



Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views round Haw Palace of Kengtung Saopha Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng in Kengtung, Shan State (East) yesterday.

Kengtung Haw Palace Replica Museum successfully inaugurated

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing gave guidance for reconstruction of Kengtung Haw Palace on request of relatives of Kengtung Saopha Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng and residents.

A ceremony to inaugurate the already-built museum which is a replica of Haw Palace of Kengtung Saopha Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng took place at the land of Haw Palace in Haw

Palace Park on Nawngtong lake circular road in Ward 5 of Kengtung, Shan State (East) yesterday morning, with attendance of Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior

General Min Aung Hlaing.

The Senior General, his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla and officials were welcomed by relatives of Kengtung Saopha Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng, town elders and

local people.

On the occasion, town elder U Sai Yi Tip Pawong expressed thanks and pleasure to the Senior General for his guidance to build Kengtung Haw Palace Replica Museum of Kengtung Saopha Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng and it is a great auspicious day for emergence of the museum in Kengtung.

SAC Joint-Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, Council members General Mya Tun Oo and Lt-Gen Nyo Saw, Shan State Chief Minister U Aung Aung and member of the Advisory Board to the SAC Chairman Dr Yin Yin Nwe cut the ribbon to inaugurate the museum.

The Senior General unveiled the stone plaque of the museum and then sprinkled scented water on it together with relatives of the Saopha. **SEE PAGE-2**

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Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing hears the report on progress of the Kengtung airport construction yesterday.

Kengtung Haw Palace Replica Museum successfully inaugurated

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The Senior General also presented cash awards to dance troupes, cultural groups and officials who took built the museum.

The Senior General, wife and party viewed round documentary photos of the Saopha, his family members and relatives, documentaries, utensils, and formation of rooms in the Haw Palace displayed at the museum. The Senior General discussed gathering of more historical documentaries, systematic preservation of ancient utensils, and installation of glass for partitions to systematically keep the documentaries.

Kengtung Saopha Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng invited experts from India to build the Haw Palace in 1903 and it was completed in 1906. The building was decorated with Shan traditional and Myanmar architectural works influenced by European and Indian styles. It was the first-ever

Salient points in opening of Kengtung Haw Palace and inspection tour of the Senior General to Kengtung Airport

- Kengtung Saopha Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng invited experts from India to build the Haw Palace in 1903 and it was completed in 1906.
- The building was decorated with Shan tradition and Myanmar architectural works influenced by European and Indian styles.
- Officials need to manage direct flights from Laos, China and Thailand to Kengtung Airport.
- It is necessary to facilitate the runway of the airport with necessary equipment for enabling aeroplanes to land at Kengtung airport in all seasons.

cement building in Kengtung.

Kengtung Saopha Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng, his son Saopha Sao Kawng Tai and grandson Saopha Sao Sai Long and families lived in the Haw Palace till 1959. In 1962, the Haw Palace was used as the government office. According to the requests of the relatives of the Saopha and residents in 2021, construction of the building started under the guidance of the Senior General.

Now, the building was successfully opened. Renovating historical buildings and religious buildings of national races show great historical traditions of the State and forge fraternity, trust, peace and stability and socioeconomic development of national races.

On arrival at Kengtung Airport, the Senior General heard reports on upgrading the airport by SAC member Union Minister for Transport and Communica-

tions General Mya Tun Oo and Director of Military Engineers Maj-Gen Zaw Naing Oo reported on brief history of the airport and upgrading process of the airport.

In his response, the Senior General said that upgrading of Kengtung Airport aims to make preparations for the future. At present, he continued that it is necessary to upgrade the airport to admit landing and taking off

of jets.

The Senior General instructed officials to manage direct flights from Laos, China and Thailand to Kengtung Airport.

He underscored that upgrading the airport is purposed for development of tourism industry in Kengtung and contribution to socioeconomic development of the region and residents.

He gave guidance to facilitate the runway of the airport with necessary equipment for enabling aeroplanes to land at the airport in all seasons.

The Senior General inspected the site for new Kengtung Airport and upgrading of the runway and left necessary guidance.

On the evening of 10 May, the Senior General paid homage to 99 years old Presiding Patron of Kengyin Monastery Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Khemacara and donated alms.

SAC members, Union ministers and deputy ministers also donated alms and offerings to the Sayadaw.

The Senior General instructed officials to conduct necessary maintenance for the monastery. — MNA/TTA

59th Myanmar Gems Emporium concludes successfully in Nay Pyi Taw

THE 59th Myanmar Gems Emporium concluded successfully yesterday at the Maniyadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw.

A total of 800 jade lots were offered for sale through open tender on the final day, with 758 of them being sold. Throughout the ten days of the emporium,

from 3 to 12 May, a total of 379 pearl lots, 88 gem lots, and 3,251 jade lots were sold.

The central committee organized the emporium with the objectives of generating foreign revenue, supporting foreign businesses, and providing raw materials for micro, small, and

medium enterprises engaged in manufacturing jade products in Sagaing and Mandalay. — MNA/NT

A phototaken yesterday to show gem merchants at 59th Myanmar Gems Emporium's final day.



NATIONAL

Shan State (East) has to combat drug production, trafficking and online gambling and scams

As government is effectively combatting online gambling and online scams in Shan State (East), residents have to cooperate with the government in combatting such crimes.

of flights to Kengtung and upgrading of Government Technical High School in Kengtung.

Union Minister General Mya Tun Oo and the Shan State Chief Minister discussed plans to extend more flights to Shan State (East) and estimation for

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing highlighted that the government has been carrying out eradication of narcotic drugs as a national task for many years.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing yesterday morning met departmental officials at different levels and town elders at the City Hall in Kengtung of Shan State (East) to talk about regional development.

In his address, the Senior General stressed that residents need to manufacture marketable products made of crops of the region with the use of modern techniques.

He underscored that as Shan State (East) possesses sound foundations to successfully manage manufacturing of products, it is necessary to encourage agriculture and livestock based industries.

In the human resource sector, the Senior General noted that Shan State (East) must turn out technicians who are skillful in health, information technology, and engineering sectors.

The government has opened agriculture, livestock and industrial high schools to produce skillful human resources skillful with more plans to establish institutes, colleges and universities for students to further study higher education, he added.

Currently, the Senior General emphasized that Kengtung and Tachilek airports are being upgraded for admitting flights from neighbouring countries.

He continued that as Kengtung region is endowed with beautiful natural environments



Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets departmental officials at different levels and town elders at the City Hall in Kengtung of Shan State (East) yesterday.

Salient points of speech of the Senior General at the meeting with departmental officials and town elders in Kengtung

- The government is effectively combatting online gambling and online scams in Shan State (East).
- The government has been carrying out eradication of narcotic drugs as a national task for many years.
- Shan State (East) must turn out technicians who are skillful in health, information technology, and engineering sectors.
- Kengtung and Tachilek airports are being upgraded for admitting flights from neighbouring countries.

and ancient heritages contributing to successfully operate tourism industry, efforts must be made to enhance tourism services in the region.

He urged local authorities to

strive for beautifying the region and serving the guests with accommodation, food supplies and domestic foods in cooperation with residents and departmental officials.

Shan State Chief Minister U Aung Aung, town elders and departmental officials reported on undertakings of agriculture, livestock and regional development, border trade measures, running

upgrading the GTHS.

The Senior General also met with town elders at the hall of Triangle Region Command and fulfilled the requirements of regional development in the afternoon.

Also present at the meeting were SAC Joint-Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, Council members General Mya Tun Oo and Lt-Gen Nyo Saw, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and the commander of Triangle Region Command.

After the meeting, the Senior General presented Maravijaya Buddha image replicas and food-stuffs to town elders.—MNA/TTA

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News and Periodicals Enterprise



NATIONAL

Myanmar Gazette

Appointment of Head of Service Organization

THE State Administration Council has appointed U Kyaw Kaung Cho, Deputy Director-General (Administration) of the Department of Bridges under the Ministry of Construction as Director-General of the same department on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

Bangladesh New Year celebration held at embassy in Yangon



Bangladesh Embassy celebrates Bangladesh New Year Day event on 10 May at the Embassy of Bangladesh in Yangon, Myanmar. **PHOTO: SITHU LIN (IPRD)**

THE Bangladesh New Year Day celebration took place on the evening of 10 May at the Embassy of Bangladesh in Yangon, Myanmar.

