

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

All in agriculture and livestock sectors urged to work in concert with diligence, perseverance and good morale to boost State economy

THE following is the full-text translation of the message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to mark the Peasants' Day, today.

Esteemed peasants,

Now is an occasion of a historically significant day

honouring the farmers who engage in agriculture and livestock farms across the nation. I extend my greetings to all with best wishes for all peasants to have physical and mental well-being with the capacity to double the agriculture and livestock tasks and enjoy socioeconomic development.

In implementing the five-point roadmap, the State Administration Council is initiating short-term and

long-term plans by adopting three economic objectives in order to ensure the prosperity of the State, food security, all-round development of the economic sector and promotion of export volume.

Peasants have to grow primary crops such as paddy and oil crops, including groundnut, sesame and sunflower, and industrial crops such as cotton,

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Mandalay Region welcomes 2.4 million tourists in 2023



International travellers marvel at the breathtaking vista from a pagoda within the Bagan Ancient Cultural Heritage Zone, located in Mandalay Region.

MORE than 2.4 million domestic travellers and foreign tourists visited the destinations in Mandalay Region in 2023, according to U Min Maung Soe, Deputy Director of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Mandalay Region).

In 2023, the number of tourists visiting destinations in Mandalay Region

exceeded 2.4 million, comprising over 2.1 million domestic visitors and more than 310,000 foreign tourists.

“In 2022, 1.2 million domestic travellers and 120,000 foreign tourists entered the region. In Mandalay Region, Mandalay, Bagan, Popa, and PynOo-Lwin areas are tourist destinations that are constantly visited throughout the

year,” U Min Maung Soe said.

Mandalay Region Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar Hoteliers Association-Mandalay Zone and Myanmar Tourism Federation are co-operating to ensure continuous tourist visits and improve tourism services during this year. — ASH/TKO

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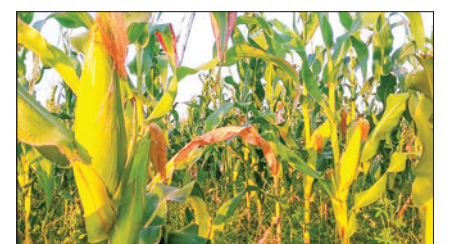
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Persistent weak corn demand drives prices down

NATIONAL

All in agriculture and livestock sectors urged to work in concert with diligence, perseverance and good morale to boost State economy

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sugarcane and coffee, in addition to pulses, beans and maize, among other crops, to meet the earmarked sown acreage. I want to urge them to strive to meet the target production of all crops through the use of quality strains of crops, proper soil preparations, smart supply of water, correct agricultural techniques, and the growth of double crops.

In order to ensure food security and promote the export sector, annual plans are adopted for relevant crops, and encouragement is being given to boost the per-acre yield of primary crops. As peasants have placed 17 million acres of paddy, 10.57 million acres of pulses and beans, 8.24 million acres of oil crops, 1.6 million acres of corn and 0.52 million acres of cotton in the 2023-24 financial year, I would like to express my gratitude to relevant departments and peasants for their concerted efforts.

At present, people consume more cooking oil than necessary, and some of them are suffering from health problems. On the other hand, the import volume of cooking oil increases due to local demand. Consuming just the necessary volume of cooking oil can contribute much to the improvement of health conditions as well as the reduction of spending on foreign currency. As such, it is necessary to strive to increase the production of oil crops. The government is making the utmost efforts for the cultivation of oil crops on set acres of croplands to secure the target production for cooking oil at home.

The government is implementing plans to reduce the import volume of thread and textile products and meet the target cultivation of 800,000 acres of long-staple cotton grown in the past five years with the expansion of sown acreage in order to increase the per-acre yield of cotton for export purpose as well as supplying the domestic demand. If surplus, cotton can be exported. Moreover, as the government sets a plan to produce 700 visses per acre of quality cotton, farmers have to follow the implementation of the government's plan. As coffee production is a sure long-term agricultural business in the global market, I would like to invite interested persons and ethnic entrepreneurs capable of investing in the coffee farming industry. The government earmarked the initial cultivation of 100,000 acres of coffee with more plans to grow 300,000 acres of coffee crops and then one million acres of crops in the future.

Currently, the government manages the production of seeds in the entire nation entirely using quality strains of crops while organizing the seed show since 2019 to broaden the scope of peasants.

Likewise, the government initiates management for the use of machinery in farmland preparations and harvesting and winnowing in the agriculture sector, systematic reclamation of farmlands in order to utilize agricultural equipment at full capacity, sell various agricultural machinery items at different levels of the workplace and transform the manual to the mechanized farming through modern techniques.

The Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Agri-

culture, Livestock and Irrigation cooperate in selling urea fertilizers to peasants at reduced prices. Moreover, arrangements are being made to disseminate knowledge about the combined use of fertilizer and natural fertilizers and the production and use of natural fertilizers in relevant areas for boosting the per-acre yield of crops and to make concerted efforts among the government, private businesspersons and associations in selling inputs at fair prices with the contribution of the State economic promotion fund.

Currently, crops throughout the world face loss and damage before harvest time due to the climate change process, and it is necessary to consider how to overcome the challenges of food shortage and how to enhance response power against the challenges due to aforesaid events. The government has enacted laws and bylaws to protect the rights of peasants and raise their interests by paying particular attention to the storage of reserve seeds, making preparations, and re-growing crops in the damaged areas.

On the other hand, peasants have to change the cultivation of crops suitable for the regions and use short-term matured crops with the least water requirement in order to efficiently use water in conformity with the changing climate. As such, the government raises peasant awareness and demonstrations to use modern irrigated facilities to save water in cultivation and change the cultivation of crops with the least requirement of water.

The government has built 246 dams, 144 reservoirs, 72 lakes, 199 sluice gates, and 219 water pumping stations, totalling 880, to solve the shortage of water as well as irrigate more than 3.1 million acres of crops. Moreover, the government carries out sinking 25,513 tube wells as underground water tapping, temporary damming creeks to supply water with the use of solar pumping systems, building anti-saltwater dykes and embankments for prevention of flooding in deltaic areas close to the sea and entering salt water in order to supply sufficient agricultural water and prevention of flooding. Hence, I would like to urge all peasants to use water efficiently and minimize the waste of water.

Peasants have to apply ways of boosting the per-acre yield of crops and emphasize the cultivation of crops in double and mixed-cropping patterns to increase the sown acreage of crops. Moreover, it is necessary to leverage the application of good agricultural practices and organic crop cultivation.

Farmers' Channel of MRTV and Myanmar Radio broadcast general knowledge about agricultural techniques, including modern agricultural methods, climate, market and agrarian information in order to improve the cultivation and production of crops, whereas newspapers, journals, periodicals and farming business publications are being published as well as agricultural techniques are being shared through mobile phone for farmers to be able to accumulate agrarian information.

The capital revolving fund of the State economic promotion fund contributes to the implementation of

the monsoon project and oil crop project this year in addition to the green gram and summer paddy project last year. In order to develop agriculture and livestock sectors, eight states, six regions, and six self-administered zones and division have been provided the capital through the State economic promotion fund for booming agriculture, livestock and related businesses.

An emphasis is being placed on initiating artificial insemination processes in order to propagate pedigree cows, distribute pedigree cows by operating quality cow species research farms, educate local farmers for managing livestock and production to follow Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP), vaccinate cattle and control animal diseases with treatment, establish livestock breeding zones and implement dairy cow farming industries through the State economic promotion fund.

It is necessary to successfully breed cows and buffaloes in order to produce dairy products to ensure local sufficiency. A plan is underway to establish the Veterinary Science School in Insein in May 2024 so as to turn out skilled professionals for enhancement of the livestock breeding sector.

In the livestock sector, the State economic promotion fund contributed to the implementation of the agriculture and livestock emerald green project, and the capital revolving fund supported the livestock farms.

The capital revolving fund contributes to the emerald green village (fishery sector) project for rural development. In this regard, some 90 per cent of production met the domestic fish demand, and the remaining 10 per cent of fish products were exported to earn foreign exchange.

The government assists in the collection of fish species suitable for regions, climate and market demand, non-depletion of fish species, an increase of fish production, production and releasing of fingerlings into natural water for ensuring sustainability of pedigree fish species, testing quality of water and soil of fish farms, undertaking of health and disease control, issuance of recommendations for fingerling health conditions. As such, fish farmers need to follow Good Aquacultural Practices (GAQPs).

In conclusion, if agricultural and livestock farms of peasants who are composed of rural people, accounting for 70 per cent of the population of Myanmar, are successful, all people will have improvement in their basic daily needs and socioeconomic lives. As the country can ensure food security at home as well as earn increased income in the export of products to global countries, I want to urge all in the agriculture and livestock sectors to work in concert with diligence, perseverance and good morale to boost the State economy.

**Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu
Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma Min Aung Hlaing
Prime Minister
Chairman, State Administration Council**

NATIONAL

Myanmar attends 13th HLTF-ACV Meeting in Laos

A Myanmar delegation led by U Lwin Oo, Alternate Eminent Person (EP) of Myanmar and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, attended the 13th Meeting of High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision (HLTF-ACV), which was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, on 27-29 February 2024. The High-Level Representative drafting session of the 13th Meeting of the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision (HLTF-ACV) was held prior to the 13th Meeting of HLTF-ACV.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Chatoulong Bouasisavath, Eminent Person (EP) of Lao PDR as the ASEAN Chair and Mr Dato' Zainuddin Yahya, Eminent Person (EP) of Malaysia and Former Malaysian Ambassador, as the permanent shepherd Member State. It was also attended by Eminent Persons, High-Level Representatives and officials from the ASEAN Member States, Timor-Leste as an Observer, as well as the Deputy



The Myanmar delegation is pictured attending the 13th Meeting of High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision on 27-29 February 2024 in Vientiane, Laos.

Secretary-General and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.

At the meeting, the deputy minister expressed appreciation to the Co-Chairs and commended High-Level Representatives for their efforts in the drafting of the APSC Strategic Plan of the ASEAN Community Vision

2045. He shared his view on the placement of the elements of Institutional Strengthening-related Strategic Measures, format and methodology of the development of the APSC Strategic Plan. He suggested considering the placement of the cross-cutting action lines in consultation with

the Co-Chairs of the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Economic Integration (HLTF-EI), Senior Officials Committee for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOCA). He also highlighted the importance of continuous engagement with stakeholders, especially youth, women's or-

ganizations, the business community and academia, to learn about their aspirations and suggestions for a better future for ASEAN.

During the meeting, views were exchanged on the three recommendations submitted by the High-Level Representative drafting session of the 13th HLTF-ACV. It guided HLR to conduct a drafting session online to complete the first reading of the draft APSC Strategic Plan prior to the 14th Meeting of the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision in order to expedite the drafting process.

At the sideline of the meeting, the deputy minister had separate meetings with Mr Alounkeo Kittikhoun, Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar and Mr Phoxay Khaykhamphithoune, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR, on 28 February 2024 and discussed Myanmar's cooperation with ASEAN and bilateral cooperation between Myanmar and Lao PDR on areas of mutual interest. — MNA

Thai naval warship arrives in Yangon for goodwill visit



The special delegation from the Thai naval vessel seen being welcomed on its arrival at Thilawa Port yesterday.

ROYAL Thai naval warship HTMS Prachuap Khiri Khan (OPV-552) arrived at Thilawa Port in Yangon yesterday morning for a goodwill visit to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

The warship was wel-

comed by Tatmadaw (Navy) officers and other ranks, as well as the Thai Naval Attaché to Myanmar.

The warship is visiting as a goodwill trip led by Rear Admiral Pongmit Narongkul, Chief of Staff of the Royal Thai

Navy's 3rd Naval Area Command.

The special delegation will stay in Yangon for three days until 3 March, visiting famous places and conducting friendly sports competitions between the two navies. — MNA/KZL

Foreign fuel tankers regularly arrive at Thilawa Port

THE tankers bringing ordered fuel from abroad regularly enter the Thilawa Port area of the Yangon Region as planned to fill the storage tanks with fuel. Subsequently, the fuel is distributed to states and regions, including Yangon Region.

On 29 February 2024, a total of more than 1,200,000 gallons of 92 Ron, 400,000 gallons of 95 Ron, over 900,000 gallons of diesel, and more than 1,200,000 gallons of premium

diesel fuel were filled by 1,175 bowzers.

Therefore, sufficient fuel is stored in the storage tanks at the Thilawa Port area, and distribution is being carried out according to the daily schedule. Consequently, the public need not worry about fuel shortages due to rumours, and they can be assured that they only need to purchase the usual amount of fuel without stocking up. — MNA/TRKM

Daily newspapers available online

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

NATIONAL

2023-2024 Inter-State/Region Billiard & Snooker Championship concludes



SAC members, Union ministers and officials watch the final matches yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

THE final matches plus the awarding ceremony for the 2023-2024 Inter-State/Region Billiard

and Snooker Championship was held at Wunna Theikdhi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday

morning.

State Administration Council members, Union ministers,

deputy ministers, officials from the Billiard and Snooker Championship and athletes joined

the event. They enjoyed the final matches of the Men's Individual Snooker 15 Red Event, Men's Individual Snooker 6 Red Event, Men's Individual 9 Ball Pool Event and Women's Single 9 Ball Pool Event. Next, the SAC members and officials presented awards to the first, second and third prize winners of the respective events of the 2023-2024 Inter-State/Region Billiard and Snooker Championship.

The tourney was held from 24 February to 1 March with the aim of bringing out the next generation of talented athletes. Reportedly, a total of 13 men's teams and ten women's teams competed in the tourney. — MNA/KZL

MoRAC Union Minister receives Sri Lankan Ambassador

UNION Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Tin Oo Lwin received Sri Lankan Ambassador to Myanmar Mr J M J P Bandara yesterday in the reception hall of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Nay Pyi Taw.

The meeting was also attended by U Aye Tun, Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture, the permanent secretary, directors-general, deputy permanent Secretaries and officials.

During the meeting, both sides appreciated the friendship between Sri Lanka and Myanmar, as the countries worship the same religion, Theravada Buddhism. They also discussed the free courses for monks from Sri Lanka offered by the Interna-

tional Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, facilities for Myanmar monks who are studying in Sri Lanka, arrangements to confer religious titles to the monks of all the Four Nikayas in Sri Lanka: Shwegyin Nikaya, Ramanya Nikaya, Amarapura Nikaya, and Siam Nikaya, mutual respect relations between the two countries in the arena of religion, the establishment of Buddhist University in City of Kandy, an invitation to visit the sacred Buddha tooth relic festival in Kandy this year, and views on religious and cultural issues between the two countries.

After the meeting, the Union minister presented commemorative gifts to the Sri Lankan Ambassador to Myanmar. — MNA/TKO



Commemorative gifts are exchanged during the Sri Lankan ambassador's call on Union Minister U Tin Oo Lwin yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

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NATIONAL

Over 700,000 acres of 43 mangrove protected public forests conserved: MoNREC

ACCORDING to U San Myint Tun, deputy director of the Forest Department, more than 700,000 acres of 43 mangrove-protected public forests have been established in order to prevent natural disasters and conserve the marine ecosystem in the coastal areas across the country.

Natural resources and mangrove-protected public forests are developed to protect the biodiversity of tropical forests and allow local people to use forest products continuously, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC). Currently, 1,384 reserved and protected public forests have been implemented and conserved.

“The mangrove-protected public forests have been established in coastal areas since the reserved and protected



Photos showcase shore areas near mangrove-protected public forests.

public forests were developed to protect against natural hazards and conserve the marine ecosystem. Through the establishment of this structure, the mangroves will be able

to protect the coastal areas from natural disasters, as well as conserve the ecosystem to keep the aquatic animals that will grow up in the mangroves. In fact, the benefits will

be achieved if the ecosystem is improved, and waterbirds will come to live and enjoy. In addition, by maintaining this way, we will be able to continuously and systematically

extract forest products from the mangroves, to meet the demand of the local people as well as improve the climate and enhance the forest cover area of Myanmar. There are 43 mangrove-protected public forests in Myanmar with a total area of about 716,500 acres,” U Min Maung Soe said.

Forest care and conservation activities such as transplanting mangrove plantations in places where the trees are sparse, dissemination of technology and public knowledge to reduce the destruction of natural forests are being carried out in the mangrove-protected public forests to be able to conserve through awareness activities.

In addition, banks and mangrove forests will be expanded and conserved. — ASH/TKO



High-quality Chinese fibre furniture market dampened by high prices

DUE to its rising price, sales of China-imported high-quality fibre furniture have been dull, according to furniture shops.

This high-quality fibre furniture is used mainly for offices, schools and shops, and currently, the market has been flat.

“These furniture are China-made, not locally-produced. The fibre furniture is usually bought by shops such as café and fancy shops. The market

was good previously. But now the market has been slow. Wholesale distributors can't control prices and even sell old stocks with current higher prices. So the products get more expensive for customers. But we have to control prices because we want to liquidate our stock. We don't sell at a higher price as the same as they raised,” said an official from a fibre furniture shop.

The fibre furniture market



The picture displays Chinese-made fibre furniture in a restaurant setting.

was booming after COVID-19, and the trading was average a few months ago. But the market

has been slow for the past two weeks.

Fibre furniture is light and

easy to carry, which is why it draws customers' attention. — Thit Taw/ZS

NATIONAL

Export earning policy bites pulses market



Dozens of pulse bags are seen being displayed at a shop.

AS the export earning policy remains unchanged, pulse prices have been significantly dropping in recent days. Meanwhile, green gram prices barely fluctuated.

The black gram prices were volatile in February. The price stood at

K3.02 million per tonne on 23 February and jumped to K3.22 million on 27 February. Then, it plummeted to K2.94 million per tonne on 28 February. Similarly, the pigeon pea price also plunged to K3.657 million per tonne on 28 February from K3.91 million on

20 February.

Nonetheless, the prices of green gram were stable at K2,830-K3,250 per viss for Pakokku green gram and K4,250 for Shwe Wah green gram variety between 23 and 29 February.

The chickpea prices decreased to K5,925-K6,300 per viss on 29 February from K6,250-K6,400 on 27-28 February.

