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SUNDAY EDITION

The Global NEW LIGHT of MYANMAR

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Senior General calls for electricity readiness in modern rail transport

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing directs the modernization of Myanmar rail transport through electricity.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing gave instructions to officials on his inspection tour of factories at Mahlwagon yard of Myanma Railways under the Ministry of Transport and Communications in Mingala Taungnyunt Township of Yangon Region yesterday.

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The photo captures the efficient organization of export rice bags aboard an overseas-bound vessel at Yangon Port.

Myanmar's rice exports surge to US$208 mln in H1 this FY for global markets

The rice export volume recorded the highest in May and dropped in July and August.

The value of Myanmar's rice and broken rice exports amounted to US$208 million from over 460,000 tonnes in the H1 (April-September) of the current financial year 2023-2024, comprising 427,645 tonnes in maritime trade and 36,512 tonnes via land borders, as per the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

The export volumes were registered at 87,648 tonnes worth $36 million in April, 110,706 tonnes worth $48 million in May, 62,725 tonnes worth $28 million

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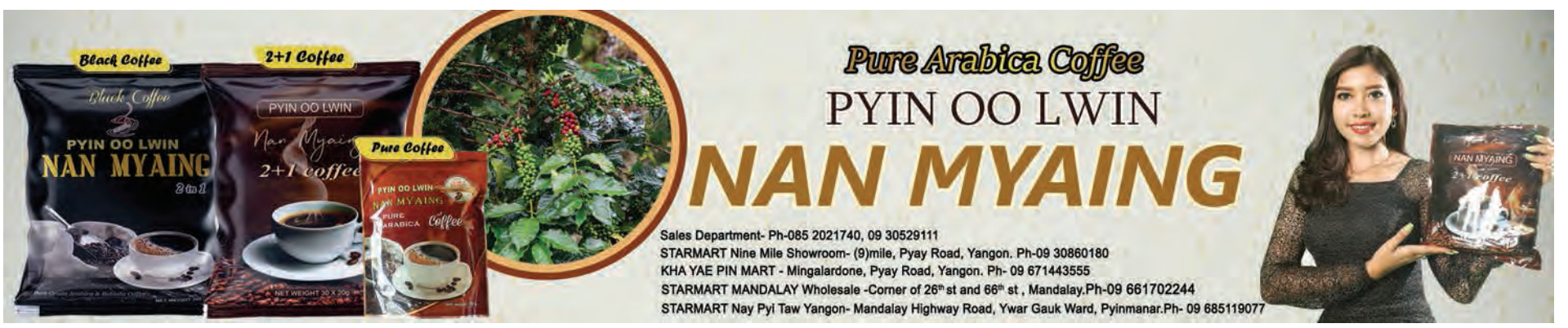

NATIONAL

This photo captures the scene of issuing the Temporary Border Pass-TBP at the Muse district stadium compound yesterday. **PHOTO: MUSE IPRD**

Surge continues in issuance of temporary border passes in Muse

THE officials concerned from the District/Township Department of Immigration cooperated with relevant departments in issuing the Temporary Border Pass-TBP at the Muse district stadium compound yesterday morning as the number of TBP is being issued continuously increasing by the appointment system in Muse township, the border town between Myanmar and China in Shan State (North).

A total of 5,358 persons who will travel with the TBP were issued nine-day unrenewable cards by the officials concerned under the supervision of U Aung Zaw Moe, chairman of the Muse district administration body. The TBP unrenewable cards have been issued to 1,500 persons for three days on 13 September, 6,466 for 13 days on 16 September and 5,035 for nine days on 30 September.

The Myanmar-China Temporary Border Pass (TBP) has been processed by the appointment system since 13 September and a total of 13,718 persons received TBPs for 34 days until 7 October. In the previous arrangement, it was able to pass 300 persons with TBP through the Nantaw border and 200 through the Sinphyu border per day.

It was reported that the authorities from the two countries negotiated and increased the number of border-passed people to 330 persons through the Nantaw border and 250 through the Sinphyu border on 30 September. — Muse District IPRD/MKKS

India-Myanmar Charity Bazaar-2023 to take place in Yangon in December

THE India-Myanmar Charity Bazaar-2023 will be held in Dagon Township of Yangon in December, according to the Indian Embassy in Yangon, Myanmar.

That festival will be organized by the Indian Women's Association of Yangon (IWAY) in Myanmar and held from 11 am to 5 pm on 2 December at India House, Diplomat Road, Dagon Township.

Indian cuisine, Indian clothing, Myanmar jewellery, Indian handicrafts, souvenirs, and gemstones with entertainment and raffle programmes will be included in the bazaar. The entrance fee for visitors will be K5,000 and tickets can be purchased at the Indian Embassy and designated location. — ASH/KZW

Objectives of 24th Myanmar Traditional Cultural Performing Arts Competitions 2023

(A) To uplift national prestige and integrity and to preserve the cultural heritage and national characteristics

(B) To explore, preserve and uplift the traditional cultural heritage of performing arts of ethnic nationals and national cultural characteristics

(C) To explore and preserve the traditional cultural heritage for the young generation and further propagate the national spirit

(D) To support measures in the field of national culture ensuring the development, peace and tranquillity of the State.

Myanmar businesspeople invited to join Korea Import Fair 2024

This screenshot captures essential information about the Korea Import Fair 2024.

MYANMAR'S business community is invited to attend the Korea Import Fair 2024, scheduled for July 2024 in Seoul, as announced by the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

The Korea Import Fair 2024 will take place in Seoul, Korea, from 4 to 6 July 2024, with support from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE) of Korea.

The Korea Import Fair 2024 is a unique exhibition featuring seminars and B2B meetings dedicated to showcasing imported products. The exhibition will cover a wide range of product categories, including energy products, metals, livestock and meat, agricultural produce, food and beverages, cosmetics, household appliances, kitchen appliances, IT equipment, fashion clothing, accessories, handicrafts, baby items, travel information, and cyber security. — ASH/KZW

NATIONAL

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views round Myanma Railways' factories at Mahlwagon yard during his inspection tour, Yangon Region yesterday.

Senior General calls for electricity readiness in modern rail transport

FROM PAGE-1

In his instructions, the Senior General stressed that as rail transport among various kinds of transport systems is cheaper, it can directly contribute to the welfare tasks for the daily socioeconomic life of the people and it is important for the economic development of the State. As such, it is necessary to improve the rail transport system.

As the cargo trains are of great importance in the smooth flow of commodities of the State, the Senior General stressed the need to maintain wagons for the development of the cargo transport of rail service, he added.

The Senior General underscored that rail transport must catch the attention of rail passengers, adding that research should be conducted for better strength of rail tracks.

Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Aung Myaing reported to the Senior General on functions of factories and workshops in the Mahlwagon yard, transport of cargo trains, background histories of the Diesel Locomotive Shed (Mahlwagon), Mahlwagon carriage shed, bridge frame workshop (Mahlwagon), and heavy machinery workshop (Mahlwagon).

At Mahlwagon Carriage Shed, the Senior General inspected 30 RBEs donated by West Corporation of Japan to Myanma Railways and instructed officials to emphasize maintenance and tidiness of the carriages for running the RBEs to be used in Yangon circular railway and short railway segments for providing smart transport facilities to rail passengers.

The Senior General inspected the display of steamed locomotives used by MR for many years.

