

The **Global** **NEW LIGHT** of **MYANMAR**

Four Objectives of the National Defence and Security Council

- 1. To steadfastly strive for emergence of political forces and the people’s representatives who can implement a genuine, disciplined multi-party democratic system while constantly emphasizing on the national interests of the State.
- 2. To persistently strive for promoting the socio-economic life of the people through the development of agro-based industries in improving the agricultural sector, the vital foundation of the economic growth of the State.
- 3. To put emphasis on enhancing the national education and health sectors for sustainable development of the State.
- 4. To implement multi-party democratic system, with the participation of the people, to ensure the success of multi-party democratic general election process and successfully moving towards with the multi-party democratic system aspired by the entire people.

Article

Retired US Army Colonel: Myanmar’s Elections Give Washington A Chance To Reset Decades-Stalled Ties

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Article

How Are International “So-Called Experts” Misjudging Myanmar Yet Again?

By Maung De’ Doe

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Belarus CEC Deputy Chairman leads election observation delegation to Myanmar



The election observation delegation, led by Belarusian Central Election Commission Deputy Chairman Mr Alexei Bashan, arrives in Yangon, welcomed by relevant officials.

INTERNATIONAL election observation delegations will visit Myanmar to monitor the multi-party democratic general election scheduled for 28 December 2025. The delegation led by Mr Alexei Bashan, Deputy Chairman of the Central Election Commission of Belarus, arrived in Yangon by air on 24 December.

The election observation delegation, led by the deputy chairman of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus, was welcomed at Yangon International Airport by a member of the Union Election Commission and the Yangon Region in-charge, the regional Minister for Natural Resources, officials from the Union Election Commission Office, and the Yangon Region Election Sub-commission Office. — MNA/TH

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UEC Chairman inspects opening and operation of polling stations in Union Territory

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No 1 Heavy Industries Enterprise calls tenders for vehicle scrapping and transport

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MR to operate additional special trains on major routes for Christmas holiday

NATIONAL



2025 MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY GENERAL ELECTION

- Domestic election observers who wish to monitor the multiparty democratic general election, which will begin in phases on 28 December 2025, may apply for election observation permits at the Union Election Commission (UEC), as well as the relevant Region/State, District, and Township Election Subcommissions from today until 5 December 2025.
- The Union Election Commission announced on 16 September 2025 that domestic election observers must follow the Code of Conduct for Observers, issued under Notification 68/2025, and adhere to the procedures set out for their observation activities under Notification 69/2025. These notifications are available for viewing and can be downloaded from the Union Election Commission's official website <https://www.uec.gov.mm>.
- The Union Election Commission has also announced that international election observers will be allowed to monitor the multiparty democratic general election. Invitations will be extended directly to representatives of relevant countries and international organizations. In addition, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, invitations will be sent to representatives of foreign embassies, consulates, and permanent missions that maintain diplomatic relations with the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Union Election Commission



- Let us encourage production for prosperity of the Nation.
- Let us ensure education sector for the development of the Nation.
- Let us protect our environment for the prosperity of the Nation.

Four National Objectives for 78th Independence Day 2026

- To safeguard the non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty by all citizens, as they are the most essential and suitable national objectives and national duties
- To strive forward for national unity and Union peace to implement sustainable and balanced development
- To establish a genuine, disciplined democratic system completely by exercising the freedom and justice in accordance with the laws and regulations
- To advance other economic sectors and promote MSMEs based on regional products

BRICK Studio unveils “Temporal: Deception” by 2 artists



light and shadow, colour and form through a monochromatic illustrative style, expressing the con-

“I am showcasing three collage pieces. The first is titled ‘Time Consumes Time’, depicting the shell of a time machine left behind. The second piece is

‘Time Consumes Man’, attaching a small, good-deed funeral fan onto the canvas. It includes spirit, the Samsara cycle, and a sunset. Just imagine how many fans have been offered and how many more to come. The final piece serves as a reminder that nothing is permanent. I experimented to find ‘black within black,’ said artist Win Myint Oo.

This art exhibition will be open for five days at BRICK Studio from 10 am to 5 pm. — Htun Htun/ZN

AN art exhibition titled “Temporal: Deception” featuring the works of artists Win Myint Oo and Sithu is currently being held at BRICK Studio at the Secretariat, Yangon, Gate 8, Anawrahta Road from 25 to 29 December.

“Throughout history, science and philosophy have attempted to describe time in various ways, yet it has failed. But we already know how rapidly

changes can occur within a single second. In this exhibition, you will experience how two artists, who have travelled through different periods, perceive time based on their different perspectives, beliefs, and experiences. Please come and enjoy how unique they are,” the exhibition organizer stated.

Artist Win Myint Oo explores the relationship between

nec-tion between the body, machinery, and the soul, accompanied by the poetry of Nwe Oo Hlaing.



The artist is pictured with his creations at the Temporal: Deception art exhibition.



Call for Unity, Steadfastness
Amid Attempts To Divide

All citizens must stand orderly and united through thick and thin. We must never lose sight of our main goal and persevere it without deviation regardless of any attempt by the detractors to divide, incite and provoke us.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by General Aung San
at 7:40 pm on 1 January 1947)



Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Announcement 170/2025

7th waxing of Pyatho 1387 ME
25 December 2025

Announcement for Date and Participating Townships for Phase III of Multiparty
Democratic General Election

- 1. The Union Election Commission announced the townships participating in the first and second phases of the Multiparty Democratic General Election. For Phase I, to be held on 28 December 2025, 102 townships were designated under Announcement 56/2025 on 20 August 2025. For Phase II, to be held on 11 January 2026, 100 townships were designated under Announcement 141/2025 on 28 October 2025.
- 2. The third phase of the Multiparty Democratic General Election will be held on the 8th waxing of Tabodwe 1387 ME (Sunday, 25 January 2026). A total of 63 townships will participate in this phase, as designated and announced according to the attached table, organized by Region/State.

Attachment: List of townships participating in Phase III of the election reported on page 4

Sd/ Than Soe
Chairman
Union Election Commission

UEC Chairman inspects opening and operation of
polling stations in Union Territory

UNION Election Commission Chairman U Than Soe, along with Union Election Commission Member (in charge of Union Territory) U Myo Hlaing, officials from the Union Election Commission Office, the Union Territory election subcommission chairman and members, and other officials, inspected the opening and operation of polling stations in the Union Territory yesterday morning to ensure the successful conduct of the 2025 multiparty democratic general election.

The Chairman of the UEC and his team inspected the opening of polling stations in Pobbathiri, Pyinmana, and Zabuthiri Townships,

where polling station officials explained the preparations made to ensure the successful conduct of the election.

The UEC Chairman then instructed that voters be able to vote smoothly at polling stations, that any emergency situations arising from the use of the Myanmar Electronic Voting Machine (MEVM) be addressed systematically in accordance with the rules and directives, that there be no shortages at polling stations, and that efforts be made to ensure the successful conduct of the election, before coordinating the necessary arrangements. — MNA/TH



UEC Chair U Than Soe inspects the polling station in the Union Territory in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

NATIONAL

Residents Urged to Prioritize Public Safety Amid Armed Terrorist Threats

ARMED terrorists have been launching attacks by using residential homes and administrative buildings in towns and villages as cover, where they have forcibly settled. They aim to shield themselves from Tatmadaw counterattacks while also persuading temporarily displaced persons to return to their native areas and recruiting new members. That enables terrorists to use civilians as human shields. Tatmadaw is committed to safeguarding the sovereignty of the State and will respond to these threats based on intelligence and prevailing conditions. Therefore, residents in areas where terrorists have taken control must prioritize their safety and protect themselves from being exploited by these groups.

