

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing hoists bejewelled diamond orb, pennant-shaped vane, golden umbrella atop Myodaw Hteikpan Mingala Pagoda in Pyinmana Township

A CEREMONY to enshrine religious objects into the upper reliquary and hoist a golden umbrella atop Myodaw Hteikpan Mingala Pagoda took place in conjunction with the consecration in the precinct of Pali Tekkatho Mingala Zeyon Monastery in Pyinmana of Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning, graced by the presence of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area Ovadacariya Wegyi Buddhist Learning Centre in Pobbathiri Township Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Bhaddanta Adiccavamsa and Presiding Patron of Pali Tekkatho Mingala Zeyon Monastery Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Vimala Buddhi and members of the Sangha.

At the ceremony, Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla offered the bejewelled diamond orb, the pennant-shaped vane and religious objects dedicated to the Lord Buddha and alms to Wegyi Sayadaw. Council Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, council members and Union ministers also presented alms to members of the Sangha.

The Senior General, wife and party conveyed the bejewelled diamond orb and the pennant-shaped vane by the decorated float to the site in front of the Maha Mingala pavilion.

At the auspicious time, the Senior General opened the upper reliquary and offered oil lights. Then, he kept religious objects in the reliquary and sprayed them.

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A ceremony to hoist golden umbrella atop Myodaw Hteikpan Mingala Pagoda takes place in the precinct of Pali Tekkatho Mingala Zeyon Monastery in Pyinmana of Nay Pyi Taw yesterday attended by SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Myanmar's export bags US\$266M in third week of Dec 2023

Trade value through Kampaiti border swells to US\$21.381 million in December.

THE value of Myanmar's exports amounted to US\$266 million in the third week of December, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics showed.

Myanmar shipped green gram, black gram, pigeon pea, and other various pulses, sesame, peanut, watermelon, muskmelon, fruits and vegetables, rubber, onion, shrimp, and other

fishery products to its trade partners.

The pulses were conveyed to Pakistan, Thailand, the UAE, Viet Nam, Canada, the US, and Japan through a maritime route. Foreign demand has significantly risen at the end of the year.

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Chin State's Konjac cultivation enhances rural livelihood and income, generates revenue

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Myanmar citizens in Japan urged to contact embassy over natural disaster concerns

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Five national objectives of 76th 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



The photo shows the ceremony of offering 9,000 oil lamps to Kyaiktiyo Pagoda.

Kyaiktiyo Pagoda attracts over 25,000 visitors in December

THE eminent Kyaiktiyo Pagoda located in Kyaikto of Mon State attracted over 25,000 pilgrims in the December holidays, said U Soe Hla, chairman of the board of trustees. Similarly, about 850 tourists visited the pagoda from January to October 2023, and most of them were from Thailand and Viet Nam.

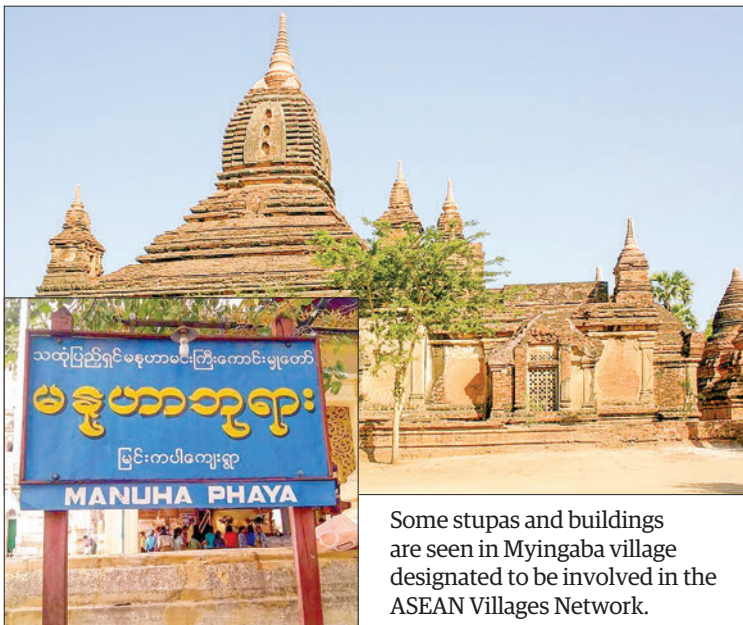
Currently, about 250 times

of truck service run up and down to the pagoda daily, and the hotels, guesthouses, free dormitories, and restaurants are open to visitors.

“The Kyaiktiyo Pagoda festival is on the full moon day of Thadingyut. The number of visitors to the pagoda is increasing daily during the festival period. There are over 2,000

visitors daily, and over 4,000 visitors during the holidays. The pagoda hosts over 8,000 visitors daily in the December holidays,” said U Soe Hla. The Buddha Pujaniya Festival of the Kyaiktiyo pagoda is held from the full moon day of Thadingyut to the Kason full moon day, and the pagoda is open to the public daily. — ASH/KTZH

ASEAN Villages Network Project set for implementation in three Myanmar villages



Some stupas and buildings are seen in Myingaba village designated to be involved in the ASEAN Villages Network.

MYANMAR is working on a project to establish three villages that will connect to the ASEAN Villages Network according to the Rural Development Department under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development.

The ASEAN Villages Network includes 30 villages from ten ASEAN countries, and each village will connect to jointly implement the project between 2024 and 2025 with the aim of bringing socioeconomic development in line.

Under the project, Nyaung-U's Myingaba village in Manda-

lay Region, Lewe's Thawkagon village in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory, and Nyaungshwe's Innpawkhon village in Shan State are slated to join the ASEAN Villages Network as a tourism village, digital village, and one region and one product village respectively.

The ASEAN Villages Network is the first network to be established in ASEAN countries, and under the project, the socioeconomic life of residents in the villages will be promoted to the level of ASEAN, according to the Rural Development Department. — ASH/TH

Myanmar's export bags US\$266M ...

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Furthermore, exports of the finished apparel manufactured on a Cutting, Making, and Packaging basis also grew.

Next, Myanmar's Kampaiti border with the neighbouring country China totalled \$21.381 million in December, the Ministry of Commerce's

statistics indicated.

The Kampaiti border aims to achieve a trade target of \$18.5 million in December, comprising exports worth \$16 million and imports worth \$2.5 million. More than \$21 million worth of trade including exports worth \$19.029 million and imports worth \$2.352 million was carried out at the

Kampaiti border as of the third week of December, surpassing the trade target of the month.

Tissue-cultured bananas, watermelon, pumpkin, rubber, chili pepper, and Aemahta rice were mainly exported and construction materials, capital goods, and intermediate goods were imported. — TWA/KK



The photo shows the authority checking a truck loaded with goods at the Kampaiti checkpoint.

NATIONAL

The fact that we are making endeavours for peace today as a national duty is to be able to relay a legacy of a bright and stable future and a developed nation for our future generations. This if not meant for self-interest or for the good reputation of a sole person.

[An excerpt from the speech delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 1/2021 of the National Unity and Peace Restoration Central Committee on 3 March 2021]



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing hoists bejewelled diamond orb, ...

FROM PAGE-1

The wife of the Senior General, dignitaries and attendees conveyed the bejewelled diamond orb and the pennant-shaped vane onto the pagoda by a decorated float. The Senior General and party fixed the diamond orb and the pennant-shaped vane atop the pagoda and sprinkled scent water on them.

The Senior General and his wife offered flowers, water, oil lights and golden lotus robes to the Buddha image in the southern part of the pagoda. Next, members of the Sangha consecrated the pagoda.

After the ceremony, the Senior General, wife and party offered day meals to members of the Sangha. — MNA/TTA

Live broadcast of National Flag saluting ceremony on 76th Independence Day

ON the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day, the national flag saluting ceremony will be held on the morning of 4 January in the square in front of Nay Pyi Taw City Hall.

The live images of the ceremony will be shown on Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV) HD Channel at 6:30 am that day. Additionally, the live broadcast will be available on MRTV-News Channel, MRTV-NRC, MRTV Farmers', MRTV Sports, and MRTV Parliament Channel, as well as MITV Channel, MWD HD Channel, MWD Variety HD Channel, Channel Light Channel, Readers' Channel, 5 plus Channel, Sky Net Up to Date, Sky Net Ethnic Channel, and the MRTV website. Air live on Radio Myanmar, Padamyia FM, Cherry FM, FM Bagan, Mandalay FM, Pyinsawady FM, Shwe FM, Thazin FM, and Star FM. — MNA/KZW

SAC Vice-Chairman DPM Vice-Senior General Soe Win inspects preparations for hosting dinner and entertainment programmes to honour 76th Anniversary of Independence Day

CHAIRMAN of the Central Committee for Organizing the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win yesterday afternoon inspected preparations for holding the dinner and entertainment programmes honouring the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day to be convened on the lawns in front of the SAC Chairman Office and the hall.

