

# The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla pay homage to the Presiding Patron of Thiladhamma Kontha Tawya Monastery, Wasipeik Sayadaw and members of the Sangha at the event yesterday in Tachilek, Shan State (East).

## Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla pay homage to remains of Naga Hnakaung Sayadaw

**P**residing Patron of Naga Hnakaung Monastery of Tachilek in Shan State (East) Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dr Bhaddanta Dhammasiri passed away at 00:02 am on 8 February 2024, Thursday.

The remains of the Sayadaw are kept at Naga Hnakaung Monastery. Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, accompanied by Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and his wife, senior military officers of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and their wives, the commander of Triangle Command and officials, paid homage to the remains of the Sayadaw yesterday afternoon.

After paying homage to the Presiding

Patron of Thiladhamma Kontha Tawya Monastery, Wasipeik Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kovida, and members of the Sangha, the Senior General supplicated the plans for holding the final rites ceremony. The Senior General instructed officials to hold the final rites on a grand scale and arrange transport, accommodation, food and water supply for monks, nuns and people for their convenience, as the Sayadaw is one of the leading Sayadaws of the nation.

The Senior General and his wife donated cash to the fund for holding the final rites to the Sayadaws. The Senior General, wife and party paid homage to the remains of Sayadaw.

The Sayadaw-to-be was born to U Haung and Daw Nang Pin on Wednesday's 9<sup>th</sup> Waxing of Nattaw 1290 ME, in Yangkein Village of Kengtung Township in Shan State (East). On the full moon

of Tabaung 1299 ME, he was novitiated under Kengyin Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Dhammaramsi of Kengtung and ordained on the 13<sup>th</sup> Waxing of Kason 1310 ME. From age 10, the novice learned primary education and pursued Pariyatti literature from Kengyin Sayadaw to complete the Mula Dhammacariya examination in the Gon Shan language in 1320 ME.

With four branches, the Sayadaw established the Naga Hnakaung Buddhist Learning Centre in 1357 ME. These centres gave teaching and held basic primary, junior, middle and senior Buddhism examinations in the Gon Shan language in accord with the government's curriculum for Shan monks and novices 50 times. Starting from 1355 ME, the Sayadaw participated in printing Tri Pitaka treatises and translated treatises into Gon Shan

language and supervised carving inscriptions on Tri Pitaka treatises on some 2,500 stone plaques to be kept on the platform of Tachilek Shwedagon Pagoda. Moreover, the Sayadaw served missionary and public welfare measures by donating the land plots for basic education buildings in Tachilek, establishing a home for the aged and an orphanage with necessary aid, donating the land plot for the district hospital and building necessary buildings in his long lifespan. The government conferred the Agga Maha Pandita title to the Sayadaw in 1992, the Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja title in 2001, the Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika title in 2005 and Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru title in 2021 in addition to religious titles conferred by Thailand. The Sayadaw passed away at age 96 and Vasa 77. — MNA/TTA

### NATIONAL

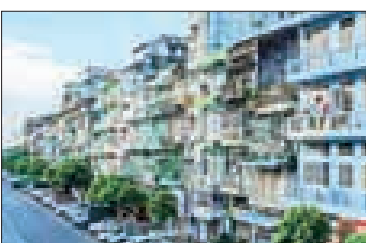
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Korea Science & Technology University offers free gemology course for Myanmar citizens

### BUSINESS

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Housing prices soaring in downtown Yangon

### NATIONAL

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Parahita group assists Myanmar worker injured in Malaysian accident

# 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

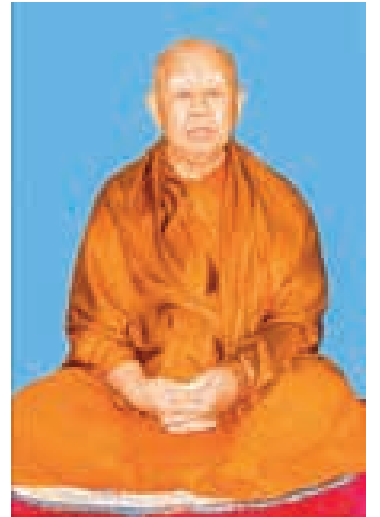
## Mottos of 77<sup>th</sup> Union Day 2024

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

## State Ovadacariya Presiding Patron of Naga Hnakaung Monastery, Dr Bhaddanta Dhammasiri, passes away

PRESIDING Patron of Naga Hnakaung Monastery in Samseng Ward (A), Tachilek, Shan State (East), State Ovadacariya Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dr Bhadd-

anta Dhammasiri, aged 96, Vasa 77, passed away at 00:02 am on 8 February, 14<sup>th</sup> Waning of Pyatho 1385 Myanmar Era, according to the Department of Religious Affairs. — MNA/TTA



### Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council

#### Order No 19/2024

14<sup>th</sup> Waning of Pyatho 1385 ME  
8<sup>th</sup> February 2024

#### Appointment and Duty Assignment of Judge of Bago Region High Court

THE State Administration Council has appointed and assigned Daw Khin Ohn Tint to the duties of Judge of the Bago Region High Court under Section 419 of the Constitution.

By order,

Aung Lin Dwe  
Lieutenant-General  
Secretary

## Myanmar and India: 83 honoured with 2024 International Buddha Peace Award



Myanmar Ambassador to India U Moe Kyaw Aung and Indian Deputy Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Mr Ramdas Athawale igniting candles to open the ceremony.

THE International Buddha Peace Award 2024 ceremony, organized by the Maitry Peace Foundation, was held on 5 February at the Myanmar Embassy in New Delhi,

India, and 83 those worthy of honour from the Myanmar and Indian communities were honoured with awards, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ceremony was opened by Myanmar Ambassador to India U Moe Kyaw Aung and Indian Deputy Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Mr Ramdas Athawale by lighting candles before giving their opening remarks.

At the ceremony, 83 people who are striving to excel in building peace as well as engaging in social welfare activities for the sake of humanitarian affairs and equal development efforts in line with the teachings of the Lord Buddha were awarded by the Myanmar Ambassador and Indian Deputy Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment. The Myanmar Embassy to India hosted a vegetarian dinner for the attendees. — ASH/TH

## Notice for road users

THE State flag-hoisting ceremony and dinner event for the 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Union Day will take place at City Hall Square in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. On the full-dress rehearsal day (10 February 2024) and the ceremony (12 February 2024), the traffic in Nay Pyi Taw, Zabuthiri Township, will be closed, starting from the Municipal Guest House traffic lights on the Pyinmana-Taungnyo Road to the traffic lights at the corner of the Thabyaygon Market. Therefore, those driving vehicles on these days can use the route from the Municipal Guest House traffic lights on the Pyinmana-Taungnyo Road to the Shwekyapin traffic lights along Tawwin Yadana Road, and from the intersection of the Thabyaygon Market corner along Padauk Road and heading towards Ayeyawady Road.

Nay Pyi Taw Traffic Enforcement Supervisory Committee

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# NATIONAL

## Students should serve national cause after finishing their degrees: MoI UM

Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn participated in a forum on the “Prevention of Toxic Media” forum and “State Building and Media Role” with the students from universities and colleges in Mandalay at Yadanabon Hall in Mandalay yesterday.

It was attended by Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Myo Aung, departmental officials, Rectors, Pro-Rectors and faculty members of relevant universities and colleges.

Speaking at the event, the Union Minister said the youths have high technological exposure today, and there is also an endless bombardment of news in the technology era. Meanwhile,

some media outlets intentionally create situations to put the country in serious trouble. Fake news and misinformation cause undesirable situations. It should also be considered whether the news is right or wrong without basing it on emotion. Only the emotion can cause delusion.

The Union minister then stated the role of media in highlighting the activities of the government, duties of youths, the primary focus of the Prime Minister on youth sectors, the need for stability and unity in nation-building tasks, urging students to serve national cause after finishing their degrees, and encouraging the students to become reliable youths and treasures of the country.



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn warmly greets student participants of the “Prevention of Toxic Media” forum and “State Building and Media Role” yesterday in Mandalay.

Then, the region’s chief minister talked about the role of media that controls the other three pillars – legislative, executive, and judiciary – as the fourth pillar and the role of university students as the essential human resource in building a nation.

The Union minister and the

chief minister drew lots of five MRTV DTH satellite dishes and 100 DVB T2 Set Top Boxes for the faculty members and students.

A total of 1,090 participants, including rectors, faculty members and students from 12 universities and colleges in Man-

dalay Region, joined the event.

The Union minister headed to the charity food donation event of New Starlight Group of Companies to mark Chinese New Year at Mingala Mandalay Shopping Complex on the same evening and observed the complex areas. — MNA/KTZH

## Yangon circular train experiences surge in passenger number

ACCORDING to U Thaung Htaik, chief superintendent of Yangon Railway Station, the number of passengers using the Yangon circular train has been increasing steadily since the beginning of February.

