

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR



State Administration Council Chair Premier Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives the Dhamma present from the chairman of Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) yesterday.

Safeguarding nationality, language, religion, and education is a national cause, says Senior General

THE Senior General emphasized that safeguarding nationality, language, religion, and education is a national cause, and all citizens in the country are responsible for the flourishing of the national cause.

Permanent Honorary Patron of the Young Men's Buddhist Association-YMBA Agga Maha Mangala Dhamma Jotikadhaja Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met members from the association (Central) at YMBA (Central) office in the precinct of Shwedagon Pagoda in Dagon Township of Yangon Region

yesterday morning.

In his speech, the Senior General highlighted that YMBA has to strengthen

the national spirit in order to train youths to be polite and shape a good society.

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Salient points from the speech made by the Senior General at the meeting with YMBA officials

- Safeguarding nationality, language, religion, and education is a national cause, and all citizens in the country are responsible for making the national cause flourish.
- YMBA has to strengthen the national spirit in order to train youths to be polite and shape a good society.
- Tatmadaw never accepts encroachment on Our Three Main National Causes.
- YMBA needs to strive to safeguard nationality, language, religion, education, and national solidarity as much as it can.

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NATIONAL

Objectives of 79th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day 2024

(A) To safeguard the State with the sacrifice of life by upholding Our Three Main National Causes: Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty as the national policy of Tatmadaw;

(B) To actively participate in implementing the processes of two national visions of the State: the

prosperity of the country and food security by Tatmadaw members together with the government and ethnic people in their respective sectors;

(C) To steadfastly implement enhancement of three capabilities in accord with the work process of Tatmadaw, such as study, practise and obey in building a modern patriotic Tatmadaw with pow-

erful strength and sharpening prowess;

(D) To provide necessary assistance to hold a free and fair multiparty democratic general election by Tatmadaw to ensure peace and stability, solidarity and development, which are actual needs of the State and to emerge a Union based on democratic and federal systems.

Shwemawdaw Pagoda receives 360,000+ domestic, 10,000+ foreign tourists in 2023

ACCORDING to Shwemawdaw Pagoda Board of Trustees' member U Tin Aung Myint, more than 360,000 domestic travellers and 10,000 foreign tourists visited the Shwemawdaw Pagoda in 2023. Renovation works have been developed at the Bago's Shwemawdaw Pagoda since 2022, aiming for more convenience for travellers, especially for the elders. The renovation projects include the installation of the escalator and the versatile renovation of the over 100-year-long Kyaukpadaung religious hall and golden monastery.

U Tin Aung Myint said, "Flocks of pilgrims from various cities and towns all over the country

mostly visit on weekends. Last year, over 360,000 pilgrims from different towns and cities and over 10,000 foreign visitors visited the pagoda. We have arranged accommodation for the visitors as well."

The Shwemawdaw Pagoda once fell in 1917 due to the earthquake. Pilgrims and visitors mostly visit to observe the King Dhammazedhi bell that was built in 833 ME, Bilu Yannaing Stupa located on the upper platform of the Shwemawdaw Pagoda, and Yekkha Meldaw. The Buddha Pujaniya and offering ceremony to 500 Buddhist monks are usually held in the month of Tagu. — ASH/ TMT

Township courts empowered to adjudicate civil lawsuits not exceeding K50 million



The photo depicts Hline Township court in Yangon Region.

THE Union Supreme Court announced on 14 February that the township courts had been conferred the authority to adjudicate civil lawsuits not exceeding K50 million under Section 63 of the Union Judiciary Law.

As a result, civil lawsuits worth less than K50 million

are to be judged by township judges and associate township judges without needing to refer the cases to the district court. Township judges now have the right to adjudicate civil lawsuits not surpassing K50 million, while associate township judges are able to hear civil lawsuits not exceeding K20 million. The

above order released by the Union Supreme Court will come into force on 1 April 2024.

In the past, the township judges and associate township judges were entrusted with the authority to adjudicate cases that were not more than K10 million, and the associate township judges were empowered to handle cases that were less than K3 million.

According to the Union Supreme Court's instructions, township judges must delegate cases to the judges of the township court. When the township judge is temporarily unable to discharge their duties, the delegated judges can transfer cases to other judges for adjudication on behalf of the township judge. However, the cases filed to the self-administered division/zones level courts and district courts before 1 April 2024 are not to be transferred to the township courts. — TWA/TH



Enhanced conservation efforts planned for Dugongs



Water hogs or dugongs or sea cows facing the threat of extinction seen in a coastal area of Myanmar.

THE measures to conserve water hog or dugong, or sea cow, classified as level 1 among endangered aquatic animals found in the Ayeyawady and Rakhine coasts of Myanmar, will be increased, according to the Environment and Endangered Species Conservation Branch under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

"Currently, dugongs are facing extinction in our country and in more than 30 other countries. Myanmar designated to conserve this mammal and, we have designated them as a fully protected aquatic animal," U Han Win, Staff Officer from the Environment and Endangered Species Conservation Branch, said.

Dugongs are marine mammals, and arrangements to survey them are more complex than those of dolphins, as the

mammals are used to diving immediately and disappearing when they hear noises from nearby boats. Searching with a two-seater plane from above and diving and searching methods can be employed in surveying them.

"At present, it is still difficult to conduct a survey. Professionals are also needed. To carry out surveys like before, we will need overseas experts and technical support, but we will continue to increase relevant conservation works for the dugongs," U Han Win said.

Dugongs often get entangled in fishing nets along the Rakhine and Ayeyawady coasts, get stranded, and die. They are commonly found around Manaung Island in Rakhine State and the upper part of Chaungtha Beach in Ayeyawady Region. — ASH/TH

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NATIONAL

Safeguarding nationality, language, religion, and education is a national cause, says Senior General

FROM PAGE-1

He continued to say that efforts must be made to encourage youths to have good morale and spirit to safeguard nationality, language, religions and education to reach a correct path of national spirit over the State and citizens.

He underscored that it is a severe condition for the future of the State that valuable new generation youths are on the wrong track of disturbing acts and are not participating in nation-building endeavours. Hence, YMBA needs to persuade those youths to get on the right track, he added.

The Senior General stressed that leaders of YMBA have to broaden the scope for training new generation youths to attain high capacity with physical and mental strengths while turning out the human resources for the State.

He noted that the association must be capable of leading the national cause but politics. Currently, those instigating terror acts and malicious media are committing to destroying the future of the State, not implementing national cause. Although equal terms of rights have been given to all ethnicities, initiating the politics without

honesty sparks current ethnic armed conflicts, he added.

The Senior General disclosed that all citizens are responsible for defending the State, and Tatmadaw never accepts encroachment on Our Three Main National Causes. People must have physical and mental concepts for forging peace and stability in the nation.

To improve the five capacities of youths, he said that YMBA needs to consider that the People's Military Service Law aims to safeguard Our Three Main National Causes, defined as a national duty of the State. Without comprehensively observing the law, some unscrupulous persons commit instigations based on fake news and misinformation. Hence, YMBA branches in all parts of the nation disseminate accurate information to the people.

He underlined that people can cultivate team spirit and teamwork through military service in order to shape a better nation. **As YMBA plays an important role among social organizations, it needs to deeply emphasize safeguarding nationality, religion, language and education of the country,** he noted.

Union ministers and officials



Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing hears the explanation of YMBA's activities by YMBA Chairman U Ye Tun in Yangon yesterday.

reported on the dissemination of factual information about the People's Military Service Law to the people and the participation of YMBA in the improvement of the role of youths and fostering Union spirit and national solidarity spirit among the citizens.

In his response to the discussions, the Senior General said that as the government emphasizes nation-building endeavours through a well-organized capacity, YMBA needs to strive to safeguard nationality,

language, religion, education, and national solidarity as much as it can.

YMBA Chairman U Ye Tun presented a Dhamma gift to the Senior General, who warmly greeted those from teams formed for the prevention of natural disasters.

Before the ceremony, the YMBA chairman reported on the conducting of Abhidhamma and Buddhism courses across the nation, participation of YMBA members in public welfare tasks,

formation of rescue and relief teams, a plan to construct a new YMBA (Central) building, and allotments of booths at the historical exhibition of the association.

Also present at the meeting were Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, council member Lt-Gen Nyo Saw, Union ministers, the Yangon Region chief minister, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, the commander of Yangon Command and officials. — MNA/TTA

MoI UM attends honorary dinner for 2023 Myanmar Academy Awards winners, organizers

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn attended the dinner in honour of winners of the Academy Awards 2023 and those who participated in organizing the 2023 Myanmar Academy Awards event at MWD Media Centre in Yangon yesterday.