Mahlwagon yard handled cargo transport with the use of 9,021 wagons before World War II and it set a record for the largest cargo transport weighing 4,030,653 tonnes in 1940-41. Mahlwagon yard plays a key role in the increase of rail passengers and the development of cargo transport of Myanma Railways.

The Senior General looks into the Gyoungwaing dock in Gyoungwaing Village in Kyimyindine Township of Yangon Region.

> As the cargo trains are of great importance in the smooth flow of commodities of the State, the Senior General stressed the need to maintain wagons for the development of the cargo transport of rail service, ...

Senior General views round preparations to resume Gyoungwaing dock

The Senior General continued his inspection tour to Gyoungwaing dock in Gyoungwaing Village in Kyimyindine Township of Yangon Region.

Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr Aung Gyi reported to the Senior General on facts about the dock and situations to resume the functions of the dock.

In his response, the Senior General gave guidance that as the dockyard halted its functions for many years, it must be repaired in conformity with the current era and facilitated with the necessary machinery, adding necessary preparations must be done for building and repairing vessels.

The Senior General inspected the docking workshop, dry dock and dock tracts, the entrance to the dock and the jetty and gave necessary instructions to officials.

Gyoungwaing dock was built in the 1981-82 financial year. It functioned as a dry dock in 1986. During the period from 1995 to 1999, the dock admitted 49 vessels for repairs and then it halted functions.

As the dock is 36 years old, relevant government departments and organizations are striving for re-operation of the dock if its halting period it will cause loss and damage to the dock. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

MoNREC UM arrives back from 3rd Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation

THE Myanmar delegation led by Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi arrived back in Yangon yesterday evening after attending the Third Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation held in Nyingchi, China's Xizang Autonomous Region from 4 to 6 October.

During the visit, the Union minister observed the community-based tourism, Tibetan archery, horse riding and trekking services in Zashigan Tibet village in Loulan city on 5 October.

On 6 October, the Union minister visited the Loulan nature reserve spanning over 43,00 hectares and heard the presentations of officials regarding the conservation of evergreen forests and natural environment, watershed areas, research on biodiversity and ecosystem, and recreational sites for people.

Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi observes the Loulan Nature Reserve on 6 October 2023 in China.

Moreover, he proceeded to Yani National Wetland Park (8,737 hectars) at an altitudes higher than 3,000 metres and studied the conservation of hilly water resources, mainland, mountain ecosystem, wildlife and bird species. He also went to over 100-year-old Lamalin Buddhist Temple and studied Tibetan architecture, religion and culture. — MNA/KTZH

Union Energy Minister engages in energy talks during Moscow visit

UNION Minister for Energy U Ko Ko Lwin led a Myanmar delegation to Moscow for the Russia Energy Week International Forum (REW) on 6 October following their participation in the First Energy Forum of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Kazakhstan from 3 to 6 October.

The Union minister held discussions with the Roscongress Investment-RCI delegation, led by Mr A Segey Vladimirovish, focusing on energy-related matters. Topics included expediting joint actions, the need for a deep-water port to accommodate large oil tankers for a new oil refinery in Myanmar, an invitation for Myanmar officials to attend the 2024 Energy Forum in Vladivostok, and opportunities for mutual development.

Union Minister U Ko Ko Lwin emphasized the importance of fostering close cooperation with friendly countries like Russia to meet Myanmar's energy requirements and looked forward to deeper collaboration in the future, given the historical friendship between Myanmar and Russia. — MNA/MKKS

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The photo shows the model vegetable farm established in Wunnkyan Village-tract, Hpa-an Township. **PHOTO : SAW MYO MIN THEIN**

Kayin State promotes rural income growth through domestic businesses

KAYIN State Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo highlighted the potential for domestic industries to boost the income of rural farmers and their families, particularly those reliant solely on agriculture in the region.

This development not only supports regional economic growth but also creates employment opportunities.

His remarks came during the launch of the Mee Eain bamboo arts and crafts shop, located on the Hpa-an-Zathapyin-straight Road, Kawthayokeya village tract, Kawmuya, Hpa-an Township. The shop's purpose is to consolidate and promote the market for both domestic and international sales of local handicrafts.

The state government actively encourages such initiatives, aiming to centralize the viewing and purchasing of traditional bamboo-based handicrafts while stimulating their production.

Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo emphasized that support and promotion will continue until the 'One Region One Product' concept is realized, foreseeing improvements in the regional economy due to the interest of local tourists.

During their visit, the Chief Minister and his team also inspected a model vegetable farm in Wunnkyan village-tract, Hpa-an Township, discussing the necessary requirements for its development. — Saw Myo Min Thein/KZL

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NATIONAL

SECM facilitates registration of public firms with 100+ shareholders on pre-listing board

The Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM) said it is making preparations for public companies having more than 100 shareholders to register with the Pre-Listing Board.

The SECM held a roundtable discussion on the Pre-Listing Board (PLB) in Yangon on 6 October.

The event was held to facilitate the registration of public companies with more than 100 shareholders and other unlisted companies to meet the criteria to be able to register and provide them with fund-raising opportunities as the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) set up a secondary market naming PLB.

Officials of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar are seen at the Yangon Stock Exchange.

The event was led by SECM Chairman Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win. The permitted public companies are the listed companies, public companies whose securities are traded on the over-the-counter market, and public companies which have more than 100 shareholders or have obtained approval from the SECM under Subsection (a) of Section 35 of the Securities Exchange Law.

The YSX launched a Pre-Listing Board in 2022.

The shares of eight listed companies are traded on YSX daily. Until 2023-2024FY, there are 45,934 investors and the investment amount of eight listed companies in the first six months of this FY is K749.772 billion. — ASH/KTZH

This file photo captures a sand sculpture against the backdrop of joyful beachgoers at Ngapali Beach.

Ngapali Beach Autumn Festival to be held in November

The Ngapali Beach Autumn Festival will be held in Thandwe Township of Rakhine State in November. The authorities make preparations for the festival regarding the cleanliness of the beach and opening of hotels, motels and guesthouses, according to U Tin Tun Aung, Director of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Rakhine State).

The autumn festival aims to attract travellers and the first and second autumn festivals were held on 21 November 2021 and 22 November 2022. This year festival will be held between 14 and 22 November.

"The Ngapali Beach Autumn Festival will be in November. It is held yearly. The event will include the events like previous years such as the sand pagoda festival and funfairs. It will also include Rakhine traditional wrestling, volleyball, cycling, racing and Greasy pole climbing competitions," said U Tin Tun Aung.

Ngapali Beach is one of the most beautiful beaches in Myanmar and also the best-known beach in Asia.

The beach hosted huge crowds of domestic and foreign travellers before the COVID-19 period. There are 102 hotels and guesthouses in Rakhine State, of which 70 hotels, motels and guesthouses of which are being operated. — ASH/KTZH

Private sector workers to enjoy raised wages starting October

ACCORDING to the National Committee on Setting the Minimum Wage, the K4,800 daily minimum wage set on 14 May 2018 will increase by K1,000 of allowance as of 5 October and the new minimum wage of K5,800 per day will apply to all employees in all workplaces and factories across the country. The employers are also supposed to factor in the new minimum wage starting on 1 October in the calculation of salaries for workers.

This image showcases skilled cut-make-pack workers diligently sewing garments at a CMP workplace.

