

# The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR



Destinations in Myeik Archipelago and local visitors. **PHOTOS : MYINT OO (MYEIK)**

## Myeik Archipelago tourism industry faces challenges

According to insiders, the tourism industry in the Myeik Archipelago, Taninthayi Region, is encountering challenges due to increasing costs.

Regional tour companies primarily cater to local travellers rather than visitors from other regions or foreign countries.

A tour operator explained, "We attract local communities to travel at a subsidised price on public holidays like Christmas and New Year. Even a day trip costs over K100,000 for one traveller." Previously, Myeik District hosted over 40 travel companies, but the number has dwindled to just a handful. The industry has suffered, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We plan to suspend operations after Chinese New Year and Thingyan Festival. The responsibility for sustainable tourism also adds to the difficulty. It's becoming increasingly challenging each day"

The archipelago boasts pristine



beaches, crystal-clear waters, and the indigenous Salone tribe. Visitors can enjoy activities such as swimming, boating, sightseeing in the mangroves, and observing life on fishing boats.

Famous landmarks include Lay Island, Bailey Island, Kyalleik Island, Donenyaunghmine Island, Smart Island, Padan Island, and Don Waterfall.—Myint Oo (Myeik)/NT

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Registration approved for 1,888 EV passenger cars, light trucks

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Visitors flock to Yangon Zoological Gardens' 118<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration

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Central Myanmar's annual honey production reaches 300 tonnes, 2/3 exported to Asia

## EV assembling plants inquire to invest in Ngazun's MIPC

OVERSEAS electric vehicle companies are discussing with the officials of Myotha Industrial Park City (MIPC) in Ngazun Township, Mandalay Region, to find out investment opportunities for establishing EV factories at the MIPC, according to Mandalay Myotha Industrial Development Public Co., Ltd.

Myotha Industrial Park City is an industrial zone project developed by the Mandalay Region government

and the Mandalay Myotha Industrial Development Public Company. The park currently has more than 20 factories invested by companies from nine countries, and 23 more factories scheduled to start operation in 2025 are being constructed. The park will also see an animal feed manufacturing plant and other foodstuff factories operating in the coming years, according to the Mandalay Myotha Industrial Development Public Company which is build-

ing concrete lanes connecting between the Mandalay International Airport and the park.

Local and external investors are invited to investment in the MIPC and the MIPC officials will reportedly provide the necessary assistance for the interested investors in application processes to seek the permits from the Myanmar Investment Commission and the relevant ministries. — ASH/ TMT

# NATIONAL

## National Objectives of 77<sup>th</sup> Union Day 2024

- To protect the perpetuity of the Union by the entire ethnic people through the Union spirit
- To join hands in harmony with the government, Tatmadaw, and the entire people to ensure the state stability and the rule of law
- To promote all-inclusive livestock breeding-based manufacturing industries and MSMEs, ensuring the socioeconomic development of the entire ethnic people
- To make collaborative efforts of all ethnic nationals to ensure the prosperity of the nation and food security which are the two national visions
- To strive to emerge a modern and developing country, as well as a Union based on democratic and federal systems, by all ethnic nationals

## Mottos of 77<sup>th</sup> Union Day 2024

1. Unity is strength  
Power of Union
2. Drifting in one boat, on the same voyage we float  
Ethnic brethren of the land joining hand in hand
3. Marching towards with unity  
Ensuring the destination of the Union
4. Let's firmly join hands among ethnic national brethren  
of the Union
5. Let's go forward with unity of the ethnic nationals



## New postage stamp set for release in February

MYANMAR Post, under the Ministry of Transport and Communications, will issue a new postage stamp featuring the Golden Birdwing butterfly of Myanmar. According to records from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, this butterfly species is unique to Myanmar.

The new postage stamp, valued at K200, will be available for purchase simultaneously at the Central Post Office in Nay Pyi Taw, the General Post Offices in Yangon and Mandalay, and post offices in other regions and states starting at 9:30 am on 1 February.

As part of a special programme, the date of purchase will be stamped on the postage stamps bought at the Central Post Office in Nay Pyi Taw and the General Post Offices in Yangon and Mandalay on 1 February. — MNA/KZW

## Distribution of potable paddy transplanters to tackle labour shortage



A farmer demonstrating use of potable paddy transplanting machine.

ACCORDING to the Agricultural Mechanization Department, potable paddy transplanting machines will be provided to farmers to address the labour shortage in the agricultural sector.

The department has conducted experiments to manufacture these potable paddy transplanting machines with the intention of widespread use throughout the country. The latest experiment, con-

ducted in November 2023, marked the third iteration.

The report also outlines plans for collaboration with private businesses to produce these machines in larger quantities, given the success of the experiments and their applicability in actual paddy fields.

The current experimental machine features a 1.5 kW engine with a consumption power that allows for trans-

planting paddy saplings an acre in just two hours.

The machine's weight varies from 56 kilogrammes to 65 kilogrammes based on raw materials used in the manufacturing process, and the department aims to set an affordable price for farmers.

The primary goals of producing these potable paddy transplanting machines include implementing the correct system for growing and producing paddy crops, boosting per-acre yield and addressing the issue of labour scarcity in paddy cultivation.

The machines are being experimented with and manufactured by the Agricultural Mechanization Department (Inngon Factory) and a private agricultural machinery manufacturing factory in the Bago Region. By prioritizing quality, efficacy, efficiency, and affordability, the aim is to encourage the widespread use of these machines among farmers. — ASH/TMT

## Registration approved for 1,888 EV passenger cars, light trucks

AS per the Department of Road Transport Administration, 1,877 private electric vehicles and 11 electric light trucks were registered in 2023.

The Steering Committee

on National-level Development of Electric Vehicles and Related Accessories revealed that despite aiming to import approximately 30,000 electric vehicles as part of a pilot pro-

ject, only over 1,800 electric vehicles were imported in 2023. — TWA/KZW

EVs arriving at Yangon port on 18 August 2023.



# NATIONAL

## MIFER UM attends 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of Inter-Governmental Russian-Myanmar Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation

A Myanmar delegation led by Dr Kan Zaw, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, attended the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Inter-Governmental Russian-Myanmar Commission, along with related meetings and the Russian International Forum and Expo, held at the All-Russian Exhibition Centre (VDNH-Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) in Moscow, Russia on 27 January, at the invitation of Mr Maxim Reshetnikov, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation.

The Union Minister's delegation participated in the exclusive meeting of the commission co-chairmen and the plenary meeting of the commission on the morning of 27 January.

Furthermore, discussions on political cooperation and development between the two countries took place between the Russian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Iskander Azizov and Myanmar Ambassador to Russia U Thit Linn Ohn.

Subsequently, the Minister of Economic Development of Russia guided the Myanmar delegation to the "Feel Russia" travel booth at the Russia International Forum and Trade Fair, where they explored opportuni-



Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw participates in plenary meeting of Inter-Governmental Russian-Myanmar Commission on 27 January in Moscow, Russia.

ties for promoting cooperation in the tourism sector.

Later in the day, the business forum continued, with governments and businessmen from both countries exchanging views on business opportunities, laws and regulations related to trade, investment and agricultural cooperation, tourism sector cooperation, finance, and information technology.

Additionally, the Union minister met with Ms Gohar Barseghyan's delegation from

the Integration Promotion Department under the European-Asian Economic Commission on 25 January.

In the afternoon, he attended the Russia-Asia-Pacific strategic cooperation dialogue jointly organized by the Russia-Myanmar Association for Friendship and Cooperation (RMAFC) and the Gorchakov Fund.

They also held discussions with Mr Ivan Polyakov, Chairman of the Russia-ASEAN Business Council, focusing on economic

cooperation between Russia and ASEAN countries, trade and investment promotion between Russia and Myanmar, and economic cooperation issues.

Similarly, a separate meeting was arranged by the Russian-ASEAN Business Council between Russian and Myanmar businessmen for business matching.

On 26 January, the delegation met with representatives of the Roscongress Foundation's Investment Fund to discuss is-

suess related to the construction of a natural fertilizer factory, a solar power plant, an oil refinery, an animal feed factory, as well as the development of mineral exploration and mining activities.

In the afternoon, they met with Mr Anton Kobayov, Advisor to the President of the Russian Federation, to discuss the progress of cooperation with Myanmar and future issues.

Additionally, members of the Myanmar delegation, including the Vice Chairman of the Commission, the Ministry of Commerce, the Deputy Minister, and group members, attended an introduction and presentation of Aquarius technology products at the headquarters of Aquarius Technology Company in the evening to explore cooperation opportunities. Upon arrival in Moscow, the Myanmar delegation visited the Golden Pagoda in Kaluga Township, Moscow, and toured famous landmarks in the city.