Among the attendees were Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein and his wife, Yangon City Mayor U Bo Htay and his wife, Bangladesh Ambassador to Myanmar Dr Md Monwar Hossain, as well as ambassadors and charge d'affaires from foreign embassies in Yangon, along with other invitees.

During the event, Dr Md Monwar Hossain, the Ambassador of Bangladesh to Myanmar, conveyed New Year greetings.

Following this, Regional Chief Minister U Soe Thein, his wife, and the guests enjoyed various performances including Bangladeshi song "Boishakhi Song", Myanmar puppet dance, snake tricks, and a magic show.

Subsequently, the ambassador hosted a New Year dinner to all attendees at the ceremony.—Sithu Lin (IPRD)/TKO

Construction of medical student dormitories, medical treatment activities inspected



Union Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win views round medical institutions in Yangon yesterday.

UNION Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win inspected the Medical Skills, Simulation, and Research Centre of University of Medicine (1) in Yangon yesterday morning.

He observed the training of basic orthopaedic surgery practical skills and met with faculty members from the Department of Orthopedics who were conducting the course.

They also interacted

closely with current medical science students and provided necessary instructions.

Following this, the Union Minister and officials visited University of Medicine (1) Yangon, where they inspected the trainees' dormitory. He also inspected the sites for construction of a five-storey student hostels on the university campus situated near the National Health Laboratory

Department.

The Union Minister and officials viewed round medical wards at Yangon General Hospital and medical treatment at new seven-storey building of the hospital, leaving instructions on convenient receiving of medical treatments for patients, supply of medicines, maintenance of the building and security measures.—MNA/TKO

Arrangements underway to ensure uninterrupted communication links following Kyoneik Bridge destruction

DURING a visit to inspect the damage to the Kyoneik Bridge yesterday, Mon State Chief Minister U Aung Kyi Thein said that arrangements are underway to construct a new bailey bridge and a temporary route as soon as possible, aiming to ensure there is no disruption to travel following the damage caused by a mine attack perpetrated

by KNLA and PDF terrorists on 11 May.

Yesterday, the chief minister, along with officials, visited the Kyoneik Bridge to inspect the situation where the collapse of 100 per cent of the embankment is causing difficulties for both people and vehicles to pass through.

The chief minister instruct-

ed officials from the Ministry of Construction and the Shwe Thanlwin Highway Company to conduct repair works as soon as possible to ensure uninterrupted flow of goods in the region, prevent delays in public travel, and coordinated efforts to meet these needs.

The Kyoneik Bridge, a 95-foot-long and 41-foot-wide reinforced concrete bridge with a 60 tonnes of maximum withstanding, situated on the Yangon-Mawlamyine Highway in Thaton Township, is utilized by the community for daily social and economic activities.—Thet Naing (Mawlamyine)/TH

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NATIONAL



Land preparation at the Aung Mingala field in Chauk, where 5,000 trees will be planted. PHOTO: NAY HTOO NAING FB

Film icon's tree-planting efforts in Chauk heat up public interest

FILM and video actor Nay Htoo Naing has been promoting tree planting in Chauk, Magway region, and many interested people have contributed, according to his posts on social media.

After his initial proposal to grow 5,000 plants in the Aung Mingala field in Chauk, which has been listed among the world's 15 hottest cities, public interest has soared, and his Facebook account has been flooded with donors.

"Nay Htoo Naing is a promoter of plantations. He is not the one who will grow and nurture these plants to become trees. Nay Htoo Aung will try to

get the necessary support from the people and organizations that will take care of the trees. Whoever or whatever organization grows, our focus is to grow trees," he informed the public on his social media page.

The contribution starts at around K50,000, for which Nay Htoo Naing regularly updates the list of donors, and many fans follow it with appreciative comments.

In addition to Aung Mingala mound, he plans to grow trees in the surrounding area of the Chintaungma pagoda. Thus, he has contacted the groups that will maintain the

plantation.

At the Aung Mingala field in Chauk, Magway region, land preparation has been commenced to grow 5,000 trees of nine species, including gum-ki-no star-flower, tamarind, gold mohur, Gangaw (*Mesua ferrea*), laburnums and rain trees.

In previous years, the actor had also planted trees in some areas, including Chauk, to protect them from heat. With the hotter weather, attempts by various personalities and organizations to plant trees in many regions of Myanmar have been expected this year. — MT/ZN

Two of three low-pressure areas to form early monsoon depressions

IT is forecast that three low-pressure areas may happen, and two of them are likely to develop into depressions in the early monsoon season, according to the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology.

Storms that happened in pre-monsoon hit the Rakhine coast and the delta generally.

"It is forecast that low-pressure areas will happen three times in early monsoon season.

Of three, two have the possibility of a storm.

In late monsoon, three times of low-pressure area occurrence are forecast, and one has the possibility of a storm. Generally, storm in early monsoon happens on the Rakhine coast and the delta, based on data 30 years ago," U Hla Tun, the department's spokesperson, told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

Storms in mid-monsoon typically head to India, but Myanmar needs to be alert, he said.

"In mid-monsoon, normally

storms do not approach Myanmar; but they head to India. Monsoons are strong in the mid-monsoon season, so rain is high in the coastal areas. However, storms in late monsoons should be cautious, especially in Myanmar's coastal areas, because storms

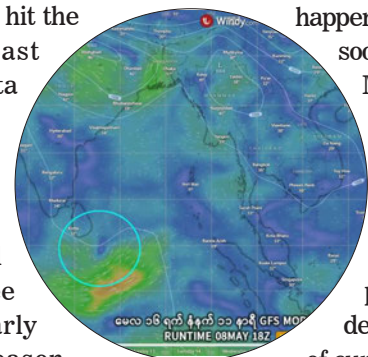
happen early, and late monsoons usually approach

Myanmar's coastal areas. It is the possibility of the storm track," said U Hla Tun. In May and June, there is the possibility of thunderstorms as a result

of cumulonimbus clouds, which are possible to happen, he said.

Accord-

ing to the weather forecast on 10 May, cumulonimbus clouds are happening in Nay Pyi Taw, upper Sagaing Region, Taninthayi Region, Kachin State, Shan State, Kayin State and Mon State, and forecast weather conditions include strong wind, torrential rain, lightning, thunderbolt and hailstorm, along with rain, along the areas where cumulonimbus clouds move, the department announced. — Thit Taw/ZS



ECMWF, GFS and GEFS models show a low-pressure area is forecast to happen at the south east Bay of Bengal, southern India and near Sri Lanka. PHOTO- WINNAING

Overseas employment agencies face punishment for tax evasion fraud

OVERSEAS employment agencies will be severely punished if fraud is found in their tax evasion accounts, Safe Migration has warned.

All such agencies are required to submit the list of overseas worker identification cards (OWIC) and the list of workers actually sent abroad during the 2023-2024 financial year in the prescribed form to dolmigration-tax@gmail.com by 17 May. If they fail to comply with it, they will be liable to pay tax based on the sending list by country and OWIC list prepared by the department.

Safe Migration also advised the agencies to check the actual list of labourers sent to Thailand via Myawady and Kawthoung under the MOU or U-Turn system in 2023-2024 and also to verify the lists of OWIC acquired for other countries.

For OWIC lists, they need to be submitted in the attached forms after being categorized according to job positions for Japan and Singapore. Zero-cost workers must be separated into their respective countries. In describing the zero-cost labour list, the table mentioning the name

of the agency, the name of the overseas company, the address (email, phone number) and the number of workers sent must be attached to the schedule in Telegram, which allows to apply for OWIC. When describing the list of U-turns for Japan, the worker's particulars, old OWIC card copy, and new OWIC card copy are also required to be submitted.