The Vice-Senior General inspected measures of reception, holding an honorary dinner, launching fireworks, presenting a variety of dances and entertainments, and



SAC Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win inspects preparations for holding dinner and entertainment programmes to mark 76th Anniversary of Independence Day at SAC Chairman Office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

other programmes and left necessary instructions.

Union ministers, the Chairman of Nay

Pyi Taw Council, the commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command, the and deputy ministers who chair the subcommittees and

officials who accompanied the Vice-Senior General coordinated necessary measures. — MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Men's Sepak Takraw & Futsal tourneys hail 76th Anniversary of Independence Day conclude

ORGANIZED by the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, the Inter-Ministry Sepak Takraw Tournament to mark the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day 2024 took place at the Wunna Theikdi Gymnasium (C) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday attended by members of the State Administration Council.

Among the spectators were SAC members Porel Aung Thein and U Yan Kyaw, Union Minister U Min Thein Zan, deputy ministers, heads of departments, officials of the Myanmar Sepak Takraw Federation watched the Sepak Takraw events.

In the final match of Sepak Takraw event, the Ministry of Border Affairs team beat the Ministry of Home Affairs team 2-0 and secured the championship trophy. Officials presented medals and a trophy to the champion team and outstanding players in the Sepak Takraw Championships.

Then, SAC member U Yan Kyaw



Champion Ministry of Border Affairs holds up championship trophy in celebration over its victory in Inter-Ministry Sepak Takraw Tournament yesterday.

presented individual medals and cash awards to the second prize winning Ministry of Home Affairs team.

SAC member Porel Aung Thein also awarded a Championship trophy and cash award to first prize winning Ministry of

Border Affairs team.

Similarly, the national futsal tournament final match was held at the Futsal Stadium in the Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

In the competition, the Ministry of Planning and Finance and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement team played with the unanimous support of the fans.

The Men's Futsal event followed and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement beat the Ministry of Planning and Finance 9-8 after a penalty shootout. Next, an awarding ceremony was held and officials presented trophies to the winners and also gave medals to the outstanding players.

Similarly, men's and women's events of football, volleyball, Sepak Takraw, futsal, and tug of war will continue today to mark the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day. — MNA/TS

Sao San Tun General Hospital's new five-storey building, University of Medicine (Taunggyi)'s four-storey facility inaugurated hailing 76th Independence Day

UNION Minister for Health Prof Dr Thet Khaing Win attended the opening ceremonies of the new five-storey building of Sao San Tun General Hospital in Taunggyi and the four-storey building of the University of Medicine (Taunggyi) marking the 76th Independence Day yesterday.

During the event, the Union

minister highlighted the establishment of new wards and school buildings aimed at benefiting the local ethnic people in Shan State, the significant role of Sao San Tun General Hospital, which was constructed with the help of the Soviet Union in 1957, as a key figure of Myanmar-Russia Friendship, and construction of

the three-storey building in 2023-2024 financial year and the staff housing.

He also urged the health workers to serve their duties in perfect ways, treat the patients warmly, and make efforts to be reliable hospitals.

The Union minister and party also comforted the patients and

inspected the medical treatment of the hospital.

The newly opened five-storey building of Sao San Tun General Hospital is constructed with over K2.5 billion of State budget, and the new four-storey building of the University of Medicine (Taunggyi) is built using K1,403 million, and the Master of Medical

Science course is opened for 2024 academic year at University of Medicine (Taunggyi).

On the same afternoon, the Union minister and parity met with the faculty members and trainees at the Taunggyi Nursing Training School and Midwifery Training School and provided cash assistance. — MNA/KTZH

Counter-argument to false information

Unverified Claims: Tatmadaw allegedly launches chemical bomb attacks in Laukkai

IT has been discovered that misinformation, falsely asserting that ten local civilians were poisoned and two children were killed due to the use of toxic chemical bombs to attack Tashwethang in Laukkai, has been circulated on online media by the malicious media DVB and the Kokang Facebook.

Contrary to these claims, the Tatmadaw did not attack Tashwethang using toxic chemical bombs. Such false information

has been circulating by armed insurgents in the past, and they continue to generate and spread misinformation opportunistically.

As armed insurgents suffer significant casualties, baseless misinformation is being spread. Subversive media that supports terrorism is spreading fake news intending to discredit the military. Reports suggest that false information is being propagated on social networks. — MNA/KZW



Misinformation: One civilian killed, five injured in MraukU police firing

FAKE news was circulated by a malicious media named DVB that a house in Shwegutaung village had exploded, leaving one woman dead and five wounded, as the police battalion in MraukU fired heavy weapons on the night of 1 January.

Regarding the news, a security official from the relevant area said that AA armed insurgents fired heavy weapons from a distance, an explosion occurred in Shwegutaung village and there

were injuries on 1 January. A shell fired by terrorists exploded inside Tayok village, Hsenwi, northern Shan State, wounding three civilians on 1 January.

To cover up their actions and misrepresent the security forces, terrorists attacked the security forces by sneaking into people's houses and burning them down and malicious media outlets have created false information through social networking sites. — MNA/KZL

NATIONAL

CHIN State is renowned for its stunning and enchanting beauty of hills, covered with evergreen and deciduous forest. Moreover, terrace farming showcases the awe-inspiring beauty of steep hills. The rich soil in those terrace farms allows the residents to execute organic farming of the elephant foot yam (Konjac). The abundant supply of Konjac in Chin State contributes to exports as an industrial crop.

Konjac, a cash crop

Konjac was naturally found in the State. Strong market demand has driven commercial Konjac cultivation for over a decade.

“Thanks to favourable weather and soil conditions in Chin State, Konjac produced from the Chin State is of high quality, attracting foreign buyers. Subsequently, this lucrative crop reaps a handsome profit. I have been engaged in this business for many years,” U Sang Oak Mang, a grower from Haka Township elaborated.

Konjac raw materials are utilized in food and beverage, cosmetics, traditional medicine and pharmaceutical industries with value addition. Even the by-products can be used as animal feed.

Konjac from Myanmar is of better quality than those origins from other countries in Asia. Consequently, foreign trade partners from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and India prefer Myanmar’s Konjac.

Most importantly, Konjac from Chin State is rich in Glucomannan. It’s highly demanded in the Mandalay market. Thereafter, it is conveyed to China, the ROK and Japan. China is the top buyer among them.

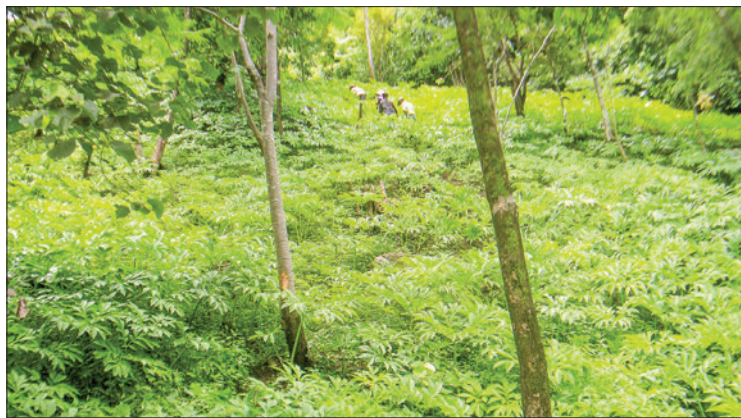
Konjac is commonly grown in Mindat, Kanpetlet, Matupi and Haka townships. Konjac plantations cover 4,325 acres in Mindat, 1,565 in Matupi, 1,559 in Haka, 847 in Tiddim, 609 in Falam, 203 in Kanpetlet, and 933 in other townships in Chin State, totalling



Young Konjac plants thriving in the farm. PHOTO: ZM

Chin State’s Konjac cultivation enhances rural livelihood and income, generates revenue

By Nadi Min



10,041 acres. Chin State is the largest producer of Konjac in Myanmar, with an estimated output of over 250,000 tonnes per year.

The cultivation costs approximately K4 million per acre. The gross profit is around K8 million to 10 million depending on soil conditions and land treatment. This cash crop produces a great amount of profits.

Negative impact of COVID-19 on sluggish Konjac market

Chin State’s Konjac which has grasped a firm market share

in the global market is currently bracing for a market crash amidst the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and regional instability.

“Nonetheless, passing on the Konjac plantation from generation to generation never fades away. Transportation disruption during the pandemic limited market reach,” U Myint Zaw Tun, director of the Department of the Co-operative.

A dried Konjac sheet processing factory located in Mindat, Chin State offered K1,500-K2,000

per viss of fresh yam from locals in the 2019-2020 financial year, allowing the residents to do well financially.

At present, that factory also shut down operations, making the growers face challenges.

