

The
Global **NEW LIGHT** of **MYANMAR**

Four Objectives of the National Defence and Security Council

1. To steadfastly strive for emergence of political forces and the people’s representatives who can implement a genuine, disciplined multi-party democratic system while constantly emphasizing on the national interests of the State.
2. To persistently strive for promoting the socio-economic life of the people through the development of agro-based industries in improving the agricultural sector, the vital foundation of the economic growth of the State.
3. To put emphasis on enhancing the national education and health sectors for sustainable development of the State.
4. To implement multi-party democratic system, with the participation of the people, to ensure the success of multi-party democratic general election process and successfully moving towards with the multi-party democratic system aspired by the entire people.

Yangon Region Lifts Curfew Effective Morning of 27 Dec

A curfew has been imposed in 44 townships in the Yangon Region (excluding Cocokyun Township) from 1 am to 3 am under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure to maintain security, stability, and the rule of law.

Now, regional stability and peace in the Yangon Region have improved, and the Yangon Region government has announced that the curfew will be lifted from the morning of 27 December to promote economic, social, and religious activities, facilitate public transport, and further develop businesses. — MNA/TH

Bagan’s Mahabodhi Pagoda
renovation by ASI India around
80% complete

The Bagan Heritage Trust and the Department of Archaeology and National Museum are jointly carrying out preservation efforts, with experts and officials working to chemically treat invasive vegetation and subsequently seal the gaps left by the dead plants with mortar to protect the site.

The renovation work on the Mahabodhi Pagoda in Bagan, currently being undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), is approximately 80 per cent complete, according to U Zaw Weik, a donor providing water for the restoration project.

The ASI began restoration work in September, and significant progress has been observed, with U Zaw Weik posting on social media that the project has reached the 80 per cent completion mark.

“Our family, along with the Zaw family (Tour Agency), is donating the water necessary for washing the pagoda and removing lime and moss. To date, we have donated over 40,000 gallons of water,” he

stated.


Furthermore, their family has donated funds to the Bagan Heritage Trust to support the chemical eradication of invasive plants, such as banyan, Indian Mulberry (*Morinda citrifolia*), Portia tree or Indian Tulip tree (*Thespesia populnea*), and weeds, growing on the pagodas and sealing gaps after removals.

The Bagan Heritage Trust and the Department of Archaeology and National Museum are collaborating on these preservation efforts. Experts and officials are working together to chemically treat invasive vegetation and ensure that once the plants are dead, the resulting gaps are properly sealed with mortar. — MT/ZN



The Mahabodhi Pagoda in Bagan is seen under renovation, which is now about 80 per cent complete.

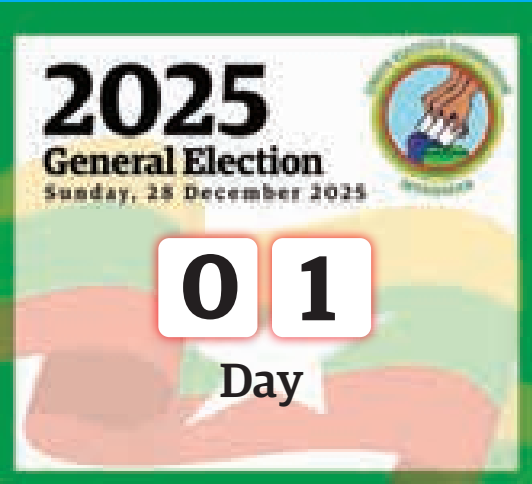
NATIONAL



2025 MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY GENERAL ELECTION

- Domestic election observers who wish to monitor the multiparty democratic general election, which will begin in phases on 28 December 2025, may apply for election observation permits at the Union Election Commission (UEC), as well as the relevant Region/State, District, and Township Election Subcommissions from today until 5 December 2025.
- The Union Election Commission announced on 16 September 2025 that domestic election observers must follow the Code of Conduct for Observers, issued under Notification 68/2025, and adhere to the procedures set out for their observation activities under Notification 69/2025. These notifications are available for viewing and can be downloaded from the Union Election Commission’s official website <https://www.uec.gov.mm>.
- The Union Election Commission has also announced that international election observers will be allowed to monitor the multiparty democratic general election. Invitations will be extended directly to representatives of relevant countries and international organizations. In addition, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, invitations will be sent to representatives of foreign embassies, consulates, and permanent missions that maintain diplomatic relations with the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Union Election Commission



- Let us encourage production for prosperity of the Nation.
- Let us ensure education sector for the development of the Nation.
- Let us protect our environment for the prosperity of the Nation.

Myanmar Gazette

Appointment of Head of Service Organization confirmed

THE National Defence and Security Council has confirmed the appointment of Dr Ngu Thida, Managing Director of the Myanma Post under the Ministry of Transport and Communications, after the one-year probationary period.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

Issued at 7 pm Friday, 28 December 2025

BAY INFERENCE: The weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the South Andaman Sea and South Bay and a few clouds over the North Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF 27 December 2025: Light rains are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region. The degree of certainty is 60 per cent. The weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Bago, Magway, Ayeyawady Regions and Chin, Rakhine States and partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: The sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about 3-5 feet off and along the Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of a slight decrease in night temperatures in Mandalay, Magway, Lower Sagaing Regions and Kayah, Shan States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 December 2025: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 December 2025: Generally fair weather.

— DMH

- ### Four National Objectives for 78th Independence Day 2026
- To safeguard the non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty by all citizens, as they are the most essential and suitable national objectives and national duties
 - To strive forward for national unity and Union peace to implement sustainable and balanced development
 - To establish a genuine, disciplined democratic system completely by exercising the freedom and justice in accordance with the laws and regulations
 - To advance other economic sectors and promote MSMEs based on regional products

Myanmar-China Friendship Art Exhibition opens in Yangon, 26-30 Dec



This photo shows participating artists and selected artworks featured in the catalogue of the Myanmar-China Friendship Calligraphy and Painting Group Art Exhibition.

A Myanmar-China Friendship Calligraphy and Painting Group Art Exhibition will be held at Artistic Space Art Gallery in Botahtaung Township, Yangon Region, from 26 to 30 December.

The exhibition will showcase a diverse collection of artworks by Myanmar artists Maw Li Shwe, Kyi Oo, Thike Oo, Mon Myint UKP, Iris Win, Kaung Kin, Soe Naing Soe and Win Maung Shwe. Visitors will be able to view a wide range of works created in various media, including watercolour, oil, acrylic and pencil, covering a variety of themes and artistic expressions.

Speaking about the exhibition, painter Maw Li Shwe said: “The Myanmar-China Friendship Calligraphy and Painting Group Art Exhibition will be on display at Artistic Space Art Gallery from 10 am to 5 pm from 26 to 30 December, open daily. This exhibition is being organized for the second time to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Myanmar and to promote artistic exchange and cooperation between the two countries. Alongside Myanmar paintings, we are also presenting Chinese calligraphy works and sculptures by Chinese artistes. The Chinese calligraphy pieces on display feature inspirational phrases, each with its own meaning, and sculptures made from sandalwood and agarwood will also be exhibited. I warmly invite the public to visit and support the exhibition.”

According to the organizers, the exhibition will feature oil paintings, watercolour and modern artworks by both Myanmar and Chinese artistes, as well as traditional Chinese calligraphy and finely crafted sculptures, offering visitors a comprehensive cultural and artistic experience that celebrates friendship between the two nations. — ASH/KZL

NATIONAL

For a nation to achieve development and stability, it is essential that every citizen be fully equipped with knowledge, skills and critical thinking. In particular, for a country like Myanmar undergoing a democratic transition, it is crucial for all of our national brethren to think critically, discern right from wrong and work together for the benefit of the nation.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Acting President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Chairman of the State Security and Peace Commission, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the opening ceremony of Dawei City Hall held on 18 September 2025)



UEC Chairman receives Belarus CEC Deputy Chairman

UNION Election Commission Chairman U Than Soe received a delegation, led by Belarusian Central Election Commission Deputy Chairman Mr Alexei Bashan, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Belarusian CEC Deputy Chairman expressed support for the election, which plays a key role in Myanmar, gratitude for the chance to observe the election, and gave a greeting speech.

The UEC Chairman warmly welcomed the delegation to visit and observe the election with full support. He explained that the friendly diplomatic relations between Myanmar and Belarus have existed for 26 years since 1999.

