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State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing pays inspection tours in the National Kandawgyi Garden in PyinOoLwin yesterday.

PyinOoLwin aims to transform into smart city, setting example for other towns

As PyinOoLwin is a flower city, it is necessary to shape the city so the travellers can enjoy beautification and pleasant, said Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

On his inspection tour, Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing viewed the preservation of the National Kandawgyi Gar-

den in PyinOoLwin yesterday afternoon.

The Senior General stressed the need to shape PyinOoLwin as a smart city for the emergence of other towns and villages of Mandalay Region as pleasant environs under disciplines.

He pointed out that as the world faces global warming, PyinOoLwin, possessing good resources, needs to establish

green zones of trees and grow perennial trees and shade trees to continue conserving favourable weather.

The Senior General and party viewed round the garden and inspected the butterfly museum, orchid park, researched cultivation of domestic flower species at the research centre and test plots, and production of natural fertilizers and gave necessary

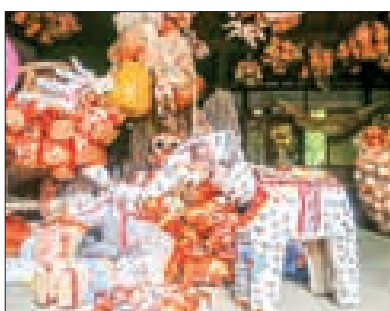
instructions over discussions of officials. The Senior General then fed pet fish in the lake and cordially greeted the people, taking relaxation.

The garden is a landmark not only for PyinOoLwin but for the State. In 2019-2020, as water flow into the lake declined, the Senior General guided his inspection tours in September and December 2021 to carry out nec-

essary renovation and maintain the waterway. Water flows into the lake through inlet channels, and the lake can store a larger volume of water. It can be seen that the guidance is being implemented for maintaining the famous position of the lake, beautifying the lake, and long-term existence as a modern garden for local and foreign travellers. The 16th Flower Festival of the Lake will be held on a grand scale, and plans are underway to continue the conservation of water sources, beautification with trees and flowery plants and environmental preservation. — MNA/TTA

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NATIONAL



Poster of nominated "Grieving Rain" series and one of the scenes from nominated "Crying Forest".

Myanmar movies, series, actors, and actresses nominated at 2023 Asian Academy Creative Awards

ASIAN Academy Creative Awards 2023 expressed that Myanmar movies, series, actors and actresses from Canal+ Myanmar Channel and Mahar Mobile Application have been nominated for National Winners at the Asian Academy Creative Awards 2023 in Singapore.

The mentioned award ceremony was held on 7 December in Singapore. And it is stated that Actor Aye Chan Maung nominated for Best Actor in A Leading Role with "Grieving Rain" series, Actress Pan Yaung Chel nominated for Best Actress in A Leading Role with "Grieving Rain" series and Actress Hsu Htet nominated for Best Actress In A Supporting Role with "Chokhar Seintthat Achittakhwat (A cup of love in

tea)" respectively.

Similarly, "Crying Forest" from Canal+ Myanmar Production for Best Drama Series, "An Ugly & Seven Handsomes" from Canal+ Myanmar Production for Best Comedy Programme, Sai Nyan Linn Sett from "Yangon Nights" produced by Mahar Mobile was nominated for National Winners individually.

Director General U Ye Naing of Myanma Radio and Television, the Myanmar delegation led by Director U Saw Myint Zaw and Myanmar actress Pan Yaung Chel attended the mentioned award ceremony. The best creations from 16 Asia-Pacific countries were selected and awarded as respective titles in the ceremony. — ASH/TRKM

Myanmar Showcase 2023 held in Cairo, Egypt

THE Myanmar Showcase 2023, featuring Myanmar's traditional culture and art, took place at the Myanmar Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, on 30 November, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported.

The purpose of the Myanmar Showcase 2023 was to enhance Egyptians' awareness of Myanmar, including its history, ethnic diversity, culture, agricultural produce, traditional food, natural beauty, the harmonious coexistence of different religions, preparations for the repatriation of those displaced from Rakhine State, and the state of domestic political development. By organizing the event in this manner, bilateral ties between Myanmar and Egypt are expected to be strengthened, and people from both countries will become



Myanmar Showcase 2023 features traditional culture and art in Egypt on 30 November 2023.

more acquainted.

The exhibition featured various galleries showcasing Myanmar's traditional culture and art. Additionally, there were photo displays illustrating Egypt-Myanmar bilateral relations, the Myanmar government's efforts to welcome back internally displaced persons,

and domestic political developments. Traditional Myanmar dishes such as coconut milk noodles, fried Mandalay beans, fried rice paper rolls, Shwe Yin Aye dessert, and banana pudding were served to guests. Attendees were also provided with pamphlets and souvenirs about Myanmar. — ASH/TKO

MSME Market Festival set for Pindaya in Danu Self-Administered Zone

THE MSME Market Festival is scheduled to take place in Pindaya Township of the Danu Self-Administered Zone in southern Shan State. Daw Aye Aye Than, head of the Small-scale Industries Department in the Danu Self-Administered

Zone, has announced that the festival will showcase MSME products from Shan State (South).

This festival will be held in conjunction with the Danu National Day celebration, which falls on 20 December. Efforts

are underway to ensure the comprehensive representation of MSME products from the Danu region and local products from Ywangan, Pindaya, Kalaw, Yaksawk, and Nawngkio during the event. — ASH/MKKS

Myanmar handicrafts market downsizes despite century-old surviving

THE market for traditional Myanmar handicraft dolls made of paper, such as owl dolls, roly-poly boy dolls, elephant dolls, and horse dolls, is currently shrinking. The doll-making industry survives in a small market in some parts of Upper Myanmar, as mentioned by U Aung Min, an artist specializing in paper dolls from Kannadaw Village in Sagaing Township.

He stated, "Very few people in villages near Sagaing Ngahtetgyi Pagoda, including Nyaunggon, Kannadaw, and Gonnyinhtaung villages, are still engaged in the traditional paper doll business.

Many years ago, almost all village households crafted paper dolls and supplied them to shops in pagodas nationwide. However, nowadays, we don't receive as many purchase orders as before. We get some orders during pagoda festivals in Mandalay, Sagaing, and Magway, and foreigners usually buy them as souvenirs. The doll industry faced its most challenging period during the Covid-19 pandemic. While the orders for paper dolls are increasing slightly now, productivity remains low due to the limited number of makers in this business."

In general, the sales turno-



The photo depicts colourful Myanmar traditional handicraft dolls in the market.

ver of paper dolls, including owls, roly-poly boys, elephants, horses, etc., is typically high during seasonal festivals, pagoda festivals, and donation ceremonies like Kathina robe offerings in the Myanmar months of Tabodwe, Tabaung, and Tagu. However, sales usually decline in the months of Nadaw and Pyatho.

For more than a century, Nyaunggon Village, Kannadaw Village, and Gonnyinhtaung Village, located near Sagaing Ngahtetgyi Pagoda, have been crafting these Myanmar traditional handicraft paper dolls. — ASH/TMT

NATIONAL



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing addresses the passing out parade of the 65th Intake of Defence Services Academy yesterday in PyinOoLwin.

DSA graduate cadets urged to pledge loyalty to organization and State

Regardless of the varied responsibilities shouldered, as every single military personnel can engage in battle and fulfil the mantle of national defence, comrades are required to epitomize the virtues intrinsic to a genuine soldier, said Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing delivered a speech at the passing out parade of the 65th Intake of Defence Services Academy in PyinOoLwin yesterday morning.

First, the Senior General delivered the speech. He said: The primary duty of the Tatmadaw is to fulfil the imperative role of national defence. As military personnel, Comrades must fully embrace the Three Capabilities, such as “Military Capability, Organizational Capability, and Administrative Capability”, to safeguard the nation effectively.

Furthermore, as individuals vow to sacrifice their lives for each other on the battlefield, disciplinary imposition is to dutifully perform assigned tasks in an obedient manner and avoid unnecessary fatalities. Hence, comrades are to grasp the profound rationale underlying the stringent imposition of



SAC Chair Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing greets graduate cadets while attending the graduation dinner yesterday in PyinOoLwin.

discipline, and personal growth thrives amidst cultivating a steadfast and well-disciplined approach.

