

# The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

## Article

### Growing Joy

By Yin Nwe Ko



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9 Bago-Yangon bus lines to relocate to Aung Mingala Terminal

## NATIONAL

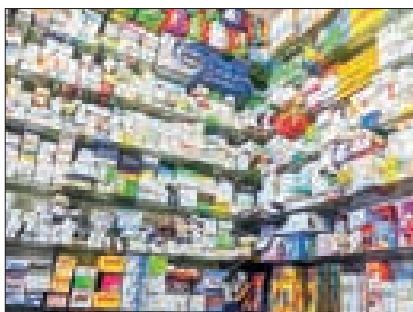
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CBM sells US\$5.4M to fertilizer, edible oil, and pharmaceutical importers on 3 July



State Administration Council Chair PM Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presents gift to Chinese Ambassador Mr Chen Hai during the yesterday call in Nay Pyi Taw.

## Myanmar, China cooperate in forging peace and stability in border region

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chen Hai discussed the development of Myanmar and the government's endeavours to restore internal peace with the help of China.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Mr Chen Hai, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Myanmar, who has completed his tour of duty, at the Credentials Halls of the Office of the State Administration Council Chairman in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Both sides cordially exchanged views on the progress of diplomatic relations, friendship and cooperation between China and Myanmar — strategic partnership countries — exchange of goodwill visits between high-ranking

officials of both countries and preparations for holding a free and fair multiparty democratic general election. Also present at the ceremony were SAC Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe and officials. — MNA/TTA

# NATIONAL

Republic of the Union  
of Myanmar  
State Administration Council

Order No 43/2024  
13<sup>th</sup> Waning of Nayon 1386 ME  
4 July 2024

Appointment of Deputy Minister

THE State Administration Council has appointed U Min Htut as Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Planning and Finance under Section 419 of the Constitution.

By Order,  
Aung Lin Dwe  
Lieutenant-General  
Secretary

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8th July 2024



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## U Kyaw Soe Moe presents Credentials to President of People’s Republic of Bangladesh



U Kyaw Soe Moe, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, presented his Credentials to Mr Mohammed Shahabuddin, President of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, on 4 July 2024, in Dhaka. — MNA

## Projects planned to improve Ayeyawady water systems and mitigate hazards



This photo depicts preparation works being launched to prevent the bank from collapsing due to river erosion.

According to the Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems (DWIR), 16 projects are scheduled for this financial year to combat river erosion and landslides and to enhance waterways in Ayeyawady Region.

"In this financial year, there are projects for landslide prevention and waterway improvements in Ayeyawady Region. Nine will be funded by the State and seven by the regional government," said U Toe Aung Lin, head of Ayeyawady Region's DWIR.

The bank erosion protection projects, funded by the State this financial year, include safeguarding the Satumukha Pagoda in Lemyethna township, affected by landslides from the Ngawun River.

Additionally, plans are underway for waterway development activities to facilitate safe vessel navigation and improve waterways. An emergency protection fund is also being prepared, given the occurrence of sudden landslides in August and September due to high water levels. — ASH/MKKS

## 9 Bago-Yangon bus lines to relocate to Aung Mingala Terminal

YANGON Region Public Transport Committee (YRTC) has worked on relocating nine highway bus lines plying between Bago and Yangon Aung Mingala Highway Bus Terminal, and the building is under construction to accommodate bus stations, Bago highway committee member U Ba Myint said at a press conference on 2 July at YRTC.

For bus gates, the construction of the building has been completed by about 50 per cent, with the approval of the Yangon City Development Committee.

"Of 10 Bago-Yangon bus lines, nine will be relocated to Aung Mingala and the rest one which connects Bago with Ayeyawady Region will continue running from Dagon Ayeya Highway Bus Terminal. YCDC granted a 200 ft-60 ft land plot near Gate 1 to set up gates for Bago-Yangon bus lines, and construction has completed nearly 50 per cent. The remaining 50 per cent is expected to

finish this month, and bus lines will start running at the end of the month," he said.

Bus lines will start to run after the construction is finished. Passengers can come to take buses at Aung Mingala and about 20 to 30 buses will be provided on a daily basis. Bus fare from Bago to Yangon's Aung Mingala Terminal is set at K3,000 by the consent of bus lines, and action will be taken if it charges more, he said. — MT/ZS



A bus line runs from Bago to Yangon

The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increase of death rate due to the disease.

# NATIONAL

## SAC Member comforts flood victims in Myitkyina

STATE Administration Council Member Daw Dwe Bu visited Myitkyina Township in Kachin State yesterday to inspect the rehabilitation processes and relief items.

The SAC member, the Kachin State chief minister and relevant officials went to the temporary camp for flood victims at Maha Aungmyay Shwebo Monastery in Rampu Ward of Myitkyina. The SAC member provided ten bags of rice for over 1,000 people from 187 households, while the chief minister and his wife and the minister for Kachin State Security and Border Affairs donated 35 cartons of instant noodles, three cartons of canned fish and one bag of chickpeas, and rice boxes by the minister for



SAC Member Daw Dwe Bu and officials inspect the arriving relief items for Myitkyina flood victims yesterday.

Kachin State Ethnic Affairs.

The SAC member highlighted the rescue work and

rehabilitation activities conducted in Kachin State, warmly greeted the people and inspect-

ed the healthcare services.

She also met flood victims at No 1 BEHS (Branch) in Ram-

pu Ward and comforted them.

During the meeting, the SAC member and party donated foodstuffs and the health staff providing healthcare services to flood victims.

Moreover, the SAC member and party attended the cash and food donation ceremony to the Kachin State Natural Disaster Management Committee at Manaw Shwepyi Hall.

At the event, the SAC member highlighted the proper cooperation in overcoming the record-breaking river water level.

SAC Member Daw Dwe Bu also received K20 million and foodstuffs donated by the Myitkyina Yunnan Buddhist Temple and Hongxin Company. — MNA/KTZH

## DPM MoFA Union Minister receives Chinese Ambassador



Chinese Ambassador Mr Chen Hai calls on Deputy Prime Minister MoFA Union Minister U Than Swe yesterday.

DEPUTY Prime Minister and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic

of the Union of Myanmar U Than Swe received Mr Chen Hai, Ambassador Extraordi-

nary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to Myanmar, who is leaving upon completion of his tour of duty in Myanmar, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the farewell call, both sides cordially exchanged views on matters pertaining to further enhancement of the existing "Pauk-Phaw" relations between Myanmar and China, mutually beneficial cooperation in both regional and international arena, especially in ASEAN and the United Nations, the maintenance of peace and stability along Myanmar-China border and the acceleration of Myanmar-China bilateral relations. — MNA

## Myanmar, Siberia foster bilateral relations and cooperation

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reported that Myanmar Ambassador to the Russian Federation U Thit Linn Ohn attended the Altai Regatta Dragon Festival held in Barnaul, Altai Krai, Siberia, from 28 June to 1 July.

Approximately 600 athletes from ASEAN countries, including Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, as well as from India, Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Russia, participated in the festival. The Myanmar team secured the first place in the 200-metre and 500-metre races in the men's D-10 boat category, fostering friendly relations among the participating coun-

tries, according to the report.

During his visit, the ambassador met the regional government, led by Governor Mr Viktor Tomenko of Altai Krai. They discussed bilateral relations between Myanmar and Altai Krai, focusing on trade and investment development, social and sports cooperation, and promoting tourism between the two regions.

The ambassador also visited the Altai State Pedagogical University in Barnaul and the Divo Altai LLC oil plant, where he exchanged views on potential cooperation in the respective sectors. — ASH/TMT



Myanmar Ambassador U Thit Linn Ohn meets Governor Mr Viktor Tomenko of Altai Krai, Siberia.

The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increase of death rate due to the disease.

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# NATIONAL

## Myanmar delegation attends dinner at 4<sup>th</sup> China Xizang Trans-Himalaya Forum

THE Myanmar delegation led by Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi arrived on 3 July in Nyanchi and Lulan of the Xizang Autonomous Region to attend the fourth China Xizang Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation and Vice-President of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Mr Zhu Zhenghui welcomed the Myanmar delegation.

The Union minister had a friendly meeting with the representatives of the countries attending the forum and discussed issues related to forestry and environmental conservation.

In the afternoon, the Union minister discussed the conservation of the traditional Tibetan highland grasslands and pastures located at an altitude of 3,700 metres between mountains



The reception of the fourth China Xizang Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation in progress on 3 July, attended by Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi.

and glaciers. They also paid observation tours in agricultural and livestock activities, local people-based tourism activities and the life and traditional culture

of local Tibetan people and their livelihoods.

In the evening, the Union minister and representatives from member countries attend-

ed the forum's reception dinner in Lulan.

