthayi Region's Agriculture Department stepped up to set up an edible oil refinery plant to ensure the quality and safety of edible oil.

Myanmar brings in 400,000-600,000 tonnes of palm oil from international markets. Yet, some are found to have low grades.

"As palm oil is cheaper, low-income people mostly consume it. As long as it is processed and qualified to be sold in the market, palm oil is safe to consume. Some unscrupulous traders import palm oil of low quality through illegitimate trade. Some utilized hazardous substances to prevent the palm oil from solidifying, posing health risks. Palm oil is widely consumed worldwide. However, it is important to test iodine value to measure saturation and unsaturation levels in oil," U Thein Soe, deputy head of the department, said.

"Oil palm can be grown only in Taninthayi Region. Myanmar needs an edible oil refinery to produce healthy cooking oil. The expansion of oil palm cultivation has land issues. We have to consider some factors: forest conservation, substituting unprofitable old rubber trees with oil palm, infertile land, and vacant, virgin and fallow land. The most commercially valued tree is oil palm, which is commonly found in Thailand and Malaysia. Growers are not interested in oil palm as the market is about 200 miles away from them.



Panoramic view of thriving oil crops plantation for edible oil production.



High transport costs hindered them from growing oil palm. To tackle this problem, a plan to establish an oil refinery in Myeik District is underway," he added.

According to the Agriculture De-

partment, there are six crude edible oil processing factories in the Dawei, Myeik, Bokpyin, and Kawthoung districts.

"To construct a crude oil factory with a production capacity of 30 tonnes per hour, it costs about K5,000 million. For an edible oil refinery, the capital is estimated at US\$15 million. That plant can produce 150 tonnes of refined oil, along with 30 tonnes of crude oil," an official of Myeik district elaborated.

The oil palm is primarily found in

Myeik, Bokpyin and Kawthoung districts. The refinery and crude oil processing plants can promote oil palm cultivation. Growers suggested that the factories should be developed near the oil palm cultivation areas.

Taninthayi Region has favourable weather and land conditions to achieve oil palm cultivation, attracting both domestic and foreign investors. There are almost 400,000 acres of oil palm in the region. — Myint Oo (Myeik)/EM

Diesel price slightly dips in domestic market

DIESEL price slightly decreased to K2,400 per litre of diesel and K2,445 per litre of premium diesel on 29 March.

The prices stood at K2,435 per litre of diesel and K2,480 per litre of premium

diesel on 28 March.

Domestic fuel prices are closely tied to the price index set by Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS), the pricing basis for many refined products in southeast Asia,

according to the Supervisory Committee on Oil Import, Storage and Distribution of Fuel Oil. The diesel oil prices hit the highest of K3,245 for premium diesel and K3,330 for diesel in August 2023.

The committee is, therefore, steering the market to ensure price stability and fuel oil security. Under the supervision of the committee, the Petroleum Products Regulatory Department has been issuing daily reference prices to ensure price stability for energy consumers.

The committee is inspecting the fuel stations to see whether they are overcharging. The authorities are taking action against those retailers of fuel stations under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law 2017 if they are found overcharging rather than the set reference rate. As per the statement, 90 per cent

of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally. Domestic fuel prices are highly correlated with international prices. The State is steering the market to mitigate the losses experienced by importers, sellers, and energy consumers. Consequently, the government is trying to distribute the oil at a reasonable price compared to those of regional countries.

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



Cars queue up for refuelling at Yangon petrol station.

OPINION

Balance environment for living and non-living beings

MOUNT Popa stands as an oasis amidst Central Myanmar's arid lands, adorned with lush greenery and a diverse array of flora, including medicinal plants tracing back through successive eras. Embedded in the myths and oral traditions of locals, Mount Popa is believed to be a haven for those with supernatural abilities, hermits, and seekers of life's essence.

Environmentalists rejoice as the government announces the establishment of the first national Geopark in Mount Popa Park, located in Kyaukpadaung Township of the Mandalay Region, on 20 March 2024. This declaration fills the local populace with pride, recognizing their region as a national geopark within the heart of central Myanmar.

The Geopark encompasses intangible cultural treasures ranging from geological marvels and biodiversity hotspots to ancient cultural heritage sites, social traditions, local products, and natural splendours.

Establishing geoparks across the nation not only showcases the country's commitment to environmental conservation but also provides habitats for biodiversity and preserves cultural heritage, contributing to the delicate balance of the natural environment in Myanmar. If so, the geoparks will improve the climatic conditions of all parts of the nation.

Preserving these invaluable assets requires systematic conservation efforts coupled with public awareness campaigns to safeguard these treasures. Consequently, the Geopark serves as a crucial site for sustainable development, ensuring that residents can reap the benefits of preserving these irreplaceable heritages.

Comprising 15 geological zones, the Mount Popa Geopark falls under the stewardship of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. Their mandate involves safeguarding these areas to guarantee the long-term sustainability of natural resources and heritage sites through the establishment of conservation zones for biodiversity, ecosystem preservation, and maintaining geological integrity.

The establishment of Mount Popa National Geopark marks the initial stride towards enhanced conservation of natural resources. This precedent sets the stage for the creation of more geoparks across the nation, each blessed with abundant natural resources and rich cultural traditions, poised to become coveted tourist destinations for both domestic and international travellers.