The warfare of the 21st century unfolds in asymmetric, multi-dimensional forms of attack, emerging from diverse sides and sectors. Comrades must anticipate warfare’s metamorphosis and the fluidity of military strategies due to the state-of-the-art weaponry and ordnance. It is incumbent upon

comrades to adeptly comprehend modern command and control systems, meticulously observing and assimilating evolving military doctrines that align with technological leaps. Reflective of the prevailing circumstances, comrades serving as young leaders must persistently pursue knowledge, delving into not only military affairs but also the dynamic realm of contemporary international affairs.

“To cement a disciplined, genuine multiparty democratic system and build a Union based on the democratic and federal system” will be implemented to ensure success.

A Nation functions through its national, economic, and defence driving forces, with the economic force being the primary pivot among them. Bolstering the economic force holds great importance, as the vitality of the other two forces hinges

on its strength. Hence, I would like to impart that the ongoing commitment to pursue “Prosperity of the Nation and food self-sufficiency” is implemented as two national visions in our government’s administration.

The Senior General inspected graduate cadet companies.

Before delivering a speech, cadet companies saluted the Senior General with the slow-march past and quick-march past.

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NATIONAL



SAC Chair Defence Services C-in-C Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla warmly encourage Tatmadaw members and MPF members who are undergoing treatments at the Military Hospital in PyinOoLwin yesterday (above and below photos).

Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla comforted Tatmadaw members and police injured in the line of duty at the Military Hospital in PyinOoLwin yesterday.

The Senior General talked warmly with each patient, discussing their conditions and offering the necessary support. Then, he and his entourage contributed honorary grants and gifts to the wounded personnel.

Later, they visited the radiation oncology department to witness the radiotherapy machine's and CT scanner's functionality. The Director of Medical Services and the staff in charge provided a comprehensive briefing during the tour.

The Senior General and

Senior General, his wife comfort wounded Tatmadaw members



his entourage provided meals to the patients and their families at the cancer ward.

The Senior General's wife, Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, continued touring the maternity ward, personally greetings and engaging in conversations with every mother and expectant mother while presenting them with gifts.

Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Maung Maung Aye and wife, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Moe Aung and wife, Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Tun Aung and wife, and other high-ranking officers and their wives accompanied the Senior General. — MNA/NT

DSA graduate cadets urged to pledge loyalty to organization ...

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The Senior General presented the Best Cadet Award to Cadet Thurein Oo, Excellent Award in Training to Cadet Hein Htet Aung, Excellent Award in Studies (Arts) to Cadet Zay Lin Maung, Excellent Award in Studies (Science) to Cadet Chan Nyein Lwin and Excellent Award in Studies (Computer) to Cadet Han Phone Myat respectively.

After returning the salute of cadet companies, the Senior General left the parade ground. Also present at the ceremony were Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, wife of the Senior

General, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Thiri Pyanchi Sithu Maung Maung Aye and wife, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Zeya Kyaw Htin Sithu Moe Aung and wife, Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Zeya Kyaw Htin Sithu Tun Aung and wife, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, military attachés from foreign missions to Myanmar, parents of graduate cadets and guests.

After the parade, the Senior General met five outstanding cadets at the headquarters of DSA and spoke

words of honour.

He urged those cadets to try hard to become outstanding persons in the workplaces and reliable persons of the State by continuously studying knowledge and skills. Moreover, the Senior General stressed the need to be loyal to their organization and the State and dutifully serve the assignments.

In the evening, the Senior General attended the graduation dinner of the 65th Intake of DSA at the cadet mess hall of Anawrahta Battalion. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Vice-Senior General Soe Win emphasizes flawless preparation for 76th Anniversary Independence Day



State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win presides over the second coordination meeting of the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day Organizing Central Committee yesterday.

STATE Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win has called for advancing preparation work for the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day, with greater perfection as the commemorative day

draws near. As the Chairman of the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day Organizing Central Committee, the Vice-Senior General addressed the second coordination meeting of the committee yesterday.

The Vice-Senior General said that the Prime Minister approved the ceremonial programmes such as invitations, poster erection, flag-hoisting ceremony, message reading session and dinner. He then added that it

should discuss matters related to holding sports competitions and the Youth and Literary Arts Festival. All should conduct the preparation work for the ceremony with greater perfection and must provide detailed

security measures for each person, region, and event in addition to the existing security plan. Officials of the relevant subcommittees reported on the progress of preparations for the ceremony. — MNA/KTZH

Commissioning ceremony for graduates of 65th Intake of DSA as gazetted officers held



The DSA 65th Commissioned Officer Appointment Ceremony in progress yesterday.

THE 65th Commissioned Officer Appointment Ceremony for the Defence Service Academy took place at the DSA Convocation Hall, Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army). Lt-Gen Lin Aung, Military Appointment General, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, Commandant of DSA Brig-Gen Soe Myat Htut, and

graduated cadets were in attendance yesterday morning. Military Appointment-General Lt-Gen Lin Aung presented the commissioning letter to each graduated cadet. After presenting the commissioning letters, Lt-Gen Lin Aung, delivered a speech and concluded the ceremony. — MNA/KZW

Counter-argument to false information

Misinformation: People forced to draw lots to attend militia training in Patheingyi

THE Ayeeyarwaddy Times distributed a make-up news story that a resident of a Patheingyi township village said each village was instructed to register three people each from villages for militia training in Patheingyi township.

According to an enquiry

to a relevant official about the matter, no instruction has been given to conduct militia training to village-tract in Patheingyi Township and other townships, as malicious media are spreading false information to create public fear and misrepresentation. — MNA/KZL



Screenshot validates false claims.



Screenshot validates misinformation.

False reports circulate about operation control commander's death in clash

MALICIOUS media, including Khit Thit, are spreading misinformation that Operation Control Command Commander Brig-Gen Aung Zaw Lin from Tatmadaw has died in the Kokang clash of northern Shan State.

The news is incorrect, degrading the military's reputation and the morale of Tatmadaw members involved in armed engagements. It is a purposeful propaganda spread to mislead the public and reduce trust in Tatmadaw. — MNA/KZL

NATIONAL

Kampaiti border trade swells to US\$68.99 mln in nearly past eight months



The photo shows some trucks passing the Kampaiti border checkpoint.

MYANMAR'S Kampaiti border with the neighbouring country China garnered US\$68.99 million as of 24 November in the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April, comprising exports worth \$54.17 million and

imports worth \$14.8 million.

The figure increased from \$50.67 million recorded in the corresponding period last FY 2022-2023.

The Kampaiti border aims to achieve a trade target of \$18.5 million in December, with exports worth \$16 million and imports worth \$2.5 million. The Kampaiti border witnessed trade worth \$1.824 million within the first three days this month, which is 9.859 percent of the trade target.

About \$1.088 million worth of trade was carried out at Kampaiti border as of the second week of August, accounting for 36.27 per cent of trade target.

Tissue-culture bananas, watermelon, rubber and Aemahta rice were mainly exported and capital goods, construction materials, intermediate goods, consumer goods, clothes and fruits were imported.

There is no freight forwarder service running in the Kampaiti border. Companies transport with their own trucks. — TWA/EM

Kandawgyi to host Vegetable, Fruit and Horticultural Exhibition

THE vegetable, fruit and horticultural exhibition will occur at the Palemahmyaing Park in Kandawgyi Natural Park in early 2024 as a Yangon Region Chief Minister's trophy.

The exhibition was held from 1993 to 2020 but was suspended from 2021 to 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was resumed in January 2023 to promote the socioeconomic development of fruit, vegetable, and flower growers and contribute to the nation's economic growth.

The vegetable, fruit and horticultural exhibition will be held with cooperation between the Yangon City Development Committee and the Yangon Region Agriculture Department, supervised by the Yangon Region government. — TWA/MKKS



The Vegetable, Fruit and Horticultural Show and Contest in January 2023.

Bowser incidents: One crashes in Bago, another catches fire in Kyaukse



A bowser crashed on the Bago detour, and the other one caught fire in Kyaukse yesterday (top and above photos).

THE Myanmar Fire Brigade reports that a bowser crashed on the Bago detour, and another one caught fire in Kyaukse yesterday.

In the morning, a bowser overturned at the No 33/4 milepost along the Bago City detour. The fire stations in Bago sent four fire engines to initiate cooling procedures and prevent potential fires.

At the same time, another bowser caught fire on the Kyaukse detour. The Kyaukse District/Township fire services department deployed two fire engines and four water tankers. The Singaing Township Fire Services Department also despatched one water tanker, and the TadaU Township Fire Services Department, one water tanker to put out the fire. — TWA/NT

Pulses market forecasts low prices for new green grams in harvest season

WHEN new black grams and pigeon peas are offered at high prices with advance purchases, the price of new green grams is bound to decline during the harvest season.

The traders are closely paying attention to the market prices. According to the pulses market forecast, the costs will likely hit K90,000 per basket of new pigeon peas and K85,000 per basket of black grams from delta regions in the upcoming harvest times.

The green gram produced from the Yangon Region is ex-

pected to be offered K60,000 per basket, growers from the Kayan area told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

The pulses prices were registered at K2.9275 million per tonne of black gram (Fair Average Quality), K3.1675 million per tonne of black gram (Special Quality), K3.1 million per tonne of pigeon pea (red gram), K2,500-K2,570 per viss of green gram from the Pakokku area and K3,665 per viss of green gram (Shwewah) on 8 December 2023.

The prevailing prices

surged from K2,830-K3,000 per viss of green gram (Shwewah), K1.75 million per tonne of black grams (FAQ) and K1.835 million per tonne of pigeon pea on 8 December 2022. The figures showed an increase of K1.2 million per tonne for black grams, K1.3 million for pigeon peas and K200,000 for green grams.

The FOB prices were set at US\$1,010-\$1,030 per tonne of black gram (FAQ), \$1,110-\$1,130 per tonne of black gram (SQ), \$1,120-\$1,140 per tonne of pigeon pea, \$690-\$710 per tonne of green gram from central Myanmar re-



Various pulses are seen at a grocery.

gions and \$870-\$900 per tonne of green gram (Shwewah) then.

Black gram price dipped to K2.98 million per tonne on 6 De-

cember, yet the pigeon pea price remained unchanged.

Green gram (Shwewah) varieties from the Kayan area touch the highest. There are around 300,000 acres of green gram (Shwewah) in Yangon Region and a hundred thousand acres in Kayan Township.

The cultivation cost is K600,000 per acre, and the yield rate is estimated at 15 baskets per acre.

This month, the high-grade green gram (Shwewah) from the Kayan area is K70,000 per basket. — TWA/KK

YGEA raises pure gold price to over K3.56M per tical post-FX liberalization

FOLLOWING the policy of the Central Bank of Myanmar to liberalize the Foreign Exchange market, the Yangon Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) hiked up the pure gold price to over K3.56 million per tical (0.578 ounce or 0.016 kilogramme).

On 5 December, the CBM allowed authorized dealers (private banks) to operate forex exchange transactions freely as per the market rate determined by the supply and demand market forces, with no longer

setting the reference exchange rate.

Earlier, the YGEA used the interbank transaction rate set by the CBM in calculating the reference price for pure gold. Therefore, the gold reference rate was only K3.2094 million per tical on 6 December.

After the liberalization of the foreign exchange rate regime, the reference price surged to K3,561,900 per tical, indicating a significant increase of K350,000.

Nonetheless, the precious yellow

metal was valued at K3.73 million per tical in the unofficial market. There is a price difference of over K160,000 per tical between the YGEA's reference price and the actual market value.

The US dollar is currently exchanged at approximately K3,560 at the over-the-counter market.

When the Kyat depreciated at K4,000 against the greenback in the forex market, the gold price peaked at K4 million per tical in late August 2023. — NN/EM



Gold jewellery seen being displayed for sale in one of the gold outlets in Yangon.

MRF urges traders to avoid rice price hikes amid export policy changes



Varieties of rice seen being organized for sale in the retail and wholesale shop in Yangon.

MYANMAR Rice Federation (MRF) called for setting fairer prices and avoiding price hikes to the traders by taking advantage of the export earning policy changes, as per the notification on 8 December 2023.

The government eased export earning rules to benefit the exporters. This action aims to facilitate exports and trade.

MRF has notified the reference prices of various monsoon paddy varieties produced in 2023 and asked the members, rice millers, traders, and companies to adhere strictly to the notification. The federation issues fair rice prices based on the reference prices every month. This effort is to lessen the public burden on food costs.

The Ministry of Commerce stated that starting from 4 November, wholesalers must be registered for rice storage in domestic markets on the digi-

tal registration service (MyRO).

MRF has been making efforts through public-private partnerships to have a systematic registration for rice storage, fair market and price stability, and steer the market with investigation against those unscrupulous traders who attempt to manipulate the market by raising the price.

At present, rice is not self-sufficient in the domestic market during the harvest season of monsoon paddy. That is why MRF has urged consumers not to panic-buy.

Furthermore, the federation is hopeful that the difficulty in buying fuel oil these days will be tackled soon. Thus, the federation is discussing with stakeholders about offering adequate fuel oil (diesel) for agricultural machinery and cement at fair prices for the summer paddy season, MRF stated. — NN/EM

KIF 2024 invites Myanmar businesspersons to showcase products

THE three-day Korea Import Fair (KIF 2024) that will be held on 4-6 July 2024 at the Convention and Exhibition Centre in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, welcomes Myanmar businesspersons seeking to enter the Korean market, showcase their products and connect with Korean importers and distributors, according to the Trade Promotion Division.

This 21st exhibition aims to bridge the network between foreign participants and member companies of the Korea Importers Association (KOIMA) and introduce the products of

foreign countries to domestic importers. The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of Korea will sponsor it.

It is a platform to showcase diverse products, attracting the importers and the people's attention. The B2B matching will be included in this. It is an excellent opportunity to bring Myanmar's products into the Korean market.

Participation costs are US\$3,000 per nine-square-metre booth and \$10,000 per 36-square-metre booth. Those who register before December 2023 can enjoy a 40 per cent

discount, while 30 per cent is before February, and 20 per cent is before April.

Those enthusiastic exporters can contact Mrs Rachel Hwang (Head of International Relations) by email at rachel@koima.or.kr, phone +82-2-792-4833, Mr Minwoo Jeong (International Relations) through email wizard@koima.or.kr, phone +82-2-6677-3662, and Ms Mingee Kim (International Relations) through email mingee@koima.or.kr, phone +82-2-6677-3664, according to the Trade Promotion Organization. — NN/EM

Cold storage charges likely to rise amid oil market chaos

YANGONITES are currently experiencing fuel crunches amid the forex market policy changes, and cold storage charges are likely to increase, U Hla Han, a chilli pepper warehouse owner, told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

The cold storage charges and labour wages are approximately K1,000 per viss of chilli pepper as of the second half of 2023.

The traders who stored chilli peppers at cold storage last year reaped a handsome profit in late 2022.

The cold storage charges were K75 in 2022 and increased to K125 per viss in 2023.



Some goods are seen systematically being placed in cold storage.

The prices stood at K8,000-8,500 per viss of chilli pepper and K11,000-12,000 per viss of bell pepper in mid-2022. After processing them at cold storage, they were sold at K19,000 per viss of chilli pepper (Moehtaung variety) and K31,000 per viss of bell pepper at the end of

the year.

The prices declined in 2023 owing to the weak demand. Some chilli peppers are found to be sent to cold storage in mid-2023 to earn great profit.

The negative consequences of the fuel market might affect fuel-related businesses. Subsequently, the cold storage charges are expected to increase due to lengthening power blackouts and difficulty in buying fuel oil (diesel).

The charges are possibly double or more compared to last year. Consequently, those traders who kept the stocks in cold storage saw little chance to make a profit this year. — TWA/KK

OPINION

Uphold societal integrity: A collective effort against corruption

CORRUPTION, a pervasive societal ill, inflicts regrettable losses on communities. While those engaged in corrupt practices may experience temporary gains, their unsustainable ascent eventually leads to societal downfall due to their inappropriate actions.

