

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

ПОЛИТИКА

Премьер Мьянмы Мин Аун Хлайн поздравил Путина с победой на выборах

18 Марта 2024, 08:24

Вероника Колесник

ВЫБОРЫ ВЫБОРЫ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА ВЛАДИМИР ПУТИН МЬЯНМА

ПОЗДРАВЛЕНИЯ



Фото: REUTERS/Roscosmos

Премьер-министр Мьянмы Мин Аун Хлайн 18 марта тепло поздравил действующего главу РФ, самовыдвиженца Владимира

Report says SAC Chair PM Senior General Min Aung Hlaing sent congratulatory message to Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin for presidential election victory

AS four presidential candidates competed in the presidential election of the Russian Federation from 15 to 17 March 2024, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin secured 87.28 per cent, Nikolai Mikhailovich Kharitonov 4.31 per cent, Vladislav Andreevich Davankov 3.85 per cent and Leonid Eduardovich Slutsky 3.20 per cent at a time when the counting of votes completed by 100 per cent. Among them, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin clearly won over his opponents with excellent voting results.

Media in the Russian Federation, such as TASS news agency, Izvestiya news agency, Moscow-24 news agency, Arguments and Facts daily, Kommersant daily, Krasnaya Vesna news agency and Vedomosti internet news page mentioned the congratulatory messages sent by Heads of State from global countries, including Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, to election winner Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin on 18 March 2024. — MNA/TTA

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Watermelon, muskmelon export market to China heading to pullback

Installation of 14MW solar power system planned for Thilawa SEZ

THE Ministry of Electric Power (MoEP) has announced plans to install a solar power system with a capacity of up to 14 megawatts in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Thanlyin Township, Yangon Region.

Currently, three plants within the Thilawa SEZ have already installed solar systems, generating approximately two

megawatts of power. Further studies conducted by companies in the zone suggest that the solar system has the potential to produce up to 14 megawatts of power.

Myanmar-Japan Thilawa Development Company Limited (MJTD) has confirmed that once the solar system is installed, surplus power will be transmitted and distributed to other factories within

the special economic zone through the Ministry of Electric Power's power lines.

Covering an area of 667.275 hectares (approximately 1650 acres), Thilawa SEZ has attracted investment from 114 companies across 21 countries. Among the economic zones currently being implemented in Myanmar, Thilawa SEZ stands out as the most successful. — ASH/TMT



An aerial view of the Thilawa Special Economic Zone in Thanlyin Township, Yangon Region.

NATIONAL

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Notification No 61/2024

11th Waxing of Tabaung 1385 ME
20 March 2024

Second additional provision for the Provision of Honorary Titles and Medals issued

- As the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has stated, "The President may, in accord with the law, have the power to confer honorary titles and awards" in its Section 205 (a) in order to honour the persons for excellent performance in cooperation with foreign countries in various sectors for development of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the State Administration Council has added the following honorary medals into the provision of the honorary titles and medals announced in 2009 –
 - International Cooperation Title
 - Thiri Zeyakyaw Title
 - Thiri Theinkhakyaw Title
 - International Military Cooperation Title
 - Thiri Thihakyaw Title
 - Thiri Thurakyaw Title
- The second additional provision for the provision on honorary titles and medals with regard to the criteria for qualification of the persons to be deservedly honoured, forms, sizes, measurements, colours of ribbon and definition of medals, ways of recommendations at different levels, and certificates of honour of relevant medals, have been released in accord with Section 419 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in order to present honorary medals for performances.

Sd/
Min Aung Hlaing
Senior General
Chairman
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Law Amending the Employment and Skill Development Law (State Administration Council Law No 19/2024)

11th Waxing of Tabaung 1385 ME
20 March 2024

THE State Administration Council has enacted this Law under Section 419 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

- This Law shall be called the Law Amending the Employment and Skill Development Law.
- The wording mentioned in the Employment and Skill Development Law "Labour, Employment and Social Security Ministry" shall be substituted with the wording "Ministry of Labour".
- The wording mentioned in Sub-Section (e) of Section 7 of the Employment and Skill Development Law, "Employment and Skill Development Body," shall be substituted with the wordings "Employment Development Body" and "National Skill Standards Authority", respectively.
- The wording mentioned in the Employment and Skill Development Law "Skill Development Body" and the wording mentioned in Sub-Section (d) of Section 28, "Skill Development Committee", shall be substituted with the wording "National Skill Standards Authority", respectively.

I hereby sign this Law under Section 419 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Sd/
Min Aung Hlaing
Senior General
Chairman
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Law Amending the National Food Law (2024)

(State Administration Council Law No 20/2024)

11th Waxing of Tabaung 1385 ME
20 March 2024

THE State Administration Council has enacted this Law under Section 419 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

- This Law shall be called the Law Amending the National Food Law (2024).
- Section 28 of the National Food Law shall be substituted as follows: -

"28. If anybody is sentenced for violating any provisions of Section 22,

 - they shall be sentenced to imprisonment for ten years in maximum or shall also be sentenced to a fine ranging from K300,000 to K3 million for the food-related case mentioned in Sub-Sections (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f) or (g).
 - if the food-related case concerning Sub-Section (h) or (i), the person shall be sentenced to one year's imprisonment or a fine of K500,000 or both.
 - The court shall adopt the order to destroy the evidence related to the case or manage them under the prescribed rules."
- Section 29 of the National Food Law shall be substituted as follows: -

"29. Anybody who is sentenced for a case violating the provisions mentioned in Section 23 and the individual shall be sentenced to imprisonment for ten years at maximum or a fine ranging from K1 million to K5 million. Moreover, the court shall adopt the order to destroy the evidence related to the case or manage them under the prescribed rules."
- The wording "the fine from K100,000 in minimum to K300,000 in maximum" mentioned in Section 30 of the National Food Law shall be substituted with the wording "the fine from K300,000 in minimum to K3 million in maximum"; the wording "moreover, documents related to the case shall be confiscated as the public finance" with the wording "moreover, the court shall adopt order to destroy the evidence related to the case or manage them under the prescribed rules."
- The wording "shall sentence three years' imprisonment or the fine ranging from K100,000 to K300,000 or both" mentioned in Section 31 of the National Food Law shall be substituted with the wording "shall impose a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment, along with fines ranging from K300,000 to K3 million".

I hereby sign this Law under Section 419 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Sd/
Min Aung Hlaing
Senior General
Chairman
State Administration Council

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

Bank Holiday

ALL Banks will be closed on 1 (Monday) April 2024 "BANK HOLIDAY", under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

Central Bank of Myanmar

NATIONAL

Vice-Senior General: Foster economic growth through MSME development

VICE-SENIOR General Soe Win, Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister who also serves as the chairman of the Committee on Development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), delivered a speech at the committee's meeting 1/2024 at the Ministry of Industry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Win Shein, along with relevant Union Ministers and officials, were also in attendance.

The committee chairman noted that this is the fourth working committee meeting and highlighted that the relevant ministries and government bodies are implementing decisions made during the third meeting.

He stressed the committee's commitment to executing directives from the SAC chairman. That includes initiatives such as producing value-added agricultural and livestock products, expanding crops for edible oils and industrial purposes, increasing dairy product output, and developing human resources.

He welcomed ideas and



State Administration Council Vice-Chair Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win addresses the meeting 1/2024 of the Committee on Development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) yesterday.

contributions from those present, underscoring the government's focus on economic growth, with a particular emphasis on promoting MSMEs. As MSMEs cover the entire supply chain from production to packaging, they have the potential to significantly impact the country's economy and create numerous growth opportunities.

The SAC is working towards implementing nine objectives and a five-point roadmap, including national prosperity and food security.

Regarding the production

of value-added products using locally sourced materials, ministries and local agencies have collectively identified 612 products across four sectors.

There is a plan to manufacture local products following a one-region-one-product strategy to reduce dependence on imports. The committee has devised an action plan focusing on 107 products proposed by state and regional governments, with 57 prioritized for immediate attention.

Following discussions with MSME owners in 23 state and regional meetings, as well as

five focused gatherings, the committee chairman highlighted that the two primary challenges identified are access to land and capital. The government has provided loans through MSME development funds.

In efforts to enhance human resources, various ministries have trained 91,807 individuals across 350 courses since January 2022. Currently, 3,862 trainees are undergoing training programmes.

In conclusion, the production sector is the backbone of Myanmar's economic devel-

opment. A well-functioning production system can create many opportunities and reduce poverty. The committee chairman invited attendees to share insights based on past experiences.

Subsequently, the committee chairman listened to presentations from different Union Ministers, chief ministers, and high-ranking officials and offered his support accordingly.