He also clarified the preparations being made to success-



Belarusian Cental Election Commission Deputy Chairman Mr Alexei Bashan calls on Union Election Commission Chairman U Than Soe in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

fully hold the election, the arrangements to be implemented during the election, measures

taken to ensure that voters can cast their votes safely, easily, and accurately using the Myan-

mar Electronic Voting Machine (MEVM), efforts to conduct the election process in pursuit of

democratic standards to ensure a free and fair election trusted by the public, and cooperation prospects through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the election commissions of the two countries regarding election-related activities.

Both sides also exchanged views on the electoral process of Belarus, the observation process for the election and proper measures to ensure a free and fair election. They also had a documentary photo taken together with attendees, and exchanged gifts.

Also, present at the meeting were Union Election Commission Member U Myo Hlaing and relevant officials of the commission's office. — MNA/KTZH

Overseas advance ballots counted at Shwe Myaing Hall in Mawlamyine

THE region and state subcommissions of the Union Election Commission counted advance ballot papers cast by voters residing overseas at Shwe Myaing Hall of the Mawlamyine District General Administration Department on the afternoon of 25 December, under Rule 92 (a) of the relevant Hluttaw Election

Rules.

In Mon State, 104 voters proposed to cast advance ballots, of whom 84 actually voted. Union Election Commission Member U Ko Ko Lwin, who is responsible for Mon State, together with members of the state election subcommission, opened and counted the ballots

in the presence of representatives from political parties.

The counting of advance ballots continued on a township-by-township basis yesterday at the respective election subcommission offices, according to available information. — Sithu (IPRD)/KZL



Counting of overseas advance ballots underway in Mawlamyine on 25 December 2025.

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.

NATIONAL

Residents Urged to Prioritize Public Safety Amid Armed Terrorist Threats

ARMED terrorists have been launching attacks by using residential homes and administrative buildings in towns and villages as cover, where they have forcibly settled. They aim to shield themselves from Tatmadaw counterattacks while also persuading temporarily displaced persons to return to their native areas and recruiting new members. That enables terrorists to use civilians as human shields. Tatmadaw is committed to safeguarding the sovereignty of the State and will respond to these threats based on intelligence and prevailing conditions. Therefore, residents in areas where terrorists have taken control must prioritize their safety and protect themselves from being exploited by these groups.

(An excerpt from guidance given by Chairman of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to Shan State cabinet members and state-level departmental officials on 3 September 2024)

Observers from Russia, China, India, Vietnam arrive in Yangon ahead of 2025 General Election

AS the 2025 Multiparty Democratic General Election is scheduled to be held on 28 December, election observation teams from Russia, China, India, and Vietnam arrived in Yangon by air yesterday.

International election observers include Deputy Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Mr Kara-ool Sholban, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Mr Deng Xijun, former Army Commander of India Mr Sahni Arun Kumar, a delegation led by Deputy Chairman of the Commission of Kazakhstan Mr Yerman Mukhtar, a delegation led by National Election Committee (NEC) member Mr Yich Samethy, and Mr Nguyen Duc Thinh from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. All arrived in Yangon yesterday as scheduled.

The teams were welcomed at Yangon International Airport by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein and regional ministers, Russian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Iskander Azizov and embassy officials, the Union Election Commission member in charge of the Yangon Region, and officials from the Union Election Commission and the Yangon Region Election Subcommission. — MNA/MKKS



Photos (clockwise) show election observation missions from Kazakhstan, China, Russia and India being welcomed on arrival at Yangon International Airport yesterday.

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NATIONAL

General Aung San Declares Firm Stand Against Election Disruption

“Our Government shall not permit any disruption of the forthcoming election. The electoral process shall remain free and fair, and no interference shall be exercised upon those who participate in it. Yet, let it be firmly declared that any attempt to disturb or sabotage the election shall be met with the full weight of authority”.

(An excerpt from the radio address regarding the election, delivered by General Aung San on 13 March 1947)



Myanmar confirms Influenza A H3N2 cases, no Subclade K detected

A coordination meeting to further strengthen influenza surveillance activities being implemented by the Ministry of Health was held in Nay Pyi Taw on 23 December.

At the meeting, Director-General Dr Myat Wunna Soe from the Office of the Union Minister and the Department of Public Health said the Ministry of Health has been continuously monitoring the occurrence of

respiratory infectious diseases, including seasonal influenza. The influenza virus Influenza A H3N2, which has recently been reported in global media as showing increased transmission in some countries, is also one of the virus types circulating in Myanmar in 2025, but the Subclade K has not yet been detected. However, as the public is expected to have a moderate level of immunity against the

virus, and as the currently used influenza vaccines and antiviral medicines are effective for prevention and treatment, there is no need for the public to be especially concerned. He continued that if severe influenza symptoms occur, public hospitals are prepared to provide treatment with flu antiviral drugs and intensive care when necessary. The timely information release and public health awareness are



The coordination meeting on strengthening influenza surveillance activities implemented by the Ministry of Health is underway in Nay Pyi Taw on 23 December 2025.

being carried out. The ministry’s deputy permanent secretary, other relevant medical officials and invitees coordinated the discussion. — MNA/KTZH

CAD handles 100+ complaints, extends cross-border support for ASEAN services

THE Consumer Affairs Department has received over 100 complaints during the current financial year, according to Deputy Director-General U Kyaw Kyaw Lwin.

Among the reported cases, issues regarding wi-fi and internet services rank the highest. Complaints regarding failed after-sales services are the second most common, followed by grievances over missing facilities in apartment purchases.

“In the current period, the majority of complaints, roughly 50 per cent in the Yangon Region, are internet service disruptions, poor connectivity, and service quality issues,” he said. “The second most common complaints involve products with failed services, while the third one is the lack of pledged facilities in new apartments.”

Out of these cases in Yangon Region, only about ten cases remain unresolved. Furthermore, he highlighted that as a member of the ASEAN Consumer Protection, the department can

assist citizens who face issues in ASEAN countries, including medical treatments or product purchases. It will then coordinate with its counterparts in the relevant ASEAN nations to resolve the matter.

The Consumer Affairs Department is currently collaborating with various associations to conduct educational programmes. These initiatives include meeting with entrepreneurs and manufacturers to discuss ethical business practices, while advocating for consumer rights to ensure that those who suffer losses are fairly compensated. — MT/ZN



Wi-Fi internet cables installed in a township in Yangon.

Yangon Region Journalists Association holds second ceremony honouring veteran journalists



The second veteran journalist respect paying event is in progress in Yangon yesterday.

THE Social Welfare Team of the Myanmar Journalists Association (Yangon Region) held the second veteran journalist respect-paying ceremony yesterday morning at Ngahtetgyi Pagoda in Yedashe Ward, Bahan Township.

The ceremony was attended by Yangon Region’s Social Affairs Minister U Htay Aung, Ethnic Affairs Minister U Saw Jacob Htoo, retired veteran journalists, and invitees.

Yangon Region’s Social

Affairs Minister U Htay Aung and Myanmar Journalists Association (Central) Chairman U Myat Khaing delivered opening remarks.

The Yangon Region Journalists Association’s Social Welfare Committee Chairman, U Tun Yin, then delivered remarks. Afterwards, the Yangon Region Social Affairs Minister and the Ethnic Affairs Minister presented K6.5 million provided by the Yangon Region government to U Tun

Yin, and a certificate of honour was handed in return.

Cash assistance was then distributed to 65 veteran journalists. Following this, U Tin Win (Tin Win Lay-Kyimyindine), Secretary of the Yangon Region Journalists Association, delivered a vote of thanks. On behalf of the veteran journalists, patron U Thet Tin (Maung Tha Tint) delivered an encouraging address, bringing the ceremony to a close. — Bala/MKKS

NATIONAL

504 online scam hub-related buildings demolished

THE government of Myanmar manages the combined team comprising security forces, administrative bodies and local authorities to raid illegal buildings in Shwe Kokko and KK Park areas where telecom fraud and online gambling activities are operated, and systematically dismantle the confiscated materials and illegal buildings used in the online scams and gambling activities.

Yesterday, the combined team dissolved five more illegal buildings: three four-storey buildings and two two-storey buildings used in telecom fraud and online gambling activities in the Myawady-Maethawtalay (KK Park) area. Therefore, a total updated number of 504 buildings out of 635 illegal buildings have been demolished in the KK



Online scam-related materials and items being razed by fire in the Shwe Kokko area.