(An excerpt from guidance given by Chairman of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to Shan State cabinet members and state-level departmental officials on 3 September 2024)

List of Townships Participating in Phase III of the Multiparty Democratic General Election

From page 3

No.	State/Region	Township	Remark
1	Kachin	1. Bhamo 2. Mansi 3. Moemauk 4. Phakant 5. Shwegu	
2	Kayin	1. Kawkareik 2. Kya-in-Seikkyi	
3	Sagaing	1. Kani 2. Salingyi	
4	Taninthayi	1. Launglon 2. Thayetchaung 3. Palaw	
5	Bago	1. Kyaukkyi 2. Kyaukdaga 3. Pyu 4. Ottwin 5. Thaegon 6. Waw 7. Gyobingauk 8. Okpo	
6	Mandalay	1. Myittha 2. Chanmyathazi 3. Mahlaing 4. Taungtha 5. Myingyan 6. Ngazun 7. Thabeikkyin 8. Patheingyi	

7	Yangon	1. Dagon 2. Lanmadaw 3. Seikkyi/Khanaungto 4. Dala 5. Dagon Myothit (Seikan) 6. Dagon Myothit (East) 7. Mingala Taungnyunt 8. Thakayta 9. North Okkalapa 10. Tamway 11. Yankin 12. Kyauktan 13. Kayan 14. Thongwa 15. Sangyoung 16. Hlinethaya (West) 17. Hlinethaya (East)	
8	Shan	1. Metmung 2. Pinlaung 3. Nyaungshwe 4. Pekhon 5. Moenai 6. Kehsi 7. Mongshu 8. Hsipaw 9. Kyaukme	
9	Ayeyawady	1. Yekyi 2. Ngaputaw 3. Dedaye 4. Nyaungdon 5. Danubyu 6. Ingapu 7. Mawlamyinekyun 8. Zalun 9. Laymyethna	

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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

General Aung San Declares Firm Stand Against Election Disruption

“Our Government shall not permit any disruption of the forthcoming election. The electoral process shall remain free and fair, and no interference shall be exercised upon those who participate in it. Yet, let it be firmly declared that any attempt to disturb or sabotage the election shall be met with the full weight of authority”.

(An excerpt from the radio address regarding the election, delivered by General Aung San on 13 March 1947)



MISIS receives
Belarusian
election observer
delegation

CHAIRMAN and members of the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS) received the election observer delegation of Belarus, led by Mr Alexei Bashan, Deputy Chairman of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus, at the MISIS office in Yangon yesterday.

Both sides exchanged views

on information on the forthcoming election, electoral processes, and cooperation between the future parliaments (Hluttaw) of Myanmar and its counterpart in Belarus. The visit contributed to strengthening mutual understanding and fostering constructive engagement between MISIS and relevant institutions of the Republic of Belarus. — MISIS



The MISIS Chair and members meet the Belarusian delegation, led by Deputy Chairman Mr Alexei Bashan, in Yangon yesterday.

Veteran sports writers
receive cash assistance
from sports bodies



Handover of cash assistance to veteran sports writers underway yesterday.

THE Department of Sports and Physical Education, the Myanmar Olympic Committee and the Myanmar Sports Media Federation honoured veteran sports writers by providing cash assistance on the morning of 25 December at the office of sports columnist Htun Htun (Arts/Science) on Anawrahta Road (Bar

Street) in Kyauktada Township. According to a statement, cash assistance was provided to a total of 16 veteran sports writers: nine in Yangon, three in Mandalay via KPay, and four ill writers in Yangon through home visits. Each recipient received K300,000 for this year. — Bala/MKKS

Microfinance industry bounces
back in Apr, serving nearly 2.85M



A still image from a television advertisement of a small and medium finance company.

SINCE the period following the COVID-19 pandemic, microfinance institutions, whose volume of service provision had declined, have seen their operations recover from April 2025 onwards, according to information from the Microfinance Business Supervisory Committee. The committee is also overseeing and ensuring that

microfinance companies and service-providing organizations systematically comply with regulations and guidelines related to anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CFT). In addition, emphasis is being placed on security-related matters, including cybersecurity, to prevent misuse by online scam operations.

The gradual increase in operating costs faced by microfinance institutions has become an issue that requires solutions. If both capital costs and operational expenses can be reduced, interest rates charged on loans to members could be lowered to an appropriate level. Accordingly, efforts are being made to reach a position where such reductions can be implemented. Microfinance institutions are socially oriented enterprises operating with the objectives of promoting rural development and reducing poverty. According to figures as of October 2025, microfinance companies and organizations are providing microfinancial services to a total of 2.842 million members in wards, villages and townships across all 15 regions and states. — ASH/KNN

NATIONAL

MFVP warns of penalties for continued use of banned pesticides

MYANMAR Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association (MFVP) said it has been notified that effective penalties will follow if Thiamethoxam and Clothianidin, which are prohibited for two years, are found continuing to be distributed, sold, or used.

The insecticides – Thiamethoxam and Clothianidin – are considered toxic and a two-year ban was taken into effect as of 12 December 2025 in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, Bago Region, Magway Region, Mandalay Region, Yangon Region, Shan State and Ayeyawady Region, which are the biggest producers of paddy, green gram and black gram, announced by the Pesticide Registration Board.

The two pesticides will be prohibited from being distributed, sold and used in the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area and regions and states until the ban is still in effect, it said.

MFVP said it received a notification that effective legal action will follow under the Pesticide Law if the pesticides are being traded in the market. — MT/ZS



A notification for banning two pesticides.

Myanmar national awarded compensation for Bangkok traffic accident injury

THE Labour Attaché Office in Bangkok, Thailand, said that compensation worth 210,000 baht was transferred to a Myanmar national who was injured in a traffic accident.

In the accident, Maung Khun Tu Tu was injured, and the insurance company gave him the compensation at the office on 24 December.

On 22 December, the Labour Attaché Office transferred one million baht to the wife of a migrant worker, U Htay Than, who was killed in a road accident in Songkhla province.

The Labour Attaché Office in Bangkok has worked on dealing with labour issues for Myanmar migrant workers, including their difficulties and losses. And Myanmar migrant workers are advised to contact the telephone numbers



This photo captures Maung Khun Tu Tu receiving the compensation at the Labour Attaché Office in Bangkok.

of the Labour Offices during office hours if their rights are violated. More information can be obtained from its call centre: 020030015, Labour Attaché (Bangkok): 06 18108454,

Labour Officer (Bangkok): 06 52206952, Labour Attaché (Mae Sot): 06 52206953. Labour Officer (Chang Mai): 09 45866607 and Labour Officer (Ranong): 06 34818121. — MT/ZS

Myanmar steps up fight against online scams, gambling; 499 KK Park buildings demolished



Images show the illegally built three-storey flats before and after the demolition.

THE Government of Myanmar is conducting systematic clearance operations within illegal buildings in the Shwe Kokko and KK Park areas, which are notorious for widespread online scams and gambling activities. These operations, carried out by joint teams of security personnel, administrative authorities, and local officials, also involve the seizure of items used in illegal online scams and gambling, as well as the organized demolition of unlawful structures.