The 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Inter-Governmental Russian-Myanmar Commission, related meetings, and the Russian International Forum and Expo were also attended by representatives from business associations and the UMFCCI. — MNA/TKO

## Myanmar Consul General in St Petersburg takes part in events marking 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of escaping Leningrad from fascist invaders

MYANMAR Consul General U Aung Pe Thet of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in St Petersburg took part in events marking the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the lifting of the siege of Leningrad from the fascist invaders.

This event is of particular importance for the city and all of Russia, because the siege of Leningrad is one of the most terrible pages in the history of the country. For 872 days, from 8 September 1941 to 27 January 1944, the city was surrounded by enemy forces, deprived of



Consul General U Aung Pe Thet takes part in events dedicated to the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the lifting of the siege of Leningrad from the fascist invaders yesterday in St Petersburg, Russia.

food and basic resources, and subjected to mass starvation and bombing. However, Leningraders did not give up and continued to resist.

The importance of this heroic victory is recognized outside Russia. That is why representatives of the diplomatic and consular corps of friendly countries were present at the event organized in honour of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the lifting of the siege of Leningrad. Their participation emphasizes the significance of the event and

demonstrates solidarity with the idea of preserving historical memory, especially in the face of attempts to rewrite and distort episodes of the world history.

In the event, the Myanmar Consul General laid flowers at the "Mother Motherland" monument at the Piskarevskoye Memorial Cemetery. He also visited the museum of the patriotic association "Lenrezerv", dedicated to the siege of Leningrad, and took part in the requiem concert at the Gazprom Arena. — GNLM

# NATIONAL

## Delegation led by UM of MoHT joins ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024

THE ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024, along with several ministerial meetings, took place at the Landmark Mekong Riverside Hotel in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, spanning from 22 to 27 January.

Led by Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism, Dr Thet Thet Khine, the Myanmar delegation participated in the forum and related meetings, at the invitation of Mrs Suanesavanh Vignaket, Minister of Information, Culture, and Tourism of Lao PDR.

The opening ceremony of the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024 commenced on the evening of 24 January at the Don Chan Palace Hotel in Vientiane. Notable attendees included Deputy Prime Minister of Lao PDR, Professor Dr Kikeo Khaikhamphithoune, along with ASEAN tourism ministers, representatives from partner countries China, Japan, South Korea, India, and the Russian Federation, the ASEAN Secretary-General, and other



Attendees of the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers pose for documentary photo in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic.

distinguished guests.

During the forum, the Minister of Information, Culture, and Tourism of Lao PDR delivered the opening speech.

On 25 January, the Union Minister participated in the ASEAN Tourism Forum-2024 and the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers. Discussions revolved around collaboration for sustaining the tourism industry in ASEAN countries, including

Myanmar. Myanmar's tourism industry received 1.24 million travellers in 2023, contributing to ASEAN's total of 93.76 million travellers. Additionally, plans were outlined to rejuvenate Myanmar's tourism sector and Myanmar's readiness to serve as the vice-chair of the 28<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Tourism Forum in 2025.

Furthermore, she attended the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers Meeting and visited

the ASEAN Tourism Exhibition, where the Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association showcased its offerings.

The delegation also participated in Malaysia Night, hosted by Malaysia, the next chair of the ASEAN Tourism Forum-2025.

On 26 January, the Union minister was present at the 23<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-China, Japan, South Korea Tourism Ministers Meeting and voted on holding the ASE-

AN-China Tourism Ministers Meeting in 2025.

Moreover, the delegation attended several other events, including the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-Russia Federation Tourism Ministers Meeting, a press conference of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers, a ceremony with the Prime Minister of Lao PDR Mr Sonexay Siphandone, an awarding ceremony for ASEAN tourism standards, and the closing ceremony of the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024.

Myanmar received accolades in various categories, including the ASEAN Green Hotel Award, ASEAN MICE Venue Standard Award, and the ASEAN Sustainable Tourism Award. Additionally, Keng Tung and Pathein were honoured with the ASEAN Clean Tourist City Award.

As part of the visit, the delegation explored the Pha That Luang Stupa and the wooden sculpture museum, showcasing Lao's traditional wood arts, to promote tourism in Vientiane.

— MNA/TMT

## Specialist medical teams extend healthcare services in states and regions across country

SPECIALIST medical teams comprising professors and physicians from Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw are extending medical services in various states and regions across Myanmar.

On 27 and 28 January, reports indicate that these specialist teams, led by professors and physicians from General Hospitals in North Oakkalapa and Thingangyun townships, along with professionals from the 550-bed Yangon Children's Hospital, travelled to Mawlamyine in Mon State for the

second time to provide medical treatment to local residents.

During this outreach, a total of 1,512 patients received treatment, including individuals from ten townships in Mon State and three townships in Kayin State. The medical conditions treated ranged from cardiac diseases, gastrointestinal issues, and neurological ailments to orthopaedic and dermatological problems, among others.

Additionally, medical check-ups included procedures such as Echocardiography, Oe-

sophago-Gastro-Duodenoscopy (OGD) Scope, Colonoscopy, CT scans, glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) tests, X-ray examinations, laboratory tests, ultrasound scans, and electrocardiograms (ECG). Some patients requiring further treatment were referred to Yangon General Hospital.

Chief Minister of Mon State U Aung Kyi Thein and other officials visited the patients, delivered speeches, and provided nutritional support during the medical mission. Furthermore, Deputy Direc-



The specialist and health staff perform medical checkup on the patient with the aid of diagnosis machines in Mawlamyine on 27 and 28 January 2024.

tor-General Dr Thida Aung of the National Blood Centre conducted a session on blood transfusion and safety at the Department of Public Health of Mon State on the evening of 28 January.

This initiative marks the

15 field medical trips by specialist medical teams in 2023. In 2024, similar efforts have been undertaken in Taunggyi, Pyay, Thandwe, Pathein, and now in Mawlamyine, with plans for continuous implementation in the future. — MNA/TRKM

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# NATIONAL

## Nay Pyi Taw to be included in tourism destinations



Photos depict a water fountain and famous places in Nay Pyi Taw.

ARRANGEMENTS are being made to put Nay Pyi Taw into list of travel destinations for home-grown and oversea travellers, the Deputy Minister for

Hotels and Tourism said at a meeting with hotels and tourism organizations, companies and relevant authorities on 26 January.

He also called for efforts to promote Nay Pyi Taw as a tourism destination as the city already has good transportation, accommodation and other tourism facilities.

In the meeting, participants discussed the current arrangements for pilgrims and other facilities that should be added, addressing possible difficulties, and plans to integrate other tourist attractions together with pilgrimage tours.

In 2023, local and foreign travellers visited 38 tourist destinations in Nay Pyi Taw such as four places in Ottarithiri, seven in Zeyathiri, six in Pobbathiri, four in Lewe, two in Dekkhinathiri, seven each in Pyinmana and Zabuthiri townships as well as other areas of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism has formed tourism destinations management bodies to ensure systematic development of destinations in Myanmar. — TWA/TRKM



Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Pagoda.

## 72<sup>nd</sup> Buddha Pujaniya Festival to be held at Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Pagoda

THE 72<sup>nd</sup> Buddha Pujaniya Festival of the Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Pagoda in Mayangon Township, Yangon Region will be held from 21 to 25 February, according to the pagoda board of trustees.

This is the first time Buddha Pujaniya festival of the pagoda is held since 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, leading to the suspension of the festival.

“The festival couldn’t be held for three years due to outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. It had been suspended since 2020. This year, the 72<sup>nd</sup> Buddha Pujaniya Festival of the Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Pagoda will be held again for five days. The consecration ceremony of the pagoda, recitation of Pathana treatise, offering alms and Htamane (Glutinous Rice Festival) will be included,” said U Aung Htut, a member of Trustees Board of Kaba Aye Pagoda.

During the festival, Htamane making festival will take place on 22 and 23 February. On 24 February, alms will be offered, and on 25 February, 45 members of the Sangha will consecrate the pagoda whereas the well-wishers will donate alms to 48 members of the Sangha. — ASH/TKO



Fine works of some photographers in previous years depict Taungthaman Lake and Bridge.

## MCDC to organize 2024 Taungthaman Beauty Photo Contest

According to the Mandalay City Development Committee (MCDC), the 2024 Taungthaman Beauty Photo Contest will be held to highlight

the beauty of Taungthama Lake and Bridge, among the most popular spots visited by local and foreign tourists in Mandalay Region.

Contestants must only submit photos taken by them this year. If there is a dispute regarding the ownership of the photo, the contestant will be responsible for settling it and the awarded prize will be revoked.

A contestant can submit up to four 10x14 inches sized colour photos for the contest, and

any contestant is not allowed to submit more photos using other names. If a contestant is found to be submitting more than four photos using other names, they will be removed from the shortlist for the prize. In the competition, the first, second, third and three consolation prizes will be awarded, and the photos submitted for the contest will be used by Mandalay Region Government and MCDC as needed.