At the ceremony, CPC Secretary Mr Wang Junzheng of the Xizang Autonomous Region and

Vice-President Mr Zhu Zhenghui gave welcome speeches, and representatives of the participating countries made friendly introductions and greetings.

On 2 July, the Myanmar delegation led by the Union minister arrived in Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region. Director Ms Nie Xunli of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China greeted them at Lhasa Gonggar Airport. They frankly discussed matters related to environmental conservation and human resource development, forest conservation, biodiversity conservation, and tourism development between the two countries.

In the evening, the Union minister and delegation went to the open-air theatre in Lhasa to watch the Princess Wencheng Opera, a traditional Tibetan cultural show. — MNA/TS

## MNREC to expand 7 protected mangrove forests in Yangon Region



Photos (L & R) show officials inspecting a mangrove forest and its surroundings in a coastal area of Yangon Region.

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, seven protected public mangrove forests have been established

along the coast of Yangon Region as a green belt and will continue to be expanded.

As part of the green belt initiative, seven protected public

mangrove forests cover a total of 23,855 acres in Yangon Region. Across the entire country, there are 44 mangrove forests, comprising both reserved for-

ests and protected public forests, totalling 717,238 acres.

Myanmar has over 1.1 million acres of mangroves, ranking seventh globally and third

in Southeast Asia. The conservation of natural mangrove forests and the establishment of mangrove forests in coastal areas adjacent to the sea are crucial as they can act as a protective barrier against natural disasters caused by the sea and prevent the intrusion of salty seawater into farmland, thereby reducing the risk of crop damage, according to the ministry.

The ministry will carry out a wide range of awareness campaigns to encourage local people to cooperate in preserving mangrove forests, which are vital resources fostering the breeding of fish, prawns, and other aquatic animals. — ASH/TH

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# NATIONAL

## MWCDF donates K3M to flood victims in Kachin

YESTERDAY, the Myanmar Women and Children Development Foundation (MWCDF) donated K3 million to help flood victims in Kachin State.

The donation ceremony was held at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement with the attendance of Union Minister Dr Soe Win, the deputy minister, the permanent secretary, the directors-general, the MWCDF chair and members.

MWCDF Chairperson Dr Daw Wai Wai Thar explained the purpose of donation, and the Union minister explained relief



The donation ceremony of the Myanmar Women and Children Development Foundation in progress yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

activities conducted in Kachin State. He received K3 million and gave the association a certificate of gratitude in return. Similarly, 17,500 canned fish donated by the Myanmar Rice Federation and tarpaulin, clothes, communication devices, medicines and medical supplies donated by the National Disaster Management Committee, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement were transported to flood-affected residents in Kachin State by Tatmadaw aircraft on 3 July. — MNA/KTZH

## Khamti flood victims evacuated, provided foods

DUE to heavy rains in Sagaing Region, the water level of the Chindwin River is rising, reaching the critical water level of Khamti at 1,360 centimetres. Still, it has been increased to 1,535 centimetres as of yesterday, exceeding its critical water level by 175 centimetres.

Sinthay Village, Aungthaya Village, Zeephyugon Ward, Pawmai Ward and Myoma Ward of Khamti Township are experiencing floods.

Firefighters and departmental staff, including members of the Myanmar police force, helped the flood victims from the wards and villages to places free from the flood and provided them with clean drinking water and food.

Officials also donated rice and daily food to the monks and nuns from the monastery and nunnery in Pawmai Ward and are carrying out relief work. — MNA/KZL



Rescue and relief measures underway in Khamti Township.



## Parahita groups prepare to assist in flood networking

A Parahita group helps in evacuating flood-affected people in Myitkyina.

THROUGH networking, Parahita groups are working to provide help and rescue if floods continue in Myanmar.

Since the flood broke out in Myitkyina and nearby areas, they have started providing necessary help for flood-affected people by networking. Now, they have made preparations to go to affected areas where they can reach them if required.

“We have made sure we are ready for operating boats and water pumps since the early monsoon season. In the

Myitkyina flood, we helped connect with local Parahita groups when we received calls for help.

If water flows down, the network of Parahita groups is strong in Magway. I’m worried about Hinthada because people are living beside the embankment. We’ve prepared for it,” said Yangon-based Shwe Myitta Parahita group chair Daw Shwe Lei.

At present, Parahita groups have worked through networking and also provided donations to flood-affected ar-

reas, she said.

“Mountain streams cause Myitkyina’s flood, and the water will drop back when we arrive there, so we’ve prepared for the assistance that local Parahita groups will need. But they could deal with it on their own, without needing our help. We can help locals by advising them on how they can contact local Parahita groups. We have prepared to provide help in making networks or going in person to cooperate with them if they need our workforce,” she said. — Htet Oo Maung/ZS

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# NATIONAL

## Fishing permits resume in July



Fishing boats are seen in the Myanmar Waters.

ACCORDING to the Department of Fisheries, after a three-month suspension of fishing permits for the spawning season, fishing permits have been re-authorized this July.

Because the spawning season was set to April, May and June, the fishing season was prohibited during the proposed period, and the fishing season is set for July.

During the non-fishing or closed season, the fishing boats were only parked in the respective ports and were continuously monitored by the relevant authorities.

Last year, the closed season in the Myanmar Sea was classified according to the type of fishing boat and was set from two to three months. The fish

hatching season, which is the closed season, is set as April, May and June, and it has been carried out according to the plan to advance one month each year.

The no-fishing period and the no-fishing area in Myanmar waters have been set in 2022 under of Subsection (b) of Section 22 and Section 23, announced on 3 March 2022.

Dr Fridtjof Nansen of Norway conducted research on the existence of fish resources in the waters of Myanmar, and according to the research findings, compared to 1979-80, there was a decrease of 80 per cent in shallow water fish and 60 per cent in deep water fish.

Therefore, in order to restore and grow the diminishing

fish resources, the Department of Fisheries, in cooperation with the relevant departments, has prepared the seasons of no-fishing and has monitored and controlled the fishing vessels with the Vessel Monitoring System.

In cooperation with fishing industry federations, research activities are carried out, and six places near Lampi Island in Taninthayi fishing waters have been designated as fish conservation zones.

In addition, based on information on marine biodiversity and marine ecology and the number of fish resources, officials are working to study the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and bio-mass. — TWA/KZL

## Security forces seize illegal wildlife, narcotics in Tachilek raid

UPON receiving information about Chinese citizens residing on an estate in Wamkyauklon Village, Tachilek Township, security forces conducted a raid on 19 June.

They apprehended four Chinese nationals and confiscated narcotic drugs, arms, and ammunition. Additionally, they found one male and one female Himalayan bear, one male African lion,

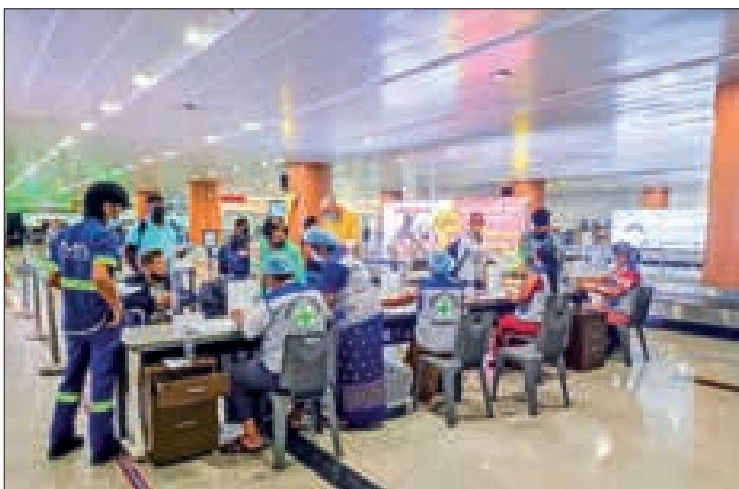
and one female Bengal tiger, all of which were illegally possessed.

The chief executive officer of the Htoo Zoos and Gardens Business Unit, in collaboration with the Myanma Timber Enterprise, transported wild animals to the Zoo and Safari Park in Nay Pyi Taw for public display, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. — TWA/TMT



This photo shows an African lion (male) being confiscated in Tachilek.

## Myanmar eases health requirements to boost tourism and trade



This photo shows Yangon International Airport conducting required health checks for all incoming travellers.

THE Ministry of Health announced that the health requirements for tourists visiting Myanmar have been relaxed.

The ministry stated that, as of 1 March 2024, the public health requirements for tourists entering Myanmar by international flights, sea trips, and border gates have been cancelled.

Following a successful vaccination campaign, widespread adoption of public health measures, and public adherence to the New Normal Setting, Myanmar is now among the countries experiencing a significant decline in COVID-19 cases.

