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The Global NEW LIGHT of MYANMAR

Vol. X, No. 225, 1st Waning of Tazaungmone 1385 ME | www.gnlm.com.mm | Tuesday, 28 November 2023

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla attend release of hot-air balloon offered to Maravijaya Buddha Image in Tazaungdine Lighting Festival

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla attended the hot-air balloon releasing ceremony of Tazaungdine Lighting Festival at Maravijaya Buddha Image in the Maravijaya Buddha Park in Dekkhinathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, the full moon of Tazaungmone.

The ceremony was also attended by the SAC Secretary, the Joint Secretary and his wife, council members and their wives, Union-level persons and Union ministers and their wives.

The Senior General and wife and attendees viewed the launch of fireworks and hot-air balloons to Maravijaya Buddha Image.

After offering flowers, water and lighting to the Buddha image, the Senior General and wife ignited 9,000 oil lamps offered to the Buddha image and cordially greeted pilgrims and people enjoying the Tazaungdine festival.

The Senior General and his wife presented cash awards to nine weaving teams in the first golden lotus robe-weaving contest.

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State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing participates in the hot-air balloon releasing event at the Maravijaya Buddha Image in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Myanmar pulse exports swell to 1 mln tonnes over 7.5 months

MYANMAR exported more than 1 million tonnes of pulses, with an estimated value of over US$865 million, to foreign trade partners over the past seven and half months of the current 2023-2024 financial year beginning 1 April, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated.

The value of pulses exports by seaborne trade reached $749.633 million (over 890,644 tonnes), whereas over 134,746 tonnes of pulses worth $115.606 million were sent to the neighbouring

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Merchants evaluating beans and pulses at the Mandalay market.

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Taninthayi's fishery industry: Soaring costs and plummeting prices threaten operations and jobs

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Chinese Navy Escort Task Group (ETG) arrives in Yangon for bilateral activities

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Ngwehsaung Beach packed with visitors during Tazaungdine holidays

NATIONAL

Maravijaya Buddha Image Lighting Festival concludes amidst large pilgrim crowds

THE final day of the Maravijaya Buddha Image Tazaungdine Lighting Festival in Dekkhinathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, was crowded with pilgrims.

During the festival, the road to Buddha Park was packed with visitors and the traffic police members systematically controlled the traffic.

Officials provided necessary measures for the pilgrims to enjoy the festival peacefully and also guided them ways to light offering sites, hot-air balloons releasing places and market stalls. Pilgrims, monks, people and religious group members peacefully paid homage to the Buddha Image, lit oil lamps in the pagoda compound and recited Pathana treatise.

The State-owned media broadcast live streaming hot-air balloons releasing events for those who cannot come to the festival.

Crowds flock to the Maravijaya Buddha Image in Nay Pyi Taw during the holiday. **PHOTO: HTEIN AYE**

Moreover, the Buddha Park was decorated with LED lights and other religious sites in the park were also full of pilgrims.

The festival also featured entertainment programmes, sales of regional products, foodstuffs and commodities of MSMEs and Myanmar traditional snacks.

Visitors to the Tazaungdine Lighting Festival did good deeds with peace of mind and the members of the Myanmar Red Cross Society provided clinics to provide emergency healthcare services to the pilgrims.

Tazaungdine Lighting Festival was held from 25 to 27 November, and pilgrims paid homage to the Maravijaya Buddha Image while enjoying the beauty of Tazaungmone full moon night. — Myo Sett Thit/KTZH

Theme of 103rd Anniversary of National Victory Day 2023

From peace of the Union towards development of the State

Objectives of 103rd Anniversary of National Victory Day 2023

10th Waning of Tazaungmone 1385 ME
7 December 2023

- To build the Union based on the democratic and federal system through united strengths of all National people
- To implement a comprehensive education system accessible to all
- To nurture youths endowed with five physical and mental strengths and a patriotic spirit
- To encourage MSME businesses by emphasizing the economic drive

Bagan welcomes nearly two mln visitors in Jan-Oct 2023

Visitors worship and delight at a pagoda in Bagan.

FROM January to October of 2023, nearly two million domestic travellers and tourists visited the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone, according to Assistant Director U Myo Min Aung of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Bagan Branch).

During the period, nearly two million domestic and foreign tourists visited the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone, including more than ten thousand international tourists.

"The influx of domestic and foreign tourists to Bagan's ancient cultural heritage area has been increasing since 2022. The arrival of domestic tourists is the highest, especially during the New Year period, Thingyan period, Thadingyut, Tazaungdine, and December holidays. Since 2022, there have been domestic travellers," said U Myo Min Aung.

Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone is the most attractive place for tourists and domestic travellers. From January to October of last year (2022), about one million domestic and foreign tourists arrival, and the arrival of internal and external travellers from January to October this year was about 50 per cent more than the previous year. — ASH/TKO

NATIONAL

Crowds delight at the Tazaungdine Festival in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla ...

FROM PAGE-1

The Senior General, his wife and the audience watched offering fireworks to Maravijaya Buddha Image and releasing hot-air balloons at the Tazaungdine lighting festival.

They also relased small hot-air balloons. The Tazaungdine lighting festival took place from 25 to 27 November at Maravijaya Buddha Image. During the festival, 9,000 oil lamps were offered to the Image, Maha Pathana treatise and religious verses were recited, fireworks were launched, golden lotus robes were weaved and hot-air balloons were released on a grand scale. The precinct of Buddha Park was illuminated with LED bulbs. In the market fair, MSME businesses showcased domestic products, foodstuffs, personal goods and traditional snacks. Artistes performed songs and dances to the audiences. — MNA/TTA

SAC Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla enjoy Samañaphala Day

AS today is the full moon day of Tazaungmone as well as Samañaphala Day, one of the significant days of Buddhist people, Tazaungdine and lighting festivals are being held yearly as Myanmar's traditional culture.

On the significant days, Buddhists take Sabbaths dedicated to the Lord Buddha, recite Pathana Desana and Paritta, donate Kathina robes at monasteries and do meritorious deeds as well as pay homage to pagodas and stupas.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win and his wife Daw Than Than Nwe, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Maung Maung Aye and wife, senior military officers of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and their wives, and Union level persons and their wives offered oil lights and multicolour lights, flowers and water, and 1,000 oil lamps and happily enjoyed the Samañaphala Day on full moon of Tazaungmone and Tazaungdine lighting festival.

SAC Chair PM Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla observe the Samañaphala Day yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

The Samañaphala Day in progress offering multicolour lights.

Roads, buildings and trees in the compound of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) were also illuminated in addition to the funfairs in commemoration of the Tazaungdine light festival which families of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army, Navy and Air) happily enjoyed.

Likewise, lighting festivals, the Shin Uppagutta Pujaniya festival and setting oil lamps adrift in the water took place at religious edifices in regions and states. People joined the festival and lit the oil lamps as well as participated in the charity fairs.

Similarly, as now is Tazaungdine holidays, recreation centres, beaches and parks in regions and states are crowded with picnickers to enjoy the full moon of Tazaungmone. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Pagodas, including Shwedagon, teem with pilgrims on Tazaungmone Full Moon Day

AS the full moon day of Tazaungmone (Samañaphala Day) is one of the significant days for Buddhists, people hold the Tazaungdine festival and lighting festival as part of preserving the Myanmar cultural traditions.

The pagoda board of trustees of Shwedagon Pagoda celebrated Samañaphala Day of 1385 ME at the designated places of the pagoda.

At the ceremony, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein, relevant officials and members of religious organizations donated offerings to the Shwedagon pagoda, Kathina Golden Lotus Robe to Padamya Myat Shin and four Buddha Images of four prayer halls.

They also took nine precepts from Shwedagon pagoda Ovadacariya Sayadaw Yangon Region Sangha Nayaka Committee Chairman and donated alms food to Sayadaws.

Similarly, the 39th lotus robe offering ceremony was also organized at Botahtaung pagoda while the 23rd lotus Robe offering ceremony at Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye pagoda on the same morning.

Moreover, boards of trustees of famous pagodas in Yangon Region offered alms meals, flowers, water, candles and fruits to pagodas and held Samañaphala Day ceremonies and Paritta reciting ceremonies.

