

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

Athletes to compete in 2024 National Sports Festival with might and main

SENIOR General Min Aung Hlaing unveiled that a plan is underway to hold the fifth National Sports Festival in the coming December to achieve success in the XXXIII Southeast Asian Games to be hosted by Thailand in 2025.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered an address at the ceremony to honour victorious Myanmar sports teams in the Asian and international level sports competitions in 2023, taking place at Wunna Theikdhi Gymnasium B in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

He instructed the ministries and region and state governments to prepare for relevant sports teams to participate in the National Sports Festival 2024 with might and main.

The Senior General stressed the need to arrange player selections, training sessions and plans for grasping more significant victory in order to increase the numbers of selected athletes and sports events in the 33rd SEA Games to be held in Thailand and the 20th Asian Games to be hosted by Japan in 2026.

He disclosed that the government will award winners in the 19th Asian Games and the 4th Asian Paralympics held in China in September and October 2023, the World e-Sports Championship in Romania in August and September 2023, the 14th



State Administration Council Chair PM Senior General Min Aung Hlaing cordially greets triumphant athletes, managers and coaches from the sports teams yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

World Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Championship in Korea in November and the 19th World Petanque Championship in Thailand and the World Vovinam Cham-

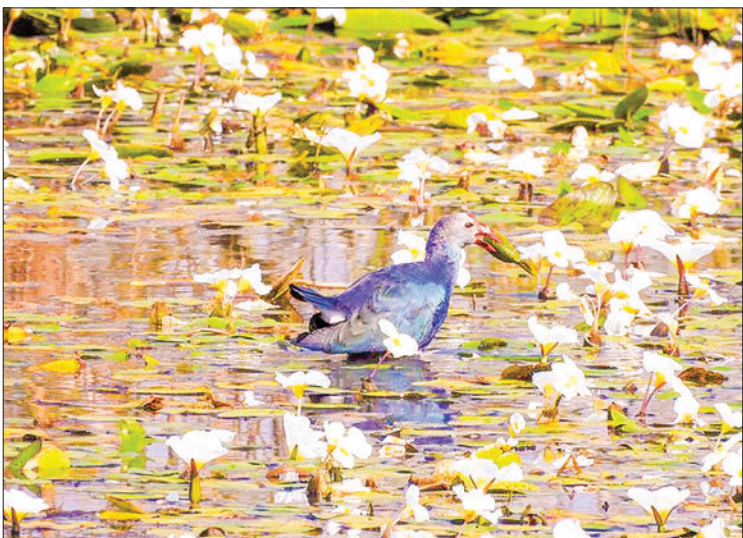
ampionship in Viet Nam respectively.

The Senior General recounted that the Myanmar sports contingent secured one gold medal in the four men's Sepak

Takraw event in the 19th Asian Games, two bronze medals in the 12-oar women's 500-metre and 12-oar men's 1,000-metre

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Myanmar adds Paleik Lake, Pyu Lake to Flyway Network Sites



One of the Flyway Network Sites (FNS) in Mandalay Region.

THE Forest Department under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Republic of Korea's Incheon-based East Asian-Australian Flyway Partnership (EAAF) jointly designated the Paleik Lake (EAAF154) in Singaing Township and Pyu Lake (EAAF155) in TadaU Township of Mandalay Region as the seventh and eighth Flyway Network Sites (FNS) in the country on 16 November 2023.

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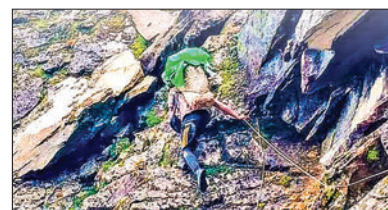
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MSME businesspersons need to emphasize exporting finished products

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24 types of medicinal plants recorded in PutaO, Khakaborazi National Park

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Myanmar entrepreneurs invited to attend Bharat TEX 2024

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Myanmar adds Paleik Lake, Pyu Lake to Flyway Network Sites



A certificate of participation in international standard conservation procedures for the Paleik Lake.

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Paleik Lake has an area of 1,186 acres, and the Pyu Lake covers 878. The two lakes meet the criteria, such as they regularly provide food and shelter to about one per cent of endangered bird species, endangered waterbirds and migratory birds. So, the Forest Department cooperated with international partner organizations aiming to

conserve the migratory waterbirds along the Asian-Australian Flyway and biodiversities and livelihood benefits to local communities. The EAAFP is a Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI) to support the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands, Ramsar Convention.

It will also bring benefits such as effective conservation of migratory waterbirds and their

inhabitants, participation in international standard conservation procedures, a sustainable ecosystem through solid cooperation and supportive sites for migratory birds and migratory bird conservations.

Myanmar has eight Flyway Network Sites to date. They are Gulf of Mottama in Mon State (2014, EAAF 117), Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary in Kachin State (2014, EAAF 118), Moeyungyi Wildlife Sanctuary in Bago Region (2014, EAAF 119), Nantha Island and Mayyu Estuaries in Rakhine State (2018, EAAF 139), Mainmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary in Ayeyawady Region (2018, EAAF 140), Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary in San State (2020, EAAF 147), Paleik Lake in Mandalay Region (2023, EAAF 154) and Pyu Lake in Mandalay Region (2023, EAAF 155), according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. — MNA/KTZH

More local tourists take hot-air balloon ride over Bagan thanks to discount

AMONG the tourists who ride hot-air balloon flights to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the ancient city of Bagan above the sky, the number of local visitors has risen recently.

This is a result of hot-air balloon companies giving discounts on balloon flight prices.

"The hot-air balloon flight price was about K350,000 per person previously, so only foreigners could afford it. But now hot-air balloon companies have offered discount prices at around K250,000-K270,000 per person, that is why the number of local customers is larger than foreign customers," said U Kyaw Myo Win, director of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture (Bagan branch).

Currently, the arrival of visitors from all over Myanmar has mounted in Bagan and of foreign tourists, the majority is from Thailand, followed by

Russia.

"At present, the number of local visitors is greater. Thailand is the largest among foreign visitors, and Russia is the second largest. In the past, visitors arrived in Bagan on Friday and visited on Saturday and Sunday, so the city was deserted on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. This is no longer the case. There



An aerial view of the Bagan Ancient Cultural Heritage Zone with hot-air balloon riders.

are visitors even on weekdays. The city is still vibrant with tourist groups," said U Kyaw Myo Win.

The arrival of visitors in Bagan started rising in last summer and visibly mounted as of last October Thadingyut period, resulting in a shortage of hotel rooms that even led visitors to stay in monasteries. — MT/ZS



Myanma Railways unveils picturesque Taunggyi-Pawmu railway journey



Travellers seen seizing the chance to enjoy breathtaking views of Taunggyi on the Taunggyi-Pawmu-Taunggyi train.

MYANMA Railways, under the Ministry of Transport and Communications, operates a weekly Taunggyi-Pawmu-Taunggyi railway service, allowing travellers to experience the stunning views of Taunggyi. The journey commences at 9 am each Sunday.

The trip takes approximately one hour and 30 minutes to cover a distance of 11.41 miles. The train stops at Htethain Station, allowing passengers to appreciate the scenic surroundings of the Bawathanthaya Roundabout. The train pauses for 30 minutes at Htethain Station, providing time for the turnaround back to Taunggyi. Departing from Pawmu station at 11:15 am, the train reaches

Taunggyi at noon.

The train, equipped with a 2,000-horsepower locomotive, comprises one upper-class carriage, four ordinary-class carriages, and one guard coach. Tickets for the Taunggyi-Pawmu journey are priced at K10,000 for the upper class and K5,000 for the ordinary class.

This Taunggyi-Pawmu trip offers travellers an opportunity to relish the breathtaking views of Taunggyi, contributing to a refreshing and clear state of mind. It is noteworthy that tour companies, travel agencies, private schools, and other service businesses can rent an entire train, with arrangements available for such requests. — MNA/TRKM

NATIONAL

Athletes to compete in 2024 National Sports Festival with ...

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traditional boat race, standing 27th position among 45 contending countries whereas taking 35th position in the 18th Asian Games with two bronze medals.

He praised the athletes for securing two bronze medals in the 100-m and 200-m short distance race and one bronze in the 100-m short distance race in the 4th Asian Paralympic Games.

Moreover, he continued that Myanmar secured one sil-

ver medal in the Dota 2 of the World E-Sports Championship, one gold in the Men's Sports Physique up to a 175-centimetre event and one silver medal in the men's 70-kilogramme bodybuilding event in the 14th World Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Championship.

In addition, Khin Cherry Thet of Myanmar was honoured as the world's 1st position in securing a gold medal in the 19th World Petanque Championship,

he added.

The Senior General claimed that 32 Myanmar athletes bagged two gold, three silver and nine bronze medals in the 7th World Vovinam Championship, taking the 6th position globally.

He praised victorious athletes, including managers and coaches, for excellently securing five gold, five silver and 14 bronze medals in the Asian and world-level competitions.

