Embrace the Future: Unfolding a New Chapter with a Fresh Vision

The Global NEW LIGHT of MYANMAR

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MR introduces RBE trains for Mandalay-Thazi rail, easing commuters amid Bago flood

To facilitate the commuters, the Myanma Railways (MR) will run temporary RBE (railway bus engine) trains for the Mandalay-Thazi trip from 11 October.

A DEVASTATING flash flood caused by heavy rain near Bago Station temporarily shut down railway service for Yangon-Mandalay trips from 8 October 2023. To facilitate the commuters, the Myanma Railways (MR) will run temporary RBE (railway bus engine) trains for the Mandalay-Thazi trip from 11 October, said an official of Mandalay Central Railway Station.

"The RBE started to run on the Mandalay-Thazi railway part from 11 September. This is a temporary trip for the smooth transportation of the passengers. The train departs at 6 am and arrives at 9:15 am. It departs from Thazi at 2 pm and arrives at Mandalay station at 5:20 pm," he added.

The fare is K5,000 for the whole Mandalay-Thazi trip with 14 stops.

Yangon-Mandalay express railway trips will resume depending on the flood condition and after post-flood reconstruction of the railway track, road parts and crossings.

The public will be notified of the resumption of the trip after the post-flood necessary preparations. — Maung Aye Chan/KK

RBE trains stand ready at Thazi Station for temporary operation on the Mandalay-Thazi rail. **PHOTO: MAUNG AYE CHAN**

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Central Committee to enhance exports by overseeing production and logistics

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Myanmar ships over 5,000 MTs of shrimp to foreign markets in H1

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Yangon-Mandalay, Bago-Mawlamyine rail sections set to resume after floodwaters recede

YGEA adopts CBM auction exchange rate for pure gold reference price calculation

YANGON Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) switched to the Central Bank of Myanmar's auction exchange rate in calculating the reference price for pure gold, raising to over K2.9 million per tical (0.578 ounce or 0.016 kilogramme).

YGEA earlier calculated the price depending on the CBM's reference exchange rate of K2,100, with some additions. It changed to the CBM's auction exchange rate to set the reference gold price from 7 October 2023.

The YGEA set the reference exchange rate at K2.921 million per tical on 11 October. Nonetheless, pure gold fetches K3.42 million per tical in the grey market, indicating a price gap of K500,000 per tical between them.

The YGEA's reference price and the unofficial gold market value vary on the US dollar exchange rate which is K3,360 in the grey market. The spot gold price gained a bit to around US$1,870 per ounce.

Myanmar's gold price is highly tied to the spot gold price and US dollar exchange rate. The soaring dollar exchanging up to K4,000 drove the gold price up to a record high of K4 million per tical in late August 2023. — NN/EM

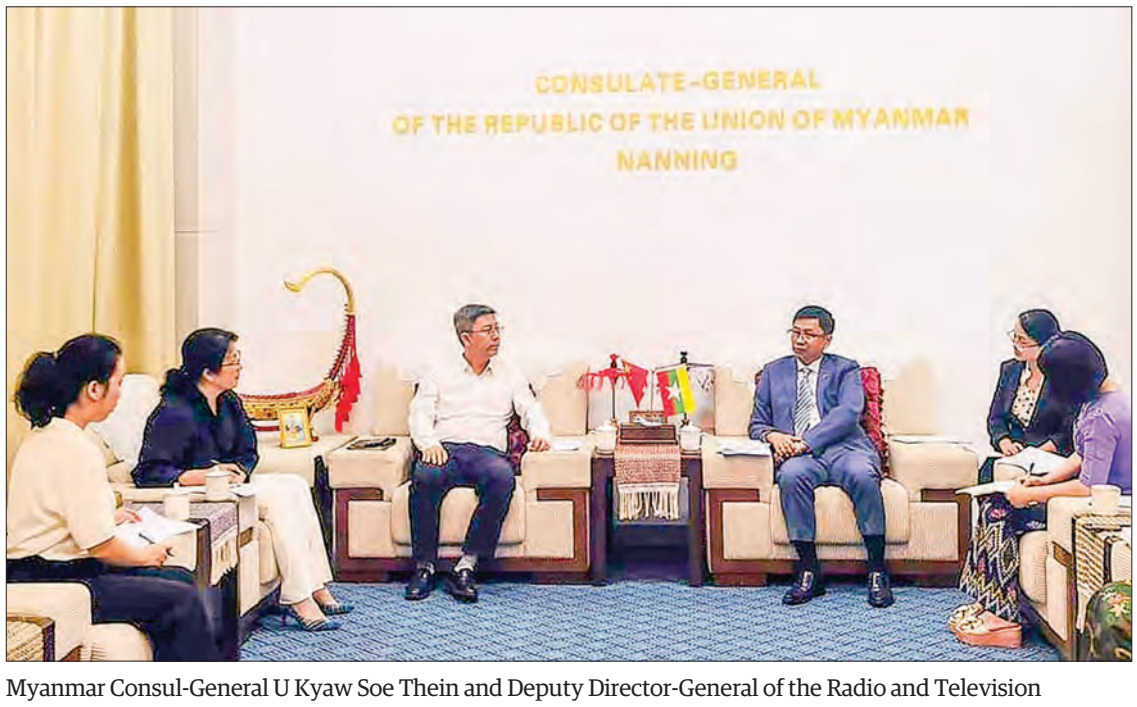
NATIONAL

Guanxi television in China's Guangxi Autonomous Region showcases Myanmar's tourism sector in promotional videos

CHINA'S Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region has aired a video promoting Myanmar's tourism industry on Guangxi Television. Deputy Director-General of the Radio and Television Administration Mr Lu Zhengning made this statement during a meeting with Myanmar Consul-General U Kyaw Soe Thein at the Myanmar Consulate-General office in Nanning, China on 10 October.

Mr Lu Zhengning stated that Guangxi Television and Myanmar Television will collaborate by broadcasting the tourism promotion videos provided by the Consulate-General of Myanmar. He also invited the head of relevant ministry and Myanmar's consul-general to attend the 2023 ASEAN-China Media Forum, scheduled to be held in Nanning on 23 October.

The Myanmar consul-general also mentioned that some Chinese citizens are hesitant to visit Myanmar due to a recent movie. However, by depicting the actual situation through filming and broadcasting in China, we can provide greater insight into Myanmar, ultimately fostering stronger friendship between the people of the two countries. Mr Lu Zhengning also discussed the potential for media to present and showcase videos related to Myanmar, enabling better understanding and promoting cooperation. — ASH/KZW



Myanmar Consul-General U Kyaw Soe Thein and Deputy Director-General of the Radio and Television Administration Mr Lu Zhengning discuss matters related to Myanmar tourism sector development in Nanning, China on 10 October.

Five-day PyinOoLwin Tazaungdaing fire balloon festival to be held

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

THE PyinOoLwin Tazaungdaing fire balloon festival in Mandalay Region will be held in November, said U Win Myint, a member of the festival organizing committee.

The festival has been planned to be held in the hot-air balloon field near Maha Arnthtoo Kantha Sutaungpyae Pagoda in PyinOoLwin from 24 to 28 November.

"The PyinOoLwin Tazaungdaing festival is an annual lighting festival that welcomes most of the local and foreign travellers. We did not have the celebrations in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But it was resumed in 2022. This year will mark the 17th fire balloon festival. We are preparing to organize the festival attracting more revellers," he said.

The festival will include the weaving of Matho Thingan (non-stale robe), a 9,000-oil light offering festival and a hot-air balloon competition.

The hot-air balloon competition will be in the hot-air balloon field near Maha Arnthtoo Kantha Sutaungpyae Pagoda, the weaving of non-stale robe and 9,000 oil light offering festival on the pagoda platform.

The Mandalay authorities make preparations to welcome the travellers with a bang. — ASH/KTZH

Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda repairs set for festival season

ACCORDING to the Pagoda Festival Organizing Committee, repair and maintenance of the damage to Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda caused by the Mocha Cyclone and the flow of Mann Creek during the rainy season will be undertaken keeping in line with ancient artworks.

The landslide between the Upper Koekhangyi Pagoda and the 28 Buddha Images Pagoda will be built into a retaining wall and the drains will be restored.

