

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.

Zeyathiri's U Khin Yi elected Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker; Tatkon's U Maung Maung Ohn Deputy



U Khin Yi from the Zeyathiri Constituency and U Maung Maung Ohn from the Tatkon Constituency take their oaths as Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker and Deputy Speaker, respectively, and sign the oath of office.

The first-day event of the first regular session of the Third Pyithu Hluttaw commenced at the convention hall of the Pyithu Hluttaw at the Hluttaw Complex in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The Hluttaw session was attended by elected Pyithu Hluttaw Representatives from Regions and States and Defence Services Personnel Representatives of the Pyithu Hluttaw.

The Hluttaw representatives elected a meeting chair who will supervise the election of the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker and Deputy Speaker. They elected Dr Nanda Kyaw Swa from the Dagon Constituency between two nominated candidates for the post as the Pyithu Hluttaw meeting chair through secret voting.

The meeting chair, Dr Nanda Kyaw Swa, took affirmations in front of the Pyithu Hluttaw, signed the form of affirmation and extended greetings.

The meeting chair announced that, of the 373 Pyithu Hluttaw representatives who were entitled to attend the First Regular Session of the Third Pyithu Hluttaw, all representatives were present. Therefore, the First Regular Session of the Third Pyithu Hluttaw was duly convened with 100 per cent attendance, and the meeting was declared open.

Pyithu Hluttaw representatives took affirmations in front of the meeting chair and signed the form of affirmation.

During the election of the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, Dr Pwint San from the Yaksawk Constituency nominated U Khin Yi from the Zeyathiri Constituency

as the sole candidate for the position of Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, and U Than Tun from the Pathein Constituency seconded the nomination. Accordingly, in accordance with Rule 11 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Rules (2013), the meeting chair announced that U Khin Yi from the Zeyathiri Constituency had been elected as Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw.

In electing the Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, U Thet Pon from the Sagaing Constituency nominated U Maung Maung Ohn from the Tatkon Constituency as a sole candidate for the Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw while U Hla Swe from the Pobbathiri Constituency seconded the nomination. So, the meeting chair announced that U Maung Maung Ohn from the Tatkon Constituency had been elected as Dep-

uty Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw in line with Rule 13 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Rules (2013).

Speaker U Khin Yi and Deputy Speaker U Maung Maung Ohn took affirmations in front of the meeting chair and signed the form of affirmations.

The meeting chair handed over responsibilities to Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw U Khin Yi in accord with Rule 15 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Rules (2013).

The Pyithu Hluttaw speaker extended greetings. (The greetings of the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker are reported on page 3)

The first day of the first regular session of the Third Pyithu Hluttaw was adjourned, and the date and time for the second day session will be announced.

— MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Education Shapes Individual Lives and the Nation's Future

❖ Education serves as a fundamental force that develops a person's character, intellect, personal mindset, and values, and accordingly, it can shape not only the progress of each individual's life but also the future of an entire nation.

(An excerpt from the message sent by Acting President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and State Security and Peace Commission Chairman Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark the 105th Anniversary of National Victory Day, which fell on 14 November 2025)

- 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.

Objectives of 81st Armed Forces Day

- To participate in national politics in a leadership role of the country, not to deviate from the path of democracy in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Constitution, safeguarding the national policy, the Our Three Main National Causes
- To cooperate with the government and people in performing measures for State stability, ethnic unity and the nation's development
- To act with utmost care based on the agreements of NCA without deviating from the Our Three Main National Causes while serving duties for durable peace, as the resolution of armed conflicts play key role in moving towards a genuine and disciplined multiparty democratic pathway
- To continuously improve three main tasks of Tatmadaw – Study, Practise, Comply – and the ability to apply modern technologies in structuring Tatmadaw into a Standard Army

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Union Election Commission

Announcement 36/2026

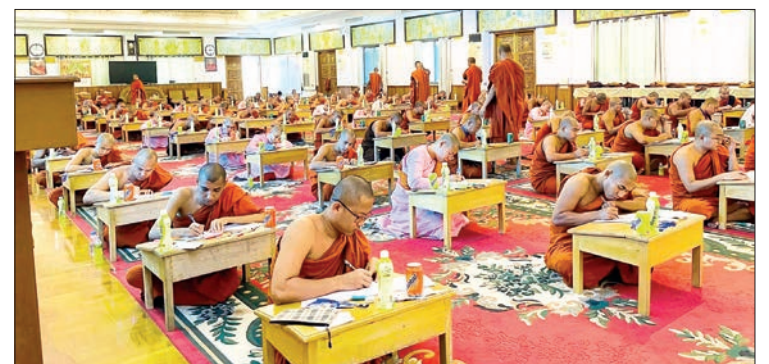
14th Waning of Taboung 1387 ME
16 March 2026

Substitution of two Defence Services Region or State Hluttaw Representatives

FOR the report submitted in accordance with Section 33 of the Region or State Hluttaw Election Law to change the name lists of two Defence Services Region or State Hluttaw representatives nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services in multiparty democratic general election held in phases starting 28 December 2025, the Union Election Commission reviewed it and substituted the two Defence Services Region or State Hluttaw Representatives mentioned in announcement 35/2026 dated on 11 February 2026 as follows: -

- Kayin State Hluttaw
BC 27238 Colonel Min Thu Kyaw replaced by BC 32835 Colonel Soe Moe Win
- Ayeyawady Region Hluttaw
BC 30107 Colonel Khant Mon Swe replaced by BC 30339 Colonel Soe Min Oo
Sd/ Than Soe
Chairman
Union Election Commission

Sitagu International Buddhist Academy opens applications for 2026-2027



The second day of the second semester exam of 2025-2026 is underway at the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy (Yangon) on 13 February 2026.

OLD and new students can submit applications for MA, BA, and diploma courses for the 2026-2027 academic year, said the administration of the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy, Yangon.

As of 10 March, applications can be submitted at the school library, it said.

Requirements are: new MA students must be under 35 years of age and have passed a BA degree with a 55 per cent mark from a Sitagu International Buddhist Academy, or have achieved Grade B + and above from an English language-speaking local or foreign university with humanities and social science with an average mark of 55 per cent.

New BA students must be under 32 years of age, must have graduated with a degree

in Sasanadhaja Dhamma Cariya, Sakka Siha Dhamma Cariya, Ceti Yangana Dhamma Cariya, BA or BSc degree from a university, and new diploma students must be under 30 years of age and have passed the government's Pathamagyi examination or matriculation exam.

For submission, an application form, a copy of the respective certification, a copy of the religious membership card, approval of a guardian and two 2-2 inches recent photos in colour are required, and the deadline is 24 March. The entrance examination is scheduled on 26 March for the diploma course, and 27 March for the BA and MA courses, and English language proficiency and general questions on Pitaka will be tested. — MT/ZS



Information Centre for Trafficked Persons (Yangon, Mandalay)



The trafficked persons can contact and ask for help.

Yangon

64, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road,
Mayangon Township.
01 8666619

Mandalay

Near Shwegyin Than Lan, Boetawtoe
Ward, Aungmyaythazan Township.
02 2830423

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)

Hluttaw representatives urged to put State, public interests first

The Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw extended greetings on the first day of the first regular session of the Third Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday. The full text of the translated greetings is as follows: -

Esteemed Hluttaw representatives,

I would like to extend my greetings to all the Pyithu Hluttaw representatives and distinguished guests attending the First Regular Session of the Third Pyithu Hluttaw, wishing you all good health and physical and mental well-being, and that you may be blessed with prosperity, fulfilment of your aspirations, and all auspiciousness.

As the representatives on behalf of the people elected me as the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, I am especially grateful to the Hluttaw representatives and all the people. For this, I would like to say that I feel deeply honoured, delighted, and proud. I will respectfully cherish this as a lifelong and memorable moment in my life.

Esteemed Hluttaw representatives,

Today is also a historic and proud day, marking the emergence of the Third Pyithu Hluttaw in accordance with the will of the people, following the successful holding of a free and fair multiparty democratic general election, and reflecting the aspiration of the entire population for the development and establishment of a multiparty democratic system.

I solemnly accept the trust placed in me by the representatives in assigning this responsibility. I would like to firmly pledge that I will make my utmost efforts to discharge this duty in accordance



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Yi delivers greeting on the first day of Third Pyithu Hluttaw's first regular session yesterday.

with the Constitution, relevant laws, and rules. Moreover, I would like all Hluttaw representatives to work together in unity, with mutual understanding and cordi-

ality, openly and transparently, and in accordance with democratic practices. Furthermore, through broadmindedness, patience and forgiveness, mutual re-

spect, and cooperation, I firmly believe that together we will be able to build a better future for the State and the people – one that leads to a stronger and more prosperous Myanmar.

Esteemed Hluttaw representatives,

Under the Constitution, among the three estates of the State's sovereign power, the legislative estate is the principal responsibility of the Hluttaw. In addition, the three branches of State power must, as far as possible, be exercised separately and mutually checked and balanced, while also carrying out the duty of representing the people. In serving these responsibilities, it is necessary to amend, repeal, or enact laws so that existing laws, rules, regulations, and procedures implemented in pursuit of political visions are in line with the conditions and systems of the times.

Hluttaw representatives are the people's representatives elected by the public. Accordingly, they must engage and consult with the people and strive to convey the voice and will of the people on their behalf. At the same time, it is also the responsibility of Hluttaw representatives to share and explain the Hluttaw's actions to the public so that they may understand the efforts being carried out for the benefit of the State and the people.

Esteemed Hluttaw representatives,

In conclusion, I would like to urge all Hluttaw representatives to join hands with one another in unity and harmony, focusing on the interests of the State and the people in serving the responsibilities of the Hluttaw.