He declared to award K30

million each to gold medalists, K20 million each to silver medalists and K10 million each to bronze medalists, totalling K390 million to honour them for their vigorous efforts in taking training and competitions so as to bring honour to the State.

Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan reported on athletes' competitions in the Asian and international sports competitions in 2023.

The Senior General presented awards to Sepak Takraw, Bodybuilding and Physique, Petanque, and Vovinam teams, respectively.

The Joint Secretary and council members also presented awards to the victorious teams.

The Senior General cordially greeted victorious athletes and coaches and joined a tea party with the victorious athletes, managers and coaches from the sports teams. — MNA/TTA

MSME businesspersons need to emphasize exporting finished products

ACCORDING to Vice-Senior General Soe Win, MSME businesspersons have to improve themselves from the status of importer to exporter.

Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win met MSME businesspersons, departmental officials and ethnics at Zweekabin Hall in Hpa-an of Kayin State yesterday morning.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice-Senior General said that only when MSME produces finished products will relevant regions have food security and export surplus products to implement import-substitute plans.

He stressed that businesspersons need to be MSME members to be recognized as the MSME Businesspersons of the state. So they will have the chance to seek the necessary capital to expand their work establishments. He added that they will have loans from the MSME development fund and 16 private banks through collateral type.

He underscored that the government set basic cooking oil, rice and broken rice, cotton, rubber, tea, coffee, rattan, timber and bamboo as raw materials. Manufacturing finished products based on raw materials needs to be done under the One Region-One Product scheme to



State Administration Council Vice-Chair Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win looks into the exhibits displayed at the event yesterday.

ensure local sufficiency and export products.

He noted that ten ministries are conducting 260 training courses for turning out skilled workers. Only when skilled workers are turned out can quality products be produced. If so, such products will have high demand. If the businesses do not have labour skills, products cannot penetrate the market.

The Vice-Senior General explained that rubber production is an advantage in Kayin State

rather than in other states and regions. As rubber is used in producing various types of tyres across the nation and other personal goods, he added that it is necessary to strive to produce quality rubber.

He continued to say that businesspersons must contact ministries via MSME Agencies to fulfil market requirements. They have to introduce their products at the MSME exhibition and contest of regions and states on the 77th Anniversary of

Union Day.

He highlighted that they need to contact the management committee of Thilawa Special Economic Zone to export their products depending on offers from abroad. Hence, they need to manufacture quality products by applying high technology. He noted that they have to know the different benefits between traditional and systematic cultivations to boost production.

He spotlighted that peace and stability are essential in

relevant regions to boost the economy. So, the government always opens the door to peace while striving to forge peace and stability in the entire nation.

At the ceremony, the Vice-Senior General fulfilled the needs of MSME businesspersons.

The Vice-Senior General viewed round to display of domestic products and foods, personal goods, industrial products and traditional handiwork. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

MNHRC inspects Aung Chan Thar Labour Camp

THE inspection team, led by Member U Tin Aung of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, inspected the Aung Chan Thar Labour Camp in Kyauktan Township, Yangon Region, under Sections 43 and 44 of the Commission Law yesterday.

The inspection team thoroughly examined the Aung Chan Thar Labour Camp under the Commission Law and established procedures. The primary focus of the inspection was to assess whether the detainees in the camp were afforded their fundamental rights, including access to adequate food supply and healthcare services, as well



MNHRC Commissioner U Tin Aung (L) seen during the inspection tours at the Aung Chan Thar Labour Camp yesterday.

as ensuring sufficient purified water. Additionally, the team scrutinized the conditions to

ensure that prisoners received their personal belongings and items sent by their families. The

inspection also aimed to identify any instances of human rights violations, torture, or discrim-

ination within the workplace environment of the labour camp.

The inspection team further examined various facilities within the labour camp, including the prisoners' dormitories, clinic, library, kitchen, food store, water purifier, areas designated for family visits, and the sanitation system.

Additionally, the MNHRC donated 50 books for the prisoners, and the officer in charge of the labour camp received the donated books.

The findings and recommendations of the inspection team will be sent to the relevant authorities for taking necessary actions. — MNHRC

Myanmar Ambassador to Egypt attends G77 + China's 3rd South Summit in Uganda

THE Myanmar delegation led by U Myint Lwin, Myanmar Ambassador to Egypt, participated in the Third South Summit of the Group of 77 and China held on 21-22 January 2024 in Kampala, Uganda. During the Summit, Myanmar Ambassador to Egypt U Myint Lwin delivered a statement on 22 January 2024. — MNA



Myanmar Ambassador to Egypt U Myint Lwin delivers the statement at the summit on 22 January 2024.

Media invited to attend Myanmar Film Academy Awards ceremony

THE Myanmar Motion Picture Academy Awards 2023 ceremony will be held on 3 February 2024 at Myanmar International Convention Centre MICC-1 in Nay Pyi Taw.

Depending on the number of media persons attending the ceremony and the limited space where the ceremony will be held, A Zone and B Zone will be identified for the news media.

In addition, the certified media who wish to attend the ceremony and receive information must fill in the information in the application form, such as the name, Citizenship Scrutiny Card number, position, and news agency, at the rate of two media personnel per news media.

Interested media can contact 067 3412143, iprd.crd.npt@gmail.com; (Yangon) 01 544582, 01 544583, iprd.crd.ygn@gmail.com of the Copyright and Registration Division (Nay Pyi Taw) of the Information and Public Relations Department, Ministry of Information by 27 January 2024.

Ministry of Information

Counter-argument to false information

False claims of security forces burning Hmawnigon village in Madaya

MISINFORMATION is circulating that security forces entered Hmawnigon village in Madaya Township, Mandalay Region, firing small arms and heavy weapons and setting houses ablaze. It has been discovered that DVB, the malicious news media outlet, is circulating inaccurate information.

The actual incident was that security forces tasked with maintaining peace and security in Madaya Township were attacked by PDF terrorists

near the village of Hmawnigon. Ground reports and statements from security officials indicate that, during their retreat, the attackers set fire to houses in the village. Reports suggest that security forces collaborate with the public to ensure the area's security and community peace. However, malicious news media is spreading news to conceal the terrorist acts of insurgents and misrepresent the efforts of the security forces. — MNA/ KZW



Screenshot validates misinformation.

The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increase of death rate due to the disease.

NATIONAL



Some rare medicinal plant species.

24 types of medicinal plants recorded in PutaO, Khakaborazi National Park

THE snow-capped mountains and forests balance the world's ecosystem and watershed areas of rivers and streams. Meanwhile, the Khakaborazi National Park recorded 24 medicinal plants found in PutaO and Khakaborazi National Park in Myanmar's northernmost part, where the snow-capped mountains and forests are situated.

The Khakaborazi National Park, which is linked with the Himalayas and the main catchment area of Ayeyawady River, boasts various biodiversities, rare orchid species, Rhododendron species and medicinal plants. The officials record 297 trees and 220 orchid species, including black orchid. Similarly, they also record 24 therapeutic plants, including two new species.

Medicinal plants such as *Fritillaria cirrhosa*, *Coptis teeta*, medicinal taro root, *Cordyceps* and *Gushar* are growing in the national park.

"We conducted further research on 22 kinds of medicinal plants growing in the Khakaborazi National Park and recorded 24 types of medicinal plants. They are the plants that can be grown near PutaO and Khakaborazi snow-capped mountains. They cannot be found anywhere. As the place is rich in plant species, many species have not completed scientific experiments. The snow-capped mountains and coastal regions maintain the global climate. Myanmar possesses these two values, so we must conserve the nature-gifted biodiversity, plants, wild animals, forests, and snow-capped mountains.



A local spotted searching for medicinal plants along the Khakaborazi mountain ranges. **PHOTOS: KANU.**

Especially, the medicinal plants growing atop the icy mountains are precious and cannot be substituted, and they are the previous medicinal plants of the country," said Daw L K Si Yun from the research and educating programme of Khakaborazi National Park.

The *Gushar* is similar in shape to *Fritillaria cirrhosa*,

but *Fritillaria cirrhosa* is bitter, and *Gushar* is sweet. The *Fritillaria cirrhosa* grows on the slope of a snow-capped mountain, and the *Gushar* grows near the top of the Hkakaborazi mountain. The *Gushar* possesses previous characteristics and tastes. When their significant characteristics are explored through systematic research,

they will become an effective medicine in Myanmar's traditional and foreign medicinal-related fields, a traditional medicine practitioner from Yangon considered. Other plants do not grow in the places where the *Gushar* is located. The *Gushar* can be dug between three and five years. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/KTZH

YBS swiftly addresses closed YPS card readers with prompt repairs

ACCORDING to Yangon Payment Service (YPS), if machines on YBS bus lines, which provide YPS card payment services are closed, and there are reports along with vehicle numbers and bus line numbers, YPS will check or repair them and take immediate action in cooperation with respective bus lines.

YPS responded to a passenger's comment on its Facebook page about some YBS buses having closed card readers.

"We have cooperated with respective bus lines in cases of closed readers on YBS bus lines. And we have carried out check or repair at once and taken prompt actions if you have recorded vehicle and bus line numbers," the page replied.

