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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.

Myanmar Eyes Russia, EU Markets for Raw Bamboo Shoot Exports

For dried bamboo shoot production, fresh bamboo shoots are harvested annually from July to September and dried from November through the end of March before being exported to overseas markets.



This photo shows female workers preparing fresh bamboo shoots for drying.

Myanmar is preparing to export three types of fresh bamboo shoots to the Russian Federation, and tests are also being carried out to enable the export of odourless fresh bamboo shoots to the European market, according to the Bamboo Shoot and Bamboo Growers and Producers Association.

"Russia has made offers to purchase three types of fresh bamboo shoots, including boiled fibre bamboo shoots. In addition, there have been proposals to distribute odourless fresh bamboo shoots to markets as far as

European countries, so we are currently conducting trials," said a responsible official from the association.

Moreover, Japan has placed orders for up to 200 tonnes of dried bamboo shoots for this year, although only 10 per cent of the order has so far been exported. As a first shipment, five tonnes of dried bamboo shoots will be exported to Japan in February, and the remaining 15 tonnes will be shipped consecutively thereafter.

For the production of dried bamboo shoots, fresh bamboo shoots are collected

annually from July to September and dried from November until the end of March before being exported for sale overseas.

When exporting fresh and dried bamboo shoots to international markets, dried bamboo shoots produced from certain bamboo species are known to meet international market standards. In processing bamboo shoots into finished products, special care must be taken to ensure that no chemical substances are used, as the presence of chemical residues could result in the loss of market access. — ASH/MKKS

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By Min Khant

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National Objectives for 79th Union Day 2026

1. To work together among all ethnic nationals to achieve the country's prosperity and food security, the national goal of the country.
2. To cooperate hand-in-hand with the government, Tatmadaw and all ethnic nationals in successfully implementing the measures for stability and rule of law.
3. To strive together with ethnic armed groups to establish a lasting peace, while propagating justice, freedom and equality within the country.
4. To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, practising a genuine and disciplined multiparty democratic system through the friendship, trust, unity and collaboration of ethnic people.
5. To cooperate, ensuring the development of education, health and socioeconomic status of ethnic nationals and the emergence of a developing country.

- 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.

Mottos for 79th Union Day 2026

1. Unity is strength, Unity is power, Peace is beauty.
2. Let's build lasting peace for the Union's development
3. National brethren, let's unite and join hands for the Union
4. Unity boosts friendship Harmony brings peace

Myanmar Gazette

Appointment of Heads of Service Organizations confirmed

THE National Defence and Security Council has confirmed the appointment of the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations, shown against each of their names after the one-year probationary period.

Name	Appointment
(1) Dr Aung Kyaw	Director-General Union Minister's Office Ministry of Education
(2) Dr Aye Aye Thant	Rector Yenangyoung University Department of Higher Education Ministry of Education

South-East Asia's oldest zoo in Yangon turns 120

THE oldest zoo in South-East Asia, the Yangon Zoological Gardens, will celebrate its 120th anniversary in late January for five days.

Founded in 1906, the zoo is the oldest in the South-East Asian countries and will turn 120 soon.

The opening ceremony of the 120th anniversary is scheduled on 31 January, and market fair, dancing and singing shows, and a magic show, as well as a

talk show for children, will take place from 1 to 4 February.

The Yangon Zoo has invited visitors to enjoy the festival and experience nature.

The Yangon Zoo said it is a shelter where wild animals, living resources are being protected with love and kindness so that they can continue living in the world, as well as a place for acquiring knowledge for the next generations. It is open from 8 am to 5 pm daily. – MT/ZS



This image captures visitors exploring the Yangon Zoo.

Myanmar MSME Cluster Footwear Manufacturers Federation (Central)

Statement 1/2026

21 January 2026

THE Myanmar delegation, led by Union Minister for the Ministry 2 of the President's Office U Ko Ko Hlaing and Union Minister for Legal Affairs and Attorney-General Dr Thida Oo, is attending oral hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 12 to 29 January 2026 to respond, under the law, to allegations brought by The Gambia. This action demonstrates the responsible conduct of a sovereign State and clearly reflects Myanmar's commitment to respecting and abiding by international legal principles and norms.

We, the executive committee members and members of the Myanmar MSME Cluster Footwear Manufacturers Federation (Central), fully welcome and support the State's firm and effective efforts to address matters concerning the nation on the basis of trust in the fairness and justice of the rule of law. We believe that such legal engagement will accurately present the realities on the ground, enhance understanding within the international community, and serve as an essential foundation for building confidence and mutual trust.

Accordingly, the executive committee members and members of the Myanmar MSME Cluster Footwear Manufacturers Federation (Central) hereby place on record our welcome, support and recognition of the efforts undertaken by the Myanmar delegation representing the State at the ICJ to resolve the case through legal means. We further declare that our Federation stands firmly united with the State's policies and positions.

**Myanmar MSME Cluster Footwear Manufacturers Federation (Central)
Executive Committee Members and Members**

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)

Myanmar's lawyers continue to respond in Gambia-Myanmar case

THE oral hearings in The Gambia-Myanmar case are taking place from 12 to 29 January at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands. Myanmar delivered its first oral arguments from 10 am to 6 pm local time on 19 January, with its lead counsel, Mr Christopher Staker, and counsel, Mr Sam-Bloom Cooper and Ms Leigh Lawrie, presenting the case.

Myanmar's lawyers responded to The Gambia's allegations, with Mr Stefan Talmom addressing The Gambia's claim on alleged hate speech and propaganda, and Ms Alina



Miron responding to allegation concerning the violation of the obligation to punish and destruction of evidence.

Myanmar's lawyer Sam-Bloom Cooper responded that genocide has not been established and dismissed the allegations of failure to meet the burden of proof, while Mr Stefan Talmom responded to The Gambia's allegations concerning alleged legal consequences. (The counterarguments of Myanmar's counsels are excerpted separately.) — MNA/GNLM

Public Notice

IT is a source of pride and encouragement to witness the nationwide outpouring of support for the Agent of Myanmar team, led by Union Minister U Ko Ko Hlaing, who is currently representing the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the hearings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

It is respectfully acknowledged that various organizations and members of the public have voluntarily expressed their support through social media posts, official statements, and on-the-ground campaigns, without any external prompting.

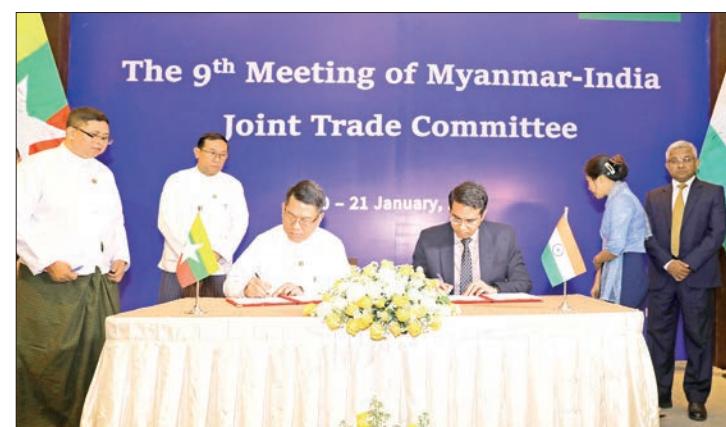
As the Agent of Myanmar team is presently engaged in legal proceedings under international law, all supporters – both those expressing views on social media and those organizing or participating in rallies across towns and villages – are earnestly urged to strictly observe the following guidelines: -

- (1) Refrain from writing or making statements that criticize, attempt to influence, or may be construed as exerting pressure on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and judges.
- (2) Avoid the use of racially discriminatory language in speeches, slogans, or on placards.
- (3) Refrain from engaging in hate speech or using the name of any group that is not officially recognized as an indigenous ethnic race.
- (4) Express support for the Agent of Myanmar team in a dignified and responsible manner, recognizing that the case is being defended in court through strong evidence and under applicable international laws. — News Team

9th Myanmar-India Joint Trade Committee meeting held

THE Ninth Myanmar-India Joint Trade Committee Meeting, hosted by Myanmar, was held yesterday at the Park Royal Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, chaired by Deputy Minister for Commerce U Min Min of the Ministry of Commerce, an opening address was delivered in which he stated that, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of the Myanmar-India Joint Trade Committee, the committee meetings have been held alternately by the two countries since 2003. He noted that these meetings represent an important milestone in enhancing bilateral trade cooperation. He added that discussions would be held on ways and means to further increase bilateral trade vol-



Deputy Commerce Minister U Min Min and Shri Nitin Kumar Yadav, Additional Secretary of Commerce Department under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India sign the minutes of the meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

umes, facilitate smoother trade, improve infrastructure, and promote increased investment in key sectors such as agriculture, transport, energy, information and communication technology, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and health. He expressed

confidence that today's meeting would further strengthen existing cooperation between the two countries and help identify effective measures to reduce and overcome trade-related challenges faced by businesses on both sides.

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NATIONAL

Tatmadaw (Air) 87th Intake of Pilot Course concludes

ON behalf of the State Security and Peace Commission Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Zeya Kyaw Htin Sithu Tun Aung delivered an address at the graduation ceremony of the 87th intake of pilot course of the Tatmadaw (Air) in Meiktila yesterday morning.

The General presented wings to the graduated pilots individually and awards to the relevant outstanding graduated pilots.