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanmar Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise



NATIONAL

AML/CFT Capacity-Building Course 1/2026 opens

THE opening ceremony of the Capacity-Building Course 1/2026 on the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) was held yesterday morning at the Public Finance Management Academy of the Ministry of Finance and Revenue in Nay Pyi Taw.

The opening ceremony was attended by Dr Kan Zaw, Union Minister for Finance and Revenue, Daw Than Than Lin and U Han Win Aung, Deputy Ministers for Finance and Revenue, Heads of Departments, guests, trainers and trainees.

At the ceremony, Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw highlighted that the course was opened with the aim of more effectively



Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw opens the Capacity-Building Course 1/2026 on the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism yesterday.

implementing the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) processes being implemented by the State through the cooperation of departments under the ministry. He focused

on the AML/CFT process, which is an important process for the country, as the use of the legal banking system to transfer and place illegal funds can affect the country's economic stability, strong financial sector,

and investment. Therefore, he stated that it is necessary for supervisory authorities and law enforcement agencies to closely supervise and cooperate effectively by sector.

He highlighted that supervi-

sors can only effectively supervise if they are systematically aware of AML/CFT supervision processes. He urged that reporting organizations need to carry out their AML/CFT responsibilities, such as verifying suspicious financial transactions and financial transactions exceeding the specified amount, and submitting reports promptly. He encouraged trainees to pay special attention to the subjects taught and apply them effectively and practically in the respective fields they are responsible for.

Altogether, 35 officers from departments under the Ministry of Finance and Revenue will attend the course, and it will last five days. — MoFR

Chinese Embassy launches 5th Lancang-Mekong Quiz for 10th anniversary

THE Chinese Embassy to Myanmar has announced on its social media page that the fifth "Lancang-Mekong Knowledge Quiz" will be held to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the first Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) Heads of State Meeting, which took place on 23 March 2016.

From 16 to 20 March, three multiple-choice questions re-

garding Lancang-Mekong cooperation will be posted daily on the embassy's social media platform. Each day, three participants who correctly answer all three questions will be randomly selected to receive a six-sided Chinese lacquered panel art piece and a panda crossbody backpack. The list of winners will be officially announced on 23 March. — ASH/KZL



This image showcases a graphic advertisement to promote the Lancang-Mekong Knowledge Quiz.

Day temperatures to climb gradually after 16 Mar

DAY temperatures will gradually increase in some regions, including Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, from 16 March onwards, after the northeast monsoon weakens in the South China Sea, said meteorologist U Win Naing.

There are no abnormal weather conditions like upper air cyclonic circulation and formation of a low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, and the winter monsoon will be weak in the South China Sea after 16 March, he said.

Day temperatures will reach 39 degrees Celsius and above in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, Bago, Mandalay, Magway and lower Sagaing regions after 20 March.

However, it will rain from moderate to heavy in upper Sagaing and Kachin State until 22 March with a possibility of

torrential rain, but rainfall will be low in northern Shan State, and there will be light rain in the rest regions and states until 18 March, he said.

The relative humidity at noon will be 20-30 per cent in regions and states, and 70-80 per cent in mountainous regions and coastal areas at night and early morning. Along with elevated day temperatures, signs of dry air will begin.

When day temperatures increase and the air becomes dry, people will need to be cautious about heat-related illnesses such as dehydration, heat stroke, respiratory problems, and high UV radiation. At the same time, farmers should take advice from respective agricultural experts to protect their crops and prevent yield decline due to low soil moisture, high evaporation rate in plants and high infectious diseases,

he said.

A social association said a monk was found lying at a bus stop and transported to the hospital a few days ago, and according to the medical report, he died from haemorrhagic stroke due to hyperthermia. — MT/ZS



Prevention tips for public health and agriculture regarding the summer heat and the dry air.

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NATIONAL

Matriculation, vocational exams reach Day 5

THE 2026 matriculation examination and the 2026 industrial, agricultural and livestock matriculation examinations continued yesterday nationwide, including at overseas examination

centres.

For the 2026 matriculation examination, a total of 887 examination centres were opened this year, comprising 16 overseas centres and 871 domestic centres.

A total of 268,753 candidates registered for the examination.

On the fifth day, 254,649 candidates sat the Physics and History, while 14,104 were absent, resulting in an attendance rate

of 94.75 per cent.

For the 2026 industrial, agricultural and livestock matriculation examinations, a total of 53 domestic examination centres were opened. A total of 3,386 can-

didates registered for the exam, and 3,364 sat the examinations, while 22 candidates were absent, giving an attendance rate of 99.35 per cent, according to the Ministry of Education. — MNA/KTZH

Day 5 of matric, industrial, agricultural and livestock exams passes peacefully

AS the 2025-2026 academic year matriculation examination and the industrial, agricultural and livestock matriculation examinations were held nationwide yesterday from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, students sat the Physics and History subjects, as well as Mechanical, Agricultural and Livestock subjects, peacefully.

On the fifth day of the matriculation examination, students sat the Physics and History subjects at 111 examination centres across Yangon Region. Meanwhile, students in the industrial, agricultural and livestock matriculation examinations took Surveying, Electrical Equipment and Welding in the Mechanical subject, Crop Protection in the Agricultural subject, and Aquatic Animal Breed-

ing and Beekeeping in the Livestock subject.

According to the Yangon Region Education Office, a total of 46,710 candidates, including 20,707 males and 26,003 females, sat the examinations, with an attendance rate of 94.83 per cent.

At examination centres throughout Yangon Region, teachers on duty reminded students entering the centres to bring their examination admission cards and necessary writing materials. Officials at the respective centres also provided timely assistance to those who had forgotten their admission cards and to candidates who required medical attention.

Among the 111 examination centres in 45 townships across 14 districts in Yangon Region, the fifth day of the

matriculation examination was conducted at 107 centres, while the industrial, agricultural and livestock matriculation examinations were held at four centres for 402 candidates, including 244 males and 158 females.

At the examination centre in Insein Central Prison, 36 candidates, including 33 males and three females, sat the examination. Meanwhile, seven candidates took the examination in hospitals: 14 candidates (four males and 10 females) sat the examination at Mingaladon Hospital, Shwepyitha Hospital, Hlinethaya (East) Hospital, Thingangyun Hospital, Dagon (North) Hospital, North Okkalapa Hospital, Mayangon Hospital, Bahan Hospital, Thanlyin Hospital and Pazundaung Hospital. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/MKKS



Images show students leaving peacefully after Day 5 of matriculation examinations yesterday. PHOTO: KANU

Disaster-prevention art workshop, exhibition opens for Mandalay public

THE Japan Foundation, Yangon, has announced that an art movement titled 'What can art and artists do to raise awareness about the importance of disaster prevention and improve mental health?' will be held in Mandalay on 21 and 22 March at the MABA Office, Water Street, Ward 6, Mingala Mandalay.

The foundation noted that in Japan, September is designated as disaster prevention month to commemorate the Great Kanto Earthquake (1 September 1923), which resulted in massive casu-

alties, and disaster awareness activities are conducted across every city and village during this month.

Similarly, following the earthquake that struck Sagaing and Mandalay, Myanmar, in March 2025, the foundation aims to host these awareness programmes in the affected areas one year later.

The event will include collaborative workshop sessions where non-artists can also participate and exhibitions featuring paintings, sculptures, pho-

tography, and installations by local Mandalay artists. The foundation will hold discussions regarding the background and concept of the exhibition.

The exhibition is free and open to the public; however, those wishing to participate in the workshop must register in advance. Participants will be contacted individually, and limited space will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration link is <https://forms.office.com/r/nNdz2Gt7gv>. — MT/ZN

Myanmar to share traditional textile preservation experience at ASEAN Talks



A Myanmar artisan is seen in the textile industry.

TRADITIONAL crafts such as designing and hand-weaving traditional textiles are facing the risk of disappearing, according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture.

With the rapid advancement of technology and the expansion of industrial production, skills such as traditional textile design and hand-weaving are increasingly under threat of decline. As a result, the preservation and promotion of traditional textile designs have become an especially important issue in the present day.

To address the risk that activities such as traditional textile design and hand-weaving may disappear, management discussions on the preservation and promotion of traditional textile designs among ASEAN countries are being organized. Myanmar will present papers at these meetings, share its experiences, and exchange best practices. In addition, the participating ASEAN countries will jointly discuss the challenges encountered in preservation efforts and seek solutions together. — ASH/MKKS

NATIONAL

Republic of the Union of Myanmar National Defence and Security Council

Union Tax Law 2026 (National Defence and Security Council Law 18/2026)

13th Waning of Taboung 1387 ME
15 March 2026

THE National Defence and Security Council enacts this Law under Section 427 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

Chapter I

Title, Date of Effectiveness, and Definitions

1. (a) This law shall be called the Union Tax Law 2026.
(b) This law shall come into effect, starting from 1 April 2026.
2. The following terms used in this law shall have the meanings ascribed to them below: -
 - (a) Taxes and levies mean the taxes, revenues, duties, licence fees, permit fees, and fines collected by the Union Government for the Union under this law.
 - (b) Law means the laws enacted concerning the taxes and levies collected by the Union Government for the Union.
 - (c) Relevant Ministry means the Union Government ministries and the Nay Pyi Taw Council responsible for collecting taxes and levies on behalf of the Union Government.
 - (d) Budget Law means the Union Budget Law and Supplementary Appropriation Law issued annually.
 - (e) Tariff means the rates set by the Union Government for the collection of taxes and levies for the Union.

Chapter II

Tax Assessment for Collection

3. The Union's tax income under the Union Budget Law shall constitute the original assessment for the collection of the Union's taxes and levies for the relevant financial year as specified in Schedule (1) of this law.