Also, two small bridges will be extended on the three-mile road at the entrance of Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda. The pillars and the seven tiers of Lower Settawya will be repaired and the slope from Koekhangyi to Upper Settawya will be upgraded by the extended slope.

The reports on repair works will be submitted to the Magway Region government and will be implemented before the next pagoda festival.

The Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival will commence for nearly three months from 25 January to 17 April and it is usually crowded with nearly 1,500-2,000 pilgrims per day. — TWA/MKKS

COVID-19 report, 11 October 2023	NEW TESTS	NEW CASES	CASUALTIES
	3,049	3	0

NATIONAL

Union Minister General Mya Tun Oo chairs the Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods to review its work processes yesterday.

Central Committee to enhance exports by overseeing production and logistics

THE central committee has to review the work processes being conducted at seaport, airport and border trade camps to revive the trading sector and to amend them if necessary, said Central Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods Chairman State Administration Council Member Union Minister General Mya Tun Oo.

The Union minister said the words during the 1/2023 meeting of the central committee held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

He also highlighted the instructions of the Prime Minister that it should make efforts to produce the imported basic commodities to meet the country's needs and to be able to export.

He added that while trying not to face the trade deficit in the State economy, the committee will supervise to promote the production of export goods and export volumes and not prevent suspensions in production and price increases of essential commodities such as medicines and medical supplies, farming products, fuel, cooking oil and so on.

It will also set measures to facilitate the banking system to ensure the official currency flows for trading and supervise the working processes of the working committee to ensure the speedy flow of trading procedures.

He then urged the entrepreneurs, and relevant officials of ports to report their challenges to be solved and scrutinize the insurance information and containers systematically.

Then, the attendees coordinated the discussion and the Union minister concluded the meeting. — MNA/KTZH

MoPF workshop strengthens statistical user-provider linkages

DEPUTY Prime Minister Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Win Shein presided over a workshop on enhancing linkages between statistics users and providers in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the event, the Union minister said the statistics system of Myanmar is decentralized and only the cooperation of statistical departments and firm linkage can release accurate, qualified and reliable statistics.

The enhancement of linkage between the users and providers of the statistics plays a key role in the National Strategy for Development of Statistics for Myanmar and the User Engagement Strategy was drafted in 2019 with the help of the UN Statistics Division and International Development Partners.

He then talked about the "survey of users' opinions on statistical yearbooks and digits released by Central Statistical Organization" conducted in September 2023 online and urged to understand the needs of users to release the statistics that can also support the development of the national statistical system.

Permanent Secretary Dr Soe Win also discussed the topic of Promoting Statistical Literacy for All while Improving Statistics User-Provider Relations by Deputy Director-General U Than Zaw of the Central Statistical Organization. At noon, the relevant officials of governmental departments and the Myanmar Statistics Association organized a roundtable discussion under the title of "Dissemination of Official Statistics" and "Statistics User Participation and Stakeholder Engagement". — MNA/KTZH

Union Minister U Win Shein opens the workshop on statistical user-provider linkages yesterday.

Nay Pyi Taw Council Member supports rural development in Pyinmana

COLONEL Min Naung, a member of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, led a team to Pyinmana Township to promote peace, security, and regional development in the mountain villages. They oversaw ongoing activities related to security, law enforcement, education, healthcare, and overall regional development.

Col Min Naung supervised the sale of rice and palm oil at affordable prices in Phalaung village, ensuring food security for residents. Following this, the team visited the newly constructed Hteinpyaung Village Basic Education Primary School in Hteinpyaung village. In the afternoon, they engaged with village administrators, sub-village department employees, militia members, and residents.

Locals receive the provisions from Nay Pyi Taw Councillor Col Min Naung.

During the meeting, Col Min Naung emphasized the government's commitment to narrowing the development gap between urban and rural areas by focusing on rural development and reaching every village.

The council member and department officials also visited monasteries, temples, and households, providing essential items to teachers and students, including food products, solar panels, school supplies, educational books, mosquito nets, medicine, and first-aid kits. The Pannkhin Project 2 facilitated the distribution of household certificates and citizenship scrutiny cards to village and village-tract elders, administrators, headmasters, and locals.

The team concluded their visit by paying respects to the Presiding Sayadaw of Aungthukha Monastery and presenting a pagoda statue, along with flowers and gifts. — MNA/KZW

NATIONAL

Preparations in full swing for 8th NCA Anniversary Celebration

Member of the State Administration Council, Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn inspect the preparations for the ceremony of the Eighth Anniversary of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement at MICC II yesterday.

THE Eighth Anniversary of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) is set to be celebrated on 15 October at the Myanmar International Convention Centre II (MICC II) in Nay Pyi Taw.

Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, member of the State Administration Council, Union Minister for Home Affairs and Chairman of the Steering Committee for the Eighth Anniversary of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, presided over the inspection of event preparations, joined by Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, and officials.

During the preparations, various galleries representing the Ministry of Border Affairs, the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs, and the Ministry of Information were assessed for inclusion in the event, featuring displays like the 'Historic Milestone of Peace as Told by Newspapers'. Additionally, the arrangements of media outlets such as MRTV, National Races Channel, and Ethnic Language Broadcasting of Radio Myanmar were scrutinized.

Simultaneously, the rehearsal of ethnic traditional cultural dance troupes from the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and MRTV of the Ministry of Information was observed. These troupes will perform at the ceremony.

Union Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn concluded their inspection by assessing the preparations in the Plenary Hall, where the anniversary ceremony will take place, and providing necessary instructions. — MNA/TS

Myanmar seeks close collaboration with Russia to produce electricity

THE Myanmar delegation led by Union Minister for Electric Power U Nyan Tun visited Russian Power System Operator in Moscow yesterday and observed the electricity system in Russia — the world's fourth largest producer and consumer of electricity with 991 power plants and a total installed capacity of 246,500 megawatts.

Russia has a single synchronous electrical grid covering many countries, with a total length of 490,000 kilometres (more than 300,000 miles) of 110-750 kV power lines and a total of more than 10,000 substations. In the production of electricity, 60.7 per cent of the electricity is produced through the thermal energy of burning coal and natural gas, while 18.8 per cent and 20 per cent of the electricity is produced the through use of hydropower and nuclear energy, respectively.

Union Minister for Electric Power U Nyan Tun discusses with officials from Russian Power System Operator for cooperation on electric power generation yesterday.

Electricity from wind and solar energy sources accounts for 0.5 per cent. The remaining power requirements are met hourly by natural gas and coal, and 31 nuclear reactors with a total installed capacity of 21,000 megawatts run at 10 different locations throughout Russia.

In the meeting room of the facility, Mr Katave Andley Mihilovich, director of market management and officials briefed the Myanmar delegation about their power system. The Union minister expressed that Myanmar is willing to work more closely with Russia to produce electricity and words of thanks for their serious consideration. — MNA/TH

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.

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

NATIONAL

Awarding ceremony for Inter-State & Region Lethwei tourney 2023 held

State Administration Council Member Daw Dwe Bu presents the trophy to the Taninthayi Region team at the Inter State/Region Boxing Tournament yesterday.

AIMING to raise the standard of sports and bring out the next generation of athletes, the final bouts of the 49th Inter-State and Region Lethwei Tournament were held at Wunna Theikdi Gymnasium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon, attended by SAC members and officials.

The final fights of men's 48, 51, 57, 63.5, 71 and 80-kilogramme categories under the No 6 bouts were held followed by women's bouts of 46, 57 and 63-kilo categories.

An awarding ceremony was held after the final games and fighters with various weight classes were awarded by SAC members, Union ministers and officials. — MNA/KZL

Drugs worth over K720 mln, pistol seized in Mandalay and Bago regions

OVER K720 million worth of stimulant tablets and a pistol were captured in Mandalay and Bago regions, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force searched a Suzuki Swift driven by Sai Saing Hlaing accompanied by Phyo Nyein Kyaw in Chanayethazan township in Mandalay Region at 7:30 pm on 5 October and captured 1,700 Ecstasy, 2.55 kilogrammes of ketamine and 30 grammes of happy water.

