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The Global NEW LIGHT of MYANMAR

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Myanmar witnesses sixfold hike in tourist arrivals compared to last year

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing highlighted the important role of the tourism industry in the booming of the State economy at the 2023 World Tourism Day ceremony.

State Administration Council Chair Premier Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views round the exhibits at the event yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

ARRIVALS of international tourists in Myanmar increased six times in comparison with that of the same period last year, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

The Senior General delivered an address at the ceremony to mark the 2023 World Tourism Day at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

He recounted that due to the resumption of international flights and sea ports, more than 600,000 international travellers arrived in the country from January to July 2023, exceeding some sixfold the amount rather than more than 100,000 international tourists last year.

The Senior General noted that the government is striving for the resurgence of the State economy in all aspects, and emphasis must be placed on the tourism industry contributing to the State economy. In so doing, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism has drawn strategy and action plans for increasing the number of domestic and international travellers, he added.

As such, the Senior General expressed his firm belief that the tourism sector will reach a situation similar to that of the pre-Covid-19 period soon due to the increasing number of tourist arrivals.

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Myanmar launches 'Welcome Russia' initiative in Moscow

THE 'Welcome Russia' programme in Myanmar, which aims to invite more Russian tourists to Myanmar, was introduced by U Lwin Oo, Myanmar Ambassador to Russia at the 6th International Route Development Forum NETWORK 2023 in the Russian city of Moscow on 26 September, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ambassador told the forum which was organized by the Centre for Strategic Development in Civil Aviation (Avia Centre) about the measures being implemented by related ministries in Myanmar.

In his presentation with the theme "Direct flight from Myanmar to Russia: Gateway to a new unique destination for Russian tourists", the ambassador explained the maiden flight of Myanmar Airways International (MAI)'s Yangon-Mandalay-Novosibirsk route, the geographic location of Myanmar, prominent tourism destinations in Myanmar, Russian tourists' privilege of visa exemption and opportunities for tourism businesses in Myanmar. — ASH/TH

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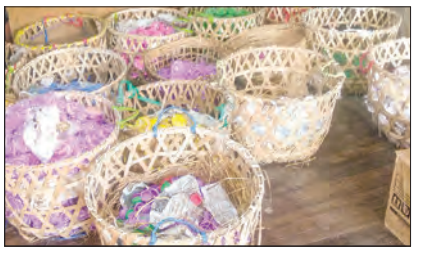

Thadingyut Festival celebrants boost sales of clay oil lamps

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Myanmar exports over 26,420 tonnes of rice in Sept 2nd week

NATIONAL

Chinese Embassy's Chargé d'affaires ai expresses support for Myanmar in finding development path aligned with national conditions

Ms Cao Jing, Chargé d'affaires ai of the Embassy of PRC in Myanmar delivers a greeting remark at the event of the 74th anniversary of the founding of PRC in Yangon on 26 September.

CHINA supports Myanmar's search for a development path that suits its national conditions, said Ms Cao Jing, Chargé d'affaires ai of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Myanmar.

She made those words at a ceremony celebrating the 74th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) held at Wyndham Grand Hotel in Yangon on 26 September.

She also added that China sincerely hopes that Myanmar will enjoy political stability and economic growth and that its people will live a happy life.

She continued that China will join hands with Myanmar to carry forward the traditional Pauk-Phaw friendship that deepens more through bilateral relations.

She said, "China works together with Myanmar and provides assistance in economy and trade, culture and education, poverty reduction, energy and communication sectors."

She continued that China supports Myanmar in implementing over 100 projects that deliver benefits to the people under the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation framework.

Myanmar entrepreneurs were also invited to the China-ASEAN Expo, and China-South Asia Expo recently and it was a platform to introduce Myanmar's products to the world.

Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Myanmar in 2020 and opened a new chapter in China-Myanmar relations. Currently, the two countries are implementing the results of that visit, she added.

The ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Win Shein, Deputy Minister for Information Maj-Gen Zaw Min Tun and invitees. — KNL/KTZH

Shan State welcomes nearly 1 mln domestic and foreign tourists

DURING the eight months from January to August 2023, more than 960,000 domestic and foreign tourists visited Shan State, including more than 40,000 foreign tourists, according to U Htin Aung Naing, Director of Hotel and Tourist Information Department (Shan State).

Compared to the eight months from January to August 2022, the number of tourists has increased by more than three hundred thousand.

"Shan State is the most visited region in Myanmar. In particular, they mainly visit the southern part of Shan State including Taunggyi, Kalaw, Pindaya and Inlay.

"In 2022, the number of tourists visiting Shan State from January to August 2022 is more than 660,000, and this year the number has increased to 960,000. Out of that number, there are more than 40,000 foreign tourists," U Thin Aung Naing said.

A total of 400 hotels, motels and guest houses are situated in Shan State, and currently, 337 are operating, so southern Shan State is a region that can attract tourists all the year round.

Currently, Kalaw in southern Shan State is being developed and implemented as a tourist town, and Chinese and Russian language courses have also been opened as basic language courses for employees working in hotels and motels so that foreign tourists can visit without difficulty. — ASH/KZL

The photo shows travellers by boat in Inlay Lake feeding seagulls.

Taunggyi Tazaungdaing Festival to launch 63 nighttime hot-air balloons

THE Taunggyi Tazaungdaing traditional hot-air balloon festival will be held in November in southern Shan State and 63 nighttime hot-air balloons will be launched at the festival, said competition judge Sai Aung Myo.

This year's festival will take place on 21-27 November at the Ahweiya hot-air balloon square in Taunggyi, the capital of Shan state.

"We have the lists that fifteen 25-foot-high Nya Mee Gyi (balloons with fireworks), twenty-three 22-foot-high Nya Mee Gyi and twenty-five 18-foot-high Sein Na Pan (decorated with candles) will compete this year. We also invite all to launch Ayoke (two or four legs) daytime hot-air balloons," he said.

It will prioritize traditional hot-air balloons rather than the competition this year.

A total of 115 Nya Mee Kyi and Sein Na Pan hot-air balloons and 281 daytime hot-air balloons were launched during the festival in 2019. — ASH/KTZH

File photo shows that a hot-air balloon attached with fireworks and revellers are seen happily cheering during the Taunggyi Tazaungdaing Festival.

NATIONAL

Myanmar witnesses sixfold hike in tourist arrivals ...

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The Senior General continued that Myanmar is endowed with underground and above-ground natural resources, adding invaluable cultural heritage that can be seen across the nation. Based on these natural resources and cultural heritages, the country needs to strive for the exploration of tourist destinations to attract travellers and for the long-term development of the tourism sector.

The Senior General stressed the need to invest in green infrastructure development measures in order to efficiently use natural resources in energy-saving ways.

He highlighted that as peace and stability contribute to the development of the tourism industry, it is necessary to foster peace and stability in all aspects for the development of the nation.

They all enjoyed a video clip on the message sent by the secretary-general of the World Tourism Organization.

The Senior General, Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo and Council Member Admiral Tin Aung San presented prizes to winners in the contests to mark World Tourism Day 2023 and viewed round the displays at the exhibition.

The commemorative ceremony was also attended by State dignitaries, diplomats, scholars and those from the private tourism sector.

Myanmar allowed international flights from 17 April 2022 to land in the country and accepted the application of e-visa on 20 May the same year. More than 200,000 international travellers entered the country through international airports, sea ports and land borders in 2022. Such an amount exceeded 43 per cent more than 2021. Due to the resumption of international flights and sea ports, more than 600,000 international travellers arrived in the country from January to July 2023.

Myanmar, being a member of the UNWTO, has been marking World Tourism Day on 27 September yearly like the other member countries of the organization across the world. — MNA/TTA

MIFER Union Minister receives RMAFC President-led delegation

UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations Dr Kan Zaw received the delegation led by Mr Anatoly Bulochnikov, President of the Russia-Myanmar Association for Friendship and Cooperation, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Both sides exchanged views and discussed the economic cooperation between the two countries and potential investment opportunities in Myanmar. — MIFER

Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw meets President of the Russia-Myanmar Association for Friendship and Cooperation Mr Anatoly Bulochnikov in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Workshop on Media Literacy to Address Disinformation held

Workshop on Media Literacy to Address Disinformation jointly organized by MRTV and Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development-AIBD in progress in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, spoken on the occasion by Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn.