Chapter III

Setting tariffs and reporting

4. The relevant ministry shall collect the taxes and levies specified in this law in accordance with the tariffs provided in this law.
5. If the Union Government wishes to amend, supplement, or replace the tariffs in this law, it must submit them to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for discussion and approval.
6. (a) The relevant ministry shall submit, every quarter, the collection status of the Union's taxes and levies based on the original assessment specified in Schedule (1) of this law to the Department of Budget.
(b) The Department of Budget shall compile the collection reports submitted by the relevant ministries and, with analysis, submit quarterly reports through the Ministry of Finance and Revenue to the Union Government.
7. The Union Government shall submit a report every six months to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on the collection status of the Union's taxes and levies based on the original assessment specified in Schedule (1) of this law.

Chapter IV

Responsibilities and Authority of the relevant Ministry

8. The relevant ministry shall be responsible for supervising and ensuring the collection of the Union's taxes and levies according to the original assessment specified in Schedule (1) of this law.
9. In relation to special goods taxes, commercial taxes, income taxes, and gemstone taxes under this law, the relevant ministry may issue notifications, orders, directives, and procedural guidelines as necessary to ensure a clear understanding and compliance, without altering their original meaning.
10. The relevant ministry may obtain the necessary information and support to ensure that taxpayers make payments in accordance with the law from the President's Office, the Union Government, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the Pyithu Hluttaw, the Amyotha Hluttaw, the Supreme Court of the Union, the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union, the Union Election Commission, Union ministries, the Union Attorney-General, the Union Auditor-General, the Union Civil Service Board, the Nay Pyi Taw Council, the Central Bank of Myanmar, the governments of Regions or States, Self-Administered Zone or Division Leading Bodies.

Chapter V

Special Goods Tax

11. According to Section 6 of the Special Goods Tax Law, the types of special goods subject to tax and their corresponding tariffs are as follows: -

Types of Special Goods and Tariffs

- (a) Concerning special goods, the special goods tax shall be imposed according to the following tariffs:

- (1) For domestically produced special goods subject to tax based on their value, the tax shall be calculated based on the estimated selling price determined by the factory, workshop, or department sales value, or by the Director-General of the Internal Revenue Department and the Management Committee of the Internal Revenue Department, using the market price as a basis; the tax may also be applied to whichever of these two values is higher.
- (2) For special goods not assigned a value-based tariff, if they are produced and sold domestically, the tax shall be applied based on the value determined by the Management Committee of the Internal Revenue Department.
Exception: For domestically produced special goods to compete in the domestic market with imported special goods, the Management Committee of the Internal Revenue Department shall ensure that the value determined for domestic goods corresponds with the customs arrival value set for imported goods of the same type.
- (3) For goods imported into the country, the tax shall be calculated based on the customs arrival value.

No	Types of Special Goods	Value	Tariff
1	(a) Varieties of cigarette	If a box of cigarettes fetches K1,000	K15 per piece
	(b) Varieties of cigarettes	If a box of cigarettes fetches from K1,001 to K2,000	K28 per piece
	(c) Varieties of cigarettes	If a box of cigarettes fetches above K2,001	K31 per piece
2	Tobacco		60 per cent
3	Steamed Virginia		60 per cent
4	Cheroot		K3 per piece
5	Cigar		80 per cent
6	Tobacco blends for pipe		80 per cent
7	Betal quid materials		80 per cent
8	(a) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches K700-K2,500 per litre	K287 per litre
	(b) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K2,501 to K4,600 per litre	K755 per litre
	(c) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K4,601 to K7,200 per litre	K1,289 per litre
	(d) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K7,201 to K9,800 per litre	K1,811 per litre
	(e) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K9,801 to K12,400 per litre	K2,325 per litre
	(f) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K12,401 to K15,000 per litre	K2,895 per litre
	(g) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K15,001 to K18,200 per litre	K3,438 per litre
	(h) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K18,201 to K21,400 per litre	K3,981 per litre
	(i) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K21,401 to K24,600 per litre	K4,524 per litre
	(j) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K24,601 to K27,800 per litre	K5,068 per litre
	(k) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K27,801 to K31,000 per litre	K5,611 per litre
(l) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K31,001 to K34,200 per litre	K6,379 per litre	
(m) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K34,201 to K37,400 per litre	K6,952 per litre	
(n) Varieties of alcohol	If alcohol fetches prices ranging from K37,401 and above per litre	60 per cent of the value per litre	

TO BE CONTINUED

Shwe Padauk Fish Market sees high supply and low demand due to daily fish inflows

ALTHOUGH the freshwater fish is processed daily at Shwe Padauk Fish Market this month in Hline Township, Yangon, which mainly distributes aquatic products nationwide, the supply in the market is high while demand remains low, according to the Shwe Padauk Fish Market Development Committee.

The freshwater and salt-water products from the Shwe Padauk Fish Market in Hline Township and the Kyimyindine Sanpya Fish Market are transported to the upper and lower parts of the country and the border areas with a good transport system. Currently, due to rising fuel prices, transportation challenges, increased fish feed costs, and the harvesting of fish ponds before the summer, there are difficulties in transporting and distributing freshwater products from Ayeyarwady, Yangon and Bago regions.

As freshwater products continue to arrive daily, wholesale dealers at the Shwe Padauk Fish Market distribute them to cold storage factories for export, to



A variety of fish goes on sale at the local market. PHOTO: ZWE MARN

markets across the country, and to township markets in Yangon. However, at present, export orders have been suspended, shipments of freshwater products nationwide have decreased, and consumption in township markets has declined. As a result, the market is facing an imbalance between supply and demand.

“During this month, fish

arrivals at the market have increased. More than a hundred trucks enter the market every day. Although supply is high, transactions are slow. The reason is that there are no export orders this month. Even though fish are distributed domestically, supply is higher than demand, making it difficult to stabilize the market. The amount being sold

exceeds domestic consumption. Supply and demand are not balanced. Fish arrivals are higher this year because feed prices have risen, and raw materials such as bran and peanut cake have become scarce, even for those who have money. Therefore, farmers are harvesting their ponds and selling fish at the available market price rather

than continuing to raise them. Moreover, to prevent fish deaths due to the heat in April, many farmers are harvesting and selling their fish this month, which is why fish are continuously entering the market. Since the market has become narrower, sellers are pushing sales. Because fish keep arriving, fish inflows will likely decrease later,” stated Committee Vice-Chair U Aye Ko.

The Shwe Padauk Fish Market receives over 300,000 viss of freshwater products and about 30 types of freshwater products. The fish arriving at the market are being distributed in the domestic market at whatever prices are available. However, due to reduced breeding of export-sized fish, suspension of fish farming caused by high feed costs, smaller fish entering the market before reaching proper size, and declining fish prices due to high feed costs, fish farmers estimate that freshwater product inflows may decline by the end of this year and early next year. — Thitsa (MNA)/KTZH

DICA: 200 companies fail to file AR in Feb

TWO hundred companies were struck off the register in February 2026 as they failed to file annual returns (AR) on the online registry system, MyCO, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

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.

The DICA report showed the failure of 200 companies in January. A total of 7,300 companies in 2025 and 19,000 in 2024 also failed to submit the AR.

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 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

YU invites tenders for annual contract for canteen services

UNIVERSITY of Yangon's Tender Invitation and Evaluation Committee invited cafeteria operators to submit proposals to run canteen services of 59 shops at YU and YU's Hlaing Campus for the 2026-2027 financial year. Tender form and regulations are available at K2,000 at the

Administration Department of YU at 10 am on 13 March 2026. Submission of tender is at 2 pm on 26 March. Tender opening will be held at 10 am on 30 March.

Interested individuals can enquire about details through the department at 09 44888752 and 09 250259389. — NN/KK

Tenders invited for mixed-use development project

THE Mandalay City Development Committee invited businesses to submit tenders under the Swiss Challenge Method to implement a mixed-use development project on 11.3517 acres of land owned by MCDC, located on 62nd Street between 36th and 37th Streets in Mahamyaing Ward 2, Mahaangmyay Township, Mandalay.

The tender application is available on the eighth floor of the MCDC (Building and Central Stores Department). Tender submission will be closed at 4 pm on 11 April 2026. Ethnic business owners will be prioritized in the tender evaluation process. Individuals can enquire about details through MCDC at 09 2011545. — NN/KK

OPINION

Manage human resources for health to improve the health sector

In training and producing health human resources, including doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals, the State has been increasing the number trained each year in line with national requirements, so as to provide the public with quality healthcare services.

It was noted that the severe COVID-19 pandemic, which the entire world had to face, was successfully overcome through the collective efforts of the government, civil servants and the public under the policy that “nothing is more important than human life”. Moreover, when natural disasters such as Cyclone Mocha in 2023, Typhoon Yagi in 2024, and the Mandalay earthquake in 2025 occurred,

In addition, to enhance staff performance, opportunities have been arranged for both domestic and overseas postgraduate training. Promotions for nurses and the upgrading of nursing schools to institutions of nursing science have also been carried out. As a result, when providing healthcare to the public, not only must quality and competence be ensured, but healthcare professionals are also expected to adhere to professional ethics and standards in their respective fields.

hospital has been staffed with doctors, including 2,649 newly appointed physicians, along with outpatient and inpatient doctors, nurses, health professionals, and public health workers.

In addition, to enhance staff performance, opportunities have been arranged for both domestic and overseas postgraduate training. Promotions for nurses and the upgrading of nursing schools to institutions of nursing science have also been carried out. As a result, when providing healthcare to the public, not only must quality and competence be ensured, but healthcare professionals are also expected to adhere to professional ethics and standards in their respective fields.

Research activities related to medical treatment and hospital administration must also be expanded and strengthened. In conducting health-related research, the Ministry of Health will collaborate with medical and allied universities, hospitals, disease control programs, primary healthcare staff, and community-based organizations. Only through such cooperation can successive generations of healthy and resilient citizens be developed.

healthcare workers could be seen selflessly making sacrifices and working in unity to strive to deliver healthcare services.