After the investigation, the combined police force seized 60 pills of Ecstasy, 225 grammes of happy water and 107.5 grammes of ketamine from a house rented by Phyo Nyein Kyaw in Mahaaungmyay township at 8 pm.

Similarly, police force arrested Lwin Htoo Aung who is a drug trafficker with Jetour X70, 7.405 kilogrammes of Ketamine, 800 grammes of happy water, two pills of Ecstasy, a pistol with ammunition and cash K1 million near Milepost 72 on Yangon-Mandalay expressway at 2 pm on 6 October.

In addition, police arrested Aikkwan (aka) Sai Kwan Kham at his house in Muse township at 3:30 pm on the same day.

The offenders admitted the drugs to transport from Shan State to Kayin State.

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

Arrestees and seized vehicles, narcotic drugs and weapon are seen in the pictures.

Confiscation of illegal items: consumer goods, industrial materials, foodstuffs and vehicles

THE combined teams under the Taninthayi Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force conducted inspections on 8 October and impounded an unregistered Hi-jet car (approximately K2.8 million) in Bokpyin township, three related things that were used in the illegal lead mining including 32 engines (25hp), 31 sets of Air Compressor and 25 sets of Compressor worth K16.75 million in Bokpyin township and a Scania express bus (estimated value of 300 million) carrying 661 visses of "Shwetu" orchid flower bulb worth K528,800 without official documents at the Malywaltaung combined checkpoint in Yepu township. The action was taken under the Export and Import Law, the Myanmar Mines Law and the Forest Law.

The Customs on-duty teams made inspections on the same day and impounded two kinds of goods worth K20,447,280 including 5,090 kilogrammes of empty paper cups that were not declared in the ID from a container at the Myanmar Industrial Port, 480 boxes of Out of Scope Ultra Lube lubricant worth K12.6 million without Import Licence from a container at the Asia World Port Terminal container checkpoint, four kinds of goods worth K5,117,532 including 1,746 kilogrammes of drain cover made with iron and poly concrete that were not declared in polish oil that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID) at the Milepost 23/5 on Muse-Mandalay road. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

Photos show the confiscated Aromatic Collagen Mask and Panasonic telephone set from Thilawa container port.

Similarly, the Muse Township Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force seized 13 kinds of goods worth K10.431 million including 90 warm clothes that were smuggled by the side of the road over the Asia World Tollgate in Muse Township on 10 October. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

The on-duty teams conducted inspections on 10 October and confiscated two Nissan AD Van car (estimated value of K30 million), headed to Mandalay from Lashio, carrying 2,700 kilogrammes of fire clay powder worth K5.4 million without official documents at the 16th-Mile Kyaukchaw checkpoint and a Mitsubishi Fuso bus (estimated value of K30 million), travelling from Muse to Mandalay, carrying 4,920 boxes of Aromatic the ID at the Hteedan container checkpoint, 56 kinds of goods worth K478,636,430 including 120 sets of Panasonic telephone and 2,304 Aromatic collagen mask that were not declared in the ID at the Thilawa Terminal container checkpoint and a Mitsubishi Fuso bus (approximately K30 million), headed to Yangon from Myawady, carrying 2,400 bottles of Goat Milk shampoo worth K10 million that were not declared in the ID at the Mayanchaung permanent checkpoint. The action was taken under the Customs procedures.

A total of 15 arrests were made on 8 and 10 October, with an estimated value of K965,011,042, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

NATIONAL

Farmer Rights Group sets paddy reference price at K750,000 per 100 baskets

A leading group for the protection of farmer rights and enhancement of their benefits announced a paddy reference price at K750,000 per 100 baskets (a basket is equivalent to 46 pounds) for monsoon paddy produced this year and summer paddy that will be produced in the summer next year on 10 October.

The reference price of paddy was set at K320,000-330,000 per 100 baskets (a basket is equivalent to 46 pounds) in the 2012-2013 financial years. The price doubled after a decade.

Myanmar Rice Federation has notified the reference prices of various monsoon paddy varieties produced in 2023, following the discussion with related institutions in the rice industry, according to a notification dated 19 September 2023. Yet, the MRF has not revealed the measurement for one basket.

The floor prices and the ceiling prices are set at K1.3-1.5 million per 100 baskets of monsoon low-grade paddy and K1.5 to 2 million per 100 baskets depending on producing areas.

At that time, the rice prices stood at K60,000-70,000 per sack for low-grade varieties and K100,000-125,000 per sack of Pawsan rice varieties.

Before the monsoon paddy harvest season, the market values of the paddy prices were K1.7-1.8 million per 100 baskets (50 pounds per basket) for low-grade paddy and K3.7 million per 100 baskets for high-grade Shwebo Pawsan paddy.

The market price of low-grade monsoon paddy was below K300,000 per 100 baskets in 2011. Under the rice reserve scheme of the State, the floor price of paddy (46 pounds per basket) was set at K330,000 for monsoon paddy and K320,000 for summer paddy, to raise the market value at the 2011 monsoon harvest season.

A farmer is seen piling up the harvested paddy in the field in Ayeyawady Region.

The rice prices moved in the range of K150,000-350,000 per sack, while the broken rice fetched K110,000 per sack back in 2012.

The current paddy reference price is lower than the rate notified on 19 September 2023.

The floor price of paddy price in the 2021-2022 FY hiked up the market value of the paddy for the interest of the farmers. The reference prices this year are drastically lower than the actual market rate. Thus, there is speculation that it was just a statement with no effect on the farmers. — TWA/EM

Illegal millet export transport by vessels, trains, and vehicles uncovered

ACCORDING to the 5/2023 meeting of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, they identified the illegal transport of bags of exported millets by vessels, trains, and vehicles in July and August.

During these two months, they were able to identify and take action against the illegal transport of millet in the Bago Region and Mon State and also prevent the attempt to export illegal millet across the Yangon Region.

In addition, the illegal exportation of 11 containers in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) was also discovered. As an extraordinary event, under the management of the Mon State Anti-Illegal Trade Special Task Force, 1,659 bags of undocumented millet without export licenses and QR codes were found suspiciously in five cargo trailers arriving at Mawlamyine Station on 2 August. According to related inspections, 51 wagons along the Bago and Mawlamyine routes and 37 suspicious trailers from Bago Station were identified.

A total of 611 cases (valued at K10,445.742 million) and 540 cases (valued at K12,434.244 million) were arrested in July and August 2023, respectively, due to the action of the Anti-Illegal Trade Special Task Force. Although the number of cases and the value of seizures were higher than the previous year, there are still illegal trades in the import and export segments. To ensure that there is no illegal trade, the import and export sectors should be more thoroughly identified and arrested by special teams than before, Chairman of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win stated. — TWA/CT

The coordination meeting of the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee on 9 October 2023, is in progress at the conference hall of the Ministry of Commerce in Nay Pyi Taw.

Rescue flight planned for Myanmar citizens in Israel seeking repatriation

THE Myanmar Embassy in Israel informed that the rescue flights are being arranged for the Myanmar citizens in Israel who would like to return home so that they can contact the Myanmar Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel for assistance.

At present, the Myanmar Embassy will coordinate with respective officials from the concerned country to facilitate the Myanmar citizens who are facing difficulties and want to return home although some commercial flights have been suspended in Israel.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has been advising Myanmar citizens in Israel not only to remain indoors unless necessary but also to seek refuge in a secure location if they find themselves in a conflict situation and the relevant addresses and phones have been informed to contact for any assistance. — TWA/MKKS

Myanmar ships over 5,000 MTs of shrimp to foreign markets in H1

MYANMAR exported over 5,335 metric tonnes of shrimps worth US$20.927 million to global markets in the H1 of the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April, according to the Department of Fisheries.

Myanmar's seaborne shrimp export was estimated at 4,783.24 tonnes worth $18.028 million and the border saw exports of 552.327 tonnes worth $2.899 million between 1 April and 30 September of the current FY.

The shrimp exports plunged compared to that of the year-ago period. Myanmar sent 8,048.139 tonnes worth $28.245 million by sea and 578.818 tonnes worth $2.634 million via the border in the corresponding period last FY, reaching 8,626.957 tonnes worth $30.879 million. This FY, the shrimp export volume is down by 3,291.39 tonnes valued at $9.952 million.