An illegally built three-storey structure is pictured before and after destruction in the KK Park Section 3.



The map showing the demolition measures in the KK Park Section 3, Myawady in Kayin State.

Park area.

To destroy the illegal buildings within the KK Park area, these buildings were demolished using machinery and explosive devices starting from

14 December, and as of today, five two-storey buildings have been destroyed, and a total of 54 buildings have been totally destroyed.

To prevent future reuse of the materials in online scams and gambling activities in KK Park and Shwe Kokko areas, the seized materials were incinerated systematically.

The government considers the eradication of telecom fraud and online gambling crimes as a national responsibility and, to ensure that such activities can no longer operate within Myanmar, will continue its efforts in coordination not only with domestic forces but also with the governments of neighbouring countries. — MNA/KTZH

Chinese Embassy provides solar power to Yezin Agri University

THE Chinese Embassy to Myanmar has donated solar power systems to Yezin Agricultural University, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

The donation aims to support teachers, students, and staff at Yezin Agricultural University and to enhance the quality of education. It is not only a clear example of the longstanding diplomatic relations between Myanmar and China, but also a form of humanitarian assistance and human resource development.

The successful installation of the solar power systems represents China-Myanmar cooperation in green energy and agricultural technology, providing additional impetus to improve the study and research environment for university faculty members and students.

China has expressed its willingness to work with Myanmar to innovate cooperation models and jointly promote sustainable agricultural development, contributing to regional economic integration. — ASH/MKKS



This photo captures the Chinese Embassy providing solar power systems to Yezin Agricultural University.

Danyingon Market plans to welcome 2026 with 3-day market fair

DANYINGON Market will celebrate the New Year market fair and fun activities for three days, commencing on 31 December to welcome 2026, according to Myanmar Argo Exchange Public Ltd (MAEX).

The market's new year celebration will take place joyfully from 31 December to 2 January, and visitors can enjoy entertainment while shopping at the market in the new year.

The entertainment programme will include widely known artists from the movie, theatrical and music industries, as well as comedians.

For hiring booths, enquiries can be made via the following contact numbers: 09 950441069 and 09 253911435.

The public is invited to visit the market's New Year celebration. — MT/ZS



This image displays a poster for the Danyingon Market's 2026 New Year market fair and fun activities.

Everyone born and raised on this land is responsible for being loyal to the nation

❖ In accordance with the saying, “One must be grateful to those who have provided for them,” those who were born and raised on this land are responsible for remaining loyal and grateful to the nation.

(An excerpt from the greetings extended by Chairman of the State Administration Council, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, at the meeting with trainees, administrators and instructors of the basic and advanced maritime and aviation courses 1/2025 held on 21 May 2025)

Myanmar eyes carbon market entry upon achieving NDC targets



This image displays a logo for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

THE Environmental Conservation Department under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation stated that Myanmar is seeking to enter the carbon market upon meeting the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) targets.

The NDC is the climate action plan that outlines the country’s efforts to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change. Countries are required to submit the NDCs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) every five years. Myanmar ratified the Paris Agreement in 2017. The country is joining hands with private companies from developed countries investing in improved efficient stoves and renewable energy projects to engage in international carbon trading under Article 6, focusing on forest-based carbon credits.

Currently, the carbon credits are increasingly utilized to meet the NDCs. Myanmar aims to generate revenue by selling surplus carbon credits after meeting the NDC target.

The Myanmar Carbon Credit Market has started experiencing interest from both domestic and international investors, which is expected to yield significant revenue in future.

According to data from the mandatory carbon market under the UNFCCC and the voluntary carbon market voluntary cooperation, the most active nations in carbon trading are the East Asian countries, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, with the US and European countries operating intensively in the carbon trading market. — ASH/KK

YUOE launches batch 1 of Child Care and Development Certificate Course on 5 Jan 2026

YANGON University of Education’s Human Resource Development Department will conduct a Certificate Course in Child Care and Development (Batch 1) from 7 am to 9 am on 5 January 2026, from Monday to Friday.

Those Myanmar citizens who have taken the matriculation exam are eligible to attend the course. There is no age limit for trainees. The course has three levels, with one level lasting three months and costing K90,000.

The application form is available starting from 29 December 2025 at YUOE. The deadline for the submission is 30 December.

The written test is scheduled to take place from 9 am to 10 am on 31 December, and the interview will be held at 1 pm on 31 December 2025.

Those interested can enquire details at the YUOE’s Academic Affairs Department. — NN/KK

Yangon palm oil reference price set at K6,060 per viss



Workers diligently arrange jerrycans of cooking oil for distribution and sale.

THE wholesale reference rate of palm oil for the Yangon market is set at K6,060 per viss for this week ending 1 January, slightly up from K6,050 per viss registered last week, according to the Supervisory Committee on Edible Oil Import and Distribution

The palm oil reference prices were K6,280 per viss recorded from 5 to 11 December, K6,140 for 12 to 18 December, K6,115 for 19-25 December and K6,050 for 19 to 25 December.

The Supervisory Committee on Edible Oil Import and Distribution under the Ministry of Commerce has been closely observing the FOB prices in Malaysia and Indonesia, adding transport costs, tariffs and banking services to decide the wholesale market reference rate for edible oil weekly.

Despite the reference price, the market price is still high.

To control overcharging, the Consumer Affairs Department under

the Ministry of Commerce informed consumers of lodging complaints for overcharging through the call centre hotline in late August. The department urges consumers not to buy palm oil at high prices.

The Committee notified that any person who is involved in price gouging and oil storage to attempt market manipulation will face legal action under the Essential Goods and Services Law.

The department is working together with the Myanmar Oil Dealers’ Association and the cooking oil importing companies to offer affordable rates of imported palm oil for consumers.

The complaints for overcharging can be lodged over hotline 1535 of the call centre of the Consumers Affairs Department, or sent to the Facebook page of the department and the region and state departments concerned.

The domestic consumption of palm oil is estimated at one million tonnes per year. The local palm oil production is just about 400,000 tonnes. About 700,000 tonnes of palm oil are imported annually through Malaysia and Indonesia to meet domestic demands. — NN/KK

ESE seeks bids for Note Counting Machine purchase

ELECTRICITY Supply Enterprise’s Tender Committee under the Ministry of Electric Power called for suppliers to purchase note counting machines (Desktop Type – 40 Nos) to be utilized in the cash collection counters of the respective township offices operated under the Electricity Supply Enterprise for the financial year 2025-2026.

It excludes the offices in Kayah, Chin, northern Shan, Rakhine, Taninthayi and Sagaing Region. The tender

form is available to be bought starting from 22 December. Tender forms can be submitted by noon on 5 January 2026. Individuals can enquire about the details through the Chief Engineer’s Office in Nay Pyi Taw. — NN/KK

OPINION

Strive to ensure energy security and energy self-sufficiency

TODAY, countries around the world are not only using fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas, and coal, and nuclear energy, but are also expanding and combining renewable energy sources—such as hydro, solar, wind, biomass, and hydrogen—into an energy mix for consumption.

Looking at the energy development plans of countries around the world, it is evident that they aim to increase the use of renewable energy in the future. However, they still primarily rely on

oil and natural gas to meet the rapidly growing energy demand.

Similarly, Myanmar is taking steps to follow the global trend of increasing the use of renewable energy. The country is working to generate electricity from solar and wind energy and promote the use of electric vehicles to reduce fuel consumption. At the same time, it is ensured that oil and natural gas are used with advanced technologies to minimize environmental impact.

The Ministry of Energy is striving to develop new offshore natural gas projects and discover new oil fields, as well as to fully restore the operational capacity of long-established oil refineries, petrochemical plants, and large fertilizer factories. In addition, modern technologies are being used to increase oil production from existing oil fields, working in coordination with local oil entrepreneurs to systematically drill oil wells and upgrade oil and natural

gas pipeline networks.

The government is making efforts to adopt AI technology in oil and natural gas exploration, utilize 3D seismic technology, build new oil refineries to produce advanced fuels domestically, and construct additional fertilizer factories, among other technological upgrades. It is emphasized that these initiatives should be carried out successfully with the goal of ensuring national energy security and energy self-sufficiency.

Myanmar cooperates with friendly countries, not only with major international oil companies but also with local indigenous entrepreneurs for investment to systematically explore, extract, and utilize the country's oil and natural gas resources. At the same time, developing technology, research, and human resources should be steadily pursued as an essential part of the process.

Everyone has to work to ensure energy security and energy safety successfully, so that energy resources continue to develop sustainably for the benefit of the nation and its people, and the country's valuable natural resources can be used in a long-lasting and sustainable manner. Only when the country has energy security and energy self-sufficiency will the people enjoy the socioeconomic life through the developed production based on energy facilities.

I JOINED a gathering of alumni in the first week of December 2025. It was just a class reunion. The gathering was organized by my friend Thein Win Aung, whose nickname is Sayagyi, together with another organizer, Kyaw Swa, who is generally called, but his formal name is Kyaw Swa Oo. They held several gatherings for friends. But I have missed past gatherings.

Nicknames of alumni

Most of the university students have nicknames called by their close friends as well as classmates. A group of our friends at the university have respective nicknames. Nominations for these nicknames were based on different reasons. But I cannot unveil these reasons because it may be shameful for someone. Really, the nicknames of university students are very lovely among friends.

Since the student life, we have been calling Ko Lwin Oo, Oo Zin, because he was ordained during the long holidays while attending the second-year course. Thein Win Aung is called Sayagyi till today, as he always gives instructions to others. I am Lone Lay because the conversed expression of Lone Lay is Lay Lone. It defines that I have been wearing glasses. It is dubbed I have four eyes. So, my nickname is Lone Lay. Automatically, another friend who also wears glasses is called Lone Gyi, as he is older than me. Likewise, Ko Myint Sein is older than us. So, we call him "Uncle Gyi". Soe Min Naing is called Tuk Tuk. Tint Hsan had stayed at a residence in Arthawka Street in Tamway Township. So, his nickname is Arthawka.

Feelings from 40 years ago

From then on, we all call each other with nicknames in all relations. If so, our minds and feelings will go back to the past days. But it was 40 years ago. On 5 December 1985, the students who had passed the basic education high school examination in the relevant townships had the chance to join the university. They started their university student lives. It was a great day for us. As we all lived in the suburban areas of Yangon, we had chances to attend the relevant campuses of the Yangon University. As such, we started university life 40 years ago. We started learning at the Yangon University (Botahtaung Campus), which was called No 1 Regional College in Yangon in the past.

We are all students majoring

in Botany. All students from the science combination had to participate in the science laboratories. As we were science majoring students, we joined the science labs of physics, chemistry, zoology and botany subjects. So, we all attended the classes as well as participated in the practical work. In a narrow interval, we had lunch. Sometimes, we had lunch at the canteens. Some of us took food carriers from home. Later, we went to the Botahtaung Pagoda, not far from the school building of the Botahtaung campus, so as to have lunch. Whenever we had lunch in the cave of the pagoda, we talked about something loudly. Once, officials of the pagoda board of trustees drove us out of the cave of the pagoda as our noisy talks disturbed other pilgrims.

A gathering in Thanlyin City

I noticed the current situation at the tables of the restaurant after withdrawing my thoughts from the past events. We held a gathering of alumni at a restaurant near the Kyaikkhaung Pagoda in Thanlyin. The gathering started at about 11 am. Some friends were late to join us. Some friends departed us because they needed to go to more appointments. Someone came to us, but someone went away.

The table was rounded by Thein Win Aung, who is now a businessman, Kyaw Swa Oo, who is now a retired officer from Myanmar Economic Corporation, and Soe Min Naing, who is also a retired officer. One more alumnus was Thurein Linn, who is a businessperson, and another one was Ko Myint Sein, called Uncle Gyi, who is serving as a staff officer at the Yangon City Development Committee. The remaining friends were businesspersons Tint Hsan and Ko Aung Tun. Female alumni were Marlar Myint, who is serving as an assistant director at the Road Transport Administration Department, while Yin Yin Myint is a teacher at the basic education school. Moreover, Myat Myat Maw



The gathering of alumni refreshes their souls and revitalizes their capabilities to overcome the challenges of life. AI-generated image.

becomes an assistant manager at the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank, whereas Mya Mya San is a retired officer from a government department. And, I was a retired Deputy Chief Editor from the Ministry of Information.

Although some friends were invited to the gathering, they could not join us due to various reasons and personal appointments. At the table, we reminisced about past events from our student life. While some had forgotten certain incidents, others recalled them and shared the details. A few friends expressed their views about a particular event and recounted their experiences during a quarrel in our first year. Fortunately, all those involved in the quarrel were not removed from the university, as it was nearly time for the examinations. However, those involved had to sign a promise in the presence of the registrar, pledging not to repeat such behaviour. The registrar also issued them a warning regarding their quarrel.

Significant events to memorable ones

Currently, the quarrel has

become a memorable event for everyone. During our student life, we faced yet another quarrel while attending our final-year course at Yangon University (Main Campus). At that time, we signed a promise in the presence of the university officials at the Convocation Hall. Fortunately, we managed to avoid the risk of being removed. In hindsight, the event became a source of laughter at our gatherings.

Currently, our body structures have changed in a notable way. We all do not have the past body structures and youth. Silver-coloured hair takes positions on our heads. Most of us have lost some teeth. Our eyes cannot shine. Generally, we do not all have youth. Even I, the youngest among us, am over 57 years old. The eldest of us is over 60 years old.

We had the great opportunity of dreaming about the past student life thanks to organizers Thein Win Aung and Kyaw Swa Oo. Once, some of us were not close to each other in our student life, but we are all close friends at present. We exchanged information about the

friends. Some of our friends have passed away. Whatever it may be, this gathering refreshed our minds. It revitalized our mental power.

Nobody can defy ageing

Ageing awaits us. Illness and disease are striving to overcome us. Death is within everyone's reach. Before we die, we must live with love and affection. While we are still alive, we should meet our friends and renew friendships built over many years. We must encourage one another so that weary hearts may awaken again. We will meet again in the coming years. In the years ahead, will all of us still be able to meet one another?

We struggle day and night to meet our basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. As a result, we face exhaustion and the hardships of life. Unexpectedly, we encounter significant challenges and obstacles. While moments of happiness in life are rare, difficulties and losses are frequent. Many individuals have fallen or given up along life's journey while striving to overcome these hardships and challenges. We have seen them.

BY AUNG KYAW THANT

Some, however, persevere through their efforts and successfully overcome these obstacles. They reach their goals. That life goal is the ability to establish a complete family life, free from the worry of struggling to meet basic needs.

At the recent alumni gathering I attended, friends who had not seen each other for forty years shared their experiences with one another. They recalled and discussed events from their school days that everyone had experienced. When one person forgot a detail, another would remind them. When one started a story, another would add to it. They paid tribute to those who had passed away and remembered those who were still alive but unable to attend due to distance. They reflected on the lasting bonds of their student life and shared updates about the careers and positions of people in their circle. They exchanged phone numbers and shared social media accounts and contact addresses with one another.

Current structures of alumni

Clearly, we are no longer young. The faces we knew forty years ago have changed, with only traces of our former appearances remaining. Most have grown old, with hair turning grey. Lips and chins show signs of drooping, and skin around the cheeks and ears has sagged. Those who were once slender in youth have become heavier, and even those who remain slim are now reaching an age when illnesses begin to affect them. One thing is certain: our eyes are no longer as bright as they were forty years ago.

Time has changed everything. Yet, the one thing that remains unchanged is the spirit of our friendships. The brief reunion brought renewed energy to both our minds and bodies and filled us with joy and vitality. I would like to say that the heartfelt alumni gathering gave us the strength to continue facing the challenges of life.



UAE approves gene replacement therapy for new age group in spinal muscular atrophy patients

THE Emirates Drug Establishment (EDE) has announced the approval of Itivisma (onasemnogene adepovovec), a gene therapy that uses an adeno-associated viral vector to treat spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) in eligible adults and children aged two years and above.

With this decision, the UAE becomes the second country globally to grant approval for this treatment, reinforcing its leadership in accelerating patient access to advanced medical innovations across the region. Itivisma targets the genetic cause of spinal muscular atrophy by replacing the defective gene responsible for the disease, helping to improve patients' motor functions and reduce their reliance on long-term treatments.

This regulatory authorization is part of EDE's ongoing commitment to enabling access to high-value, advanced therapies and accelerating the delivery of breakthrough medicines to UAE patients, in line with the UAE's vision for a world-class, efficient, innovative, and sustainable healthcare ecosystem.

