

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR



Canes are transported to the mills.

Across the country, there are approximately 500,000 acres of sugarcane plantations, with nearly all sugar mills reported to have completed nearly 100 per cent of sugarcane crushing for this milling season, as stated by U Win Htay, Vice-chairperson of the Myanmar Sugar and Cane Related Products Association (MSCRPA).

The report indicates that Myanmar has 23 sugar mills, with all mills except some mills in northern Shan State and Sagaing Region having completed their cane crushing operations.

U Win Htay remarked, "It can be noted that nearly all sugarcane mills nationwide have completed crushing,

Sugar mills across the country nearing completion of cane crushing season

except for some mills in northern Shan State and Sagaing Region. It is anticipated that the remaining mills will finish operations by April. Sugarcane prices for this season range between K130,000 and K150,000 per tonne, depending on the opening price rate of the mills. The crushing season spans from December

to April."

The primary regions for sugarcane cultivation are northern and southern Shan State, and the upper part of Sagaing Region. Additionally, sugarcane is also grown in the eastern and western parts of the Bago Region, Yangon Region, and Mandalay Region. — ASH/TMT

Summer water shortage warning and available communication link information

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People wait for purified water distributed by Department of Rural Development.



NATIONAL PAGE-2



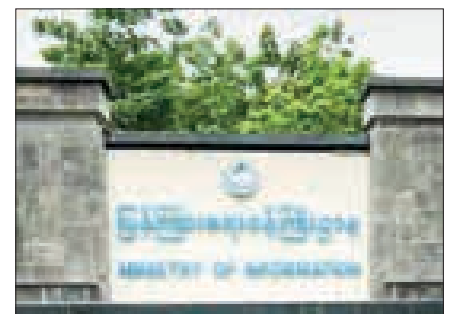
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Loans to be provided for MSMEs manufacturing value-added products

NATIONAL

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of Service Organizations transferred and appointed

1. The State Administration Council has transferred Managing Director U Thurein Win of Road Transport under the Ministry of Transport and Communications as Director-General of Information Technology and Cyber Security Department from the date he assumes charge of his duties.
2. The State Administration Council has appointed Deputy Director-General U Win Nay Lwin of Economic Department under the Office of State Administration Council as Director-General of the Information and Security Affairs Department on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Announcement of Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

7th Waning of Tabaung 1385 ME
31 March 2024

IT is necessary to control Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) infection continuously. So it is now announced that public requests, orders, notifications and directives (except for easing restrictions) released by Union-Level Organizations and Union Ministries up to 31 March 2024 have been extended to 30 April 2024 for prevention, control and treatment on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).

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Shooting scene of film course organized by MMPO.

A gathering to commemorate Myanmar Motion Pictures Organization's film courses from 1956 to 2019

ACCORDING to U Chan Thar Kyi Soe, Joint Secretary-3 of the Myanmar Motion Pictures Organization (MMPO), there will be a collaborative gathering of participants from the MMPO film courses spanning from 1956 to 2019. The event is scheduled for 9 April.

U Chan Thar Kyi Soe stated, "Numerous renowned directors, actors, and actresses have emerged from the film courses held over the years, some of whom are no longer with us. The gathering on 9 April aims to bring together participants from the 78 years of these courses, which have covered acting, scriptwriting, di-

recting, editing, and more. The goal is to share memories and experiences across generations."

Invitations have been extended to various individuals including Academy May Than Nu, Academy Director Zin Yaw Maung Maung, Academy Director Nyi Nyi Tun Lwin, Academy Khant Si Thu, Academy Director Nyo Min Lwin, Academy Thu Htoo San, Arkar Myint Aung, Kaung Pyae, Bhone Thaik, Athen Cho Swe, Yu Thanda Tin, actor and director Htoo Paing Zaw Oo, Nyi Htut Khaung, Soe Thiha, Shin Min Satt, Bhone Nay La, and other film participants. — ASH/ TRKM

Summer water shortage warning and available communication link information

FROM PAGE -1

THE Department of Rural Development, under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, conducts a pre-enrollment of the villages that have the potential to have shortages of drinking water during the summer, establishes communication links directly with the villages, and arranges plans to quickly provide drinking water. The www.water-donation.com website has been published in order to respond immediately if water shortages occur in the summer.

To promptly address potential water shortages, the Rural Development Department of relevant townships has already published contact phone numbers for respective villages. In case of water scarcity, villagers can communicate through various channels such as phone calls, Facebook, Viber, and Messenger.

In addition, visiting the www.water-donation.com website or sending messages through the Water-Donation Mobile Application that can be used on mobile phones is available.

The Water-Donation Mobile Application can be easily accessed and used on the above website, and if water shortages occur in the villages, please inform to the Regional/State, District, Township Rural Development Departments and the Rural Development Department (Head Office) including the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, the Union Territory. — GNLN/TKO



People from Thepyintaw Village in NyaungU Township get drinking water provided by Myintmyatthu Drinking water committee of NyaungU Township on 28 March 2024. **PHOTO: YE WIN NAING (NYAUNGU)**

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

Myanmar expects to grow nearly 750,000 acres of cotton plants in 2027-28 FY

Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) U Min Naung, together with Chief Minister of Magway Region U Tint Lwin, met with the producers and growers of cotton plants in Magway on 29 March.

The Union minister emphasized the importance of promoting cotton plantations, highlighting their role in the development of cotton-based MSMEs and the anticipated increase in cotton production, which would facilitate exports beyond domestic demand. He also projected that a total of 612,712 acres of cotton plants would be grown across 19 cotton plantation zones in six states and regions during the 2024-25 financial year, with an anticipated yearly increase



Union Minister U Min Naung, together with Chief Minister of Magway Region U Tint Lwin, meets the producers and growers of cotton plants in Magway on 29 March.

in production leading to an expansion of the designated cotton plantation areas to 747,000 acres by 2027-28 FY. It is estimated that 700 visses of cotton will be produced per acre.

The Union minister contin-

ued that more than 260,000 acres of cotton plantations are targeted to grow in four agricultural zones located in Magway Region. He also urged departments, businesspersons and farmers to collaborate among them to

overcome difficulties and limitations encountering in cotton plantations and productions.

Director-General of Agriculture Department Dr Ye Tint Tun discussed expansion of cotton sown acreage, use of quality

cotton seeds, requirements to comply with the seed law, and the matters related to quality of crops, productivity, market situation, and long-term benefits of farmers.

Members from cotton plantation and producers association and cotton growers discussed experiences and needs that were encountered in cotton plantations. Experts and scholars from Agriculture Department exchanged views.

In Magway Region, there were 172,793 acres of cotton plantations in 2022-23 FY, 217,416 acres in 2023-24 FY, 266,800 acres are projected to grow in four agricultural zones in 2024-25 FY; and a total of 350,000 acres are projected in 2026-27 FY. — MNA/TMT



Union Minister for Electric Power U Nyan Tun inspects the machinery and vehicles of Machinery Division (Hlawga) in Mingaladon Township yesterday.

MoEP Union Minister inspects functions of Machinery Division (Hlawga)

UNION Minister for Electric Power U Nyan Tun inspected the operating conditions of the Machinery Division (Hlawga) in Mingaladon township yesterday morning.

First, officials from the Machinery Division (Hlawga) under the Department of Hydropower Implementation (DHPI) reported on the major maintenance procedures for machinery and vehicles used in major projects during the respective financial years. They also provided information about the stock of machinery spares in the warehouse to the Union Minister and his team.

In his response to the presentations, the Union minister emphasized that as hydropower projects heavily rely on machinery, it is necessary

to carefully prepare the parts to be repaired to be able to utilize these at full capacity. It is also necessary to properly record and keep records of materials obtained, utilization and stock. He also emphasized the arrival of the summer season and stressed the importance of devising fire prevention plans and conducting staged drills. Additionally, he highlighted the significance of holding meetings where staff can openly present their difficulties.

Subsequently, the Union minister looked into the maintenance status of the machinery currently in use for major projects, assessed the availability of spare parts, and inspected the condition of staff housings. — MNA/TRKM

Pheegyan banana cultivation with underground water tapping increases in NyaungU

FARMERS in Letpanchaypaw Village-tract, located in NyaungU Township, report an increase in the cultivation of Pheegyan bananas, aided by an underground water tapping system.