After the meeting, the committee chairman and officials observed the Ministry of Industry's products and accomplishments. — MNA/NT

Loans to be provided to oil millers in need of capital

OIL Mills Development Credit Management Group will provide loans to oil mill owners in need of capital.

The Oil Industry Development Loan Management Group, provides loans with low-interest rates from the oil industry development loan fund, to expand, install modern equipment to local oil mills, build new modern oil mills and promote the national economy for business capital needs.

As for the loan amounts, the loan for working capital is from a minimum of K10 million to a maximum of K300 million,



The photo depicts a general view of the local oil refinery.

PHOTO: AHMAYHTWAR

while the loan for Fixed Capital is from a minimum of K20 million to a maximum of K300 million. Those who wish to obtain a loan of more than K300 million can apply directly to the Oil Mills Development Credit Management Task Force, the Secretariat, and the Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (head office).

The loan term and repayment periods are one year for commercial revolving investment loans and three years for fixed investment loans as three instalments are set, and the loan interest rate will be

paid at five per cent per year.

Entrepreneurs who want to apply for the loan can apply for oil refinery loan proposal forms at Union Territorial Nay Pyi Taw, State/Region Oil Refinery Owners Association offices, Oil Traders, Oil Entrepreneurs Association offices, Industrial Supervision and Inspection Department branch offices, Myanmar Commercial Bank branches and Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank branches, according to the Oil Industry Development Credit Management Group. — TWA/KZL

NATIONAL

MoHA, MPF members, staff donate blood, oxygen equipment in hailing 79th Tatmadaw Day

THE Ministry of Home Affairs, Myanmar Police Force and clerical staff donated blood together at Nay Pyi Taw General Hospital (1,000-bed) and No 2 Tatmadaw Hospital (1,000-bed) yesterday morning as a gesture of hailing the 79th Armed Forces Day, which will fall on 27 March 2024.

State Administration Council Member Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Toe Yi, Deputy Minister for Health Dr Aye Tun, and officials welcomed blood donors and clerical staff



SAC Member Union Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and Union Minister Dr Thet Khaing Win encourage blood donors from the Ministry of Home Affairs yesterday.

and encouraged and provided them with nutritional supplements.

Lt-Gen Yar Pyae then donated 148 oxygen cylinders and tanks, 155 flow meters, 49 nasal planes, and 65 face masks worth K50,038,500 to Nay Pyi Taw General Hospital (1,000-bed). The Union Minister for Health received and returned the certificate of honour by expressing gratitude for the donation.

A total of 121 donated blood yesterday, and 145 police members and clerical staff will continue to donate blood on 21 March in honour of the 79th Armed Forces Day. — MNA/TS

Ethnic cultural dance troupes invited to participate in Yangon Thingyan

ETHNIC cultural dance troupes have once again been invited to perform at the Thingyan Festival's programme at the Yangon City Hall Central Pandal, as in previous years. This was confirmed by U Aung Myint Khant, a committee official responsible for organizing the Maha Thingyan Water Festival of Yangon City.

He mentioned that last year,

26 traditional cultural dance troupes representing various ethnic groups, such as Kachin, Kayin, Chin, Dawei, PaO, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan, participated in the festival. Additionally, new ethnic dance troupes and choreographed group dance troupes have been invited this year alongside the ones that performed in the previous festival.

— ASH/TKO



Traditional dancers perform at the Yangon City Hall Central Pandal in the previous year.

Chishar Temple Sayadaw's donations aid reconstruction after Mocha storm damage

DEPUTY Minister for Foreign Affairs U Lwin Oo handed over the donation made by Chishar temple Sayadaw Venerable Qianze from Guilin of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China for the reconstruction of religious buildings damaged by the Mocha storm in Myanmar to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture at the Ministry building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The deputy minister first explained the donation of 12,000 yuan by the Sayadaw Ven Qianze for the reconstruction of religious buildings. Next, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Tin Oo Lwin explained the reconstruction of religious build-



Union Minister U Tin Oo Lwin presents the certificate of honour for the donation of Chishar temple Sayadaw Venerable Qianze from the People's Republic of China to Deputy Minister U Lwin Oo.

ings damaged by the Mocha storm and the process of the donation through the ministry and expressed thanks to the Chishar temple Sayadaw Ven Qianze for the donation.

The deputy minister then handed over the donation of 12,000 yuan to the Union minister on behalf of the well-wisher Sayadaw Ven Qianze. — MNA/KZL

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

NATIONAL

MoI Union Minister addresses media literacy, national security at Nursing University

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn delivered a lecture on combating media misinformation and the media's role in nation-building at the University of Nursing (Yangon) yesterday.

Faculty members and students from medical universities, midwife schools, and other healthcare institutions attended the talk.

The session commenced with a documentary video highlighting strategies to counter media misinformation and the significance of media in national development.

During his address, the Union minister stressed the importance of critically evaluating information shared



Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn and attendees from medical universities, midwife schools, and other healthcare institutions pose for the group documentary photo at the University of Nursing (Yangon) yesterday.

on social media platforms to distinguish between truth and

falsehood, especially given the rampant spread of misinfor-

mation in today's digital era. He highlighted the govern-

ment's initiatives in tackling various challenges and cautioned against the potential consequences of misleading information, which could lead to misguided decision-making.

Furthermore, he advised the audience to critically examine rumours and false information related to the People's Military Service Law, emphasizing its crucial role in safeguarding the nation and underscoring the responsibility of every citizen in this regard.

As part of the event, lucky draws were held, with five direct-to-home satellite dishes and 100 MRTV set-top boxes awarded to participating students. A total of 520 students attended the talk. — MNA/NT

Almost 5,000 pilgrims flock to Kyaiktiyo Pagoda daily



The photo shows pilgrims visiting Kyaiktiyo Pagoda.

ACCORDING to U Soe Hla, chairman of the pagoda board of trustees, there have been nearly 5,000 pilgrims visiting the Kyaiktiyo Pagoda in Kyaikto Township of Mon State daily in March. Pilgrims from across the country flock to the pagoda every day, with approximately 250 buses providing transportation up and down the hill. Additionally, lodges, guesthouses, public rest houses, and hotels are open to accommodate the pilgrims.

"The path leading to the pagoda is in good condition. We receive about 5,000 pilgrims daily in March, and this number increases to around 7,000 on weekends. Thai pilgrims visit almost

daily, while travellers from other foreign countries, such as China, Russia, the United States, and Britain, make up about two or three visits per day," said U Soe Hla.

He also mentioned that around 160 mountain cars operate daily, with the fare recently increased by K1,000. Additionally, cable car services are available, especially on weekends, with fees remaining unchanged.

The Kyaiktiyo Pagoda is open to the public throughout the year. It hosts the annual Buddha Pujaniya Festival from the full moon day of Thadingyut to the full moon day of Kason. — ASH/MKKS

Workshop on Improved Cook Stove Distribution Monitoring held



The Project Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop of the Project of CCC Programme of Activities for Distribution of Improved Cook Stoves in Developing South and Southeast Asian Countries (Myanmar) in progress in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi attended an opening ceremony of "Project Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop" under "The Project of CCC Programme of Activities for Distribution of Improved Cook Stoves in Developing South and Southeast Asian Countries (Myanmar)" co-organized by the Dry Zone Greening Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation of Myanmar and the Climate Change Centre (CCC) of the Republic of Korea, at Thingaha Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the event, the Union minister said 70 per cent of the country's population lives in rural areas and uses fire-

wood and charcoal as a major fuel. The annual firewood demand is about 17 million cubic tonnes, and the higher demand for firewood fuel is a primary challenge in implementing the processes for sustainability of forest resources, protection of remaining natural forest resources and combating desertification.

He continued that the Dry Zone Greening Department set plans to reduce the use of firewood, promoting the utilization of firewood substitutes and protection of remaining natural forests since 1997. This project is implemented with the collaboration of the Dry Zone Greening Department and the Climate Change Center of the Republic of Korea to implement mitigation of carbon emission

and small-scale clean development project in Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions starting from 2018 under a six-year project term.

During the project period, it is estimated to distribute 500,000 improved cookstoves, which can save 40 per cent of fuelwood, to 218,678 households in 1,109 villages in six districts, and it has already distributed over 438,000 stoves to date and could help reduce over 485,000 tonnes of carbon emission.

Then, he viewed round the displayed research posters of project implementation, work implementation posters, and agricultural waste, which can be used as fuelwood substitutes and fuel-efficient cook stoves, and gave necessary instructions. — MNA/KTZH

NATIONAL

Bayintnaung's chilli pepper warehouses in stockpile amid shortages of cold storage facilities

BAYINTNAUNG'S chilli pepper warehouses face huge stockpiles in mid-March 2024 as cold storage facilities fall short.