Dr Fatima Al Kaabi, Director-General of the Emirates Drug Establishment, stated, "Granting the regulatory approval for Itivisma is a significant step demonstrating the UAE's

commitment to providing patients with the latest advanced genetic therapies, particularly those with rare genetic diseases like spinal muscular atrophy.

"This decision showcases the efficiency of the country's health system and its capability to evaluate and approve innovative drugs according to the highest scientific standards within effective timeframes. We are committed to ensuring patients receive rapid access to cutting-edge treatment options that improve their quality of life," Al Kaabi said.

She clarified that Itivisma was approved following clinical evidence that resulted in clear and sustained improvements in patients' motor abilities, in addition to a consistently positive safety profile observed throughout all stages of clinical evaluation.

Al Kaabi added, "The UAE's decision to grant regulatory approval for this therapy reaffirms the country's leadership in adopting advanced pharmaceutical technologies. It strengthens international confidence in the UAE's regulatory model, which strikes a careful balance between speed, scientific rigour, and transparency, ensuring that innovative treatments reach patients in a timely and reliable manner."

SOURCE: ANI



Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) is a rare genetic disorder that causes progressive muscle weakness and wasting (atrophy) due to the loss of motor neurons in the spinal cord. It is a leading genetic cause of infant mortality, though recent medical advancements have significantly improved survival and motor function. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ CHILD NEUROLOGY FOUNDATION**

ARTICLE

2025 Multiparty Democratic General Elections:
Turning a New Page for Myanmar?

MYANMAR NARRATIVE

THE upcoming elections on 28 December 2025 will turn a new page for Myanmar, shifting the narrative from a conflict-affected, crisis-laden country to a new chapter of hope for building peace and reconstructing the economy. Myanmar is no stranger to “founding” elections. These founding elections, often held amidst challenging environments and imperfect processes, have historically produced defining moments of opportunity to tackle the country’s ongoing conflicts and allow it to take its rightful place in the international community to fulfil its obligations.

The first founding election in Myanmar in 1951 was full of challenges. After gaining independence in 1948, the country became engulfed in multi-coloured insurgencies. The post-independence government of U Nu was dubbed the “Yangon Government” due to its last line of defence being the former capital, Yangon. However, the Yangon government was able to launch counter-offensives in 1950, regaining control over Myanmar’s major urban centres, and decided to hold the promised elections in 1951. The election was held in three phases over a period of fourteen months – from phase one in June 1951 to phase three in April 1952. Many frontier areas – today’s ethnic states – could not hold elections, and 11 per cent of central Myanmar’s regions also missed voting because they remained under insurgent control. Amidst the threat of violence from insurgents and general instability across the country, the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League, led by U Nu, won a massive victory, and Myanmar enjoyed a decade of peaceful and prosperous democratic rule.

The second founding election occurred in 2010, when the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) convened the polls after successfully adopting the 2008 Constitution. These elections were organized after twenty years of Tatmadaw rule and just two years after the deadly Cyclone Nargis. A few political parties boycotted the process, and elections were not held at all in the entire Wa Self-Administered Division. Nevertheless, the elections successfully ushered in the government led by President U Thein Sein in 2011, which introduced comprehensive political liberalization and economic reforms across the country. From 2011 onward, for another decade, Myanmar

Table 1: National, regional political parties and independent candidates contesting in three parliaments

No.	Political Parties	Leaders	Pyithu Hluttaw	Amyothar Hluttaw	State/Region Hluttaws	Nationality Candidates	Total
1	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	U Khin Yi	265	156	569	28	1018
2	National Unity Party (NUP)	U Han Tun	182	111	387	14	694
3	People’s Pioneer Party (PPP)	Dr Thet Thet Khine	193	145	320	14	672
4	Shan and Nationalities Democratic Party (White Tiger)	Sai Aike Pao	159	76	341	8	584
5	Pyithu Party (PP)	U Ko Ko Gyi	152	73	278	9	512
6	Myanmar Farmers Development Party	U Kyaw Swa Soe	125	55	243	5	428
7	51 Regional parties		203	213	525	19	960
8	Individuals		51	3	33	8	95

Source: UEC. Note: The UEC is still screening the eligibility of candidates, and the number can be reduced.

was able to re-engage with the global community and achieve a “Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement” with eight ethnic armed organizations.

The environment for holding the upcoming elections this year is no less challenging. Several international organizations have pointed out that the majority of the country’s remote regions are experiencing severe armed conflicts. However, the State Security and Peace Commission is resolved to hold elections in 265 townships, covering 80 per cent of the total 330 townships in the country. Given the preceding conflicts, the Union Election Commission (UEC) has tried its best to conduct the elections in three phases – 102 townships on 28 December 2025, 100 townships on 11 January 2026, and 63 townships on 25 January 2026 – aiming to complete all three phases within a month. Given the active pledge of violent suppression of voting by non-state armed groups, the UEC has done its utmost to ensure maximum election coverage.

Election coverage has declined dramatically over the last three elections since 2010. The election was wholly cancelled in 5 townships in 2010 and seven townships in 2015, but suddenly increased to 15 townships in 2020. In 2020, elections were cancelled in nine out of 17 total townships in Rakhine State, although the conflict in northern Rakhine was less violent and concentrated in only a few villages at that time. Rakhine political parties called foul, arguing that the southern part of Rakhine State – where the ruling party was able to grab

support from local populations against regional parties – was favoured. This time, however, the cancellations are due mainly to security reasons, not political manipulation.

Contrary to the views of ill-informed external observers who note election coverage as low as 50 per cent of the population, the recent 2024 national census suggests that the population living in the 65 election-cancelled townships constitutes only 13 per cent of the total population. Although these 65 townships represent 20 per cent of the total townships, they are located in remote areas where population density is much lower than in central Myanmar. In addition, the affected population may be even lower than the census estimates, since most of these conflict-affected populations may have already relocated to different parts of the country or neighbouring countries. Despite these structural weaknesses, the upcoming elections feature a few redeeming qualities that can generate positive outcomes from this, albeit imperfect process.

First, the participation of over 5,000 candidates from 57 political parties vying for an estimated 950 seats in three parliaments – the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House), Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House), and State and Region Hluttaws – demonstrates a highly motivated group of citizens. These candidates paid costly candidacy registration fees of K500,000 to participate, knowing they are likely to lose the fees if they do not win. They have offered pledges to their constituencies ranging from lowering inflation

to cleaning up garbage and draining sewage – thousands of worthy ideas for possible reform initiatives for the incoming government. The active cooperation from constituencies is also encouraging candidates to step up their last-minute, high-intensity door-to-door push in many areas, despite the UEC’s rules against certain types of canvassing due to security reasons.

Second, the introduction of the new Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system to elect candidates for the Amyotha Hluttaw and State and Region Hluttaws has encouraged many ethnic political parties to enter the contest. The introduction of MMP into the Amyotha Hluttaw was a decisive incentive for ethnic parties, as half of the seats will be reserved for the compensation of seats to smaller parties. In the last three elections, the largest national parties – both the Union Solidarity and Development Party and the National League for Democracy – benefited from the British-style First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system used for all three types of parliaments. Smaller ethnic political parties representing Kayin, Kayah, Chin, and Pa-O groups never won a substantial number of seats, as large national parties defeated them in their home regions. Ethnic political parties such as the Shan and Rakhine narrowly won some seats due to the concentration of ethnic populations within their states; however, they were largely excluded from a substantial part of sub-national governments. The introduction of the MMP system will change the landscape in both the Amyotha Hluttaw and sub-national

ARTICLE/LIFESTYLE
WORLD

parliaments. Furthermore, the proposed change of Section 261 of the Constitution, as agreed by Tatmadaw, will allow certain ethnic political parties to choose their Chief Ministers or participate in sub-national government. This can be a major game-changer for ethnic states, where ethnic political parties can hope for better representation for the first time. Unlike previous FPTP systems that favoured large national parties, the MMP system will boost smaller ethnic and regional parties, allowing them to gain seats through the “compensatory mechanism” of proportional representation, as they consistently collected the second or third largest vote counts in previous elections.