Myanmar's fishery export has returned to normalcy. Yet the export volume still declines compared to that in the pre-coronavirus period.

In addition to maritime trade to global markets, Myanmar delivers fishery products including fish and shrimps to neighbouring countries via border posts. Myanmar exports shrimp to over 40 foreign countries including China, Thailand, Bangladesh and Japan, mostly to Thailand, followed by China. — NN/EM

Myanmar's shrimp to be exported are seen being processed at a cold storage factory.

Black gram price hits fresh new peak despite stable price of pigeon pea

A customer checks the quality of black gram at a market.

THE black gram price hit a record high of K2.65 million per tonne although the pigeon pea price is quite stable in the domestic pulses market.

The price will fluctuate in October 2023. The price was registered only at K2.465 million per tonne on 3 October and touched a high of K2.65 million per tonne on 11 October, showing a ten-day sharp rise of K185,000 per tonne.

Meanwhile, the pigeon pea price remained unchanged at K4.075 million per tonne.

Robust demand by the main buyer India of Myanmar pulses pushed up the prices.

Myanmar's various pulses export earnings were estimated at over $715 million from over 860,000 tonnes in the H1 of the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April.

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

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

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. — NN/EM

Plans underway to export Chin State local products to domestic markets

OFFICIALS are working to export and sell Chin State local yams and dried gayal meat to domestic and foreign markets.

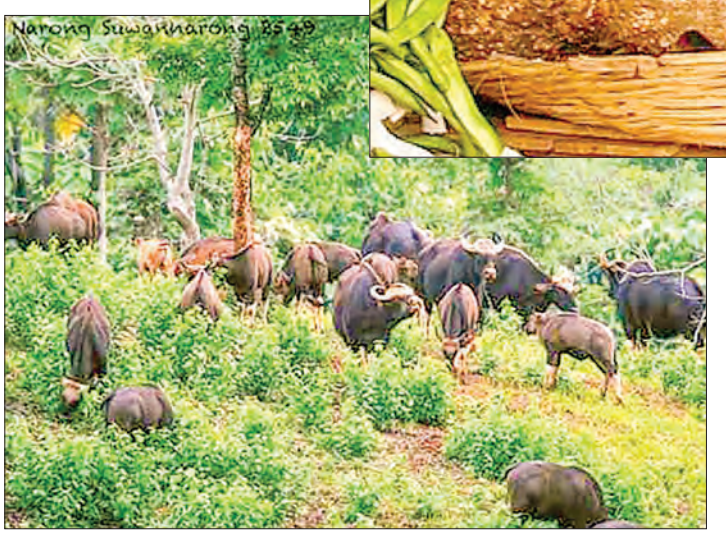
According to the Chin State Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development has provided K516 million of State Economic Promotion Fund for the state.

As a state livestock industry, livestock operations are carried out, and for agriculture, yams, bananas and potatoes are mainly grown. These measures are being carried out by the State Economic Promotion Fund, and the loan submissions from the farmers' side are K1.5 billion. They have been screened and K516 million have been supported.

An official from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development said that an agency has been opened to develop MSME businesses in the state and the cooperative is participating as a member.

The state has the largest amount of yam raw materials, and three basic cooperatives will be strengthened to produce finished products.

It is the largest breeder of cattle in the state, with more than 50,000 animals raised. Haka and Falam cities are the most breeding areas, and cooperative societies have been formed and plans are made to export dried gayal meat to foreign countries. — TWA/KZL



Haka and Falam cities are the most breeding areas, and cooperative societies have been formed and plans are made to export dried gayal meat to foreign countries. Gayals are raised in Kanpetlet Township (left photo) and elephant foot yams from Matupi (above photo) .

OPINION

Uplift Myanmar's performing arts for national integrity

THE 24th Myanmar Traditional Cultural Performing Arts Competitions of 2023 heralds a significant day for the nation's traditional and cultural performers. This event provides a stage for the display of their remarkable skills and talents, encompassing singing, dancing, song composition, and the mastery of musical instruments.

It is not just the government, but the entire populace that encourages these performers in their mission to preserve Myanmar's rich heritage of traditional performing arts. The government, in alignment with its objectives for the 24th performing arts competition, seeks to elevate national prestige and integrity while safeguarding cultural heritage and national identity.

> Myanmar's traditional performing arts serve as powerful tools for elevating the prestige and integrity of the nation. In return, people from all walks of life must rally behind these performers, providing unwavering support to foster the creation and innovation of fine arts, thereby burnishing Myanmar's image on the global stage.

These competitions serve multiple purposes, with a particular focus on exploring, preserving, and elevating the traditional cultural heritage of performing arts among Myanmar's diverse ethnic groups. They also aim to cultivate an appreciation for this heritage among the younger generation and foster the propagation of the national spirit. These competitions actively support measures within the realm of national culture, contributing to the development, peace, and tranquillity of the State.

Presently, many young individuals are drawn to foreign cultures, often without a comprehensive understanding or appreciation of their own cultural heritage. This phenomenon has led to a decline in the appreciation of Myanmar's theatrical performances, marionette presentations, song renditions, dance arts, and the significant efforts put into composing songs and playing musical instruments.

The annual performing arts competitions offer a glimmer of hope, as they provide an opportunity for the emergence of a new generation of performers. Simultaneously, they rekindle the flames of Myanmar's traditional arts and instil a passion for performing arts among the country's youth. Importantly, these competitions are open to participants from various regions and states, emphasizing skills and artistry over the pursuit of awards.

Performers not only strive to preserve traditional performing arts but also inject their own creativity into their craft to captivate audiences. Dramas and plays play a vital role in entertaining spectators, showcasing the ingenuity of artists. These artistes have created masterpieces in songs, dances, and music, demonstrating exceptional skills in song composition. Myanmar's forefathers, drawing inspiration from foreign poems and songs, transformed them into fine arts in the Myanmar language, all while preserving the essence of Myanmar's traditional culture.

Myanmar's traditional performing arts serve as powerful tools for elevating the prestige and integrity of the nation. In return, people from all walks of life must rally behind these performers, providing unwavering support to foster the creation and innovation of fine arts, thereby burnishing Myanmar's image on the global stage. ■

ARTICLE

Assistive Technology in Medical Perspectives

By Dr Than Lwin Tun

ASSISTIVE technology refers to any tools, devices, software, or equipment designed to assist people with disabilities in performing tasks that might be otherwise challenging or impossible for them. It enables and promotes inclusion and participation, especially of persons with disabilities, ageing populations, and people with non-communicable diseases. They enable people to live healthy, productive, independent and dignified lives, and to participate in education, the labour market and civil life. The primary goal of medical assistive technology is to enhance the quality of life, independence, and inclusion of individuals with disabilities by providing them with the means to interact with the world around them more effectively.

There are various categories of assistive technology, each designed to address different types of disabilities and challenges;

* **Mobility and Accessibility**: Wheelchairs and mobility scooters: For people with mobility impairments, walking aids such as canes, crutches, and walkers to assist with balance and walking, ramps and lifts.

* **Communication**: Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, tools that help individuals who have difficulty speaking communicate through symbols, pictures, or text-to-speech technology, speech-to-text software which converts spoken words into written text, benefiting individuals with speech impairments.

* **Visual Impairment**: Screen readers, the software that converts on-screen text into synthesized speech or Braille output for individuals with visual impairments, Braille displays, devices that convert digital text into Braille characters for tactile reading.

* **Hearing Impairment**: Hearing aids which amplify sound for individuals with hearing loss, closed captioning and subtitles, which provide a text-based representation of audio content for people with hearing impairments.

* **Cognitive Disabilities**: Cognitive assistive software, tools that help individuals with cognitive impairments manage tasks, schedules, and reminders, text-to-speech and speech-to-text tools that can aid individuals with reading or writing difficulties.

* **Learning Disabilities**: Educational software, the programs designed to support learning and comprehension for individuals with learning disabilities, text-to-speech and speech-to-text tools, which assist in reading and writing tasks.

* **Environmental Control**: Smart home technology allows individuals with mobility impairments to control home appliances, lights, and more using voice commands or other accessible methods.

* **Prosthetics and Orthotics**: Artificial limbs (prosthetics) and supportive devices (orthotics) that help individuals regain mobility and function.