The prices of various chilli peppers in 2024 are lower than those registered in September 2022 and February 2023.

The prevailing prices are K6,000-K8,000 per viss of long chilli pepper and Moeltaung chilli pepper and K10,000-K11,000 per viss of bell pepper.

The prices stood at K31,000 per viss of bell pepper processed in cold storage and K18,000-K22,000 for Moeltaung and long chilli peppers processed in cold storage in late 2022, making the traders reap a handsome profit.

Yet, the majority of the traders faced losses in 2023 due to the price plunge.

Some of those chilli pepper stocks are still left in some warehouses in Bayintnaung, said a depot owner from Seinpan Street in the Bayintnaung area.

The cold storage charges are K125-K130 per viss of chilli pepper



MAEX cold storage at the No 1 Danyingon market complex.

in Yangon. With chilli pepper prices dropping and the plentiful supply, cold storage facilities are full of stocks. Therefore, there is no adequate space for warehousing for now.

If chilli pepper is not stored in cold storage, the colour will fade, causing the price to decline. Prior

to cold storage warehousing before 2000, the chilli peppers were stored in clay pots.

There is less chance for the price to rise this month with the abundant supply of chilli pepper, a trader told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM). — TWA/KK

Myanmar Calendar Advisory Board publishes Thingyan and Buddhist Lent days



The Plenary Meeting of the Myanmar Calendar Advisory Board in progress from 18 to 24 February in Yangon.

THE Myanmar Calendar Advisory Board has issued the official days of Maha Thingyan (water festival) and the period of the Buddhist Lent in 1385-1386 ME.

According to the board, the first day of the Maha Thingyan (water festival) in 1385-1386 ME will fall on Sunday, 14 April, at 12:24 pm, and the second day will be on 15 April. The final day of the water festival will be on 16 April at 4:29:26 am, while Wednesday, 17 April, marks the first day of the New Year in Myanmar and the Rakhine calendar.

The 72nd Plenary Meeting of the Myanmar Calendar Advisory Board was held at the National Theatre (Yangon) from 18 to 24 February, and the advisory board chair Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Panyeinda, Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Daw Nu Mra Zan, and officials attended the meeting. — TWA/TH

New court building unveiled in Htantabin Township

THE chief minister of Yangon Region attended the opening ceremony of the new court building in Htantabin Township, Yangon Region, yesterday.

Located at No 257 on the corner of Bayintnaung Street and Bogyoke Street in Ward 2, the new court building was inaugurated with the chief minister, the Yangon Command commander, and the chief justice of the Yangon Region High Court cutting the ribbon and unveiling the signboard. Constructed by Hnaingshin Metta Company Limited, the new court building was formally handed over to Township Judge U Thant Zin Oo, who expressed gratitude for the completion of the project. — TWA/TKO

FDA mandates approval for branded bottled water, edible oil manufacturers

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Food and Drug Administration (FDA), manufacturers of branded bottled drinking water and edible oils must obtain approval from the FDA. This approval is necessary before applying for a license. The directive was issued by the Myanmar Food and Drug Administration on 4 March under Section 38, Sub-section (b) of the National Food and Beverage Law.

As per the directive, producers of branded bottled drinking water and edible oils, which are considered controlled food items from the date of the directive, must apply for a food production certificate from the FDA. Subsequently, they should obtain a license from the relevant department or organization.

Furthermore, if a license has already been obtained from the relevant department or organization but food pro-



Food chemistry lab at the FDA Department in Nay Pyi Taw.

duction approval is pending, applicants must apply for food production approval at the FDA Department by 1 April.

Any necessary endorsements, li-

cence renewals, or new licences should be processed in accordance with the instructions provided by the relevant department or organization. — TWA/TMT

New supply of kidney beans brings down prices

A high inflow of new kidney beans slashed the prices when there was regular demand, Mandalay's market figures showed.

The price of new kidney beans touched only K3.402 million per tonne in the third week of March 2024 after it hit a record high of K4.593 million per tonne on 7 February, indicating a drop of K1.2 million per tonne over the past month.

Myanmar exports kidney beans to China, India, Japan,



The photo shows kidney beans.

Singapore, and other foreign countries through border and maritime trade channels. Myanmar shipped 59,425.711 tonnes of kidney beans worth US\$50.31 million to foreign markets in the previous financial year 2022-2023 (April-March), the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated.

Myanmar conveyed 33,466.428 tonnes of kidney beans worth \$40.32 million to foreign trade partners between 1 April and 8 March of the current FY 2023-2024, comprising 17,349.467 tonnes worth \$17.633 million through maritime trade and over 16,116.96 tonnes worth \$22.689 million via land borders, as per the Ministry of Commerce's statistics.

Kidney beans are cultivated in October-November and harvested in early February. They are grown in the upper Sagaing Region, Bhamo in Kachin State, Kayin State and along the Ayeyawady River. The beans produced from Katha and Bhamo townships are in high demand in the domestic market due to their large size. — NN/EM

Watermelon, muskmelon export market to China heading to pullback

THE pullback of the watermelon and muskmelon export market to China could be near, fruit traders stressed.

Extreme weather and transport disruption at borders are contributing factors to the physical damage of the fruits.

Additionally, the demand for Myanmar's watermelon and muskmelon has faltered significantly in China's market amid their supplies.

Subsequently, Myanmar exporters are suggested to contemplate the market conditions depending on the supply and demand factors amid the export risks and transport disruption.

Watermelons and muskmelons are now being delivered to China through Lweje and Mongla road channels under these circumstances.

Myanmar's watermelon is primarily exported to China. However, fruit traders emphasized that traders are facing prolonged challenges amid the



Watermelons arranged for sale at a fruit shop.

policy changes in China.

Tight inspections of Chinese Customs hindered truck transport in early February last year. That being so, only 20-30 trucks were given green lights to pass the checkpoint despite high demand.

Consequently, watermelon was sold out at the depots on the Chinese side, and more than 500 trucks queued in line on the Myanmar side.

The COVID-19 restrictions

hindered Myanmar's watermelon and muskmelon exports to China in 2021. Chinese Customs policy changes worsened the delay. Long delays in trucks led to the deterioration of fruits, and only one in five trucks heading to China remained undamaged.

The traders need to carefully consider delivery time, price and profitability, as watermelon is a perishable fruit while trying to explore new markets beyond China. — NN/EM

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ADVERTORIAL

Reliable Power Supply for College Entrance Examination in Myanmar

FOR the college entrance examination in Bhamo, Dapein (1) Hydropower Station of China Datang Corporation will primarily carry out careful planning, make thorough arrangements and take vigorous actions for reliable power supply from 11 to 19 March.

As a reliable power source in Bhamo, Dapein (1) Hydropower Station will, following the principles of "early planning, early arrangement and early implementation" and the schedule of the college entrance examination in Bhamo, list key power supply zones, coordinate power supply measures and refine the tasks related to work safety, so that there is "zero hazard" in power



supply for the college entrance examination.

Dapein (1) Hydropower

Station will continue to assume the responsibility for secure power supply to meet current



needs, boost sustainable development, promote the Pauk-Phaw friendship and jointly

write a brilliant chapter of the Belt and Road Initiative.

OPINION

Choose poetry hearts and souls to optimize the globe

POETRY possesses a remarkable ability to penetrate even the most rigid concepts, soften hardened hearts, and temper strong attitudes. Embedded within our daily routines and conversations, poetry subtly shapes our perceptions and influences our thoughts.

UNESCO officially declared 21 March as World Poetry Day during its 30th General Conference in Paris, France, in 1999. This annual commemoration serves as a catalyst for nurturing a deeper appreciation for poetry and its transformative power. UNESCO's objective is clear: to promote linguistic diversity by encouraging poetic expression and amplifying the voices of endangered languages.

World Poetry Day provides a platform to celebrate poets, revitalize oral traditions through recitals, and advocate for the reading, writing, and teaching of poetry. It fosters interdisciplinary connections, bridging poetry with other art forms such as theatre, dance, music, and painting, thereby elevating poetry's visibility in mainstream media.

At its core, World Poetry Day seeks to ignite a global movement to promote poetry's consumption, creation, dissemination, and education. It aims to breathe new life into national, regional, and international poetry communities, fostering cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

Around the world, nations proudly showcase their rich traditions and customs intertwined with poetry. This cultural heritage not only preserves ancestral legacies but also serves as a vibrant expression of diverse lifestyles. Poetry acts as a unifying thread, weaving together the tapestry of global cultures into a colourful garland of shared humanity.