In terms of strengthening healthcare infrastructure, a total of 25 people's hospitals were upgraded over the past five years. To reduce disparities between urban and rural healthcare services and ensure equal access, 12 new 16-bed hospitals were newly established and expanded in rural areas. In addition, efforts were made to construct high-quality buildings that are essential for hospital operations. As a result, 41 new hospital buildings and staff housing facilities were also constructed during the five years.

In upgrading the health sector, emphasis has been placed on achieving Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – the long-term development of a skilled health workforce. Following the policy of “where there is a hospital, there must be doctors,” over the past five years, every public

The Dawn of a New State: Trust, Stability, and Development

Myanmar has entered the dawn of a new state after years marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, internal armed conflict, and the expansion of illicit war economies. The successful conduct of multiparty general elections earlier this year marks a critical milestone in the country's transition toward a new political and economic order. Against this backdrop, a high-level forum convened over the weekend in Nay Pyi Taw, bringing together regional thinkers, Myanmar scholars, and newly elected parliamentary representatives. The forum focused on identifying practical pathways towards trust, stability, and development. Participants examined how the incoming government can move beyond emergency, stability-oriented governance towards inclusive, market-driven development grounded in public trust.

In this transition, the new parliament will play a pivotal role. As elected representatives of the people, lawmakers are uniquely positioned to rebuild public confidence by translating citizens' priorities into a people-centred economic agenda and a citizens' budget. While political and diplomatic challenges remain, the economic front offers a clear and pragmatic path forward, particularly through deeper cooperation with neighbouring countries. Scholars from China, India, Thailand, and Europe emphasized that Myanmar can transform its geography from a site of conflict into a hub for regional connectivity and food security. The forum's participants shared a common aspiration: to move beyond stop-gap policies and build a resilient, integrated economy at the dawn of the new state.

As Myanmar relied heavily

on agriculture for community survival during years of instability, the forum underscored the urgency of revitalizing rural livelihoods. Participants explored ways to establish food security corridors that support inclusive growth while rebuilding trust in conflict-affected rural areas. More than 60 per cent of Myanmar's agricultural export earnings come from pulses, corn, and seafood traded with India, China, and Thailand. The resilience of these supply chains through five years of pandemic and conflict highlights a clear opportunity for regional partners to guarantee restriction-free trade and secure logistics. Such cooperation could deliver tangible peace dividends, as many of these crops are grown and transported through conflict-affected regions. Over time, this partnership could catalyze a shift from subsistence farming to

agro-processing, positioning Myanmar as a reliable food corridor – a “guaranteed pantry” for some of the world's largest populations.

A shared vision among regional scholars emphasized Myanmar's strategic location at the crossroads of China, India, and ASEAN. Elected representatives discussed how the country can serve as a gateway linking landlocked Northeast India and Southwest China to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. While Myanmar offers the shortest physical routes for the movement of goods and people, participants stressed that connectivity must go beyond infrastructure. True connectivity also requires “software”: knowledge exchange, technology transfer, labour mobility, and a functioning digital economy.

Several practical ideas emerged to accelerate compre-

By Zaw Oo

hensive connectivity. First, while large-scale infrastructure development takes time and depends on improved security, partnerships can begin immediately through capacity building in governance, technology, and skills relevant to connectivity projects. Second, even as low-intensity conflicts persist in some border areas, pilot projects can be launched in central hubs such as Mandalay towards the periphery, alongside ongoing post-earthquake reconstruction. This approach would signal to conflict-affected regions that peace brings tangible development dividends.

The forum also recognized Myanmar's progress in dismantling cyber-scam centres and illicit networks in formerly ungoverned areas. However,

participants agreed that deeper multilateral cooperation is now essential to address emerging threats, including cyber insecurity and illicit financial flows. National speakers and lawmakers also highlighted the urgency of labour shortages and brain drain. Proposed solutions included promoting circular migration to achieve brain gain, expanding affordable legal migration pathways, and strengthening formal remittance channels to leverage domestic development. Additional partnership opportunities were identified in the digital economy, financial inclusion, and human capital development – all addressing the dangers of decentralizing cyber scam centres. Discussions also touched on ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus, with

calls to move beyond a narrow focus on conflict management toward a stability-to-development continuum and renewed economic cooperation, as today's conflict dynamics are increasingly shaped by war economies rather than political grievances.

Private-sector voices pushed the discussion further. One speaker argued that reaching the “full light of day” requires a return to fundamentals – macroeconomic stabilization and policy coherence. Interventions highlighted the urgent need to address inflation, exchange-rate volatility, and policy uncertainty driven by conflict. A seasoned observer called for stronger alignment between laws, policies, and practices across key sectors – agriculture, manufacturing, services, and banking – to rehabilitate the economy and transition from restrictive, conflict-era controls to

open-market operations.

Finally, the forum addressed the week's most pressing global concern: energy security amid escalating tensions in the Middle East. With risks to supply routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, participants explored how Myanmar, like its regional peers, can proactively manage potential energy shocks. Proposed measures included fuel conservation, electricity demand and tariff management, and transparent digital rationing mechanisms, drawing lessons from regional experiences. The discussion also reinforced the importance of a long-term energy transition strategy, expanding renewable energy, strengthening grid resilience, and diversifying energy sources, to unlock Myanmar's potential within the region's broader push towards sustainable energy transformation.

Advancing Parliamentary Responsibilities through Youth Engagement in Myanmar

Starting from the third week of March 2026, the mornings are returning as a meaningful moment that would open a new page in Myanmar's political history. Throughout Myanmar's long political journey, the parliament has played an important role as an institution representing the people. For some time, our parliamentary buildings remained silent and still, and now appear to be eagerly awaiting the moment when they will come alive once again.

The magnificent parliamentary halls, which were once filled with the echoes of parliamentary debates and deliberations, had remained quiet for a period of time. Yet now they seem ready to welcome the footsteps of representatives who will arrive from various constituencies. The wide roads, magnificent corridors and suspension bridge that once stood empty, the systematically constructed buildings, and the well-organized chambers all seem to proudly welcome the return of the people's representatives.

Within the calm grandeur of the parliamentary buildings, the

By Khaing Khaing Shwe (Public Policy, NUS)

sight of people's representatives entering one after another from different constituencies can be seen as a symbol of the revival of political processes. These scenes suggest not only the effective implementation of parliamentary responsibilities but also the increasing importance of cooperation with the public, especially with young people.

Thus, the parliamentary sessions that will resume starting from the third week of March 2026 accommodate discussions related to politics and the public interest, and parliamentarians' hopes for important decisions, and policies that will benefit the people and the nation. Therefore, this article will discuss, from a policy perspective, how parliamentarians can cooperate with younger citizens in carrying out their responsibilities effectively.

Cooperation with Youth in Carrying Out the Responsi-

bilities of Parliamentarians

The 2008 Constitution of Myanmar defines the important role of parliament and outlines the duties and powers of parliamentarians to represent the interests of the people. In implementing these responsibilities, cooperation with young people is a very important factor for the development of our society and our nation.

First, one of the primary duties of parliamentarians is to propose and enact policies and laws that prioritize the interests of the people. In order to make this process successful, meaningful participation of the public, especially attention to the voices and perspectives of the youth, is essential. Incorporating their experiences, views, and ideas into the legislative process can lead to policies that better address the social needs of future generations and respond to emerging trends. This approach also helps create a strong foundation for a positive

social environment in our country.

Second, parliamentarians serve as a bridge between the government and the people. They must present the needs and challenges of their constituencies in parliament and seek timely solutions. In performing this duty, issues related to youth, such as education, employment, human trafficking, environmental protection, etc., can be addressed more effectively when parliamentarians work together with youths. By holding consultations and discussions with the youth of the country and youth organizations, their concerns, needs, and suggestions can effectively contribute to finding durable solutions.

Third, parliamentarians are responsible for the development of their constituencies. In carrying out this responsibility, cooperation with young people is essential for the successful implementation of development activities. Parliamentarians should encourage

youth, together with community members, to participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of development projects. Nowadays, younger generations are particularly skilled in the use of technology, and they are proficient in digital platforms and social media. They can help parliamentarians collect public opinions and present them to parliament, as well as communicate more effectively with the public and media, and promote development initiatives to a wider audience.

Finally, parliamentarians can help young people gain a deeper understanding of citizens' rights, responsibilities, and the principles of public accountability. Organizing training programmes, discussions and youth forums within their constituencies is important for promoting awareness of social values, the rule of law, and civic responsibility. However, direct coaching and mentorship are even more valuable in shaping informed and responsible future citizens.

Demonstration of good examples by a parliamentarian today

will help create good leaders for the future. It is also important to make younger generations understand the fundamental values of leadership. In guiding emerging leaders, it is important to remember the old saying: “**One must first be a good follower to become a good leader.**” To become a good leader, individuals must first learn how to listen, collaborate, and take responsibility as followers.

Such experiences and guidance will enable youths of today to become responsible leaders capable of guiding and nurturing their future generations.

However, it should be noted that **Gen Z** are generally more independent, more analytical, and easier to disengage. They are more willing to challenge or resist unethical behaviour and practices. Therefore, parliamentarians who wish to lead by example should uphold strong ethical standards and cultivate accountable mindsets.

Acting with Ethical Standards

Parliamentarians are human beings, and like anyone else, they may find it difficult to resist the

influence of power, position, and brown-nosers who constantly flatter them. There have been cases where parliamentary assistants were informally appointed and gradually became proxy parliamentarians. In some situations, these assistants appeared to hold more influence than the elected representatives themselves and even made decisions on their behalf. While the parliamentarians were attending sessions in parliament, these proxy figures sometimes acted as if they were the king or queen of the area. Therefore, the existence of clear and well-enforced codes of conduct is crucial for parliamentarians.