“With that factory closing down, the Konjac is sent to the Mandalay market via Pakokku Township. The prevailing price of Konjac is K700 per viss so the growers do not make a profit as expected,” U Myint Zaw Tun added.

Additionally, the dried Konjac sheet price drastically plunged to K7,000 per viss from the K15,000 register in the pre-pandemic period, U Sang Oak Mang said.

Formation of cooperatives for market potentials

Under the directive of the Chin State’s Chief Minister, the micro, small, and medium enterprise development committee including officials from the related departments and organiza-

tions are implementing projects to boost the Konjac plantation in Chin State and step up the value-added market from raw material suppliers.

The Department of Agriculture is also offering technical assistance and awareness courses for choosing quality seeds to produce quality yam. Additionally, the Department of Co-operative is also forming a Konjac grower Co-operative society in each township and bridging the network between each co-operative to explore market opportunities.

Chin State’s Cooperative Department provided K600,000 for three acres of old farmers and K4.5 million for three acres of new farmers in the current 2023-2024 financial year through the State Economic Promotion Fund allotted to Chin State. Furthermore, K197.9 million will be contributed to 375.5 acres of the members of the cooperative societies.

“Following the instruction of the Chin State chief minister, cooperative societies are incorporated to form partnerships between the growers of common interest. It will help expand the business, achieve manufacturing of value-added products, and explore markets by linking the cooperative with the ministry concerned,” U Myint Zaw Tun highlighted.

Konjac cultivation increases income, bags export earnings

Enterprises are executing value-added production of Konjac such as dried Konjac sheets and Konjac noodles in Chin State. Those products are distributed domestically. The cooperative is also making concerted efforts to resume the operations of a dried Konjac sheet processing factory in Haka Township.

When Konjac, naturally grown in Chin’s Hills, can be produced and exported as a local product with value addition, it will help spur the socio-economic development of the local growers.

Translated/EM

NATIONAL

Myanmar citizens in Japan urged to contact embassy over natural disaster concerns



Large cracks are seen on the ground in Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture, on 1 January 2024, after a strong earthquake rocked a wide area on the Sea of Japan coast in central Japan. **PHOTO: KYODO**

MYANMAR citizens residing in Japan can seek necessary assistance from the embassy in the event of natural disasters, as announced by the Myanmar embassy.

On 1 January 2024, at approximately 4 pm local time, a powerful 7.5-magnitude earthquake occurred, with

its epicentre offshore from Ishikawa prefecture, Japan, resulting in significant damage.

Following the earthquake, local authorities issued tsunami warnings for coastal regions, including Niigata, Toyama, Yamagata, Fukui, and Hyogo prefectures.

Myanmar citizens residing in the vulnerable areas are advised to stay informed through update announcements and can reach out for assistance, if needed, by contacting the embassy's hotline at 070 4413 7383, according to the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo. — TWA/TRKM

Temporary road closures in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw for 76th Independence Day celebration

DURING the celebration of the 76th Anniversary of Independence Day on 4 January, certain roads in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw will experience temporary closures.

Traffic lanes will be closed from 4:00 am until the conclusion of the ceremony at People's Square in Yangon Region.

The Yangon Region Government advises that vehicles travelling from north to south along Pyay Road should turn right at the Myaynigon traffic light and proceed to Lower Kyimyindine Road. Vehicles

travelling from south to north on Pyay Road should turn onto University Avenue, then proceed through Baho Road and Alon Road to reach Lower Kyimyindine Road.

In addition, the national flag-hoisting and saluting ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area will take place at City Hall Square. Consequently, traffic in Nay Pyi Taw Zabuthiri Township will be temporarily closed or detoured from 2 am to 8 am, starting from the Municipal Guest House traffic light on Pyinmana-Taungnyo Road to the traffic light at the

corner of Thabyaygon Market.

For those using vehicles on those days in Zabuthiri Township, the traffic restrictions will be in effect from the Municipal Guest House traffic light on Pyinmana-Taungnyo Road to the Shwekyapin traffic light along Tawwin Yadana Road. The Nay Pyi Taw Traffic Enforcement Supervision Committee has also issued a notice for drivers approaching from the traffic light at the intersection of Thabyaygon market corner along Padauk Road and heading towards Ayeyawady Road. — TWA/KZW

Yangon market sees dip in onion prices in early 2024

WITH an influx of 180,000 visses of onions from various regions to Yangon's market on 2 January 2024, the prices of onions slightly decreased to K1,900-K3,700 per viss depending on varieties and producing areas (Myingyan, Seikphyu, Myittha).

The prices stood at K1,900-K4,000 per viss in the wholesale market on 1 January with 220,000 visses of onions supplied to Yangon's market. The large onion from the Myittha area fetched K4,700 per viss on 28 December 2023.

Nonetheless, the prevailing prices of onions are still higher than those (K1,700-K2,500 per viss) registered in the corresponding period last year.

There are around 180,000 acres of onion across the country. Myanmar aims to achieve onion exports of 100,000 tonnes in the current 2023-2024 financial year. The leading onion exporting country India banned onion ex-



The photo depicts Seikphyu onion depot on 2 January 2024.

port on 8 December 2023 on the low output. India accounts for half of onion imports from Asian countries rather than Egypt and China. India annually exports 670,000 tonnes of onions to Bangladesh. India's ban on onion export might pose difficulties to some Asian countries.

Myanmar also experienced a low yield of onions due to erratic weather conditions in late 2023. Consequently, Myanmar's onion market is likely to raise its head again, onion traders forecast. — TWA/KK

Over 2M people to receive CSCs in Pankhinn Project Phase III



The photo shows the implementation of the Pankhinn project by officials in Hmawza village-tract in Pyay township in Bago Region on 29 August 2023.

UNION Minister U Myint Kyaing of the Ministry of Immigration and Population announced on 30 December that the third phase of the Pankhinn Project, scheduled to run from 1 January to 30 September 2024, aims to issue citizenship scrutiny cards (CSCs) to more than two million people.

The Union minister disclosed that over 12 million households had been registered using the e-ID system, and an addition-

al 2.8 million households, collected through a free format, would undergo validation and approval within the specified period before submission to the Union Election Commission.

During the Pankhinn Project Phase I, citizenship scrutiny cards were granted to over 3.4 million individuals, and in Phase II, the number reached over 1.4 million individuals. — TWA/MKKS

Strong demand pushes up peanut prices

THE peanut prices are rising at a slower pace in the domestic market on account of strong demand by Chinese buyers and local oil millers, according to the Mandalay Commodity Depot.

The prevailing prices move in the range between K5,800 and K7,550 per viss in the domestic market depending on varieties.

Strong demand drove the peanut prices to K7,550-K11,000 per viss on the back of strong foreign and domestic demand on 18 August 2023.

Myanmar has been exporting oil seeds (sesame seeds and peanuts) to foreign countries. In April 2022, the world's top palm oil exporter Indonesia, which is one of the main oil suppliers to Myanmar, declared an export ban

on cooking oil export to reduce domestic shortage. Consequently, Myanmar's Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce temporarily suspended exports of oil crops (peanut and sesame) from 9 May 2022 to have oil self-sufficiency.

Exports of Myanmar's edible oil crops resumed as the world's top palm oil exporters returned to normalcy, according to a notification dated 5 July 2022 released by the Trade Department.

The country exported over 10,000 kilogrammes worth US\$16.333 million to foreign markets through seaborne and border trade channels over the past eight months of the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April. — NN/EM



Photo shows a pile of peanut seeds at a depot.

Black gram, pigeon pea prices on upward trend



Merchants checking sample pulses and beans at a commodity centre in Ayeyawady Region.

THE prices of black gram and pigeon peas are expected to continue an upward trajectory, according to the Ayeya Trade Convention Centre.

A surge in black gram prices persists in the main supplier Ayeyawady Region. The black gram fetches around K95,000 per basket. The price continued rising in the last week of December.

Additionally, Myanmar's black gram yield is estimated at 650,000-700,000 tonnes for this season. India's pulses output dropped more than expected

due to erratic weather in India, prompting them to import from abroad. Myanmar and India have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to purchase 2.5 million tonnes of Myanmar's black gram (urad) in the 2023-2024 financial year.

India also imports the urad from Brazil. Yet, there is a requirement to meet the growing demand from the domestic market. If so, the price is likely to go up. The black gram is expected to be offered around K90,000 per basket in the upcoming harvest season,

according to a report by the ACC.

The pigeon pea price remained stable at K3 million to K3.1 million in the third week of December 2023. The price went up a bit in the first week of January. India has low stocks of pigeon peas. Subsequently, India's government offered incentives to the growers that they will buy the pigeon pea (tur) at a higher price than the Minimum Support Price (MSP). This action aims to increase the acreage of pigeon peas. Imports of Myanmar's pigeon peas are bound to happen in January, as per the reports of India's new agencies.

India has inked a MoU with Myanmar to buy 100,000 tonnes of pigeon peas. Myanmar's pigeon pea production is approximately 250,000-300,000 tonnes per year.

Thus, pulses traders forecast that pigeon pea prices are likely to move onwards on the back of strong demand.

The prevailing prices stood at K2.987 million per tonne of black gram and K3.275 million per tonne of pigeon peas in the domestic market. — NN/EM

STYLE Bangkok 2024 invites Myanmar businesspersons to display local products

MYANMAR Trade Promotion Organization notified Myanmar businesspersons of joining STYLE Bangkok 2024 to display Myanmar products.

The lifestyle and fashion exhibition will be held from 20 to 24 March 2024 at Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre (QSNCC) in Bangkok.

The expo will provide four (three by three square metres) booths for free. It is a great opportunity to showcase fashion, leather products, handicrafts, souvenirs, and household goods, and attract new buyers.

Those interested companies need to register at <https://mitc.myantrade.gov.mm/member/trade-fair/new> and the participants will be selected in order. For further details, the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization can be reached at phone number 067 408622. — NN/EM



Logo of STYLE Bangkok 2024.

OPINION

Facilitate legal trade for the benefit of the people

THE government is actively working to enhance the trade processes undertaken by private businesses, both domestically and internationally. While import taxes are being levied, private entrepreneurs are engaged in trade operations that extend to foreign markets through maritime and land border routes.

To ensure a seamless and efficient flow of goods, business owners import products and transport them to various regions and states, navigating tollgates and checkpoints. In a bid to expedite this process, the Ministry of Commerce has implemented various measures to facilitate the smooth movement of commodities.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, the MyCO system has been instituted to assist businesspersons in establishing companies and business organizations. Additionally, the Myanmar Trade Net 2.0 system enables businesses to register for exports and imports, as well as apply for the necessary licenses. The Ministry has also introduced the Myanmar Automatic Cargo Clearance System (MACCS) for those involved in the trade sector to facilitate export and import declarations. Furthermore, an online matching system has been implemented for convenient international fund transfers and receipt of funds from abroad. Presently, the government has established an online connection linking relevant government organizations through a businessperson-centric online marketing network system.

Businesspersons have to sympathize people who face daily foot, clothing and shelter problems whenever they wish to rise profit from their essential commodities and they have to do their businesses honestly and righteously in measurements and weighing of trading. The government's commitment to creating an environment conducive to legal trade not only benefits businesspersons but also contributes to the overall economic development of the state. The synergy between government departments and private enterprises is crucial for fostering a transparent, efficient, and lawful trade ecosystem.

Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) must collaborate to organize businesspersons more systematically and operate trade measures in accordance with the law, rules, and regulations.

As part of efforts to enhance the state economy, officials from government departments and businesspersons must engage in a meaningful exchange of information and ideas. This collaborative approach is essential for amending necessary measures, addressing weak points in legal procedures, and promoting the continuous improvement of the trade sector.

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Electronic 'soil' enhances crop growth: Research

Barley seedlings exhibit 50 per cent faster growth in their root systems when electrically stimulated using a novel cultivation substrate developed by researchers at Linköping University.

WHEN barley seedlings' root systems are electrically stimulated using a new cultivation substrate, they grow 50pc faster on average. Linköping University researchers developed an electrically conductive 'soil' for soilless growing, known as hydroponics, in a paper published in the journal PNAS.

"The world population is increasing, and we also have climate change. So it's clear that we won't be able to cover the food demands of the planet with only the already existing agricultural methods. But with hydroponics

we can grow food also in urban environments in very controlled settings," says Eleni Stavrinidou, associate professor at the Laboratory of Organic Electronics at Linköping University, and leader of the Electronic Plants group.

Electrically conductive cultivation

Her research group has now developed an electrically conductive cultivation substrate tailored to hydroponic cultivation which they call eSoil. The Linköping University researchers have shown that barley seedlings

grown in the conductive "soil" grew up to 50 per cent more in 15 days when their roots were stimulated electrically. Hydroponic cultivation means that plants grow without soil, needing only water, nutrients and something their roots can attach to — a substrate. It is a closed system that enables water recirculation so that each seedling gets exactly the nutrients it needs. Therefore, very little water is required and all nutrients remain in the system, which is not possible in traditional cultivation.

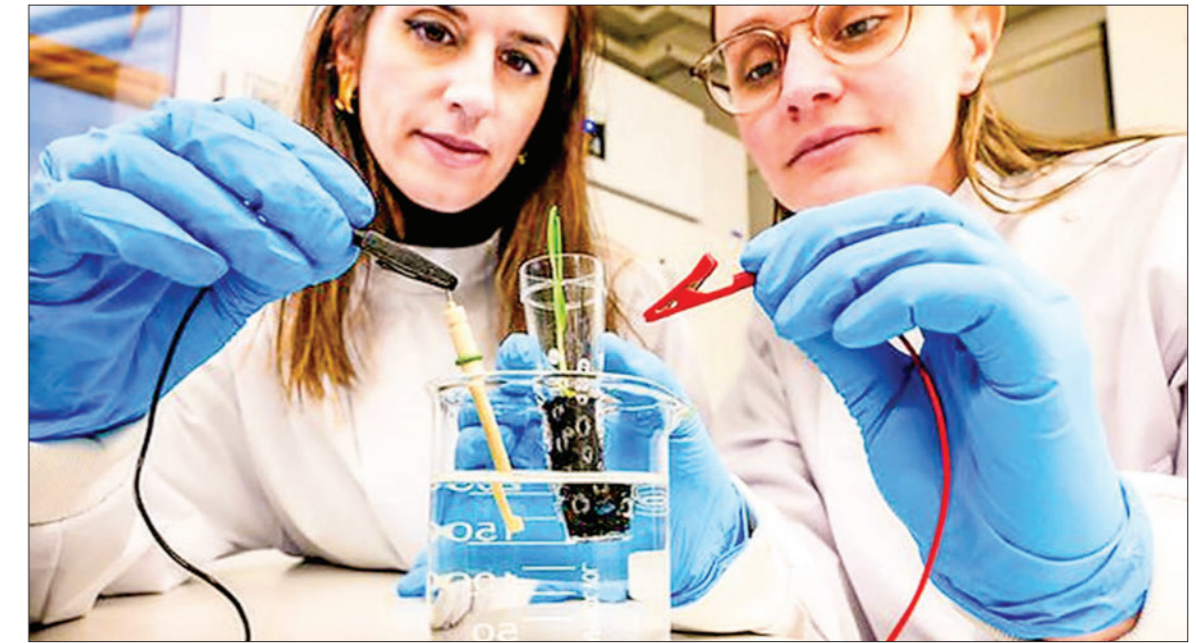
Hydroponics also enables

vertical cultivation in large towers to maximise space efficiency. Crops already being cultivated in this manner include lettuce, herbs and some vegetables. Grains are not typically grown in hydroponics apart for their use as fodder. In this study the researchers show that barley seedlings can be cultivated using hydroponics and that they have a better growth rate thanks to electrical stimulation. "In this way, we can get seedlings to grow faster with less resources. We don't yet know how it actually works, which biological mech-

anisms that are involved. What we have found is that seedlings process nitrogen more effectively, but it's not clear yet how the electrical stimulation impacts this process," says Eleni Stavrinidou.

Non-biodegradable

Mineral wool is often used as cultivation substrate in hydroponics. Not only is this non-biodegradable, it is also produced with a very energy intensive process. The electronic cultivation substrate eSoil is made of cellulose, the most abundant biopolymer, mixed with a conduc-



Eleni Stavrinidou, associate professor, and supervisor of the study and Alexandra Sandéhn, PhD student, one of the lead authors, connect the eSoil to a low power source for stimulating plant growth. **CREDIT: THOR BALKHED**

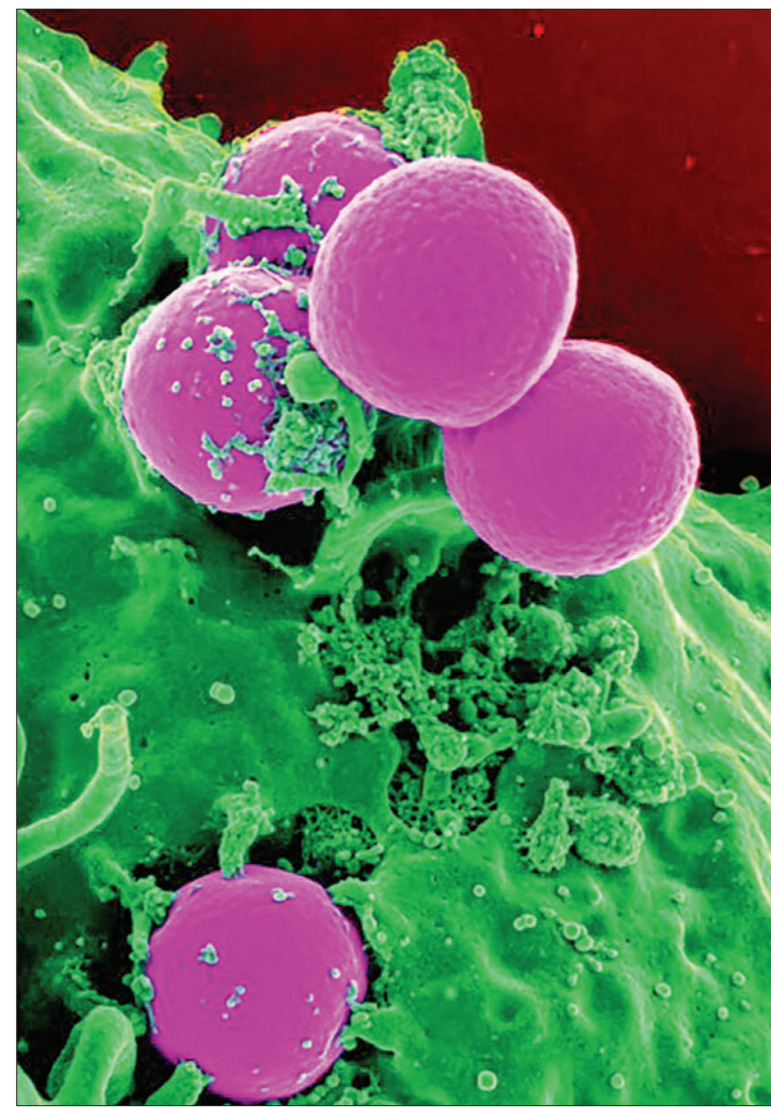
tive polymer called PEDOT. This combination as such is not new, but this is the first time it has been used for plant cultivation and for creating an interface for plants in this manner.

Previous research has used high voltage to stimulate

the roots. The advantage of the Linköping researchers' "soil" is that it has very low energy consumption and no high voltage danger. Eleni Stavrinidou believes that the new study will open the pathway for new research areas to develop further

hydroponic cultivation. "We can't say that hydroponics will solve the problem of food security. But it can definitely help particularly in areas with little arable land and with harsh environmental conditions."

SOURCE: ANI



Next-generation sequencing by Brigham researchers suggests that modifying current cancer care standards could enable approximately 6,000 more patients in the United States to benefit from immunotherapy treatment annually. **ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ BIOETHICS**

Study sheds more light into benefits of immunotherapy

ACCORDING to the Brigham researchers' next-generation sequencing, changing existing cancer care standards might allow around 6,000 more patients in the United States to benefit from immunotherapy treatment each year.

Immunotherapy is a highly successful treatment for cancer patients with mismatch repair failure, and new research finds additional cancer patients who potentially benefit from this type of therapy. Researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital, a founding member of the Mass General Brigham healthcare system, discovered that immunohistochemistry, the current standard of care test for mismatch repair deficiency, missed nearly 6 per cent of endometrial cancer patients and 1 per cent of colorectal cancer patients with mismatch repair

deficiency. Next-generation sequencing, which researchers predict might identify the ailment in these missing cases, was used to discover the condition in these missed cases.

The results of the study were published in the journal Cancer Cell. "In colorectal cancer and endometrial cancer, which are the two types of cancer where mismatch repair deficiency is most commonly seen, immunotherapy is not the standard treatment unless a patient has this condition," said first author Elias Bou Farhat, MD, a post-doctoral research fellow in the division of Pulmonary and Clinical Care Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital. "But in patients with this condition, even in late-stage cancer, those who receive immunotherapy can live for years and in some cases be potentially cured. Including next-generation sequencing as a

complimentary testing practice could benefit patients in all phases of cancer, from pre-treatment to advanced stages."

More than 150,000 people are diagnosed with colorectal cancer and more than 65,000 people are diagnosed with endometrial cancer in the United States each year. In these two types of cancer, patients often have high rates of mismatch repair deficiency, a genetic state where errors in DNA occur due to a lack of certain repair proteins. This state impairs DNA's ability to repair itself and can lead to many types of cancer. Previous research has shown that cancer patients with this condition typically respond well to immunotherapy treatment, which uses a person's own immune system to fight cancer. In this study, the researchers looked at a cohort of 1,655 patients from Brigham and Women's Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Insti-

tute who either had colorectal or endometrial cancer and who received both immunohistochemistry and next-generation sequencing tests.

The researchers observed that nearly six per cent of the patients with endometrial cancer and one per cent of the patients with colorectal cancer were missed as being mismatch repair deficient by immunohistochemistry but caught by next-generation sequencing. These patients responded better to immunotherapy than other treatments and their survival and treatment outcomes were the same as those who were found deficient by both tests.

Immunohistochemistry only detects mutations that affect the antigen; next-generation sequencing is a more sensitive test because it looks for more mutation characteristics.

SOURCE: ANI



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 2 January 2024)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 3 January 2024: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi regions and Kachin State and generally fair 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 Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions and Kachin, Shan and Chin states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 January 2024: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 January 2024: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 January 2024: Generally fair weather.

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

(Issued at 4:30 hour MST)

A slight earthquake of magnitude 4.6 Richter Scale with its epicentre inside Myanmar (about 32 miles northeast of Lahe), latitude 26.67°N, longitude 95.79°E, depth 23 kilometres, about 131 miles northwest of Myitkyna seismological observatory was recorded at 4:15:54 am MST on 2 January 2024.

NATIONAL

MoNREC UM advocates forest restoration, economic growth via tree plantations



Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi makes an inspection tour to Ayeyawady Region on 30 December.

UNION Minister U Khin Maung Yi for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC) said on 31 December that planting economically significant trees is instrumental in restoring the forest's status and reducing dependency on natural forests.

During an inspection tour, the MoNREC Union Minister visited various sites, including 350 acres of ironwood trees planted in the 2023 rainy season at Plot 21, 400 acres of ironwood fields planted in the 2022 rainy season at Plot 22, and 350 acres of ironwood trees planted in the 2021 rainy season at Plot 30 in

Thalatkwa forest reserve in Patheingyi township, Ayeyawady region.

The Union minister highlighted the ministry's efforts to establish forest plantations, aiming to enhance the country's forest cover and fulfil national responsibilities for forest restoration. Additionally, he stressed the need to actively implement the creation of protected forests and forest reserves, preserve mangroves, protect ecosystems and biodiversity, and establish village firewood plantations for local communities. — TWA/MKKS

Use of Myanmar Mobile Money increases among pensioners

THE number of pensioners using Myanmar Mobile Money service to withdraw their pensions has increased, said an official from the service company.

Using Myanmar Mobile Money enables people who contact banks to avoid carrying cash as well as access to mobile financial services – deposit, withdrawal, remittance transfer, remittance, withdrawal via over-the-counter service, and buying phone bills. From the Myanmar Economic Bank or MMM's external agents, pensions can be withdrawn easily by submitting application forms to banks.

"No need to go anywhere, just need to apply a form, we send SMS to client's phone, then clients can withdraw pension from our agents across the

country. We send it on the 21st of the month. We send SMS to the client's SIM card so no matter whether your phone is a keypad or an iPhone, you can get the message and withdraw by showing it to the agent. This service is very helpful for the elderly and those in poor health. Your phone is your bank," said the official.

Including Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, Yangon Region, and Mandalay Region, pensioners across the country have widely used the service to withdraw their pensions, and there are more than 12,000 MMM subscribers nationwide.

"Withdrawing from agents is 100 per cent safe. We send SMS to their mobile SIMs, so there is no risk of being hacked," he said. — Thit Taw/ZS



A slip for enabling people to draw cash from bank.

Near-extinct turtle lays eggs in Thandwe, Rakhine, bringing New Year joy



Staff checking turtle. PHOTO: KIFCA

THE Kyeintali Inshore Fisheries Co-Management Association (KIFCA) said an egg laid by a nearly extinct leatherback turtle in Kyeintali, Thandwe district, Rakhine state, is currently under preservation naturally and it is good news for New Year 2024.

It laid the egg near Zone 3 of the Kyeintali coastal co-management area on the night of 30

December, a KIFCA official said.

"The leatherback turtle is big and has a lower spawning rate than other species. It is getting quite rare among five turtle species seen in Myanmar. It is good news for New Year," he said.

This turtle egg is twice the size of an ordinary egg.

"Normal turtle eggs are two centimetres by three centimetres. But this leatherback turtle's egg is about 6 cm. So,

it is almost twice as big. The mother could be an old turtle," he said.

Turtle species such as green turtle, hawksbill turtle, loggerhead turtle, leatherback turtle, and olive ridley turtle can be seen in Myanmar.

With MBF's guidance and support, partners like DoF, RCA, KIFCA, and locals are working together to conserve the turtle nesting site naturally amidst the current difficulties. — MT/ZN

Nepalese student forms blood bond with Chinese

NEPALESE student Shekhar Dongol has donated blood 18 times in the course of his life, and two of those occasions took place in China this year.

Dongol, who studies at Tianjin University, donated blood at a mobile blood collection site in north China's Tianjin Municipality on Thursday. He also received a certificate of voluntary blood donation.

The ongoing cold weather, with heavy rain and snow, has led to an increase in patients suffering from cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, resulting in high demand for blood for clinical treatment in Tianjin.

"I hope to help those in need in China in this way," Dongol said.

Soon after he enrolled at Tianjin University in March this year, Dongol contacted the school and asked for information on donating blood.



Shekhar Dongol, a Nepalese student who studies at Tianjin University, donates blood at a mobile blood collection site in north China's Tianjin Municipality, 28 December 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA

Within a month, he had completed his first donation, said Zhao Zhipeng, a teacher with Tianjin University's School of International Education.

"Dongol told us that regular blood donation is not only

beneficial for society, but also helps the donor develop scientific and reasonable dietary and lifestyle habits. It is a healthy practice worth maintaining," Zhao said. — Xinhua

Bangladesh's 'tiny houses' tackle giant flood challenge

AN award-winning architect in Bangladesh, one of the nations most at risk from flooding driven by climate change, has developed an ingenious two-floor housing solution to help people survive what scientists warn is a growing threat.

This year, when the annual monsoon floodwaters swelled the country's mighty Brahmaputra river, 40-year-old farmer Abu Sayeed did not have to abandon his home for the first time in his life — but merely climb up a ladder and wait out the waters.

The "Khudi Bari" or "tiny house" — resilient homes made on bamboo stilts rising out of the floodwaters that are also easy to move to safer locations when needed — offer hope to millions.

Bangladesh is listed as the seventh most vulnerable to extreme weather caused by climate change and rising sea

levels, according to the environmental rights organisation Germanwatch.

Much of Bangladesh is made up of deltas as the Himalayan rivers of the Ganges and Brahmaputra slowly wind through the low-lying country towards the sea.

With millions at risk, relocating people to higher ground is a near-impossible task.

"Fleeing your home during the floods is part of your life," said Sayeed, from the northern village of Shildaha, where 17 prototype Khudi Bari houses have been built by Bangladeshi architect Marina Tabassum.

Scientists warn of the growing impact of climate change — increasing the intensity of monsoon rains, as well as warning that ice in the Himalayas is melting faster than ever before. — AFP

China's 2023 box office earnings exceed 54.9 bln yuan

THE Chinese film market has shown robust recovery momentum, with the total box office earnings for 2023 exceeding 54.91 billion yuan (over 7.75 billion US dollars).

The figure is lower than the record highs of over 60 billion yuan in 2019 and 2018, but close to the level in 2017, making it the fourth highest annual box office in Chinese film history.

Data released by the China Film Administration on Monday showed that nearly 1.3 billion tickets were sold throughout the year.

Domestic productions have generated over 46 billion yuan in box office revenue, accounting for 83.77 per cent of the national total.

The top 10 spots on the box office chart were dominated by domestic titles, with suspense comedy "Full River Red" ranking

first, followed by sci-fi blockbuster "The Wandering Earth II" and crime drama "No More Bets" in the second and third place.

Zhi Feina, a professor with the Chinese National Academy of Arts, noted that domestic films this year saw a noticeable improvement in quality as they reflect traditional Chinese culture and real life, emotionally relating to the audience.

Looking back on the year, box office performance during key movie-going seasons stood out, including the Spring Festival and summer holidays.

Over the past year, a good number of young Chinese filmmakers, actors, and screenwriters have emerged as an important force behind the growth of the industry.

According to experts, their works have shown great promise and potential. — Xinhua

In Boston, 'polar' swimmers mark New Year with icy plunge

SCORES of people hurled themselves into the icy waters of Boston Harbor Monday as part of the city's 120-year-old tradition of the New Year's Day Polar Plunge.

Braving water temperatures of 44 degrees Fahrenheit

(six degrees Celsius) and air temperatures just above freezing, the swimmers dived in as bagpipes played and people held up pictures of loved ones they had lost in the past year and who had participated in the freezing festival in the past.

Some of the swimmers from the sports-mad city wore hockey masks or the shirts of their favourite teams, while others donned festive outfits like Santa Claus's red suit. One family even dressed as bees to honour their late father. — AFP



Revelers take the plunge during the annual "L Street Brownies" polar bear plunge in Boston Harbor on 1 January 2020. The polar plunge on New Year's day dates back over 100 years in Boston, but many people, mainly members of the L-Street Brownies, take daily swims 365 days a year into the ocean. The water was reported to be 4 degrees °C (40 °F and the air 36 °F). PHOTO: AFP

ECONOMY WORLD

Viet Nam's manufacturing PMI remains in contraction in December

THE Vietnamese manufacturing sector ended 2023 in contraction mode with the manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) standing at 48.9 in December, remaining below the 50.0 no-change mark, according to an S&P Global Market Intelligence report released on Tuesday.

This signalled a fourth consecutive monthly decline in business conditions in the sector, said the report.

Looking at the whole year, the report said the index rose from 47.3 in November to point to a softer rate of deterioration. The health of the sector worsened through much of 2023, improving

only in February and August.

The average PMI reading across the year was the lowest since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020, according to the report.

Andrew Harker, economics director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said, "Attention now turns to the prospects for 2024, with firms still optimistic on balance that output will expand. This led to broad stability of employment and purchasing activity despite the reductions in new orders, as manufacturers attempt to maintain capacity in the hope of better days to come."

— Xinhua

Philippines rakes in US\$8.67 bln in int'l tourism receipts in 2023

THE Philippines' international tourism receipts surged to 482.54 billion pesos (8.67 billion US dollars), as the country welcomed more than 5.4 million foreign tourists in 2023, the Department of Tourism (DOT) said Tuesday.

Philippine Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said 5,450,557 international visitors entered the country from 1 January to 31 December 2023. Of the international arrivals, 91.8 per cent were foreigners, while the remaining were overseas Filipinos. The arrivals exceeded the Philippines' 4.8 million target

for 2023.

"The year 2023 is a win for the Philippine tourism industry as it welcomed more than 5 million international visitor arrivals," Frasco said in a statement.

South Korea retains its top spot as the Philippines' primary source of international visitors. It was followed by the United States, Japan, Australia, and China.

"The Philippines has also reached an estimated 66 per cent recovery rate for its all-time high international visitor arrivals achieved in 2019," added Frasco.

— Xinhua

NEWS IN PICTURE



A staff member transfers quartz sand for the trains at a maintenance station in Hohhot, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, 2 January 2024. Staff members at the maintenance station were busy servicing the EMU trains on Tuesday so as to guarantee their normal operations after the New Year holiday travel rush. PHOTO: XINHUA

Manzhouli sees record number of China-Europe freight train trips in 2023

MANZHOULI, China's largest land port, handled 5,001 China-Europe freight train trips in 2023, up three per cent compared to the year 2022, according to China Railway Harbin Bureau Group Co, Ltd.

This was the first time that the figure exceeded 5,000 within one year. Both the volume of China-Europe freight train

trips through Manzhouli and the amount of goods transported have achieved continuous growth for 10 consecutive years.

Last year, the China-Europe freight trains transported 540,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of cargo via the port, up 16 per cent year on year.

So far, 21 China-Europe

freight train routes have passed through the port in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, connecting 13 countries, including Poland, Germany and Belgium, with 60 Chinese cities. Cargos transported cover 12 major categories, such as daily necessities, industrial machinery and agricultural products. — Xinhua

Afghanistan's exports reach nearly US\$2 bln in 2023

THE exports of the war-torn Afghanistan in 2023 had reached nearly 2 billion US dollars, spokesman for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad said.

"The volume of Afghanistan's exports in the past year of 2023 had reached to 1.9 billion US dollars and the figure shows a 2 per cent increase

which is equal to 41 million US dollars against the export volume in 2022," the private television channel Tolonews quoted Jawad on Tuesday as saying.

Majority of the goods had been exported to Pakistan, India, China, United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, citing the official, the media outlet added.

Earlier, the Afghan care-

taker government's acting Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi said Afghanistan exports its products to more than 60 countries including the neighbouring states. Afghanistan's main export items include coal, saffron, fresh and dry fruits, hand woven carpet, precious and semi-precious stones. — Xinhua

NEWS IN PICTURE



Beekeepers collect honey from beehives at a field in Munshiganj, Bangladesh on 29 December 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA

China's CNPC replaces US oil giant as lead contractor for Iraq's West Qurna 1 oilfield

CHINA'S leading oil and gas producer, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), officially took over from US oil giant ExxonMobil as the lead contractor for Iraq's West Qurna 1 oilfield on Monday.

The handover ceremony was held in Iraq's southern province of Basra with the attendance of Iraqi officials, Chinese diplomats, and representatives of CNPC, Basra Oil Company, ExxonMobil, and so on.

Congratulating CNPC's new partnership, Bassim Mohammed Khu-

dair, Iraqi deputy oil minister for extraction affairs, told Xinhua that he had full confidence in CNPC's manpower, strategy and vision, and believed that the project will be completed within the stipulated time.

For his part, Ji Gang, counselor of the Chinese Consulate General in Basra, said he expected China and Iraq to work together to make the West Qurna 1 oilfield project an excellent example of energy cooperation between the two countries.

The CNPC will adhere

to the principle of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, follow the vision of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, and ensure a smooth handover and orderly transition, said Chen Mingzhuo, general manager of the project.

The West Qurna 1 oilfield, located about 50 km northwest of Basra, the capital of the namesake province, is one of Iraq's largest oilfields, with an estimated annual crude oil output of more than 25 million tonnes. — Xinhua



Bassim Mohammed Khudair (2nd R), Iraqi deputy oil minister for extraction affairs, and other representatives attend a handover ceremony in Basra, Iraq, on 1 January 2024. PHOTO: XINHUA

Hainan's offshore duty-free sales up 25% in 2023



Tourists check out in a duty-free shopping mall in Sanya, south China's Hainan Province, 30 September 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA

CHINA'S southern island province of Hainan saw total offshore duty-free sales surging 25.4 per cent year on year to 43.76 billion yuan (about 6.2 billion US dollars) in 2023, local customs said Monday.

Last year, over 6.7

million shoppers purchased 51.3 million duty-free products on the tropical island, according to the customs of Haikou, the capital of Hainan. The two figures grew 59.9 per cent and 3.8 per cent, respectively. Since the beginning of this year,

Hainan has introduced a raft of measures to boost the recovery of duty-free consumption, including simplifying purchase procedures, issuing duty-free consumption coupons, and holding duty-free shopping promotions. — Xinhua

Viet Nam targets US\$2 bln tra fish exports in 2024

VIET Nam aims to produce 1.7 million tons of commercial tra fish and earn 2 billion US dollars from exporting the products in 2024, Vietnam News Agency (VNA) reported Tuesday, citing the Ministry of Agricul-

ture and Rural Development.

Deputy Minister Phung Duc Tien said that to that end, the fishery sector needs to be ready with plans to better respond to the increasingly competitive market, and

stricter regulations and technical barriers of importing countries.

China, one of the traditional import markets for Vietnamese tra fish, is expected to increase the imports, the VNA report said. — Xinhua

Malaysia's manufacturing PMI remains unchanged at 47.9 in December

THE seasonally adjusted S&P Global Malaysia manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was unchanged at 47.9 in December, indicating that business conditions remained challenging for manufacturing firms.

Gross domestic product (GDP) grew at a similar pace to levels seen in the second and third quarters of the year, S&P

Global Market Intelligence said in a statement on the latest PMI data, noting that official manufacturing production data improved slightly year-on-year.

S&P Global Market Intelligence economist Usamah Bhatti said that despite the latest PMI data suggesting that demand conditions in the Malaysian manufacturing sector remained subdued at the

end of 2023, the data are still consistent with modest growth in the official statistics.

He said evidence is pointing to demand conditions staying muted in the coming months, given the sustained moderations in production and new business inflows.

There was also evidence that firms increasingly utilized existing

stocks of finished items to complete orders, he added.

"Positively, input prices rose at a softer pace for the first time in three months during December, which contributed to only a modest increase in output charges. As such, price increases were less pronounced than the respective series averages," he said. — Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BAJO VOY.NO. (013N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BAJO VOY.NO. (013N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **3-1-2024** 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

BRICS membership to offer Iran more opportunities in multilateral cooperation: spokesman

IRAN'S Foreign Ministry spokesman, Nasser Kanaani, said on Monday, the day Iran became an official BRICS member, that the multilateral platform provided by the BRICS enables Iran to grasp more opportunities to boost economic cooperation with other countries and better serve its national interests.

Making the remarks at a weekly press conference here in the Iranian capital, Kanaani said Iran had always seriously pursued and made efforts toward the promotion of multilateralism, and the country's full membership in the group was an outcome of its enhanced international status.

The BRICS is the acronym for an emerging-market cooperative mechanism that initially includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Iran was invited to join the bloc in August last year, with its full membership set to take effect on 1 January 2024.

Kanaani stressed that with the accession of new members, BRICS had gained a new weight and importance in international equations, saying using the group's capacities, Iran would be able to further safeguard its national interests and improve its "constructive and influential" role in international multilateral equations. — Xinhua

Death toll rises to 48 in strong Japan quakes amid aftershocks, rising damage reports



This photo taken on 2 January 2024 shows a road damaged by earthquakes in Hakui, Ishikawa prefecture, Japan. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

THE death toll has risen to 48 in the central Japanese prefecture of Ishikawa as of 3:30 pm local time, after a series of powerful earthquakes hit the area in central Japan and the vicinity, with aftershocks and more damage reports coming in.

In its latest update, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said a 4.6-magnitude earthquake struck off the Noto

Peninsula at 5:13 pm local time on Tuesday at a depth of 10 km, measuring upper 5.

As of 11 am local time, a total of 57,360 people evacuated in 955 locations across quake-affected Ishikawa and Niigata prefectures, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told the press on Tuesday. Local media reports showed that the water supply has been cut in

a total of 16 cities and towns in the quake-hit Noto region. Approximately 1,000 Self-Defence Force officers have arrived at the disaster area to carry out rescue operations.

The JMA on Tuesday said the earthquake, which measured the country's maximum seismic intensity of 7, recorded a maximum three-component vector sum peak ground acceleration of 28,266 gals. — Xinhua

TOP NEWS STORIES

More than 14,000 dengue fever cases recorded in Ethiopia: WHO

THE World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday said that it had recorded 14,249 cases of dengue fever in Ethiopia in 2023.

The WHO said in an African Region Health Emergency Situation Report it published that the dengue fever in the East African country had also caused at least seven fatalities.

The UN agency further said it's currently helping out with response activities for dengue fever including coordination, capacity building, active case finding, vector control, case management and social mobilization.

"Ethiopia is currently facing multiple health crises, including cholera, measles, malaria, dengue fever and internal displacement of people due to conflicts and natural disasters," the report said. "Malaria and dengue fever outbreaks are a major concern during the rainy season, while the internal displacement of people worsens the public health crisis due to crowded and unsanitary living conditions." — Xinhua

Earthquake jolts off central Indonesia

AN earthquake with a magnitude of 5.1 struck off East Nusa Tenggara province in central Indonesia on Tuesday, the country's meteorology, climatology and geophysics agency said.

The earthquake rocked at 11:46 a.m. local time (0446 GMT) with the epicentre situated 16 km southwest of Kupang regency and a depth of 37 km, the agency said.

No tsunami warning has been issued by the agency as the quake would not trigger giant waves.

Indonesia has been often hit by earthquakes for its position on a vulnerable quake-stricken zone called "the Pacific Ring of Fire". — Xinhua

All 379 on board evacuated from aircraft in flames at Tokyo's Haneda Airport: NHK

ALL 379 passengers and crew members on board a Japan Airlines airplane that was caught in fire at Tokyo's Haneda Airport have evacuated, local media reported Tuesday.

The airplane, flight 516 from New Chitose Airport in Hokkaido Prefecture to Tokyo's Haneda Airport, collided with what appears to be a Japan Coast Guard aircraft after landing at Haneda Airport, public broadcaster NHK reported, citing Japan Airlines.

Firefighters are extinguishing the flames, it said.

NHK footage showed a large burst of fire erupting from



This photo taken on 2 January 2024 shows a Japan Airlines airplane caught in fire at Haneda Airport in Tokyo, Japan. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

a side of the Japan Airlines plane as it taxied on a runway and soon the blaze engulfed the aircraft. — Xinhua

SPORTS



The Myanmar National League players are seen in action during the previous football season. PHOTO: THAW GYI

MNL announces schedule of domestic leagues set to be held in 2024

THE Myanmar National League has announced the dates of domestic competitions planned to be held this year.

The Myanmar National League is scheduled to hold four league competitions and one cup tournament in the 2024-2025 season, starting March. Next season, the Myanmar National League Cup will be held as the first competition between March and May. The tournament will allow MNL clubs as well as

MNL-II clubs to compete, with a total of 22 teams.

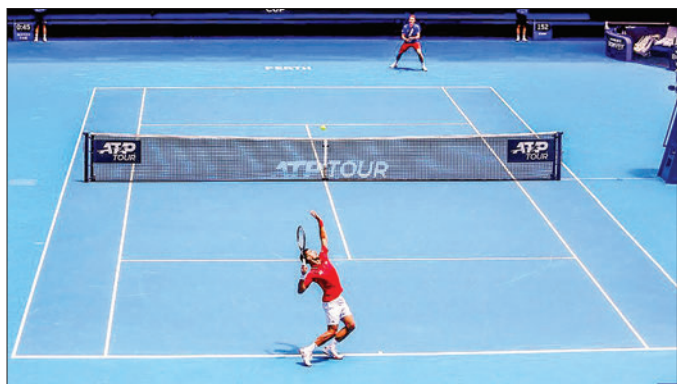
Myanmar National League competitions, MNL-II competitions, Women's League, and MNL U-20 League competitions will be held as league competitions.

The Myanmar Women's League will be held from March to October, the MNL-II Competitions will be from July to December, the MNL U-20 competi-

tions from May to November, and the Myanmar National League competitions from July 2024 to February 2025.

The MNL tournament is planned to be held in Yangon as well as Taunggyi and Patheingyi coming season. In the last 2023 season, Myanmar National League, MNL-II, and Women's League, only three were held, but coming season, two more competitions will be added. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

Swiatek-led Poland, host Australia power into United Cup quarters



Novak Djokovic (front) of Serbia serves to Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic during the Group E match between the Czech Republic and Serbia at the 2024 United Cup tennis tournament in Perth, Australia, 2 January 2024. PHOTO: XINHUA

WORLD No 1 Iga Swiatek was in sublime form on Monday to power Poland into the United Cup quarterfinals, while host Australia also

progressed.

Swiatek was under pressure when she hit the court in Perth after Alejandro Davidovich Fokina gave Spain

the lead with a comeback 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory over world No 9 Hubert Hurkacz.

But Swiatek, winner of four Grand Slam titles, was undaunted and swept past Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-2, 6-1. The 22-year-old Swiatek has only lost seven games in two singles matches as she starts her preparation for the Australian Open in style.

"I'm really happy with my level and the way I'm focused," Swiatek said. "I'm not feeling rusty. I'm not feeling like I need to get into a lot of rhythm."

Swiatek then combined with Hurkacz to thrash Sorribes Tormo and Davidovich

Fokina 6-0, 6-0 in the mixed doubles as Poland awaits a quarterfinal opponent.

After losing their opening tie against Britain, Australia faced a must-win clash against title holders United States in Group C.

Alex de Minaur kept alive Australia's quarterfinal prospects by defeating No 10 Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-2 in an eye-catching performance.

"I was in a great mindset and I played the type of tennis I wanted to be played," said No 12 ranked de Minaur, who was sluggish in his opening loss to Britain's Cameron Norrie. — Xinhua

Zielinski in advanced talks with Inter over free transfer

SSC Napoli midfielder Piotr Zielinski is set to leave the Italian champions at the end of the season after the Pole held advanced talks with Inter Milan to join the club on a free transfer.

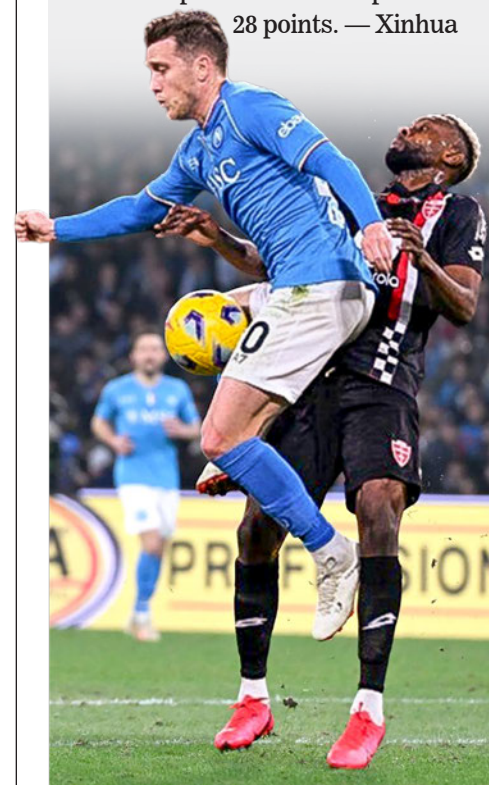
"For me, Zielinski is already an Inter player. If he decided to stay in SSC Napoli, he would already sign a new contract with them. He loves Naples and he felt good there, but he changed his attitude, so I'm sure he will join Inter," the UEFA vice-president, Pole Zbigniew Boniek said in an interview for Polish media on Tuesday.

Zielinski's contract with Napoli expires in June 2024. The 29-year-old tried to negotiate a new deal with the club for several weeks but the two parties failed to come to an agreement.

"He said he wanted to stay in Napoli forever, but being Polish, he may be more accustomed to fog than the sun and sea," SSC Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis told Corriere dello Sport at the end of December.

According to Xinhua sources, the Pole has already decided to join Inter Milan. The Serie A leaders offered him a three-year contract with an option for one year extension. Both sides remain in advanced talks to finalize the deal soon. The midfielder is determined to leave SSC Napoli.

In the Serie A season, Zielinski has played 17 games with two goals and two assists. Napoli sits in the 8th place with 28 points. — Xinhua



Napoli's Piotr Zielinski (L) vies with Monza's Jean-Daniel Akpa Akpro during the Italian Serie A football match between Napoli and Monza in Naples, Italy, 29 December 2023. PHOTO: XINHUA

Death toll rises to 48 in strong Japan quakes amid aftershocks, rising damage reports

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Israel rejects Hamas's hostage deal proposal – Reports



The photo released by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on 1 January 2024 shows Israeli troops conducting a military operation in Gaza Strip. **PHOTO: ISRAEL DEFENCE FORCES/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA**

PALESTINIAN movement Hamas, through Qatari and Egyptian intermediaries, presented its proposal for a new prisoner deal to Israel, but the Jewish state found it unacceptable, the Axios news portal reported on Monday, citing Israeli officials and a source.

At the same time, an Israeli official noted that Hamas's offer shows the movement is ready to negotiate a new hostage deal, even as fighting continues in the Gaza Strip, the report said.

A proposal included a three-step process, the report read. Each phase provided for a pause in hostilities for more than a month in exchange for the release of hostages. As part of the first phase of the deal, Israel is asked to withdraw its troops from Gaza in exchange for the release of approximately 40 hostages, the report read, adding that the final phase called for the release of Israeli soldiers held in the Gaza Strip and an end to the war in the enclave.

On 7 October, Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip while its fighters breached the border, attacking both civilian neighborhoods and military bases. As a result, over 1,200 people in Israel were killed and some 240 others abducted. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. Over 21,800 people have been killed so far in Gaza as a result of Israeli strikes, local authorities said. — Sputnik

China-Ethiopia cooperation gaining momentum across various fields: envoy

CHINA-ETHIOPIA cooperation is gaining momentum across various fields of partnership, Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia Zhao Zhiyuan has said.

The Chinese ambassador, in his New Year remarks published by the state-run Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA)

Sunday, underscored that China-Ethiopia relations will continue to expand in the new year.

“Our two sides have continued to make progress in practical cooperation in trade, investment, infrastructure, agriculture, communications, finance,

culture, education, people-to-people exchanges and other fields, bringing more benefits to the two peoples,” Zhao said.

Describing the positive advancements in Sino-Ethiopian ties during 2023 as “extraordinary”, he said the elevating of the bilateral relationship to an all-weather strategic partnership will help further deepen the ties to new heights. “China and Ethiopia upgraded our bilateral relations into all-weather strategic partnership, which means that rain or shine, we two friendly developing countries both agree to step up mutual support on issues of each other's core interests and major concerns,” he said.

Zhao said the upgrading of bilateral ties enabled the two countries to remain committed to further enhancing mutual trust, and cooperation across the board and strategic consultation regardless of how the external and internal environment may evolve.— Xinhua



A staff member boards a train at Lebu Railway Station in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 30 June 2023. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Putin starts 2024 explaining his view of Russia's BRICS chairmanship

RUSSIA'S chairmanship of BRICS in 2024 will take place under the slogan “Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security”, focusing on positive and creative cooperation with all interested states, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday. BRICS is attracting more and more supporters and likeminded people, Russian President Vladimir Putin noted in his address. Putin recalled that Russia took over the baton of the BRICS chairmanship on 1 January and that Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have joined BRICS as new full members. He noted that “sovereign equality, respect for the chosen path of development, mutual consideration of interests, openness, consensus, the aspiration to form a multipolar international order and a fair global financial and trade system, and pursuit of collective solutions are the top challenges of our time.” — Sputnik