Moreover, poetry serves as a universal language transcending geographical and linguistic boundaries. Through the exchange of knowledge, culture, and artistic expressions, poetry facilitates connections between people, fostering compassion, empathy, and rationality. It has the potential to reshape global dynamics,

mitigating conflicts and promoting harmony.

As we embrace the significance of poetry in shaping hearts and minds, let us recognize its pivotal role in fostering a more inclusive and compassionate world. By engaging with poetry, we cultivate empathy, celebrate diversity, and inspire positive change. Together, let us harness the power of poetry to optimize the globe and create a brighter future for generations to come.

"Standing on the Shoulders of Giants" is the celebratory theme for World Poetry Day 2024, marked annually on 21 March. The theme nods to iconic writers of the past whose trailblazing works enlarged poetry's footprint across cultures. In fact, as honouring the poetry act is a fine tradition for the global people, they all have to sustain the tradition for perpetual existence, setting aside the hardness of hearts and souls of some individuals who neglect the peace and prosperity of the world.

EPISODE:31

ON THE Jadeite and Other Rocks, from Tammaw in Upper Burma

Professor Max Bauer of Marburg University reported on the petrology of jadeite and other rocks from Tammaw in Upper Burma in 1895. While his report provided a comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of jadeite and other rocks, due to space constraints, only the following excerpts could be extracted to offer a general overview of Burmese jadeite.

In the following pages, I propose to describe the rocks collected by Dr Noetling at the jade mines near Tammaw in Upper Burma, which are now in the collection of the Geological Survey of India. These specimens, including the jadeite and the serpentine (the most important), bear all the characteristics of true rocks.

Jadeite

The jadeite forms a fine-grained mass, chiefly white, and bearing at first sight a certain resemblance to marble. The size of the grains is not uniform; they are at times so small as to be indistinguishable by the naked eye, while at times, they are somewhat larger, in which case they are characterized by an elongated form and distinct cleavage. On account of the smallness of the grains, no single individual could be separated, and further information could be obtained only using the microscope. I will, however, first describe the general appearance of the jadeite.

General Characters

The colour of all specimens under my observation is a clear snow-white on fresh fracture; this monotonous white is, however, relieved by beautiful emerald-green spots, which represent the really valuable part of the stone. They are of variable size, sometimes as large as a lentil or a pea, attaining a diameter of several centimetres. The colour is, in many cases, very intense, but in others, it is quite pale, at times forming a faint film-like covering of larger or smaller portions of the surface. As it approaches the white mass of the rock, the colour changes abruptly. However, there is no well-defined boundary between the two. The green colour is due to the presence of a small quantity of chromium, for powder of an intensely green colour gives an unquestionable Cr reaction before the blowpipe: this,

The Burma Circle of the Geological Survey of India and their Contributions to the Geology of Myanmar

By THAN HTUN (GEOSCIENCE MYANMAR)

however, is less distinct when the paler powder is used and is absent in the white portions, when fresh, the lustre is vitreous, but towards the surface, it becomes somewhat duller.

Specific Gravity

Special care was exercised in the determination of the specific gravity because, in samples of jadeite from Bhamo, which might perhaps be considered identical to specimens from Tammaw, it was found to be very low. The average specific gravity of the Tammaw jadeite is about 3.3, while Issel gives that of two specimens of green jadeite Bhamo as 3.10, which corresponds with the values obtained by Damour. Mallet states that the specific gravity of the Tammaw jadeite is 3.24.

Microscopic Characters

The microscopic examination shows that the groundmass is composed of a confused aggregate of irregular prisms, varying in size; their length and breadth being in some cases the same and nearly equal to 1mm, but as a rule, the prisms are elongated, their length considerably exceeding their breadth. In no case, however, did I observe a breadth of less than 0.1 mm. The groundmass of the jadeite is perfectly pure and without a trace of any accessory mineral. The prisms are perfectly colourless, except at the boundary between two individuals or along small cracks, where a slight discolouration may be seen, probably due to subsequent infiltration. The green spots always retain their colour even in slices; it is, however, very pale, even in cases in which it was originally intense. In very pale sections, no pleochroism is noticeable, but thicker slices are slightly dichroic, with the colours ranging from bluish to yellowish green. The prisms are, at times, colourless in places. In the centre of the green spots, they are coloured, but as they approach the surrounding

white groundmass, they begin to lose their colour and become partly green and partly white. Hence, we see that the green patches in the white ground cannot be due to an aggregation of green mineral grains at certain spots, but we must imagine local impregnations that took place using a colouring matter containing chromium in the solution. The green prisms are exactly similar in every respect to the white ones, with the sole exception of their different colour and so on.

Serpentine and Olivine

The groundmass of the serpentine is dense, appearing completely homogeneous, with a very dark, somewhat brownish-green colour; which spreads evenly over the whole surface. The fracture is uneven and splintery. Hardness considerable, exceeding that of pure serpentine: apatite is distinctly scratched in some instances. Under the microscope, the cause of this anomaly is at once evident, for the specimen is seen to be an altered olivine rock, the alteration of which into serpentine is quite complete, but the process of serpentinization is proceeding in the usual manner along cracks and fissures. In microscopic sections, the olivine is perfectly colourless and transparent; in thick slices, however, it shows a greenish-yellow tinge. It forms an aggregate of rather coarse grains, which in several instances have a diameter of more than 1 cm. They are always irregularly circular, with no indication of crystal faces being traceable. The olivine individuals and also the aggregates formed by the small grains are intersected in the usual manner by strings of serpentine of a greenish-yellow colour, which usually show distinct and very fine fibrous structures, running in most cases parallel to the walls of the small fissures: in a few cases, however, they are perpendicular to the walls. The rock is, therefore, a fibrous serpentine, very similar to chrysolite,

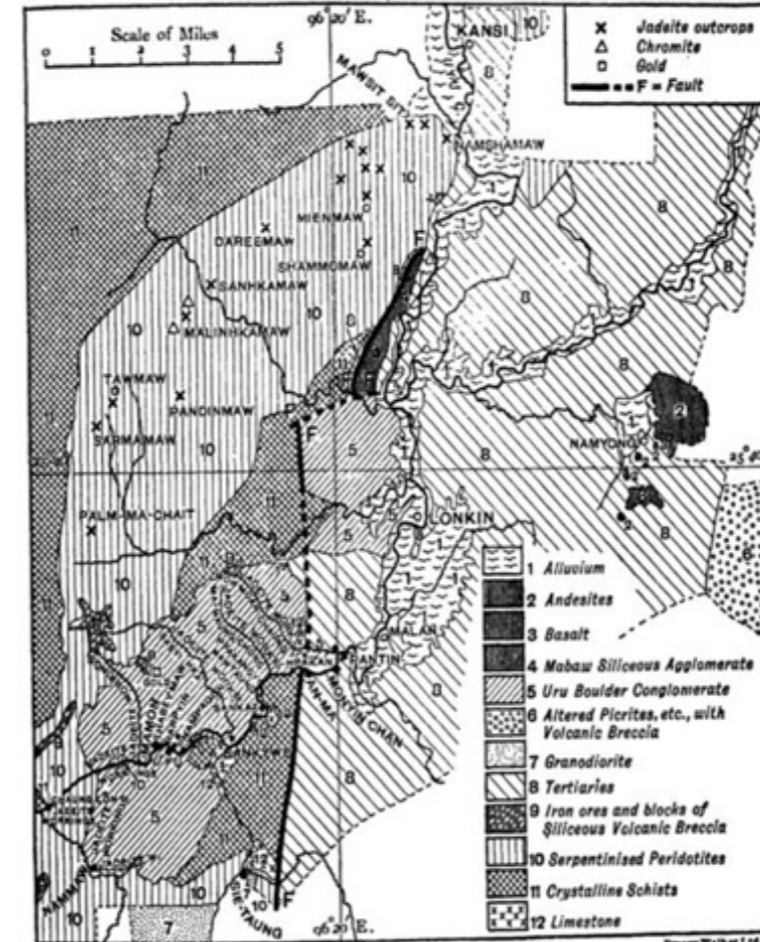
and closely resembles it in the vividness of its polarisation colours and so on.

Magnetite and other Accessory Constituents

Except for numerous small black grains with a metallic lustre, no other minerals but olivine and serpentine can be seen. These black grains, which have a diameter of one millimetre, are magnetic and, hence, are probably magnetite. Some of the grains are not magnetite. These grains are unquestionably the source of the Cr, which permeates portions of the jadeite and produces green patches. In the specimens under observation, however, no mineral can be identified as chromite or picotite; if, however, a larger number of specimens were examined, I do not doubt that sections of both minerals would be found. A specimen of the serpentine rock, which had been freed as much as possible from magnetite, gave a specific gravity of 2.838, etc.