* **Medical Devices**: Insulin pumps, medical alert systems, and other devices that help manage medical conditions.

World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that today 2.5 billion people need one or more assistive products such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, or apps that support communication and cognition. With a global ageing population and a rise in non-communicable diseases, this number will rise beyond 3.5 billion by 2050, with many older people needing two or more products as they age.

Medical assistive technology aims to improve the lives and independence of people with disabilities by enabling more effective interaction with their environment. **ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/FREEPIK**

While supporting independence and well-being, assistive products can help to prevent or reduce the effects of secondary health conditions, such as lower limb amputation in people with diabetes. They can also reduce the need and impact on careers and mitigate the need for formal health and support services. Moreover, access to appropriate assistive products can have a tremendous impact on community development and economic growth.

Despite the global need and recognized benefits of assistive products, access to assistive products remains limited. Addressing this unmet need is essential to progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and realizing the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On 28 and 29 March 2023, the WHO Assistive Technology team hosted a meeting in Geneva to review the methodology, outcome and dissemination of the WHO rapid Assistive Technology Assessment (rATA) survey and plan for further strengthening this important data collection tool.

The rATA is a population-based household survey that measures the self-reported need, demand, and barriers to accessing assistive technology. A global data collection effort from 2019 to 2021 saw the implementation of rATA in 35 countries and informed the WHO-UNICEF Global Report on Assistive Technology published in May 2022. The meeting brought together 28 stakeholders from 18 countries who were involved in the development, delivery, and analysis of rATA data. Participants discussed their experience and learning from rATA data collection and together identified priority actions to improve the questionnaire, increase efficiency in rATA implementation, better support country implementation, strengthen data management and analysis, and increase dissemination of rATA results.

Investing in effective and efficient assistive technology data collection is key to being able to inform evidence-based policies and programmes, measure progress in improving access to good quality assistive products and services, and ultimately ensure equitable access to assistive technology for everyone in need. In addition, assistive technology plays a crucial role in enabling people with disabilities to participate more actively in education, employment, communication, and daily life. It continues to evolve with advancements in technology, making it increasingly personalized, user-friendly, and effective for addressing a wide range of disabilities and challenges.

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Can chatbots be therapists? Only if you want them to be

Many new companies are using AI to create apps that provide therapy and companionship for mental health, and it's becoming a significant industry.

A MANAGER at artificial intelligence firm OpenAI caused consternation recently by writing that she just had "a quite emotional, personal conversation" with her firm's viral chatbot ChatGPT.

"Never tried therapy before but this is probably it?" Lilian Weng posted on X, formerly Twitter, prompting a torrent of negative commentary accusing her of downplaying mental illness.

However, Weng's take on her interaction with ChatGPT may be explained by a version of the placebo effect outlined this week by research in the Nature Machine Intelligence journal.

A team from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Arizona State University asked more than 300 participants to interact with mental health AI programmes and primed them on what to expect.

Some were told the chatbot was empathetic, others that it was manipulative and a third group that it was neutral.

Those who were told they were talking with a caring chatbot were far more likely than the other groups to see their chatbot therapists as trustworthy.

"From this study, we see that to some extent the AI is the AI of the beholder," said report co-author Pat Pataranutaporn.

Buzzy startups have been pushing AI apps offering therapy, companionship and other mental health support for years now — and it is big business.

But the field remains a lightning rod for controversy.

'Weird, empty'

Like every other sector that AI is threatening to disrupt, critics are concerned that bots will eventually replace human workers rather than complement them.

And with mental health, the concern is that bots are unlikely to do a great job.

"Therapy is for mental well-being and it's hard work," Cher Scarlett, an activist and programmer, wrote in response to Weng's initial post on X.

"Vibing to yourself is fine and all but it's not the same."

Compounding the general fear over AI, some apps in the mental health space have a chequered recent history.

Users of Replika, a popular AI companion that is sometimes marketed as bringing mental health benefits, have long complained that the bot can be sex obsessed and abusive.

SOURCE: AFP

POEM

NCA'S ROLE – PROOF OF THE PEOPLE'S SOUL

By Myinmu Maung Naing Moe

* Wishing to build up the peace
Aspiring to future track to keep
Willingly offered to come up
With equal status and discussed
On the Day of Fifteenth October
Decision was definitely made for
Ceasefire
Documented and signed the Agreement
That Day becomes historic and significant.

* Desire for goodwill to be strengthened
We all are the fraternal brethren
Want no longer to wage war
With new views of each other
And Ceasefire has to be secured
With solemn adoration, signed the agreement
Smiles on people's faces be apparent
That Day becomes historic and significant.

* O Union-born brothers!
Have elapsed over seventy years
With suspicion on each other
Hostilities shown and views differed
"Politically,
Ethnically,
Religiously"

Ideologically divided and had no effect
Hold no grudge to bury the hatchet
Revival of love beautifies the nation
While chance appears with aspiration
The time is ripe for reconciliation
NCA indeed is the people's soul
And proof unhurt as a whole
Proceed along the journey without wail
With our own discipline and way
In peace and unity to gain victory
Without wavering, through the Hluttaw's synergy
With good intention and resolution
Let us build up our own Nation!!

{In honour of the 8th Anniversary Day on which the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was signed.}

Translated by Maung Swe Ngae

NATIONAL

Yangon-Mandalay, Bago-Mawlamyine rail sections set to resume after floodwaters recede

Engineers and workers from Myanma Railways repair the tracks damaged by flooding (top photo) and the scene of Bago after water recedes (above photos).

SINCE the morning of 8 October, heavy rains in the Bago Region have caused flooding on the railway lines between Bago Station and Shwehlay Station on the Yangon-Mandalay route and between Bago-Kali Station, and Naungpattaya Station on the Bago-Mawlamyine route. As a result, passengers from two express trains in the affected area had to be arranged and transported to Yangon Station. Consequently, both the Yangon-Mandalay and Yangon-Mawlamyine train services have been temporarily suspended.

Since yesterday morning, as the water receded, Bago station and Shwehlay station became visible again. Myanma Railways officials visited the Bago Station-Kali Station and Naungpattaya Station sections with a nine-coach stone train to assess the road's condition and anchor it in place. Stone sorting works are currently in progress.

Likewise, beginning on 10 October, eight sets of stone train coaches will be anchored in the section between Bago Station and Kali Station. Essential measures to reinforce the railway, including placing stones in strategic locations, are reported underway, and plans are ongoing to facilitate the resumption of regular train services. — MNA/KZW

MPT provides 100 minutes of free calls to aid disaster-hit Bago Region (East)

People witness challenges in traffic and communications caused by flooding in Bago Region on 9 October.

MPT announced that residents in the Bago Region (east), where telecommunication services were affected by natural disasters and floods, will receive 100 minutes of free calls between MPT phones.

Locals affected by natural disasters will receive an additional 100 minutes of free MPT calls from 11 to 17 to stay connected with their families and friends.

As of 1 pm on 10 October, telecommunication services have returned to normal in almost all townships except for some in Bago and Kawa.

MPT recognizes the importance of staying connected in challenging situations, and efforts are underway to restore communication services in the remaining townships in Bago and Kawa. — TWA/ KZW

Flood Bulletin

(Issued at 14:00 hrs M.S.T on 11-10-2023)

Flood Condition of Bago River

According to the (13:30) hrs M.S.T observation today, the water level of Bago River at Bago has exceeded by more than (3) feet (93 cm) above its danger level. It may fall the present water level by about (1½) feet during the next (1) day and may remain above its danger level.

Advisory

It is especially advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas at Bago Township, to take precaution measure.

Over 27,300 flood victims relocated to 47 temporary shelters

The Bago Region chief minister receives 100 rice sacks donated by the Eastern Command for flood victims in Bago. **PHOTO: BAGO IPRD**

THE torrential rain since 6 October 2023 caused flash floods in Bago Region and the regional government relocated 27,302 vulnerable flood victims to 47 temporary shelters as of the evening of 10 October by providing accommodation, health care service and food supply.