As a result, the health requirements were moderated to promote the development of tourism and trade in the country. — TWA/TRKM

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# MRF notifies warehouse operators to register, update inventory lists

MYANMAR Rice Federation (MRF) notified warehouse operators on 3 July that warehouse operators would have to register and update inventory lists.

The MRF announced that the warehouse operators and wholesalers need to seek registration on Myanmar Rice Online (MyRO) through [www.myro.com.mm](http://www.myro.com.mm) for procurement of more than 5,000 baskets of paddy and over 50 tonnes of rice. The registered warehouse owners are notified through SMS to update their monthly reports within the first seven days of every month.



Workers meticulously organize rice bags in a warehouse.

The Ministry of Commerce has organized scrutinizing committees for rice storage, and regions and states set prices accordingly. Authorities concerned are conducting a tour

visit to check warehouses to see whether they comply with rules and regulations and whether their inventory lists are correct or not. Those who fail to do so will face strict action.

The warehouse operators who store Shwebo Pawsan, Ayeyawady Pawsan, Ayeyamin, 90-day short-matured rice, Ayapadetha, Anatha, Pakan and Panthi Thukha for commercial purposes need to register on MyRO by 7 July. Those who cannot proceed with registration by the deadline need to submit the list of inventories to the MRF. — NN/KK

## CBM sells US\$5.4M to fertilizer, edible oil, and pharmaceutical importers on 3 July

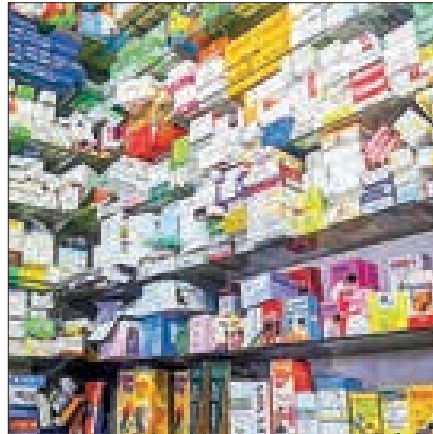
THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US\$5.4 million to those importing edible oil, fertilizer, pharmaceuticals, and medical devices on online trading platforms on 3 July.

CBM sold \$5 million for exporters and importers on 2 July and injected \$5 million and 40 million Thai baht in June and \$10 million, 30 million baht and 22.5 million yuan into markets in May through online trading platforms.

CBM injected \$3 million, two million yuan and 54 million baht into the financial market in April. It also sold

\$18 million, 12 million yuan and 312 million baht in March, \$77.38 million and 850 million baht in February and \$68.33 million, 313.5 million baht and 4.2 million yuan in January 2024, with a view to curbing the instability in the foreign exchange market and stopping the currency devaluation.

According to CBM's notification on 15 March, it has been joining hands with law enforcement agencies to combat and prosecute those who attempt to manipulate the currency market under the existing laws. CBM allowed authorized



Various medications seen being displayed at a pharmacy outlet.

dealers (private banks) to operate online foreign exchange trading freely as per the market rate depending on supply and demand, starting from 5 December 2023. — NN/KK

## Ensuring quality, accuracy in retail and wholesale of Pawsan and Aemahta rice

MYANMAR Rice Federation (MRF) announced on 3 July that companies, wholesalers and retailers in distribution chains need to sell the rice according to the set reference prices, ensuring the right price, right products and right sales for consumers.

The Consumer Affairs Department under the Ministry of Commerce has been joining hands with the Myanmar Rice Federation as a public-private partnership to govern the rice market for price stability and distribute rice at reference prices.

Rice bags must include labels mentioning rice varieties and components of rice mix to ensure the right products and right quality in both retail and wholesale of Pawsan and Aemahta varieties. They are asked to sell rice according to monthly reference prices. Rice measurement must be accurate according to the weight described on the bags. Consumers can check rice measurements at rice depots. MRF notified that retailers and wholesalers must abide by existing rules and laws and register on MyRO for rice storage and sales.

Those who fail to follow the stipulations mentioned above are subjected to legal action. MRF encouraged retailers and wholesalers to cooperate in this to enhance the rice industry. — NN/KK

## Rupee-kyat trade settlement mechanism now operational

THE rupee-kyat trade settlement mechanism is operational now. India executed the first transaction of over ten million rupees for pulse exports via the Punjab National Bank Yangon office on 2 July 2024, according to the Embassy of India to Myanmar.

The embassy encouraged businesses from both sides to benefit from that mechanism. An awareness event on the rupee-kyat trade settlement mechanism was held on 9 February. Mr Vinay Kumar, Ambassador of India to Myanmar, gave a greeting remark that the rupee-kyat trade settlement mechanism will promote bilateral trade and ensure smooth trade flow. That mechanism will cover both border and

sea trade channels. Hopefully, it will entice traders as well as those engaged in micro, small and medium enterprises to participate in bilateral trade. It will create more jobs, contribute to economic development, simplify transactions, and make them cost-efficient.

CBM Governor Daw Than Than Swe said that the mechanism aims to bolster trade, facilitate trade, simplify transactions, reduce dollar dependence, lessen impacts from volatile exchange rates and promote the use of national currency.

Myanmar negotiated with the Embassy of India through diplomacy and the Reserve Bank of India to implement the rupee-kyat trade settlement. India

is one of Myanmar's important trade partners. It is the fourth-largest exporting and the sixth-largest importing country of Myanmar.

Among the Asian Clearing Union (ACU), Myanmar is India's top trading partner. Additionally, CBM released guidelines for payment procedures under the Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA), and the rupee-kyat trade settlement mechanism has been operationalized.

The mechanism will enhance the use of local currency and strengthen bilateral relations. Merchants need to apply for a licence to execute transactions and can process through banking, said Daw Than Than Swe. — NN/KK

# OPINION

## Enhance digital economic platform for boosting State economy

ALL global nations are prioritizing digital transformation to modernize their economic systems by integrating advanced information technology. This shift aims to enhance various sectors, including administration, infrastructure, social services, education, and trade, aligning them with the global value chain to boost the digital economy.

The backbone of a digital economy is a robust information and technology network, where fibre internet plays a crucial role. While Myanmar has achieved 90 per cent coverage with mobile broadband, only 1.6 million people use fixed broadband. Therefore, expanding fibre internet access to both urban and rural areas is essential.

Developing skilled human resources is vital for the growth of the digital economy. Students at technological universities, colleges, institutes, and schools across Myanmar should be encouraged and incentivized to participate actively in the State's digital transformation processes. The efficient use of the internet in education, health, and the economy, beyond mere social networking and entertainment, is crucial for equipping people with technological skills and new techniques to be able to broaden their scope of knowledge for analyzing the economic system in a point of digital technological view. Successful digital trade and online businesses are pivotal to the digital economy. This requires enacting appropriate laws and regulations to prevent unacceptable activities, such as online scams. Participants in the digital economic platform need to be vigilant against such scams. Myanmar's path to a thriving digital economy involves expanding fibre internet access, nurturing skilled human resources, enacting protective laws for digital trade, and aligning with international digital economic commitments. The strategic application of digital technology across various sectors will not only modernize Myanmar's economy but also enhance its global competitiveness.

Businesses that effectively utilize social networks and websites for advertising can enhance their operations, leading to greater success and contributing significantly to the State's economy.

The government is currently focusing on digital economic development to achieve its economic objectives. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and ASEAN countries are negotiating online business and digital economic commitments. Meanwhile, Myanmar is striving to finalize and seek approval for the Myanmar Digital Economy Roadmap 2023, aligning with these commitments.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of digital technology, a trend that continues in the post-pandemic period. Myanmar's businesspersons should strive to penetrate international markets with high-quality products from micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises by leveraging modern digital technology and innovative strategies.

Myanmar's path to a thriving digital economy involves expanding fibre internet access, nurturing skilled human resources, enacting protective laws for digital trade, and aligning with international digital economic commitments. The strategic application of digital technology across various sectors will not only modernize Myanmar's economy but also enhance its global competitiveness.

IT'S that time of year again. I'm sitting in front of the fire, looking through a small stack of seed catalogues – from High Mowing Organic Seeds, Seed Savers Exchange, and The Maine Potato Lady. Today, though, I love the Fedco catalogue because it is printed on newsprint, with the veggies and fruit depicted not with photographs but with beautiful and sometimes goofy drawings. One is an excellent rendering of someone drawing back a bow and arrow, except the arrow is a pod of peas. In another, some pumpkin-shaped people are admiring a pumpkin. A couple of leaves of the dinosaur kale are cute, happy baby dinosaurs – That kind of thing.

