

# The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

## Myanmar, Thailand to strengthen collaboration for secure, seamless border trade

**S**ENIOR General Min Aung Hlaing and Lt-Gen Jakkapong Janpengpen of the Royal Thai Armed Forces emphasized cooperation between Myanmar and Thailand on

political trends and between the two armed forces on security trends for ensuring a secure and smooth border trade process.

Chairman of the State Adminis-

tration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received a delegation led by Director of Joint Operations of the Royal Thai Armed Forces Lt-Gen

Jakkapong Janpengpen at Bayintnaung Villa in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

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Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo and Director of Kyaukpyu SEZ Deep Seaport Co Ltd Mr Liang Chuanxin give a press conference at Horizon Lake View Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw on 26 December 2023, following the ceremony to ink the Addendum to the Concession Agreement for implementation of the deep seaport of Kyaukpyu SEZ.

## Myanmar's Kyaukpyu SEZ deep seaport set to make history, targeting 7M containers annually

The Kyaukpyu SEZ Project is a heavy infrastructure development project with a large amount of investment through Myanmar-China cooperation.

**A**FTER the completion of Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone's deep seaport project, it will become Myanmar's first international-level deep seaport, facilitated with ten jetties capable of seven million containers per year, said Union

Minister U Aung Naing Oo.

A ceremony to ink the Addendum to the Concession Agreement for implementation of the deep seaport of Kyaukpyu SEZ took place at Horizon Lake View Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw on the evening of 26 December. After the

ceremony, Chairman of the Myanmar SEZ Central Working Body Union Minister at the Union Government Ministry 1 U Aung Naing Oo met the media.

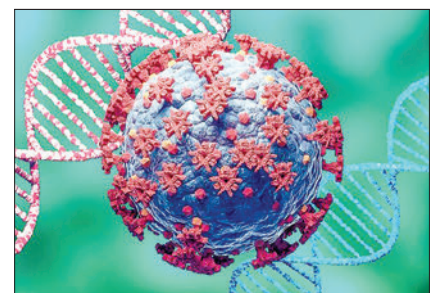
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India-Myanmar Fora commemorates 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Diplomatic Relations

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MoH implements vital measures, including vaccinations, amid surge in Covid-19 cases

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Commerce Ministry issues 2024 vehicle import policy, oldest model set to be 2023

# NATIONAL

## India-Myanmar Fora commemorates 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Diplomatic Relations

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the GTTC India-Myanmar Forum and the Indian Economic Trade Organization-Myanmar Forum were held in New Delhi on 23 December to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar-India diplomatic relations.

These forums took place at the Myanmar Embassy in New Delhi, India, on 23 December, coinciding with the ceremony marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar-India diplomatic relations. Smt Meenakshi Lekhi, the Minister of State from the Ministry of External Affairs of India, graced the event as the guest of honour. Ambassadors and their spouses from ASEAN countries and partner countries, special guests, diplomats, representatives of the Indian Parliament, officials from the Ministry of External Affairs of India, businessmen from Myanmar, and businessmen from India also



The GTTC India-Myanmar Forum and the Indian Economic Trade Organization-Myanmar Forum to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar-India diplomatic relations in progress in New Delhi on 23 December.

attended the ceremony.

During the ceremony commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar-India diplomatic

relations, U Moe Kyaw Aung, the Myanmar Ambassador to India, and Smt Meenakshi Lekhi, the Minister of State at the Minis-

try of External Affairs of India, extended their greetings.

Additionally, the GTTC India-Myanmar Forum and the

Indian Economic Trade Organization-Myanmar Forum organized a trade fair showcasing Myanmar cultural art, lacquerware, and products such as beans, avocados, Myanmar gems, and Indian products in around 20 stalls inside the Myanmar Embassy.

A total of 12 representatives from Myanmar and India participated in the GTTC India-Myanmar Forum and the Indian Economic Trade Organization-Myanmar Forum. Moreover, the guests were served Myanmar food, including coconut noodles, vermicelli, pickled tea leaves salad, Myanmar tea, and coffee, during the event.

Intending to promote Myanmar-Indian cultural exchange, participants wore Myanmar ethnic costumes and Indian traditional costumes, presenting songs and dances performed by Indian dance groups. — ASH/TKO

### Five national objectives of 76<sup>th</sup> Independence Day

1. To uphold "Our Three Main National Causes" – Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of national solidarity and Perpetuation of sovereignty, which are national interests and national politics
2. To ensure the promotion of a comprehensive education sector that produces human resources with perfect abilities like intelligence, skills, and talents in building a Union based on democracy and federalism
3. To make efforts to hold free and fair elections under the law and ensure the right to vote across the nation
4. To foster public cooperation for state stability and strengthen the multiparty democratic system at the end of acts of terrorism
5. To promote agriculture and livestock-based MSMEs

## Sagu scouts explore Shwesettaw Mannchaung Elephant Camp on field trip



Scouts from Minbu Township (Sagu) who attend the basic scout training batch 1 prepare to camp on the bank of Mann Creek and study about elephants at Shwesettaw Elephant Camp. **PHOTO: MAUNG MAUNG (MINBU)**

A basic scout training batch 1 is underway for five days from 22 to 26 December with 93 participants at Sagu Private High School No 1, Minbu Township, Minbu District, Magway Region, on the morning of 25 December.

A total of 93 scouts conducted a practical field trip on the camping training subject on the sandy beach beside Mann Creek at the Shwesettaw Mannchaung Recreational Elephant Camp. The youth scouts worked diligently

on scouting activities, including camping fire, climbing and walking on foot and tent pitching, supervised by their teachers.

"The scouts are trained to know the history and purpose of scouting, to learn to live together in a spirit of unity and love, and to be able to manage and use the food items in their possession in an orderly manner," explained Daw Moe Sue, the leader of the scout group. In the afternoon, the scouts visited

the elephant camp, and Daw Su Yie Phyto, in charge of the elephant camp, explained the purpose of opening the elephant camp, the service activities of the elephant camp, the activities of the baby elephants and the daily activities of the elephant camp.

After that, the young scouts fed the baby elephants and enjoyed elephant rides while observing the beauty of the natural forest, mountains, and water. — Maung Maung (Minbu)/KZL

# NATIONAL

All our national people always cherish and value our traditions and national characteristics. Safeguarding and promoting national characteristics and national culture will contribute to fostering the patriotic spirit and thereby bringing great benefits to the nation and people. Now is the crucial time to have the national spirit as we strive for peace and development and for the establishment of a Union based on democracy and federalism.

*[An excerpt from the message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Diamond Jubilee) of Kachin State Day on 10 January 2023.]*



## Myanmar, Thailand to strengthen collaboration ...



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives a delegation led by Director of Joint Operations of the Royal Thai Armed Forces Lieutenant General Jakkapong Janpengpen at Bayintnaung Villa in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

### FROM PAGE-1

At the meeting, both sides exchanged views on the promotion of existing friendly ties and cooperation between the two countries and two armed forces, cooperation in

peace and stability of border region, rule of law, narcotic drug eradication, and eradication of online gambling and online scam and further plans to promote cooperation. They also discussed plans to jointly

eradicate online gambling and online scams near Myawady on the Myanmar-Thai border. They also emphasized the promotion of cooperation in humanitarian measures and aid and exchange of information.

Also present at the meeting together with the Senior General were Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and senior military officers. The Director of Joint Operations of the

Royal Thai Armed Forces was accompanied by senior military officers of the Royal Thai Armed Forces and Thai Military Attaché to Myanmar Senior Colonel Thanwit Yomchinda. — MNA/TTA

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# NATIONAL

## Myanmar's Kyaukpyu SEZ deep seaport set to ...

### FROM PAGE-1

On the occasion, the Union minister explained that the Kyaukpyu SEZ Project is a heavy infrastructure development project with a large amount of investment through Myanmar-China cooperation. He continued that the project comprises 30 per cent shares of Myanmar and 70 per cent shares of China to implement the deep seaport project in four phases.

"The project will comprise four phases. The project will be facilitated with ten jetties to admit docking of vessels. On completion, the port will be able to handle some seven million 20-foot containers per year. Primarily, the project will manage the export of our country's commodities and the commodities passing through Myanmar to African, Southeast Asian, and European countries. Any commodities must be exported to target countries via Singapore and Malaysia. Upon completion of the project, we will have the chance to export commodities to target countries directly," the Union minister clarified.

The Kyaukpyu SEZ Management Committee and Kyaukpyu SEZ Deep Seaport Co Ltd (Pro-

ject Company), formed as a joint venture between Myanmar and China, signed the Concession Agreement to implement the deep seaport in November 2020.

In his clarification, the Union minister said, "Both sides held coordination meetings to clearly understand the Concession Agreement and the authority and duties for some facts in the agreement between Myanmar and China. Myanmar initially proposed to ink the Addendum to the agreement."

According to the coordination meetings, the Chairman of the Kyaukpyu SEZ Management Committee and the official representative of the Kyaukpyu SEZ Deep Seaport Co Ltd inked the Addendum to implement the project as soon as possible.

He added, "This project aims to enhance the socioeconomic life of the people in Rakhine State, including Kyaukpyu region, and create employment opportunities in addition to promoting cooperation in economy and trade between Myanmar and China".

This project will be a trade focal point among Asia, Africa and Europe and a gateway to the world to improve the socioecon-

omy of Myanmar and regional countries. Hence, Myanmar and China closely cooperate in implementing the initial process of the project, U Aung Naing Oo commented.

It will be able to attract millions of US dollars in investment to Myanmar, generate a lot of tax revenue for the State, and promote the surrounding upstream and downstream industries, thus increasing the economic development of the entire country and the individual GDP of the people.

In implementing the project, the local Rakhine businesspeople and ethnic business persons who have a great deal of experience and can actually work will be invited to cooperate with the project company, he added.

He continued that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) complete about 85 per cent, and the work processes will continue to complete a hundred per cent. The geo-topographic survey has been completed, and the relevant work of drafting designs is in progress.

The capital investment financing to start the project will be conducted, and the major in-

frastructure of the project will be constructed. "If all these processes are completed, the project will start. The two sides will cooperate to start the project promptly," said U Aung Naing Oo.

"Regarding the Kyaukpyu Deep Seaport Project, the Kyaukpyu locals want to complete it as quickly as possible. Some of the town elders of Kyaukpyu and other locals who previously served senior-level duties met with me and demanded that the project be started promptly. The residents are satisfied with the Kyaukpyu project. They also suggested starting the operations as quickly as possible," the Union minister said regarding the opinions of the locals.

Along with the construction of the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone deep seaport project, the industrial park project will continue to be implemented. If the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone Deep Seaport Project and the Industrial Park Project are implemented, job opportunities will be available for locals, and most management positions will be occupied by Myanmar nationals.

The Kyaukpyu Special

Economic Zone and the Deep Seaport Project will bring many possession of benefits to the country, such as possession of a seaport that can directly connect to international governments, job opportunities in various fields, including management positions for the Myanmar citizens, receiving of tax revenues in trading with China passing through Myanmar and attracting foreign investments for having industrial zone project.

"The whole project will contribute to the entire country and socioeconomic sector of the citizens," U Aung Naing Oo reaffirmed.

The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), which the former governments agreed on, will reportedly be implemented along with this project. The CMEC features the China-Mandalay-Kyaukpyu of Myanmar express railway, connecting to the Kyaukpyu Deep Seaport project.

The project will be a four-phase operation and was signed by the former government. The project will be implemented phase by phase, in its stipulated time frame. — Hein Min Soe/TTA/KTZH



The book title of 'Efforts for the Recovery of Rakhine region Affected by Cyclone Mocha' donation ceremony in progress in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

## MoCRD Deputy Minister donates books authored by himself to IPRD libraries

IN a generous gesture, Deputy Minister for Cooperatives and Rural Development U Myint Soe (Myint Soe-Natala), donated books written by himself to township libraries of the IPRD under the Ministry of Information. The ceremony, held at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw, saw the presence of Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn, Deputy Minister U Ye Tint, and

officials.

U Myint Soe's books centred around the Mocha storm, encapsulate his experiences and collected information, providing insights into the recovery efforts in Rakhine State. During the ceremony, he distributed 100 copies of "Efforts for the Recovery of Rakhine region Affected by Cyclone Mocha" and shared his motivations for offering the book for free.

Deputy Minister U Ye Tint, returned a certificate of honour to U Myint Soe. Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn expressed words of thanks, emphasizing the significance of the donated books for the rehabilitation of Rakhine State. He pledged to order District office of Information and Public Relations Department to keep these valuable records of collaborative efforts. — MNA/TS

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# NATIONAL

It should also work together with the relevant organizations to get techniques and investments in rubber plantation sectors and rubber-based MSMEs

Interviewer - Hninsi Nwe

THE government encourages the MSMEs to improve the State economy.

The government also makes efforts to promote rubber-based industries, and here is an exclusive interview with U Aung Shwe, owner of the “Yadana Shwe Phyu” rubber production company in Thanbyuzayat Township of Mon State.

**Q: When did you start your rubber industry?**

**A:** In 2017, 14 factories were established with the state government budget, and Yadana Shwe Phyu plant is one of the factories, and I started running the operations.

**Q: Where do you get the raw rubber materials from?**

**A:** We purchase the raw rubber materials from farmers or other suppliers.

**Q: What are the rubber production processes?**

**A:** The processes go like weighing the liquid rubber, filtering, DRC measurement, filtering in the bulking tank (80), calculating the DRC and adding one ounce of Formic acid into 14 pounds of rubber to become

harder, grinding the frozen rubber, exposure to wind, putting in the smoking chamber after leaving the well-dried rubber for four nights and grading 1, 2 and 3.

**Q: How is the distribution system?**

**A:** We transport the products to Mandalay and Yangon. We also sell at the plant. We make the orders depending on the pounds made by the traders such as 77 pounds or 110 pounds. The rubber is currently distributed locally and the township and state levels are also working with the relevant factories to export directly. If there is a factory unit, we can export directly to foreign countries.

**Q: What are the challenges in this business?**

**A:** The rubber latex yield is from September to early June. During that period, if the weather is not fine, it can cause losses to the latex. If so, we add Ammonia and transport to the factory. We still need quality materials and systematic production processes to ensure the rubber quality. Therefore, we are still striving to achieve



Rubber sheets kept to be dried at rubber production industry in Thanbyuzayat Township of Mon State. PHOTO: SITHU SOE

standard rubber.

**Q: What would you like to inform the officials regarding the difficulties in the production of rubber-based finished products?**

**A:** If we cannot produce the finished products using the raw materials, we still have to rely

on imported rubber-based finished products. It should also work together with the relevant organizations to get techniques and investments in rubber plantation sectors and rubber-based MSMEs. The government also should create a market. If the policies of the Central Bank of Myanmar are eased to a certain

extent, foreign merchants can come and trade here. If so, the rubber businesspeople can get profits and it can also raise the lives of farmers.

**Q: How many employees does the “Yadana Shwe Phyu” rubber industry need and what is the benefit for the employees?**

**A:** The Yadana Shwe Phyu industry is running with 20 workers daily. The daily wage of the worker depends on pounds of rubber. We pay K15,000-K18,000 per head. They get K450,000 per month at least and the workers are convenient in rubber season. In the harvest season, we also provide a bag of rice per household and such doing can support their families.

**Q: Is there anything you would like to add?**

**A:** We want the support of the government to get quality rubber-based raw materials as the currently receiving raw materials are substandard as they are being produced just from the small-scale rubber plantations of Mon State. If we could produce finished products based on locally produced rubber raw materials, there would be economic growth.

Translated by KTZH

## Counter-argument to false information

### False news: Farmers fear to pay off agricultural loans at Wethteekan police station

FALSE information is being written and spread on social networking sites that farmers are afraid of being forced to pay agricultural loans at the police station, and those who cannot pay the loans will be prosecuted and arrested in Wethteekan Station, Pyay, Bago Region.

Regarding the news, according to an official from the relevant ministry, the government has been lending out annual agricultural loans at a low interest rate to help farmers with their agricultural expenses. Therefore, in lending,

the new loan system is applied only after the previous year's arrears have been paid, and the procedures for recovering the arrears are taken seriously. The Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank and its branches are only collecting arrears through an organizational way, and no cases have been opened against the farmers who still have to pay the loans. According to the terms of the loan instructions, farmers who have paid their arrears are being given new loans before cultivation season.

Malicious media outlets are taking advantage of the current situation to instill fear in local farmers and spread false news against State service personnel and administrative institutions. —MNA/KZL



### Misinformation: Women inmates of Obo Prison tortured and denied medical treatment

FALSE information was spread on social media that women who were imprisoned for political reasons were forced to get up early in the morning to take a shower and squat on the balcony in the Obo Prison of Mandalay.

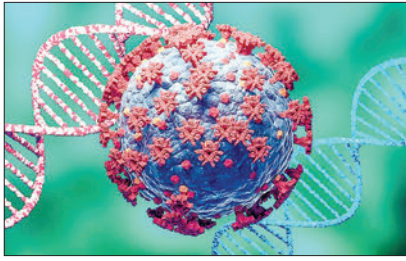
Regarding the news, an official from the Correctional Department said that prison staff are managing the prisons under the Prison Act and instructions, without any personal torture.

The Correctional Department of conducts its daily activities under the law. In response,

illegal media are deliberately spreading false and misleading information about the Correctional Department and prison staff. — MNA/KZL



# NATIONAL



The Covid JN.1 strain.

## MoH implements vital measures, including vaccinations, amid surge in Covid-19 cases

DURING the third week of December 2023, preparations are underway to sustain vaccination coverage due to the increasing number of Covid-19 patients in the country, as reported by the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Between 10 and 17 December, seven new cases of Covid-19 were identified. Subsequently, from 17 to 24 December, an additional 29 confirmed cases of Covid-19 were reported, bringing the total to 36 cases.

Despite the rise in virus detection, there have been no reported deaths due to the virus this week, according to the MoH's statement on 25 December.

Currently, with the escalating number of Covid-19 strain JN.1 infection in some countries in the region and other parts of the world, Union Minister Dr Thet Khaing Win emphasized in a coordination meeting on 22 December that the Ministry of Health should take necessary measures to sustain Covid vaccine coverage.

From 23 March 2020, to 24 December 2023, Myanmar reported a total of 641,422 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 620,159 recoveries and 19,494 deaths, according to the statistics provided by the Ministry of Health. — TWA/TKO

## Tamarind market sees late harvest season



A pile of tamarind baskets at a warehouse.

FRESH tamarind usually flows into Yangon's market in the last week of December, and they are expected to enter the market in early January, U Thein Swe, a tamarind trader, told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

As tamarind prices have declined for two consecutive years, those traders who kept the stocks in their hands do not make a profit.

With the harvest season approaching, the tamarind prices moved in the range between K1,100 and K2,500 per viss depending on varieties, including seedless tamarind.

New tamarind from Pyay, Yamethin, Taungtha, Mahlaing and Pakokku areas will likely be supplied in the domestic market.

The traders purchase a tamarind tree outright at K50,000 to K100,000 depending on productivity, said a trader from Mahlaing Township.

Traders forecast less chance for prices to rise after observing the export and domestic market conditions. Amid

inflation of dry groceries, tamarind is the only commodity whose price remained unchanged.

Low exports for tamarind and its substitutes and high stocks in the market are contributing factors to the sluggish market, a tamarind trader engaged in Bayintnaung Commodity Centre pointed out.

Low profits prompted traders to lose interest in this business. This way, the supply of new tamarind is possibly delayed.

Tamarind fetched K1,900-K2,200 per viss on 21 December 2022. New tamarind is expected to be priced around K1,100-K1,200 per viss, Daw Hein, a tamarind trader, said.

Upper Myanmar regions are arid, so big trees such as palm trees and tamarind trees help the residents reduce peak temperatures and contribute to the community's livelihoods. Therefore, the community must be committed to conservation activities, as some cut down trees. — TWA/EM

## AYA Bank launches 'AYA SME Demand Loan' programme to boost SME support

AYEYARWADY Bank has introduced a programme called 'AYA SME Demand Loan,' offering long-term loans to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for acquiring raw materials, equipment, and machinery, as well as constructing factories and warehouses to facilitate business expansion.

Under this initiative, the maximum loan amount is K1 billion, and the principal repayment is structured in instalments of 30%, 30%, and 40% over three years. The interest rates range from 10% to 14.5%, and borrowers are required to make monthly or quarterly interest payments. The repayment period extends up to three years. To secure the loan, borrowers must provide plots of land, buildings, and condominiums as collateral. — TWA/TMT



AYA Bank's announcement of long-term loans for SMEs for business expansions.

## Myanmar sends over 270 workers to S Korea under EPS in Dec

THE Myanmar Embassy in Seoul announced that on 26 December, 271 Myanmar national workers were dispatched to the Republic of Korea under the Employment Permit System (EPS).

Workers comprise 208 manufacturing workers and 63 re-entry workers through the government overseas employment agency, and they arrived at Incheon International Airport on the same day.

This marks the second batch of production workers sent to South Korea in December, with an additional of 150 workers dispatched on 19 December.

From January to November, Myanmar sent over 9,000 workers to South Korea, as reported by the government's overseas employment agency. — TWA/MKKS



Myanmar workers arrive at Incheon International Airport of Korea on 26 December.

## Commerce Ministry issues 2024 vehicle import policy, oldest model set to be 2023

REGARDING the 2024 vehicle import, 2023 will be the oldest model to be issued an import permit for non-commercial vehicles under Section 13 (B) of the Export and Import Law, according to Notification No 80/2023 of the Commerce Ministry.

For non-commercial vehicles, the model year must be 2023 or later. Public service vehicles such as mini-buses, city buses, express buses, and commercial trucks manufactured in 2020 and later can be imported. Moreover, fire engines and ambulances manufactured in 2014 or later are allowed for import. The oldest model of machinery is set for 2014.

Except for machinery, all import vehicles must be left-hand drive under the 2024 vehicle import policy.

Heavy equipment that cannot be driven on public roads such as excavators, bulldozers,



Electric vehicles (EVs) are pictured at the container yard of Yangon Port.

wheel loaders, vibratory rollers, clamp loaders, motor graders, road roller compactors, bridge cranes, gantry cranes, tower cranes, pilling machines, crawler

drill/cranes, overhead travelling cranes, mobile cranes, rough-terrain cranes, forklifts, boom lifts, and asphalt finishers are allowed to be brought into the country

as long as they are 15 years old or less.

The ministry issues the specified model year for vehicle importation. The existing auto-

mobile import policies are not modified, the notification stated.

The Agribusiness and Trade Division under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation stated that Myanmar brought in more than 6,400 vehicles including 1,400 non-commercial vehicles over the past seven months in the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April.

The ministry's report showed that 1,418 non-commercial passenger vehicles worth US\$31.14 million, 54 buses worth \$1.04 million, 855 trucks worth \$13.07 million, and 4,095 heavy machinery worth \$132.38 million between 1 April and 3 November this FY.

Moreover, the import value of auto parts was estimated at \$35.12 million then. Therefore, vehicle and automobile imports swelled to \$215.75 million over the past seven months. — NN/EM

## Sugar prices on upward trend despite sugarcane harvest season

THE price of sugar peaked at over K3,900 per viss on 27 December despite the sugarcane harvest season.

The sugar price stood at K3,780 per viss on 1 December. The figures showed an increase of K150 per viss within four weeks.

High price is attributed to the lack of sugar imports and low stocks in the domestic market.

The sugar mills notified sugarcane growers again that they raised the price of sugar-

cane to K150,000 per tonne for the 2023-2024 sugarcane season.

The company set the sugarcane floor price at K90,000-K100,000 per tonne last season. Sugarcane and sugar traders emphasized that the rise in the offering price is aimed at covering the high input cost of the growers amid the price rise in sugar.

Additionally, sugar mills are pushing up the growers to ramp up per-acre yield and expand the cultivation acreage.

The sugar price was below

at K1,000 per viss in the 2019-2020 sugarcane season. The prevailing price increased to over K3,900 per viss amid low stocks and no importation of sugar.

Myanmar's annual sugar production is estimated at 450,000 tonnes. Myanmar earlier sent sugar to China and Viet Nam beyond self-sufficiency. At present, it is delivered to Viet Nam only, Myanmar Sugar and Cane Related Association stated.

Sugarcane is commonly found in the upper Sagaing Region, followed by northern Shan State. It is also found in the western and eastern Bago Region, Yangon Region and Mandalay Region.

The sugarcane is grown in December-January. It can be harvested from November to February of the following years. The sugarcane growing rotation cycle lasts four years in Myanmar. — NN/EM



## Black gram price fluctuates around K3M/tonne in domestic market

THE black gram market saw moderate fluctuation of around K3 million per tonne in the domestic market upon the foreign demand.

The black gram price stood at only K2.836 million per tonne on 1 December. The market has witnessed slight changes around K3 million per tonne starting from 5 December. The price hit K3 million per tonne on 27 December, indicating a sharp rise of K160,000 per tonne within four weeks.

Myanmar mostly exports black gram, green gram, and pigeon peas to foreign markets.

Of them, black gram and pigeon peas are primarily shipped to India while green grams are exported to China and European countries.

Myanmar's various pulses export totalled over US\$931 million from 1.1 million tonnes in the past eight and a half months of the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April.

Myanmar's pulses exports bagged over US\$1.47 billion from over 1.9 million tonnes in the previous FY 2022-2023, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated. — NN/EM



Bags of sugar seen in a warehouse.

# OPINION

## Conserve natural resources at Inlay Lake to lessen climate change

**I**NLAY Lake, nestled in Shan State, stands as a captivating haven for both local and international travellers, doubling as a significant habitat for migratory birds. Over time, it has evolved into a prominent tourist destination, drawing attention for its scenic beauty and biodiversity. However, the lake faces the imminent threat of shrinking due to silting caused by deforestation in its surrounding areas.

Once characterized by expansive shallow waters and a broad watershed, Inlay Lake has witnessed a steady reduction in size. To combat this ecological challenge, local authorities and residents are collaboratively engaging in annual conservation efforts. Heavy machinery is employed to counteract the effects of silting, ensuring the preservation of this vital natural resource.

Beyond its ecological significance, Inlay Lake plays a crucial role in sustaining the livelihoods of local communities. Residents cultivate crops on floating islands and along the bunds, yielding seasonal and kitchen crops that cater to daily consumption needs. Recognizing the lake's importance, government departments, including the Department of Irrigation and Water Utilization Management, have initiated the Inlay Lake Conservation Project in the financial years.

For the 2023-24 fiscal year, a substantial budget of K700 million has been allocated for the construction of three silting-detering dykes, removal of floating islands, dredging of sand and silt from the lake, and an anti-weeding process. The progress indicates that 40 per cent of silting-detering dams, 78 per cent of dredging operations, 30 per cent of the anti-weeding process, and 54 per cent of floating island removal have been completed in the lake. Only upon the fulfilment of these project phases can the lake contribute positively to the environmental well-being of its surrounding areas.

Moreover, Inlay Lake plays a pivotal role in the national electrification plan, as Bilu Creek originates from the lake and streams to Lawpita, an excellent facility for generating electricity for the national grid. This underscores the lake's significance in not only benefiting local communities but also contributing to the improvement of the overall natural environment.

With the lake serving as a vital source of livelihood for local people and contributing to national development, there is an essential need for conscientious efforts to ensure the sustainability of these resources. By doing so, the local populace can mitigate the impact of climate change on their region and contribute to the broader well-being of the nation.

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**I**T was amusing to hear that the so-called Arakan Army – AA blamed the State Administration Council's announcement on the news about the case of the seizure of AA's drug smugglings between 3 and 9 December 2023. In those cases, the government authorities seized more than K51.87 billion (US\$ 24 million) worth of 2.07 tonnes of ICE (Crystal Meth) and 800 kilogrammes of prohibited chemical caffeine from AA's drug smugglers. According to my deep awareness of AA, their financial asset mainly comes from the illegal business of drug smuggling and extortion from innocent people, and their strength is built up with forcible recruitment, which all are intolerable acts by a real Arakan patriot, like me. It is the veracity of all Arakanese that we can't accept the acts of AA, which have been rendering the Rakhine state's instabilities, and their traitorous acts, which have been connecting with the Bengali terrorists who put Arakanese in danger.



ID No. of AC-0321  
Nay Linn Tun



ID No. of AC-0037  
Tun Lin (Aka) Pyone Cho



ID No. of AC-0304  
Soe Tun

Before considering the AA's involvement in drug-related criminal cases, we should notice a question about the AA's financial resources for buying arms and ammunition, and for providing salaries and facilities for their members. I am wondering if there is any good business run by AA and if there is, whether it is enough to get all the necessities for the survival of that insurgent group. I am so sure that there is no answer at all for that account. Thus, undeniably, the lifeblood of AA is coming from nowhere except drug smuggling and extortion.

In fact, AA ran its business mainly based on drug smuggling from the very beginning under the guidance of their boss (the puppeteer) so-called Kachin Independence Army – KIA. AA has expanded the drug market by using overland and nautical smuggling routes. Primarily overland route

to Bangladesh and India through Rakhine state, and a nautical route to Malaysia and Indonesia. AA has stepped up its drug smuggling after 2016. Therefore, it happened frequently, and heard about the seizure cases of AA's drug traffickers and smugglers under the NLD government. Once in 2019 August, AA admitted that a smuggler (Khaing Khaing San) was a former AA member. Actually, she is not an ex-member but recruited by AA in 2015 when she was working in Thailand, and working for AA as a member of the fundraising group for drug-related business.

Nay Lin Tun, who was arrested for drug trafficking in December 2023, joined the No 5 basic military training course of the AA base in Laiza due to the connection with a Monk, U Eain Da, from Ariyarwatha Monastery, Kyikean village. He has served from the Private rank to Sergeant with the

AA identification No. AA-00104, and became the Second Lieutenant with AA identification No. AC-0321 in October 2019.

Tun Lin also joined the AA training course together with Nay Lin Tun in October 2011 due to the contact with the presiding monk of Dat Khaung Monastery, U Tat Da Ma. His AA identification No. is AA-00138. After serving from Private to Warrant officer rank, he became Lieutenant in November 2019 with AA identification No. AC-0037.

Soe Tun joined AA in May 2012 through the recruitment of AA Captain Htun Aung Phyu and attended the basic military course No (8), which opened in Laiza, Kachin training ground. With AA identification No. AA-00178, he has served from the Private rank to Sergeant. In March 2019, he became Lieutenant with AA identification No. AC-0304.

Kyaw Han was recruited by



Khaing Khaing (Aka) Khaing Khaing San (Aka) San Chay who was arrested illegal drug case.



ID No. of AC-0304  
Kyaw Han

three armed groups, so-called The Three Brotherhood Alliance. They all are blended in the drug-related criminal cases (one group is in cahoots with another).

We, the Rakhine people, don't want the ruining of stability in our region for the sake of a small group of self-seeking Arakanese by exploiting their ethnicity and Rakhine state. Although AA armed terrorist group is formed with some Arakanese, it is not accepted by all innocent Rakhine people. Because they are just drug smugglers, a criminal gang, and they make money from drug smuggling, which can endanger humankind. Therefore, as a Rakhine Ethnicity who wants to get peace and stability in my surroundings, I wrote this letter to expose the undeniable fact of AA's drug smuggling case to publicize the truth.

At the rank of Col Kyaw Myat Oo (Aka) Maung Naing (Aka) Law Pann (Aka) Thar Thar (Aka) Wai Thar Tun from AA Terrorist Group.

# Undeniable Facts of Drug Smugglings by So-called Arakan Army

By Maung Kyaw (Taungup)

AA in 2016 when he was living in MaHainKye ward of MraukU township and attended the basic course in Meewa Base, Namathar village, Kyauktaw township. Currently, he is a Sergeant with AA identification No. AA-00287. Tun Nu was also recruited and trained in Meewa AA's Base in February 2022, and he is now serving as a Private with AA identification No. AA-18923.

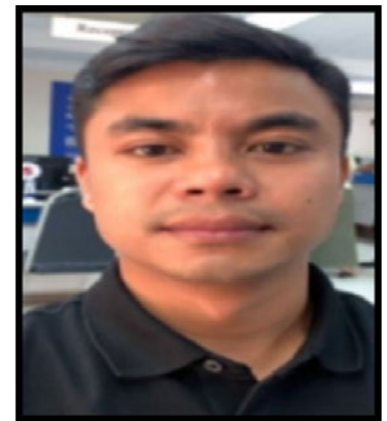
Kyaw San Lin with AA Identification No. AA-15473 was recruited in May 2020. He joined No (57) basic military course in Laiza, now he is a Private.

All those AA insurgents, arrested for drugs-related offences are working for drug trafficking and fundraising under the command of AA Colonel Kyaw Myat Oo (aka) Maung Naing (aka) Law Pann (aka) Thar Thar (aka) Wai Thar Tun (who was holding Citizenship Scrutiny Card (CSC) with the name 'Kyaw Myat Oo').

By knowing their drug-related history, it can be judged that the blatant lies about AA groups are not related to drug smuggling cases. Including AA, I will sooner or later expose the history of drug-related cases committed by



ID No. of AC-0304  
Kyaw Han



ID No. of AC-0304  
Kyaw Han



Tatmadaw released a statement describing that three members of AA terrorist Group captured.

three armed groups, so-called The Three Brotherhood Alliance. They all are blended in the drug-related criminal cases (one group is in cahoots with another).

We, the Rakhine people, don't want the ruining of stability in our region for the sake of a small group of self-seeking Arakanese by exploiting their ethnicity and Rakhine state. Although AA armed terrorist group is formed with some Arakanese, it is not accepted by all innocent Rakhine people. Because they are just drug smugglers, a criminal gang, and they make money from drug smuggling, which can endanger humankind. Therefore, as a Rakhine Ethnicity who wants to get peace and stability in my surroundings, I wrote this letter to expose the undeniable fact of AA's drug smuggling case to publicize the truth.



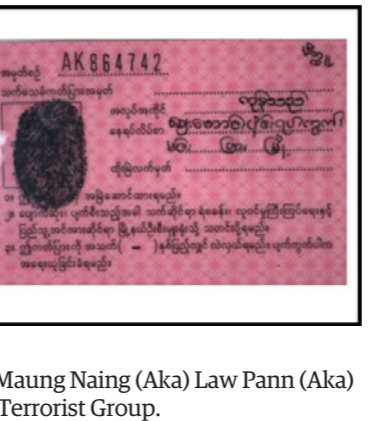
ID No. of AA-18923  
Tun Nu



ID No. of AA-18923  
Tun Nu



ID No. of AA-15473  
Kyaw San Lin



ID No. of AA-15473  
Kyaw San Lin



At the rank of Col Kyaw Myat Oo (Aka) Maung Naing (Aka) Law Pann (Aka) Thar Thar (Aka) Wai Thar Tun from AA Terrorist Group.

### Letter to the editor

**The Global New Light of Myanmar Yangon Respected Sir,**

The news item (15.12.2023) Real Estate Prices Double in New Satellite Township by TWA urged me to write this letter.

In the pre-war period, we can see 'to Let, sign Boards everywhere in Yangon. It was very simple and easy to rent an apartment. Pay one month's rent as a deposit and a monthly rent of Rupees15-Rupees30 according to locality. Even after Independence, the same trend followed.

There were huts on every street where air strikes destroyed buildings. There were many quarters where people could hire houses at low rent.

The situation changed due to insurgency and rebellion. People from villages and districts came to Yangon. New townships were created in the good interest of the people. We can buy a plot of land with a house within the range of K3,000 to K15,000.

As time changed, the prices rose to sky out of reach of any ordinary man.

There is vast vacant land in the countryside, and the government may create it.

In new townships, plots of land 40 feet by 60 feet, 50 feet by 100 feet or 100 feet by 100 feet should be sold at fair prices so that people in Yangon may be able to immigrate to district townships.

This plan may reduce the population of Yangon and lower the rental rates of buildings and apartments as well as the cost of flats.

The government should re-establish the rent control office and fix the rent rate. Thank you.

U Tin Hla  
31/2, Mingala St, Thingangyun, Yangon.  
(15/12/23)

## Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 27 December 2023)

**BAY INFERENCE:** Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the South Bay and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 28 December 2023:** Weather will be generally fair in Bago Region and partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (3-6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Kachin, Shan and Kayah states.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 December 2023:** Partly cloudy.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 December 2023:** Generally fair weather.



# SCI/ENVIRON WORLD

## Global greenhouse gas reduction in paper industry requires diverse strategies: study

The study, published in *Nature*, emphasizes the significant contribution of the pulp and paper industry to GHG emissions.



A vendor arranges paper bags at Kimironko market in Kigali, Rwanda, 14 July 2022. PHOTO: CYRIL NDEGEYA/XINHUA

A group of researchers have assessed the net global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of domestic paper-related industries across 30 major countries from 1961 to 2019 and found significant differences in terms of historical

emission evolution trends and structures in these countries, according to a recent study published in the journal *Nature*.

The pulp and paper industry is an important contributor to GHG emissions.

Country-specific strategies are essential for the industry to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, given its vast heterogeneities across countries, the study noted.

Researchers from the Department of Environmental Science and Engineering of Fudan University cooperated with international partners to set up a greenhouse gas emissions dataset concerning the paper industry and proposed a strategy to reach net-zero emission by 2050, which took into account the local conditions of countries.

The research showed that the global paper industry had emitted 43.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent of greenhouse gases from 1961 to 2019. — Xinhua

## Scientists identify new ancestor of modern maize: study

The study underscores the significance of wild relatives of maize for future breeding efforts, emphasizing the potential for genetic diversity and improvement in crop development.

A collaborative team of Chinese and US scientists have identified a new ancestor of modern maize, highlighting the potential of the crop's wild relatives to be utilized in future breeding.

The study published on Friday in the journal *Science* revealed that the origin of modern maize can be traced to an admix-

ture between ancient maize and a teosinte living in the highlands of Mexico some 4,000 years after domestication began.

The origins of maize were controversial for nearly a century and recent work suggested the possible contribution of a wild relative called "*Zea mays ssp. mexicana*". — Xinhua



A farmer airs harvested corn in Binzhou City, east China's Shandong Province, 29 October 2023. PHOTO: CHU BAORUI/XINHUA

EVEN as human-caused climate change threatens the environment, nature continues to inspire our technological advancement.

From compasses mimicking insect eyes to forest fire-fighting robots that behave like vines, here's a selection of this year's nature-based technology.

### Insect compass

Some insects — such as ants and bees — navigate visually based on the intensity and polarization of sunlight, thus using the sun's position as a reference point.

Researchers replicated their eye structure to construct a compass capable of estimating the sun's location in the sky, even on cloudy days.

Common compasses rely on Earth's weak magnetic field to navigate, which is easily disturbed by noise from electronics.

A prototype of the light-detecting compass is "already working great", said Gkaniias, who led the study published in *Communications Engineering*.

### Water-collecting webs

Fabric inspired by the silky

## 2023's nature-inspired tech



Some insects — such as ants and bees — navigate visually based on the intensity and polarization of sunlight. PHOTO: AFP

threads of a spider web and capable of collecting drinking water from morning mist could soon play an important role in regions suffering water scarcity.

The artificial threads draw from the feather-legged spider, whose intricate "spindle-knots"

allow large water droplets to move and collect on its web.

### Fire-fighting vines

Animals aren't the only source of inspiration from nature.

Scientists have created an inflatable robot that "grows" in

the direction of light or heat, in the same way vines creep up a wall or across a forest floor.

The roughly two-metre-long tubular robot can steer itself using fluid-filled pouches rather than costly electronics.

In time, these robots could find hot spots and deliver fire suppression agents, say researchers at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

"These robots are slow, but that is OK for fighting smoldering fires, such as peat fires, which can be a major source of carbon emissions," co-author Charles Xiao told AFP.

### Kombucha circuits

Scientists at the Unconventional Computing Laboratory at the University of the West of England in Bristol have found a way to use slimy kombucha mats — produced by yeast and bacteria during the fermenting of the popular tea-based drink — to create "kombucha electronics".

The scientists printed electrical circuits onto dried mats that were capable of illuminating small LED lights.

Dry kombucha mats share properties of textiles or even leather. But they are sustainable and biodegradable, and can even be immersed in water for days without being destroyed, said the authors.

### Scaly robots

Pangolins resemble a cross between a pine cone and an anteater. The soft-bodied mammals, covered in reptilian scales, are known to curl up in a ball to protect themselves against predators.

Now, a tiny robot might adapt that same design for potentially life-saving work, according to a study published in *Nature Communications*.

It is intended to roll through our digestive tracts before unfurling and delivering medicine or stopping internal bleeding in hard-to-reach parts of the human body.

Lead author Ren Hao Soon of the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems was watching a YouTube video when he "stumbled across the animal and saw it was a good fit". — AFP

# Radio sets make a comeback in war-torn Gaza

*With electricity and internet access limited due to the situation, battery-powered radios have become essential for Gazans to stay informed about the news.*

BEFORE war broke out in Gaza, Mahmud al-Daoudi could never have imagined the radio sets gathering dust in his shop would be in such high demand, offering his customers a precious link with the outside world.

Power cuts have long been a part of everyday life, but the besieged territory's 2.4 million people are now enduring long blackouts after Israel cut off electricity and fuel supplies.

Its relentless assault has killed more than 19,450 Gazans, mostly women and children,



A Palestinian man listens to his radio in a refugee camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip amid continuing battles between Israel forces and Hamas fighters. **PHOTO: AFP**

according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Israel began its devastating air and ground offensive

following the 7 October Hamas attacks, which killed around 1,140 people in southern Israel, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

It is now impossible to plug in computers or television sets, recharge phones or access the internet without generators or solar panels, a luxury few Gazans can afford.

But to keep up with the news, there's always the battery-powered radio.

"We had a full stock but we've been completely out of them since the first week" of

the war, Daoudi said.

With the phone and internet cuts, "radio is the only way to find out what's going on", he said.

The long battery life is another plus, he said from his store in Rafah, at the southern end of the territory.

Before the war, a radio cost around 25 shekels (\$7) — now, they go for around 60 shekels (\$16).

"We've even resold the broken radios people returned to us," the 33-year-old said. — AFP

## 'Aquaman,' 'Colour Purple' notch notable weekends at N American boxoffice

*"Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," featuring Jason Momoa, claimed the top spot at the Christmas weekend box office, despite relatively subdued ticket sales for the DC Extended Universe film.*



The movie earned \$38.3 million in its opening weekend in the United States and Canada, spanning Friday through Monday, according to Exhibitor Relations. **PHOTO: IMDB**

"AQUAMAN and the Lost Kingdom," starring Jason Momoa as a sea-dwelling superhero, splashed to the top of the three-day Christmas weekend boxoffice despite muted ticket sales for the DC Extended Universe offering, industry watchers reported Tuesday.

The film took in \$38.3 million in its debut weekend in the United States and Canada for the Friday-through-Monday period, according to Exhibitor Relations. The DC comics sequel follows the king of Atlantis

as he splits his time between the depths of the sea and the surface world, combining forces with his half-brother and former enemy as turmoil and climate change threatens the underwater realm.

Warner Bros.' fantasy musical "Wonka," starring Timothee Chalamet as a younger version of Roald Dahl's famous chocolatier Willy Wonka — a character first played by Gene Wilder and then Johnny Depp — placed second for \$28.4 million.

The new musical version of "The Colour Purple," which only debuted on Christmas Monday, meanwhile landed in third with \$18.2 million in sales — the biggest Christmas Day opening since "Sherlock Holmes" in 2009. The new reimaging is based on the Pulitzer-Prize winning novel by Alice Walker that then became a beloved movie before landing on Broadway as a musical. It follows the struggles and triumphs of a young Black woman in rural Georgia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. — AFP

## Japanese comedian denies sexual assault allegations

ONE of Japan's most popular comedians denied sexual assault allegations published in a prominent magazine on Wednesday, his talent agency said, adding it was considering legal action.

There are "no facts whatsoever" in accusations published by weekly Shukan Bunshun

against comedian and TV presenter Hitoshi Matsumoto, his talent agency said in a statement. The Bunshun report quoted two women as alleging Matsumoto, now 60, forced them into sexual activities at private parties at a Tokyo upscale hotel in 2015. — AFP

## Shakira's Colombian home city unveils statue in her honour

COLOMBIAN superstar Shakira's Caribbean home city of Barranquilla unveiled a 6.5-metre (21.3-foot) hip-swaying statue in her honour on Tuesday.

The towering bronze and aluminium creation depicts the singer in a bikini top, bare middle and a long, flowing skirt, her hands clasped over her head and

one hip jutting out in one of her characteristic dance moves.

"Hips that do not lie, a unique talent, a voice that moves masses," reads the inscription at the base of the sculpture unveiled on the banks of the Magdalena River at a ceremony attended by Shakira's parents William Mebarak and Nidia Ripoll. — AFP



A statue of Colombian singer Shakira at the Malecon in Barranquilla, Colombia, on 26 December 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

# ECONOMY WORLD

## India's current account deficit narrows in July-September: RBI

A current account deficit occurs when a country's total imports surpass its total exports, making the CAD a crucial economic indicator.



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) attributed the reduced current account deficit to a narrowing merchandise trade deficit, which dropped from USD 78.3 billion to USD 61.0 billion. **PHOTO: ANI**

INDIA'S current account deficit narrowed to USD 8.3 billion in the second quarter of the financial year 2023-24, lower than USD 9.2 billion it recorded in the preceding quarter.

A current account deficit is when a country's total value of imports exceeds the total value of exports. The CAD numbers are a key indicator for any economy.

In the second quarter of

the previous financial year, the current account deficit was USD 30.9 billion. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said that the underlying reason behind the lower current account deficit in the second quarter was the narrowing of the merchandise trade deficit to USD 61.0 billion from USD 78.3 billion.

As per the data, the current account deficit in July-September amounted to 1.0 per cent of

India's GDP. For the first half of 2023-24, the current account deficit more than halved to USD 17.5 billion (or 1.0 per cent of GDP) from USD 48.8 billion in April-September 2022, or 2.9 per cent of GDP. "India's current account deficit moderated to 1.0 per cent of GDP in H1:2023-24 from 2.9 per cent of GDP in H1:2022-23 on the back of a lower merchandise trade deficit," the RBI said. — ANI

## Homelessness soars in rural England as living costs hit poor

The G7 nation, ranked as the world's sixth-largest economy, is grappling with a cost-of-living crisis, leaving a significant number of Britons struggling due to escalating bills for food, energy, rent, and mortgages.

HOMELESSNESS in rural England has risen by 40 per cent in five years with many sleeping in the open air, tents or makeshift shelters, a British rural charity said on Tuesday. A cost-of-living crisis in the G7 nation and world's sixth-biggest economy has left many Britons struggling to make ends meet, as bills for food, energy, rent and mortgages increase.

Annual inflation hit a 41-year peak of 11.1 per cent in October 2022, and while it has come down to 3.9 per cent in November, charities say a range of factors — notably cuts to welfare payments

in the last decade and a housing shortage — has exacerbated food poverty and homelessness.

The CPRE charity, which campaigns for affordable housing in rural England, said homelessness in the countryside had increased from 17,212 in 2018 to 24,143 in 2023, with wages stagnating and housing costs rising in many areas. "The sharp rise in rural homelessness shows the real-life impact of record house prices, huge waiting lists for social-rent housing and the boom in second homes and short-term lets," it said. — AFP



The CPRE charity said homelessness in the English countryside has increased from 17,212 in 2018 to 24,143 in 2023. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

## Regulators lift operation ban on TEPCO nuclear plant in Niigata Pref

JAPAN'S nuclear watchdog said Wednesday it has lifted its de facto ban on the operation of Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc.'s Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant in Niigata Prefecture, more than two years after an order was issued for the improvement of counterterrorism measures.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority confirmed that measures had been enhanced after inspections of the seven-reactor complex on the Sea of Japan coast and hearing from TEPCO President

Tomoaki Kobayakawa, but it remains uncertain whether the nuclear plant will resume operation as the trouble-prone utility still needs to obtain local consent.

"We will listen to residents' opinions and make our decision," Niigata Gov. Hideyo Hanazumi said.

In April 2021, the NRA prohibited the transportation or loading of reactor fuel stored at the plant due to insufficient counterterrorism measures, ordering the utility to take corrective action. — Kyodo

## US holiday sales growth estimated at 3.1%: Mastercard

PRELIMINARY shopping data indicated that US holiday sales increased 3.1 per cent compared with the year-ago period, a solid but unspectacular increase reflecting mixed sentiment on

the economy.

The figures, supplied by Mastercard SpendingPulse and released Tuesday, pointed to apparel and restaurants among stronger areas of spending in

the period between 1 November and 24 December, while electronics and jewelry experienced declines.

The Mastercard data puts the US holiday shopping performance in line with the forecast of the National Retail Federation, which had described consumers bolstered by a strong jobs market but buffeted by a lengthy period of inflation and the effects of higher borrowing rates. The growth in this year's holiday sales is below 2022 holiday season sales increase of 5.3 per cent and much below the 2021 figure of 14.1 per cent, according to NRF data. — AFP



US holiday sales grew 3.1 per cent from last year's, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

## eSIM cards help war-torn Gaza stay online

POWER cuts have become a fact of life in war-torn Gaza. But thanks to embedded SIM cards, Palestinians can still access the internet and maintain a channel of communication with loved ones abroad.

“Without them, we’d be cut off from the world,” said Hani al-Shaer, a local journalist who depends on eSIM cards to do his live streams. “And no one would know what was happening in Gaza,” he added, just as the besieged territory on Tuesday experienced the latest in a series of telecoms breakdowns since the

war began. The war erupted after the Hamas attack on 7 October killed around 1,140 people in Israel, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on the latest official Israeli figures.

Vowing to destroy Hamas, Israel has led a massive air and ground campaign against the Palestinian militants in retaliation.

The offensive has left vast areas of Gaza in ruins and killed at least 20,915 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. — AFP



A mobile phone store owner said his main customers are journalists who use eSIMs to provide the outside world with an accurate account of the situation in Gaza. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Toyota global output hits new 1-year high on robust overseas demand

The record-breaking output was supported by a November production increase of 11.2 per cent, reaching 926,573 cars, with the global chip shortage easing and contributing to growth in production outside Japan. Domestic production also rose by 18.3 per cent in November to 314,917 cars.

TOYOTA Motor Corp said Wednesday its global output from January to November reached 9.23 million vehicles, soaring to a new single-year record with still one month left in 2023, helped by robust demand in North America and Europe.

The all-time high came as the automaker’s worldwide production for November rose 11.2 per cent from a year earlier to 926,573 cars, a single-month record. The previous high in a full year was 9.05 million units in 2019.

An easing in the global chip shortage contributed to growth in production outside of Japan, with the figure for November in-



Toyota Motor Corp. announced a new single-year production record of 9.23 million vehicles from January to November 2023, attributing the achievement to strong demand in North America and Europe. **PHOTO: KYODO**

creasing 7.9 per cent to 611,656 vehicles, a record for the month. Domestic production rose 18.3 per

cent to 314,917 cars.

The automaker is also ramping up production in December, setting it on a

course to produce over 10 million Toyota- and Lexus-branded units in a year for the first time. — AFP

## Apple Watch import ban goes into effect in US patent clash

A US import ban on specific Apple smartwatch models took effect after the Biden administration chose not to veto a ruling on patent infringements related to blood-oxygen level detection.

A US import ban on certain Apple smartwatch models came into effect Tuesday, after the Biden administration opted not to veto a ruling on patent infringements.

The United States International Trade Commission (ITC) decided in October to ban Apple Watch models over a patented technology for detecting blood-oxygen levels. Apple contends that the ITC finding was in error and should be reversed, but last week paused its US



Apple Watch Ultra 2 devices are displayed for sale in Los Angeles. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

sales of Apple Watch Series 9 and Apple Watch Ultra 2. The iPhone-maker said it

would appeal the decision in a US federal court. The move came into effect on

the online Apple Store on 21 December, with retail locations ceasing sales 24 December — just ahead of the holiday.

The order stemmed from a complaint made to the commission in mid-2021 by Masimo Corp, in which the medical device maker accused Apple of infringing on “light-based oximetry functionality”.

Masimo contends it invented the technology — and that Apple poached its employees to win access to the knowledge. — AFP

### MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

AS the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (Independence Day) and 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (Kayin New Year's Day), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE M.V GENIUS ACE VOY.NO. (2360E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V GENIUS ACE VOY.NO. (2360E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-12-2023 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT 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: 2301928

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanmar Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPPING PRIVATE LTD

## ROLLING UPDATES: WORLD

### Russian, Indian foreign policy chiefs meet, hold press conference in Moscow

The top diplomats from Russia and India, Sergey Lavrov and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, are engaging in discussions covering the Gaza Strip crisis, de-dollarization, and BRICS cooperation.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is holding talks with his Indian counterpart, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK**

THE top diplomats will engage in discussions regarding several bilateral issues, with particular emphasis on three essential topics — the crisis in the Gaza Strip, de-dollarization, and cooperation within the BRICS bloc. Sputnik presents a live

broadcast from Moscow, where Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is holding talks with his Indian counterpart, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

Russia and India are deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict between Israel and the

Palestinian movement Hamas. This conflict has severe consequences for the civilian population of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Both Moscow and New Delhi firmly support the idea of a two-state solution to this issue. — SPUTNIK

### Guatemala supreme court orders release of anti-corruption prosecutor

GUATEMALA'S supreme court on Tuesday ordered the release of former anti-corruption prosecutor Virginia Laparra, who was sentenced in December 2022 to four years in prison for abuse of authority in a trial criticized by

the international community. The criminal chamber of the court ordered that “the preventive detention of the accused cease,” in a decision reported by the press and confirmed to AFP by Laparra’s lawyers.

The decision took into consideration that Laparra had already served almost half of her jail term as she was imprisoned for 10 months before her sentencing on 16 December last year. — AFP

### US, Israel discuss ‘different phase’ of war

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met Tuesday to discuss shifting “to a different phase” of the Israel-Hamas war with Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer, a White House official said.

The meeting provided an opportunity to talk about steps to improve the humanitarian situation in war-torn Gaza and minimize harm to civilians, according to the official, who did not wish to be named.

It was also meant as a



Protests against Israel have become a regular occurrence since 7 October. **PHOTO: AFP**

### UK retains metric system for selling after overwhelming support

The UK government has abandoned plans to re-introduce imperial measures, such as pounds and pints, after a consultation showed overwhelming support for maintaining the metric system.

THE UK government said on Wednesday it had dropped its plan to start selling in imperial measures after a consultation revealed 99 per cent support for keeping the metric system.

Ministers had looked at changing the law after the UK’s departure from the European Union in 2020 to allow traders to use Britain’s traditional weighing system — which measures in pounds and pints — only alongside the metric one.

But they decided against the move after 98.7 per cent of the 100,938 respondents to an official consultation said they were happy using metric units when

buying or selling a product.

“The government has analyzed all consultation responses received and reviewed the arguments for and against expanding the use of imperial units in domestic consumer transactions,” a statement from the department of business and trade said. “After careful consideration, the government has decided against any legislative changes at this time.”

The department said the UK had “a long and proud history” of using imperial measures and that their use is “closely associated with our culture and language”. — AFP



An example of a dual-unit road sign. Imperial and metric units are mandatory for signs relating to width and height from March 2015. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS**

chance to speak on “the transition to a different phase of the war to maximize focus on high-value Hamas targets”, the official said, referring to the Palestinian militant group.

The discussion comes after the UN Security Council agreed last week to a watered-down resolution calling for aid to be delivered to the Gaza Strip “at scale.”

Gaza’s 2.4 million people are suffering dire shortages of water, food, fuel and medicine,

with only limited aid entering.

The bloodiest-ever Gaza war erupted when Hamas attacked southern Israel on 7 October and killed about 1,140 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

They took 250 hostages of whom 129 remain inside Gaza. The effort to bring these home was also among the topics on the table at the Sullivan-Dermer meeting. — AFP

# SPORTS

## Liverpool go top as Nunez strikes, Hojlund caps Man Utd fightback

*Darwin Nunez ended his goal drought, scoring his eighth goal of the season and his first in 12 games.*



Manchester United's Rasmus Hojlund celebrates after scoring the winner during Tuesday's Premier League match at home to Aston Villa. **PHOTO: AFP**

LIVERPOOL climbed to the top of the Premier League as Darwin Nunez ended his goal drought to inspire a 2-0 win against Burnley, while Rasmus Hojlund broke his own barren run to cap Manchester United's thrilling fightback to beat Aston Villa 3-2 on Tuesday.

Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool took an early lead through Nunez at Turf Moor and held on despite wasting a host of chances.

Nunez's eighth goal this season was his first

for 12 games since he netted against Bournemouth in the League Cup on 1 November.

Diogo Jota, back from a month's injury absence, wrapped up the victory late on to leave Liverpool two points above second placed Arsenal, who have a game in hand.

Arsenal can regain top spot with a victory at home to West Ham on Thursday.

After successive draws with Manchester United and Arsenal prior

to Christmas, this was an essential victory for Liverpool's title ambitions.

On Liverpool being in pole position, Klopp said: "That's nice. It will probably change and that's no problem. It was not perfect but we are where we are."

At Old Trafford, United were in danger of another damaging defeat when goals from John McGinn and Leander Dendoncker put Villa in control by half-time at Old Trafford. — AFP

## OBITUARY

DAW K SAR KUMARI (A) KATHLEEN THAPA  
(AGE 86)

DAUGHTER OF (U S.M THAPA + DAW TULASA LIMBUNI) WIFE OF (U DAWOOD JAMAL) RESIDING AT NO 361, U WISARA ROAD, YANGON, MOTHER OF U AYOUB JAMAL + DAW KITTY SOE, U IMRAN JAMAL + DAW KYI KYI MYINT, U WAHID JAMAL + DAW PRE LOME, GRANDMOTHER OF SEVEN GRAND CHILDREN, GREAT GRANDMOTHER OF ONE GREAT GRAND CHILD PASSED AWAY ON 25.12.2023 AT 04:00 AM AND HAS BEEN CREMATED ON 25-12-2023 AT 13:00 AT YEWAY HINDU CEMETRY. HEART FELT GRATITUDE TO ALL FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS WHO JOINED DURING THE FUNERAL PROCEEDINGS.

## Man Utd must consult Ratcliffe's INEOS over transfers, Ten Hag future

*Manchester United has reached an agreement with INEOS and its chairman, Jim Ratcliffe, for a 25 per cent stake, giving INEOS control over football operations at Old Trafford pending regulatory approval.*

MANCHESTER United must consult with INEOS over any January transfer window deals and the future of manager Erik ten Hag prior to the Premier League ratifying its agreement to take a 25 per cent stake in the club.

The English football giants announced on Christmas Eve it had reached an agreement with chemicals company INEOS and its chairman Jim Ratcliffe, a boyhood Red Devils fan, which will give the firm responsibility



INEOS founder Jim Ratcliffe. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

for football operations at Old Trafford once the regulatory approval procedure is completed. This procedure is set to take four to six weeks and run beyond the finish of the January transfer window. — AFP

## Over 4,000 runners join Mini Marathon Event to mark 76<sup>th</sup> Independence Day



Runners participate in the Mini Marathon Event in Yangon to mark 76<sup>th</sup> Independence Day. **PHOTO: BALA SOE**

WITH the supervision of Yangon Region Government, a Mini Marathon Event was held in front of the Thuwunna Indoor Stadium-I in Yangon yesterday to commemorate the 76<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Independence Day. The event was launched by Yangon Region Minister U Soe Thein by firing a gun.

The 20-kilometre Marathon event for Under-18 men's and women's athletes was started in front of the Thuwunna Indoor Stadium-I to Waizayanta Road to Parami Kyaukyaydwin of North Okkalapa and back to the starting point.

Meanwhile, the 10-kilometre Marathon event for Under-18 men's and

women's athletes was started in front of the Thuwunna Indoor Stadium-I to Waizayanta Road to Parami Junction and back to the starting point.

Next, the three-kilometre Marathon event for Under-12 men's and women's athletes was started in front of the Thuwunna Indoor Stadium-I to Waizayanta Road to Parami Junction and back to the starting point.

The winners, first-runners up and second-runners up grabbed the medal plus cash awards. The event finishers also got cash awards. Over 4,000 runners participate in the event. — Bala Soe/KZL



# N Korea begins key year-end party meeting, Kim hails achievements

North Korea's ruling party, the Workers' Party of Korea, has commenced a key year-end meeting to assess policies implemented in 2023 and discuss a draft budget for the upcoming year.

**N**ORTH Korea's ruling party opened Tuesday a key year-end meeting to review its policies from 2023 and discuss a draft budget for next year, with leader Kim Jong Un hailing achievements in boosting "national power", the official Korean Central News Agency said.

Kim, who presided over the plenary

meeting of the Workers' Party of Korea Central Committee, in his report defined 2023 as "a year of great turn", in which North Korea "left a great trace in the glorious course of development in the efforts to improve the national power and enhance the prestige of the country", KCNA said Wednesday.

The report said "change and progress" were made in areas including politics, national defense and diplomacy, it added. KCNA noted the country's possession of "space reconnaissance assets", referring to the November launch of a military spy satellite, and said Pyongyang "has been unswervingly put (in) the position of a military power" following the development of new strategic weapons.

The agency also mentioned a constitutional amendment in September to incorporate Pyongyang's policy of boosting its nuclear force, saying the move firmly laid "a strong institutional and legal foundation for defending the state, self-respect and national interests". — Kyodo



The Workers' Party of Korea Central Committee convenes a plenary meeting in Pyongyang on 26 December 2023. **PHOTO: KCNA/KYODO**

# Indian Navy intensifies maritime security operations in Arabian Sea following recent incidents

The Indian Navy is actively collaborating with national maritime agencies to coordinate efforts and implement effective security measures in the Arabian Sea.

**I**N response to the recent maritime incidents in the Arabian Sea, the Indian Navy has commenced focused maritime security operations in the region. The navy has significantly increased the presence of warships and enhanced air surveillance to safeguard the waters and ensure the safety of maritime activities, the Indian Navy said in a statement. The move comes in the wake of incidents that raised concerns about the safety of shipping and trade routes in the region.



The navy has increased the presence of warships and improved air surveillance to safeguard waters and ensure the security of maritime activities, addressing concerns about shipping safety. **PHOTO: ANI**

"The presence of Indian Navy warships and air surveillance in the region has been enhanced," stated the Indian Navy. The navy is actively collaborating with national maritime agencies to coordinate efforts and implement effective security measures. The pri-

mary objective of these operations is to secure the Arabian Sea and protect merchant marine activities from potential threats. The increased naval presence is expected to act as a deterrent and contribute to the overall safety and stability of the maritime environment. — ANI

## MASSIVE COCAINE HAUL

### 120 kilos of cocaine wash up on Australian beaches

**A**USTRALIAN police said Wednesday they were scouring beaches after mysterious packages believed to contain more than 120 kilogrammes (260 pounds) of cocaine washed up over the Christmas period.

A first batch of 39 barnacle-encrusted, one-kilogramme bricks of suspected cocaine was discovered on Friday near Magenta Beach, north of Sydney, police said.

Since then, another 85 packages of the same size had been spotted along about 80 kilometres (50 miles) of the New South Wales coastline, state police said.

Police urged people to report any suspicious packages, Detective Chief Superintendent Jason Weinstein said in a statement. "Detectives and specialist police are currently combing beaches and coastlines for any outstanding packages and working behind the scenes to make sure we find and hold accountable those responsible," said Weinstein, who is director of the state's crime command.— AFP