“Currently, there’s a notable increase in passenger numbers. Before February, we had around 5,000 circular train passengers. Now, that number has risen to approximately

7,000 per day. It’s around 6,500 on weekdays, and at weekends, it reaches about 7,000 per day. Consequently, trains must operate more frequently during rush hours but less frequently during midday,” explained the chief superintendent.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were about 80,000 train commuters daily. Following the pandemic, the number of circular train commuters

decreased, but it has been rising again lately.

Previously, circular trains ran up to 30 times a day, but now the frequency has reduced to 26 times a day. Currently, Yangon’s circular railway is undergoing upgrades, and upon completion, it is expected to transport approximately 240,000 passengers per day using high-speed trains. — ASH/TKO



The glimpse of a circular train at a station in Yangon.

## MSME products, ethnic food show to hail 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Union Day

AS a gesture of hailing the 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Union Day, the MSME Products Show will be staged in conjunction with the traditional food sale in Tabaung Ground near Up-patasanti Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw from 10 to 14 February.

The show will display MSME products from regions and states, domestic products, agricultural machinery and electric vehicles (EVs), and traditional foodstuffs. Moreover, the schedule comprises music entertainment programmes.

As such, MSME products and traditional foodstuffs from regions and states are available in a single place, and visitors can observe the traditions and customs of ethnics. Anyone can visit and buy the products at the show from 8 am to 10 pm. — MNA/TTA

### Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit [www.moi.gov.mm/mal](http://www.moi.gov.mm/mal), [www.moi.gov.mm/km](http://www.moi.gov.mm/km), [www.moi.gov.mm/nlm](http://www.moi.gov.mm/nlm) and [www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper](http://www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper).

News and Periodicals  
Enterprise



# NATIONAL

## Applications open for MIF Research Fellowship Programme 2025



The logo image of the Matsumae International Foundation (MIF) Research Fellowship Programme 2025.

THE Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo has announced that scholarships for the Matsumae International Foundation (MIF) Research Fellowship Programme 2025 are now open for scholars wishing to conduct research in Japan.

Applicants must hold a PhD and be under 49 years

old. Proficiency in English or Japanese is required. Individuals who currently live or have previously lived in Japan are ineligible. Preference will be given to those in natural science, engineering, and medicine who also hold relevant professional positions in their home country.

The scholarship will be

awarded to 15 scholars, with funding available from April 2025 to March 2026. Applications should be submitted to the Matsumae International Foundation (MIF) via email [application@mif-japan.org](mailto:application@mif-japan.org) between 1 April and 30 June.

— TWA/TRKM

## Korea Science & Technology University offers free gemology course for Myanmar citizens

THE Myanmar Embassy in Seoul, Korea, announced on 7 February that Myanmar citizens can enrol in the introductory gemology course at Korea Science and Technology University for free. The course is designed explicitly for Myanmar citizens who are married to Koreans.

It will commence at the end of March or early April (to be confirmed) and run for six months, from 9 am to 5 pm from Monday

through Friday. The Korean Language course will also be provided for free.

Only twenty trainees will be accepted, and the course will proceed only if a minimum of twenty trainees are enrolled. Applicants must be aged between 18 and 34 and submit their application to [schoolarinseoul@gmail.com](mailto:schoolarinseoul@gmail.com) along with a copy of their residence card by 19 March. — MT/TWA/TRKM



The photo shows the lecture time for the basic jewellery course.

## Counter-argument to false information

### Misinformation: some 2,000 war veterans gathered in Nay Pyi Taw for military training in Taungdwingyi

MALICIOUS media spread fake news on social networks, stating that Tatmadaw has gathered some 2,000 war veterans from regions and states to Nay Pyi Taw with a plan to give a two-week military training to them in Taungdwingyi for sending them to the frontlines as reinforcements.

In this regard, a relevant official said that it was misinformation

circulated by malicious media that as monks and pilgrims from all parts of the nation pay homage to the Maravijaya Buddha Image built in the precinct of Buddha Park in Dekkhinathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw, number of those pilgrims consists of war veterans in addition to retired State service personnel who arrived in Nay Pyi Taw for their pilgrimage tours. — MNA/TTA



Screenshot validates false claims.

### Malicious media accuses Tatmadaw of using poisonous gas bomb



Screenshot validates fake reports.

FALSE information that Tatmadaw used poisonous gas bombs in Yanbye Township on 7 February when it launched air strikes circulated on social media pages by malicious media outlets.

“Tatmadaw used no poisonous gas bomb in Yanbye Township or in any battle. Armed insurgents spread such fake news reports when they face considerable casualties in Tatmadaw’s air strikes. — MNA/KTZH

### Fake News Alert: 3 women, including 3 children, shot dead by Tatmadaw

THE malicious media is circulating fake news that Tatmadaw shot three women and three children dead in Shadaw Township of Kayah State on 5 February.

According to a regional security official, there was no movement of Tatmadaw in Shadaw Township on 5 February, and the news claiming that Tatmadaw killed the displaced persons was just fake news. Malicious media outlets are intentionally spreading such fake news reports. — MNA/KTZH



Screenshot validates false information.



# NATIONAL

## Terrorists transport arms, ammunition using philanthropic vehicles

IT was announced that Tatmadaw wiped out KNLA and PDF terrorists that attacked the local battalion on 7 February in Zayetgyi of Htantabin Township in Bago Region.

The Security Forces conducted security measures in Zayetgyi at 6 am yesterday. The terrorists opened fire on security members of 1,200 feet long Myo Soe Bridge, which is built over the Sittoung River along Kywepwe-Zayetgyi road. They exploded the bridge, aiming at disturbing military columns on the way to Zayetgyi at 4:30 am on 7 February, and they also attacked a regional base in Zayetgyi.

Members of the security force found a damaged Alin Say Taman Parahita vehicle beside the road and also dead bodies of terrorists, arms and ammunition in the vehicles. KNLA and PDF terrorists transported weapons and injured persons under the philanthropic theme.

During the security measures, there was a clash between Tatmadaw columns and terrorists who hid in Zayetgyi, and the terrorists retreated. Then, the arms and



The 1,200-foot long Myo Soe Bridge in the aftermath of the mine blast by KNLA and PDF terrorists.

ammunition and dead bodies of terrorists were seized.

The terrorists face huge losses and casualties in the Tatmadaw counterattack, air strikes and reinforcements. Therefore, they torched the houses of innocent civilians while retreating. Some locals sent the video files of burning houses to the authorities.

KNLA and PDF terrorists transport their members and weapons using ambulances. The people can participate in fighting terrorism and arresting insurgents as quickly as possible, secretly reporting to the officials about their hiding places and activities. — MNA/KTZH



(From left to right): Photos show seized arms and munitions, the burnt house perpetrated by KNLA and PDF terrorists, and an ambulance vehicle KNLA and PDF terrorists used to transport arms and munitions as well as their members.

## Heroin worth over K1.36 bln seized in Thazi

THE Myanmar Police Force reported the seizure of over K1.36 billion worth of 54.78 kilogrammes of heroin in Thazi township.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprising members from the security forces intercepted and searched Ko Myo, Myo Myint Htun, and Nyunt Win riding motorbikes near a creek of Kywekyia village on the valley road from Yinmabin village in Thazi township to Taunggya village in Pyawbwe township at 6 pm on 2 February.

The police discovered a total of 33 kilogrammes of heroin concealed in 3,300 soap containers within 15 poly bags.

Following the investigation, the police arrested San Oo, a drug trafficker, and Aung Htun

Lin (aka) Chit Thae, involved in drug trafficking, in Kywetatson village in Thazi township at 8 pm on the same day. Additionally, the police seized 21.78 kilogrammes of heroin in 2,178 soap containers from Ko Myo's house in Myoma Kwethhit ward in Yinmabin village in Thazi township at 8:30 pm.

Furthermore, the police apprehended Lwin Moe Thu (aka) Moe Thu Aung, the driver of a 22-wheel truck transporting the seized drugs, in Ayethaya in Taunggyi township at 2 pm on 5 February.

Legal proceedings have been initiated against the offenders, and an investigation is ongoing to identify other individuals involved in the criminal network. — MNA/MKKS

## Myanmar repatriate illegal immigrants in borders to relevant authorities

MYANMAR'S government has been paying attention to local stability, peace and rule of law, including the border areas. As some illegal immigrants are residing in Myanmar through the border areas, the administrative organizations are conducting the necessary investigation

and repatriating them to the relevant countries.

From 5 October 2023 to 8 February 2024, 50,619 foreigners who are illegal residents in Myanmar, including 48,803 Chinese citizens, 1,071 Vietnamese citizens, 537 Thai citizens, 133 Malaysian citizens, 20 Korean citizens and 18 Lao

citizens, were identified and verified under the law. The authorities were able to repatriate them systematically.