There is no greater sucker for seeds than me. When I flip through these pages of photos, drawings and descriptions, I start dreaming. Oh my, Chica-go callaloo. Look how big these leaves are! Wait, hold up, black peanuts? I wonder how they'd do in Indiana. Uh-oh, orange watermelons. It goes on and on, for the enticements are legion and often irresistible, and it makes me think the seed catalogue, though an expression of consumer culture, must be among the very most beneficent.

And then I start filling up my cart: two of this, three of that, five pounds of elephant garlic, where three would more than do. Four packs of butter beans. Oh, they have those Italian red-stemmed dandelions: five of those.

If it were almost anything else, I would say to myself, as my mother occasionally did when I was a kid and had heaped up a mountain of fried potatoes or spaghetti on my plate, "Rossy, I think your eyes might be bigger than your stomach." By which I mean our city lot is precisely a 10th of an acre, and I just bought enough seed... Hang on. Do they have shallots? Gotta get a couple of pounds of those!... to plant an acre. Maybe two or three.

When the packages start arriving in the mail and keep arriving, Stephanie, my partner, and I start giggling, and then sometimes put our hands over our faces and groan, "Oh no!" But the fact of the matter is, whether or not I am thinking it at the moment as I click the arrow button up, up, up, (4, 5,

6 ...), we will give away a lot of these seeds. We'll give them to friends or neighbours or whoever could use them. Not because we're saints but because we're gardeners. And if you garden, that's kinda just what you do.

For example, if we were to take a very quick tour of this garden in a few months, I could point out to you just how many plants have been given to us. Over in the herb bed, growing with the lemon balm and chamomile, are the Egyptian onions Amy gave us. Bryce gave us the black raspberries under the crapple tree. The figs came from my friend Jay's father, Mr Lau. Jessica gave us the daffodils. My friend Ada sent some sweet grass, and the roots were diapered in moist paper towels, which now grow out front next to the comfrey Jami gave us. The stand of peonies next to them was dropped off over a decade ago as a housewarming gift by someone whose name I have forgotten. Wait, wait: Andy. His name is Andy, and those flowers make one of my favourite smells on this earth. As does the star magnolia that Crystal gave us. And the lily given by my mother, which she even helped me plant.

Among gardeners, there is a near-constant chatter, asking what you need, asking if you have any, and asking if you could use this. One day, Roro texts, "Hey, do you have a few heads of garlic?" The next day, she called to say she had found a big stand of serviceberry bushes that she wanted to show me. One day, Bunny asks, "Can I get a few of those sweet potatoes?" The next, he says, "I got a haul of chicken of the woods; let me bring it by." Amy tells us we should come to harvest some of their persimmons, and I bring some of these purple hot peppers that are coming up like crazy. Perhaps this is the creme de la creme when our friend Kayte gives me a packet of seeds she saved from tomatoes we'd given her that were given to us as seedlings by our friend Mark. Back and forth and back and forth it goes.

Why is this back and forth the gardener's disposition or, more to the point, practice? Because a garden – a healthy, thriving garden – tells us to. Whether we know it or not, we're just emulating the garden, which is a repository of sharing. During the COVID-19 lockdown, wandering around out back and looking for more places to plant, I noticed that there was a strip between the raised beds and the alley, maybe three or four feet wide. I borrowed our neighbour's pickup and dug a six-inch trench in the gravel down to the soil, which seemed weirdly worrisome for being beneath the gravel. Then I filled that trench with planting mixes I scrounged from the garage before planting a bunch of sunflowers with seeds we had in our stash. "The seeds were four or five years old, and I was planting them into a gravel trench. And although planting seeds is always an act of faith, this qualified maybe a little extra.

About a week later, while I was weeding the trench on my knees, I almost accidentally pulled a sunflower sprout, pushing its pale neck from the soil. But after seeing that one, I then recognized a couple of others in the same state of unfurl. And within a few days, almost all the seeds I'd planted had sprouted and were like a tiny, unevenly staggered green colonnade. In

just a few months, lining our alley was a gorgeous family of mismatched sunflowers, several of them taller than I am. I would not infrequently go out to chat with them, by which I mean pour a little water into the trench beneath their feet and run my hand over their delicate faces, features that were also popular with about a zillion pollinating critters.

By the time the temperature started dropping into the low 60s in the early fall, I was noticing on my morning moseys with coffee in hand (gardens are for moseying, note that) teeny bumble-looking bees nestled into the sunflowers. This close, you can tell the flower is being pollinated by these guys, their impossibly beautiful swirl of seeds filling out, nuzzle by nuzzle. And by the time it's chilly enough that the bees sleep their nights elsewhere, their work has been done, and done well, to which the goldfinches testify.

As far as I am concerned, you will never find a lovelier bird, and these ones – they are like baseball players this way – are crazy for sunflower seeds. They perch on the big grinning

face and dig in, stammering their beaks with such passion you will sometimes see shell shards flying and hear what sounds like an Elvin Jones jazz drum solo. And wouldn't you know, these goldfinches, in their glee, very kindly plant for us several sunflowers, a few just where we want them, and a few we dig up young and replant elsewhere?

I put in the seeds, and the rain and sun brought them up. The pollinators caroused the flowers into seeds, and the birds gobbled the seeds into more plants, and so on and on and on. If we pay just a little bit of attention in a garden, we notice that it's constant, this sharing. And if we dropped beneath the surface, where so much of a garden's work happens, with the roots and beetles and worms all busy with their dark labours, we'd see mycelium webbing through that dark, knitting it all together, redistributing nutrients, sharing the wealth. Back and forth and back and forth.

All of which is why I bristle at the idea of gardening as an act of self-sufficiency or independence. I get the premise:

# Growing Joy

By Yin Nwe Ko



Growing what you can't buy is awesome; knowing where your food comes from is lovely; sticking it to Big Grocery is fun, etc. But a garden, a healthy garden anyway, shows us that no matter how hard you try, no matter how much you earn or stash or hoard or bunker up, you will never be self-sufficient or independent because nothing living is.

Neither bacteria nor bald eagle nor billionaire nor you nor me. In addition to the fact that we all die, the most salient or unifying feature of the living is that we cannot survive without help. Even the most prepped and rugged survivalist, though in his mind prepared to go it free of human help, will not make it very far without the fish and deer and berries and wild greens and firewood and everything that made these possible. To be among the living means to be interdependent, always and forever, whether you like it or not. It means you are the beneficiary of a largesse so large, so deep, you will never in one lifetime get to the bottom of it.

But instead, by celebrating that kindness—which we do in part by sharing what that kindness has given us—we also might harvest what is planted in that kindness. Just the other day, my mother told me her mother always grew a hearty pinto-type bean they called a Dutch bean, one her grandmother had always grown. Though my mother made a face that I'm pretty sure meant she didn't love it, my granny did. And it fed my mother all the same. I suspect my great-grandmother Biggie, when she fled Port Gibson, Mississippi, for Youngstown, Ohio, in 1913, brought with her some seeds with which to create the garden she fed everyone from.

We all are made of these stories, even if we do not know them. People saved these seeds because they loved them, and they thought we might love them too. Whoever saved the seeds loved us before they knew us. Our gardens archive that love.

Reference:

Reader's Digest May 2024

## New Australian AI tool capable of improving patient response to cancer therapy

### KEY POINTS

- Australian researchers at the Australian National University (ANU) have developed an AI model called DeepPT.
- DeepPT is designed to help select the most suitable treatment for cancer patients.
- According to a new study by ANU, DeepPT has been successful in predicting responses to therapies across multiple types of cancer.
- When DeepPT was combined with another tool called ENLIGHT for therapy selection, the patient response rate to cancer therapy increased significantly—from 33.3 per cent to 46.5 per cent.

AUSTRALIAN researchers have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) model that can help select the most suitable treatment for cancer patients.

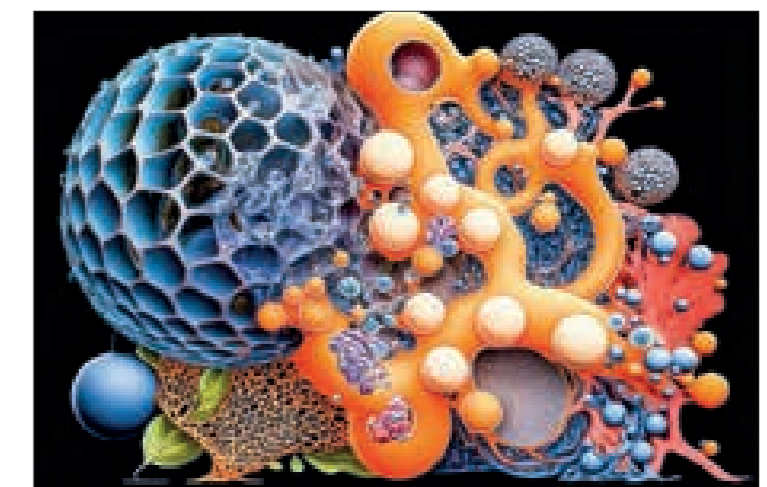
In a new study, a team from the Australian National University (ANU), reported that the AI model — called DeepPT — was found to successfully predict responses to therapies for patients with multiple types of cancer.