In commemorating the International Anti-Corruption Day, the UN Convention against Corruption at 20 focuses on the theme "Uniting the World against Corruption" in 2023. As the world grapples with significant challenges that threaten global prosperity and stability, the opportunity arises for individuals worldwide to envision a society free from corruption collectively.

The repercussions of corruption extend across every facet of society, intricately intertwining with conflict and instability. This menace jeopardizes social and economic development, undermining democratic institutions and the rule of law. Flourishing societies thrive on principles of sympathy, empathy, and compassion.

Consequently, the fight against corruption is inherently linked to promoting morale and morality. Triumph over corruption ensures that empathy and compassion remain ingrained in the collective consciousness, whereas its surge leads to diverse forms of suffering and adversity.

Today's world confronts unprecedented global challenges that imperil prosperity and stability, many of which are exacerbated by the pervasive plague of corruption. Governments must prioritize comprehensive anti-corruption measures across all sectors to safeguard the victims of corruption and foster societal well-being. Corruption acts as a spark or flame, igniting dissatisfaction among society members and pushing them into a deteriorating abyss. It serves as a tool to dismantle societal and familial structures, not only following conflict but often being a root cause. Corruption fuels and perpetuates conflict by subverting the rule of law, exacerbating poverty, enabling the illicit use of resources, and financing armed conflicts.

Society must unite in a concerted effort to combat corruption effectively. Governments, organizations, and individuals alike must prioritize anti-corruption initiatives in all aspects of life. This collective commitment will not only dismantle the corrupt structures that threaten societal foundations but also pave the way for a more just, stable, and compassionate world. As individuals commemorate the UN Convention against Corruption's two decades, everybody recommits themselves to the shared goal of eradicating corruption and building a future where integrity and justice prevail.

Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all countries. Corruption undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development and contributes to governmental instability. That is why everybody needs to eradicate corruption in all ways and means to emerge a prosperous society.

EPISODE:25 A W G BLEECK

Bleeck contributed the papers; "Rubies in the Kachin Hills, Upper Burma", "Jadeite in the Kachin Hills", and "On some occurrences of wolframite lodes and deposits in the Tavoy district of Lower Burma" to Myanmar geology from 1907 to 1913. Due to limited space, I would like to extract some significant information from his comprehensive report on Jadeite in the Kachin Hills as follows: -

Jadeite in the Kachin Hills, Upper Burma

To judge by the long list of publications, our knowledge of Burmese jadeite should practically be complete, and yet there are numerous problems relating to the mode of occurrence and the genesis of jadeite which have not been solved satisfactorily. Most of the previous authors have based their views on the statements made by Dr F Noetling, the only other geologist who has visited the jade mines at Tawmaw. Dr Noetling's survey of the jade-mines district, however, was incomplete, as he is careful in pointing out himself, owing to the fact that the unsettled state of the country and the impenetrable jungle impeded him in his work. I had to contend with the same difficulties, and although the jade mines themselves offer every opportunity for detailed petrographical investigation, the geology of the surrounding country could not be satisfactorily surveyed. A careful combination, however, of all the observations helps one to give a fairly good idea of the geological features of the district. The places visited on tour were Manwe, south of Kamaing on the Indaw chaung; Naniazeik, due west of Kamaing; Kansi, Lonkin, Mamon, and Hougpa, all on the Uru chaung; Tawmaw and Hweka, the former north and the latter south of Mamon.

Jadeite is found at three places in the Kachin Hills: at Tawmaw, at Hweka, and at Mamon. The quarries and mines at Tawmaw are undoubtedly the most interesting. Tawmaw is situated on a plateau approximately 3,000 feet high. This plateau is about 10 miles long, stretching from north to south; its breadth, however, does not exceed one mile. The jadeite, associated with other minerals, occurs in a dyke of igneous origin. This dyke is intrusive into serpentine, which is the predominant rock on the plateau. The mines and quarries

The Burma Circle of the Geological Survey of India and their Contributions to the Geology of Myanmar

cover an area of ground approximately 500 yards long and 200 broad (Fig. 1). Twelve shafts have been sunk on the jadeite dyke and



Fig.1. Sketch-map of part of Upper Burma. Scale 1 in. = 32 miles. Source: GSI

are being worked. These numerous shafts and inclines represent different claims, which are let out to Chinese traders by the owner of the jade mines, a Kachin chief. Underground, the workings are connected up. Some, of course, are considerably deeper than others. Mining methods have not changed since Dr Noetling visited Tawmaw in 1892. The fire process for cracking the rock is still in vogue, exactly as previous authors have described it.

These mines are only worked for about three months in the year; from the beginning of March till the end of May; during the rain, malaria fever stops all work. In January, the Kachins begin to bail the mines, which fill up with water completely during the time they are not working. This laborious task takes nearly two months to complete. Day and night, a few scores of Kachins are at work bringing up the water in kerosine oil tins. After the bailing is completed, the mines are in a dangerous condition, and nearly all the complicated timbering has to be renewed. On the occasion of my first visit to Tawmaw, all the shafts were underwater, and I had to content myself with specimens picked

up from the dumps. A month later, however, I revisited the place, and with the mines being dry by this time, I was able to study the jadeite Naniazeik are almost entirely composed of granite. In several places, I traced irregular masses of crystalline limestone surrounded on all sides by this granite. The marble is generally of a pure white colour. In many places, it contains crystals of graphite, chondrodite, forsterite, phlogopite, etc. These minerals were developed by contact metamorphism of limestone by intrusive granite. It is significant that in many places, the Kachins have washed for corundum in the numerous little streams that come from these mountains. Furthermore, ruby mines were formerly worked near Naniazeik. Corundum is a specific contact mineral in crystalline limestone, and there can be no doubt that the above-mentioned marble is the matrix that originally contained the corundum. From the fact that ruby mines are known to exist 11 miles north of Naniazeik, I gather that granite and crystalline limestone continue in this direction. Six miles to the northwest of Naniazeik, however, serpentine sets in and forms a range as far as Kansi and even beyond the Sanka chaung. These serpentine hills are all very much alike, with steep sides crowned by long and narrow plateaus.

South of Nani, the landscape changes, the hills become much lower, and the slopes become gentler. These low ranges are entirely composed of a bluish-grey sandstone, which sometimes gives way to a coarse conglomerate. Identical rocks were found at Hweka, where the conglomerate is rich in jadeite boulders. Both sandstone and conglomerate are interstratified with very thin seams of coal. Some very badly preserved casts of dicotyledon leaves were collected. Mr J Schuster very kindly determined them to belong to a new species of *Laurus*, which he called *Tetranthera Hwekonsis*. These leaves are of some importance, as they prove the Tertiary age of the sandstones and conglomerates. In all probability, these strata are identical to the Miocene strata, which Dr Noetling mentions in this paper on jadeite in the Kachin Hills. Although the country lying between Hweka and Nani could not be surveyed, it is very probable that these Tertiary strata continue as an uninter-

rupted series of rocks from Nani as far as and even beyond Hweka to the south. The tertiary strata show considerable faulting. West of Hweka, serpentine sets in again and continues on as far as Hougpa on the left bank of the Uru Chaung. On the western slopes of these serpentine hills overlooking the river, several almost horizontal terraces of brown iron ore occur, which are of a very interesting nature. This is not laterite, for which one is at first inclined to take it, but undoubtedly an iron-ore formed by precipitation from aqueous solution and must therefore be termed bog iron-ore or lake-ore.

North of Mamon on the left bank of the Uru, I came across a series of "crystalline schists." These schists appear to form a small isolated occurrence bounded on one side by the Uru and on the other three sides by the Tertiary strata. They correspond to the crystalline schists occurring on the right bank of the river.

These latter are from the slopes of the range leading up to Tawmaw. Near the crest, the crystalline schists suddenly stop, and again, the serpentine forms the plateau. Crystalline schists of nearly identical outward appearance occur again on the western slopes of this mountain range.

The mineral resources of the jade-mines districts are, with the exception of jadeite, of no economic value whatsoever. Ruby mining at Naniazeik and Manwe has never been done at any profit, although systematic prospecting of the whole ruby and corundum tract may lead to favourable results. In the upper reaches of the Uru Creek, Kachins wash for gold. The work, however, can hardly be termed remunerative. The coal seams and chromite which occur in the serpentine near Tawmaw are not of sufficient quality for exploitation.

