

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

106 specially funded MLC projects drive Myanmar's development



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends the Fourth Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) Leaders' Meeting online yesterday.

MEKONG-LANCANG Cooperation initiated in 2016 has taken a position of comprehensive development within seven years, said Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing joined the Fourth Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Leaders' Meeting through the videoconferencing system yesterday afternoon.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that Myanmar has received 106 specially-funded projects worth US\$31.6 million from 2017 to 2023, contributing to the country's socioeconomic development.

The Senior General noted that member countries have to assist each other under the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation procedure, and it is necessary to raise the momentum of implementing the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation initiatives corridor and drafting the plan to increase the relationship among member countries.

He continued that priorities must be given to human resource development for MSME businesses and agro-based enterprises, adding that member countries have to cooperate with each other in sharing

technologies and expertise to improve the public health sector and implement Mekong-Lancang Cooperation for the development of infrastructures.

The Senior General thanked China for helping construction of the National Infectious Disease Prevention and Training Centre in Nay Pyi Taw, which will be completed in early 2024.

He welcomed the plans for the establishment of Mekong-Lancang tourism cities and the development and partnership of Mekong-Lancang aviation travels. He stressed the need to enhance the cooperation of member countries in the rule of law to combat transnational crimes, drug production and trafficking, human trafficking, terror acts, cybercrimes, and online gambling become hindrances to regional security and economic development. He also recognized the important role of the regional coordination sector being initiated by the Mekong-Lancang Security and Rule of Law Cooperation Centre.

Member countries' leaders exchanged views on Mekong-Lancang Cooperation's progress and future cooperation procedures. The meeting released the Nay Pyi Taw Declaration, the Mekong-Lancang

Cooperation Plan of Action (2023-2027) and the Joint Initiative on the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Innovation Corridor Development. At the meeting, the Senior General handed over the duty of alternate co-chairmanship to Thailand.

At the meeting, the Senior General was accompanied by Council Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe and Deputy Minister U Lwin Oo.

From August 2020 to December 2023, Myanmar successfully served as the alternate co-chairman together with the permanent co-chairman of China for the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation formed with Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The meeting was presided over by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Premier Mr Li Qiang of the People's Republic of China as co-chairpersons, with attendance of Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Thipadei Hun Manet, Laos Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin and Vietnamese Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính. — MNA/TTA



The Fourth Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) Leaders' Meeting in progress yesterday with Heads of State, including Myanmar, of the MLC Member Nations participating on 25 December 2023.

NATIONAL

PAGE-3



Nay Pyi Taw Christians celebrate Christmas with prayers, festive joy

BUSINESS

PAGE-7



Kyat weakens to K3,500 against dollar in over-the-counter market

NATIONAL

PAGE-10



Yangon Cosplayer Meet Up Vol 2: Young enthusiasts gather for joyful cosplay in Kamayut

NATIONAL

Five national objectives of 76th Independence Day

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Central Bank of Myanmar Notification No 27 /2023

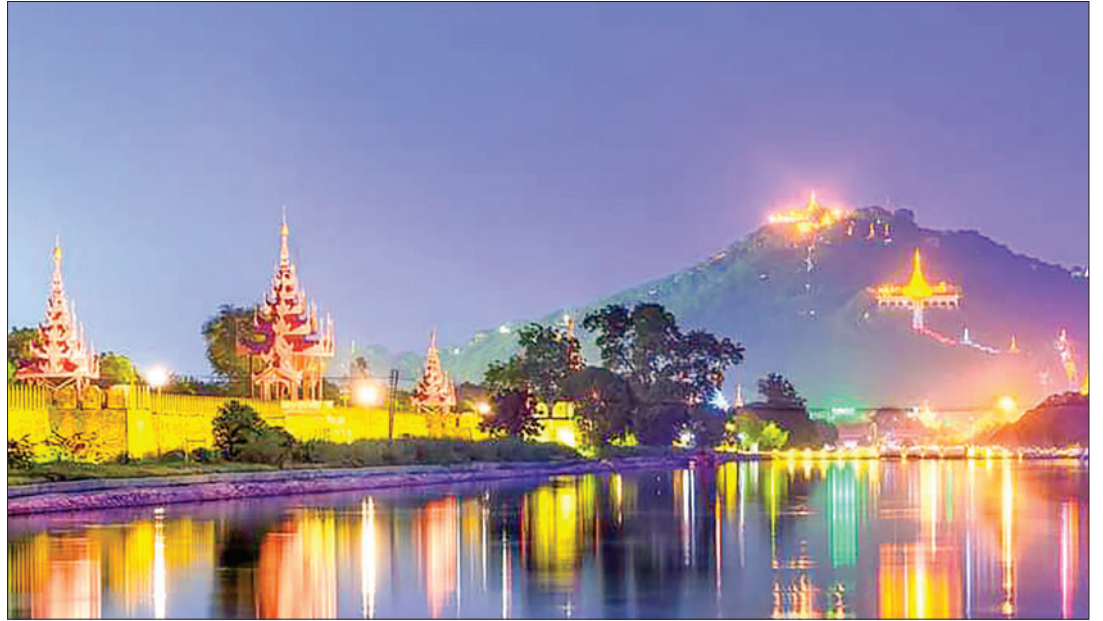
13th Waxing of Nattaw 1385 ME
25 December 2023

1. Under the Foreign Exchange Management Law, Foreign Exchange Management Regulation, and Notification No 27/2022 of the Central Bank of Myanmar released on 6 May 2022, export earnings must be deposited in foreign currency into the exporter’s bank account in the State within 45 days for the goods exported to Asian countries and within 90 days for those exported to other countries outside Asia.
2. The period for repatriation of export earnings received from the exports to Asian countries is changed to 30 days instead of 45 days, and 60 days is changed to 90 days for depositing export earnings received from the exports to countries outside Asia.
3. The notification shall be effective from the date of issue.
4. Action will be taken against those who fail to follow the notification under the Foreign Exchange Management Law.

Than Than Swe
CBM Governor

COVID-19 report, 25 December 2023

NEW TESTS	NEW CASES	CASUALTIES
12,984	29	Nil



Tranquil Scene: Mandalay Royal Palace, the moat and the Mandalay Hill in the background.

Mandalay prepares for joyful 2024 New Year celebrations

THE Mandalay Region Government Office has announced that the New Year celebration and festivities for 2024 will take place in Mandalay.

Like citizens of other countries wait who until midnight to welcome the New Year, Manda-

lay will joyously celebrate the occasion with performances by famous artistes, a countdown, and a fireworks display.

A coordination meeting was held at the meeting hall of the Mandalay Region Government Office on the afternoon

of 24 December to plan and organize the 2024 New Year celebration in Mandalay township.

The meeting was attended by Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Myo Aung, ministers, and relevant officials. — ASH/MKKS

Four Myanmar tour firms to participate in ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024

AS an opportunity for the tourism sector, four tourism companies representing Myanmar will participate in the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024, which will be held on a rotational basis in Laos, said U Naung Naung Han, chair of the Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association.

The ASEAN Tourism Forum is annually held on a rotational basis in 10 ASEAN countries, and Laos will host it next year. Indonesia hosted it last year. The event features about 300 booths from 10 member countries.

“Four Myanmar-representing companies have registered to participate in the event. In the ASEAN Tourism Forum, ASEAN countries sell their tour packages promoting each other and invite tourists worldwide to come to the ASEAN region. US and European travel agencies visit the event.



A visitor seen delighting in the panoramic view of the Bagan Ancient Cultural Heritage Zone.

This is an opportunity for the travel sector,” said U Naung Naung Han.

He said that travel agencies from different countries will visit the event, so this is a chance to showcase tours of Myanmar.

“Participating in the event is an opportunity to promote our country’s tourism sector.

And travel agencies worldwide will come so we can answer their questions about our country’s current situation and where they can visit,” he said.

To promote Myanmar’s tourism sector, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism made visa relaxation and considered further relaxation. — MT/ZS

NATIONAL

All our national people always cherish and value our traditions and national characteristics. Safeguarding and promoting national characteristics and national culture will contribute to fostering the patriotic spirit and thereby bringing great benefits to the nation and people. Now is the crucial time to have the national spirit as we strive for peace and development and for the establishment of a Union based on democracy and federalism.

[An excerpt from the message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark 75th Anniversary (Diamond Jubilee) of Kachin State Day on 10 January 2023.]



MoI UM meets Yangon-based staff for year-end reflection, celebration

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn met the staff from Yangon-based departments and enterprises under the Ministry of Information at StudioA of Myanmar Radio and Television (Yangon) on 24 December.

First of all, the staff present at the meeting were explained countering misinformation, titled "Preventing Media Poisoning," and reflected on the ministry's responsibilities, "State Building and the Role of State Media", using video clips.

In his remarks, the Union minister stated that the State Administration Council/government had to assume control of state responsibilities due to

the former government's voting rigging. He highlighted the government's efforts to achieve prosperity, food security, and the strengthening of a genuine and disciplined multiparty democracy, the building of a Union founded on democracy and federalism, the five-point roadmap, and nine political, economic, and social objectives, calling on the staff to dedicate their efforts to these endeavours.

Subsequently, the Union minister engaged in entertainment programmes and gift exchanges with staff members during the Christmas celebration. Christian staff members working on ethnic TV programmes and radio at the My-



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn addresses the meeting with staff members from departments and enterprises based in Yangon yesterday.

anma Radio and Television in Tatkon, Nay Pyi Taw, gathered for prayer and carol singing on

24 and 25 December.