By using DeepPT in combination with a second tool called ENLIGHT to select the most suitable therapy, the patient response rate to cancer therapy increased from 33.3 per cent to 46.5 per cent. "We know that selecting a suitable treatment for cancer patients can be integral to patient outcomes," Danh-Tai Hoang, lead author of the study from ANU's Biological Data Science Institute, said in a media release.

DeepPT builds on previous work by the same researchers to develop an AI tool to help classify brain tumors. Both tools use microscopic pictures of patient tissue called histopathology images.

Compared to current methods of processing complex molecular data to identify suitable therapies — a process that can take weeks — Hoang said using histopathology images is more cost-effective and timely.

SOURCE: XINHUA



This advancement underscores the potential of AI in personalized medicine, facilitating more effective and efficient treatment decisions for cancer patients. Blood cells play a crucial role in the body's immune response, which is particularly vital in combating diseases like cancer. ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/PIXABAY



# NATIONAL

## Terrorists resumes rocket attacks, killing 10 in Lashio



TERRORISTS launched attacks using drop bombs and rockets in the towns, wards and villages where the people peacefully live.

On 3 July, released news expressed that shells fired by terrorists fell into Ward 1 of Area 3, Nilar Road in Ward 10, Pan Oak monastery compound in Ward 5 of Area 1 and Ward 4 of Area 3 in Lashio of Shan State (North), killing seven civilians including three children aged 12 and 14, and some were injured.

On 4 July, terrorists started rocket attacks again in Lashio. Shells fell on the

houses in Sein Pan Street in Ward 9 of Area 3, Sabai Street in Ward 9 of Area 1, and Kyan-taung Street in Ward 9 of Area 1. Three people – two men and one woman – died, whereas two, one male and one female, were seriously injured in the explosion. The injured persons were taken to Lashio General Hospital for medical treatment.

Moreover, terrorists restarted rocket attacks at noon, and the shells fell into No 15 BEPS (Post) in Ward 9 of Area 2, and school buildings were destroyed.

Terrorists launched rocket attacks starting on 3 July, and ten people died, and some were seriously injured.

Security forces conducted the needed security measures by cooperating with locals. — MNA/KTZH

Debris, damage and casualties seen after terrorist rocket attacks in Lashio, Shan State (North).

## Crackdown on illegal trade results in seizures, arrests worth K134.9M

UNDER the oversight of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, efforts to combat illicit trading are effectively underway with actions in accordance with the law.

On 3 July, a combined team led by the Customs Department conducted inspections and seized commodities valued at approximately K12.44 million. These included 1,341 kilogrammes of Chinese-made water valves and two 55 kVA diesel generators, valued at approximately K20.24 million, which were not declared in import declaration forms found in three containers at Myanmar Industrial Port. Additionally, authorities seized 56,130 kilogrammes of GI hollow pipes, produced in China and valued at approximately K82.5 million, from ten containers at the Asia World checkpoint.

On the same day, the combined team managed by Yangon Region's Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force inspected and confiscated items valued at approximately K30.75 million. That included an unregistered Mini Cooper vehicle valued at approximately K3 million at the corner of Bago River Road and Yadana Road in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township and an unregistered Honda Insight valued at approximately K4 million near Baho Street, Insein Township. They also seized 12.567 tonnes of illegal timbers, valued at approx-

imately K23,753,143, at No 120/121, Debay-in Wunhtauk U Myae Street, Industrial Zone 2, eastern Hlinethaya Township. The action was taken under the Import-Export Law and Forestry Law.

Another team managed by Ayeyawady Region's Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force inspected and seized 3.073 tonnes of other kinds of wood valued at approximately K417,955 in Thaboung Township, Patheingyi District, and one engine used in illegal logging along with four related accessories, valued at approximately K510,000, in Bogale Township, Pyawbwe District.

On 4 July, a combined team managed by the Bago Region's Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force inspected and seized 0.28 tonne of hardwood and 0.866 tonne of other woods, valued at approximately K133,898, in Toungoo District.

Also, on the same day, another team managed by Sagaing Region's Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force conducted inspections. It confiscated an unregistered New Anbo 125 motorbike, valued at approximately K350,000, in Homalin Township.

As a result of these operations, the Anti-Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported 11 arrests on 3 and 4 July involving goods estimated at K134.9 million. — MNA/TMT

## Crackdown on illegal trade leads to arrests, seizures based on informant tips



SUPERVISED by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, inspection teams under the state and regional illegal trade eradication special task forces, along with One-Stop Services led by the Customs Department, are consistently and effectively cracking down on illegal trade. These efforts take place at border trade offices and stations, permanent checkpoints along land and sea trade routes, and at ports and airports. For this, information is crucial.

In June 2024, responsible citizens submitted 43 reports, of which eight were inaccurate and two were late, leading to 33 arrests. There were 61 cases of seized illegal goods, including

timber, industrial products, consumer goods, and foodstuffs, with an estimated value of K1,095.50 million.

The vehicles transporting these illegal items were also confiscated. Whistleblowers will be awarded twenty per cent of the estimated value of the seized items. Therefore, departmental officials are arranging to distribute K188.164 million in informing rewards in June during the 2024-2025 financial year. Additionally, information-driven arrests are detailed in monthly reports.

Responsible citizens can report illegal trade by contacting the following phone numbers: 09-404-339-969, 067-409-883, and emailing [antiillegaltradeinfo@gmail.com](mailto:antiillegaltradeinfo@gmail.com). — MNA/TRKM

## Athens Acropolis introduces private visits for 5,000 euros

*This initiative allows groups of up to five people exclusive access outside of normal visiting hours, aiming to provide a more intimate and personalized experience of the ancient monument.*



The Acropolis is offering private visits for 5,000 euros, prompting protests from the site's guards. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Acropolis in Athens, one of the world's most visited ancient monuments, has begun offering private visits for 5,000 euros (\$5,400), setting off protests from the site's guards.

According to the official website of the culture ministry unit that manages the hilltop site, these group visits will be held outside of normal

opening hours and are limited to a maximum of five people each.

Normal visits cost 20 euros or 30 euros for a combined ticket with other sites.

"The Acropolis Experience now offers visitors the exclusive opportunity to enjoy this perfect architectural expression of the Greek spirit

in private," says the Hellenic Heritage website.

Up to four group visits can take place at a time, beginning at 7 am or 8 pm on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

According to Greek media, the first such private visit took place on Saturday with a Russian couple and their private guide. — AFP

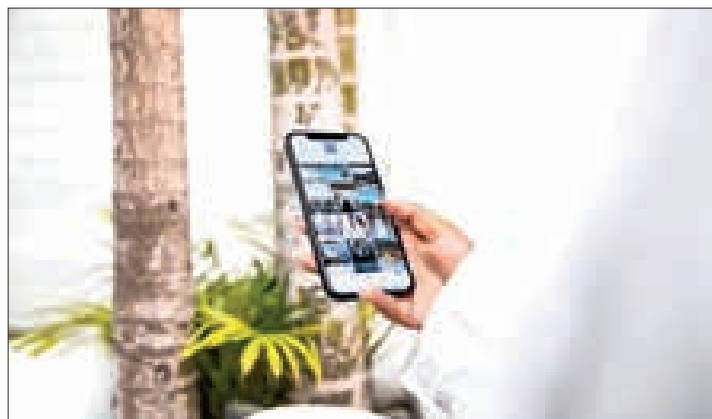
## Threads hits 175 mln users on first anniversary

THREADS, Meta's alternative to X (formerly Twitter), has hit 175 million monthly users a year after its out-of-the-blue launch.

"What a year," Meta CEO and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg said Wednesday on Threads in announcing the platform had reached the threshold.

Threads, which hit app stores on 5 July last year, is a spin-off of Instagram and is intended to be a rival to X, formerly known as Twitter, after that platform alienated many users and advertisers following Elon Musk's purchase in 2022.

Threads was rushed out



Threads, Meta's response to X (formerly Twitter), has swiftly gained traction in the social media landscape, amassing 175 million monthly users within a year of its surprise launch. **PHOTO: PEXELS**

after Musk threatened to limit the amount of posts on X for non-subscribers.