In NyaungU Township, farmers typically cultivate Pheegyan bananas during the Myanmar months of Tabaung and Tagu. According to banana grower U Aye Ko, most farmers prefer cultivating Pheegyan bananas rather than Rakhine bananas due to the higher demand in domestic market and high price of the former.

Some growers plant one basal shoot of banana plant per pit, while others opt for two basal shoots per pit, with harvest typically occurring after ten or eleven months. Buyers from NyaungU, Pakkoku, and Kyaukpadaung townships visit the villages to purchase Pheegyan bananas, which fetch K1,500 per bunch. — Dipa Linn/ TMT



Photo shows Pheegyan banana farms in Letpanchaypaw Village-tract in NyaungU Township. PHOTO: DIPALINN

NATIONAL

Illegal trade crackdown results in confiscation of smuggled goods worth over K400 million

UNDER the supervision of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, special task forces have initiated 16 cases and confiscated smuggled goods worth K404.9 million, including teak and fuels, in the last three days.

Customs Department officials seized 10,000 pairs of shoes valued at K70 million from a container at the Asia World Container Terminal on 29 March. As the shoes were not declared in the import documentation, the department has taken action against the suspects in accordance with customs procedures.

On the same day in Lewe Township, the Nay Pyi Taw Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force confiscated an unlicensed Luojia 110 motorcycle worth K300,000 and took action against the suspect as per the export/import law.

Meanwhile, on 30 March, the Mandalay Region Illegal Trade



Illegal timbers were seized in Bago Region on 30 March.



Smuggled fuel seized in Mandalay on 30 March.

Eradication Special Task Force seized 4,084 gallons of diesel and 561 gallons of gasoline, valued at K52.9 million, along with vehicles used for transportation, including a Hino fuel Bowser, Isuzu Fuel Bowser, KIA Fuel Bowser, Hino Tractor Head, and tank trailer, with a total worth of K220 million. Authorities have taken action against the suspects following customs procedures.

Similarly, the Mon State Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force seized goods worth

K18.4 million, including edible palm oil and a Mitsubishi Fuso Canter used for transportation, valued at K30 million, at the Thanlwin Bridge checkpoint on the same day. The suspects are facing charges under customs procedures. On 30 March, the Bago Region Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force seized smuggled teak, hardwood, and other wood products worth K2.1 million and detained the suspects according to forest laws in Toungoo and Pyay districts.

Additionally, on 31 March, the committee confiscated an unlicensed Hino Truck and Nissan Diesel Truck valued at K10 million and arrested the suspects following export/import laws in Toungoo. On the same day, the committee seized smuggled teak worth K1.1 million and detained the suspects according to forest laws in Bago and Toungoo districts. — MNA/NT

Over 1M stimulant tablets worth of K2 billion seized in Mandalay Region

THE Myanmar Police Force reported the seizure of over one million stimulant tablets, valued at over K2 billion in Mandalay Region.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprising members of the Anti-Drug Police Force searched a motorcycle driven by Paing Soe accompanied Ma Ei Ei Mon near Kyaukchaw Village, Patheingyi Township in Mandalay Region on 23 March and seized 40,000 stimulant tablets from them. And police searched houses of

Paing Soe and Ma Ei Ei Mon and confiscated 5,800 stimulant tablets on the same day. Following interrogation, police arrested Ma Sein (aka) Thet Htar in Mahaaungmyay Township on 24 March, Waing Aung Myint with a motor cycle in Chanmyathazi Township on 26 March, Kyaw Ye Thu together with 100,000 stimulant tablets on the road head to Kwaygyigon Village on 26 March and Gaw Yon Singh in Chanmyathazi Township. The police seized 860,000 stimulant tablets from Waing Aung Myint's

house in Pyigyidagun Township on 27 March.

Those suspects confessed that the seized drugs were bought from Shan State and sold them in Mandalay Region. Legal action has been initiated against offenders, and an ongoing investigation is underway to apprehend other individuals involved in the case. — MNA/KZL

Offenders seen alongside with confiscated stimulant tablets and motorcycle.



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Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.
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NATIONAL



Kyaukkalat Beach attracts visitors

Some natural rocks at Kyaukkalat beach.

KYAUKKALAT Beach, which is a beautiful beach with rocks that remain intact and green algae and located in Ngaputaw township, Ayeyawady Region has begun popular among visitors.

And there are people who have prepared to visit the beach during Thingyan, according to some travel companies and people who prepare for this trip.

Including stalagmites and mushroom rocks, the beach has beautiful and natural sceneries for photo shooting. The beach has become popular in this year's tour season and there are visitors who travel there by hired car and some visit by connecting with travel companies.

"The beach is very beautiful with rocks

which remain intact and there are green algae when the sea level falls. It is a good place for photo shooting particularly. The beach has become popular these years so the number of visitors has become increased. There are visitors who have prepared to take trip there in Thingyan," said an official from a travel company.

Ma Thet Htar who has prepared to visit the beach during Thingyan by hiring car told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM), "I've a plan to visit beaches in Ayeyawady Region a few days earlier before Thingyan. I've made preparation for a vacation to Myat Mawtinsun, Ngwetaung and Kyaukkalat beaches in Ayeyawady Region from Yangon". — MT/ZS

Wheat price increases slightly when Thingyan gets close

WHEN Thingyan is nearing, wheat price has slightly risen.

A slight increase in wheat price has been seen in March as Thingyan Festival is approaching and the next factor is transportation difficulty. Currently, the wheat price has climbed up about K100 a viss in retail market. "Wheat price per viss is K5,200 this month, up from K5,100 in February," said a shop owner who sells wheat, condensed milk, sugar and tea

shop supplies from Htantabin township.

The production of wheat, one of agricultural products grown in Myanmar, improved and its trade was vibrant with stable price.

In Myanmar, wheat is grown in one season only as winter crop a year. It is mainly grown in Mandalay Region and Sagaing Region, as well as in southern and northern Shan State, Chin State and Kayah State. — Thit Taw/ZS



Wheat flour is automatically packaged at a wheat mill.

Initial compensation paid for 6 Myanmar victims of Thailand's crane collapse, with guaranteed payment of balance after 3 months

A crane collapse at the steel construction site (2) of a factory under construction by Sin Ker Yuan Co. Ltd in Rayong's Pluak Daeng district killed seven people, including six Myanmar nationals and one Chinese national, and initial compensation has been paid for the victims with a guarantee to pay the remaining amounts in three months, said an activist involved in helping Myanmar migrants in Thailand. Fearing that full compensation won't be paid, protesting workers blocked the rescue team from carrying the bodies after the accident happened at around 3:30 pm on 29 March.

"There was a precedent that the employer didn't pay the full compensation. So, there was a blockade by the workers. A final agreement was reached around midnight. The first tranche of 500,000 baht will be paid immediately to each Myanmar victim, and the remaining 1.1 million baht will be paid over the next three months," he said.

It is not yet known how to communicate with all the bereaved families who are entitled to this compensation in the accident.

"There are many workers at the worksite. And the dead victims are known to be legal workers," he added.

Many Myanmar migrants have gone to Thailand to work, and the activists are also negotiating with the relevant authorities about the rights of illegal Myanmar workers in Thailand. — Htet Oo Maung/ZN

Traditional Myanmar murta mat sells better in summer



Murta mats on display in the shop.

WITH the arrival of summer, buyers of murta mats, Myanmar's traditional hand-woven mats from strips of murta, are on the rise, according to the mat dealers.

Murta mats are suitable for all seasons — summer,

rainy season or cold season — and as they are also good for health, balancing the coldness in the midst of the ambient heat, sales of murta mats are rising in March when the temperature gets higher.

The most active sales are seen in types such as double sleeping bed-size mat, double sleeping mat, single sleeping mat and mat used in meditation, a mat seller said.

"Since the weather becomes very hot this month, cool and hygienic murta mats are selling better. Many people bought one or two pieces. Various types — double, bed-size and single — sell well. Foam mats are a bit hot. Murta mats are not like that. As they keep the sleepers cool,

they usually sell more in hot weather," said one vender.