Third, the combination of the MMP system and the creation of larger constituencies for proportional representation has provided breathing space for ethnic political parties facing the acute challenge of campaigning in their respective conflict-affected states. Although ethnic political parties, particularly in highly conflict-ridden regions such as Rakhine and Chin States, may see the majority of their Pyithu Hluttaw elections cancelled, they can still enhance their representation through the Amyotha Hluttaw. They can compensate with vote counts from the townships where elections are held through the MMP mechanism and larger constituencies. That is why five Rakhine political parties and three Chin political parties are contesting in the upcoming elections, even though they can barely match powerful national parties in terms of resources and protection. This gives an

Figure 2: New MMP System introduced in Amyotha and State/Region Hluttaws



Source: The authors’ own drawing based on UEC information.

opportunity for non-armed ethnic leaders to gain popular support to organize effective mediation for conflict reduction and the negotiation of peace processes with various ethnic armed counterparts in their respective regions.

Fourth, for the first time in twenty years, women candidates have reached the highest percentage ever – 18 per cent of total registered candidates – surpassing the already high percentage of 15 per cent in the 2020 elections, when women office-holders were attracting more women into the political process. This is a welcome recognition of the role of women in peace, reconciliation, and nation-building, as many female candidates have raised hopes for the cessation of conflicts and the promotion of women’s and youth affairs. Public campaigns for higher voter turnout will benefit women and youth candidates. In fact, the use of the MMP system will also benefit smaller ethnic and regional political parties when voter turnout is higher.

Last but not least, the introduction

of Myanmar Electronic Voting Machines (MEVMs) can not only address the unfinished issue of vote-counting irregularities but also step up electoral practices to a higher level of transparency and accountability through technological upgrades. The use of voting machines can erase the possibility of “invalid votes” caused by the handwritten procedures of the past. The ratio of wasted invalid votes was as high as five per cent in all three previous elections where paper ballots were used. Unlike what outside observers have wildly suggested regarding the possibility of electronic surveillance through the machines (claims which tend to exaggerate the capabilities of low-cost, locally-made MEVMs), public demonstrations on the use of MEVMs across the country have never raised doubts over the surveillance issue, as the machines do not have the sophisticated design required to capture additional information about voters.

To conclude, the Myanmar elections are being conducted in the interest of the Myanmar people and are being organized

with the best humanly possible procedures and methods to maximize public participation despite the conflict and unstable environment. While the elections do not choose the elected government directly, they will choose candidates for the three parliaments, where the voice of the people can be reflected in future governance. With the new MMP electoral system, the election will also enhance the role of smaller ethnic and regional political parties in national affairs through compensatory mechanisms at the Amyotha Hluttaw. At the sub-national parliaments, these ethnic and regional political parties will surely gain representation this time, and they can immediately pick up the task of peace and reconciliation with their armed counterparts in different states and regions. Like previous founding elections in Myanmar, the upcoming elections have certainly brought hope and energy to people who have suffered for too long under ongoing conflicts. An election that strives for popular participation should be cherished, not condemned.

King Charles calls for ‘reconciliation’ in Christmas speech

BRITAIN’S King Charles III called for “compassion and reconciliation” at a time of “division” across the world in his Christmas Day message Thursday.

The 77-year-old monarch said he found it “enormously encouraging” how people of different faiths had a “shared longing for peace”.

Charles praised individuals who risked their lives to save others in situations of violence, including those caught up in the killings at a Jewish event at Bondi Beach in Australia this month.

“Individuals and communities have displayed spontaneous bravery, instinctively placing themselves in harm’s way to

King Charles III did publicly praise individuals who risked their lives to save others during violent incidents.



defend others,” said the king whose words were accompanied by images of events at Bondi.

Eighty years after the end of World War II, the king said the courage of servicemen and women and the way communities came together after the conflict carried “a timeless message for us all”.

“These are the values which have shaped our country,” he said. — AFP

Britain’s King Charles III recorded his Christmas message in the Lady Chapel of Westminster Abbey in central London. **PHOTO: AARON CHOWN / POOL/AFP**

ECONOMY
WORLD



China's embrace of the digital yuan, or e-CNY, highlights a significant push toward a central bank digital currency. **PHOTO: WU WEI/XINHUA**

China pushes digital yuan into ASEAN countries to chip away at dollar rule

China is expanding its digital yuan (e-CNY) into ASEAN trade routes as a central component of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor.

CHINA is expanding its digital yuan, or e-CNY, into ASEAN trade routes. Recent People's Bank of China (PBOC) pledges include cross-border pilots with Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia, all tied to the New International	Land-Sea Trade Corridor. This builds on 2020 pilots, currently accelerating amid US trade tensions. Key expansion facts Renminbi (RMB, or yuan) settlements with ASEAN countries surged, hitting	28 per cent of bilateral trade worth \$597 billion in early 2025 (Standard Chartered Bank analysis/October). Singapore is a key off-shore RMB hub and fintech center for Chinese firms (including blockchain companies like Wanxiang) — SPUTNIK
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Lula downplays impact of US tariffs on Brazilian economy

BRAZILIAN President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Tuesday that 2025 is "ending well" for Brazil, noting that US	tariff hikes on Brazilian goods turned out to be "irrelevant" to the nation's economy. "The year is ending well.	Food prices are falling, and people are once again able to afford things that had become more expensive. Even the tariffs imposed by the United States on Brazil ended up being irrelevant," said Lula while addressing the domestic situation and the country's relations with Washington.
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Brazil is the world's second-largest producer of iron ore. **PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK**

Lula stressed that Brazil's economy showed adaptability and resilience in the face of Washington's new trade policies and the geopolitical and trade tensions they have created. — Xinhua

India must shift focus to deliver export gains amid tough 2026 trade outlook: GTRI

WITH 18 free trade agreements (FTAs) already signed and more likely in 2026, India's priority must now move from negotiating new deals to ensuring existing FTAs translate into real export gains, particularly in electronics, engineering and textiles, highlighted a report by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI). The report said India's total exports stood at US\$825 billion in FY25 and are expected to rise only marginally to around US\$850 billion in FY26, reflecting a challenging global trade environment.	Merchandise exports are likely to remain flat in FY26 due to weak global demand and rising protectionism, while services exports may cross US\$400 billion, providing the only meaningful cushion to India's overall trade performance. It stated, "With 18 FTAs already signed and more possible in 2026, India's priority must shift from signing deals to making FTAs deliver real export gains." According to GTRI, India is entering 2026 facing one of the toughest global trade environments in years. — ANI
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Merchandise exports are expected to remain flat due to weak global demand and rising protectionism, while services exports may surpass US\$400 billion, offering the primary support to India's overall trade performance. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ANI**

Thailand's exports growth quickens to 7.1% in Nov

THAILAND'S exports extended their growth for a 17 th consecutive month in November, mainly driven by sustained strong demand for industrial products in line with the electronics sector's upward cycle, official data showed on Thursday. Exports, a key driver of the Southeast Asian country's economic growth, expanded 7.1 per cent year-on-year last month to US\$27.45 billion, according to the	Ministry of Commerce. Industrial shipments increased 12.2 per cent compared to the previous year in November, marking the 20 th successive month of expansion, with strong performances recorded in telephones, computers, and gems and jewellery products. Meanwhile, exports of agricultural products declined 15.7 per cent, and agro-industrial shipments dropped 2.3 per cent. — Xinhua
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China to impose world’s first mandatory EV energy consumption cap

CHINA will implement a new state standard for the energy consumption level of electric vehicles (EVs) starting from 2026, China’s top market regulator announced on Friday.

The new standard for passenger vehicles is the world’s first to cap the mandatory energy consumption of EVs, the State Administration for Market Regulation said.

Under the standard, automakers will be required to upgrade their products technically.

For instance, a two-tonne vehicle must consume less than 15.1 kWh per 100 kilometres.

This is expected to increase EVs’ average endurance mileage by about seven per cent.

The mandatory cap of energy consumption, which varies by vehicle weight, is formulated considering the current energy consumption levels of pure-electric passenger EVs and that of specific vehicle models, technical potential, as well as cost control.

— Xinhua



Electric vehicles are charged at the Quanhu Park station equipped with ultra-fast liquid-cooled chargers in Guiyang, southwest China’s Guizhou Province, 13 June 2025. PHOTO: XINHUA

First Bond game in a decade hit by two-month delay

A Danish video game studio said it was delaying the release of the first James Bond video game in over a decade by two months to “refine the experience”.