A team led by Bago Region Chief Minister U Myo Swe Win inspected some areas by boat to intensify the evacuation activities in the region on the afternoon of 10 October. They provided drinking water bottles and water purification tablets in some wards facing floods. The chief minister received 100 rice sacks donated by the Eastern Command for Bago's flood victims at the natural disaster management office in the Bago Region.

Afterwards, they also observed the maintenance and restoration of some rail parts in the north of Bago city and the minister instructed the officials concerned to tackle the traffic congestion and repair the railway crossings by working together with the officials of Myanma Railways. — IPRD/KK

Dutch 'coffee shops' savour legal pot trial

Despite common perception, marijuana is not fully legal in the Netherlands but has been tolerated to a certain extent since the 1970s.

IN the back room of "The Baron", a Dutch marijuana-selling "coffee shop", owner Rick Brand excitedly browsed through the cannabis products he will soon be able to offer.

"The legal producer has this type and this one," he said, pointing to products named "Runtz" and "Wedding Cake". "I've tasted it. It was great."

"The Baron" is one of a handful of coffee shops taking part in a new experiment from December to offer high quality "legal cannabis" from government-approved suppliers.

Contrary to widespread perception, pot is not actually legal in the Netherlands but since the 1970s, it has been "tolerated" up to a certain point.

Coffee shops may not stock more than 500 grammes (just over one pound) of cannabis, nor sell more than five grammes per day to the same customer.

Growing and supplying cannabis is illegal, meaning coffee shops are technically operating outside the law when they receive stock — sometimes from shadowy criminal suppliers.

Coffee shops may not stock more than 500 grammes (just over one pound) of cannabis, nor sell more than five grammes per day to the same customer. Checkpoint cafe in Terneuzen. **PHOTO: ED OUDENAARDEN/AFP/FILE**

The 61-year-old Brand, who has been selling pot for 32 years, believes that getting everything above board will deliver legal clarity for coffee shop owners — with more choice and better quality products for consumers.

He is dealing with a nearby supplier selected by the authorities, who has been preparing for this experiment for years.

The legal grey zone leads to uncertainty over precisely what smokers are getting in their joints, he told AFP.

"What we've been receiving until now sometimes contains pesticide, but also foreign agents to increase weight. Actually, we don't really know," he said. — AFP

New Zealander sets new record for 24-hour bungee jumps

A New Zealander smashed the world record Wednesday for the most bungee jumps in 24 hours after making a total of 941 leaps off Auckland Bridge.

Mike Heard, 41, toppled the previous record of 765 jumps set by Frenchman Francois-Marie Dibon in Scotland last year.

Having started at 0700 local time on Tuesday (1800 GMT Monday), Heard passed Dibon's record in the early hours of Wednesday before powering on to set the new best mark, his support team told AFP.

"It certainly wasn't easy, and going into it, I knew it would be a massive challenge. The number of jumps we had to hit, added a whole new level of nerves to this attempt for me," Heard said.

"But the record needed to be here, because bungee is a part of our DNA."

Heard, who lives in Auckland, was showered with blue confetti after his 941st and final leap just before 0700 local time Wednesday. — AFP

Pharrell Williams to hold Vuitton show in Hong Kong

MUSICIAN-TURNED-DESIGNER Pharrell Williams will hold his second show as creative director for Louis Vuitton in Hong Kong, the brand announced on Tuesday.

Williams will hold a "pre-fall show" for his menswear line on 30 November, following his glitzy debut at Paris Fashion Week in June.

It emphasizes the importance of Chinese consumers to Louis Vuitton, which said it "found the cultural vibrancy of this island archipelago an ongoing source of inspiration".

Williams succeeded Virgil Abloh, the first black American to helm a major French label until his death from cancer. — AFP

Williams will hold a "pre-fall show" for his menswear line on 30 November, following his glitzy debut at Paris Fashion Week in June. **PHOTO: HANDOUT/AFP**

Nice pick up: Guitars owned by Clapton, Cobain hit auction block

Its distinctive psychedelic design symbolizes the 1967 "Summer of Love" counter-cultural era.

GUITARS played by music legends Eric Clapton and Kurt Cobain are going under the hammer in the United States next month with an estimated price tag of up to $2 million each.

Up for grabs at the sale organized by Julien's Auctions in Nashville will be Clapton's Gibson SG — popularly known as "The Fool" — which the British rocker began using when his band Cream embarked on its first US tour.

Its custom-painted psychedelic finish makes it one of the most recognizable guitars on the planet, and a key symbol of the "Summer of Love", the 1967 counter-cultural moment that defined a generation.

Eric Clapton's Fool guitar (left) and Kurt Cobain's Skystang I guitar are displayed at the media preview for Julien's "Played, worn, torn rock'n'roll iconic guitars and memorabilia" in Gardena, California, on 10 October 2023. **PHOTO: VALERIE MACON/AFP**

"The Fool" remained with him for years afterwards, and was key to the development of what was dubbed the "woman tone" — an oft-imitated sound he produced on the guitar. — AFP

ECONOMY
WORLD

Qatar will supply 3.5 million tonnes of gas a year under the deal, following two agreements with Total last year. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Qatar signs 27-year gas supply deal with France's Total: state energy firm

QATAR has agreed to supply France's TotalEnergies with natural gas for 27 years, its state energy company announced on Wednesday. Qatar will supply 3.5 million tonnes of gas a year under the deal, QatarEnergy said, following two agreements with Total last year for a share of the Gulf state's huge North Field gas expansion project.

"These two new agreements we have signed with our partner TotalEnergies, demonstrate our continued commitment to the European markets in general, and to the French market in particular, thus contributing to France's energy security," Qatari Energy Minister Saad Al-Kaabi said.

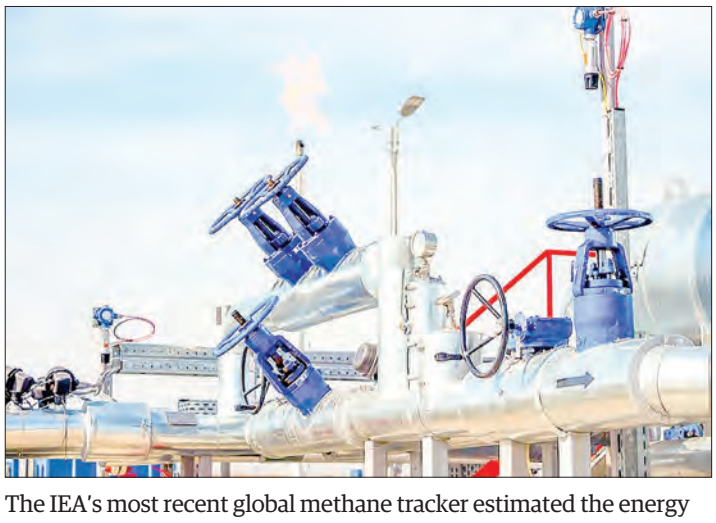
Total signed a $1.5 billion deal with QatarEnergy in September last year giving it a 9.3 per cent stake in Qatar's North Field South project, the second phase of the field's expansion.

In June 2022, the French energy giant became the first partner in the first phase of the expansion, North Field East, investing more than $2 billion for a 6.25 per cent total share.

Deliveries of the gas to southern France are expected to begin in 2026. — AFP

'Immediate' cuts to methane from fossil fuel needed: IEA

Failure to address methane emissions will likely push global temperatures over 1.6°C by 2050, even with significant fossil fuel cuts.



The IEA's most recent global methane tracker estimated the energy sector produced 135 million tonnes of methane emissions in 2022, a slight rise from the year before. **PHOTO: IEA**

METHANE emissions from fossil fuels must be slashed immediately to limit climate warming, and major reductions are possible with existing technologies at low cost, the International Energy Agency said Wednesday.

Methane is far less abundant in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, but is responsible for around 30 per cent of the global rise in temperatures to date.

It lingers in the atmosphere for only around a decade, but absorbs energy much more quickly than carbon dioxide, and cutting emissions of the greenhouse gas is seen as a quick way to limit global warming in the short term, and rapidly improve air quality. — AFP

China to host intl forum on Belt and Road initiative next week

China's white paper on the Belt and Road initiative highlights a decade of success, promoting cooperation and addressing global development issues.