Section 120 of the 2008 Constitution of Myanmar and the Election Law define the qualifications required for parliamentarians. In addition, there are fundamental standard codes of conduct and ethical principles which are commonly practised by parliamentarians in many countries around the world. By applying these codes and principles in performing their duties throughout their elected term, parliamentarians can make significant contributions to the country and provide exemplary role models for youths.

Parliamentarians are human beings and, like anyone else, may find it difficult to resist the influence of power, position, and individuals who constantly flatter them. In previous parliamentary terms, there were cases where parliamentary assistants have been informally appointed and gradually assumed the role of proxy parliamentarians. In cer-

ARTICLE/ENVIRON: WORLD

Advancing Parliamentary Responsibilities through...

FROM PAGE 9

This article seeks to highlight these codes and principles underneath:

- 1. Integrity and Honesty:** Parliamentarians must act in the public interest rather than for personal gain. They must avoid bribery and corruption.
- 2. Accountability:** Parliamentarians must be accountable to the public and to voters. They must be able to explain their actions honestly.
- 3. Transparency:** Reports, budget decisions, and policy decisions should be openly presented to the public and

voters. They must avoid participating in decisions that involve personal interests.

- 4. Avoidance of Conflict of Interest:** Position as a representative of people must not be used for the benefit of family members, friends, or business partners. If a conflict of interest exists, it must be declared, and the member should withdraw from the decision-making process.
- 5. Proper Use of Public Resources:** Government funds, staff, offices, and travel expenses must only be used for official parliamentary duties.
- 6. Respect:** Parliamentarians

must treat fellow members, staff, and citizens with respect. Insults, harassment, and disruptive behaviour must be avoided.

- 7. Confidentiality:** Confidential information obtained through official duties must not be disclosed.
- 8. Compliance with Laws, Rules and Regulations:** Parliamentarians must follow laws, rules, regulations and directives.
- 9. Commitment to Public Service:** They must actively participate in parliamentary sessions, debates, and committee work on behalf of their

constituents.

- 10. Reporting Misconduct:** Any unethical or illegal behaviour should be reported to the appropriate authorities.

In conclusion, the responsibilities of parliamentarians extend beyond lawmaking to representing public interests, promoting constituency development, and guiding future generations. Fulfilling these duties effectively requires both strong ethical standards and meaningful engagement with youths. By upholding principles such as integrity, accountability, transparency, and respect, parliamentarians can build public trust and set positive examples for society and youth. At the same time, col-

laborating with the youth – by listening to their perspectives, involving them in community development, and mentoring them in civic values – can strengthen public participation and produce more responsive policies. When parliamentarians engage and lead the youth with integrity, they not only improve governance today but also help cultivate responsible leaders for tomorrow. Such cooperation lays a strong foundation for sustainable national development and a more inclusive and democratic society in the future.

(Ref: Codes of Conduct for Parliamentarians, A Comparative Study by King Prajadhipok's Institute for UNDP)

Conservationist group discovers coral spawning for 1st time at 2 areas in Cambodia

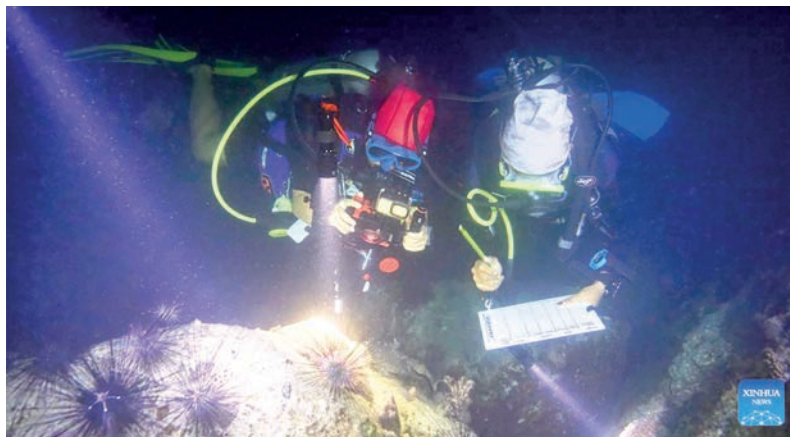
A conservationist group has spotted coral spawning events for the first time on Song Saa Island in Preah Sihanouk province and in Koh Sdach Archipelago in Koh Kong province in southwest Cambodia, said a joint press release on Monday.

The survey and study of these coral spawning events were conducted from 7 to 9 March, with support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, Fauna & Flora, Marine Resource Protection Organization, and Song Saa Foundation, among others.

During the research, the team conducted night dives and detailed reef monitoring to record spawning activities, assess coral health, and document environmental conditions, the press release said.

“These observations provide vital scientific data that help researchers understand coral reproduction cycles, track reef recovery, and identify factors that contribute to effective coral reef management,” the press release said.

“The information gathered also supports evidence-based strategies for long-term coral reef



Divers record a coral spawning event in Cambodian waters on 7 March 2026. PHOTO: KIMLONG MENG/FAUNA & FLORA/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA

conservation, benefiting both biodiversity and coastal communities that rely on healthy reefs for food and livelihoods,” it said.

Minister of Environment Eang Sophalleth said the successful observation of coral spawning highlighted the effectiveness of ongoing conservation and management efforts in Cambodia's marine protected areas.

“Continued collaboration between government institutions, conservation organizations, and local communities is essential to conserve biodiversity and to sustain these ecosystem services for all generations,” he said.

According to the press re-

lease, the conservationist group also discovered a coral spawning event for the third time in Koh Rong Archipelago in Preah Sihanouk province.

“The results of these three consecutive years bear witness to the recovering health of our seas and stand as undeniable proof of our success in implementing fishery protection measures,” Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Dith Tina said.

Healthy coral reefs are extremely important for ensuring the sustainability of marine fisheries resources and supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities. — Xinhua

Researchers develop 3D-printed implant to repair major tissue loss

AN international research team has created a 3D-printed implant that could open up new avenues for the treatment of severe tissue damage, according to a statement by the Israel Institute of Technology on Sunday.

The implant, known as a tissue flap, combines muscle and fat tissues with an integrated network of blood and lymphatic vessels, enabling rapid integration into the damaged area. This built-in vascular system delivers oxygen and nutrients immediately, while the lymphatic network removes fluids, critical factors for tissue survival and function.

Currently, patients with major tissue loss require an autologous flap surgery, harvesting tissue from another part of their own body, as transplants from other people are often rejected.

The new engineered flap may overcome these challenges and could lead to personalized implants tailored to each patient's injury.

In experiments on rats, the flap quickly integrated with the host tissue, supporting normal muscle growth, stable fat cells, and proper blood flow.

The researchers used a special bio-ink and a bioreactor to grow the blood vessels under conditions that mimic natural blood flow.

Although tested in rats, the tissues were made from human cells, and the team is now moving to large-animal trials as a step toward clinical use in humans.

This advance represents a major step toward lab-grown, implantable tissues for injuries, burns, and surgeries, according to the statement. — Xinhua

'One Battle After Another' dominates Oscars

"ONE Battle After Another" triumphed at the Oscars on Sunday, winning six awards, including the coveted best picture statuette, besting "Sinners" in a thrilling finale to one of the most competitive awards seasons in recent years.

Director Paul Thomas Anderson personally won three Oscars, the first of his career, for his political thriller that tackles the hot-button issues of immigration raids and white supremacy.

"You make a guy work really hard for one of these," he said to laughter as he accepted the award for best director.

"I wrote this movie for my kids to say sorry for the house-keeping mess that we left in this world we're handing off to them," he said after collecting the best adapted screenplay prize.

"But also with the encouragement that they will be the generation that hopefully brings us some common sense and decency

"One Battle" tells the story of a pot-addled ex-revolutionary, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, who struggles to remember



US filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson and US producer Sara Murphy accept the award for Best Picture for "One Battle After Another" alongside cast and crew onstage during the 98th Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California, on 15 March 2026. PHOTO: AFP

passphrases in a battle of wits against the terrifying Colonel Lockjaw, played by best supporting actor winner Sean Penn.

The film also won best editing and the inaugural award for casting.

Anderson is one of the great-

est auteurs of contemporary US cinema, but until Sunday had never won an Oscar, despite 11 previous nominations for acclaimed films including "There Will Be Blood" and "Boogie Nights."

'Sinners' wins four

Ryan Coogler's "Sinners", a

bluesy vampire fable that offers a meditation on America's difficult racial history, had come into the evening with a record-tying 16 nominations.

It left with four awards, including best original screenplay for Coogler and best actor for

Michael B Jordan, who plays gangster twin brothers Smoke and Stack seeking their fortune in the segregated South.

Jordan told reporters backstage that he had created detailed journals to flesh out the backstories of both roles in order to clearly express "those nuances between the two".

Other prizes were best score for Ludwig Goransson and best cinematography for Autumn Durald Arkapaw, the first time a woman won in that category.

Coogler called his writing award "an incredible honour" and told journalists he credited a creative writing professor for his success. Both "One Battle" and "Sinners" were produced by Warner Bros Studio, which was the subject of an intense bidding war between Paramount and Netflix. The studio claimed 12 of the 24 awards on offer on Sunday. In perhaps the least surprising award of the evening, Jessie Buckley won best actress for her portrayal of William Shakespeare's heartbroken wife Agnes navigating the loss of their son in "Hamnet". — AFP

1st cherry blossom of 2026 confirmed in Kofu, Gifu, Kochi

CHERRY trees came into bloom in the cities of Kofu, Gifu and Kochi on Monday, ahead of other parts of Japan, the local meteorological observatories said.