If there are any discrepancies in country-wise lists without applying for OWIC by the agency or if there are any inconsistencies in the data, the



OWIC card issuing station (Mayangon).

agency must visit the responsible official at the Dagon Myothit (North) office for justification and recommendation, which is also required to be submitted in an attachment. When they want to

delete any sent labour list for various reasons, they will have to submit with the endorsed letter for returning OWIC cards to the officer of Dagon Myothit (North), it said. — MT/ZN

NATIONAL



The Shwehsandaw Pagoda in Toungoo and the 445th Buddha Pujaniya festival.

Shwehsandaw Pagoda Buddha Pujaniya festival in Toungoo slated on 15 May

THE 446th Shwehsandaw Pagoda Buddha Pujaniya festival, Kason water-pouring ceremony, and procession of two sacred relic teeth will be held in Toungoo Township, Bago Region, from 15 to 29 May, according to the pagoda trust.

U Yin Htay, treasurer of the trust, said: "In addition to the pagoda festival, we will host a procession featuring two sacred relic teeth, one from China and one from Sri Lanka, in Toungoo at 3 pm on 22 May. Later that evening, we will perform a water pouring ceremony on the Bodhi banyan tree located in the northwestern corner of the pagoda compound."

King Bayintnaung's brother Toungoo King Min Khaung commissioned the pagoda in 932 ME. It is said to contain a strand of the Lord Buddha's sacred hair relics. — ASH/NT

ASEAN-ROK economic ties highlighted at roundtable talks

MYANMAR'S delegate joined the ASEAN-Korea Trade and Investment Roundtable 2024 discussion held at Four Seasons Hotel in Seoul on 8 May, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

U Thant Sin, Myanmar Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, who assumes the alternate chair of the ASEAN Committee in Seoul, represented the nation at the meeting. At the meeting, he reflected on ASEAN and ROK's 35 years of dialogue partnership, highlighting the importance of economic relationships

in deepening bilateral friendship.

ASEAN is ROK's second largest trade partner, whereas ROK stands as ASEAN's fifth largest trade partner and sixth biggest investor, according to the 2022 figures. So, he looked forward to the implementation of policies for mutual benefits from the meeting.

The ASEAN-Korea Centre has convened the ASEAN-Korea Trade and Investment Roundtable jointly with the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy four times, including this year. — ASH/NT



The photo shows Ngwehsaung Beach with travellers.

Chinese tourists set to explore Ngwehsaung Beach in Myanmar-China tourism promotion trip

CHINESE tourists are scheduled to visit Ngwehsaung Beach as part of the Myanmar-China Tourism Promotion Familiarization Trip (FAM-Trip) programme, according to the Ayeyawady Region Tourism Promotion Committee.

More bungalows will be built in the hotel zone of Ngwehsaung Beach, according to the resolution passed during the Ayeyawady Region Tourism Promotion Committee meeting 1/2024 on 7 May. The committee is also making necessary ar-

rangements for the upcoming tour programmes, including the FAM Trip for Chinese tourists.

The FAM Trip programme will include not only Ngwehsaung Beach but also other attractive tour destinations near Patheingyi Township, such as Lovers Island, the 19-Mile Elephant Camp, Moemakha Elephant Camp, and Thazin Village.

Currently, there are a total of 32 hotels and five guesthouses with 1,861 rooms open at Ngwehsaung Beach, all licensed by the Region Directorate of Hotels

and Tourism.

The beach authorities prioritize the cleanliness of the sea view, sandy beach, landscaping within the hotel compound and along the coast, as well as corridors and public areas of each hotel, while also ensuring that local foods are well-prepared for the visitors.

Similarly, the Myanmar-Russia Tourism Promotion Familiarization Trip (FAM-Trip) was organized in October 2023, featuring 14 tour destinations in Myanmar. — ASH/TMT



ASEAN-Korea Trade and Investment Roundtable 2024 in session.

Gold market inspections target manipulative practices

AUTHORITIES have continued carrying out inspections in the gold market in order to crack down on dishonest behaviour, said Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) Chair U Myo Myint.

“Relevant departments have been continuously working on this issue. They have taken action on all complaints. An official announcement was already made on seven gold shops that have been dealt with, and inspection is still in progress to take further action against the rest,” said U Myo Myint.

The Gold and Currency Market Monitoring and Regulatory Working Committee, under the leadership of the Central Bank of Myanmar, has formed special joint forces and conducted on-site investigations at gold shops in Yangon Region



Jewellery and gold ornaments sold in the gold market.

and Mandalay Region.

Officials announced that the Maung Kane gold shop, New Tai Sin gold shop, Kayan

Thongwa gold shop in Yangon Region, Shwe Sin Win gold purified shop, Shwe Minthar goldsmith, Mann Sabel gold trading

and Myanmar's Gold shop in Mandalay Region were found lacking gold trading certificate and failing to comply with in-

structions that gold trading businesses must follow.

As of 2 April, the authorities have taken necessary action in accordance with the respective rules and regulations, including warning and signing an acknowledgement of business operation without having a gold trading certificate and temporary suspension.

Currently, the gold market is slow, and selling is more than buying, said U Myo Myint.

“Local gold mines’ production has been good again. Gold prices will plunge when transport routes improve. Gold is extracted inside our country, which is the largest gold producer,” he said.

YGEA has been offering free gold training courses, which attracted nearly 400 applicants, but it could only select about 100 candidates. — MT/ZS

Myeik District exports US\$19.41 million worth of aquatic products in 2023-24 Financial Year

THE Fisheries Department of Myeik District in Taninthayi Region reported that a total of 30,000 tonnes of aquatic products from Myeik District was exported during the 2023-24 Financial Year, generating US\$19.41 million.

These marine products were exported from Myeik District through the Mawtaung and Kawthoung-Ranong border trade routes, as stated by U Zaw Min Oo, Deputy Director of the Fisheries Department in Myeik District, Taninthayi Region.

U Zaw Min Oo explained, “Aquatic products from Taninthayi Region, primarily from Myeik District, are exported via the Mawtaung trade post through the border route, while some are directly transported from Kawthoung to Ranong. In the previous 2023-24 Financial Year, a total of 32,567.61 tonnes of aquatic products were exported,



Aquatic products that will be exported abroad are sterilized and packaged in cold storage.

generating US\$19.41 million. Additionally, 3,854 tonnes of aquatic products were exported in April, the first month of the 2024-25 Financial Year, earning US\$3.47 million. Myeik District is known for its production of saltwater fish and prawns”.

Aquatic products from

Taninthayi Region, including fish, prawns, farmed fish, and other marine produce from Kawthoung, Dawei, and Myeik districts, are transported via five routes for export. Some goods are also transported to Yangon before being exported abroad. — ASH/TMT

MoC collaborates with UMFCCI to export maize and rice, boosting economy

ACCORDING to reports, a total of 5,400 tonnes of maize were exported from Min Htet Min Port (MHM), along with 2,700 tonnes from Shweme Jetty (SMJ) and 4,850 tonnes of rice from Wilmar International Port Terminal. This export initiative, conducted in collaboration between the Ministry of Commerce and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI), aims to bolster the country's economy.

Additionally, on 15 May, further exports included 71,900 tonnes of maize and 6,000

tonnes of rice from Sule Port Wharves (SPW), 53,500 tonnes of maize from Myanmar Industrial Port (MIP), 58,400 tonnes and 12,500 tonnes of rice from Ahlon International Port Terminal (AIPT), 29,500 tonnes of maize from The Myanmar Terminal-TMT, 5,400 tonnes of maize from Min Htet Min Port (MHM), 11,000 tonnes from Yangon International Gateway Terminal (YIGT), and 2,700 tonnes of maize from Myanmar Five Star Line (MFSL). These exports are set to continue.— MNA/TRKM



A vessel is seen berthing at a port in Yangon on 12 May 2024.

OPINION

Provide eyesight care and treat eye diseases

MEDICAL experts warned on 25 April 2024 that half of the world's population may need glasses by 2050 because of eye disorders. There are currently people living in some countries, including the United States, who are suffering from myopia problems. This type of problem occurs 25 per cent more often than usual. According to researchers from the Rochester Technological Institute of the United States of America, four billion people worldwide will need glasses by 2050.