Additionally, lighting festivals were also held in wards and streets, and places were crowded with people for funfairs and Kathina festivals. The significant places were also decorated with colourful light bulbs. — Ko Ko Zaw/KTZH

Kathina golden lotus robes being coveyed round the Shwedagon Pagoda before offering them to it yesterday.

Wellwishers seen doing good deeds at Maha Wizara Pagoda yesterday.

Ministries and UMFCCI to collaborate on increased production of paper and pulp

THE Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry will collaborate to enhance the manufacturing of paper and pulp, as announced by the federation.

In pursuit of this goal, Union Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than, Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi, UMFCCI President U Aye Win, and other officials met with businesspeople and management bodies at paper and pulp factories in the East Dagon Industrial Zone and Dagon Seikkan Industrial Zone on 25 November.

Their discussions focused on obtaining technology and expertise in manufacturing paper and pulp, securing raw materials to enhance production, promoting local manufacturing to reduce reliance on imports, and assisting entrepreneurs in acquiring the necessary equipment. — ASH/NT

Counter-argument to false information

Misinformation alert: False report on abandonment of staff from Winka police outpost, Taungsun camp of Correctional Dept in Bilin Township for fear of terror attacks

Screenshot validates false report.

MALICIOUS media spread misinformation on the social network pages that service personnel from the Correctional Department in Taungsun and Winka police outpost in Bilin Township abandoned their camps due to concerns about attacks of terrorists and insurgents.

With regard to the misinformation, officials serving duties in their areas said no one abandoned the police outpost and the camp of the Correctional Department in Bilin Township and it is just a piece of false news.

Malicious media instigating the terror acts are spreading misinformation to cause fear among State service personnel serving their assigned duties and residents who wish to live peacefully, and the government is focusing on forging peace and stability and the rule of law with momentum. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Nay Pyi Taw pagodas overflow with visitors on Tazaungmone Full Moon Day

OF 12 months in Myanmar, Tazaungmone is a significant month for the Buddhists, and they keep the sabbath, recite Pathan and Paritta, donate Kathina robes, celebrate Kathina donation ceremonies and make good deeds on that day.

The pagodas and monasteries in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area were also crowded with devotees on the full moon day of Tazaungmone.

In the morning, the 15th Tazaungdine Golden Lotus Robe donation ceremony was held at the Uppatasanti Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw.

It was attended by Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Tin Oo Lwin, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman U Than Tun Oo and other relevant officials.

The Union minister and party took Nine Precepts from Ovadacariya of Pagoda Presiding Sayadaw of Inntha East Monastery and donated offertories to Sayadaws.

(L & R) People throng to pay homage to the Uppatasanti Pagoda and enjoy the holiday in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Moreover, the pagodas in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area were also crowded with pilgrims, locals and families of government employees.

Similarly, the white-elephant camp, religious item stalls and souvenir shops were also crowded with visitors.

Moreover, streets and roads were packed with people celebrating the Kathina ceremony, charity fair and the shopping centres and places of recreation were also packed with visitors.

The well-known DJ music and the band also entertained visitors at the night market festival of Nay Pyi Taw Water Fountain Park.

People offered 9,000 oil lamps to the Uppatasanti Pagoda in the evening, and also Mezali (Cassia siamea) salad and Pantthaku (kind of discarding cash or materials).

The traffic police and security members also provided security measures for the people. — Lu Lin Nge/KTZH

Mandalay pagodas, resorts overflow with visitors on Tazaungmone Full Moon Day

ON the full moon day of Tazaungmone (Samañaphala Day), the pagodas and the resorts in and around Mandalay were packed with many people, enjoying the holiday and doing meritorious deeds.

Starting from dawn, people offered candle lights, lotus robes and Kathina robes at the pagodas and monasteries as is the custom. At the Maha Muni Buddha Image, one of the most famous pagodas, the monks washed the face of the Buddha statue and offered lotus robes.

Donors and well-wishers were busy doing good deeds at Mandalay Taungdaw Sutaungpyae Pagoda, Kuthodaw Pagoda, Kyauktawgyi Pagoda, Aungdawmu Pagoda, Shwekyimyin Pagoda and the Jade Pagoda.

In the evening, the city was also alive with the people lighting the candles and donating the Mezali Phu (buds of Cassia siamea) salad (traditional and seasonal salad) and they enjoyed it the full moon day of Tazaungmone happily.

Moreover, the other famous places around Mandalay such as the Taungthaman Lake, the U Bein Bridge and the city garden were also filled with recreational enthusiasts. — Maung Aye Chan/TRKM

Photos depict crowds gathering at pagodas and recreational venues to pay homage and enjoy the holiday yesterday in Mandalay.

NATIONAL

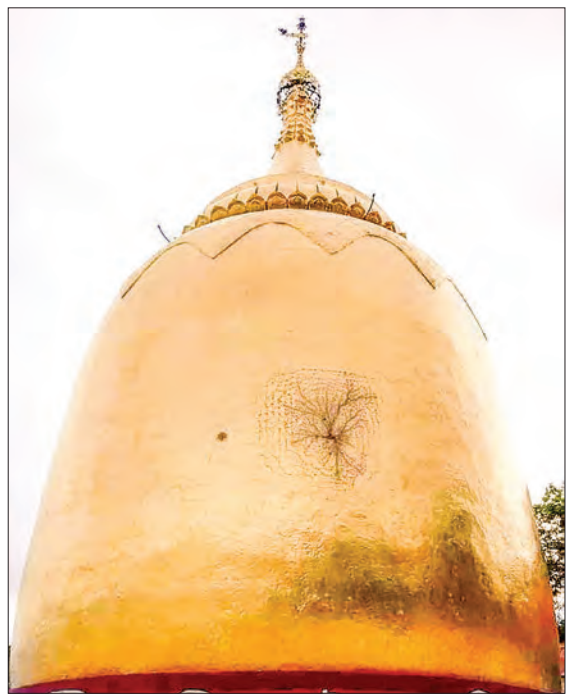
Lightning conductors to be installed at ancient buildings, temples and pagodas in Bagan

PLANS are underway to install lightning conductors at eleven ancient buildings in the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone, according to the Department of Archaeology and National Museum (Bagan Branch).

Buu Pagoda and Dhammarazika Pagoda were struck by lightning during the last rainy season. Due to these incidents, authorities have been holding discussions on installing lightning conductors on eleven ancient buildings to protect them from the natural disaster of lightning.

Currently, plans are being processed to install lightning conductors near ancient buildings, temples, and pagodas in areas that can be struck by lightning.

Last rainy season, 53 ancient buildings experienced damage. The mural paintings and masonry art of 59 buildings were also damaged, and maintenance on those buildings is currently underway. — TWA/TKO



Buu Pagoda and Dhammarazika Pagoda were hit by lightning last rainy season.

Small onions in low demand, widening price gap

THERE is a low demand for small onions in the domestic market, while medium and large onions are in high demand to be sent to the border this year, causing the large price gap subsequently.

When locally produced onions fetch high prices, price dumping happens when large quantities of Chinese onions enter the domestic market at below costs. Nonetheless, they are mostly utilized in restaurants rather than households due to their flavour.

Harvested monsoon onions are seen in a field.

The onion prices move in the range between K2,200 and K3,900 per viss depending on size, producing areas (Myingyan, Pakokku, Seikphyu) and qualities on 25 November.

The large onion price hit a record high of K5,100 per viss at the end of 2022. Medium-sized onions are mostly consumed in delta regions, while households in the Yangon Region prefer large onions.

The onion prices vary in different sizes in Yangon's market. — TWA/KK

Fresh sugar to flood market in December

THE sugar mills are scheduled to run at the end of November, so the new sugar will start flowing into the market in December, the sugar millers said.

The sugar mills hiked up the price of sugarcane up to K150,000 per tonne for the 2023-2024 sugarcane season from the earlier set rate of K110,000 per tonne.