The celebration included exchanging gifts, ethnic food

stalls, and the participation of staff members and their families from various faiths. — MNA/NT

Nay Pyi Taw Christians celebrate Christmas with prayers, festive joy



Christian prayer session in progress yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: KO KO AYE**

YESTERDAY marks Christmas Day, a special occasion commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Christians across Myanmar engage in prayers and expressions of gratitude in alignment with their respective Christian denominations. As night falls, vibrant lights adorn churches to enhance the festive atmosphere.

At St Michael's Catholic Church in the Nay Pyi Taw Council area, as well as in the Myanmar Baptist Church and various Christian congregations, the Christmas Day festivities commenced with joint prayers

and praises yesterday morning. Bishops and revered leaders joined the Christian community in Bible readings, prayers, and thanksgiving, fostering fellowship and enjoyment.

Within the church premises, Christmas hymns resonate, contributing to the joyous celebration. Reports indicate the execution of gift exchange programs among congregants. As night descends, churches are adorned with colourful electric lights, creating a jubilant ambience to celebrate the birth of Christ with joy and merriment. — Aung Ye Thwin/KZW

NATIONAL

Cherry Blossom Festival: Nurturing cherry flowers and boosting regional tourism, says MoHT UM



Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine Warmly greets ethnic communities at Loimwe's Cherry Blossom Festival in Kengtung Township, Shan State (East).

THE Cherry Blossom Festival aims at developing the regional tourism industry, loving the Cherry and conserving them in the long run, exploring the tradition, culture and food of ethnic people and promoting the tourism industry, luring local and foreign travellers, said Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Thet Thet Khine.

The Union minister highlighted the purpose of the festival at the opening ceremony of the Cherry Blossom Festival and Ethnic Traditional Food Fair 2023 on Monday in Loimwe, Kengtung Township of eastern Shan State.

After the opening ceremony, the Union minister and party vis-

ited the tea plantations in Wamseng village. They inspected the location to explore as tourist destinations, proper measures to penetrate the market with the Wamseng tea as a regional icon and preventive measures not to affect the environment.

They then headed to Kengtung Waterfall and instructed on preserving the natural environment and watershed areas. They also presented cash awards to the regional ethnic dance groups.

The Cherry Blossom Festival was first held in 2022 in Loimwe, a tourist attraction in eastern Shan State. The Ethnic Traditional Food Fair is the first time this year. — MNA/KTZH

Counter-argument to false information

Baseless claims: Misinformation surrounding pagoda donations exposed

IT has been reported that the regional military headquarters seized K600 million intended for donating gold foils to the Shwemudaw Pagoda in Pathein. There are claims that the US dollars collected to expand the Mawtinsun Pagoda platform in Zeechai village, Hainggyikyun, were exchanged at K2,100 per dollar. It has been found that misinformation is spread through social media posts by the terrorist supporter Ayeyarwaddy Time.

According to an official from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and another official from the Regional Mil-

itary Headquarters, the funds donated for the pagodas have not been confiscated by any departmental organization. Instead, those are appropriately managed by the respective trustees. It is evident that the malicious media, which supports terrorism and spreads misinformation about religious stupas, is only circulating inaccurate reports. The subversive media intentionally fabricates and spreads misinformation and false claims aimed at undermining the country's stability and creating misconceptions among the people. — MNA/KZW

Misinformation circulated regarding MraukU Ancient Cultural Museum incident

NARINJARA, a supporter of terrorism in Rakhine State, posted misinformation on social media, claiming that Tatmadaw fired heavy weapons at the MraukU Ancient Cultural Museum in MraukU. The misinformation alleges an explosion in the stone inscription room and the destruction of stone tablets. It has been discovered that misleading information is being written and spread.


Regarding the incident, an official from the local security group reported that on the night of 24 December, AA insurgents launched rockets at two police stations in MraukU. The explosions were reported to have affected residential buildings where residents live, including the MraukU Ancient Cultural Museum, resulting in damage to some residential buildings and stone tablets.

The AA terrorists' rockets, as reported by subversive media, is claimed to be falsely written, inciting, and circulated with the assertion that the military fired heavy weapons to cover up the shootings. — MNA/KZW



Screenshot validates false claims.

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Myanmar star tortoise population surprisingly recovers on the brink of extinction

By TWA

MYANMAR star tortoise (*Geochelone Platynota*) was a critically endangered species of tortoise in Myanmar by the red-list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, pushing nature conservationists to intensify conservation movements.

They live in arid ecosystems and their habitats are mostly found in Mandalay, Magway and Sagaing regions. They are locally called by different names (star tortoise, spider tortoise, flower tortoise, golden tortoise, Nat tortoise).

Myanmar star tortoise from the Shwesettaw Wildlife

Sanctuary in Magway Region, which was recognized as an endangered species at the risk of extinction. The trial captive breeding of tortoises in outdoor fencing reaped successful results and the star tortoise population has increased to 2,027 in 2022 from 297 in 2014, as per the surveys of the sanctuary.

There has been a total of captive-bred 8,788 star tortoises in Lawkananda Wildlife Sanctuary and 2,650 were set into the wild as of June 2022, totaling 11,438 star tortoises.

There are three star tortoise farms such as Shwesettaw, Mintsonetaung and Lawkananda. The

majority of star tortoises belong to Lawkananda farm in Bagan.

The female tortoises lay eggs three to five times a year. They normally dig holes for three hours to lay eggs on the ground and then, carefully cover up the eggs so that baby tortoises can climb up the hole and the tortoise eggs are protected from predation and extreme weather conditions. The width of the hole is four inches and the depth is six inches.

The female tortoises lay four eggs per clutch for the first time and nine eggs for the second time. The production rate varies depending on time.

The star tortoise hatching season is from late September to May. Hatching time is three to nine months so a board is installed eight inches away from a hole. The crew of the sanctuary and officials record the registration number of the tortoise, egg-laying date, number of eggs, hatching times and direction to the tortoise's hole in the board.

The tortoise eggs laid in June-July are ruined if it doesn't hatch until August. The lifespan of a tortoise is 80-100 years. The hatching success rate is 50 to 70 per cent due to high temperature and sandy ground in Shwesettaw



One of the star tortoises seen at the Shwesettaw Mintsonetaung Wildlife Sanctuary.

Wildlife Sanctuary.

Healthcare service and common symptoms

The tortoise is bred in the outdoor fence made of stone blocks. The feed is water spinach, gourd, Chinese cabbage and watermelon. When the baby tortoises have weight loss problems, they have to take medicine to treat worms. The symptoms such as stones in the kidney caused by dehydration, runny nose, loss of appetite, eye sore, dizziness and keeping the mouth open are found, and they need to be treated by vets.

Rare star tortoises in danger of extinction

A surge in demand in villages drives tortoises to a high risk of extinction and the villagers hunt them down with greyhounds. Illegitimate trade, the trend of tortoise pets by elite people, deforestation in their habitats and turning the forest into farmlands are contributing factors to the risk of extinction. Therefore, captive breeding of tortoises is fostered to prevent

them from extinction.

Wildlife Sanctuary crew, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation is stepping up conservation efforts to protect rare species and other tortoise species endemic to Myanmar (Rakhine mountain tortoises, smooth soft-shell turtle, speckled tortoise, striped turtle, Myanmar roofed turtle and Myanmar-eyed turtle) facing extinction like the star tortoise at the wildlife sanctuaries.

Conservation of endangered species

Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary is home to 14 mammal species, 43 amphibian species, 39 butterfly species, 113 bird species, white-throated babbler, hooded tree pie, skylark, Jerdon's minivet, golden deer and star tortoises. Those endangered and threatened species are listed in the protected list under the management and conservation of the officials concerned of the Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary Division.

Translated/EM



Myanmar star tortoises.

Unauthorized fibre and WiFi cables cleared in four townships

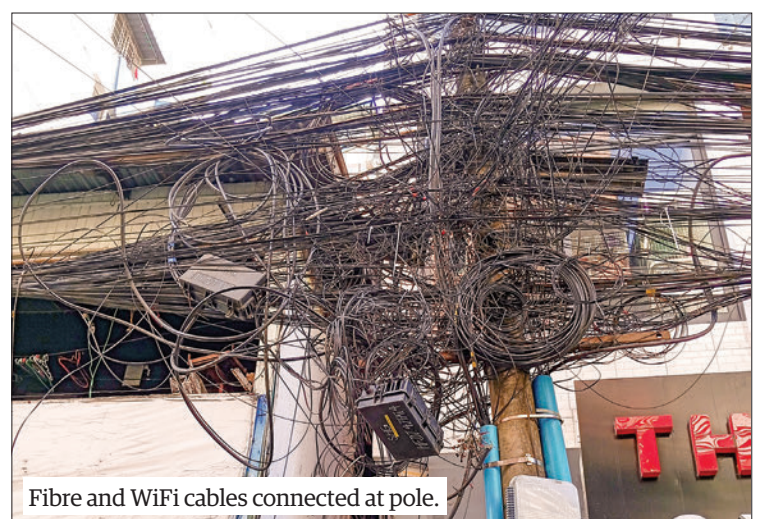
UNOFFICIAL fibre and Wi-Fi cables have been removed and cleared on 22 and 23 December in four townships in Yangon Region.

Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation (YESC) has announced a plan to remove the illegal fibre cables and Wi-Fi

cables on lamp-posts.

Inspections were made whether the unofficial fibre cables and Wi-Fi cables had been removed and whether the official telecommunication companies properly installed the cables in accordance with the city's specifications.

The electrical engineers and staff of Dagon Myothit (North) Township, Hlaing township, Pabedan Township and Bahan Township and employees of telecommunication companies made the inspections in their respective townships. — TWA/TKO



Fibre and WiFi cables connected at pole.

NATIONAL

Excess supply causes market failure for chilli processed in cold storage



A plantation of Moehtaung chilli peppers.

WITH an influx of new chilli into the market, the ones stored in the cold storage facilities are in low demand, and the prices are moving downward, U Hla Han, engaged in chilli depot, told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

Chilli processed in cold storage experience colour degradation one month after they are placed in the market,

decreasing consumer demand.

These days, fresh red chilli from the Salin area flow into the Yangon's wholesale market at K13,500 per viss, while those red chilli from cold storage are sold at K15,000-K15,500 per viss. Demand for new red chilli is increasing.

Similarly, bell peppers from the Sinphyukyun area processed in cold storage

fetches K19,000-K19,500 per viss on 19 December. The new bell pepper price is also the same as those at present.

Those traders who stored the chilli at the cold storage are receiving low profits as the newly supplied chilli is of high quality and low price.

The prices of Moehtaung chilli from the Pyawbwe area dropped to K10,500 in December from K15,000 on 9 August.

New long chilli and red chilli from Hinthada and Kyaukme are expected to enter the market in early 2024. Red chilli and bell peppers from delta regions will possibly flow into the market in March 2024.

Last year, those traders who stored the chilli in cold storage after buying them at low prices during harvest time reaped a handsome profit.

Nonetheless, some of them resulted in low profits and even losses.

If new chilli produced in early 2024 is priced low, cold storage operators might consider them to store for high-profit potentials, pointed out a warehouse operator. — TWA/KK

MRF witnesses surge in summer paddy loan applications

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Rice Federation, applications for short-term loans for summer paddy have increased to 50,000 acres in recent days.

A K400,000 agricultural loan per acre is reported to be issued, generating interest among farmers. Plans are underway to extend loans to farmers in Yangon, Bago, Mandalay, Ayeyawady, and Nay Pyi Taw in January 2024.

The Myanmar Rice Federation, in collaboration with licensed private banks, is in negotiations to provide short-term agricultural loans to enhance rice production for farmers with

more than ten acres of paddy fields.

To qualify for the loan, farmers need to possess the original copy of Form 7 as insurance, have a loan period of four or five months for one paddy season, and incur an annual interest rate of 10 per cent. Loans will be available for up to 100 paddy acres.

Application forms are being accepted starting from 20 December, and arrangements are being made to send them to the relevant banks for verification through the Myanmar Rice Federation. — TWA/TRKM



The photo shows farmers growing the summer paddy in Yangon Region. PHOTO: XINHUA

Yangon taxi fares surge due to fuel challenges, highway bus fares remain stable

AS reported by taxi users, commuters in Yangon City are facing escalated taxi fares this December due to challenges in acquiring fuel.

While fuel procurement was typically routine in Yangon, this month has presented some obstacles. However, a private car owner in Latha Township mentioned to GNLM that there was a sufficient fuel supply for private cars in the past. Instances of fuel acquired at gas stations being resold in the black market have been reported, prompting authorities to take action against these illicit fuel transactions.

Between 5 and 14 December, authorities seized 69,909



City taxis seen in Yangon City.

gallons of fuel and 11 bowlers, amounting to K735 million, for unauthorized fuel storage and distribution.

Taxi fares have significantly increased, especially for vehicles using octane and gas. For instance, a regular taxi fare for

a trip between Pabedan Township and Lanmadaw Township, which was previously K3,000, has surged to K5,000. Passengers have reported paying K15,000 for a one-way trip from Yangon downtown to Sawbwagyigon.

According to reports, highway bus fares in Yangon City have remained unchanged despite the rise in taxi fares. For example, the Yangon-Aungmye route, covering a 200-mile distance, still charges K15,000. Bogale-Dala and Bogale-Maubin-Hlinethaya, which cover 85 and 95 miles, respectively, set K6,000 per passenger.

Passengers taking indirect routes to Dagon-Ayeya

highway bus terminal may pay K8,000/9,000 per person when relying on brokers. Bus stations are required to pay brokers K2,000/K3,000 for each person they carry.

Despite the high taxi fares, highway bus fares in Yangon City have reportedly remained unchanged. For the 400-mile journey from Yangon to Aungmye, average bus fares are K25,000 per passenger, while special buses offering additional services maintain fares at K35,000 per passenger. Residents in Aungmye have reported that these fares have not changed between last year and this year. — TWA/TMT

Kyat weakens to K3,500 against dollar in over-the-counter market

KYAT weakened to approximately K3,500 against the greenback at the Over-the-Counter market.

The Kyat-dollar exchange rate was stable at a high of K3,500 in December in the forex market. Meanwhile, the reference exchange rate of the Central Bank of Myanmar is K2,100.

On 5 December, the CBM allowed authorized dealers (private banks) to operate forex exchanges freely as per the market rate determined by the supply and demand market forces.

Additionally, the CBM notified that outward remittance must comply with the rules and regulations of the Foreign Exchange Management Committee.

The dollar gained to around K4,000 on 19 August 2023.

Under Section 9 of the Foreign Exchange Management Law, only those entities holding foreign exchange dealer licences are allowed to deal in foreign currency and traveller's cheques. Those



Some greenbacks seen at the Authorized Dealer's exchange counter.

holding foreign currencies without valid licences and permits will face legal actions under the law, according to the CBM's notification released on 21 August 2023.

According to Notification 7/2014 dated 30 September 2014 issued by the Central Bank of Myanmar, affirmingly stating that under Clause 15 of the Foreign Exchange Management Law, domestic residents are allowed to keep US\$10,000 in a maximum or

equivalent amount of foreign currencies for six months. If those foreign currencies that have been unused for over six months have to be exchanged in local currency at the market price through authorized dealers or deposited into bank accounts.

Those illegally holding foreign currencies are to face legal actions under the Foreign Exchange Management Law, the CBM warned again. — NN/EM

Thailand emerges as Myanmar's leading export partner in 8 months

THAILAND is the primary source of Myanmar's exports among the top ten export partners, with US\$2.57 billion over the past eight months of the current financial year 2023-2024, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics show.

China is ranked as the second largest export partner with \$2.067 billion between 1 and 15 December. In terms of export market share, the remaining are Japan with \$814.666 million, India with \$597.8 million, the US with \$425.489 million, Germany with \$379.398 million, Poland with \$343.077 million, Spain with \$323.5 million, South Korea with \$274.682 million and the UK with \$229.633 million.

Garment exports earned the highest of the top 10 export commodities this FY, at \$3.1 billion. The export values stood at \$2.36 billion from natural gas export, \$501.3 million from black gram, \$429.3 million from

rice and broken rice, \$275 million from corn, \$242 million from fish, \$192 million from green gram, \$132 million from natural rubber, \$102 million from pigeon pea and \$82.5 million from metal and gross ores. Myanmar exports black gram, rice and broken rice, corn, green gram, rubber, pigeon pea, sesame, onion, turmeric, tamarind, dried ginger, konjac, castor oil seed, coffee bean, cashew nuts, cassava, watermelon, muskmelon, mango, tissue-cultured banana, agricultural produce, various fish, shrimp, eel, crab and dried fish to external markets.

Additionally, Myanmar has been exerting efforts to enhance manufacturing exports, and veneer and plywood, finished forest products, clothes, sugar and other manufacturing products are also sent to foreign markets. In addition to the border, Myanmar exports goods by sea and air. — NN/EM

Myanmar ships 1.1 mln tonnes of pulses as of 15 Dec

MYANMAR conveyed over 1.1 million tonnes of pulses worth over US\$931 million to foreign trade partners in the past eight and half months of the current 2023-2024 financial year beginning 1 April, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics showed.

Myanmar bagged \$815.65 million from pulses exports of over 964,987 tonnes through the maritime trade channel, whereas over 135,383 tonnes of pulses worth \$116.3 million were sent to the neighbouring countries via border between 1 April and 15 December 2023, totalling \$931.955 million from exports of 1,100,371 tonnes.

The value of Myanmar's pulses exports totalled over US\$1.47 billion from over 1.9 million tonnes in the previous FY 2022-2023, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated.

Myanmar mainly exports black gram, green gram and pigeon peas to foreign markets. Black grams and



Various pulses and beans seen being organized for sale in the market.

pigeon peas are primarily shipped to India, while green grams are exported to China and Europe.

India has growing demand and consumption requirements on black gram and pigeon peas. According to

a Memorandum of Understanding between Myanmar and India signed on 18 June 2021, India will import 250,000 tonnes of black gram and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon peas (tur) from Myanmar for five consecutive years from 2021-2022 financial year to 2025-2026 FY. This G-to-G pact will not affect the pulses' annual quota set by India. Myanmar's exporters are also entitled to deliver the pulses to India under that yearly quota.