Eyesight disabilities have a substantial impact on all sectors of society, including relations and everyday routines, as well as the process of education and employment opportunities. Although myopia may affect children and teenagers, it may affect most people regardless of age. That is because most people are busy with their mobile phones and computers in their daily routines.

A Myanmar saying goes: "Loss in eyes, failure in ears". Those who suffer from eyesight will lose their lives, whereas those who lack hearing skills will be failures in their lives. As such, everybody needs to take care of their eyesight as well as hearing skills against various dangers. Moreover, patients with eyesight disorders and eye diseases have to take proper treatments in time to overcome their challenges in life.

A school-age child suffering from an eyesight disorder may face degradation in learning and education. If an adult has a disorder of eyesight, it can bring worse social life. Those suffering from eyesight disorders may face fewer job opportunities, resulting in the occurrence of depression and worries. Senior citizens who have eyesight disorders may encounter social loneliness, difficulty walking, the possibility of accidental injuries and other harmful impacts.

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Consequently, they may have eyesight disabilities.

As such, researchers stated that if individuals excessively use smartphones, they may face myopia disease in addition to varieties of eye disorders, which may cause 39 per cent certainty. If they also use many hours of computers, the possibility of myopia may rise to 80 per cent. Parents need to manage their children's time better by reducing screen time.

According to the estimation of the World Health Organization, some 2.2 billion global countries suffer from eyesight problems due to presbyopia and myopia. One billion people cannot solve their eyesight problems yet. Eyesight disorder or blindness is based on cataracts and dullness in eyesight due to irregular refraction.

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What is a Public-Private Partnership?

Public-Private Partnership is a contractual agreement between a public agency and a private sector entity. With Public-Private Partnership, the public agency and the private sector entity share assets, skills, risks and rewards and set up one project. Public-private partnerships combine the public sector capital and private sector capital to improve public services or the management of public sector assets. Public-private partnerships contribute more advantages to the government than a privatization form due to the fact that PPPs emphasize the role of the government, whereas, in a privatization form, the whole business needs to be transferred to the private sector.

Why do developing countries need Public-Private Partnerships?

Developing countries usually have a budget deficit based upon a low tax base, weak tax administration, and poor business environment. With the budget deficit shown, adopting PPPs enables the government to afford to deliver good public services. PPPs are being widely used among governments when it comes to procurement processes when public funding is inadequate. PPPs are also a reliable form of investment from the perspective of private investors, as they guarantee the long-term delivery of public services.

The origin of Public-Private Partnership in world countries

The history of public-private partnerships dates back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when countries focused on developing public infrastructure through joint financing and infrastructure operation. In Britain and the United States, around the eighteenth century, over 2,500 companies were chartered and incorporated to develop private turnpikes. In France, around the seventeenth century, the government used concessions to finance its infrastructure development. This means its private enterprises and banks are granted the ability to design, construct, finance, and operate infrastructures such as railways, roads, electricity, and tramways. In the later decades, PPPs have been commonly used by most countries as they prove to be easy to procure, construct, and finance.

Common types of PPPs

Basic PPP contract types vary in terms of levels of responsibility and risk to be taken by the private operator so that different countries adopt a particular PPP contract type that meets the local requirements on a country-to-country basis. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), PPPs are commonly used in most countries as follows-

- Service Contract
- Management Contract
- Lease Contract
- Concession
- Build- Operate- Transfer (BOT)
- Joint Venture

Public-Private Partnership

By Maythu Htay



Compared to privatization, PPPs allow the government to maintain a significant role while leveraging private sector expertise and capital, offering more advantages to the government without transferring full ownership to the private sector. **ILLUSTRATION: IMAGE USED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSE/FREEPIK**

(1) Service Contract: This is a model in which the government partners with a private entity to perform one or more services for a 1 to 3-year limited period. In this model, the government funds capital investment, and a private partner performs the service at the agreed cost, which is in line with the performance standards set by the public sector. The public authority takes operation and management responsibility and commercial risk, whereas the risk taken by the private entity is minimal.

(2) Management Contract: In a management contract, daily operation and management responsibility are assumed by the private entity with its own working capital, whereas the public authority finances capital investment with asset ownership. The contract generally lasts for 2 to 5 years.

(3) Lease Contract: In a lease contract, the initial establishment of the system is financed by the public authority and contracted to a private company for operation and maintenance. The contract usually lasts for 10 to 15 years. The private sector has to take responsibility for service provision and financial risk for operation.

(4) Concession: In the concession model, the private sector needs to provide all capital investment (assets), and these assets belong to both the public authority and a private company. In this model, the public authority needs to take the role of regulating the price and quality of service while the private partner takes full responsibility for funding, management, operation and maintenance.

(5) Build Operate Transfer (BOT):

There may be various forms of BOT-type contracts such as Build-Operate Transfer, Build-Own-Operate, Design-Bid-Build, Design-Build and Design-Build-Finance-Operate.

(6) Joint Venture: A Joint Venture is a model in which the infrastructure is co-owned and operated by the public sector and private partner. In this model, both the public sector and private partner are shareholders, so both parties have to invest in the project and share risks.

How did PPPs evolve in Myanmar?

From 1962 to 1988, Myanmar practised the "Burmese Way to Socialism" under the leadership of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) as a one-party system. In the economy, it practised a centrally planned economy. In 1988, after the Burmese Way to Socialism, in the aftermath of a tremendous uprising due to the inflation and demonetization of Myanmar kyats, the State Law and Order Restoration Council took office from 1988 through 1997. In 1997, the State Law and Order Restoration Council was reformed as the State Peace and Development Council from 1997 until 2011. In 1997, the State Peace and Development Council announced the transition into a market-oriented economy. With this transition, the government started to pave the way for Public-Private Partnerships and privatization. In 1997, PPPs started in Myanmar to fulfil the country's infrastructure needs. However, the projects during those days were based upon unsolicited proposals (a proposal made by a private party to under-

take a PPP project, submitted at the initiative of the private party rather than in response to a request from the relevant government agency) under the Build-Operate-Transfer form. In 2011, President U Thein Sein's government took on the duties of the state, and some reforms were made significantly. In October 2011, 11 private banks were allowed to trade foreign currency. In November 2012, the new Foreign Investment Law (2012) was enacted, and special economic zones were established in Thilawa and Dhawei. In 2016 and 2017, Myanmar Investment Law (2016) and Myanmar Companies Law (2017) were enacted. In April 2015, to improve the reliability and stability of Myanmar's power supply and to prevent the power shortage problem, the Myingyan Natural Gas Power Project was initiated. This is the first PPP project that was adopted through a solicited proposal (solicited bid received from private parties via a competitive tender process for PPP Projects under the purview of an Implementing Government Agency) between Singapore-based Sembcorp Utilities and the Ministry of Electricity and Energy. This project is located in Myingyan Township of Mandalay Region and was governed by a 22-year Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) agreement and a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

When PPPs were widely used in Myanmar, the government started using the Swiss Challenge (a public procurement process designed to encourage private sector initiatives to engage in PPP Projects). Under the Swiss Challenge tender process, if a relevant government agency wishes to proceed with

a project that was received as an unsolicited proposal, the agency is required to publish a bid and invite third parties to exceed it) to welcome private sector involvement in the tender processes recently. With regard to public-private partnership implementation, the Project Bank Notification was one of the greatest achievements. It was issued on 30 November 2018 by the Office of the President after the Private Partnership Centre was established through Notification No 24 /2021 of the Union Minister's Office of the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

Public-Private Partnership in Myanmar

Myanmar's government budget is shown as a deficit as the country has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios. As Myanmar's tax-to-GDP ratio is meagre, the government cannot afford to make sufficient investments in infrastructure. Although Myanmar is a recipient of Official Development Assistance (ODA), a kind of aid given by developed countries to assist the development of developing countries, the funds from public capital and ODA are insufficient to meet the infrastructure gap. In Myanmar, PPPs have been practised in the form of build, operate, and transfer, mainly in the road and power sectors, and some projects have been done in hotels. Some forms of PPPs in Myanmar are categorized as Greenfield projects (any investment in a structure or an area where no previous facilities exist and without constraints imposed by prior works), Brownfield projects (any investment that uses previously constructed facilities that were once in use for other purposes), Production Sharing Contracts and Joint Venture Agreements between ministries/government organizations and private companies. In Project Bank Directive issued by the government, common types of PPPs which have been practised in Myanmar are categorized as Build-Own-Operate (BOO), Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT), Build-Transfer-Lease (BTL), Build-Transfer-Operate (BTO), Operation and Management (O & M) and other forms of PPPs.