With the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation aiming to designate 10 per cent of the nation's total area as environmental conservation zones, efforts are underway to expand the conservation footprint. Presently, 59 natural environmental conservation areas cover 6.42 per cent of the nation's territory. These endeavours also seek to position Mount Popa Geopark as a contender for inclusion in the World Geopark Sites roster.

Establishing geoparks across the nation not only showcases the country's commitment to environmental conservation but also provides habitats for biodiversity and preserves cultural heritage, contributing to the delicate balance of the natural environment in Myanmar. If so, the geoparks will improve the climatic conditions of all parts of the nation.

IF the December 2023 figures of 700 foreign visitors to Inle (pronounced Inn Lay) are anything to go by, it would be a case study of a major tourist attraction in 'perpetual recuperation mode'.

Recalling the heydays during the 2013 to 2016 periods, when boatmen had difficulties finding slips for their motorised sampans, said Aung Lin, one of the few remaining boatmen, playing their trade transporting visitors around the real Venice of Asia. Now, many of them have either given up or been toiling and praying for their daily continuance after getting bruised for four consecutive years due to the double jeopardy of COVID-19 and politics.

Gone were the days when thousands of domestic and foreign visitors descended upon Inn Lay Lake to enjoy the uniqueness of nature, putting this vast lake up on top of an enormous plateau. People have to queue just to get onto the sampans. Jetties were precious assets, and tourists waited for their turns to get on board. The expansive lake is bustling with activities, from the feeding of the seagulls, admiring fishermen on skiffs, stepping on floating strips of islets used for growing tomatoes, visiting many unique attractions, and simply waving each other from mechanised sampans.

I went to Inn Lay in the mid-

dle of January to check out the reality of the circumstances. Alas, the flight from Yangon was packed for both legs. A group of Korean tourists were spotted on the same flight with us. Sadly, on our boat ride to the hotel, during our three-night stay or on tours of the attractions, we ended up 'Waving into Thin Air', crisp and freezing, in this desolate beauty of nature, disheartened and dispirited by ineluctable causes, perforce.

As Confucius once said, 'We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope'. The glimmer of hope arising just like a phoenix arising from the ashes of its previous life, starting with the resort that we stayed in. Only with a couple or so of villas occupied during our mini break, Villa Inle Boutique Resort is keeping its operational costs to a minimum by growing its own organic vegetables and operating a small poultry farm producing organic eggs - An ultimate combination of freshness and nature perhaps. I have spoken to a few other hoteliers around the lake; they also have upcoming batches of visitors from abroad to add whatever little vibrancy they can to the destination. I also spoke to car leasing operators. All have downsized their operations and possessions for their continued survival. One such operator, Thura, has already sold off two of his vehicles and

is now just operating with one car. He said he did not have a choice and knew no other way of earning a living now.

Adding to their despair is the deficient infrastructure, poor law and order and present high-security environment. Electricity supply has always been a shortcoming in Myanmar, but the situation is made worse by NNCP terrorist at-



Visitors from home and abroad must also adjust their expectations and increase their support for the local economy of Inle through spending on handicrafts and tours and enjoying longer vacations. PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Waving into Thin Air

By U AC

tacks on electrical infrastructure and government dependency to implement any major

infra projects during and after COVID-19. This is adding woes to the hotels as the first

question most domestic tourists and local visitors typically ask would be, 'Would there be

a 24-hour electrical supply during my stay?'. Even in boutique hotels such as Ville Inle, which charges around \$100 a night, the cost of running a generator to affect uninterrupted power supply would be set back by more than per night revenues from a couple of rooms. More so for larger hotels. With a significantly reduced number of visitors during this peak season, this is a promise that hotels simply cannot fulfil.

Recent shortages in fuel supply have all the hotels and other businesses scrambling to get limited supply at exorbitant prices, exacerbating operational losses for all wanting to put on a better show during this holiday season.

Political changes and anti-government activities have made the law and order situation worse, too. Even crooked villagers became more daring, attempting a variety of methods to extort money out of good businesses operating in and around Inn Lay.

The security situation all across the country is demanding the creation of barbicans and barricades at multiple junctions around Inn Lay, and this is forcing visitors and the general public to stay home after sunset. This is a stark contrast to lively night scenes as late as five years ago.

Can Inle survive?

Just like in war, speed is essential to survival. Speed of action, strategy and successful implantation. The difficulty here is not in individual attempts but in teamwork that involves government (ministries), businesses, media and private individuals from here and abroad, pushing the wheels of improvements into motion.

Government help is needed in infrastructure (especially electricity), security, nationwide promotions and convincing people to support local attractions. Businesses must also find innovative ways to promote, survive, and generate alternative income. Media assistance is most needed to reflect the truth about Myanmar, combat fake news that infected the minds of international visitors and prevent tourist arrivals en masse. Visitors from home and abroad must also adjust their expectations and increase their support for the local economy of Inle through spending on handicrafts and tours and enjoying longer vacations.

Without such efforts, the laggard attraction will continue to remain in the doldrums for many years to come. It may end up being in a slow death and becoming a desert of dejection and despair, doomed due to dependency from all stakeholders concerned.

Working together for a healthier, safer world: WHO and IPU renew partnership

Martin Chungong and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus signed the memorandum. Both organizations pledge to collaborate on global health initiatives, emphasizing universal health coverage, global health security, and addressing health inequities.

THE Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the World Health Organization (WHO) today signed a new memorandum of understanding (MoU), reaffirming the critical role that parliamentarians play in enabling good health to foster stable and equitable societies.