In the Yangon market, a single 3' x 6' sleeping mat costs over K20,000 and a bed size goes up to over K60,000 while the price can vary from shop to shop, he added.

A housewife in Pazundaung, Yangon, said she recently bought a bed-size murta mat for K 65,000.

"With the hotter weather these days and the power cuts at night, we could no longer sleep, so we had to buy a murta mat. I even had to pay K65,000 for one piece I bought from Pazundaung market. I saw other customers also buying murta mats in the shop," she said. — MT/ZN

NATIONAL

Tender invited for screening movies at Nawade Cinema in Yangon

A tender has been invited for at Nawade Cinema in Ma- which is owned by the According to the ten- der invitation committee tender applications will be available for purchase at

the screening of movies yangon Township, Yangon, Ministry of Information. the Myanmar Motion

Pictures Promotion Department in Bahan Township, Yangon Region, on 30 March. The deadline for submitting applica- tions is 29 April.

Further details regarding the date, time, and venue for opening tender proposals will be announced subsequently. — TWA/TKO



Nawade Cinema seen with Academy Award Statue.

Ministry of Education issues deadline for private school registration

THE Ministry of Education has announced that action will be taken against private schools failing to register.

Private schools are required to submit registration applications by 8 March 2024, as mandated by the Ministry of Education's Private Schools Supervisory Board. Deputy Minister for Education Dr Zaw Myint has cautioned certain large schools that have not yet submitted their applications to do so before the 28 March deadline.

Any schools failing to submit registration applications will face closure after 12 May 2024, marking one year from the enforcement of the law. Additionally, newly established private schools must promptly apply for registration, as the law prohibits the operation of private schools without registration.

Furthermore, the Deputy Minister for Education has outlined additional regulations. Teachers in private schools must possess a private teacher registration certificate to be appointed. They are required to attend private teacher training courses at educational universities and educational degree colleges, commencing in late April. Private schools must fulfil tax obligations and provide lectures on Myanmar language to enhance students' reading proficiency. Private school teachers must prepare students for comprehension tests, which will be conducted from September. — TWA/TKO

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Information Ministry issues warning on broadcasting movies contrary to Myanmar culture

THE Ministry of Information has issued a warning, stating that the broadcasting of movies which undermine Myanmar's cultural values and traditions will face prohibition.

Presently, movies are being disseminated through various social media platforms such as movie applications, Facebook, YouTube, Viber, and Telegram, through the creation of accounts, pages, groups, and websites.

These online movies lack official approval and do not undergo censorship. Consequently, they often contain content, including actions and dialogues,

that contravene the country's policies, religious sentiments, ethnic harmony, legal framework, and cultural norms, rendering them unsuitable for family viewing.

Action against such movies will be taken in accordance with the activation of a law enacted on 13 April, designating the broadcasting of motion pictures via telecommunications networks as an essential service. According to this law, individuals found guilty of violating such orders under Section 5 of the Law on Essential Goods and Services could face imprisonment ranging from



Office of Ministry of Information.

six months to three years and a fine not exceeding K 500,000.

Moreover, these online broadcasts have facilitated the

proliferation of online gambling and sexual services, which pose risks to the moral development of young people and undermine societal values.

Additionally, the inability to issue official certification to regulate and supervise these broadcasts deprives the country of its regulatory authority.

It has also been highlighted that the directives cover the use of communication networks, establishment of movie theatres, launching of film applications, and broadcasting or screening movies through communication networks. — TWA/ TRKM

Potato price uptrends while garlic price fluctuates in Yangon market

IN the Yangon market in last week of March, Shan potato prices return falling. On 31 March, Shan potato A1 was priced at K1,800 per viss; OK and S1 was K2,000; and S2 K1,500.

On 23 March, Shan potato A1 was priced at K1,200 per viss; OK and S1 K1,500 while S2 K1,200. On 1 March, Shan potato A1-OK and S1 were priced at K2,400 per viss; S2 K2,100 and S3 K1,900.

According to the market information, since there isn't Chinese potato arriving in the market, price of it has not been shown in the daily reference price rate since 27 February 2024 although price of Chinese potato has skyrocketed up to K4,200 per viss on 15 November 2023.



Potatoes and garlics were seen at a wholesale shop.

Potatoes need thorough storage system especially in the summer.

Garlic prices were surged with a break record at K17,000 per viss in the wholesale mar-

ket.

However, new Shan garlics have arrived in Yangon mar-

ket and the wholesale prices were downward trending to K5,500-K6,000-K6,500-K6,500 in the last week of March. On 28 March, the price of it returned increasing to K8,000-K8,500-K8,700-K8,700.

On 30 March, it dropped back to K7,500-K8,000-K8,300-K8,300. Kyukok garlic price turning surged back to K10,300-K10,500 per viss on 25 March whereas it was K9,500-K9,700 on 22 and 23 March. Again on 30 March, it declined to K9,800.

Therefore, the market information reports that kitchen commodities such as rice, chilli and onion prices were decreasing though potato and garlic prices were fluctuating. — TWA/TMT

Loans to be provided for MSMEs manufacturing value-added products

A total of eight types of MSME businesses, including value-added product manufacturing firms located in regions, states, and the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, will be provided with loans, according to regional MSME development agencies.

As stipulated in Section 20 (c) of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Law, the government has allocated loans through MSME development fund, enabling MSME businesses to access financing at low interest rates.

The maximum loan amounts for businesses are set as K10 million for microbusiness, K50 million for small-scale business, and



Female workers seen in work process of an MSME industry.

K100 million for medium-sized business.

MSME entrepreneurs seeking loans can submit applications through the MSME development agency's branch offices located in regions, states, Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory, as well as

Self-Administered Division and Zones.

Myanmar Economic Bank will commence lending for the convenience of loan applicants, with arrangements being made for other private banks to participate in the lending process. — TWA/TH



The sugar production at a sugar mill

Sugar price slightly increases this month

SUGAR price has slightly increased this month and it is still hard to say exactly, according to the market.

As Thingyan is approaching, the sugar price has climbed up by some hundreds of kyats and transportation difficulty is one of the factors for the price rise.

"Sugar price has also risen. It is hard to say exactly about the price because it differs among shops. Retail price has recently increased to K4,700 a viss, up from around K4,500 in early the month. Price of sugar and jaggery will rise when Thingyan

is drawing near," said Ko Nan Phya, a teashop owner from Shwepyitha township.

Although the price has been high now, it is expected to fall back after Thingyan, he said.

Myanmar exports sugar to Viet Nam mainly and offers from ASEAN countries including India, Bangladesh and Indonesia for purchase have been received. Total nationwide plantation of sugarcane is more than 430,000 acres and it is mainly grown in northern and southern Shan State, Sagaing Region and Bago Region. — Thit Taw/ZS

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.

OPINION

Seek the best way for fostering durable peace

The pursuit of lasting peace is a paramount goal for the people of Myanmar today. Achieving internal peace that endures requires concerted efforts from all parties involved. It is widely understood that nationwide peace can only be achieved when all stakeholders commit to laying down their arms and ammunition, thus embracing the peace process as a whole.

Individuals who seek to incite conflict often do so out of self-interest or irrationality, serving only to destabilize the nation and hinder progress. These individuals, whether driven by personal gain or ideological fervour, do not serve the greater good or national interests. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize the establishment of durable peace across the entire nation and to root out those who persistently undermine peace efforts and the nation's tranquillity.

Myanmar has witnessed the emergence of various armed groups over time, each citing different reasons rooted in the protection of sovereignty and independence. However, the legacy of neo-colonialism has perpetuated armed conflicts, both internally and through external instigations. The decision to resort to armed struggle as a solution to diverse problems only exacerbates the nation's plight, prolonging internal conflicts for over seven decades.

Those advocating for armed struggle must reckon with the dire consequences it inflicts, particularly on the lives of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who flee conflict zones. This year, in particular, has exacerbated the plight of IDPs, with ongoing fighting compounded by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and other unforeseen circumstances. The lack of access to education, healthcare, food, and security compounds the suffering endured by IDPs.