The FOB prices stood at US\$980-\$1,000 per tonne of black gram (FAQ) and \$1,220-\$1,240 for pigeon pea from 19 to 24 February, whereas the prices slumped to \$955-\$975 for black gram (FAQ) and \$1,190-\$1,210 for pigeon pea on 1 March. Also, the FOB price dipped to \$770-\$800 per tonne of green gram from central Myanmar regions and \$870-\$900 for the Shwewah variety on that day, which was just a tiny price difference.

There is news spreading in India's market that the reference price is likely to be set to control the prices of locally produced pulses. The misinformation on Myanmar's currency market also influenced the price fluctuation. — TWA/KK

Temperature in March can rise due to moderately strong El Nino process: DMH

THE Department of Meteorology and Hydrology stated that the temperature can rise due to the El Nino process, which may be moderately strong in March. The estimation is made based on the sea surface temperature of the Pacific Ocean and atmospheric conditions near the equator.

The weather conditions prone to El Nino can lead to abnormal precipitation, high daytime temperatures, abnormal storm occurrences, and extreme weather events such as drought.

The Department of Meteorology and Hydrology has issued a notice to be aware of the situations related to El Nino's occurrence, which will continue to be published in a timely manner according to the relevant sectors so that the citizens can prepare in advance. — TWA/TRKM

Shwe Myanmar Maha Aungkaday Hein wins record K500M prize in 60th Aungbarlay Lottery

SHWE Myanmar Maha Aungkaday Hein lottery shop won the highest prize of K500 million during the opening event of the 60th Aungbarlay lottery. The grand prize of the lottery opened on 1 March was won by the Shwe Myanmar Maha Aungkaday Hein with D-199724, and the K200 million grand prize was won by Moeyan Shwe Lamin and Myat Su Kaday lottery shop, according to the Aungbarlay Lottery Directorate of Internal Revenue Department.

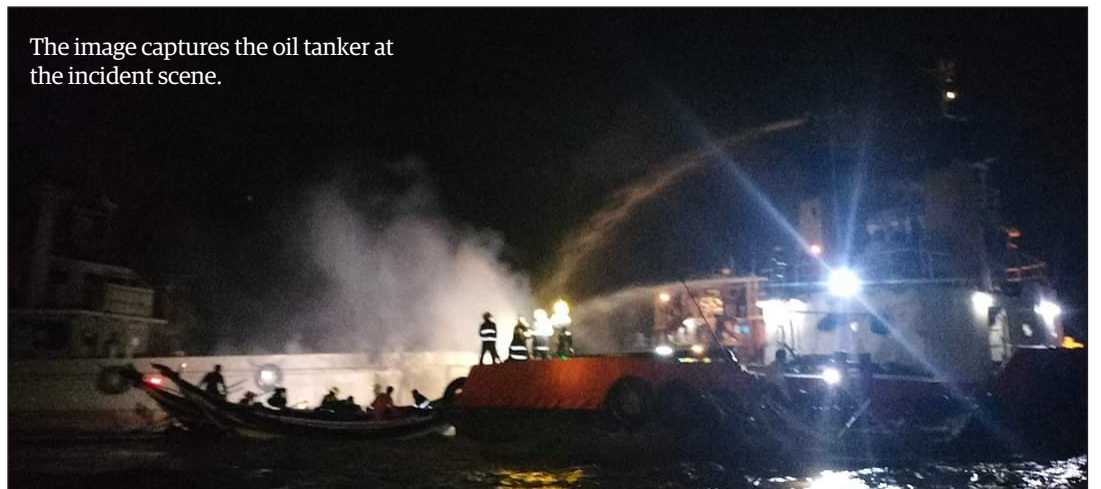
The Internal Revenue Department said that more than K4.90 billion was received from the sale of the 60th Aungbarlay lottery. For the opening of the 60th Aungbarlay lottery, a total of 490,912 lottery tickets were sold in order from the letter "A" to the letter "H".

In addition, if unsold lottery ticket numbers emerge from the lottery system during the opening of the lottery, the total value of the lottery ticket will be re-opened as another appropriate lottery ticket, and the number of distributed lottery tickets may change. — TWA/KZL



A glimpse of the 60th Aungbarlay Lottery opening ceremony.

The image captures the oil tanker at the incident scene.



Fuel transfer accident claims damages, lives

DURING the fuel transfer from an oil tanker to a cargo vessel in the Yangon River yesterday, an overheated submerged pump caused an explosion, resulting in damages and casualties, according to the Fire Service Department.

The explosion caused a loss of 800 gallons of fuel and damages to the oil tanker's tank and deck. What is even more tragic is the loss of lives of Ko Than Lwin (25) and Ko Waiyan Tun (19), who were on the cargo vessel. Another crew member, U Than Oo, sustained injuries, while Ko Aye Min Htwe and Ko Kyaw Lin are currently missing.

The initial findings indicate that the Konda-6 diesel tanker was in the process of transferring 2,500 gallons of fuel to the MV Singaza cargo vessel when the submerged pump in use exploded as a result of overheating.

The incident happened at 2:23 am near

the Bagaya Port in Kyimyindine Township, Yangon Region. Fire stations in Kyimyindine, Sangyoung, Ahlon, and Kamayut dispatched fire engines to the site.

Additionally, the firefighters collaborated with charity organizations and sent out boats containing small fire engines to kill the fire. The Nattha fire-extinguishing vessel from the Inland Water Transport also joined in the effort.

A firefighter shared his experience on social media, recalling, "The most thrilling moment was when we navigated across the river in a boat with portable fire engines in the dark".

The firefighters managed to subdue the fire at 3:07 am and finally extinguished it at 3:35 am. The explosion reportedly shocked and awakened the residents in surrounding neighbourhoods.

The authorities are investigating the explosion. — TWA/NT

Fuel oil prices set to dip

THE fuel oil prices decreased by K50-85 per litre on 1 March after a hike in late February.

The prices stood at K2,770 per litre of Octane 92, K2,885 for Octane 95, K2,565 for diesel and K2,610 for premium diesel on 29 February.

The prices sank to K2,715 for Octane 92, K2,835 for Octane 95, K2,485 for diesel and K2,525 for premium diesel on 1 March.

The fluctuation of fuel oil prices in the domestic market is closely tied to the price index set by Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS), the pricing basis for many refined products in south-east Asia. The decline in MOPS price weighed on the prevailing fuel prices, according to the Supervisory Committee on Oil Import, Storage and Distribution of Fuel Oil.

With the MOPS's high price index climbing, the oil prices peaked at K3,245 per litre for

diesel and K3,330 for premium diesel in August 2023.

The committee is, therefore, steering the market to ensure price stability and fuel oil security.

Under the supervision of the committee, the Petroleum Products Regulatory Department has been issuing daily reference prices to ensure price stability for energy consumers.

The committee is inspecting the fuel stations to see whether they are overcharging. The authorities are taking legal action against those retailers of fuel stations under the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law 2017 if they are found overcharging rather than the set reference rate.

As per the statement, 90 per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally. The domestic fuel price is high-



Vehicles queue up to refuel at a Yangon petrol station.

ly correlated with international prices. The State is steering the market to mitigate the loss between the importers, sellers and energy consumers.

Due to proper supply of fuel oils to filling stations, no queue of vehicles to buy fuels is not

seen in downtown Yangon and suburban areas in February 2024.

However, Malaysia's oil sector receives government subsidies, and the prices are about 60 per cent cheaper than those of Myanmar. Every coun-

try lays down different patterns of policy to fix the oil prices. Myanmar also levies only a lower tax rate on fuel oil and strives for the energy consumers to buy the oil at a cheaper rate, the committee affirmingly stated. — NN/EM

Export licence, permit validity set for two months

THE Trade Department notified on 29 February that export licences and permits are valid for two months.

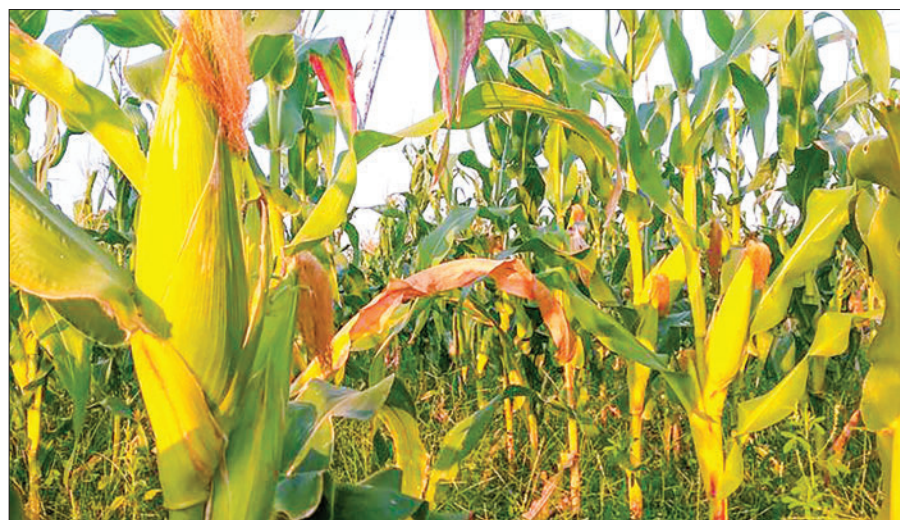
The extension of the validity of the licence is up to 14 days if the documents of shipping goods are provided, the Trade Department stated.