In his opening speech, the Union Minister highlighted the formation of 17 working committees and subcommittees, 12 awards, including three lifetime awards conferred at the event and marking scheme of Myanmar Motion Pictures Organization in reviewing 35 movies, and



Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn delivers the speech at the honorary dinner for winners of Academy Awards 2023 and those who participated in organizing the 2023 Myanmar Academy Awards event in Yangon yesterday.



also expressed gratitude to the relevant persons who participat-

ed in holding the event. He also talked about the

best fashion awards and positive comments from artistes,

professionals, and fans.

Then, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein and Chairman of Myanmar Motion Pictures Organization U Kyi Soe Tun delivered words of thanks to relevant officials, and Chairman U Zaw Myint Oo of the Academy Award judging panel explained the award selection processes.

Officials then gave cash awards to those who participated in the academy event, and lifetime achievement award winner Academy Daw Nwet Nwet San expressed gratitude on behalf of the award recipients. — MNA/KTZH

NATIONAL

MoC UM inspects Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge construction

UNION Minister for Construction U Myo Thant, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein and officials inspected the construction site of the Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge (Dala), which will connect downtown Yangon with Dala Township, yesterday.

Firstly, Consultant Engineer Mr Bae explained the project with a PowerPoint presentation to the Union minister and officials at the Yangon end of the bridge.

U Kyaw Kaung Cho, deputy director-general of the Department of Bridges and leader of the project, discussed safety requirements, traffic management strategies, the construction of a 0.5-metre-wide drinking water pipeline, and negotiation plans with the Yangon City Development Committee for a toll plaza on the Dala side.



Union Minister for Construction U Myo Thant looks into progress of Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge (Dala), in Dala, Yangon Region yesterday.

The Union minister provided the necessary support and observed the completion of the

approaching bridge on the Yangon side, ramp bridge, and pier columns.

Additionally, the Union minister visited the Dala bank via boat to inspect the designated

area for the toll plaza, approaching bridges, and ongoing projects. Emphasizing the significance of signage and signal lights, he underscored their role in ensuring the safety of boats during the construction phase.

The Friendship Bridge is under construction as per international standards and norms. Given its height of 49 metres clearance to accommodate 15,000-tonne ocean vessels, ramp bridges and approaching bridges are being built to ensure a smooth gradient and safe passage.

Being the tallest bridge in Myanmar, it imposes a maximum speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour on the main and approaching bridges and 30 kph on the ramp bridges for safety. — MNA/NT

CBM Governor attends SEACEN Governors' Conference, ASEAN Central Bank Governors' Meeting

CENTRAL Bank of Myanmar Governor Daw Than Than Swe led a delegation to the 59th SEACEN Governors' Conference/High-Level Seminar and the 43rd ASEAN Central Bank Governors' Meeting convened in Mumbai, India, on 15 and 16 February.

On 15 February, the seminar, titled "Navigating Economic Headwinds and Advancing Financial Inclusion: Perspective and Challenges", took place. Ms Petya Koeva Brooks, Assistant Director in the IMF's Research Department, presented "Insights on the Global and Emerging Markets Econom-

ic Outlook". Mr Francois Villeroy de Galhau, Governor of Banque de France, discussed "The Road to 2 per cent Inflation Target, Which Challenges Ahead?"

The first part of the ASEAN Central Bank Governors' roundtable discussion revolved around "The Drivers and Road to Achieving Inflation Targets-Challenges Ahead".

The second and third parts centred on "Challenges and Implications of Higher for Longer Interest Rates" and "No One Behind: The Role of Digital Public Infrastructure in Financial Inclusion", respectively.

The 43rd ASEAN Central Bank Governors' Meeting was held on 16 February. Executive Director at The SEACEN Centre, Dr Mangal Goswami, presented the Centre's operations in 2023, priorities for 2024, and plans pending the Governor's decision. The Central Bank Governors offered their suggestions.

Additionally, the Myanmar Central Bank Governor convened a bilateral meeting with her Indian counterpart about direct payments between the rupee and kyat in trading and improving cooperation in payment-related matters. — MNA/NT

Counter-argument to false information

Fake news about arresting youths near Shwebo-Myitkyina Road spreading

THE malicious Khit Thit Media is spreading fake news stating that the security forces detained the youths near Shwebo-Myitkyina Road to serve military service.

According to the relevant authorities of the local administration, the actual event was that the security forces only did the necessary security checks to prevent the terrorists among the citizens and doing terrorist activities in order to ensure local peace and stability.

In the same way, the other false news is being spread intentionally, stating that the people's names from the factories and quarters of Monywa

were collected for the military service. Actually, it is just collecting census data from the local administrators and officials from the relevant ministry. The malicious media outlets are just intentionally disturbing the security measures and census works by the respective authorities to create misunderstandings among the citizens, to cause worries among the people, and to lead the youths in the wrong direction. Therefore, it is reported that all the citizens need to focus only on the official statements and news from the government media concerning people's military service. — MNA/TRKM

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NATIONAL

Used laptops at half price draw more buyers

AT a half price, used laptops are attractive to many buyers and are sold well, according to second-hand laptop dealers.

“More people buy second-hand ones rather than new laptops. The main point is the price difference. Used ones cost almost a half as much as new ones. So, people are more interested in buying used ones than new laptops,” a dealer said.

Most of these second-hand laptops are sold back by training institutions, companies, and home and office users, and their price varies depending on the model.

Laptops and accessories are sold in Myanmar kyats, but their value is fixed in dollars. Hence, the actual price in kyats has to be recalculated based on the prevailing exchange rate in the external

market at the time of sale, said some computer shops.

“Now, people are buying more used laptops than new ones. Some used ones are as good as new ones. The price difference is one reason to prefer them. But, some only use new laptops. Second-hand laptop users seem to be increasing in the market,” a dealer in Yangon said. — Thit Taw/ZN



The second-hand laptop is seen in the market in Yangon.



Renowned composer Dinae Pone Naka passes

COMPOSER Dinae Pone Naka, who has created unique songs from the early stereo period to date, passed away on 17 February, according to the Myanmar Music Association.

The 80-year-old songwriter Dinae Pone Naka (aka) U Ko Lay composed many famous songs, and famous studio singers Kankaw Taw Myo Aung, Bo Bo Han, and Cho Pyone sang his songs.

“We, Myanmar Music Association (Central), are sorry to hear about the loss of composer Dinae Pone Naka (aka) U Ko Lay. He produced very famous modern Myanmar songs and singers. May his soul rest in peace, Dnae Pone Naka (aka) U Ko Lay,” said U Lwin Myint, Chairman of the association.

The songs “Tain Pali Nway Hnaung”, “Khat Mite Mite Chit Kya Soh”, “Lu Gyi Min Myar Lat Khote Tee Par”, and “Ngar Bo Bo Han Par A Chit” are still popular nowadays. — ASH/KTZH

Myanmar, Uzbekistan discuss collaborative tourism, trade promotion



Myanmar Ambassador to India U Moe Kyaw Aung and Uzbekistan Ambassador to India Mr Sardor Rustambayev are seen exchanging gifts.

MYANMAR and Uzbekistan continued discussions to promote collaboration in tourism, trade, and commerce, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Myanmar Ambassador to India U Moe Kyaw Aung and Uzbekistan Ambassador to India Mr Sardor Rustambayev exchanged views on regional and

global issues on 15 February at the Myanmar Embassy to India.

U Moe Kyaw Aung presented in the meeting that Myanmar and Uzbekistan have friendly relations, and the two countries will also uplift the beneficial mutual collaboration as members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), promoting potentialities of the bilateral partnership in economic, trade and tourism sectors, while increasing the communications of government to government (G to G) and People to People. He also explained the current situation in Myanmar.

The Uzbekistan ambassador also discussed that there is potential to increase bilateral economic relations, and the Uzbekistan Embassy will continue promoting trade and economic collaboration. — ASH/TMT

Myanmar Miss to compete 71st Miss World in India

ACCORDING to Miss Yoon Theint Theint Nway, she is going to participate in the 71st Miss World that will be held in the New Delhi of India from 18 February to 9 March.

The contestants representing over 120 countries, including Myanmar, are going to take part in the beauty pageant.