Kofu in Yamanashi Prefecture, west of Tokyo, reported its earliest bloom since records began in 1953. It came nine days earlier than last year and 10 days earlier than average.

The flowers in Gifu blossomed nine days earlier than the previous year and nine days earlier than average, while those in Kochi were six days earlier than the previous year and seven days earlier than average.

At around 10 am, the specimen tree at Kochi Castle in the western Japan city was confirmed to have more than five blossoms — the standard for declaring official flowering. This is the third consecutive year Kochi has recorded the country's earliest bloom of the Somei Yoshino, the most common "sakura" variety.

An observatory official said low rainfall and long hours of sunshine contributed to Kochi's blooms, adding that full bloom is expected in about a week.

Koyumi Hamada, 16, a first-year high school

student who visited Kochi Castle with classmates, said, "I want to go cherry-blossom viewing with my friends. I can't wait to see them in full bloom!" — Kyodo



A Somei Yoshino cherry tree comes into bloom at Kochi Castle in Kochi, western Japan, on 16 March 2026. PHOTO: KYODO

Film powerhouse India falls short at Oscars

INDIA may churn out around 2,000 movies per year, but it is yet to win a golden statuette in the coveted film categories at the Oscars.

The South Asian nation's Oscar journey started in 1957, with "Mother India" narrowly losing the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film by a single vote to Federico Fellini's "Nights of Cabiria".

In the decades since, only two other Indian entries "Salaam Bombay!" and "Lagaan" have made it into the final nominations for the top film categories.

This year, despite securing a spot in the 15-film shortlist for the International Feature Film at the 98th Academy Awards, Neeraj Ghaywan's "Homebound" did not make the final five.

"There were other equally good films in competition," acclaimed filmmaker Shekhar Kapur told AFP reflecting on the film's ouster.

Commercial formula

But while the marquee awards have been somewhat out of reach, India has managed to take home some accolades at the annual star studded event hosted in California.

In 1992, legendary Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray received an Honorary Academy Award.

Kapur secured seven Oscar nominations in 1999 for his film "Elizabeth" — in mostly technical categories.

Recent triumphs for India include "RRR" which won the Best Original Song and "The Elephant Whisperers" that took Best Documentary Short in 2023. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

Vinfast losses widen to \$3.9 bln in 2025

NASDAQ-LISTED Vietnamese electric vehicle maker Vinfast doubled its sales in 2025, it said Monday, but losses widened to \$3.9 billion.

CEO Pham Nhat Vuong is Vietnam's richest person and Vinfast aims to compete with global EV giants such as Tesla.

But it has struggled to break into the international market and has now reported combined losses of well over \$9 billion in the three years since it listed on the Nasdaq exchange in New York, even as sales have climbed.

Fourth-quarter revenues reached 39.4 trillion dong (\$1.57 billion), up nearly 140 per cent year-on-year, it said in a statement, with increasing contributions from new markets including India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

But it reported a net loss of \$1.4 billion for the period.

For the full year 2025, it delivered 196,919 EVs globally, it said, doubling units sold year-on-year, with 11 per cent of them outside Vietnam.

The figure "represents Vinfast's highest annual deliveries since inception", it said.

But its net loss for the year was 97.2 trillion dong (\$3.87 billion), 25.7 per cent worse than 2024, when it tripled deliveries.

Vinfast shares soared when it debuted on the Nasdaq in August 2023, at one point reaching a market value bigger than US auto giants Ford and General Motors, but have since slumped.

With more than 100 showrooms globally, Vinfast is trying to crack markets in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, the United States and Canada. — AFP



A VinFast electric car is seen on a street in Hanoi on 16 March 2026. PHOTO: AFP

China's forex market remains stable in Feb

CHINA'S foreign exchange market remained generally stable in February despite heightened geopolitical tensions and increased volatility in international financial markets, the country's foreign exchange regulator said on Monday.

The Chinese foreign exchange market recorded transactions worth US\$2.6 trillion in February, while cross-border receipts and payments by non-banking sectors totalled \$1.2 trillion, according to the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

In February, non-banking

sectors recorded a net inflow of \$35.6 billion in cross-border capital, while banks posted a forex settlement surplus of \$42.8 billion, the data showed.

Overall, China's foreign-related economy is developing steadily, the foreign exchange market remains active, corporate foreign exchange settlement willingness has shown a modest decline, and demand for forex purchases is generally stable, with market expectations remaining steady, the administration said. — Xinhua

Philippines pitches agriculture as bankable investment sector



This photo taken on 23 May 2025 shows residents planting rice at a rice field in Nara town, Palawan province. PHOTO: AFP

THE Philippines is stepping up efforts to attract global capital to agriculture, positioning the sector as a "viable, bankable investment option", the country's Department of Agriculture (DA) said Monday.

At the ceremonial signing of the partnership for the Hand-in-Hand National Investment Forum 2026, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said the initiative reflects a shift in how the country presents its

agri-fisheries sector to international financiers.

The forum aims to channel private investment into projects spanning farming, fisheries and rural infrastructure. Those areas offer strong growth potential but remain chronically underfunded, the DA said in its press release.

Tiu Laurel said the initiative brings development institutions and private investors together to accelerate rural

economic growth.

Despite employing millions of Filipinos, agriculture has struggled to draw large-scale investment due to fragmented supply chains, climate vulnerability and persistent infrastructure bottlenecks, the DA said.

By promoting agriculture as a highly bankable sector, the DA said it is signalling a stronger push towards investment-led modernization. — Xinhua

India's wholesale inflation rises to 2.13% in Feb

INDIA'S wholesale price index (WPI) rose to 2.13 per cent in February, data released by the federal ministry of commerce and industry on Monday said.

According to the ministry statement, the positive rate of inflation in February 2026 is primarily due to the increase in prices of other manufacturing, manufacture of basic metals,

non-food articles, food articles and textiles etc.

WPI inflation rate was 1.81 per cent in January and 0.96 per cent in December 2025.

WPI Food inflation rose to 1.85 per cent in February as compared to 1.41 per cent in January.

The index for the primary articles group declined by 0.52

per cent from 193.9 in January to 192.9 in February.

The index for the fuel and power group increased by 1.17 per cent from 145.9 in January to 147.6 in February.

The index for the manufactured products group increased by 0.47 per cent from 147.5 in January to 148.2 in February. — Xinhua

Strait of Hormuz closure hits ethylene supplies in Japan

A major Japanese oil company said Monday it will reduce its production of ethylene, a petrochemical used to make plastics, as the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the war in the Middle East affects supplies of crude oil and its de-

rivatives.

Ethylene production has been curbed at Idemitsu Kosan Co plants in Chiba Prefecture near Tokyo and Yamaguchi Prefecture in western Japan, the company said, as its procurement of naphtha has become

difficult.

Ethylene is produced from naphtha derived from crude oil, which is imported mainly from the Middle East. It is widely used for car bumpers, cosmetics and food containers. — Kyodo

Oil eases on hopes for Strait of Hormuz passage

OIL prices eased on Monday as investors balanced hopes for the crucial Strait of Hormuz reopening with concerns over further attacks on energy infrastructure.

As the Middle East war entered its third week, most European stocks climbed while Asian stocks mainly fell.

International benchmark Brent North Sea crude was up just 0.1 per cent — after rising about three per cent earlier in the day — and the main US contract West Texas Intermediate shed more than one per cent.

That came as a non-Iranian oil tanker transited the Strait of Hormuz with its automat-

ic transponder system activated, despite major disruption to shipping in the crucial waterway, according to monitor Marine Traffic.

US President Donald Trump piled pressure on world powers over the weekend to help reopen the vital shipping lane choked off by Iranian attacks.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said London was working with allies to come up with a “viable” plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has declared closed to US and US-allied traffic.

Germany meanwhile said the war in the Middle East, started by US-Israeli strikes on Iran, has “nothing to do with NATO.



A photo taken on 13 March 2026 shows a display with the prices for Super E10, Super, Diesel and other fuel at an Aral oil and gas station in Berlin, Germany. PHOTO: AFP

“The situation is not close to being resolved but investors seem reassured by signs of action,” said AJ Bell investment director

Russ Mould.

The London, Paris and Frankfurt stock markets rose on Monday, but analysts warned that market

sentiment remained fragile.

In Asia, Tokyo and Shanghai closed lower, while Hong Kong rose.

During Asian trading hours, crude had climbed further above \$100 a barrel after attacks on oil infrastructure on the UAE’s east coast and strikes on Iran’s Kharg Island.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told CBS his country was not interested in talks with Washington, but was ready to speak to countries about safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz. The two sides continued to exchange fire Monday, with Saudi Arabia saying it had intercepted more than 60 drones since midnight, while flights were temporarily suspended at Dubai’s airport after a “drone-related incident” sparked a fire nearby. — AFP

Indonesia’s foreign debt rises in Jan as govt external loans increase



Trainees walk to the entrance of Bank Indonesia, the country’s central bank, in Jakarta on 16 September 2025. PHOTO: AFP

INDONESIA’S foreign debt rose to US\$434.7 billion in January 2026, growing 1.7 per cent year

on year, the country’s central bank announced on Monday.

The increase was

mainly driven by higher government external debt, which reached \$216.3 billion in January 2026,

up 5.6 per cent year on year, said Ramdan Denny Prakoso, communications executive director of Bank Indonesia, in a press release.

“In January 2026, external debt developments were influenced by the government’s withdrawal of foreign loans to support government programmes and projects, as well as foreign capital inflows into international government securities,” he said.

He added that the funds were used for sectors including health and social services, government administration and defence, education, construction, as well as transport and warehousing. — Xinhua

Dutch AI firm Nebius says signs \$27 bln deal with Meta

DUTCH artificial intelligence firm Nebius said on Monday it had signed a deal worth \$27 billion over five years to provide AI infrastructure to social media giant Meta.