The government will continue identifying and repatriating foreign nationals who have illegally entered and resided through the borders. — MNA/TKO



The handover moment of the immigrant repatriation on the Myanmar-China border.

# NATIONAL

## Over 10,000 villages gain electricity access in 8 years via small-scale power projects, home solar systems

ACCORDING to data released by the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, 500,000 houses in more than 10,000 villages have gained access to electricity over the past eight financial years, mainly through small-scale power generation projects and home solar panel systems.

Breaking down the figures, between the financial years 2016-17 and 2023-24, approximately 2.5 million people residing in these 500,000 houses across more than 10,000 villages have been provided with electricity through small-scale power generation projects and home solar panel systems.

The areas covered by these projects include regions situated at least 10 miles away from the national grid and des-



The mini-grid solar system is installed in Aungba Village, Sungebalai Village-tract in Kawthoung Township.

ignated locations earmarked for electricity supply, particularly in Taninthayi Region, Ayeyawady Region, Shan State, and Rakhine State.

The report indicates that the Department of Rural Development has applied two systems since the 2016-17 financial year to electrify villages under the National Electrification Plan. Villages with fewer houses have been equipped with solar panel systems for home use, while those with more houses and higher electricity demands have been supplied with renewable solar energy.

Furthermore, the department aims to extend nationwide electricity access to all villages by utilizing renewable energy resources by 2030. — TWA/TMT

## CBM authorizes banking agents for expanded financial services

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) has announced its decision to permit the operation of banking agents, who will conduct banking transactions on behalf of banks.

This initiative aims to extend financial services to people in remote, unbanked, and underserved areas, promoting inclusivity within the economic system.

Banking agents are business entities that have entered into representative contracts with authorized banks to facilitate banking services, following regulations set by the CBM.

These authorized banking agents will collaborate with the digital banking sector overseen by the CBM and will be required to pay a service charge of K200,000 to the CBM upon appoint-

ment.

Potential banking agents applying for this role must provide details such as the proposed agent's name, location, address, and contact numbers, along with evidence of past business experience from the two years preceding the application. Additionally, they must submit a draft of the agreement between the authorized bank and the agent, complying with existing laws.

CBM will notify successful applicants within three months of receiving complete application documents. Incomplete applications will be replied with requirements to the respective bank within the same timeframe.

Banking agents will be authorized to conduct various transactions, including cash deposits and withdrawals, bill payments, loan collections, remittances, and checking account balances, as per the agreements between the bank and the banking agent.

Banks must submit a single application to the CBM for all proposed banking agents. If a bank wishes to expand the number of banking agents, it must apply for permits every quarter typically in March, June, September, and December. — TWA/ TMT

## 14 cases in selling illegal fuel worth K176.429 mln in Jan

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, there were 14 cases of arrest for selling fuel oil illegally in January, with a total value of confiscated fuel oil amounting to K176.429 million.

In December 2023, there were 65 cases (298.057 tonnes of fuel) worth K738.392 million, while in February 2024, there were 14 cases (74.225 tonnes of fuel) valued at K176.429 million, all aimed at preventing illegal fuel trading in States and Regions.

Fuel oil has been designated as a prioritized import, and the ministry is consistently taking all necessary measures to ensure that people can purchase it at a lower price, stated Union Minister for Transport and Communications General Mya Tun Oo during the meeting of the Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods on 7 February.

The Union minister added that the ministry systematically verifies and permits new companies interested in importing fuel oil. Steps have also been taken to allow free import of fuel oil for private industries, farming, service sectors, the hotel industry, schools, hospitals, and other enterprises. — TWA/MKKS



A cashier and staff members of a private bank.



## Housing prices soaring in downtown Yangon

THE property value in downtown Yangon is rocketing, some realtors told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

The rent for apartments in Lanmadaw and Latha townships is approximately K300,000 per unit in minimum. In mid-2022, the 12-foot by 50-foot apartment on the fourth floor was estimated at K70 million. At present, the market value reaches K90 million.

The sales price for the 8<sup>th</sup>-floor apartment is around K60 million, Ko Kyaw Win, an owner of the apartment in Latha Township, told the GNLM.

The six townships in the central part of the commercial hub Yangon (Lanmadaw, Latha, Pabedan, Kyauktada, Botahtaung and Mingala Taungnyunt) are easily accessible by different modes of transportation. This is why it is a great op-

tion to live in.

The 12-foot by 50-foot apartment was sold for K65 million in January. It was earlier transacted at K55 million in mid-2023. The apartment was sold again six months later, said the land owner of that apartment.

The apartment worth K55 million was renovated, spending K5 million and resold. The apartment was offered at K38 million in 2022. The land owner of that apartment received two per cent of the transaction twice within six months.

Along with the rising sales price, the rent is sky-high. The 7<sup>th</sup>-floor apartment has been rented only at K200,000 per month for years. Ko Maung Win, who rented that apartment, was forced to move out in mid-2023 after the rent rose to K290,000.

The pure gold price hit K3.8 million per tical this month. So,



investors tend to buy apartments. This way, the apartment prices were up by K20 million over the past one year. Also, the

rent rose by at least K50,000. Those who stay in dormitories are facing a burden of high living costs as they have to use one-

third of their low income K5,800 for housing, Ma Swe, who lives in a dormitory in Lanmadaw Township, stressed. — TWA/KK

## CBM performs market intervention to strengthen domestic currency

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) conducted market intervention by selling foreign assets to strengthen its currency. It sold US\$8 million on 8 February again.

The CBM pumped \$37 million and 250 million Thai baht into the financial market in ten days, with \$13 million on 1 February in the forex market and five million dollars and 50 million Thai baht on an online trading platform

for the exporters/importers on 2 February, \$11 million and 200 million Thai baht on 5 February and \$8 million on 8 February.

The CBM sold \$68.33 million, 313.5 million Thai baht and 4.2 million Chinese yuan in January 2024.

The CBM's reference exchange rate is set at K2,100 against a US dollar, while the exchange rates are approximately K3,500 against a US dollar, K100

for a Thai baht and K490 for a Chinese yuan in the grey market.

The CBM liberalized the forex market online trading platform for authorized dealers (private banks) to operate FX freely as per the market rate, depending on supply and demand.

Additionally, outward remittance must be done per the rules and regulations of the Foreign Exchange Supervisory Committee. — NN/EM

## PyinOoLwin's seasonal strawberries flood domestic market, export shortage

TRADERS remarked that seasonal strawberries from the PyinOoLwin area are widely distributed to the domestic market as they have yet to penetrate foreign markets.

There are 235 acres of strawberries in PyinOoLwin Township this year, with a cultivation cost of K4.5 million per acre. Strawberries are cultivated from September to October, and fresh strawberries are harvested from January to May.

The fresh strawberry fetches



Baskets of fresh strawberries arranged for sale in the market.

K10,000-K13,000 per viss, depending on varieties at the beginning of this year's season. The prices

rose slightly from K9,000-K12,000 per viss recorded last year.

The strawberry price moves down due to the abundant supply. Last year, it plunged to K5,500-K8,000 per viss. The supply then exceeds the demand, scaling down the price, growers and traders said.

Despite the lack of exports, strawberries are highly consumed in the market as fresh fruit. It is also processed as strawberry paste, jam and wine with value addition. — NN/EM

## MGE nods expired trade licence renewal with fines

MYANMA Gems Enterprise gives the green light to the renewal of expired gem trading licence in the past three years with a three-year fine until 31 March 2024 in accordance with rules and bylaws stipulated by Myanmar Gemstone Law, under the approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Those who want to resume business can proceed to the renewal procedure at the departments concerned of Myanmar Gems Enterprise within office hours.

Nonetheless, only those holding a licence with a two-year expiry can be reinstated with the set penalty starting from 1 April 2024. Those licences that expire more than two years at that time will get cancelled, as per the notification.

A total of 230 gem trading licences are due to expire in March, Myanmar Gems Enterprise notified.

Under the approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, those holding available licences (gems and jewellery trading licence, manufacturing licence for finished gems and carvings and rough gemstone and finished products trading licence) issued by the Myanmar Gems Enterprises need to proceed to the renewal process three months before the expiry date. They must renew them at least one month before the expiry.

Additionally, they can notify Myanmar Gems Enterprise of winding down a business with one month's notice prior to ceasing the operation.

Licence renewal applications can be processed at Myanmar Gems Enterprise (Nay Pyi Taw), Gems Museum in Yangon, Mandalay office, mining departments in Mogok, Lonkhin/Phakant, Mongshu and Myitkyina areas, in line with the rules and regulations. — NN/EM



## OPINION

### Enumerate population and housing census for forthcoming elections

THE upcoming October 2024 marks a pivotal moment for Myanmar as it prepares to conduct a population and housing census, a crucial exercise for shaping state policies and managing the nation's affairs. The data collected from this census will play a key role in determining how the government manages the economy, allocates the state budget, and addresses the needs of various sectors.