Legal framework governing Public-Private Partnerships

In Myanmar, the Ministry of Planning and Finance, Myanmar Investment Commission and Directorate of Investment and Company Administration are government agencies that regulate PPP projects. The laws governing Public Private Partnerships before and after the issuance of Project Bank Notification are mentioned as follows: -

- Myanmar Companies Law (2017)
- Myanmar Investment Law (2016)
- Permanent Residence of a Foreigner Rules (2014)
- Myanmar Special Economic Zones Law (2014)
- Securities and Exchange Law (2013)
- Myanmar Citizens Investment Law (2013)
- Central Bank Law (2013)
- Foreign Investment Rules (2013)
- Foreign Investment Law (2012)

- Law Amending the Commercial Tax Law (2011)
- Private Industrial Enterprises Law (1990)
- Financial Institutions of Myanmar Law (1990)
- State-Owned Economic Enterprises Law (1989)
- Special Company Act (1950)

In Myanmar, apart from these laws, for the commonly used Build Operate Transfer project form, general tendering processes have been widely practised under Directive No 1/2017 (Tender Rules), which is widely used as a PPP manual in Myanmar. In addition to that, the State Administration Council issued tender notification No 1/2022. In PPP if the private party is involved in international connection, the project is liable to Myanmar Investment Law (2016), and some restricted business activities are outlined in the notification 15/2017 of the Myanmar Investment Commission.

Public-Private Partnerships in the Form of Production-Sharing Contracts in Myanmar

Production-Sharing Contract is used in Myanmar's Oil and Gas sector, and it is a contract signed between a government entity and private companies. In Myanmar, under the Production-Sharing Contract, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise acts as a body for the state and invites oil companies as contractors to make financial and technical investments in oil and gas extraction. According to MOGE data, over 150 oil companies were registered as local partners with MOGE. According to the terms and conditions of the model production-sharing contract set up by MOGE, there are two periods listed: the exploration period (an initial term of up to three years) and the development and production period (commenced on notice of commercial discovery and continues for at least twenty years from the date of completion of the development phase) in the oil and gas operation.

State Administration Council highlighting the role of Public Private Partnership in Special Economic Zones

Three currently established Special Economic Zones are Thilawa SEZ, Dawei SEZ and Kyaukpyu SEZ, but this article wants to highlight two of these. The incumbent government, the State Administration Council, is attempting to develop Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the form of PPPs for economic development. In the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone Project, the China International Trust and Investment Corporation Consortium contributed 70 per cent, and the Myanmar side contributed 30 per cent when implementing the Kyaukpyu Deep Seaport project. It is a four-phase project building ten jetties where the ships can berth. After this project, the livelihood of people in Rakhine State, particularly those in Kyaukpyu District, will improve.

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NATIONAL

AA terrorists intentionally attack hospital in Buthidaung, killing three



The map shows incident of AA terrorist attack at Buthidaung People's Hospital on 11 May.



Wounded resident receiving medical treatment at military hospital in Buthidaung.

REPORTS indicate that AA terrorists on 11 May launched heavy weapon attacks on the people's hospital in Buthidaung, Rakhine State, where internally displaced people sought shelter. The assault resulted in the deaths of three residents and left ten others wounded, including a one-and-a-half-year-old and a ten-year-old.

The attack by the AA terrorists was reportedly committed from Kyaukyit (Ywathit) Village, 2,800 metres northeast of Buthidaung at about 11 pm on 11 May. Heavy weapon shells fell and exploded the four-storey staff housing of the hospital. Those injured are currently receiving treatment at the local military hospital in Buthidaung.

The AA terrorist has launched 14 attacks on residential wards in Rakhine State, leading to 60 fatalities and 113 injuries. — MNA/NT

K374.8 mln worth of smuggled goods confiscated in two days

THE Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee opened 24 cases and seized K374.8 million worth of illicit goods on 9 and 10 May.

The Customs Department and related officials confiscated 8,000 kilograms of disposable plastic sheets, exceeding what was described in the import declaration letter, and a Hino truck was used to transport them to the Mawanchaung checkpoint on 9 May. The estimated value of the sheets and truck is K32 million. The suspects are charged under Customs procedures.

Similarly, the Shan State Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force seized 16 undocumented consumer goods worth K99 million on the road from Kengtung to Lashio on 9 May. Officials have taken action against suspects following Customs procedures.

Additionally, the Kayin State Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force seized 14 undocumented

products, including used electronic devices and consumer goods, worth K18.9 million, and two Higer buses, worth K70 million, in two separate incidents at the Thanlwin Bridge combined checkpoint on 9 May. Authorities have opened charges against suspects in line with Customs procedures.

Moreover, the Bago Region Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force confiscated smuggled timbers, including 4.2 tonnes of teak, 2.7 tonnes of hardwood, and 10 tonnes of timbers of various kinds, worth K4.9 million in total, across Bago districts from 9 to 10 May. The action was taken against suspects under the Forest Law.

Likewise, the Mon State Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force seized 0.58 tonne of smuggled timbers of various kinds, worth K112,024, and the Mitsubishi Fuso Canter, worth K19 million, used to transport timbers in Mawlamyine Township on 10 May. Officials have charged suspects under the Forest Law. — MNA/NT

Public-Private Partnership

From page-9

Myanmar can directly transport goods to countries in Africa, South Asia, and Europe. In responding to the media, **Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo and Mr Liang Chuanxin** said that “the deep-sea port is a four-phase project containing ten jetties, and it can accommodate about seven million 20-foot containers per year once completed. The consortium of this project will be incorporated by both domestically owned private or public companies registered under the Myanmar Companies Law 2017.” What’s more benefi-

cial about the project is that the State Administration Council has already planned to prioritize the investment of ethnic business-people in the consortium.

Thilawa Special Economic Zone is another successful example of the PPPs project in Myanmar, which the Myanmar government and the Japanese government have carried out. Myanmar Japan Thilawa Development Limited has acted as a developer. Myanmar Japan Thilawa Development Limited was formed in January 2014 as a joint venture between MMS Thilawa Development Company,

Thilawa SEZ Management Committee, and Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Limited. In Thilawa SEZ, in Zone A, a Residential and Commercial Area was first established, covering offices, residences, restaurants, hotels, international schools and hospitals, and it has begun operation since September 2015, whereas in Zone B, three types of land are categorized as industrial land, logistical land, residential or commercial land.

To sum up, the State Administration Council is currently putting an emphasis on Public-Private Partnerships and Small and

Medium Enterprises to boost the economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 implications. The actions of the State Administration Council, such as developing Special Economic Zones, encouraging SMEs to produce value-added goods to penetrate the export market, and providing tax exemptions and incentives in the existing tax laws, prove that the State Administration Council is making an earnest effort to keep the existing economic infrastructure and projects working. The implementation of public-private partnerships can pave the way for infrastructure

development in Myanmar, and the opportunities can be seen in this initiative.

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NATIONAL

‘Wathan Pyoekinn’ art exhibition to be held at Wathan Art Gallery

AN art exhibition titled the ‘Wathan Pyoekinn’ will be held at the Wathan Art Gallery in North Okkalapa Township, Yangon, from 25 to 27 May, according to artist Yin Mar Hlaing, one of the exhibition’s organizers.

The paintings will be fea-

tured in various styles, including watercolours, oil colour paintings and acrylics, by the children who attended the drawing class of Wathan Pyoekinn Yinthwaynge Myar and the coach artists.

Artist Yin Mar Hlaing said,

“We will show the paintings of the twenty children who attended the drawing class in March and the three coach artists. At the exhibition, the audience will also have to enjoy the painting of our six-year-old youngest artist”. — ASH/TRKM



Some paintings which will be displayed at the gallery seen in the catalogue.