THE third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) will be held in Beijing from 17 to 18 October. Chinese President Xi Jinping will attend the opening ceremony of the forum and deliver a keynote speech, and hold a welcome banquet and bilateral events for the guests attending the forum, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying announced on Wednesday.

According to Hua, the theme of the third BRF is "High-quality Belt and Road Cooperation: Together for Common Development and Prosperity".

The two-day forum starting next Tuesday is expected to draw representatives from over 130 countries, including Russian President Vladimir Putin. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said in a statement its theme will be "high-quality Belt and Road cooperation: together for common development and prosperity".

On Tuesday, China released a white paper on the Belt and Road initiative and boasted of its achievements over the past decade, saying cooperation under the scheme has benefitted participants and helped resolve global development challenges.

Major achievements include railway projects in Indonesia and Laos, but the initiative has also brought criticism for drawing recipient nations into a Chinese debt trap, with developing nations saddled with huge debts that allow Beijing to leverage control over them. — Xinhua/Kyodo

A sign bearing a "Belt and Road" slogan in Chinese is pictured in Beijing on 11 October, 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Tokyo Stock Exchange opens new platform for carbon credit trading

TOKYO Stock Exchange Inc on Wednesday opened a platform on which carbon credits can be traded as part of efforts to accelerate decarbonization in the private sector.

The exchange allows companies to buy and sell "J-Credit," an asset certified by the Japanese government and allocated to organizations that have reduced carbon dioxide emissions through renewable energy use, tree-planting, and other measures.

A company struggling to meet its emissions target can purchase credits to offset the amount by which it has exceeded it, while a firm that has reduced greenhouse gasses by more than it needs can make money by selling extra credits. — Kyodo

UK businesses ask for help after rise in shoplifting

BRITISH businesses are seeking government help as shops suffer an unprecedented number of thefts and violence by criminal gangs, addicts and people struggling with a cost-of-living crisis.

"We see shoplifting everyday here, sometimes multiple times a day," laments Pravin Kharel, the 28-year-old manager of a Sainsbury's food store in London. The British Retail Consortium says shoplifting is up 27 per cent this year in ten of the country's largest cities, a phenomenon affecting also the United States and France, which suffered a 15-per-cent rise in 2022.

The situation in Britain has caused the BRC to demand that police and local mayors do more to protect retail workers.

Following this, 88 bosses of UK retailers, including the heads of supermarket giant Tesco, Boots pharmacy chain and stationery business WHSmith, jointly wrote to the government, demanding measures to tackle the fallout.

"We are writing to ask you to take action to support our colleagues who continue to face unacceptable levels of violence and abuse, amid a rise in theft, much of it organized crime, and anti-social behaviour which in many cases are the root cause of violent incidents," read the letter addressed to Britain's interior minister, Suella Braverman. Kharel estimates that losses to his store total about £250 ($305) per week.

At 6.7 per cent, annual inflation in Britain remains the highest in the G7, after energy and food prices surged. **PHOTO: AFP**

Meat, alcohol and confectionery

The Association of Convenience Stores says supermarket thefts hit a record-high last year in the UK at 1.1 million incidents.

The most stolen items were meat, alcohol and confectionery, added the ACS, which represents more than 33,500 shops.— AFP

ExxonMobil to buy Texas shale producer Pioneer for about $60 bln

EXXONMOBIL sealed a megadeal to acquire Pioneer Natural Resources for about $60 billion, bolstering its holdings in the Permian Basin, a key US petroleum region, the companies announced Wednesday.

Under the all-stock transaction, ExxonMobil will buy Texas-based Pioneer for $59.5 billion based on ExxonMobil's closing price on 5 October. The overall transaction, including debt, is valued at around $64.5 billion, the companies said.

Exxon Mobil Corporation's Chairman and CEO Darren Woods unveiled a takeover of Pioneer Natural Resources for about $60 billion in the petroleum giant's biggest deal since the late 1990s merger between Exxon and Mobil. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

ExxonMobil said the takeover, the company's biggest since the late 1990s acquisition of Mobil by Exxon, will enable greater economies of scale, permitting it to deploy drilling and operating technologies over a bigger region.

"The combined capabilities of our two companies will provide long-term value creation well in excess of what either company is capable of doing on a standalone basis," said ExxonMobil Chief Executive Darren Woods. — AFP

China's new energy passenger car sales surge in September

SALES of new energy passenger cars in China soared in September 2023, data from an industry association showed Wednesday.

Last month, retail sales of new energy passenger vehicles in China expanded 22.1 per cent year on year to 746,000 units, according to the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA).

In the first nine months of the year, nearly 5.19 million units of these cars were sold via retail channels, surging 33.8 per cent from a year ago, the association said.

Wholesale sales of these cars reached 829,000 units in September, up 23 per cent year on year.

The data also revealed that exports of China's new energy passenger cars skyrocketed 107 per cent from a year ago to 91,000 units, accounting for 25.4 per cent of the country's total passenger car exports. — Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3318S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3318S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **12-10-2023** 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

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V HANSA HARBURG VOY.NO. (338W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V HANSA HARBURG VOY.NO. (338W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **12-10-2023** 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 MSC SUPARNA F VOY.NO. (SB339A)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MSC SUPARNA F VOY.NO. (SB339A)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **12-10-2023** 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 MEDITERRANEAN SHIPPING COMPAY S.A

ROLLING UPDATES
WORLD

‘Not proud at all’: Japan’s army struggles to recruit

In July, experts warned that there is an extremely high risk of the military becoming weaker due to not having enough personnel.

Many join the armed forces hoping to help during natural disasters, but are dismayed to find themselves doing military tasks. **PHOTO: KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP**

A recent open day at a Japanese military base near Tokyo was a fun family outing but, despite the games and snacks, the army recruitment stand was bereft of visitors.

“This is the reality. The festival is always packed but no one comes,” confessed one of the two soldiers on duty, unwanted leaflets on the table next to a green armoured vehicle.

Japan has massively upped its defence spending in recent years, alarmed by China’s growing assertiveness in the region and the frequency of North Korea’s missile tests.

But a report by a panel of experts in July highlighted an “extremely high” risk that the armed forces would be weakened because of a lack of personnel.

Although numbers fluctuate from year to year, since 1990 the strength of the Self-Defence Forces, as Japan’s military is known, has fallen by more than seven per cent to under 230,000.

In 2022 fewer than 4,000 people joined up, undershooting the target by more than half. The last time its objective was met was in 2013.

Many advanced economies are having problems recruiting enough people, with the situation particularly acute in Japan, where one in 10 people is 80 or over. But according to current and former soldiers who spoke to AFP, it’s not just demographics to blame. — AFP

US Supreme Court to hear racial gerrymandering case

THE US Supreme Court is to hear a case on Wednesday about discrimination against Black voters that could impact whether Democrats or Republicans control the House of Representatives next year.

The high-stakes voting rights case involves a challenge to a congressional district map drawn up by the Republican-majority legislature in South Carolina.

It is one of several legal battles involving racial gerrymandering — the manipulation of electoral maps to minimize the voting power of minorities — winding their way through the US courts.

Black voters represent around a quarter of registered voters in Alabama but are in a majority in only one of the state’s seven US House districts. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ JOSHUA LOTT/AFP/FILE**

A panel of federal judges approved a new congressional map for the southern state of Alabama this month that includes a second electoral district with a large population of African Americans, who tend to vote Democratic.

“The law requires the creation of an additional district that affords Black Alabamians, like everyone else, a fair and reasonable opportunity to elect candidates of their choice,” they said. — AFP

ILLEGAL CONTENT AND DISINFORMATION

EU warns Musk ‘X’ spreading ‘illegal’ disinfo after Hamas attack

EU commissioner Thierry Breton warned Elon Musk on Tuesday that his platform “X”, formerly Twitter, is spreading “illegal content and disinformation”, in a letter seen by AFP. The letter said concerns had heightened after the Hamas attack against Israel, and demanded Musk respond to the complaint and contact “relevant law enforcement authorities” within 24 hours. – AFP

Rioting inmates take hostages at Paraguay’s largest prison

The rioters took 10 guards hostage, as well as about 30 women who came to visit detained relatives.