As per the Trade Department's notification dated 29 February,

The licence applicants who fail to re-fill information for the incomplete forms within seven days from the date of the department's response will be cancelled automatically, according to the export/import notification No 4/2022.

However, the specified period for filling out incomplete forms has been eased to 14 days from seven days starting from 1 March 2024 in order to facilitate export procedures. In addition to the real-time notification from the system, the applicants will receive a rejection or approved letter to the official email of the respective companies. — NN/KK

Persistent weak corn demand drives prices down



Corn plants thriving in the cornfield.

AS the demand faltered in the corn market, the corn price has been continuously shrinking since early January. The prevailing price reaches just K1,060 per viss.

Myanmar exports corn to China and Thailand through the border and also ships to China, India, Viet Nam and the Philippines through maritime channels, according to the Myanmar Corn Industrial Association.

Thailand, the leading importer of Myanmar's corn, grants corn imports under zero tariff (with Form-D) between 1 February and 31 August. However, Thailand imposes a maximum tax rate of 73 per cent on corn imports to protect the rights of their growers if the corn is imported during the corn season of Thailand.

Additionally, China has been pur-

chasing Myanmar's corn through cross-border trade under the alternative development for poppy substitution programme. Legitimate corn trade between Myanmar and China commenced at the end of 2022. A total of 112 Myanmar companies have been permitted for corn exports.

Myanmar shipped 934,883 tonnes of corn worldwide as of 29 December in the current financial year 2023-2024 beginning 1 April, bagging US\$279.042 million, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics indicated.

Myanmar conveyed over 2 million tonnes of corn to foreign trade partners in the 2022 corn season. The majority of them were sent to Thailand, and the remaining went to China, India, the Philippines and Viet Nam.

The corn is cultivated in Shan, Kachin, Kayah and Kayin states and Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. Myanmar has three corn seasons — winter, summer and monsoon. Myanmar's annual corn output is estimated at 2.5-3 million tonnes. — NN/EM

The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increase of death rate due to the disease.

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OPINION

Recognize benefactors in agricultural, livestock and fishery sectors

AS MYANMAR is an agricultural and livestock farming-based country, farmers of these industries are benefactors for the whole nation. They cultivate crops and operate livestock breeding farms for domestic consumption as well as export purposes in order to ensure local food security and to increase incomes for the State in the national export strategic vision.

In order to ensure food security and promote the export sector, annual plans are adopted for relevant crops, and encouragement is being given to boost the per-acre yield of primary crops. Farmers have placed 17 million acres of paddy, 10.57 million acres of pulses and beans, 8.24 million acres of oil crops, 1.6 million acres of corn and 0.52 million acres of cotton in the 2023-24 financial year.

Myanmar is blessed with abundant natural land and water resources. Depending on the climatic conditions for agriculture and livestock farms, the whole country has to strive for the acceleration of cultivation and livestock farming in addition to fishery tasks with the use of appropriate techniques and united strength of those farmers to develop the national interests of the State in all aspects. Benefactor peasants make the utmost effort to produce foods at full capacity to meet local demand as well as export purposes.

use modern irrigated facilities to save water in cultivation and livestock tasks.

It is necessary to improve livestock breeding as well as the fishery sector to ensure local food security and earn income from the export of surplus products. Both peasants and farmers are responsible for the production of crops, meat, fishery and dairy products to ensure sufficiency of local consumption.

Myanmar is blessed with abundant natural land and water resources. Depending on the climatic conditions for agriculture and livestock farms, the whole country has to strive for the acceleration of cultivation and livestock farming in addition to fishery tasks with the use of appropriate techniques and united strength of those farmers to develop the national interests of the State in all aspects. Benefactor peasants make the utmost effort to produce foods at full capacity to meet local demand as well as export purposes.

The government is implementing plans to reduce the import volume of thread and textile products and meet the target cultivation of 800,000 acres of long-staple cotton grown in the past five years with the expansion of sown acreage in order to increase the per-acre yield of cotton for export purposes as well as supplying the domestic demand. If surplus, cotton can be exported.

The government has built 246 dams, 144 reservoirs, 72 lakes, 199 sluice gates, and 219 water pumping stations, totalling 880, to solve the shortage of water as well as irrigating more than 3.1 million acres of crops while sinking 25,513 tube wells and arranging other irrigation facilities in order to supply sufficient water for agricultural and livestock farms. As such, farmers have to apply proper cultivation and livestock farming techniques of crops. As such, the government raises awareness of those farmers and demonstrations to

CHRISTINA Koch has the kind of job children dream of. Beginning in 2019, on her first mission to the International Space Station (ISS), the NASA astronaut lived in space for 328 days — the longest time any woman has spent there. During that mission, she 3D printed biological tissues, grew proteins, worked on a dark matter experiment, and made up half of the first all-female spacewalk.

Now, as part of the space agency's ambitious project to send people back to the moon, Koch is preparing for her next adventure. With it, she will cement her place in the history books. On the Artemis II mission, scheduled for November, Koch will spend ten days on a trip to circle the moon with three other astronauts.

Doing this will probably mean she won't get to set foot on the lunar surface in the future, however, due to the lifetime safety limits on how long an astronaut can spend in space. Nevertheless, she will become the first woman to orbit Earth's satellite and set eyes on its mysterious far side.

Artemis II will be the first crewed test of NASA's colossal Space Launch System rocket and the Orion craft that sits atop it, setting the stage for future missions with the aim of landing humans on the moon for the first time since 1972. Koch spoke with *New Scientist* Journal about her vital work aboard the ISS, what space smells like, and the unique microgravity sports you can play in orbit.

Leah Crane: What was it like to be up there on the ISS for so long? Did you feel cooped up?

Christina Koch: I was very lucky that I got to spend almost 11 months on board the ISS as my first space flight mission. I absolutely loved having that long mission - a typical mission on the ISS is around six months, and I probably would have been devastated if I had to go home after six months. I definitely wasn't ready to leave.

I never got cabin fever. It was pretty far into my mission before I realized, "I haven't felt the wind on my face in a long time. I miss that." There were definitely days when I would go over to our tiny greenhouse, which is about the size of a couple of shoe boxes, and just smell the plants. Just to smell something that was organic, that actually did a lot for me.

The First Woman To Fly To The Moon

By Min Zan

I've never really thought about the smell aspect - does the space station smell like anything? Body odour, maybe?

You know, if it does, we get nose blind to it very quickly. The main smell that I think most new folks notice is almost a metallic one. We sometimes say it's the smell of space. When we have a visiting cargo vehicle come and dock, and we first open that hatch, there's a space in between the station and the cargo vehicle that has been exposed to just the open vacuum of space. It has this weird metallic smell.

Sometimes, right before we

open the hatch, we would call everyone over to have a smell.

So luckily, we don't necessarily notice all those human smells as much, but I really will never forget the uniqueness of that space smell.

How did it feel to break the record for the longest space flight by a woman?

A lot of people talk about this individual accomplishment of having a record. I like to think of it not so much as that, but that the milestone is important because it communicates where we are and what the state of the art is right now in human space exploration.

I hope that the record I set is exceeded as quickly as possible.

I also used it as inspiration. Those days when I didn't necessarily feel up to it, I knew I had to bring my best and try to get the most out of every day because what I was doing was different from the usual ISS mission.

It was an ultramarathon, not a marathon.

Doing that sort of thing is important for medical research on how long-term space flight affects women, right?

I think that I would characterize it as the long-term effects on any human, and the fact that

I happen to be female could illuminate where there would be a difference. In general, anything we see that's a difference between men and women, whether on the ground or in space-flight adaptation, is an area to explore.

Is this one reason it is so important to have a diverse astronaut corps?

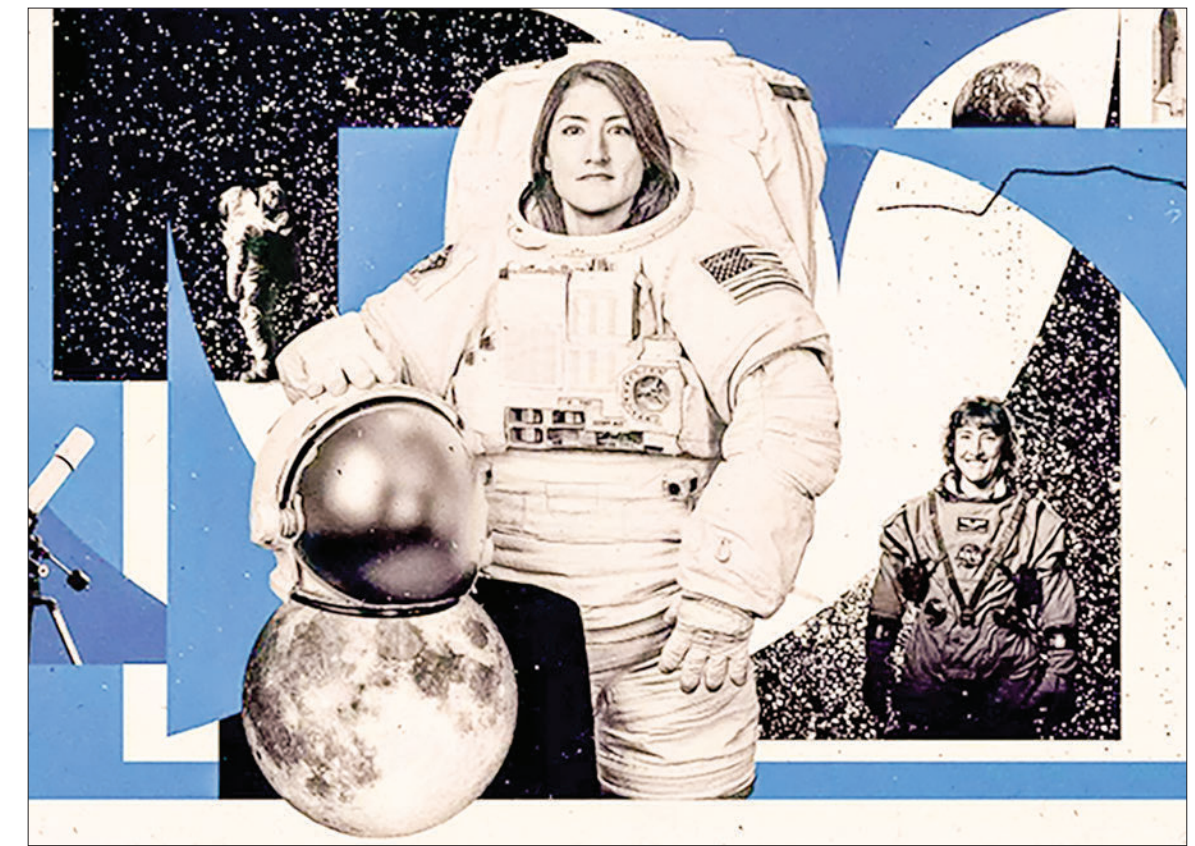
Absolutely. Collectively, we've made the decision that it's important to be representative of everyone that we are carrying dreams for as we explore. NASA made this decision many, many years ago, and that's why now we have an astronaut corps that represents everyone.

The important reason is manifold. Plenty of studies have shown that missions are more successful when you have a diverse group of people contributing to them. Not only will we discover more, get there more efficiently, learn more, and be more successful because we're diverse, but we will inspire a larger segment of the population when people look at the astronaut corps.

I know that there's a lot of work to be done on the space station, but do the astronauts up there get to unwind and have a laugh sometimes, too?

Human bowling is something that we do in our off time. We do have time off as astronauts: we have weekends, typically, and, of course, there is time after work. We work about 12 hours a day, five days a week, and then some extra hours on the weekend.

But when we do have time off, we definitely take advantage of the fact that we are in microgravity. Human bowling is where one person kind of gets in a cannonball position, and either someone throws them, or they launch themselves off some handrails. Then, the rest of the crew



Christina Koch.

is sort of standing like the pins in bowling. And the idea is that you have to, you know, bowl with your body. There has also been human surfing.

Is that just one person standing on top of another?

Yes.

After almost a year in space, was coming home super weird?

I would say super weird defines it pretty well.

Coming back to Earth, standing on your own two feet, feeling the wind on your face — all those Earth things that you don't experience on board the space station. I remember a couple of weeks before I came back, I thought to myself, "I should really think about what it's going to feel like to walk". That's because I just hadn't experienced that in so long, and the idea of balancing on my two feet seemed utterly foreign to me.

There's the physical aspect: your body, really does a great job adapting to microgravity, £ which means, of course, you have to readapt to gravity when you come home. There's also a huge psychological and mental aspect to coming home. I'll never forget when my head popped out of that capsule. I looked out and saw about five times as many people as I had seen in almost the last year all looking up at me, and I thought, "Oh wow, I'm really happy to be home, but that's a lot of people."

Now, we're moving into the phase where we get a little bit more hands-on. We're getting to play with the displays. We're get-

Now that you are back, are you looking forward to your next mission, travelling around the moon as part of the Artemis programme?

I've been excited about it for many years. Every person we've ever loved, and every forest I've ever walked in, is all far, far away on that one planet.

What has the training been like so far?

It's been a lot of different things. There are a lot of people to meet. There are a lot of things to learn about, things that have been in the works for many, many, many years. So, part of what we're doing is actually a lot of travel to meet the far-flung teams — every time we meet the teams, we learn both the technical side of what they are doing and also their culture. We learn what we need to know to feel that sense of trust in the vehicle, and they learn what they need to know to see who their operators are going to be.

But then, of course, we have the real technical training, the hardcore stuff, which typically happens at the Johnson Space Centre in Texas. It's been classroom work: a lot of background theoretical knowledge about the spacecraft, about the mission, about the orbital mechanics, and about the science that we can do during the journey.

Now, we're moving into the phase where we get a little bit more hands-on. We're getting to play with the displays. We're get-

ting to learn the flight software; eventually, we'll do full-length simulations with the mission control teams all over the world. And then there's the (full) hands-on stuff: getting in suits, getting into the vehicle, learning how we're going to get out of the vehicle if and when we need to, working with the recovery team. I think the biggest takeaway is how many people it takes to put together a mission like this and the awe of being a part of it.

Are you disappointed that you won't get to walk on the moon?

I am nothing but stoked to be a part of this mission. I am so excited that I'll get to watch some of my friends walk on the moon, that I will know those people, that I'll know the teams that got them there, that I will know the whole process that they've gone through in the Artemis programme.

I am just really excited that we are doing this, and to have a role to contribute is really just where the dream comes true for me. Every single day I wake up and come to work, I feel like I am going to work to do cool things with my friends, like going to the moon.

Note: Leah Crane is a reporter covering space for *New Scientist*

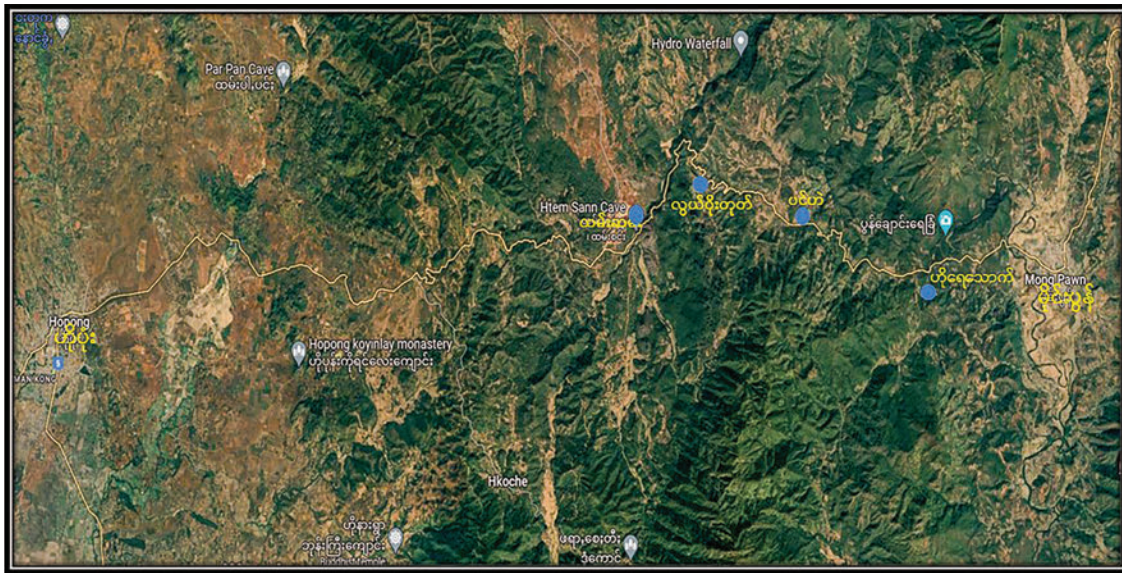
Reference: *New Scientist* 13 January 2024



During her 11-month stay on the International Space Station, Christina Koch did all kinds of jobs, including maintenance of spacesuits and a spacewalk to carry out repairs on the ISS.

NATIONAL

Security forces reclaim control of Union highway



The map indicates security forces in action against terrorists along the Hsihseng-Mongpun road and Union highway in Shan State.

AFTER 16 engagements with terrorist groups along the Hsihseng-Mongpun road and the Union highway since 22 February, security forces regained control of the Union highway

on 29 February. The road was restored to operational status on 1 March.

The conflicts began when some members from the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement signatory Pa-O National Liberation Army (PNLA), the KNDF, and KNPP ambushed the security forces and blocked some parts of the road along the highway since 21 February.

They were apparently encouraged by external elements such as NUG and CRPH terrorists, along with locally operating PDFs.

The move was supposedly aimed at shutting down the vital road in the region and undermining the law and order

in the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, Shan State (South). Some members of the security forces made ultimate sacrifices, while others sustained injuries in the operation. They seized the bodies of the terrorists, along with weapons, ammunition, and related equipment.