Software-driven blood management efficient in distribution to 38 hospitals

SOFTWARE-ASSISTED blood management has demonstrated increased efficiency in handling donors’ data, according to Professor Dr San Sanda Khin of the Pathology and Blood Bank at Nay Pyi Taw General Hospital.

The Blood Management System software stores blood

types and donors’ data from the National Blood Centre at Yangon General Hospital and blood banks at 38 general hospitals across the nation.

The professor said: “The software facilitates rapid and efficient retrieval of blood type and other necessary informa-

tion. With donor data securely kept, we can promptly reach out and request specific blood types when needed” The National Blood Centre in Yangon Region distributed over 93,000 units of blood to 38 general hospitals with the help of the software in 2023. — ASH/NT

MoH announces new food safety mechanism for ready-made food

THE Ministry of Health declared a food safety mechanism in which ready-to-eat food can be registered on Food Product Notification, and a food product code can be created from 9 May 2024.

That food product code will help the consumer conduct self-inspection on food and make their choice safely by providing labels containing a list of ingredients and package display.

It will also help the food

manufacturers improve their brand reputation, build loyalty, increase customer confidence in their products and explore foreign markets. The code will also make traceability easier for food hazards and health risks.

In applying for registration on Food Product Notification, ingredients of the food, brand logo, net weight and packaging type, manufacturing business and countries, address and contact information and

recommendation or approval of related institutions must be uploaded in PDF file format on the FDA website, together with the brand logo. The registration fee for e-submission is K10,000 (e-payment).

It is necessary to get food product codes for product expansion. Awareness campaigns for the Food Product Notification system will be conducted, and afterwards, mandatory labelling orders for on-the-go food will be exercised. — TWA/KK



Green Challenge Association grew trees in 2023.

200,000 seeds to be scattered in coming monsoon in PyinOoLwin

A planting project which will grow 200,000 seeds has been scheduled to do in coming monsoon season in PyinOoLwin and as a different method of planting, seeds will be put inside earth balls and dispersed by catapult, said Green Challenge Association’s chair U Aung Myo Paing.

With the aim of greening the town, Green Challenge Association previously carried out similar projects by using various methods- traditional planting method, scattering seeds by humans, catapult and hot-aired balloon.

“We will do it this year too but not sure whether it includes scattering by hot-aired balloons or not. Generally, we disperse seeds at the roadside by humans and over hills and valleys by catapult. We usually do it July and August. We’ve already collected seeds now. Making earth balls will start in June. We have aimed to disperse about 200,000 seeds a year. In Covid-19 period, although hot-aired balloon wasn’t included, we dispersed 200,000 seeds. Forests have depleted in PyinOoLwin too so the weather becomes hot sharply. We want to create forest again around the town, in particular. We can’t reach the forest, so we scatter seeds by catapulting or hot-aired balloon so that seeds will reach areas where humans can’t access. We want to have trees again in forests,” he said.

For clearing bushes and digging ditches to grow 300-500 saplings by traditional method that is scheduled to do on every

Sunday, about 20-30 volunteers are needed. And it is hard to go to forests, they use dispersion by catapult, he said.

They have also requested local trekking groups, riders and bikers to help scattering seeds along their journey, as well as the association members are also asked to bring seeds when they go on trips, so that they can scatter seeds by expected amount.

It is not easy to plant hundreds of thousands of seeds by traditional methods and seeds may flow into water when it rains heavily or may get destroyed when forest fire breaks out, but it is a reward for them if just about 20,000 out of 200,000 seeds can be alive, he said.

Green Challenge Association initiated its first planting project in 2019 and grew about 20 kinds of seeds around the town, grew about 600,000 seeds in 2020 by using various methods including scattering by hot-aired balloon, scattered seeds in 2021 and 2022 without including hot-aired balloon and in 2023, they used hot-aired balloon for scattering seeds. About 30 per cent of areas, they had planted previously, have trees now.

“Trees have grown up in about 30 per cent of areas we scattered, some have become green with small groups of trees. We scatter acacia catechu, acacia tree (Htanaung) and tamarind in lower Myanmar where the weather is hot. We scattered about 20 kinds of seeds,” he said. — MT/ZS

ECONOMY WORLD

FAO puts focus on importance of technology for International Day of Plant Health

The focus of this year's observance is on leveraging innovation across various areas crucial for plant health. These include plant pest monitoring to protect agricultural production and the use of digital systems to ensure safe international trade in plants.

THE Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) is marking this year's International Day of Plant Health by shining a light on the importance of leveraging innovation to protect plants, which are indispensable for sustaining life on earth.

This year's observance on 12 May focuses on the many innovations that cut across areas where plant health is crucial, such as plant pest monitoring to protect agricultural production and digital systems to ensure safe international trade in plants.

"We have no option but to leverage innovation, technological advancements and tools to



FAO's work involves scientific approaches, innovation, and the latest technologies. **PHOTO: FAO**

protect plants," says FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol. "The unprecedented global chal-

lenges we face, such as the unrelenting climate crisis, demand innovative approaches and digital

technologies to support countries with stronger pest surveillance and early warning systems," she added.

The UN-designated International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) is a key legacy of the International Year of Plant Health 2020. Ever since then, it has been raising global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity and the environment, and boost economic development. This year's celebrations at FAO include a high-level event on 13 May.

Plant health should be prioritised, given that up to 40 per cent of food crops are lost due to plant

pests and diseases every year. This affects global food security and agriculture, the main source of income for many vulnerable rural communities. Climate change and weather extremes are also impacting plant health, altering ecosystems, and creating new niches for pests to thrive in.

International travel and trade, which has tripled in volume in the last decade, has led to increased interconnectedness among countries and regions. This underlines the importance of ensuring that people, goods and commodities crossing borders do not carry pests and diseases affecting plants, animals and humans. — ANI

BRIEFS: ECON

Japan, US, EU to beef up countermeasures against counterfeit trade

JAPAN, the United States and the European Union are planning to reinforce countermeasures against the illicit trade in counterfeit products in cooperation with online marketplace operators, sources familiar with the matter said Saturday.

With the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development playing a central role in the move, the like-minded partners will cooperate with online marketplace operators such as Amazon.com Inc. and Rakuten Group Inc. and aim to formulate guidelines in 2025 or later to prevent fake brand goods from being traded online.

The economic impact of counterfeits has become widespread and enormous. — Kyodo

Pak govt imposes additional tax on non-filers for mobile loads, bundles

THE Pakistan government has decided to impose an additional tax on non-filers, who would now have to pay more in taxes on mobile loads and bundles, ARY News reported on Friday.

According to the report, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) devised a plan against non-filers which is likely to be implemented from 15 May. The government would impose a 2.5 per-cent-additional tax on non-filers as well as withholding SIM cards of those who refuse to comply. — ANI

Second edition of 'Investopia Europe' kicks off in Milan

The event aimed to delve into the latest global trends concerning expanding business operations into new markets to attract investments. It also focused on modern financing trends in European markets, particularly in emerging and sustainable economic sectors.

INVESTOPIA, a global ecosystem initiated by the UAE Government, launched its second edition of Investopia Europe, part of the Investopia Global Talks series, at Palazzo Mezzanotte, the historic headquarters of the Italian Stock Exchange in Milan.

The aim was to formulate a new vision for stimulating investment in tourism, hospitality, aviation, the creative economy, entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises, and sustainability.

This event also aimed to explore the latest global trends in expanding business operations into new markets to attract investments and modern financing trends in European markets, with a focus on new and sustainable economic sectors.



Investopia, a global ecosystem initiated by the UAE Government, launched the second edition of Investopia Europe at Palazzo Mezzanotte, the historic headquarters of the Italian Stock Exchange in Milan. **PHOTO: WAM.**

The event was held in collaboration with EFG Consulting and sponsored by the leading Italian banking group Intesa Sanpaolo.