HUNDREDS of inmates rioted on Tuesday and took dozens of hostages at the overcrowded Tacumbu prison, the largest in Paraguay, according to authorities and AFP journalists at the scene.

Justice Minister Angel Barchini said the government is “monitoring everything that is happening” at the prison in the capital Asuncion.

He did not confirm press reports that the prison’s director, Adan Jesus Gonzalez, had been captured by the inmates.

According to AFP journalists and images broadcast by television channels, many detainees took up positions on the roof of the main prison building, throwing stones at the police. — AFP

Tacumbu prison houses around 3,000 inmates, or 607 per cent of its theoretical capacity. **PHOTO: ROCIO LA NEGRA VIA X/AFP**

SPORTS

Sapporo's 2030 Winter Olympics bid dropped, 2034 or later targeted

Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido in northern Japan, hosted the 1972 Winter Games and was previously considered a front-runner for a second hosting opportunity.

THE city of Sapporo and the Japanese Olympic Committee on Wednesday abandoned their bid to host the 2030 Winter Olympics and decided to aim for 2034 or later.

Posters to promote Sapporo's bid to host the 2030 Winter Olympics and Paralympics are pictured in the northern Japan city in Hokkaido on 6 October, 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Sapporo has been unable to build momentum as public sentiment has soured following revelations of widespread bribery and bid-rigging related to the Tokyo Games held in the summer of 2021. JOC President Yasuhiro Yamashita had proposed that Sapporo bid for 2034 or later, and Mayor Katsuhiro Akimoto agreed to the plan during a meeting in Tokyo.

Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido in northern Japan, hosted the 1972 Winter Games and was once considered the front-runner to host for a second time, but the International Olympic Committee appears to have shifted its focus to other candidates. — Kyodo

Maguire grateful for Beckham support in troubled times

HARRY Maguire has thanked David Beckham after the former Manchester United star contacted the troubled England defender to offer support when he was booed by Scotland fans earlier this season.

Maguire has endured abuse from supporters across the country during his difficult spell at Old Trafford, but the penchant for picking on the centre-back reached a crescendo during England's friendly in Scotland last month. The 30-year-old was mercilessly goaded at Hampden Park after scoring an own goal in England's 3-1 win.

Maguire laughed it off as a "little bit of banter" immediately after the match but his mother publicly came to his defence after growing tired of the relentless abuse of her son.

Former England captain Beckham also offered support to Maguire as he personally reached out to the former Leicester star, who has lost his place in the United defence, as well as the club captaincy, during Erik ten Hag's reign. Few have faced more difficult times in an England shirt than Beckham, who laid bare the pain he suffered after his 1998 World Cup red card against Argentina in a new Netflix documentary.

"I actually spoke with David about three weeks ago, after the Scotland game," Maguire said on Monday.

"He got in touch with me, so it was really nice of him and I really appreciated that. It meant everything. "I've spoken throughout my career about David Beckham being someone I looked up to and watched when I was a young boy. — AFP

Myanmar to play MSAR today in World Cup Qualifiers

Myanmar head coach Feichtenbeiner is seen at the pre-match press conference for the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers. **PHOTO: MFF**

THE first round of the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers will be held today at Thuwunna Stadium, and the Myanmar team will play against the Macau team.

The pre-match press conference for the match between the Myanmar team and Macau was held on 11 October at the Thuwunna Football Stadium press conference hall, attended by the head coach and captain of both teams.

"I will prepare for a good result and a decent performance in this match to help in the second round match. The first leg will be played at home, so we have to take advantage of the opportunity. Our team beat Macau in the friendly match, but we have to play with focus. We hope to get a good result with the support of the audience. In the last few games, we have scored less, but have not conceded a goal in the last three games in a row.

"A team needs to balance defence and attack. We have prepared well to score more goals. Not because of Kyaw Zin Phyo, the main goalkeeper's injury, but because there are other good goalkeepers, there is no problem. The players are trying to get the best results even though they only have a few days to prepare," said Myanmar head coach Feichtenbeiner.

"The results in the last matches were not good, but we have prepared the best for the World Cup qualifying match against Myanmar. The structure of the Myanmar team is more systematic than ours and includes professional players. But the Myanmar team also has weaknesses.

"To get a good result against the Myanmar team, we have prepared the best in terms of mentality. We didn't beat the Myanmar team in the friendly match, but the upcoming match is not a friendly match," said Macao Head Coach Olivia. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

'Born winner' Rooney hired as new Birmingham manager

Wayne Rooney has been hired as Birmingham's new manager. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

FORMER Manchester United star Wayne Rooney was hired as the new manager of Championship club Birmingham on Wednesday.

Rooney has agreed a three-and-a-half-year contract to replace John Eustace at St Andrew's after leaving Major League Soccer side DC United last week.

Eustace, in charge for just 15 months, was sacked despite guiding Birmingham to sixth place in the Championship this season and Rooney will be expected to oversee a push for promotion to the Premier League.

"I am absolutely delighted to be joining Birmingham City at such an exciting time. It is very clear that they have a plan and are committed to realising their ambition for the club," Rooney said.

"We are fully aligned on what is expected. I have been building my managerial career, putting myself in challenging environments, to get me ready for this opportunity.

"It's a project that gives me a sense of purpose and I can't wait to get started". — AFP

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Kremlin calls Balticconnector gas pipeline incident 'alarming news'

Russia considers it alarming and references previous pipeline explosions, particularly the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic region.

An employee operates a valve at a compression station of the Balticconnector gas pipeline between Finland and Estonia in Inkoo in 2019. **PHOTO: MIKKO STIG/AFP/FILE**

THE information about an explosion at the Balticconnector gas pipeline is "alarming news," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday, adding that dangerous precedents in the Baltic were created by explosions at the Nord Stream pipelines.

"I don't have technical information, I don't know if our special services have such information. But, of course, this is quite alarming news, because we know that dangerous precedents — committing terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure facilities — have already been created in the Baltic, I mean well-known attacks against Nord Streams, so of course we will expect more detailed information," Peskov told reporters.

Balticconnector was shut early on October 8 after a sudden drop in pressure raised concerns that gas was leaking from the 48-mile-long undersea pipeline, which has an annual capacity of up to 2.6 billion cubic meters.

Pipeline operator Gasgrid Finland said the pipeline appeared to have been damaged. — SPUTNIK

AMID INTENSE CLASHES

Israel bolsters forces on border with Gaza as regional powers scramble to mediate

ISRAEL intensified on Tuesday its airstrikes on the Gaza Strip and bolstered its forces along the border, the fourth day of one of the most intense clashes between Israel and Hamas militants in decades.

In retaliation, Hamas has launched barrages of rockets targeting central Israel, including Tel Aviv. Many recreational sites and shops in Tel Aviv have remained closed since the conflict began. As night fell, rockets were fired at Ashkelon, prompting residents to seek shelter. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson, Daniel Hagari, reported that the IDF has regained control over most of the southern region that was infiltrated by Hamas militants on Saturday during a surprise attack. However, clashes are still ongoing. Armed Palestinian militants continue infiltrating Israel. The IDF confirmed that two Palestinian militants, who apparently crossed into Israel during Saturday's attack and were in hiding, were killed in a firefight. — Xinhua

All flights suspended in London Luton Airport after car park fire

The fire resulted in significant structural damage. Approximately 1,200 vehicles in the car park were potentially affected by the fire.

ALL flights at London Luton Airport have been suspended until Wednesday afternoon after a massive blaze ripped through one of its car parks.

The fire happened around 9 p.m. local time on Tuesday at the airport's Terminal Car Park 2 and caused "significant structural collapse," said Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service on X, formerly Twitter. It said up to 1,200 vehicles may have been in the car park and subsequently damaged.

The fire service said in its latest update around 9 a.m. on Wednesday that the fire in the multi-story car park has been extinguished, but "four crews and an aerial appliance remain at the scene."

East of England Ambulance Service said five people, including four firefighters and one airport staff, have been sent to hospital due to smoke inhalation.

Luton Airport advised passengers not to travel to the airport due to "severely restricted" access. Luton Airport is Britain's fifth-busiest airport, carrying over 13 million passengers in 2022. — Xinhua

The airport says works are ongoing to get the airport operational again. **PHOTO: JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP**