

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

Youths cautioned against influence and manipulation of neo-colonialists

THESE big countries penetrate the developing countries by deploying those who obey their orders and followers to fuel problems and conflicts based on racism and religion, said Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered an address at the opening ceremony of the Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival in commemoration of the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day at Gymnasium B of Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

He continued to say that small countries like Myanmar may experience deterioration if they cannot safeguard themselves through collaborative efforts or may suffer the influence and manipulation of big nations.

He added that it is because those big countries applying wordings of human rights and democracy attempt to develop countries under their manipulation and influence through various means and ways.

As such, the Senior General underscored that it is necessary to safeguard the Union to be free from disintegration



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views round the exhibition at the event yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

Salient points from the speech made by the Senior General at the opening of the Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival

- Small countries like Myanmar may experience deterioration if they cannot safeguard themselves.
- Big countries applying wordings of human rights and democracy attempt to develop countries under their manipulation and influence through various means and ways.
- It is necessary to safeguard the Union from disintegration and raise awareness so that the new generation of youths can comprehensively understand the ways and means of neo-colonialism.
- Today's youth and literary fine arts festival aims to let all citizens know the history of Independence Day and the Independence struggle, raise patriotic spirit among the youths and participate in nation-building tasks.

and raise awareness for the new generation of youths to understand the ways and means of neo-colonialists comprehensively.

According to the world's current situation, he unveiled that non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty are the most appropriate national ambitions, goals and duties.

The Senior General noted that today's youth and literary fine arts festival aims to let all citizens know the history of Independence Day and the Independence struggle, raise patriotic spirit among the youths and participate

in nation-building tasks.

The festival is an investment for youth resources of the country to develop the whole nation, he commented.

As such, the government implements youth affairs policies to help the youth emerge as qualified citizens, adding that all have to give chances to youths for participation in the State's development undertakings.

At the ceremony, the Senior General enjoyed songs and dance entertainment of artistes from the Fine Arts Department and the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs.

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MDY Intl Trade Fair & Investment Forum 2023 fostering regional entrepreneurial connections

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YGEA to open 30th gold training programme in Jan

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Irrawaddy Dolphin Observation Programme for foreign tourists launching along Ayeyawady River

NATIONAL

MDY Intl Trade Fair & Investment Forum 2023 to include musical entertainment

THE daily musical entertainment will be seen together with the Mandalay International Trade Fair and Investment Forum 2023, according to the Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry- MRC-CI.

The event will be held at the Mandalay Convention Centre in Chanmyathazi Township, Mandalay Region, from 20 to 22 December. A programme of music performances by ar-

tistes was also added during the event.

"The exhibition and forum will be held from 20 to 22 December. A total of 262 booths will be opened for display and sale. The products that will be displayed are food and consumer goods, agricultural produce and agricultural machinery. There is also a musical entertainment programme for visitors during the exhibition," said U Win Htay, Chairman of the Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Singers No No, Aung Ye Kyaw, July Wint Htel, Pann Eaindra Nway and Anoni Mus will entertain with songs.

The Mandalay International Trade Fair and Investment Forum 2023 will include agriculture and livestock forums, as well as tourism and energy sector forums.

The Mandalay International Trade Fair and Investment Forum was held once in 2019 in Mandalay Region. — ASH/KZL



The image shows the handout from the MDY Intl Trade Fair and Investment Forum 2023.

Renovation of Salay Archaeological Museum successfully completed

U Aung Aung Kyaw, director of the Department of Archaeology and National Museum (Management), announced the completion of the maintenance project for the Salay Archaeological Museum, also known as Yokesone Monastery, situated in Salay, Magway Region.

The project, initiated in early December, encompassed tasks such as installing a lightning rod and restoring ancient religious structures. Additionally, the department repaired two nearby pagodas that had suffered minor damage during Cyclone Mocha.

The director explained, "Experts used to refer to Salay as 'a second Bagan' due to its numerous ancient pagodas and temples. Yokesone Monastery is also globally renowned, leading us to conduct maintenance projects every financial year."

Concerns about the existing road's proximity to religious structures prompted the department to construct a new road. Heavy vehicles' vibrations were compromising



Authorities are undertaking renovation works in Salay Archaeological Museum, also known as Salay Yokesone Monastery, and on religious buildings in its surrounding area.

these buildings' integrity, necessitating this infrastructure update.

Salay, the hometown of U Ponnya, a celebrated literary

icon from the late Konbaung Dynasty, is renowned for the Yokesone Monastery, temples, and colonial buildings. — ASH/NT

Corruption Complaints Accepted: Taking Action Against Wrongdoing

1. Anyone can report and file a complaint against corruption and becoming wealthy through corruption to the commission, commission office, working committees, working group, plenary inspection team and investigation team organized by the law in line with the stipulations.
2. When sending the complaints, it must be addressed directly, without sending a copy, to the commission.
3. The name of the complainants, signature, copy of CSC, address and phone numbers must be included.
4. It requires proof of primary evidence such as witnesses, documents, photos, audio and video files.
5. If a complaint is made deliberately to slander or defame a person, the complainant will face legal action under Section 56 of the Anti-Corruption Law.

Address

Anti-Corruption Commission
Office 56, Zeya Htani Road, Oattara Thiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw.
Post Office No 144
Phone: 067 8103347, 067 8103334
Email: accm@accm.gov.mm
Website: http://www.accm.gov.mm

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Head of Service Organization appointed

THE State Administration Council has appointed U Aung Myo Oo, Deputy Director-General (Admin) of the Department of Highways under the Ministry of Construction, as Director-General at the same department on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

The Global New Light of Myanmar

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NATIONAL

Youths cautioned against influence and manipulation ...



State Administration Council Chair Premier Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presses the electric button to unveil the Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

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Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla and dignitaries viewed round

the exhibition of the festival. Also present at the ceremony were the joint secretary of the council and wife, council mem-

bers and their wives, Union-level dignitaries, Union ministers and their wives and officials. The festival will last till 22

December, and visitors can view round the exhibition staged by ministries free of charge from 9.30 am to 4.20 pm daily, with

entertainment programmes, talk shows of artistes, and sales of ethnic foods and books. — MNA/TTA

Students, youths, children engage enthusiastically in 76th Independence Day Youth & Literary Fine Arts Exhibition

THE Youth and Literary Fine Arts Exhibition, as a gesture of hailing 76th Independence Day, was held at the Wunna Theikdi Gymnasium B in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The event was crowded with the ministries' staff, teachers, students, youths and children.

The booths of 14 ministries featured awareness of cyber security, drugs, anti-human trafficking, traffic rules, the record of the State Flag hoisting ceremony, declaration of independence, independence monument, State Flags, honorary titles and medals conferred between 1948 and 2023, record photos of paving Magwayza-Khaunglanphu road in PutaO district of Kachin State, book stalls, mobile book shops and photos of Sarpay Beikman.

Moreover, the event also displayed the historic agreements, documents, stone inscriptions, the national museum, conservation of biodiversity, Myanmar's ecosystem, forestry, data collec-

tion of citizens aged over 10, basic and higher education sectors, electric vehicles, mobile science and technologies, innovations of technological universities and the youths-related activities.

Similarly, the Ministry of Information and Religious Affairs and Culture opened book shops for students and young people.

Besides such programmes, the exhibition became more alive for its special entertainment programmes.

Moreover, MRTV arranged a news studio where people can read news like newscasters and take photos.

Additionally, the visitors to the event were interested in the displays of EVs and Nay Pyi Taw Police Force as they featured security, the rule of law and criminal cases, cartoon displays of traffic rules and regulations, actions on gambling and other matters.

The event also included fun fair games and quizzes of ministries concerned with youths



Youths and schoolchildren flock to booths at the 76th Independence Day Youth and Literary Fine Arts Exhibition yesterday.

and children.

The festival aims at sharpening the intelligibility and critical thinking of youths, motivating the young people to read books and publications, know the advantages of literature, uplift patriotic spirit, prestige and integrity through literature

and fine arts, adore the independence of the nation with the knowledge of independence struggle and sufferings in the colonial era, enjoy peace, stability and beautifying scenes of the nation with development activities as well as panoramic rural scenes to have the soul

for adorning the relevant regions and states, and easily know endeavours of relevant ministries through the displays of booths at the event. Therefore, students, youths and children should participate in the event being held from 20 to 22 December. — Myo Sett Thit/KTZH

NATIONAL

Students engage in discussion on 'Youth and Literature' topic



Students take part in the panel discussion on the topic of "Youth and Literature" at the Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival in commemoration of the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day at Wunna Theikdi Stadium B in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

THE 76th Independence Day Youth and Literary Fine Arts Festival took place yesterday morning at Wunna Theikdi Gymnasium B in Nay Pyi Taw. In the afternoon, a youth panel discussion was conducted on "Youth and Literature", with students actively participating.