YPS added that it will try to ensure better services.

To be convenient for paying bus fares for YBS passengers, YBS cards and YBS QR code payment services enabling pas-

sengers to pay bus fares by mobile phone are available.

The YPS QR code payment service was launched for YBS 13, 55, and 57 on 11 January, for YBS 63 on 18 January, for YBS 42 and 65 on 19 January, for YBS 22 and 64 on 20 January, for YBS 111, 133 and 134 on 22 January. — MT/ZS

A commuter in downtown Yangon utilizing a YPS card for YBS bus fare.



NATIONAL

Shan State Buddhist University sees its first convocation



The first convocation of the Shan State Buddhist University in Taunggyi Township and its graduates seen on 21 January 2024.

THE first convocation of Shan State Buddhist University in Taunggyi Township, Shan State (South), was held on 21 January, according to Venerable Dr Pandavabhipala, registrar of the university.

At the convocation, one doctorate, 33 Master of Arts, 18 postgraduate diplomas in Pali and Buddhist Studies, 13 Graduate Diplomas in Library and Information Management,

nine Bachelor of Arts in Lik Loung (Shan Literature), and one Diploma in Lik Loung (Shan Literature) graduates were conferred with educational credentials by the University Chancellor, Dr Dhammasami, widely known as Oxford Saydaw. These graduates finished their studies between 2018 and 2023.

“Shan State Buddhist University has been open for eight

years, reaching its sixth academic year. But this is the first time the university convened a convocation,” Venerable Dr Pandavabhipala said.

Professor Dr Aung Tun Thet from Yangon and Dr Peter Skilling from Canada were given honorary professorships. Shan literature historian Professor Sai Kham Mai was bestowed with an honorary doctorate. — ASH/TH

Bus lines to operate Minbu-Shwesettaw, up-down routes for Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival

ACCORDING to U Khin Maung Soe, a member of the Pogoda’s board of trustees, the Aung Mann small-vehicle line will commence operating the Minbu-Shwesettaw transport service and the transport service up and down the hill starting on 14 February.

The Shwesettaw pagoda festival is scheduled to take place from 14 February (the fifth waxing of Tabodwe) to 17 April (Myanmar New Year’s Day).

As in the past, there would be no pilgrim groups who travelled directly to the Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda festival. Now, pilgrims

will travel to Minbu Township according to their schedules. They will have to use the Aung Mann small-vehicle lines from there to the pagoda. The transport service between Upper Settawya and Lower Settawya remains as before. The Aung Mann small-vehicle line will operate the Minbu-Shwesettaw route and the up-down route from 6 am to 6 pm starting from 14 February, utilizing 20 Hyundai Starex.

Bus fares are K6,000 for the Minbu-Shwesettaw round trip and K1,000 each for the up and down routes. — ASH/MKKS



A bird’s-eye view of the Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda.

US\$30.519M worth of medical supplies imported

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Commerce’s records, drugs and medical supplies valued at \$30.519 million were imported from 26 foreign countries in December 2023.

On 13 August 2023, the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce for Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices (MCCPMD) announced efforts to prevent medicine shortages, given the increasing costs of home remedies and essential medicines in the medical industry.

The statement highlights that the MCCPMD has already imported necessary medicines for citizens. They urged pharmaceutical companies, wholesale distribution stores, and retail stores to continue their usual pharmaceutical trade

without interruptions. Additionally, they called on medicine suppliers to expedite the import of medicines and medical supplies, as efforts are underway to facilitate and streamline pharmaceutical imports.

It is reported that \$30.519 million worth of 1,300 tonnes of medicines and medical supplies were reportedly imported from countries including Argentina, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Cyprus, Ecuador, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Spain, the Philippines, Singapore, Portugal, Thailand, the US, and Viet Nam. — TWA/TRKM

Fire erupts at Hteinbin Landfill Site in Hlinethaya Township

ACCORDING to the Fire Services Department, a fire broke out in the Hteinbin landfill site in Hlinethaya Township, Yangon. The fire started at 12:29 pm on 23 January and was extinguished by 12:58 pm.

Two fire engines and two water bowsers from the Hlinethaya township fire station, one water bowser from the Northern District fire station, and two water bowsers from the Shwelinpan fire station reportedly participated

in the firefighting efforts.

In April 2018, the Hteinbin landfill site was engulfed in flames for five days, leading to the unfortunate death of four individuals with comorbid conditions due to fire smoke. — TWA/TRKM



(L & R) Photos show the Hteinbin garbage dump fire as firefighters work diligently to extinguish the flames.

Myanmar entrepreneurs invited to attend Bharat TEX 2024

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA), Myanmar entrepreneurs, especially from the garment industry, are invited to participate in the Bharat TEX 2024, a global textile mega event, to be held on 26-29 February in New Delhi.

Organized by the Indian Ministry of Textiles, the event is said to be a valuable platform for global industrial businesses.

Exhibitions, knowledge-sharing sessions, talks on the respective category, G2G and B2B meetings and networks, product launch ceremonies, pavilions for mutual benefits and exchanges for various sectors, and other activities will be involved at the event.

In addition, the participants and visitors from other countries can study the Indian culture, costumes and traditions at

the event. Potential purchasers of Indian textiles, importers, and exporters are projected to exchange information and make a wide network through the event.

Myanmar entrepreneurs from the garment industry involved in the Buyer Delegation Visit led by the MGMA will have a chance to stay three nights in New Delhi free of charge. Event organizers arranged a gala dinner, shuttle to and from



An advertisement of the Bharat TEX 2024 with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

the hotel, the airport and the exhibition. However, the potential participants will have to spend

the expenses for airport tickets, the MGMA informed. — NN/TMT

Tamarind price in Yangon market surges upon late arriving

NEWLY harvested tamarind typically comes into the Yangon market in late December each year. However, this year, it reached a month later than usual, and opening prices were at K3,000-K3,100 per viss, as reported by a tamarind trader from Bayintnaung's Khayay Street to The Global New Light of Myanmar (GLNM).

Although the opening prices are high, they are expected to decrease in the next few days due to a forecasted decline in demand, according to a comment from a commodity purchaser.

When the new tamarind was harvested towards the end of 2022, traders expected it to fetch a handsome price, but it remained low throughout 2023.

On 21 December 2022, the price of new tamarind was K2,100-K2,200 per viss in the Yangon market, while the price of old tamarind on that day was K1,900-K2,000 per viss. However, on 22 March 2023, prices for various tamarind varieties were K1,700-K1,750 per viss for new tamarind, K1,800-K1,850 per viss for old tamarind, and K2,400-K2,700 per viss for pulp tamarind. Tamarind prices in other towns and cities were K850-K900 per viss.

From late December 2023 to 10 January 2024, old tamarind was priced at K1,100-K1,200 per viss, and old pulp tamarind was priced at K1,900-K2,500 per viss.



The photo shows fresh tamarind arriving in the market.

In late December 2021, the price of new tamarind was K2,000 per viss, while old tamarind was K1,800 per viss in the Yangon market.

Domestic tamarind stocks have been steadily increasing since fewer businesses produce cigars and beverages where tamarind is heavily used, and tamarind exports have decreased for two consecutive years. This increase in tamarind stocks has led to a price decline, as mentioned by a tamarind seller, Ko Han, from Bayintnaung Seinpan Street to the GNLN. The tamarind price has remained stable even though prices of many food commodities in the Yangon market surged in 2022 and 2023.

Tamarind trader U Htaw Gyi forecasted that tamarind productivity will be low due to less rain in central Myanmar in 2023. If tamarind exports increase amid low productivity, prices are predicted to rise in 2024, as forecasted by the tamarind traders. — TWA/TMT

Online service available for gold purchase via One Pay/UAB Pay apps

THE Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) reported that gold can now be purchased online, especially by utilizing the One Pay and UAB Pay applications.

The YGEA discussed with personnel from Asia Green Development Bank and Academy Gold Shop on 22 January for online gold trading with the One Pay app.

The report states that before, the premium pure gold could be purchased only via the UAB Pay app. However, it can also be purchased with the One Pay application now.

The global gold price is US\$2030 per ounce, whereas

the YGEA reference rate for pure gold is K3,654,700 per tical. Notwithstanding, the price for pure gold in the gold market reaches K3,800,000 per tical, which results in a discrepancy of over K150,000 between the market price and the YGEA reference price.

The YGEA established the reference gold price by calculating based on the interbank online forex rate that the Central Bank set before 5 December 2023. At that time, the market price and the YGEA reference price had a gap of at least K400,000-K500,000 per tical.

On 5 December 2023, the Central Bank of Myan-

mar transitioned online forex trading to a floating market, allowing Authorized Dealers to trade based on demand and supply without the Central Bank of Myanmar's direct involvement in setting the forex rate.

The updated exchange rate in the market is K3,450 for a dollar. Market price records show that the price of pure gold reached its maximum in the domestic market in late August 2023, coinciding with a soaring forex rate of K4,000 for a dollar. During that period, the price of gold even approached K4 million in the gold market. — NN/TMT



The launching ceremony of the online gold purchasing service with the UAB Pay app was held at UAB Tower located at the Time City, Yangon, on 29 March 2023.

OPINION

Decorate the future of society with lights of education

IN the global arena, acknowledging education as an inherent human right, a public asset, and a collective responsibility is paramount. Consequently, the United Nations General Assembly designated January 24 as the International Day of Education, underscoring education's pivotal role in shaping societies.

Divergent levels of education within a society can have profound effects, influencing the historical narratives of nations and altering the course of relevant countries. The impact of education is far-reaching; it can either be a catalyst for global peace or an instigator of conflicts that escalate into devastating wars. Realizing a brighter future for society necessitates a concerted emphasis on elevating educational standards.

Pursuing "Learning for Lasting Peace," this year's theme for the International Day of Education, underscores the imperative to

promote education across all facets of society. This transformative educational process empowers learners to acquire essential knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and behaviours, positioning them as agents of peace within their communities.

While the government has allocated a substantial budget of K3,146.149 billion for education in the 2023-24 financial year, it is crucial to recognize that the responsibility for promoting education cannot solely be on governmental shoulders. A collective, relentless effort from all segments of society is essential to expedite the promotion of education, uplifting national standards and enhancing the lives of those within the educational sphere. Hence, everybody should contribute to the government's responsibilities to speed up the education promotion plan.

Amidst the backdrop of escalating climate change, democratic erosion, persistent inequalities, discrimination, hate speech, violence, and global conflicts, education emerges as a powerful tool to both address and prevent these challenges. It is not merely an investment but a long-term commitment with cumulative returns over time. Education serves as a lifeline for children, offering a means to escape poverty and chart a course toward a promising future. Yet, a staggering 244 million children and adolescents worldwide find themselves deprived of this fundamental right. In Myanmar, the 2019 interim census revealed that out of a population of 46.46 million over five years, only 290,000 individuals had completed vocational education, and 300,000 had graduated from universities. Alarmingly, just half of the 22.9 million people above 15 had completed middle school education. These educational statistics underscore the urgent need to intensify efforts in promoting education universally, emphasizing the imperative to produce a more educated citizenry capable of guiding future generations.

While the government has allocated a substantial budget of K3,146.149 billion for education in the 2023-24 financial year, it is crucial to recognize that the responsibility for promoting education cannot solely be on governmental shoulders. A collective, relentless effort from all segments of society is essential to expedite the promotion of education, uplifting national standards and enhancing the lives of those within the educational sphere. Hence, everybody should contribute to the government's responsibilities to speed up the education promotion plan.

INDEED, making essential key points for improving Health System Development would require a profound understanding of the current healthcare system, its challenges, and the socioeconomic context. Therefore, we would like to submit some general thoughts that could be considered based on the specific needs and circumstances;

❖ **Infrastructure Development:** Allocate resources for the development and maintenance of healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals, clinics, and medical facilities, particularly

in rural and underserved areas.

❖ **Healthcare Personnel:** Invest in training and recruiting healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff, as well as community health workers. Provide incentives to encourage healthcare professionals to work in rural or remote areas.

❖ **Telemedicine and Technology Integration:** Explore the integration of telemedicine and technology to improve healthcare accessibility, especially in

Key Notes on Improving Health System Development

By Dr Than Lwin Tun

remote areas. This could include tele-consultations, electronic health records, and mobile health applications.

❖ **Disease Prevention, Health Education and Health Literacy Promotion:** Implement compre-

hensive public health education programs to raise awareness about preventive measures, healthy lifestyles, and early detection of diseases as well as health literacy promotion. This can contribute to reducing the burden on the healthcare

system. ❖ **Emergency Preparedness and Response:** Develop and regularly update emergency response plans to handle health crises, including infectious disease outbreaks. This includes ensuring an adequate supply of medical

equipment, drugs, and personal protective equipment.

❖ **Community Engagement:** Foster community engagement and collaboration to address health issues at the grassroots level. This involves working closely with local communities to understand their unique health challenges and co-designing solutions.

❖ **Data Collection and Analysis:** Strengthen health information systems for effective data collection, analysis, monitoring and evaluation of health indicators. This can aid in evidence-based

decision-making and resource allocation.

❖ **Mental Health support:** Prioritize mental health services and support, especially in the aftermath of public health emergencies or during times of increased stress. This includes both community-based and clinical mental health services.

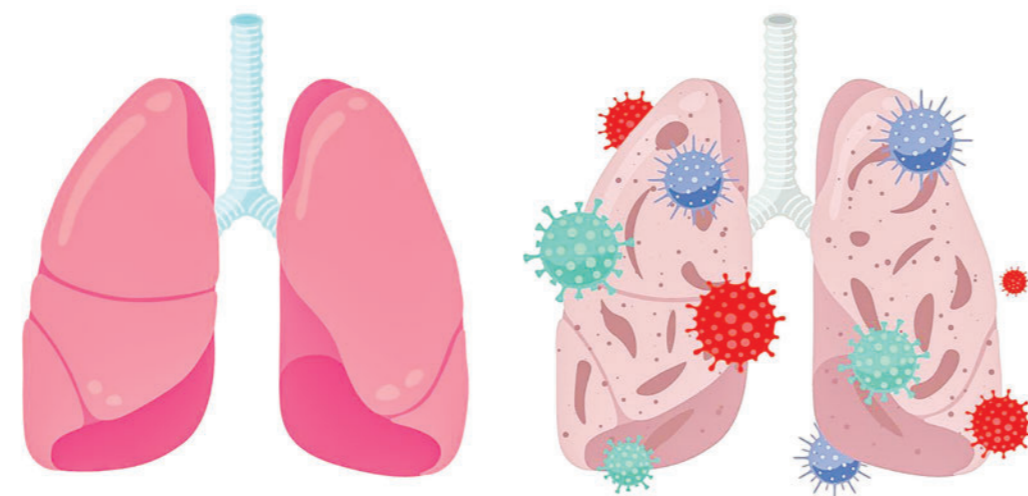
❖ **Collaboration with International Organizations:** Collaborate with international health organizations, NGOs, and other countries to share best practices, access resources, and participate in global health initiatives.

❖ **Access to Essential Medicines:** Ensure a consistent and affordable supply of essential medicines and vaccines, especially in remote and underserved areas.

In addition, it is essential to note that these key points are general in nature, and their effectiveness will depend on the specific context and challenges faced by the healthcare system globally. Collaborating with stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, communities, and international partners, is essential for successful implementation.

Study reveals how viral infections interact with human bodies

The study identifies a gene expression profile that may differentiate between symptomatic and asymptomatic infections, as well as distinguish positive asymptomatic individuals from those who are negative.



A longitudinal study by Columbia University researchers provides insights into viral respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 and influenza, examining symptomatic, asymptomatic, and mild cases. **PHOTO: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

MUCH of our understanding of viral respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19 and influenza is based on investigations of symptomatic patients.

A new longitudinal study of symptomatic, asymptomatic, and mild illnesses conducted by Columbia University researchers gives information on how our bodies respond to these infections at the molecular level.

They describe the finding of a gene expression profile that may distinguish between symptomatic and asymptomatic

illnesses, as well as positive asymptomatic persons from negative individuals.

The study presents a complex picture of how several common respiratory viruses interact with the human body, and with each other, as well as with common respiratory bacteria.

The results are available as an interactive web tool (link is external and opens in a new window) for scientists to generate and test new hypotheses, and are described in a new peer-reviewed article in the journal PLOS Biology.

Nasal swab samples

Over 19 months, 214 volunteers enrolled in the Virome of Manhattan study provided nasal swab samples, which were analyzed by molecular testing (RNA-seq and qPCR) along with daily individual reports of symptoms and demographic information.

The majority of the infections were caused by rhinoviruses and coronaviruses. Only eight per cent of positive samples contained evidence of multiple viral coinfections (one case was positive for five different viruses).

The study found that influenza leads to greater changes in gene expression than other viruses, such as coronavirus or rhinovirus. Their findings were also suggestive of a possible link between repeat exposure to pathogens and host responses.

"The repeated emergencies of influenza and coronavirus pandemic outbreaks have emphasized the need for a better understanding of host-pathogen interactions in respiratory infections," says study co-first author Marta Galanti, PhD, an associate research scientist in environmental health sciences at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

"Identifying the main biological pathways by which viruses interact with our bodies is key for developing therapeutic tools, such as antivirals or vaccines, as well as for better identifying individuals at risk, both for seasonal respiratory viruses and emerging pandemic threats," says study co-senior author Jeffrey Shaman, PhD, professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia Mailman and Interim Dean of the Columbia Climate School.

An earlier study using data from the same cohort found that reinfections with endemic coronaviruses are not uncommon, even within a year of prior infection.

SOURCE: ANI

Study reveals why family businesses have more women leaders

Family firms, contributing over 70 per cent to global GDP, show notable acceptance of female leadership, with 55 per cent having at least one woman on their board, and 70 per cent considering a woman as their next CEO, according to poll statistics.