As part of these ongoing operations yesterday, three four-storey illegal buildings

and two three-storey illegal buildings in section 3 of the Myawady-Maethawtalay (KK Park) area, previously used for online scams and gambling, were demolished. This brings the total number of illegally constructed buildings systematically removed in the KK Park area to 499 out of 635 structures. For buildings demolished using heavy machinery, fire cylinders have also been employed to ensure destruction. Since 14 December, three four-storey buildings have been demolished in this manner, bringing the total number of fully destroyed

buildings to 49. In addition, items previously used for online scams and gambling in the KK Park and Shwe Kokko areas were systematically burned yesterday to prevent their reuse. The Government of Myanmar has emphasized that it considers the eradication of online scams and gambling a national responsibility and will continue these operations in coordination with domestic forces and neighbouring governments to ensure that such activities cannot take root anywhere in the country. — MNA/MKKS

Migrant workers on leave required to report upon airport arrival

MIGRANT workers returning to Myanmar on leave will need to report their arrival to the team responsible for migrant workers at the arrival counter of Yangon International Airport without fail, said the Public Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) under the Department of Labour.

A similar announcement was also made by the Myanmar Embassy to the Republic of Korea on 23 December. The Department of Labour said this

requirement aims to avoid delays in the verification process for departure.

The Ministry of Labour has also granted Overseas Worker Identification Card (OWIC) for those who would go abroad again after returning on leave. Those on the OWIC list will need to resubmit if they are unable to apply for OWIC by the schedule; however, OWIC won't be issued if the relevant officer finds documents are incorrect during the interview, it said. — MT/ZS



This photo shows travellers at the arrival counter of the Yangon International Airport.

NATIONAL

Teachers must nurture students into well-rounded youth with five core strengths

- ❖ “It is the duty of teachers to guide students’ mindset, discipline, and learning in the correct direction.”
- ❖ “As ethnic teachers like you are very important for the future development of the nation, when you complete your studies and serve in your assigned areas, I deeply urge you to nurture your students to become well-rounded young people with the five strengths —strong in body, intellect, character, livelihood, and friendship.”

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Acting President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and State Security and Peace Commission Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with male and female students from the BEd five-year course No 7 of the University for Development of National Races of the Union held on 21 October 2025)

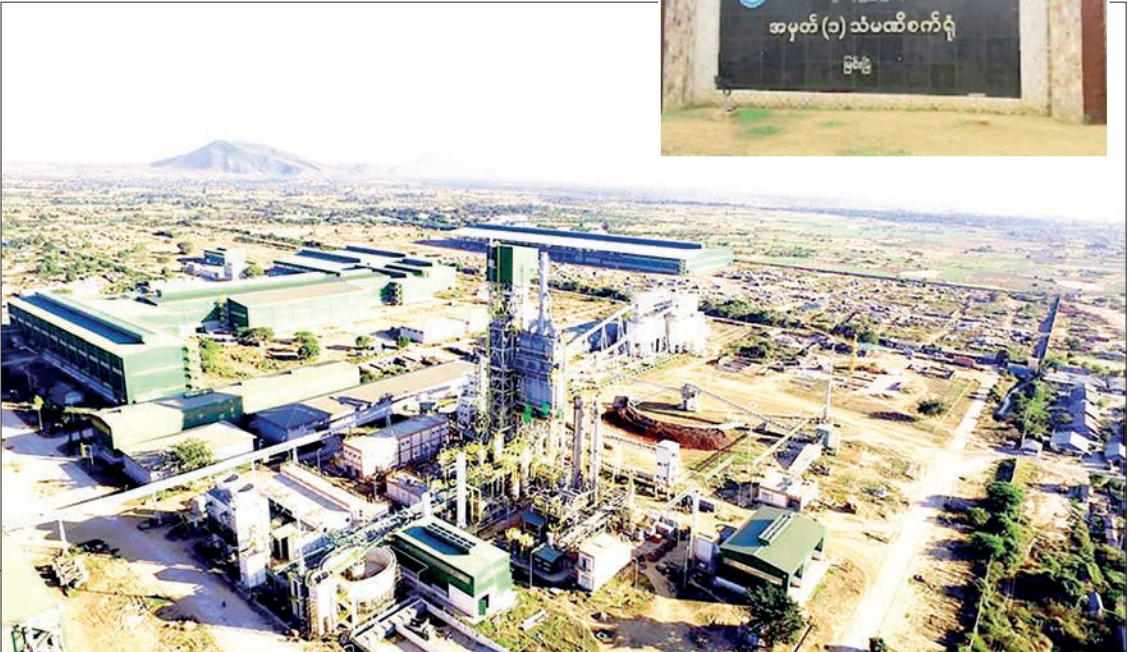
No 1 Heavy Industries Enterprise calls tenders for vehicle scrapping and transport

THE No 1 Heavy Industries Enterprise of the Ministry of Industry called for companies and organizations for scrapping, transporting and delivering over 1,100 vehicles to the No 1 Steel Mill (Myingyan).

The companies and organizations that can scrap, transport and deliver those 1,129 vehicles, motorcycles and machinery seized by Union-level institutions and ministries from various townships in Mandalay Region to the No 1 Steel Mill

(Myingyan) are invited to participate in bidding.

Tender documents became available at the No 1 Heavy Industries Enterprise starting from 24 December 2025. And the tender submission deadline is 7 January 2026. Business entities can enquire about tender details through the administration department at 067 3405451 of the No 1 Heavy Industries Enterprise (Office 30) in Nay Pyi Taw during working hours. — NN/KK



An aerial panoramic view of the No 1 Steel Mill (Myingyan).

CBM to inject \$23M into fuel oil sector

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) announced on 24 December that it would sell US\$23 million to fuel oil-importing companies.

Furthermore, CBM sold over \$540,000 to edible oil-importing companies and \$550,000 to fuel oil-importing companies on that day.

CBM sold over \$358,000 to edible oil-importing companies and \$349,000 to fuel oil-importing companies on 23 December.

CBM sold over \$1 million to edible oil-importing companies and over \$653,000 to fuel oil-importing companies on 22 December, in addition to an injection of \$30,000 from CMP companies into the market.

CBM sold eight million baht to business entities on 18 December.

CBM made an injection of over \$21 million, 2.4 million yuan and 1.5 million baht in



The facade of the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) in Yangon.

November.

CBM injected over \$2.48 million, 5.75 million yuan and 4.98 million baht in October, along with sales of over \$54 million purchased from CMP companies. CBM aims to curb the instability in the foreign exchange market and currency devaluation. According to CBM’s notification on 15 March 2024, it has been collaborating with law enforcement agencies to combat and prosecute those who attempt to manipulate the currency market under the existing laws. CBM allowed authorized dealers (private banks) to operate online foreign exchange trading freely as per the market rate, depending on supply and demand, starting from 5 December 2023. — NN/KK

IWUMD invites tenders for fixed-price construction materials for Sittway projects

TENDER Accepting and Evaluating Committee of the Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department in Rakhine State invited an open tender for the purchase of construction materials at a fixed price to be utilized in the projects implemented in Sittway under the Sittway’s State Fund (Capital) for the current financial year 2025-2026.

Detailed list of quantity and standard of the construction materials and tender specifications can be enquired through the Director’s Office of the IWUMD at 09 423658577.

The tender form is available for purchase by 5 January 2026, and tender submission will be closed on 12 January 2025. The tender opening date and time will be announced later. Individuals can enquire about tender rules and regulations, and the opening date through the IWUMD in Sittway. — NN/KK

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Actively participate in the improvement of healthcare services

NURSES and midwives are essential and indispensable personnel in the healthcare sector. The nursing profession is the process of helping a person who is suffering from illness to regain health, addressing not only the patient’s physical, mental, and social needs, but also providing care and treatment to ease their pain and suffering.