Speaking on the occasion, the General stated that producing qualified and competent pilots capable of flying and operating modern aircraft and helicopters of Tatmadaw (Air) to build a strong, capable, modern, and patriotic armed force, the training school has trained and produced new-generation pilots for the country and the Tatmadaw. The graduates assigned to various units of Tatmadaw (Air) would now begin assuming national defence duties by piloting and operating high-value, advanced



Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Zeya Kyaw Htin Sithu Tun Aung inspects the graduate companies at the passing out parade of the 87th intake of pilot course of the Tatmadaw (Air) in Meiktila yesterday.

aircraft and helicopters.

He then urged the graduates to perform their assigned duties by integrating their spirit, ability and skills, and stressed the importance of being honest, and administering subordinates with unity and fairness, without discrimination.

He encouraged pilots who will undertake flight duties to strictly observe fundamental disciplines, including personal discipline, ground discipline, and flight discipline.

He added that reading good books greatly contributes to developing strong morale and

correct beliefs and attitudes, and encouraged the cultivation of regular reading habits. The graduates should not only read themselves but also ensure that their subordinates continuously study relevant subjects. In addition to books and publications, he emphasized the need to utilize

modern digital and online platforms for learning in line with the timeline.

He continued that to build a fully capable modern Air Force, efforts are being prioritized to procure or conduct research for the production of aircraft, helicopters, unmanned aircraft, and weapons systems. He also stressed the importance of continuously studying modern technologies through ongoing training and refinement to ensure effective operational capability.

The General met outstanding graduates and their parents at the Flying Training Base.

Today's graduated pilots will be assigned to relevant aircraft and helicopter squadrons.

In the evening, the General and wife attended the graduation dinner in honour of the 87th intake of the pilot course of the Tatmadaw (Air) together with senior military officers.

After the dinner, the General cordially greeted graduate officers and their parents and relatives. — MNA/KTZH

9th Myanmar-India Joint...

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AT the Preliminary Meeting held yesterday, the minutes of the meeting, following detailed discussions by representatives of the relevant ministries of both countries, were reportedly confirmed and signed by Deputy Minister for Commerce of Myanmar and Shri Nitin Kumar Yadav, Additional Secretary of the Department of Commerce under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of India, along with other officials. A luncheon was then hosted for the delegates from Myanmar and India in attendance.

The Ninth Myanmar-India Joint Trade Committee Meeting was attended by directors-general, the deputy

permanent secretary, deputy directors-general and responsible officials from the Ministry of Commerce, deputy directors-general and officials from relevant ministries, Mr Abhay Thakur, Ambassador of India to Myanmar, and a delegation led by Shri Nitin Kumar Yadav, Additional Secretary of the Department of Commerce under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of India, along with other officials. A total of 56 delegates attended the meeting. It is learnt that both sides agreed to hold the Tenth Myanmar-India Joint Trade Committee Meeting in New Delhi, India. — MNA/ MKKS

Myanmar deports 477 undocumented foreign entrants



The immigration process in progress for the deportation of undocumented foreign entrants.

MYANMAR deported 300 Chinese nationals, 91 Indonesians, 78 Ethiopians and eight Bangladeshis, totalling 477 individuals, involved in telecom fraud and

other criminal activities in Kayin State via the Myanmar-Thailand Friendship Bridge II yesterday.

Myanmar authorities officially handed the deportees the

necessary legal documents to ensure their smooth repatriation.

The government is strictly cracking down on online scams and online gambling by cooperating with other countries, including neighbouring countries. It also exposes those involved in the Online Scam Centre and the foreign masterminds to take effective actions against them, and actively works to transfer the trafficked foreigners and those who face hardships to their respective countries as quickly as possible. — MNA/ KTZH

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)



Tourist arrivals climb at Shan State hotspots



TUNTUNWINYWANGAN



Views in Ywangan. PHOTO: TUN TUN WIN (YWANGAN)

VISITOR arrivals in Shan State's popular tourist destinations, such as Taunggyi, Kalaw, Inlay, Pindaya and Ywangan, have mounted visibly, according to tourism-related businesses.

People have preferred these destinations, which are rich in beautiful natural landscapes that look perfect in the cold weather, for pre-wedding shooting or going on vacation with family and friends. The number of visitors to these destinations has risen significantly since last December and has remained high until this month, said a resident.

"The visitor arrival is larger on long public holidays. There was an influx of visitors during the last December holidays. People have taken a trip here until now. Some choose here for pre-wedding shooting, and

some visitors come with family or friends. Here, the weather is pleasant now, and a sea of clouds and beautiful views can also attract visitors," said a man who runs a tourism-related business.

The increase in tourist arrivals has also supported tourism-related businesses such as Oway rental service, car rental service and local products trading, he said.

During this tourism peak season, local visitors have taken trips to Bagan-NyaungU, Kyaito, Nay Pyi Taw, Bago, as well as in PyinOoLwin, Taunggyi, Kalaw, Inlay, Pindaya and Ywangan, and people are going on vacation in overseas destinations, according to the tourism community. The tourist arrival is also expected to be large in the coming February holidays. — MT/ZS

Germany-assisted charity clinic in Bagan delivers 1,000+ free treatments monthly

THE German Embassy in Yangon has announced that the Thettawshay Charity Clinic in Bagan is providing free basic medicines for more than 1,000 treatments each month, made possible through the embassy's support.

Chargé d'Affaires Mr Mathias Licharz of the German Embassy in Yangon recently visited the clinic to observe the healthcare services being provided to the local community.

According to the embassy's statement, the clinic continues



Chargé d'Affaires Mr Mathias Licharz of the German Embassy in Yangon is pictured during his visit to the Thettawshay Clinic in Bagan.

to offer essential medical care despite significant challenges, including natural disasters, the increasing number of displaced

persons, and rising medication costs. In the face of these difficulties, the volunteers at the Thettawshay Clinic remain dedicated to providing free basic healthcare services to the local population.

The embassy highlighted that access to basic health services is vital for long-term well-being. By strengthening public health and supporting individual mobility, the clinic's work helps foster overall social stability within the community.

— MT/ZN

New Elephant Museum to debut at Shwesettaw Mann Chaung Camp during festival

AN elephant museum will open to the public at the Shwesettaw Mann Chaung Recreation Elephant Camp in Minbu (Sagu) Township, Magway Region, according to the camp's assistant manager.

The museum will open during this year's Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival and will display a wide range of elephant-related information for public education, including life-sized elephant models and traditional equipment used in

working with elephants.

Exhibits will include fossil remains of ancient elephants; elephant head models fitted with tusks to illustrate different elephant species; equipment used by mahouts; demonstrations of traditional elephant capture methods; Myanmar artworks made from legally permitted materials resembling ivory; radio collars used for tracking wild elephants; camera traps installed in forest areas; and various sculpted

elephant figures.

The Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival will be held for 86 days, from 22 January to 17 April, corresponding to the fifth waxing of Tabodwe to Myanmar New Year's Day. During the festival period, the Shwesettaw Mann Chaung Recreation Elephant Camp will be open daily from 7 am to 6 pm. Visitors will also be able to stay overnight at accommodation facilities within the elephant camp. — ASH/KZL



Elephants at the Shwesettaw Mann Chaung Recreation Elephant Camp.



Exhibits prepared for display inside the elephant museum.

NATIONAL

Prof Stefan Talmon Presents Counterarguments at ICJ

PROFESSOR Stefan Talmon submitted the rebuttal arguments on alleged hate speech and propaganda for the case of The Gambia versus Myanmar at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, on 20 January.

He stated: One of The Gambia's arguments is that the utterances of Myanmar soldiers are an indicator of genocidal intent. You were presented on screen with seven statements which allegedly represented "utterances of soldiers posted online". However, the Reuters report that is adduced as evidence does not even mention the word "soldier". All statements are unattributed. One of the seven statements is not even included in the report. One of the statements was a comment on a news article on attacks on police stations by Bengali militants.

This example is only to show that when the Court deals with the statements put forward by The Gambia, it needs to focus very closely on the original statements themselves. The Court should take note of the fact that, in many cases, The Gambia does not put forward the statement itself but relies on secondary sources, reports and news articles. Material of this nature is of no evidential value.

The Gambia says that the

Court must determine whether Myanmar's alleged use of hate speech and propaganda "constitutes an indicator of genocidal intent." In its presentation last week, The Gambia referred thirteen times to "anti-Rohingya hate propaganda, and the hateful utterances of Myanmar soldiers" – speech acts it considers to be indicators of genocidal intent. It comes as no surprise that at the end of the presentation, The Gambia concluded that such hate speech and utterances are "conclusive indicators of genocidal intent".

This approach has no basis in the Court's case law. The Court follows an "inference from a pattern of conduct" approach. The Court first establishes a pattern of conduct from which genocidal intent is then inferred. So there is no direct inference of genocidal intent from hate speech or the tolerance of hate speech.

The only question, therefore, is whether hate speech and the toleration of hate speech could be relevant for establishing a pattern of conduct from which genocidal intent could be inferred. A pattern of conduct has been defined as "a consistent series of acts carried out over a specific period of time." The two elements of genocide must be "linked". It is the acts committed

by the perpetrators of the attacks on the protected group that must form the pattern of conduct from which the inference is drawn. Extraneous factors, such as hate speech and toleration of hate speech, would inevitably raise the question of their relationship to the actual attacks and the question of causation.

The Gambia's hate speech and propaganda argument is thus irrelevant for establishing an alleged general plan to destroy the Bengali Muslim group in whole or in part by way of inference from a pattern of conduct.

The Gambia would have to show that the speech acts are related to the particular circumstance in question and that the only reasonable inference from these acts was genocidal intent. Considering the other intents mentioned by The Gambia itself in its presentation, such as intent to incite hatred or violence against Bengali Muslims, or intent to take "revenge", an intent to destroy would not be the only reasonable inference from these speech acts.

The Gambia's attempts to insinuate an orchestrated top-down campaign of genocide led by Myanmar's Senior General Min Aung Hlaing fail on the evidence. When read in their context and against the back-

ground of the counter-terrorism operations, the snippets from the General's statements contain no espousal of genocidal intent, let alone a call for genocide, or even simple violence.

There is no evidence of genocidal intent in these or other statements by the Senior General. Even if viewed in isolation, as a matter of their ordinary meaning, none of the statements selectively relied on by The Gambia calls for the physical destruction of the group of the Bengali Muslims, in whole or in part, as such.

None of these statements qualifies as direct and public incitement to genocide or is reflective of a genocidal intent of its author. The Gambia tries to gloss over this deficiency by referring instead to "hate speech and anti-group propaganda" as an indicator of Myanmar's alleged genocidal intent.

There is, however, also another flaw in The Gambia's argument. There is a difference between hate speech in general, or inciting discrimination or violence, and incitement to commit genocide. Incitement to commit

genocide requires more than incitement to hatred or violence; it requires genocidal intent on the part of the instigator. The Gambia has not proven any genocidal intent on the part of the authors of the alleged hate speech acts.

Thus, even if the hate speech argument was relevant for establishing genocidal intent on the part of Myanmar, which it is not, The Gambia would have to prove by conclusive evidence that the authors of the hate speech acts themselves had genocidal intent. It has not done so.

Even if the statements which The Gambia refers to as "anti-Rohingya hate speech and propaganda" were relevant for establishing genocidal intent, The Gambia would still have to prove by conclusive evidence that these speech acts are reflective of genocidal intent on the part of their author. It has not done so.

Even if some of the statements were reflective of genocidal intent, the Gambia would have to prove, by conclusive evidence, that the speech acts in question are attributable to Myanmar. Again, The Gambia has failed to do so.

Even if some statements by individuals reflecting genocidal intent could be attributed to Myanmar, the State's genocidal intent cannot be established by way of attributing the genocidal intent of one or more individuals. Accordingly, The Gambia's submissions on hate speech are so far removed from, and fall so short of proving genocidal intent, that they cannot be sustained.

Alina Miron Delivers Reply Arguments at ICJ

ALINA Miron submitted the rebuttal arguments on allegations concerning the violation of the obligation to punish and the destruction of evidence for the case of The Gambia versus Myanmar at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, on 20 January.

She stated: It now falls to me to refute the allegations concerning the obligation to punish genocide, developed by The Gambia in Chapter 11 of its Counter-Memorial and Chapter 8 of its Reply. In essence, The Gambia considers that Myanmar has failed in its obligation to punish genocide because it has not conducted a serious investigation or brought proceedings in relation to the facts brought to the Court's attention and be-

cause it has attempted to conceal evidence relating to these events.

The Gambia does not show how the failure to conduct serious investigations and the concealment of evidence – assuming these were established, which is not the case here – would in themselves contribute to the destruction of the protected group, when they are not part of the *actus reus*. Nor does it demonstrate how these facts would retrospectively shed light on the specific intention to destroy a protected group that the respondent State allegedly had at the critical moments.

However, this interpretation has not been validated by any international case law, not even by that invoked by The Gambia, which, in oral proceedings, was

reduced to nothing.

The Gambia does not explain how the Court could adopt the approach it proposes, given that it has no jurisdiction over individual criminal responsibility and that the Gambia itself attributes the material acts in question to members of the Myanmar armed forces and police.

In any event, if the ultimate objective of invoking the obligation to prosecute is to bypass the requirement to prove *dolus specialis* or to attribute certain potentially criminal acts to Myanmar, it is bound to fail. Indeed, while The Gambia was unable to provide evidence of this in its demonstration of the commission of genocide, it cannot dispense with this requirement by invoking a complementary but

distinct responsibility for failure to repress.

Since The Gambia has failed to fulfil its burden of proving that genocide was committed, there is simply no need to examine the allegations of impunity and destruction of evidence. It is therefore for the sake of completeness that I will show that Myanmar did not fail to fulfil its obligation under the Convention to punish genocide.

The obligation to punish, like the obligation to prevent, is an obligation of conduct and not of result, as stated by The Gambia. The parties to the Convention have an obligation to use all appropriate means at their disposal to punish those responsible for genocide. A contracting party is only liable if it has manifestly

failed to implement the measures available to it for this purpose.

What is certain is that the obligation to punish is only enforceable against a Party if the alleged acts fall within the scope of the Convention. This requirement is linked to the Convention's scope *ratione materiae*. However, Gambia tends to accuse Myanmar of failing to punish «crimes/atrocities committed against the Rohingya in general or, more specifically, 'war crimes' committed during the anti-terrorist operations of 2016 and 2017. It is clear, however, that the obligation to punish under the Convention applies only to acts referred to in Article III of the Convention.

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NATIONAL

Sam Blom-Cooper Presents Rebuttal Arguments at ICJ

MR Sam Blom-Cooper, Advocate for Myanmar, submitted the rebuttal arguments that genocide has not been established for the case of The Gambia versus Myanmar at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, on 20 January.

He stated: I will present to you now the reasons why The Gambia has failed to prove the acts have been committed that constitute the *actus reus* of genocide; or any such acts were committed with the requisite or specific intent physically or biologically to destroy the claimed group as such.

The Gambia's evidence also lacks weight due to the pervasive anonymity of the ultimate sources of information, and the fact that the FFM reports and other reports relied upon were not the product of a court, or court-like process. It is another extraordinary feature of this case that not even the Applicant, let alone Myanmar or the Court, knows the identities of the vast majority of witnesses in this case. I turn now to deal specifically with the events of 2016 and 2017.

In the Croatia case, this Court held that the term "killing" in Article II (a) does not apply to civilian deaths occurring as a result of use of force exclusively directed against military targets,

if the civilian deaths were not caused deliberately. Analogously, it will not apply to the death of armed persons engaged in committing a terrorist attack, in the course of a necessary military or security operation; or to civilian deaths during such operations, if such operations were exclusively directed at legitimate targets, and the civilian casualties were not caused deliberately.

Throughout its case, The Gambia does not attempt to quantify how many of those who allegedly died in the operations of 2016 and 2017 were actively participating in the violence. Instead, The Gambia merely refers to the FFM's unverified 'death toll' figures and the vague and generalized claim that the operations in August 2017 "directly resulted in more than 10,000 deaths". The evidence presented by The Gambia.

While there is no specific numeric threshold in respect of killings within Article II (a), given the estimated size of the Bengali population in northern Rakhine State before August 2017 was approximately 1.4 million, The Gambia's estimated number of deaths would have been insufficient to contribute to the physical or biological destruction of the group, and would have been incapable of bringing about its physical destruction.

I turn next to paragraph (b) of Article II, which refers to "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group". Paragraph (b) applies only to acts of intentionally causing serious bodily or mental harm. Thus, this provision does not extend to bodily or mental harm inflicted by combatants on each other in the course of battle in armed conflict. Nor does it extend to serious harm inflicted upon insurgents or terrorists in battle or during law enforcement operations. Nor does it extend to unintentional collateral casualties in the course of such operations.

Restrictions on, or deprivation of, food must be more than "occasional denials of food supplies", but must be "of a systematic or general nature", "calculated to bring about the physical destruction in whole or in part" of the group. It is perhaps telling that The Gambia elected to remove the very section of the FFM dedicated to "Access to food and malnutrition" from its Annex of its Memorial. It does not support its case.

The Gambia fails to identify any evidence of deliberate deprivation of medical care, let alone any restriction on medical care that comes close to meeting the threshold within Article II (c).

The Gambia does not show

that the movement of part of the population to Bangladesh occurred "in circumstances calculated to result in the total or partial physical destruction of the group".

The Gambia has not addressed how any of these alleged acts constitute measures calculated to bring about the physical or biological destruction of the Bengali population as such. To the contrary, the evidence shows that Bengalis have readily been able to marry, procreate, and earn a living in northern Rakhine State. An illuminating example of evidence in this regard is to be found within The Gambia's own evidence, such that 51 of 55 (i.e. 93 per cent) of The Gambia's signed witness statements originate from married persons, and that 50 of 55 (i.e. 91 per cent) are parents to children, with on average five each.

I now proceed to paragraph (d) of Article II, which refers to "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group". According to The Gambia, the *actus reus* of this paragraph is satisfied by what is alleged to be a high prevalence of rape and other brutal forms of sexual violence. The Gambia claims that such acts impaired the willingness and ability of alleged victims to procreate, both because it affected their pos-

sibility of marriage, and because the trauma has led them not to procreate.

Put shortly, this argument fails for the same reasons it was rejected in the Croatia case, in that there was no evidence "that the acts of sexual violence were perpetrated to prevent births within the group".