Entries photos are allowed to be shot with digital DSLRs and mirrorless cameras, and the original file taken by the contestant must be submitted on a CD, then, the contestant photos must be sent to Head Office of the Public Relations and Information Department under MCDC between 10 am and 4 pm till 29 January.

Photo award selection will be held at MCDC office on 30 January, and the awarding ceremony will be notified to the winners in time. — ASH/TKO



# NATIONAL

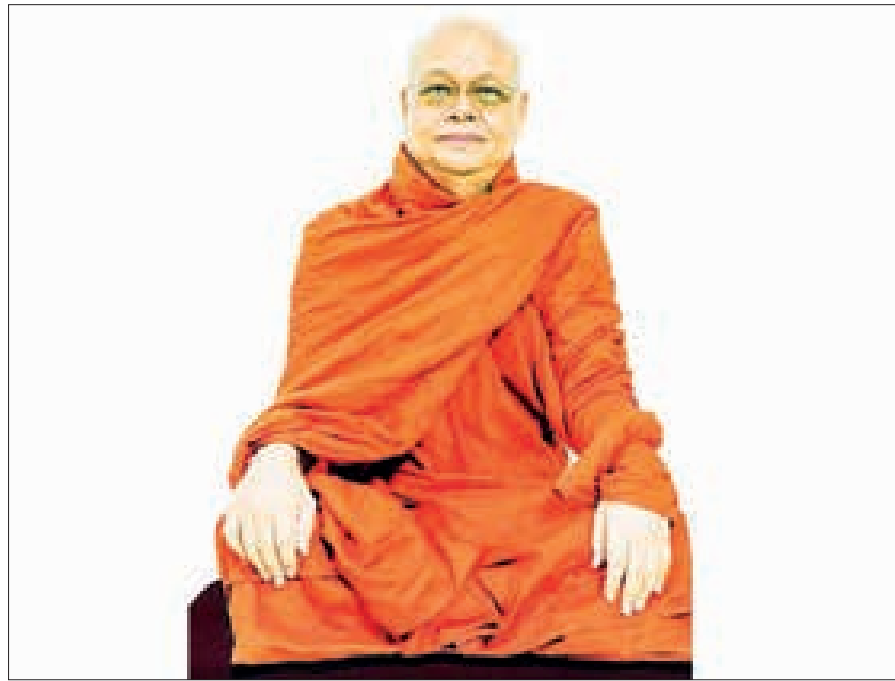
## 16<sup>th</sup> Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Sayadaw emerges

THE 76<sup>th</sup> Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination turned out the 16<sup>th</sup> Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Sayadaw.

16<sup>th</sup> Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida title recipient Sayadaw Bhaddanta Paññasiri Lankara, who emerged as a prominent religious figure, served as a monk at the Tipitaka Nikaya Monastery in Dagon Township, Yangon Region. The Sayadaw, aged 59 and vasa 39, set for the 33-day selection examination from 26 December 2023 to 27 January 2024.

At the examination, candidates have to join the oral tests for two treatises of the first session of Vinaya Pitaka genre, three treatises of the second session of Vinaya Pitaka genre, three Digha Nikaya treatises in Suttanta Pitaka genre, first five treatises of Abhidhamma Pitaka genre and two treatises of the second session of Abhidhamma Pitaka genre for Tipitakadhara title and the writing test for Tipitakakovida title.

The Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida selection examination started in 1948,



Myanmar's 16<sup>th</sup> Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida title recipient Sayadaw Bhaddanta Paññasiri Lankara.

and the first-ever Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida title recipient Sayadaw was Mingun Sayadaw. Since then, a total of

15 Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida title recipient Sayadaws have come out till the 75<sup>th</sup> examination. — TWA/KZW



The late Win Sein Tawya Sayadaw.

### 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday for late Win Sein Tawya Sayadaw on 4 February

THE 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday in commemoration of the late Win Sein Sayadaw, the patron monk of Win Sein Tawya Monastery in Myainggon Village, Mudon Township, Mon State, is scheduled for 4 February.

To honour this occasion, holy umbrellas will be hoisted atop two pagodas near Shin Uppagutta statue whereas a new guest hall will be inaugurated, and a new robe will be draped over the remains of the Sayadaw. Additionally, members of the Sangha from 120 monasteries will be offered day meals and offerings.

Approximately 30 charity shops will contribute food and refreshments for visitors attending the Sayadaw's birthday celebration. — TWA/KZL



## Visitors flock to Yangon Zoological Gardens' 118<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration

THE Yangon Zoological Gardens, the Southeast Asia's oldest, celebrated its 118<sup>th</sup> birthday from 25 to 28 January with a four-day festival featuring a variety of entertaining programmes in the compound of the zoo.

The festivities include music bands, dance performances, magic shows, photo opportunities with tame animals, children's games and gift giveaways, Q&A sessions, food stalls,

pharmacies, souvenirs, and toy shops.

Established during the colonial era under British rule, the Yangon Zoological Gardens, originally named the Victoria Memorial Park, has a rich history. Sir Arthur Phayre, the Commissioner of Myanmar, developed a keen interest in Myanmar's birds and animals and began collecting and raising them in small cages around 1867.

In 1882, the "Phayre" museum, located at the site of the Yangon General Hospital, exhibited wild animals in small cages. This location also housed the Phayre Museum and the Agri-Horticultural Society of Myanmar.

In 1901, in honour of Queen Victoria's 25<sup>th</sup> reign anniversary (1819-1901), public donations totalling K240,000 funded the establishment of a separate zoo. Sixty-one acres of fallow land

near the Kandawgyi Lake were cleared to build the current zoo.

In January 1906, England's Prince of Wales and his wife, later known as King George V and Queen Mary, inaugurated the zoo, renaming it Victoria Memorial Park.

Officially opened on 25 January 1906, the Yangon Zoological Gardens has remained a cherished landmark since its inception. — Aung Myint (IPRD)/KZL



PHOTOS : AUNG MYINT (IPRD)

## Prices of chilli pepper varieties decline in Yangon market

THE prices of chilli pepper varieties declined to K12,500 and K12,000 per viss on 28 January from K13,000/K13,500 per viss on 18 January, according to the dealers at Bayintnaung Commodity Wholesale Centre, Yangon.

Newly-harvested Thazi long chilli was priced at K13,500 per viss before declining to K11,000 per viss these days. Long red chilli from Salin region priced at K14,000 per viss in previous days is now K12,500 per viss.

Shan long chilli is priced at K9,500/K9,900 per viss in these days whereas Moehtaung chilli from cold storage and Shan Moehtaung are set at K10,500/K10,800 and K9,000 per viss respectively.

Prices of other chillies with-



Long red chillies are seen in the market.

in these days are Sinphyukyun new bell pepper at K14,500/K15,000 per viss, Chinese bell pepper at K17,000/K17,500 per viss, Zee bell pepper at K12,000 per viss and Thazi bell pepper at K11,000 per viss.

In the middle of January, prices of varieties of bell peppers were Sinphyukyun K18,000, Zee K13,000, Thazi K14,000, and Chinese K9,500 per viss respectively. Chillies from various towns and cities have arrived in the market despite less demand this month. Although there is rain in these days, the chilli crop cultivations aren't destroyed by the rain, some chilli growers from delta region told the Global New Light of Myanmar.

Ko Han, a chilli trader from Seinpan Street, said that most

of the chilli traders faced loss in storing chilli stocks in 2023 due to various reasons. As such, the storage volume of chilli declines this year, rather than that of previous year.

The chilli traders secured much profit in 2022 when the chilli prices skyrocketed with wholesale price for bell pepper at K31,000 per viss, long chilli K20,000, and Moehtaung chilli K20,000 per viss respectively. In 2023, the wholesale price for bell pepper was set at K23,000, Moehtaung and long chilli K15,000 each per viss as the largest price.

Varieties of chillies from the delta are expected to enter Yangon market during Thingyan festival period in April, according to the chilli market. — TWA/TMT



A wholesale palm oil shop.

## Palm oil wholesale reference price set higher on Kyat depreciation

KYAT devaluation drove the wholesale reference price of palm oil up, as per the institution concerned.

The wholesale reference rate of palm oil for the Yangon market on 18 December 2023 was set at K4,810 per viss. Then, it rose to K5,275 per viss on 22 January 2024, the Supervisory Committee on edible oil import and distribution issued weekly.

With the recommendation of the ward administrators, consumers are eligible to buy the palm oil at the retail reference price, U Thein Lwin, a palm oil seller from Latha Township, told the Global New Light of Myanmar.

International palm oil prices surged to US\$885 per tonne on 24 January from \$830 on 5 January.