Myanmar has a rich history of population censuses, dating back to the British colonial era in 1872 when the population exceeded two million. Subsequent colonial governments continued this practice, conducting censuses in 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1931, and 1941, with the latter recording over 16 million people across Myanmar. However,

after gaining independence in 1948, successive governments faced challenges in conducting regular censuses.

In 1973, during the Myanmar Socialist Programme Party era, the government launched a comprehensive population census, revealing a total population of around 29 million. Subsequent censuses in 1983 and 2014 recorded populations of over 35 million and 51 million, respectively. Now, as Myanmar aims to hold a free and fair multiparty democratic general election in a peaceful and stable environment, the importance of accurate census data becomes paramount.

The past mistakes of voting fraud must not be repeated, making it imperative to ensure the correct population enumeration for compiling the voter list. The forthcoming population and housing census holds historical significance for Myanmar, a crucial step towards a transparent and credible electoral process.

The accurate data collected from the census is instrumental in preventing controversial measures that could lead to disputes and conflicts during the general election. Both local stakeholders and the international community eagerly await the results of the census enumeration, recognizing its potential to alleviate the population's concerns and contribute to a peaceful national environment.

The reliability of census data is crucial for strengthening the democratic system. As Myanmar strives for a free and fair election, the forthcoming population and housing census from 1 to 15 October 2024 will serve as a cornerstone, shaping the nation's path toward a more transparent and accountable future.

Not only local witnesses but also the international community await the results from the census enumeration. The correct data from the census will ease the sigh of people and will create a peaceful situation in the country. As it will be reliable data for the multiparty democratic general election, all the entire people wishing to strengthen the democratic system need to participate unitedly in the successful process of enumerating the census.

THERE is no doubt that today's education has placed special emphasis on human dignity and values with the vision that conceives human beings as creators who are not limited to watching the established order only. In the historical years, human dignity has occupied a preponderant place, but in fact, a deplorable decadency and crisis in fundamental human values are observed. Hence, the course of our own humanity's existence has to be recovered before this is forgotten in the history route. Nowadays, we meet a society in which the only practices are profits, earnings, commerce, and great shares, where human beings are just objects, not subjects, so disposable as the same products made for single use. Education development must, therefore, essentially contribute to the knowledge and significance of man as a person by no way allowing its mutilation or, at worst, its own reduction as a thing of learning. As regards this education development, EHV (Education in Human Values) and IP (Integrated Personality) go hand in hand very often. All about EHV will herein be presented intricately.

Education in Human Values (EHV) takes a holistic approach to educating the student. It covers five values as an integral part of the human being that is recognized by all major religions, adopts a multifaith approach, allows and encourages each stu-

## Education in Human Values

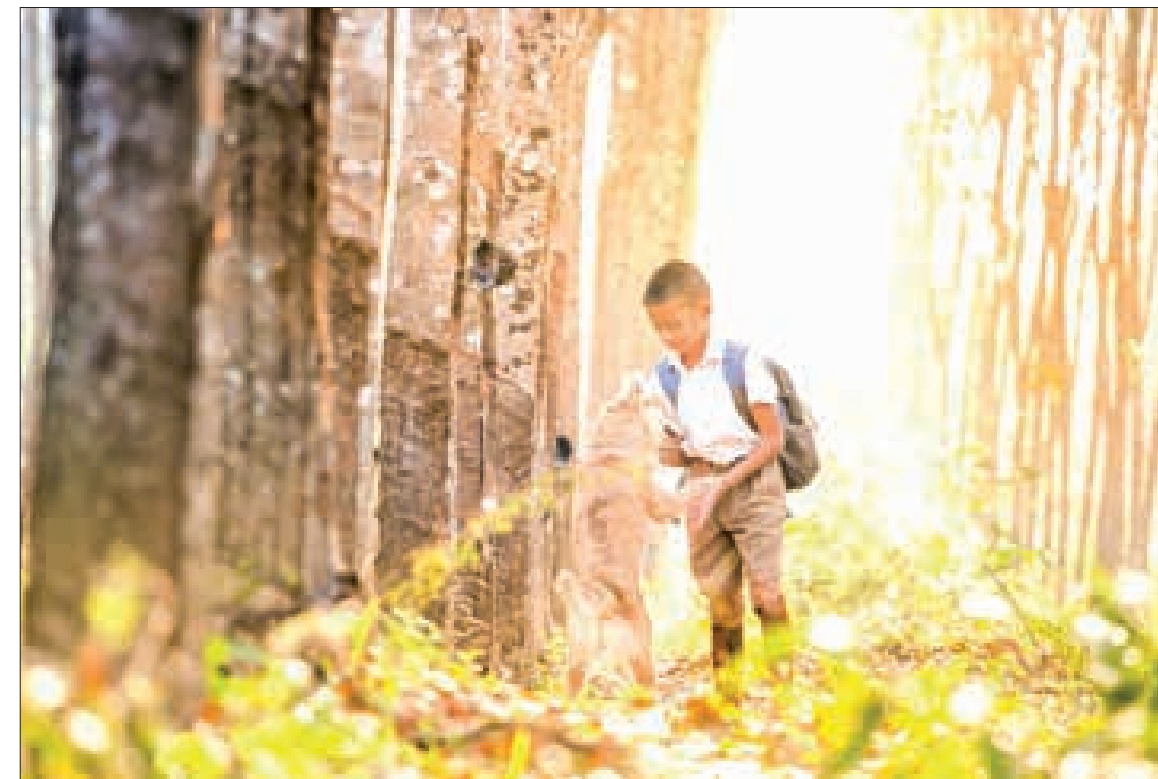
By Hu Wo (Cuckoo's Song)

*Education in Human Values (EHV) adopts a holistic approach, encompassing five universally recognized values: love, peace, truth, right conduct, and non-violence.*

dent to follow his faith and is simply conducive to the application in diverse cultural conditions. These values are love, peace, truth, right conduct, and non-violence, which also defines the human personality as five aspects: the emotional, the psyche, the intellect, the physical, and the spiritual. Love corresponds to the emotional, peace to the psyche, truth to the intellect, right conduct to the physical, and non-violence to the spiritual. These human values can be related to the three levels of consciousness – the conscious mind, the subconscious mind, and the super-conscious mind. If the conscious mind is raised towards the super-conscious mind, then knowledge and wisdom will be

drawn out from within. The human values integrated with a learning concept also start with interacting with the environment. This is, in essence, education.

The development of empathy and love is usually taught through a set of respective values such as caring, friendship, generosity, kindness, and sharing. Education must be directed towards a broadening heart, which encompasses an expansion of love, consciousness, and universal compassion. When love in this broad sense combines with the capacity of discernment, it is referred to as truth. Relative truth can take many forms, although when it comes from within oneself as the dictate of the inner self, it



The five human values of love, peace, truth, right conduct, and non-violence are one and cannot be separated. Education must be directed towards a broadening heart, which encompasses an expansion of love, consciousness, and universal compassion. ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ PIXABAY

becomes the right conduct. Peace means an awareness of emotions, their acceptance and skilful handling, resulting in calmness and balance. Of course, intrapersonal peace stems from the practice of love, truth, and right conduct. After all four values are practised, non-violence emerges as the culmination of all human values. The process of holding and practising these values is the essence of character building as well.

The basic principles of human values integrated instruction are as follows: -

- Human values are integral to all subjects and activities in school, at home, and even in our lives.
- The five human values of love, peace, truth, right conduct, and non-violence are one and cannot be separated because if one value disappears, the other values will then disappear.
- Human values cannot be taught, so they have to be brought out from within the student.
- In real life, everything is inter-

related; that is, we do not just have one value throughout the day.

- Human values integrated instruction lets the student know the ability to solve problems from various perspectives by giving varied correlative experiences.
- Also, this instruction opens up a broader worldview for both teachers and students, making the learning process much more interesting than ever.

By promoting positive rela-

tionships and a climate of human values, EHV creates powerful learning dynamics that encourage students to attain their full potential. Those values offer constructive self-image, increased confidence, and a sense of personal mastery in such a way that they may be sequenced from simple to complex, from single to multiple, but closely related sub-values. EHV assists students in relating to values at three levels – cognitive, affective, and behavioural. With the help of EHV, the student is motivated to explore and develop a clear understanding of human values in the way that this sharpens the student's critical thinking as well as problem-solving skills and raises the student's awareness of his own conscience, improves the level of self-awareness, particularly of thoughts about oneself, others, motivation and feeling, offering self-confidence and emotional resiliency; undertake continuous self-evaluation of behaviour that enables the student to deal with moment-to-moment decisions and put him on a continuous trajectory of moral learning; and pursue numerous studies showing that EHV being introduced makes schools come out as better learning centres, which grow in behavioural manners, student's respect for self or others, school culture, cooperation, and academic standards. Besides this, teachers spend less time on behaviour management and more

on academic work – their stress is reduced.