The Gambia's evidence does not show that any alleged acts of rape and sexual violence committed during Myanmar's military operations have, in fact, prevented meaningful numbers from finding spouses or procreating.

The Gambia does not specify exactly when or where these particular alleged incidents are said to have taken place, or the evidential basis for the assertion. Nor does The Gambia establish by evidence any causal nexus between any alleged incident of sexual violence and the prevention of any births.

The first feature of the evidence to be considered is the existence and activities of ARSA in the region, and the context in which the operations of 2016 and 2017 took place. In short, ARSA was a serious threat. It was both necessary and justified to deploy military force to confront such a threat when it commenced its attacks.

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The fact that certain crimes may have gone unpunished or concealed does not mean that they constituted genocide. In order to hold Myanmar accountable for its obligation to punish, The Gambia must demonstrate that genocide was likely committed. These minimum details are necessary to determine whether the facts and conduct in question are likely to fall within the scope of the Convention. However, as my colleagues have shown, The Gambia's allegations are singularly lacking in precision.

It is still by denying the discretionary power of the territorial State that The Gambia can assert that the absence of prosecution constitutes in itself proof of a clear violation of the obligation to punish, when in fact it is a matter of exercising the power to assess evidence and qualify the facts. Here too, the

Gambia is posing as a premise what it must prove. In this case, it must prove that the absence of prosecution is a manifest violation of the obligation to prosecute – in this case, this implies reasonable grounds to believe that genocide was committed by the persons whom Myanmar should have prosecuted. In the absence of such evidence, and given that the obligation to punish is a duty of diligence, The Gambia cannot suggest that the absence of prosecution or conviction constitutes *ipso facto* a breach of the obligation to punish.

To an excessive degree – Myanmar has prosecuted certain members of its armed forces for acts committed during anti-terrorist operations and some have been sentenced to prison terms. Moreover, The Gambia acknowledges this, while down-playing these examples – because it considers the sentences

unsatisfactory.

Finally, there are the allegations of systematic destruction of Rohingya villages by fire or bulldozers, which The Gambia considers to be evidence of *dolus specialis* on two counts: as an indicator of genocide and as a practice of destroying evidence to conceal the crime. In reality, The Gambia's allegations regarding the destruction of evidence suffer from the same deficiencies in narrative and evidence as the allegations of genocidal acts. My colleagues have analysed them at length, and I will be brief. Here, too, many questions arise about the relevance of the lengthy discussions our opponents have devoted to this issue.

How could these facts constitute evidence of genocide? In themselves, they do not constitute either *actus reus* or *dolus specialis*. The Gambia does not even dispute this.

The Gambia conflates allegations relating to events during the 2016 and 2017 counter-terrorism operations with those relating to subsequent events. Myanmar accepts that destruction of homes took place during the counter-terrorism operations, but these were aimed at legitimate military targets. Other destruction was caused by the ARSA.

Contrary to what Gambia claims, the destruction is far from widespread. I would nevertheless point out that, despite the tendency to generalize geographically, which is also present in the allegations concerning the destruction of evidence, hundreds of Bengali Muslim villages in northern Rakhine State were not affected.

I finally come to the allegations concerning Myanmar's lack of cooperation with certain United Nations bodies, in par-

ticular the investigative mechanism and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights.

Myanmar has explained, in its communications with the United Nations and in its submissions in the present case, that its refusal to recognize the mandate of the fact-finding mission was motivated by its doubts about its impartiality. The same applies to the investigative mechanism established after the fact-finding commission. It is not surprising that The Gambia, whose case relies heavily on the reports of these bodies, does not give credence to Myanmar's concerns about the investigative methods on which the work of these bodies is based. I would emphasize that Myanmar has the right to challenge them and their conclusions without this constituting evidence of *dolus specialis* or a violation of the obligation to punish.

Preserve the fine traditions of Myanmar in the month Tabodwe

HISTORICAL evidence shows that Htamanne (traditional glutinous rice dish) festivals were continuously held in Tabodwe, the 11th month of the Myanmar calendar, as far back as the reigns of ancient Myanmar kings. As Tabodwe is the coldest season of the year, people's bodies tend to lose warmth and energy. Therefore, consuming nutrient-rich htamanne, prepared with oil and protein-rich ingredients, was regarded by ancient Myanmar elders as a seasonal food from a traditional medical perspective, as it helped nourish the body and maintain healthy skin.

The preparation of Htamanne is a festival that symbolizes unity and solidarity. Along with recalling historical traditions and auspicious beliefs, people consume it as one of the four seasonal foods and offer it in donations. As a festival believed to bring benefits in both the present and the hereafter, the Htamanne festival continues to be celebrated joyfully to this day.

For this reason, most Buddhists commemorate Tabodwe by offering fire offerings made with fragrant wood at pagodas, stupas, and religious shrines in reverence to the Buddha. The Fire Offering Festival is also known by other names, such as the Bonfire Festival, Fire Merit-Making Festival, or Fire Donation Festival. In the present era, as Fire Offering Festivals are held less frequently, it is considered important to preserve and pass down this festival as a traditional cultural heritage.

One of the seasonal religious festivals held during Tabodwe is the Fire Offering Festival. As Tabodwe is an extremely cold period, the festival involves offering firewood and braziers to the Lord Buddha and the Sangha, and is therefore called the Fire Offering Festival. According to traditional belief, during ancient times, the Buddha Himself endured the cold by keeping warm with a fire brazier.

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Hence, the Htamanne Festival held during Tabodwe is one of the traditional seasonal festivals of the Myanmar New Year cycle and is a customary celebration well suited to the cold climate of the season. As a Myanmar traditional cultural festival rich in auspicious values, the Htamanne Festival and the Fire Offering Festival must be preserved and promoted by the Myanmar people so that they endure for generations to come.

Internationally Overlooked ARSA's Terrorist Acts at Myanmar's Western Gateway

By Min Khant

WHEN we speak of a nation, its sovereignty and territorial integrity are as vital as life itself. No government of any country in the world would simply look on and do nothing if terrorists launched attacks against its security forces, police outposts, and innocent civilians. Such a response is legitimate both under international law and under a nation's right to self-defence.

What will be discussing today is a frightening truth that is being concealed under the banner of "human rights," widely portrayed and amplified by global media outlets. That truth concerns the brutal acts of the terrorist group ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army), which has taken root in the Maungdaw area of Rakhine State, which is Myanmar's western gateway, as well as the political manoeuvring and deceptive actions operating behind it.

The Government of Myanmar has designated the ARSA group as a terrorist organization in accordance with the law since 25 August 2017. The root cause of the case between Myanmar and The Gambia at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which has attracted global attention, is the ARSA. The case began in 2019 following the Tatmadaw's response conducted in accordance with the Rules of Engagement (ROE) in response to the ARSA's terrorist acts.

Although it has now reached the year 2026, the cases brought against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) have still not been concluded. Myanmar

is still facing the lawsuit filed by The Gambia, which accuses the country of committing genocide. In this case brought by The Gambia, the international community has been encouraged to perceive Myanmar as a human rights violator; however, the extremist terrorist group ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army), which is the real perpetrator behind the victims of terrorist attacks, killings, and mass displacement on the ground, appears to be deliberately ignored. It is particularly astonishing to hear that the ARSA group is concealed to the extent that it does not even exist in the submissions of The Gambia, the plaintiff in this case.

If one assumes that ARSA is merely a small rebellion group harbouring a grievance against locals, it would be a serious mistake. A solid organizational structure, support from international extremist networks, and key objectives lie behind it. While much of the international media seeks to portray ARSA as "freedom fighters", a closer examination of its origins



Hafiz Tohar and his terrorist group members.

ARSA (formerly known as Aqa Mul Mujahidin) is a man named Attaullah, also known as Hafiz Tohar, aged 45, who was born in Karachi, Pakistan, raised in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and later moved to Kyaukpyinseik Village in Maungdaw Township, Myanmar.

Hafiz Tohar is an individual who underwent six months of military training with the Taliban, a terrorist organization based in Pakistan. He was not a lone actor but operated with a core group of 12 members, including Pakistani national Khalid, and Ibrahim, Azza and Arab Tullah, residents of the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh. They were associated with the RSO terrorist group and initiated terrorist activities in the Maungdaw region under the name Aqa Mul Mujahidin. Their group received financial support from certain religious leaders in Saudi Arabia and maintained connections with international terrorist networks.

The ARSA group did not emerge suddenly. It traces its origins to the Mujahideen insurgents of 1948, evolving through stages such as RLP, RPF, and RSO. In 2016, it began operations under the name of Aqa Mul Mujahidin (AMM) and later changed its name to ARSA. Their objective is clear: to carve out areas, including Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung in the northern Rakhine State from Myanmar's map and establish a new state called Arkistan. To achieve this goal, they received financial and technical support from extremist organizations in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. To realize this ambition, they had devised a brutal four-stage grand plan.

In the first phase, Bengalis connected to government departments would be labelled as traitors and assassinated. In the second phase, Bengalis who disobeyed ARSA's orders would be killed. In the third phase, local ethnic people (Rakhine, Mro, and Daingnet) would be killed and forced to flee their homes. Finally, in the fourth phase, security personnel and their outposts would be attacked in order to seize territory. This is not a political claim. It is clearly nothing but terrorism.

headquarters in the Maungdaw and Buthidaung regions.