The roads connecting Mongpun and Taunggyi remain open for travel as usual after security forces drove away terrorists from the Hopong-Mongpun highway. Security forces, in collaboration with locals, are implementing counter-terrorism measures to address issues such as extortion, arms trafficking, and drug smuggling. — MNA/NT

Confiscations of illegal items: Timbers, animals, industrial materials and vehicles

THE combined teams managed by the Magway Region Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force nabbed a total of 5.45 tonnes of smuggled timbers worth K1,524,626. They impounded the smuggled 24 oxen valued at K24 million in Minhla Township on 27 February. This enforcement was carried out under the Forest Law and the Essential Supplies and Services Law.

On 28 February, the combined teams supervised by the Ayeyawady Region Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force captured illegal timber weighing 59.853 tonnes worth K4,341,572 in Yekyi Township, illegal timber weighing 92.024 tonnes valued at K11,199,382 in Ingapu Township and illegal timber weighing 2.607 tonnes valued at K203,581 in Nyaungdon Township and illegal timber weighing 2.409 tonnes valued at K97,487 in Pathein Township. Actions were conducted under the Forest Law.

On the same day, a Mitsubishi Canter truck (approximately K20 million) was seized at a bus station in Mawlamyine Township, and the vehicle carried 300 gunny sacks and 49 packages of PP woven sacks valued at K8.62 million. The action was taken under Customs procedures.

Additionally, on 29 February,

the combined teams confiscated a Mitsubishi Fuso truck and a Dongfeng tractor head with a trailer (estimated valued at K95 million), heading to Yangon from Thamanya and to Yangon from Myawady at the Nyaungkhashay x-ray station. These vehicles are carrying 1,750 kilogrammes of raw materials of rubber slippers, 60,000 kilogrammes of liquid (suspected Scott paint thinner) and 5,600 kilogrammes of industrial raw materials valued at K18.875 million. These actions were taken under Customs procedures.

Similarly, on 29 February and 1 March, the combined teams captured illegal teak weighing 10.329 tonnes worth K6,545,648 in Bago and Thayawady districts, illegal teak weighing 5.897 tonnes, illegal hardwood weighing 11.879 tonnes and illegal hardwood timber weighing 22.665 tonnes worth K12,198,886 in Bago, Toungoo and Nyaunglebin districts. These actions were conducted under the Forest Law.

The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported that 18 arrests were made on four consecutive days from 27 February to 1 March, with an estimated value of K202,606,182. — MNA/MKKS

K760M worth of stimulant tablets, Happy Water seized in Nawngkhio

A total 1,290,000 of stimulant tablets and 2.48 kilogrammes of Happy Water valued at K760 million was seized in Nawngkhio Township, as reported by the Myanmar Police Force.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team, including members of the Anti-Drug Police Force, conducted a search of a Hyundai Grand Starex vehicle driven by Min Min Ko travelling from Kyaukme to Nawngkhio at 12:30 pm on 28 February. Police seized 1,290,000 stimulant tablets and 2.48 kilogrammes of Happy Water in this vehicle.

After investigation, police arrested Kyaw Thu Aung who involved in the drugs trafficking



Two arrestees are seen alongside seized drugs and vehicles.

in a Nissan AD van in Nawngkhio Township at 1 pm on the same day.

The arrested persons admitted that the seized drugs will be transported from Shan State (North) to Mandalay Re-

gion.

Legal action has been taken against the arrestees, and an ongoing investigation aims to arrest other perpetrators involved in the case. — MNA/MKKS

K3.3 bln worth of stimulant tablets seized in Pyay, Minhla townships

A total of 1.65 million stimulant tablets, valued at K3.3 billion, were seized in Pyay and Minhla townships, as reported by the Myanmar Police Force.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprising members of the Anti-Drug Police Force conducted a search of an Isuzu light truck driven by Hein Paing Oo (aka) Ko Paing (aka) Thar Nyi heading from Pyay to Pandaung at the Nawaday bridge in Pyay Township at 9

am on 13 February. The police seized 1.41 million stimulant tablets hidden in house paint jerricans and compressors in this vehicle.

After interrogation, the police arrested Aung Ko Latt, Zaw Myint (aka) Yay Khe, and Lin Lin Htike with 240,000 stimulant tablets near Milepost 205 on the Pathein-Monywa road in Minhla Township at 7:30 am.

Subsequently, the police also arrested Kyaw Hla, who

was involved in drug trafficking, in a guesthouse in Mindon on 14 February.

The offenders admitted that the seized drugs were to be transported from the Yangon Region to the border of Rakhine State.

Legal action has been taken against the offenders, and an ongoing investigation aims to arrest other perpetrators involved in the case. — MNA/MKKS

NATIONAL

ME to issue certificates of identity for undocumented migrant workers in Malaysia

THE Malaysian government has announced that undocumented migrant workers shall go back home by paying a 500 Ringgit fine between 1 March and the end of December, and the Myanmar Embassy to Malaysia said it would issue a certificate of identity (C of I) through verification.

Undocumented foreigners in Malaysia shall leave the country within 14 days by paying a 500 Ringgit fine at immigration offices along with a passport or C of I and return air ticket on a specified date from 1 March to 31 December 2024, announced the Malaysian government.

That is why Myanmar nationals who have no passport can apply for a C of I at the embassy in person so that they can return to Myanmar within the deadline, and a C of I will be issued if they are verified Myanmar nationals, said the Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

“At present, Malaysia has intensively cracked down on illegal workers. This announcement seems more arrests will follow after the deadline has expired. It makes workers anxious. They even don’t want to live without legal documents, though. They came here because they want to work,” said a Myanmar migrant worker in Malaysia.

Myanmar nationals can enquire about consular services by texting the embassy’s WhatsApp no. +60 1125105774, said the embassy. — MT/ZS



Kyauktiyo Pagoda crowded with pilgrims.

Kyauktiyo Pagoda welcomes over 500,000 pilgrims from Thadingyut to Tabodwe

OVER 500,000 pilgrims from all parts of the nation visited the Kyauktiyo Pagoda in Mon State from Thadingyut Full Moon Day to Tabodwe Full Moon Day, according to U Soe Hla, the chairman of the board of trustees.

The number of pilgrims nationwide flocks to Kyauktiyo Pagoda daily and almost 250 buses op-

erate transport of pilgrims up and down the hilly road as well as the lodges, guesthouses, public rest houses and hotels opens for the pilgrims.

Additionally, Kyauktiyo Pagoda is open to the public year-round. It hosts the annual Buddha Pujaniya Festival from the full moon day of Thadingyut to the full moon day of Kason. — ASH/MKKS

370 Japanese firms to hire over 1,300 Myanmar workers



Myanmar workers pictured at a Japanese workplace.

A total of 370 Japanese companies will offer jobs to over 1,300 Myanmar workers, according to the announcement of the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo on 29 February.

The embassy released the data for 370 demand letters between 15 and 29 February after verification, and the offers will be for over 400 male workers, over 800 fe-

male workers and over 1300 in total.

The statement also said that the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo is reviewing the demand letters sent by the Ministry of Labour via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a timely manner.

After verifying the legal establishment of labour supervising agencies and recruitment factories/companies in Japan, together with relevant documents, its findings and comments were returned to the Ministry of Labour through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Over 300 demand letters from 1 to 15 February, which were verified and sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, would recruit over 900 Myanmar nationals in total, the embassy said. — MT/ZN

No gender quota set in recruiting workers from South Korea for first time

THERE is no set gender quota in recruiting workers for the service industry from South Korea, the EPS centre in Myanmar stated. It is the very first time from South Korea.

Only the nature of the business determines the ratio in terms of quota that is employer demand, and recruitment at work also play a role.

Furthermore, Myanmar has

not been yet issued the E-9 visa for nursing care workers, and the current recruitment type is the service worker category (E-9).

For the first time, women from Myanmar will be able to apply for the EPS-Topik exam online, which will take place in mid-2024. The EPS exam is scheduled for early March. — TWA/MKKS



Applicants seen waiting for submitting exam forms at EPS-Topik Centre.

ECONOMY WORLD

Lao PM orders actions to ensure smooth flow of logistics

Sonexay reaffirmed the government's commitment to reducing logistics costs to enhance competitiveness and transition Laos from a landlocked to a land-linked country.

LAO Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone visited Thanaleng Dry Port in Lao capital Vientiane, and ordered stakeholders to work together to streamline procedures, speed up logistics and transport systems, and cut costs to boost the flow of freight destined for delivery within Laos and to countries in the sub-region.

During the visit on Satur-

day, Lao Prime Minister Sonexay issued the instruction after learning that it was possible to implement cost-cutting measures and remove unnecessary steps in the shipping process to bolster competitiveness and speed up the transport of freight, according to Lao Economic Daily report on Wednesday. Sonexay said reducing logistics and transport costs

is a common goal of the Lao government in efforts to increase competitiveness and convert Laos from a landlocked country to a land-linked one.

Lao Prime Minister Sonexay told authorities in charge to carry out proper inspections of all containers, in order to prevent the movement of prohibited or inappropriate goods. — Xinhua



The Fuxing train passes the Yuanjiang Bridge on the China-Laos railway in southwest China's Yunnan Province on 23 November 2022. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

2023 saw record revenues from Israel's offshore natural gas fields

THE revenue from natural gas export royalties collected by Israel's Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure hit a record 2.19 billion Shekels (US\$ 595 million) in 2023, as exports to Jordan and Egypt increased by 25 per cent. The total income from such royalties has crossed

the 25 billion Shekel (US\$ 6.7 billion) mark.

The ministry reported that in the past year there was an increase of about 13.9 per cent in the total amount of natural gas production compared to 2022.

The total production of natural gas for the domestic

economy of the two largest reservoirs in Israel, "Tamar" and "Leviathan" decreased, due to the introduction of the Karish (Shark) reservoir as an "additional producer creating a more competitive environment in the natural gas market in Israel". —ANI



Israel's Leviathan natural gas field as seen from the northern coastal city Caesarea. **PHOTO: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/POOL AFP/FILE**

High inflation and electricity costs hit Pakistan's textile industry

THE textile industry in Pakistan's Karachi has been facing massive losses due to severe load shedding. The traders have to suffer because of the inability of the Pakistani administration

to provide a basic amenity like electricity to its people, which has resulted in a loss in revenue for small and big traders in Karachi. A textile shopkeeper, Muhamad Bilal, from Karachi,

stated that "the government is not taking any pity on us; when we open the shop in the morning, there is no electricity, and when we close the shop, there is no electricity". — ANI

Poland to push for tighter limits on Ukrainian food exports to EU: Prime Minister

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk reiterated Poland's stance on tighter limits for Ukrainian food imports into the EU to protect farmers' livelihoods.

POLAND will keep pushing for tighter limits on Ukrainian food imported into the European Union without duties in order to safeguard farmers' livelihoods, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on Wednesday.

"We are ready for a serious talk about limits. We cannot agree with the limits proposed by Brussels," Tusk, who is also the former president of the European Council, told reporters in Warsaw.

The Polish prime minister said he wanted the EU's exec-

utive to cap cheap Ukrainian food imports at pre-2022 levels, while the European Commission insists that keeping imports of sensitive products like poultry, eggs and sugar at 2022-2023 levels will be enough to protect the interests of EU farmers.

"Poland will suggest in Brussels that the ceiling be set ... at the pre-war levels when limits on Ukrainian agricultural products were strict and posed no threat to Polish producers — at least not at the current scale," Tusk said. — SPUTNIK



Protesting Polish farmers on 20 February pried open two Ukrainian freight cars on the border and spilled grain on the tracks. Farmers blocked the highway linking Warsaw and Lublin in eastern Poland. **PHOTO: SERGEI GAPON/AFP**

Volkswagen teams up with Chinese EV maker Xpeng to develop intelligent connected vehicles

VOLKSWAGEN has signed an agreement with Chinese electric vehicle startup XPeng on strategic technical collaboration to jointly develop two intelligent connected vehicle models for the Chinese market, Volkswagen Group China said Thursday.

The two models, slated to hit the market in 2026, will be equipped with state-of-the-art software and hardware, offering Chinese customers an intuitive, connected digital experience and advanced automated driving functions.

According to the

agreement, the two parties have entered into a joint procurement programme for common vehicle and platform parts. Through joint procurement and the use of innovative technologies during the design and engineering phase, the development time for these two electric vehicle models will be reduced by over 30 per cent.

As Volkswagen's largest development center outside Germany, Volkswagen China Technology Company in Hefei, capital of east China's Anhui Province, is acting as a central interface to ensure the best possible synergies of the two parties, according to the agreement. — Xinhua



A Volkswagen car is on display during an expo in Shanghai. PHOTO: FAN JIANLEI/FOR CHINA DAILY

Japan firms Kao, Earth tie up to sell mosquito spray in Thailand

JAPANESE cosmetic firm Kao Corp and pharmaceutical maker Earth Corp said Thursday they will jointly sell mosquito eradication sprays in Thailand in July to help the fight against insect-borne infectious diseases in Southeast Asia.

The new product "Ars Mos Shooter" contains a substance developed by Kao that makes mosquitoes unable to fly by saturating their wings and bodies, while Earth has been active in Thailand for about 40 years with a high market share in insect control.

As the spray does not include chemically manufactured insecticidal components, it can be used even with



Kao Corp President Yoshihiro Hasebe (R) and Earth Corp President Katsunori Kawabata hold a new mosquito eradication spray at a press conference in Tokyo on 29 February 2024. PHOTO: KYODO

children around, the companies said.

Dengue fever, which is spread by mosquitos and has been expanding in Southeast Asia amid global warming, mainly infects children and could cause deaths in serious cases, they said.

"With the hope to swiftly save as many people's lives as possible, we joined hands with Earth, which has a strong reach and brand (in Thailand)," Kao President Yoshihiro Hasebe told a joint press conference. — Kyodo

HK total retail sales value up 0.9% in Jan

THE value of total retail sales in January 2024, provisionally estimated at 36.5 billion Hong Kong dollars (about 4.66 billion US dollars), increased 0.9 per cent from the same month in 2023, the Census and Statistics Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government said on Friday.

The revised estimate of the value of total retail sales in December 2023 increased by 7.8 per cent compared with a year earlier. The revised estimate of the volume of total retail sales in December 2023 increased by 4.8 per cent from a year earlier, the department said.

Analyzed by broad type of retail outlet in descending

order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing January 2024 with January 2023, the value of sales of jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts increased by 25.2 per cent; medicines and cosmetics went up 25.2 per cent; motor vehicles and parts rose 23.7 per cent; stationery and gifts increased

27.8 per cent.

A spokesman for the HKSAR government said that looking ahead, continued increase in visitor arrivals alongside further recovery of handling capacity and organization of mega-events would bode well for retail businesses. (1 Hong Kong dollar equals 0.13 U.S. dollars) — Xinhua



The indoor view of Hangzhou Restaurant in Hong Kong, China. PHOTO: QIN QING/XINHUA

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BAJO VOY.NO. (V.019N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BAJO VOY.NO. (V.019N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **2-3-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** 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 LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V KOTA RAJIN VOY.NO. (KRJN0314W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V KOTA RAJIN VOY.NO. (KRJN0314W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **2-3-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** 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 PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V URANUS J VOY.NO. (2/24)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V URANUS J VOY.NO. (2/24)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **3-3-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **WILMAR** 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
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S WILHELMSSEN PROT SERVICE(S) PTE LTD

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

Kishida apologizes for funds scandal as 1st PM at Diet ethics panel

Kishida became the first sitting prime minister to attend a parliamentary ethics panel, vowing to lead efforts for compliance.



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaks at a session of the House of Representatives political ethics committee in Tokyo on 29 February 2024. **PHOTO: POOL PHOTO / KYODO**

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida apologized Thursday for “inviting suspi-

cion and mistrust” in politics among the public due to a political funds scandal rattling his

Liberal Democratic Party as the first incumbent premier to attend a parliamentary ethics panel. During a televised session of the House of Representatives political ethics committee, Kishida also promised to promote reforms to safeguard compliance in ruling party governance, saying, “I will continue taking a leading role.”

But the opposition bloc criticized Kishida’s appearance at the committee, saying he failed to contribute to uncovering further details of the scandal as he only reiterated what he had argued at other Diet sessions so far. The LDP, which has been in power for most of the period since 1955, has come under intense scrutiny amid allegations that some of its factions neglected to report portions of their incomes from fundraising parties and created slush funds for years. — Kyodo



Left side of the Crimean Bridge opened for traffic. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK**

Russia must press Bundestag to look into alleged German plot to strike Crimean Bridge: Official

IT is necessary to send a demand for an investigation to Bundestag, the German parliament, after information about a recording of German officers discussing an attack on the Crimean Bridge, Russian lower house speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said on Friday.

“The information that has emerged with recordings of discussions by high-ranking German officers about plans to strike the Crimean Bridge ... as well as how to do this so that suspicion does not fall on German Chancellor [Olaf] Scholz, deserves the most serious discussion and response ... I also think it is correct to send a demand to the Bundestag to conduct an investigation,” Volodin

wrote on his Telegram channel.

The issue will be discussed by the State Duma lawmakers on 11 March, the speaker added.

“The fact that the conversation was recorded compels the German leadership to provide an explanation ... Does Scholz understand that these actions will require Russia to retaliate?” Volodin added.

Earlier, Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of RT and Rossiya Segodnya, Sputnik’s parent media group, said she had obtained an audio recording of high-ranking officers of the German Bundeswehr discussing “how they will bomb the Crimean bridge”. — SPUTNIK

TOP NEWS

Cambodia’s oldest English daily newspaper to cease publication due to losses

CAMBODIA’S oldest English-language daily newspaper, The Phnom Penh Post, will cease its publication by the end of this month due to financial losses, it announced on Friday.

The newspaper said in a statement that its advertising revenues have significantly decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic downturn.

“The rapid advancement of technologies and the widespread circulation of news through social media have also caused severe financial difficulties for the company,” it added.

It noted that despite the shareholders’ efforts to inject more funds and to generate income by all means, it has still failed to bear such losses.

“Therefore, our shareholders have decided, with deep regret, to cease the publication of the newspaper, both the English and Khmer editions, by 29 March 2024,” the announcement said.

“We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all our customers, readers and business partners for your support of The Phnom Penh Post thus far,” it added. The Phnom Penh Post was launched in 1992. — Xinhua

At least 43 dead as devastating blaze rips through high-rise building in Bangladeshi capital

AT least 43 people were killed Thursday night after a devastating fire tore through a high-

rise building in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka.