MYANMA Radio and Television under the Ministry of Information and Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development-AIBD jointly organized a "Workshop on Media Literacy to Address Disinformation" in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, Deputy Minister U Ye Tint, Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung, Directors-General and Managing Directors, Myanmar Press Council Chairman U Ohn Maung (Myinmu Maung Naing Moe), departmental officials, Joint Venture Broadcasters of MRTV and trainees.

The ceremony commenced with the screening of a video clip on the role of the State media in nation-building endeavours.

Speaking at the event, the Union minister said media and information literacy (MIL) is an essential mechanism to combat disinformation in this digital era. In Myanmar, the use of smartphones has exploded since 2011. With poor digital literacy skills, Myanmar users are susceptible to disinformation campaigns and other online dangers, particularly young people, the most prevalent users.

Most of the journalists and the media in the developing world including Myanmar lack the capacity and know-how to understand or uncover disinformation. When they do not possess verification skills, either they succumb to wrong information or are late in doing the damage control. So, this Workshop on Disinformation was held as a part of the Bali Declaration.

He continued that the ASEAN Task Force on Countering Fake News is organized and the staff of the Ministry of Information and officials of relevant departments are participating in releasing the true news, reviewing media regulations and existing media laws and also public awareness activities including media digital literacy in combating fake news and disinformation.

Then, Programme Manager Ms Monica Phang of AIBD and Malaysian Speaker Associate Professor Dr Sara Chinnasamy, Political and Media Analyst of Universiti Teknologi MARA-Ui TM made greeting speeches respectively.

The workshop focused on topics including "Journalism Objectivity and Values in Content", "Targets of Lies, Rumours, and Hoaxes", "Methods or Tools to Identify Disinformation and Exercise Judgment", and "Journalists' Role in Changing the Public's Perception of Disinformation".

The workshop will be held until 28 September. The MRTV of the Ministry of Information became a full member of AIBD on 29 July 1997 and actively participated in seminars, workshops and webinars of AIBD. This is the 3rd workshop between Myanmar and AIBD. — MNA/KTZH

NATIONAL

MoHT UM joins World Tourism Day celebration in Saudi Arabia

Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Thet Thet Khine takes part in the World Tourism Day celebrations and the Tourism Leaders' Forum in Riyadh yesterday.

THE World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Saudi Arabia co-hosted World Tourism Day celebrations and the Tourism Leaders' Forum in Riyadh yesterday, attended by Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Thet Thet Khine and Ambassador U Tin Yu of the Myanmar Embassy.

The ceremony commenced with opening remarks from Saudi Arabia's Minister of Tourism Mr Ahmed AI Khateeb, and UNWTO's Secretary-General Mr Zurab Pololikashvili.

The World Tourism Federation's Executive Director Ms Natalia Bayona presented the Global Tourism Investment Framework. Subsequent discussions encompassed various aspects of the tourism industry, including its role as a bridge between stakeholders, the growing interest of young tourists in environmental protection, sustainability initiatives, investment in tourism education and skills building, and investing in destinations.

Representatives from 120 countries, along with over 500 hoteliers and tourism professionals from countries such as Uzbekistan and Tanzania, attended the forum.

Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine will continue her participation in the Tourism Leaders' Forum and hold bilateral meetings with Myanmar's counterparts.

This event aimed to revitalize global tourism, which had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, aligning with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). — MNA/TS

E-lock system in highway cargo transport to be implemented

TO use the E-lock system in highway freight transport, the Department of Transport Planning has issued a notice that all vehicles weighing 9 tons or more must register to become members.

Before the E-lock system is implemented in highway freight transport, inspection is made along trade routes with the vehicle/cargo inventory.

When applying for and renewing "A" and special "A" business licences for cargo transport operations of nine tonnes and above, they must register and become members of the Myanmar International Freight Transport Service Operators Association, the Myanmar Container Vehicle Association, and the Myanmar Highway Freight Transport Operators Association.

If the products are carried in sealed vehicles and monitored using the E-Lock system, they will not be opened and inspected.

E-Lock system for monitoring sealed trucks Yangon-Myawady, Yangon-Mandalay and Mandalay-Muse freight routes are under preparation to operate. — TPT

MoIP Union Minister receives Bangladeshi Ambassador

UNION Minister for Immigration and Population U Myint Kyaing received Ambassador of Bangladesh to Myanmar Dr Md Monwar Hossain in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Both parties discussed bilateral cooperation between the two nations, the peaceful movement of people across their shared borders, ongoing efforts to receive displaced persons from Rakhine State, Myanmar's progress in verifying individuals intending to return from Bangladesh, preparations in place for their repatriation, and collaborative efforts between the two countries to ensure the successful reception of displaced persons. — MNA/MKKS

30th Myanmar Tatmadaw Medical Conference to be held on 3-5 Oct

TWO pre-conference workshops of the 30th Myanmar Tatmadaw Medical Conference were held from 25 to 27 September and the conference will take place at No 1 Military Hospital (700-bed) from 3 to 5 October.

Local and international researchers, professors, medical experts, and nurses from the Myanmar Tatmadaw Medical Corps will collectively present 72 research papers, and 114 research posters, and participate in a conference symposium, a major symposium, 21 specialized symposiums, a clinicopathological conference, a clinical session, 10 special talks, and a debate.

The retired senior officers, professors, medical experts and nurses need to register at www.dsmrdc.org for attendance at the conference online. — MNA/MKKS

COVID-19 report, 26 September 2023

NEW TESTS	4,252
NEW CASE	2
CASUALTIES	0

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NATIONAL

Thadingyut Festival celebrants boost sales of clay oil lamps

Online marketing trends and unique designs boost the clay oil lamp business.

THE clay oil lamp sales tripled this year in the Mandalay market as the Thadingyut Festival (Lighting Festival) is drawing near, said Ma Aye Aye Myint running a Pyone Pan Thar clay oil lamp business in Mandalay.

This year, businesspersons leveraged digital platforms and boosted sales. Coloured clay oil lamps with innovative designs are in high demand with online shoppers.

"There are five or six designs of oil lamps with seven colours each. The unique design with decorations tripled the sales compared to that of last year. Moreover, we offer custom-made products as well," she elaborated.

Thanks to the upgraded designs and online shopping trends, the clay oil lamps are distributed to markets of Shan State and Taninthayi Region beyond Mandalay.

"The traders in every township in Shan State purchase them. The demand from Tachilek and Taunggyi areas is recorded as the highest. Some traders from the Taninthayi Region even export our clay oil lamps to Thailand. As candle wicks are put in the clay oil lamps, we are doing a roaring trade. The clay oil lamp is pretty cheap. Most importantly, it can be reused many times. The bus terminals linking with the earthen craft businesses are doing well financially at present," she continued.

A worker prepares clay oil lamps to transport them to the market. **PHOTO: MAUNG AYE CHAN**

The prices of clay oil lamps move in the range between K22 and over K400 per pc depending on quality, designs and types. — Maung Aye Chan/ EM

Mandatory registration for online businesses set for 2 October

THE online sale business is recognized as an essential service and the owners must register their businesses commencing on 2 October, according to the Trade Department of the Ministry of Commerce.

The department introduced the eComReg system at an awareness-raising campaign held at the Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry on 24 September.

The Ministry of Commerce released an order setting the online business as an essential service on 21 July under Subsection (c) of Section 4 of the Essential Supplies and Services Law.

"The online business owners can make registration starting from 2 October. Those registered between 2 October to the end of December 2023 will be exempted from registration fees. If they are found running online businesses without registration, they will face action effective from 1 January 2024," said an official of the Trade Department.

The applicants need to submit their business names, logos, recommendation letters of respective wards and police stations and K4,000 for an online application form.

All online sales must be registered regardless of their privately produced or resold commodities. Even if they pay other taxes or licence fees to municipal officials, they must register.

The permission of relevant departments will be granted only to the official businesses. — ASH/KTZH

An online business page is seen on a laptop screen.

Advertise with us
Call 09 251 022 355
09 255 597 511

MAI operates cargo flights to Kolkata, Bangkok, KL, Singapore

An aircraft operated by Myanmar Airways International is seen at Yangon International Airport.

THE Myanmar Airways International (MAI) will start operating Boeing 737-400 Freighter cargo flights between Yangon and Kolkata, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore starting from 28 September.