The outcomes of EHV are many: providing better academic achievement, improvement in literacy and numeracy in a way such that students get concentrated and able to grasp concepts more easily, and the development of the learning environment in school. Through its behaviour and discipline, the classroom becomes more peaceful; the incidents of inappropriate behaviours decrease; fights in the playground less; students themselves take positive action to reduce conflict; and interpersonal skills increase. Its increased social skills involve better listening skills, conflict resolution, cooperation, decreased vandalism, and a harmonious atmosphere at school. At last, its intrapersonal skills even include increased self-confidence, better self-concept or self-esteem, an increased sense of pride, and the emergence of leadership skills in students.

Finally, education in human values is a multicultural, multifaith, self-development programme designed for children and young adults all over the globe. It is a simple education tool devised to help develop positive values in the young so that children and young adults are getting fit for life, not just for earning a good living.

## Studies on infant mice offer a novel strategy to stop the flu from spreading to humans: Study

*This finding could aid in combatting influenza, a major cause of seasonal flu deaths. Despite existing vaccines and treatments, more strategies are needed to curb infection spread.*

IT has long been known by scientists that many bacteria and viruses cause illnesses by first attaching themselves to sugar molecules on the cell surfaces lining mammals' sinuses and throats, including humans. For example, viral particles can cling to these molecules—also known as sialic acids, or SAs—in a manner similar to that of keys inserted into locks.

Now, a new study in infant mice shows that keeping virus

particles from attaching to SAs limits more than just the entry of influenza A viral infections, but also hinders their exit (shedding) and transmission from mouse to mouse. Such infections are the main cause of the seasonal flu that kills more than 36,000 Americans annually. While vaccines to guard against infection and symptom treatments exist, they are not foolproof, scientists say, and more strategies are needed to prevent

infection from spreading.

Led by researchers from NYU Grossman School of Medicine, the study team stripped away, or desialylated, SA receptors by placing directly into mouse nasal cavities a neuraminidase enzyme known to loosen the acids' ability to remain attached to cell surfaces. The infant mice were then infected with influenza A. Results showed treatment with the neuraminidase enzyme dra-

matically cut mouse-to-mouse transmission rates by more than half (from 51 per cent to 100 per cent) in a half-dozen influenza strains tested.

Publishing in the American Society for Microbiology journal mBio online 11 January, the work was conducted in infant mice, which unlike those even a few months older or adult mice, were found by the research team to have many sialic acids in the

upper portion of their respiratory tract. Specifically, the team blocked two SAs, technically called alpha-2,3 SA and alpha-2,6 SA receptors (the locks). These are known to be widely present in the human respiratory tract, which researchers say makes infant mice a strong comparable model for studying the spread of the infectious disease in children, who are also recognized as important "drivers" of flu transmission



Current approaches focus on targeting the virus, but the study is the first to show that treating the host to prevent transmission could be another effective strategy. PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ PIXABAY

among people.

"If further experiments in humans prove successful, desialylat-

ing neuraminidase enzymes may prevent the flu from spreading," said Ortigoza," said lead study in-

vestigator and infectious disease specialist Mila Ortigoza, MD, PhD. SOURCE: ANI



# NATIONAL

## Endorsement of Myanmar Standards Adoption

IN accordance with the duties and functions of Section 5, Article B and vested mandate of Section 33, Article (b) of the Law on Standardization, the National Standards Council endorses the following 63 standards to adopt as Myanmar Standards.

### No Myanmar Standards

1. MMS ASTM C151/C151M-18 Standard Test Method for Autoclave Expansion of Hydraulic Cement
2. MMS ASTM D113-17 Standard Test Method for Ductility of Asphalt Materials
3. MMS ASTM D2042 – 15 Standard Test Method for Solubility of Asphalt Materials in Trichloroethylene
4. MMS JIS G 0404 : 2014 Steel and Steel Products – General Technical Delivery Requirements
5. MMS JIS G 0416: 2014 Steel and Steel Products \_ Location and Preparation of Samples and Test Pieces for Mechanical Testing
6. MMS JIS G 1253: 2002 Iron and steel-Method for spark discharge atomic emission spectrometric analysis
7. MMS JIS Z 2241 : 2011 Metallic materials-Tensile testing Method of test at room temperature
8. MMS JIS Z 2244: 2009 Vickers Hardness Test - Test Method
9. MMS JIS Z 2245: 2016 Rockwell Hardness test - Test method
10. MMS JIS A 5523:2012 Weldable hot rolled steel sheet piles
11. MMS JIS A 5528:2012 Hot rolled steel sheet piles
12. MMS ISO 10004:2018 Quality management — Customer Satisfaction — Guidelines for monitoring and measuring
13. MMS ISO 10005:2018 Quality Management — Guidelines for quality plans
14. MMS IEC 60332-1-1:2004+AMD1:2015 CSV Tests on electric and optical fibre cables under fire conditions - Part 1-1: Test for vertical flame propagation for a single insulated wire or cable - Apparatus
15. MMS IEC 60332-1-2:2004+AMD1:2015 CSV Tests on electric and optical fibre cables under fire conditions - Part 1-2: Test for vertical flame propagation for a single insulated wire or cable - Procedure for 1 kW pre-mixed flame
16. MMS IEC 60332-1-3:2004+AMD1:2015 CSV Tests on electric and optical fibre cables under fire conditions - Part 1-3: Test for vertical flame propagation for a single insulated wire or cable - Procedure for determination of flaming droplets/particles
17. MMS IEC 60811-100:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 100: General
18. MMS IEC 60811-201:2012+AMD1:2017 CSV Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 201: General tests - Measurement of insulation thickness
19. MMS IEC 60811-202:2012+AMD1:2017 CSV Electric and optical fibre cables – Test methods for non-metallic materials –Part 202: General tests – Measurement of

### No Myanmar Standards

- thickness of non-metallic sheath
20. MMS IEC 60811-203:2012 FDMMS IEC 60811-203:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 203: General tests - Measurement of overall dimensions
21. MMS IEC 60811-401:2012+AMD1:2017 CSV Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 401: Miscellaneous tests - Thermal ageing methods - Ageing in an air oven
22. MMS IEC 60811-403:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 403: Miscellaneous tests - Ozone resistance test on cross-linked compounds
23. MMS IEC 60811-404:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 404: Miscellaneous tests - Mineral oil immersion tests for sheaths
24. MMS IEC 60811-405:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 405: Miscellaneous tests - Thermal stability test for PVC insulations and PVC sheaths
25. MMS IEC 60811-409:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 409: Miscellaneous tests - Loss of mass test for thermoplastic insulations and sheaths
26. MMS IEC 60811-412:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 412: Miscellaneous tests - Thermal ageing methods - Ageing in an air bomb
27. MMS IEC 60811-501:2012+AMD1:2018 CSV Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 501: Mechanical tests - Tests for determining the mechanical properties of insulating and sheathing compounds
28. MMS IEC 60811-504:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 504: Mechanical tests - Bending tests at low temperatures for insulation and sheaths
29. MMS IEC 60811-505:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 505: Mechanical tests - Elongation at low temperature for insulations and sheaths
30. MMS IEC 60811-506:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 506: Mechanical tests - Impact test at low temperature for insulations and sheaths
31. MMS IEC 60811-507:2012 Electric and optical fibre cables - Test methods for non-metallic materials - Part 507: Mechanical tests - Hot set test for cross-linked materials

**To be continued ...**

## Parahita group assists Myanmar worker injured in Malaysian accident

A Myanmar citizen, who had started working just three days after arriving in Malaysia, broke his arm in a workplace accident and was helped by the Lovely Heart Parahita Blood Donor Group (Kuala Lumpur-Malaysia) as his employer didn't show up, the group said on 6 February. He suffered a broken arm and minor injuries to his head and leg after falling from a height of 10 feet while standing in front of a forklift truck carrying a load at the factory in Kampong Jawa, Klang.



An injured Myanmar worker.