The prevailing market prices are K3.01 million per tonne of black gram (urad) and K3.35 million per tonne of pigeon pea (tur).

Black gram, which India primarily purchases, is commonly found only in Myanmar. In contrast, pigeon peas, green grams and chickpeas are grown in African countries, Australia, stated the Myanmar Pulses, Beans, Maize and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association. — NN/EM

OPINION

Revitalize traditional medical science through potent therapies

THE rich tapestry of Myanmar's traditional medical science, rooted in ancient techniques documented on palm leaves, folded papers, and literary treatises, has been a cornerstone of healthcare for generations. Throughout the Tagaung, Sri Ksetra, Bagan, Inwa, and Konbaung eras in Myanmar, the efficacy of traditional therapies was evident, with skilled practitioners extending their services to the highest echelons of society, including his majesty kings, royal families, court counsellors, military personnel, and the general public.

Even today, over 70 per cent of Myanmar's population, predominantly residing in rural areas, continues to rely on traditional medicines for their daily health needs. Recognizing the

importance of this heritage, successive governments have established traditional medicine hospitals and clinics one after another across the nation to provide holistic healthcare services rooted in Myanmar's cultural medicinal practices to the people.

In the face of global advancements in modern Western medical science, Myanmar emphasizes the intrinsic connection between food and medicine, echoing the traditional wisdom that "food is medicine, and medicine is also food." Preserving the knowledge embedded in Myanmar's traditional medicine is crucial, urging both the government and the people to collaborate with international organizations to elevate the standards of Myanmar's traditional medicine to emerge potent therapies based on experimental

tests and valuable experiences.

To ensure the transmission of invaluable therapies to future generations, Myanmar traditional medicine practitioners must generously share their experiences and knowledge with new-generation practitioners so as not to lose valuable therapies. Currently, modernizing Myanmar's traditional medical science is imperative for the whole nation at this juncture. Embracing advanced technologies, studying outcomes from experimental tests, and disseminating knowledge globally will position Myanmar's traditional medicine on the international stage.

Under the State's guidance, the Ministry of Health allocates annual research funds with a focus on evidence-based medical education. The Department of Traditional Medicine plays a pivotal role in conducting research on Myanmar's traditional therapies, medication methods, and herbal plants. This shift from experience-based to evidence-based medical education underscores the commitment to advancing Myanmar's traditional medical science.

The journey to uplift Myanmar's traditional medical science is a collective effort, requiring collaboration between the government, traditional medicine practitioners, and international partners. By embracing the wisdom of the past while embracing the opportunities of the present, Myanmar's traditional medicine can not only endure but also flourish in the evolving landscape of global healthcare for the sake of the people.

Have a Pleasant Early Morning!

Engaging in activities during the early morning is advised to maintain a clear and focused mind, free from mixed feelings like anxiety and grief.

WITH many different points of view on time perception, everyone will define the best period of a day as they like. Myself, I enjoy the early morning during the day most. On such this morning, the whole environment is still a little dark as the sun is beginning to peep out in the east as well as it can be peaceful and quiet, particularly in the country, except cocks crowing and birds chirping sometimes. Also, at this time, plants and trees are standing tall and still, with no wind. The early morning is so beautiful in the grey and red half-light. Of course, the early morning is the very start of a day, so we should all wake up quite well at the crack of dawn.

Should we get up early, we need to have sound sleep as well as enough sleep at first. Sound sleep by night often offers calm and ease for the next day. Grown-ups usually take adequate sleep, usually between 4 and 6 hours.

Speaking by local time, the early morning is between 5:30 and 6:00. We should never miss the early morning simply because our getting up late may hurry us up with everything that we carry out on a day-to-day basis.

Within the space of the early morning, it would be better if we have to keep a clear mind free from such mixed feelings as anxiety and grief. Whatever happened one day should not be taken to another day in any way. Some past which causes a negative effect on our future days can be well forgotten by us ourselves. The past is past only. In order to be able to think positively and big, we can say our prayers, practise meditation or yoga, conduct our private study, and even do the cooking of whichever curry we like.

It is just as well that doing gentle physical exercise like jogging and walking dogs is done in the early morning but without its consequent physical or mental fa-



Engaging in gentle physical activities such as jogging and walking dogs is best done in the early morning to avoid subsequent physical or mental fatigue. ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/PIXABAY

tigue. Naturally, physical exercise reduces work stress and keeps the body fit, healthy, or fresh throughout the day. What is more, exercise will most likely turn temporary attention to another place, not the job; therefore, doing the same thing every day seems less boring and helps release nervous tension. Doing aerobics or exercising on the home walking machine is also appropriate. In the main, the more oxygen comes into the blood, the better the body. After all, it is best if whatever physical exercise does not exhaust the body even very little but relaxes it so much.

There is no denying the fact that breakfast is the healthiest meal of the day for someone who takes this meal at the very beginning of the day while he is starving for it actually. Breakfast must help us feel a full stomach and enjoy its taste for certain. Our breakfast should be fried rice, Mont-hingah, coffee, milk, half-boiled egg, or tea with fried bread and egg.

Whatever food and drink they are, we ought to have a nice breakfast until we are satisfied with it. At worst, this may mean breakfast is supposed to be eaten like a beggar.

After what we should do comes those we should not normally do. Playing loud music early in the morning through the radio, Bluetooth, or whatever is a bad habit. This is merely a kind of noise pollution which gives rise to a threshold of pain higher than average due to the volume that we cannot stand. Even listening to a pleasant or low sound for 30 minutes or so deafens us as long as it lasts. Hence, anybody had better listen to music all to themselves if possible.

Some families tend to quarrel in the too early morning. By Myanmar tradition, a family quarrel in the morning is termed having bad luck. In fact, no quarrel with anyone at the start of the day also creates his making. Getting a scolding from the elders in the morning

looks likewise awful. Sometimes, these quarrels and scoldings have no apparent reasons. If they pretty near turn out to be habits anywhere, everybody had the best break or change these two habits as soon as possible.

Above all, we need not consume one day in such a hurry for the simple reason that all people have been working until they keep body and soul together. In 'The Quiet Life' by A. Pope, we are able to spend our lives quietly in a healthy body and peaceful mind day by day. Noticeably enough, an unlimited number of people's desires appear to stretch into infinity. It is said that Ernest Hemingway, who is the author of 'The Old Man and the Sea', used to watch the rising view of the sun without fail since he learned to enjoy the beauty of nature. Fundamentally, we will have to keep calm under any circumstance day after day. Have a pleasant early morning, therefore.

Hotter weather due to climate change could lead to more mosquitos: Study

Published in the journal Ecology, the study titled "Warming and Top-Down Control of Stage-Structured Prey: Linking Theory to Patterns in Natural Systems" indicates that rising temperatures, often associated with climate change, can reduce the effectiveness of predators in controlling mosquito populations.

A recent study conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University scientists found that a warmer environment may result in more mosquitos as predators struggle to maintain their number.

As the cover feature in Ecology, a journal published by the Ecological Society of America, the study — "Warming and Top-Down Control of Stage-Structured Prey: Linking Theory to Patterns in Natural Systems" — found that rising temperatures, often linked to climate change, can make predators of mosquito larvae less effective at controlling mosquito populations.

Development time of larvae

Warmer temperatures accelerate the development time of larvae, leading to a smaller window of time for dragonflies could eat them.

This means there could be nearly twice as many mosquito larvae that make it to adulthood in the study area. The researchers looked at riverine rock pools at Belle Isle along the James River in Richmond and found that warmer temperature pools had more aquatic mosquito larvae, even when their predators that naturally control the populations were present.

The native rock pool mosquito

is not an important disease vector, but it is one of the few local mosquitos that doesn't have to feed as an adult to lay eggs. So the findings might apply to similar taxa, like the invasive Asian rock pool mosquito.

"We might see larger populations of everyone's least favourite bug, mosquitos. While the mosquito to larvae we studied here [are] the North American rock pool mosquito, these findings likely apply to species of mosquito that do act as vectors for diseases like West Nile or even Zika virus," said Andrew T Davidson, PhD, lead researcher on the study. He conducted the research through the PhD program in VCU's Centre for Integrative

Life Sciences Education.