While some may take peace for granted, those living in constant fear of violence and instability yearn for its realization more than ever. Peace processes must extend beyond mere rhetoric and translate into tangible improvements in people's lives. Even as those who enjoy socioeconomic privilege may fail to grasp the entire significance of peace, the citizens who endure the constant threat of explosions and firearms harbour unprecedented aspirations for the restoration of enduring peace.

That is why forging lasting peace in Myanmar requires a collective commitment to laying down arms, addressing the root causes of conflict, and prioritizing the well-being of all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable. Only through genuine reconciliation and sustained efforts can Myanmar overcome the legacy of conflict and embrace a future defined by peace and prosperity for all.

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A Valuable Lesson from a Modest Sum

By Min Zan

In the corridors of memory, there exists a tale from my Grade II days that unfolds a series of events peppered with innocence, curiosity, and an unexpected life lesson. This narrative, rooted in the seemingly mundane yet profound, revolves around a simple one-kyat note and the impact it left on my sister and me. As we delve into the story, we will explore the dynamics of childhood desires, parental concerns, and the enduring wisdom hidden within seemingly trivial experiences.

In those early years of schooling, my sister and I were accustomed to our mother's unwavering dedication to our well-being. Pocket money was a luxury we were not granted, as our mother meticulously prepared our snacks—bananas, biscuits, dry cake, groundnut brittle, sesame brittle, and bottles of water. Our school bags, thus, became repositories of health-conscious provisions, eliminating the need to succumb to the allure of the school's snack stalls during recess.

However, as children often do, my sister and I yearned for a taste of autonomy, a chance to make our own choices and embrace the thrill of decision-making. Our disdain for the snacks our mother provided was not a reflection of their taste but rather a manifestation of our desire to break free from the routine. The solution to our craving for independence came in the form of pocket money—specifically, a one-kyat note each.

In today's digital age, the worth of a one-kyat note might be lost on the younger generation, but for us, it represented a ticket to newfound freedom and a window into the world of possibilities that the school's snack stalls held. Acquiring this currency, however, was no easy feat. It required enduring our mother's lengthy lectures, peppered with admonitions about choosing wisely, avoiding and dyed foods, and steering clear of anything that flies might rest on. Little did we comprehend the gravity of her warnings about diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis, and jaundice.



The one-kyat note lesson reveals the transformative power of ordinary experiences. It reminds us that wisdom can come from unexpected sources.

Armed with our hard-earned one-kyat notes, we embarked on a journey to the snack stalls, with our sights set on the most crowded one—the domain of 'Mummy Than.' Despite the incongruity of the name, Mummy Than was a tall, dainty, and enchanting man—the proprietor of the most sought-after stall in the school. His shop boasted an array of tempting treats, from packs of plum jam and damson to Bouea burmanica, mango, sweet lime, toffee, candy, and other delectable delights.

Standing in front of Mummy Than's bustling stall, our eyes danced over the tantalizing display, undecided on which treat to choose. The dilemma of making our first independent snack selection left us feeling both excited and bewildered. Eventually, we made our choices, paid Mummy Than with great composure, and left the shop with content smiles, unaware of the unforeseen turn of events awaiting us.

As fate would have it, our elation was short-lived. A stern voice called out to us, accusing us of

attempting to evade payment for our chosen snacks. It was Mummy Than himself, and we found ourselves at the receiving end of his wrath. Despite our earnest attempts to explain that we had indeed paid, Mummy Than vehemently rejected our claim, brandishing the very one-kyat note we thought we had handed over.

In a stern tone, he admonished us, likening us to "knobbed sticks" and warning of consequences if such an incident recurred. Feeling a mix of shame, embarrassment, and nervousness, we retreated from the snack stalls to seek solace beneath a banyan tree beside the school's football ground. There, we cried and consoled each other, vowing to keep the incident hidden from our mother.

The passage of time brought with it unexpected twists, and twenty-five years later, life presented me with an intriguing twist of fate. While on night duty in a hospital, an emergency patient arrived in my ward, and to my surprise, it was none other than Mummy Than himself—the

same enchanting figure from our childhood, now marked by grey hair and a thinner frame.

As I attended to him, a poignant realization dawned upon me. The one-kyat note incident, once a source of embarrassment, had transformed into a valuable life lesson. Mummy Than, in his own way, had imparted wisdom that resonated through the years. His seemingly harsh words and accusations had instilled in us a sense of scepticism, a reminder not to believe anyone blindly until the evidence was in hand.

The one-kyat note, a seemingly insignificant sum, had become an investment in a lesson that transcended monetary value. It taught us the importance of discernment, the need to question, and the value of self-reliance. In retrospect, Mummy Than's actions were not unjust; rather, they were a catalyst for a deeper understanding of life's complexities.

Reflecting back on that bitter experience from Grade II, I can't help but think about how Mom, in her caring way, never gave us pocket money for school

snacks. She carefully packed our bags with bananas, biscuits, dry cake, groundnut brittle, or sesame brittle, ensuring we had a healthy snack. However, as children, we longed for the thrill of buying snacks ourselves from the school stalls, dismissing Mom's offerings as too plain. Little did we understand the importance of her concerns about our health.

When, after persistent requests, we finally received one-kyat note each as pocket money, it felt like a treasure. Back then, we didn't fully grasp the value of the currency, and Mom's lectures about avoiding certain foods for health reasons seemed like distant tales. The recess hour became an exciting time, marching towards the snack stalls with our precious one-kyat notes, ready to make our own choices.

The encounter with Mummy Than, the shop owner, marked a turning point. In our inexperienced attempt to buy snacks independently, we faced an embarrassing situation. Mummy Than accused us of not paying, and though we showed him the

one-kyat note, he insisted otherwise. The embarrassment and scolding left us shy and nervous, seeking solace under a banyan tree where we made a pact to keep it a secret from Mom.

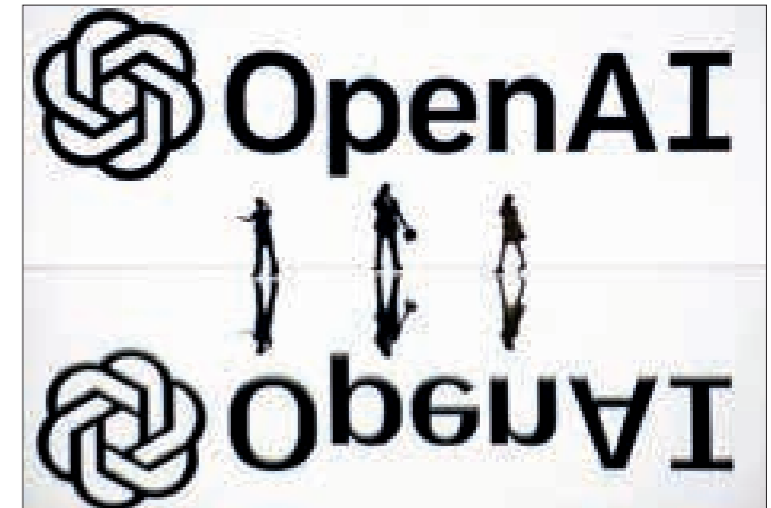
Twenty-five years later, as fate would have it, Mummy Than turned out to be an emergency patient in the hospital where I was on night duty. His grey hair and thinner figure made me recall that one-kyat incident. Surprisingly, I found a valuable lesson in that bitter memory. Mummy Than, in his own way, had taught us a practical lesson about trust and believing in actions rather than words. It made me realize the worth of that one-kyat lesson, an invaluable investment in shaping our approach towards life.

While the experience was bitter at the time, it served as a lifelong lesson, guiding us not to trust blindly and emphasizing the importance of practical experiences over mere words. The seemingly insignificant one-kyat note turned out to be a priceless investment in shaping our perspective on trust and actions.

In addition, the one-kyat note lesson stands as a testament to the transformative power hidden within seemingly ordinary experiences. It serves as a reminder that wisdom can emerge from unexpected sources, and the value of a lesson transcends the apparent triviality of its origins. As we navigate the complexities of life, may we carry with us the echoes of our one-kyat note lesson—a journey through innocence, mistakes, and the profound wisdom that weaves its way through the tapestry of our lives.