This was the latest in a

long line of chaotic announcements by the mercurial Tesla founder and Zuckerberg tried to seize the moment. — AFP

### BRIEFS: ENTERTAINMENT

#### Robert Towne, Oscar-Winning 'Chinatown' screenwriter, dies at 89

POPULAR screenwriter Robert Towne, celebrated for his Oscar-winning script for the 1974 classic 'Chinatown,' died at the age of 89.

Towne died at his Los Angeles home, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Throughout his career, Towne garnered acclaim with Academy Award nominations for his scripts of 'The Last Detail' (1973) and 'Shampoo' (1975), which showcased his distinctive portrayal of Los Angeles, blending beauty with melancholy. His scripts often featured iconic collaborations with actors like Jack Nicholson and Warren Beatty, capturing the essence of Southern California as both seductive and disillusioning. — ANI

## S Korean YouTuber's viral embrace of solo life



Her popularity indicates a growing segment of the population questioning traditional values. **PHOTO: AFP**

SOUTH Korea is grappling with a dire demographic challenge as its birthrate hits record lows, prompting extensive governmental efforts to boost marriage and reproduction rates.

However, amidst this societal push, Seen Aromi, a 37-year-old YouTuber from rural South Korea, has found unexpected fame and personal fulfillment by advocating for singlehood.

Living on her terms, Seen Aromi embraces a lifestyle that defies traditional expectations. She practises yoga, savours lazy mornings, and shares her contentment with over 200,000 YouTube subscribers, encouraging them to reject societal pressures and find joy in independence.

"Not getting married is my greatest achievement," she asserts, rejecting the conventional notion that marriage and motherhood define a woman's

purpose.

Seen's message resonates widely, evident in the success of her book 'I Can't Help but Live Well On My Own,' which soared to the top of South Korea's bestseller lists. Her narrative strikes a chord not only with single women in their 30s but also with older generations navigating life changes.

Seen celebrates the freedom to be herself without conforming to societal norms that prioritize marriage and family.

South Korea's struggle with its birthrate crisis stems from economic challenges and entrenched cultural norms that prioritize traditional gender roles.

Seen's story symbolizes a growing trend where individuals opt out of marriage and parenthood due to economic pressures and evolving societal expectations. — AFP

# ECONOMY WORLD

## Indian shipbuilders' shares soar 200% as exports surge

*GRSE, a prominent Indian shipbuilding company, has seen its stock price increase dramatically.*



The recent performance of GRSE's stock is indicative of investor confidence in India's defence capabilities and export potential under the current policy framework. **PHOTO: GRSE/SPUTNIK**

INDIA aims to expand its market share in defence exports, with state-run firms like Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd (GRSE), playing a key role in the pursuit.

Shares of Indian shipbuilding behemoth, GRSE, rose by

nearly 200 per cent in the last three months, and by another five per cent on 4 July, hours after the Kolkata-based firm announced an export order by the Bangladesh Navy for an advanced tug.

GRSE's stock was priced at INR 807 on 1 April this year, before closing at INR 2,407 on

the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Tuesday.

Shares of the company have been breaking new ground, especially after a \$6-billion target for defence exports was set by the Ministry of Defence (following the return of the Narendra Modi-led government to power last month). — SPUTNIK

## Michelin Guide unveils Japan hotel ratings for 1<sup>st</sup> time



Officials of hotels in Japan chosen by the Michelin Guide to receive the top three "key" rating pose for a photo with Gwendal Poullennec (3rd from R), international director of the Michelin Guides, in Tokyo on 4 July 2024. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE Michelin Guide unveiled Thursday its ratings for hotels in Japan for the first time, with six facilities receiving the maximum three "keys", a designation similar to stars for

restaurants.

Among the six that received the highest rating for promising an "extraordinary stay" are Gora Kadan in the famous hot spring area of Ha-

kone near Tokyo and Palace Hotel Tokyo, according to Nihon Michelin Tire Co.

The announcement comes after the Michelin Guide released its new ratings for hotels first in France in April this year and then the United States, Spain and Italy. Japan became the fifth country to have its hotels rated. Hotels are judged in five evaluation categories including architecture and interior design, quality of service and providing an experience worth the price, Michelin said.

Other than the six facilities with the top rating, Michelin selected 17 facilities for two keys for offering "an exceptional stay" and 85 for one key for providing "a very special stay". — Kyodo

## EU gives conditional nod to Lufthansa's proposed ITA Airways stake

THE EU on Wednesday announced its conditional approval for German airline Lufthansa's proposed stake in ITA Airways, a deal that Italy called a "big European success".

Lufthansa, one of Europe's largest carriers, last year agreed to pay 325 million euros (\$350 million) for a 41 per cent stake in ITA, with the Italian finance ministry also contributing 250 million euros as part of the capital increase.

The German airline's presence in Italy will be bolstered

by the deal and said it would give more options for travel to Africa, South America and the Middle East.

But it has faced a turbulent process to get regulators' approval after the European Commission opened an in-depth probe in January, fearing it could hurt competition.

The commission, the EU's antitrust regulator, has now given the green light after Lufthansa and the Italian government offered a package of commitments to assuage those fears. — AFP

### NEWS DIGEST: ECON

#### Laos strives to promote vocational education, human resources

THE Lao National Chambers of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Vocational Education Development Institute (VEDI) for partnership to bolster human resources for the business sector and to promote vocational education.

The MoU was signed in Lao capital Vientiane on Wednesday by the LNCCI Secretary General Phouxay Thepphavong, and the VEDI Director-General Bounseng Khammounty.

The agreement aims to enhance cooperation between the two sides, which will work together on deciding the scope of collaboration, exchanging information, jointly creating national training standards and designing of courses, and training business trainers based on regional and international standards, Lao National Radio reported on Thursday. — Xinhua

#### Israel increases quota for foreign workers by 14,300

ISRAEL'S Committee of Directors-General on Foreign Workers, chaired by the Prime Minister's Office Director-General Yossi Shelley, approves an additional quota for up to 14,300 more foreign workers to come to Israel in order to fill the labour shortage caused by the ongoing war against Hamas in Gaza.

This is in addition to a previous increase in the quota of 98,400 foreign workers.

The 14,300 will work in the following fields:

A quota of 2,750 foreign workers for nursing institutions under the supervision of the Health Ministry

A quota of 1,550 workers for nursing institutions under the supervision of the Welfare and Social Affairs Ministry

A quota of 5,000 foreign workers for the transport infrastructure sub-sector.

A quota of 5,000 workers for the renovation contractor sub-sector. — ANI

## S Korean households' surplus fund grows in Q1

South Korean households' surplus fund increased for the second consecutive quarter.

SOUTH Korean households' surplus fund grew for the second straight quarter due to higher deposits, central bank data showed Thursday.

The net surplus fund, or the value of financial assets minus financial debts possessed by households and non-profit organizations, stood at 77.6 trillion won (US\$56.2 billion) in the January-March quar-

ter, up 47.8 trillion won (\$34.6 billion) from three months earlier, according to the Bank of Korea (BOK).

The surplus fund expanded 10.1 trillion won (\$7.3 billion) during the fourth quarter of last year.

Financial assets, such as deposits and securities, surged 40 trillion won (\$28.9 billion) in the first quarter from three

months earlier.

The deposit holdings soared 40.2 trillion won (\$29.1 billion), but the possession of insurance and pension fell 23.9 trillion won (\$17.3 billion).

The holdings of equity securities and investment fund gained 16 trillion won (\$11.6 billion).

Financial liabilities declined 7.8 trillion won (\$5.6 billion) in the first



Pedestrians are seen in front of the Bank of Korea (BOK) in Seoul, South Korea, on 24 November 2022. PHOTO: WANG YILIANG/XINHUA

quarter compared to the previous quarter.

The BOK had left its

policy rate unchanged at 3.50 per cent since January last year, after raising it by 3.0 percentage points for the past one and a half years. — Xinhua

## Tourism remains Fiji's growth driver, says deputy PM

Given the rising demand, Gavoka emphasized the necessity for new investments, particularly in expanding hotel capacity.



The island country of Fiji is becoming a hot destination among tourists for its diverse and unique attractions, including tropical scenery, pristine nature, marine life, culture and friendly people. PHOTO: CHINA DAILY

TOURISM remains Fiji's growth driver and the country expects one million visitors to arrive this year, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism Viliame Gavoka on Thursday at a tourism summit held in Nadi, Fiji's third largest city.

According to Gavoka, in 2023, the industry broke the visitor arrival record, with 929,740 tourists who contributed an estimated 3.2 billion Fijian dollars (around US\$1.4 billion) to the Fijian economy, reported Fijivillage news website.

As demand surges,

so does the need for new investments, particularly in hotel capacity, he said.