Ecosystems and food webs

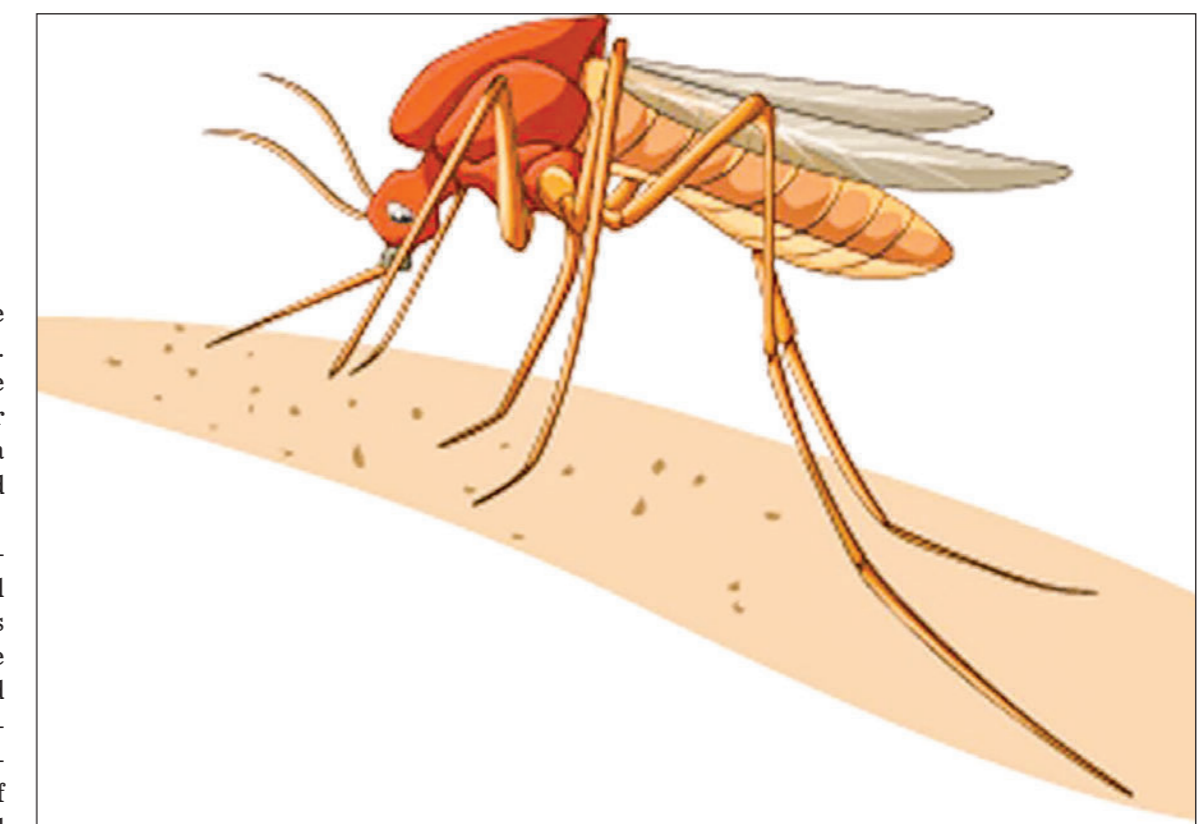
Predators help stabilize ecosystems and food webs, and the study looked at predator-prey interaction between dragonfly nymphs and mosquito larvae. Before fieldwork, the research was rooted in concepts of thermal physiology and short-term lab experiments that yielded predictive models of the relationship between predators, prey and temperature in the field. The field study then tested the models in a completely natural environment.

The study builds on Davidson's earlier research in Functional Ecology as well as work by lab

mate C. Ryland Stunkle and the rest of the VCU rock pool team. The team also acknowledges the collaborative support of professor Brian Byrd of Western Carolina University's College of Health and Human Sciences.

The recent work led by Davidson was part of a larger National Science Foundation grant that has involved scientists from VCU, the University of Richmond, Radford University, Western Carolina University and Eastern Carolina University. The collaborative award of nearly USD 1 million has included nearly USD 400,000 for VCU.

SOURCE: ANI



A study from Virginia Commonwealth University reveals that a warmer environment may lead to an increase in mosquito populations as predators struggle to maintain their numbers. PHOTO: ILLUSTRATION: FREEPIK

ARTICLE

By Hu Wo (Cuckoo's Song)

NATIONAL

Ancient coins unearthed at Beikthano World Heritage Site reveal hidden history



Photos show the entrance to the Beikthano World Heritage Site and the excavated Mound KKG 3.

ACCORDING to the Department of Archaeology and National Museum, archaeologists

excavated three ancient coins from the Beikthano World Heritage Site in Taungdwingyi

Township, Magway Region, on 19 December.

The department stated

that two appeared to be made of gold and the other of silver. They discovered them 25 cen-

timetres underground at the Unexcavated Mound 002.

The coins have diameters of 2.2 centimetres, 1.8 cm, and 3.2 cm, respectively. The gold coins have the same features despite their differing sizes.

Upon discovery, the smaller gold coin was split in half, while the silver exhibited damage at the bottom. The department said they would assess the coins with experts to confirm their ages further.

Archaeologists have unearthed almost 50 Pyu-era coins at the Beikthano site. They are excited about the current finding since it can help rediscover the site's historical heritage. — ASH/NT

Yangon Cosplayer Meet Up Vol 2: Young enthusiasts gather for joyful cosplay in Kamayut



Creative young contestants pose in group documentary photos at yesterday's event in Yangon.

MA Amara Lin Aung, one of the competition participants, shared that many young people joyfully participated in the Yangon Cosplayer Meet Up Vol 2, a Christmas celebration held at the Times City Promotion Outdoor Area in Kamayut Township, Yangon Region.

The Yangon Cosplayer Meet Up Vol 2 Cosplay Con-

test is part of "The Street" and "ATOM Wonderland" events at the Times City Promotion Outdoor Area from 23 to 25 December. It is the largest gathering of young cosplayers in the Yangon Region, attracting participants for competition, support, and learning.

Over 120 cosplayers took part in the Yangon Cosplayer

Meet Up Vol 2 Cosplay competition, with many young teenagers showcasing sophisticated and beautiful cosplay costumes, and they competed in performances that complemented their outfits.

Many young people joyfully participated in the Times City Christmas Festival, taking photos with others attending the event. — ASH/KZW

Miss Myanmar to compete in 2024 Miss Supranational Pageant in Poland

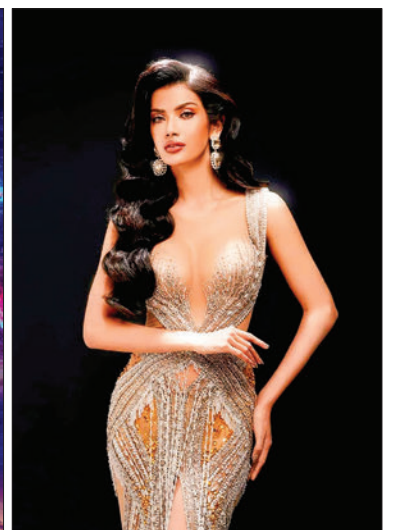
MISS Dee will represent Myanmar in the Miss Supranational 2024 pageant, scheduled for June in Poland.

Miss Dee, the winner of Miss Supranational Myanmar 2024, previously represented Mawlamyine as Miss Universe Myanmar 2023 and earned the title Miss Universe Myanmar 1st Runner-up.

"Thank you for entrusting me with this opportunity. I am committed to working hard for

the competition and will make every effort to represent Myanmar with pride. I will prepare thoroughly and strive to uphold the honour of Myanmar," Miss Dee said.

Miss Dee is 171 centimetres tall. She is 27 years old and holds a degree in English, focusing on fashion and music. She is interested in thrifting and charity work and is currently working as a model. — ASH/KZW



Miss Supranational Myanmar 2024 Miss Dee.

UNESCO listing brings new shine to North African metal art

MOHAMED Amine Htiouich began honing his metal engraving skills as a teenager. Now the 37-year-old Tunisian is training the next generation in the ancient art, recently recognized by UNESCO.

Htiouich first worked on copper, then silver and finally gold at the family's workshop in the old medina of Tunis.

Two decades later, he offers free apprenticeships to young enthusiasts in the art of manually cutting words or symbols into jewellery and household objects, a craft often passed down from father to son.

"I don't want to see this tradition disappear," said Htiouich. "I'm afraid that one day there will be no succession."

The long-standing tradition,



A Tunisian artisan displays a copper plate he is engraving to a tourist at his shop in the souks of the medina of Tunis on 7 December 2023. The long-standing tradition, which has been practised across North Africa and the Middle East for centuries, was last month added to UNESCO's intangible heritage list. But while it is gaining recognition abroad, local artisans regret that metal engraving remains undervalued at home and suffers from a lack of government support. **PHOTO: AFP**

which has been practised across North Africa and the Middle East for centuries, was added last month to UNESCO's intangible heritage list.

While it is gaining recognition abroad, local artisans regret that metal engraving remains undervalued at home and suffers from a lack of government support.

The UNESCO designation "commits us to preserving this exceptional know-how", said Imed Soula, a Tunisian artisan who helped get engraving nominated for the list.

Soula told AFP that local craftsmen were "inspired by the aesthetic, religious and cultural references of their societies" when creating the exquisite works. — AFP

Octogenarian 'Aunty Ilonka' rings heavy church bells in Hungary

FOLLOWING in the footsteps of her family's past five generations, Jozsefne Szedlak, or Aunty Ilonka as she is widely known, leaves her home to the nearby bell tower at least twice a day.

As one of the few remaining bell ringers in Hungary, she has taken on the responsibility of tolling the bells at the Catholic church in Tereny, a village of 350 residents around 60 kilometres (40 miles) north of Budapest.

The heaviest bell there weighs around 450 kilogrammes (1,000 pounds).

"As long as my hands and feet can handle it, there won't be an automatic system," says the 80-year-old grandmother of three.

"Because people say, and it's true, that bells die when they are automated, so a bell working by the press of a button does not chime the same."

"The bell summons the living, mourns the dead and breaks the storms."

Around Europe, bell ringers have become increasingly rare as motorization has progressed steadily since the 20th century, said Ferenc Bajko, a

campanologist who studies the history of church bells.

"In Hungary, usually Protestant churches have them, where the bells are only used on Sundays. It is really unique to have someone manually ring the bells several times every day," he told AFP.