Key attendees included Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri,

UAE Minister of Economy and Chairman of Investopia, along with various high-profile ministers, diplomats, and business leaders from Italy, Cyprus, and the European Parliament. — ANI

More Japan workers turning to job resignation services after holidays

Reasons for resignation include unpleasant superiors and discrepancies between promised and actual employment conditions, with 60 per cent of Momuri users being in their 20s and 30s, including many recent graduates.

UNABLE to face going back to their jobs after the Golden Week holidays that ended in early May, an increasing number of Japanese workers are turning to private services to resign on their behalf, including a rise among graduates who started in April.

The services, which have grown in popularity in recent years, enable workers to quickly leave companies without doing so in-person for reasons that can include harassment or an adverse working environment.

Albatross Co., a Tokyo-based firm launched in 2022, said its resignation service Momuri, which can translate to “already too much”, has seen a steady stream of users coming forward with stories of mistreatment.

While it typically handles about 200 people a month, Albatross says numbers rocketed to

1,400 customers in April. It has already heard from more than 500 people so far in May.

Among the reasons given for wanting to quit is that their immediate superiors are unpleasant, or that they were hired as permanent staff but actually employed as contract workers upon starting the job.

People in their 20s and 30s account for 60 per cent of Momuri users, with a marked number of them new graduates who only began their jobs in April, the company said.

One graduate told Albatross their new employer had “made it seem at the hiring meeting like it was a company with a glamorous corporate culture, but in reality, the boss ran it like a dictatorship and employees were verbally abused.” More quit after the person came forward, the firm said. — Kyodo



Staff at Albatross Co. in Tokyo handle cases from customers using the company's resignation proxy Momuri service to quit their jobs, in April 2024. **PHOTO: ALBATROSS CO./KYODO**



Israel's Minister of Agriculture, Avi Dichter, signed a memorandum of understanding with Romanian officials in Bucharest to bolster Israeli food security by securing emergency wheat supplies. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS**

Israel signs emergency wheat agreement with Romania

This agreement, part of Israel's “Treat the Wheat” initiative, is the fourth pact of its kind, with Israel providing agricultural technology and knowledge in exchange.

IN a bid to fortify Israeli food security, Minister of Agriculture, Avi Dichter, signed a memorandum of understanding with Romanian officials in Bucharest on Sunday to provide wheat during emergencies.

The agreement marks the fourth pact in Israel's strategic initiative, “Treat the Wheat”, to secure emergency wheat supplies. In exchange, Israel will provide Romania with agricultural technology and knowledge.

“In this period of global uncertainty and severe geopolitical conflicts in our region, this agreement, born out of common interests, will allow Israel an additional import channel, especially in times of emergency,” Dichter said.

The agreement with Romania follows similar accords with Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Morocco, all aimed at diversifying Israel's wheat import sources.

Israel's “Treat the Wheat” initiative was launched in the aftermath of global wheat shortages stemming from Russia's war on Ukraine.

Israeli agriculture is facing staggering losses in production and manpower. Before 7 October, Israel had 29,900 foreigners, mostly Thais, working in farms, orchards, greenhouses and packing plants. Israeli workers who might have filled the gaps have been called up for military reserve duty while Palestinian labourers are currently banned as security risks. — ANI

Burning smell prompts emergency on PIA flight

A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight en route from Dubai to Islamabad experienced a moment of concern when passengers reported a burning smell emanating from the food storage area.

Prompt action ensued as an emergency was declared, leading to the deployment of essential services, including fire brigade and ambulances, at Dubai Airport, ARY News reported.

Following a thorough examination by the flight crew, the aircraft was ultimately cleared

for departure to Islamabad. The PIA spokesperson confirmed the in-flight smoke detection and the resulting delay in departure.

This incident occurred amidst the commencement of PIA's post-Hajj flight operations, which started on 9 May and will extend until 10 June 2024.

The airline is facilitating direct flights to Jeddah and Madina from eight cities across Pakistan, including Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Multan, Quetta, Sialkot, and Sukkur, as reported by ARY News. — ANI

ROLLING UPDATES: WORLD

Iraq hopes oil reserves will exceed 160 bln barrels: minister

Iraq currently holds 145 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, among the largest globally, with 96 years' worth of production at the current rate.



Untapped potential: An employee turns a valve at the Hammar Mushrif station inside the Zubair oil and gas field, north of Basra. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

IRAQ, one of the world's biggest oil producers, aims to boost its crude reserves to more than 160 billion barrels, Oil Minister Hayan Abdel Ghani said on Saturday.

The minister's comment came during the launch of new licensing rounds for 29 oil and gas fields.

According to the World Bank, Iraq has 145 billion barrels of proven oil reserves amounting to 96 years' worth of production at the current rate.

These are among the largest crude reserves in the world.

"The ministry has put forward 29 promising projects today," Abdel Ghani said during the opening of the new bidding process that will last three days.

"We hope to announce an increase of Iraq's proven oil reserves to more than 160 billion barrels," he added.

Iraq has completed five licensing rounds since 2008.

Abdel Ghani said the government will support and assist the winning companies.

The new rounds include fields and exploration blocs in 12 provinces and an offshore bloc — the first to be explored in Iraqi territorial waters in the Gulf.

Iraq also hopes the blocs will lead to increased natural gas production to help reduce dependence on imports from Iran, a crucial supplier for Iraqi power generation.

Iraq, trying to move past decades of war and prior sanctions that led to underinvestment, was left dependent on imports from its eastern neighbour for a third of its gas needs.

"Iraq anticipates deriving more than 3,459 million standard cubic feet of gas per day (98 million cubic metres) and over one million barrels of oil per day from these licensing rounds," according to a statement by the prime minister's media office. — AFP

Donald Trump could owe over US\$ 100 million in taxes if he loses audit case: Report

FORMER US President Donald Trump could owe more than US\$ 100 million in taxes if he loses years-long Internal Revenue Service (IRS) inquiry into his claims of huge losses on his Chicago skyscraper, the New York Times reported.

According to an Internal Revenue Service inquiry uncovered by The New York Times and ProPublica, Trump used a "dubious accounting maneuver" to claim improper tax breaks from his troubled Chicago tower.

The 92-storey, glass-sheathed skyscraper along the Chicago River is the tallest and, the last major construction project by Trump.

But when Trump sought to reap tax benefits from his losses, the IRS has argued, he went too far and, in effect, wrote off the same losses twice.

The first write-off came on Trump's tax return for 2008. With sales lagging far behind projections, he claimed that his investment in the condo-hotel tower met the tax code definition of "worthless", because his debt on the project meant he would never see a profit.

That move resulted in Trump reporting losses as high as US\$ 651 million for the year, the report stated. — ANI

India highlights forest conservation, sustainable management initiatives

INDIA participated in the 19th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), held at the UN Headquarters in New York from 6 May to 10 May 2024, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change informed in a press release.

During the session, India highlighted the country's significant advancements in forest conservation and sustainable

Over the past fifteen years, India has consistently increased its forest cover, ranking third globally in net gain.

forest management, which led to a consistent increase in forest cover over the past fifteen years. Globally, India ranks third in the net gain, in average annual forest area, between 2010 and 2020.

India shared the high priority the country provides towards biodiversity and wildlife conservation, having expanded the network of protected areas to over a thousand wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves, biosphere reserves, and other wildlife habitats. The recent celebrations marking 50 years of Project Tiger and 30 years of Project Elephant underscore India's commitment to species conservation and habitat protection.

India also highlighted the creation of the International Big Cat Alliance, another important step aimed at protecting and conserving the seven big cat species around the world through collaborative international efforts. — ANI



India celebrated 50 years of Project Tiger and 30 years of Project Elephant, demonstrating its commitment to species conservation. **PHOTO: PEXELS**

SPORTS

ASEAN Mitsubishi Electric Cup: Drawing lots event for team Myanmar to be held on 21 May

The 2024 ASEAN Mitsubishi Electric Cup drawing lots event for Myanmar national football team will be held in Hanoi, Viet Nam on 21 May, as stated by the ASEAN Football Federation.

The 2024 ASEAN Mitsubishi Electric Cup Tournament will take place in the same format as the previous 2022 tourney, with five teams divided into two groups at the final stage.