“I will get a chance to proudly share the beauty and talents of Myanmar women under the theme “Beauty with A Purpose”, which also includes charity duties, on the stage. I have prepared to be a repre-

sentative of whom the people of my native town, Pindaya, and my Danu ethnicity can be proud. I would like to request my fans to cheer me up and support me online throughout the Miss World Festival,” Miss Yoon Theint Theint Nway said.

Miss Wine Lay, Miss Khin Yadana Thein Myint, Miss Myat Thiri Lwin (Bella), Miss Ei Kyawt Khine, Miss Han Ti, and Miss Lin Latt Yoon were the representatives of Myanmar in Miss World competitions from 2014 to 2019, respectively. — ASH/TRKM



Miss Yoon Theint Theint Nway will represent Myanmar in the 71st Miss World beauty pageant in India.

NATIONAL

Marine survey in EEZ to continue until 19 February



The photo shows the Myanmar-Singapore international underwater fibre cable transmission project.

THE Department of Fisheries announced that marine surveying activities within the Myanmar Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) will be carried out until 19 February.

In order to continue the

Myanmar-Singapore underwater fibre cable connection to Bangladesh, marine measurement works are planned to be carried out by Campana Mythic Company Limited in the EEZ from 12 to 19 February.

Maritime warnings have already been issued for ships, cargo boats, fishing ships, and motor boats not to travel in the designated area in order not to cause delays during the operation period. — TWA /MKKS

Strong overseas sugar sales bolstered by domestic consumption

IN addition to regular domestic consumption, sugar is exported to overseas markets, and its sales are also excellent, according to the data provided by market researchers.

“In the local market, the supply from Sagaing is late, about two months, but the supply from Shan State is available now. That is why sugar is never out of stock. In the overseas market, 40 per cent was sold

to Viet Nam. There is regular export so the foreign market can buy as much as we sell,” said an official from the sugar and molasses wholesalers’ association.

In previous years, the sugar market suffered losses and sugarcane plantation acres were reduced. But the price has been handsome this year, so the plantation acres have been extended.

The sugar price was just K900 per viss to the maximum in previous years, but currently, it is priced at around K3,850 per viss.

There is a prospect that the sugar market is promising, and both farmers and consumers will be fine if farmers are able to extend the plantation acres in the coming season, said sugar market analysts. — Thit Taw/ZS

MGMA to assist ease of import licence for CMP export development

MYANMAR Garment Manufacturers Association announces that it will assist in the ease of import licences for necessary inputs for raising the CMP garment export sector.

Under the guidance of the CSS Taskforce secretary, MGMA submitted a letter requesting information to help facilitate the licensing process for importing

necessary inputs for the CMP sector to all its member factories and companies on 14 February.

The letter says MGMA would assist in facilitating import licences for necessary inputs such as spare parts, lubricants and chemicals used in CMP garment factories in order to be efficient with the CMP export sector. MGMA members will need to fill

out requirements, which are set according to factories, in an Excel sheet and submit a soft copy to mgma@myanmargarments.org by 4 pm, 16 February. MGMA has already sent an Excel file to its member factories’ respective Admin and HR mails. — MT/ZS

The manufacturing lines of workers in the CMP garment industry.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Individuals postponed from military service to resume duty

IN the capacity as Chairman of the Central Body for Summoning People’s Military Servants, SAC Member Deputy Prime Minister Union Defence Minister Admiral Tin Aung San said at its coordination meeting on 16 February 2024 that those who are temporarily postponed to serve at the military, even if they are over the age of military service, must return to serve the specified period of military term.

Those who can be temporarily suspended from military service are those who have received approval from the relevant Tatmadaw Medical Examination Board that they do not meet the level of health necessary to serve in the military, civil servants, those who are studying, those who are caring the elderly and raising the young, those who are receiving drug addiction treatment, and those who are serving prison terms.

The government will not be able to recruit more than 50,000 people per year. Under the People’s Military Service Law, all those who will carry out the duty of national defence will receive salary, rations, and entitlements according to their grades and qualifications. In addition, proper time must be spent on military training to have skills that military personnel should have.

After the training, they will be assigned to the positions according to their grades, skills, and experience, and they are intended to serve only in the security forces located in the areas they are living, Maj-Gen Zaw Min Tun, SAC Information Team Leader, said.

Overseas employees assigned regularly

THE Ministry of Labour announced on 15 February that the process of the submission of job offers to send workers to foreign countries is resumed regularly and that the submission of new demand letters for jobs, which was temporarily suspended on 14 February, can continue. The statement also stated that the despatching process, overseas worker identification cards (OWICs), contracts, and the submission of job invitations to send workers to foreign countries are undertaken as usual.

No restriction on passport issuance

THE Ministry of Immigration and Population (MoIP) has stated that after the People’s Military Service Law came into effect on 10 February 2024, the MoIP has no specific statement or restriction on overseas leave. In addition, the international airports such as Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, and Mandalay airports and the entry and exit checkpoints bordering neighbouring countries have been allowed to enter and exit under the law as usual, according to the statement. — Htun Htun/TKO



Pure gold price gains to K3.9 mln per tical in grey market

WITH spot gold price rising above US\$2,000 per ounce and Kyat depreciation against the US dollar, the pure gold price moved up to K3.9 million per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilogramme) in the unofficial market.

At present, the Yangon Gold Entrepreneurs Association set the reference price at K3.6234 million per tical, showing a significant difference of over K270,000 per tical between the YGEA's price and the actual market value.

Earlier, the YGEA used the interbank transaction rate set by the CBM in calculating the reference price for pure gold, indicating a big gap of K400,000-K500,000 per tical.

On 5 December, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) allowed authorized dealers (private banks) to operate forex exchange transactions freely as per the market rate determined by the supply and



Gold items are displayed at a gold jewellery outlet in Yangon. PHOTO - XINHUA

demand forces.

The Kyat-US dollar exchange rate is currently around K3,570 at the over-the-counter market.

When the Kyat weakened to K4,000 against the greenback in the forex market, the gold price peaked at K4 million per tical in August 2023.

Subsequently, the YGEA urged the members to deal in immediate transactions with instant payments to curb the volatile market. — NN/EM

Myanmar F&B Industry eyes expansion via ThaiFEX-Anuga Asia 2024

MYANMAR Trade Promotion Organization informed that ThaiFEX-Anuga Asia 2024 is a gateway for Myanmar's F&B industry to expand businesses, explore new potential markets, and showcase its products.

The Department of International Trade Promotion, Ministry of Commerce (Thailand) will hold this five-day long event from 28 May to 1 June. It will provide a platform to interact and exchange with business persons with common interests. The event will provide eight 5.06 square metres wide booths to Myanmar businesspersons.

Those enthusiastic can register through <https://mitc.myantrade.gov.mm/member/trade-fair/new>. Those companies will be given priority in order. For further details and enquiries, the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization can be reached at 067 408622/067 408623. — NN/KK

Myanmar's foreign trade exceeds US\$25 bln in ten months

MYANMAR'S international trade with foreign trade partners amounted to US\$25.5 billion in the past ten months of the current financial year 2023-2024, beginning 1 April, comprising exports worth \$12.135 billion and imports worth \$13.378 billion.

The total trade balance plunged from \$28.66 billion recorded in the year-ago period. The figures reflected a sharp drop of \$3.15 billion compared with that of the corresponding period last FY, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics showed.

Myanmar's seaborne trade value was estimated at \$18.787 billion, while \$6.7 billion of trade was conducted at borders in the past ten months.

Myanmar exports agricultural produce, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital goods, intermediate goods, raw materials



File photo shows foreign currency notes seen at a foreign exchange counter.

imported by the CMP enterprises and consumer goods.

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

Myanmar prepping to export hundreds of tonnes of dried areca nuts to India monthly

INDIA'S LAX Corporation Co Ltd proposed to buy hundreds of tonnes of Myanmar's dried areca nuts monthly, according to Mon State's Areca Nut Producers and Exporters Association.

The product samples were sent to them in January 2024. After 17 tonnes (one 20-foot container) of the first batch passes the quality testing, 200 tonnes of areca nuts will be exported monthly to India. They will raise the purchase order as well. At present, Myanmar suppliers and an Indian company are negotiating prices, transaction types, designated locations and transport modes for exports. Upon agreement, the export of dried areca nuts will commence, U Aung Nay Lin, chair of the association, said.