"The minimum wage of K600 per hour and K4,800 per day for eight hours of work have not been changed. Workers will only earn K1,000 of the daily allowance. If there are thirty days in a month, it means that they get their salary plus K30,000 of allowance. Some private factories have already increased their allowances months ago and they do not need to increase again now. Only factories that have not yet increased their allowance fee must comply with the scheme," said U Htain Lin, a member of the Thakayta Industrial Zone Management Committee in Thakayta Township, Yangon Region.

Many of the factories in Yangon Region's industrial zones have already practised the minimum wage of K5,800 per day even before the announcement. — ASH/TH

NATIONAL

The photo shows pilgrims visiting the Kyaiktiyo Pagoda.

Kyaiktiyo Pagoda Festival to start on 29 October (Thadingyut Full Moon Day)

THE Kyaiktiyo Pagoda Festival will be held for seven months from 29 October 2023 (Full Moon of Thadingyut) to 22 May 2023 (Full Moon of Kason), according to the Kyaiktiyo Pagoda Trustees Board.

The Kyaiktiyo Pagoda Trustees Board will provide the pilgrims with appropriate accommodation, transportation and foods during the festival. The number of pilgrims was low during this rainy season. There were 177,749 pilgrims from local and 2,904 abroad during the Pagoda Festival in the rainy season as Thai pilgrims were the most common.

The pagoda festival is usually held from Thadingyut full moon day to Kason full moon day but it is launched to be visited by pilgrims from local and abroad all year long. — TWA/MKKS

Sri Ksetra Museum 90% transformed into digital museum

NINETY per cent of the transformation of Sri Ksetra Museum into a digital museum has been completed in the village of Hmawza, Pyay district, Bago Region.

The Department of Archaeology and National Museum oversees a total of 32 museums, which comprise five types of cultural museums and Buddhist museums.

Among these museums, the website design has been completed including the National Museum (Nay Pyi Taw), National Museum (Yangon), Mandalay Myanansankyaw Golden Palace Cultural Museum, Bagan Ancient Culture Museum, Bago Hanthawady Archaeological Museum and the Beikthano Archaeological Museum.

After designing the website for Sri Ksetra Museum, an online server will be set up in the relevant museums. Additionally, there will be offline servers with touch screens and QR codes for the public to use for study.

Furthermore, according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, a digital directory will also cover famous pagodas from Myanmar, including Shwedagon, Shwemawdaw (Bago), Myathalun (Magway), Maha Muni Buddha Image (Mandalay), Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, Uppatasanti Pagoda, Ananda and Shwezigon Pagodas and Shitthaung temples from MraukU city.

Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Myanmar, Sri Ksetra is the ancient capital of the Pyu people. Sri Ksetra, located in the Pyu Cultural Heritage Region, is situated approximately five miles south of Pyay in the Bago Region and about 180 miles northwest of Yangon. This ancient Pyu City flourished between the 4th and 9th centuries AD. — TWA/KZW

The photograph displays a World Heritage Site sign at the historic Pyu ancient city of Sri Ksetra.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MEC, MEHPCL assigned to address soaring commodity prices

STATE Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing addressed the issue of high commodity prices during an afternoon visit to the Myanmar Economic Corporation, situated between the Yangon River and the Hmawwun Creek in Kyauktan Township, Yangon Region, on 6 October. He attributed the high commodity prices to increased input costs and wages while inspecting the progress of the Thilawa Multi-Agriculture and Livestock Zone. To address the issue of high commodity prices, the Myanmar Economic Corporation and Myanmar Economic Holdings Public Company Limited have been assigned duties for supplying meat and meat products to the Yangon and Mandalay Regions. Additionally, they are reported to be working on meeting the demand of fish and seasonal crops.

Exploring feasibility of providing supplementary allowances

STARTING from 1 October, the minimum wage for workers in CMP factories has been set at K4,800 per day added with a K1,000 allowance. Some workers in factories and workshops are considering the recent notification issued by the National Committee on Setting the Minimum Wage, for their convenience.

Local universities forge nuclear technology cooperation with Russian Institution

A memorandum of understanding was signed on 6 October at Yangon University of Technology, fostering collaboration in science, technology, and engineering, including nuclear technology, between three universities under the Ministry of Science and Technology and the National Research Nuclear University (Moscow Engineering Physics Institute-MEPhI) of the Russian Federation.

Substitute crops gain popularity amidst falling corn prices

THIS year, as corn prices decline and become less affordable for corn farmers, they are increasingly replacing corn crops with other options like peppers and beans, as reported by the Myanmar Corn Industry Association. The price of corn has remained stable and has not seen an increase.

AML/CTF oversight enhanced

U Nyi Nyi, Vice-Chairman (Vice Mayor) of the Yangon City Development Committee, stated, "Yangon City Bank Limited was established with 100 per cent capital contributed by the Yangon City Development Committee and is regulated by the Central Bank of Myanmar. It operates under the guidance of Yangon City Bank directors. Under the Anti-Money Laundering Law, there is a crucial need to strictly adhere to the directives issued by the Central Bank of Myanmar in combating money laundering and terrorist financing." He emphasized these points during his address at the opening ceremony of the updated banking course conducted by Yangon City Bank on 7 October. — Htun Htun/KZW

Domestic fuel prices drop amidst falling international crude oil costs

WITH the international crude oil price falling, the fuel oil prices have declined in the Yangon market.

The global crude oil price was US$90 per barrel in late September and tumbled to $83 on 5 October, as per crude oil price charts. The fuel oil prices were K1,945 per litre of Octane 92, K2,045 per litre of Octane 95, K2,285 per litre of diesel and K2,325 per litre of premium diesel on 6 October. The prices of Octane remained unchanged on 7 October, whereas diesel prices showed a decrease of K60 per litre.

The fuel prices touched a high of K2,440 per litre of Octane 92 and K2,650 per litre of diesel on 18 September 2023.

The photo shows a petrol station located in Tamway Township in Yangon.

The current market values indicated a sharp drop of K495 per litre of Octane 92 and K425 per litre of diesel compared to those registered on 18 September.

Now, the prices were down by K2,250 per gallon (4.54 lire) of Octane 92 and K1,930 for diesel. They can save around K110,000 per 50 gallons of Octane 92 and K96,000 for diesel, a truck driver Ko Tun told the Global New Light of Myanmar.

Diesel prices showed high volatility in the markets in 2022 and 2023. The diesel prices dropped to an eight-month low of K1,450 per litre on 4 May 2023, as per the wholesale reference oil prices' statistics.

The fuel oil prices weigh on the freight forwarding industry. Freight rate fluctuates on fuel oil prices so the traders and truck operators are closely observing the daily market prices. — TWA/EM

Myanmar's various pulses exports bag US$715 mln in H1

Beans and pulses are organized for sale in the market.

MYANMAR shipped more than 860,000 tonnes of pulses, with an estimated value of over US$715 million, to foreign trade partners in the H1 (April-September) of the current 2023-2024 financial year, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated.

The value of pulses exports by seaborne trade hit $603.407 million (over 733,314 tonnes), whereas over 130,052 tonnes of pulses worth $111.604 million were sent to the neighbouring countries through the border between 1 April and 29 September 2023, totalling $715 million from exports of over 863,366 tonnes.

Myanmar's pulses exports swelled by over $1.47 billion from over 1.9 million tonnes in the previous FY 2022-2023, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated.

Myanmar mainly exports black gram, green gram and pigeon peas to foreign markets. Of them, black gram and pigeon peas are primarily shipped to India while green grams are exported to China and Europe.