Defending Champion Thailand, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos are having chances to directly participate in the tournament while lower ranked Timor Laste and

Brunei teams will play for qualifiers for the final stage.

According to the Sedan, Thailand and Viet Nam is placed in Pot-1 while Pot-2 sees Indonesia and Malaysia. The Pot-3 features the Philippines and Singapore while the Pot-4 includes Myanmar and Cambodia. The Pot-5 comes with Laos and one qualifying teams from the group stage (Timor Laste or Brunei).

This year's tournament will be held from 23 November to 21 December, and the competing teams will have to play four group games, two home games and two away games. The semi-finals and finals will be held

in two rounds, home and away system.

The ASEAN Mitsubishi Electric Cup Tournament is formerly named as Tiger Cup, ASEAN Championship and ASEAN Suzuki Cup Championship respectively.

Thailand has won the championship title for seven times while Singapore has grabbed the title for four times, Viet Nam two times and Malaysia one time. Team Myanmar has reached the semifinals of the tourney in 2004 and 2016. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

The trophy for the AFF Mitsubishi Electric Cup 2022 is seen. **PHOTO: AFF**



Luis Suarez in action. **PHOTO: AFP**

Suarez on target as Inter Miami rally to beat Montreal

Despite Lionel Messi's departure due to injury, Inter Miami maintained momentum, ultimately clinching victory in an impressive display of resilience.

LUIS Suarez continued his prolific scoring form as leaders Inter Miami recovered from a two-goal deficit to register a 3-2 away win over Montreal in Major League Soccer (MLS) on Saturday.

Bryce Duke put the hosts ahead at Saputo stadium with a 22nd-minute strike after Jules Vilsaint's perfectly weight pass on the counterattack.

Vilsaint then put his name on the scoresheet by playing a slick one-two with Ariel Lassiter before cutting inside his marker and angling a shot into the far corner.

The visitors suffered a scare as Lionel Messi limped off the pitch in the 42nd minute, having appeared to injure his left knee following an ugly challenge from George Campbell.

In his absence, Matias Rojas stepped up to curl home a free-kick after Suarez was fouled by Samuel Piette.

Messi, who was playing for the first time in Canada, returned to the pitch almost immediately after Rojas' strike. Inter's fans had even more reason to cheer four minutes later when Suarez tapped home at the far post after Julian Gressel's cross was unwittingly flicked into his path by Duke. — AFP

Mexico leaves goalkeeper Ochoa out of Copa America squad

GOALKEEPER Guillermo Ochoa has been left out of Mexico's squad for the upcoming Copa America in the United States, the country's football federation said on Friday.

The 38-year-old veteran of five World Cup campaigns paid

the price for having lost his regular starting place at Italy's Salernitana, where his contract is due to expire next month.

Mexico's three goalkeepers for the tournament starting next month in the United States will be Luis Malagon (America), Julio

Gonzalez (Pumas) and Raul Rangel (Chivas). "I spoke with him to let him know about my decision and reiterate that it doesn't mean he's out of the reckoning for the 2026 World Cup," Mexico manager Jaime Lozano told reporters. — AFP

Team Myanmar to play two remaining World Cup Qualifiers in June



THE Myanmar national team will play the remaining two group matches of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers in June. Team Myanmar will start training in the last week of this month for the remaining qualifiers and will have around 10 days to prepare.

Myanmar will take on Japan at home on 6 June and North Korea on 11 June as away game. In their

first meet, Myanmar has lost to Japan 0-5 and North Korea 1-6. Myanmar squad is placed in the Group B with one point in four games played, standing at the bottom place. Japan has already advanced to the next stage with 12 points while Syria picked seven points and North Korea collected three points. The Myanmar team is likely to struggle to score as they are meeting the top teams in Asia and are likely to be formed with around 30 preliminary players. The semi-finals of the Myanmar National League, a domestic club competition, will be held on 25 and 26 May so players will start training only after the tournament.

— Ko Nyi Lay/KZL



Myanmar team players vie for the ball with team Japan (Samurai Blue) during the first round World Cup Qualifiers. **PHOTO: AFC**

Iraq hopes oil reserves will exceed 160 bln barrels: minister

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WORLD

AI film festival gives glimpse of cinema's future

WITH fantastical characters including mud people and giant grandmothers, an AI film festival is giving a glimpse of the storytelling made possible by the novel technology.

Nearly 3,000 short films were submitted to the festival organized by Runway AI, one of the leading start-ups in the field of AI-powered video generation.

The 10 films selected put the filmmakers' vivid imaginations on display, with their stories set in aesthetically stunning universes.

"There is a perception of ... AI-driven filmmaking and creation as having a very specific style," Runway co-founder and chief technology officer Anastasis Germanidis told AFP.

But each of the selected films "feels very different from the other one," he said Thursday at the festival's awards ceremony.

Movie making and animation having grown by leaps and

AI filmmaking has the potential to revolutionize the industry, enabling independent filmmakers to produce compelling stories without substantial financial resources.



ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ AI-GENERATED IMAGE/ TECHXPLORE

bounds in the past 50 years, past feature films like "Inception," "The Matrix" and "Loving Vin-

cent" come to mind when watching the AI shorts.

But the latest technology al-

lows films to be made on a fraction of a typical movie budget, and by anyone with access to a

computer and the software.

With just a prompt, Runway can transform a series of still images into a short video, or turn a photo into a painting.

In February, generative AI leader OpenAI launched its video creation software, dubbed Sora, while Google and Meta are developing their own versions, called Lumiere and Emu, respectively.

Not yet perfect

Leo Cannone's award-winning short film utilized AI-generated images from the Midjourney application, animated using Runway, but required numerous edits due to current AI limitations, particularly in creating human-like characters and dialogue.

The film's premise, exploring the transformation of grandmothers into giants after death, dictated its aesthetic. Despite AI's visual defects, Runway's co-founder acknowledged its evolving potential for diverse storytelling. — AFP

Japan bullet trains host wrestling, dining events in new travel trend

Wrestlers engage in a thrilling match aboard a shinkansen bullet train from Tokyo to Nagoya, marking a novel trend in post-pandemic travel experiences.

WRESTLERS face off in a shinkansen bullet train traveling from Tokyo to Nagoya in central Japan, with cheers erupting throughout the packed car as they exchange kicks and execute piledrivers.

This is just the tip of a new trend in post-pandemic travel experiences, where bullet trains are being transformed into lively entertainment venues, making the journey as fun as the destination. The shinkansen wrestling event held last September was organized by Tokyo-based DDT Pro-Wrestling by utilizing operator Central Japan

Railway Co.'s chartered train car service.

All 75 premium seats priced at 25,000 yen (\$161) and reserved seats priced at 17,700 yen were sold out in around 30 minutes. DDT Pro-Wrestling president Sanshiro Takagi said he organized the event to enable people to have "an extraordinary experience on the shinkansen". "I want to hold such events again as it left an impact on many fans," the 54-year-old pro-wrestler said, adding that it also attracted attention from overseas via social media. — Kyodo



A pro-wrestling event is held on a bullet train in September 2023. PHOTO: CENTRAL JAPAN RAILWAY CO. / KYODO

A COLOSSAL SOLAR STORM

Massive solar storm threatens communications and GPS systems

PREPARE yourselves for an extraordinary celestial spectacle set to unfold tonight as a colossal solar storm threatens to disrupt vital communications and GPS systems, ushering in a cosmic event of unprecedented proportions, CNN reported.

The warning came from the highest echelons of the US government, issuing its first severe geomagnetic storm watch in almost two decades. This advisory, a response to the imminent arrival of "at least five earth-directed coronal mass ejections" and sunspots spanning an area 16 times wider than our planet, catapults us into a realm of heightened space weather activity.

Dubbed a G4 event, this storm ranks as the second-most severe classification on the US government's scale.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the radiation emanating from these solar eruptions began bombarding Earth's magnetic field on Friday and is slated to persist throughout the weekend. In a startling escalation, NOAA upgraded the storm to a rare G5 or "extreme" classification, a distinction not witnessed since October 2003, as reported by CNN. — ANI