Five-year memorandum

The new five-year memorandum was signed by Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General, and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, at the 148th IPU Assembly, which is taking place in Geneva from 23 to 27 March 2024. Both organisations commit to continue working together to promote, provide and protect the health and well-being of all people, everywhere. It renews a historic commitment made in 2018 to leverage their

respective scientific and political mandates to address persistent and emerging challenges facing populations worldwide.

The memorandum reinforces critical areas of cooperation that align with global health priorities, namely universal health coverage, global health security, health promotion and reducing health inequities, especially in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

It also adds new cross-cut-

ting areas of work, including responding to climate change, support to the government-led negotiations on a new pandemic agreement, and sustainable financing for health. This includes collaboration on this year's first WHO Investment Round to overcome the historic imbalance between assessed and voluntary contributions, the distortions this creates, and the issues WHO faces with insufficiently predictable and flexible financing.

Latest round of negotiations

WHO Member States are staging their latest round of negotiations on an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response before scheduled consideration of a proposal for adoption at the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024. The proposed agreement aims to provide a basis for international cooperation that was lacking during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parliaments are instrumental in

supporting the process towards adoption, as well as in guiding the follow-up considerations at a national level.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said: "Parliamentarians play an essential role in set-

Both organizations commit to working together for global health. ILLUSTRATION: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/PIXABAY



ting policies, prioritizing investments and ensuring accountability to advance public health. Political leadership in service of the public saves lives and protects health by ensuring communities and countries are better prepared and designed to be healthier and safer. WHO looks forward to working even closer with the IPU and parliamentarians worldwide to advance efforts to protect and promote people's well-

ing, from negotiating a pandemic agreement to prevent a repeat of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, to investing in universal health coverage."

A key role

Martin Chungong, said: "The COVID-19 pandemic was not an isolated occurrence. Another pandemic will happen. It is not a question of if, but when. Parliaments have a key role, which is why we will continue working with WHO at all levels to raise awareness among parliamentarians on the pandemic agreement and other global health processes; to give parliamentarians access to technical expertise and information; and to support them to pursue their national health priorities and back them with the necessary legislation and resources."

SOURCE: ANI

NATIONAL

India donates 2 Aarogya Maitri Cubes to Myanmar military



The Indian ambassador (3L) is pictured during the handover event.

A handover ceremony for two Aarogya Maitri Cubes donated by India to Myanmar military took place at Defence Services General Hospital (1,000-beds) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In attendance were Adjutant-General Lt-Gen Soe Min Oo, Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Vinay Kumar and medical officials.

First, the video featuring

data related to Aarogya Maitri Cubes was played. Then, the Indian ambassador clarified the donation, and Adjutant-General Lt-Gen Soe Min Oo expressed gratitude for donation.

Then, the Indian ambassador handed over the documents, medicines and medical supplies for two Aarogya Maitri Cubes to Director of Medical Services Maj-Gen Ko Ko Lwin.

Then, the Adjutant-General, the Indian ambassador and party observed the demonstration of Aarogya Maitri Cubes.

The Aarogya Maitri Cubes is aimed to provide essential medical supplies to the any developing country affected by the natural disaster or humanitarian crisis as quickly as possible. The “Aarogya” means health and “Maitri” means friend, and so the meaning of the product is that a product that is produced to conduct healthcare services successfully in partner countries. The Aarogya Maitri Cubes consists of 72 cubes, and the facility has an operation theatre, a mini-ICU, outpatient room, x-ray machine, Test Kits and power generator, and so on.

The Aarogya Maitri Cubes will bring benefits to the country and Tatmadaw, and the donation will also strengthen the bilateral relationship and friendship between two countries. — MNA/KTZH

Yangon circular train services temporarily suspended during Thingyan Festival

ACCORDING to U Thaung Htaik, chief superintendent of Yangon Railway Station, Yangon circular train services will be temporarily suspended from 13 to 16 April during the Thingyan Festival. Services will resume as usual on 17 April.

The Yangon circular trains usually run 26 times per day, and passenger numbers have seen a significant increase since February. Currently, approximately 7,000 passengers use the Yangon circular train on a daily basis.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Yangon circular train used to carry around 80,000 passengers daily. However, this number decreased following the outbreak of COVID-19. Presently, there has been a resurgence in passenger numbers.

The upgrading process for the Yangon circular train is currently underway. Upon completion of this process, the circular train will be capable of transporting approximately 240,000 passengers. — ASH/TKO



A Yangon circular train operating within Yangon.

Monywa Thingyan festival promises vibrant celebration, cultural delight

ACCORDING to U Myint Nang Soe, a member of Sagaing Region's Maha Thingyan Festival organizing committee, the Monywa Thingyan festival will feature walking Thingyan activities, accompanied by the graceful dances of Thingyan dancing troupes.

“Along the Kanthaya Bogyoke road, the Monywa Thingyan festival will include a walking Thingyan event adorned with colourful umbrellas. There will be five pavilions hosting danc-

ing competitions and entertainment, with the central pavilion serving as the focal point,” stated U Myint Nang Soe.

The main pavilion of the Monywa Walking Thingyan festival will incorporate an entertainment area alongside additional water-playing and entertainment pandals.

Moreover, five pandals will provide food donations to guests throughout the festivities, from the eve until the final day. — ASH/MKKS



Monywa residents seen enjoying the Thingyan Festival in the previous year.

Myanmar products shine at Asia-Pacific Festival & Charity Bazaar 2024



Myanmar's booth displays traditional crafts and food at the Asia-Pacific Festival & Charity Bazaar 2024, held in Tokyo, Japan.