He added that the government has increased the marketing budget through Tourism Fiji and will continue to strategically drive reforms to make it easier for investors, to invest in Fiji and in the Fijian brand. Tourism Fiji CEO Brent Hill said Fiji is set to enhance its global connectivity with potential new direct flight routes, which are expected to increase accessibility and attract a diverse range of international tourists to the Pacific island nation. — Xinhua

## Kenya expects 3 mln foreign tourist arrivals

THE number of foreign tourist arrivals in Kenya for 2024 is expected to reach three million, up from two million posted in 2023, Alfred Mutua, cabinet secretary for the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, has said.

"The increase in numbers means more money for the country and many new jobs, especially for our youths, and business growth," Mutua said in a statement obtained by Xinhua on Thursday.

The tourism and wildlife sector is one of the largest foreign exchange earners and employers in Kenya, with 80 per cent of the employees being youth. The tourism sector is experiencing high bookings with only a few cancellations, mainly for events due to recent protests over the high cost of living, Mutua said. — Xinhua

## German industry orders fall

INCOMING orders in Germany's manufacturing sector fell by 1.6 per cent in May compared to the previous month, according to preliminary figures published by the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) on Thursday. This marked the fifth consecutive decline.

The renewed decrease was attributed to a "noticeable drop in orders from abroad", which fell by 2.8 per cent month-on-month, particularly from countries outside the euro area, according to the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). Domestic demand, on the other hand, saw a slight increase. Fewer aircraft orders led to a significant decline of 19.2 per cent for manufacturers of transport equipment, including aircraft, ships and trains, according to Destatis. In contrast, an increase of 11.2 per cent for manufacturers of computer, electronic and optical products had an overall positive effect. — Xinhua

## GM fined \$146 mln for lowballing vehicle emissions

GENERAL Motors will pay nearly \$146 million in penalties for underestimating emissions produced by its vehicles, federal regulators said Wednesday.

The American auto giant was fined after approximately 5.9 million vehicles were found to release more emissions than reported, a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) spokesperson told AFP.

The vehicles in ques-

tion, with model years between 2012 and 2018, showed more than 10 per cent higher carbon dioxide emissions in tests, on average, than what GM reported, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Additionally, GM agreed to write off greenhouse gas credits that equate to approximately 50 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, the EPA said, with a market value of hundreds of millions of dollars. — AFP

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V UNI ACTIVE VOY.NO. (773N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V UNI ACTIVE VOY.NO. (773N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 5-7-2024 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 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm 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.

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# ROLLING UPDATES WORLD

## Voting begins in Britain's general election

MILLIONS in Britain began to cast their votes in the general election on Thursday, as around 40,000 polling stations across the country opened at 7 am local time (0600 GMT).

Voters in 650 constituencies will elect members of the House of Commons, the lower chamber of parliament. A party must win at least 326 seats to secure a majority and be asked by the monarch, King Charles III, to form a government.

Pre-election opinion polls gave the main opposition Labour Party a 20-point lead over the Conservative Party, which has been in power for 14 years.

Observers say the cost of living, healthcare, education and immigration are among the issues that matter most to voters.

Britain's inflation rate soared to a four-decade high in 2022 as exorbitant prices for gro-

ceries, energy and rent inflicted pain on the public. Despite falling inflation in recent months, the cost of living continued to be the primary concern for people across Britain, according to an official survey in April.

Meanwhile, a recent survey showed that public satisfaction with Britain's National Health Service fell to a record low, with long waiting times cited as a major reason.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg, a professor of politics at the University of Liverpool, told Xinhua that the general view is that the Conservatives' record in dealing with these issues was "awful" during their 14 years in government. The Labour Party is seen as the alternative for a change, even though there is "no great enthusiasm" for Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour Party. — Xinhua

*Leading up to the election, pre-election polls indicated a substantial 20-point lead for the main opposition Labour Party over the Conservative Party, which has held power for 14 years.*



Britain's opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria arrive to cast their votes. **PHOTO: PAUL ELLIS / AFP**

## Death toll hits 180 in record floods in southern Brazil

*The flooding, which began on 29 April after torrential rains persisted for days, affected 2,398,255 inhabitants across 478 towns, including Porto Alegre, the state capital. More than 450,000 people were evacuated during the peak of the storms.*



Rescue team members transfer equipment and medicine from a flooded hospital in Canoas, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil, 10 May 2024. **PHOTO: LUCIO TAVORA / XINHUA**

AT least 180 people have died from weeks of record flooding in southern Brazil's Rio Grande do Sul state and 32 people remain missing, the civil defence agency said Wednesday.

Torrential rains began on 29 April and continued for days, inundating cities across the state. Rescue and recovery work started after the flooding began to subside in mid-June.

Severe weather has impacted some 2,398,255 inhabitants in 478 towns, including the state capital, Porto Alegre, said the agency in a report, adding that during the height of the storms, more than 450,000 people were evacuated.

Brazil's government has allocated 85.7 billion reais (about US\$15.4 billion) to aid and rebuild Rio Grande do Sul, according to Secretary of Social Communication Paulo Pimenta, who was appointed by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to oversee the reconstruction effort.

Rio Grande do Sul, an agricultural state located on the border with Uruguay and Argentina, has seen record economic losses from the disaster. — Xinhua

## US reports fourth human case of bird flu linked to cows

US officials on Wednesday reported the country's fourth human case of bird flu linked to the current outbreak of the virus in dairy cattle.

As with previous cases, the person worked on a farm and was exposed to infected cows, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a statement, adding that the risk to the general population remained "low".

The infection occurred in Colorado and the affected person only had eye symptoms, was given antiviral medication, and has since recovered, it said.

A first US infection in the southern state of Texas was announced on 1 April. Two other cases were subsequently reported in Michigan.

Numerous herds of cows are infected across several American states, an epidemic which was first detected in March.

Experts are concerned about the growing number of mammals infected with the disease, although cases in humans remain rare. — AFP



This latest case follows earlier infections in Texas and Michigan. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE / PKVESTA**

# SPORTS

## England midfielder Jude Bellingham won't go for surgery after EURO 2024

REAL Madrid and England star player Jude Bellingham will not have to go for surgery after he sustained a shoulder injury that has caused problems in the past season.

In the previous season of La Liga in November, when Real Madrid faced Rayo Vallecano, Bellingham sustained a shoulder injury.

Following the injury, the English player wore a pad on his shoulder to prevent himself from receiving further injuries.

Bellingham was supposed to undergo surgery after the end of the EURO 2024 just like his Real Madrid teammate Brahim Diaz, who was struggling with a shoulder problem. Meanwhile, Goal.com quoted AS's report and stated that both the Los Blancos will not undergo surgery this summer.

Bellingham had a spectacular debut season at Real Madrid, scoring 19 goals, and helping Carlo Ancelotti's men to win the La Liga and UEFA Champions League (UCL) for a record number of time. The youngster also scored four goals and made five assists in the previous season of the UCL.

Real Madrid won their 15<sup>th</sup> UCL title after beating Borussia Dortmund 2-0 in the final match of the tournament, where Bellingham played a huge role in the game.

The 21-year-old has been stupendous in the ongoing EURO 2024, scoring two goals after playing four matches for the Three Lions. In England's previous match against Slovakia, Gareth Southgate's side clinched a 2-1 win after Bellingham and skipper Harry Kane's lone goals. — ANI

## Ronaldo hails Mbappe as football's future ahead of inter-generation duel

*The upcoming clash between France and Portugal promises to be a spectacle, blending talent, generational prowess, and a deep-rooted admiration between two of football's most iconic figures.*



WITH the 2022 FIFA World Cup runners-up and the Euro 2016 winners set to take each other on Friday evening, the match in Hamburg will be far from ordinary.

For many, France versus Portugal in the Euro 2024 quarterfinals represents the unique showdown of Kylian Mbappe versus Cristiano Ronaldo.

Not only will superstars from two different generations compete on the Hamburg pitch, millions of fans will watch their heroes.

While France's Mbappe is heading for the future in the shirt of Real Madrid, 39-year-old Ronaldo has entered the autumn of his glittering career.

The special relationship between both players increases fans' excitement. Portugal's veteran was Mbappe's role model in his early years.

A photo shows a teenage Mbappe posing on his bed in his family home, dressed in blue jeans and a green sweater, and giving looks of admiration to his walls covered with posters of Ronaldo.

Mbappe having to play with a protective mask due to a broken nose might give the challenge a special touch, while Ronaldo may find himself ahead of his final Euro encounter, after he announced: "This will definitely be my last Euro." — Xinhua



Portugal's forward (7) Cristiano Ronaldo and France's forward (10) Kylian Mbappe go head to head when Portugal play against France in a UEFA Euro 2024 quarterfinal at the Volksparkstadion Hamburg on Friday. PHOTO: AFP

## Copa America: Messi in doubt for Argentina-Ecuador quarterfinal

ARGENTINA manager Lionel Scaloni said Wednesday he will wait until the last possible moment to decide whether Lionel Messi will play in the team's Copa America quarterfinal against Ecuador.