The palm oil's original price is around K5,000 per viss as imported Malaysian palm oil is valued at K3.1 million per tonne when it was calculated with the exchange rate of K3,500. The actual palm oil value in the domestic market was approximately K6,000 per viss.

Starting from December 2023, an oil quota is set for each region and state under the palm oil distribution system to facilitate the consumers. The majority of them have a chance to buy palm oil at a reference price. — TWA/KK

## Central Myanmar's annual honey production reaches 300 tonnes, 2/3 exported to Asia



A private beekeeping farm in Magway Region. PHOTO: NAY THIT

CENTRAL Myanmar annually produces 300 tonnes of honey, with two-thirds of this sum being exported to Japan, China, South Korea, and Thailand, according to the Apiculture Development Division (Nay Pyi Taw) at the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department.

The honey varieties are diverse, encompassing plum honey, sunflower honey, and multi-floral honey.

Private farms in Magway Region yield about 200 tonnes yearly, with local consumption reaching nearly 100 tonnes yearly.

An official at the division

explained: "Our experts visit beekeepers to assess the readiness of colonies and hives for honey collection. When deemed ripe, an opening is carefully carved at the tip of the honeycomb, delicately removing the beeswax."

The division provides training courses to local communities to enhance honey collection efficiency.

The official added: "We put each cell into the specialized machine to ensure a clean and high-quality product. We aim to educate and empower farmers to produce superior honey."

Magway is the heart of honey production in central Myanmar, hosting six township-level farms and 78 private beekeepers managing over 13,000 hives.

Sesame honey and plum honey constitute 60 per cent of the annual production, followed by sunflower honey at 30 per cent and multi-floral honey at 10 per cent. Sunflower honey commands the highest price in foreign exports. — ASH/NT

# OPINION

## Set a plan to reduce a half casualty of traffic accidents in 2030

The Yangon Region Private Transport Committee (YRTC) is on a mission to cut traffic accident casualties by half in 2030. Tasked with overseeing the daily operations of bus lines under the Yangon Bus Service, the YRTC is committed to ensuring the safety of road users and the public. Taking stringent actions against violators of traffic rules, the committee maintains discipline by dismissing YBS drivers who break regulations and promptly recruits replacements to maintain seamless services along respective bus lines.

To prepare new drivers for their responsibilities, the YRTC meticulously selects candidates and conducts comprehensive driving training courses, covering not only the intricacies of traffic rules but also relevant disciplines. The focus extends beyond mere adherence to rules, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing traffic safety for both passengers within the buses and those outside.

In response to this alarming trend, the Myanmar government is determined to enforce traffic rules rigorously and enhance public awareness to curb the rising number of casualties. All relevant organizations and government departments are urged to proactively educate the public, including vehicle drivers and conductors, fostering a deep commitment to following traffic rules.

In response to this alarming trend, the Myanmar government is determined to enforce traffic rules rigorously and enhance public awareness to curb the rising number of casualties. All relevant organizations and government departments are urged to proactively educate the public, including vehicle drivers and conductors, fostering a deep commitment to following traffic rules.

With a targeted plan to reduce traffic accident casualties by half in 2030, using the baseline data in 2020, the government emphasizes that success relies on widespread compliance with traffic rules. Only through collective adherence to these rules can the ambitious 2030 plan be realized, paving the way for a generation committed to disciplined and safe road practices.

1. In my first article on this topic, I mentioned that this article is very delicate, difficult, dedicated, and long. I intend to explain my ordinary, simple, basic and layman's views. As intended, this is my second humble and honest attempt in alphabetical order.

A (continued)

**Acquaintance and friend**  
An acquaintance of my father once met Stalin.

The noun acquaintance means a person known slightly.

She has been a friend of my mother since her school days. The noun friend means a person known well.

**Acute and chronic**  
I have an acute pain in my left ear.

The adjective acute means sharp or short duration.

I have a chronic pain in my left ear.

The adjective 'chronic' means long duration.

- In a time sense, the two adjectives are opposites.

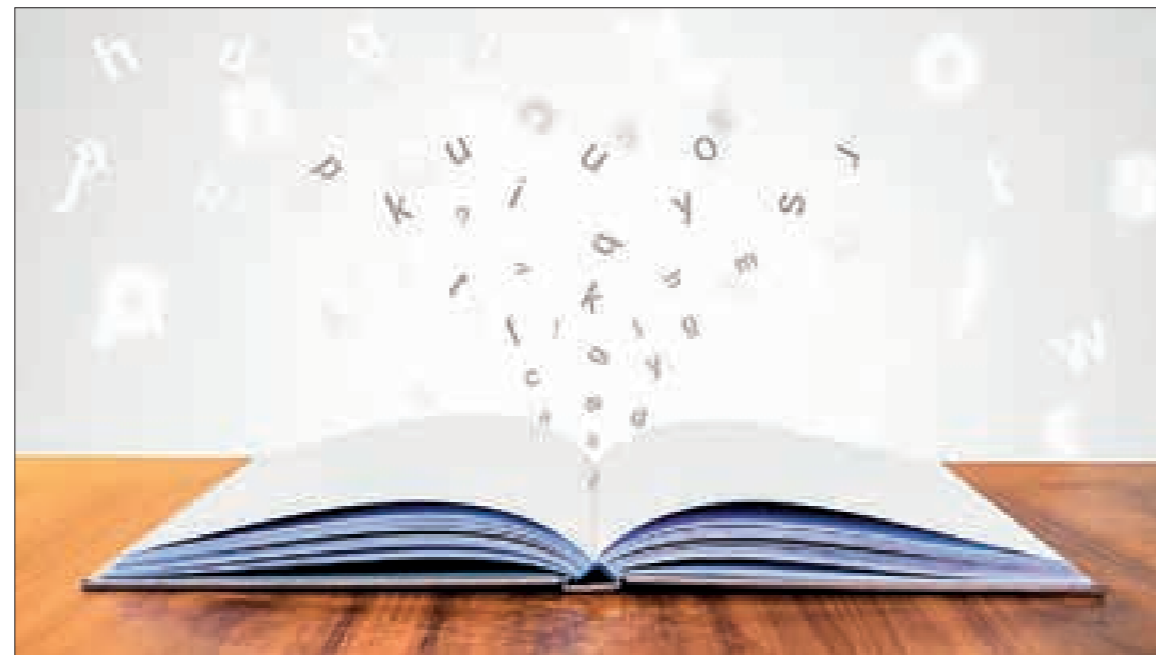
**A.D. and B.C.**  
The battle of Hastings took place in the year A.D. 1066. A.D. means anno domini (Latin for in the year of our lord).

The abbreviation should be placed before the date.

The battle of Zama took place in the year 202 B.C. B.C. means before Christ. The abbreviation should be

## ENGLISH PROBLEM WORDS II Better English (Series II)

By U Khin Maung (A retired diplomat)



There are many more pairs of words that can be challenging for English learners. ILLUSTRATION: PIXABAY

placed after the date.

**Adapt and adopt**  
Can you adapt the skirt length to follow this year's fashion? Adapt means to modify.

The couple decided to adopt an orphan child. Adopt means to choose as one's own.

**Adapter and adaptor**  
She is a good adapter of old ideas.

Adapter, with "e", means a person who modifies something.

You will need to use an electrical adaptor. Adaptor, with "o", means a tool that modifies something.

**Addenda and addendum**  
The report has three addenda. Addenda means things to be added. It is plural.

The addendum is missing from this report. Addendum is the singular form of addenda.

**Admit and admit of**  
He refused to admit his

crime. Admit means to confess or acknowledge.

The letters from the bank manager admit two possibilities regarding your overdraft. Admit means allow room for.

**Admittance and admission**  
No admittance without a ticket. The noun admittance means right to enter.

Admission to the concert is \$5.

The noun admission means a charge for admittance.

**Adverse and averse**  
My request for a bank loan met with an adverse reaction from the manager. The adjective adverse, with "d", implies opposition.

My bank manager is not averse to lending money if you have plenty. The adjective averse, without "d", implies unwillingness rather than opposition.

**Advice and advise**  
I will give you one piece of advice: never drink if you intend to drive. Advice, ending "ce", is a noun meaning suggestion.

We wish to advise you that ... Advise, ending "se", is a verb derived from advice.

**Affect and effect**  
The hot weather started to affect the runners. The verb 'affect' means to cause a change in or to influence.

The effect of the hot weather was a drought. The noun effect means con-

sequence.

**Affection and affectation**  
She has a great affection for her dog. The noun affection means love.

She dressed with too much affectation for my liking. The noun affectation means conscious display.

- Affectation gives us the adjective affected, meaning full of affectation as in: An affected way of speaking.

**Afflict and inflict**  
The disease can afflict the hearing of elderly people. The verb afflict, beginning with "aff-", means trouble or pain.