India has growing demand and consumption requirements for black gram and pigeon peas. According to a Memorandum of Understanding between Myanmar and India signed on 18 June 2021, India will import 250,000 tonnes of black gram and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon peas (tur) from Myanmar for five consecutive years from 2021-2022 financial year to 2025-2026 FY. This G-to-G pact will not affect the pulses' annual quota set by India. Myanmar's exporters are also entitled to deliver the pulses to India under that annual quota.

The prevailing market prices are K2.504 million per tonne of black gram (urad) and K4.07 million per tonne of pigeon pea (tur).

Black grams which India primarily purchases are commonly found only in Myanmar, whereas pigeon peas, green grams and chickpeas are grown in African countries and Australia, Myanmar Pulses, Beans, Maize and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association stated. — NN/EM

Myanmar's rice exports surge to US$208 mln in H1 this ...

FROM PAGE-1

in June, 58,334 tonnes worth $26 million in July, 59,971 tonnes worth $28 million in August and 84,773 tonnes worth $42 million in September respectively.

The rice export volume recorded the highest in May and dropped in July and August.

MRF aims to achieve 2.5 million tonnes of robust rice export in the current FY, expecting to bag $1 billion.

Myanmar exported 2,261,203 tonnes of rice and broken rice to foreign trade partners in the past 2022-2023 FY (April-March), with an estimated value of $853.472 million.

Last FY, China was the main buyer of Myanmar's rice and broken rice with over 775,000 tonnes, followed by Belgium with 323,000 tonnes, Bangladesh with over 239,000 tonnes and the Philippines with over 202,000 tonnes.

Myanmar has been endeavouring to attain 10 per cent growth in the rice export. To increase foreign income, it has been prioritizing the exportation of high-grade rice and bolstering export volume, MRF stated.

Myanmar pocketed over $809.135 million from approximately 2.164 million tonnes of rice export in the 2021-2022 FY (April-March). — NN/EM

The file photo shows workers carrying bags of rice at a warehouse in Yangon on 8 March 2023.

OPINION

Help children escape from a life of child labour

MILLIONS of children worldwide face a bleak future, devoid of educational opportunities, as they are compelled to abandon their schooling to join the workforce. It is imperative that relevant authorities step in to provide these children with a smoother life path and alleviate the challenges they face in pursuing an education.

Children hailing from impoverished families bear the brunt of inflation, soaring living expenses, and the lingering aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Regrettably, some children are forced to join the labour force prematurely, and tragically, a subset of them falls victim to sexual exploitation by unscrupulous individuals. Authorities take stringent action against offenders to relieve the burdens these children face in the workplace.

Presently, children across the globe grapple with a myriad of challenges, including economic instability, political turmoil, poverty, various forms of conflict, and natural disasters. These root causes often drive children to enter the workforce prematurely, robbing them of their potential futures.

Society undergoes a shift in mindset to prevent the heinous act of forcing children into child labour. If adults extend their empathy towards children, nations can significantly reduce child labour offences, ultimately creating an environment conducive to the education and growth of future generations. By doing so, everybody should help children break free from the shackles of child labour and embrace the learning opportunities that await them.

According to data compiled by the United States, approximately 160 children were forced into child labour in early 2020. Shockingly, this marked the first time in two decades that such practices had derailed child development initiatives.

The world is currently grappling with numerous challenges that affect children on multiple fronts. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the education of over 2.5 billion students worldwide. Additionally, armed conflicts, fueled by various underlying causes, pose significant barriers to children's access to education. The spectre of children prematurely entering the workforce looms as a dire threat to their hopes and dreams.

Child labour is a global issue, and it is a problem that affects children in Myanmar as well. The annual labour population census in 2018 revealed that Myanmar had a child population of 12.4 million, aged between 5 and 17. Shockingly, 600,000 of these children were already toiling away in workplaces, with 420,000 trapped in the cycle of child labour. Furthermore, a harrowing 400,000 child labourers were subjected to hazardous work conditions. Alarmingly, more than 30 per cent of the 12.4 million children were rural child labourers, while 20 per cent were found in urban areas.

Society undergoes a shift in mindset to prevent the heinous act of forcing children into child labour. If adults extend their empathy towards children, nations can significantly reduce child labour offences, ultimately creating an environment conducive to the education and growth of future generations. By doing so, everybody should help children break free from the shackles of child labour and embrace the learning opportunities that await them. ■

WHO approves second malaria vaccine for children

According to the WHO, both the R21/Matrix-M vaccine and the world's first malaria vaccine have been shown to be safe and effective in preventing malaria in children.

THE World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday recommended a new anti-malaria vaccine for children, a move that could offer countries a cheaper and more readily available option than the world's first shot against the parasitic disease.

The R21/Matrix-M vaccine, developed by Britain's Oxford University, can be used to curb the life-threatening illness spread to humans by mosquitoes, the WHO said, stating that "both vaccines are shown to be safe and effective in preventing malaria in children and, when implemented broadly, are expected to have high public health impact."

It is the second malaria vaccine recommended by WHO, following the RTS,S/AS01 vaccine, which received a WHO recommendation in 2021.

According to WHO, malaria "places a particularly high burden on children in the African Region", with nearly half a million children dying each year.

"As a malaria researcher, I used to dream of the day we would have a safe and effective vaccine against malaria. Now we have two," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Unprecedented demand

Demand for malaria vaccines is unprecedented; however, RTS,S is in short supply. The addition of R21 to the list of approved shots is expected to result in sufficient supply to benefit all children living in areas where malaria is a public health risk.

Tedros described it as "a vital additional tool to protect more children faster, and to bring us closer to our vision of a malaria-free future."

WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti said the shot "holds real potential to close the huge demand-and-supply gap. Delivered to scale and rolled out widely, the two vaccines can help bolster malaria prevention and control efforts and save hundreds of thousands of young lives in Africa from this deadly disease".

Next steps

WHO is now reviewing the vaccine for prequalification. Having got approval that will enable GAVI [a global vaccine alliance] and Children's Fund UNICEF to buy the vaccine from manufacturers, added Tedros.

The vaccine will be rolled out in some African countries, including Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria in early 2024, and will be available in mid-2024 in other countries, Tedros said, adding that doses would cost between $2 and $4.

SOURCE: WHO

A nurse holds 7-month-old Beverly Wakasa while speaking to her mother, Sylvia Kadesa, about the malaria vaccine at the Malava County Hospital Child Welfare Clinic in Kakamega, Kenya. **PHOTO: GAVI, THE VACCINE ALLIANCE.**

ARTICLE
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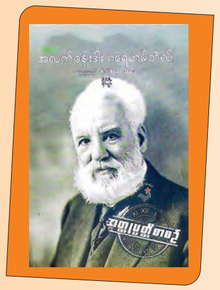

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Publication Date	-	July 2023
Price	-	K2,000

Alexander G Bell: A Life from Beginning to End

ALEXANDER Graham Bell was one of the few people to successfully combine the roles of both teacher and scientist. He spent his working life teaching deaf people to speak while, in his spare time, his experiments with sound led to the development of the first working telephone.

The publishing house of this translated version has been publishing books of biographies of world-famous persons, and this book under review is the 22nd of the biography series.