“The victim hasn't been in Malaysia long. He's only been working for three days. He had a broken hand and minor injuries at his head

and leg,” the group said. The employer is a Chinese, not a Malaysian. He hasn't even come to the factory, let alone offered assistance. “As he had no documents, he asked for our help. We went to his residence to take him to the clinic. Then, with the referral letter, he was admitted to Specialist Sentosa,” stated the blood donor group. After three days in hospital and a successful operation under the care of his brothers, he was reportedly discharged. — MT/ZN

## Surge in secondhand mobile phone sales recorded

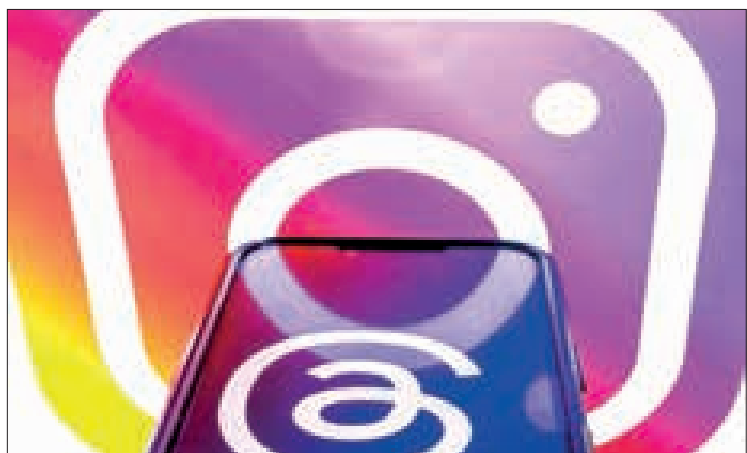
IN the mobile phone market, the demand and supply for secondhand phones is marketable, according to the mobile phone trading market.

“The sale of secondhand mobile phones with no error is more popular than new ones. Because secondhand phones can be resold at any time or can be exchanged with another by losing a certain percentage. Depending on your phone's condition, the percentage for exchange is different. New mobile phones can't be exchanged,” said a mobile phone shop owner.

There is a wide variety of

mobile phones available in Myanmar, and there are two groups of users in the market: Android phone users and iPhone users. However, the number of Android users is still larger.

“In Mandalay, the number of iPhone users is larger. The sale of cheap products is better. In the market, selling and buying used phones is better than selling new products,” said a mobile phone shop owner in Mandalay. Currently, sales of power banks used with mobile phones are also good, and the keypad mobile phone market still survives with moderate sales. — Thit Taw/ZS



As tech firms strive for ways to automatically detect images, video or audio altered or created using artificial intelligence tools, Meta is also urging internet users to look at posts critically to make sure what they are seeing isn't bogus. **PHOTO: STEFANI REYNOLDS/AFP**

## Meta wants industry-wide labels for AI-made images

*The social media giant aims to implement a system within months to identify and tag such content on Facebook, Instagram, and Threads.*

META on Tuesday said it is working with other tech firms on standards that will let it better detect and label artificial intelligence-generated images shared with its billions of users.

The Silicon Valley social media titan expects to have a system in place in a matter of months to identify and tag AI created images posted on its Facebook, Instagram and Threads platforms.

Meta and other platforms are under pressure to keep tabs on AI-generated content with fears that bad actors will ramp up

disinformation, with elections due this year in countries representing half the world's population.

"It's not perfect, it's not going to cover everything; the technology is not fully matured," Meta head of global affairs Nick Clegg told AFP.

While Meta has implemented visible and invisible tags on images created using its own AI tools since December, it also wants to work with other companies "to maximize the transparency the users have", Clegg added. — AFP

## Networks unite to create new sports streaming platform

*The collaboration involves forming a joint venture to develop the innovative service, pending final agreements.*

ESPN, Fox and Warner Bros Discovery have reached agreement on a new streaming platform for live sports content, the companies said on Tuesday.

The platform would combine the sports offerings of the three networks in one product offering content from the US's top leagues and is planned to be launched in Autumn of this year.

The networks said in a statement that they had "reached an understanding on principal terms to form a new Joint Venture (JV) to build an innovative new platform to house a compelling streaming sports service".

The companies said that the formation of the package is subject to them reaching "definitive agreements".

The product is targeted at 'cord-cutters' who prefer to subscribe to streaming services rather than traditional cable TV packages.

"The platform would aggregate content to offer fans an extensive, dynamic lineup of sports content, aiming to provide a new and differentiated experience to serve sports fans, particularly those outside of the

traditional pay TV bundle," the statement said.

Consumers would be able to bundle the product with existing broader streaming offerings from Disney+, Hulu and Max.

The new platform would provide access to ESPN's existing streaming platform ESPN+ as well as the main channels

from ESPN, Fox and Warner Bros.

It would include games from the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball, NASCAR, UFC, college sports, PGA Tour golf and international soccer, including the 2026 World Cup, which will be broadcast on Fox. — AFP



ESPN, Fox, and Warner Bros Discovery announced an agreement to launch a new streaming platform for live sports content. **ILLUSTRATION: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ESPN**



Taylor Swift made history at the 2024 Grammys, winning Album of the Year for 'Midnights,' making her the first person to achieve this feat four times. **PHOTO: ANI**

## Taylor Swift becomes first artiste in history to win 'album of the year' four times

*In her acceptance speech, Swift thanked her friend Jack Antonoff, calling him a "once-in-a-generation producer" and expressing gratitude for their collaboration.*

SINGER Taylor Swift created history at the Grammys 2024 by becoming the first person to win Album of the Year four times.

The American artiste bagged the award for 'Midnights'.

Jon Batiste, boygenius, Miley Cyrus, Lana Del Rey, Janelle Monae, Olivia Rodrigo, and SZA were the other nominees in the coveted category, People reported.

In her acceptance speech, Swift gave a shout-out to her friends Jack Antonoff and Lana Del Rey.

"I get to work with one of my best friends who is not only one of my best friends but also a once-in-a-generation producer. That's Jack Antonoff. I'm so lucky," she began.

She added, "But I think so many female artistes would not

be where they are and would not have the inspiration they have if it weren't for the work that (Lana has) done. I think she's a legacy artiste, a legend in her prime right now. I'm so lucky to know you and to be your friend."

Swift also noted the things that bring her the most joy in the industry. "I would love to tell you that this is the best moment in my life. — ANI



# ECONOMY WORLD

## India's automotive sector accelerates towards global leadership

Government initiatives like FAME II aim to deploy 10,000 electric buses across 169 cities with a US\$ 7 billion commitment, further accelerating EV adoption.



India's automotive sector is poised for global leadership. **PHOTO: ANI**

INDIA'S automotive sector continues to soar; with the industry poised to become a global

leader in the dynamic world of automobiles. Contributing a significant 7.1 per cent to the

nation's economy and employing over 37 million people, the sector remains a cornerstone of India's economic landscape.

With a market size of US\$ 108 billion, the industry's growth trajectory is evident, fuelled by a shift towards premium products and a burgeoning interest in electric vehicles (EVs).

In FY24 alone, EV sales surged by a remarkable 209.17 per cent, reaching 8,47,439 units and propelling India's EV fleet to 1.02 million units. Government initiatives, such as FAME II, are further accelerating EV adoption, with plans to deploy 10,000 electric buses across 169 cities backed by a US\$ 7 billion commitment. — ANI

## US trade gap narrows in 2023 to smallest in three years

THE US trade deficit narrowed in 2023 to the smallest in three years, government data showed Wednesday, while the country imported more goods from Mexico than China for the first time in about two decades.

The latest figures add to a series of positive economic

news for President Joe Biden, who has been working to boost sentiment on his handling of the economy as his November reelection campaign picks up pace.

For all of 2023, the overall trade gap was \$773.4 billion, down 18.7 per cent from the \$951.2 billion figure in the prior

year, US Commerce Department figures showed.

In 2022, the country saw the biggest deficit in government data dating back to 1960.

But the latest numbers showed a fall in the goods deficit last year, with imports of products dropping more than exports. — AFP



The overall US trade gap narrowed to its smallest in three years in 2023, according to government data. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

## Maldives at "high risk" of external, overall debt distress, says IMF

AMID rising fiscal deficits and public debt, Maldives remains at "high risk" of external and overall debt distress, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its report.

This comes after an IMF mission led by Piyaporn Sodriwiboon visited Male from 23 January- 6 February to discuss recent economic developments and the country's policy priorities.

The report has highlighted that the Maldivian economy expanded by 13.9 per cent in 2022 and is estimated to grow by 4.4 per cent in 2023.

"Following the pandemic-induced contraction, the Maldivian economy expanded by 13.9 per cent in 2022 and is estimated to grow by 4.4 per cent in 2023. As

tourist arrivals are expected to rise further, growth is projected at 5.2 per cent in 2024," the report stated.

The global financial agency further pointed out that, amid elevated fuel prices and strong import demands, the current account deficit in 2024 is projected to remain 'large'.

"Without significant policy changes, the overall fiscal deficits and public debt are projected to stay elevated, and the Maldives remains at high risk of external and overall debt distress. Amid elevated fuel prices coupled with continued strong import demands, the current account deficit in 2024 is projected to remain large, albeit gradually narrowing over the medium term. — ANI



"As tourist arrivals are expected to rise further, growth is projected at 5.2 per cent in 2024," the report stated. **PHOTO: ANI**

## Shanghai eyes first stop in inbound travel

SHANGHAI'S strong attraction as a tourist destination will definitely benefit inbound tourism in China and the Yangtze River Delta region in particular, as it is one of the most vibrant cities in the country, said experts.