The annual production of areca nuts is estimated at 230,000 tonnes. Myanmar exports them to foreign countries



File photo shows a worker peeling areca nuts in Minbya Township, Rakhine State. PHOTO: THEIN NU AUNG

beyond self-sufficiency. India has a growing requirement for areca nuts to meet domestic demand. They also purchase areca nuts to produce value-added products. As India is the leading importer of areca nuts, Myanmar will endeavour to grasp a market share and boost areca nut exports.

There were 253,370 acres of areca nuts in Myanmar with an output of 230,000 tonnes, according to the 2020-2021 financial year's statistics. Mon State is the top supplier with about 90,000 tonnes, followed by Taninthayi with over 80,000 tonnes and Kayin State with over 25,000 tonnes. — NN/EM

OPINION

Successfully initiate rupee/kyat direct payment system

MYANMAR has taken a significant stride towards enhancing bilateral trade by introducing direct payment systems for various currencies. The yuan/kyat and baht/kyat systems were previously established to bolster trade with China and Thailand, facilitating Myanmar's business entities and government trade organizations to secure robust market shares in their relevant partner countries.

Recent discussions between Myanmar and Indian officials have revolved around the initiation of a rupee/kyat direct payment system, aiming to catalyze the trade processes between the two nations. During a recent meeting, the Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar and the Indian Ambassador to Myanmar emphasized the implementation of the rupee/kyat direct payment system to ensure mutual benefits for both countries.

India holds a significant position as Myanmar's fourth-largest export market and sixth-largest import partner among the member countries of the Asian Clearing Union (ACU), which includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Myanmar engages in regular trade processes and border trade with Indian partners. The new payment system is now in operation following the issuance of guidelines for the Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA). This development involves a diplomatic exchange between the Indian Embassy and the Road and Belt Initiative, allowing businesspersons to apply for the new payment and clearance through banking services using the rupee. Punjab National Bank, CB Bank, and UAB Bank have been granted permission to oversee rupee/kyat payments and operate the Rupee/Kyat Trade Settlement Mechanism. The success of this initiative relies not only on the management efforts of both governments but also on the trade techniques and endeavours of businesspersons, contributing to the promotion of trade value.

The introduction of this new system is expected to streamline Myanmar's border trade camps, ensuring a smooth process of border trade measures with India to boost the businesses of residents and the Myanmar Government.

As a result, Myanmar's business entities can now conduct their export and import activities seamlessly with three neighbouring countries — India, China, and Thailand — using direct payments based on the respective currencies. This is particularly advantageous for trade through land borders and maritime routes. Moreover, Myanmar has a unique opportunity to officially export black beans, pigeon peas, and green grams to India until the 2025-2026 financial year, given India's status as a major bean market for Myanmar. Overall, the newly approved rupee/kyat direct payment system presents a promising avenue for fostering trade relationships and economic growth.

COVID-19 vaccination or booster during pregnancy protects infants for six months: study

A new study from the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) finds that women who receive an mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine or booster during pregnancy can pass strong protection against symptomatic COVID-19 to their infants for at least six months after birth.

WOMEN who receive an mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccination or booster during pregnancy can provide their infants with strong protection against symptomatic COVID-19 infection for at least six months after birth, according to a new study of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH).

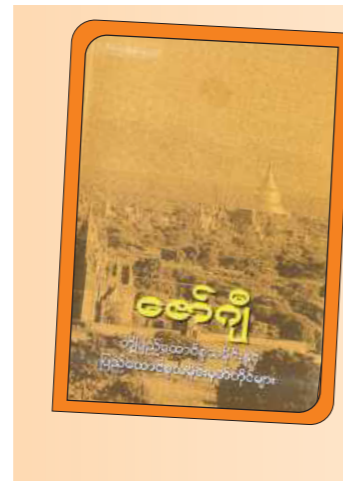
Earlier study revealed that when pregnant volunteers received both doses of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, antibodies induced by the vaccine could be found in their newborns' cord

blood. This suggested that the infants likely had some protection against COVID-19 when they were still too young to receive a vaccine, NIH said in a release on Wednesday. However, researchers did not know how long these antibody levels would last or how well the infants would actually be protected. In this study, NIH researchers analyzed data from 475 infants at nine sites across the United States. The infants were evaluated during at least one follow-up visit during their first six months after birth.

Based on blood samples from the infants, the researchers found that newborns with high antibody levels at birth also had greater protection from COVID-19 infection during their first six months.

These findings, which were published in Pediatrics, reinforce the importance of receiving both a COVID-19 vaccine and booster during pregnancy to ensure that infants are born with robust protection that lasts until they are old enough to be vaccinated, said NIH.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Book Title	- Doe Pyidaungzu Thamaing Hnint Pyidaungzu Thamaing Hmattaing Myar
Writer	- Saya Zawgyi
Publishing House	- Seikku Cho Cho
Publication Date	- November 2023 (1 st Edition)
Price	- K6,000

Doe Pyidaungzu Thamaing Hnint Pyidaungzu Thamaing Hmattaing Myar

By Saya Zawgyi

THIS is a combination of the two school textbooks titled "Doe Pyidaungzu Thamaing" and "Pyidaungzu Thamaing Hmattaing Myar", with the former published in 1956 and the latter in 1957. Seikku Cho Cho published the combined book. The author is U Thein Han (Zawgyi), who holds a Bachelor's Degree. This book will enable the readers to be aware of how the country of Myanmar was mobilized, how the people of Myanmar Naing Ngan have lived throughout the history of Myanmar, how they have co-existed peacefully, shar-

ing joys and sorrows through weals and woes and sunshine and rain and ultimately, how the neighbouring countries have interfered in our internal affairs, causing the people to go against each other, resulting in the near disintegration of the country. The readers can learn a lesson that countries can disintegrate when political incitement and cultural infiltration sway their fellow citizens. Additionally, this book provides the biographies of the famous leaders.

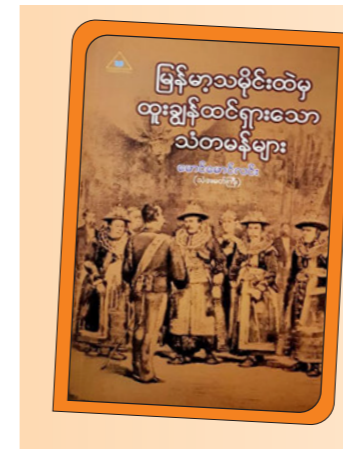
Doe Pyidaungzu Thamaing (The History of Our Union) is

composed of 27 episodes dealing with the neighbouring countries, the beginning of Myanmar, building the nation, the arrival of Buddhism and Buddhist Culture; the Kingdom of Thaton and the Kingdom of Sri Ksetra the Kingdom of Bagan; King Anawrahta and Reverend Araham; King Kyansittha and Reverend Araham; the Affairs of Mons, Shans and Bamars; King Bayintnaung; Myanmar Versus Europe; King Ah-Nauk Phet Lun and the Portuguese colonialists; the troika of the Dutch, the French and the British; U Aung Zeya Versus U

Aung Hla; the Konbaung Dynasty; Burma Versus the World; the two Anglo-Burmese Wars; King Mindon; the outlooks of Myanmar Ministers in the era of King Mindon; The British Occupation; the Independence Struggle; and the independent Republic of the Union of Myanmar among other things.

Pyidaungzu Thamaing Hmattaing Myar includes seven episodes dealing with Ancient Asian Culture, the Commencement of Myanmar Culture, the Glory of Bagan, the Rivalry among the Royalities, the kings who have mobilized the country of Myanmar, Myanmar Versus the World, and the Contemporary History of Myanmar.

This book has used the Christian Era, and so, if the readers want to know the Myanma Era equivalent, 638 years is to be subtracted from the Christian Era. Concerning the Pyu Era and the Bagan Era, Saya Zawgyi has referred to Professor G H Luce, who has written the Ancient Kingdom of Myanmar. True, the historical facts are only the secondary ones because the writer has had to refer to an alien historian. Nevertheless, the writer has welcomed the critics to argue against Professor Luce's opinion.



Book Title	- Myanmar Thamaing Htai Ga Htoo Chun Htin Shar Thaw Thantaman Myar
Writer	- Maung Maung Linn (Ambassador)
Publishing House	- SMART Group of Companies
Publication Date	- December 2023 [1 st Edition]
Price	- K5,500

Myanmar Thamaing Htai Ga Htoo Chun Htin Shar Thaw Thantaman Myar

THIS book is a compilation of the articles carried on the pages of the Myanmar Alinn Daily, the state-owned Myanmar version newspaper. Nevertheless, there are also articles written by Sayagyi Dr Khin Maung Nyunt. His articles are concerned with the diplomats in the days of Myanmar monarchs. The writer of this book has added the facts obtained from state-owned newspapers regarding the diplomats who performed their missions during the period of Japanese occupation, the pre-independence and post-independence periods.