Six different groups of rocks will be treated in the following order: -

1. The granite and crystalline limestone west of the Indaw chaung between Naniazeik and Manwe.

By THAN HTUN (GEOSCIENCE MYANMAR)

2. The serpentine and basic eruptive rocks lie between the Sanka chaung and Naniazeik.
3. The Tertiary sandstones and conglomerates between Nani and Hweka.
4. The serpentine and bog iron ore west of Hweka.
5. The "crystalline schists" on the left bank of the Uru creek.
6. The serpentine and "crystalline schists" on the right bank of the Uru creek. (Tawmaw series.)

Dr F Noetling makes no mention whatever of the granite hills between Naniazeik and Manwe. The granite shows the usual varieties of coarse and fine grain. Dark crystalline concretions composed particularly of the more basic constituents of the rock are very abundant. Numerous veins of apite and pegmatite traverse the granite. These bosses of granite enclose large masses of crystalline limestone.

The most important of the second group of rocks is the serpentine. Specimens collected on the march from Naniazeik to Kansi all closely resemble one another. A slight difference in colour is produced by weathering, the colours varying from dark green to brown green. Magnetite and chromite occur as dark concretions or tiny ill-defined veins throughout the rock. The microscope proves the rock to be normal serpentine. Chromite occurs as inclusions in the fresh olivine and is besides finely disseminated throughout the whole mass of serpentine. Magnetite is undoubtedly of secondary origin, as it only shows in the "serpentine minerals". Northwest of Nani, I came across some basic eruptive rocks closely resembling basalt. These rocks form low hills, which, for the most part, are unapproachable on account of dense jungle.

The third group of rocks under discussion are the Tertiary sedimentary strata. Both sandstones and conglomerates enclose short and thin coal seams and layers of coaly shale. The colour of sandstones and conglomerates is bluish-grey. The thickness of the sandstone beds must be very

considerable, as judged by the profiles exposed on the cuttings of the new P W D road from Lonkin to Naniazeik. The sandstones gradually pass into conglomeratic sandstones and finally into a coarse conglomerate. The microscopic study of these rocks revealed the following component minerals: quartz, calcite, serpentine, plagioclase, glauconite, chlorite, and an amorphous dark organic substance. Quartz and glauconite are predominant. In no instance could any signs of metamorphism be discovered, the sandstones, etc., bearing a perfectly normal and unaltered aspect. As a "jadeite deposit" of considerable economic value, the conglomerate attracts our special interest. The numerous well-rounded large and small boulders of rock which make up the conglomerate consist chiefly of serpentine, quartz pyroxenite, saussurite-gabbro, and an occasional boulder of jadeite. The ce-

group No 5 represents a series of crystalline schists. They vary in outward appearance as well as in mineral composition but nevertheless belong to a continuous series, the different types gradually passing into each other. The term "crystalline-schists," which has been employed to designate this whole group of rocks, has no bearing whatsoever on their real nature. The origin of crystalline-schist cannot be explained other than by contact metamorphism produced in basic igneous rocks by intrusive granite.

A general survey of the jade mines gives one the impression that the jadeite occurs as a broad dyke in the serpentine. The strike of this dyke is N to S, and the dip averages 60°. In my opinion, an outcrop of white jadeite set off against the dark green of the serpentine must have led to the discovery of the jadeite at Tawmaw. The nature of the dyke is illustrated in Fig 2.

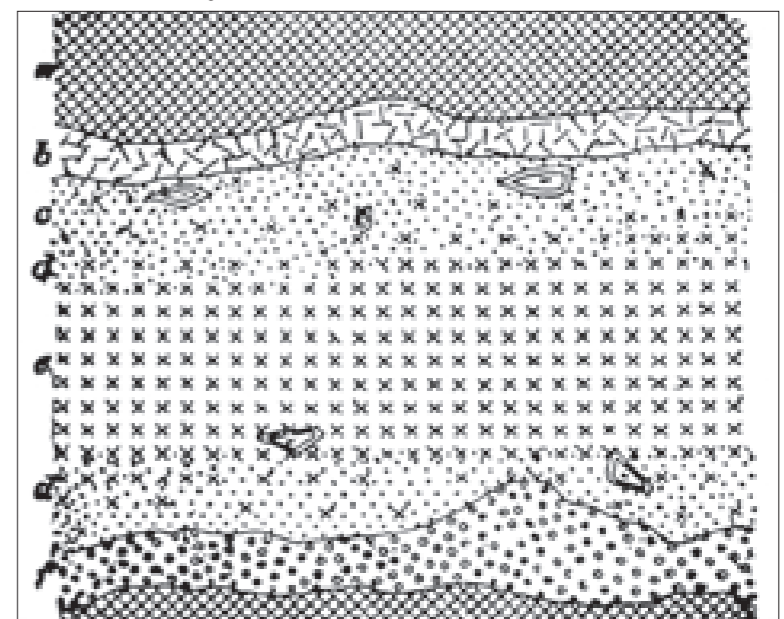


Fig. 2. Section through the jadeite-albite dyke at Tawmaw a. Serpentine. b. Earthy chlorite. c. Albite rock with inclusions of schistose amphibolite. d. Zone of mixed albite and jadeite. e. Jadeite. f. Amphibolite. Source: GSI

Jadeite is a mineral of high specific gravity. Minerals of high specific gravity suggest development under high compression due to orographic movements during the solidification of the rock. As a result of high pressure, a rock that, under normal conditions, would crystallize with the mineral paragenesis of albite-nephelite, etc., will develop the anomalous paragenesis of albite and jadeite. We may therefore assume that an intrusive dyke of dyke of mineral matter rich in soda can lead to the primary formation of an albite-jadeite rock when solidifying under anomalous conditions (i.e., piezo crystallization).

References: Bleeck, A W G, 1908: *Jadeite in the Kachin Hills, Upper Burma, Record of GSI, Vol. XXXVI, Part 4.*

NATIONAL

MoI UM enjoys entertainment of variety show marking 103rd Anniversary National Victory Day in Hpa-an



The variety show in action to mark the 103rd Anniversary National Victory Day in Kayin State, graced by Union Information Minister U Maung Maung Ohn on 7 December 2023.

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn enjoyed the entertainment of a variety show to mark the 103rd National

Victory Day in Hpa-an Township of Kayin State on 7 December. The show featured songs and dances presented by basic educa-

tion students, traditional dances of ethnic cultural troupes, and entertainment of famous singers of Unplugged band.

The Union minister then presented a K2 million cash award to the artistes who participated in the variety show.

The Union minister also inspected the healthcare systems provided to Sayadaws and nuns at the three-storey building of Kayin State General Hospital (Hpa-an) yesterday.

First, the Union minister paid homage to State Ovadacariya Presiding Sayadaw of Naunglon Htanpataing and Presiding Sayadaw of Amita Yama Monastery and donated cash.

Then, he inspected the healthcare services of physicians, specialists and health workers of the hospital and advised proper healthcare system-related matters. — Saw Myo Min Thein (IPRD)/KTZH

China-Myanmar bilateral textile & machinery trade fair held in Yangon Region

THE China-Myanmar Bilateral Textile and Machinery Expo was held on the morning of 8 December at the Yangon Convention Centre (YCC) in Mayangon Township, Yangon Region, according to the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA).

The China-Myanmar bilateral textile and machinery trade fair will be held three days from 8 to 10 December in cooperation with Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA) and the Chinese Textile and Garment Association In Myanmar (CTGA).

At the China-Myanmar Bilateral Textile and Machinery Expo, about 100 garment manufacturers from China and Myanmar are showcasing their garments, and equipment manufacturers are also opening more than 100 booths and displaying industrial products.

In addition, 28 Chinese brands, textiles and clothing, shoes and bag products, and made in Myanmar clothing products are also on display. Similarly, the MGMA and foreign garment manufacturers' associations in Myanmar, such as Korea, Japan, and China (Hong Kong), also displayed member factories and product galleries, promoting and introducing local SMEs. — ASH/TKO



The China-Myanmar Bilateral Textile and Machinery Expo underway on 8 December 2023.