The lesson learned from that was that a minimal amount of money extended far beyond the confines of snack stalls and childhood follies. It became a guiding principle, urging us to approach life with measured scepticism, to question assumptions, and to withhold trust until actions spoke louder than words. The experience, initially a small snag in our journey, had laid the foundation for navigating the larger snags that awaited us as we ascended the ladder of life experience.

The encounter with Mummy Than, the shop owner, marked a turning point. In our inexperienced attempt to buy snacks independently, we faced an embarrassing situation. Mummy Than accused us of not paying, and though we showed him the



Safety measures implemented by OpenAI for Voice Engine include watermarking to trace audio origin and proactive monitoring to prevent misuse. PHOTO: AFP

OpenAI unveils voice-cloning tool

This development underscores the importance of addressing concerns related to the proliferation of synthetic voice technology.

OpenAI says ways to verify people consented to having their voices imitated by artificial intelligence and to automatically detect audio deep fakes involving prominent people should be built in widely deployed 'synthetic voice' tools / © AFP

OpenAI on Friday revealed a voice-cloning tool it plans to keep tightly controlled until safeguards are in place to thwart audio fakes meant to dupe listeners.

"Voice Engine"

A model called "Voice Engine" can essentially duplicate someone's speech based on a 15-second audio sample, according to an OpenAI blog post sharing results of a small-scale test of the tool.

"We recognize that generating speech that resembles people's voices has serious risks, which are especially top of mind in an election year," the San Francisco-based company said. "We are engaging with US and international partners from across government, media, entertainment, education, civil society and beyond to ensure we are incorporating their feedback as we build."

Disinformation researchers fear rampant misuse of AI-powered applications in a pivotal election year thanks to proliferating voice cloning tools, which are cheap, easy to use and hard to trace.

Acknowledging these problems, OpenAI said it was "taking a cautious and informed approach to a broader release due to the potential for synthetic voice misuse". The cautious unveiling came a few months after a political consultant working for the long-shot presidential campaign of a Democratic rival to Joe Biden admitted being behind a robocall impersonating the US leader.

AI-generated call

The AI-generated call, the brainchild of an operative for Minnesota congressman Dean Phillips, featured what sounded like Biden's voice urging people not to cast ballots in January's New Hampshire primary.

The incident caused alarm among experts who fear a deluge of AI-powered deepfake disinformation in the 2024 White House race as well as in other key elections around the globe this year.

OpenAI said that partners testing Voice Engine agreed to rules including requiring explicit and informed consent of any person whose voice is duplicated using the tool. It must also be made clear to audiences when voices they are hearing are AI generated, the company added. SOURCE: AFP

SCI/ENVIRON: WORLD

Dubai Municipality issues guidance for businesses on single use plastics ban

The resolution aims to reduce plastic waste and promote recycling to protect the environment.

DUBAI Municipality (DM) has published additional guidance for businesses on the single use plastics ban that was issued in January following a resolution by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council.

The resolution was introduced to protect the environment by minimising plastic waste through changing consumer habits and fostering a

culture of recycling among businesses and the community.

Dubai Municipality published an awareness guide for the initiative under its #DubaiMoreSustainable campaign, which was launched at COP28. The guide has now been expanded with more information and an FAQ to help people and businesses adhere to the new rules.

It is aimed at individuals, public sector entities, private businesses, corporations, and institutions, promoting everyday



Due to their widespread use and contribution to pollution, single-use plastics have become a significant environmental concern. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/AFP**

sustainable practices in work and at home in line with Dubai Municipality's efforts to advance

quality of life and sustainability. The move not only helps safeguard the environment but

also supports the development of a circular economy, sustainable development, and the preservation of natural resources for future generations.

Mohammed Alrayees, Head of Waste Strategy and Projects Department at Dubai Municipality, said, "Dubai Municipality is committed to transforming Dubai into a leading and sustainable global city. This comprehensive guide has been launched to answer questions on single use plastics and green alternatives in line with our support for all individuals, businesses and institutions to adopt sustainable practices". — ANI

Climate change is slowing heat waves, prolonging misery

Researchers found that heat waves have slowed down by an average of five miles (eight kilometres) an hour per day between 1979 and 2020, exacerbating the impact on communities.



A photograph shows the parched river bed of the Gardon near the Saint-Nicolas de Campagnac bridge in Saint-Anastasie, southern France, after a heat wave hit in June 2022. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

CLIMATE change is causing heat waves to slow to a crawl, exposing humans to extreme temperatures for longer than ever before, a study published in *Science Advances* said Friday.

While previous research has found climate change is causing heat waves to become longer, more frequent and more intense, the new paper differed by treating heat waves as distinct weather patterns that move along air currents, just

as storms do.

For every decade between 1979 to 2020, researchers found heat waves slowed down by an average of five miles (eight kilometers) an hour per day.

"If a heatwave is moving slower, that means heat can stay in a region longer, so that has effects on communities," senior author Wei Zhang of Utah State University told AFP.

The researchers divided the world into three dimensional-grid cells and defined

heat waves as a million square kilometre zones where temperatures reached at least the 95th percentile of the local historical maximum temperature.

They then measured their movement over time in order to determine how fast the hot air was moving.

They also used climate models to determine what the results would have looked like absent human-caused climate change, and found manmade factors loomed large. — AFP

US finalizes new heavy-vehicle pollution standards

FOLLOWING last week's crack-down on car emissions, President Joe Biden's administration on Friday unveiled finalized pollution standards for trucks, placing vehicle tailpipes at the forefront of his climate crisis agenda.

The new rules announced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will apply to vehicles including freight trucks, school buses and waste haulers built between 2027 and 2032, and will prevent around a billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere.

Heavy goods vehicles account for 25 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in the US transport sector, which itself is the main source of emissions in the country, according to the

EPA.

The finalized regulations are the "strongest national greenhouse gas standards for heavy-duty vehicles in history," EPA chief Michael Regan said.

Under the measures, vehicle manufacturers will have the flexibility to choose which set of emission control technologies they want to use, with options including hybrid and electric engines.

Regan said heavy-duty vehicles are essential for "keeping our economy moving" but represent "significant contributors to pollution from the transportation sector; emissions that are fueling climate change and creating poor air quality in too many American communities". — AFP



Heavy goods vehicles account for 25 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in the US transport sector, which itself is the main source of emissions in the country, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). **PHOTO: AFP**

Imported films shine in typically slow March box office

“The Pig, the Snake and the Pigeon,” directed by Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Ching-po, opened on 1 March and grossed 600 million yuan (about 84.57 million US dollars), topping March’s box office chart.

IN the Chinese mainland film market, March is usually considered an “off-peak season” for box office revenue, with no major holidays and fewer local blockbuster releases.

However, this year’s March proved to be anything but lackluster, as several imported films seized the market opportunity with strong word-of-mouth, achieving impressive grosses and showcasing the market’s

inclusivity and vitality.

Directed by Hong Kong helmer Wong Ching-po, Taiwan movie “The Pig, the Snake and the Pigeon” opened on March 1, grossing a whopping 600-million-yuan (about 84.57 million US dollars) to top March’s box office chart, according to film data platform Maoyan.

It stars Ethan Juan as an ambitious criminal, who, upon discovering he is only Taiwan’s



French director Justine Triet poses with the trophy during a photocall after she won the Palme d’Or for the film “Anatomie d’une Chute” (Anatomy of a Fall) during the closing ceremony of the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France on 27 May 2023. PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ GAO JING/XINHUA

third-most-wanted fugitive, embarks on a quest to overtake the top two. Released a week later

on 8 March, Denis Villeneuve’s sci-fi epic “Dune: Part Two” has raked in 320 million yuan for sec-

ond place.

Both films boast strong audience scores of 8.1 and 8.3 on review site Douban.

In a rare feat for a low-budget import, “Pig” saw its March 8 single-day gross surpass the “Dune: Part Two’s” debut numbers and has since maintained a daily lead over the highly anticipated “Dune” sequel, stunning analysts.

“Chinese mainland audiences will embrace any film, big or small, local or imported, as long as the story connects,” says Dong Wenxin, a film industry observer and theater manager, offering a unique perspective on the result. “It’s an opportunity-rich market.” — Xinhua

Ethiopia’s internet users surpass 41 mln

THE number of internet users in Ethiopia has surpassed 41 million amid a rapidly growing number of mobile service subscribers, the country’s state-run telecom firm has said.