Fans will now have to wait until 27 May to play “007 First Light” featuring Ian Fleming’s world-famous spy, after IO Interactive said on Tuesday it was postponing the launch to add some final touches. “007 First Light is our most ambitious project to date, and the team has been fully focused on delivering an unforgettable James Bond experience,” the Danish studio

wrote on X. Describing the game as “fully playable”, IO Interactive said the two additional months would allow their team “to further polish and refine the experience”, giving players “the strongest possible version at launch”.

The game, which depicts a younger Bond earning his licence to kill, is set to feature “globe-trotting, spycraft, gadgets, car chases, and more”, IO Interactive added. It has been more than a decade since a video game inspired by Bond was released. The initial release date was scheduled for 27 March. — AFP



‘007 First Light’ depicts a younger Bond earning his licence to kill. PHOTO: AFP

Vietnamese southern hub’s FDI inflows jump 24% in 2025

VIETNAM’S southern hub Ho Chi Minh City is estimated to attract US\$8.37 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2025, a year-on-year increase of 24.2 per cent, the Vietnam News Agency report-

ed Thursday.

The total comprises US\$1.6 billion for 1,865 new projects, \$2.9 billion for 432 existing projects, and about \$3.7 billion from foreign capital contributions, share purchas-

es and acquisitions, the report said, citing the municipal Department of Finance.

Singapore was the largest source of investment with \$2.1 billion, it said. — Xinhua

“World’s 1st” immersive theme park in Tokyo to close in Feb

A Tokyo theme park that billed itself as the world’s first fully immersive attraction will close on 28 February its operator said Thursday, about two years after opening.

The Immersive Fort Tokyo project “deviated substantially from the original plan, including in financial terms”, Tsuyoshi Morioka, CEO of Katana Inc, said in a statement. The facility was launched in the popular commercial district of Odaiba.

The theme park was known for recreating the worlds of novels and anime through video and live performances, allowing visitors to

take on the roles of characters in the stories.

Katana also spearheaded the development of Junglia Okinawa, a nature-immersive theme park that opened in southern Japan in 2025 and has proved popular with both domestic and foreign tourists. — Kyodo

S Korean banks’ loan delinquency ratio rebounds in Oct

SOUTH Korean banks’ loan delinquency ratio rebounded owing to more new delinquent loans than bad loan settlements, financial watchdog data showed

Friday.

The ratio of bank loans, at least one month overdue, to the total gained 0.07 percentage points from a month earlier to

0.58 per cent at the end of October, after sliding 0.10 percentage points in the previous month, according to the Financial Supervisory Service. — Xinhua

ROLLING UPDATES
WORLD

Malaysia’s former PM Najib convicted in 1MDB graft trial

Once groomed for leadership, Najib has faced a dramatic downfall since his 2018 election defeat, with ongoing corruption investigations also implicating his wife, Rosmah Mansor.



A \$250 million yacht was among the assets tied to the 1MDB scandal. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

FORMER Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak was found guilty on Friday of abusing his power to plunder millions from the 1MDB sovereign wealth fund and launder the proceeds. His sentencing, expected later on Friday, is likely to heap years onto the six-year term he is already serving for a separate case related to the now-defunct state investment vehicle. Presiding Judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah convicted the 72-year-old former leader on all four counts of abuse of power, as well as all 21 counts of money laundering, involving around 2.28

billion ringgit (\$554 million) from the fund. Najib, dressed in a navy blue suit and white shirt, was seen looking down, slumped in his seat as the judge read the verdict. While Najib, the son of one of the country’s founding fathers, was groomed for leadership from a young age, he experienced a spectacular fall from power as public anger mounted over the corruption scandal. Since his 2018 election loss, investigations under successive governments have ensnared him and his wife Rosmah Mansor in graft allegations. — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

China opposes Japan’s dangerous moves in cyber field

CHINA firmly opposes Japan’s dangerous moves in the cyber field and strongly urges Japan to abide by its pacifist Constitution and uphold existing international rules and order with concrete actions, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said on Friday. “Should any improper act by Japan undermine China’s sovereignty, security and development interests, it will surely elicit a solemn response from China,” spokesperson Lin Jian said at a daily press briefing in response to Japan’s cyber offensive shift. — Xinhua

US launches ‘deadly’ strike against ISIS

THE United States on Thursday (local time) launched a “deadly” strike against the terror organization Islamic State in northwest Nigeria, said President Donald Trump. Donald Trump, in a social media post on Truth Social, said that the strike targeted terrorists over the alleged killings of Christians. “Tonight, at my direction as Commander in Chief, the United States launched a powerful and deadly strike against ISIS Terrorist scum in Northwest Nigeria,” Trump said. — ANI

4 dead as ferries collide amid dense fog

AT least four people died, and a dozen were injured in a head-on collision between two passenger ferries amid dense fog on the Meghna River in Bangladesh’s Chandpur district, about 115 kilometres southeast of the capital Dhaka, early Friday. Md Nazmul Islam Sarker, deputy commissioner and district magistrate in Chandpur, told Xinhua over the phone that most of the passengers were asleep when the accident occurred. Several witnesses told local television channels that the ferries were carrying hundreds of people on board, with many stuck in cabins. — Xinhua

Seoul to ease access to North Korean newspaper

SOUTH Korea said Friday it will reclassify North Korea’s long-banned state newspaper as general information, easing public access, in the latest overture from the administration of dovish President Lee Jae Myung. South Korea remains officially at war with its nuclear-armed neighbour, and a decades-old national security ban on Pyong-

yang’s propaganda remains in place. Critics including President Lee say South Koreans are politically mature enough to judge such material, which often idolizes the North’s leadership, for themselves. They also argue the ban amounts to unnecessary censorship in a vibrant democracy

that is one of the most wired and educated countries in the world. Seoul’s government convened on Friday an inter-agency meeting and confirmed a consensus among the relevant parties regarding the “reclassification of the Rodong Sinmun newspaper from special material to general material”, it said in a statement. — AFP



People reading the newspaper for free at a public newspaper reading stand on the platform of a metro station in Pyongyang, North Korea. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

SPORTS

THE 2025-2026 Myanmar Women's League continued on 26 December with the second day of Matchday 10, as Ayeyawady claimed a dramatic late victory and defending champions ISPE extended their lead at the top of the table.

At Padonma Ground, Ayeyawady defeated Thitsa Arman 2-1 with a stoppage-time winner. The victory earned Ayeyawady maximum points through a late strike and allowed them to apply pressure on league leaders ISPE, trailing them by just one point. Thitsa Arman, who had taken the lead, conceded twice and suffered their first defeat of the season.

With both sides boasting a strong core of national team players and occupying positions near the top of the standings, the match was played at a high intensity and attracted considerable spectator interest. Ayeyawady handed starting roles to their newly signed Japanese and Filipino players, recruited during the mid-season transfer window, with the Japanese player making an immediate impact by scoring the equalizer. Nilar Win opened

Ayeyawady steal late victory as ISPE extend lead in Women's League



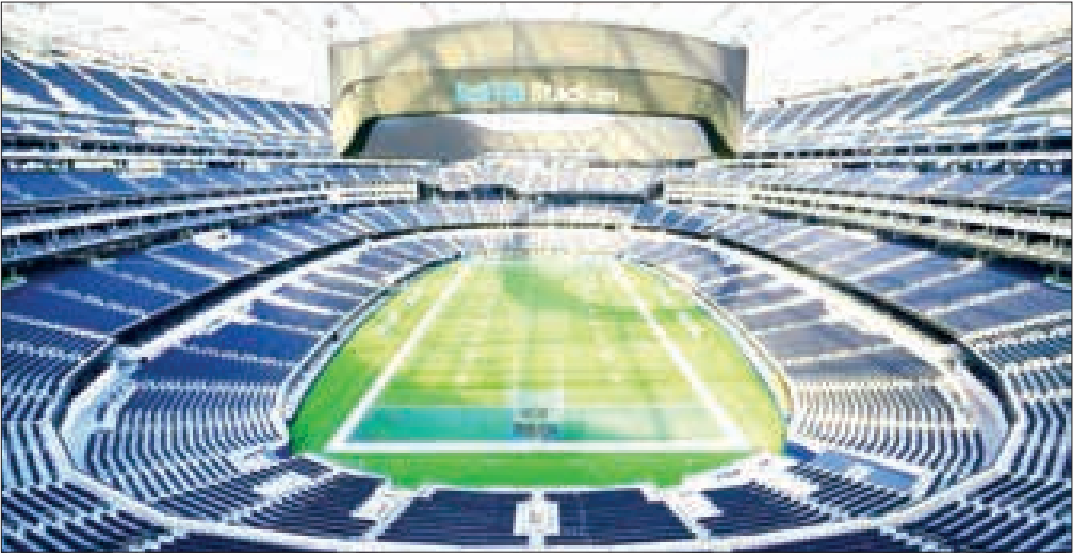
Ayeyawady and Thitsa Arman players battle for possession during their Myanmar Women's League clash. **PHOTOS: MWL**

the scoring from the penalty spot in the twentieth minute for Thitsa Arman, but Ogawa levelled with a long-range effort in the thirty-eighth minute. After an evenly contested second half, Phyu Phyu Win struck the winning goal deep into added time to complete the comeback.