The sugar prices stood at K3,800-3,850 per viss in Yangon's market on 24 November. There is a price difference of approximately K150 per viss between Yangon's market price and that of Mandalay (K3,650-3,700 per viss), said U Naing Lin, a trader who sends sugar to regions outside Yangon, told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

A renowned brand of sugar is supplied by Shan State. Mandalay market is the major hub for the sugar trade.

The sugar prices were registered at K2,425-2,570 per viss on 25 November 2022. The prevailing prices indicated an increase of K1,300 per viss compared to that of the corresponding period last year.

There is a low chance of the price to dip to K3,500 per viss in Yangon's market, traders forecast. Those traders who kept the sugar stocks in their hands reaped a handsome profit this year. Thus, the new sugar is also expected to be in high demand, market observers pointed out. — TWA/KK

The photo shows a variety of sugars found in the market.

Danyingon market introduces affordable cold storage for veggie sellers

THE Danyingon market in Insein Township, Yangon, started to provide cold storage services for vegetable sellers at affordable rates to prevent their goods from perishing.

By utilizing cold storage, vendors can increase profits by reducing transport, loading, unloading charges, and waste.

Cold storage service charges will be K3 per kilogramme of fruits and vegetables for 24 hours, K5 per kilogramme of grapes, and K5 per kilogramme of Shan products. Charges will be negotiable if products are stored for more than 24 hours.

For more detailed information, enquiries can be made at Apartment B12, located at the corner of Shwepyitha Bridge and Pearl Street in Insein Township, Danyingon Market, or by calling 09 261 289 462, 09 775 435 975, or 09 250 493 456." — TWA/TMT

NATIONAL
BUSINESS

Taninthayi Region is home to 1,500 offshore fishing boats. Some fishing boats are pictured.

Taninthayi's fishery industry: Soaring costs and plummeting prices threaten operations and jobs

FALLING seafood prices, rising fuel costs, and unstable currency rates are severely impacting Taninthayi Region's fishery exports to Thailand, potentially bringing the industry to a standstill, according to industry insiders.

An offshore trawler usually costs 13 million baht (around K120 million) per trip. Despite a potential catch worth 18 million baht (K170 million), traders often face losses due to additional operational expenses.

A merchant from Myeik says, "Fleets of 10 to 20 trawlers remain docked. Small-scale fishermen have stopped completely. The impact is profound on all offshore boats. I heard medium-sized iron-hauled boats are faring relatively better in Rakhine waters. But plummeting prices, soaring operational expenses, and unfavourable currency rates have forced us in Taninthayi Region to halt operations."

A barrel of fuel oil costs over K660,000, while a container of fish barely fetches K65,000. "Our fishing boats came back. We just decided to dock them since the market is no longer favourable. The current situation hurts all offshore boats, especially large-scale ones because they need more men to operate. Since they use surface-and midwater-fishing methods, they struggle to catch fish. Thai buyers no longer accept their fish since there's a surplus. The exchange rate makes the situation worse, too," complains another offshore fishing business owner.

Traders are required to exchange 50 per cent of the earnings from fishery exports at the designated currency rate and spend the remaining 50 per cent within a month. Additionally, Thai buyers are driving down seafood prices, worsening the situation.

An official at the Myeik District Squid Entrepreneurs Association said, "It affects squid traders, too. At the beginning of the season last year, a salver of squids earned K350,000. But the market opened to K200,000 this year and has fallen as low as K150,000. We decided to stop operating once the boats return. The fishermen are going to lose their jobs. Sea exports aren't advantageous. Land transport costs from K600,000 to K900,000 additionally. A kilogramme of parquet fish barely makes K500 now. We can't go on like this."

Taninthayi Region is home to 1,500 offshore fishing boats, and local people are worried that losses in the fishery industry might spread to other sectors.— Myint Oo (Myeik)/NT

Maungtaw border facilitates agri, fisheries, and industrial export products to Bangladesh

MYANMAR primarily conveyed agricultural produce, fisheries and finished industrial goods to Bangladesh through the Maungtaw border, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

At present, the goods flow into the Maungtaw border through the Sittway-Buthidaung-Maungtaw and Sittway-Angumaw-Maungtaw routes. Mostly, goods are delivered to the border via the Sittway-Angumaw-Maungtaw route. Then, they are exported to Bangladesh via the Kanyinchaung Economic Zone.

Between 1 and 21 November, Myanmar sent 38.25 tonnes of areca nuts worth $0.06 million, 27 tonnes of jengkol $0.008 million, 110 tonnes of fresh ginger $0.022 million, seven tonnes of mango $0.003 million, 101.3 tonnes of rohu $0.128 million, 45.5 tonnes of dried small fish $0.029 million, 46 tonnes of dried anchovy $0.017 million, 1.54 tonnes of Katla fish $0.002 million, 22 tonnes of preserved jujube pack $0.007 million, nine tonnes of Tun Shwe Wah ointment $0.005 million and 13 tonnes of Thanaka pack $0.007 million to Bangladesh via Maungtaw border. Maungtaw border sees no import then.

The export prices at Maungtaw border were $300 per tonne of jengkol, $200 per fresh ginger, $1,266 per tonne of rohu, $3,150 per tonne of dried anchovy, $630 per tonne of dried small fish, $330 per tonne of preserved jujube pack, $1,000 per tonne of areca nut, $500 per tonne of Tun Shwe Wah ointment, $500 per tonne of Thanaka pack, $420 per tonne of mango and $1,306 per tonne of Katla fish.

The cross-border trade value via Myanmar's Maungtaw border with neighbouring Bangladesh was targeted to hit US$1.53 million in November, comprising exports worth $1.5 million and imports worth $0.03 million, yet the actual trade amounted to $0.286 million with exports only, reaching 18.69 per cent of trade target. — NN/EM

Export cargoes seen being loaded onto the vessel at the Maungtaw border.

Female workers pursue tailoring positions at the garment workplace.

MGMA launches batch 230 of basic tailoring training course in Dec

MYANMAR Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA) will offer a Basic Tailoring Training Course (Batch 230) from 11 to 29 December at the Myanmar Garment Human Resources Development Training Centre (MGHRDC).

The course will provide practical approaches and technical know-how of tailoring, different sewing methods, labour laws and practices.

This training will also bridge the network between those engaged in garment factories and those hunting jobs from regions outside Yangon, to create job opportunities for residents. Thus, the training will also help find jobs. Those who wish to attend the training can enrol through phone numbers: 09 940858350, 09 450723262, 09 9403912570, 09 784085794 and 09 969865024. — NN/EM

OPINION

Adhere to traffic regulations crucial for accident prevention

DESPITE the escalating number of vehicles in Myanmar, there has been a noteworthy decline in traffic accidents, as reported by the Road Transport Administration Department. Up until the end of October 2023, more than 6,510,000 vehicles, encompassing buses, private cars, light trucks, cargo trucks, heavy machinery, and others, were registered with the department. Remarkably, the incidence of traffic accidents has been consistently decreasing year after year.

The department's statistics reveal that a total of 4,050 traffic accidents occurred across Myanmar in the ten months from January to October 2023, compared to 4,744 cases during the corresponding period of the previous year, marking a decline of 694 cases. Similarly, the number of injuries resulting from traffic accidents from January to October 2022 was 6,613, with 2,343 fatalities, compared to 5,656 injuries and 2,068 deaths in the same period of 2023. This represents a decrease of 957 injuries and 275 deaths.

Furthermore, the responsibility for preventing traffic accidents extends beyond vehicle drivers and conductors to encompass all road users. Those who neglect traffic rules put themselves at risk of accidents, leading to inevitable casualties. The severe consequences of injuries and fatalities in traffic accidents alter the original structures and lives of those affected. Consequently, strict adherence to traffic rules is crucial for the interests and safety of everyone on the road.

This positive trend is attributed to the collaborative efforts of authorities in traffic rule enforcement bodies at various levels and the dedicated work of the Traffic Police Force, coupled with the vigilant and cautious driving practices of individuals aimed at reducing casualties in traffic accidents in 2023.