It will fly the Yangon-Kolkata-Yangon flight on 28 September and 4 October and the Yangon-Bangkok-Yangon flight every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

It will serve the Yangon-Kuala Lumpur-Yangon route every Wednesday and the Yangon-Singapore-Yangon route on 13 October.

The MNA leased new Boeing 737-400 cargo aircraft from Malaysia and it arrived in Myanmar on 15 September. The new cargo flight can carry 18 tonnes of cargo. — ASH/KTZH

NATIONAL

Fishery product exports exceed US$276 mln in first 6 months this FY

ACCORDING to the Department of Fisheries, more than US$ 276 million worth of fishery products have been exported abroad in the first six months of the 2023-2024 financial year.

Exports to foreign countries between April and September exceeded 175,000 tonnes. Myanmar has over 480,000 fish and shrimp breeding ponds, along with more than 120 cold storge facilities.

Annual exports were $785.021 million in the financial year 2020-2021 and $481.657 million in the 2021-2022 (Mini Budget) period. Myanmar now exports aquatic products of 45 countries each year. In the meat sector, only live animals are currently being exported to neighbouring countries through land borders. — TWA/KZW

The initial stage of preparing fish for export in a cold storage facility.

Myanmar exports over 26,420 tonnes of rice in Sept 2nd week

THE data from the Ministry of Commerce reveals that over 26,420 tonnes of rice and broken rice were exported during the second week of September.

From 9 to 15 September, Myanmar exported more than 14,610 tonnes of rice valued at US$8.08 million via the maritime route and 2,009 tonnes of rice worth $0.898 million through the Myanmar-China border trade. This adds up to about 16,620 tonnes of rice shipped via the two routes, with a total value of $8.978 million.

Rice exports comprised 10,900 tonnes to Asian countries, over 2,150 tonnes to EU member countries, and 1,560 tonnes to African countries. Myanmar's rice exports reached countries including Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, the Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Croatia, Poland, Germany, Hungary, Africa, Mozambique, and the Ivory Coast.

In the second week of September, more than 8,100 tonnes of broken rice, valued at $3.617 million, were shipped via the maritime trade route, and over 1,700 tonnes of broken rice worth $0.693 million were sent abroad through the Myanmar-China border trade route. The total export of broken rice exceeded 9,800 tonnes, with a combined value of $4.31 million.

Bags of rice are being loaded onto the cargo ship at Yangon port.

Concerning broken rice exports, 4,150 tonnes of broken rice were exported to Asian countries, while more than 3,950 tonnes of broken rice were shipped to European Union member countries. Broken rice found its way to destinations including the Philippines, China, Viet Nam, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Germany.

Compared to the previous week's exports, there was an increase of more than 7,000 tonnes of rice and over 4,000 tonnes of broken rice exported during this period. — TWA/CT

Weekly updated prices of Bayintnaung commodity market

FROM 20 to 26 September in the Yangon Bayintnaung Market, onion prices saw a slight increase, while the prices of rice, potatoes, and garlic remained low. Additionally, the reference price for palm oil decreased once again.

Onion

Although the wholesale price of special-sized onions was K3,150 per viss on 19th September, it dropped to K2,900 per viss on 23rd September. By 26 September, the price had slightly risen to K2,950 per viss.

On 26 September, approximately 90,000 visses of onions from various regions entered the market, with Seikphyu onions priced between K2,500 and K2,950 per viss. It is worth noting that the highest price for a viss of onions remained below K3,000 in regional markets.

The Seikphyu market received 35,000 visses of onions at a maximum price of K2,700 per viss, while the Pakokku depot received a total of 9,000 visses of onions, reaching a maximum price of K2,550 per viss.

Potato

The Yangon potato market only published prices for Chinese potatoes on 26 September, with the wholesale price of Chinese potatoes falling to K1,900 per viss.

Chilli Pepper

In the Yangon chilli pepper market on 26 September, Eainme and Panye long chilli peppers were priced at approximately K8,000–K11,000 per viss. New Pyawbwe Moehtaung chilli peppers were priced at K11,500, and Sinphyukyun and delta region bell peppers, processed in cold storage, were valued at K18,000–K18,500 per viss.

Rice

On 26 September, at the Yangon rice market, the price per bag of multi-cropped rice was K69,000, the 90-day rice variety stood at K72,000, and the Pawkywe rice variety was priced at K97,000. Pawsan rice variants ranged from K100,000 to K125,000 per bag, depending on the producing region. Low-grade rice fell below the reference price.

A dry groceries outlet is seen at a market.

Garlic

On 26 September, Shan garlic was priced at K7,100 per viss for S2, K8,200 for S3, K8,300 for S4, and K8,500 for S5 in the Yangon market. Kyukok garlic was priced at K7,200 per viss.

Palm Oil

The wholesale reference price of palm oil is K4,375 per viss from 25 September to 1 October, marking a K65 per viss decrease compared to the previous week.

Beans and Pulses

On 26 September, the price of black gram was K2,540,000 per tonne for RC and K2,840,000 per tonne for SQ/RC. Meanwhile, a tonne of pigeon peas was valued at K4,050,000.

Additionally, the price of green gram (Kayan Shwewah variety) was K3,630, and the Pakokku variety ranged from K3,080 to K3,250 per viss. Chickpeas were priced at K5,850–K6,100 per viss. — TWA/CT

Fuel prices decreasing at slow pace

FUEL prices see a steady decline in the domestic market, indicating a ten-day decrease of K160-240 per litre.

Fuel prices were K2,220 per litre of Octane 92, K2,325 for Octane 95, K2,490 for diesel and K2,565 for premium diesel on 27 September.

The price index set by Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS), the pricing basis for many refined products in southeast Asia, weighs on the domestic fuel prices, according to the Supervisory Committee on Oil Import, Storage and Distribution of Fuel Oil.

In August 2022, the oil prices hit the highest of K2,605 per litre for Octane 92, K2,670 for Octane 95, K3,330 for premium diesel and K3,245 for diesel.

The committee is therefore steering the fuel oil storage and distribution sector effectively so as not to have a shortage of oil in the domestic market and to ensure price stability for energy consumers.

A sign displaying fuel oil prices at the petrol station in Yangon.

The Petroleum Products Regulatory Department, under the guidance of the committee, is issuing the daily reference rate for oil to offer a reasonable price to energy consumers. The reference rate in the Yangon Region is set on the MOPS's price assessment, shipping cost, premium insurance, tax, other general costs and health profit per cent.

The rates for regions and states other than Yangon are evaluated after adding the transportation cost and the retail reference rates daily covered on the state-run newspapers and are posted on the media and official website and Facebook page of the department daily starting from 4 May.

The committee is inspecting the fuel stations whether they are overcharging or not. The authorities are taking action against those retailers of fuel stations under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law 2017 if they are found overcharging rather than the set reference rate.

As per the statement, 90 per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally. The domestic fuel price is highly correlated with international prices. The State is steering the market to mitigate the loss between the importers, sellers and energy consumers. Consequently, the government is trying to distribute the oil at a reasonable price compared to those of regional countries.

Some countries levied higher tax rates and hiked oil prices compared to that of Myanmar. However, Malaysia's oil sector receives government subsidies and the prices are about 60 per cent cheaper than that of Myanmar. Every country lays down different patterns of policy to fix the oil prices. Myanmar also levies only a lower tax rate on fuel oil and strives for energy consumers to buy the oil at a cheaper rate. — NN/EM

Entrepreneurs must renew gem trading licences by end-Dec: MGE

Failure to renew gem trading licences will face revocation.

LICENCE for gem trade will be revoked unless it is renewed, according to Myanma Gems Enterprise (Nay Pyi Taw).

Those entities holding licence of gems and jewellery trading licences, manufacturing licences for finished gems and carvings and rough gemstone and finished products trading licences issued by Myanma Gems Enterprise under the approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation are required to proceed to the renewal process three months before the expiry date. They must renew them at least one month before the expiry.

Myanma Gems Enterprise (Nay Pyi Taw) released a notification on 14 July 2023 to extend licences for gems and jewellery trading licences, manufacturing licences for finished gems and carvings and rough gemstones and finished products trading licences.

Additionally, they can notify Myanma Gems Enterprise of winding down a business with one-month notice before ceasing the operation.