The writer said that diplomats in the 21st century have to

study a lot because many events in the world are taking place at a high speed. Additionally, things are getting more complicated with the fast development of technology. All these things have called on the diplomats to keep themselves abreast of the changing technology and of the changing circumstances. In his attempt to seek a solution to this problem the diplomats are facing, the writer of this book has consulted with AI regarding the requirements for a person to become an outstanding diplomat.

This book has two parts. Part 1 is about the definitions of the diplomats and their diplomat-

ic affairs, Myanmar diplomacy in the earliest period, the basic principles of modern diplomacy, the two world wars and the role of diplomacy, nuclear diplomacy, post-cold-war diplomacy, diplomacy in the 21st century and the future trend of diplomacy.

Part 2 is concerned with the role played by the diplomats and envoys throughout the history of Myanmar, commencing from the Pyu Era. The biographies of the outstanding diplomats are vividly written. Among the exceptional diplomats and envoys he has written about, the most worth mentioning are a Pyu Prince known as Thu Nanda, the two

ministers called Na Kya Konsa and Maha Thena in AD 801 who led a 35-member delegation to China in the era of Tang Dynasty. Additionally, the readers can learn about the diplomatic skills of Shin Disapamauk during the reign of King Nara Thiha Pa Tay. He displayed his excellent diplomacy during his visit to Kublai Khan. Minister Satu Yinga Bala has also demonstrated the art of diplomacy in the Pinya Era, Wunzin Pho Yazar, Minister U Paw Oo in the era of King Maha Thiha Thura of Konbaung Dynasty, Myawady Mingyi U Sa, Kinwun Mingyi U Kaung, Yawmingyi U Pho Hlaing, Ambassador U Cheint and Ambassador U Myu.

As for the war period and the post-independence period, the writer has given credit to Dr Thein Maung, Sir Maung Gyi, U Soe Nyunt, U Pe Khin, U Myint Thein, U Win, U Nyunt and U Thant for their excellent performance. SMART Group of Companies publishes this book. What appeals to me most is the sincerity of the writer, who is very daring in his confession that should there be any discrepancies and fallacies in his book, he is the one and only person to blame. The blame is on him as a compiler.

“ဆင်ခြေဖိုး”
ဇော်ထိန်

မီးလင်းတဲ့ လက်ဖက်ရည်ဆိုင်ကို ထွက်လာခဲ့ကြတာပေါ့။

အိမ်တွေကတော့ အမှောင်ထဲမှာ ကျန်ခဲ့ပြီ။

ခြောက်သွေ့မှုဟာ ငါတို့အပေါ်ကို ညီညီညာညာ ကျရောက်လို့။

ငြီးငွေ့မှုကိုတော့ အဝင်မဆိုးအောင် အချိုရည်ရောပြီး မျှောချခဲ့ကြ။

ရော့သံသီချင်းတွေဆိုရင်း ငိုခဲ့ကြတယ် ဟစ်ဟော့ပဲတွေဆိုရင်း ရယ်ခဲ့ကြတယ် ငါတို့ဖွဲ့သီကြ။ ငြီးတော့ ငါတို့ ပြန်အန်ထုတ်ပစ်ကြ။


လွမ်းပဲ လွမ်းနေရ။

‘ညဟာ ညထက် ပိုပြီးမှောင်လာခဲ့ပြီလေ’

အိမ်လား အိမ်မပြန်ချင်သေးလည်း အိမ်ကိုပဲ ပြန်ခဲ့ကြရတယ်။

The original poem was first published in the March 2004 issue of Sataing Thit (New Style) magazine.

Suburb
By Zaw Htein,
Translated by Myint Zan



We departed for the teashop with lights:
The houses are left in the darkness
aridness has fallen uniformly upon us as for weariness
we have to mix it with liquid sweetener and swallowed it so that the mind would not be too disturbed
we wept as we sang rock songs
we laughed as we sang hip-hop
we composed and sang
and then we expunged them out again

Oh, such nostalgia!
'ah, the night has become darker than the night.'

Home?
even if we do not want to go home yet
we still have to return home

Love Angel

Chit Ko Pe

When in joy and pleasure, I'm with you, and we are.

When in sorrow and distress, I'm alone and myself.

Let it be my hurt and pain. You're above my self-being.

I don't mind sacrificing my life, if it were only for your sake.



မေတ္တာရောင်
ချစ်ကိုပေ

အေးအတွဲ ပူမွေတူး သုအေး အတွဲသာ ဒုက္ခပူ မမျှပါ။

ကိုယ်ကျိုး မငဲ့ညှာ မေတ္တာဝေ နွေးထွေး။

အရေးကြုံ သူ့အခက်မှာ အသက်ပင် ထိုးပုံအပ်မယ် ပေးဆပ်မနွေး။ ။



NATIONAL Entertainment

Sithu Tin Tin Mya

GREAT singer Sithu (Daw) Tin Tin Mya talked about her entertaining event only for her friends and also said, "Ta Kyawt Hna Kyawt song is the very first one in my life. Ba Ba U Ko Ko recorded and Ko Win Oo composed it. It is one of my milestones."



May Mie Ko Ko

ACTRESS May Mie Ko Ko told her fans that they can watch the ten movies and series she starred in in 2024. She also committed to try for her fans and also expressed her gratitude to Forever Group.



Celebrity Brief

MRTV-4 to broadcast "Poe" Myanmar series

THE MRTV-4 channel will broadcast the "Poe" Myanmar series at 7 pm from Monday to Friday starting from 22 February, according to actor Zin Myo.

The novel is by Maung Nge Yin Thway, and the script is by Aye Moh Moh Aung and San Yu Maw. Director Hin Kyaw directs it.

"It is about the life of a youth who has a deep passion for arts and can grab success despite the challenges and hardships. It is a drama depicting the lifestyle," said Zin Myo. The artistes starred in that series are Han Htoo Zan, Phyo Yaza Naing, Aye Myat Noe San, Mable, Loon Chel, Academy May Thinzar Oo, Zin Myo, Kyaw Zaw Hein and others. — ASH/KTZH



Artistes of "Poe" Myanmar series.



Aung Ko Latt

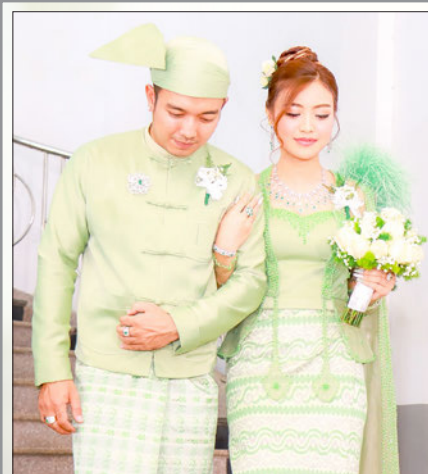
REGARDING rapper Je Me, singer and director (U) Aung Ko Latt, who is now making plots and scripts, said my father is an artist. Even though we painted, we had no knowledge of oil colour painting. But I am still handing over the art skills to my son.

Aung Ko Latt made a movie, "Natt", that depicts the traditional culture of Myanmar. The artistes in that movie are Naing Nine, Phyo Ngwe Soe, Khara, Eindra Kyaw Zin, Melody, Khin Thazin and Hannay Lwin Lwin.



Saw Khu Hser

COMPOSER Saw Khu Hser said the finance regarding the copyright issue for songs is not a significant fact, but only the copyrights. Those in international countries who can compose many songs like us will become rich people. A foreigner I met composed only three songs, and he gains benefits when others make cover songs or make a copy. Many composers face hardships in our country. Some of them passed away. The copyrights can support their family, and we will also be happy with that.



Nay Ye

Nay Ye, son of artist Khin Hlaing, celebrated his wedding reception with his bride, Ma Chaw Su Yadana Khin, at Mingun Tipitaka Monastery in Yangon on 14 February. Khin Hlaing said, "The marriage is linked with fate. We cannot predict anything, and it depends on the person. If he (his son) offers true loving kindness, everything will be OK. My wife chose me even though I had to live in Kyimyindine. But, she can reap good benefits for that."