To further mitigate traffic accidents and casualties, it is imperative for all drivers to drive with utmost concentration on their current tasks, setting aside other distractions. This not only ensures their safety but also safeguards the well-being of those accompanying the drivers. Additionally, authorities from traffic rule enforcement bodies and the traffic police force must take unbiased action against any traffic rule offenders. Swift action against violators has the potential to save countless lives of road users and passengers.

Furthermore, the responsibility for preventing traffic accidents extends beyond vehicle drivers and conductors to encompass all road users. Those who neglect traffic rules put themselves at risk of accidents, leading to inevitable casualties. The severe consequences of injuries and fatalities in traffic accidents alter the original structures and lives of those affected. Consequently, strict adherence to traffic rules is crucial for the interests and safety of everyone on the road.

During the period from January to October 2023, Yangon Region reported the highest number of traffic accidents with 712 cases, followed by Ayeyawady Region with 612 and Mandalay Region with 565. Therefore, it is imperative for all individuals to unwaveringly follow traffic rules to avoid the regrettable aftermath of accidents and steer clear of the adverse impacts and disadvantages associated with such incidents.

ARTICLE

A Few Random Thoughts and Suggestions

Maun Kyaa Nyo

FIRST of all, to come to mind is the need to use the term "Myanmese" when referring to our language. I have seen quite a lot of writers in English who use the word "Myanmar" when they mean the country and the people as well as the language. I have even read someone who wrote Myanmarsa in his article. He seems to have noticed the inadequacy of the word Myanmar when referring to the language. But 'sa' is not English and should not be used; otherwise, it would become Myanglish as Singaporeans usually use Singlish — a funny mixture of Singaporean and English. That writer should have written "Myanmar language". But that would have needed two words where one word could do the work if the right term "Myanmese" was chosen.

Look at some other countries and their languages. When the country is England, its language is English; people, adjectives and language are English. When the country is Japan, its people and language are Japanese. Ditto China and Chinese. Country, France – language, French. Enough! enough! Country and language are always differently spelt. When our country was known as Burma, our language was Burmese. Then, why insist upon using the same word Myanmar for the country and people as well as the language? Confusion may arise out of the incorrect use of the word Myanmar when the intended meaning is the language. Suppose someone is told to write something in Myanmar, it can have two different meanings: one is that, that something has to be written in the country of Myanmar; and the other, in the Myanmar language of the two meanings, the more prominent one is the country. So, the person told to do that writing will (more likely than not) understand that he/she must write it in the land of Myanmar rather than in its language. This misunderstanding will be the result of using the word Myanmar instead of the correct — so far unused-term Myanmese. I discussed the need to use the new word 'Myanmese' in the local paper, The Standard Time (San Taw Chein) a few months ago. If the correct term Myanmese had been used in that supposed case, there would have been no confusion at all since the meaning of the request/command would have been as clear as limpid water.

Then come some important misspellings. I have already pointed out one in an online post a few months ago. That misspelling was/is using the word motion picture (without an 's') while referring to all movies/films. A case in point is the 'Myanmar Motion Picture Organization'. As a rule, the word is spelt pictures (with an 's') at the end because a film/movie is made up of hundreds of thousands of small individual (but continuous) pictures shown very fast one after the other on the movie screen by a projector. So when all movies/films are meant, the usual spelling is 'motion pictures'. If only a particular movie/film is meant, the picture is spelt without an 's' as in the case of a statement — 'That novel has been made into a major motion picture.' Otherwise, all movies/films are spelt motion pictures when a dignified term is intended. That's why I have written in my online post that the title 'Myanmar Motion Picture Organization' is misspelt.

Another misspelling I would like to point out is the prefix of the name Maung when referring to a young man or a male student. It is a traditionally accepted spelling, established since Myanmar started to write in English. I see the 'g' at the end of the word as superfluous or unnecessary. Leaving it out makes no difference whatsoever – either in the sound or the meaning. The spelling 'Maun' is enough to indicate the required sound. Why put a 'g' at the end unnecessarily involving a waste of the necessary time, effort, space and ink? But that's a long-established tradition!

The name of a city located on the Taninthayi Coast is also being misspelt as Dawei. Some of the readers may probably know that the combination of two vowels – ei – phonetically indicates the sound 'ay' rather than the required sound – 'ai' – like in air, chair etc. The city was called Tavoy under British rule. Now that it has been Myanmarized, it has unfortunately been misspelt as Dawei. The correct, proper spelling is Dawai.

By means of the suggestions mentioned above, the life quality and honour of being government employees can be enhanced so that most people will come to regard government employment as something to be highly desirable.

I would like to point out another misspelling — in Myanmese this time. It is not a misspelling actually: it is using the same word in translating Palestine as well as Palestinians. You can see that the two words are quite different. But the translators here have unanimously used the same Myanmar word 'pa-let-sa-tain' for both names. The spelling is all right for the country. But when it comes to the people – Palestinians – the same Myanmar word cannot and should not be used. Obvious, isn't it? The correct Myanmar word for Palestinians is 'Paletsatainthar myar, meaning the sons or people of Palestine.

The most important part of this article

Now we come to the partial (but, definitely effective) solution to the problem of skyrocketing prices of everything that's troubling the whole country, overwhelmingly. The solution is simple enough: just issue rations (free supplies) of staples like rice, cooking oil, beans/pulses, eggs etc. to every government employee (the faster, the better!). As for the non-government citizens, sell them the stales at especially reduced prices. There can be one problem: the threat of some unscrupulous persons queuing up at selling points and selling back their lots to merchants at a profit, creating a 'tansitoesar'/queue-up-sell back-and-eat class of people. To prevent that problem, merchants should be warned in advance not to buy government-issued staples from individuals.

In this way, the sufferings of all government employees numbering in the millions can be reduced to a greater or lesser extent. When millions of government employees are relieved of their pain (not totally, of course), the non-government citizens will also receive a certain amount of benefits through the rippling (consequential) effect. But let me remind you of the fact that the problem of rising prices can never be totally solved as it is an everlasting, ongoing process. It can only be solved for a short time.

Regarding this matter, I have written an article for the (now defunct) local newspaper The Voice Daily. When? Being a careless person, I haven't kept a copy, I can only say that it was more than ten years ago- maybe fifteen or even twenty years.

In that article, I made several suggestions which I have summarized below.

*The problem of rising or skyrocketing prices cannot be solved by merely increasing the salaries or incomes of government employees. It's only a short-term solution at the best. It is certainly bound to be followed by inflation as the prices of everything will be raised by greedy merchants and sellers who are always seeking a reason to do so.

The title of the article was "How to Suppress Corruption". So, I made other suggestions too. The three root causes of corruption are (1) need, (2) greed and (3) the red-tape system. To explain in detail; corruption arises because most of the government employees feel, as we say in Myanmese, 'Nga-wan-putsa-ma-nay-tha-loh, because my stomach is hot and hungry. A lot of government employees are honest by nature and wouldn't dream of getting involved in corruption under ordinary circumstances. But when it comes to the three primary needs of life — food, clothing and shelter — not being fulfilled, they, poor guys, have to resort to corruption. There's no other way of escape for them from immediate hunger. By no means should such people be punished.

This being the case, I suggested in my article that their needs should be fulfilled rather than punished. How? As I have written above, their needs should be attended to in various ways. They include:

- Selling them the staples at especially reduced prices.
- Enabling them to live in government-owned residences at low rents if not totally free, and to go on living at low rents after their retirement;
- Allowing them and their family members to travel on state-owned conveyances (buses(if any), trains, ships and aeroplanes) at low rates, if not totally free;
- Selecting totally honest, hard-working and efficient employees monthly, half-yearly or yearly, to be prominently praised and given prizes;

By means of the suggestions mentioned above, the life quality and honour of being government employees can be enhanced so that most people will come to regard government employment as something to be highly desirable.

After meeting the three fundamental needs of government workers and raising their worth, we now come to the next step, which is, erasing greed: the second cause of corruption. It can be handled in the following ways.

In bribery and corruption, two parties are involved viz the receivers and the givers. Both of them are guilty. But, of the two, the former (invariably, the people in power) who, despite earning reasonably enough-more than enough in some cases-, should be punished severely as they do it out of greed. The latter should be spared from punishment, with a warming, as they have been forced by prevailing circumstances to be a party.