The book starts with the clause, "Alexander Graham Bell seems to have arrived in the world of us to invent new things." Alexander was born in Scotland on 3 March 1847. Smart boy, Alexander enjoyed creating different things and using his imagination to invent things. From an early age, Alexander was interested in hearing devices and anything with sound. Bell's wife and mom were both deaf, so, Bell was always looking for ways to help people who could not hear. Bell's research on hearing and speech led him to his most well-known invention: the first telephone.

Alexander, like any inventor, had to go through many trials to find the correct path for the telephone to work. Many people believed that it would never work and saw his different trials as failures. Bell did not look at himself as a failure. Bell saw an opportunity to learn and continued to push himself. Bell had a working telephone through trial and error method, and it happened in 1875. Alexander Graham Bell was a scientist, inventor, engineer and innovator who changed the way we communicate with people across the world. Along with all of his accomplishments, Bell is remembered for completing a goal and wanting to better our world.

In fact, both Alexander and his grandfather were teachers. And what is inter-remarked like this, "testing is that it is his father who has invented the writing system for the deaf. His brother also followed the path of his father and grandfather. Alexander has taught the deaf the English language.

This book is composed of ten chapters. A headmaster once gave his remarks about Alexander like this, "He is an excellent teacher, who can make the students interested in his lectures." He moved to the west of England where he was highly popular for his teaching method. Despite such a great achievement, he returned to London to teach deaf children at the special schools for the deaf. He has devoted his life to teaching the deaf children. In another chapter, the readers will find out how he got the idea to invent the telephone.

The original writer has not neglected his love life. As Alexander needs the money to get married to the woman he is in love with, he has turned to the invention of a new communication device to be able to earn money enough to hold a wedding ceremony. In the final episode, the readers will feel sad for the wife of Alexander, who is leaving this earth soon. In his moribund stage, Alexander has great difficulty breathing in his wife's bosom. She said, "Don't leave me." Unable to reply verbally, he writes the word 'No' in her palm. Sorry, it is not a happy ending. ■

Book Title	-	Cleopatra: A Life from Beginning to End
Writer	-	Naing Oo
Publishing House	-	Yin Myo
Publication Date	-	July 2023
Price	-	K2,000

Cleopatra: A Life from Beginning to End

THIS book is another biography published by Yin Myo Publishing House. And the translator is Naing Oo again. This is the 23rd of the biography series of Yin Myo.

The main characters in this book are Cleopatra – the last pharaoh of ancient Egypt; Mark Anthony – a Roman politician and general – as a military commander and administrator, he was an important supporter and loyal friend of his mother's cousin Julius Caesar; Julius Caesar – a Roman general and statesman and a distinguished writer of Latin prose – he played a critical role in the gradual transformation of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire; Octavian (Gaius Julius Caesar, later called Augustus), adopted son of Julius Caesar.

From the commencement, Cleopatra's story was larger than life: epic in scale, mythic in symbolism and operatically over the top in its grandeur and spectacle. As Stacey Schiff describes it in a captivating new biography, Cleopatra's meeting with Julius Caesar was "a singular, shuddering moment," when "two civilizations, passing in different directions, unexpectedly and momentously" touched.

Cleopatra was born a goddess, became a queen at 18 and at the height of her power, Ms Schiff writes, "she controlled virtually the entire eastern Mediterranean coast, the last great kingdom of any Egyptian ruler. For a fleeting moment, she held the fate of the Western world in her hands." Having inherited a kingdom in decline, Cleopatra would go on to lose it, regain it, nearly lose it again, amass an empire and then lose it all.

Cleopatra was a resourceful leader: disciplined, self-assured and shrewd in her management of her country's affairs; a sovereign who "knew how to build a fleet, suppress an insurrection, control a currency, alleviate a famine".

She would go down in history, however, not as "the sole female of the ancient world to rule alone and to play a role in Western affairs," Ms Schiff writes, but as the consort of Caesar and later Mark Antony: a woman depicted by historians and poets as a wanton temptress symbolizing 'insatiable sex'.

Ms Schiff even manages to make us see afresh famous scenes like Antony's painful death after his defeat at the hands of Octavian, and Cleopatra's subsequent suicide. Her death – "an honourable death, a dignified death, an exemplary death", over which she presided herself, "proud and unbroken to the end" – even won her detractors, Ms Schiff observes: "by the Roamn definition she had at last done something right; finally, it eas to her credit that she had defied the expectations of her sex".

This book has ten episodes written by Stacy Schiff, who is a winner of the Pulitzer Prize. She has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Centre for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library. ■

Entertainment

Celebrity Brief

Thukamein Hlaing

The Heart of Rangoon presented the songs of composer Thukamein Hlaing on 5 October. Singers J Maung Maung, Eaint Chit, Htet Nay Kyi, May La Thansin and Nay Min Eain (Velocity) sang for Tribute Night of Thukamein Hlaing. Moreover, his son and daughter Thit Taw and San Yay also participated in the event as next generation guests. "You all might feel that the world we possess today is full of grief, strength and happiness," said Thukamein Hlaing. The famous song 'Thanthaya San Yay' by Zaw Win Htut was composed by Thukamein Hlaing on the night that his daughter was born.

Director Hein Soe

The 8th graduation ceremony of the acting course and short movie presenting event of Director Hein Soe was conducted at M3 Restaurant in Yangon on 5 October. He said, "My acting training is concluded once a month. They have to make short films to examine their qualification. This is an event that presents their creation to the media, fans and parents."

Chit Kaung

Famous singer Chit Kaung grabbed his success without challenging others but, in the past himself though he requested the teashop owners to play his songs. "My singing style is similar to U Kyaw Hein. I sing the songs of U Kyaw Hein. I challenged myself ... like that, I will leave this industry if I am not successful like them when I sing the songs of famous actor," he said.

Chue Lay

Chue Lay made a food donation to mark her 30th birthday on 5 October in Dagon Myothit (South) Township. "I will choose my partner based on his look, at least I may be happy for that. Currently, my heart is broken," she replied to the media.

Pan Yaung Chel

Pan Yaung Chel was nominated for the Asian Academy Creative Awards for Best Actress in a Leading Role for the second time with 'Grieving Moe' movie. Regarding this, she said, "I didn't expect the Grand Award. I am on the nomination list with Song Hye Kyo who I have loved and emulated since my childhood. She did her best in The Glory, and others will grab the award if she doesn't win the prize. I am so happy to be the national winner representing Myanmar in this category. I also thank my fans and I will do my best."

Comedian U Yar Kyaw

U Yar Kyaw, who participated in the radio comedy programmes together with Zaythelgyi Sunny, began his career as a comedian when he was 19, and now it has been 55 years in this field. The proud comedian waits for the clients that they will contact him if they think of his better performance, and so he is struggling to make ends meet, he said. He is the father of comedian Shet Tel.— Htun Htun/KTZH

'So' Composing & Singing Contest heads into Grand Final

MYANMAR'S first 'So' song composing and singing contest that awarded K4.5 million to the winners organized its grand final event at Hazagon Studio of Shwe Htut Tin Compound in Yangon yesterday.

The top six finalists for the Grand Final (Songwriter) were Ar Phone, Pin Lal Aye, Thaw Zin Lat, Hmone Gyi and Nyan Lin Htut while the top six finalists for Grand Final Winner (Singer) were Maung Thu, Bwe, Anoni Mus, Nyan Lin Htet, Moana and Pearl Phyu Sin Phway.