Moe Kyaw (guitar)

THE Phoenix band and Khine Moe Pyae (Khin Htoo, Moe Kyaw and Yar Pyae), a memorable talk show in commemoration of the 40th death anniversary of famous composer and lead guitarist Moe Kyaw, will be organized at Imperial Garden in Yangon on 18 February. The event is brought by "Studio Café Talk". — Htun Htun/KTZH

Jailed Thai ex-PM Thaksin to be freed Sunday: PM

Thaksin, who returned from exile six months ago, was initially sentenced to eight years but had it reduced to one year. Details of his release, including possible monitoring and travel restrictions, are yet to be confirmed.



Former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra will be released from prison on Sunday, the country's current premier has said. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

JAILED former Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra will be freed on Sunday, the kingdom's prime minister has said, just six months after returning from 15 years of self-imposed

exile.

The controversial billionaire, twice elected prime minister and ousted in a 2006 military coup, was jailed for eight years on graft and abuse-of-power

charges upon his return to Thailand in August, but within days had his sentence cut to one year by King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

Speaking to reporters on Saturday before boarding a flight, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said Thaksin's release would be "on the 18th" and handled "according to the rule of law".

The exact details of Thaksin's release are not clear, but he may be subject to monitoring — possibly with an ankle tag — and restrictions on his right to travel.

It comes after Justice Minister Tawee Sodson said earlier this week that Thaksin, 74, would be among 930 prisoners granted early release. — AFP

Tens of thousands protest Hungary child abuse pardon

TENS of thousands protested Friday in central Budapest against a presidential pardon in a child abuse case that is becoming the biggest political crisis Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has faced since his return to power in 2010.

Meanwhile another prominent Hungarian figure resigned, following President Katalin Novák and former justice minister Judit Varga — who both stepped down on Saturday.

Calvinist Bishop Zoltan Balog announced his resig-

nation Friday as the head of Hungary's largest Protestant church after coming under pressure for supporting Novák's pardoning of the accomplice of the director of a children's home convicted of abusing kids and adolescents in his care. — AFP



A scandal over a presidential pardon for an accomplice in a child sexual abuse case is proving to be the biggest political crisis Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has faced since his return to power in 2010. **PHOTO: AFP**

Texas to build military base on Mexico border, in new swipe at Biden

Governor Greg Abbott revealed the initiative in Eagle Pass, a town on the Rio Grande, aiming to accommodate up to 2,300 soldiers by April.

TEXAS plans to construct a military base along the border with Mexico, the state's Republican governor announced Friday, as his election-year tug-of-war with the White House over migration continues to broil.

A wave of illegal border crossings in recent months has made migration a key talking point in the US presidential election campaign once again, with Republicans seeking to pin blame for the record-high numbers entirely on Democratic President Joe Biden.

Governor Greg Abbott made

the announcement of the new base in the flashpoint border town of Eagle Pass, where he has amassed national guard troops from Texas and other Republican-led states to erect razor wire and other barriers in a bid to block migrants from entering the country.

The town lies along the Rio Grande, the river that forms the border. The facility built on the site will be able to accommodate some 300 soldiers by April — and will have the ability to expand to house up to 2,300, Abbott said.

— AFP



Texas National Guard members stand behind a fence at Shelby Park on 3 February 2024 in Eagle Pass, Texas. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

'Toxic' powder sent to official Brussels buildings

LETTERS containing a toxic powder were sent to at least three government buildings in Brussels, Belgian prosecutors said Friday, adding that no injuries were reported.

Police and fire services were scrambled after the letters were found at the State Justice Building, the nearby Justice Minister's office and the Palace of Justice building a few kilometres away.

"People who came into contact with the powder were isolated and examined. Nobody was injured," the public prosecutor's office said in a statement.

A preliminary investigation identified the powder as Brucine — a toxic alkaloid closely related to the even more toxic Strychnine, which is sometimes used as a pesticide.

"This substance is actually only dangerous when ingested. Contact with the skin poses no danger," prosecutors added.

An intense probe was launched to hunt the senders of the envelopes, but prosecutors added that the incident was not connected to a number of drug-related shootings which put the city on edge this week. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

S Korean govt sees signs of slowing consumption, construction investment

While manufacturing and exports have driven recovery, private consumption and construction remain sluggish.

THE South Korean government saw signs of a slowdown in consumption and construction investment in its economic report Friday.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance said in its monthly report, called Green Book, that the South Korean economy had been on a recovery track centred on manufacturing production and export amid the slowing inflation. The ministry, however, noted that

the pace of recovery would vary by economic sector due to the slumping private consumption and the sluggish construction investment.

It cautioned that uncertainties remained such as geopolitical risks in Europe and the Middle East and the possibility of supply chain disruption despite the growing expectations for the global economy's soft landing and the improved IT industry.



South Korea's automotive export grew for the 17th straight month in November, due to robust demand for eco-friendly vehicles. Visitors view a car during the 2019 edition of Seoul Motor Show in Goyang, South Korea, 2 April 2019. **PHOTO: WANG JINGQIANG/XINHUA/FILE**

The country's export jumped 18.0 per cent in January from a year earlier, maintaining an upward trend for the fourth consecutive month.

Industrial production added 0.3 per cent in December compared to the previous month, but construction investment diminished 2.7 per cent.

Retail sale decreased 0.8 per cent in December on a monthly basis, but facility investment increased 5.5 per cent. The number of jobs expanded 380,000 in January from a year earlier, while jobless rate added 0.1 percentage point to 3.7 per cent. — Xinhua

World Bank endorses new Afghanistan approach which could unlock \$300 mln

THE World Bank's executive board endorsed a new approach to its relationship with the people of Afghanistan Thursday under which new funds of around \$300 million could be made available, outside the control of the Taliban authorities.

The Bank's new engage-

ment with Afghanistan, dubbed "Approach 3.0", will also revive a regional infrastructure project that was paused after the Taliban took control of the South Asian country in August 2021, the Bank announced in a statement.

Under the approach, World

Bank's lending arm for some of the world's poorest countries, known as the International Development Association (IDA), will make available around \$300 million over the next 15 months, subject to further board approval, a spokesperson told AFP. — AFP



The World Bank has approved \$300 million in new funding for Afghanistan. **PHOTO: AFP**

Malaysia's economy eases to 3.7% in 2023 amid global challenges

THE Malaysian Central Bank announced Friday that Malaysia's economy eased to 3.7 per cent in 2023 from 8.7 per cent in 2022, amid global trade challenges.

Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) said in a statement

that the growth moderated amid a challenging external environment, which was due mainly to slower global trade, the global tech downcycle, geopolitical tensions and tighter monetary policies.

On the domestic front, it

said that despite the lapse of large policy support provided as the economy started to open up in 2022, the continued recovery in economic activity and labor market conditions supported growth in 2023. — Xinhua

EU watchdog urged to reject Meta 'pay for privacy' scheme

The European Data Protection Board (EDPB) will soon decide if this violates data privacy laws.

CIVIL rights groups on Friday called on an EU watchdog to rule against Facebook owner Meta's scheme to let Europeans pay to opt out of data tracking, which they say violates EU law.

Since November 2023, Facebook and Instagram users in Europe have been able to buy subscriptions, which mean the platforms stop using their data for targeted advertising.

The EU regulator, the European Data Protection Board (EDPB), is due to decide shortly on whether a system like Meta's violates the bloc's data privacy laws.

Meta argues the subscriptions are a way to comply with the European Union's strict rules after losing a string of legal battles with Brussels.

Privacy activists argue this is a breach of consumer law, deeming it an unfair and aggressive practice.

"We urge the EDPB to issue a decision on the subject that aligns with the Fundamental Right to Data Protection," 28 civil rights organizations including Austrian privacy group NOYB and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, said in a letter. — AFP



Meta argues it's a way to comply with EU rules, but privacy activists see it as unfair and aggressive. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

US CDC warns of E coli outbreak linked to raw milk cheese

E coli is a large and diverse group of bacteria. Although most strains of E coli are harmless, others can make people sick.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday warned of E coli outbreak linked to raw milk cheese.

Ten people infected with the outbreak strain of E coli have been reported from four US states. Four people have been hospitalized and one person developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, which is a serious condition that can cause kidney

failure, according to CDC.

Of the six people who remembered the details of the raw milk cheese they ate, all reported eating raw cheddar cheese of Raw Farm brand. The company has agreed to recall products.