FAMILY firms account for more than 70 per cent of the global GDP, and poll statistics reveal that they are significantly more accepting of female leadership: up to 55 per cent have at least one woman on their board, and 70 per cent are considering a woman as their next CEO.

Experts attribute the outlier gender parity to a focus on long-term plans or family values. But a new study, published in the Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, suggests that women's success as leaders in family businesses is deeply rooted in how employees interpret their leadership style.

"Family firms tend to focus on being inclusive and supportive of internal stakeholders, extending the sense of 'family' and community," says Remedios Hernandez-Linares of the Universidad de Extremadura in Spain and one of the study's authors.

"This culture creates a moderating effect for women leaders – their leadership is perceived as relationship-building and values dissemination."

This leadership style aligns more closely with Western gender norms that characterize women as more empathetic and

cooperative and men as more competitive and aggressive.

The authors note, however, that women leaders at family businesses are not necessarily more impactful because they conform to gender norms. They thrive because their businesses' strategies emphasize areas where women are traditionally seen as competent.

"CEOs influence employees' behaviours via modelling, and leaders who are more credible and legitimate are more effective role models," says Maria Concepcion Lopez-Fernandez of Universidad de Cantabria in Spain, another of the study's authors.

"Perceived incongruity between female gender roles and leadership roles can lead to prejudice and bias against female leaders."

The authors specifically dug into how CEOs foster entrepreneurship, a highly masculinized business behaviour, within their business culture. They conducted regression analysis on survey data from 322 Spanish small businesses, 198 classified as family firms and 133 as nonfamily.

Women represented 20 per cent of the CEOs. CEOs ranked their business's performance on five entrepreneurial traits:



The study published in the Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal suggests that women's success in family businesses is linked to how employees perceive their leadership style. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/PEXELS**

risk-taking, innovation, proactiveness, competitiveness, and autonomy. The survey also measured key aspects of social learning at each business, including commitment to learning, shared vision, and open-mindedness. The analysis showed no direct effect of CEO sex on entrepreneurial orientation, and all aspects of social learning were positively related to entrepreneurship.

However, there were marked differences based on CEO sex and whether the organization was a family business.

"It is not male or female leadership per se that predicts a firm's entrepreneurial orientation, but rather, whether the male or female CEO is leading a family or nonfamily business," says Kimberly A Eddleston of Northeastern, the study's third author.

"Women leaders at family firms better leverage their business's commitment to learning and open-mindedness to support entrepreneurship than women leaders at nonfamily firms."

SOURCE: ANI

ARTICLE

NATIONAL

Preservation efforts secure centuries-old religious buildings in Makkara

THE Department of Archaeology and National Museum preserves over 120 ancient religious buildings from the Bagan Age to the Konbaung era in the ancient city of Makkara in Singaing Township, Mandalay Region.

An official at the department said, “We discovered evidence of human habitation around Makkara since the Stone Age. It was probably a thriving city of many ancient civilizations, including Pyu, Bagan, Pinya, Inwa, and Konbaung.”

The city accommodates 126 pagodas and temples, varying in conditions — some in ruins, others intact and well-preserved — all embellished with distinctive Myanmar architec-

tural features.

“Among them, the Shweyaungdaw Pagoda is the most prominent. The lion statues at the beginning of its stairways are considered the second largest after those at the Min-gun Pahtodawgyi.”

The pagoda is believed to be built during the reign of King Bodawpaya of the Konbaung Dynasty. The murals inside the edifice are mostly intact, and the monastery near the pagoda also houses some murals. Ancient Pagoda No 31 features walls embedded with Buddha images and a distinctive composition, setting it apart from many other structures.

To reach Makkara, take the Kyaukse-Mandalay Road and look for the directional sign-



The lion statues and ancient pagodas in Makkara.

board to Makkara near the ‘Welcome to Singaing’ sign. Follow this direction along the Thabyeyoe Canal road.

Additionally, use the route through Meethwebote village and the Shwesaryan Bridge, accessible from Shwesaryan

Road in Ohnchaw village, 14 miles from Mandalay along the Mandalay-PyinOoLwin Road.

Travellers may find the many directional signs inside the ancient city helpful.

The city was established in 666 AD according to the say-

ing ‘Thaw Thaw Thar Makkara’ and served as a scout town. The three Shan brothers Raza Thingyan, Athinkara, and Thihathu detained King Kyawswar of Bagan in 1298 and ruled Myinzaing, Makkara, and Pinle regions. — ASH/NT

CRIME NEWS

Confiscated illegal items: Timbers, industrial materials, foodstuffs, consumer goods, motorbikes and vehicles

ON 22 January, on-duty teams took enforcement actions under the Forest Law and the Export and Import Law, resulting in the seizure of various items. In Namati township, a Dongfeng vehicle (estimated value of K13 million) was confiscated, carrying 4.33 tonnes of illegal timber worth K338,324 near Yeaye Creek Bridge. In Shwebo township, six unregistered motorbikes (approximately worth K530,000) were seized near the Shwebo-KhinU road. In Homalin township, an unregistered Kenbo 125 motorbike (estimated value of K150,000) was confiscated.

Additionally, the Bago Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force, overseeing combined teams, reported the following confiscations on the same day. A Howo tractor head with a trailer (estimated value of K70 million) travelling from Thamanya to Yangon was seized near the Shwethanlwin Tollgate. It was carrying 11,500 kilogrammes of galvanized iron pipe and 6,650 kilogrammes of second-hand clothes valued at K40.5 million, not declared in the Import Declaration

(ID). A TT bus (estimated K30 million) travelling from Mawlamyine to Yangon was confiscated at the Nyaungkhashay x-ray station. It carried six kinds of goods worth K13.2 million, including 9,000 bags of Yum Yum instant noodles without official documents. Similarly, a Customs on-duty team reported confiscating twenty kinds of goods worth K20.04 million, including 90 Junsha Stainless Steel Sink, from a container at the Myanmar Industrial Port.

Furthermore, joint on-duty teams reported the capture of five kinds of goods worth K25.55 million, including 28,150 bottles of LipoVitan-D and 1,080 kilogrammes of Fructose Syrup without official

documents at the Thiriyadana market in Thiriyadana bus compound in North Okkalapa township. Two vehicles (approximately K48 million) travelling from Mandalay to Yangon were seized at the Ywathagyi Dry Pot. They were carrying three kinds of goods worth K56,443,105, including 1,200 sets of electric kettles and 140 sets of Top1 combined rice mill that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID).

In total, 15 arrests were made on 22 January, with an estimated value of K317,751,429, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. All actions were conducted under the Customs procedures. — MNA/MKKS



Confiscated illegal goods in Bago Region.

K30 bln worth of Ice seized in Nawngkhio, Shan State (North)

K30 billion worth of two tonnes of Ice (Methamphetamine) was seized in Nawngkhio Township of Shan State (North), according to the Myanmar Police Force.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team, including members of the Anti-Drug Police Force, searched and examined a Fuso 12-wheel vehicle driven by Naing Oo, accompanied by Chit Kaung, travelling from Yatsauk to Nawngkhio near Magyi village in Nawngkhio Township at 7:30 pm on 17 January. The police captured 2,000 kilograms (two tonnes) of Ice (Methamphetamine) valued at

K30 billion that were hidden in paper cartons and beer cartons.

According to the investigation, the police arrested Zaw Myo Lin (aka) Ko Lin, who was tasked with transporting the seized drugs at 1 pm at the Yatsauk tollgate.

The investigation revealed that the seized drugs were intended to transport abroad via sea through Ayeyawady Region from Shan State.

Legal action has been taken against the offenders, and an investigation is underway to identify others involved in the criminal chain. — MNA/MKKS

Arrestees seen together with seized drugs and a vehicle.



French theatre director's 20-year ties with Chinese operas

FRENCH theatre director Patrick Sommier has been devoted to passing on the true meaning of Chinese operas which, according to him, are the assembly of all art forms, to the French public.

On the occasion of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France in 2004, Sommier was invited to collaborate on a joint project with the Beijing Vocational College of Opera and Arts (BVCOA) to perform Beijing Opera in France.

Sommier told Xinhua that when he arrived in China, like many others in Europe, he listed "plenty of cliches about Chinese opera: magnificent costumes, multicoloured make-up, extraordinary acrobatic movements..."

Unexpectedly, the beauty of Beijing Opera "quickly" captured his heart, he said. Re-



This file photo taken on 25 January 2010 shows French theatre director Patrick Sommier posing for photos with members of Beijing Vocational College of Opera and Arts (BVCOA) in front of the MC93 theatre in Bobigny, France. PHOTO: XINHUA

calling his collaboration with the BVCOA, for the first time, Sommier was impressed by the vigor of the actor hidden be-

hind the make-up and costumes, and the characters of incredible strength from the Chinese classics that evoked thoughts of the

Greek tragedy genre.

He was also touched by the Chinese professors who passed their know-how to their students

by acting together with them, which is different from how the French did in the theatre world, he added. "In China, opera is an art requiring lifelong devotion and actors are the embodiment of the opera."