Nyan Linn Htut won the title of " Grand Final Winner (Songwriter) while Nyan Linn Htet for Grand Final Winner (Singer). The first prize winners for Songwriter and Singing contests were awarded K4.5 million and other prizes. The judges of the 'So' songwriting and singing contest are Saya Myint Moe Aung, Chaw Su Khin, and Wai Gyi with conductor Maung Maung Lwin and host Aung Pyae Phyo.

Their first audition was on 1 July 2023 and there were 50 contestants each for songwriting and singing contests. After the various stages, there were 20 contestants for the songwriting contest and 21 contestants for the singing contest. Among them, six contestants for each category reached the grand final event. — ASH/KTZH

Nyan Linn Htut

Nyan Linn Htet

WORLD

Israel says at 'war' after rocket barrages, militant infiltration

Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant has accused the Palestinian militant group Hamas of launching what he described as a "war" against the State of Israel.

Rockets are fired from Gaza City towards Israel. **PHOTO: AFP**

PALESTINIAN militants have begun a "war" against Israel, the country's defence minister said Saturday after a barrage of rockets were fired and fighters from the Palestinian enclave infiltrated Israel, a major escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Violence between Israel and the Palestinians has been surging for almost two years, with fatalities in the occupied West Bank hitting a scale not seen in years.

At least two people were killed in Israel, officials said.

Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said Palestinian militant group Hamas has "launched a war against the State of Israel".

"Troops are fighting against the enemy at every location," he said in a statement.

AFP journalists said Israel's military began air strikes on Gaza, following the rocket barrage from inside the territory which is sealed off from Israel by a militarized border barrier. — AFP

Poland and Hungary clash with EU over migration reform

Poland's Mateusz Morawiecki and Hungary's Viktor Orban reject the EU's proposed migration reform plan. **PHOTO: AFP**

A row over planned changes to Europe's migration rules overshadowed an EU summit Friday, although supporters of the reform vowed opposition from Poland and Hungary would not derail it.

The Polish and Hungarian leaders did prevent the leaders from including migration in a joint statement of the summit's conclusions, causing the meeting to end on a sour note.

That forced European Council president Charles Michel to issue a separate statement in his name about asylum policy and border protection, and the French and German leaders said the legislative process on the issue would continue as planned.

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who hosted the summit in Granada, dismissed concerns about the clash.

"The most important thing is what our interior ministers achieved a few weeks ago with the agreement on crisis regulation, because that is what is really relevant in political terms," he said. — AFP

Bedbugs force closure of seven schools in France, says minister

The infestation has raised concerns, as it coincides with France hosting the Rugby World Cup and preparing for the Paris 2024 Olympics, which could impact the country's reputation and readiness for these major sporting events.

FRANCE has been forced to shut seven schools over growing concerns over an infestation of bedbugs, Education Minister Gabriel Attal said on Friday.

"Bedbugs were detected at various levels in... I believe 17 institutions, and currently as I speak to you, seven institutions are closed for this reason," Attal told France 5 television.

The French government has held a series of meetings this week to examine surging numbers of reported bedbug cases at a time when France is hosting the Rugby World Cup and preparing to host the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Earlier yesterday, the Education Ministry said in statement to AFP that five schools with a total of 1,500 students had been closed.

Earlier this week, authorities announced two schools — one in Marseille and the other in Villefranche-sur-Saone outside Lyon in southeastern France — had been shut down for cleaning. "We have almost 60,000 institutions and we're only talking about a few dozen here, but it's true that cases are piling up," Attal said. "An immediate response is needed, so that we can have institutions treated within 24 hours." — AFP

Products used to eradicate bedbugs on display at the Hygiene Premium pest control shop in Paris, France on 3 October 2023 and, inset, one of the parasites on display at the Bed Bug Summit in Washington DC on 2 February 2011. **PHOTO: MIGUEL MEDINA/ JEWEL SAMAD/AFP**

ECONOMY
WORLD

On average, households of two or more people spent 293,161 yen ($1,975) in August, with a smaller decline compared to the 5.0% drop in July. **PHOTO: KYODO/FILE**

Japan household spending falls 2.5% in August on rising prices

Rising prices led to reduced spending on items like food and education.

JAPAN'S household spending in August dropped 2.5 percent from a year earlier, declining for the sixth consecutive month, as rising prices prompted people to cut back on food and education-related outlays, government data showed Friday.

Households of two or more people spent an average of 293,161 yen ($1,975), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications said. The rate of decline was smaller than the 5.0 percent in July.

The continued weakness in spending came as real wages dropped 2.5 percent in August for the 17th consecutive month of decline, as the impact of rising prices outweighed that of salary increases, separate data from the labor ministry showed.

Food expenditure, accounting for around one-third of household spending, fell 2.5 percent, led by decreases in seafood, meat, dairy products and eggs amid rising prices. Outlays for education dropped 13.6 percent as cram school expenses fell.

Unusually hot weather dampened appetite for autumn clothes, pushing down spending on clothing by 5.9 percent. Purchases of pesticides also fell due to fewer mosquitos amid the heat, leading to a 5.1 percent drop in outlays for furniture and household goods category, the internal affairs ministry said. — Kyodo

STRONGEST EXPORTS IN TWO YEARS

Canada posts August trade jump

CANADA saw trade rebound sharply in August, posting a surplus of Can$718 million (US$522 million) with the strongest exports in two years outpacing an uptick in imports, the government statistical agency said Thursday.

The Group of Seven nation's trade balance swung back from a deficit of Can$437 million in July when port operations on its Pacific coast were disrupted by a dock workers strike.

This turnaround was helped by exports to the United States hitting a record high in the month. Canada also significantly boosted trade with other countries.

Total exports increased 5.7 per cent, led by banking sector gold transfers to the United States and oil shipments. The latter was driven mostly by higher prices for crude.

Total imports, meanwhile, rose 3.8 per cent, partially offsetting a decline the previous month. – AFP

In US, lack of affordable child care hinders work force

Accessible and affordable daycare services are crucial for parents to participate in the workforce and sustain their careers.

PARENTS of young children in the United States are finding that with daycare centres in short supply, or too expensive, more and more of them — mostly mothers — are having to stay at home to look after their kids.

"It was just an undercurrent previously that was exposed and compounded by the pandemic," said Kevin Schreiber, who heads an association of business leaders in York County, Pennsylvania.

He was speaking to AFP on the sidelines of a visit by the chairman of the US Federal Reserve, Jerome Powell, and of its Philadelphia branch, Patrick Harker, who came to meet local economic leaders.

Without available or affordable daycare in place, it is almost impossible to find a job, or to keep one, at a time when the country is experiencing a significant labour shortage.

Many daycare centres in the US have closed, forcing some families to choose which parent works and which stays home with the kids. **PHOTO: AFP**

The manufacturing region of York, located between Washington and New York, has lost 20 per cent of its daycare centres since the Covid-19 pandemic.

And those that remain operate at only 85 per cent of capacity due to a lack of staff, said Schreiber.

Since 2020, about 16,000 US daycares (10 per cent) closed. Over 20 per cent of families saw a parent, often the mother, leave work, causing income loss, says Calvin Moore, Council's head. In early 2023, 4.5 million Americans couldn't work due to childcare. Even those who can afford it spend 25 per cent of income, leading to credit card debt. — AFP

King emphasized that Australian liquefied natural gas (LNG) is vital for Japan's energy security. **PHOTO: STR/AFP**

Australia needs more investment in gas industry: resources minister

AUSTRALIAN Minister for Resources Madeleine King has said that more investment is needed in Australia's gas industry to ensure future supply for Australia and its allies, as concerns grow in Japan about the challenges of ensuring stable gas supplies as Canberra adapts its energy policy.