Even though he smiles all the time, he seems to be the type of person who would inflict great pain on his enemies. The verb inflict, beginning "in", means to impose. It has a sense of punishment.

**Aggravate and irritate**  
That new medicine seems to aggravate his illness. Aggravate means to make worse something already bad.

Smoking can irritate the lungs. Irritate means to inflame or to annoy.

Reference: *English Problem Words*, by George Jerkings, London.

# ARTICLE

## Letter to the Editor

The Global New Light of Myanmar  
Subject: Aungbalay Lottery Jackpot to Jackfruit System

Respected Sir,

I have been casting Burma State Lottery to Aungbalay Lottery for the last 73 years. Since I was a five-year-old kid, elders have asked me to buy a ticket for them, hoping a child's hand would bring them good luck. But the goddess of wealth has never cast her kind eyes upon me or these elders.

We are still a developing socialist country. Working people, mostly government servants, salary earners, and low-income people, contribute to the fund, not out of greed to win a jackpot but expecting to win the least prize to meet the cost of living.

The present-day prize system is not helpful. The money fund is given as a jackpot to a few lucky persons at the expense of most people. So, the present jackpot system should be changed to a jackfruit system. The system should be revised so that many people get a share of the major prizes.

Thank you, Sir.

Hanthawady Tha

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## 'Game changer': Gene therapy offers hope for children born deaf

*A new gene therapy is helping deaf children hear for the first time, giving hope for a breakthrough in treating hereditary deafness.*

A gene therapy that has allowed several children born deaf to hear for the first time is being hailed as a "game changer" that raises hopes of the first new treatment for hereditary deafness in decades.

Several medical teams around the world are trialling the procedure, which focuses on a rare genetic mutation that affects only a small number of the 26 million people with congenital deafness globally.

But several success stories announced this week are already being seen as a turning point.

On Tuesday, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia revealed that 11-year-old Aissam Dam, who was born deaf, was now "literally

hearing sound for the first time in his life".

Aissam still has mild-to-moderate hearing loss, and may never learn to talk because the brain's window for acquiring speech closes around the age of five.

But a trial in China, the results of which were announced in The Lancet journal on Thursday, tested a similar treatment on six younger children.

Five gained the ability to hear, according to the findings of the trial that started in 2022, making it the first to have tested the gene therapy on humans.

Some of the children were already able to speak thanks to a cochlear implant — which they now no longer need, study co-author Zheng-Yi Chen of the Massachusetts Eye and Ear hospital told AFP.

But one, a baby only a year old, had never been able to com-



Little cute baby girl, child in blue dress, smiling happily at camera in white sunny, bright bedroom. PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ ENVATO

municate verbally, Chen said.

Chen said that after the treatment, when the mother asked

the baby "who am I?", the baby responded: "Mama." When asked what a chicken sounds like, the

baby responded: "Coo-coo."

"Everyone just cried with joy, it's really amazing," said Chen, adding that the baby was expected to grow up speaking normally.

Not since cochlear implants were invented 60 years has there been such an advance, Chen said, adding that the therapy "symbolises a new era in the fight against all types of hearing loss".

**How does it work?**

For now, the trials in China, the United States and another announced in France this week all use a similar technique to focus on people born with a mutation of the OTOF gene.

SOURCE: AFP



# NATIONAL

## Tatmadaw beats KIA, TNLA and PDF terrorists, clears landmines in Shan State (North)

TERRORIST groups, including KIA, TNLA, and PDF, launched attacks aimed at undermining government administrative mechanism by destroying critical infrastructure such as roads and bridges in Shan State (North) and Sagaing Region.

Since 18 January, these groups have committed attacks on security posts in Momeik, Shan State (North), resulting in civilian casualties, extortion, and the destruction

of essential facilities including hospitals, schools, residences, and government buildings.

Responding to the escalating violence, Tatmadaw troops conducted counter-terrorism operations, bolstered by reinforcements and supporting fire of artillery and heavy weapons. Following 16 engagements, the Tatmadaw successfully regained control of Momeik on 27 January, prompting the terrorists to scatter towards the



Photo shows residential houses and departmental buildings burned down by terrorists in Momeik, Shan State (North).



Photo shows the Tatmadaw troops in front of Momeik People's Hospital after regaining control of Momeik.

north, northeast, and east of the town.

The Tatmadaw's operations have been conducted within the bounds of established rules of engagement (ROE), necessitated by the terrorists' targeting

of civilian infrastructure and their use of civilians as human shields. Several security personnel made ultimate sacrifices, while the Tatmadaw seized arms and ammunition, terrorist bodies, and explosive devices.

The aftermath of the attacks has left significant destruction in Momeik, prompting the Tatmadaw to initiate efforts to remove landmines and debris, facilitating the town's rehabilitation process. — MNA/NT

## K315 mln worth of illegal trade seized in two days

UNDER the guidance of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, state and regional special task forces seized smuggled goods valued at K315.5 million in 12 cases over two days.

The seizure operations commenced on Friday when the Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force intercepted contraband worth K228 million in Taninthayi Region.

Among the confiscated items, illegally extracted lead weighing 5,264 kilogrammes held the highest value, estimated at approximately K157 million. Additional seized goods included fishing equipment, cars, and motorcycles. The suspects face charges under mining laws, customs procedures, and export/import regulations.

Similarly, another special task force seized K1 million worth of undocumented ammonium nitrate and the associated vehicle used for transportation in Kachin State on the same day. The suspects are charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.

Likewise, customs authorities impounded 131 bundles of 92 per cent poly-



Confiscated illegal ammonium nitrate in Kachin State.

ester fabric, exceeding the declared unit on the import form, and 29,900 kilogrammes of GI hollow pipes for construction purpose in 16 containers at the Asia World terminal at the Myanmar Industrial Port on Friday.

The combined value of the two commodities is estimated at more than K76

million. Suspects face charges under customs procedures. Additionally, another task force apprehended individuals involved in illegal timber activities, seizing three tonnes of teak valued at over K2 million in Bago Region on Saturday. Authorities charged the suspects under the Forest Law. — MNA/NT

## Condition of El Nino during February 2024

Issued at 28-1-2024

THE Sea Surface Temperature (SST) over the Tropical Pacific Ocean near the Equator and atmosphere phenomena is strong condition. According to the Numerical Weather prediction models of the International Meteorological Agency, it is forecast to decrease moderate to strong El Nino condition during February 2024.

Although the El Nino condition occurs in the Pacific Ocean, the effect of El Nino may cause generally extreme weather events such as irregular rainfall patterns, rising temperature, irregular storm formation and drought.

Therefore, it is advised to prepare in advance for all related sectors. El Nino Condition will be updated in time. — DMH

## Emmy-winning director Rod Holcomb dies at 80

*The Directors Guild of America mourns his passing, acknowledging his significant impact on television direction and creative rights.*

ROD Holcomb, an Emmy-winning ER director who also worked on episodes of Lost, China Beach, Wolf, and The Six Million Dollar Man, has died, according to Hollywood reporter. He was 80.

Holcomb passed away on 24 January in Los Angeles following a protracted illness, the Directors Guild of America said on Friday.

Holcomb said, "Dad was an inspiration to me. He always stayed humble and never lost his desire to mentor young people who were making their way into

the industry." "Our gentle giant and kind friend passed away peacefully with his wife Jane, son Josh and daughter Natasha by his side," Holcomb's manager, Geoffrey Brandt, told The Hollywood Reporter.

"He was 80 years young." "The DGA deeply mourns the passing of Rod Holcomb, a visionary director whose impact on television direction and the creative rights of television directors cannot be overstated," DGA president Lesli Linka Glatter said in a lengthy statement. — ANI



Holcomb passed away peacefully with his family by his side. PHOTO: ANI

## French dance music duo Justice returns

FRENCH dance music duo Justice made its comeback on Wednesday, releasing first new tracks in eight years ahead of upcoming album "Hyperdrama".

"Generator" combines hardcore techno with violins and a funky bassline, while "One Night/All Night" is a poppy club track featuring Tame Impala's Kevin Parker.

They are the first songs to come from the new album, due out on 26 April.

"We both came to this project fresh. In the end, it was fluid, we were happy to meet again, each with new influences, new desires," said Justice members Xavier de Rosnay and Gaspard

Auge, one finishing the other's sentence on French radio station Franceinfo.

The Grammy-winning duo's last studio album was 2016's "Woman", and fans of the "French Touch" dance scene have been eagerly awaiting its return, particularly since the retirement of Daft Punk in 2021.

Justice will return to live performances with an appearance at Coachella festival in California in April and has several massive shows booked across Europe this summer.