MoSWRR Union Minister meets Interim UNRC, UNHC



The UN Interim Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator calls on Union Minister Dr Soe Win yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Soe Win received Mr Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UN Interim Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim for Myanmar, at the ministry office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Mr Ramanathan Balakrishnan, who has completed his

tour of duty, discussed about UN agencies, the ministry's humanitarian support for those in need in Myanmar, coordination between UNFPA and the Department of Social Welfare to sign a work plan, visa issues for foreign employees, assistance provision of UNOCHA in Myanmar and cooperation with the ministry after Cyclone Mocha.

The Union minister also highlighted the importance of cooperation between the ministry and partner organizations for needy people, visa verification and approval for foreign employees of international organizations and UN organizations cooperating with the ministry in line with procedures. — MNA/TS

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Japan to allow use of private cars as taxis under certain terms

The Japanese government has formally approved a plan to alleviate the nationwide shortage of taxi drivers by allowing individuals with a standard driver's licence to provide taxi services using their personal vehicles.



While the plan expands the pool of potential taxi drivers, the emphasis on prior training and direct employment by taxi companies maintains a balance between flexibility and ensuring a standard of service quality and safety. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE Japanese government on Thursday finalized a plan to allow drivers with a standard licence to offer taxi services using their own vehicle in an effort to address a nationwide shortage of taxi drivers.

Under the eased meas-

ures, individuals without a licence to provide driver services will be able to do so as long as they undergo prior training and are directly employed by taxi companies, according to people familiar with the matter. The individuals, however,

will not be permitted to drive a conventional taxi. The shortage of drivers in Japan has been exacerbated by a recovery in economic activity and increased inbound tourism following the easing of the coronavirus pandemic.— Kyodo

Pakistan zoo shut down after mystery tiger attack

The closure of the zoo is a precautionary measure in response to the alarming incident, highlighting the need for a comprehensive investigation into the circumstances surrounding the fatal tiger attack.

A zoo in Pakistan has been shut down after a man was mauled to death by tigers in an attack discovered during routine cleaning, officials said

Thursday.

The body was found on Wednesday morning in Bahawalpur's Sherbagh Zoo in the eastern province of Punjab

after staff spotted one of the three tigers with a shoe in its mouth.

"The zoo is closed right now as we determine how the man got in," Ali Usman Bukhari, a senior officer of the province's wildlife department, which operates the zoo, told AFP. The condition of the body suggests the attack happened late Tuesday night.

"The autopsy report has not been released, however evidence gathered from the enclosure points towards him being alive when he was attacked by the tigers," Bukhari said.— AFP



The incident was found when workers saw a tiger with a shoe in its mouth. The body was discovered on Wednesday morning in Sherbagh Zoo in Bahawalpur, Punjab. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ AFP**

Godzilla smashes record as top-grossing Japanese live-action in US

THE newest Godzilla film has become the highest-grossing Japanese live-action film in the United States, raking in more than \$14 million, Japan film production company Toho Co said Thursday.

"Godzilla Minus One" made over \$14.36 million as of Tuesday local time, surpassing the previous title held by "The Adventures of Milo and Otis", released in Japan and the United States in 1986 and 1989, respectively.

The latest instalment in the

franchise, which opened last Friday, follows the giant reptilian monster rampaging through postwar Japan.

"It makes me happy that it was none other than Godzilla to have broken the record that had long gone unbeaten," said director Takashi Yamazaki. Ryunosuke Kamiki, who starred in "Godzilla Minus One", said, "It's like a dream that the film is also being watched by so many people in America!" — Kyodo



Supplied image for the new Japanese live-action film "Godzilla Minus One". **PHOTO: TOHO CO./KYODO**

French government to block Paris post-Olympics speed limit plan: minister

THE French government will block a flagship plan by the Paris mayor's office to set a speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour (30 mph) on the capital's congested ring road after the 2024 Olympic Games, the transport minister said Thursday.

The issue is the latest example of tensions between the centrist government of President Emmanuel Macron and the city hall under Socialist Mayor Anne Hidalgo just over half a year before the Games get underway.

The mayor's office said in November that the restrictions aimed at reducing pollution and noise from the Boulevard Peripherique — one of Europe's busiest roads — will come into force a few weeks after the Olympics end.

"I think it is not a good idea in the short term to have this speed limit" and "at the end of 2024, we will not take the decision, we will not validate the decision", Transport Minister Clement Beaune told Franceinfo radio.

The 35-kilometre (22-mile) Peripherique — widely known as the "Periph" — is used by around 1.2 million drivers every day, most of them from the Ile-de-France region that includes Paris.

The current speed limit is 70 kilometres an hour, and 80 per cent of vehicles on the road have just their driver and no passengers. Under city hall's plan, one lane of the ring road in each direction would be reserved for vehicles carrying two or more passengers. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

EU proposes three-year delay on UK electric car tariffs

The European Commission seeks a single extension until 31 December 2026, in response to the EU automotive industry's worries about a potential 10 per cent post-Brexit tariff's significant costs.



The U-turn by the European Commission delays a 10 per cent tariff on electric car sales between the EU and UK for three years. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

BRUSSELS proposed Wednesday a three-year delay on tariffs on the sale of electric vehicles between Britain and the EU that was meant to kick in from January, in a major reversal of its previous position.

The European Commission said it now wants a one-off extension, until 31 December 2026, after the EU automo-

tive industry raised concerns about the massive costs that would arise from a post-Brexit 10-per-cent tariff.

The commission's extension proposal must formally be approved by the EU member states. EU leaders are to hold a regular summit in Brussels next week.

The commission had in-

itially strongly opposed such an extension, despite industry's pleas, requests from the British government and calls for pragmatism by EU lawmakers.

Its extension proposal included wording designed to make it legally impossible to put off tariffs beyond the December 2026 date. — AFP

Italy's ruling parties kill minimum wage bill

The government suggests expanding collective agreements to 20 per cent of uncovered workers.

ITALY'S governing right-wing parties on Wednesday scuppered an attempt by the opposition to introduce a minimum wage, which would have brought the country into line

with the majority of the EU.

Members of parliament voted instead to give Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's hard-right government six months to enact measures

to make pay in Italy "fairer".

Opposition members shouted "for shame!" as the bill, which would have set a minimum wage of nine euros (\$9.7) an hour before tax, was quashed.

"You are on the side of the exploiters, you slap the exploited in the face!" thundered Elly Schlein, head of the centre-left opposition Democratic Party.

Italy is one of five countries in the European Union where wages are determined solely by collective bargaining between employers and trade unions. The others are Austria, Denmark, Finland and Sweden. — AFP



A dairy factory in Italy. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/MARCO BERTORELLO/AFP/FILE**

TOP HEADLINES

Big US banks balk at new capital rules in Senate hearing

LARGE US banks railed against new proposed capital requirements at a congressional hearing on Wednesday, joining Senate Republicans in casting the measures as crimping loans to everyday Americans.

"This rule will make services so uneconomical, you will likely see two outcomes: many banks will simply stop offering certain products and services, and those that do will have to charge more for them just to make it worth the service," said JPMorgan Chase Chief Executive Jamie Dimon.

The proposal, the Basel III Endgame rule developed in concert with international standards in response to the 2007-2009 financial crisis, would increase capital requirements by 20-25 per cent on the largest banks, Dimon said in prepared remarks.

Senator Sherrod Brown, a Democrat from Ohio who chaired the annual oversight hearing, voiced skepticism over the complaints.

He argued the stricter capital requirements were needed to protect the bank system from another catastrophic meltdown, or from the recent bout of instability in midsized banks in March. — AFP

Canada maintains key interest rate at 5%

CANADA'S central bank on Wednesday held its key lending rate at five per cent, citing the global economic slowdown and easing inflation.

But the Bank of Canada nevertheless left the door open to eventual fresh rate hikes, saying it was "still concerned about risks" to the outlook for prices down the road.

"With further signs that monetary policy is moderating spending and relieving price pressures, Governing Council decided to hold the policy rate at five per cent," the Bank of Canada said in a statement.

The bank has left its benchmark interest rate at five per cent for months, after nearly a dozen hikes over an 18-month period as it tried to rein in inflation to its target two per cent.