Aunty Ilonka is a "great blessing", says Tereny mayor Andrasne Brozso.

Television crews and curious tourists regularly visit the village to meet her and even

Hungarian President Katalin Novak visited her last June.

Usually Aunty Ilonka just uses one hand to chime a bell at noon or in the evening, saying a silent prayer to count the time.

But on important Christian holidays like Christmas, she has to manually chime all three bells of the medieval church.

So she sits down on a stool and uses both her hands and right foot to simultaneously toll them — Not an easy feat, given their weight. — AFP



Bell ringer Jozsefne Szedlak, or as everyone calls her, Auntie Ilonka, rings the bell at noon in the catholic church in Tereny, 88kilometres far from Budapest, Hungary, on 22 December 2023. Following the footsteps of her family's past five generations, Jozsefne Szedlak is one of the few remaining bell ringers in Hungary. **PHOTO: AFP**

Surfing Santas ride waves, raise funds in Florida



A surfer dressed as Santa poses during the 15th annual "Surfing Santas" event in Cocoa Beach, Florida, on 24 December 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

SANTAS of all stripes descended on Florida's Cocoa Beach this Christmas Eve — not to deliver presents, but to ride some waves and raise funds for a good cause.

Beginning early Sunday, the beach filled up with thousands of adults and children alike dressed as St Nick, elves or reindeer for the annual "Surfing Santas" celebration.

Launched in 2009, the event raises funds for Grind for Life, a charity helping cancer patients travel for treatment, as well as the local surf museum. While dozens of wetsuit-clad surfers headed out into the chilly water — albeit much warmer than the

North Pole — others were content to lounge on the beach under cloudy skies, sipping cocktails and taking in the programming, including a costume contest and Hawaiian dance show. Under a tent, volunteers were selling T-shirts and raffle tickets to raise funds. Cocoa Beach lies along Florida's so-called Space Coast, just south of Cape Canaveral.

"Surfing Santas" was born in 2009 from the mind of Cocoa Beach resident George Trosset after he saw a TV advertisement in which several people dressed as Santa take surfboards out of a car and jump in the ocean. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

Moderna's swift progress highlights optimized business environment in Shanghai



This photo taken on 20 December 2023 shows the construction site of American biotech company Moderna's pharmaceutical plant in Shanghai, east China. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

IT took American biotech company Moderna just over three months to start the construction of its first pharmaceutical plant in China following an investment agreement with Shanghai.

The "Moderna speed", even faster than that of Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory, reflects how the Chinese economic powerhouse Shanghai has continued to optimize the business environment and stimulate the vitality of reform and opening up.

On 5 July, Moderna signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Shanghai Municipal Commission of

Economy and Informatization and the Minhang district government.

As one of the world's leading mRNA vaccine developers, Moderna focuses on cancer immunotherapy, including mRNA-based medicine R&D and virus prevention technologies.

Moderna secured land for the China R&D and production headquarters project in Shanghai and obtained approval for the pile foundation work of the facility in October.

With an estimated investment of 3.6 billion yuan (about 507 million US dollars), the project is by far the largest

foreign investment in China's biomedical field. It covers an area of about 18 hectares in the Shanghai Xinzhuang Industry Park in Minhang District.

To facilitate the investment, Minhang has set up a special work team serving 24 hours a day to address issues with the investment. The team handled 45 requests from the US side within two months, responding to them in as little as 30 minutes.

The city, district and industrial park all have a special work team, according to Tong Lingling, deputy general manager of Xinzhuang Industrial Zone Economic and Technological Development Co Ltd.

"The teams at the three levels worked in coordination with each other and helped enterprises speed up the approval process," Tong said.

At a recent plenary session of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China, the optimization of the business environment represented by "Moderna speed" has received widespread attention.

Participants at the session proposed improving the administrative approval process and strengthening services for enterprises to help materialize more projects as fast as that of Moderna to boost the Chinese economy. — Xinhua

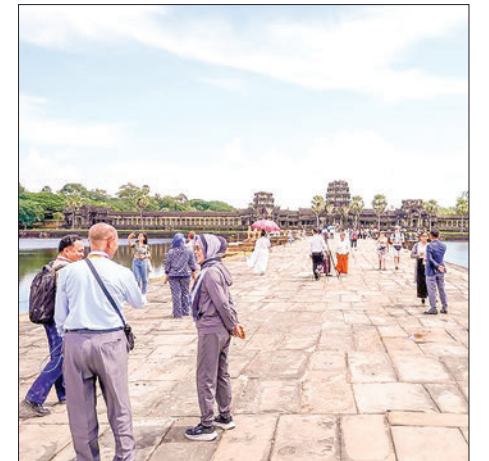
Cambodia receives nearly half million Chinese tourists in 11 months

CAMBODIA attracted 498,250 Chinese visitors during the first 11 months of 2023, said a report from the Ministry of Tourism released on Monday.

The number accounted for 10.1 per cent of a total of 4.91 million international tourist arrivals to the Southeast Asian country during the January-November period this year, the report said.

China was the third biggest source of foreign tourists to the kingdom after Thailand and Viet Nam, the report said, adding that some 1.65 million Thais and 920,093 Vietnamese travelled to Cambodia during the above-mentioned period.

Ministry of Tourism's Secretary of State and Spokesperson Top Sopheak said Cambodia is keen to see more Chinese holidaymakers.



People walk on the causeway leading to the main gate of the Angkor Wat temple in Siem Reap province, Cambodia, 4 November 2023. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

"We want more Chinese tourists as they have importantly contributed to our economic and tourism development as well as poverty reduction," he told Xinhua.

Sopheak believes that the Chinese-invested Siem Reap Angkor International Airport, which officially launched its commercial operations last month, will attract more international travellers to Cambodia.

"We hope it will attract new international airlines, so they will bring more tourists and investors to Cambodia, particularly to Siem Reap province, the home of the famed Angkor Archaeological Park."

Tourism is one of the four pillars supporting Cambodia's economy, in addition to garment, footwear and travel goods exports, agriculture, and construction and real estate. — Xinhua

Tokyo stocks rise on tech, retailer gains

TOKYO stocks rose slightly Monday after technology issues tracked gains in their US counterparts and retailers were lifted on hopes for solid earnings amid recovering inbound tourism.

The 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average ended up 84.98 points, or 0.26 per cent, from Friday at 33,254.03. The broader Topix index finished 0.97 point, or 0.04 per cent, higher at 2,337.40.

On the top-tier Prime Market, gainers were led by rubber product, precision instrument and pharmaceutical issues. The US dollar briefly weakened to the lower 142 yen range in Tokyo amid expectations the US Federal Reserve will move to cut interest rates next year, while many

participants retreated to the sidelines due to the holiday season overseas.

At 5 pm, the dollar fetched 142.35-55 yen compared with 142.41-51 yen in New York and 142.23-25 yen in Tokyo at 5 pm Friday.

The euro was quoted at \$1.1009-1021 and 156.89-93 yen against \$1.1008-1018 and 156.83-93 yen in New York and \$1.1000-1002 and 156.46-50 yen in Tokyo late Friday afternoon.

The yield on the benchmark 10-year Japanese government bond ended at 0.610 per cent, a fall of 0.015 percentage point from Friday's close. Amid limited trading ahead of the year's end, some market participants bought the debt to adjust their posi-



A pedestrian walks past an electronic board showing the rate of the Japanese yen versus the US dollar (L) and the closing numbers of the Tokyo Stock Exchange (R) along a street in Tokyo on 19 December 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

tions, sending yields slightly lower.

Stocks were initially lifted by improved sentiment, tracking gains on the US tech-heavy Nasdaq index late last week, with further buying in the retail sector after recent data showed the number of foreign visitors is returning

to pre-pandemic levels.

"The number of foreign visitors looks like it still has space to expand further next year, considering the recovery came without many Chinese visitors," said Makoto Sengoku, senior equity market analyst at the Tokai Tokyo Research Institute. — Kyodo

‘Beyond our borders’: Viet Nam tech firm VNG takes on world best

VNG co-founder Le Hong Minh’s first taste of international competition was as a gamer for Viet Nam at an early e-sport tournament in South Korea.

Two decades later, he says he’s ready to face the world’s best again as he takes his tech company public.

The firm — headquartered in buzzing business hub Ho Chi Minh City — is one of Viet Nam’s leading game publishers, but it also runs a digital wallet, cloud services and Viet Nam’s most popular messaging platform.

Months after Vietnamese electric vehicle maker VinFast made its debut on the Nasdaq, hitting the headlines around the world as its valuation skyrocketed and then crashed, VNG is also planning a listing in New York.

“I challenge the game team by saying that in the next three to five years we need to become a global game compa-



This photo taken on 8 December 2023 shows a staff member of the Vietnamese internet firm VNG working at the VNG headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City. **PHOTO: AFP**

ny,” Minh, 46, told AFP from his office on the banks of the Saigon river.

To do that, “we need to be on a global stage, with access to global capital and talent”.

In Viet Nam, VNG’s products are already deeply embedded in people’s lives.

Its Zalo app has 75 million active users in a country of 100

million people, outperforming Facebook to make it Viet Nam’s most popular messaging platform.