Before the discussion, staff and artists from the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs, Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, and Ministry of Information performed songs, including "Ever-

lasting Faith" and "The Youth", and popular modern music as part of the entertainment programmes.

Following the entertainment programmes, MRTV-4 TV presenters and actors delved into discussions about literature and art. They explored the relationships among youth, literature, and art, the benefits of studying and reading literature based on age groups, the manners and difficulties encountered in youth life, and

the success achievable through persistent and diligent pursuit of one's passion.

Subsequently, participating students engaged in knowledge-sharing dialogues, with discussion leaders elaborating on essential topics that youth should be aware of. Likewise, on 21 December with the theme "Youth and Optimism" and on 22 December with the theme "Relation with Youth", dialogues are scheduled to continue. — MST/TKO

FMI records 68% profit surge, fuelled by financial, healthcare services

HALF-YEAR profit of the First Myanmar Investment Public Co Ltd (FMI Group) up to September 2023 increased more than 68 per cent, and the revenue rose 43.9 per cent compared with the corresponding period last year; the group said on 16 December.

FMI earned K229.4 billion and K159.4 billion in this and the previous half of the financial year, respectively, up 43.9 per cent, mainly thanks to financial services (Yoma Bank) and healthcare services (Pun Hlaing Hospital Group). Yoma Bank earned K190.7 billion and K130.4 billion in this and last year's half-financial year, respectively, a 46.2 per cent increase, mainly due to various bank loans and banking services.

Pun Hlaing Hospital Group

earned K 38 billion and K 29 billion in this half financial year and last year, respectively, increasing 31.4 per cent, mainly due to medical checkups, emergency treatment, and inpatient and outpatient medical services.

As a result, FMI Group made a gross profit of K90.9 billion, up 68.6 per cent compared with K53.9 billion last year.

Memories Group, a travel agency of FMI Group, that has signed management contracts with famous buildings in Yangon, such as Boutique Hotel, Governor Residence and British Club, is expanding its resort services market amid the challenges of declining foreign tourist arrivals and slowing domestic tourism services, it also stated. — MT/ZN



Pun Hlaing Hospital (Mandalay). PHOTO: FMI

Counter-argument to false information

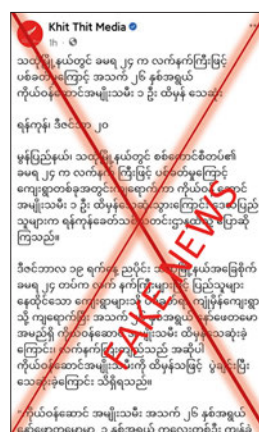
Than Lwin Times spreads false information

THAN Lwin Times, a malicious media outlet, spread misinformation that the military convoy forcibly took precious things from the houses in Nyaungzin Village of Thayetchaung Township on 17 December.

The regional security official claimed that Tatmadaw did not march to Nyaungz-

in Village of Thayetchaung Township on 17 December, and the mine attack on Tatmadaw was also false information.

Malicious media outlets circulate false information on social media to cause disintegration between Tatmadaw and the people. — MNA/KTZH



Screenshot validates misinformation.

Khit Thit media misreporting on Tatmadaw's artillery shells incident in Mon State

KHIT Thit, a malicious media outlet, is deliberately spreading misinformation on social media that a 26-year-old pregnant woman from Kyonhmein Village died after an artillery shell launched by the Thaton

military base exploded on 19 December.

The regional security official claimed that Tatmadaw did not fire on that day, but terrorists launched attacks.

Tatmadaw has

never opened fire into villages, and the malicious media Khit Thit is just circulating false information on social media to cause disintegration between Tatmadaw and the people. — MNA/KTZH

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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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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

NATIONAL

Pre-coordination meeting for 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Conference & Seminar

THE pre-coordination meeting of 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners' Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar was held at MICC II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the event, Director-General Dr Su Su Dwe of the Traditional Medicine Department, who is also a patron of the event, briefed four proposals – to cooperate with related professionals and international traditional medicinal universities and organizations for the development of traditional medicine to develop safe and high-quality traditional medication, to conduct capacity build-



The pre-coordination meeting for the 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners' Conference and Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar in progress in Nay Pyi Taw.

ing training courses for traditional medicine practitioners to improve quality of traditional medicine related subjects and to raise public awareness in public health and health-related knowledge through traditional medicine.

Then, the representatives discussed the respective proposals. The representatives visited Maravijaya Buddha Image at noon.

The 22nd Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners' Conference will be on 21 December, and the Myanmar Traditional Medicine Seminar will be on 22 December at MICC II in Nay Pyi Taw. — MNA/KTZH

MDY Intl Trade Fair & Investment Forum 2023 fostering regional entrepreneurial connections



A general view of visitors at exhibition stands during the Mandalay International Trade Fair & Investment Forum 2023 at the Mandalay Convention Centre in Mandalay on 20 December 2023. PHOTO: MTK

THE Mandalay International Trade Fair and Investment Forum 2023, held at the Mandalay Convention Centre, has attracted numerous visitors, according to reports.

The event, organized collaboratively by the Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MRCCI) and the Chamber of Commerce of Dehong Prefecture, is slated to run from 9 am to 5 pm on 20-22 December. It serves as a crucial link, connecting Mandalay entrepreneurs with countries in the region.

U Win Htay, Chairman of the MRCCI, stated, "Since representatives from ASEAN businesses came and showcased their enterprises, we believe our entrepreneurs will gain foreign connections. We signed MoUs with businesses from Viet Nam and China today."

The event aims to identify business opportunities in Mandalay and encourage local micro, small, and medium enterprises through business matching with foreign companies.

Dr Tun Tun Aung, Managing Director of the Mandalay Myotha Industrial Park Development Company, said, "We exhibited the investment potential of our industrial park at this event. Positioned at the heart of Myanmar, it is accessible by land, sea, and air routes." He invited everyone to the forum to witness the innovative ventures awaiting Mandalay's future.

The forum features three discussions on investment potential in Myanmar: the agriculture and livestock sector on 20 December, the hotel and tourism sector on 21 December, and the green energy MSME sector on 22 December.

Visitors can explore over 240 exhibitions at the event, showcasing items ranging from household goods and medicine to solar and electric vehicles. Entertainment programmes, lucky draws, and game activities are also available to keep visitors engaged.

Participating countries include Myanmar, China, India, Bangladesh, and Viet Nam. — Maung Aye Chan/NT

FDA issues notices on sale of unregistered drugs in market

THE Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a notice on 19 December that unregistered medications are on sale in the market.

FDA regularly inspects the drugs in the market and finds that unregistered medications that do not guarantee quality, efficacy, and safety are on sale in the market, according to the statement.

Medicines notified by the FDA include Benda 500 Tablet, Tiffy Dey tablet, Sara Suspension (Strawberry) and Sara For Children Suspension (Orange), which do not have the same Myanmar label as the barcode.

The barcode of the officially imported Benda 500 Tablet is 8851473004123, and the drug registration number is MM Reg No R250 7AA 2814 and written in Myanmar on the insert sheet. The bar code of the illegally imported Benda 500 tablet is 8851473001191. There is no drug registration number in Myanmar, and no Myanmar is written on the insert sheet.

Similarly, the barcode of Tiffy Dey tablet, which

was illegally imported, is 8851473007704 and has no drug registration number. There is no writing in Myanmar on the medicine bottle and medicine card.

The barcode of the officially imported Tiffy Dey tablet is 8851473009678, and the drug registration number is MM Reg No R2609 AA 3580. English is on the medicine bottle and medicine card. It is written in English and Myanmar characters.

In addition, the illegally imported Sara Suspension (Strawberry) and Sara For Children Suspension (Orange) do not have a drug registration number, and the medicine bottle and insert sheet are not written in Myanmar.

The officially imported Sara Suspension (Strawberry) drug registration numbers are MM Reg No R2402 AA 1167 and Sara For Children Suspension (Orange) MM Reg No R2103 AA 2933, written in English and Myanmar on the bottle and insert sheet. — TWA/KZL

NATIONAL

Literary Day's 36th Commemoration: Ceremony honouring literati set for 24 Dec

THE 36th Literary Day commemoration ceremony, organized by the Myanmar Writers' Association, will be held on 24 December at the City Hall in Kyauktada Township.

To ensure the attendance of township writers' associations, including the literati, they have been instructed to collect invitations from the Myanmar Writers' Association office in Kyauktada Township starting from 20 December.

Since 1980, the Myanmar Writers' Association has organized the respect-paying ceremony to honour veteran literary scholars. In 1980, there were approximately ten literary doyens. From 1996



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn respects a literary doyen, presenting him with a cash prize at the 35th Literary Day commemoration ceremony for the literati.

to 2022 (the 35th ceremony), the literati, about 247 in total, have been honoured. — TWA/KZW

Sinphyukyun bell pepper opens at K10,000 lower than last year's price

THE opening price of new bell peppers from the Sinphyukyun area was K19,000 per viss in Yangon's market on 19 December, down by K10,000 compared to last year.

Last year, it fetched K29,000 per viss on 24 November 2022 during an entry into

Yangon's market. Yet, the prices were downward, reaching K24,000-K25,000 per viss on 17 December. The price drastically fell to K12,000 per viss on 27 December.

The price rebounded to K15,000-K16,000 per viss in H1 this year. The price hit a high

of K19,500-K20,000 per viss in November and December.

Meanwhile, the highest price of the bell pepper processed in cold storage is around K20,000 this year, while bell peppers hit a record price of K31,000 per viss on 17 November 2022. — TWA/KK

Elevated poultry feedstuff costs drive up egg prices

RISING feedstuff costs in poultry farming drove egg production costs and increased egg prices. The price of broken rice, mainly used in feed processing, jumped to K45,000 per sack this year.

Integrated chicken and fish farming is ordinary in the country, whereas the free-range system is fostered for ducks. The integrated farms save some costs, yet farmers must focus on health and safety measures.

Free-range farming is a labour-intensive system to manage free-range ducks. This system saves some feed costs.

Poultry chicken farming



Egg cartons were found in the market.

attracts the attention of farmers rather than duck farming. Duck farming was mostly found in the Kayan, Thanet-

pin and Thakala areas before the 2020s. Locals from delta regions (Pyapon and Latputta districts) are executing this

YRG to host minimarathon in marking 76th Independence Day

THE minimarathon competition commemorating the 76th Independence Day will take place at 6 am on 27 December at the National Indoor Stadium 1, Thuwunna, organized by the Yangon Regional Government.

The minimarathon competition (for participants under the age of 18) will offer the following cash prizes: K500,000 (first prize), K400,000 (second prize), K300,000 (third prize), K200,000 (fourth prize), K150,000 (fifth prize), K100,000 each (for winners No 5 to 10), K50,000 each

(for winners No 11 to 50), K40,000 each (for winners No 51 to 100), and K30,000 each (for winners No 101 to 200). Additionally, the male/female competition (for participants under the age of 12) will award K150,000 (first prize), K100,000 (second prize), K70,000 (third prize), K50,000 (fourth prize), K30,000 (fifth prize), and K10,000 each (for winners No 6 to 100).

Individuals interested in participating in the competition can register in advance by calling 09 790473243. — TWA/MKKS



File photo shows that youth runners participating in the 75th Lashio marathon competition.

business.

Duck eggs supplied from the Mawlamyine area fetch higher prices in the Yangon market. Eggs are in high demand in the market. The price of duck egg (K300-400) is over K100 higher than that of chicken egg (K230-300).

At present, egg production costs over K5,000 per viss. The lack of border demand cut egg prices for now, making egg farmers hit financially.

Egg consumption might reduce some food costs when meat prices are surging, Daw Thiri, a housewife, told the Global New Light of Myanmar. — TWA/KK



A poultry farm.

MRF to disburse K400,000 per acre to improve rice yield

MYANMAR Rice Federation (MRF) will provide a short-term loan of K400,000 per acre to enhance rice production.

The farmers who own more than 10 acres of farmland are entitled to apply for this loan, according to the MRF's statement released on 20 December.

The MRF has been coordinating with authorized dealers (private banks) for the loan scheme to reap a fruitful result.

Farmers must provide farmland permits (Form 7) as collateral. The loan tenure is around four to five months with an annual interest rate of ten per cent. The farmers can take out loans for up to 100 acres. The loan application will be forwarded to the relevant banks after the MRF's scrutiny.

Those farmers holding

more than 10 acres can apply for a loan through admin@mrf.com.mm and Viber Phone: 09 400067240 of the MRF.

On 14 December 2023, the coordination meeting regarding cultivation loan (K400,000 per acre) for the summer paddy season was held virtually and attended by managing directors of the Myanmar Economic Bank and Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank, officials of Myanmar Rice Federation and representatives of KBZ Bank, A Bank, AYA Bank, Yoma Bank and UAB Bank.

This loan scheme is projected to cover Ayeyawady, Bago, Yangon and Mandalay regions and Nay Pyi Taw. The meeting highlighted how to initiate this scheme up to 100,000 acres as a pilot project. — NN/EM



Farmers harvest rice using a grain thresher to process paddy during the harvest season.

YGEA to open 30th gold training programme in Jan



Jewellery items are displayed at the gold jewellery's outlet in Yangon.

YANGON Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) will offer gold education course (30th Batch) for free at its office at No 42/50 on Shwebontha Street, Pabedan Township, in the coming January (2-11 January 2024).

The YGEA will also conduct an awareness course (11th Batch) on anti-money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT).

The respective experts will disseminate education and knowledge about gold mining, gold refining, gold trading, basic calculations to run a gold

shop, gold smith, gold mortgage, gold price calculation, gold/silver coins and jewellery and opening gold shops.

Those enthusiastic can take out enrollment forms free at the association's office. As the number of trainees is limited, they can contact YGEA's numbers: 09 450049282 and 09 251992727 for further details.

The precious metal dealers' licences can be sought only with the AML/CFT course completion certificate under Chapter 2, Section 3 (G) of Directive 2/2022, issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs' Central Body on

Anti-Money Laundering.

The YGEA handed over 21 applications for precious metal dealers' licences to the registration board in the Pabedan, Lanmadaw, and Latha townships on 1 April.

YGEA Chair U Myo Myint handed over 21 applications for precious metal dealers' licences to the authorities concerned from the General Administration Department and the respective registration boards of Lanmadaw (one application), Latha (one application), Pabedan (19 applications). — NN/EM

Advertorial

Actively Promoting Local Talent Development in Dapein (1) Hydropower Station

DAPEIN (1) Hydropower Station of China Datang Corporation Ltd stands deep in the mountains of northern Myanmar. It is adjacent to the Dapein River at the China-Myanmar border and surrounded by mountains and virgin forests. It has an installed capacity of 240,000 kilowatts. The construction of this hydropower station was commenced in July 2007. This hydropower station is the first one invested, constructed and operated overseas by China Datang Corporation Ltd. It is also a power corridor between China and Myanmar, and an important window to-



wards Southeast Asia through Myanmar. In the past 15 years, Dapein (1) Hydropower Station has reliably provided clean en-

ergy for the people of Myanmar, effectively improving people's livelihoods and local economy. It has been praised by various

sectors in Myanmar as an outstanding corporate image of Datang.

Recently, five Myanmar employees have completed entry procedures for Dapein (1) Hydropower Station, the second batch of Myanmar production and technical professionals recruited successfully this year, indicating that Dapein (1) Hydropower Station is at a rapid development stage of local employment and talent cultivation.

Dapein (1) Hydropower Station has a comprehensive salary, benefit and talent building system for Myanmar talents.

China Datang Corporation Ltd provides broad platforms and vast opportunities for the growth and development of Myanmar talents.

In the future, China Datang Corporation Ltd will continue to offer better career development opportunities for more young people in Myanmar and increase the proportion of local employment, thereby improving local employment and economy, enhancing the cooperation between China and Myanmar in the power sector, and promoting the corporate high-quality and sustainable development.

OPINION

Promote integrated coastal management for national advancement

MYANMAR boasts an extensive coastline stretching 2,800 kilometres, presenting abundant opportunities for both off and inshore fishing, aquatic resource farming, offshore oil and natural gas exploration, exclusive economic zone utilization, and the harnessing of renewable energy. The coastal areas further hold the potential for international ports, acting as strategic hubs for global maritime trade, fostering natural beaches and islands for tourism development, and preserving the rich traditional culture of local ethnic communities.

Despite these promising prospects, Myanmar faces significant challenges, including the degradation of marine diversity, coral reefs, mangrove forests, seagrass, and fishery resources. This, in turn, results in a decline in food security and threatens the livelihoods of local communities. Addressing these issues promptly is imperative.

Over successive eras, the government has enacted laws,

Myanmar has taken significant strides by finalizing the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and the Marine Pollution Control Law, designating non-fishery areas in the sea for the development of fishery deposits, and establishing mangrove forests and protected public forests in various regions and states through collaborative efforts of relevant departments and residents. These initiatives contribute to the accumulation of marine resources and the overall development of coastal areas, benefiting the state's economy, ensuring food security for the population, and enhancing maritime security for the nation's prestige.

The emphasis on the blue economic sector goes beyond merely creating economic opportunities; it seeks to establish policies and plans that ensure the conservation and systematic utilization of resources from the coastal and marine ecosystem in a harmonious manner. Collaboration among relevant organizations is crucial for the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources. Additionally, the government has implemented an annual non-fishery period as part of resource conservation.

Myanmar has taken significant strides by finalizing the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and the Marine Pollution Control Law, designating non-fishery areas in the sea for the development of fishery deposits, and establishing mangrove forests and protected public forests in various regions and states through collaborative efforts of relevant departments and residents. These initiatives contribute to the accumulation of marine resources and the overall development of coastal areas, benefiting the state's economy, ensuring food security for the population, and enhancing maritime security for the nation's prestige.

We warmly welcome Mount Popa National Geopark

Introduction

MOUNT Popa, in reality, forms the largest and southernmost of the group of Lower Chindwin volcanoes. The area occupies about 500 square miles and lies between 20° 40' and 21° 3' N Lat and 95° 6' and 95° 22' E Long, and is represented on the following one-inch Burma Survey map sheets, 84/04, 0/8, P/1, P/2, P/5, and P/6. It is situated in Mandalay Division in the Myingyan plane of Central Myanmar. Although the region is located in the dry zone of Myanmar, the weather of Mount Popa is cooler than that of surrounding regions due to the isolated high mountain of 4,981 feet. Relatively, the Mount Popa area is the most convenient and accessible place in Myanmar. One can reach Mount Popa by motorcar, train, and plane via Nyaung U airport from Yangon and Mandalay. Mount Popa National Geopark is the first Geopark in Myanmar, which is a collaborative effort by the Myanmar Geosciences Society and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

What are Geoparks?
A UNESCO Global Geopark is like nowhere else on Earth. It is somewhere to touch, explore and connect with a part of the Earth's history. As an area of unique geological interest, a Geopark is a place where you can discover extraordinary landscapes, places and people. (UNESCO)

Geodiversity of Myanmar
Myanmar, the second largest country in Southeast Asia, occupies a geologically critical position in the northeast corner of the Indian Ocean, where the northern end of the Sunda-Andaman arc, the world's second-largest arc system, has collided with the Indian continent in the Naga Hills and juxtaposed with the eastern end of the India-Asia collision zone and the Himalayas to the east. Myanmar has a disproportionately large number of world-class metallic mineral deposits for its size and population, producing offshore and onshore reserves of gas and oil and an abundance of gemstones, reflecting the country's varied geology. This includes the post-Jurassic Popa-Loimye magmatic arc in the west and the continental Shan Plateau welded to a Triassic island arc in the east. (A H G Mitchell, 2018)

Potential Geoparks
Based on the information on protected forest areas, the Myanmar Geosciences Society proposed ten potential Geoparks throughout the country. Many more Geopark areas concerning natural caves in karst areas along the Shan-Tanintharyi region exist.

The potential Geoparks proposed by the Myanmar Geosciences Society are as follows: —

Myanmar National Geoparks

Mount Khakaborazi National Geopark
Putao National Geopark
Indawgyi Lake National Geopark
Twintung-Yimabin National Geopark
Mount Popa National Geopark
Inlay Lake National Geopark
Pindaya Cave National Geopark
Manaung Kyun National Geopark
Mount Zwegabin National Geopark
Balu Kyun National Geopark

Geopark Establishment Committee
Myanmar Geosciences Society

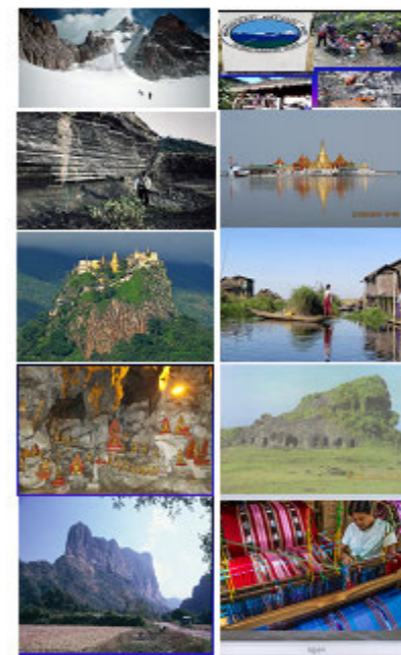


Fig 3. 10 Proposed Myanmar National Geoparks

Mount Popa National Geopark

Since 1920, an area of 2,961 acres was demarcated as National Forest in the Mount Popa area, and it extended up to 128.54 square kilometres in 1989. The Popa Mountain Park was established with UNDP's aid in 1993. In 2007, the Forestry Department formed the National Institute of Biological Resources and International Cooperation Unit for Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation to conduct research. The biodiversity of Mount Popa has been studied in collaboration with NIBR and the National Institute of Biological Research, Incheon, Korea, in 2014 and the compilation of medicinal

and yield various fruits such as bananas, mangoes, papaya and abundant products of toddy palms. Natural plants are formed as Dry Than-Dahat Forest, Dry Mixed deciduous forest, Scrub Indaing Forest, Dry Hill Forest and Grassland, especially in Mount Popa's southern and eastern parts. The Forestry Department controls more than 360 famous local herbal medicinal plant species. Floras are mainly made of teak, Pyinkado, Tamalan, and various varieties of bamboo. Faunas include mainly jungle pigs, cats, monkeys, mammals, reptiles, and 45 species of birds.

The Mount Popa area has a remarkably rich geodiversity that includes varied geology, landforms, and assemblages of associated features and processes. Some geological features can even be considered as world-class. Because geodiversity has a range of values in many ways, and as human activities and urban development now threaten it, geoconservation is essential for the well-being of present and future generations. Geodiversity and geoconservation deserve more attention in Myanmar.

Geology
Regarding gravitational collapse and explosive eruptions of Mount Popa, Alexander Belousov and et al. described as follows: - Mount Popa is one of the best-preserved volcanoes in Myanmar. The separately standing complex volcanic edifice is com-

posed of lava flows and domes (basalts to dacites). There are questionable reports of possible volcanic activity ~800BP and 442 BC. The majority of the young volcanoclastic fans represent typical debris avalanche deposits (S = 27 square kilometres, V = 3 sq km, H = 1.1 km, L = 11 km, H/L = 0.1) composed of block facies. In its eastern, the debris avalanche is covered by a deposit of scoriaceous PF. The Edifice of Mount Popa was destabilized by the intrusion of magma, and the collapse triggered the explosive eruption. No blast deposit was found in the area, so the collapse scenario was of Shiveluch type. Ar-Ar dating of the summit lava dome and the lava flow truncated by the avalanche scar provide zero age - thus, they are very young. Buried paleosol under the avalanche deposit provided a calibrated C14 age of 17660-17220BP, 12820-12650 and 8590-8400 BP. Thus, the avalanche and the PF were deposited 8000BP. The paleosol contains thin layers of fine-grained ash, indicating Mt Popa's eruptions at the beginning of the Holocene. Paleosol on top of the volcanoclastic provides a calibrated C14 age of 2740-2640 BP. The uppermost paleosol contains no ash layers. Thus, there is no geological evidence of explosive eruptions of the volcano at the end of the Holocene.

Alexander Belousov et al. concluded that the latest period of

volcanic activity of Mount Popa took place at the beginning of the Holocene. It included several mild explosive eruptions, probably of Vulcanian type ~ 12700-8500BP, followed by large-scale edifice collapse ~8000 BP, then followed (probably immediately) by strong magmatic eruption with deposition of the PF. They have not found shreds of evidence of the eruptions ~800BP and 442 BC; they could be of very small scales or possibly were misinterpreted nonvolcanic events: crater wall collapse, mudflows, etc.

Petrified Forest

The Mount Popa Global Geopark Development Committee was formed in December 2016. It conducted frequent field activities and discovered petrified forests in the sandstone of the Irrawaddy Formation, mainly west and southwest of Mount Popa around Thanbo Villages. The longest fossil tree is more than 22 metres long and two metres in diameter. Many tree trunks are at the top of the hills and along the creeks. In August 2017, Thailand-Myanmar collaboration on petrified wood research and conservation Dr Nareerat Boonchai and party investigated the fossil woods of Mt Popa Geopark and proposed a further detailed research programme for palaeobotany and related subjects.

The mammalian fossils

The mammalian fossils, especially teeth, jaws and bones of ancient elephants, deer, gavialis, tortoises, cattle, etc., are found. In April 2018, vertebrate palaeontologist Dr Yupa Thesod from Chaing Mai University, Thailand, inspected all the tooth and jaw fossils of ancient elephant and their ages of Mount Popa Geopark. The fossils were found in the sandstone of the Irrawaddy Formation during farming. Most of the fossils are fragmented, but some are still complete, which suggests that these fossils were transported not far from their origin. According to the tooth morphology, the proboscidean fossil can be classified at least into five species, including Stegolophodon sp. 1, Stegolophodon sp. 2, Stegodon primitive form, Stegodon advanced form and probably Mammut?/Sinomas-

todon?. These fossil assemblages suggest that the geological age of this area is Miocene and Pliocene. However, the stratigraphy and sedimentology of the fossil locality should be done in more detail (Yupa Thasod and Than Htun 2018).

Cultural Heritage

The cultural and religious heritage of the Mount Popa Geopark includes astrology, alchemy and the worship of Nats. Astrology to the Burmese meant not only the methods of tracing the courses of the planets and their influence on mortals but also the ritual by which the planets were appeased and made to withdraw their influence and impact.

Alchemy also came to Myanmar from India, but Burmese alchemy became a religious cult. The Burmese alchemists did not merely seek the power of transforming base metals into gold; they also had the noble aim of evolving an eternally youthful body, which would be an answer to the perpetual human lament that beauty and youth must prevail.

The worship of Nats was purely native in origin and developed out of that form of animism, which still prevails among some of the hill peoples of the country. The most important of the thirty-six Nats are the Lord of the Great Mountain and his sister, Lady Golden-Face, whose abode was on Mount Popa, an extinct volcano in central Myanmar. In the ninth century, they became the guardian gods of Bagan and its kings. As permitted by the Bagan King, traditional Myanmar believed that Taungkalat had been home to thirty-six Nats forever. There was an annual Nat feast on Mount Popa itself, at which hundreds of animals were offered as a sacrifice to the Lord of the Great Mountain and Lady Golden-Face during the Bagan Dynasty. Still, no special offers for animals are found these days (Than Htun and Nareerat Boonchi, 2022).

Archaeological Heritage

Regarding archaeological heritage, a lot of ancient traditional iron furnaces in the Bagan Dynasty were discovered near Thanbo village. King Anawrahta, when his brother King took power

at Bagan, based at Popa village, gathered soldiers and trained them secretly to take the throne. He made weapons with iron concretions from Irrawaddy Sandstone by using the furnace. He used horses and elephants in fighting, and there is a royal elephant pasture near Shwezeying Village. According to archaeological data, the Popa region has been inhabited by humans since 10,000 years ago. The Mount Popa region is at the heart of the famous Anyathian culture in Myanmar. The estimated population in this region is currently about 291,561 people in 339 villages.

Mount Popa National Geopark

Upon permission of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Myanmar Geosciences Society comments its study in the Mount Popa area to establish the First National Geopark towards UNESCO Global Geopark on 9 December 2016. After collaboration effort by the Forest Department, the Myanmar Geosciences Society, the Department of Geological Survey and the Mineral Exploration and Geology Departments of various Universities, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation has released Notification 152/2023 recognizing Mount Popa National Geopark starting from 6 December 2023. We warmly welcome Mount Popa National Geoparks and other potential Geoparks for education, conservation and sustainable development in the Mount Popa region.

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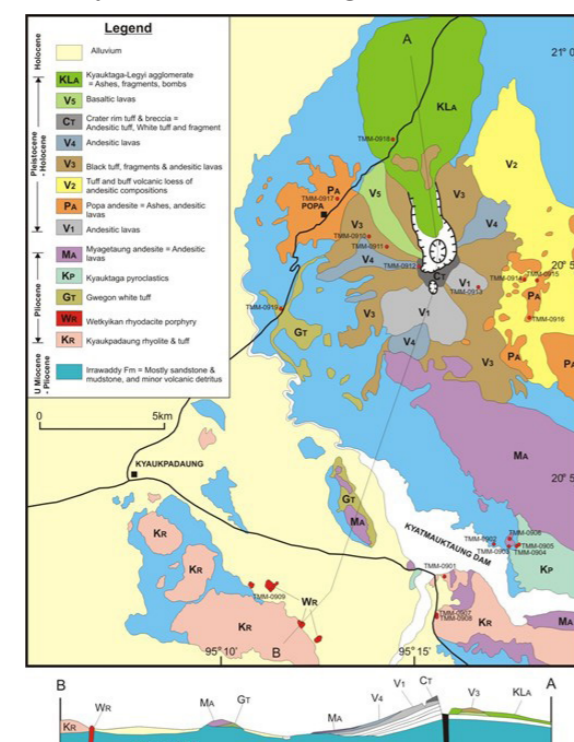


Fig 1. Geology map of Mt Popa, Dr Hla Min (2015).

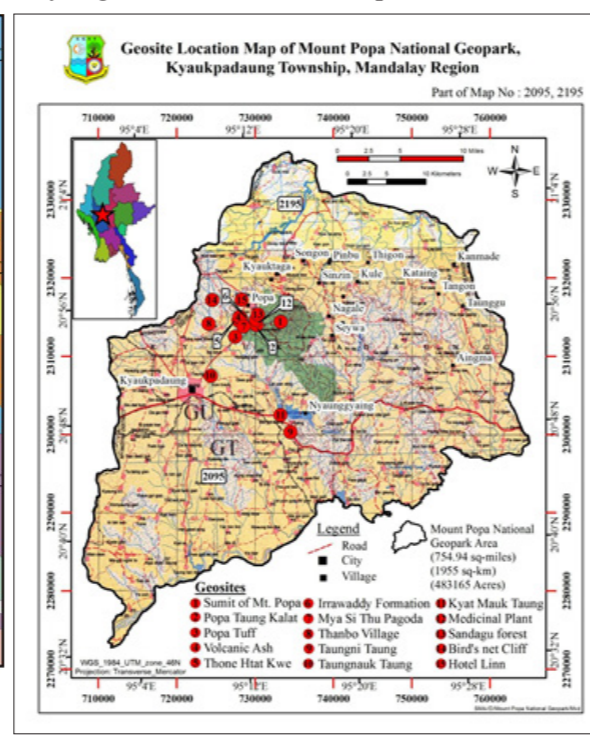


Fig 2. Geosite location map of Mt Popa

NATIONAL

IN a collaboration between the Wild Conservation Society (WCS) and tourism entrepreneurs, preparations are underway for the launch of a programme to observe Irrawaddy dolphins in Mingun and Shwebo-Kyaukmyaung areas along the Ayeyawady River in Sagaing Region. The programme, set to commence in early February 2024, is designed for international travellers.

Jointly crafted by the WCS, the Hotel Entrepreneurs Association, and an individual with expertise in Ayeyawady River businesses, the initiative aims to provide a unique experience for tourists during the upcoming season. U Myint Sein, Head of the Sagaing Region Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, emphasized the positive impact of tourism development on job opportunities, individual incomes, and the generation of foreign currency for the country. He highlighted the potential for building mutual trust among diverse groups.

Irrawaddy dolphins, pri-

Irrawaddy Dolphin Observation Programme for foreign tourists launching along Ayeyawady River



Irrawaddy dolphins delight in graceful and unrestricted swims in the Ayeyawady River

marily found in the Ayeyawady River, have been inhabitants of Myanmar for over 2,000 years. Recognized officially by neighbouring countries along the Mekong River and India, these dol-

phins are a rare species. With only a few rivers worldwide housing dolphins, countries with such populations often create programmes, including exhibitions and observation trips,

to showcase these unique creatures in their natural habitats.

Promoting the tourism sector as a smoke-free industry aligns with global trends. Myanmar, too, is actively promoting

tour schedules that encompass sightseeing of natural environments, traditional cultures, ancient heritage, marine environments, wildlife sanctuaries, and biodiversity observation. The Irrawaddy dolphins in Myanmar, known for their short noses and friendly appearances, reproduce between the ages of seven and nine. Their pregnancy lasts fourteen months, and their average life expectancy is between 30 and 50 years.

The Fishery Department collaborates with relevant departments in the Ayeyawady River to safeguard Irrawaddy dolphins from harm and potential extinction. Electrofishing and net-fishing are strictly prohibited under the Freshwater Fishery Law. Additionally, local villagers in surrounding areas are educated and equipped with knowledge about Irrawaddy dolphins, encouraging their participation in nature-based tourism businesses while ensuring the preservation of this unique species. — Nyein Thu/TMT

New venomous Pit Viper species discovered in Myanmar's Ayeyawady delta

RESEARCHERS have identified a new species of pit viper exclusive to Myanmar in the Yangon and Ayeyawady regions, as reported by the Native Species Conservation and Identification in Myanmar.

Named the Ayeyawady Pit Viper (*Trimeresurus ayeyawadyensis* sp nov), the species is recognized for its unique presence in the Ayeyawady delta. Ching Christian, representing the

Herpetological Society of Singapore and specializing in the Ayeyawady Pit Viper, noted, "T ayeyawadyensis is native to the delta region between the rivers of Patheingyi and Yangon. We discovered it in late 2023. It's venomous."

In addition to this newly identified species, scientists have also found another endemic variety named *Trimeresurus uetzi* in central regions of the country this year.



Ayeyawady Pit Viper – a recently found new species.

The NSCI, comprised of local and international researchers studying Myanmar's biodiversity, is actively involved in species classifi-

cation, sharing conservation knowledge, and producing articles to dispel long-established myths about flora and fauna. — ASH/NT

Stimulant tablets valued at over 240 million seized in Tachilek township

ACTING on a tip-off, a joint team comprising members of the Anti-Drug Police Force conducted a search of a compound in Saekham ward in Tachilek at 4:30 pm on 18 December. During the operation, Aikekyon and Aikechan were apprehended along with the discovery of 400,000 stimulant tablets.

Further investigations led to the arrest of Arnon Chamanan, who was found with five stimulant tablets at a hotel at 4:45 pm on the same day. Additionally, authorities seized 200,000 stimulant tablets concealed in a bush near the Hweye detour in Tachilek township at 4 pm on 19 December.

Legal action has been taken against the arrested individuals, and an ongoing investigation aims to uncover the culprits involved in the entire criminal operation. — MNA/MKKS

Illegal timbers, foodstuffs, fuel oil and vehicles confiscated

THE combined team under the Yangon Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force confiscated 3.624 tonnes of illegal teak and 5.641 tonnes of other illegal timbers worth K5.793 million in Htaukkyant township and a Toyota Voxy vehicle (estimated value of K25 million) carrying 1.32 tonnes of illegal teak worth K871,728 in Hlegu township on 17 December. The action was taken under the Forest Law.

On 19 December, a joint team supervised by the Mandalay Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force captured three kinds of goods valued at K6.97 million, including 624 boxes of

Oishi green tea and 4,000 kilogrammes of chicken sausages, from a Mitsubishi canter travelling from Taunggyi to Mandalay. The action was conducted under Customs procedures.

A combined team confiscated 1,680 gallons of illegal diesel (informal diesel) worth K17.01 million in Monywa township on 20 December. The action was conducted under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law.

Six arrests were made on 17, 19 and 20 December, with an estimated value of K75.645 million, as reported by the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee. — MNA/MKKS

Indigenous Indonesians use Korean letters to save dialect

The Cia-Cia language lacks a written form and doesn't easily translate to the Latin alphabet, but the syllable-based Hangul script aids in preserving the language for the 80,000 Cia-Cia people.



This picture taken on 14 October 2023 shows participants in traditional Korean attire holding signage in the Korean Hangul script, used to document the language of the Cia-Cia ethnic group which has no written form, during the city's anniversary event in Baubau on Buton island, Southeast Sulawesi. PHOTO: YULI PURNOMO SIDI / AFP

IN an eastern Indonesian village, schoolchildren scrawl the distinctive circles and lines of Hangul script on a whiteboard, but the language they are learning is not Korean. It is their own Indigenous Cia-Cia tongue.

The language of the Cia-Cia ethnic group in southeast Sulawesi province's Baubau has no written form, and the syllable-based tongue does not readily translate to the Latin alphabet often used to transcribe Indonesia's national language.

But the Korean Hangul script, developed in the 15th century, shares a syllable-based system that has made it an unusual tool in the effort to preserve and transmit the language of the approximately 80,000 Cia-Cia people. — AFP

Online video games, the latest hunting grounds for drug cartels

Narcotics police enhance video game skills as drug cartels shift online.

NARCOTICS police the world over are sprucing up their video game skills, as cartels go increasingly online to sell drugs and recruit dealers. "Cartels have been incredi-

bly tech savvy over recent years, reaching vast audiences," Benjamin Shultz, foreign malign influence analyst at Deloitte, told a Council of Europe meeting.

"The Sinaloa Cartel has a Twitter account with almost 200,000 followers and they tend to post nearly daily, engaging and posting images and other contents that glorify what they do," he said. The account has since been shut down.

To bring greater attention to the role of online gaming in the drug trade, the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group, which works on international drug issues, held a forum in Mexico City on 19 and 20 December. — AFP



In online games, users can connect with almost anyone. PHOTO: JEAN-CHRISTOPHE VERHAEGEN / AFP/FILE

'Tombstone' hats remind whirling dervishes of their death

THE tall light brown hats worn by whirling dervishes are as intriguing as the elliptical dance performed in honour of the Sufi poet and mystic Rumi.

In Konya, a sprawling city in Türkiye's central Anatolian plain where Rumi spent most of his life and died 750 years ago, one of the last workshops makes these special "sikke" hats to order.

Yunus Girgic refuses to sell sikkes to tourists because they are exclusively reserved for real dervish dancers.

And he makes sure they do not reach amateurs' hands, quizzing potential clients about their motives for wanting the distinctive hat.

"I ask a few basic questions

and immediately see who I am dealing with," Girgic told AFP.

At the start of the "sema" dance ritual, dervishes take off their long black coats but retain the sikke, which signifies the tombstone — the end of life on Earth when the dancer meets God.

The manufacturing secrets of these deeply symbolic felt hats — each one 26 to 27 centimetres (about 10 inches) tall — have been passed down for four generations to Girgic.

Each one is produced from a kilo (half a pound) of goat or sheep wool, which is patiently stretched, dipped several times in soapy water and then rolled flat, like pie crust. — AFP



'Very moved': ney player Ashmi Benmehidi is fitted with his 'sikke' hat. PHOTO: OZAN KOSE / AFP

DR Congo rapper pardoned after jail for insulting president

A Congolese rapper arrested in 2021 for insulting the country's leader Felix Tshisekedi has been freed from prison after receiving a presidential pardon, the musician told AFP on Tuesday.

Delphin Katembo, who goes by the stage name Idengo, was arrested in October 2021 on charges of insulting the head of state and for calling for the killing of members of the security forces.

He received a ten-year sentence for a rap song in which he said: "They're sacrificing us

because of money... We are tired of their promises."

A video also showed him with a weapon in his hand, pretending to cut off heads.

"Finally, I've been released," exclaimed Idengo, 27, upon leaving Goma prison.

President Tshisekedi announced the rapper's release on 11 December, and Idengo vows to continue expressing himself through his music. The Democratic Republic of Congo is holding elections, with Tshisekedi seeking a second term. — AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

German steel industry reports production losses in 2023

In 2023, Germany's crude steel production dropped 4 per cent to 35.5 million tonnes due to the energy crisis and a sluggish economy, making it one of the weakest production years.

CRUDE steel production in Germany in 2023 fell by 4 per cent year-on-year to 35.5 million tonnes due to the energy crisis and the weak economy, according to preliminary figures published by the German Steel Association on Tuesday.

It said that 2023 is set to be "one of the weakest years in terms of production." Following an eight per cent slump in 2022, production was only lower during the financial crisis back in 2009.

"Steel production is current-

ly in free fall," Kerstin Maria Rippe, the association's managing director, said in a statement. Such a protracted negative cycle has not yet been observed in Germany and the data would "give cause for great concern".

Electric steelmaking, a highly energy-intensive industry branch, was particularly affected, recording a slump of 11 per cent to a record low of 10.1 million tonnes.

Caught in the downturn, German steel producer Thys-

senkrupp recorded a net loss of two billion euros (2.2 billion US dollars) in fiscal 2022-2023 due to write-downs in its steel business. In the previous year, the company still made a profit of 1.2 billion euros.

The write-downs had become necessary due to higher capital costs, the recession and the "structural changes specific to the steel industry", Thyssenkrupp said when publishing the figures at the end of November. — Xinhua



An employee works in a hall with coils of cold-rolled steel at the ThyssenKrupp plant in Duisburg, western Germany.
PHOTO: INA FASSBENDER / AFP



The Maranta tanker is currently heading to Ukrainian Black Sea ports under the temporary route set up by the Ukrainian government in August following the collapse of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/OLEKSANDR KUBRAKOV/ X**

Ukraine's exports via alternative Black Sea corridor reach 10M tonnes

The alternative sea route now sees monthly exports of about five million tonnes of agricultural products, up from 278,000 tonnes in its first month of operation.

UKRAINE'S exports via the alternative "humanitarian corridor" in the Black Sea have reached 10 million tonnes since August, Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said on Tuesday.

During the operation of the new corridor, 302 ships left Ukraine while 337 entered

the country's ports, Kubrakov wrote on Facebook.

According to him, those vessels delivered grain and other goods from Ukraine to 24 countries.

Currently, Ukraine exports about five million tonnes of agricultural products per month via the alternative sea route,

while in the first month of the corridor's operation, those exports stood at 278,000 tonnes, Kubrakov said.

In August, Ukraine established a "humanitarian corridor" for cargo ships in the Black Sea as an alternative to the Black Sea Grain Initiative that collapsed in July. — Xinhua

UK inflation hits lowest level in more than two years

BRITISH inflation has slowed sharply to the lowest level in more than two years on falling petrol prices, official data showed Wednesday, easing a cost-of-living crisis after aggressive interest-rate hikes.

The Consumer Prices Index hit 3.9 per cent in November from 4.6 per cent in the previous month, attaining the weakest rate since September 2021, the Office of National Statistics said.

The news handed a further boost to embattled Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak after inflation had already achieved his goal of falling below five per cent in October.

Finance minister Jeremy

Hunt welcomed the news but conceded that Britons were still struggling with elevated consumer prices.

"With inflation more than halved we are starting to remove inflationary pressures from the economy," said Hunt.

"We are back on the path to healthy, sustainable growth. But many families are still struggling with high prices so we will continue to prioritize measures that help with cost of living pressures."

Sunak is currently seen as unlikely to win next year's general election, as his governing Conservatives trail Keir Starmer's main opposition Labour party. — AFP



UK inflation slowed to 3.9 per cent in November, pulled down by a drop in petrol prices. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**



More businesses are turning to E-cargo bikes to beat London traffic. PHOTO: AFP

On yer bike: London firms turn to cargo bikes

ON a busy north London street, plumber Ben Hume-Wright zipped through the heavy rush-hour traffic to his next job by bike.

Trades such as his used to rely on vans but many are now choosing to do more business using two or sometimes three wheels.

Since switching his Ford diesel pickup truck for an electric cargo bike two years ago, Hume-Wright said he has been busier than ever.

"I used to take on a maximum of five or six appointments" a day, he told AFP as the traffic ground forward behind him.

"I'll now book in six, seven and possibly even eight, because I know that I'm not going to get stuck in traffic."

Hume-Wright set up in 2010 and was reliant on his van for 11 years. But now describes it as a "glorified shed" handy for storing parts and tools.

When faced with a big installation job, he gets a supplier to deliver bulkier items directly to the client's address.

He then shows up on his bike with just the

tools needed for the job.

"It's cheaper, I don't have any of the fuel costs and I just enjoy it. It's a lot more fun," he said.

Growth strategy

Transport for London (TfL), the local government body responsible for most of the British capital's transport network, launched its first "Cargo Bike Action Plan" earlier this year.

To address a surge in polluting van deliveries due to online shopping during the pandemic, Transport for London (TfL) aims to promote cargo bikes, supporting Mayor Sadiq Khan's goal of a carbon net-zero city by 2030.

TfL estimates a potential reduction of 30,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions annually in Greater London. Cargo bikes, once popular in northern Europe, are experiencing a revival, notably in Denmark and the Netherlands.

The UK has seen significant growth in electric cargo bike sales, with a 30 per cent increase reported by the Bicycle Association in the year to May 2023. — AFP

Daihatsu to stop all vehicle shipments over improper safety testing

The Toyota subsidiary admitted data-rigging in collision tests for six models, impacting sales in Thailand and Malaysia.

DAIHATSU Motor Co said Wednesday it will stop all shipments at home and abroad after the Toyota Motor Corp subsidiary found most of its car models were affected by improper vehicle safety tests.

The move comes after the minivehicle maker acknowledged earlier this year data-rigging in collision tests for six of its models, including those sold in Thailand and Malaysia.

A third-party panel it has set up identified 174 new counts of misconduct across 25 vehicle test items

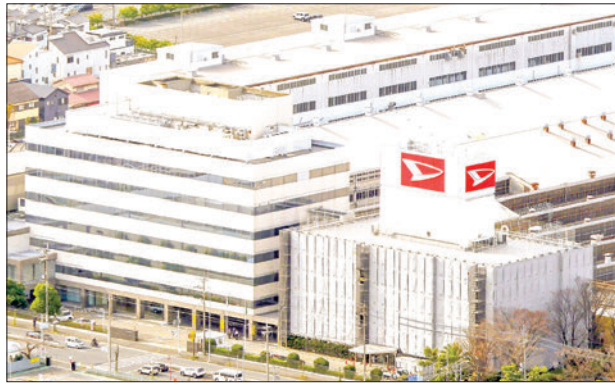


Photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter on 20 December 2023 shows the head office of Daihatsu Motor Co in Ikeda, Osaka Prefecture. PHOTO: KYODO

in addition to those already discovered, with the oldest one dating back to 1989, Daihatsu said, adding that

it reported the findings to the transport ministry. The number of vehicles affected by improper test-

ing expanded to 64 models, including all 11 models that the automaker currently sells in Japan, such as the Rocky compact sport utility vehicle and the Copen minivehicle. Among the affected vehicles sold overseas are the Xenia in Indonesia and the Axia in Malaysia sold under the Perodua brand. The 64 models also include those supplied to Toyota, Mazda Motor Corp and Subaru Corp for sale under their brands as well as those whose production has already ended, it said. — Kyodo

Spain takes 10% of Telefonica following Saudi stake



The Spanish government's stake in Telefonica will balance out a similar stake taken by Saudi Telecom (STC). PHOTO: AFP/FILE

SPAIN said Tuesday it will acquire 10 per cent of local telecoms giant Telefonica, just months after Saudi Telecom took a significant stake in the operator.

Spain's government said the acquisition will make it the "reference public shareholder" in Telefonica, and justified the move on the grounds that the company is "a leader in the telecommunications sector and of

key importance in other strategic areas."

The government also said that Telefonica's activities were important for Spain's national security and defence, including foreign military operations.

The state's stake in Telefonica "will preserve its strategic capacities and its essential importance for national interests," it added. — AFP

The Global New Light of Myanmar

www.gnlm.com.mm

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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BANDUNG VOY.NO. (805N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR BANDUNG VOY.NO. (805N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-12-2023 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of 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 SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE

ROLLING UPDATES WORLD

Hamas chief in Egypt for talks on Gaza truce and hostage release

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh plans to meet Egypt's spy chief to negotiate a potential truce and release of prisoners in the Gaza war.

THE leader of Hamas travelled to Egypt on Wednesday as hopes grew that Israel and the Palestinian militant group may be inching toward another truce and hostage release deal in the Gaza war.

The Qatar-based Hamas chief, Ismail Haniyeh, arrived in Cairo for discussions on the "aggression in the Gaza Strip

and other matters", the group said in a statement.

He was due to meet Egypt's spy chief for talks on "stopping the aggression and the war to prepare an agreement for the release of prisoners", a source close to the group told AFP.

Haniyeh — who earlier met Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Qatar

— was heading a "high-level delegation" to Egypt, a frequent mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, the source said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had told hostage families late Tuesday that he had twice sent his spy chief to Europe in efforts intended to "free our hostages".

"It's our duty, I'm respon-



Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh's arrival in Cairo on 20 December was preceded by a meeting with Iran's foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (centre) in Qatar. **PHOTO: IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY**

sible for the release of all the hostages," the premier told the relatives of some of the 129 captives still believed to be held in Gaza.

"Saving them is a supreme task.

"I have just sent the head of Mossad to Europe twice to promote a process to free our hostages. I will spare no effort on the subject, and our duty is to bring them all back". — AFP

EU reaches landmark agreement on reforming migration laws

EU countries and lawmakers strike a deal on an overhaul of asylum and migration laws, featuring faster vetting, border detention centres, accelerated deportations, and a solidarity mechanism.



Three men are seen on a beach in Sangatte, northern France, after a failed attempt to cross the English Channel. **PHOTO: AFP**

EU countries and lawmakers reached an agreement Wednesday on an overhaul of the bloc's laws on handling asylum-seekers and migrants, officials said.

The reform includes speedier vetting of irregular arrivals, creating border detention centres, accelerated deportation for rejected asylum applicants and a solidarity mechanism to take pressure off southern countries experiencing big inflows.

Spain, which chaired the lengthy negotiations in its role holding the EU presidency, said on X, formerly Twitter: "A political agreement has been reached on the five files of the EU new Pact on Migration and Asylum."

European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas said: "It's been a long road to get here. But we made it. Europe is finally delivering

on migration."

Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen added that "migration is a common European challenge — today's decision will allow us to manage it together". The accord still needs to be formally approved by the European Council, representing the 27 EU member countries, and the European Parliament before it enters the bloc's lawbooks. — AFP

Volkswagen to adopt Tesla's charging standard

THE Volkswagen Group announced on Tuesday that the company will adopt Tesla's North American Charging Standard (NACS).

The future vehicles in its portfolio of brands, which include Audi, Porsche, and the group's Scout Motors, will get the NACS charge port built starting in 2025, the German automobile giant said.

The announcement came as many automakers leveraged on the charging standard since

Tesla's announcement last year that it was opening up access.

Ford announced in May 2023 that its EV owners would soon have access to Tesla chargers via an adapter, adding that its next generation of EVs would be integrated with Tesla's NACS charge port starting in 2025. Major automakers such as GM, Rivian, Honda, Mercedes, Hyundai, Kia, Toyota and Subaru followed with their announcements to leverage Tesla's charging standard. — Xinhua

Thailand halts new gun licences after deadly shootings

THAILAND has stopped issuing new gun licences for a year; the interior ministry announced on Wednesday, after a series of high-profile shootings.

The change comes into effect immediately, the ministry said, and follows debate in the kingdom about firearms control following deadly gun incidents.

A 14-year-old boy opened fire in a Bangkok shopping mall in October, killing three people, and an ex-policeman armed with a legally owned handgun and knife

murdered 36 people at a nursery a year earlier.