A Myanmar delegation exhibited Myanmar traditional handicrafts and food at the Asia-Pacific Festival and Charity Bazaar 2024, held in Tokyo, Japan, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Asia-Pacific Ladies Friendship Society (ALFS) organized the bazaar at the Meiji Kinenkan Hall on 26 March.

Myanmar's booth showcased a rich array of products, including lacquerware, jade

ware, silverware, gold and silver thread embroidered items, wooden products, food, coffee, and consumer goods crafted from Myanmar bamboo using Japanese technology.

Besides Japanese companies and organizations, 19 embassies across the Asia-Pacific region displayed their cultural crafts and cuisines.

Princess Hanako Hitachi, Mrs Yuko Kishida, wife of Japanese Prime Minister, Mrs Haruko Komura, chairperson of the ALFS, and diplomats graced the event alongside some 3,000 guests. The ALFS, led by ambassadors and ambassadors' wives from 26 embassies across the Asia-Pacific region, alongside esteemed Japanese women, aims to foster cultural exchange and enrichment between Japan and its member countries. — ASH/NT

NATIONAL

Peace restored as Hsihseng regained from PNLO, KNDF, and KPDF

LOCAL Tatmadaw members, MPF members, departmental personnel, people's militia (local) members and national race people participated in clearing debris in damaged local residences and departmental buildings set fire by terrorists in Hsihseng of Shan State yesterday.

Maj-Gen Naing Naing Oo of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) presented cash donations to Mwedaw Pagoda and cash assistance to departmental personnel and security forces.

PNLO terrorists participated in arms smuggling. So, security forces seized a large number of arms and ammunition from PNLO terrorists on 17 December 2023 and 20 January 2024.

PNLO ambushed security posts along the Union highway



Aftermath photos reveal debris and damage following terrorist attack on Hsihseng Township Hospital and Public Health Office by PNLO, KNDF and PDF.

on 21 February. So, security forces took security measures to control the region in addition to combatting terrorists in 16 clashes and then totally controlled the Union highway on 29 February. So, the transport process of vehicles could resume as usual on 1 March.

Most of Pa-O people from Hsihseng Township joined hands with Tatmadaw and people's militia (local) members to launch attacks on PNLO on 27 February and reoccupied Hokhe monastery and hospital on 28 February, hospital staff housing and police station on 2 March,

Mwedaw pagoda hillock on 13 March, Sanphu Village on 18 March, Kyaukkacha on 19 March and Phayaphyu road junction on 25 March. In the incidents, some bodies of terrorists, arms, ammunition and related accessories were seized, and some Tatmadaw members, people's

militia members and residents were wounded. Thanks to the active cooperation and sacrifice of resident national races, Tatmadaw and people's militia (local) could reoccupy the Hsihseng region from PNLO, KNDF and KPDF terrorists. — MNA/TTA

Counter-argument to false information

Fake news: conscripted 11 youths in North Okkalapa

THE malicious media intentionally spread fake news, claiming that 11 youths were arrested to serve in the military in Dawna Street and Khaing Shwewah Street at (L) ward in North Okkalapa Township.

According to an official from the People's Military Servant Summoning Team, at 6:15 am on 29 March, 11 individuals who expressed their willingness to volunteer for military service in (L) Ward reported to the administrative office. The subversive

media fabricated and spread false information to mislead the public regarding the 11 people who volunteered to join the military.

Since the People's Military Service Law came into effect, subversive media outlets have been deliberately spreading fake news to frighten the people. These subversive media sources and terrorists are afraid and do not want citizens to acquire military knowledge or fulfil their national defence duties. — MNA/TKO

Misinformation: Alleged suicide linked to military conscription

MALICIOUS media outlets have been circulating fake news alleging that a mother committed suicide after her son and son-in-law were conscripted under the People's Military Service Law in Thingangyun Township, Yangon Region.

A member of the Central Body for Summoning People's Military Servants

clarified that the son and son-in-law were registered solely due to the requisite age criteria, dispelling any misinformation. They continue to reside at their residence.

Malicious media outlets are spreading false information to sow fear among the public and distort the facts regarding the law. — MNA/NT

Bamboo growers increase as products rebound in markets

WITH bamboo markets rebounding due to both local and overseas orders for bamboo and its handicrafts, interest in bamboo cultivation has increased among farmers, according to U Kyaw Win, a bamboo expert.

Purchases of Wahbo (giant bamboo) from China and other countries increased this year, and some buyers have personally come to the field to procure, he said.

"Bamboo nurseries are now available in many places. Bamboo is becoming rare, and its market has become wider, so many people are interested in growing it. Bamboo seems to be more profitable for farmers compared to other crops. The bamboo market has become wider than before. In the overseas market, Chinese traders want to buy three-foot-long Wahbo bamboo by the millions. They buy as many bamboo strips as we can produce. We export bamboo slats in small quantities to Malaysia and Singapore. There are also many orders for bamboo shoots. The local market is doing well. It was good last year, but this year, we see many buyers in persons in the fields to physically inspect and buy," he said.

Due to the shortage of bamboo and high transportation costs, bamboo prices are rising this year compared to last year. "A piece of Kyathaung bamboo (a type



A commercial bamboo plantation.

used for mats and construction) now costs K1,200, up from K600/700. It is of good quality, but at K1,200, the price has almost doubled. The price of Htiyo bamboo (monastery bamboo) has also increased from K700/800 to K1,600," he said.