Skilled nursing care not only provides physical treatment for patients with poor health and their family members, but also helps

Qualified nurses have chances for their further studies in bachelor’s courses, postgraduate diplomas, master’s courses and doctoral courses to expand their scope of knowledge in the nursing field. For those who strive, opportunities in life are always waiting. Therefore, the government has been continuously producing and supplying human resources for the health sector. Therefore, all nurses and midwives must responsibly contribute in their respective roles to public health care and work collectively to help raise the nation’s overall health standards.

In carrying out public healthcare activities, the government is implementing effective policies and plans based on the country’s available resources to conduct preventive measures against disease and to provide quality medical treatment when illnesses occur. The State Government is striving to ensure that every citizen can access quality health care services with minimal personal financial burden. As nurses play an essential role in supporting public health care, it is necessary to work towards producing not only a sufficient number of nurses, but also highly qualified ones.

The government has established two universities of nursing in Yangon and Mandalay, while 23 nursing training schools and nursing and midwifery training schools, as well as 20 midwifery training schools, are being operated in all regions and states in order to turn out qualified nurses and midwives who can provide healthcare services to the people. Moreover, the Nursing-Related Field Practice Training Centre, the Central Domiciliary Midwifery Training Centre and the Lady Health Visitor Training School are open in Yangon so as to enhance the capacity of nurses and midwives. The Ministry of Health decided to appoint 1,520 newly trained nurses and 361 newly trained midwives as civil service staff in 2025 and 1,762 nurses in February and May 2026.

Qualified nurses have chances for their further studies in bachelor’s courses, postgraduate diplomas, master’s courses and doctoral courses to expand their scope of knowledge in the nursing field. For those who strive, opportunities in life are always waiting. Therefore, the government has been continuously producing and supplying human resources for the health sector. Therefore, all nurses and midwives must responsibly contribute in their respective roles to public health care and work collectively to help raise the nation’s overall health standards.

Retired US Army Colonel: Myanmar’s Elections Give Washington A Chance To Reset Decades–Stalled Ties

WRITING in Real Clear Defence, a Washington, DC-based news publication with close ties to Republicans, Joe Buccino, a retired US Army Colonel and former US Central Command communications director, wrote an opinion editorial contending that Myanmar’s upcoming elections present a strategic opening for President Trump to reset its long-stagnant policy towards Myanmar and the Southeast Asia region.

Ahead of Myanmar’s elections, Col Buccino examined the regional momentum, strategic considerations, and recent confidence-building measures between the US and Myanmar.

Col Buccino highlighted that recent US actions, such as the Trump administration’s termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Burmese nationals, may reflect a shift in US policy connected to progress in Myanmar’s governance and stability.

In November, US Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem announced the termination of Myanmar’s TPS designation, noting the country’s “...progress in governance and stability, including the end of its state of emergency, plans for free and fair elections, successful ceasefire agreements, and improved local governance contributing to enhanced public service delivery and national reconciliation.”

Col Buccino wrote, “The Trump administration’s recent termination of Temporary Protected Status for Burmese nationals, citing Myanmar’s progress in governance and stability, signals a potential shift in US-Myanmar relations...With Myanmar’s first national elections scheduled for later this month, Washington has an opportunity to recalibrate a relationship that has stagnated for decades – with implications for US strategic positioning across Southeast Asia.”

Col Buccino states that Washington’s recent shift in policy, combined with various confidence-building measures between the two countries, is generating momentum for the US to reassess and revitalize its engagement with Myanmar after decades of poor policies, especially those from the Biden administration. A policy reset could also reshape Washington’s broader strategic posture in Southeast Asia, Buccino noted.

“Two decades of American isolation policy have created a vacuum that competing powers have filled. Without a significant US presence, Myanmar has increasingly looked elsewhere for economic partnerships, military equipment, and development financing. Reconnecting with Myanmar could help rebalance these influences while securing US access to critical resources needed for defence and technology industries. Recent diplomatic signals suggest openness to such engagement. At October’s ASEAN Summit, the administration notably refrained from public criticism of Myanmar’s government – a marked departure from previous approaches. This measured response may indicate willingness to prioritize strategic engagement over political conditionality.”

Read more here: Myanmar Elections: US Policy Reset in Southeast Asia? (RealClear Defence, by Joe Buccino, 22 December 2025) — Editor

Myanmar Elections: U.S. Policy Reset in Southeast Asia?

By Joe Buccino

Retired U.S. Army Colonel and former U.S. Central Command communications director

THE Trump administration’s recent termination of Temporary Protected Status for Burmese nationals, citing Myanmar’s progress in governance and stability, signals a potential shift in U.S.-Myanmar relations. With Myanmar’s first national elections scheduled for later this month, Washington has an opportunity to recalibrate a relationship that has stagnated for decades, with implications for US strategic positioning across Southeast Asia.

“The upcoming elections provide a diplomatic opening that may not persist. Engagement could be structured around concrete benchmarks related to governance improvements, economic reform, humanitarian access, and regional security cooperation. Such an approach would maintain leverage while creating incentives for incremental progress rather than demanding comprehensive transformation as a precondition.”

implications for US strategic positioning across Southeast Asia.

Recent Regional Momentum

The administration has demonstrated a sustained appetite for economic engagement in Central and Southeast Asia. Recent agreements with Kazakhstan totalling over \$17 billion include \$4 billion in American locomotive purchases. A \$35 billion deal with Uzbekistan, elevated to strategic partnership status, includes more than \$8 billion for American aircraft.

Closer to Myanmar, trade agreements with Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Vietnam

SEE PAGE 10



The Trump administration’s recent termination of Temporary Protected Status for Burmese nationals, citing Myanmar’s progress in governance and stability, signals a potential shift in U.S.-Myanmar relations. With Myanmar’s first national elections scheduled for later this month, Washington has an opportunity to recalibrate a relationship that has stagnated for decades—with implications for U.S. strategic positioning across Southeast Asia.

Recent Regional Momentum

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Closer to Myanmar, trade agreements with Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Vietnam have enhanced U.S. access to critical minerals essential for defense manufacturing. These agreements have also strengthened cooperation between U.S. and regional law enforcement to dismantle transnational cyber-crime networks. Together, these initiatives establish a template that could apply to Myanmar engagement, given the country’s mineral wealth and challenges with criminal networks operating within its borders.

The Strategic Case for Myanmar

Myanmar’s geography alone warrants strategic attention. As the only ASEAN member state with direct access to both the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, Myanmar occupies a critical position linking South and Southeast Asia. Control of Myanmar’s coastline provides potential naval access to critical sea lanes, while its land borders with China, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Laos make it a natural nexus for regional trade and military logistics. The country’s natural resources—including rare earth elements essential for defense manufacturing and emerging technologies—add another dimension to its strategic value.

Two decades of American isolation policy have created a vacuum that competing powers have filled. Without significant U.S. presence, Myanmar has increasingly looked elsewhere for economic partnerships, military equipment, and development financing. Reconnecting with Myanmar could help rebalance these influences while securing U.S. access to critical resources needed for defense and technology industries.

Recent diplomatic signals suggest openness to such engagement. At October’s ASEAN Summit, the administration notably refrained from public criticism of Myanmar’s government—a marked departure from previous approaches. This measured response may indicate willingness to prioritize strategic engagement over political conditionality.

Potential Confidence-Building Measures

ARTICLE
WORLD

Retired US Army Colonel: Myanmar’s Elections Give...