Messi suffered an adductor injury in the Albiceleste's 1-0 victory over Chile and missed his side's 2-0 win over Peru in their final group match on Saturday.

"We are going to wait a little longer to make a decision," Scaloni told reporters ahead of Thursday's

clash at the NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas.

"We will have another training session and the fact we have an extra day to recover also helps. Yesterday he trained with everyone with a good feeling and, depending on the how the next session goes, we will decide." Messi said that he was unable to move freely in the match against Chile and revealed he had been suffering from flu-like symptoms during the tournament. — Xinhua



Lionel Messi of Argentina (1<sup>st</sup> L) in action during the Copa America group match against Chile, 24 June 2024. PHOTO: CONMEBOL

Voting begins in Britain's  
general election

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# WORLD

## THE EXOTIC PET TRADE

### Malaysia rescues hundreds of tortoises from 'Ninja Turtle Gang'

MALAYSIAN authorities have rescued hundreds of smuggled tortoises meant for sale in Southeast Asia, disrupting an international crime ring called the "Ninja Turtle Gang", a wildlife official said Thursday.

Abdul Kadir Abu Hashim, wildlife and national parks department director-general, said 400 tortoises worth 3.8 million ringgit (\$805,084) bound for the lucrative exotic pet trade were seized during an operation by the police and wildlife officials on Saturday.

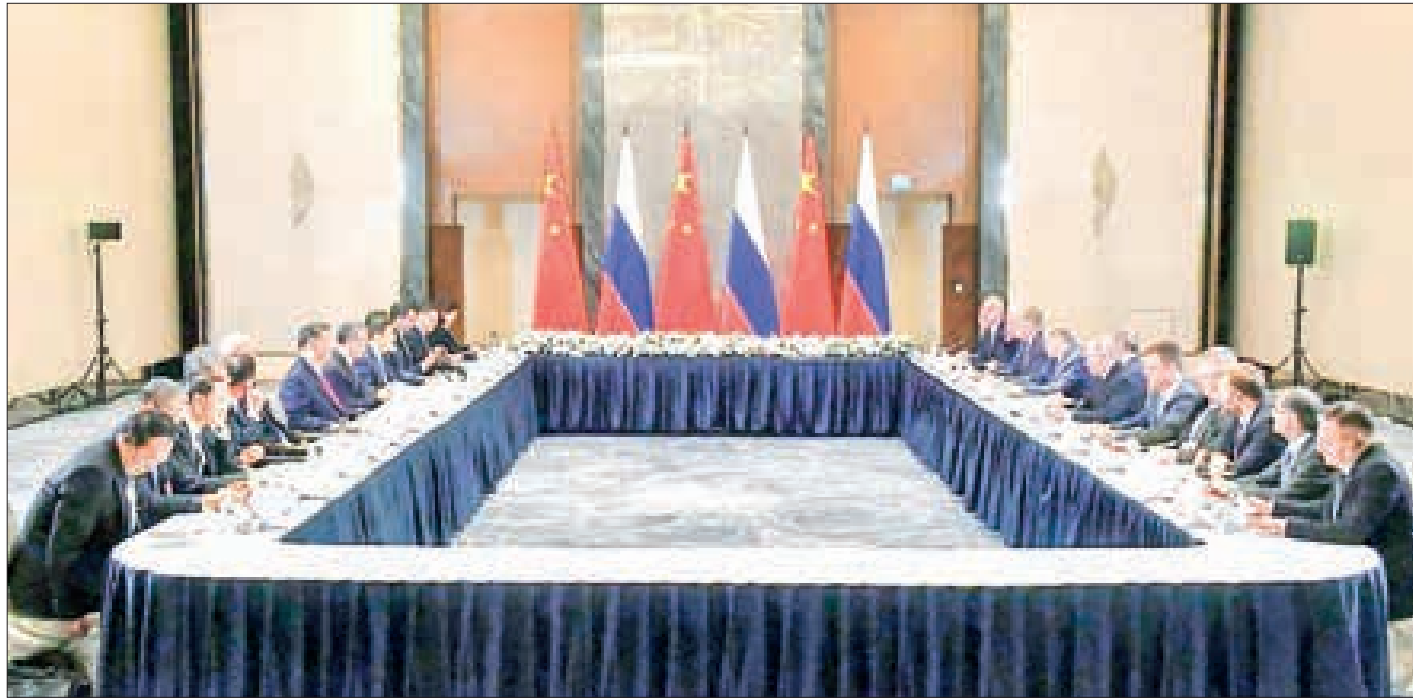
Across Asia, many believe that tortoises bring good luck and prosperity.

"This is the biggest ever seizure in the past 10 years," Abdul Kadir told AFP, adding that the reptiles were to be sold on to Thailand and Indonesia after local demand was met.

He said the tortoises were believed to have been smuggled from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

The joint operation, code-named "United National Resource", crippled the tortoise smuggling ring known as the "Ninja Turtle Gang", he said.

The operation involved a car chase in which the driver of a vehicle thought to be used in the smuggling was arrested. — AFP



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets Russian President Vladimir Putin ahead of the 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Astana, Kazakhstan, 3 July 2024. PHOTO: XIE HUANCHI/XINHUA

## SCO summit kicks off in Astana with Belarus joining association

THE 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) kicked off Thursday in Astana, with Belarus officially becoming a member of the association.

The summit began with an official ceremony where all relevant documents for the country's membership were signed. "Dear heads of state, a decision on the full membership of the Republic of Belarus in the SCO has been made," Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced, congratulating Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Lukashenko, in turn, noted that

“ The 24<sup>th</sup> SCO Summit in Astana marked Belarus' formal accession to the organization. Kazakh President Tokayev announced Belarus' full membership, with a signing ceremony for relevant documents. ”

Minsk will strive to expand the SCO's influence and broaden its circle of allies and supporters.

The SCO summit is currently being held in Astana, with attendance by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Mongolia, Azerbaijan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye and Turkmenistan, and the SCO Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. — Xinhua

## 90% of container vessels delayed in Singapore: official

ABOUT 90 per cent of container vessels are arriving off-schedule in Singapore due to the Red Sea crisis, compared to about 77 per cent for 2023, Transport Minister Chee Hong Tat has told parliament in his latest written reply.

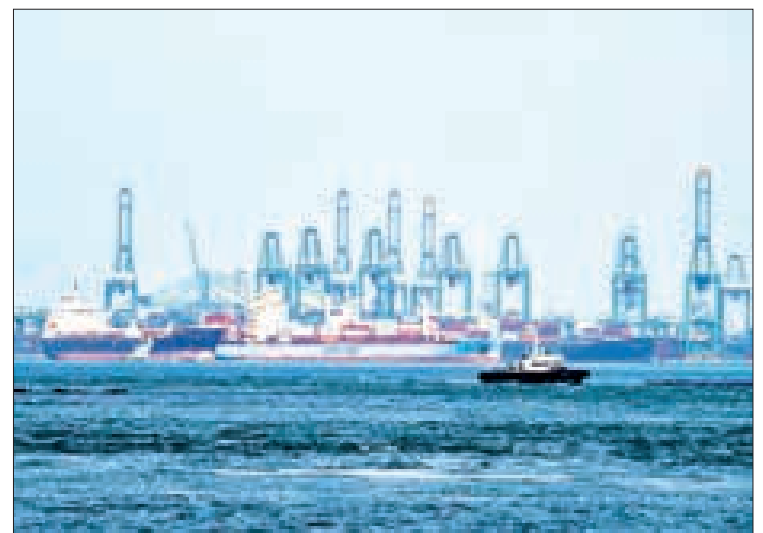
The Red Sea crisis has forced vessels to divert to longer routes around the Cape of Good Hope between Europe and Asia. As a result, ports worldwide are

experiencing more off-schedule arrivals, Chee said in the reply on Tuesday.

Shipping lines rely on Singapore as a transshipment to rearrange containers and facilitate operations. Such moves have lengthened container vessels' stay in the port and increased the waiting time for incoming vessels, leading to congestion at container berths, the minister said.

Meanwhile, many of the ships are arriving within a short window, compounding the issue by causing a "bunching" effect, he added.

Chee noted that the port management agencies have reactivated additional berths and yard space and will continue to scale up handling capacity in the following months to meet the anticipated demand. — Xinhua



Container ships berth at Singapore's Pasir Panjang container terminal on 31 January 2024. PHOTO: THEN CHIH WEY/XINHUA