Pikrolite

The percentage by volume is olivine 36.79 per cent and serpentine 63.21 per cent. These figures are, of course, not correct, but they give a very fair idea of the composition of the groundmass and certainly prove that no more than one-half of the original olivine has been altered into serpentine. The newer portions of pure serpentine, usually observed in connection with this form of alteration, are not absent in the present case. Strings of pikrolite, in particular, may be seen running through the rock. These veins are of a lighter colour than the chief mass of the rock and are, as a rule, very narrow. Some, however, attain a thickness of nearly two centimetres. Some specimens, the outer surface of which is composed of pikrolite, exhibit the characteristic course, straight, striated appearance, producing the effect of a slickenside, and one of these specimens gives unmistakable evidence of the tremen-



Sketch map showing the geology of the jadeite-bearing region in the neighbourhoods of Kansi, Lonkin, Tammaw, Hpakon, Mamon, etc. Source: H.L. Chhibber 1934.

dous crushing and pressure. On fresh fracture, the pikrolite has a faint fatty lustre, but on the natural surface, this lustre is much more marked. The colour is light green, with a distinct greyish or yellowish tinge. Under the microscope, the pikrolite is light yellow, almost colourless, and not pleochronic. It can hardly be distinguished from the surrounding Canada balsam and must, therefore, have the same refractive index.

Albite-hornblende rock

The specimen under my observation is about the size of the fist and formed part of a large boulder exhibiting both rolled surfaces and fresh fracture. The rolled surface is brown owing to impregnation by hydroxide of iron, the colouration extending for some distance within the rock but gradually fading and eventually disappearing. At first glance, one would

be inclined to identify this rock as a saussurite gabbro owing to the appearance of the fractured surface. The fine white, sugary groundmass contains grains of brown mineral, which cleaves easily and has a metallic lustre on the cleavage faces. Examination proved, however, that these two parts are neither saussurite nor diallage, and hence the rock is not a saussurite gabbro but represents a new type. The beautiful, snow-white groundmass is almost indistinguishable from some saussurites, as, for example, from that of Hamburg near Frankenstein in Silesia. It has the hardness of feldspar and fuses with great difficulty before the blowpipe. The specific gravity of the two fragments was 2.599 and 2.576, respectively, which gave an average of 2.587.

Microscopic Characters

Under the microscope, the

groundmass is seen to be a homogeneous aggregate of very small, irregularly rounded grains, varying in size from .02mm to a fourth or fifth of that size. These grains are almost perfectly pure, enclosures being absent, with the exception, perhaps, of a few small liquid enclosures with moveable bubbles. The grains are perfectly transparent and colourless, and between them occur foreign particles, which, however, are never included in them. The white grains show no cleavage faces but are crossed in one direction by a series of fine cracks, indicating a perfect cleavage.

Hornblende

The brown mineral resembling diallage, scattered through the white groundmass, has been proven to be hornblende. It occurs in single crystals of various sizes, the largest being nearly 4 cm. by 2 cm. This, however, is less than the original size of the crystal on the surface of the specimen and has been considerably broken. As a rule, the crystals are smaller but are always as large as a pea. They are not numerous, being scattered throughout the rock. Their outline is generally irregular, although, at times, rough crystal faces can be made out. The colour is that of brown hair, but sometimes grey, and the cleavage faces have a metallic lustre, resembling diallage or bronzite. Each crystal is bounded by a green margin, while the surrounding groundmass is also coloured green, and so on.

Hornblende-Glaucophane Schist

This specimen has a dark brown surface; in some places, it is rough, and in others, it is smooth but not rolled much. It is a schistose rock of an intense emerald to grass-green colour and bears a strong resemblance to smaragdite. A closer examination, however, at once reveals the fact that it represents an aggregate of greyish hornblende individuals, largely permeated by green enclosures, which impart to its remarkable colour. The greyish portions pass in places into a deep green, but in other places, again, the green colouring matter is absent.

The hornblende individuals are most irregularly intermixed and show no signs of definite arrangement. They attain a length of as much as three and a breadth of as much as two centimetres. They have no crystalline outlines,

but their cleavage is perfect, the angle between the two prismatic cleavages averaging $124\frac{1}{2}^\circ$. The specific gravity of the whole mass -not that of the pure hornblende- was obtained from two pieces of rock, the values being 3.112 and 3.126. The characteristics of glaucophane and augite could not be described due to restricted space.

Geological Age

Noetling believes that the jadeite and serpentine penetrate the surrounding tertiary sandstone, while nothing is known about the relationship between the occurrence of the two other rocks and the jadeite. Noetling's view necessitates the assumption of an eruption of jadeite and another of olivine rock, following one another, but the petrological composition of these rocks is not favourable to such a view, which would include them among the tertiary eruptive rocks. Judging by the petrological characters, we must consider them to represent a system of crystalline schists.

Now, there is no doubt that in former geological times, olivine rocks were produced by volcanic eruptions. Nowhere, however, have rocks of this nature been found in beds of such modern date, being, according to Noetling, not older than of Miocene age. To consider the jadeite as an eruptive rock would be entirely unjustified, for neither in the older nor yet in, the more recent series of eruptive rocks has any rock of the nature of jadeite been found. In Turkistan, however, it has been proved to be embedded with nephrite in the crystalline schists (gneiss and mica schist), and it belongs to that series.

I have repeatedly stressed the fact that these rocks must have been subjected to great pressure, which can only be accounted for by folding. I do not assert for a moment that the above arguments are absolutely convincing. Still, they certainly support the view which best accords with the petrological evidence, while the stratigraphical conditions observed by Noetling in the mines at Tammaw fully bear out this.

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NATIONAL

Mandalay Solo Art Exhibition features marionette show, traditional Myanmar Orchestra

A solo art exhibition featuring the ancient custom of marionette performance by puppeteers and traditional Myanmar orchestra will be held in Mandalay, says the Siripaccaya Art Gallery.

The art exhibition titled “Marionette Show”, which will be held from 23 to 24 March at the Hotel Mandalay on 78th Street, and between 37th and 38th streets, will showcase the works of the late U Zaw Win (Thit Htwi).

“To the east of the art show, there will be a marionette show. It is a sideshow to the art exhibition. While the artworks are being displayed, a marionette show is also arranged for the children who have been missing it for a long time. We are organizing all the features of a traditional Myanmar marionette show,” said Ko Hla Myo, founder of the Siripaccaya Art Gallery.

Despite the title “Marionette Show”, the exhibition goes beyond art, and visitors can learn about the broader aspects of puppetry, as well as art, and there will be some programmes for the children.

“What we are planning for the show is 1) a marionette show, 2) the target audience is the children, and as many gifts as possible will be provided to the participating children, 3) they can enjoy an authentic puppet show (with a real Myanmar orchestra, real puppets, real singing, real lamenting and real drama talks according to the old traditional agenda), 4) publication of a commemorative booklet in limited numbers, 5) a food stall with free food for the children (including Kho Taung noodle salad, steamed sticky rice, fries and fritters and steamed rice cake), and 6) a workshop-style demonstration of puppet carving, puppet painting, and puppet stringing (professionals will demonstrate how they carve, paint and string puppets in their daily routine),” said the Siripaccaya Art Gallery. — Thit Taw/ZN

Continuous arrival of tourists in Bagan, expected surge during Thingyan

THERE is a continuous arrival of local and foreign tourists in the Bagan Ancient Cultural Heritage Zone, and it is expected to expand in Thingyan, said U Kyaw Myo Win, director of the Archaeology and National Museum Department (Bagan branch) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture.

From this dry season until now, not only local visitors but also foreigners have been coming to visit Bagan without interruption.

“About 50 foreigners alone arrived just two days ago. Local visitors also

entered. Flights are congested a little. Previously, there were two airlines run weekly, and another airline was expanded. Now, these three airlines are not sufficient due to loads of visitors. There are visitors who come by car. Tourist arrival in Bagan has increased. Tourist arrivals were high in previous festive periods, so it is expected to be large in Thingyan too,” he said.

During seasonal festivals- Thadingyut and Tazaungdine, and the December holidays, tourist arrivals mounted, and even hotels were fully booked.

As a result of thriving tourist arrivals, residents can enjoy job opportunities and earn more, said residents.

“Due to the increase in visitor arrivals, residents are now doing well. Local businesses have yet to restore to their previous condition. They are fine,” said Ma Pyae Pyae, a vendor from Bagan.