Ethio-Telecom’s Chief Executive Officer Frehiwot Tamiru while addressing a meeting Tuesday on the performance of the Ethiopian government’s digitization initiative, called Digital Ethiopia 2025, said the share of Ethiopians using the internet has shown steady growth, the Ethiopian News Agency reported.

The number of internet users in Ethiopia, which was 17 million in 2018, has now reached 41 million, she said, adding that the number of mobile service subscribers in the East African country has reached 85 million.

In October 2022, Safaricom

Telecommunications Ethiopia Private Limited Company, Ethiopia’s first private telecom firm, launched its mobile telecommunications network and services in the country, making it the second telecom service provider in the country alongside Ethio-Telecom.

Tamiru said the two telecom service providers in Ethiopia have created a network capacity that can handle more than 96 million, given Ethiopia’s population is about 120 million.

As part of its ambition to provide modern telecom services to its users, Ethio-Telecom has been partnering with Chinese technology companies, mainly Huawei and ZTE, to realize its 4G and 5G LTE telecom services and expand high-tech telecom facilities across the country. — Xinhua



Frehiwot Tamiru, chief executive officer (CEO) of Ethio-Telecom, speaks during the launching ceremony of its upgraded mobile money platform TeleBirr in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 23 March 2023. PHOTO: MICHAEL TEWELDE/XINHUA

Germany’s legal weed sparks calls to protect young people



Germany is planning to set up regulated cannabis cultivation associations to enable people to obtain the drug legally. PHOTO: JOHN MACDOUGALL / AFP

Germany is set to legalize marijuana for adults over 18 starting 1 April, under one of Europe’s most liberal drug laws.

SMOKING weed will soon be legal for over-18s in Germany, but addiction experts are calling for more prevention efforts to ensure young people are protected from the dangers of cannabis use.

Under one of the most liberal drug laws in Europe, adults in Germany will from 1 April be allowed to carry up to 25 grammes of dried cannabis on them and cultivate up to three marijuana plants at home.

“From our point of view, the law as it is written is a disaster,” Katja Seidel, a therapist at a

drug addiction centre in Berlin, told AFP.

“Access to the product will be easier, its image will change and become more normalised, especially among young people,” Seidel said, adding that she expects to see an increase in cannabis use “at least initially”.

The government says decriminalising weed will hit the black market and reduce the spread of contaminated cannabis.

Health Minister Karl Lauterbach, a physician himself, acknowledges cannabis can be

“dangerous” especially for people under the age of 25 whose brains are still developing.

Medical experts say cannabis use among young people can affect the development of the central nervous system, leading to an increased risk of developing psychosis and schizophrenia. Lauterbach has promised a major campaign to educate youngsters about the health risks and boost prevention programmes, but it remains unclear how much money the government plans to spend and how effective it will be. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

China to build first-class business environment: top legislator

China will maintain its commitment to development through opening up, progressively widening its doors.



Aerial photo taken on 19 April 2017 shows the pilot free trade zone in Wuhan City, capital of central China's Hubei Province. **PHOTO: XIONG QI/XINHUA**

CHINA'S top legislator Zhao Leji said Thursday that China will proactively dock with high-standard international economic and trade rules and build a market-oriented, law-based and internationalized first-class business environment.

Zhao, chairman of the

National People's Congress Standing Committee, made the remarks in a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024.

China will stick to development by opening up, with its doors to be open wider and wider, Zhao said, adding that the

country will continue to shorten its negative list for foreign investment and remove all restrictions on foreign investment access in the manufacturing sector.

China also will make it more convenient for foreigners to work, study and travel in the country, Zhao said. — Xinhua

Brazil's G20 meeting spotlights Indian presidency commitments

THE second day of the G20 Employment Working Group (EWG) meeting held under the Brazilian presidency in the city of Brasilia began with a special session dedicated to the follow-up of implementation of commitments made during India's G20 presidency to develop an international reference classification of occupations and skills, according to an official statement from the Union Labour and Employment Ministry.

In the meeting, the Indian delegation highlighted the need for G20 countries to work towards the G20 EWG commitment of the Indian Presidency in 2023 for the incorporation of basic and extended indicators in respective national surveys for mapping global skills gaps. This



A G20 Brazil banner is displayed at the Rio de Janeiro city hall building in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 15 February 2024. **PHOTO: AFP**

classification of occupations and skills has the potential to benefit developed, developing and least developed nations alike.

The Secretary, Labour and Employment, Sumita Dawra, highlighted that the first step towards realization of the long awaited global skill harmonisa-

tion has been taken with ILO and OECD having prepared the draft terms of reference (ToR) of the feasibility study for international reference classification. The feasibility study, spanning two years, will include a pilot in select sectors, including IT, care and green sectors. — ANI

MF approves \$820 mn as part of Egypt bailout

THE International Monetary Fund announced on Friday the immediate disbursement of \$820 million to the Egyptian government, part of an augmented plan to aid the nation's stumbling economy.

The IMF's Executive Board validated the payment as part of a \$3 billion aid programme granted at the end of 2022.

The IMF action, repeatedly postponed and eagerly awaited by the Egyptian government, arrives at a time of mounting difficulties for its economy.

The Board also approved a \$5 billion extension announced at the beginning of the month, bringing the Fund's total lending to Egypt to \$8 billion.

In a news release, the IMF said that the Egyptian government has achieved all the objectives set out in the first two

stages of the aid program, with the exception of the level of its foreign currency reserves.

"The authorities have significantly strengthened the reform package," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in the release.

"Recent measures toward correcting macroeconomic imbalances, including unification of the exchange rate... and significant tightening of monetary and fiscal policies, were difficult, but critical steps forward," she added. Earlier this month, Egypt's central bank raised rates by six percentage points to 27.75 per cent to combat inflation and bring the official exchange rate closer to the black market rate, causing the Egyptian pound to plunge 40 per cent in one day, following a 50-per-cent fall over the last few months. — AFP

Iraq to import electricity from Jordan

IRAQ said Friday a power line would soon bring electricity from Jordan to the border area as authorities aim to diversify energy sources to ease the country's chronic outages.

With its generating capacity ravaged by decades of conflict and underinvestment, Iraq has long relied on imports of both gas and electricity from neighbouring Iran.

The 340-kilometre (210-mile) power line from Jordan will officially start operating on Saturday, the electricity ministry said in a statement.

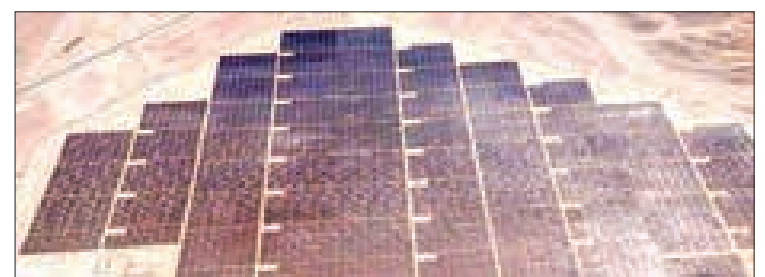
In a first phase, it will provide 40 megawatts (MW) of power to the Al-Rutbah area near the border. Its capacity will then be boosted to 150 MW and finally

500 MW to cover "several large parts" of Anbar province, west of the capital Baghdad.

Despite its vast oil reserves, Iraq suffers rolling power cuts that can last up to 10 hours a day, forcing those households that can afford it to subscribe to neighbourhood generators as a back-up.

Iraq's imports from Iran are carefully monitored by the United States to make sure they do not breach US sanctions on Tehran, which regularly cuts supply to punish non-payment.

Power outages are particularly severe in the summer when temperatures regularly hit 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) and demand for refrigeration and air-conditioning surges. — AFP



The Shams Ma'an solar plant, which was engineered and constructed by First Solar, is an important component in Jordan's strategic diversification of its generation portfolio. **PHOTO: IMAGE USED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSE/ MAJDI ABU LEBBEH/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS**



Advanced lithography machines at the heart of semiconductor manufacturing, intricately etching patterns onto silicon wafers. Pictured: A visitor explores innovations at Shanghai's Semiconductor Expo in September, 2019. **PHOTO: FANG ZHE/ZUMA PRESS/INSTAGRAM**

China hopes Netherlands will ensure normal trade of lithography machines: minister

CHINA hopes the Netherlands will ensure normal trade of lithography machines, Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao has said.