"In order to improve security and decrease crime rates, we will temporarily ban the issuing of personal guns," interior ministry spokeswoman Traiseree Taisaranakul said on her official Facebook page.

Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in the region with 10 million firearms in circulation, according to the GunPolicy.org website — roughly one for every seven Thais. — AFP

SPORTS

Chelsea back from brink to reach League Cup semis

CHELSEA came back from the brink to reach the League Cup semi-finals with a dramatic penalty shoot-out victory against Newcastle after Mykhailo Mudryk's last-gasp equalizer on Tuesday.

Mauricio Pochettino's side were joined in the semi-finals by Fulham, who beat Everton on penalties, and second-tier Middlesbrough, 3-0 winners against Port Vale.

Beaten three times in their previous five games, a wretched run that started with their 4-1 loss at Newcastle, Chelsea showed



Chelsea celebrate after beating Newcastle in the League Cup quarter-finals. PHOTO: AFP

some much needed fighting spirit to win the quarter-final 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at Stamford Bridge.

Languishing in 11th place in

the Premier League, they were two minutes from being knocked out before Ukraine winger Mudryk came to the rescue with the leveller that set the stage for

the Blues' shoot-out success.

Pochettino's only silverware as a manager is a French league title and domestic cup with Paris Saint-Germain. — AFP

Nuno in talks to replace Forest boss Cooper: reports

FORMER Tottenham boss Nuno Espirito Santo has held talks with Nottingham Forest about replacing Steve Cooper as manager of the Premier League strugglers, according to reports on Tuesday.

Cooper has been under fire throughout a dismal run of just one win in 13 league games which has seen Forest slump to one place above the relegation zone. Forest officials have reportedly spoken to Portuguese coach Nuno as they look to end Cooper's reign at the City Ground. Nuno has been out of work since leaving Saudi Pro League club Al-Ittihad in November. Now the 49-year-old is in line for a return to the Premier League two years after his sacking from an ill-fated four-month spell at Tottenham. — AFP

Paris hotels angry over tourist tax hike ahead of Olympics

Paris hotel associations strongly oppose the government's plan to triple visitor taxes for the 2024 Olympics.

PARISIAN hotel associations vehemently oppose the government's plan to triple visitor taxes for the 2024 Olympics, citing concerns about France's global perception and the adverse effect it could have on the hospitality sector's reputation.

Paris hoteliers were up in arms on Tuesday over a government plan to triple the tax paid by visitors on nights at ho-

tels next year when the capital hosts the Olympics.

The tourist tax in Paris now varies from 0.25 euros (\$0.27) a night for the most basic accommodation to five euros (\$5.5) a night for luxurious establishments.

The government is to triple that fee as part of its 2024 budget, which it plans to ram through parliament without a

vote before Christmas.

"It's another blow for the competitiveness of our sector as well as France's image at a time when all attention is on the Paris 2024 Olympics," the UMIH hotel and restaurant union and GNC group of hotel chains said in a statement.

The government has said the 200-per-cent increase in the tourist tax will help fund public transport.

The syndicates claimed it would "amount to 423 million euros in tax collected a year — far more than the 200 million euros" the government and the regional transport authority have said they needed.

Catherine Querard, the president of GHR, another union representing the hospitality and catering sector, added: "The authorities fear a hike in hotel prices, but they're sending the tax rate through the roof. Then they'll come and blame us." — AFP



Jake Paul, shown reacting after knocking out Andre August last week, announced a partnership deal with USA Boxing to boost attention for fighters as they prepare for the 2024 Paris Olympics. PHOTO: AFP

Jake Paul to partner with USA Boxing ahead of Paris Olympics

YouTube star and pro boxer Jake Paul will team up with USA Boxing for an inside look at Paris Olympics preparations on his social media.

JAKE Paul, a YouTube sensation turned pro boxer, will partner with USA Boxing to provide an inside look at preparations for the Paris Olympics on his social media accounts.

The US sport governing body announced the plan on Tuesday that will include Paul mentoring fighters on becoming a brand in and out of the ring.

Paul will join the US 2024 Olympics squad in Paris, as well as at the US Olympic training facility in Colorado Springs in a bid to boost attention for amateur boxing next summer in France.

"It has always been my goal to shine a spotlight not just on boxing as a sport, but on the people who work so hard to be the best within it," Paul said. — AFP



The controversy comes after regional authorities announced a sharp rise in public transport tickets for the Games. PHOTO: AFP



CHINESE President Xi Jinping met Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin in Beijing on Wednesday.

Noting that since the beginning of this year, he has met President Putin twice, Xi said the governments, legislative bodies, political parties and localities of the two countries have carried out in-depth exchanges, and pragmatic cooperation in various fields has developed in a sound and steady manner.

In the first 11 months of this year, the bilateral trade between China and Russia achieved the annual trade volume target of 200 billion US dollars jointly set by the two heads of state, which shows the strong resilience and broad prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries, Xi said.

He noted that maintaining and developing China-Russia relations is a strategic choice made by both sides based on the fundamental interests of the two peoples.

China supports the Russian people in taking the development path of their own choice, Xi said, expressing the hope of taking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Russia next year as a new starting point to continuously expand the positive effects of the high-level political relations and jointly move forward in the process of comprehensively promoting economic and social development and realizing national rejuvenation.

The Chinese economy has strong resilience, great potential and wide room for manoeuvre, and its long-term sound fundamentals remain unchanged, Xi said. China firmly promotes high-quality development and high-level opening up, which will provide new opportunities for the de-



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin in Beijing, capital of China, 20 December 2023. **PHOTO: DING LIN /XINHUA**

Xi meets Russian PM

China and Russia reach their annual trade goal of \$200 billion in the first 11 months of this year, highlighting strong cooperation prospects, according to President Xi.

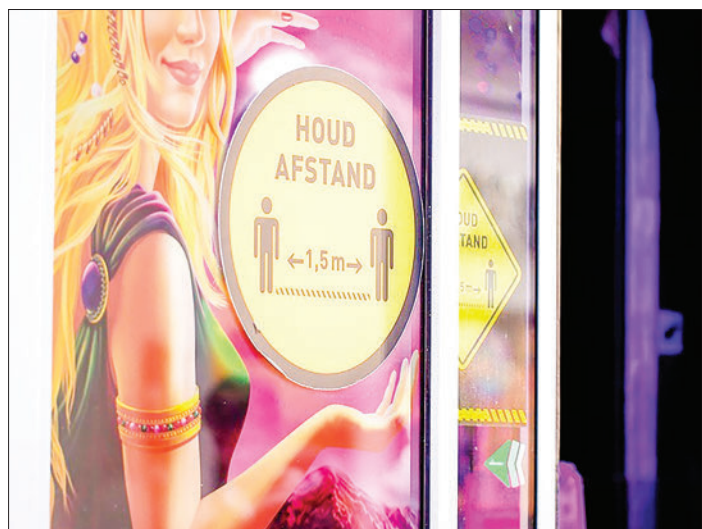
velopment of various countries including Russia, he said.

Xi called on the two sides to give full play to the advantages of political mutual

trust, economic complementarity, infrastructure connectivity and people-to-people exchanges; continuously enrich the connotation of cooperation; deepen co-

operation on economy, trade, energy and connectivity; and jointly maintain the security and stability of the industrial and supply chains. — Xinhua

WHO classifies JN.1 strain as variant of interest



UN health agency urges precautions: wear masks in crowded places, maintain social distancing, and enhance ventilation to prevent infections and severe disease. Photo taken on 1 November 2021 shows a COVID-19 precaution notice to keep 1.5-metre distance in a shop in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. **PHOTO: SYLVIA LEDERER/XINHUA**

The WHO designated the JN.1 coronavirus strain as a distinct variant due to its fast spread. The global public health risk is currently considered low, and existing vaccines provide protection against severe outcomes from JN.1 and other COVID-19 variants, according to the WHO.

THE World Health Organization (WHO) classified the JN.1 coronavirus strain as a separate variant of interest from the parent lineage BA.2.86 on Tuesday, citing the strain's rapidly increasing spread. "Based on the available evidence, the additional global public health risk posed by JN.1 is currently evaluated as low," the WHO said. Current vaccines continue to protect against se-

vere disease and death from JN.1 and other circulating variants of COVID-19, it added.

The United Nations health agency advises people to take measures to prevent infections and severe disease using all available tools, such as wearing a mask in crowded or poorly ventilated areas, keeping social distancing and improving ventilation. — Xinhua

NW China earthquake leaves 131 dead

THE number of injured people from the 6.2-magnitude earthquake in northwest China's Gansu Province has risen to 782 in Gansu, with the death toll standing at 113 as of 9 am on Wednesday, according to a press conference on Wednesday morning.

The earthquake has taken the lives of 18 people in Qinghai Province, local authorities said on Wednesday morning.

As of 5:30 am, there have been 198 reported injuries in Qinghai due to the disaster, with 16 others still missing. — Xinhua