As of this dry season, the number of local and foreign visitors has swollen again in Myanmar, and no decline has been seen in the travel industry. — MT/ZS



Visitors waiting for sunset view in Bagan.

Goyangyi Island sees surge in visitors; local guides benefit from job growth

THE visitor arrival has begun larger in Goyangyi Island, especially since this month, increasing job opportunities for local tour guides.

People who visited the ancient Mawtinsun Pagoda Festival, which is in progress during the month, also went to visit Goyangyi on their return, and some visitors came to the island in order to escape from the summer’s heat.

“As there are many visitors on the island, local tour guides have enjoyed

better job opportunities. Some came to visit Goyangyi during their trip to Mawtinsun. Some came straight to Goyangyi for relaxation. The number of visitors has increased more than before. Visitors are from Yangon as well as from other regions and states,” said a resident.

A man who visited Goyangyi said that despite inconvenient travel, Goyangyi has a beach that provides an environment of peace and tranquillity

for relaxation.

“However, the journey to Goyangyi made me exhausted due to far distance and bumpy road, but it is a very peaceful island where big rocks and coral reefs are located, and the water is crystal clear,” said Win Ko Ko, who visited the island in early March.

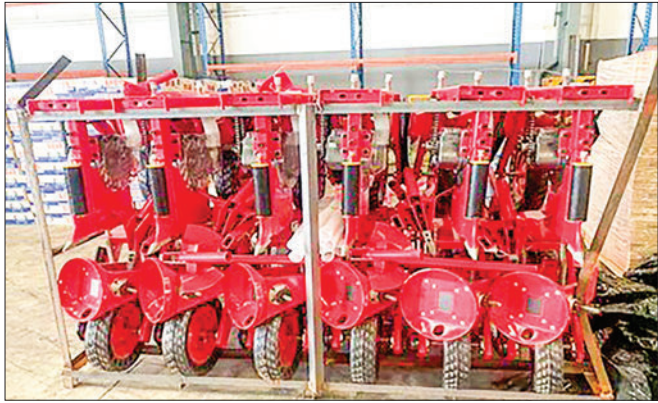
There are enquiries about the journey and hotel reservations for visiting Goyangyi from Yangon during the Thingyan holidays. — MT/ZS



Beach and other attractions to visit on Goyangyi island.

NATIONAL

Confiscations of illegal items: Timbers, various fish, fuel oil, industrial materials, consumer goods and vehicles



Photos show confiscated corn seeders at the Myanmar Industrial Port and escalator spare parts and elevator spare parts at the Thilawa Port Terminal container checkpoint.

THE on-duty team, supervised by the Kachin State Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force, confiscated various goods worth K7.07 million on the outskirts of Bhamo township on 18 March. This included 250 bed sheets (made in China), and the enforcement was conducted under Customs procedures.

On the same day, combined teams seized three corn seeders valued at K6 million, which were not declared in the Import

Declaration (ID), from a container at the Myanmar Industrial Port. Additionally, they confiscated goods worth K33.145 million from five containers at the Thilawa Port Terminal container checkpoint. This included seven China-made escalator spare parts and 125 China-made elevator spare parts without official documents. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

On 19 March, the com-

combined team seized 480 kilograms of various fish valued at K824,000 from a wooden boat in the waters three miles east of Thandani island in Kawthoung township. They also confiscated illegal timbers weighing 2.077 tonnes worth K311,610 in Kyunsu township and 4,988 kilograms of illegal lead valued at K149.64 million in Yamon village in Kyunsu township. These actions were taken under Customs procedures, the

Forest Law, and the Myanmar Mines Law.

On the same day, 1,140 gallons of illegal diesel without official documents were seized in Monywa township, and an unregistered Toyota Crown car (approximate value of K3 million) was captured in Dagon Myothit (North) Township. The action was taken under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law and the Export and Import Law.

Additionally, illegal teak weighing 1.93 tonnes, illegal hardwood weighing 1.462 tonnes, and illegal timbers weighing 12.968 tonnes were captured in Patheingyi and Yekyi townships. The action was taken under the Forest Law.

The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported that 14 arrests were made on 18 and 19 March, with an estimated value of K206.819 million. — MNA/MKKS

Counter-argument to false information

NUG-spread misinformation alleges exodus since Military Service Law enforcement

SUBVERSIVE NUG is spreading propaganda, claiming that there has been a significant exodus of people fleeing to other countries since the State Administration Council (SAC) implemented Myanmar's People Military Service Law on 10 February 2024.

This misinformation aims to persuade young people to join terrorist groups, destabilizing the Union, national unity, and sovereignty. They urge individuals not to undergo military training or serve in the military for national defence.

Furthermore, terrorist groups exploit political conflicts, making arrests, executing individuals under false accusations of informing security forces, burning homes, and planting mines on public roads.

The malicious media and terrorist groups purposefully circulate false news to discourage citizens from undergoing military training or serving in the military under the law. Consequently, the government is providing education on the laws, regulations, and rules of Myanmar's People Military Service Law through State-owned media. Interested individuals can also access information at <https://mod.gov.mm/node/74> for enquiries. — MNA/TKO



The screenshot validates misinformations.

Misinformation circulated regarding fatal explosion in Sagaing Region

THE subversive media outlets are spreading false news alleging that an explosion caused by security forces on the morning of 18 March killed a father and son in Sanmyo ward, Kalay Township, Sagaing Region and that the number of casualties has risen.

However, according to a resident, the explosion was caused by a mine

planted by PDF terrorists, which detonated in front of the KBZ bank in Sanmyo ward on the morning of 18 March, resulting in the death of a father and his son at the scene. These malicious media outlets are circulating misinformation, failing to provide accurate news in a timely manner, and undermining the stability of the region. — MNA/TMT

Women put in list of military service registration in Hmawby Township: Misinformation

MALICIOUS news media are spreading misinformation that women are included in the list of military service registration in the wards and villages of Hmawby Township, Yangon Region.

According to a person in charge of the relevant township administration, there is currently no plan to recruit women for people's military service, and pamphlets have already been distributed about that.

People can learn more details about at the website <https://mod.gov>.

[mm/node/74](https://mod.gov/mm/node/74) and Mobile phone's SMS so the action of the malicious news media are shameful.

Regarding the law of military service, some people are doing fraud by asking for money. In order for people to avoid scams and to prevent young people from going astray due to baseless information errors, the State-owned media and information on military service are continuously broadcast to make them aware of and understand news about military service. — MNA/KZL

ECONOMY WORLD

Beijing boosts intl sci-tech innovation hub amid high-quality development

In 2023, technology contract transactions surpassed 850 billion yuan, with an average of 337 new technology enterprises established daily.



Baidu and Pony.ai's autonomous driving vehicles test on the street in Yizhuang in Beijing's southern suburb. **PHOTO: CHINA DAILY**

BEIJING Municipality will focus on building itself into a major international sci-tech innovation center and leverage its strategic role as the national capital to develop new quality

productive forces in a drive to enhance the city's high-quality development, local authorities said on Tuesday.

In recent years, Beijing's efforts have achieved remarka-

ble results. The city has topped the list of "Nature Index — Science Cities" for eight consecutive years, ranking among the most innovative cities in the world, the city's mayor Yin Yong said at a press conference.

The volume of technology contract transactions in Beijing exceeded 850 billion yuan (about US\$119.74 billion) in 2023, with an average of 337 technology enterprises established each day. In the face of a new round of global technological and industrial changes, the capital will continue to make efforts to improve its sci-tech research capabilities, deepen the reform of the sci-tech system, and strengthen the cultivation and introduction of talent, Yin said. — Xinhua

Economic hard times make Swedes cut back on drinking

A slumping economy gave Swedes less to cheer about last year as alcohol consumption fell the most in nearly a decade in the Nordic country, excluding the 2020 pandemic, research showed Friday. Alcohol consumption among people above the age of 15 fell to 8.6 litres per

capita in 2023, according to the Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN)

It was down 2.7 per cent from 2022, the biggest annual drop since 2014 when excluding 2020. "This shows that the economic situation in 2023 has also

influenced the buying of alcohol," Bjorn Trollidal, a researcher at CAN, said in a statement.

"The depreciation of the Swedish krona and the increase in fuel prices has affected imports," the researcher told AFP.

As a result, Swedes bought less alcohol from Germany, which accounts for 50 per cent of total imports, he added.