There are many other greedy people besides some government employees, most of whom are merchants and retail-sellers always seeking a reason to raise the prices of everything they sell, even at the drop of a hat! Such people should be found out after issuing warnings in advance and severely punished.

While greed is being suppressed in these ways, the last cause of corruption- the red tape system – should be attended to at the same time. What is the red tape system? Here's the explanation. As some of the readers probably know, in most offices case files are tied up with red tape, ready to be sent from office to office. As a rule, most cases take a long time to get to the final decision. The red-taped files have to be sent up from the lowest office to the highest, passing several offices on the way, up and down. This is the bottleneck that causes most of the delays in office work. These delays are bad for everyone concerned — business people applying for licences etc. and finally the consumers. Naturally, all applicants are anxious to get their business done as quickly as possible, knowing that the longer the delays, the more expensive their imports and/or products become. To avoid delays, they have to grease the palms of those in power as the red-taped files from office to office.

To solve the chief part of the problem of skyrocketing prices, the red-tape system ought to be done away with, as much as possible. Most cases and applications shouldn't be made to pass several offices. In most cases, there should be officials with decision-making authority, just a few steps from the lowest office. Time limitations should be fixed for import licences, permits etc. when there's a rule that certain licenses must be issued in such and such a time — the shorter, the better- the applicants won't resort to bribery, but wait until the time limit is up. This will go a long way in solving the bribery problem.

Similarly, the problem of trials at law courts taking an unacceptably long time to come to the final decision can be prevented or shortened to a great extent by fixing time limits on most cases. One reason for most delays is witnesses failing to come. This can be prevented by making it a compulsory duty on the part of witnesses. They must come without failure. There may be exceptions to this rule.

I would like to conclude this article with a beautiful irony. As most of the readers are aware, our country usually occupies the lowest position or somewhere near it on the list of the least developed countries (LDCs) in Asia. But, wonder of wonders, it almost always tops the list of the most generous nations on earth thanks to a lot of people including artistes like Khant Si Thu and Khine Hninn Way who give generously in lean times like that of COVID-19. Just imagine one of the LDCs hovering near the bottom topping the list of the most generous nations. What a beautiful irony!

Oh, Myanmar GENEROUSLY! Hallowed Be Thy Name!

PS! I almost forgot to mention the most important part of my suggestion which is none other than increasing the production of the staples and many other required things. In accord with the law of supply and demand, when supply rises, demand is bound to fall, bringing down the prices of related things. In short, promoting the production of necessary things is a long-term but surefire way of solving the skyrocketing price problem.

■

NATIONAL

Chinese Navy Escort Task Group (ETG) arrives in Yangon for bilateral activities

Tatmadaw (Navy) Senior officers welcome the Chinese Navy Escort Task Group at Thilawa Port yesterday.

THREE naval vessels from the People's Liberation Army's 44th Navy Escort Task Group (ETG) arrived at Thilawa Port in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

Destroyer Zibo (Destroyer), Frigate Jing Zhou, and Qian Dao Hu (a replenishment ship) were warmly welcomed by senior officers and personnel from the Tatmadaw (Navy), officials from the Chinese Embassy, and the military attaché office to Myanmar, as well as representatives from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar and the China-Myanmar Buddhist Association.

Senior Captain Sun Bo is leading the 700-strong naval task force in a bid to conduct naval security exercises between Myanmar and China, participate in friendly sports matches, and visit places of historical and cultural significance in Yangon. — MNA/NT

Confiscated illegal items: Timbers, consumer goods, industrial materials, foodstuffs and vehicles confiscated

Officials check seized illegal items.

DURING the inspections on 24 and 25 November, the Customs on-duty team managed by the Customs Department confiscated 15 kinds of goods worth K5.36 million, including 25 iPads (used) without official documents from luggage, at Yangon International Airport (Import Desk), 888 kilogrammes of curtain fabric valued at K8.88 million without official documents at Mandalay International Airport (Import Desk) and a Toyota HiAce vehicle (approximately worth K30 million) travelling from Myawady to Mawlamyine carrying four types of goods worth K8.66 million, including 2,500 bottles of LipoVitan-D energy drink and 60 Nakita digital stoves without official documents at the Kawkareik (Tadakyoe) combined checkpoint. The actions were taken under Customs procedures.

A combined team captured 16 kinds of goods worth K62,168,800, including 1,728 bottles of Dr Hakem and 10,000 boxes of Kinoki foot detox pads without official documents, at the warehouse in Mandalay on 25 November. The action was carried out under Customs procedures.

On 25 and 26 November, the Customs on-duty teams impounded a Scania bus, heading to Mandalay from Mawlamyine, carrying five kinds of goods worth K6.35 million, including 600 bottles of Two-Shrimp brand vegetable oil (one-litre bottle) and 20 jerrycans of One-Shrimp brand (18-litre jerrycan) without official documents, at the Nyaungkhashay x-ray station and a total of 0.340 tonne of illegal teak valued at K224,532 in Nyaunglebin district on 26 November. These actions were conducted under Customs procedures and the Forest Law.

A total of 10 arrests were made on three consecutive days from 24 to 26 November, with an estimated value of K161,643,332, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

Illegal immigrants handed over to relevant authorities

THE government is focusing on national stability and law and order in all regions and states, including the border areas. As some foreign nationals are illegally entering and residing in Myanmar through land borders, administrative organizations conduct necessary checks and repatriate them to relevant countries under the law.

A total of 553 illegal immigrants, comprising 466 males and 87 females, were repatriated to China through Chinese officials. Therefore, a total of 9,194 illegal immigrants, including 8,312 males and 882 females, were repatriated to China from 31 October to 27 November.

The government will continue the process of screening and repatriation for foreign nationals who have illegally entered and resided in the border areas. — MNA/KZW

WEATHER REPORT

Low Pressure Area Conditions

Issued at (19:00) hours M.S.T on 27-11-2023

ACCORDING to the observations at (17:30) hrs M.S.T today, the low pressure area over the South Andaman Sea and adjoining Malacca Strait still persists. It is likely to move West-Northwestwards and may further intensify into a depression over the Southeast Bay of Bengal on (29.11.2023). Thereafter, it is likely to move Northwestwards and may further intensify into a Cyclonic Storm on (1.12.2023).

COVID-19 report, 27 November 2023

NEW TESTS	NEW CASES	CASUALTIES
31,767	Two	Nil

NATIONAL

Ngwehsaung Beach packed with visitors during Tazaungdine holidays

STARTING from 25 November, the Tazaungdine holiday, Ngwehsaung Beach in Pathein district, Ayeyawady Region, was bustling with locals and foreign visitors from various places.

Ngwesaung, a resort beach, boasts a long coastline, clear seawater, a pristine sandy beach, and excellent hotel services, making it an attractive destination for many visitors.

During Tazaungdine, visitors shopped at Ngwehsaung's souvenir stalls, while others relaxed, swam, and strolled on the beach. Many visitors also explored the famous islands near Ngwehsaung, including Snake Island, Turtle Island, Bird Island, Lovers Island, Sinma Island, Kyunhlyarshay, Kyoukmaungnhama, Phayathonsu, and Moemakha camps.

Members of the town and ward administration bodies, along with the police force and departmental personnel, are reportedly ensuring security for visitors to guarantee a relaxing and peaceful experience. Their efforts aim to ensure safety, prevent traffic jams at intersections, and manage crowded areas. — R-014 (Ngwehsaung)/TRKM

Photos show visitors enjoying fun at the Ngwehsaung Beach in Pathein District of Ayeyawady Region.

MoHT DM receives PRC delegation

The group documentary picture at the call yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

U Phyo Zaw Soe, Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism received the delegation led by Chairman of the Goverment of Xizang Autonomous Region of China Mr Yan Jinhai yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they discussed the issues in a friendly and open manner such as Chinese tourists visiting the destinations in Myanmar, granting Visas on Arrival, media in China, Familiarization Trip (FAM Trip) involving tourism operators Influencers, Bloggers, tourism cooperation between Myanmar and China, tourism promotion activities, exchange of visits between tourism destinations of Xizang Autonomous Region and Myanmar, pilgrimage cooperation, incoming investment in the hotels and tourism sector in Myanmar, and regarding the continued close cooperation in the development of tourism between the two countries.