The growing interest in bamboo and bamboo products is an opportunity for innovators in bamboo handicrafts. At the same time, it can also be an advantage for bamboo farmers in the future, he commented. — MT/ZN

ECONOMY WORLD

What is the economic impact of the Baltimore bridge collapse?

Efforts are underway among ocean shippers, other ports, and cargo owners to redirect ships originally bound for Baltimore.



The collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge will bring an economic hit but analysts say it is unlikely to make a broad-based impact. **PHOTO: AFP**

DIVERTED cargo and supply chain disruptions have left businesses rushing to avoid an economic hit following the collapse of a major bridge in Baltimore after it was hit by a cargo ship.

With vessel traffic at the Port of Baltimore suspended until further notice since Tuesday's accident, experts warn of knock-on effects but say these should be manageable in the

near term.

Baltimore is the biggest vehicle-handling port in the country, including cars and heavy farm equipment, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told a press briefing.

He estimates there is between \$100 and \$200 million in value coming through the port daily, with "about \$2 million in wages that are at stake every day".

He added in a CBS interview that ocean shippers, other ports and cargo owners are working to figure out where to divert ships headed that way.

Besides the direct hit to thousands of Baltimore port workers, Maryland Governor Wes Moore warned in a CNN interview that more than 140,000 people could be indirectly impacted by disruptions. — AFP

UNEP says food waste is derailing economic growth, green transition

THE crisis of food waste and loss has reached alarming levels globally, undermining efforts to eradicate hunger, poverty and environmental pollution, said the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in a new report launched Wednesday.

The UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2024, the second edition of this kind, was launched in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, ahead of the International Day of Zero Waste which falls on Saturday.

The world wasted 1.05 billion tonnes of food in 2022, equivalent to 132 kilogrammes per person and one-fifth of all food available to consumers, says the report which was co-authored by UNEP and WRAP, a British environmental charity.

Inger Andersen, the executive director of UNEP, decried the growing crisis of food loss and waste in a world where 783 million people are affected by hunger annually while 150 million children are stunted due to chronic malnutrition.

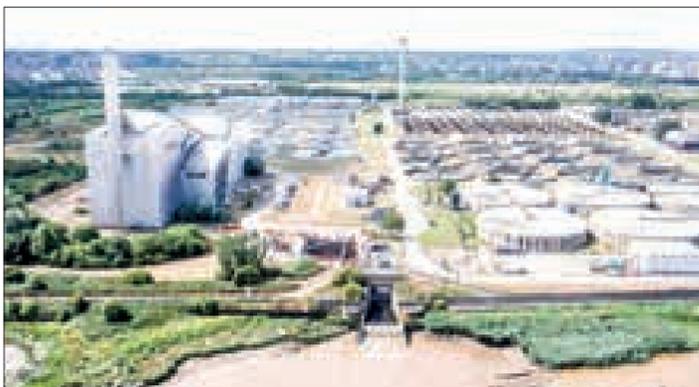
"Food waste is a global tragedy. Not only is this a major development issue, but the impacts of this unnecessary waste are causing substantial costs to the climate and nature," Andersen remarked.

The report says households accounted for 60 per cent of food waste in 2022, followed by food services players at 28 per cent and the retail sector at 12 per cent, adding that the toll of food waste and loss to the global economy stands at one trillion US dollars. — Xinhua



The world wasted 1.05 billion tonnes of food in 2022, equivalent to 132 kilogrammes per person and one-fifth of all food available to consumers. **PHOTO: UN**

Financial crisis at UK's biggest water supplier worsens



Britain's biggest water supplier said in a statement that £500 million (\$630 million) of new equity will "not be provided by Thames Water's shareholders" this month. **PHOTO: BEN STANSALL/AFP**

DEBT-PLAGUED Thames Water revealed Thursday that

it failed to raise a major cash injection from shareholders,

blaming industry regulations that made its rescue plan "uninvestable".

Britain's biggest water supplier said in a statement that £500 million (\$630 million) of new equity will "not be provided by Thames Water's shareholders" this month.

The company added it was in "ongoing" talks with industry regulator Ofwat over a plan that is "affordable for customers, deliverable and financeable for Thames Water, as well as investible for equity investors". — AFP

Japan enacts revised 112.57 tril yen budget for FY 2024

JAPAN'S parliament on Thursday enacted a 112.57 trillion yen (\$744 billion) budget for fiscal 2024 starting in April, the second-largest, to better respond to security threats and demographic challenges, ease the pain of inflation and rebuild earthquake-hit areas.

The budget includes a record 7.95 trillion yen in defense spending. The government revised its initial plan and double the amount of emergency funds to one trillion yen after a deadly quake hit central Japan on New Year's Day.

Although the government has been seeking to trim its spending to pre-pandemic levels after it swelled in recent years to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, it faces high hurdles because it has already decided to sharply increase spending on defence and on child-related policy in the coming years. The rapid ageing of society is also boosting social security costs, which totaled a record 37.72 trillion yen, or about a third of the general-account budget for the next year. — Kyodo

Beijing's central business district boasts 114 regional headquarters of multinationals

Recently, four foreign firms, including branches of BMW, Volvo, and Toyota, registered there. Almost half of Beijing's multinational HQs are in the CBD.