Minister of Health and

Family Welfare of Bangladesh Samanta Lal Sen told Xinhua early Friday that they had confirmed the deaths.

The minister said 33 bodies were brought to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and 10 others to the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka.

Anwarul Islam, an inspector of the Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters in Dhaka, earlier told Xinhua that around 75 people, including 42 in an unconscious state, were rescued from the “Green Cozy Cottage Shopping Mall” and were rushed to several hospitals. — Xinhua



Firefighters battle a fire raging on a building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 29 February 2024. At least 43 people were killed Thursday night after a devastating fire tore through a high-rise building in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

SPORTS

Myanmar U-16 Team to hold new player selections

FOOTBALL authorities will select new players for the formation of the Myanmar U-16 national football team on 4 and 5 March, as stated by the Myanmar Football Federation.

The previous selection event to form the team was held on the second week of February, and a total of more than 100 players who played well in the FIFA-MFF U-15 league competition held last year and players from football academies were selected. Some players who could not participate in the selection due to school exams will be selected again in the second round of selection.

The Myanmar U-16 coaching staff will select 40 players after the first round of selection. After the second round of selection, the preliminary list for international competitions will be confirmed. Japanese national



The image shows 40 players to be selected from different club teams.

head coach Mitami will handle the youth team. Team Myanmar will compete in U-16 ASEAN

Championship and U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers this year. — My Lay/KZL

Liverpool announce £9 mln loss for 2022/23 season

LIVERPOOL made a pre-tax loss of £9 million (\$11.4 million) last season as increased commercial income failed to offset a drop in media and matchday revenues, the club's latest accounts revealed on Thursday.

Overall revenue to the end of May 2023 remained static at £594 million after a disappointing campaign in which Jurgen Klopp's men finished fifth in the Premier League and made early exits from the Champi-

ons League and both domestic cups.

The wage bill for the current Premier League leaders rose £7 million to £373 million and administrative costs climbed by £17 million to £562 million.

The previous 12 months had produced a small profit of £7.5 million.

Liverpool's biggest income stream in 2022/23 was the £272 million, up £25 million, generat-

ed from off-field income, but a last-16 Champions League exit a year after reaching the final meant media revenue dropped by £19 million to £242 million.

Matchday revenue also fell due to fewer games being played across last season after the previous campaign, when the club played in every fixture - a total of 63 — they were eligible for, winning both domestic cups and reaching the Champions League final. — AFP

Man City face Man Utd test as Liverpool's kids prosper

Erling Haaland, the prolific striker for Manchester City, is gearing up to face their arch-rivals Manchester United in a crucial fixture this weekend.



ERLING Haaland has Manchester United in his sights this weekend as Manchester City host their cross-town rivals at the start of a season-defining spell for the Premier League champions.

Pep Guardiola's men, chasing an unprecedented fourth straight English top-flight crown, boast an impressive recent record against United but know they cannot afford a slip-up in a tight title tussle.

Leaders Liverpool are strongly fancied to see off struggling Nottingham Forest despite their injury problems, while free-scoring Arsenal face relegation-threatened Sheffield United.

AFP Sport picks out three talking points ahead of this weekend's action.

Hotshot Haaland highlights Rashford's woes

The Manchester derby appeared to be shaping up to be a tasty face-off between Haaland and Rasmus Hojlund until the in-form United forward sustained a muscle injury.

Norway international Haaland scored five times in

Manchester City forward Erling Haaland has scored 27 goals in 30 games this season. PHOTO: JUSTIN TALLIS / AFP/FILE

the 6-2 FA Cup win against Luton in midweek to take his tally to 27 in 30 appearances in all competitions this season despite two months out injured.

In stark contrast Marcus Rashford, United's leading man last season, has mustered just five goals, leaving his side blunt in attack at the Etihad in the absence of Hojlund, who is likely to be missing on Sunday. City manager Pep Guardiola warned the United game would be "completely different" from their Luton romp but in truth the derby, while a blockbuster clash on paper, has become one-sided in recent years.

City have won five of the past six matches against their local rivals in all competitions, scoring 18 goals. — AFP

FIFA launches new tool to track qualifying race to 2025 Mundial de Clubes

The tool on FIFA's website offers insights into qualified teams, available slots, and qualification criteria across all confederations. It includes a central section for qualified teams and six sections dedicated to each confederation.

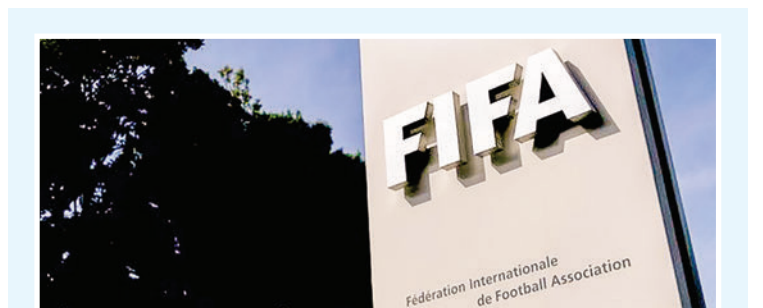
FIFA has launched an online club ranking tool to let fans track their teams' progress in the race to reach the inaugural Mundial de Clubes in 2025.

The maiden Mundial de Clubes, featuring 32 teams, will be staged in the United States from 15 June to 13 July 2025.

Fans and media will find which teams around the world have qualified or are still in the running to the competition, as well as the available slots and the qualification criteria for each confederation.

The tool, available on FIFA's official website, features seven

sections. The central section features all teams that have qualified for the tournament either as continental champions or those who have clinched their place via the ranking pathway. The remaining six sections are each dedicated to one of FIFA's six confederations. — Xinhua



FIFA introduces an online club ranking tool for fans to monitor their teams' journey to the inaugural Mundial de Clubes in 2025. Scheduled from 15 June to 13 July 2025, in the United States, the tournament will host 32 teams. PHOTO: AFP



Devotees flock to pay homage to Sacred Relics of Lord Buddha in Thailand

THOUSANDS of devotees continued to flock to pay their homage to the sacred relics of Lord Buddha and his two disciples at Sanam Luang in Bangkok, which the Indian Embassy said is a testament to the enduring friendship between the people of India and Thailand.

In a post on X, Indian Embassy to Thailand stated, “Thousands of devotees continue pay homage to the sacred relics of Lord Buddha and his two disciples at Sanam Luang, Bangkok. A testament to enduring friendship between the people of India and Thailand.”

To commemorate the auspicious sixth cycle and the 72nd birth year of King Rama X and as a mark of friendship between the people of the two countries, the sacred relics of Lord Buddha and his disciples, Arahant Sariputta and Arahant Maha Moggallana reached Thailand from India on 22 February on a special Indian Air Force plane.

The relics, which will be on a 25-day exposition in four cities of Thailand are currently enshrined for public veneration at a specially built mandapam at Sanam Luang Royal Palace ground in Bangkok.

It is estimated that every day almost one lakh devotees are visiting the ‘mandapa’ that has been custom-built for the relics. Apart from people of Thailand, the devotees from Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam are visiting the Bangkok to their respect.

On 26 February, on the 72nd birthday

of Thailand’s King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua and Queen prayed before the relics of the Lord Buddha and his disciples Arahant Sariputta and Arahant Maha Moggallana at Sanam Luang Ceremony in Bangkok’s Phra Nakhon district on Monday. — ANI

The relics, now on a 25-day exposition across four Thai cities, are currently housed for public viewing at a dedicated mandapam at Sanam Luang Royal Palace ground in Bangkok.



People visit Sanam Luang to pray before holy relics of Lord Buddha and his disciples. PHOTO: X/@INDIAINTHAILAND/ANI

Asia’s richest man launches lavish pre-wedding party in India



Indian tycoon Mukesh Ambani kicks off celebrations ahead of his son’s wedding by feeding more than 50,000 people in his hometown. PHOTO: RELIANCE/AFP

INDIA’S richest man has kicked off lavish pre-wedding parties for his son by feeding more than 50,000 people in his hometown, with celebrations in the coming days expected to include some of the world’s most influential figures.

Global tech CEOs, industry titans, Bollywood stars, pop icons and politicians are expected to jet in Friday for the main three-day celebrations hosted by billionaire tycoon Mukesh Ambani, who is building a sprawling Hindu temple complex for the event.

Ambani, 66, chairman of oil-to-telecoms giant Reliance Industries, is Asia’s richest person according to the Forbes real-time billionaires list, worth more than \$114 billion.

On Wednesday evening, Ambani and wife Nita — along with their son Anant and his fiancée Radhika Merchant — launched a three-day feast for villagers at the Reliance Township in his hometown of Jamnagar, in India’s western state of Gujarat. — AFP

**501 CASES PER
100,000 INHABITANTS**

Brazil passes 1 mln cases of dengue fever

BRAZIL has registered a total of 1,017,278 probable cases of dengue fever and 214 confirmed deaths from the disease, while another 687 deaths are under investigation, according to the latest report released Thursday by the Health Ministry.

The incidence rate of dengue fever in the South American country is currently 501 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

Brazil could see twice as many cases of dengue fever this year as in 2023, when 1,658,816 cases were recorded, Health Minister Nisia Trindade said. — Xinhua