E coli is a large and diverse group of bacteria. Although most strains of E coli are harmless, others can make people sick.

Some kinds of E coli can cause diarrhea, while others cause urinary tract infections, respiratory illness and pneumonia, and other illnesses, according to CDC. — Xinhua



Photo taken on 23 October 2018 shows cheese products displayed at a grocery store in Madison, Wisconsin, the United States. **PHOTO: WANG PING/XINHUA**

Hong Kong trade with US remains strong: official

HONG Kong's trade relations with the United States remain strong despite geopolitical tensions and economic headwinds, said Maisie Ho, director of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in New York (HKETONY), here on Thursday.

"Our long-standing bilateral trade relations with the United States remain strong despite geopolitical tensions and economic headwinds.

The United States is Hong Kong's third-largest trading partner, whereas Hong Kong is the second-largest trading partner economy with which the United States enjoys trade sur-

plus," said Ho at HKETONY's spring reception to celebrate the Year of the Dragon.

At last count, there are close to 1,300 US firms in Hong Kong, with about half of them having a regional scope, she said.

"Our office will continue to work towards nurturing and rekindling old and new relationships, and strive for positive collaborations and understandings to foster a bond that transcends borders," said Ho.

Ho also remarked on the series of remarkable achievements and collaborations between New York and Hong Kong in the past year. — Xinhua

Singapore gives households and companies tax relief

Singapore announced a relief package on Friday to help individuals cope with the high cost of living, including utility bill rebates.

SINGAPORE unveiled on Friday a relief package for individuals, including rebates for utility bills to help ease the high cost of living in the city-state.

The announcement was made during the 2024 national budget statement coming ahead of general elections due next year.

The polls are set to mark a major political transition, with a younger crop of leaders set to lead the Southeast Asian economic powerhouse.

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Lawrence Wong presented the wide-ranging budget in parliament that earmarked Sg\$3.2 billion (\$2.4 billion) to support households and companies grappling with inflation. A personal income tax rebate of 50 per cent capped at Sg\$200 for the last tax year, will be granted, while families will also receive cash and rebates



Shoppers pass by a luxury retail store along Orchard road in Singapore. **PHOTO: ROSLAN RAHMAN/AFP**

for their utility bills.

"These are concrete ways to help Singaporeans tackle cost of living pressures," said Wong, who is expected to succeed Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong before general elections due by November 2025.

"Let me assure everyone we will always have your

backs," he said. Companies will also enjoy a 50 per cent corporate income tax rebate, capped at Sg\$40,000, as part of a package to help businesses.

"Many companies have seen increases in their wage bills, rental and utilities, amongst others," said Wong, 53. — AFP

London Fashion Week blends tweed and Y2K amid economic gloom

FROM tweed to the iconic low-rise jeans of the early 2000s, London Fashion Week unveiled a spectrum of styles on Friday, kicking off its 40th season which has been dimmed by the UK's gloomy economy.

Some 60 designers, ranging from rising talents to renowned brands like Burberry, will show their new designs over five days, hoping to draw the interest of buyers and fashion influencers. Irish-American

designer Paul Costelloe's show, titled "Once upon a Time" — a reference to the iconic 1984 film "Once Upon a Time in America" — showcased wide-belted coats in ecru, anthracite and checkered tweed. — AFP



Elsewhere, Turkish designer Bora Aksu delivered a gloomier mood. **PHOTO: AFP**

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

Kamboj: India supports comprehensive reform of UNSC across all five clusters

India's UN Ambassador, Ruchira Kamboj, voiced support for a comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council, advocating for expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories.



Speaking at negotiations in New York, she emphasized the need for inclusivity and equity in shaping the Council's future. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ STAN HONDA/AFP/FILE**

INDIA'S permanent ambassador to the United Nations, Ruchira Kamboj on Saturday highlighted that India supports a comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council across all five clusters, including an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

Kamboj was speaking at the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council Reform in New York on Saturday.

While highlighting the

future vision for the Security Council, she said, "Our reform must be guided, I would say, by a bold vision for a more equitable and inclusive world."

"Comprehensive reform across all clusters under discussion, including an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, is imperative to realizing this vision."

Kamboj further asked the co-chairs whether expanding only in the non-permanent

category would not solve the problem.

"It will, in fact, not reforming one category of the United Nations Security Council at all will widen the difference between permanent and non-permanent members even more, thereby perpetuating inequities instead of removing these, and thereby further entrenching a dispensation that is no longer relevant in the current geopolitical context," she added. — ANI

Trump denounces judge's decision to pay nearly \$355 million, labelling it a "complete sham"

Trump alleged bias in the justice system and accused officials of targeting him unfairly.

FORMER US President Donald Trump on Friday (local time) blasted a ruling by a judge in New York, ordering him and his companies to pay nearly USD 355 in the civil fraud case. He called the decision a "complete and total sham".

In a series of posts on his Truth Social platform after the court's decision, Trump said the justice system in New York State and US as a whole is under assault by "partisan, deluded, biased Judges and Prosecutors".

"The Justice System in New York State, and America as a

whole, is under assault by partisan, deluded, biased Judges and Prosecutors. Racist, Corrupt AG Tish James has been obsessed with "Getting Trump" for years, and used Crooked New York State Judge Engoron to get an illegal, unAmerican judgment against me, my family, and my tremendous business. I helped New York City during its worst of times, and now, while it is overrun with Violent Biden Migrant Crime, the Radicals are doing all they can to kick me out," Trump posted on Truth Social platform. — ANI



Former US President Donald Trump sits in New York State Supreme Court during the civil fraud trial against the Trump Organization, in New York City on 11 January 2024. **PHOTO: CHARLY TRIBALLEAU / AFP**

THE MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

Israel says will coordinate with Egypt before Rafah offensive

ISRAEL will coordinate with Egypt before launching any military offensive in the southern Gaza border city Rafah, the Israeli foreign minister pledged Friday. "We will operate in Rafah after we coordinate with Egypt," Israel Katz told journalists on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, where 180 dignitaries have gathered to discuss conflicts around the globe.

"Egypt is our ally, we have peace agreements with Egypt,

and we will operate in a way that does not hurt the Egyptian interests," he said. Fears had been growing for the hundreds of thousands of people who have fled the north of Gaza to Rafah as Israeli troops advanced into the territory to wage war on Hamas.

But Israel is now planning a major operation in the overcrowded city. With the border to Egypt closed, nearly 1.5 million Palestinians are essentially trapped there. — AFP

Xinjiang braces for more passenger train suspensions amid extreme weather

DUE to extreme weather conditions in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, 54 scheduled passenger

trains are set to be suspended on Saturday, according to the China Railway Urumqi Group Co., Ltd.

From Friday to Sunday, many places in Xinjiang have experienced or will be affected by blizzards, strong winds and cold waves, according to the region's meteorological observatory.

On Friday, 40 scheduled passenger trains were suspended to ensure people's safety. Additional precautionary measures such as temporarily halting some passenger trains and reducing train speeds have been implemented, according to the China Railway Urumqi Group Co., Ltd. — Xinhua



An aerial drone photo taken on 17 January 2024 shows a view of Hemu Village after snow in Altay Prefecture, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. **PHOTO: LI XIANG/XINHUA**

SPORTS

Defending champion VUC wins 13 consecutive games in MFF Futsal League 1

THE Week-13 match of the MFF Futsal League1 continued on 17 February at the MFF Futsal Gymnasium in Thuwunna Football Stadium, Yangon.

Defending champion VUC is leading the standing table with a 13-game winning streak. This week, the top-ranked VUC team and the second-placed MIU team met, and the VUC team won by 6:2. The MIU team lost both rounds to the VUC team this season, losing by a goal.

MIU team has been struggling to get a good result every time they meet the VUC team since many local players have been suspended. The VUC team continues to lead with a 13-game winning streak and is in an excellent position to take first place with five games remaining.

In the other matches, M2K beat Futsal Lover FC 3-2, Winner Soccer won over Futsal-19 3-1 while Generations FC smashed Lin Latt FC 5-3, and Dream Team trounced Letwe Thondra 9-2.

After the Week-13 matches, VUC garnered 39 points, leading the standing table, while MIU scored 28 points for second place. The Letwe Thondra team secured only seven points and sitting at the bottom position. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL



The Myanmar futsal players compete in the Week-13 match of the MFF Futsal League1. PHOTO: MFF

Ailing Woods pulls out of Genesis Invitational in 2nd round

GOLF superstar Tiger Woods withdrew in the second round of the Genesis Invitational because of illness on Friday in the latest setback for the 15-time major champion.