The country's economy shrank by 0.3 per cent in 2023, one of the weakest performers in the European Union, as the central bank raised rates to battle soaring inflation. Sweden has an alcohol distribution monopoly, meaning that apart from bars and restaurants Swedes can only buy beverages with an alcohol-level above 3.5 per cent at state-run outlets called Systembolaget, and authorized retailers in rural areas. — AFP



Booze consumption fell by 2.7 per cent in Sweden last year. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

EU and Philippines relaunch free trade talks

The European Union and the Philippines have agreed to restart negotiations for a free trade agreement, aiming to begin the first round of talks "later this year," announced EU trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis.

THE European Union and the Philippines announced the resumption of negotiations for a free trade agreement on Monday, with Brussels saying the first round of talks should begin "later this year".

"The conditions are right to take our trade relations to the next level," EU trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said at a press conference in Brussels.

Talks began in 2015 under then-Philippine president Benigno Aquino but stalled two years later under his successor

Rodrigo Duterte, whose deadly drug war strained diplomatic relations with the West and sparked an international probe.

The two sides announced their intention to reopen negotiations during a visit to Manila by EU chief Ursula von der Leyen last year.

The Southeast Asian nation says it wants to expand its economic relations with other countries to achieve greater "resiliency". The EU is the Philippines' fourth-largest trading partner and is one of the biggest investors in the country. — AFP



A crane stacks shipping containers of Philippine products for export at the international container port in Manila on 11 September 2012. **PHOTO: JAY DIRECTO/AFP**

German housing crisis shows no sign of easing: Destatis

GERMANY'S housing crisis has shown no sign of easing, with a 23.5-per cent decline in the number of residential building permits issued in January compared to the same period of 2023, the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) said on Monday.

Only 16,800 apartments were granted building permits in January, according to Destatis. Last year, a total of 260,100 building permits were issued for apartments, the lowest level since 2012.

"The new year has started with further bad news for res-

idential construction," Felix Pakleppa, chief executive of the German Construction Federation (ZDB), said in a statement, warning that "today's lack of building permits is tomorrow's lack of orders and apartments".

Pakleppa told Xinhua that it was "difficult to say when the situation will ease again". For the current year, 235,000 housing completions were expected. "Falling interest rates and a reliable funding environment are crucial for more construction to take place again." — Xinhua

Crisis-hit Playmobil eyes a Swift boost as it turns 50

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, Playmobil seeks a boost in sales with the help of pop icon Taylor Swift amid fierce competition from Lego.

AS Playmobil turns 50, the German company behind the popular plastic figures is hoping that pop megastar Taylor Swift can help it shake off a slump in fortunes.

Playmobil has in recent years lost ground to rivals, in particular Lego, the world's number one toymaker whose sales are 10 times greater than those of its German competitor. The Danish company has been way ahead in the licensing business, boasting Star Wars, Harry Potter and a more recent addition —

Barbie — in its portfolio. Over at Playmobil, the picture is distinctly less glamorous. Its greatest ever success is a 7.5 centimetres (three-inch) figure of German Protestant firebrand Martin Luther, 1.3 million of which have been sold.

Things are about to change, Playmobil hopes. Boss Bahri Kurtzer said contacts have been made with people close to Swift — one of pop music's most dominant forces — and creative work has started. — AFP



Playmobil has in recent years lost ground to rivals, in particular Lego, the world's number one toymaker. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

China's new rules on consumer finance to defuse risks, promote consumption

Analysts noted that China's recent regulations on consumer finance companies aim to strengthen market regulation and risk control, enabling the sector to better support consumption growth.

CHINA'S recent new regulations on consumer finance companies will improve market regulation and risk control and let the sector better play its role in bolstering consumption growth, analysts said.

On Monday, the National Financial Regulatory Administration published a series of measures that lifted the access threshold of consumer finance companies, stepped up regulatory rules, and enhanced the protection of consumer rights.

According to the official document, the main investor of a new firm



This photo taken on 4 November 2022 shows an evening view of the Lujiazui area in east China's Shanghai. PHOTO: WANG XIANG

providing consumer loans needs to hold a stake of at least 50 per cent, up from 30 per cent previously. Its

shareholders with related business expertise and experience are also required to have a bigger

stake. The minimum level of registered capital for the company is also raised. — Xinhua

Apple CEO in China ahead of Shanghai store opening

APPLE CEO Tim Cook was on a China charm offensive Wednesday ahead of a new flagship Shanghai store opening, weeks after a report suggested the company's sales in the country slumped at the

start of 2024.

Cook posted a video compilation on Chinese social media platform Weibo that featured him strolling in Shanghai's Bund area, taking selfies and eating soup dumplings with Chi-

nese actor Zheng Kai.

"I'm always so happy to be back in this remarkable city," he wrote in an accompanying caption in Chinese and English.

Apple will on Thursday open an eighth store

in Shanghai, China's most populous city and its financial hub.

Cook's visit comes as worries grow around Apple's market share in the world's second-largest economy. — AFP

Swiss firm Lonza snaps up Roche site in US for \$1.2 bln

SWISS healthcare manufacturing group Lonza announced Wednesday that it had reached an agreement to buy a US biologics site from pharmaceutical giant Roche for \$1.2 billion in cash.

In a statement, Lonza hailed the "highly valuable strategic acquisition" of the Genentech site in Vacaville California — one of the world's largest biologics manufacturing sites by

volume.

The agreement between the two Swiss companies "will make capacity immediately available for our customers and unlock future growth for our Biologics division," Lonza's president of biologics Jean-Christophe Hyvert said in the statement.

The agreement was due to be finalized in the second half of the year, the company said. — AFP



Lonza, which makes drug substances used by pharmaceutical, biotech and nutrition companies, said the deal would specifically increase its biologics manufacturing capacity for so-called mammalian therapies, PHOTO: WLADYSLAW SOJKA / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V T12 APPLE VOY.NO. (2411E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V T12 APPLE VOY.NO. (2411E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-3-2024 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S T12 LOGISTICS PTE LTD

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD



The Korean Central News Agency announced that North Korea has established a timetable for completing the development of a new hypersonic missile weapons system following the success of its latest ground engine test. **PHOTO: KCNA VIA KNS/AFP**

North Korea successfully conducts ground-jet test for new hypersonic missile

Hypersonic missiles are part of the advanced weaponry pledged by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un at a key party congress in 2021.

NORTH Korea has successfully conducted a ground-jet test of a solid-fuel engine for a new type of intermediate hypersonic missile amid heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula, according to Yonhap News Agency.

Reportedly, hypersonic missiles are on the list of sophisticated weapons North Korean leader Kim Jong-un vowed to develop during a key party congress in 2021, along with nuclear-powered submarines, spy satellites and solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The missiles travel at a speed of at least Mach 5, five times the speed of sound, and

are designed to be maneuverable on unpredictable flight paths and fly at low altitudes.

At Mach 5 or higher, such a missile would be able to traverse the 195 kilometres between Pyongyang and Seoul in just one to two minutes, as reported by Yonhap News Agency.

“The military strategic value of this weapon system is appreciated as important as ICBM from the security environment of our state and the operational demand of the People’s Army and enemies know better about it,” Kim said at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground on the country’s west coast on Tuesday. — ANI

Netanyahu rejects US plea to halt Rafah attack, agrees to talk in Washington

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rebuffed the US request to halt a ground operation in Rafah city, home to approximately 1.5 million displaced Palestinians, but agreed to dispatch a delegation to Washington for talks.

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday rejected the US call to cancel a ground operation in Rafah city, where about 1.5 million displaced Palestinians resided, but agreed to send a delegation to Washington for discussions.

The White House confirmed in a statement that Netanyahu and US President Joe Biden agreed in a phone call on

Monday, that their teams would meet “soon” in Washington to “exchange views and discuss alternative approaches” to a major ground operation in Rafah.

Netanyahu’s office said in a statement that the delegation, led by Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, will be dispatched next week “for the sake of the continuation of the fighting”.

Earlier on Tuesday, Net-

anyahu said in an address to the parliament’s Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that a ground assault is the only way to defeat Hamas militants in Rafah. He said he “made it as clear as possible” to Biden that Israel is “determined to complete the elimination of (Hamas) battalions in Rafah, and there is no way to do this without a ground incursion.” — Xinhua



People are seen among the rubble of a destroyed building in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah, on 19 March 2024. **PHOTO: YASSER QUDIH/XINHUA**



Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Mark Milley (L) and former Commander of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), Gen Kenneth F McKenzie Jr, (R) participate in a hearing with the House Foreign Affairs Committee in the Rayburn House Office Building on 19 March 2024 in Washington, DC. **PHOTO: AFP**

US generals implementing chaotic Afghan exit testify at House hearing aimed at holding Biden accountable

TWO top US generals who implemented President Joe Biden’s plan to withdraw troops from Afghanistan testified at a House hearing Tuesday, as Republicans renewed their effort in an election year to hold the incumbent president accountable for the deadly evacuation.

At the hearing held by the House Foreign Affairs Commit-

tee, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley and former Commander of the US Central Command Kenneth McKenzie were both dressed in suits and ties instead of military uniforms, because they had retired from their respective posts. Lawmakers hoped the retired generals could give more candid testimonies now that they are

ordinary citizens.

Milley and McKenzie said their remarks were consistent with those given in previous testimonies that they provided while still on duty — that the chaos, including the loss of 13 US soldiers in a terrorist attack at Kabul International Airport on Aug. 26, was the result of multiple contributing factors. — Xinhua

SPORTS

Asian Cup brawl brought South Korean team closer, says captain Son

SON Heung-min said Wednesday that the Asian Cup bust-up with Lee Kang-in had brought the South Korean team closer, on the eve of a World Cup qualifier against Thailand.

Tottenham and South Korea skipper Son dislocated a

finger in a clash with Paris Saint-Germain's Lee on the eve of their defeat in the Asian Cup semi-finals last month.

Lee was widely blamed for the melee, which was triggered after Son objected to some of the younger squad members

Ahead of a World Cup qualifier against Thailand, Son Heung-min stated that the Asian Cup altercation with Lee Kang-in had united the South Korean team, following a clash that left Son with a dislocated finger.



Son Heung-min speaks during a press conference on Wednesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

rushing off to play table tennis after a pre-game dinner.

Reports said that the 23-year-old Lee tried to punch Son, a claim the PSG attacking midfielder denies.

The incident sparked a media furore in South Korea, with

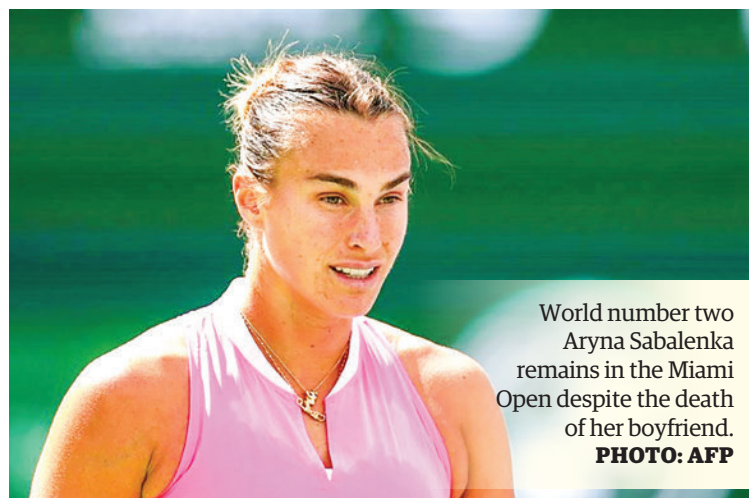
reports sponsors briefly moved to drop Lee, before he travelled to London to apologize to Son in person.

Son said on Wednesday that Lee had now apologized to the South Korean squad. — AFP

Robinho awaits fate on serving nine-year rape sentence in Brazil

BRAZIL'S Superior Court of Justice is set to rule on whether former international footballer Robinho will serve his nine-year Italian rape conviction in Brazil, marking a potentially unprecedented legal decision in the country. Brazil's justice system on Wednesday will decide whether former Manchester City and Real Madrid striker Robinho will serve his nine-year rape sentence, handed down by an Italian court, in the South American country.

Brazil's Superior Court of Justice (STJ) will examine the Italian request to approve the prison sentence that was imposed in 2017 and ratified in 2022. — AFP



World number two Aryna Sabalenka remains in the Miami Open despite the death of her boyfriend. **PHOTO: AFP**

Tennis rallies around Sabalenka at Miami Open after boyfriend's death

WORLD number two Aryna Sabalenka intends to play in the Miami Open this week, organizers said Tuesday, as fellow players offered their support following the death of her boyfriend in an apparent suicide.

Sabalenka's partner, Belarusian former NHL ice hockey player Konstantin Koltsov, 42, died late Monday after jumping from the balcony of a room in an upmarket resort in Miami, police said. Two-time Grand Slam winner Sabalenka practised at the Miami Open's Hard Rock Stadium venue early on Tuesday afternoon as organizers said she had not asked to withdraw and was "intending to play".

The 25-year-old from Minsk, who won the Australian Open in 2023 and retained her Melbourne title earlier this year, is due to face Spain's Paula Badosa in the second round.

Badosa, a close friend of Sabalenka's, said the match would be "uncomfortable". "Yesterday I spoke with her a lot of time. This morning the same. So I know what she's going through," she told a press conference. "I know the entire situation, what is happening. That for me is a little bit shocking also to go through that because at the end she's my best friend and I don't want her to suffer. It's a very tough situation," she added. — AFP

Israel eye history as final three Euro 2024 places up for grabs

ISRAEL'S national football team is on the brink of history, seeking their first-ever European Championship berth against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, with crucial playoff matches ahead amidst increased security and international scrutiny.

Israel's footballers are aiming to make history by reaching the European Cham-

pionship for the first time amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, with the final three places at Euro 2024 up for grabs over the next week.

Twelve teams still have dreams of reaching Germany later this year with three sets of four nations to face off in Thursday's semi-finals and the winners progressing to a final on 26 March. Israel be-

came a member of Europe's governing body UEFA 20 years ago, but are yet to reach the continent's major international competition. The war between Israel and Hamas has forced Alon Hazan's men to try and finish the job on the road with no international matches going ahead in Israel for the foreseeable future due to security concerns. — AFP



Israel are aiming to qualify for the European Championship for the first time. **PHOTO: AFP**



Modi congratulates Putin, vows to strengthen India-Russia partnership

Putin secured victory in the presidential elections, garnering 87.17 per cent of the votes, according to data from the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation.



Sharing details of his conversation with the Russian President on X, PM Modi posted, "Spoke with President Putin and congratulated him on his re-election as the President of the Russian Federation. PHOTO: SPUTNIK/FILE

P RIME Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday rang up Russian President Vladimir Putin, congratulating him again on his re-election to the top office.

During their telephonic conversation, both leaders agreed to intensify efforts towards expanding the India-Russia 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership'.

Sharing details of his conversation with the Russian President on X, PM Modi posted, "Spoke with President Putin and congratulated him on his re-election as the President of the Russian Federation."

We agreed to work together to further deepen and expand the India-Russia Special & Privileged Strategic Partnership in

the years ahead".

Earlier, on Monday, PM Modi congratulated President Putin on his re-election via a post on X, saying he was looking forward to further strengthening the strategic partnership and people-to-people ties between India and Russia.

"Warm congratulations to Mr. Vladimir Putin on his re-election as the

President of the Russian Federation," PM Modi posted from his X handle earlier.

Putin won the presidential elections on Sunday, receiving 87.17 per cent of the votes based on the result of processing 70 per cent of the electoral protocols, Russia-based TASS reported, citing data from the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation. — ANI

Viet Nam to invest US\$ 375 mln in low-carbon rice cultivation

VIET NAM will implement a project worth about US\$ 375 million to support infrastructure for low-carbon rice cultivation in the Mekong Delta region from 2026 to 2031, Vietnam News reported Tuesday, citing the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

It is part of the government's initiative to develop one million hectares of low-carbon and high-quality rice fields.

The fund will be primarily sourced from a 360-million-dollar loan of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development of the World Bank.

The remaining 15 million dollars will be invested by the Vietnamese government and local authorities.

The project aims to help Viet-



Viet Nam is set to launch a \$375 million project aimed at supporting low-carbon rice cultivation infrastructure in the Mekong Delta region from 2026 to 2031. Farmers working on boat at the shrimp-rice farming area in Ca Mau, Viet Nam in this undated handout photo. PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/WWF-VIETNAM

namese farmers adapt to climate change and increase farm profitability while supporting small-scale

producers through the development and strengthening of farmer organizations and cooperatives.— Xinhua

NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY PLAN UNTIL 2050

Israel working on national food security plan for first time

FOR the first time in its history, Israel is working to ensure food security in the country. As such, Israel's Ministry of Agriculture said that it is "changing its face and focusing its mission" in a new way and, in cooperation with other ministries, is developing a proposal for a national plan to that end.

To emphasize the importance of this, the ministry intends to change its name to "Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security".

The ministry said that in the coming days it will submit a decision-making proposal for the government's approval to formulate a national plan for food security that will include the formulation of goals for the supply of food to the entire population until the year 2050, with intermediate goals for the years 2030 and 2040. — ANI