FROM PAGE 9
have enhanced US access to critical minerals essential for defence manufacturing. These agreements have also strengthened cooperation between US and regional law enforcement to dismantle transnational cybercrime networks. Together, these initiatives establish a template that could apply to Myanmar engagement, given the country’s mineral wealth and challenges with criminal networks operating within its borders.

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Myanmar’s geography alone warrants strategic attention. As the only ASEAN member state with direct access to both the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, Myanmar occupies a critical position linking South and Southeast Asia. Control of Myanmar’s coastline provides potential naval access to critical sea lanes, while its land borders with China, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Laos make it a natural nexus for regional trade and military logistics. The country’s natural resources, including rare earth elements essential for defence manufacturing and emerging technologies, add another dimension to its strategic value.

Two decades of American

isolation policy have created a vacuum that competing powers have filled. Without a significant US presence, Myanmar has increasingly looked elsewhere for economic partnerships, military equipment, and development financing. Reconnecting with Myanmar could help re-balance these influences while securing US access to critical resources needed for defence and technology industries.

Recent diplomatic signals suggest openness to such engagement. At October’s ASEAN Summit, the administration notably refrained from public criticism of Myanmar’s government—a marked departure from previous approaches. This measured response may indicate willingness to prioritize strategic engagement over political conditionality.

Potential Confidence-Building Measures

Several concrete policy adjustments could signal US openness to renewed engagement while establishing conditions for reciprocal actions. These measures would need careful sequencing to build momentum toward normalized relations.

On Myanmar’s upcoming elections, Secretary of State Rubio stated earlier this year that the administration would “avoid opining on the fairness or integ-

rity of an electoral process, its legitimacy, or the democratic values of the country in question.” Applying this principle to Myanmar’s elections would be consistent with stated policy and could open diplomatic channels that have remained closed. While this stance will draw criticism from democracy advocates, it reflects a judgment that engagement may serve US interests better than continued isolation, particularly given that isolation has not produced desired political changes within Myanmar.

On the economic front, establishing support for commercial opportunities that benefit American companies, including aircraft components, mining equipment for resource extraction, materials for oil and gas infrastructure, and medical equipment. Such an arrangement would demonstrate the US’s willingness to move beyond punitive measures.

The 2023 Burma Sanctions Regulations effectively excluded American energy companies from Myanmar’s oil and gas sector. Reassessing these restrictions could allow US firms to compete with state-owned enterprises from other nations currently dominating Myanmar’s energy development. American energy companies bring not only capital and tech-

nology but also higher environmental and safety standards that could benefit Myanmar’s long-term development. This would provide both economic returns and strategic influence over a sector that shapes Myanmar’s economic trajectory and international alignments.

Regional Context and Precedent

Myanmar’s leadership has expressed support for closer relations with Washington, particularly around countering cybercrime operations targeting American citizens. Myanmar has taken steps to crack down on fraud centres, demonstrating a willingness to cooperate on issues of mutual concern. The administration’s “Third Neighbour” trade framework – successfully applied to Mongolia and Kazakhstan – offers a proven model for engaging states seeking to diversify their international partnerships. This framework allows countries to balance relationships with major neighbours while developing independent economic ties with the United States.

Strategic Considerations

US policy for two decades prioritized isolation over engagement. This has simply ceded strategic space to competitors. The policy question

is whether continued isolation serves American interests better than conditional engagement.

The upcoming elections provide a diplomatic opening that may not persist. Engagement could be structured around concrete benchmarks related to governance improvements, economic reform, humanitarian access, and regional security cooperation. Such an approach would maintain leverage while creating incentives for incremental progress rather than demanding comprehensive transformation as a precondition.

Southeast Asia’s political and economic landscape is being actively shaped by competing powers. Whether the United States will contest for influence in Myanmar or continue to observe while competitors establish facts on the ground represents a fundamental strategic choice with lasting implications for the Indo-Pacific balance. The administration’s recent track record in Central Asia and mainland Southeast Asia demonstrates a willingness to pursue engagement where strategic benefits align with American interests. Myanmar’s geography, resources, and position within ASEAN make it a logical next focus for this approach.

Locals sound alarm as Bijagos Islands slowly swallowed by sea

THE Bijagos archipelago off Guinea-Bissau’s Atlantic coast faces severe environmental threats due to rising sea levels. Comprising 88 islands and islets, with only about 20 inhabited, it spans over 10,000 square kilometres.

The region is rich in biodiversity, hosting sea turtles, hippos, sharks, manatees, and nearly 850,000 migratory birds, along with sacred sites and artisanal fisheries supporting 25,000 residents. However, erosion is a dire concern, with beaches receding up to two metres annually,

shrinking shoreline and threatening communities. Islanders like Antonio Honoria Joao and Adriano Carlos Souarez observe the land inching closer to the sea, with some structures damaged or at risk of collapse.

Local inhabitants lament the loss of once distant beaches and the encroaching water. A government report warns that the coastline is retreating by up to seven meters each year, endangering both human settlements and vital ecosystems, highlighting urgent climate change impacts on this fragile archipelago. — AFP



Locals worry the sea could one day swallow their islands whole. PHOTO: AFP

ARTICLE

WELL, here we go again. With the first general election since 2020 set to commence on 28 December, the international media machine is churning into overdrive. Just look at a recent Reuters report titled Myanmar junta’s shift from battlefield to ballots faces long odds.

It’s not like we’re hearing this kind of headline for the first time; we’ve heard its variations hundreds of times before. The narrative is always the same: the election will fail, it is merely a sham, and the government is on the verge of collapse.

However, for those of us actually living on the ground in Myanmar – not sitting in Bangkok coffee shops, Washington DC offices, or Australian university lecture halls – these assessments are meaningless. They are not independent insights but rather the echoes of “gurus” trapped in an echo chamber of one-sided information.

Many of these commentators haven’t set foot in Myanmar since the conflict began; some may never have been here at all. Yet, their words are cited as gospel. In reality, they are completely divorced from the complex realities of Myanmar. They claim to offer analysis, but

How Are International “So-Called Experts” Misjudging Myanmar Yet Again?

By Maung De’ Doe

and diplomats,” cited in reports like those from Reuters, likely haven’t breathed the air in Yangon or Nay Pyi Taw for years. Reading their comments, it is painfully obvious these are people viewing Myanmar through a laptop screen. They live comfortably in Western capitals, safe under the protection of the very nations imposing sanctions on Myanmar.

From such a vantage point, it is easy to criticize the government’s roadmap. When you aren’t the one facing the actual conflict or economic hardships, it is easy to dismiss the election as a “sham”.

These so-called experts claim the election is “impossible” because they are measuring Myanmar against Western standards rather than political realities. They fail to see that for

Myanmar, where do they get their news? The answer is simple: they regurgitate one-sided information from exile media, activists, and opposition groups. While these groups have their own political existence, treating their words as objective “real news” is a fundamental error.

Western analysis seems to thrive on narratives of state collapse. A minor skirmish is portrayed as a major military defeat; a small protest is amplified into a nationwide revolution. The word “impossible” is born from these cherry-picked snippets of information. They conveniently ignore the fact that the military has maintained control over major cities and the administrative machinery for nearly five years. They have been predicting a collapse for a long time, yet here we are – still

crave stability, and are ready to go vote.

Donor-Driven Analysis

To put it bluntly, one must ask: “Who benefits?” The industry of Myanmar “experts” runs on funding from Western governments and foundations. These entities have political agendas. If an analyst were to write, “The Council’s election might succeed” or “The military is the only institution holding the country together”, their grants would almost certainly be cut.