Speaking to Kyodo News in a phone interview Wednesday, King said that Australian liquefied natural gas is an essential component in maintaining Japan's energy security, and welcomed input from the country's government and its industry in planning Australia's gas policies to ensure stable regional energy supplies. — Kyodo

Japan to postpone plan to extend Hokkaido Shinkansen Line by 2031

THE Japanese government is set to postpone its plan to extend the Hokkaido shinkansen bullet train line to Sapporo by the spring of 2031 amid delays in construction and the city's plan to abandon its bid to host the 2030 Winter Olympics, government sources said Saturday.

The transport ministry and Hokkaido Railway Co will arrange a new deadline, but the 212-kilometre extension project between Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto and Sapporo still faces a labour shortage in the construction sector, which is expected to worsen when Japan introduces new overtime regulations in 2024.

A Hokkaido Shinkansen Line bullet train travels through Hokuto, Hokkaido, in September. **PHOTO: KYODO**

The move comes as a part of the construction work is already projected to be up to four years behind schedule due to problems including a massive rock obstructing tunnel construction.

The bullet train to Sapporo would not have been realized in time for the Olympics even if the construction had progressed as scheduled.

The ministry has so far upheld the 2031 deadline, wary of announcing a postponement too quickly in case Sapporo became the host city for the Games and an early completion could be driven forward, according to a senior ministry official. — Kyodo

NEWS IN BRIEF

Thai mall shooter's family 'accept responsibility', apologize

THE family of a 14-year-old boy who shot two people dead at a mall in Bangkok apologized Friday for their son's actions, in a statement released by the Thai government.

Police have charged the teenager, who has not been named, with murder over Tuesday's attack at the Siam Paragon mall, which left five other people wounded.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin vowed to take "preventive measures" after the shooting – the third high-profile deadly gun attack to hit the kingdom in the last four years. "We offer our deepest apologies to the victims, the families of the deceased and the injured, from the recent shooting incident that occurred as the result of our son's actions at the Siam Paragon department store," said the statement, distributed in Thai, English and Chinese to reporters by the Thai foreign ministry. "We are deeply saddened and shocked by this incident and accept responsibility as fully as we can." The statement, signed by "the father of the juvenile offender", pledged the family's full cooperation with the police investigation. – AFP

China's express delivery sector reports rapid expansion in first eight months

CHINA'S courier sector logged double-digit growth in terms of business volume and revenue during the first eight months of this year, official data showed.

The sector raked in a total revenue of 748.81 billion yuan (about 104.29 billion US dollars) in the period, up 10.7 per cent year on year, according to the State Post Bureau.

Companies in the sector handled 81.46 billion parcels in the same period, surging 15.9 per cent over one year earlier. In August alone, China's courier sector delivered 11.16 billion parcels, with its business revenue up 12.3 per cent year on year to 99.28 billion yuan, the data also revealed. — Xinhua

In August alone, China's courier sector delivered 11.16 billion parcels, with its business revenue up 12.3 per cent year on year to 99.28 billion yuan. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Shares of ExxonMobil retreated following reports it is nearing a potential deal to acquire Pioneer Natural Resources that could be worth $60 billion. **PHOTO: AFP**

Pioneer shares rocket higher on ExxonMobil takeover reports

SHARES of Pioneer Natural Resources surged more than 10 per cent Friday following reports the shale producer is nearing a megadeal to be acquired by ExxonMobil. The potential transaction, which would bolster ExxonMobil's holdings in the Permian Basin in Texas and New Mexico, could be announced "in the coming days" and be worth $60 billion, reported the Wall Street Journal, citing people familiar with the matter.

The newspaper also said it was "still possible" there would be no deal. Pioneer's output of 707,000 barrels per day of oil equivalent amount to just over a quarter of ExxonMobil's production, but Dallas-based Pioneer is known for an exceptionally large acreage position in the Permian.

A deal could allow ExxonMobil to significantly boost oil and natural gas output from the petroleum basin, which is well positioned to provide key raw materials to ExxonMobil petrochemical assets in the Gulf Coast that the oil giant has expanded.

An ExxonMobil spokeswoman declined comment.

While today's oil prices are above the level at which ExxonMobil usually undertakes big deals, "we think the stars could be aligning on several fronts, which make the deal plausible," said a note from JPMorgan Chase. — AFP

ROLLING UPDATES
WORLD

India flood toll hits 56, army warns on stray munitions

Floods in India washed away military weapons and explosives, with army teams set up to recover them.

AT least 56 people are confirmed dead in floods that hit India's northeast as of Saturday, with the army warning munitions washed away by the deluge posed a public safety risk.

Violent torrents struck Sikkim state on Wednesday after the sudden bursting of a high-altitude glacial lake.

Climate scientists warn that similar disasters will become an increasing danger across the Himalayas as global temperatures rise and ice melts.

"So far 26 bodies have been found in Sikkim," state relief commissioner Anilraj Rai told AFP by phone. Thirty more bodies had been recovered from the Teesta river basin by search and rescue teams downstream in neighbouring West Bengal state, Jalpaiguri district police superintendent K. Umesh Ganpat told AFP.

"The river stretches up to 86 kilometres," he added. "The search operation is continuing."

Among the dead are seven Indian army soldiers posted in Sikkim, which sits on India's remote frontiers with Nepal and China and boasts a sizeable military presence. Sixteen soldiers are among the more than 100 people still missing.

India's defence ministry said in a statement that the floods had washed away "firearms and explosives" from military camps.

Local media reports on Friday said that two people had been killed and four others injured by a mortar shell that exploded while flowing through the flood waters in West Bengal. — AFP

Search and rescue teams found 30 more bodies downstream in West Bengal's Teesta river basin. **PHOTO: AFP**

Magnitude 6.3 earthquake kills 14 in western Afghanistan

A magnitude 6.3 earthquake hit western Afghanistan on Saturday killing 14 and injuring 78, an official said, with predictions the toll could rise after reports of landslides and victims trapped under collapsed buildings.

The United States Geological Survey said the epicentre was 40 kilometres (25 miles) northwest of the region's largest city of Herat, and was followed by seven aftershocks with magnitudes between 4.6 and 6.3. Crowds of residents fled buildings in the city at around 11:00 am (0630 GMT) as the quakes began, lasting for over an hour.

"We were in our offices and suddenly the building started shaking," 45-year-old Herat resident Bashir Ahmad told AFP. "Wall plasters started to fall down and the walls got cracks, some walls and parts of the building collapsed." — AFP

People gather on the streets in Herat after a magnitude 6.3 earthquake hit western Afghanistan. **PHOTO: AFP**

FENTANYL SMUGGLING

US, Mexico vow to do more to curb migration, drug flows

THE United States and Mexico pledged Thursday to step up efforts to tackle flows of drugs and migrants, setting aside signs of friction over a US plan to extend a controversial border wall.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador criticized the announcement by Washington that it would add to the barrier that was a signature policy of Donald Trump, calling it a "setback".

"It does not solve the problem. We must address the causes" of migration, he told reporters shortly before meeting Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the National Palace. — AFP

Virgin Galactic carries first Pakistani into space

Namira Salim is an adventurous individual with previous experiences at both poles and parachuting over Mount Everest.