Wang made the remarks on Wednesday when meeting with visiting Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Geoffrey van Leeuwen. Wang and

Van Leeuwen had an in-depth exchange of views on the export of lithography machines and ways to strengthen cooperation in the semiconductor industry.

China regards the Netherlands as a reliable economic and trade partner, and hopes that the Netherlands will uphold the spirit of contract,

support enterprises in fulfilling their contractual obligations and ensure normal trade of lithography machines, Wang said.

He called for efforts to maintain the stable global semiconductor industrial chain and supply chain, and promote the sustained and healthy development of bilateral economic and trade relations. — Xinhua

Record 63% of Japanese in financial stress, poll shows

A record 63.2 per cent of respondents said they do not feel financially secure in Japan and have a negative outlook on their future, a recent government survey showed.

The proportion of people who experienced financial stress in 2023 rose 0.7 percentage point from a year earlier against the backdrop of surging prices, according to the Cabinet Office poll.

The result was the worst since the question on reasons for being dissatisfied was added in

2008 to the survey which takes the public pulse on economic and social attitudes.

The latest poll was mailed to 3,000 people aged 18 or older, with valid responses being returned from 57.1 per cent.

Those who cited difficulties in child-rearing stood at 28.6 per cent, followed by 28.2 per cent saying it is hard for young people to be independent, according to the survey conducted between November and December. — Kyodo

Kenya tourist revenue climbs above pre-Covid levels

REVENUE from tourism in Kenya jumped nearly a third in 2023 over the previous year beating the pre-pandemic numbers, according to the tourism ministry.

Kenya has been a major tourist destination in East Africa traditionally attracting visitors from across the world to its wildlife parks and Indian Ocean beaches.

A ministry report seen by AFP on Sunday said revenue rose 31.5 per cent last year to hit 352.5 billion shillings (nearly

\$2.7 billion).

But per capita spending in dollar terms by the 1.95 million visitors fell.

"Despite the increase in the number of visitors in 2023 as compared to 2022, the average per capita expenditure in US dollars decreased signif-

icantly," the report said.

"This is partly attributed to the sustained depreciation of the Kenya shilling against the major currencies."

Before the coronavirus pandemic, tourism brought in about \$2.24 billion in 2019 from two

million visitors, or about 10 per cent of GDP.

Americans accounted for the largest number of 2023 arrivals at 265,310, followed by Ugandans (201,623), Tanzanians (157,818) and 156,700 from the United Kingdom. — AFP



Kenya has been a major tourist destination in traditionally attracting visitors from across the world to its wildlife parks. **PHOTO: AFP**

Baltimore bridge highlights role of migrants in US workforce

THE death of six Latino workers who were fixing potholes when a Baltimore bridge collapsed highlights the crucial role immigrants play in keeping America running, say advocates.

And it stands in stark contrast to the rhetoric of populists like Donald Trump, who cast them as criminal invaders ruining the country. "Mi-

grants come and do the jobs that Americans don't want to do," said Luis Vega, an activist and former construction worker. The work is too hard, the hours are too long, or the conditions too difficult.

"Who here wants to clean hotel rooms? Who wants to work under the hot sun? Who wants to be in the fields?" said Vega.

A team of eight men



The six men who died in the Baltimore bridge disaster were all migrants. **PHOTO: AFP**

were doing road maintenance overnight Monday into Tuesday on the Francis Scott Key Bridge when a huge container

ship smashed into a support pillar, sending almost the entire span crashing into the Patapsco River. — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V TORRES STRAIT VOY.NO. (411W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V TORRES STRAIT VOY.NO. (411W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **1-4-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 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.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE., LTD.

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

China's internet audio, video convention focuses on new technologies



A visitor learns about a VR device during an exhibition of the 11th China Internet Audio and Video Convention in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province, 28 March 2024. **PHOTO: TANG WENHAO/XINHUA**

THE 11th China Internet Audio and Video Convention, demonstrating a series of cutting-edge technologies, opened on Thurs-

They emphasized the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, particularly in creating AI-generated content (AIGC) short videos with aesthetic, social, and emotional values.

day in Chengdu, capital of southwest China's Sichuan Province.

Focusing on innovation and industrial upgrades, the three-day event has attracted participating enterprises to display their technologies in 5G+8K, 3D, cloud gaming and other sectors.

As one of the new quality productive forces, intelligent internet audio and video has empowered economic growth, promoting the building of cul-

tural power and serving Chinese modernization, Hu Zhengrong, head of the Institute of Journalism & Communication, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said at the opening ceremony.

Shen Yang, a professor at Tsinghua University, said the development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has brought people into a stage of "producing high knowledge with zero knowledge", and the

AI-generated content (AIGC) short videos are bringing aesthetic values, social values, and emotional values to people.

Shen said there will be more and more AIGC videos in the future, and AI assistants will become new partners for humans to transform the world.

This event was co-hosted by China's National Radio and Television Administration and the Sichuan provincial government. — Xinhua

Saharan dust smothers Switzerland, southeast France

AN exceptionally rare haze of Saharan dust cloaked Switzerland and southeastern France on Saturday, sparking health warnings as a yellow hue tinged the sky.

The phenomenon, which began in Switzerland on Friday, brings with it "a very clear worsening of sunlight and visibility. Added to that is an increase in concentrations of fine particles", the MeteoSuisse weather service posted on X.

With the dust concentrated at lower than 3,000 metres (around 9,800 feet), air quality was especially affected, with Switzerland's airCHECK monitoring application flagging high levels of pollution in a corridor stretching from the southwest to the northeast. Calculations

estimate that the amount of dust reached around 180,000 tonnes, double the levels recorded during recent similar events, SRF Meteo forecaster Roman Brogli told public radio.

In neighbouring France, local authorities in the southeast and south announced that the air pollution threshold was breached on Saturday, with the Hérault department asking residents to avoid intense physical effort, particularly those with heart or respiratory problems.

The Sahara desert releases 60 to 200 million tonnes of mineral dust per year. While the largest particles come rapidly back down to earth, the smallest can travel thousands of kilometres. — AFP



This photograph taken on 30 March, 2024, shows thick sand dust blown in from the Sahara giving the sky a yellowish appearance above the vineyard terraces of Lavaux, on the banks of Lake Geneva, near Chexbres western Switzerland. **PHOTO: FABRICE COFFRINI / AFP**

President of Peru slams raids in luxury watch investigation

Television footage captured agents breaking down the door of Boluarte's home, adding drama to the unfolding case.

PERUVIAN President Dina Boluarte slammed raids on her home and office Saturday after authorities carried out overnight searches in a corruption probe centred on Rolex watches she has been wearing publicly.

Television footage showed agents with a metal bar breaking down the door of Boluarte's home in a dramatic twist to a case that erupted several weeks ago amid questions over whether she has enriched herself illegally while serving in the government.

The very unpopular Boluarte, in power since December 2022, has not explained how she got the watches, saying only that were the fruit of hard work.

"The measure taken early



Peruvian President Dina Boluarte is facing a corruption probe after a news outlet questioned how she acquired her luxury watches. **PHOTO: PRESIDENCIA DEL PERU/AFP/FILE**

this morning is arbitrary, disproportionate and abusive," a defiant Boluarte, who was at the presidential palace as agents raided her home, said in an address to the nation.

A lawyer for Boluarte said police found watches in her office at the government palace.

"They did not take them away. They were noted and photographed. There were around 10, and among them were some nice ones but I cannot say if they were Rolex," attorney Mateo Castaneda told

radio station RPP.

Boluarte has said she will not address the issue publicly until she has given a sworn statement to prosecutors on 5 April.