Prophecies of “imminent collapse” sell. They validate the sanctions imposed by Europe and the West. If an expert argued that “holding elections in phases is better for security”, they would be branded a “junta apologist”.

The Reality on the Ground

Contrary to the Reuters headline, the situation regarding the December 2025 election is quite solid. Starting the election in 102 townships is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of pragmatism. It is about doing what is possible within the security context to move the political process forward.

Furthermore, the narrative that Myanmar is “internationally isolated” is a myth. While the West shouts, Myanmar’s neighbours are engaging. China, Russia, and India – countries that actually matter to Myanmar’s affairs – support the election. They understand that a transition to a civilian government led by the military is a standard, stabilizing mechanism in this region. If you assume success depends on Western recognition, you are just replaying that same old “impossible” broken record.

Voter lists are out. The Myanmar Electronic Voting Machines (MEVM) are ready (a fact critics ignore). Political parties are campaigning. For millions of people in secure areas like Yangon, Mandalay, and Ayeyawady, the ballot box is a far better exit strategy than the barrel of a gun.

Conclusion

The “experts” cited in the Reuters report will likely continue predicting collapse right up until the new government is formed and parliament (Hluttaw) convenes. They will cry “sham”, cite fake news, and cash their checks from donors.

But history is written by those who actually show up. The real evaluators are the Myanmar people who will line up to vote on 28 December. They aren’t voting to please a researcher in London. They are voting for their future, their stability, and their own definition of democracy.

It is time to stop listening to voices from the ivory tower and look at the hard realities on the ground. To those who think the machinery of the state will grind to a halt because of foreign criticism, I say: Your “impossible” is simply incorrect. Despite your criticism and scepticism, the election and its subsequent phases will happen.

Care to place a bet?

“Western analysis seems to thrive on narratives of state collapse. A minor skirmish is portrayed as a major military defeat; a small protest is amplified into a nationwide revolution. The word “impossible” is born from these cherry-picked snippets of information. They conveniently ignore the fact that the military has maintained control over major cities and the administrative machinery for nearly five years. They have been predicting a collapse for a long time, yet here we are – still standing.”

they are merely forcing events to fit into their desired narrative. They are telling their donors what they want to hear, relying on “fake news” that perpetuates the problem rather than finding a solution.

The “Keyboard Experts”

The first and most glaring issue is distance. The “analysts

ordinary citizens, this election – however imperfect – is an exit strategy from the state of emergency and a path back into a legal framework. To accept this requires a pragmatic view from the ground, something these “keyboard experts” sorely lack.

Echoes of “Fake News”

If these experts aren’t in

standing.

These observers merely repeat the talking points of the NUG and their affiliates because they cannot verify the situation on the ground themselves. They listen to stories crafted to secure continued foreign funding. They completely omit the desires of the silent majority: the people who are weary of war,

Therefore, the analysis is tailored to the audience. It is written to please donors. They tell their Foreign Ministries exactly what they want to hear: “Your pressure is working, the military is weak, the democrats are about to win”. This is not genuine analysis; it is paid propaganda masquerading as expertise.

NATIONAL

China-Myanmar poetry recitation marks 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties



This photo captures a China-Myanmar poetry recitation event held to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Myanmar-China diplomatic relations.

A China-Myanmar poetry recitation event was held at Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) Studio A in Kamayut Township, Yangon Region, on the morning of 24 December to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Myanmar-China diplomatic relations.

The China-Myanmar poetry recitation event, titled ‘Poetry Hearts Move Together’ to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Myanmar-China diplomatic relations, was jointly presented

by MRTV and GXRTV (Guangxi Radio and Television). The event featured a video clip of the poem ‘The Sight of Father’s Back’ written by a Chinese writer, a recitation of the poem ‘Padauk Pann’ written by Zawgyi, a video interview featuring Chinese students discussing their favourite Myanmar poems, and a performance of the Chinese song ‘May the Related One Live Forever’.

In addition, they showed a video clip of a modern Chinese poem, ‘Pinglu Canal’, recited

a poem titled ‘Thar Theemyay Thoh’ written by Ngwe Tayee, presented an interview video featuring Myanmar students studying Chinese literature as they discussed their favourite Chinese poems, and recited poems as gifts for their Myanmar friends.

In addition, a video interview with Myanmar citizens who had arrived in China was shown, during which they performed Chinese songs and filmed a documentary. — ASH/TH

MR to operate additional special trains on major routes for Christmas holiday

MYANMA Railways has announced that, during the Christmas holiday period, both regular and special train services will be expanded on the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon-Pyay and Yangon-Mawlamyine routes to facilitate convenient travel for the general public and departmental staff.

On the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw route, a DEMU (Spain) special up train will depart Yangon Station at 6:30 am on 25 and 28 December and arrive at Nay Pyi Taw Station at 12 noon. The DEMU (Spain) special down train will depart Nay Pyi Taw at 12:30 pm and arrive in Yangon at 6 pm.

Similarly, on the Yangon-Pyay route, a special up air-bagged train will depart Yangon Station at 1 pm on 25 December and arrive at Pyay Station at 8:55 pm. The Pyay-Yangon special down air-bagged train will depart Pyay Station at 10:30 am on 28 December and arrive in



This photo shows an MR train cruising along the tracks.

Yangon at 6:30 pm.

Likewise, on the Yangon-Mawlamyine route, a special up air-bagged train will depart Yangon Station at 9:15 am on 25 December and arrive at Mawlamyine Station at 6 pm. The special down air-bagged train will depart Mawlamyine Station at 9:10 am on 28 December and arrive at 5:55 pm.

In addition to these special

services, regular trains currently in operation will also run with full-capacity coaches. Ticket fares and stopping stations will remain the same as those of the daily regular services. Upper-class tickets may be purchased three days in advance, while ordinary-class tickets must be purchased one day in advance at the respective stations. — ASH/MKKS

Second-round selection of 2025 Myanmar Motion Pictures Academy receptionists set for 29 Dec

THE second-round selection of receptionists for the 2025 Myanmar Motion Pictures Academy Awards, which will be held in Nay Pyi Taw, will take place on 29 December at Golden Jubilee Hall of the Myanmar Motion Pictures Organization (MMPO) in Bahan Township, Yangon Region, according to MMPO First Joint Secretary U Chan Thar Kyi Soe.

He said the judging panel for the second round will comprise Academy Award-winning artistes Khant Si Thu, Yan Aung, May Than Nu and Soe Myat Thuzar, together with Academy Award-winning directors Nyunt Myanmar Nyi Nyi Aung and Maung

Thi.

U Chan Thar Kyi Soe explained that nearly 250 applicants took part in the preliminary first-round selection held on 21 December, from which candidates were short-listed for the second round. A total of 104 candidates will compete in the second round, and successful candidates will then progress step by step to the third round through a systematic selection process.

For the 2025 Myanmar Motion Pictures Academy Awards ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw, organizers are expected to select either eight couples (16 individuals) or ten pairs (20 individuals) of receptionists. — ASH/KZL



The first-round selection of receptionists for the 2025 Myanmar Motion Pictures Academy Awards is in progress.

ME Phnom Penh says no additional fees charged for consumer services

THE Myanmar Embassy to Cambodia has announced that no service fees are required for consular matters other than the passport book fees and fines prescribed by the State.