This was not a normal attack. It was a well-organized military operation utilizing hundreds of forces. Ever since then, it has become evident that they were destroying regional peace and stability and initiating terrorism. On that single day alone, 38 clashes occurred, resulting in the loss of 12 security personnel and 6 weapons. Due to these attacks, 11 security personnel and one Immigration Department staff member were killed. Moreover, ARSA members also planted mines on roads and blew up bridges. International community should consider that situation. Which government would remain passive if thousands of armed men simultaneously attacked 30 police stations in its country? Could the Myanmar government afford to look on the situation without conducting any counter-terrorism operations? It must be clearly understood whether this is a claim for human rights or an act of terrorist aggression.

The Hafiz Tohar's group did not only carry out terrorist attacks. They also disseminated extremist propaganda through social media platforms, releasing around 10 video files. In his video files, he proclaimed statements like 'Only Islam must exist in the Arakan region' and explicitly incited with calls such as 'Come kill the members of other faiths, carry out Jihad, everyone come out.' The undeniable truth of their terrorist acts is evident in the video files circulating on social networks, accompanied by translations in Myanmar and English, showing their arson attacks against Rakhine villages while giving commands in the Bengali language.

The most horrific aspect of ARSA's actions is the killings based on racial hatred. ARSA did not target only security personnel, but it also deliberately attacked and murdered local ethnic communities and Hindu civilians. On the morning of 25 August 2017, ARSA terrorists abducted 52 Hindus from Ye-baukkyia Village and 53 from Khamaungseik (South) Village, totalling 105 people. Among them, the remains of 45 Hindu victims were later exhumed after they had been brutally beheaded and buried together in a mass grave.

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Nor did the violence end there. ARSA also mercilessly murdered members of the local Mro ethnic people and the local Daingnet people. Even more horrifying is the fact that ARSA also beheaded followers of Islam, whom it regarded as traitors for rejecting its violent ideology or for allegedly cooperating with the government. These facts demonstrate that ARSA is not a group for the human rights movement, but rather an extremist terrorist organization, similar to ISIS.

The Government merely conducted counter-terrorism operations in response to ARSA's terrorist attacks. Contrary to the accusations made by The Gambia and the OIC at the ICJ, there has been absolutely no genocide or extermination of the Bengali population in Myanmar. In any country in the world, when terrorists threaten territorial integrity and murder innocent civilians, the government has a responsibility to protect its citizens. The Myanmar Armed Forces and the police force targeted only ARSA terrorists and carried out their operations in accordance with the Rules of Engagement (ROE) to avoid harm to innocent civilians, as documented in investigation reports.

Behind the widely cited claims that hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled, there is also a major political trap orchestrated by ARSA. The ARSA group used Bengalis as human shields, and when their at-

tacks failed, they themselves set villages on fire and fled. They then threatened ordinary Bengali villagers, saying, "If you do not flee, the government troops will come and kill you," and "If you do not follow us, you will be killed as traitors," thereby forcing them to flee to the other country. At the same time, they enticed them with promises such as, "Once you reach the other country, you will live well with international aid and be resettled in a third country." Their objective was solely to create a refugee crisis and bring international pressure to bear on Myanmar.

As of now, until the 2026 ICJ case proceedings, the lawyers representing The Gambia have almost completely avoided mentioning the role of ARSA. Moreover, they have not addressed the fact that over 6,000 to 10,000 terrorists launched attacks using weapons and mines. Likewise, they cannot provide answers on how to resolve or compensate for such incidents.

Looking at the statements made by Mr Suleiman, the lawyer for The Gambia, in a BBC interview, it is evident that their objective leans more toward seeking compensation from Myanmar rather than pursuing justice. They have turned a blind eye to ARSA's terrorist acts and only referred to one-sided FFM (Fact-Finding Mission) reports. These reports do not reflect the true situation on the ground and are politically biased. The reluctance of the United Nations and international organizations to designate ARSA

as a terrorist organization is very dangerous. This amounts to the indirect encouragement of terrorism.

Up to 2026, ARSA has not disappeared, and they continue to hide in border areas and carry out terrorist activities through various means. They are still recruiting new members in refugee camps and threatening and killing those attempting to return. Myanmar, which is facing legal proceedings at the ICJ, continues to firmly address the situation in accordance with the law. Therefore, the international community should open its eyes and recognize the truth: Myanmar is not attacking the Bengali people out of hatred, but rather carrying out Counter-Terrorism Operations against the ARSA terrorist group, which poses a threat to the state.

The threat posed by ARSA to Myanmar's western gateway is not a problem for Myanmar alone. All countries opposing terrorism need to acknowledge and combat collectively such threats as a common enemy. The international community should not forget that while it tends to label all Bengalis as refugees, every member of ARSA is also Bengali. Myanmar, for its part, is responding with dignity and on solid legal grounds to the realities arising from the terrorist attacks carried out by the ARSA group against Bengali communities and the local Rakhine ethnic population. This article highlights the fact that it is now time to recognize and respect Myanmar's legitimate right to self-defence.

Sam Blom-Cooper Presents Rebuttal Arguments at ICJ

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Accordingly, Myanmar disseminated Rules of Engagement, which are accepted as being consistent with internationally-recognized standards, to its command headquarters and on pocket-cards to its personnel, in advance of conducting the operations. Such a step, to place limits on the use of military force, is manifestly at odds with the intent on the part of the State to destroy the protected group.

First, the operations in October 2016 only began after there had been a series of coordinated ARSA attacks upon security personnel and infrastructure in Maungtaw and Rathedaung Townships. On this occasion, ARSA's campaign of violence extended to more than 50 locations and involved many killings of non-Muslim civilians, not least at Kha Maung Seik.

Since early September 2017, the threat from ARSA to civilians and state security personnel has diminished, and accordingly, there have been no comparable military operations. The Gambia makes not a single allegation, and

has not adduced any evidence, of any killings or other serious acts of violence which it claims amount to demonstrations of genocidal intent by the Myanmar security services against Bengalis since that date, more than eight years ago. The Gambia has no explanation for how or why the violent expression of its alleged genocidal intent, said to be underpinned by a "deep-seated hatred", simply evaporated after seven days in late August 2017.

Accordingly, following the 2016 attacks, certain security measures were implemented, which included: requiring residents to remove fences from their homes; confiscating items that could be used as weapons, such as large knives; and imposing curfews, which applied to Bengali and non-Bengali residents alike.

To these alleged preparatory genocidal measures, The Gambia falsely suggests that Myanmar used starvation as a means of weakening the population and preparing it for destruction. This is, again, a claim without evidential support and simply wrong for the reasons given by

Ms Lawrie. In fact, the available evidence positively shows that Myanmar ensured the supply of food to affected Bengali communities, as security considerations would allow.

It is beyond doubt that a tight geographical nexus exists between ARSA activity and responsive military operations. As Ms Lawrie and I have set out in detail in respect of all 46 specific locations where genocidal violence is alleged, without exception, military operations were conducted only at, or in direct proximity to, locations where ARSA had attacked or was known to be active.

The Gambia uncritically adopts, and presents as conclusive, the FFM's 'reasonable grounds' estimate of "more than 10,000 deaths" as having been the direct result of the military operations in August 2017. By contrast, the total figure of "520 people killed" (comprising 376 ARSA fighters, 131 "ethnic/Hindu/Bengali people" and 13 "members of security force"), as recorded by Myanmar, is dismissed by the FFM merely because it does

not conform to its own estimate.

In any event, even if The Gambia's contended figure of 10,000 deaths was proven, and even if every one of those deaths was an intentional killing such as to come within Article II (a), this number would still be "small in relation to the size of the targeted part of the group", to follow the language of the Court in the Croatia case. The alleged targeted group of Bengalis in this case stood at approximately 1.4 million. The disputed figure of some 10,000 fatalities constitutes some 0.7 per cent of the total, which is about the same – in fact slightly less – than considered in Croatia.

In particular, at the time of the military operations of 2016 and 2017, 126,000 Bengalis were living in IDP camps in Rakhine State. There is no evidence that any of them were subjected to any military operations or other form of violence at all. There is also no evidence that conditions in those camps were such as to lead to the physical or biological destruction of those living there.

Testimony from multiple IIMM witnesses reveals that the

military would: ask them why they were leaving; or, tell them not to leave Myanmar; or, tell them they could go where they wished; or, photograph them in groups; or, direct them where to go; or, they simply ignored them. Moreover, Myanmar denies that sexual violence took place in the manner or on the scale alleged, and this has not been proved by The Gambia.

Myanmar accepts that, following the 2016 military operations, there were numerous arrests, detentions and prosecutions of Bengalis, mostly men, allegedly involved in ARSA's attacks. This was not indiscriminate targeting of any or all Bengalis, but only those reasonably suspected of involvement in ARSA's violence.

The Gambia claims that there was a deliberate targeting of Bengali leaders and that "Myanmar systematically detained, tortured and killed — often in public view — Rohingya community leaders, including religious leaders, throughout northern Rakhine State." It rests on the most

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Prof Stefan Talmon Delivers Rebuttal Arguments at ICJ

PROFESSOR Stefan Talmon presented the rebuttal arguments on alleged legal consequences for the case of The Gambia versus Myanmar at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, on 20 January.

He stated: My task this afternoon is to deal with the remedies claimed by The Gambia for the alleged violations of the Genocide Convention and the Provisional Measures Order of 23 January 2020.

There is no question of remedies because The Gambia has not established by fully conclusive evidence that Myanmar is in breach of any of its obligations under the Convention or the Court's Order.

The Gambia, as a non-injured State, requests a declaration that Myanmar has violated its obligations under the Genocide Convention and an order that it shall immediately cease any ongoing violation of the Convention. In addition, it requests the Court to order Myanmar to provide assurances and guarantees of non-repetition, and declare that it must make reparation in the interest of the alleged victims of genocide, including a long list of specific acts of restitution, as well as compensation and additional means of satisfaction.

When dealing with remedies, three questions must be distinguished: First, whether the Court has jurisdiction to entertain a particular remedy; Second, whether there is a legal basis for the remedy claimed; and Third, whether the factual and legal requirements of the legal basis are met. I will deal with

these three questions in turn.

Myanmar submits that the Court does not have jurisdiction to entertain a claim by a non-injured State like The Gambia for reparation in the interest of alleged victims of genocide.

Article IX provides that the Court may decide disputes "relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide". The Court's jurisdiction with regard to remedies thus depends on what is meant by the term "responsibility of a State for genocide".

The term "responsibility of a State" must be interpreted in light of "the rules of general international law ... on responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts". These general rules on State responsibility do not provide for reparation to individual victims of violations of international law, but for reparation to their State.

The term "reparation" is understood as "reparation for the injury caused". Under the general rules of State responsibility, only the State is injured – either itself or through its nationals. The Court's jurisdiction under Article IX concerning reparation is thus limited to inter-State responsibility.

In the Bosnia case, the Court held that "a finding that 'the Court has jurisdiction' ... does not necessarily prevent subsequent examination of any jurisdictional issues later arising that have not been resolved, with the force of res judicata." In that case, the Court distinguished between a finding on the existence of jurisdiction and on the extent of jurisdiction. A finding that the Court had jurisdiction did not preclude a later decision on the

extent of that jurisdiction. The question of what kind of remedies the Court may entertain under Article IX of the Genocide Convention concerns the extent of its jurisdiction. This question was not addressed, let alone decided in the Court's Preliminary Objections Judgment. The question has thus not been resolved with the force of res judicata.

It is submitted that, in light of the meaning of the term "responsibility of a State for genocide" in Article IX, the Court should decide now that its jurisdiction does not extend to claims for reparation in the interest of alleged victims of genocide, because the alleged victims themselves do not have a right to claim reparation under the Genocide Convention.

The Preliminary Objections Judgment neither addressed nor decided the question of whether there is a legal basis for the remedies claimed by The Gambia. That question was therefore not decided with the force of res judicata in the Preliminary Objections Judgment, as claimed by The Gambia. The Court would have to decide this question now if it found a violation of the Genocide Convention and that it had jurisdiction to entertain a claim for reparation in the interest of alleged victims of genocide.

Such a claim cannot be based on the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law. The Basic Principles and Guidelines are not legally binding and do not create any legal obligation

under international law to make reparation directly to the alleged victims of genocide. Even less so do they establish a right on the part of non-injured States to claim reparation in the interest of the alleged victims.

The Gambia relies for its reparation claim also on Article 48, paragraph 2 (b), of the ILC's Articles on State Responsibility, according to which non-injured States may claim from the responsible State performance of the obligation of reparation in the interest of the beneficiaries of obligations erga omnes partes. However, this provision is not reflective of customary international law, as shown in detail in Myanmar's Counter-Memorial.

If The Gambia wants to rely on Article 48, paragraph 2 (b), it must prove its customary international law status. It has not done so. There is no constant and widespread State practice, let alone opinio juris, for a right to claim reparation in the interest of the beneficiaries of obligations erga omnes partes. Claims by three States in ongoing litigation are hardly capable of establishing a rule of customary international law, especially if such claims are opposed by the respondent States in the proceedings in question.

The existence of a right under general international law cannot be based on flawed logical deductions. That a non-injured State may invoke responsibility for erga omnes partes violations does not automatically equate to a right to claim reparation in the interest of the beneficiaries of the obligation breached. As the Court held in its Prelimi-

nary Objections Judgment in the present case, "any State party to the Genocide Convention may invoke the responsibility of another State party ... with a view to determining the alleged failure to comply with its obligations erga omnes partes under the Convention and to bringing that failure to an end". There was no mention of bringing a claim for reparation, despite such a claim having been expressly raised in The Gambia's application instituting proceedings.

The Gambia has also not explained how it has established the interest of the alleged victims. As there are different forms of reparation, the alleged victims may prefer compensation over restitution. Considering also that Bengali Muslims resident in Myanmar would, as taxpayers, indirectly be paying for their own compensation, they may be content with declaratory relief.

The Gambia rather seeks an abstract and general declaration by the Court that Myanmar must make restitution or pay compensation for any damage caused, without specifying that damage, in the hope of extracting from Myanmar maximum amounts of money in subsequent negotiations. The Court's task, however, is not to make abstract statements of law but to settle concrete disputes. The Court has never ordered compensation for a breach of a Provisional Measures Order because it has considered satisfaction by way of a declaration of breach the "adequate form" of reparation. The request for any other remedies should be dismissed as being without any legal basis.

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tenuous, anonymous, summary hearsay evidence that does not even indicate who or what the source was, nor when, where, or how any such alleged incidents are said to have taken place. It is little more than an assertion, from which no pattern of conduct can be said to arise, nor from which an inference of genocidal intent could reasonably be in-

ferred.

There was no "consistent pattern of conduct" from which an intent to destroy any protected group as such can be inferred. While there was a significant number of casualties in three locations where the most intense clashes with ARSA took place, in the other 43 locations, alleged violence and loss of life were far less, and often minimal or even

non-existent. Without exception, the counter terrorism operations were responsive to ARSA violence.

Myanmar's operations were only conducted in locations proximate to those where ARSA was active; Bengali villages where ARSA was not active were simply not subject to any form of military engagement. Indeed, many Bengali villages were completely

untouched.

The operations were short-lived, lasting only a matter of days. No allegations of homicide, or even an assault, post-date 5 September 2017, which begs the question why expression of the alleged genocidal intent disappeared so precipitously and remained so?

Myanmar did not attempt to harm a single individual out

of 126,000 Bengali Muslims living in the Internally Displaced Persons camps in Rakhine State, who, on any view, would have been supremely vulnerable to destruction had a genocidal intent existed. Myanmar is confident that this Court will carefully and fairly assess all of the evidence, and when it does, will conclude that genocide has not been established, and did not take place.

NATIONAL BUSINESS

CBM pumps over THB3.4M into forex market

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) injected over 3.4 million baht into the foreign exchange market along with sales of over US\$938,000 to edible oil-importing countries on 20 January.

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold over \$1.75 million to edible oil-importing companies on 19 January, in addition to an injection of \$700,000 and over three million baht.

CBM announced on 16 January that it would sell 30 million baht to the importers.

CBM sold over \$1.83 million to edible oil-importing companies and \$470,500 to fuel oil-importing companies on that day after an injection of over 4.8 million baht on 16

January.

CBM injected over \$1.5 million into edible oil-importing companies and over \$2 million into fuel oil-importing companies on 15 January, along with sales of \$844,000 and over 7.35 million baht.

CBM announced on 14 January that it would sell \$25 million to those engaged in the fuel oil sector. Furthermore, CBM sold over \$1.3 million to edible oil-importing companies, in addition to an injection of over 1.88 million baht into the market on the same day.

CBM sold over \$1.39 million to edible oil-importing companies on 13 January 2026 after injection of over 965,550 yuan and over three billion baht



into the market.

CBM sold \$50,000 to edible oil-importing companies on 12 January 2026, along with an injection of 659,000 yuan and over 2.18 million baht.

CBM pumped \$34 million,

11 million baht and 300,000 yuan into the market in December 2025. CBM made the injection of over \$21 million, 2.4 million yuan and 1.5 million baht in November and 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

AMD to procure over 10,000 gallons of premium diesel

SYSTEMATIC Farmland Development Team (Upper Myanmar) of the Agricultural Mechanization Department invited Myanmar citizen suppliers to procure over 10,120 gallons of premium diesels to implement 200 systematic farm land areas, with Union Budget during the 2025-2026 Financial Year.

Those 200 farmlands are located in Koyan (South) village, Nabekon village tract,

Myothit Township, Magway Region. Tender documents are available until 3 February at the department in Magway Region. Tender can be submitted by 3 February (1 noon).

Individuals can enquire about details of open tender rules and regulations through the contact number of the department at 09 250893397. — NN/KK

Shan State govt calls for EOI to develop container terminal

THE Shan State government called for Myanmar citizen business entities to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to develop the container terminal for the second time, according to the Proposal Evaluating Committee in Taunggyi City.

This container terminal project is located on 19.8 acres in the ring road of the Htiphaung village tract in Taunggyi Township of the Shan State Development

Supervisory Office.

Tender documents are available starting from 12 January and 11 February 2026 at the Engineering Division of the Shan State Development Supervisory Office. The deadline for submission is 4 pm on 11 February. Only those qualified applicants can proceed to tendering. Individuals can enquire about details of the Engineering Division by dialling 081 2121023. — NN/KK

DICA: 400 companies fail to file AR in Dec

STATISTICS of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) indicated that 400 were struck off the register in December 2025 as they failed to file annual returns (AR) on the online registry system, MyCO.

The DICA report showed failure of 1,500 companies each in January and February, 900 in March to submit AR. No company fails to file AR in April. Some 400 companies in May, 600 in June, 1,000 in July, 400 in August, 200 in September did not file AR. No company is listed for failing to submit AR in October. Four hundred companies failed to submit in November 2025 as well.

The DICA notified those companies which failed to file their AR on the MyCO were struck off the register from the date of the directive, under 430 (F) of the Myanmar Companies Law, according to the DICA's notification.

A total of 19,000 companies also failed to submit the AR in 2024. The registration and re-registration of companies on the MyCO website commenced on 1 August 2018, in keeping with the Myanmar Companies Law 2017.

All registered companies



The facade of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) office.

need to submit AR on the MyCO registry system within two months of incorporation, and at least once every year (not later than one month after the anniversary of the incorporation), according to Section 97 of the law.

Under Section 266 (A) of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017, public companies must submit annual returns and financial statements (G-5) simultaneously. All overseas corporations must submit ARs in the prescribed format on MyCO within 28 days of the financial year ending, under Section 53 (A-1) of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017.

As per DICA's report, thousands of companies were suspended for failing to submit AR forms before the due date. Newly established companies

are required to submit ARs within two months of incorporation or face a fine of K100,000 for filing late returns.

The DICA has notified that any company which fails to submit its AR within 13 months will be notified of its suspension (I-9A). If it fails to submit the AR within 28 days of receiving the notice, the system will show the company's status as suspended. Companies can restore their status only after shelling out a fine of K50,000 for the AR fee, K100,000 for restoration of the company on the Register, and K100,000 for late filing of documents, totalling K250,000. If a company fails to restore its status within six months of suspension, the registrar will strike its name off the register, according to the DICA notice. — NN/KK

India banking sector set for steady earnings recovery

THE outlook for the banking sector remains positive, with earnings expected to recover steadily over the medium term, supported by stable margins, improving asset quality, and a pickup in loan growth, according to a report by Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

The report estimates that the banking sector will deliver an earnings CAGR of around 16 per

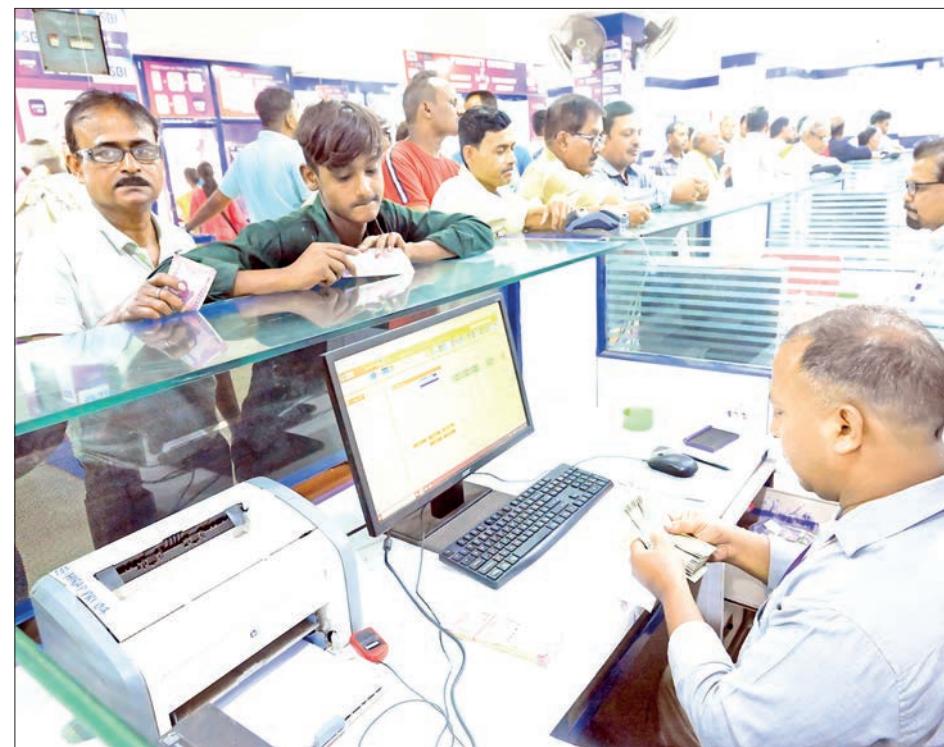
cent over FY26-28E, signalling a gradual but sustained recovery after a period of pressure.

It stated, "Sector outlook positive; Estimate earnings CAGR of approx. 16 per cent over FY27-28E. Buoyed by resilient margin performance and improved asset quality, we have earlier raised our aggregate FY26/27 earnings estimates by approx. three per cent/one per

cent in 2QFY26 results, mainly led by PSU banks".

The report added that resilient margin performance and improved asset quality have supported earnings, prompting it to earlier raise its aggregate FY26 and FY27 earnings estimates by around three per cent and 1 per cent, respectively, after the 2QFY26 results, mainly led by public sector banks.

— ANI



India's banking sector is on track for a steady recovery, with earnings expected to grow strongly over FY26-28. **PHOTO: ANI**

Netflix shifts to all-cash offer for WBD in bidding war with Paramount Skydance

NETFLIX announced Tuesday it has revised its nearly \$83 billion bid for Warner Bros. Discovery (WBD) to an all-cash offer amid an escalating bidding war with Paramount Skydance.

In a joint statement, Netflix and WBD said the revised agreement "simplifies the transaction structure, provides greater certainty of value for WBD stockholders, and accelerates the path to a WBD stockholder vote."



The Netflix logo is displayed at Netflix studios in Los Angeles, California, on 7 October 2025. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

The all-cash transaction remains valued at \$27.75 per WBD share, unchanged from the prior transaction structure.

WBD stockholders will also receive the additional value of shares of Discovery Global following its separation from WBD,

according to the statement. Netflix, the world's largest streaming company by subscriber numbers, sent shockwaves through Hollywood on 5 December when it announced an agreement to acquire major parts of WBD, including its studios and streaming business. Discovery Global, the parent company of cable networks such as CNN and TNT, is not included in the proposal. —Xinhua

Mitsubishi Motors names Kishiura as 1st new president in 5 years

MITSUBISHI Motors Corp. said Wednesday it appointed corporate officer Keisuke Kishiura as president, effective 1 April marking the first change in the post in five years. Kishiura, 56, will also serve as chief operating officer in a newly created post, while President Takao Kato will assume the CEO post. Kato, 63, will also become chairman after a general shareholders' meeting in June. The management change

comes as the automaker is struggling with net losses amid a tough business environment that includes high US tariffs, while seeking ties with Nissan Motor Co and Honda Motor Co.

Since joining Mitsubishi Motors in 1993, Kishiura has led its US operations and worked in Thailand and the Netherlands. Since April 2025, he has served as a corporate officer and head of the corporate planning division. — Kyodo

Railway safety questioned as Spain reels from twin train disasters

SPAIN'S railway system was under scrutiny on Wednesday after a commuter train crashed near Barcelona, just days after at least 42 people died in a collision between two high-speed trains.

A train driver died and 37 people were injured — several seriously — late on Tuesday when the commuter train hit a retaining wall that fell onto the tracks in Gelida near Barcelona, regional officials said.

Spain's railway operator Adif said the wall likely collapsed due to heavy rainfall that swept across Spain's northeastern region of Catalonia in recent days.

Spain was already reeling from Sunday's collision in the southern region of Andalusia, which was the country's deadliest rail accident in more than a decade.

A minute's silence for the victims was held on Wednesday at the opening of Madrid's annual international tourism trade fair. — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V RANONG MOE VOY.NO. (009)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V RANONG MOE VOY.NO. (009)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-1-2026** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 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 ANDAMAN SEA GATEWAYS GROUP OF COMPANIES LIMITED

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V CTP FORTUNE VOY.NO. (357W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V CTP FORTUNE VOY.NO. (357W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-1-2026** 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 NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING

ROLLING UPDATES

Putin-Witkoff meeting scheduled for Thursday, Kremlin confirms



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with US President's Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff before a meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia on 25 April 2025. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK/FILE**

Witkoff noted that significant progress has been made in recent weeks towards resolving the Ukrainian conflict.

US President's special envoy Steve Witkoff says he plans to travel on Thursday to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Reuters reports, citing Witkoff's interview with CNBC.

"I think that, and then I am going to Moscow with Jared [Kushner]... And I will leave Thursday night and arrive in Moscow late at night," Witkoff told CNBC.

In a separate interview with Bloomberg, Witkoff said that significant progress has been made in recent weeks towards resolving the Ukrainian conflict.

"I know we have made more

progress in the last six or seven weeks since Geneva than we have made ... in the last three or four years," he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed that the meeting is scheduled for Thursday.

"Yes, indeed, such contacts are on the president's schedule for tomorrow," Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian media.

Witkoff also said that he plans to hold a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday, Reuters reported, quoting Witkoff's interview with CNBC. — SPUTNIK

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chile president picks Pinochet lawyers as ministers

CHILE'S right-wing president-elect Jose Antonio Kast on Tuesday named two ex-lawyers of former dictator Augusto Pinochet to lead the ministries of defence and human rights when he takes office in March.