After the meeting, the Deputy Minister hosted a working lunch to the delegation led by the Chairman of the Xizang autonomous province.

The delegation visited the tourist attraction destinations in Nay Pyi Taw during the trip and an official visit to Myanmar is intended to increase cooperation in the fields of tourism and culture between the Xizang Autonomous Region of China and Myanmar. — MNA/TS

Myanmar pulse exports swell to 1 mln tonnes over 7.5 months

FROM PAGE-1

countries through land borders between 1 April and 17 November, totalling $865.239 million from exports of 1,025,390 tonnes.

Myanmar's pulses exports amounted to 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 mainly exports black gram, green gram and pigeon peas to foreign markets. Of them, black grams 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 grams 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 grams 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 K2.8 million per tonne of black gram (urad) and K3.25 million per tonne of pigeon pea (tur).

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

ECONOMY
WORLD

Emerging East Asia's financial conditions weaken amid US rates hike: ADB

FINANCIAL conditions in emerging East Asia weakened in the third quarter of 2023 amid expectations of higher interest rates for a longer period in the United States, according to a new report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) released on Monday.

The latest edition of the Asia Bond Monitor said government bond yields rose across most regional markets in response to the elevated US interest rates.

Bond issuance in emerging East Asia grew 8.6 per cent from the previous quarter to 2.5 trillion US dollars in the third quarter. Local currency bonds outstanding in the region increased 2.5 per cent to 23.5 trillion dollars. Government bonds expanded three per cent amid increased issuance, and corporate bonds outstanding rose 1.5 per cent.

The US Federal Reserve (Fed) recently signalled its intention to retain higher interest rates for extended periods, contributing to a weakening of financial conditions in emerging East Asia between 1 September and 10 November the ADB said.

Weak external demand and a moderating growth outlook in major economies, combined with the Fed's hawkish monetary stance, pushed down regional equity markets and drove up risk premiums. Capital outflows were recorded in the region's equity and bond markets. A stronger US dollar on the back of higher US interest rates also weighed on regional currencies, said ADB.

"We see softer inflation in emerging East Asia in the next few years, which is a welcome development as regional central banks may have more room to support economic growth," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park.

"At the same time, they should remain vigilant against financial turbulence in the face of interest rates remaining elevated for a longer period," Park added. — Xinhua

Malaysia's AirAsia adds 5.2 mln seats for flights between China, India, Malaysia in 2024

An AirAsia aircraft, with an image of Indian actor Rajinikanth on its fuselage, is parked on the tarmac of the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi on 28 February 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

MALAYSIA-BASED low-cost airline AirAsia announced Monday a significant increase in services between China, India and Malaysia, totalling an impressive 230 weekly flights starting in the first quarter of 2024, with up to 5.2 million seats per year.

The significant increase in capacity via AirAsia Malaysia and AirAsia X Malaysia comes in response to the anticipated surge in travel demand following the Malaysian government's announcement of a 30-day visa-free entry for travellers from China and India into Malaysia starting 1 December 2023, AirAsia said in a statement.

The announcement also coincides with the recent announcement of the easing of travel restrictions for Malaysians to China from 1 December 2023.

"The 30-day visa-free entry for the citizens of China and India will surely provide a welcome boost for Malaysia's tourism and its economy ahead of the upcoming peak travel season while boosting economic bonds between these great nations," AirAsia's parent firm Capital A CEO Tony Fernandes said.

He said the firm stands ready to add capacity to support the demand for affordable and accessible air travel in the region.

According to the statement, AirAsia Malaysia and AirAsia X Malaysia fly from Kuala Lumpur to Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Kunming, Guilin, Nanning, Shantou, Shenzhen, Chengdu, Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai. — Xinhua

EU-NZ trade pact gets Brussels' final green light

A photo taken on 23 May 2023 shows an aerial view of a truck spreading fertilizer on a dairy farm near Cambridge in New Zealand's Waikato region, known for its fertile land and dairy industry. **PHOTO: AFP**

BRUSSELS on Monday gave the final green light for an EU-New Zealand trade deal that, while mutually lowering barriers for both markets, highlights the recent failure of EU-Australia negotiations.

The European Council, representing the EU's 27 member countries, said it adopted the New Zealand pact, setting it up come into force "probably in early 2024" once Wellington ratifies it.

The deal provides for a phased-in slashing of duties on New Zealand imports of lamb, beef, wine and fruit such as kiwifruit, while European exports, including machinery and vehicles as well as chocolate, wine and biscuits, would likewise benefit.

Two-way trade in goods and services is currently worth 9.1 billion euros (US$10 billion) but is expected to grow by 30 per cent over a decade with the new deal.

New Zealand's government estimates that the deal could bring in an extra US$365 million annually from exports of its beef, sheep and dairy products.

The EU, with its population of 450 million, is the third-biggest export market for New Zealand, population five million.

The deal is not without critics in Europe.

France's beef and dairy sectors, for instance, have voiced wariness about New Zealand products coming from land using pesticides or herbicides banned in the European Union.

The European Commission, though, has stressed that all food reaching the EU market has to comply with EU standards and vowed a "robust" system of checks. — AFP

Brunei records 37.4% total trade drop in July

BRUNEI recorded 1,910.4 million Brunei dollars (1,428.1 million US dollars) total trade in July, a 37.4 per cent year-on-year decrease due to a drop in both export and import value.

The latest International Merchandise Trade Statistics released on Monday by the Department of Economic Planning and Statistics at the Ministry of Finance and Economy showed that Brunei's exports in July decreased by 39.3 per cent yearly to 1,177.1 million Brunei dollars, which was mainly due to the drop in exports of mineral fuels and chemicals. — Xinhua

Second Global Digital Trade Expo concluded with over 155 bln yuan of deals inked

People visit the Silk Road E-commerce Pavilion at the second Global Digital Trade Expo in Hangzhou, east China's Zhejiang Province, 23 November 2023. The Silk Road E-commerce Pavilion features the achievements made in advancing economic and trade cooperation among Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) participating countries. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

DEALS on 32 projects with a total value of over 155.8 billion yuan (about 21.89 billion US dollars) were reached by leading enterprises in the sector at the just-concluded second Global Digital Trade Expo held in Hangzhou, capital city of east China's Zhejiang Province, according to the provincial department of commerce.

Themed "Digital Trade, Global Access," the expo scheduled from 23 to 27 November has attracted 68 international organizations and business associations, as well as over 800 enterprises. Finland and South Africa have been invited as guest countries of honour.

Hot topics such as cross-border data flow, digital finance and digital security governance have been discussed during the five-day event. More than a hundred activities were expected to take place at the expo, as well as the debuts of over 100 cutting-edge products and services in digital trade. — Xinhua

UK announces almost £30 bln of private investment at CEO summit

PRIME Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday announced £29.5 billion ($37.2 billion) of private funding for new UK projects as more than 200 CEOs descended on London for the 2023 Global Investment Summit.

The UK government said the new investment would create 12,000 jobs "in our most innovative sectors, including tech, life sciences, renewables, housing and infrastructure.

"Today's investments... are a huge vote of confidence in the future of the UK economy," Sunak said in a statement before the opening of the event at Hampton Court Palace, just outside London.

"Attracting global investment is at the heart of my plan for growing the economy," he added.

Investments announced on Monday included £10 billion over the next four years from Australian fund IFM Investors "for large-scale infrastructure and energy transition projects".

Spanish energy company Iberdrola announced £7 billion of funding for offshore wind infrastructure while US tech giant Microsoft plans to invest £2.5 billion in artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure, including data centres. — AFP

Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks during the Global Investment Summit at Hampton Court Palace in south west London on 27 November 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

S Korea to double tax refund for foreign tourists

SOUTH Korea planned to double tax refund for foreign tourists next year as part of efforts to attract foreign travellers and bolster the local tourism industry, the finance ministry said Monday.