The communist nation has a young and tech-savvy population, but it’s not just them who use Zalo, whose default language is Vietnamese and which is tailored to the domestic market. — AFP

Japan automakers to invest \$4.3 bln on EV production in Thailand

THE Thai government said Monday that four Japanese automakers are expected to invest a total of 150 billion baht (\$4.3 billion) for the production of electric vehicles in Thailand over the next five years amid Chinese companies’ dominance in the segment.

The announcement involv-

ing Toyota Motor Corp, Honda Motor Co, Isuzu Motors Ltd, and Mitsubishi Motors Corp came after Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin held talks with several Japanese automakers during his visit to Japan earlier this month.

Toyota and Honda are expected to invest 50 billion baht

each, while Isuzu will put up 30 billion baht and Mitsubishi 20 billion baht, a Thai government spokesman said in a statement.

The government’s investment board said some of the four automakers will start manufacturing EV pickup trucks within two to three years.

Srettha, a businessman-turned-politician, met the executives of several automakers on 15 December and discussed the Thai government’s planned tax incentives aimed at helping the automakers produce EVs in Thailand.

Chinese carmakers have recently seen their share in the Thai EV market reach nearly 80 per cent, according to local bank research.

The spokesman said, “The prime minister has stressed that Japanese carmakers can play an important role in promoting EV production in Thailand.” — Kyodo



Charging components are displayed next to a Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV plug-in hybrid SUV car at the Thailand International Motor Expo 2021 in Bangkok on 2 December 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Daihatsu to keep production suspended until Jan over safety scandal

DAIHATSU Motor Co, the smaller unit of Toyota Motor Corp, said Monday it will keep its domestic production suspended until at least the end of January after having halted all domestic shipments due to a safety testing scandal.

Daihatsu, which has been inspected by Japan’s transport ministry, said it does not know when it can resume shipments or production. The company plans to stop production at all of its factories in Japan by Tuesday.

The suspension is a major blow to thousands of its suppliers. According to credit research firm Teikoku Databank Ltd, there are over 8,000 firms in Japan that directly or indirectly

supply products or services to the automaker, generating combined annual sales of about 2.2 trillion yen (\$15 billion).

Daihatsu has begun compensation negotiations with its suppliers, sources familiar with the matter said. The automaker, which produces about 4,000 cars per day, has already stopped parts orders, they said.

The automaker is also in discussions with its labour union over employees’ wages during the production halt, according to the sources.

Daihatsu said last week that a total of 64 of its models were subjected to improper safety tests, expanding from the six it found in spring. — Kyodo



The photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter on 25 December 2023 shows a Daihatsu Motor Co factory in Ryuo in Shiga Prefecture, western Japan. **PHOTO: KYODO**

China to boost industrial recovery with targeted measures

CHINA will take further measures to step up the country’s industrial development next year on the basis of the current steady recovery in the sector, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT).

The country will beef up policy support for the stable development of key industries, promote sci-tech innovation, expand demand, and help reduce the cost of industrial companies, Tao Qing, head of the bureau for operation, monitoring and coordination with the MIIT, said in a

recent interview.

Since the start of this year, the industrial economy has shown steady recovery and a good momentum amid fluctuations, with policy efforts taking effect and the foundation consolidated, Tao said.

Xie Cun, head of the bureau for information and communications development with the MIIT, said China aims to accelerate the construction of 5G networks and gigabit optical networks, and continue to promote innovative breakthroughs in core devices. — Xinhua

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

Pope calls for end to Gaza war as world celebrates Christmas



Pope Francis arrives for the Christmas Urbi et Orbi blessing in St Peter's Square at The Vatican on 25 December 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

PEOPLE donned Santa caps on beaches, ski slopes and streets around the globe on Monday to celebrate Christmas, as Pope Francis called for an end to the wars in Gaza and Ukraine that this year have cast a shadow over one of the world's favourite holidays.

Red and white Santa outfits

appeared on surfers from Australia to Florida, on bicyclists in the smog-filled streets of New Delhi and intrepid souls braving chilly Channel waters for a holiday dip near Britain's Dover.

In his annual Christmas Day "Urbi and Orbi" mass at the Vatican, Pope Francis called for an end "to war, to every war,

to the very mindset of war, an aimless voyage, a defeat without victors, an inexcusable folly".

May peace "come in Israel and Palestine, where war is devastating the lives of those peoples", he said.

"I reiterate my urgent appeal for the liberation of those still being held hostage. I plead for an end to the military operations with their appalling harvest of innocent civilian victims, and call for a solution to the desperate humanitarian situation by an opening to the provision of humanitarian aid," he said.

"I implore peace for Ukraine. Let us renew our spiritual and human closeness to its embattled people," he said, also calling for the resolution of conflicts simmering in the Middle East, Africa and the Caucasus. — AFP

UK to divert warship to Guyana as tensions flare with Venezuela

BRITAIN said Sunday it will divert a Royal Navy warship to waters off Guyana, after a long-simmering territorial dispute between the South American ally and Venezuela recently flared again.

The British patrol vessel, HMS Trent, will arrive in the region later this month to conduct "engagements", the UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD) said.

It follows escalating tensions after Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro renewed his country's century-old claim to Guyana's oil-rich Essequibo region.

However, the South American neighbours agreed earlier this month not to resort to force to settle the dispute.

In a brief statement, Britain's MoD said: "HMS Trent will visit regional ally and Commonwealth partner Guyana later

this month as part of a series of engagements in the region during her Atlantic patrol task deployment."

The vessel is in Barbados over Christmas and will then head to waters off the mainland of Guyana, according to reports.

The ship is not expected to dock in Georgetown, its capital, because the port is too shallow, the BBC said.

The first to report on the deployment, the broadcaster said it was intended as "a show of diplomatic and military support for the former British colony".

A UK foreign minister, David Rutley, visited Guyana earlier this month and reiterated sovereign borders "must be respected" and that London would work internationally "to ensure the territorial integrity of Guyana is upheld". — AFP

Gulf states welcome UN-led peace push for war-torn Yemen

GULF Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, on Monday welcomed new commitments by Yemen's warring parties to take steps towards a ceasefire and engage in peace talks led by the United Nations.

The commitments announced by UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, marked the latest effort to end a bloody conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and unleashed one of the world's worst humanitarian tragedies.

The Arabian Peninsula's poorest country has been gripped by war since the Iran-backed Huthi rebels overran Sanaa in 2014, triggering a Saudi-led military intervention in support of the government the following year.

A UN-brokered ceasefire brought a sharp reduction in hostilities in April 2022. The truce expired in October last year, though fighting largely remains on hold.

Saudi Arabia, the key foreign party in the conflict, said in a statement it welcomed the UN announcement on Saturday of a "roadmap to support the path of peace".

Its foreign ministry encouraged Yemen's warring parties "to sit at the dialogue table, to reach a comprehensive and lasting political solution under the auspices of the" UN.

Fellow mediator Oman also welcomed the development, saying it hopes a deal "will be signed as soon as possible".

Qatar thanked the United Nations, Saudi Arabia and Oman for the peace push and urged the warring parties to accelerate an agreement.

Ahmed Nagi, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group think tank, said the announcement signals that the "UN now leads the negotiations, with the Saudis stepping back and allowing the UN to handle future political deals". — AFP

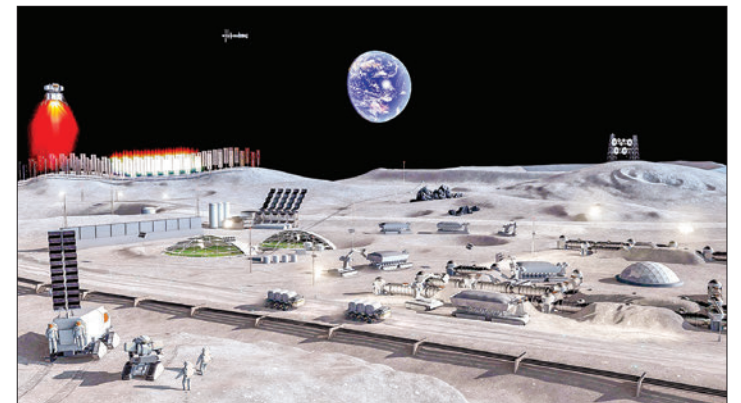
Japan likely to send 1st astronaut to Moon under US-led project

THE United States and Japan are making final arrangements to land a Japanese astronaut on the surface of the Moon for the first time, under a US-led lunar exploration programme, sources familiar with the matter said Sunday.

The Artemis programme aims to achieve a historic milestone by sending US astronauts to the lunar surface for the first time in over half a century by 2025 at the earliest, and a Japanese astronaut may be among the next to land on the Earth's satellite, according to the sources.

The two countries are also discussing putting a second Japanese astronaut on the Moon and expected to finalize a plan as soon as next month, the sources said.

Vice-President Kamala Harris said on Wednesday that the United States intended to have an international astronaut



The photo shows moon base concept image. (Photo courtesy of Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency). **PHOTO: KYODO**

accompany US astronauts to the surface of the Moon by 2029, although she did not say from which country the envisaged individual might be selected.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Friday confirmed at a meeting of the Strategic Headquarters for Space Development that two countries were speeding up discussions.

Japan will not only par-

ticipate in the construction of Gateway, a lunar-orbiting outpost planned under the Artemis programme, but will also be responsible for transporting materials, as well as developing a lunar rover that can be driven without a spacesuit.