Authorities launched an investigation this month after news programme La Encerrona drew attention to pictures of Boluarte sporting luxury watches at public events while serving as vice president under then-president Pedro Castillo and as development minister in 2021. — AFP

SPORTS

Myanmar beat Afghanistan 4-2 in friendly Futsal match

MYANMAR futsal team beat Afghanistan counterpart 4-2 in the internationally friendly match played at Thuwunna National Indoor Stadium-1 in Yangon yesterday.

The Myanmar team was defeated 1-6 in the first friendly match but managed to regain victory this match.

The Myanmar team played better than the first game and scored consecutive goals. My-

anmar's Aung Zin Oo and Myo Myint Soe scored the first and second goals, but the Afghanistan team equalized and tied with two goals each.

Next, Myanmar's Myo The Aung scored further two goals that will ensure the victory. Both teams also played first friendly match on 30 March and team Myanmar faced 1-6 loss to Afghanistan after the match. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL



Myanmar futsal player (white) vies for the ball with Afghanistan players (red) during their second internationally friendly match played at Thuwunna National Indoor Stadium-1 in Yangon on 31 March 2024. **PHOTO: MFF**



The youth Karate fighters are competing in IKO Kids and Youths Karate Tournament 2024 held in Yangon on 31 March 2024. **PHOTO: BALA SOE**

IKO Kids and Youths Karate Tournament 2024 kicks off in Yangon

THE IKO Kids and Youths Tournament Karate 2024 supervised by the International Karate Organization Myanmar took place yesterday morning at the Myanmar Disabled Sports Federation in Yangon.

"The playing techniques are better than before. The rules of the competition have also changed. The competitor can't just punch. In defence, they have to block. They have to dodge. They also have to play back with counterattacks. All the techniques are included in the scoring rules.

"In the past, the contestants only punched each other with their fists. In the previous competitions, the players did not block if the opponent kicked

them or if they were punched. The player who competes in the old techniques will lose points. Since the state and regional competitions will be held in May, this Yangon competition is a preparation," said U Min Lwin, in-charge of the International Karate Organization Myanmar.

Players aged from nine to 17-year-old competed in the tournament in 35 Kg, 40 Kg, 50 Kg, 60 Kg and 80 Kg weight classes. A total of 145 players (boys and girls) and 13 Karate clubs in Yangon Region joined the tourney. In addition, the IKO karate competition, which will be contested by various states and regions, is planned to be held in May. — Bala Soe/KZL

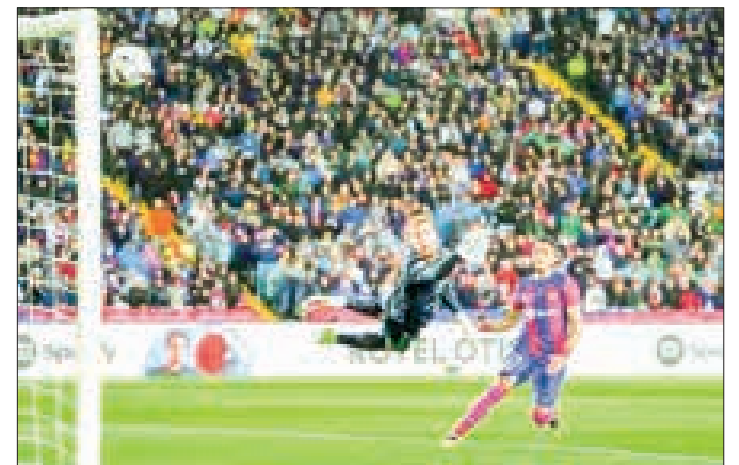
Raphinha guides Barca past Las Palmas to pressure leaders Madrid

SPANISH champions Barcelona cut the gap on Real Madrid at the top of La Liga to five points with a 1-0 win over 10-man Las Palmas on Saturday.

Raphinha headed home in the second half to clinch Barcelona's victory after the visitors had goalkeeper Alvaro Valles dismissed after 24 minutes for a rash foul.

Barcelona warmed up for their Champions League quarter-final clash against Paris Saint-Germain, their next match in 11 days' time, with a straightforward victory, albeit by a tight scoreline.

Xavi Hernandez's side are unbeaten in 11 games since the coach said he would leave at



Barcelona's Brazilian forward Raphinha heads home past Las Palmas goalkeeper Aaron Escandell. **PHOTO: AFP**

the end of the season and their recent form has given them some faint hope of retaining their title.

"We could have scored

more, we had many chances to kill the game off," said Xavi.

"It's a summary of our season, we're finding it hard to close out matches." — AFP

Suarez on target but Miami held; Cincinnati draw

LUIS Suarez bagged his fifth goal of the season as Inter Miami were held to a 1-1 draw against New York City FC in Major League Soccer on Saturday.

Former Barcelona and Liverpool star Suarez glanced in a Julian Gressel free kick in the 15th minute to fire Miami into the lead at the Chase Stadium in Fort Lauderdale.

But Miami's hopes of secur-

ing all three points were thwarted by a dogged New York performance, which got its reward when Costa Rica international Alonso Martinez equalised on 34 minutes.

Miami, thrashed 4-0 against New York Red Bulls in their last outing, created a string of clear chances after the City leveller, but were frustrated by a superb performance from goalkeeper Matthew Freese. — AFP



Luis Suarez celebrates heading Miami into the lead in their 1-1 draw with New York City FC. **PHOTO: AFP**

China's internet audio, video convention focuses on new technologies

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WORLD

**GIFT FOR
THE CATHOLICS**

Pope Francis to visit Indonesia in September: minister

POPE Francis will visit Indonesia in September, the country's religious affairs minister has said, as concerns mounted over the 87-year-old pontiff's health.

Outgoing President Joko Widodo invited the pope to visit Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, in June 2022 as part of an effort to promote religious tolerance.

"After waiting for two years, Pope Francis finally will come to Indonesia. I believe this will be a special gift for the Catholics," religious affairs minister Yaquut Cholil Qoumas said at an event in Central Java on Saturday.

"Based on the letter sent by the Vatican received by the Indonesian government, Pope Francis will be present in Indonesia on 3 September 2024," Qoumas said, according to the ministry's website. "This will be an honour for Indonesia."

According to the Pew Research Centre, Indonesia is home to 242 million Muslims and around 29 million Christians — 8.5 million of whom are Catholics.

Pope Francis is also expected to visit Papua New Guinea in August, the country's foreign minister Justin Tkatchenko said in January. — AFP

SCO countries plan to approve common energy strategy at Astana summit in July

Khan mentioned that they had previously adopted an economic cooperation strategy until 2030 in New Delhi last year and are now focusing on finalizing an energy strategy during the Astana summit this year.



The 2022 SCO summit was the 22nd annual summit of heads of state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held between 15 and 16 September 2022 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. **PHOTO: SERGEY GUNEYEV/SPUTNIK**

THE member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) plan to approve a common energy strategy at a summit in Astana in July, the organization's Deputy Secretary General Sohail Khan said.

The SCO summit will take place on 3-4 July in Astana.

"We have a strategy for economic cooperation until 2030, which we adopted

last year in New Delhi.

We are also now discussing an energy strategy, which we will be approving soon in Astana this year," Khan said during a plenary meeting of the international economic forum of CIS member states.

The SCO was founded in 2001. India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Uzbek-

istan are its members.

Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia are observer states; Azerbaijan, Armenia, Egypt, Cambodia, Nepal, Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar, Bahrain, and Kuwait are dialogue partners.

Belarus is expected to join the organization as a full-fledged member in 2024. — SPUTNIK

China, Central Asian countries launch secretariat of cooperation mechanism



This aerial photo taken on 25 April 2023 shows a view of the Tang Paradise in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province. **PHOTO: PIX USED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSE /LIU XIAO /XINHUA**

The establishment of the secretariat demonstrates the determination of the six countries to work together for development and cooperation.

CHINA and five Central Asian countries, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, held a ceremony in the city of Xi'an in Shaanxi province and launched the secretariat of the China-Central Asian cooperation mechanism on Saturday.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Murat Nurtleu, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Jeenbek Kurlubaev, Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin

Muhriddin, Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov, and Uzbekistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Bakhtiyor Saidov sent their congratulatory letters.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, commended cooperation between China and the Central Asian countries under the China-Central Asia mechanism which was initiated four years ago. — Xinhua