The embassy emphasized that its operations are conducted with the sole intent of protecting the interests of its citizens. It clarified that service fees are not required for any embassy assistance. For consular matters, including passport renewals, applications for lost or damaged passports, and tax payments, citizens are only required to pay the officially mandated book costs and fines.

Furthermore, the embassy warned that it will collaborate with relevant authorities to take necessary legal action

against individuals found to have fraudulently collected money for consular services.

For such issues, Myanmar citizens are encouraged to file a complaint directly with the head of mission at the embassy in Phnom Penh by dialling +85 516239446.

The embassy also stated that it is coordinating with relevant Cambodian officials to facilitate the prompt services for Myanmar nationals (both legal and undocumented), including managing reports received via the Cambodian Ministry of Interior’s 117 hotline, assisting Myanmar nationals who have escaped from illegal workshops, and returning citizens detained at immigration centres. — MT/ZN

Nov duty-free sales at Japan department stores down 2.5%

DUTY-FREE sales at department stores in Japan dropped 2.5 per cent in November from a year earlier to around 50.2 billion yen (\$322 million), hurt by double-digit falls in spending among visitors from Hong Kong and South Korea, industry data showed Thursday.

The number of customers from abroad decreased 2.2 per cent to around 508,000 in November, the association data showed.

Travelers from Asia make up a big portion of total visitors to Japan, and spending by inbound tourists has helped boost Japan's economy. — Kyodo



The number of customers from abroad decreased 2.2 per cent to around 508,000 in November.
PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/KYODO

Indian commercial vehicle industry poised for upcycle as replacement demand builds: Nomura

THE Indian medium and heavy commercial vehicle (M&HCV) industry appears to be entering the next upcycle, with industry volumes estimated to grow by around 8 per cent year-on-year in FY26 and 10 per cent in FY27, following a period of modest growth, according to a report by Nomura, a prominent Asia-based global financial services group and Japan's largest investment bank and brokerage firm.

The report highlighted that improving industry fundamentals are likely to support demand over the medium term. It added that rising freight rates, lower GST-led affordability and a high average age of trucks—currently esti-



Tata Motors and Ashok Leyland as primary beneficiaries of this recovery. **PHOTO: ANI**

imated at around 10 years, are expected to drive replacement demand, particularly during FY27-28. It stated "M&HCV industry appears to be entering the next upcycle..... we believe these are still early stages of a CV upcycle".

These factors together are improving fleet operator economics and supporting a recovery in volumes. — ANI

Intl tourists to Cambodia down 13.8% in first 11 months of 2025

CAMBODIA reported a total of 5.17 million international tourists in the first 11 months of 2025, a year-on-year drop of 13.8 per cent, said a report from the Ministry of Tourism released on Thursday.

Vietnam topped the chart among the foreign tourist arrivals to the Southeast Asian country during the January-November period this year, followed by China and Thailand, the report said.

Some 1.11 million Vietnamese and 1.01 million Thais travelled to Cambodia during the above-mentioned period, down 7.3 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively, the report said. — Xinhua

Rome pushes Meta to allow other AIs on WhatsApp

ITALIAN regulators ordered Meta on Wednesday to open its WhatsApp chat platform to rival AI chatbots as it and EU authorities pursue a probe that the US tech giant is abusing its dominant market position. Meta has integrated Meta AI across the company's platforms, which include Facebook and Instagram, that serve billions of users globally.

In October, Meta introduced new contractual conditions that will apply from 15 January that Italy's competition regulator said "completely exclude Meta AI's competitors from the WhatsApp platform in the AI Chatbot services market". — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO FORTUNE VOY.NO. (0QM7YS1NC)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO FORTUNE VOY.NO. (0QM7YS1NC)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **26-12-2025** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/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 A.M to 11:20 A.M and 12 NOON to 4 P.M 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 CMA-CGM SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SITC ZHI VOY.NO. (2522S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SITC ZHI VOY. NO. (2522S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **26-12-2025** 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 A.M to 11:20 A.M and 12 NOON to 4 P.M 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 SITC CONTAINER LINE CO., LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BINTAN VOY.NO. (915N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BINTAN VOY.NO. (915N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **26-12-2025** 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 A.M to 11:20 A.M and 12 NOON to 4 P.M 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 SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD



The projects reflected a strong focus on socially relevant themes. PHOTO: ANI

Students showcase social projects at MediaGame festival in Moscow

The multiday event served as a significant platform for young creators, media students, and social activists to showcase innovative ideas to address pressing social issues.

THE International Student Festival of Social Projects “MediaGame 2025” concluded successfully at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH), drawing broad participation from across Russia and several foreign countries.

As cited by TV BRICS, the multi-day event served as a

significant platform for young creators, media students, and social activists to showcase innovative ideas to address pressing social issues.

The festival received over 600 creative entries across six categories: Photo, Video, Audio, Poster, Text, and Integrated Social Project. The projects reflected a strong

focus on socially relevant themes, including environmental protection, inclusion and accessibility, cultural identity, volunteerism, and the preservation of historical memory. Organizers said the diversity of topics highlighted the growing sense of social responsibility among young authors. — ANI

Pacific archipelago Palau agrees to take migrants from US

THE tiny Pacific island nation of Palau has agreed to accept up to 75 non-American migrants from the United States under a deal worth \$7.5 million, the two countries have said.

President Donald Trump, who campaigned on a promise to expel undocumented migrants,

has accelerated deportations and cracked down on border crossings since returning to power this year.

Under a new memorandum of understanding, Palau will let up to 75 third-country nationals from the United States live and work on the sparsely populated archi-

pelago, officials said Wednesday.

In return, the United States will grant \$7.5 million to Palau for public service and infrastructure needs. With some 20,000 people spread across hundreds of volcanic isles and coral atolls, Palau is by population one of the smallest countries in the world. — AFP

Vietnam clears wartime explosives-contaminated land

VIETNAM cleared nearly 188,000 hectares of land contaminated by landmines and unexploded ordnance from 2021 to 2025, reducing the total affected area nationwide to 5.57 million hectares, the Vietnam News Agency reported Thursday.

During the period, 21 clearance projects were effectively implemented, including 11 carried out in cooperation with the United States, Japan, South Korea and Norway, and 10 funded domestically, the report said. It is estimated that about 800,000 tonnes of explosives were left across Vietnam after the wars. — Xinhua

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prime minister hopeful Tarique Rahman arrives in Bangladesh

ASPIRING prime minister and political heavyweight Tarique Rahman was welcomed back to Bangladesh on Thursday by huge crowds of supporters after his 17 years in self-imposed exile.

Rahman, the son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia and heir apparent of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), shook hands with party leaders after touching down at the Dhaka airport.

Accompanied by his wife and daughter, he waved to supporters before ducking into a convoy under tight security, video posted by his party showed. — AFP

Israel accuses Hamas of violating Trump’s 20-point ceasefire

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday said that Hamas “continued to violate the 20-point peace plan” advocated by US President Donald Trump. Netanyahu further said that Israel will respond accordingly.

In a post on X, he said, “The Hamas terror organization continues to violate the ceasefire and President Trump’s 20 point plan. Their ongoing and continuing public refusal to disarm is an ongoing flagrant violation and again today their violent intentions and violations were confirmed by their detonation of an IED that wounded an IDF officer. Hamas must be held to the agreement that they signed on which includes removal from governance, demilitarization and de-radicalization. Israel will respond accordingly.” — ANI



Palau International Airport officially known as Roman Tmetuchl International Airport, is the main and only international airport in Palau. PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/WIKIMEDIA

SPORTS

MWL 2nd round kicks off with Shan United victory

THE second round of the 2025-2026 Myanmar Women's League (MWL) got underway on 24 December, with Shan United Women's Team opening the new phase with a win on the first day of Matchday 10.