Nebius said it would provide \$12 billion of computing capacity from the beginning of next year across multiple locations.

The Amsterdam-based company said

Meta had also committed to buy up to a further \$15 billion of capacity over the coming five years.

Nebius, along with competitors including NScale and Coreweave, is a player in the emerging “neocloud” sector, building data centres optimised for AI and selling the computing power to giants like Meta or Microsoft. — AFP

S Korea’s jobless claims turn downward in Feb

SOUTH Korea’s jobless claims turned downward last month due to weak demand in the construction and manufacturing industries, government

data showed Monday.

The number of new applicants for job-seeking benefits dipped 30,100, or 25.8 per cent, from a year earlier to 87,000 in

February, after expanding 14,800 in the previous month, according to the Ministry of Employment and Labour.

The benefit appli-

cants mainly shrank in the construction, the manufacturing, the business service, and the wholesale and retail sectors. — Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BANDUNG VOY.NO. (905N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BANDUNG VOY.NO. (905N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **17-3-2026** 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 SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINES

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

South Korea lifts coal cap, ramps up nuclear output amid energy concerns



A general view shows exhaust gases billowing from the chimneys of the Taean Thermal Power Station, a large coal-fired power station owned by Korean Western Power Co, part of Korea Electric Power Corporation in Taean around 150 kilometres from Seoul, on 17 November 2025. **PHOTO: AFP**

SOUTH Korea's ruling party said on Monday the country will lift a cap on coal-powered generation capacity set at 80 per cent and boost the use of nuclear power to about the same level.

The world's eighth-largest consumer of crude oil is feeling the squeeze on energy supplies as Iran has choked off the vital Strait of Hormuz, with the Middle East war now entering its third week.

The disruption along the key oil route has sent prices soaring and prompted Seoul to impose a fuel price cap for the first time in nearly 30 years.

Ahn Do-geol, an MP from the ruling Democratic party, told reporters after a meeting

with relevant government agencies that the coal cap limiting generation to 80 per cent would be lifted from Monday.

"Effective today the 80-per cent cap will be removed," he said.

The government will also raise the utilization rate of nuclear reactors by more than 10 per cent to help offset the impact of disrupted energy supplies, he said.

"Six reactors are currently undergoing maintenance, but we plan to complete maintenance on two of them by March and the remaining four by mid-May, raising the utilization rate of nuclear power plants from the current high 60 per cent-range

to around 80 per cent."

Nuclear energy accounted for 31.7 per cent of the country's total electricity production in 2024, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The state-run Korea National Oil Corporation will bring in 3.35 million barrels of crude oil it is producing from its overseas projects by June, the MP said.

Seoul said earlier this month it had struck a deal to ship around four million barrels of crude from the United Arab Emirates to bolster supplies.

The government has said it holds oil reserves equivalent to about seven months of consumption. — AFP

Russia warns of risks to nuclear non-proliferation amid Mideast crisis

RUSSIAN Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday that the fate of the nuclear non-proliferation regime is a source of grave concern amid escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

In a message to participants of the Moscow Nonproliferation Conference, Lavrov said the recent military actions by Israel and the United States against Iran, including strikes targeting facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency, had dealt a serious blow to the authority of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Such actions have also hurt the credibility of diplomacy as a means of resolving disputes,

Lavrov said, adding that some countries may increasingly view nuclear weapons as a guarantee of security.

He stressed the importance of preserving the pact as a key element of global strategic stability and urged all signatories, particularly nuclear-weapon states, to fulfil their obligations.

The foreign minister also noted that the risks of the militarization of outer space are increasing as a result of "destructive actions by the United States and its allies".

The implementation of the US "Golden Dome" missile defence system, which envisions deploying space-based interceptor strike systems by 2028, poses a significant threat to strategic stability, he said. — Xinhua

China, US agree stable economic, trade ties benefit both countries, world, says China intl trade representative

CHINA and the United States agreed that stable bilateral economic and trade relations are beneficial to both countries and world, a senior Chinese official said here on Monday.

Meanwhile, China's position on Section 301 investigations has been consistent

and it opposes such unilateral probes, said Li Chenggang, China international trade representative with the Ministry of Commerce and vice minister of commerce, at a briefing following the new round of China-US economic and trade talks. — Xinhua

Iran denies seeking ceasefire, says war must end without repeat attacks

IRAN'S Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said Monday that Tehran has neither sought a ceasefire nor negotiations with the United States, rejecting US claims that it requested a truce.

In a post on X, Araghchi called such claims "delusional" and said Iran's armed forces would keep fighting until US President Donald Trump recognizes that the "illegal war he's

imposing on both Americans and Iranians is wrong and must never be repeated."

Speaking later at a weekly news conference in Tehran, Araghchi said that any end to the conflict must ensure that attacks on Iran are not repeated.

"When we say we do not want a ceasefire, it is not because we seek to continue the war," he said. "It is because this time the

war must end in a way that the enemies never think of repeating the attacks."

Araghchi accused Iran's adversaries of attempting to force the country into "unconditional surrender" after mobilizing their full capabilities. He added that Iran's opponents, more than two weeks into the conflict, were now seeking help from countries they once considered hostile and call-

ing for international assistance to secure shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran, he said, restricts passage only for enemies and their allies involved in the conflict.

On 28 February, Israel and the United States launched joint strikes on Tehran and other Iranian cities, killing former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, senior military commanders, and civilians. Iran responded with waves of



Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi attends a joint press conference in Tehran, Iran, 18 January 2026. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

missile and drone attacks on Israel and US bases and assets across the Middle East. — Xinhua

SPORTS

Shan United single win away from 7th MNL title

SHAN United will secure their seventh Myanmar National League title and sixth consecutive championship if they defeat Hanthawady United in the final match of the 2025-2026 season.

Shan United currently lead the table with 55 points, one point ahead of Yangon United, and has extended its unbeaten league run to 99 matches after beating Maha United 2-1 in Matchweek 21.

The title-deciding matches

will be played on 18 March, with Shan United hosting Hanthawady United in Taunggyi while Yangon United face Dagon Star United.

A win would give Shan United their 100th consecutive league match unbeaten and another historic MNL title. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

Players from Shan United celebrate victory in the match on 12 March. **PHOTO: MNL**



Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympics closes as China tops medal tally

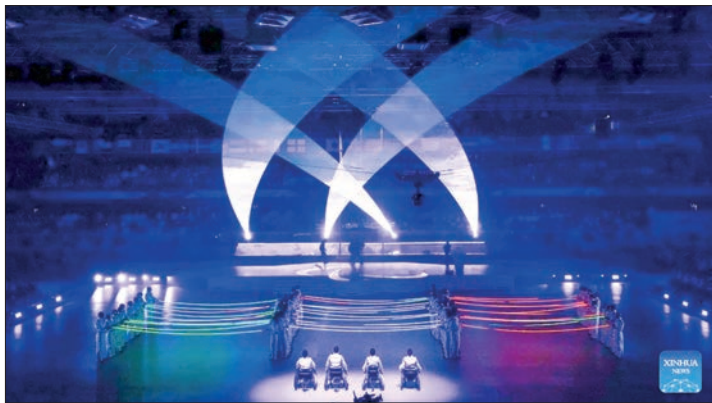
INTERNATIONAL Paralympic Committee (IPC) President Andrew Parsons declared the Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games closed on Sunday.

The closing ceremony, themed "Italian Souvenir", was staged at Cortina Curling Olympic Stadium, a historic venue that hosted the 1956 Winter Olympics and returned to the Olympic and Paralympic stage in 2026, spanning seven decades.

The Games officially opened on 6 March and featured 79 events across six sports in three competition clusters. Para alpine skiing, para snowboard and wheelchair curling took place in Cortina. Para biathlon and para cross-country skiing were held in Val di Fiemme, while para ice hockey was staged in Milan.

With over 600 athletes from 55 delegations, the 2026 Winter Paralympics marked the 50th anniversary of the inaugural edition in 1976. It was also the first time the Games had returned to Italy since Turin 2006. El Salvador, Haiti, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Portugal all made their Winter Paralympic debut at Milan-Cortina.

"These Paralympic Win-



Artistes perform during the closing ceremony of Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games in Cortina D'Ampezzo, Italy, 15 March 2026. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

ter Games have been a record-breaking success. The biggest and most beautiful Winter Paralympics with more athletes, more nations, more women and more global broadcast and digital coverage than ever before," Parsons said in his closing speech.

"Every race and every match told a story - a story of resilience and a story of possibility. A story that will inspire long after these Games close. Change starts with sport and the true power of these Games goes far beyond competition," he added.

China topped the medal table with 15 gold, 13 silver and 16 bronze medals, marking its best-ever performance at an overseas Winter Paralympics. Runner-up the United States

won 13 golds, five silvers and six bronzes, followed by Russia in third with eight golds, one silver and three bronzes. Host Italy finished fourth with seven golds, seven silvers and two bronzes.

Para cross-country skier and biathlete Cai Jiayun and wheelchair curler Wang Meng served as China's flagbearers at the closing ceremony.

The 25-year-old Cai won China's first gold medal of the Milan-Cortina Winter Paralympics and finished with three para biathlon golds in total.

In wheelchair curling mixed doubles, a newly introduced event at the Winter Paralympics, the 37-year-old Wang and her teammate Yang Jinqiao, 24, won a historic gold for China. — Xinhua

Manchester United strengthens position in third place as Tottenham takes Anfield point

MANCHESTER United strengthened its grip on a top-four finish on Sunday with a 3-1 win at home to Aston Villa.

The win leaves Michael Carrick's side third in the table, ahead of Aston Villa, which has now lost its last three Premier League games.