The G7 nation's benchmark rate has since July been at its highest level in 22 years.

After inflation in Canada hit a high point of 8.1 per cent in June 2022, it continued to slow in October, to 3.1 per cent.

The Bank of Canada said its current monetary policy was "clearly restraining spending." — AFP

Saudi says it expects budget deficits in 2023, 2024

SAUDI Arabia announced Wednesday it was projecting a budget deficit of two per cent of GDP in 2023 and 1.9 per cent of GDP next year, reflecting rising spending and lower oil revenue.

The announcement comes one year after the Gulf kingdom, the world's biggest crude exporter and the Middle East's largest economy, recorded its first budget surplus in nearly a decade in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine which led to a boom in oil prices.

Saudi Arabia is in the middle of a sweeping economic and social reform agenda known as Vision 2030, intended to transform the formerly closed-off kingdom into a business, tourism and sports hub.

The deficit for 2023 is expected to amount to 82 billion Saudi riyals (roughly \$21.8 billion), while in 2024 it is expected to total 79 billion Saudi riyals (roughly \$21 billion), according to figures released by the finance ministry.

Riyadh anticipates 4.4 per cent real GDP growth in 2024 after just 0.03 per cent this year, the ministry said.

The projections broadly align with a pre-budget statement issued in October that indicated deficits would last through 2026. — AFP

Vietnamese coffee export forecast to decline

VIETNAMESE coffee export volume in the 2023-2024 season is likely to be lower than a year earlier due to a drop in output, no carry-over stock and growing local demand, Vietnam News reported Thursday, citing the Vietnam Coffee and Cocoa Association.

Nguyen Nam Hai, the association's chairman, said Viet Nam is likely to yield 1.6 million-1.7 million tonnes of coffee in the new season compared to 1.78 million tonnes in the previous season due to unfavourable weather and shrinking planting area.

With lower output, depleted stock, and an increase in coffee consumption at home, Viet Nam is likely to export 1.4 million tonnes of coffee in the 2023-2024 crop, lower than that in the 2022-2023 crop, according to the association.

Do Ha Nam, the association's deputy chairman, said that right at the beginning of the 2023-2024 crop year, the price of coffee beans in the domestic market was very high, about 60,000 Vietnamese dong (2.5 US dollars) per kilogramme. Such a high price at the beginning of the crop year is also something that has never happened in the history of the Vietnamese coffee industry. In 2023, there has been almost no coffee from farmers for businesses to buy from June, he said, predicting that in 2024, there may be a shortage of local supply stock from May and even from April.

Official data showed Vietnam exported 1.36 million tonnes of coffee with a revenue of nearly 3.5 billion US dollars in the first 11 months of 2023. — Xinhua

Vietnamese coffee export volume for the 2023-2024 season is anticipated to decrease from the previous year, with a projected yield of 1.6 million-1.7 million tonnes, down from 1.78 million tonnes, attributed to adverse weather conditions and a reduction in planting area.



An attendant of an exhibitor presents coffee products to visitors at the Viet Nam International Cafe Show 2018 in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, on 4 May 2018. **PHOTO: HOANG THI HUONG/XINHUA/FILE**

Toshiba, Rohm to invest \$2.7 bln to expand chip production

TOSHIBA Corp and electric parts company Rohm Co said Friday they will collaborate in the power semiconductor business, planning to spend a combined 388.3 billion yen (\$2.7 billion) to expand their production with one-third of the outlay covered by the industry ministry.

Under the project, Toshiba and Rohm will expand production at their chip factories in Ishikawa and Miyazaki prefectures, respectively, they said.

Of the total cost, up to 129.4 billion yen will be subsidized by the government, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said the same day. — Kyodo



Tokyo Disneyland apologized after a viral video of Minnie Mouse's skirt being lifted by another character during a Christmas parade was deemed sexual harassment.

PHOTO: KYODO

Tokyo Disneyland apologizes for Minnie Mouse skirt-lifting incident

THE operator of Tokyo Disneyland on Friday apologized after clips of Minnie Mouse having her skirt lifted by another character during a recent Christmas parade went viral on social media, with some harshly criticizing the gesture as sexual harassment.

The parade on Sat-

urday saw a reindeer lift Minnie Mouse's skirt while she was on a float at the theme park, located just east of Tokyo, although Disneyland's operator, Oriental Land Co, declined to answer whether the move was choreographed or improvised.

— Kyodo

Epic Games, Lego join forces for latest 'Fortnite' game

TOY giant Lego and videogame leader Epic Games joined forces Thursday to launch "Lego Fortnite" in a bid to grow a platform already used by hundreds of millions of people.

The game, which like prior Fortnite offerings is free to download, features the colourful animated landscape familiar to gamers but with figures who come from the Danish company's distinct universe.

While the setting resembles that of the original Fortnite game, first launched in 2017, the playable space in the Lego version is 19 times as big. — AFP

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ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

UK PM urges support for Rwanda emergency bill after immigration minister quits

The emergency legislation, named the Safety of Rwanda Bill, has faced criticism from within the Conservative Party, prompting Immigration Minister Jenrick's resignation.

UNITED Kingdom (UK) Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Thursday called on "everyone" to support his government's latest bill that would allow the deportation of asylum seekers to Rwanda after Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick resigned on Wednesday.

"This bill blocks every single reason that has ever been used to prevent flights to Rwanda from taking off," Sunak said at a press conference at Downing Street.

In April 2022, the UK reached a deal with Rwanda, under which illegal immigrants and asylum seekers would be

sent to the east African country to have their claims processed there. If successful, they would be granted permanent residency in Rwanda rather than allowed to return to the UK.

The scheme, however, has met resistance. The first flight, which was scheduled to take seven migrants to Rwanda in June last year, was cancelled after a last-minute intervention by the European Court of Human Rights. Last month, the UK's Supreme Court ruled that the government's deportation scheme of asylum seekers to Rwanda was unlawful. — Xinhua



A handout photograph released by the UK Parliament shows Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaking during the Prime Ministers' Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons, in London, on 6 December, 2023. **PHOTO: HANDOUT / UK PARLIAMENT VIA AFP**

No surprises in store as Egypt heads to polls



Motorists drive past campaign billboards of Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi along a street in Cairo on 7 December 2023, ahead of the country's presidential election. **PHOTO: KHALED DESOUKI/AFP**

EGYPT is gearing up this month for a presidential election certain to win incumbent Abdel Fattah al-Sisi a third term in office, despite rising public discontent as the country faces its worst ever economic crisis.

From Sunday through Tuesday, Egyptians aged 18 and above will be able to cast their ballots for one of four candidates — former army chief Sisi, in

power since he deposed elected Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013, and three other relative unknowns.

Preparations for elections in the Arab world's most populous country are massive in scale — with nearly 9,400 polling stations set up and 15,000 judicial employees working over the three days of voting. — AFP

Canada to double cost-of-living requirement for intl students

The Canadian government announced a significant increase in the financial requirement for incoming international students, with Immigration Minister Marc Miller stating that starting 1 January 2024, a single applicant must show 20,635 Canadian dollars (15,181 US dollars) in addition to tuition and travel costs.

THE Canadian government announced Thursday it will more than double the cost-of-living financial requirement for incoming international students on 1 January 2024.

Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marc Miller said in a news release that a single applicant will need to show they have 20,635 Canadian dollars (15,181 US dollars) in addition to their first year of tuition and travel costs.

The cost-of-living requirement for study permit applicants has not changed since the early 2000s, when it was set at 10,000 Canadian dollars (7,357 US dollars). As such, the financial requirement hasn't kept up with the cost of living

over time, resulting in students arriving in Canada only to learn that their funds aren't adequate, the release said.

Miller said this threshold will be adjusted each year when Statistics Canada up-

dates the low-income cut-off (LICO). LICO represents the minimum income necessary to ensure that an individual does not have to spend a greater than average portion of income on necessities. — Xinhua



Students at the Bishop's University Library Learning Commons in Sherbrooke, Quebec, on 20 November 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

SPORTS

Messi, Argentina to face old foe Chile in Copa America

Lionel Messi and Argentina will avenge their 2015 and 2016 Copa America final defeats to Chile after being grouped with their old rivals in the tournament draw.