BEIJING'S central business district (CBD) now boasts a total of 114 regional headquarters of multinational companies, according to the CBD administration committee. Four foreign-funded enterprises, including the branches of carmakers like BMW, Volvo and

Toyota, have recently been registered as regional headquarters of the multinational companies in Beijing's CBD. Currently, nearly half of Beijing's regional headquarters of multinationals are located in the CBD. With more than



Photo taken on 3 October 2022 shows the view of skyscrapers of the central business district (CBD) at dusk in Beijing, capital of China. **PHOTO: WANG JIANHUA**

10,000 foreign-funded Fortune 500 companies, of China's most dynamic administration committee. — Xinhua enterprises and over 200 the district stands as one CBDs, according to the

Turkish Airlines returns to Libya after near decade-long break

TÜRKIYE 's flagship carrier, Turkish Airlines, has resumed flights to Libya's capital, almost 10 years after they were suspended over security concerns in the conflict-torn country. The airlines's chief executive, Bilal Eksi, attended a ceremony at Mitiga International Airport on Thursday to mark its first flight to Libya since 2015.



Libyan and Turkish officials were on hand to welcome the return of Turkish Airlines to Libya. **PHOTO: AFP**

"We are delighted to start flights again to Lib-

ya, with which we have historical ties," Eksi said. "We will continue to bring cultures together in Africa, as in many continents," he added. — AFP

Fallen crypto tycoon Bankman-Fried gets 25-year sentence

FOUND guilty following a five-week trial last November, Bankman-Fried was finally handed the quarter-century sentence this Thursday, which he is expected to appeal. Disgraced cryptocurrency wunderkind Sam Bankman-Fried was sentenced to 25 years in jail on Thursday — a stunning descent for a figure who seemed poised to lead an emerging sector less than two years ago. US District

Judge Lewis Kaplan said the defendant, who became known by his initials "SBF", had shown no "real remorse", even in his final pre-sentencing remarks in which the former billionaire rued "a series of bad decisions" but did not acknowledge knowingly violating financial laws. Bankman-Fried said "mistakes were made, but never a word of remorse for the commission of a terrible crime", said

Kaplan, who characterized the violations as "brazen" and called out the defendant for his "exceptional flexibility" towards the truth. Kaplan set a sentence of 25 years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. The defendant also was ordered to pay \$11 billion, an amount reflective of what Bankman-Fried effectively stole from other parties, according to Kaplan's calculations. — AFP

Viet Nam Q1 growth hits five-year high on strong exports

VIET NAM'S economy grew by 5.66 per cent on-year in the first quarter, according to official data published Friday, boosted by strong exports. It is the communist country's strongest Q1 growth since 2019, but still well off Standard Chartered Bank's forecast of 6.1 per cent. "The country's socioeconomic situation in the first quarter of 2024 achieved positive



Viet Nam is a major global manufacturing hub. **PHOTO: AFP**

result despite many uncertainties in the world economy," the General Statistics Office (GSO) said in a statement. The industrial and construc-

tion sector expanded by 6.28 per cent, while the service sector grew 6.12 per cent compared with the same period in the previous year. A major global manufacturing hub, Viet Nam also earned \$93 billion from goods exports in the first quarter, up 17 per cent year on year. The United States was its largest export market during this period. — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V METHI BHUM VOY.NO. (420S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V METHI BHUM VOY.NO. (420S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-3-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

ROLLING UPDATES: WORLD

Pope washes feet of 12 women prisoners on Holy Thursday

Seated in a wheelchair, the pope washed and kissed the feet of each prisoner, delivering a message of forgiveness and compassion during a mass held in the prison courtyard.



The Argentinian Jesuit visited the Rebibbia women's prison in the northeastern outskirts of the Italian capital. **PHOTO: VATICAN MEDIA/AFP**

POPE Francis, who often pleads for compassion to prisoners, washed the feet of 12 incarcerated women in Rome on Thursday in a rite marking Holy Thursday before Easter.

The Argentinian Jesuit visited the Rebibbia women's prison in the northeastern outskirts of the Italian capital, where he performed the same rite in 2015.

Thursday, however, was the first time the 87-year-old pontiff had dedicated his annual ritual during Holy Week

solely to women.

Seated in a wheelchair, the pope washed the feet of each of the prisoners, some of them in tears, before drying them off with a towel and kissing them.

"We all have small failures, big failures," said the pope in an impromptu homily during a mass held in the courtyard of the prison that holds some 370 women.

"But the Lord is always waiting for us, with open arms, and he never tires of forgiving," he added.

The washing of feet is "a gesture that draws our attention to the vocation of service," said Francis, who as a priest in Buenos Aires had already begun visiting prisoners.

A few minutes earlier, the pontiff was all smiles as he shook hands with the inmates.

Last month, the pope caught a flu that caused him to cancel some public meetings. During his subsequent recovery, he has on several occasions asked others to read his speeches. — AFP

Israeli strikes kill 42 in Syria's Aleppo province

Israel has launched hundreds of air strikes in Syria since civil war there broke out in 2011.

A war monitor said Israeli air strikes Friday on Syria's Aleppo province killed at least 42 including 36 Syrian soldiers, the deadliest toll for the army since the Israel-Hamas war began.

Israel has launched hundreds of air strikes in Syria since civil war there broke out in 2011, targeting army positions as well as Iran-backed forces including Hezbollah, an ally of Damascus and Palestinian militant group Hamas.

The strikes have increased since Israel's war with Hamas began on 7 October and Friday's was the second such attack in 24 hours.