At Padonma Stadium, Shan United defeated Yangon City Women's Team 2-0 to collect full points, scoring both goals in the second half. The victory also meant Shan United completed a double over Yangon City this season. Yangon City, meanwhile, remains unable to halt their losing run and suffered another defeat.

Shan United, led by Yupa Khine, July Kyaw, Yu Ya Naing, Khine Thazin, Nant Zu Zu Htet and Nant May Thazin, controlled the match, while Yangon City also fielded a full-strength side. Although Yangon City put up a stronger challenge compared to the first round, they conceded twice after the break. Sandar Aung opened the scoring in 50 minutes, and Nan Phyu Phyu Thwe added the second goal in 66 minutes. Nan Phyu Phyu Thwe was named Best Player of the Match. After nine matches, Shan United have collected 16 points, while Yangon City have

lost all nine matches and remain without a point.

In another Matchday 10 fixture played at Thuwunna Training Ground No 1, YREO and Young Lionesses played out a goalless draw. YREO captain Khin Phone received the Best Player award. Following the match, YREO have 10 points from nine matches, while Young Lionesses have seven points.

Matchday 10 continues on 26 December, with Thitsa Arman taking on Ayeyawady at Padonma Stadium, while Myawady face ISPE at Thuwunna Training Ground No 1. — Chit Ko Ko/KZL



This image shows Shan United and Yangon City players vying for the ball during their MWL match.

Shan United open three-point lead after MNL Day 9

DEFENDING champions Shan United extended their lead at the top of the table after Matchday 9 of the 2025-2026 Myanmar National League (MNL), which took place from 23 to 25 December.

On Matchday 9, Shan United edged Thitsa Arman 3-2, while Rakhine United defeated Yadanabon United 4-1. Yadanabon FC beat ISPE FC 3-1, Dagon Star United overcame Hanthawady United 3-1, and Maha United secured a 5-2 victory over Dagon Port. Meanwhile, Yangon United and Ayeyawady United played out a goalless draw. Yangon United's draw allowed Shan United to move three points clear at the summit.

After nine matches, Shan



Mark Sarki heads home the late winning goal for Shan United. **PHOTO: SUFC**

United lead the standings with 25 points, followed by Yangon United on 22 points. Yadanabon FC sit third with 17 points, Dagon Star United have 15 points, ISPE FC 14 points, and Hanthawady United 12 points. Ayeyawady Unit-

ed and Maha United are level on 11 points, Rakhine United have nine points, Thitsa Arman eight points, Dagon Port five points, and Yadanabon United remain at the bottom with two points. — Shine Htet Zaw/KZL

Boxing: Inoue up to 2nd in pound-for-pound after Crawford retirement

JAPAN'S undisputed super bantamweight world champion Naoya Inoue rose to second in The Ring boxing magazine's latest pound-for-pound rankings following the retirement of American five-division conqueror Terence Crawford.

Inoue, awaiting his bout against Mexican challenger David Picasso on Saturday in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is behind only unified heavyweight champion Oleksandr Usyk of Ukraine.

Crawford announced his retirement on 16 December with the 38-year-old, the first male boxer in the four-belt era to become an undisputed champion in three weight classes, ending his career undefeated at 42-0 with 31 knockout wins.

Junto Nakatani, making his super bantam debut against Mexico's Sebastian Hernandez Reyes on the same card as Inoue, placed sixth.

Speaking on Tuesday, "The Monster" Inoue voiced his confidence in improving his 31-0 record with 27 KOs.

"I'm getting pumped up and will exceed people's expectations," he said. "I've said I want a knockout, but I won't be going rough and forcible. I'll look to display proper boxing with a beautiful storyline". — Kyodo

AFCON organizers allowing fans in for free to fill empty stands: source

ORGANIZERS at the Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco are allowing supporters in for free after kick-off in matches where stadiums are not full, a Confederation of African Football source told AFP.

The Group F game between Cameroon and Gabon on Wednesday in Agadir kicked

off in front of almost empty stands but the ground filled up significantly over the course of the first half despite incessant rain.

The official attendance was later announced as 35,200 inside a venue which can hold over 45,000.

There have been similar

scenes at numerous matches across the opening days of the competition, even leading to confusion over the attendance figures themselves. — AFP

DR Congo supporters at their team's game against Benin in Rabat on Tuesday. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**





North Korea advances nuclear deterrent with new strategic submarine: Report

Kim stated the vessel ensures a credible deterrent and a devastating response to any attack.

KIM Jong Un guided the construction of an 8,700-tonne nuclear-powered strategic missile submarine, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) stated the submarine is a core

component of the country's "nuclear war deterrent", designed to deliver a "merciless retaliatory attack".

The report frames the submarine as the embodiment of Pyongyang's defensive policy, which it claims is "based on the strongest offensive

power". Kim Jong Un stated that the vessel represents a crucial change that "assures ourselves and even the enemy of the war deterrent level" achieved.

Its purpose is to guarantee a devastating response to any attack, with Kim warning that enemies "will face a merciless retaliatory attack if they try to select a military option."

— SPUTNIK



The submarine is part of North Korea's "nuclear war deterrent" for retaliatory strikes. PHOTO: KCNA VIA KNS/AFP

Anutin, Sihasak nominated as PM candidates

THAILAND'S ruling Bhumjaithai Party announced late Wednesday its resolution to nominate two candidates for the premiership in the upcoming election, including party leader and Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow.

In a statement, the party cited Anutin's extensive experience in national administration and the need for continuity in handling various threats currently facing the country.

Sihasak was selected based on his diplomatic experience as vital for restoring Thailand's dignity on the global stage, the party said, emphasizing his ability to work cohesively with political and security sectors.

The statement also addressed the roles of Commerce Minister Suphadee Suthumpun and Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Ekniti Nitithanprapas, who had previously been speculated as potential prime ministerial candidates, saying both have agreed to continue working with the party to form a potential government.

The clarification comes as the party launched its election campaign in the day, initially naming Anutin as its sole prime ministerial candidate. — Xinhua

Yokohama showcases Circular City Model at Asia smart city conference

YOKOHAMA city's circular city model has various activities — treatment of garbage, waste recycling, disassemble rebuilding architecture, reuse of unused clothing, reduction of food loss, sustainable aviation fuel and so on.

Declaration is issued toward international organization in Asia Smart City Conference.

Toshikazu Yazawa from Yokohama city said, "Yokohama city appeals to Asian cities making effort to create circular economy and circular city and declare it all of participants. Supported by international organization in each city creation of circular city will be undertaken. Its policy will be shared in next and after next year conference."

CEO of City Net, Jae-bok Chang,

"Thought the proposed declaration, by Yokohama city, it's, very naturally with, what we are already doing. We are going to mobilize our member cities and our network around, this is important".

Takeharu Yamanaka, Mayor of Yokohama City said, "We will take on the new name, the Asia Pacific Circular Cities Forum, APCC forum. I look forward to welcoming all of you to Yokohama next year. And again in 2027."

Yokohama city overcame social and environmental problems in its long history. Solving current problem Yokohama is becoming real circular city and global leader of its activity. It will expand to Asian and Pacific countries. — ANI



Yokohama City's circular city model is a comprehensive framework aimed at achieving a sustainable, zero-waste society through community and private sector collaboration. PHOTO: ANI