LIONEL Messi and Argentina will get the chance to avenge their defeats to Chile in the 2015 and 2016 Copa America finals after being grouped with their old rivals in the draw for next year's tournament on Thursday.

Reigning Copa America champions Argentina will defend their title in the United States

next summer in an expanded 16-team tournament which features 10 South American teams and six qualifiers from the CONCACAF region.

Argentina, winners of last year's World Cup, will kick off the tournament on 20 June in Atlanta against either Canada or Trinidad & Tobago, who meet in a playoff



Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni eyes the Copa America trophy during the final draw for the 2024 tournament in Miami on Thursday. **PHOTO: AFP**

next year to determine one of two remaining CONCACAF slots.

The Argentines will then face Chile in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on 25 June in a repeat of the 2016 Copa America Centenar-

io final held at the same venue.

Argentina, beaten by Chile in Santiago on penalties a year earlier in 2015, also lost the 2016 final on spot-kicks, with Messi blazing his penalty over the bar.

The Argentine captain later announced a shortlived retirement from international football after the defeat, before reversing the move and continuing his career. — AFP

Arsenal boss Arteta says he cannot stop touchline emotion



Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

MIKEL Arteta says he will continue to show passion on the touchline despite landing himself with a ban for Arsenal's trip to Aston Villa on Saturday.

The Spaniard will not be in the dugout at Villa Park as Arsenal aim to strengthen their grip at the top of the Premier League after he received a third yellow card of the season in Tuesday's last-gasp victory at Luton.

The Gunners came from behind to win 4-3 as Declan Rice headed in the decider deep into stoppage time, with Arteta

cautioned by referee Samuel Barrott, who deemed he had celebrated the goal excessively.

However, Arteta, who could face a further touchline ban following a Football Association charge for his post-match comments after Arsenal's defeat at Newcastle last month, does not know how to modify his behaviour.

"I don't know how to stop it," he said at his pre-match press conference on Friday. "It was a really emotional moment with everybody bouncing around and you lose sense of where you are and the space you have to be in.

"It was unfortunate as now I cannot be next to my team on the touchline but it is a decision that they make looking strictly at the rules.

"After that I straight away sat on my seat and stayed there for 30 seconds but that was after the emotion. In the moment I think it is very difficult to demand that."

The Spaniard, 41, said he did not want to stop showing emotion. — AFP

Returning Osaka targets Paris Olympics, more Grand Slam titles

A "nervous" Naomi Osaka has targeted a place at next year's Paris Olympics and more Grand Slam titles after she makes her eagerly anticipated return to tennis.

The 26-year-old former world number one is set to return to competition at the Brisbane International starting at

the end of the month, having not played on tour since September 2022.

The four-time Grand Slam champion gave birth to daughter Shai in July and she has also struggled with her mental health and the pressures of tennis.

She told Japanese broad-

caster NHK that she feels "nervous and also happy and excited" as she prepares to return.

And Osaka, who lit the cauldron to open the pandemic-postponed Tokyo Olympics in 2021, hopes her comeback takes her all the way to next summer's Paris Games. — AFP

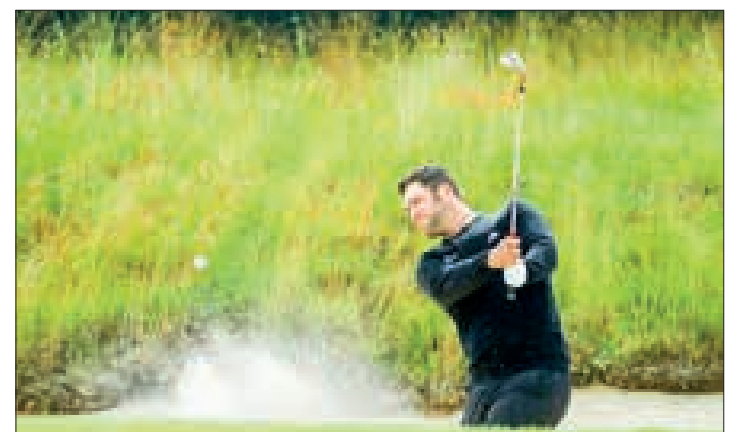
Spanish ace Rahm confirms jump to LIV Golf

REIGNING Masters champion Jon Rahm is making the jump to LIV golf, the Spanish star confirmed on Thursday.

"As you can see now it's official, this is me finally saying after all the rumours... I have officially joined LIV Golf," Rahm told Fox News.

Rahm's announcement ended weeks of speculation that the player who had previously pledged his loyalty to the PGA Tour would sign for the Saudi-backed circuit.

LIV Golf issued a statement saying details for a team captained by Rahm in the com-



Spanish golf superstar Jon Rahm has confirmed his jump to the Saudi-backed LIV Golf circuit. **PHOTO: AFP**

ing season, which starts on 2 February at LIV Golf Mayako-

ba in Mexico, will be released soon. — AFP

UK PM urges support for Rwanda emergency bill after immigration minister quits

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WORLD

TIGHTENING RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA BAN

Japan to legalize cannabis-based medicines

JAPAN has passed a bill to legalize cannabis-based medicines in a landmark revision of its stringent drug laws, while toughening its ban on recreational use of marijuana.

The changes to Japan's cannabis and narcotics control laws passed on Wednesday in the upper house will pave the way for the lifting of a ban on medical products derived from cannabis.

Cannabis-based medicines, produced with the active ingredient cannabidiol, or CBD, are already used overseas to treat various conditions like severe epilepsy.

This is a win for patient groups that have campaigned for access to these medicines. However the changes amount to a tightening of Japan's already tough cannabis policy.

Marijuana consumption was criminalized, closing a loophole that officials partly blame for a recent rise in cannabis-related arrests. Prior to the revisions, inhaling marijuana had been technically legal, as opposed to a jail term of up to five years for possession.

The loophole was originally introduced to prevent farmers from being arrested for accidentally inhaling psychoactive smoke when growing hemp. But alarmed by the recent spike in arrests over cannabis, especially among young people including teens, authorities decided to take things up a notch. — AFP



People attend water fight to celebrate the Songkran Festival in Bangkok, Thailand, 13 April 2023. **PHOTO: RACHEN SAGEAMSAK/XINHUA**

Thailand to promote Songkran as global festival after UNESCO listing

Thailand aims to elevate the Songkran festival to a global event to boost tourism and support its economy, heavily dependent on the travel industry.

THAILAND held a celebration in the capital Bangkok on Thursday to mark the listing of Songkran, a traditional Thai New Year festival, as an intangible cultural heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Thailand is poised to promote the Songkran festival in the Southeast

Asian country as a global event to help attract visitors and bolster its tourism-reliant economy.

The listing on Wednesday was a valuable gift that brings pride and honour to Thailand, Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said at the celebration.

The Thai government is committed to preserving and promoting the tradition of Songkran festival, along

with providing equal opportunities for people from all walks of life to join the celebrations nationwide, Srettha said.

As part of its efforts to promote the cultural soft power, Thailand is planning to hold a series of large-scale events for the annual Songkran celebrations, which fall in April, the government said in a statement. — Xinhua

South Korea aims to form 'chip alliance' with Netherlands

SOUTH Korea aims to establish a "chip alliance" with the Netherlands during President Yoon

Employees are seen working on the final assembly of ASML's TWINSCAN NXE:3400B semiconductor lithography tool with its panels removed, in Veldhoven, Netherlands, in this picture taken 4 April 2019. **PHOTO: BART VAN OVERBEEKE FOTOGRAFIE/ASML**

Suk Yeol's state visit next week, his office said Thursday.

The two countries are leading players in the global chip industry. Yoon is scheduled to visit the Netherlands' ASML, the world's leading maker of the machines that help manufacture semiconductors — the brains driving everything from consumer electronics to weapons.

In June, the Dutch govern-

ment said firms producing semiconductor-making equipment would need permission to export to foreign clients from September this year.

One of the goals of the upcoming state visit is "to establish a 'semiconductor alliance' between South Korea and the Netherlands", said Yoon's deputy national security advisor Kim Tae-hyo. — AFP