"Israeli strikes" targeted

"a rockets depot belonging to Lebanon's Hezbollah" close to Aleppo airport, said the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which has a network of sources inside Syria.

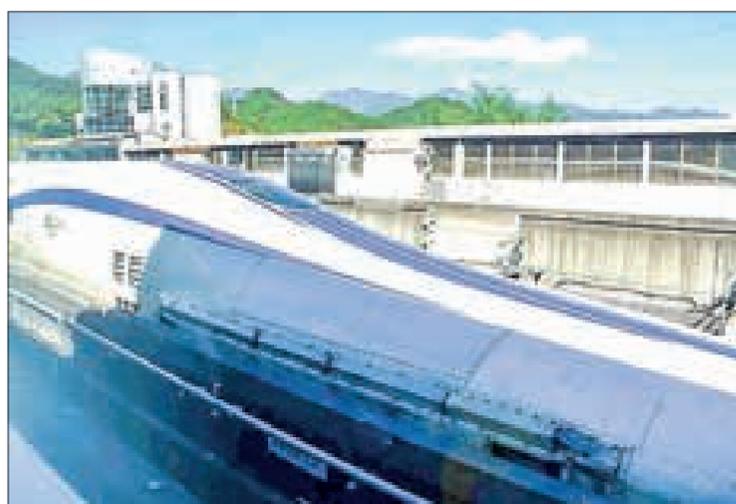
It reported "42 killed, including six from Lebanon's Hezbollah group" and "36 soldiers", the highest Syrian army toll in Israeli strikes since the Israel-Hamas war began.

State news agency SANA, quoting a military source, reported that "at approximately 1:45 am, the Israeli enemy launched an air attack from the direction of Athriya, southeast of Aleppo"— AFP



Portraits of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad (R) and Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stand as Palestinians sit at the entrance of the Yarmuk camp for Palestinian refugees, south of Damascus, during a delivery of humanitarian aid provided by Iran as part of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan on 26 March 2024.

PHOTO: LOUAI BESHARA / AFP



File photo taken in October 2022 shows a Linear Chuo Shinkansen maglev train on a test run in Yamanashi Prefecture. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Japan rail operator gives up plan to launch maglev train in 2027

CENTRAL Japan Railway Co said Friday it has given up its plan to launch a new high-speed maglev train between Tokyo and Nagoya in 2027, amid long-running environmental opposition in Shizuoka Prefecture.

"While we cannot predict the new opening date at this point, we will continue to aim to launch it as soon as possible," the company said in a document released ahead of a meeting of experts at

the transport ministry.

The Linear Chuo Shinkansen project is intended to link Tokyo and Osaka with trains travelling up to 500 kilometres per hour. But a small area on the section between the capital and Nagoya has proved a stumbling block for the project, due mostly to opposition by the central prefecture of Shizuoka.

Shizuoka Governor Heita Kawakatsu declined to comment

on JR Central's confirmation it has abandoned the original opening date, telling reporters he has "yet to receive notification" of the decision. Kawakatsu has cited environmental impact concerns in opposing the project, which requires extensive tunnels for the vast majority of its 286-kilometre route to Nagoya. Construction of the around 8.9 km of tunnels through Shizuoka Prefecture has yet to begin. — Kyodo

SPORTS

Myanmar's Soe Lin Oo edges Portuguese fighter Fabio at ONE's event

MYANMAR Lethwei star Soe Lin Oo (aka) Man of Steel beat Portuguese fighter Fabio during the ONE Championship's Friday Fight (57).

Myanmar's fighter Moe Htet Aung and Soe Lin Oo defeated their opponents, while Thant Zin had to withdraw from the competition due to emergency medical conditions.

In the One Friday Fight (57) bout, Myanmar fighter Moe Htet Aung also defeated the rival Japanese fighter by knockout and won 350,000 Baht as a bonus in addition to the fight fee.

The opponent had the upper hand in the first round, but in the second round and the third round, Moe Htet Aung attacked with the advantage.



Man of Steel (aka) Soe Lin Oo's hand seen being held up by the referee, and he was announced as the winner. PHOTO: ONE



Likewise, Soe Lin Oo was able to knock out the Portuguese fighter Fabio in the first round, but his opponent was able to recover from the loss

and compete in the second round. Soe Lin Oo was allowed to participate in a match for the second time. In the first time,

he also knocked out his opponent and won a bonus prize of 300,000 baht. Myanmar fighter Thant Zin, who was initially scheduled to

fight in the second main event tonight, had to be hospitalized due to a ruptured appendix and had to withdraw from the competition. — TWA/KZL



Manchester City have not lost at the Etihad since November 2022. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Arsenal face Man City Premier League summit meeting

ARSENAL travel to Manchester City on Sunday seeking to complete a rare double over Pep Guardiola's men in a match that could prove decisive in the three-way Premier League title race.

Liverpool can move three points clear of current leaders Arsenal and four ahead of City if they beat Brighton at Anfield earlier in the day.

At the other end of the table, Nottingham Forest are in action for the first time since a four-point penalty for breaching financial rules plunged them into the relegation zone.

Arsenal faces Manchester City in a crucial Premier League match, aiming for a rare double over Pep Guardiola's team, potentially impacting the title race.

AFP Sport looks at three talking points as the English top flight returns after the international break.

Can Arsenal storm Man City fortress?

Arsenal became just the fourth team to win each of their first eight Premier League games of a calendar year when they beat Brentford in early

March — the previous three clubs to do that all went on to win the title.