Multiple measures are in the cards to build the municipality — a strategic link between domestic and international economies — as a first stop for inbound travelers to the nation, they said.

There is a need to better promote the city's image among youth on social media platforms across the world and make mobility and payments easier for in-

ternational travelers, the experts said. Several countries, including Thailand and Singapore, have implemented mutual visa waiver programmes with China over the past months.

Since 1 December, China has also started allowing visitors from Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia to enter the country without a visa.

More than 210,000 visits from such countries were recorded within a month, up 28.5 per cent compared with the previous month, according to the National Immigration Administration. — Xinhua

# Festive mood fills Hong Kong's Lunar New Year fairs

*Hong Kong residents engage in the traditional activity of visiting Lunar New Year fairs, with 15 fairs across the territory offering flowers and festive goods.*

VISITING Lunar New Year fairs is a traditional activity in Hong Kong to welcome the new year. This year, there are a total of 15 fairs across the territory which kicked off on Sunday to sell flowers and festive goods.

The fair in Victoria Park of Hong Kong is the largest one, with flower stalls crowded with people choosing flowers and plants for home decora-

tions to celebrate the Chinese festival. Some of them asked stall owners about the price, some discussed the planting method, and some stopped to take pictures, creating a festive atmosphere.

A Hong Kong resident surnamed Chiu went to the fair with his wife and bought two pots of kumquats. They were bright in colour and had a meaning

of good luck, Chiu said with a broad smile.

"In fact, flowers are a must-have for Hong Kong people during Chinese New Year," Yip Tak Ping, president of Hong Kong History and Culture Society, said, holding a copy of a Hong Kong newspaper in 1927.

The newspaper had detailed records of the Lunar New Year fairs, includ-



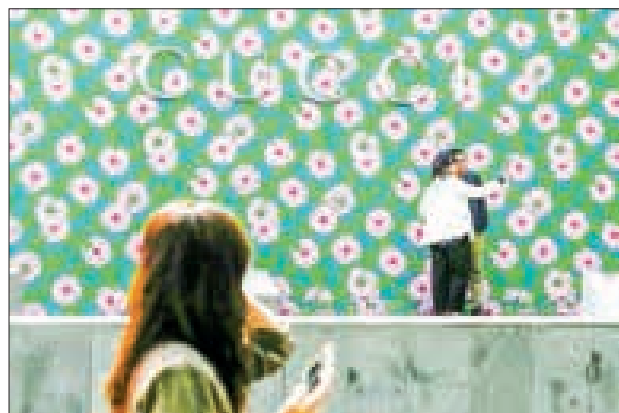
Visitors in Hanfu costumes, a style of clothing traditionally worn by the Han people, select snacks during an event celebrating the upcoming Chinese New Year at the Temple Street in south China's Hong Kong, 4 February 2024. PHOTO: ZHU WEI/XINHUA

ing how to get a licence and what items to sell, which can prove that in the 1920s,

the New Year fairs of a certain scale already existed in Hong Kong, Yip, also a

lecturer at the Education University of Hong Kong, told Xinhua. — Xinhua

# Gucci owner Kering says profit fell 17% in 2023



Luxury conglomerate Kering announced a decline in sales and net profit for 2023, with net profit dropping 17 per cent to 2.98 billion euros and sales decreasing four per cent to 19.57 billion euros. PHOTO: AFP

FRENCH luxury giant Kering said Thursday its sales and net profit fell in 2023, warning its investment strategy will weigh on results this year as it refocuses its business around its flagship brand Gucci. Kering, whose other houses include Yves Saint Laurent, Balenciaga and Bottega Veneta, reported a 17 per cent drop in net profit to 2.98 billion euros (\$3.2 billion).

Sales retreated four per cent to 19.57 billion euros. "In a trying year for the group, we strengthened our organization

and took significant steps to further enhance the visibility and exclusivity of our Houses," chief executive Francois-Henri Pinault said in an earnings statement.

"We are focused on revitalising Gucci, leveraging the unique blend of craftsmanship, Italian heritage, and modernity that characterizes this iconic House," he said.

At Gucci, a brand famous for its leather handbags, sales dropped six per cent to 9.9 billion euros — accounting for half of Kering's revenue. — AFP

# Swiss watchmaker says it's time to make luxury sustainable

VEGETAL leather and recycled stainless steel melted in a solar oven are among the materials a Geneva watch brand is using in its quest to make sustainable luxury timepieces.

The small ID Geneve start-up launched in 2020, vowing to make high-end watches with a climate- and environmentally-friendly circular production approach using non-traditional materials.

"It is out of the question to use boxes made of



Stainless steel recycled from scraps left over from the manufacturing of watches and medical materials goes into the sustainable luxury timepieces. PHOTO: AFP

Amazonian wood that will be left to gather dust in a closet," Nicolas Freudiger, the company's

35-year-old co-founder, told AFP.

Instead, the 620 watches the company

has made so far have been presented in compostable packaging made from algae, which can dissolve in water and be used as garden fertilizer.

ID Geneve, which sells pieces for between 3,600 and 5,000 Swiss francs (\$4,200-\$5,800), has already made a splash in the world of Swiss watchmaking.

And the buzz has grown louder since US actor Leonardo DiCaprio came on board as an investor last October. — AFP

<h2>CLAIMS DAY NOTICE</h2> <p>M.V CONTRIVIA VOY.NO. (065N/S)</p> <p>Consignees of cargo carried on <b>M.V CONTRIVIA VOY.NO. (065N/S)</b> are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on <b>9-2-2024</b> and cargo will be discharged into the premises of <b>MIP</b> where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.</p> <p>Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.</p> <p>No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.</p> <p>Phone No: <b>2301185</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shipping Agency Department Myanma Port Authority</b></p> <p>Agent For:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(ONE) OCEAN NETWORK EXPRESS LINE</b></p>	<h2>CLAIMS DAY NOTICE</h2> <p>M.V HAN YI VOY.NO. (2403)</p> <p>Consignees of cargo carried on <b>M.V HAN YI VOY. NO. (2403)</b> are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on <b>9-2-2024</b> and cargo will be discharged into the premises of <b>MITT-4</b> where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.</p> <p>Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.</p> <p>No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.</p> <p>Phone No: <b>2301928</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shipping Agency Department Myanma Port Authority</b></p> <p>Agent For:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPING PRIVATE LTD</b></p>
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# ROLLING UPDATES

## WORLD

## Israel PM orders troops to ready for push into crowded Rafah

*Netanyahu's decision follows the rejection of Hamas's ceasefire proposal and what he termed as "bizarre demands".*

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered troops to prepare to enter Gaza's crowded southern city of Rafah, even as new talks aimed at securing a truce with Hamas were set to open Thursday in Cairo.

Netanyahu announced the order after rejecting Hamas's response to a ceasefire proposal at the centre of recent intensive diplomatic efforts, dismissing what he called the militant

group's "bizarre demands".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken — in Israel as part of his fifth Middle East crisis tour since the 7 October attack — insisted he still saw "space for agreement to be reached" to halt the fighting and bring home hostages.

Heavy fighting raged on unabated, with more air strikes hitting Hamas-ruled Gaza, now in its fifth month of war, where the health ministry said another

109 people were killed overnight.

Alarm has mounted especially for the more than one million Palestinians crowded into Gaza's far south as the battlefield has crept ever closer to the city of Rafah on the Egyptian border.

UN chief Antonio Guterres warned on Wednesday that an Israeli military push into the city "would exponentially increase what is already a humanitarian nightmare". — AFP



A picture taken from Rafah shows smoke billowing over Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip during Israeli bombardment on 13 January 2024, amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Spanish farmers block roads for second day

*In Barcelona, nearly 1,000 tractors converged at the regional government's headquarters, with protesters decrying suffocating bureaucracy and administrative demands.*

THOUSANDS of farmers used tractors to block roads across Spain for the second day running on Wednesday amid Europe-wide protests against cheaper imports and heavy regulation.

Farmers gathered at dawn on dozens of roads, snarling traffic, mainly in Andalusia in the south, the northeastern region of Catalonia and Navarra in the north, according to the Spanish General Directorate for Road Traffic.

Almost 1,000 tractors drove slowly to the centre of Spain's second city Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, where they ral-

lied in front of the headquarters of the regional government. "Bureaucracy is suffocating us... you need to think more about documents and paperwork demanded by the administration than work on the ground," 45-year-old protester Joan Maia Sala told AFP.

After meeting regional president Pere Aragonés, some farmers said they intended to sleep on site and were determined to continue demonstrating.