Casemiro opened the scoring in Old Trafford with a powerful 53rd minute header following Bruno Fernandes' cross, although Ross Barkley drilled home a left-foot shot to make it 1-1 after an assist from Lucas Digne after 65 minutes.

Matheus Cunha took advantage of another Fernandes assist seven minutes later to slide the ball home and re-establish Manchester United's lead and Benjamin Sesko assured the points nine minutes from time.

Richarlison hit a 90th-minute equalizing goal to give Tottenham a 1-1 draw away to Liverpool, which could lift some of the pressure off coach Igor Tudor, who was heading for his fifth defeat since taking over.

Liverpool had taken an 18th-minute free kick thanks to Dominik Szoboszlai's free kick that Tottenham goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario might have done better with.

The draw leaves Tottenham

a point above the relegation zone after the two other games involving teams battling to avoid relegation both ended in 0-0 draws as Nottingham Forest was held at home to Fulham, while Leeds United took a point away to Crystal Palace.

Leeds played for all of the second half with 10 men after Gabriel Gudmundsson was sent off for two yellow cards, but could have taken all three points if Dominic Calvert-Lewin hadn't dragged a first-half penalty well wide. Saturday's results look to have tilted the title race definitively Arsenal's way after Mikel Arteta's side beat Everton 2-0, while Manchester City could only draw 1-1 away to West Ham.

Viktor Gyokeres put Arsenal ahead in the 89th minute, before Max Dowman made it 2-0 in the 97th minute with a goal that made history as he became the youngest player to ever score in the Premier League, aged just 16 years and 73 days. Bernardo Silva put Manchester City ahead away to West Ham with a clever chip, but Konstantinos Mavropanos's powerful header quickly made it 1-1 with West Ham's only effort on target all game, while Manchester City wasted chances for a vital win and are now nine points behind Arsenal. — Xinhua

South Korea lifts coal cap, ramps up nuclear output amid energy concerns

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Thailand's parliament set to elect new PM on 19 March

THAILAND'S House of Representatives is set to hold a session on 19 March to vote for a new prime minister, Secretary-General of the lower house of parliament Sirote Paetphan said on Monday.

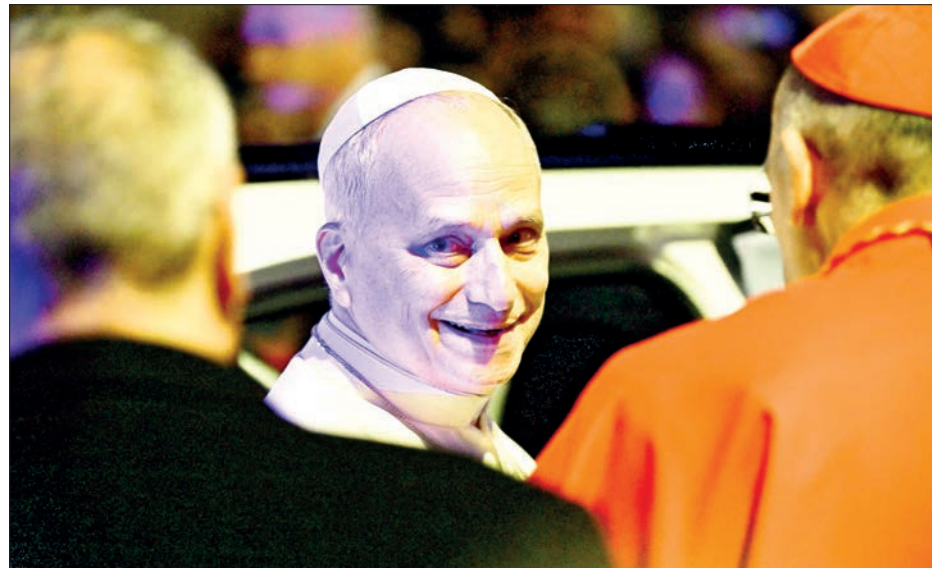
The announcement followed a royal endorsement of Sophon Zaram as the new House speaker, setting the stage for the lower house of parliament to convene for the election of the prime minister after the February general election.

Under the Thai constitution, a candidate is required to receive a simple majority of votes cast by the lower house to become the prime minister.

Thai caretaker Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul announced last week that his Bhumjaithai Party, which won 191 seats in the lower chamber in the general election, has secured enough support for its bid to form a new coalition government, commanding around 291 seats in the House.

— Xinhua

Prayers, calls for peace – Pope Leo's upcoming Africa tour



Pope Leo XIV leaves after leading Mass during a pastoral visit to the 'Sacred Heart of Jesus' Parish in Ponte Mammolo on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, in Rome on 15 March 2026. **PHOTO: AFP**

Pope Leo's first major tour abroad to four African countries in April will see the US pontiff broach an array of themes, from interfaith dialogue to calls to fight corruption and inequality.

The trip, which includes seven masses and 11 speeches, takes Leo XIV to Algeria beginning 13 April, followed by Cameroon on 15 April, Angola on 18 April and wrapping up in Equatorial Guinea, where

he will spend two days after his arrival on 21 April, according to his programme published Monday by the Vatican.

Leo will become the first pope to visit Algeria, where Islam is the state religion. The head of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics will be received by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune before celebrating a mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa in Algiers.

He will preside over another mass in the eastern city of Annaba, the land of Saint Augustine, who laid the foundations for the Augustinian Order to which the pope belongs.

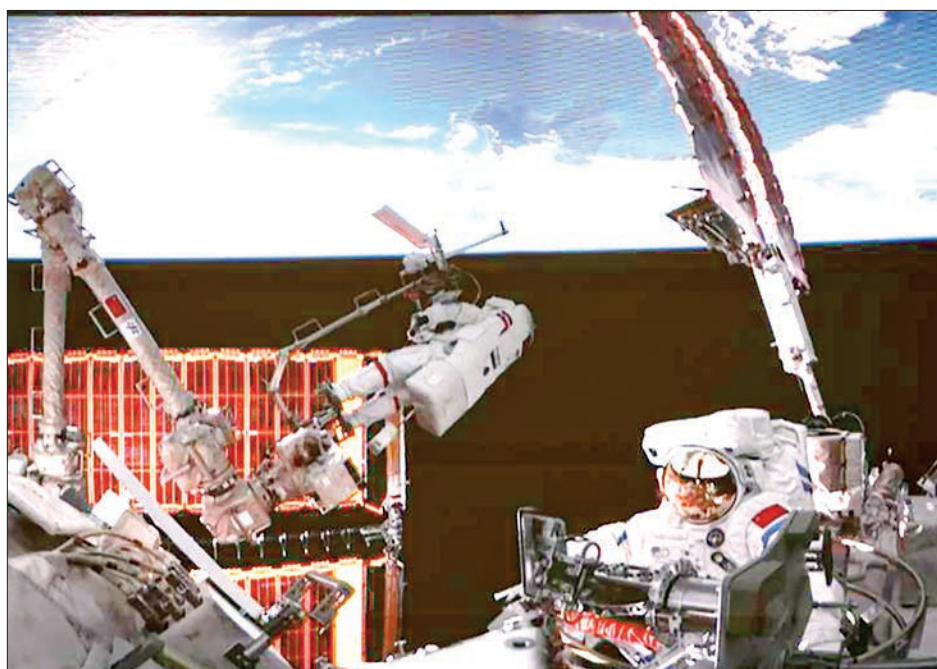
The pope does not plan to visit Tihirine, south of Algiers, although the visit comes just days after the 30th anniversary of the murder of seven Catholic monks abducted in 1996 during Algeria's civil war.

Heading south to Cameroon, a multi-faith but Christian-majority country, Leo will meet President Paul Biya and visit an orphanage in Yaounde, before travelling to Doula, where he will celebrate mass at the stadium.

The most symbolic leg takes place 16 April, where the pope travels under heavy security to Bamenda in the English-speaking northwest to issue a call for peace. Bamenda is the epicentre of the armed conflict that has pitted government forces against separatist groups for nearly a decade.

The visit to Angola, a former Portuguese colony that gained its independence in 1975, is expected to highlight social themes important to the Chicago-born pope, including conflict related to scarce resources like oil and minerals, the fight against corruption and inequality. — AFP

Shenzhou-21 astronauts complete second series of extravehicular activities



This screen image captured at Beijing Aerospace Control Centre on 9 December 2025 shows Shenzhou-21 astronauts Zhang Lu and Wu Fei (R) performing extravehicular activities outside China's orbiting space station. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

THE Shenzhou-21 crew aboard China's orbiting space station completed their mission's second series of extravehicular activities (EVAs) on Monday, according to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA).

The astronaut trio — Zhang Lu, Wu Fei and Zhang Hongzhang — worked for roughly seven hours and completed their tasks at 7:35 pm (Beijing Time), assisted by the space station's robotic arm and a team on Earth.

Zhang Lu has so far carried out six EVAs, making him one of the Chinese astronauts with the most spacewalks to date.

The trio completed the installation of a space debris protection device for the space station along with other tasks. Zhang Lu and Wu Fei, who have conducted spacewalk operations, returned to the Wentian lab module safely, according to the CMSA.

Since completing the first series of EVAs on 9 December 2025, the Shen-

zhou-21 crew has carried out equipment inspection and maintenance, environmental monitoring, and health management aboard the space station. The crew members have also conducted in-orbit training exercises, including rendezvous and docking, medical rescue, and emergency lifesaving.

The scientific experiment and test projects they undertook, covering space life science and human research, microgravity physics, and new space technologies, have been progressing steadily. They also celebrated the Spring Festival in Year of the Horse while in orbit.

The CMSA said the three astronauts have been working in orbit for more than four months. According to the mission plan, additional EVAs will be carried out by the crew during the Shenzhou-21 mission, with relevant scientific experiments and technical tests continuing as scheduled. — Xinhua