At Thuwunna Training Ground One, ISPE secured a convincing 3-0 victory over Myawady to remain at the top of the league. Khin Marlar Tun opened the scoring in 30 minutes, followed by goals from Su Pyae Pyae Kyaw in 47 minutes and Lin Myint Mo in 58 minutes.

After Matchday Ten, ISPE lead the table with 22 points from nine matches, followed by Ayeyawady on 21 points from nine matches. Thitsa Arman sits third with 18 points from nine matches. Yangon United have 17 points from eight matches, level with Shan United, who have played nine. YREO have 10 points, Young Lionesses seven points, and Myawady three points, all from nine matches, while Yangon City remain without a point after nine games. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL

Searing heat looming over 2026 World Cup



The SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles will host eight matches at the 2026 World Cup, where the prospect of extreme heat at several venues is causing concern. **PHOTO: AFP**

WITH less than six months to go before the 2026 World Cup kicks off, organizers are bracing for what could be their most challenging opponent yet: extreme heat. Soaring temperatures across the United States, Mexico and Canada pose safety issues for players and fans and a host of logistical issues that remain far from settled.

In the depths of the \$5.5 billion SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, which will host eight World cup matches, around 15 industrial misting fans more than two metres sit in storage, waiting to be deployed.

If temperatures climb above 80°F (26.7°C), the fans will be rolled out around the stadium. A roof suspended some 45 metres above the SoFi Stadium pitch offers some shade for spectators, while large openings along the sides of the stadium allow for breezes from the nearby Pacific Ocean to provide a form of natural air conditioning. — AFP

FIFA Club World Cup takes centre stage as PSG rules Europe

In a year without a major men's international tournament, club football dominated the headlines, with Paris Saint-Germain emerging as one of the standout winners.

PSG capped the season by winning the UEFA Champions League in late May with a 5-0 rout of Inter Milan, as coach Luis Enrique underlined the value of cohesion over a collection of star names. The former Spain coach has built a side that blends technical quality with pace and aggression, and after years of domestic dominance, PSG fully justified its first European crown. — Xinhua

Spurs captain Romero facing increased ban after Liverpool red card

CRISTIAN Romero could be hit with an extended suspension after he was charged by England's ruling Football Association with failing to leave the field and acting in an "aggressive" manner when he was sent off against Liverpool last Saturday.

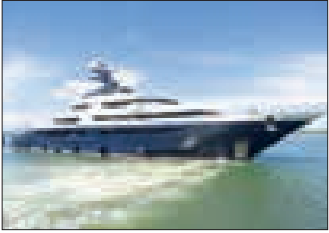
Romero's dismissal left Spurs down to nine men as Xavi Simons had already been shown a red card for serious foul play in the first half.

The Tottenham Hotspur captain received a second yellow card for kicking out at Liverpool defender Ibrahima Konate before being ordered off the field by referee John Brooks during a 2-1 defeat.

Argentina centre-back Romero had first been booked for dissent after complaining he had been pushed by Hugo Ekitike when the forward scored Liverpool's second goal. Romero's red card means he will serve a one-match ban, missing Sunday's match away to London rivals Crystal Palace. — AFP



Tottenham Hotspur captain Cristian Romero arguing with referee John Brooks after receiving a red card during a Premier League match against Liverpool. **PHOTO: AFP**



‘Sri Lanka will rise again, stronger than ever before’: Modi in letter to Sri Lankan President

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has written to Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, assuring India's support to the neighbouring country in the aftermath of the devastating Cyclone Ditwah.

Prime Minister Modi stated that India will stand with Sri Lanka for “rebuilding lives and ensuring resilience”.

Hailing India's Operation Sagar Bandhu to assist cyclone-hit Sri Lanka, he noted that the supplies and emergency materials, along with Indian teams aiding in search and rescue efforts, helped the neighbouring country to deal with the medical emergencies and restore connectivity and communications. PM Modi wrote, “In line with our ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy and First Responder commitment, we undertook Operation Sagar Bandhu to address the immediate challenges.”

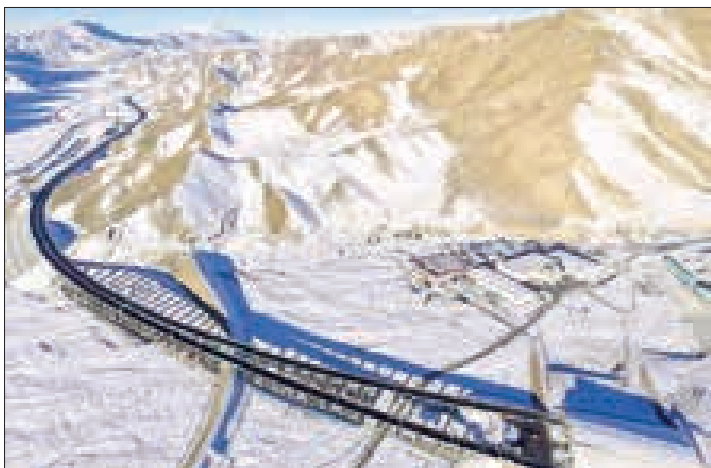
“As Sri Lanka now shifts its attention to the next phase, I would like to assure you that India will extend all possible support as a trusted partner and a reliable friend. As in the past, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with you in rebuilding lives and ensuring resilience in Sri Lanka. In this context, I am pleased to inform you that India will provide a comprehensive assistance package. I am confident that Sri Lanka will rise again, stronger than ever before. In this journey, as in its national development and progress, Sri Lanka will always find India by its side,” the letter added. — ANI

PM Modi stated that Operation Sagar Bandhu was launched as part of India's Neighbourhood First policy and First Responder role to tackle urgent challenges.



Operation Sagar Bandhu is India's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) mission launched in November 2025 to support Sri Lanka after Cyclone Ditwah caused severe flooding, loss of life, and widespread disruption. **PHOTO: ANI**

World's longest expressway tunnel opens to traffic in Xinjiang



An aerial drone photo shows the exit of the Tianshan Shengli Tunnel on the Urumqi-Yuli Expressway in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, 26 December 2025. **PHOTO: HU HUH/**

THE 22.13-kilometre Tianshan Shengli Tunnel, the world's longest expressway tunnel, officially opened to traffic on Friday.

Traversing the central Tianshan Mountains in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the tunnel slashes what was once a several-hour mountain drive to just 20 minutes. As a vital artery linking city clusters in northern and southern Xinjiang, the G0711 Urumqi-Yuli Expressway, including the tunnel, entered operation on the same day.

Via existing expressways,

the new route extends to the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the Chengdu-Chongqing region, thereby becoming a key hub that connects China's eastern economic circle with countries in Eurasia.

“This is an all-weather, high-efficiency, large-capacity transport corridor that will significantly enhance the resilience and security of national energy resources and agricultural supply chains,” said Huang Tao, deputy director of the transport bureau of the Bayingolin Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, where Yuli County is located. — Xinhua

Gold price hits a historic high of \$4,561.40 per ounce

The price of gold notched another all-time high during Friday's trading session, the trading data showed. As of 05:49 GMT, February gold price futures on the New York Comex exchange were up 0.86 per cent from the prior close, gaining \$38.6 to \$4,541 per troy ounce. Earlier in the session, prices touched a record \$4,561.4 per ounce.

Meanwhile, March silver futures climbed 4.83 per cent to \$75.145 per ounce. Earlier on Friday, silver prices also set a new record, peaking at \$72.485. — SPUTNIK