The Gunners' record against City in the Premier League is dire, with 12 defeats in their past 13 games, though their lone victory came at the Emirates in October, courtesy of Gabriel Martinelli's deflected strike. — AFP

Liverpool target Xabi Alonso says staying as Leverkusen coach

Leverkusen's current success, including a potential German league title, influenced his choice to stay with the club.

XABI Alonso, who was seen by many as Liverpool's top target to replace Jurgen Klopp as their manager, said on Friday he is staying at Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen next season.

"It's been a season of speculation regarding my future," he told a press conference.

"Up till now we have been busy and focused on the season and I wanted to reflect during the international break and take a decision.

"Last week I had a meeting when I informed (Leverkusen's directors) of my decision to continue being coach of Bayer Leverkusen," added Alonso.

The 42-year-old Spaniard has Leverkusen on course for a treble, including their first ever German league crown. Alonso said he was still developing as a coach and he felt Leverkusen, his first senior team coaching



Xabi Alonso had been strongly linked to Liverpool but says he is staying at Bayern Leverkusen. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

post, is the best place for him to carry on doing so.

"At the moment this is the right place for me to develop as a coach, I am a young coach," he said. "Right now this is the right place. I have to thank the management". — AFP



AI used during New Delhi G20 Summit, digital facilities reaching India's villages: PM Modi tells Bill Gates

NOTING that he decided not to let digital divide hamper the progress of the country and digital facilities are being extended to villages, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that he used Artificial Intelligence (AI) during the G20 Summit hosted by India last year and also uses it for some other tasks.

Modi discusses technology and AI benefits with Bill Gates, mentioning its use for interpretation at the G20 Summit and Kashi Tamil Sangamam.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates during a meeting at his residence, in New Delhi on 28 March 2024. **PHOTO: @BJP4INDIA/X**

In an interaction with Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the role and benefits of technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) while also emphasizing the need of regulations.

He said AI was used for interpretation and translation during the G20 Summit held in New Delhi.

The Prime Minister also told Bill Gates how his Hindi speech was translated into Tamil during Kashi Tamil Sanga-

mam event and the use of AI in NaMo App. "We had extensive discussions before the G20 Summit, and as you might have

seen, the Summit's proceedings took a lot of turns. I believe we have now aligned with G20s core purposes and objectives,

bringing them to the mainstream. I hope your first-hand experience echoes this sentiment," he said. — ANI

Boao forum urges global cooperation in energy transition

ENERGY company executives attending the Boao Forum for Asia Annual

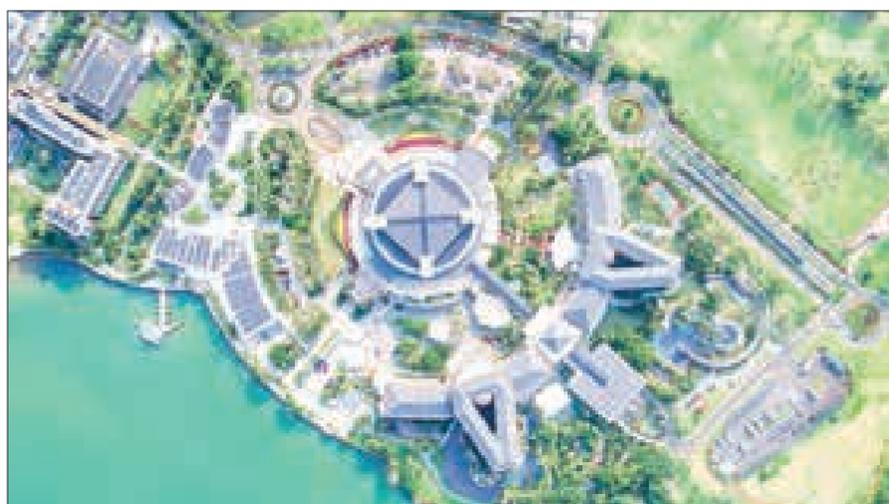
Conference 2024 in Boao, South China's Hainan province, have pledged

aggressive plans while also calling for more global cooperation to help accelerate energy transition.

At a sub-forum titled "Low Carbon Energy Transformation" held in Boao on Friday, Huang Yongzhang, president of PetroChina, revealed that China's largest oil and gas producer is actively developing its new energy business amid the country's green drive.

New energy is becoming one of PetroChina's main businesses, and is expected to account for seven per cent of its total output in 2025 and for one-third in 2035, according to Huang.

This is just one example of China's vigorous green transition as it pursues its dual carbon goals of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality by 2060. — Xinhua



An aerial drone photo taken on 17 March 2024 shows the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) International Conference Centre after renovation in the Boao near-zero carbon demonstration zone in Boao, South China's Hainan province. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

THE CENTURIES-OLD STATUE

Ancient statue in restoration at Phnom Bakheng temple in Cambodia's Angkor

CAMBODIAN archaeologists have begun to restore a larger-than-life sandstone statue in front of the southern library of Phnom Bakheng temple in the famed Angkor Archaeological Park, said the APSARA National Authority (ANA) in a news release on Friday. Soy Sophearin, a stone conservation expert, said the centuries-old statue was severely damaged, such as in the head, arms, and right leg, making it impossible for experts to identify the statue. "As for the time and cause of the statue's collapse, we do not know for sure. However, based on the remaining cement traces, we know that this statue was once restored by the French School of the Far East (EFEO) in the past," he said. — Xinhua