Kast will be sworn in on March 11 as the first far-right head of state in Chile since the exit of Pinochet, whose brutal regime left deep scars on the South American nation.

Pinochet led a dictatorship from 1973 to 1990 that left more than 3,200 dead or missing, and tortured or imprisoned tens of thousands more.

Kast, a Pinochet admirer who won a landslide election victory last December, announced "a great team for difficult times", including Fernando Barros, 68, as his defense minister and Fernando Rabat, 53, as minister of justice and human rights.

Both were members of Pinochet's legal team. — AFP

Israel demolishes UN agency premises in East Jerusalem

ISRAELI authorities on Tuesday demolished several buildings within the East Jerusalem compound of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), an action that drew immediate and sharp condemnation from the UN body.

In a post on social media platform X, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini described the move as "an unprecedented attack against a United Nations agency and its premises" and "a new level of open and deliberate defiance of international law".

Lazzarini warned that it set a dangerous precedent for the safety of all international organizations. — Xinhua

France pushes for NATO drills in Greenland, pledges to join: Reports



Representative photo: NATO soldiers during a military exercise in 2024. France has now called for similar drills in Greenland. **PHOTO: JONATHAN NACKSTRAND/ AFP/FILE**

FRANCE has called for NATO exercises to be held in Greenland and has expressed its readiness to join the drills, according to media reports Wednesday, citing the French president's office.

Last week, the Danish Defense Ministry said that it would beef up its military presence in Greenland with its NATO allies by stepping up exercises in the region.

A group of 13 German

service personnel has already arrived in Greenland for a reconnaissance mission, joining personnel from several other European countries who sent military staff to the Arctic island. — SPUTNIK

SPORTS

Myanmar bags eight medals at ASEAN Para Games

SWIMMING events for men and women at the XIII ASEAN Para Games, hosted by Thailand, took place yesterday morning at the 80th Birthday Anniversary Commemorative Stadium in Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat), Thailand.

In the men's 50-metre backstroke event, Aung Myint Myat won Myanmar's first-ever gold medal at the Games, while Indonesia secured the silver medal and Viet Nam took the bronze. In the men's 200-metre breaststroke event, Nanda Soe Min of Myanmar claimed the gold medal, followed by host Thailand with silver and Viet Nam with bronze. In the men's 100-metre freestyle event, Thailand won the gold medal, Myanmar swimmer Soe Win earned the silver, and Viet Nam took the bronze. In another men's 200-metre breaststroke event, Malaysia secured the gold medal, Myanmar's Min Htoo won the silver, and Indonesia claimed the bronze.

In the men's shotput event, Tin Nyo of Myanmar won the gold medal, Indonesia took the silver, and Aung Tun Lin of Myanmar earned the bronze. In the women's discus throw event,



Htet Htet Aye of Myanmar won the gold medal, while the Philippines secured both the silver and bronze medals. In another women's discus throw event, Malaysia won the gold medal, Myanmar athlete Chaw Akari took the silver, and Malaysia also claimed the bronze.

In yesterday's events, Myanmar athletes competed in athletics, swimming, goalball for the visually impaired, blind chess, table tennis, sitting volleyball, and football, winning a total of eight medals: four gold, three silver, and one bronze.

Following the competitions, an award presentation ceremony was held, during which Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation



Images show Myanmar's victorious para-athletes receiving cash awards from federation leaders and officials.

President Maj-Gen Hla Moe presented gold, silver, and bronze medals to Myanmar athletes, while responsible officials presented awards to other first-,

second-, and third-place winners.

In the opening group match of the sitting volleyball competition, the Myanmar team defeated the host Thailand team

in straight sets. In the seven-a-side football match, the Myanmar team and the host Thailand team played out a two-goal draw.

Afterwards, the Myanmar Paralympic Sports Federation awarded cash prizes of US\$300 to gold medallists, US\$200 to silver medallists, and US\$100 to bronze medallists. The prizes were presented by Federation President Maj-Gen Hla Moe on behalf of the federation.

On 22 January, Myanmar is scheduled to compete in blind chess, goalball for the visually impaired, swimming, sitting volleyball, football, athletics, shooting, table tennis, boccia, and bowling events at the Games. — MNA/KZL

ISPE FC draw with Shan United in Women's League

DEFENDING champions ISPE FC were held to a goalless draw by Shan United FC in Match 16 of the 2025–2026 Myanmar Women's League, played at Thuwunna Training Ground 1 on 21 January.

The draw proved a setback for ISPE FC at a crucial stage of the title race, leaving the champions under pressure in their bid to retain the league crown. With second-placed Ayeyawady FC set to play on 22 January, ISPE FC risk losing their top position should Ayeyawady secure a victory, making their upcoming head-to-head encounter decisive.

Shan United FC, meanwhile, have shown notable improvement in both performance and results this season. Although they are not yet in title contention, they have demonstrated resilience against top-ranked teams and have increasingly earned valuable points.

Despite sustained attacking pressure from ISPE FC, Shan United's defence and goalkeeper remained solid throughout the match, forcing the champions to settle for a share of the points.

Match 16 will continue on 22 January, with Young Lions facing Ayeyawady FC at Thuwunna Training Ground 1, Yangon United Women taking on YREO at the YUSC Ground, and Myawaddy FC meeting Yangon City FC at Padonma Ground. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

Man City humiliated, holders PSG stumble, Arsenal remain perfect

MANCHESTER City were on the wrong side of one of the biggest shocks in Champions League history on Tuesday, while holders Paris Saint-Germain also stumbled but Gabriel Jesus helped keep Arsenal perfect.

Pep Guardiola's Man City arrived in chilly Norway for their seventh and penultimate league-phase match against modest Bodo/Glimt as hot favourites.

But they came unstuck in the freezing conditions at the stadium 200 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, losing 3-1.



Sporting Lisbon's Luis Suarez came up with a last minute winner against holders PSG. **PHOTO: AFP**

Meanwhile, PSG have work to do to ensure direct qualification to the last 16 next week after being caught out late in Portugal.

Luis Suarez struck twice for Sporting Lisbon in the second half, sealing victory with a 90th-minute header after substitute Khvicha Kvaratskhelia had equalised for PSG after 79 minutes. The French club dropped to fifth with a home date against Newcastle in their last group stage fixture.

While the top eight secure direct entry to the last 16, teams placed ninth to 24th must navigate an additional two-legged play-off to join them. — AFP

Putin-Witkoff meeting
scheduled for Thursday,
Kremlin confirms

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WORLD

UN report flags critical global water shortages

Causes include chronic groundwater depletion, water overallocation, land degradation, deforestation, pollution, and climate change.

A UNITED Nations (UN) report released on Tuesday warned that the world is entering an era of “global water bankruptcy”.

The report, issued by the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, said chronic groundwater depletion, water overallocation, land degradation, deforestation and pollution, all compounded by climate change, are pushing many regions beyond their hydrological limits.

It noted that commonly used terms such as “water stress” and “water crisis” no longer reflect reality in many areas, as water systems have moved into a post-crisis stage marked by irreversible losses and an inability to recover to historical levels.

“This report tells an uncomfortable truth: Many regions are living beyond their hydrological means, and many critical water systems are already bankrupt,” said lead author Kaveh Madani. Water quality degradation further reduces usable water and accelerates bankruptcy, it says. The report called on governments to shift from short-term crisis response to “bankruptcy management”, urging measures to reduce and reallocate water demand, curb pollution and illegal withdrawals, and reset the global water agenda ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference. — Xinhua



The partially revealed bed of Woodhead Reservoir in Derbyshire, the UK, 13 May 2025. **PHOTO: VCG/CGTN**

Global tourism hit new record level in 2025 despite ‘weak’ US results

GLOBAL tourism hit a new record level in 2025 despite a dip in arrivals in North America due to “weak results” in the United States, UN Tourism said Tuesday.

The number of international tourist arrivals recorded worldwide hit 1.52 billion in 2025, 4.0 per cent higher than the figure in the previous year, the Madrid-based body said in a statement.

But arrivals in North America fell 1.4 per cent to 135.4 million last year with the body saying this was “partly due to weak results in the United States”.

Africa saw an 8.0 per cent rise in arrivals in 2025 to 81 million, with Morocco and Tunisia posting particularly strong results. International arrivals grew by 6.0 per cent in Asia and Pacific to reach 331 million in 2025, some 91 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.

The rise in arrivals was fueled in

part by increased international air capacity, visa facilitation in many nations

and “robust” demand from key tourism markets. — AFP



Tourists pose for group photos in Madrid, capital of Spain, 10 September 2025. **PHOTO: GUSTAVO VALIENTE/XINHUA**

Shooter of ex-PM Abe sentenced to life in prison

A Japanese court on Wednesday sentenced the man charged in the fatal shooting of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2022 to life in prison.

Prosecutors had demanded the life sentence for Tetsuya Yamagami, 45, who has admitted to murdering Abe with a handmade firearm during his stump speech in the western Japan city of Nara.

According to Kyodo News, the Nara District Court handed down the sentence, describing the attack as “despicable and extremely vicious.” Yamagami, 45, admitted to killing Abe with a homemade firearm during a campaign speech in Nara in July 2022. Abe, Japan’s longest-serving prime minister, was 67 at the time of his death. — Kyodo