Licence renewal applications can be processed at Myanma Gems Enterprise (Nay Pyi Taw), Gems and Jewellery Museum in Yangon, Mandala Station Office, mining stations in Mogok, Lonkhin/Phakant, Mongshu and Myitkyina areas, in line with the rules and regulations. Those businesspersons holding expired licences in 2020 and 2021 are urged to reinstate them with the relevant departments by 31 December 2023.

Those who want to terminate the business are also notified of the aforementioned departments one month in advance. They must also present a cash memo to those departments at least one month before the expiry date, Myanma Gems Enterprise notified. — NN/EM

A lorry of exported watermelons bound for China was spotted at the border checkpoint. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Over 100,000 tonnes of watermelons exported to China in 8 months

MORE than 100,000 tonnes of watermelons were exported to China within eight months in 2023, as reported by the warehouses at the Muse border.

When it comes to exporting fruits, including locally grown watermelons, to China, the majority of these exports originate from the Muse 105-Mile trade zone. From January through August of this year, over 113 thousand tonnes of watermelons were exported through the border, utilizing more than seven thousand vehicles.

During the period from November to June, when local watermelons are in full bloom, the majority of them are exported. In 2022, when these watermelons were exported to China, they fetched favourable prices in the Chinese market. Hence, according to traders at the Muse border, more watermelons are expected to be exported to China when the next watermelon season arrives.

Currently in Myanmar, there are more than 8,000 acres of watermelons cultivated, with the highest cultivation reported in Shan State, followed by Sagaing and Mandalay. — TWA/KZW

OPINION

Raising public awareness about earthquake risks

IN RECENT days, Myanmar has experienced slight and moderate earthquakes, serving as a stark reminder for its residents to remain vigilant as the climate transitions from monsoon to winter. The Department of Meteorology and Hydrology has issued a press release indicating the impending withdrawal of the monsoon from the southern part of Myanmar, which could contribute to seismic activity.

Although earthquakes are unpredictable natural disasters, it is important for humans to take proactive measures to mitigate earthquake-related risks and raise public awareness. Relevant government departments have released guidelines outlining the dos and don'ts related to earthquake dangers, emphasizing the importance of collective preparedness by both authorities and citizens to mitigate the impacts of earthquakes. Collaboration and vigilance are key in safeguarding communities against this ever-present threat.

On 23 September, a 3.7 Richter Scale earthquake struck an area 10 kilometres deep below the epicentre, located 21 miles west of DaikU in Myanmar and 67 miles north-northeast of the Kaba Aye observatory station. The coordinates were 17.81° north latitude and 96.34° east longitude at 17 hours, 3 minutes, and 43 seconds Myanmar standard time.

Additionally, on the same day, a weather statement from the department reported another slight earthquake, registering 5.1 on the Richter Scale. This earthquake occurred at a depth of 10 kilometres, approximately 12 miles southwest of Bago, Myanmar, and 27 miles northeast of the Kaba Aye observatory station. The coordinates were 17.23° north latitude and 96.32° east longitude, at 20 hours, 54 minutes, and 35 seconds.

Furthermore, a separate slight earthquake with a 3.7 Richter Scale magnitude struck 21 miles west of DaikU at 5 hours and 33 minutes on the same day. These seismic events notably impacted residents in the downtown Yangon area, North and South Dagon Myothit townships, Insein, and North Okkalapa townships.

Earthquake experts explain that earthquakes result from sudden movements and shaking of underground rock layers, often associated with geological faults. Throughout global history, powerful earthquakes have triggered tsunamis, causing widespread destruction of both living and non-living entities.

Earthquake experts estimate that there are approximately 500,000 earthquakes worldwide each year. Of these, about 100,000 earthquakes can have significant impacts, with 70-75 events of them being destructive enough to affect society profoundly. It's essential to understand that severe earthquakes can lead to a series of subsequent slight earthquakes.

Although earthquakes are unpredictable natural disasters, it is important for humans to take proactive measures to mitigate earthquake-related risks and raise public awareness. Relevant government departments have released guidelines outlining the dos and don'ts related to earthquake dangers, emphasizing the importance of collective preparedness by both authorities and citizens to mitigate the impacts of earthquakes. Collaboration and vigilance are key in safeguarding communities against this ever-present threat.

ARTICLE

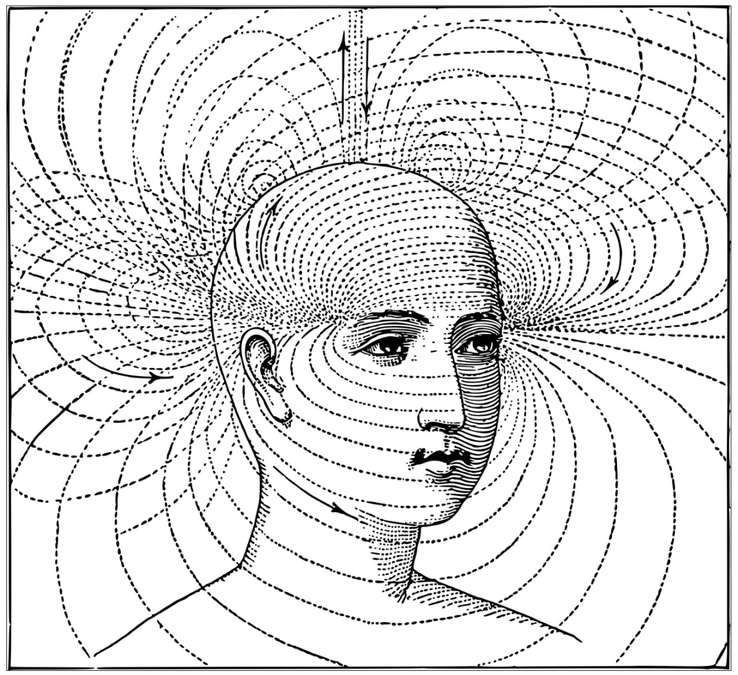
Harnessing the Power of Mind-wandering and Quiet Contemplation for Creativity and Clarity

By Yin Nwe Ko

WE often hear or read the words to do more and to think less about something. Now, the title of this article seems clumsy to read as we all have hardly read it in our lives for ages. However, queer things and advanced opinions rise into our society minute after minute. Some of the opinions are considered on whether it will be possible for them or not to perform or practise. What people think to be impossible really comes into existence in a few years, we have found many times in the world. Therefore, let us take notice of the main theme of the original author here…

The urge to leap into planning can be strong in the quieter post-Christmas days and weeks with a new journal in hand and an empty year ahead to fill with ideas, goals, and ambitions. However, while there's no harm in planning, it could be wise to pause first and allow yourself some time for quiet contemplation. When we turn down the noise and clear some mental space, we give our minds the chance to wander, and, according to the experts, that is when creative thinking happens and our deepest, most intuitive thoughts and ideas come to the surface.

While you might like the idea of doing nothing, you probably do not do it very often, if at all. We live in a world where being busy is considered better, we work hard and fill our free time with more things to do. With all this 'stuff' and stimulation, it's not surprising that our minds are rarely free to wander and be curious. Moshe Bar, a renowned neuroscientist and author of Mind-wandering: How It Can Improve Your Mood and Boost Your Creativity (Bloomsbury Tonic), says that he regularly encourages his kids and friends to "just lie on the sofa and stare at the ceiling for as long as they want to." In doing so he's trying to rid them of the guilt they feel for not doing anything observable and experience the benefits of 'Mind-wandering', which he describes as the vehicle for planning and where good ideas come from. "We know a great deal about the brain network (known as the default mode network or DMN) that mediates these important processes, and it is most vigorously active when we are doing nothing," he explains.



Take moments of silence in your day. You don't have to be alone, and you can be with others without talking or doing anything noisy. **ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/PIXABAY**

TURN DOWN THE NOISE

It is not surprising that when we are bombarded with a constant stream of information and stimulation, we find it harder to think clearly or come up with ideas. Bar likens it to an engineering term known as 'signal-to-noise ratio' – "Basically, the less noise there is the more salient the signal" and explains why improving your chances of getting a clear signal for your creative thoughts to reach your conscious mind is so important: "Hidden inside the space that is our thoughts are the new ideas, insights, clear decisions, and other mental treasures thrown at us from the subconscious," he says. "And it's much harder for us to notice them when they're embedded in cluttering noise."