Tractors were also used to block roads leading to the southern port of Malaga in Andalusia and the eastern port of Castellon, authorities said. — AFP



Tractors snarl traffic in protest over farming conditions and European agricultural policy north of Barcelona. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Third all-private astronaut mission departs from space station

THE SpaceX Dragon spacecraft undocked from the International Space Station (ISS) on Wednesday, completing the third all-private astronaut mission to the orbiting laboratory.

The mission, codenamed Axiom Mission 3 (Ax-3), is the first all-European commercial astronaut mission to the ISS, according to NASA.

The spacecraft undocked from the ISS' Harmony mod-

ule at 9:20 am Eastern Time over the Pacific Ocean, to head back to Earth.

The spacecraft is scheduled to splashdown off the coast of Daytona, Florida, on Friday morning. — Xinhua



After spend more than two weeks onboard the International Space Station, SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft has undocked with the floating laboratory on Wednesday, 7 February 2024. **PHOTO: NASA**

## Voting underway in Pakistan to elect new government

PAKISTANI voters went to the polls Thursday to elect a new government, with former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and independent candidates backed by detained former

premier Imran Khan vying to take power.

The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party of Sharif, whose corruption charges were overturned in

November and December last year following his return from self-imposed exile, is considered the frontrunner in the National Assembly election. — Kyodo

# SPORTS

## Former Manchester Utd star Lingard joins South Korea's FC Seoul

*Lingard, who had been without a club since leaving Nottingham Forest, sees his move to Seoul as a fresh start and a new chapter in his career.*

FORMER Manchester United and England midfielder Jesse Lingard said he wanted to “enjoy playing football again” after signing for South Korea’s FC Seoul on Thursday.

The 31-year-old has been without a club since leaving Nottingham Forest at the end of his contract last summer.

Lingard, who spent 22 years at United before leaving Old Trafford in 2022, said joining Seoul was a new challenge and he was “ready to accept it”.

“It’s a new beginning for me,

a new chapter in my career,” he told reporters at a press conference after being greeted by fans at the airport.

“I just want to enjoy playing football again, putting a smile on people’s faces and showing the Korean fans what I can do.”

Lingard said he had “multiple offers” but they were “all verbal”, and that he joined Seoul because they were committed to signing him. Lingard played only 20 times in all competitions for Forest and featured just four times in 2023. — AFP



Lingard, who spent 22 years at United before leaving Old Trafford in 2022, said joining Seoul was a new challenge and he was “ready to accept it”. PHOTO: YONHAP/AFP

## Third successive world title for Wang in 3-metre diving

CHINESE diver Wang Zongyu-an took gold in the three-metre springboard for the third time in a row on Wednesday at the world aquatics championships in Doha.

Wang, who had already taken the synchronized event with Long Daoyi on Sunday, won with a cumulative score of 538.70 points after six jumps.

It was the 26-year-old’s eighth world gold medal of his career and marked a hat-trick in the event having already been crowned champion last year in Fukuoka and in Budapest in 2022.

Wang beat his compatriot Xie Siyi, who took silver with 516.10pts with 19-year-old Mexican Oscar Olvera Ibarra taking bronze with 498.40pts. The Chinese have dominated the diving pool and collected more gold when Chang Yani and Chen Yiwen won the women’s 3m synchronized.

Sharon Van Rouwendaal added the 5k open water swimming to the 10k she won on Saturday as she came home in a thrilling race that saw the top three separated by less than three seconds. — AFP



Mousa Al-Tamari and Jordan beat South Korea in the semi-finals. PHOTO: AFP

## Asian Cup braces for one last surprise as Qatar face Jordan in final

AN Asian Cup full of late goals and surprises reaches a climax on Saturday when hosts and holders Qatar face a Jordan side looking to make yet more history. The 88,000-capacity Lusail Stadium, where Lionel Messi’s Argentina beat France in the World Cup final 14 months ago, will stage the final act of four weeks of Asian football.

Few would have predicted it would come down to a decider between a Qatar side who swapped coaches one month before the Asian Cup and a Jordan team ranked 87 in the world.

Pre-tournament favourites

*The Asian Cup finale sees hosts Qatar facing Jordan in a match brimming with late goals and unexpected turns.*

Japan were dumped out in the quarter-finals by Iran, who then went down in a 3-2 semi-final thriller to Qatar on Wednesday.

In a competition raining late goals, it should have been little surprise that Qatar’s winner came eight minutes from time when Almoez Ali turned in to break Iranian hearts.

“I’m very happy for Qatar,

the people of Qatar, the fans and the players,” said coach Tintin Marquez, the Spaniard who was spirited in to replace Carlos Queiroz less than four weeks before the competition.

“The match was very complex but we played a big game, the players didn’t spare any effort. Now we have one final step left to defend our title.” — AFP

## Top players to get bulk of equity in new PGA Tour venture: reports

THE PGA Tour’s creation of a new for-profit entity, PGA Tour Enterprises, will see over \$930 million in player equity grants primarily benefit its top 36 golfers, sparking significant attention following a leaked memo from Commissioner Jay Monahan.

The PGA Tour’s new for-profit entity will dish out over 80 per cent of the initial \$930 million of player equity grants to its top 36 golfers, according to a leaked memo reported by US media on Wednesday.

ESPN and Golf Digest both reported the contents of the memo from PGA Tour com-

missioner Jay Monahan, which had been distributed to players.

Last month, the tour announced a deal that could eventually be worth up to \$3 billion

with a group of billionaire sports team owners to create a new entity called PGA Tour Enterprises.

The move comes after the PGA Tour lost several top stars to the breakaway LIV Golf League, backed heavily by Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund (PIF). — AFP



Masters champion Jon Rahm moved from the PGA Tour to LIV Golf in December despite merger talks between the two tours. PHOTO: AFP



Israel PM orders troops to ready for push into crowded Rafah

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# WORLD

## Russia may forge partnerships with Asia and Mideast to explore Arctic - Expert



The Avraamy Zavenyagin icebreaker at the seaport of Dudinka. The federal Arctic port on the Northern Sea Route Dudinka is the largest in Siberia and the northernmost international seaport in Russia. **PHOTO: VLADIMIR ASTAPKOVICH/SPUTNIK**

*In response to Western member countries' suspension of participation in council events, Russia has signalled its readiness to quit the intergovernmental forum if its interests are not respected.*

the US, Finland and Sweden announced they would suspend their participation in the council's events over Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

Presently, Russia maintains cooperation with the seven Arctic nations on a bilateral basis. In May 2023, Norway assumed the presidency of the council and has since tried to restart the organization's work in a full format. Even though the council states could meet without Russia, there are a lot of issues of shared interests that could not be made without Moscow's participation, as per Grigory Dobromelov, head of the Department of State Consulting.— SPUTNIK

MOSCOW does not rule out withdrawing from the Arctic Council as the West tries to sideline the nation over its special military operation in Ukraine. No collective Arctic decisions could be made

without Russia, Grigory Dobromelov, head of the Department of State Consulting, told Sputnik.

Russia has signalled that it could quit the Arctic Council, the intergovernmental

forum promoting cooperation in the Arctic, if its activities do not meet Russia's interests.

In March 2022, Western member countries Denmark, Iceland, Canada, Norway,

### PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE EXCHANGE

#### China makes efforts to facilitate cross-border travel

RECENT efforts by China to facilitate cross-border travel have made it safer and easier for Chinese people to travel abroad, and for foreigners to come to China, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Spokesperson Wang Wenbin made the remarks at a regular news briefing when asked to give more details on China's measures to facilitate cross-border travel.

To help foreigners get a mobile number easier upon arrival, carriers including China Telecom, China Mobile, and China Unicom recently set up nine new shops at airports in such cities as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Kunming, Chengdu and Xiamen, and six new shops in popular destinations for foreign travellers in cities including Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Xi'an and Qingdao.

China is committed to high-level opening-up and expanding people-to-people exchange with the rest of the world, Wang said, adding that responsible government agencies and telecom operators in China recently took steps to enhance telecom service, easing the access to such service for foreigners traveling, working, studying or living in China. — Xinhua

## DPRK top legislature abolishes legal documents on inter-Korean economic cooperation

THE top legislature of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) abolished legal documents on inter-Korean economic cooperation during the latest plenary meeting of its standing committee on Wednesday, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported Thursday.

The plenary meeting of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), which was held at the Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang, discussed and unanimously adopted a decree "on abolishing the law of the DPRK on north-south economic cooperation, the law on special zone for international tour of Mount Kumgang



This decision follows the abolition of agencies facilitating inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation, reflecting shifting dynamics in inter-Korean relations. A general view of the venue of family reunions between North and South Koreans in the Mount Kumgang resort area of North Korea. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

and regulations for its enforcement and agreements on north-south economic cooperation," said the KCNA report. — Xinhua