Besides returning humans to the Moon and advancing lunar exploration, the ultimate goal of the Artemis programme is explore Mars. — Kyodo

SPORTS

MEF President's Trophy marks 75th Anniversary of Independence Day

THE Myanmar Equestrian Federation President's Trophy horse-riding contest marked the 75th Anniversary of Independence Day at the horse race course of the federation in Dagon Myothit (North) Township in Yangon yesterday morning.

Athletes participated in Myanmar's traditional horse riding, junior, middle, senior, special galloping, and international trail riding events in the final matches.

Among the spectators were Yangon Region Minister for Social Affairs U Aung Win Thein, Director of Yangon Region Sports and Physical Education Department U Aung Moe and officials.

After the competitions, President U Pyone Maung Maung of the Myanmar Equestrian Federation and executives presented prizes to winners in traditional horse riding, galloping and dressage events, respectively. — Lin Yama/TTA



An Equestrian jumps with her horse in the Myanmar Equestrian Federation President's Trophy horse-riding contest in Dagon Myothit (North) Township in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: LIN YAMA**

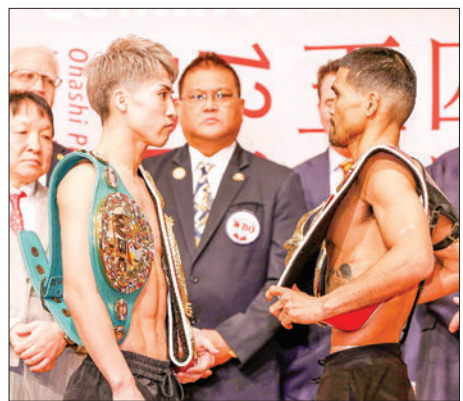
Wolves inflict Christmas misery on Chelsea

WOLVES condemned Chelsea to a fourth defeat in six league matches on Sunday, winning 2-1 in the first Christmas Eve Premier League match since 1995.

Mauricio Pochettino's men dominated possession at Molineux but wasted chances in an incident-packed game littered with careless defensive errors by the visiting side.

Wolves appeared to be cantering to victory after goals from Mario Lemina and Matt Doherty but they were made to sweat when Christopher Nkunku pulled one back deep into stoppage time on his Premier League debut.

The defeat means Chelsea are stuck in 10th in the Premier League, with Wolves behind them only on goal difference. — AFP



Japanese boxer Naoya Inoue (L) and Marlon Tapales of the Philippines face each other in Yokohama on 25 December 2023, after weighing in for their four-belt world super bantamweight title unification bout. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Inoue, Tapales weigh in for 4-belt super bantam showdown

JAPAN'S Naoya Inoue and the Philippines' Marlon Tapales both weighed in successfully Monday on the eve of their four-belt world super bantamweight title unification bout at Tokyo's Ariake Arena.

The WBC and WBO champion Inoue cleared the 55.3-kilogramme limit by 100 grammes, while WBA and IBF belt holder Tapales was another 200 grammes lighter. The pair glared at each other before Inoue reached out for a handshake.

"I've been right on the mark (with my preparation). I'm much more adjusted to the super bantamweight than my last fight," said Inoue, who has won all his 25 pro fights and 22 of them by knockout. — Kyodo

British billionaire Ratcliffe agrees deal to buy 25% of Man Utd

BRITISH billionaire Jim Ratcliffe has agreed a deal to buy a 25 per cent stake in Manchester United for about \$1.3 billion, vowing to return the Premier League club to the "top of world football".

United also announced in a statement on Sunday that Ratcliffe's INEOS company would take control of football operations after years of under-achievement under the Glazer family.

And the 71-year-old chairman of the global chemicals giant will provide substantial funds for future investment in the club's outdated Old Trafford stadium.

It brings to an end a lengthy saga that began 13 months ago when United's unpopular US owners said they were considering "strategic alternatives" to help the club grow.

The American family bought the club for £790 million (\$1.47 billion at the time) in 2005, loading the 20-time English champions with debt.

Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani



(FILES) A poster showing British INEOS Group chairman Jim Ratcliffe is seen outside the ground ahead of the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Bournemouth at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on 9 December 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

and Ratcliffe made offers in the region of £5 billion for a complete takeover, but that fell short of the Glazer family's valuation.

Sheikh Jassim withdrew his bid to buy 100 per cent of the club in October while Ratcliffe continued to pursue a minority shareholding.

"The joint ambition is to create a world-class football operation building on the club's many existing strengths, including the suc-

cessful off-pitch performance that it continues to enjoy," the United said in their statement on Christmas Eve.

Ratcliffe, who tried to buy Chelsea last year, grew up in the Manchester region and describes himself as a committed fan.

"As a local boy and a lifelong supporter of the club, I am very pleased that we have been able to agree a deal with the Manchester United board that delegates us manage-

ment responsibility of the football operations of the club," he said.

He said the expertise and talent from the wider INEOS Sport group would be harnessed in the drive for success, underlining that it was a long-term project.

"Our shared ambition is clear," he said. "We all want to see Manchester United back where we belong, at the very top of English, European and world football."

Dave Brailsford, the former performance director of British Cycling, is expected to have significant influence in his role as INEOS's director of sport.

The club said Ratcliffe would acquire 25 per cent of the Class B shares held by the Glazer family and up to 25 per cent of its Class A shares, which are traded in New York.

Ratcliffe's proposal values United at \$33 a share.

Under the deal, an additional \$300 million will be provided for investment into United's outdated Old Trafford stadium. — AFP



Egypt presents 3-stage plan to Israel, Hamas to resolve Gaza conflict – Reports

EGYPT presented to Israel and Palestinian movement Hamas its three-stage proposal to end the war in the Gaza Strip and ensure post-conflict development, the Asharq broadcaster reported on Sunday, citing sources.

The first stage includes a humanitarian truce for a period of two weeks, which can be extended for another two weeks, the report said. Hamas must release 40 Israeli women, children and elderly men and Israel, in turn, will have to release 120 Palestinian prisoners. The truce also provides for the supply of food, medical aid and fuel to the Gaza Strip, the broadcaster reported.

As part of the second stage of the Egyptian initiative, a government of technocrats should be formed in the Gaza Strip, which will oversee humanitarian assistance, the process of restoring the enclave and preparations for the general presidential election in Palestine, the report read.

The final stage calls for a full and



Palestinians fleeing the north through the Salaheddine road in the Zeitoun district on the southern outskirts of Gaza City, walk past Israeli army tanks on 24 November 2023, following a four-day ceasefire that began early in the morning. **PHOTO: AFP**

comprehensive ceasefire, as well as a deal for the release of all Israeli soldiers taken hostage and held in Gaza. During this stage, the number of Palestinian pris-

oners who will be released by Israel will also be determined. In addition, Israel will have to withdraw its troops from the cities of the Gaza Strip and allow refugees

to return to their homes in the enclave, the report said.

On 7 October, Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip, while its fighters breached the border, opening fire on the military and civilians. As a result, over 1,200 people in Israel were killed and some 240 others abducted. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza and launched a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. Over 20,400 people have been killed so far in Gaza as a result of Israeli strikes, local authorities said.

On 24 November, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a temporary truce and the exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The ceasefire was extended several times and expired on 1 December. — Sputnik

Iran denies US claim it attacked Japan-owned tanker in Indian Ocean



File photo taken from an account belonging to the Indian Coast Guard on X, formerly Twitter, shows the tanker purportedly attacked by a drone from Iran. **PHOTO: KYODO**

IRAN denied Monday that it attacked a Japanese-owned commercial tanker in the Indian Ocean over the weekend, with a Foreign Ministry spokesperson calling the US government accusation “baseless”.

The Pentagon had said that the Liberian-flagged, Netherlands-oper-

ated chemical tanker was struck about 370 kilometres off India “by a one-way attack drone fired from Iran”. The Wall Street Journal reported that the vessel is connected to Israeli tycoon Idan Ofer.

Iran supports the Palestinian militant group Hamas, which has been engaged in a war with Israel since 7 Oc-

tober, and Yemen’s pro-Iranian Houthi rebels, who have repeatedly attacked commercial ships in the Red Sea.

A commander of Iran’s elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has threatened to close other waterways if Israel continues its ground offensive in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Israel’s ambassador to India condemned Iran’s actions, saying in a post on the X platform, formerly known as Twitter, on Sunday that “this Iranian instigated attack on international shipping shouldn’t come as a surprise”.

The tanker, which was carrying 20 Indians and one Vietnamese, had left Saudi Arabia on Tuesday and was heading to Mangalore, southwestern India, according to the US Defence Department and the Indian Coast Guard. No casualties have been reported, they said.

Following the attack, the vessel decided to head to Mumbai for repairs and to have the damage assessed with the assistance of the Indian Coast Guard. — Kyodo

Tens of thousands affected as floods hit Thai south

FLOODS caused by intense rainfall have affected tens of thousands of people in Thailand’s deep south, officials said Monday, with some roads and railway lines forced to close.

At least a dozen schools in the provinces of Yala and Narathiwat have been forced to close, while footage from the region showed homes and shops inundated with murky brown waters and residents taking refuge on upper floors.

The heavy rains have also caused problems at sea, with at least seven boats sunk in the Gulf of Thailand and Andaman Sea since Friday.

The kingdom’s state railway company said track subsidence meant that trains heading south to the Malaysian border were stopping at Yala, 100 kilometres away. — AFP