It is not only external noise but internal chatter in our minds. "A quieter mind is clearer in that it lets us see the fruits of our thinking better," explains Bar, acknowledging that when we suddenly try to do nothing, we often find the mind starts racing – and not necessarily with helpful or positive thoughts. It is perhaps unsurprising then that people often turn to distracting activities rather than sitting quietly. "So much attention has been paid to ways to unplug from the bustle, but the greater challenge can be freeing ourselves from the distractions within which disrupt our attention and intrude on the quality of our experience even when we are in a perfectly quiet place."

Even though humans are the only species that can engage in internal thinking we seem to be increasingly uncomfortable with our own company and thoughts. In one famous study, subjects chose to give themselves mild electric shocks as a preference to sitting quietly in front of a white wall. However, recent research from the University of Tübingen published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology found that when people were instructed to sit and wait with no stimulation available to them, even though almost all showed an initial reluctance to it, they enjoyed it and found it more beneficial than they had expected.

STOP BEFORE YOU START

When we are embarking on a new project or have a piece of work we need to finish, the natural urge is not to take a break and to sit down until it is finished. However, the brain does not always cooperate, which can lead to feelings that we are inadequate or lack creativity and ideas. "The mind will tense and become tense and uncooperative if dominated by thoughts of having to do something quickly, making it impossible to perform to one's full potential," explains Ryunosuke Koike, author of The Practice of Not Thinking (Penguin).

So, if we can give up the guilt associated with doing nothing, practice quietening down unwanted thoughts, and allow our minds to wander freely, then we can allow new ideas, solutions, and nuggets of inspiration to spring to mind. As Moshe Bar says; "Learning to do and think less is an important skill that can be practised and one for which you will be rewarded." Here are some ways to encourage your mind to wander freely and constructively…

Move your body

Often focusing on the body can help clear the mind. Any physical activity outside in nature is good, whether it is walking, running, gardening, or a breath-focused practice like yoga or meditation. Some people find that during routine tasks, such as housework, mowing the lawn, or decorating, their minds will wander in a productive way. "My dad likes to think while folding laundry," says Moshe Bar.

Enjoy pockets of silence

A bit like being bored, silence is something many of us find uncomfortable and resist by watching TV, playing music, or avoiding being on our own. The mind responds to stimuli so if you are always surrounded by noise, it will be harder to focus – try doing some mental arithmetic while loud music is on or in a busy restaurant and see how much longer it takes than when you are in a quiet environment. Introduce pockets of quiet into your day – you do not have to be alone, and you can spend time with others without talking or watching, or listening – perhaps reading a book together or walking together silently.

Clear mental clutter

Our minds are never idle and self-chatter is pretty much continuous, composed of inner monologue, where we rehearse conversations and narrate our experiences, and dialogue where we have conversations with ourselves, and negotiate moral and practical issues. "We can't control what's happening inside our brains," says Bar, "but we can observe it and decide what to do with it." If you find that when you try to switch off, intrusive thoughts keep coming to mind, he suggests a technique called labelling. Every thought can be labelled along the following: Is it positive, negative, or neutral? Is it about me or others? Is it concerning the past, present, or future? For example, if you are worried that something you said might have offended someone, you can label it negative, me, past. Once you engage with this exercise, thoughts start to disappear as soon as you have finished labelling.

Notice the ordinary

Former monk Ryunosuke Koike says that trying to notice ordinary things rather than those that arouse strong emotions helps to focus an overthinking mind. "The mind looks for short-term pleasure gained through stimulation. One example of how to resist this is while walking down a street. Don't ignore the things around you, pay attention to how the small details in your field of vision change while you're in motion. Make a conscious effort to look and you'll begin to see many things that you may have previously ignored in a new light and thereby boost your concentration. As you become more acutely aware of the little things many people overlook, your attentiveness and sense of perception will deepen and your mind will be clearer."

SEE PAGE-10 >>

EU countries vote to weaken next car emissions norm

Led by France and Italy, the 27 nations opted for a less ambitious approach to maintain competitiveness in an industry that employs 14 million workers in the EU.

EU member countries on Monday adopted a watered-down deal on curbing car emissions, after auto manufacturers complained stricter measures could undermine electric vehicle investments.

Led by France and Italy, the 27 nations voted for a less ambitious plan than the one put forward by the European Commission in November 2022, eyeing preservation of competitivity in an EU sector on which 14 million workers rely.

The European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA), the sector's main EU lobby group, cautiously welcomed the decision for the next iteration of car emissions rules in the EU, known as the Euro 7 standard.

But groups calling for cleaner transport rules called it a disappointment.

It was "a missed opportunity," said the Association for Emissions Control by Catalyst, while the European Federation for Transport and Environment called it a "greenwash".

Coming in 2025

The Euro 7 standard will succeed the Euro 6 norm already in place from 2025 and will apply to all road vehicles.

The EU member states' position is not the final word, however.

The final text that will become EU legislation still has to be negotiated with the European Parliament, which has not yet agreed its stance.

The European Commission had sought to have Euro 7 significantly cut nitrogen oxide and fine particle emissions from vehicles, noting that air pollution is responsible for 70,000 deaths annually in the European Union.

But automakers baulked, fearing the added costs of bringing combustion engine vehicles into line at a time when they are spending billions on electric car manufacturing in the face of fierce competition from Tesla and Chinese companies.

Their pressure to have the EU lift its foot off ever tighter standards was heard by France and Italy, which earlier this year jointly opposed strict emission norms. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia also signed on to that position.

SOURCE: AFP

Groups calling for cleaner transport rules called it a disappointment. **PHOTO: DPA/AFP**

NATIONAL

Harnessing the Power of Mind-wandering and Quiet …

>> FROM PAGE-9

Rediscover daydreaming

Remember daydreaming as a child, staring out of the window during class, or lying on your bed just looking at the ceiling? Now think about when you last gazed out of the window on a bus or train or just waited in a queue instead of pulling out your laptop/phone/book. If you consciously stop yourself from reaching for a distracting activity when you have some downtime or even when you're walking (put those headphones away) or on the loo (yes, we all do it!), you'll find that daydreaming habit will come back to you. And the more you do it, the better you'll get at it until you don't automatically reach for something to do when you stop for a moment.

Meditate away impatience

You don't need any meditation kit, and you can do it anytime, anywhere. If you find yourself getting frustrated and impatient while waiting, for example, try closing your eyes, concentrating on your breathing, and perhaps repeating a mantra to yourself such as "I am calm". You will feel refreshed and relaxed instead of angry and irritated.

I think my esteemed readers have visualized the main theme of the article now. As for me, I like almost all opinions, especially the final paragraph which I enjoy most. Some of them might be difficult to perform in person, but they can be partially accepted. Nevertheless, it will be profitable for us to gain some kind of knowledge from reading and contemplating it.

Reference: The Simple Things (January 2023)

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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.

Newly Rebuilt Mingala Market: 51% construction completion for 5 above-ground floors, 2 underground floors

THE newly rebuilt Mingala Market has completed 51 per cent of the construction work on two underground floors and five floors above ground.

The Minister for Development of Yangon Region government and the Yangon City Development Committee Chairman (Mayor) and party visited the construction site of a 15-storey building (two underground and 15 above ground) located at the corner of Banyadala Road and Satyon Road in Mingala Taungnyunt Township on 25 September.

The construction site of the newly rebuilt Mingala Market.

The construction of the new Mingala Market is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2024. According to the Yangon City Development Committee's Market Department, some of the stalls that have been built will be open for sale at the beginning of next year.

The newly built Mingala Market, initiated in 2019, has been under construction since September and features over 5,000 stores, 21 elevators, and parking facilities accommodating more than 700 vehicles. This 17-storey building will include movie theatres, restaurants, banks, and supermarkets.

After completion of all construction work, approximately 4,000 vendors who originally operated in the stalls will be resettled. The market's fifth floor will be medicine and medical supplies, the sixth floor will be clothes and textiles, the seventh floor will be cosmetics, and the eighth floor will be fancy materials and textiles. Additionally, there will be warehouses on the ninth and tenth floors, mini-offices on the eleventh and twelfth floors, and movie theatres on the thirteenth floor.