ADVENTURER Namira Salim became the first Pakistani to travel into space on Friday, riding aboard Virgin Galactic's fifth successful flight in five months, the US company announced.

Salim, who previously travelled to both poles and has also parachuted over Mount Everest, was among the first customers to buy a ticket with billionaire Richard Branson's space company after it was founded almost two decades ago.

"I love my title 'first Pakistani astronaut,' it's like being a very special princess of the country. Maybe nicer than being a princess," Salim told AFP back in 2012.

Virgin Galactic said Salim is also a resident of Monaco and the United Arab Emirates.

That makes her the first person from Monaco and the first Emirati woman to travel to space, the company said. — AFP

Namira Salim, who was among the first people to buy a ticket to space with Virgin Galactic, speaks with Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Group. **PHOTO: HANDOUT/AFP/FILE**

SPORTS

Basketball great Yao Ming slams China 'slackers' after Games flop

BASKETBALL great Yao Ming branded China's team "slackers" and warned they will struggle to qualify for future Olympics because of the "huge gap" with the world's best.

The eight-time NBA All-Star, now president of the Chinese Basketball Association, slammed China's performance after they lost to the Philippines in the semi-finals of their home Asian Games in Hangzhou.

They settled for bronze after defeating Chinese Taipei on Friday, but it was far less than fans and Yao wanted.

China also flopped at last month's World Cup, missing out on a qualifying spot at next year's Paris Olympics after losing four of their five games. — AFP

China's players acknowledge the home fans in Hangzhou. **PHOTO: AFP**

Seeing double: twin sisters win Asian Games gold together

China's Wang Liuyi and Wang Qianyi won gold together. **PHOTO: AFP**

TWIN sisters Wang Liuyi and Wang Qianyi won Asian Games gold on Saturday — then said they hope to stand on the podium together at next year's Paris Olympics.

Spectators at the artistic swimming in Hangzhou might have thought they were seeing double as the 26-year-old siblings from China won duet gold following the free routine.

"This competition is important for the qualification for the Paris Olympics," Qianyi said.

"For the Tokyo Olympics (in 2021) I went with the team. This time my sister and I represented the Chinese team in the duet.

"My goal is to stand on the Olympic stage with my sister."

The Games wrap up on Sunday. — AFP

Officials and relatives of the athletes warmly welcome Myanmar sports team who won gold and bronze medals at Yangon International Airport yesterday.

Myanmar's medallists return from Asian Games

SEPAK Takraw players who brought the first gold medal and rowers who took two bronze medals for Myanmar at the XIX Asian Games in China arrived back in Yangon yesterday evening.

Officials and relatives of the athletes welcomed back them with some entertainment programmes.

The sports team includes the chairperson of the Myanmar Traditional Boat Race Federation, gold medallists from the Myanmar Sepak Takraw Federation and bronze medallists from Myanmar Traditional Boat Race Federation who took one bronze in the women's 500-metre 12-rower completion and one more bronze in the women's 1,000-metre 12-rower completion of Dragon Boat Race. — Bala Soe/KZL

Myanmar beat Palestine 2-1 at AFC Futsal Asian Cup 2024 Qualifiers

THE first day of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup 2024 Qualifiers started yesterday with the victory of the Myanmar team.

The Group E matches in which the Myanmar team is competing were hosted by Tajikistan, and team Myanmar won the opening match against the Palestine team by two goals to one. As Myanmar won this match, they had better hopes of qualifying.

The Myanmar team was down by one goal in the first half but scored an equalizer with a winning goal in the second half. The Myanmar team, which was weak in the first half, made a technical change in the second half and produced double goals. Both goals were scored by Nyein Min Soe.

The Myanmar team will play against the Indian team on 9 October as the second match of the group. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

A Myanmar player (white) vies for the ball with a Palestine player during the opener of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup 2024 Qualifiers. **PHOTO: MFF**

Michelin to rate hotels as well as restaurants

The Michelin Guide was originally established in 1900 to assist travellers by offering valuable information during a time when travel resources were limited.

From stars to keys — the Michelin Guide will start rating hotels in the same way as restaurants, it announced on Thursday. The editors say they want to create a "trusted reference" that helps travellers cut through the vast array of online hotel suggestions. Director Gwendal Poullennec said the original Michelin Guide, launched in 1900, "was created to enlighten travellers at a time when there was a lack of information. "Today, by contrast, they find themselves confronted by a mass of information. Our users spend on average 10 hours in front of screens to prepare a trip and consult more than 10 platforms — it's an obstacle course," he said. Poullennec took over the guide in 2018, the same year it bought Tablet Hotels, a US-based site offering boutique hotel stays around the world. — AFP

Musicians perform during the 15th Victoires de la Musique classique awards ceremony (France's best classical artists of the year), at the Halle au Grain in Toulouse, southwestern France, on 13 February 2008. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

In tune: Classical concert-goers' hearts, breathing synchronize

This new study indicates that heart rate, breathing rate, and skin conductivity may synchronize among audience members at classical concerts.

People who listen to music together often report feeling a powerful connection to each other as a result of their collective experience.

A new study published in the journal Scientific Reports on Thursday now finds that physical responses — including heart rate, breathing and the electrical conductivity of skin — synchronise between audience members at classical concerts.

Individuals who rated more highly for personality traits such as openness were more likely to synchronise, while those with neurotic dispositions were less likely to align.

"When we talk about very abstract things such as aesthetic experiences, how you respond to art and to music, the body is always involved there," Wolfgang Tschacher, a psychologist at the University of Bern who led the research as part of the Experimental Concert Research project, told AFP. This theory is known as "embodied cognition" — the idea that the mind is not only connected to the body but that the body influences the mind — which, while arguably intuitive to lay people, has been controversial in scientific circles.

Researchers, including Tschacher, studied 132 concertgoers at three classical concerts. They used cameras and sensors to track participants while they listened to the same music, finding notable synchronization in heart rates and skin conductance during certain musical parts.—AFP

Dragging Paris's Madame Arthur cabaret into the modern age

They call it the queerest cabaret club in Paris: nestled in the capital's Pigalle neighbourhood, "Madame Arthur" dominated the French capital's drag, cross-dressing and trans scene for more than 60 years. It was closed in 2010, like many of historic Paris's small venues, much-loved and risque, but also ageing and losing money.

But by 2015 Madame Arthur bounced back with a heady cocktail of burlesque performances featuring cover versions of old and new hits — only ever sung in French — accompanied by off-the-wall piano playing in a more modern, larger venue. Madame Arthur prizes tradition, but is also pleased that young audiences come for the venue's weekly-changing shows.

Every Thursday to Sunday, Madame Arthur's 15 burlesque artists dress up in extravagant costumes for a night of fun and folly.

They perform pieces from the back catalogue of francophone songs — current favourites are Stromae, Celine Dion and Barbara — and will also try their art on international acts such as Bjork or Michael Jackson, but only in translation.

Charly Voodoo, a pianist, composer and the ensemble's musical director, used to teach at a music conservatory. Now Charly is in charge of arrangements and improvs, under constant pressure to produce a new show every single week.

The nights are long: While the official show runs from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm, performers and guests then proceed to disco-dance until the small hours. — AFP

(from left) French artists Maud'Amour, Grand Soir, Odile De Mainville and Diamanda Callas, members of the transformist Cabaret Madame Arthur, poses at the Cabaret in Paris on 29 September 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**