The maximum limit of the on-the-spot tax refund per payment for an individual purchase at designated duty-free stores will be lifted from the current 500,000 won (380 US dollars) to one million won (760 dollars) beginning 1 January next year, according to the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

The ceiling of the immediate tax refund on the total payment will be expanded from 2.5 million won (1,910 dollars) to five million won (3,820 dollars) next year. —Xinhua

Stock markets drop as US inflation comes into view

MAJOR Asian and European stock markets mostly dropped Monday as investors awaited the release this week of key US inflation data that could provide a guide for the Federal Reserve's plans for interest rates going into the new year.

Oil prices slid nearly two per cent awaiting a delayed meeting of OPEC and its allies to decide over output levels.

With Wall Street seeing little action at the back of last week owing to the Thanksgiving break, traders had few catalysts to drive action, though analysts were upbeat about the end of the year.

A man walks past an electronic board showing numbers of the Tokyo Stock Exchange along a street in Tokyo on 15 November 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

The retreat in equities comes after a recent run-up across world stock markets fuelled by bets the US central bank has finished lifting interest rates as inflation comes down and the jobs market comes off the boil.

Expectations that the Federal Reserve is done with hiking rates continued to weigh on the dollar Monday.

The main focus this week is the release Thursday of the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation.

"These numbers will be closely scrutinized for insights into inflation trends and their potential implications for monetary policy decisions," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

"While the current backdrop does not signify 'mission accomplished' in terms of addressing inflation, policymakers must now focus on planning for the next phase of the economic battle."

Still, observers were upbeat about the outlook, with the latest weakness blamed on traders taking a breather after a strong month. — AFP

ROLLING UPDATES
WORLD

China, Japan, S Korea should play more proactive role in promoting regional, global development: Wang Yi

CHINA, Japan and South Korea should play a more proactive role in promoting regional and global development facing accelerating changes unseen in a century and the slow recovery of the world economy, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said here on Sunday.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, attended the trilateral foreign ministers' meeting between China, Japan and South Korea with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa in Busan, South Korea.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, attends the tenth trilateral foreign ministers' meeting between China, Japan and South Korea with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa in Busan, South Korea, 26 November 2023. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Wang said that China-Japan-South Korea cooperation has become the multilateral cooperation framework with the highest degree of institutionalization, the widest coverage and the richest connotation in East Asia, which has effectively served the development of the three countries and benefited the people in the region.

Following the policy of building friendship and partnership with its neighbours, China will continue to work with South Korea and Japan to bring trilateral cooperation back on track, maintain sound, stable and sustainable development, and make new contributions to regional and world peace and prosperity, said Wang.

The top priority is to continue to respect each other's development path and core interests, properly handle sensitive issues and maintain sound bilateral relations, so as to lay a solid foundation for a comprehensive restart of trilateral cooperation featuring steady and long-term progress, he stressed.

Wang stressed that the three countries should stick to mutual benefit and win-win results, restart negotiations on the trilateral free trade agreement among China, Japan and South Korea as soon as possible, maintain the momentum of regional economic integration, improve the multi-channel and multi-level regional free trade arrangements, and contribute to the common goal of pushing for a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. — Xinhua

Pope's moral force aims to 'tip' UN climate talks

HE has used science to underpin his moral missives on climate change. Now Pope Francis hopes his historic presence at UN talks will help tip the balance in critical negotiations.

The 86-year-old pontiff, a defender of the poor who has made environmental activism a cornerstone of his 10-year papacy, will address the COP28 meeting in Dubai on 2 December.

It will be the first time a pope has attended a COP since the process began in 1995, and Francis is expected to use the platform to castigate countries for a lack of action, and seek to persuade them to dramatically cut their greenhouse gas emissions.

He may also be able to play a role in rebuilding trust between climate-vulnerable nations and rich, consumerism-driven polluters.

"At a moment of global development as dark and challenging as the present one, the presence of a moral authority is more important than ever," professor Sverker Sorlin, a specialist in global environmental governance at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, told AFP.

"The pope may not turn the tables at the meeting, but be a 'tipping point' that may nudge and push the negotiators... in the right direction," said Sorlin, whose work the pope has cited. — AFP

Lightning, rain-related incidents kill 24 in India's Gujarat

AT least 24 people were killed and 23 others injured due to lightning and rain-related incidents in India's western state of Gujarat, officials said on Monday.

The deaths took place during the last 48 hours.

Apart from human casualties, the unseasonal rains perished cattle and damaged crops.

"Unseasonal rains triggering lightning, rains and strong winds have killed 24 people and injured 23 others across the state," an official said. "The rains lashed 234 sub-districts, damaging crops and perished 71 animals."

According to the officials, the deaths have been reported from across 16 districts of the state.

"Four deaths have been reported in Dahod, three in Bharuch, three in Banaskantha, two in Tapi and one each in Amreli, Surendranagar, Mehsana, Botad, Panchmahal, Kheda, Sabarkantha, Ahmedabad, Surat, Devbhoomi Dwarka, Patan and Anand," the official said.

Reports said some districts received up to 144 millimetres of rainfall. The Meteorological Department has predicted heavy rain in Gujarat accompanied by strong winds and lightning strikes.

An orange alert has been issued in south Gujarat, while a yellow alert declared in Saurashtra. — Xinhua

Kishida vows further efforts to realize summit with N Korea leader

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (2nd from L) attends a citizens gathering in Tokyo calling for the repatriation of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents on 26 November 2023. **PHOTO: KYODO**

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida vowed Sunday to "step up efforts to realize an early summit meeting" with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and resolve the decades-long issue of Japanese nationals abducted by Pyongyang.

Kishida renewed his pledge at a citizens gathering in Tokyo to bring home Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s.

"We are making approaches through various channels," Kishida said, adding "It is extremely important that I myself take the initiative in building a relationship between the leaders."

He has previously said he would aim to arrange negotiations with Pyongyang "at a high level under my direct control" to pave the way for talks with the North Korean leader as little progress has been made over the long-standing issue since 2002. — Kyodo

SPORTS

Electric Rodrygo sends Madrid top at Cadiz

RODRYGO sent Real Madrid provisionally top of La Liga with two goals in a comfortable 3-0 win at Cadiz on Sunday.

The Brazilian winger also set up a goal for La Liga's top scorer Jude Bellingham, who now has 11 to his name this season in the Spanish top flight.

Madrid climbed a point clear of high-flying Girona, who host Athletic Bilbao on Monday looking to reclaim top spot.

Carlo Ancelotti's side also rose four points clear of fourth-placed rivals Barcelona, following their 1-1 draw at Rayo Vallecano on Saturday, and third-placed Atletico Madrid.

Madrid were dealt severe blows over the past fortnight with Vinicius Junior and Eduardo Camavinga suffering long-term injuries, joining Thibaut Courtois, Eder Militao and Aurelien Tchouameni on the sidelines.

Despite that, Madrid secured a straightforward victory which is not something they take for granted after the international break, and less so with an injury-ravaged squad.

"Sometimes difficulty is just more motivation and the players understood that very well," Ancelotti told reporters.—AFP

Real Madrid's Brazilian forward (11) Rodrygo vies with Cadiz's Spanish midfielder (4) Ruben Alcaraz during the Spanish league football match between Cadiz CF and Real Madrid CF at the Nuevo Mirandilla stadium in Cadiz on 26 November 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

Thway Thit Win Hlaing lands a strong kick on Shukhalain Min in the 75-79 kilogrammes (Super Middleweight Class), during the Great Lethwei Grand Contest (TGL5) at Yegu Studio in Mayangon Township, Yangon, on 26 November 2023.

TGL5 traditional Lethwei contest: Thwaythit Winhlaing defeat ShuKhalain Min

THE Great Lethwei Grand Contest (TGL5) took place at 3:30 pm on 26 November at Yegu Studio in Mayangon Township, Yangon.

In the 75-79 kilogrammes (Super Middleweight Class), champion Thway Thit Win Hlaing defeated challenger Shukhalain Min in the first round at two minutes and 34 seconds. The champion also secured a victory against Tun Tun Min with the referees' decision in TGL-3.