The duo has been one of the biggest names in dance music since their 2007 mega-hit "D.A.N.C.E." — AFP

## Abandoned Singapore mall becomes unlikely art haven

*Despite its impending demolition, the half-century-old mall became a unique space for self-expression.*



In Singapore, where graffiti is prohibited, young artists have revitalized an abandoned mall called Peace Centre with vibrant murals and art workshops. PHOTO: AFP

IN Singapore, where graffiti is banned, young creatives have taken over an abandoned mall, spray painting colourful murals and holding art workshops to bring the space back to life.

Around half a century old, Peace Centre is scheduled to face the wrecking ball later this year, but fans say it has provided a rare space for self-expression.

Permission from authorities is required for any kind of street art in the Southeast Asian country.

In August last year, Play-Pan, an initiative co-founded by entrepreneur Gary Hong, convinced developers to postpone the mall's demolition.

The answer the initiative's backers received was that they could go ahead and use the space for "a social experiment to bring (the) community together", Hong told AFP.

They were given the space to host performances and workshops for several months, allowing artists, students, charities and small businesses to set up

shop for free or at heavily discounted rates.

The eclectic mix of pop-up stores, art tours and musical performances has transformed the once lacklustre mall into an unexpected art haven.

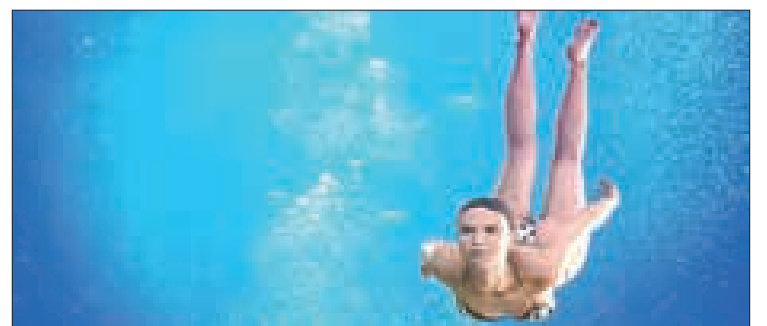
At the end of January, however, the mall will close definitively, bringing an end to the art project.

Peace Centre was once a popular mall but lost its shine to glitzier shopping centres that mushroomed over recent years. — AFP

## Swimming classes may discourage kids from just having fun in the pool: Research

SWIMMING lessons are not only potentially life-saving; they also give a full-body workout that enhances cardiovascular and lung health. While most youngsters in high-income countries learn to swim, few join a swimming club afterwards.

Here, authors from the Netherlands showed that the way that swimming lessons are taught in the Netherlands can be improved. This could stimulate more children to keep up the activity. The results are published in Frontiers in Sports and Active Living. Lead au-



Swimming lessons offer not just life-saving skills but also provide a beneficial full-body workout for cardiovascular and lung health. PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ PIXABAY

thor Carola Minkels, a doctoral student at the Department of Human Movement Sciences of the Free University Amsterdam, said: "Here we show that swimming lessons in the Netherlands

poorly support the intrinsic motivation of children: their need for autonomy is thwarted, while their needs for competence, and relatedness are only weakly supported." — ANI

# ECONOMY WORLD

## Chinese software and info-tech sector reports revenue, profit growth in 2023



A visitor interacts with a robot of SoftBank Group at the intelligent industry and information technology exhibition zone of the 6<sup>th</sup> China International Import Expo (CIIE) in east China's Shanghai, 7 November 2023. **PHOTO: ZHANG JIANSONG/XINHUA**

*The sector saw an uptick in growth rate compared to 2022, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.*

CHINA'S software and information technology services industry raked in 12.33 trillion yuan (about 1.73 trillion US dollars) in business revenues in 2023, up 13.4 per cent year on year, with the growth rate increasing by 2.2 percentage points compared to that in 2022, latest government data showed.

In a report, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said that the number of firms in the sector with annual business revenues exceeding 20 million yuan exceeded 38,000 in 2023.

The sector's profitability remained stable during the past year, with gross profits to-

taling nearly 1.46 trillion yuan in 2023, up 13.6 per cent year on year, and the profit growth rate increased by 7.9 percentage points compared to that in 2022, according to the data.

Exports in the software business segment stood at 51.42 billion US dollars last year, down 3.6 per cent. — Xinhua

## Cambodia's economy expected to grow 6.4% in 2024: central banker



A lorry drives out of the Hong Leng Huor Dry Port on the western suburb of Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 13 January 2022. **PHOTO: PHEARUM/XINHUA**

THE Cambodian economy is projected to grow by 6.4 per cent in 2024, up from 5.5 per cent in 2023, mainly driven by tourism and manufacturing sector, National Bank of Cambodia (NBC)'s Governor Chea Serey said on Friday.

The Southeast Asian country's economy is forecast to face both external and internal risks this year, she said in a speech during the closing ceremony of the NBC's two-day annual meeting.

Possible external risks in-

clude a decline in flows of international trade, investment as well as international financial market uncertainty, while internal risks can be a sluggish recovery in construction and real estate due to a low inflow of foreign investment, and climate change, according to the central banker.

Mey Kalyan, advisor to the Cambodian government and chairman of the Cambodia Development Resource Institute, said the government is proactively taking drastic measures to improve the business environment, upgrade infrastructure and logistics, and develop human resources in particular practical skills. — Xinhua

## The World Bank launches a groundbreaking \$100 million bond

*The World Bank has introduced a groundbreaking \$100 million Plastic Waste Reduction-Linked Bond, tying investor returns to Plastic Waste Collection Credits and Recycling Credits.*

THE World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IBRD) has unveiled a groundbreaking seven-year US\$ 100 million Plastic Waste Reduction-Linked Bond.

According to the World Bank, this innovative financial instrument ties investor returns to Plastic Waste Collection Credits, Plastic Waste Recycling Credits, and Voluntary Carbon Units expected to be generated by projects in Ghana and Indonesia.

The selected projects aim to reduce and recycle plastic waste in vulnerable communities, ad-

ressing the global challenge of plastics leaking into nature and oceans. Citi served as the Lead Manager for this pioneering outcome bond, mobilizing private capital to support projects with positive climate and development impacts.

Investors in the bond are contributing approximately US\$ 14 million in upfront financing to enhance the capacity of existing facilities, expand to new collection and recycling sites, and install food-grade recycling equipment in the selected projects. — ANI



Projects in Ghana and Indonesia will focus on reducing and recycling plastic waste in vulnerable communities, contributing to the global effort to combat plastics pollution. **PHOTO: ANI**

## EU chief Michel drops bid for European Parliament seat

EUROPEAN Council chief Charles Michel announced Friday he was dropping a bid to try and win a seat in upcoming EU parliament elections after coming under "personal attacks".

Michel added that he would now see through the rest of his European Council mandate that ends in November.

Michel, a former Belgian prime minister, had said 6 January he was vying to become an EU lawmaker in European Parliament elections taking place 6-9 June across the bloc.

As a result, and in the event of being elected, he said he would

step down as European Council president in mid-July.

That surprise decision created unease in Brussels, given that it could have opened the door to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, whose country takes over the rotating EU presidency in the latter half of 2024, serving as temporary European Council head until a successor was named.

Orban, who maintains close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, has raised hackles among almost all his European counterparts for blocking 50 billion euros (\$54 billion) of EU aid to Ukraine. — AFP

## China-Thailand mutual visa exemption deal inked

*The move is expected to boost tourism, foster trade, and facilitate exchanges.*

CHINA and Thailand signed on Sunday in Bangkok, Thailand a mutual visa exemption agreement, which will come into effect on 1 March 2024.

The signing, which coincides with the ongoing wave of visa exemption agreements between China and other Southeast Asian countries, demonstrates Beijing's commitment to expanding its openness. Experts believe the move aims not only to

enhance tourism but also foster trade and facilitate exchanges.

During a media briefing after attending the signing ceremony in Bangkok with his Thai counterpart Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that the agreement would not only benefit tourism in Thailand and Chinese tourists but also enhance mutual understanding between the two peoples.



Staff members welcome Chinese tourists at Suvarnabhumi airport in Bangkok, Thailand, 25 September 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA/FILE

After the news was released at noon on Sunday, data from Ctrip, one of China's largest online travel agencies, showed that the search popularity of keywords related to Thailand increased more than seven times compared to the previous day. Among them, the growth in searches for flight tickets and hotels increased sixfold. As of now, the number of bookings from Chinese tourists traveling to Thailand for the 2024 Spring Festival has increased by more than 13 times compared to the previous year, according to Ctrip. — Xinhua

## UK Post Office chief sacked as firm reels from IT scandal

*UK Business Minister Kemi Badenoch has announced the dismissal of the Post Office chairman amid the scandal involving hundreds of subpostmasters wrongly convicted of theft due to faulty accounting software.*

UK Business Minister Kemi Badenoch on Sunday said she had sacked the chairman of the Post Office amid tensions over the scandal of hundreds of subpostmasters wrongly convicted of theft due to faulty accounting software.

A television drama in early January that told the story of the subpostmasters' ordeal and their ongoing battle to clear their names and secure compensation shocked the nation.

The strong public reaction prompted Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to announce in parliament that his government would legislate to ensure the victims of what has been called Britain's biggest miscarriage of justice were "swiftly exonerated and compensated".

"We had a conversation and it was agreed that it was better that the



Software glitches led to the wrongful conviction of over 700 subpostmasters. PHOTO: AFP

Post Office had new leadership going forward," Badenoch told Sky News, confirming that she had removed Post Office chief Henry Staunton.

There has been intense criticism of previous Post Office chief Paula Vennells and others who are accused of allow-

ing the prosecutions to continue even after problems with the software were known about.

Staunton, appointed in December 2022, was not at the helm during the installation of the faulty Horizon software or the subsequent legal cases.

"But I decided that

given all of the difficulties the Post Office is having, it's not just about Horizon, it's about the entire business model, how we make it work, that we needed someone who could chair a board that was able to deal with these things effectively," Badenoch added. — AFP

## S Korea's GDP grows 1.4% in 2023

SOUTH Korea's gross domestic product (GDP) marked the lowest growth in three years in 2023 due to sluggish consumption, caused by high interest rates and inflation, central bank data showed Thursday.

The seasonally-adjusted real GDP, adjusted for inflation, grew 1.4 per cent in 2023 compared with the previous year, according to the Bank of Korea (BOK).

It was the lowest increase since 2020 when the

real GDP declined 0.7 per cent amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Except for 2020, it marked the lowest growth since 2009 when the global financial crisis roiled the Asian economy.

Export, which accounts for about half of the export-driven economy, gained 2.8 per cent in 2023 after advancing 3.4 per cent in the previous year on the back of the delayed recovery in the semiconductor sector. — Xinhua

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

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# ROLLING UPDATES

## WORLD

## Investors, Western media have negative bias about China's economy, say US observers

*Investors and Western news outlets focus on a narrow set of indicators and neglect the robust base when evaluating China's economy, according to US observers.*

INVESTORS and Western news outlets focus on a narrow set of indicators and neglect the robust base when evaluating China's economy, according to US observers.

Despite the heavy economic headwinds caused by the property sector, China is still putting out reasonable macroeconomic growth numbers as well as displaying microeconomic robustness across a number of private-led industrial sectors, including in advanced manufacturing, said Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Institute for China-America Studies.

"Furthermore, this is all happening without the government having to take recourse to 'flood



A woman works at an enterprise producing net and rope products in Lizhuang Town of Huimin County, east China's Shandong Province, 22 November 2023. **PHOTO: GUO XULEI/ XINHUA**

irrigation' measures (huge fiscal and monetary subsidies)," Gupta told Xinhua in a recent interview.

All this plus the heavy government emphasis over the past eight months on supporting the private sector bodes well for the future, especially once the property sector's health becomes more aligned with fundamentals, Gupta said.

"Western news outlets are more interested in dwelling on bad, scandalous or short-term news out of China rather than objectively assessing issues from a more considered or medium-term perspective," Gupta further said. Gupta suggested one must bear that in mind when reading analyses by Western news outlets. — Xinhua

## Fear, uncertainty and grief year after Türkiye's quake

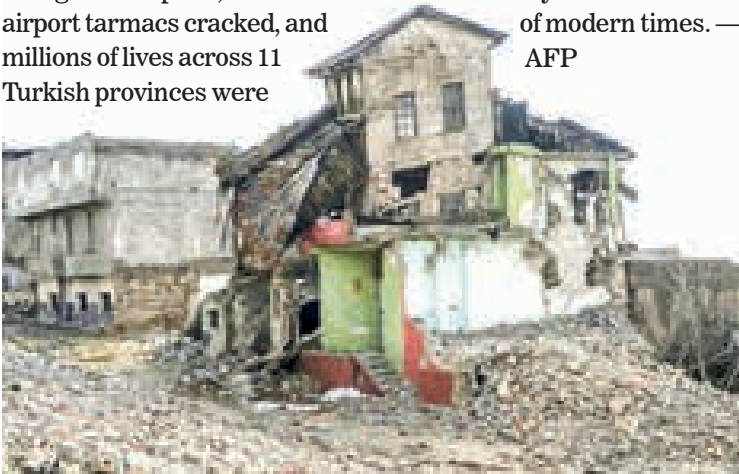
THE disaster, which killed more than 50,000 people in all, was Türkiye's deadliest in many centuries.

Over 65 nightmarish seconds of the pre-dawn hours of 6 February 2023, the ground swallowed swathes of entire cities across Türkiye's southeast, resulting in more than 50,000 deaths. The initial 7.8-magnitude earthquake shook the ground as far away as Egypt. Bridges collapsed, roads and airport tarmacs cracked, and millions of lives across 11 Turkish provinces were

upturned by the time the rest of the country woke up, stunned.

A year later, hundreds of thousands remain displaced, many of them living in container cities, while the rest of the quake-prone country waits in fear for the next big shake.

"I had 3,700 registered voters. Only 1,300 are left," said Ali Karatosun, a mukhtar (village chief) in Kahramanmaraş province, not far from the epicentre of Turkey's worst disaster of modern times. — AFP



Türkiye's 6 February 2023 earthquake destroyed more than 850,000 buildings across 11 provinces. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Royal Caribbean's 'Icon', world's largest cruise ship, sets sail

THE world's largest cruise ship, Royal Caribbean's Icon of the Seas, set sail from Miami on its maiden voyage Saturday, carrying what amounted to the population of a small city.

The ship, built over 900 days at a shipyard in Turku, Finland, is a monument to enormity, longer than the Eiffel Tower is tall, with 20 decks and room for more than 5,600 passengers (7,600 at maximum capacity) and a crew of 2,350.

To ensure no one goes bored or hungry, the monster ship, registered in the Bahamas, has seven swimming pools including a 40,000-gallon "lake", six water slides, a carousel, what Royal Caribbean says is the largest ice arena at sea, and more than 40 dining venues and bars.

Still bored? There will be 50 musicians and comedians as well as a 16-piece orchestra. The \$2 billion Icon — the



Royal Caribbean's "Icon of the Seas," billed as the world's largest cruise ship, sails from the Port of Miami on its maiden cruise on 27 January 2024. **PHOTO: AFP**

first in Royal Caribbean's new Quantum Class of ships — is stuffed with the latest technology and, despite its mammoth size, claims to be more eco-friendly than some smaller cruise ships.

The Icon is powered by what its owners say is eco-friendly Liquefied Natural Gas (though some experts say

LNG systems can leak damaging amounts of methane gas into the atmosphere).

It also features a system — microwave-assisted pyrolysis — for converting waste to energy-producing gas, and a reverse osmosis system to provide nearly all the fresh water the ship needs, the company says. — AFP

# SPORTS

## Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez to step down

FC Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez announced on Saturday that he would step down at the end of June (the end of the season).

Xavi made the remarks in the wake of his side's 5-3 defeat at home to Villarreal, which leaves them 10 points behind Real Madrid in La Liga.

"I have given everything and I will continue to do so these four months so that the fans feel proud," said Xavi at the post-game press conference in which he highlighted the "spectacular" group of players at the club, but also admitted the pressure of working at the club was hard to deal with.

Saturday's defeat came just three days after his side was knocked out of the Copa del Rey by Athletic Club Bilbao and two weeks after they lost the Spanish Super Cup final 4-1 to Real Madrid.

"The feeling of being a Barca coach is unpleasant, it is cruel, you feel that they disrespect you many times; that your work is not valued and it is a terrible drain on mental health and mood," said Xavi.

"I am a very positive guy but the energy is going down to the point that you say that it makes no sense to continue," he added. — Xinhua

## Late Thone Kaung claims champion in SKYNET invitational Sepak Takraw Tournament



Champion Late Thone Kaung men's team.

LATE THONE KAUNG club clinched the championship trophy in the SKYNET invitational Sepak Takraw Tournament 2024.

On 28 January, the final matches of the tournament took place at Shwe Htut Tin Ground in Yangon. In the men's regu event, Khit Kyaung Thar played against Late Thone Kaung whereas

Kyaung Sayar faced on Late Thone Kaung in the men's four-player event. Moreover, Huamei Myanmar competed with Apple in the women's regu event.

In the final match, Late Thone Kaung club won over Kyaung Sayar with 13-15, 15-12 and 15-9 and secured the championship title. Kyaung Sayar club stood second in the tournament.

Champion Apple club defeated Huamei Myanmar with 17-14 and 15-6 in the women's regu event final.

In the men's regu event, Late Thone Kaung deservedly won the championship trophy with 15-8, 16-17 and 17-14 over Khit Kyaung Thar club.—TWA/TTA

## Aung La N Sang decides to continuously join hands with One Championship

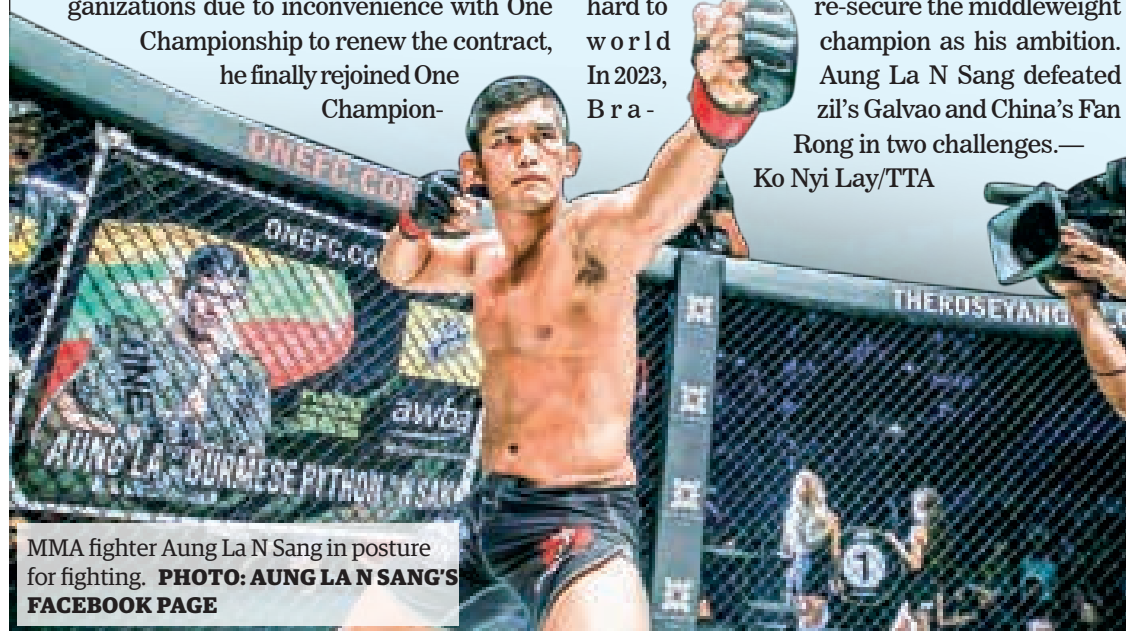
PROMINENT Myanmar MMA fighter Aung La N Sang unveiled his decisions to continuously join hands with One Championship, according to his Facebook page.

The agreement signed between Aung La N Sang and One Championship was expired last year, but they delayed to sign new agreement. Although MMA fighter held talks with other organizations due to inconvenience with One Championship to renew the contract, he finally rejoined One Championship.

ship. But, he did not release the detailed information yet. As such, it is expected that his match may be arranged in April.

Aung La N Sang started connection with One Championship in 2014 and he stood as a world champion in the middleweight and light heavyweight class. In 2021 and 2022, he missed his belts. Currently, the MMA fighter is trying hard to re-secure the middleweight champion as his ambition. In 2023, Aung La N Sang defeated zil's Galvao and China's Fan Rong in two challenges.—

Ko Nyi Lay/TTA



MMA fighter Aung La N Sang in posture for fighting. PHOTO: AUNG LA N SANG'S FACEBOOK PAGE

## Palestine expect 'celebration' in debut of Asian Cup last 16



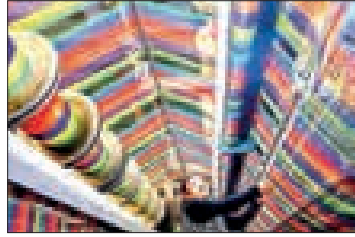
Palestine will play Qatar in the Asian Cup last 16 on Monday. PHOTO: GIUSEPPE CACACE/AFP

PALESTINE striker Tamer Seyam said Monday's historic Asian Cup last-16 match against hosts Qatar will be a "celebration" for fans who find themselves in the unusual position of rooting for both teams. Palestine have reached the knockout rounds for the first time despite a deeply troubled build-up overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in the Palestinian territory of Gaza.

Some of the players have lost loved ones and have family trapped in Gaza. The team trained and played matches abroad in the lead-up to their third Asian Cup. Fans of other sides in Qatar have been vocal in their support of the Palestine team, who qualified with a 3-0 win over Hong Kong in their final group match. — AFP

Investors, Western media have negative bias about China's economy, say US observers

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# WORLD



A stitched panoramic aerial photo shows bullet trains at a maintenance base in Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province, 26 January 2024. **PHOTO: WU ZHIZUN/XINHUA**

## ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY EFFORTS

### Viet Nam consistently refines its institutional framework to attract FDI

THROUGHOUT its 35-year history of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), Viet Nam has consistently refined its institutional framework and incentive programmes to draw in and effectively manage both domestic and foreign investment resources.

The recent intensification of economic diplomacy efforts has opened up broader avenues for Viet Nam to secure high-quality capital inflows into emerging industries, Viet Nam News Agency reported.

In 2023, Viet Nam witnessed a remarkable surge in FDI, attracting a total of USD 36.6 billion, a staggering 32 per cent increase compared to 2022.

This impressive figure breaks down as follows: newly registered capital exceeding US\$ 20 billion (a 62.2 per cent jump), supplemented capital amounting to nearly US\$7.9 billion (down 22.1 per cent), and foreign investor contributions exceeding US\$ 8.5 billion (up 65.7 per cent). — ANI

## A record 9 bln trips expected as China starts world's busiest travel season

*China has begun its annual Spring Festival migration, 15 days ahead of the Lunar New Year, expecting record-breaking journey numbers.*

CHINA officially ushered in its largest annual population migration on Friday, 15 days ahead of the Spring Festival, or the Lunar New Year, with record-breaking journey numbers expected.

An estimated nine billion passenger trips are likely to be made during the 2024 travel rush period, according to the country's transport ministry.

Of the total, 7.2 billion trips or about 80 per cent will be made by self-driving, while 1.8 billion trips will be made via railways, highways, waterways, and civil aviation, the ministry said.

China's railway operator on Friday said the country's railways are expected

to handle 480 million passenger trips during this travel season, with an average of 12 million trips daily, an increase of 37.9 per cent compared with the previous year. About 10.6 million train trips are expected to be made on Friday, the first day of the travel rush.

The 40-day travel surge, also known as "chunyun", will see hundreds of millions of people return home and reunite with their families and friends.

As a leading indicator of festivities, China's railway system saw a surge in ticket sales, with about 230 million tickets have been sold since 12 January a notable year-on-year increase.

With the record-high migration unfolding, this year's Spring Festival holiday is set to experience not only a stunning number of people flow, but also a vibrant consumption revival boosted by the prosperous tourism market, adding new steam to the country's economic recovery.

At 5:34 am on Friday, a high-speed rail journey set off from Beijing West Railway Station, initiating a bustling traffic period during the 40-day festival season in the capital city.

"The normal flow of people is back," said a railway station staff, who was busy checking tickets. — Xinhua

## Japan preparing to add transport roles to skilled visa amid shortages

JAPAN is preparing to add four sectors including the transportation industry to its foreign blue-collar skilled worker visa granting up to five years of working rights, government sources said Sunday, amid fears of driver shortages.

The move would bring the eligible industries under the Specified Skilled Worker No. 1 visa to 16 with the road transportation, railway, forestry and timber sectors under review, marking the first expansion since the system was introduced in 2019.

Relevant ministries under the government of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida are cooperating with a view to a decision on their inclusion to the No. 1 visa within the current fiscal year, which will end on 31 March, the sources said.

Japan's need for foreign labor has risen due

in part to a declining birthrate. There are also concerns about pronounced shortages in the transportation and logistics industries once new driver overtime rules begin in April, in what is known as the "2024 problem".

To help alleviate the issue, positions such as bus, taxi and truck drivers are expected to become eligible, while the government has received requests from the railway industry for manufacturing, driving and station-related roles to be included, the sources said.

Foreigners with the No. 1 visa must have passed a test demonstrating professional and Japanese language skills enabling them to work immediately. The No. 2 visa allows for unlimited renewals and permits workers to bring their children and spouses to Japan. — Kyodo



The Japanese government, under Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, is considering adding the transportation industry and others to the foreign blue-collar skilled worker visa (No. 1 visa) before the fiscal year ends on 31 March. A foreign national takes an exam to be eligible for the specified skilled worker No. 1 visa category in Fujinomiya, Shizuoka Prefecture, in August 2020. **PHOTO: KYODO/FILE**