The US PGA Tour said Woods pulled out after hitting his tee shot at the seventh hole because of illness, with no immediate word on the nature or severity of the trouble. Woods buried his face in his hands as he was ferried from the course in a golf cart, his first official PGA Tour event since he withdrew from the rain-delayed third round of the Masters last April. Two weeks later Woods had ankle surgery to address lingering pain in his right foot from injuries suffered in a 2021 car crash.

Woods has played only nine official events in the last four seasons. He has



Golf superstar Tiger Woods speaks with a rules official after withdrawing from the Genesis Invitational because of illness. PHOTO: AFP

Bayern at fault for Kane's form dip says coach Tuchel



Bayern Munich's Harry Kane. PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich coach Thomas Tuchel admitted that his team must do better to involve an "unsatisfied" Harry Kane in games as he faces a dip in form.

BAYERN Munich coach Thomas Tuchel said Saturday his side needed to do more to bring an "unsatisfied" Harry Kane into games amid a dip in form. Kane has not registered a shot on target for two matches, both of which Bayern lost. Bayern, who travel to Bochum on Sunday, have not lost three matches in a row since 2015.

"It's unbelievable how well he can score in training and how he pushes on the team — which is absolutely world-class — and how little we have found him in games.

"I have seldom experienced such a difference in what a player has been able to bring on the pitch in training and on the pitch in actual games".

Tuchel said he has not given the

experienced striker advice, saying "Harry doesn't need me. He can take care of himself".

"He knows what he's doing and he's not satisfied with the way he's been implemented in games and we're not satisfied with the way things have been going".

Kane has 24 league goals in 21 games so far this season, but drew blanks against Bayer Leverkusen and again at Lazio in the Champions League. Tuchel on Saturday recognized the "gloomy" atmosphere around the team but said "we are all committed to turning things around". Bayern, who have won the past 11 Bundesliga titles, sit five points behind Leverkusen with 13 games remaining this season. — AFP

missed the cut twice and withdrawn three times. He said his ankle procedure last year alleviated debilitating pain, but that his banged-up body will never again let him practice and play as he did in his prime. Woods said Thursday that back spasms contributed to a surprising shank at the 18th hole of his one-over par first round. There was no indication that any of the myriad infirmities that he says affect him every round contributed to Friday's withdrawal, but even if his illness is fleeting it has cost him valuable playing time.

The 48-year-old said in December at the unofficial Hero World Challenge that he hoped his various physical problems would allow him to play up to one tournament a month.

After his first competitive round in more than 10 months on Thursday he admitted the jury was still out on whether that plan would pan out and whether it would even allow him to be competitive.

"I'm hoping that's the case, hoping that I play that much," Woods said. "As far as the physical ups and downs, that's just part of my body, that's part of what it is.

"That's all right, I accept it and accept the challenges," he said.

Woods acknowledged on Thursday that he lacked "sharpness". — AFP

S Korea's Gangwon province to push for 4-day workweek

South Korea's Gangwon province aims to implement a four-day workweek to boost leisure time amid a declining population, with Governor Kim Jin-tae highlighting its potential to stimulate the local economy and counter population decline.

SOUTH Korea's eastern Gangwon province will push for a four-day workweek that can be a great opportunity as it expands leisure time amid the lower population, the provincial government said Friday.

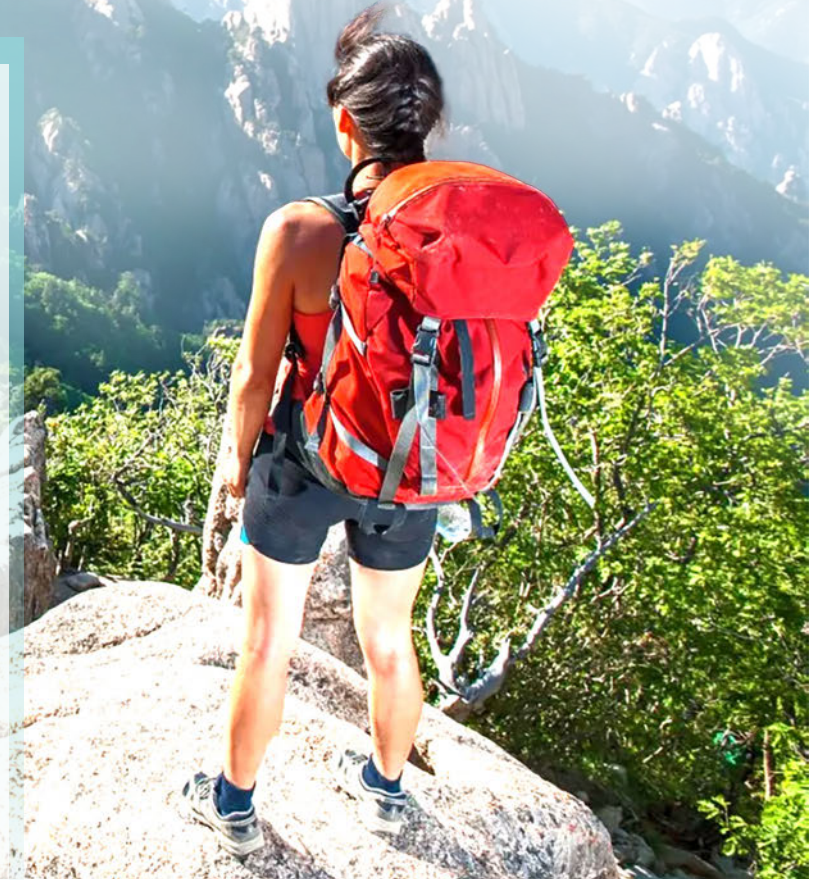
"The recently discussed four-day workweek will be a significant opportunity for the province," Governor Kim Jin-tae said earlier this week, announcing plans to study and prepare policies for the introduction of the shorter workweek.

Kim noted that the four-day workweek

will lead to an expansion of leisure time, which can contribute to breaking free from the population decrease and stimulate the local real estate market through an influx of residents and a boom in vacation homes in the province.

The Asian country has struggled with the population decline, caused by the chronically low birth rate and the rapid population ageing.

The country's total fertility rate, or the number of children a woman is expected to bear during life, hit a record low of 0.70 in the third quarter of last year. — Xinhua



A hiker takes in the stunning views of Mt Seorak National Park in Gangwon province. **PHOTO: AFP**

GLOBAL TOURISM RESILIENCE DAY

Sustainable tourism can help Africa utilize natural resources well, create jobs



PHOTO: SPUTNIK

17 February marks the Global Tourism Resilience Day. Its main objective is to highlight the importance of promoting the growth of a resilient tourism industry to effectively handle unforeseen events, "taking into account the vulnerability of the tourism sector to emergencies". The development of the sustainable tourism could help Africa preserve and "utilize well all natural resources", create jobs, Ethiopia's Tourism Ministry Advisor Muhammed Aman told Sputnik Africa.

"We have a huge variety and diversified natural resources. Really, if we develop sustainable tourism, we can have really preserved, utilize well all natural resources ... It is a source of income, this source is an opportunity for job creation. In Africa, we have a huge manpower, which is young [people], so sustainable tourism also gives a chance to job creation, small micro enterprises at the local level," the official said. — SPUTNIK

Research finds school uniform policies linked to students getting less exercise

Primary school-aged girls face a wider activity gap compared to boys in uniform-mandated countries, potentially due to decreased opportunities for active play during school hours and discomfort in certain clothing types like skirts or dresses.

NEW research reveals that school uniform policies may be preventing young people, particularly primary school-aged girls, from participating in physical activity.

The University of Cambridge

study used data about the physical activity participation of more than a million five-to-17-year-olds internationally. It found that in countries where a majority of schools require students to wear uniforms, fewer

young people tend to meet the 60 minutes of physical activity per day recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Regardless of uniform policies, across most countries fewer girls than boys reach those recommended exercise levels. Among primary school students, however, the difference in activity between girls and boys was found to be wider in countries where most schools mandated uniforms. The same result was not found in secondary school-aged students.

The authors suggest that this could be explained by the fact that younger children get more incidental exercise throughout the school day than older students; for example, through running, climbing and various other forms of active play at break and lunchtimes. — ANI



Countries with widespread uniform mandates show lower rates of meeting WHO's recommended 60 minutes of daily exercise. **PHOTO: UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**