Since then, Sommier started delving into various performance forms and advocated introducing traditional Chinese operas to French audiences.

Following Sommier's suggestion, the BVCOA in 2005 staged innovative performances whose first half featured professors and students collaborating on stage without make-up or costumes, while the second half showcased students performing classics like "Farewell My Concubine" in a traditional manner.

The performances drew a total of over 22,000 spectators, and over 7,000 French students participated in the workshops on Chinese opera make-up and body gestures. — Xinhua

China-Cambodia intangible heritage exhibition enchants visitors



Cambodian inheritors of intangible cultural heritage perform Chapei Dang Veng in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 21 January 2024. A China-Cambodia "Beauty of Intangible Heritage" exhibition kicked off here in the Cambodian capital on Sunday, captivating hundreds of visitors. PHOTO: XINHUA

A China-Cambodia "Beauty of Intangible Heritage" exhibition kicked off here in the Cambodian capital on Sunday, captivating hundreds of visitors.

The 15-day exhibition showcased creative artworks including tea sets, book lights, bookmarks and purple clay teapot painted with Bauhinia flower,

among others.

At the opening ceremony, Chinese intangible cultural heritage inheritors presented the grand song of the Dong ethnic group to the audience, as Cambodian artists introduced Chapei Dang Veng, a long-necked, two-stringed lute.

The exhibition was held

back-to-back with a competition for college students on intangible cultural heritage creative designs and a seminar on intangible cultural heritage.

Chuon Chanphearum, deputy director general of the Cambodian Ministry of Information's General Department of Information and Broadcasting, said the event was held at the right time as Cambodia and China designated 2024 as the People-to-People Exchange Year.

"This exhibition is of great significance and is a bridge for cultural exchanges," he said in a speech at the opening ceremony.

"It will play an active role in promoting people-to-people and cultural exchanges as well as further deepening the bond of friendship between Cambodia and China," he added.

Chanphearum believed that through this event, Cambodia will be able to learn from China's experience in preserving and developing intangible cultural heritage properties. — Xinhua

Canada announces national summit on combatting auto theft

THE Canadian federal government announced Sunday that a national summit on combatting auto theft will be held to ensure a coordinated response to this serious issue.

The summit that takes place on 8 February in Ottawa will serve to identify short-, medium- and long-term actions to combat auto theft, including the shipment of stolen vehicles through borders, said Public Safety Canada in a news release.

Auto theft is a highly lucrative, highly sophisticated transnational crime that not only affects Canadians but empowers criminal organizations through the proceeds of crime, said the release.

Rates of vehicle theft rose by 50 per cent in Quebec, 48.3 per cent in Ontario, 34.5 per cent in Atlantic Canada and 18.35 per cent in Alberta in

2022, as compared to the previous year, according to industry estimates.

In 2022, approximately 9,600 vehicles were stolen in the Toronto area alone, representing a 300 per cent increase since 2015, according to the Canadian Finance and Leasing Association.

Transnational organized criminal groups are believed to be involved in the export of stolen vehicles from Canada, while most vehicle thefts involve lower-level threat groups, with violent street gangs being the most prevalent, it said.

The majority of stolen vehicles exported are destined for Africa and the Middle East. Some stolen vehicles also remain in Canada enabling other crimes to be committed with the vehicles and are destroyed afterward, it noted. — Xinhua

ECONOMY WORLD



This picture taken on 30 June 2022 shows palm oil trees at a plantation in Ijok, in Malaysia's Selangor state. **PHOTO: AFP**

Malaysia keeps February crude palm oil export duty at 8%

MALAYSIA, the world's second-largest palm oil producer, has kept its crude palm oil (CPO) export duty for February at eight per cent.

A circular from the Malaysian Palm Oil Board website showed on Tuesday that the CPO reference price for

February has been lowered to 3,571.39 ringgit (755.05 US dollars) per tonne from 3,679.50 ringgit per tonne in January.

Based on the tax structure, no export duty will be imposed on any CPO price below 2,250 ringgit per tonne.

An export tax of three per

cent will be imposed when the CPO price ranges between 2,250 ringgit and 2,400 ringgit per tonne.

The maximum tax rate is eight per cent when the CPO prices are above 3,450 ringgit per tonne. (1 ringgit equals 0.21 US dollar) — Xinhua

Singapore records lower annual all-item CPI in 2023

SINGAPORE'S all-item consumer price index (CPI) rose by 4.8 per cent last year, down from 6.1 per cent in 2022, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Monetary Authority of Singapore Tuesday.

However, the core inflation, which excludes private transport and accommodation costs

to better reflect household expenses, rose to 4.2 per cent last year from 4.1 per cent in 2022, said the statement.

The two government agencies added that the inflation rate last year was impacted by the increase in the goods and services tax (GST) rate to eight per cent.

The Singaporean govern-

ment has lifted the GST rate to nine per cent since 1 January.

Despite increases in the GST rate and administrative prices, core inflation should resume a gradual moderating trend in 2024 as import cost pressures decline and tightness in the domestic labour market eases, the statement noted. — Xinhua

OECD urges reforms in Italian economy report

THE Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on Monday released a report on Italian economy, suggesting an array of reforms that it said would help the country avoid an economic slowdown.

The Italian government's statistics entity has estimated

that the country's economy grew 0.7 per cent in 2023, slightly better than the EU estimate of 0.6 per cent for the eurozone.

In its report, the OECD said Italy was at risk of slower growth if it did not make certain reforms, including scaling back pensions for the wealthiest

residents.

"Reducing the generosity of pensions for high-income households could limit the increase in spending (on pensions), while maintaining adequate public services and social protections," the report said. — Xinhua

ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024 kicks off in Laos

THE ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Tourism Forum 2024 (ATF) takes place in Lao capital Vientiane from 22 to 27 January.

Themed "Quality and Responsible Tourism — Sustaining ASEAN Future," the forum aims to strengthen collaboration in further improving ASEAN tourism products to attract more international tourists. It also hopes to contribute more to community and to sustainability of tourism within the region, Lao News Agency (KPL) reported on Tuesday.

At the same time, Laos has officially launched its tourism

promotion campaign "Visit Laos Year 2024", expecting to attract international visitors to the country.

The Lao government expects to attract at least 2.7 million foreign tourists in 2024, generating about 401 million US dollars in revenue. Foreign tourist arrivals are forecast to reach 2.9 million and generate an income of 434 million dollars in 2025.

To fulfil the expectations, the Lao government is putting every efforts including infrastructure enhancement, tourism products diversification and service quality elevation. — Xinhua

Bank of Japan maintains ultra-loose policies

THE Bank of Japan maintained its signature monetary easing measures on Tuesday, as speculation grows of a shift away from its ultra-loose stance.

After a two-day policy meeting, board members decided to keep interest rates in negative territory — a global anomaly that has depreciated the yen — while also leaving unchanged the band in which rates for 10-year government bonds fluctuate.

Analysts had predicted the BoJ would stand pat on Tuesday, partly to avoid further disruption after an earthquake on New Year's Day killed at least 233 people in central Japan.

But Governor Kazuo Ueda is eventually expected to move away from the bank's long-standing ultra-loose policies that economists see as unsustainable.

After the policy announcement, Ueda suggested that a major shift was not on the horizon.

"Even if... hypothetically, the negative interest rate were lifted, we can say that the extremely easy financial environment will continue for the time being," he told reporters. The likelihood of Japan meeting the central bank's long-standing goal of sustained two per cent inflation "continues to grow gradually", Ueda said. — AFP



The national flag flutters at the Bank of Japan headquarters in Tokyo on 23 January 2024. **PHOTO: KAZUHIRO NOGI / AFP**

New Zealand's employment confidence rises but job prospects dimming

NEW Zealand's employment confidence rose in the December quarter but job prospects are dimming, a survey said on Tuesday.

Finding and holding a job remain the biggest concerns for New Zealanders, according to the Westpac McDermott Miller Employment Confidence Index (ECI). Perceptions about job availability continued to fall in the December quarter, which likely reflects both the decline in vacancies and increased competition for those roles as net inward migration

has surged, said Westpac Senior Economist Michael Gordon. The ECI rose by 1.4 points to 99.7 in the December quarter, which remained down substantially from its peak of 115.2 in the September quarter of 2022. An index number of over 100 indicates that optimists outnumber pessimists. The rise in the ECI this quarter was largely due to a pickup in households' earnings growth over the past year after some very weak readings in the previous two quarters, Gordon said. — Xinhua

7th CIIE holds promotion event in Malaysia



This photo taken on 22 January 2024 shows a promotion event for the seventh China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A team of the seventh China International Import Expo (CIIE) held a promotion event here on Monday, attracting more than 200 enterprises and institutions from China and Malaysia. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

A team of the seventh China International Import Expo (CIIE) held a promotion event here on Monday, attracting more

than 200 enterprises and institutions from China and Malaysia.

In his remarks at the event, Malaysian Invest-

ment, Trade and Industry Deputy Minister Liew Chin Tong said that CIIE provides a platform for Malaysian entrepreneurs

to engage with Chinese businesses, facilitating trade relations and benefiting both nations. "The key point is to encourage substantive cooperation, assist mutual understanding through exhibitions and expos, and foster an understanding of each other's regulations," said Liew. Chinese Ambassador to Malaysia Ouyang Yujing spoke highly of bilateral economic and trade relations, noting that China has been the largest trading partner of Malaysia for 15 consecutive years. He hopes that Malaysian enterprises will make full use of the CIIE for deepening friendship and cooperation with China. — Xinhua

S Korean banks to ease lending standard in Q1

SOUTH Korean banks planned to ease lending standard in the first quarter amid regulatory efforts to convert bad loans into long-term installment payment loans, central bank data showed Tuesday.

The lending attitude index stood at five for the January-March quarter, sharply up from minus six in the previous quarter, according to the Bank of Korea (BOK) poll of 204 banks and other financial institutions conducted between 28 November and 15 December last year. The index above zero indicates that lenders willing to ease loan standard outnumber those willing to tighten it.

The first-quarter turnaround came as the financial regulator encouraged borrowers to swap overdue loans for long-term installment payment loans.

The lending attitude index for mortgage loan to households jumped to

three in the first quarter from minus 14 in the previous quarter, while the index for big companies advanced from minus six to eight in the cited period.

The BOK had left its policy rate unchanged at 3.50 per cent since January last year, after hiking it by 3.0 percentage points for the past one and a half years. The credit risk index for big corporations gained to six in the first quarter from three in the prior quarter, but the index for households declined from 31 to 28 in the same period.

The index for small firms stood unchanged at 28 in the first quarter compared to the previous quarter. The lending demand index climbed from four to 14 in the cited quarter on expectations for higher corporate demand for operating funds, caused by the lingering economic uncertainty. — Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ALVAN VOY.NO. (SCY1121W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ALVAN VOY.NO. (SCY1121W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-1-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** 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 LAND AND SEA INTERMODAL LOGISTICS SDN BHD LINE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V TI2 APPLE VOY.NO. (2406E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V TI2 APPLE VOY.NO. (2406E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-1-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S TI2 LOGISTICS PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V METHI BHUM VOY.NO. (414N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V METHI BHUM VOY.NO. (414N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-1-2024** 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

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO FORTUNE VOY.NO. (0UV5UE1NC)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO FORTUNE VOY.NO. (0UV5UE1NC)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-1-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/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 CMA-CGM SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD

ROLLING UPDATES WORLD

Red Sea attacks latest threat to Yemen's decaying oil tanker

MOUNTING maritime security threats off Yemen's coast have stalled work on scrapping a decrepit oil tanker, officials have told AFP, jeopardizing a rare success story in the war-torn country.

The FSO Safer, a 48-year-old vessel with a corroding hull, was for years described as a "ticking time bomb", going unserviced as fighting raged in Yemen and fears grew that a leak or on-board explosion could release its 1.14 million barrels of crude into the Red Sea.

But last August, the United Nations announced the completion of a complex transfer of the oil to a new vessel, a crucial step in staving off an environmental and economic calamity.

The UN said at the time that completing the project would in-



Oil from the tanker FSO Safer (L) is transferred to the UN purchased vessel Nautica, in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen's contested western province of Hodeida on 25 July 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

volve towing and scrapping the Safer, which still posed "a residual environmental threat, holding viscous oil residue and remaining at risk of breaking apart".

However, after delays over a \$22 million funding shortfall and other challenges, security in the Red Sea has deteriorated dramatically, a knock-on effect of the conflict between Israel and Hamas triggered by the militant group's unprecedented attacks on southern Israel on 7 October.

Iran-backed Huthi forces, which control the capital Sanaa and the waters where the Safer is located, began attacking Red Sea shipping in November, and the United States has carried out several rounds of strikes on Huthi targets this month along with two joint operations with Britain. — AFP

Power outage-hit bullet trains to remain halted throughout Tuesday



Photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter shows passengers disembarking from a shinkansen bullet train stopped on the tracks in Saitama, near Tokyo, on 23 January 2024. **PHOTO: KYODO**

MANY bullet train services between Tokyo and stations in eastern and central Japan that were suspended due to a power outage Tuesday will remain halted throughout the day, their operator said, citing damaged electricity equipment.

The outage, which began around 10 am, affected sections of the Tohoku, Joetsu and Hokuriku shinkansen lines, East Japan Railway Co said, forcing passengers, including tourists, to suddenly change their travel schedules. JR East

said it would take a "considerable time" for a restart.

The issue was blamed on an overhead electrical wire that was found hanging down over the shinkansen tracks in one location in Saitama Prefecture, north of Tokyo.

The company is working on restoring the services, but two people involved were taken to hospital following an explosion near the area with the hanged wire, investigative sources said.

Services have been suspended between Tokyo and Sendai stations on the Tohoku line, Tokyo and Echigo-Yuzawa on the Joetsu line, and Tokyo and Nagano on the Hokuriku line, it said. A bullet train was forced to stop between stations in Saitama Prefecture, with its passengers taken to track level and then guided to the ground using emergency stairs.

"I heard big sounds and thought it was another earthquake," said Yoshiko Horii from Toyama Prefecture, one of the areas rocked by the magnitude 7.6 temblor on New Year's Day, who was on a shinkansen train bound for Tokyo when it was halted. — Kyodo

Israel loses 24 soldiers in deadliest day of Gaza ground war

THE Israeli army said Tuesday 24 soldiers were killed in the biggest single-day losses since the start of its ground war in Gaza amid growing pressure on the government to find a way to end the conflict.

The heavy clashes came as a White House official was due in the region for talks aimed at securing more hostage releases, and as US media reported a new Israeli proposal for a deal that would involve a two-month pause

in fighting. Twenty-four soldiers were killed on Monday, with army spokesman Daniel Hagari saying 21 of them were reservists slain when rocket-propelled grenade fire hit a tank and two buildings they were trying to blow up.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the army had launched an investigation into the "disaster". More than 200 soldiers have been killed since Israel launched its ground operations in Gaza. — AFP



Friends and family members mourn during the funeral of Israeli soldier Hadar Kapeluk in the Mount Herzl cemetery in Jerusalem on 23 January 2024, a day after he was killed in combat in the Gaza Strip amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas. **PHOTO: AFP**

SPORTS

Salah likely to be out for longer than expected: agent

LIVERPOOL striker Mohamed Salah could be out of action for around a month with a muscle injury, his agent Ramy Abbas Issa has warned.

The 31-year-old will return to Liverpool on Wednesday from Cote d'Ivoire after suffering the injury in Egypt's draw with Ghana in the Africa Cup of Nations.

He watched Egypt's 2-2 draw with Cape Verde on Monday night, which assured them a place in the last-16 of the tournament.

Initial hopes were that after treatment in England, he could return if Egypt reached the semifinals.

However, that return looks unlikely after Abbas Issa posted on social media that "Mohamed's injury is more serious than first thought and he will be out for 21-28 days, and not two games," adding that Salah's best chance of a recovery

was to undergo "intensive treatment" with Liverpool.

The Premier League leaders confirmed "Mohamed Salah will return to the AXA Training Centre on Wednesday to begin an intensive rehabilitation program with Liverpool's medical team on the muscle injury he sustained with Egypt last week".

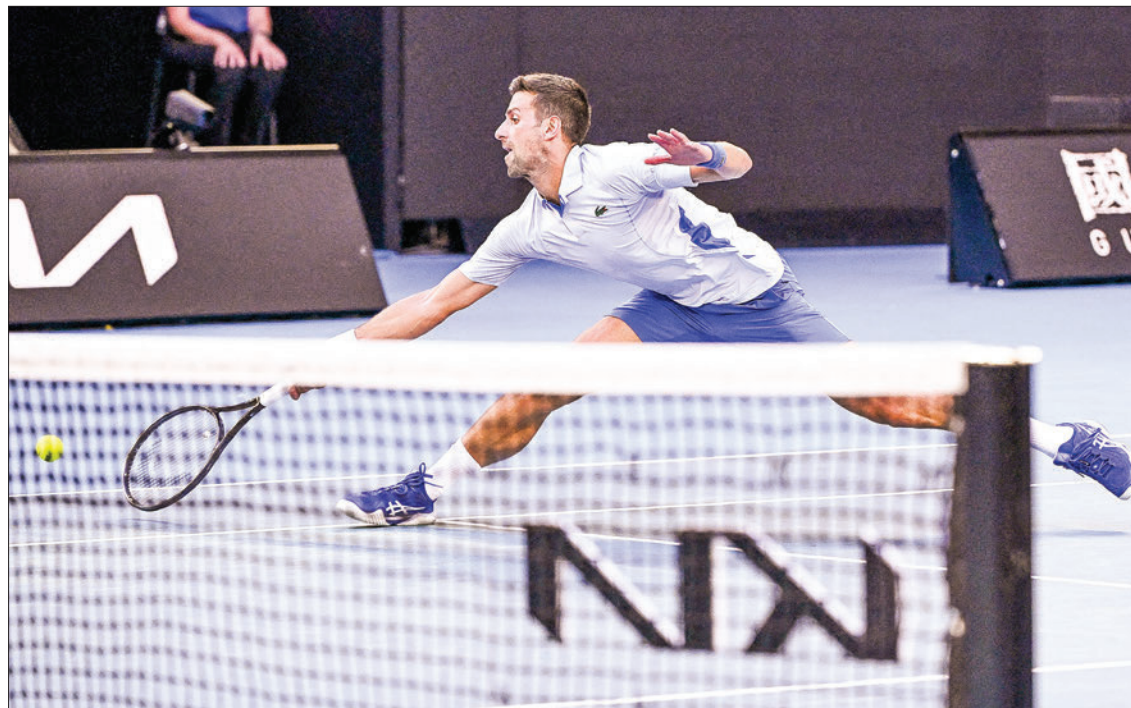
"The injury, which is worse than first feared, forced the forward from the field in the first half of the Africa Cup of Nations fixture with Ghana and an agreement has been reached with the Egyptian FA for Salah to undergo treatment in Liverpool."

"Salah will immediately begin work with the club's medical staff upon his return to Merseyside with a view to being back in action as soon as possible for club and country," informs the Liverpool website. — Xinhua



Egypt's forward (10) Mohamed Salah looks on ahead of the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 group B football match between Cape Verde and Egypt at the Felix Houphouet-Boigny Stadium in Abidjan on 22 January 2024. PHOTO: AFP

Djokovic, Gauff dig deep to make Australian Open semi-finals



Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return against USA's Taylor Fritz during their men's singles quarter-final match on day 10 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on 23 January 2024. PHOTO: AFP

NOVAK Djokovic battled past Taylor Fritz into an 11th Australian Open semi-final and a record-extending 48th at Grand Slams on Tuesday, with Coco Gauff also forced to dig deep in searing heat.

The Serbian superstar came through a probing test on Rod Laver Arena against 12th seeded American 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 to keep his bid for a 25th major crown on track.

Djokovic almost always gets the evening slot on centre court, but was bumped to the afternoon on a day where temperatures soared to 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit) and the world number

one admitted it was hard going.

"Physically and emotionally very draining," he said after the three hour and 45 minute slog, adding that he "suffered a lot" in the first two sets.

"He was serving well, staying close to the line and kind of suffocating me from the back of the court," he said.

"I think I upped my game probably midway through the third set all the way to the end."

The 36-year-old will face either Italian fourth seed Jan-nik Sinner or Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev next, with the omens not good for either man.

Djokovic has won all 10 previous semi-finals he has played

at Melbourne Park, stretching back to his first title in 2008.

Error-strewn US Open champion Gauff was also put through her paces before outlasting unseeded Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk after more than three scrappy hours 7-6 (8/6), 6-7 (3/7), 6-2.

She will meet either power-packing defending champion Aryna Sabalenka or ninth-seeded Barbora Krejčíková for a place in the final.

But her performance will not strike fear into whoever she plays next, with the 19-year-old struggling on serve and wasting countless opportunities. — AFP

Zhang, Machac reach men's doubles semifinals at Australian Open

CHINA'S Zhang Zhizhen made another piece of Chinese tennis history here on Tuesday when he and Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic produced a masterclass to reach the men's doubles semifinals at the Australian Open.

The unseeded pairing of Zhang and Machac overwhelmed Ariel Behar and Adam Pavlasek 6-3, 6-1 in a one-sided quarterfinal that lasted just one hour.

"It was an incredible match. Today we played really good, especially with returning," Zhang

said. Zhang, who is ranked 625th in doubles, entered the match with confidence after combining with Machac to produce a considerable third-round upset over doubles specialists Rajeev Ram and Joe Salisbury, who had won the last three US Open doubles titles and also triumphed at Melbourne Park in 2020.

But the Chinese-Czech pairing were wary against fellow giant killers Behar and Pavlasek, who had knocked out fifth seeds Santiago Gonzalez and Neal Skupski in

the third round. Zhang and Machac soon gained control through relentless return of serves as the new pairing raced through the second set to reach the final four. They will next face either second seeds Matthew Ebden and Rohan Bopanna, or sixth seeds Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni.

It has been an impressive bounce back for Zhang, China's highest-ranked men's singles player, who fell in the second round to 21st seed Ugo Humbert in four sets. — Xinhua



Zhang Zhizhen (L)/Tomas Machac compete during the men's doubles quarterfinal between Zhang Zhizhen (China)/Tomas Machac (the Czech Republic) and Ariel Behar (Uruguay)/Adam Pavlasek (the Czech Republic) at the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne, Australia, 23 January 2024. PHOTO: XINHUA



World may miss May deadline for pandemic accord, WHO head warns

THE head of World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday called on all countries to work urgently towards a pandemic accord.

Countries may fail to come to a legally binding agreement to enhance preparedness for future pandemics by May, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned at the global health agency's Executive Board meeting in Geneva.

"I am gravely concerned that member states may not meet that commitment," he said. "Time is very short, and there are several outstanding issues that remain to be resolved."

Tedros stressed that compromise is needed or no one gets anything.

After COVID-19 claimed more than seven million lives worldwide, the WHO's 194 member states established a process to draft and negotiate an agreement to ensure the world is better-prepared to prevent and tackle future health catastrophes.

"A failure to deliver the pandemic agreement and the IHR (International Health Regulations) amendments will be a missed opportunity for which future generations may not forgive us," Tedros said. The WHO adopted a tobacco control treaty in 2003, the first global public health accord negotiated under the auspices of the agency. — Xinhua

3rd South Summit calls for ending Israel-Palestine conflict



High-level representatives and heads of the United Nations attend the Third South Summit in Kampala, Uganda, on 21 January 2024. The Third South Summit ended on Monday in Kampala with participating leaders calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the protection of civilians. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

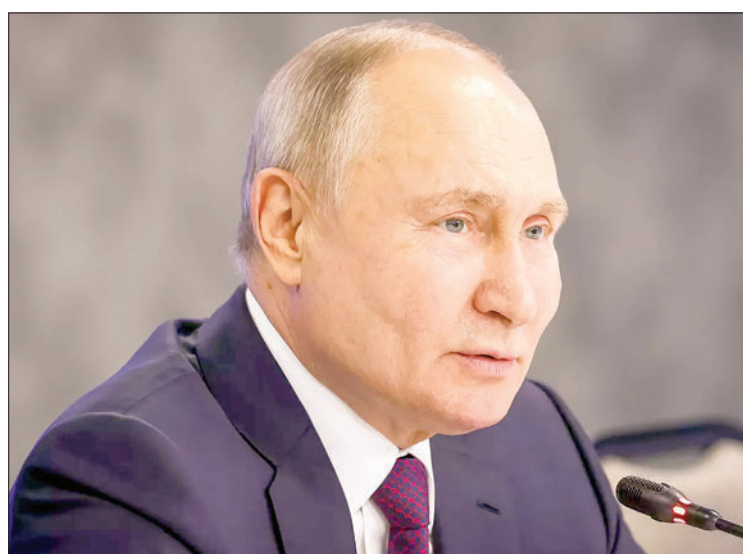
THE Third South Summit ended on Monday in the Ugandan capital Kampala with participating leaders calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the protection of civilians.

The two-day summit, which brought together leaders of the Group of 77 members and China, urged the United Nations Security Council to undertake efforts to implement its resolutions to end the Israel-Palestine conflict without

delay. The South Summit is the supreme decision-making body of the Group of 77 comprising 134 members. High-level representatives of nearly 100 countries and heads of United Nations agencies attended the meeting.

"We also reiterate our demand for the immediate and full lifting of the Israeli blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, which constitutes massive collective punishment," the leaders said in an outcome document of the meeting. They called for

the complete dismantlement and immediate cessation of all illegal Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. The leaders said that Israel is in violation of the UN Charter and international law for its strikes on Syrian civil infrastructure, including civil airports, which threaten the livelihood of civilians, hinder UN humanitarian operations, and jeopardize the safety of civil aviation. — Xinhua



Russian President Vladimir Putin. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK**

Russia to do utmost to integrate Egypt into BRICS during presidency, Putin vows

RUSSIA expects that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi will attend the BRICS summit in Russia's Kazan scheduled for later in the year, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday.

"We are waiting for you, dear Mr Sisi, at the unification summit [of BRICS] in Kazan in October this year," Putin said during the ceremony of the start of the construction of the fourth power unit

of Dabaa nuclear power plant (NPP).

Russia has planned more than 200 BRICS events, and Moscow expects that representatives of Egypt will take an active part in them, the president said.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi said that he is deeply grateful to Russian President Vladimir Putin for implementing the Dabaa nuclear power

plant project. The construction of Egypt's first nuclear power plant is proceeding at a faster pace than was initially agreed, Sisi added. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi launched on Tuesday the construction of the fourth power unit of the Dabaa nuclear power plant (NPP) in Egypt via videoconference. — SPUTNIK