Saw John emerged victorious over Mya Lone Chaw in the first round of the 63.5-67 kg (Welterweight Class). In the match between Min Htet Kyaw and Si Toe, Si Toe was declared the winner by the referee as the competitors were not evenly matched. In the 63.5-67 kg (Welterweight Class), Soe Moe Zaw won against Ah Phoe Thway in the second round. In the 54-57 kg (Featherweight Class), Saw Ke Do secured a win with the referee's decision over Daung Thatti.

In the 51-54 kg (Bantamweight Class), Salai Thang Khwee Shein won against Kyauk Yine in the third round. In the same class, Zwe Htet Aung won by knockout over Ye Kyaw Oo. In the 60-63.5 kg (Light Welterweight Class), Aung Ko Latt emerged victorious by the referee's decision over Rain Kywe Naw. — Bala Soe/KZW

Man Utd's Garnacho can be 'something special' says Fernandes

BRUNO Fernandes says Alejandro Garnacho's wonder goal in Manchester United's victory against Everton proved the Argentine teenager can be "something special".

Garnacho gave a glimpse of his vast potential with a brilliant overhead kick to inspire United's 3-0 win in Sunday's Premier League clash at Goodison Park.

Showing outstanding ingenuity and technique to conjure the breath-taking strike, the 19-year-old showed why his United team-mate Fernandes believes he has the ability to become one of the world's best players.

"It's amazing, something out of this world, I think," United captain Fernandes said.

Garnacho marked the goal by copying former Manchester United star Cristiano Ronaldo's celebration.

Fernandes cautioned that it is too early to suggest Garnacho can emulate Ronaldo's remarkable career, but he expects great things from his young team-mate, who arrived from Atletico Madrid in 2020.

"Probably he's watching too much Cristiano clips! We all know that he's a big fan. Still a long way for him to be like Cristiano but he's getting his steps," Fernandes said.

"He wants to be something special in the world of football and I think he has the capability to do that, but he has to do more than that goal!"

Garnacho was not the only impressive United teenager in action at Goodison Park, with fellow FA Youth Cup winner Kobbie Mainoo flourishing on his first Premier League start.— AFP

Manchester United's Argentinian midfielder (17) Alejandro Garnacho celebrates scoring his team first goal during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Manchester United at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England, on 26 November 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

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Israel-Hamas truce enters final day with talk of extension

An image distributed by the Schneider Children Medical Centre shows Yoni Asher being reunited with his children Aviv, 2.5 years old, her sister Raz, 4.5 years old, and his wife Doron, on 25 November, a day after they were released by Hamas in a hostage-prisoner exchange deal. **PHOTO: SCHNEIDER HOSPITAL SPOKESPERSON'S OFFICE / AFP**

THE truce between Israel and Hamas entered its final 24 hours Monday, with signs the militant group was willing to extend the pause after it freed more hostages, including a four-year-old girl orphaned by its attack.

Tearful reunions of families and hostages, released in exchange for dozens of Palestinian prisoners, have brought the first relief in the seven-week war.

Militant group Hamas raided Israel on 7 October in the worst attack in the country's history, prompting devastating Israeli bombardments of the Gaza Strip.

As the latest group of Israeli women and children walked free late Sunday, attention turned to calls for the truce to be extended before its scheduled end at 7:00 am (0500 GMT) on Tuesday.

"That's our goal, to keep this pause going beyond tomorrow so that we can continue to see more hostages come out and surge more humanitarian relief into those in need in Gaza," US President Joe Biden said Sunday.

He added he would like the fighting to be paused for "as long as prisoners keep coming out".

"I get a sense that all the players in the region are looking for a way to end this so the hostages are all released and... Hamas is completely no longer in control of Gaza."

Hamas has signalled its willingness to extend the truce, with a source telling AFP the group told mediators they were open to prolonging it by "two to four days".

"The resistance believes it is possible to ensure the release of 20 to 40 Israeli prisoners" in that time, the source close to the movement said.

Hamas has released 39 Israeli hostages and Israel has freed 117 Palestinian prisoners in exchange under the terms of the agreement. A further 19 foreign nationals have also been released from Gaza under separate arrangements. — AFP

North Korea sends troops to rebuild border guard posts

NORTH Korea has sent troops to its southern border to restore guard posts taken down under a 2018 agreement with South Korea, Seoul's military said Monday, after Pyongyang's launch of a spy satellite stoked tensions on the peninsula.

In response to the launch last week, Seoul partially suspended the agreement that was aimed at easing border hostilities, prompting Pyongyang to scrap the pact entirely and warn it would "never be bound" by the deal again.

A South Korean military official told AFP on Monday that Pyongyang had recently sent armed personnel and equipment to restore the guard posts.

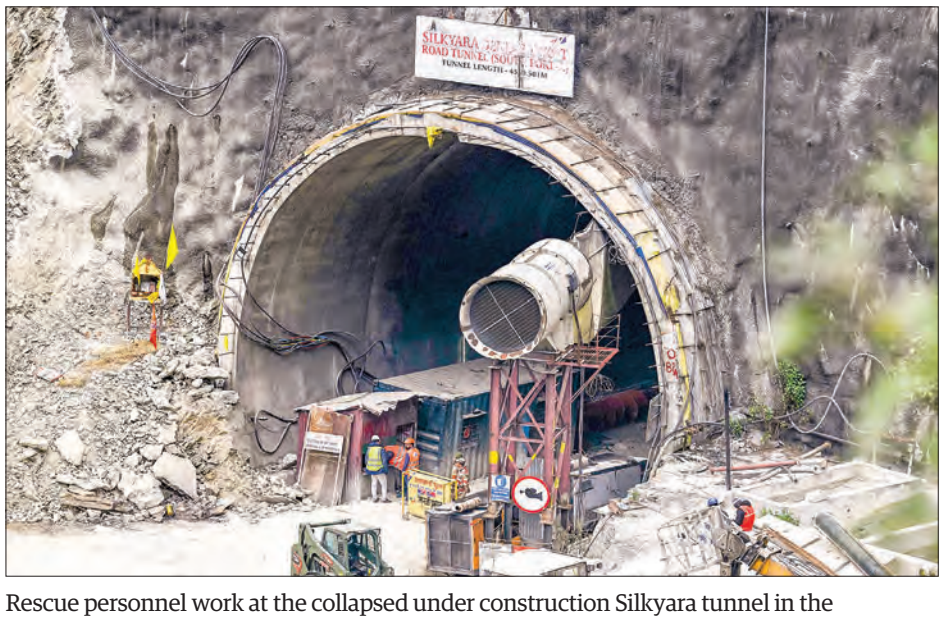
Yonhap news agency reported that North Korean soldiers were "seen rebuilding the guard posts from Friday", according to a military official, and that all 11 posts withdrawn under the five-year-old deal were expected to be restored. — AFP

Indian army digs by hand to free 41 trapped tunnel workers

INDIAN military engineers were preparing to dig by hand Monday to reach 41 workers trapped in a collapsed road tunnel for 16 days, a rescue operation hit by repeated setbacks.

Soldiers plan to use a so-called "rat-hole mining" technique, digging by hand to clear the rocks and rubble over the remaining nine metres (29 feet), with temperatures plummeting in the remote mountain location in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand.

Last week, engineers working to drive a metal pipe horizontally through 57 metres (187 feet) of rock and concrete ran into metal girders and construction vehicles buried in the earth, snapping a giant earth-boring augur machine.



Rescue personnel work at the collapsed under construction Silkyara tunnel in the Uttarkashi district of India's Uttarakhand state, on 27 November 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

"The broken parts of the auger (drilling) machine stuck inside the tunnel have been removed", senior local civil servant Abhishek Ruhela told AFP on Monday, after a specialized superheated plasma cutter was brought in to clear the metal.

"Preparations are being made to start manual drilling work," he added. "Indian Army engineering battalion personnel, along with other rescue officers, are preparing to do rat-hole mining".

Engineers in the bitterly cold conditions will use manual drills to clear the route, a tough task in the narrow pipe, just wide enough for a man to crawl through. — AFP