Individuals interested in purchasing stalls can obtain detailed information by inquiring at the Market Department of the YCDC. — TWA/KZW

ADVERTORIAL

Dapein (1) Hydropower Company Limited helps self-development of Myanmar and Chinese employees to share brighter future

IN order to deepen the friendship between Myanmar and Chinese employees and actively promote the fine tradition of "Master Teaching Apprentices" and give full play to the "Occupational Tutors" system, Dapein (1) Hydropower Company Limited has recently further established the friendship between employees from the two countries through the cultural bond to achieve win-win teamwork, interpreting infinite possibilities of cooperation. Composed of both Myanmar and Chinese employees, this cross-cultural group has demonstrated the hard-working power, innovation and friendship with its notable cooperation achievements.

At first, the Myanmar employees were taught how to use Chinese. Despite the language barrier, everyone strived to pursue knowledge all the same. Sparing no effort to teach their Myanmar colleagues, the Chinese employees built a bridge of cultural communication and transmission with patience and care, gradually tearing down the barricade of interaction. Patient assistance enabled each and every member of the group to shine brightly in cooperation.

Afterwards, this group demonstrated a high level of tacit understanding and close cooperation. Under the careful guidance of their Chinese counterparts, the Myanmar employees not only mastered the essence of the operation work of the hydropower plant but also became capable of finishing important tasks such as meter-reading, equipment temperature measurement and regular rotation experiments in just several weeks. The selfless instruction by the Chinese employees, as well as the active learning attitude of their Myanmar colleagues, has continuously raised the efficiency of safe production and ensured the steady operation of the company, while at the same time, constantly invigorating the friendly cooperation between the two countries.

The story of this cross-cultural group of Dapein (1) Hydropower Station is a chapter of cooperation, or more precisely, a paean to the hard-working spirit of ordinary heroes. With their dedication, diligence and wisdom, the Myanmar and Chinese employees have illustrated the immense power of cooperation and proven the importance of adapting to local conditions. In the future, Dapein (1) Hydropower Company Limited will continue to honour the fine tradition of "Master Teaching Apprentices" and brave more challenges, to usher in a glorious chapter of cooperation and friendship together.

NATIONAL

Myanmar invited to participate in International Jewellery Show to be held in Mumbai, India

MYANMAR has received an invitation to establish gem galleries at the International Jewellery Show scheduled for 5 to 8 January 2024 in Mumbai, India. This event will be organized by the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in India. The allocation of space for Myanmar's showcase will depend on the number of entrepreneurs from Myanmar who intend to participate.

An advertisement of the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (JGPC).

Interested entrepreneurs, along with associated organizations under the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI), are required to register their names by 2 October. Interested parties have been informed to get in touch with the Exhibition Division of the Membership Department under the UMFCCI. They should provide the respective company's letterhead with the participant's name, position, the company or organization's name, email address, and phone number. — TWA/CT

Over K18.8 billion worth of stimulant tablets captured in Patheingyi township

A total of over K300 million worth of stimulant tablets were seized in Patheingyi township, as reported by the Myanmar Police Force.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team consisting of members from the Anti-Drug Police Force searched a 22-wheel truck with a trailer, travelling from Hsipaw to Mandalay. The truck was driven by Sai Htin Lin, accompanied by Htein Win. The search took place near the Htonebo tollgate on the Htonebo-Myitnge road in Patheingyi township at 8 am on 21 September.

Police confiscated over K18.8 billion worth of 12.55 million stimulant tablets and arrested a drug trafficker by the name of Gawli, also known as Kyaw Gyi or Kyaw Sein Myint. Gawli had instructed Sai Htin Lin and Htein Win to transport the drugs from Shan State to Mandalay.

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

Confiscation of illegal items: foodstuffs (raw materials), consumer goods and vehicles

THE Customs on-duty teams under the supervision of Mandalay Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force made inspections on 23 September and nabbed 10 kinds of goods worth about K5.274 million, including 88 kilogrammes of honey and 48 boxes of Hershey chocolate flavouring without official documents, from Honey Hive foodstuff shop, 35 kinds of goods worth K14.442 million, including 27 boxes of orange jam and 25 boxes of Weiyi milk flavouring without official documents, from Hwahtike grocery and 12 kinds of goods worth K3.62 million, including 120 boxes of banana flavouring, without official documents from Shwewuthmon store in Chanayethazan township. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

The combined teams conducted inspections on 24 September and impounded two Nissan AD Van vehicles (approximately worth K24 million), headed from Muse to Mandalay, carrying 23 kinds of goods worth K23.926 million, including 650 sets of battery chargers and 3,000 pieces of underwear without official documents near Shwenyaungpin on the detour of Lashio, three kinds of goods worth about K36.238 million, including an iPhone 15Pro and 141 items of cosmetics without official documents from the luggage at the Yangon International Airport (Import Desk) and a Hino Ranger vehicle (estimated value of K30 million), travelling from Myawady to Yangon, carrying two kinds of goods worth K4.17 million, including 10 suitcases that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) at the Kawkareik (Tadakyoe) combined checkpoint. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

A total of 13 arrests were made on 23 and 24 September, with an estimated value of over K141 million. — MNA/MKKS

Myanmar Fire Brigade prepares for Global Challenge competition

U Thein Tun Oo, Director of the Myanmar Fire Brigade Headquarters, announced during the quality screening of competing fire brigade members on 26 September that they are undergoing training to participate in the international-level Global Challenge competition for firefighting and emergency rescue work.

The Myanmar Fire Brigade is preparing to represent the country in the Brave Heart Competition (individual) and Brave Heart Competition (team) events. Members are training as per the scoring rules for the fitness assessments.

A total of 41 fire brigade members from various regions and states took part in the competition. Those who meet the required standards will be selected to participate in the Global Challenge, as stated by the Director of the Myanmar Fire Brigade Headquarters.

The selection process aims not only to prepare the fire brigade for international-level competitions but also to enhance their capacity to utilize firefighting vehicles and equipment for assisting and rescuing the public in anticipation of potential natural disasters.

These efforts go beyond professionalism as they aim to represent the country in international-level Global Challenge competitions. — TWA/CT

Firefighters are seen training to participate in the competition.

ECONOMY
WORLD

Need for critical metals poses dilemmas for investors

The shift towards renewable energy is increasing demand for raw materials like lithium, cobalt, and copper.

SOARING demand for the raw materials needed for the transition towards renewable energy is creating dilemmas for investors weighing the economic, environmental and human rights risks of such projects.

With demand for fossil fuels expected to peak by the end of the decade, the focus is shifting towards lithium, cobalt, copper and other materials that are extracted from the earth through heavy labour and leave scars in the environment.

Demand for lithium — an essential component of car batteries — could increase ninefold between 2022 and 2050, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Lithium demand has already tripled in the past five years.

The mining sector presents significant concerns around human rights and environmental pollution. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Lithium and other metals that the IEA calls "key to the clean energy transition" will be the topic of a summit hosted by the global energy watchdog in Paris on Thursday.

Demand for cobalt will have increased from 171,000 tonnes to 524,700 tonnes by 2050, according to the IEA, with nickel requirements set to soar 120 per cent in the same timeframe.

The IEA said in a July report that investment in the mining sector is still insufficient to meet demand, and also flagged concerns that a high concentration of new projects were clustered in a small number of countries.

"This is a huge issue," said Jason Schenker, president of Prestige Economics. "We have massive shortfalls across commodities." — AFP

Desperate truckers in Germany stage hunger strike

TRUCK drivers who transport goods around Europe have staged a hunger strike in Germany as part of a weeks-long work stoppage, describing it as their "last hope" to draw attention to the exploitation they say they suffer. It was the latest stage in an action described as "unprecedented" by union officials, and which has seen some 80 drivers set up an encampment using their vehicles at a motorway service station.

Believing their Polish employers would not respond to their growing desperation amid the 10-week strike, some of them stopped eating last week.

The truckers — mostly from Uzbekistan and Georgia, with a handful also from Tajikistan, Ukraine and Türkiye — started to take food again at the weekend after several days, but the stoppage itself continues.

The drivers claim they are not being regularly paid their salaries — at a daily rate of about 80 euros — and were charged hefty amounts to even take the jobs in the first place. They say they also face inhumane conditions such as having to work extremely long hours. — AFP

Dozens of truck drivers have staged a hunger strike in Germany, complaining they are not regularly being paid. **PHOTO: AFP**

Sick leave in UK hits 15-year high: study

A study by CIPD and Simplyhealth found that employees took an average of 7.8 sick days in the past year, which is two days more than before the pandemic and the highest level since 2008.

SICK leave in the UK has hit its highest rate in 15 years and is well above pre-pandemic levels, a study showed Tuesday.

Employees took an average 7.8 sick days over the past year, according to the study published by human resources association CIPD and medical services company Simplyhealth.

That was two days more than before the pandemic and marked the highest level since 2008, a CIPD spokesperson told AFP.

Employees in the UK took an average 7.8 sick days over the past year, according to a study. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

"Despite our research showing that most organizations are focusing on employee well-being, the considerable rise in absences across all sectors is a worry," said Rachel Suff, senior employee well-being adviser at the CIPD. — AFP

US Federal Trade Commission sues Amazon for monopoly

THE US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and 17 state attorneys-general on Tuesday sued Amazon.com, Inc alleging that the online retail and technology company is a monopolist that uses a set of interlocking anticompetitive and unfair strategies to illegally maintain its monopoly power. The FTC and its state partners said Amazon's actions allow it to stop rivals and sellers from lowering prices, degrade quality for shoppers, overcharge sellers, stifle innovation, and prevent rivals from fairly competing against Amazon. — Xinhua

Crypto firm Binance pulls out of Russia

CRYPTOCURRENCY firm Binance said on Wednesday it was selling its Russia business, months after reports suggested US authorities were investigating possible sanctions violations.

Bloomberg reported in May that the US Department of Justice was looking into claims Russians had used Binance to skirt US sanctions imposed over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The firm, which has faced severe regulatory hurdles across the world, has previously denied breaking sanctions but in a statement on Wednesday said it was making a "full exit" from the Russian market.

"As we look towards the future, we recognize that operating in Russia is not compatible with Binance's compliance strategy," chief compliance officer Noah Perlman said in a statement. The firm said the process would take a year to complete and would involve selling its assets to CommEX, a company that only launched on Tuesday.

In a message on X, formerly Twitter, reacting to the Binance deal, CommEX said: "A hearty welcome to our new users from Russia and around the world!" — AFP

Binance has taken a severe hit since crypto markets collapsed and regulators began probing the legality of its business. **PHOTO: AFP**

Qantas chairman rejects resignation calls

QANTAS chairman Richard Goyder on Wednesday rejected calls for his resignation over a string of scandals that have buffeted the Australian airline's reputation.

Pilots and a shareholder group have called for his head because of high ticket prices, illegal ground staff layoffs and allegations it sold thousands of tickets for already-cancelled flights.

The turbulence led former chief executive Alan Joyce to take early retirement on 5 September. Goyder said he had met major shareholders two weeks ago, following Joyce's departure and after the launch of legal action over Qantas' allegedly "false, misleading or deceptive" ticket sales.

Shareholders wanted the "continuity" of his leadership as chairman, he told a Senate committee in Canberra, especially with a new chief executive, Vanessa Hudson, who took over from Joyce.

"While retaining the confidence of our shareholders and the board, I will continue to serve because I think we have got some very significant challenges ahead of us and issues to deal with," Goyder said. "If that confidence is not maintained, then clearly I will review that decision."

The Senate committee is probing the Australian transport minister's decision to block a request by Qatar Airways for an extra 21 flights a week into the country's biggest cities. — AFP

Qantas is the flag carrier airline of Australia and one of the world's most well-known and established airlines. **PHOTO: AFP**

Indonesia bans goods transactions on social media platforms

This picture shows Monica Amadea (centre), owner of a TikTok sales channel called Monomolly, and her employees offering merchandise through a TikTok livestream in Jakarta. **PHOTO: BAY ISMOYO / AFP**

INDONESIA has banned goods transactions on social media platforms in a new regulation, its trade minister said Wednesday, as Jakarta aims to rein in direct sales on major platforms it says are harming millions of small businesses. Calls had grown in recent months for a regulation governing social media and e-commerce, with offline sellers seeing their livelihoods threatened by the sale of cheaper products on TikTok Shop and other platforms.

"This trade regulation has been in force (since yesterday)," Trade Minister Zulkifli Hasan told a news conference in the capital Jakarta.

He said social commerce platforms would have a week to comply with the new rule. "Any government would protect local small businesses," he said, saying the regulation was passed to ensure "equality in business competition".

The regulation means social media firms will not be able to conduct direct transactions but only promote products on their platforms. Laws in the archipelago nation did not cover direct transactions through social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook or Instagram before the new regulation. — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V KOTA NEBULA VOY.NO. (336W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V KOTA NEBULA VOY.NO. (336W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **28-9-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/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 SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V IAL 001 VOY.NO. (W163)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V IAL 001 VOY. NO. (W163)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **28-9-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S INTER ASIA LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3317S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3317S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **28-9-2023** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

ROLLING UPDATES
WORLD

Court rejects arrest warrant for South Korea opposition leader

South Korea's opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung (C, pictured at a protest against release of Fukushima water) still faces trial on charges of bribery. **PHOTO: JUNG YEON-JE/AFP**

SOUTH Korea's opposition leader avoided arrest on Wednesday when a court dismissed a request from the prosecution for him to be taken into custody pending trial on various corruption charges.

Lee Jae-myung, leader of the Democratic Party, still faces trial on charges of bribery in connection with a firm that is suspected of illicitly transferring $8 million to North Korea.

The 58-year-old is also accused of breaching his duties, which allegedly resulted in a loss of 20 billion won ($15 million) for a company owned by Seongnam city during his term as its mayor.

Prosecutors last week requested an arrest warrant against Lee, a former presidential candidate.

In a surprise move, South Korea's opposition-controlled National Assembly voted to strip Lee of his parliamentary immunity a few days later. But in a pre-dawn judgement on Wednesday, the Seoul Central District Court dismissed the request following a marathon nine-hour sitting, which Lee attended.

A judge concluded that it was "difficult to see that there are grounds and necessity for detention" adding there was low risk of Lee destroying evidence due to him being a public figure. — AFP

Trump absent again with stage set for second Republican debate

Donald Trump has a comfortable lead in Republican primary polling. **PHOTO: KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI / AFP**

US presidential hopefuls prepared Wednesday for the second 2024 Republican primary debate, with runaway frontrunner Donald Trump once again reducing the event to a sideshow after refusing to take part.

The 77-year-old former president had announced he would be skipping the debates, citing a commanding poll lead which he has maintained despite facing multiple criminal charges.

Adding to his litany of legal troubles, a New York judge ruled Tuesday that he and his sons Eric and Don Jr committed fraud by inflating the value of the real estate and financial assets of the Trump Organization for years.

The twice-impeached Trump also faces federal criminal charges for the mishandling of classified documents and conspiracy charges for trying to overturn the 2020 election results. Instead of the debate, Trump is planning to address former and current autoworker union members in Michigan, the historic heart of the US car industry and a key battleground for the election campaign.

His visit comes a day after Joe Biden's appearance in the Midwestern state, where he became the first sitting US president to stand on a picket line, as both men bid to sell themselves as the candidate for the American worker. — AFP

UK interior minister questions role of UN refugee convention

Braverman voiced worries about interpretations of the convention that could strain the asylum system, especially claims related to gender, sexual orientation, and discrimination fears.

UK interior minister Suella Braverman on Tuesday questioned whether the United Nations Refugee Convention was "fit for our modern age" during a keynote speech at a think tank in Washington.

The address at the centre-right American Enterprise Institute intended to lay out an international plan to deal with the refugee crisis, a key political issue for her struggling Conservative party back home.

Braverman called the 1951 Refugee Convention, which legally defines the term "refugee" and outlines their rights, "an incredible achievement of its age".

"But more than 70 years on, we now live in a completely different time," she said, citing a study that says the convention now gives at least 780 million people the potential right to move to another country.

"It is therefore incumbent upon politicians and thought leaders to ask whether the Refugee Convention, and the way it has come to be interpreted through our courts, is fit for our modern age or in need of reform," she said.

Western countries will not be able to sustain an asylum system "if in effect simply being gay, or a woman, or fearful of discrimination in your country of origin, is sufficient to qualify for protection," she added.

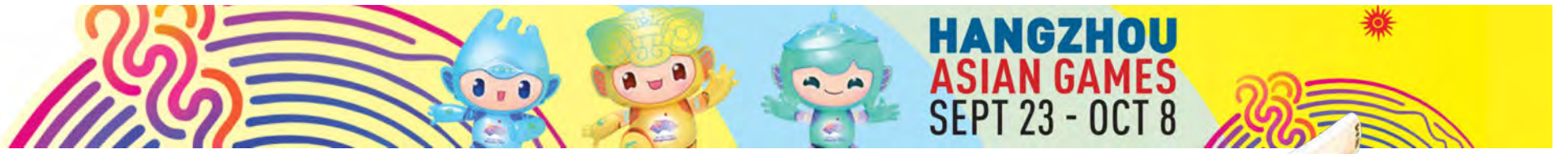
"We are living in a new world bound by outdated legal models. It's time we acknowledge that."

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said the convention was "the cornerstone of the international refugee protection regime and remains a life-saving instrument".

It added that the convention "remains as relevant today as when it was adopted in providing an indispensable framework for addressing" the challenges presented by the irregular movement of refugees. — AFP

Almost 24,000 people have crossed to England from mainland Europe in small boats this year. **PHOTO: HENRY NICHOLLS / AFP**

SPORTS



Indian Samra edged world champion Zhang to take women's 50m rifle three positions at Hangzhou Asian Games

Participants compete during the Women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions Final of Shooting at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, east China's Zhejiang Province, Sept. 27, 2023. **PHOTO: SUN FEI/XINHUA**

INDIAN sharpshooter Sift Kaur Samra clinched gold medal in the women's 50-m rifle three positions at the Hangzhou Asian Games with record-breaking 469.6 points, while Chinese markswoman Zhang Qiongyue grabbed the silver.

Samra, who completed the qualification round with a leading result of 594 points, led all the way through the final, with a 7.3-point margin ahead of Zhang, who grabbed the world championship title in this event in August. Another Indian participant Ashi Chouksey pocketed the bronze with 451.9 points.

Chinese shooter Xia Siyu, who had the same score as Samra in the qualification round, finished seventh in the final. — Xinhua

Nepal's men's cricket squad etched their names in history during the ongoing Asian Games cricket championship in Hangzhou, China. **PHOTO: ANI**

Nepal make cricket history at Hangzhou Asian Games

NEPAL men's cricket team made history at the ongoing Asian Games cricket tournament in Hangzhou, China as they smashed the highest-ever total in T20I cricket history, the fastest fifty and fastest century by a player in format's history on Wednesday.

They accomplished this during their match against Mongolia. This match also kickstarts the men's cricket competition at the continental meet.

In the match, Nepal smashed 314/3 in their 20 overs. It is the highest-ever total in T20Is, overtaking Afghanistan's 278/3 against Ireland in 2019.

They also smashed a total of 26 sixes in their innings, the highest by a team in the format's history in a single inning. They went past Afghanistan's record of 22 sixes that helped them make 278/3 back in 2019.

But two of the most interesting records are them smashing the fastest fifty and century in T20I cricket. — ANI

INTERNATIONAL

Ramos' home in Spain raided during Champions League match

VETERAN Spain defender Sergio Ramos' home was raided by burglars with his four young children inside while he was on Champions League duty with Sevilla last week, police and reports said Wednesday.

"It is being investigated," a spokeswoman for Spain's Guardia Civil police force told AFP, adding that at the time of the burglary, there were people inside the house without giving further details.

Spanish media said the player's four children and the two nannies looking after them were at home during the burglary in the town of Bollullos de la Mitacion on September 20, but none of them were harmed.

At the time Ramos, 37, was playing for Seville in their Champions League match against French side Lens at Seville's Sanchez Pizjuan stadium. His wife Pilar Rubio was away at the time as well.

Sergio Ramos (centre) in last week's Champions League match while his home was being raided. **PHOTO: AFP**

The thieves reportedly made off with luxury watches, jewellery, designer clothes and cash. Ramos in 2012 suffered an attempted break-in of his home in the Spanish capital while he played for Real Madrid but the burglars left when they realised he was at home.

The player -- who has 180 caps for Spain -- rejoined his hometown club Sevilla from Paris Saint-Germain in early September. — AFP

Absent Ryder Cup veterans 'missing being here', says McIlroy

RORY MCILROY on Wednesday said European stalwarts absent from this week's Ryder Cup in Rome after joining LIV Golf will be "missing being here more than we're missing them".

McIlroy is the most experienced player on either team as he prepares for the start of his seventh Ryder Cup on Friday.

The event will be the first without any of Lee Westwood, Sergio Garcia or Ian Poulter lining up for Europe since 1995 after the trio signed with Saudi-backed LIV and resigned from the European Tour. – AFP

WORLD

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Court rejects arrest warrant for South Korea opposition leader

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Washington was once known as the "murder capital" of the United States, though the situation has improved drastically since then. **PHOTO: EVA HAMBACH / AFP/FILE**

Rising crime in US capital divides politicians, puzzles researchers

Violent crime, particularly homicides, has increased by 28% in the US capital, Washington, this year, leading to concerns and political debates.

VIOLENT crime is on the rise in the US capital, where a 28-percent uptick in homicides this year has left researchers perplexed and politicians pointing fingers.

And while Washington is still a far cry from its days as the "murder capital" of the United States, amid the 1990s crack epidemic, the rise in violent crime in the city is both causing consternation among residents and dividing them.

Some of the killings have been especially grim: a 10-year-old girl who died from a stray bullet on Mother's Day; an Afghan immigrant who, having fled his country after the Taliban took over, was shot to death while working a late shift as a Lyft driver.

Puzzling researchers is the fact that Washington's murder rate has jumped while other major metros in the United States have seen declines. Also, the number of armed carjackings in the city has more than doubled, according to police statistics.

'Outlier' among US cities

"DC stands out in homicide trends compared to cities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, or Baltimore," says criminologist Richard Rosenfeld.

Joseph Richardson, a violence prevention professor, suggests police leadership changes and underreported drug-related shootings.

Gentrification may destabilize communities, displacing poorer residents, particularly Black Americans. Arguments about police shortage and low prosecution rates aren't persuasive to Rosenfeld.

They 'let it happen'

Debates on why crime has risen and what to do about it have become hot-button political issues in a country whose instances of police brutality have at times shocked the world.

Pamela Smith, named the local police chief this summer, has called for an "all-government approach" at a moment where "there seems to be an uptick in our juveniles committing some of these crimes." — AFP

100 killed in Iraq wedding fire tragedy

Fire, possibly started by fireworks, made the ceiling collapse due to cheap, flammable materials.

Soldiers and emergency responders gather around ambulances carrying people injured in a fire at an Iraqi wedding. **PHOTO: ZAID AL-OBEIDI / AFP**

AT least 100 people were killed and more than 150 injured when a fire broke out during a wedding at an event hall in the northern Iraqi town of Qaraqosh, officials said early Wednesday.

At the main hospital in the predominantly Christian town east of Mosul, an AFP photographer saw ambulances arriving with sirens blaring and dozens of people gathering in the courtyard to donate blood.

Others could be seen gathering in front of the open doors of a refrigerated truck loaded with black body bags.

Citing a "preliminary tally", Iraq's official INA news agency reported that health authorities in Nineveh province had "counted 100 dead and more than 150 injured in the fire at a marriage hall in Hamdaniyah", as the town is also known.

The casualty toll was confirmed to AFP by health ministry spokesman Saif al-Badr. Badr stated most injured had burns or oxygen issues and mentioned crowd crushes.

Authorities reported highly flammable panels inside the hall, emitting toxic gases from plastic combustion.

Cheap, flammable construction materials contributed to the ceiling's collapse, with preliminary indications pointing to fireworks as the cause. — AFP

UN general debate ends with global commitment to address challenges

THE General Debate of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) concluded Tuesday, with global leaders stating that the UN remains a paramount platform for crafting solutions to humanity's challenges.

In his concluding remarks, General Assembly President Dennis Francis underscored the unwavering dedication of the UN to bring peace, prosperity, and sustainability to the world.

"The United Nations remains focused on the collective challenges of our time," he said. – Xinhua