

## Students Research Bagan Murals to Safeguard Cultural Heritage

Foreign visitors show keen interest in the history of Buddha images and mural-adorned pagodas, underscoring the need for knowledgeable interpreters, while Myanmar’s unique ancient cultural heritage – widely appreciated yet rare globally – remains both a source of national pride and an important field of study and preservation for future generations.

**D**URING the reign of the Bagan kings in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, mural paintings were created in pagodas, temples, Buddha images, and caves. Currently, university students and researchers are able to conduct practical studies on mural paintings and ancient works in these pagodas and temples. According to the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Bagan Branch), the preservation of Myanmar’s ancient heritage is a source of national pride.

Mural paintings can be found in 416 Bagan pagodas, including Myinkaba Gubyaukgyi Pagoda,

Lawkahteikpan, and Thanbula Pagoda.

“In the Bagan region, Buddha images and pagodas with mural paintings are visited by both domestic and foreign tourists, as well as university and private school students. The peak tourist season is in December. University students often come for fieldwork and research papers. In particular, they frequently ask about the differences in painting styles between the early and late Bagan periods, how pigments were produced, how brushes were used, and why painting techniques changed in stupas with mural paintings.

“Foreign visitors are more interested in the history of Buddha images and pagodas with mural paintings. Therefore, there is a special need for interpreters who are knowledgeable in history. Foreign visitors appreciate Myanmar’s ancient cultural heritage, which is not found in many other countries, and it is a source of national pride that it can be studied and researched by local students. In addition, preserving this ancient heritage is also a matter of national pride,” said Assistant Director Daw San San Myint of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Bagan Branch).

During the Bagan era, mural paintings were created on the walls and ceilings of pagodas, temples, and caves. Durable pigments were developed and applied to the walls. Even when the surface layer has faded over time, the underlying paintings can still be seen today. Researchers have also recognized and praised the techniques used to prepare pigments during both the early and late Bagan periods. — Thitsa (MNA)/MKKS



University students and researchers are seen closely studying mural paintings in the pagodas and temples of the Bagan Ancient Cultural Heritage Zone. **PHOTO: ZWE MARN**

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Undocumented foreign nationals arrested in Kunhing

# NATIONAL

## 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sixth Buddhist Council Gala Enters Day Two

THE auspicious and gala ceremony to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sixth Buddhist Council continued in conjunction with the paper-reading session in Maha Pasana Cave on Kaba Aye Hill in Yangon for the second day yesterday.

As part of honouring the venerable members of the Sangha who participated in the Sixth Buddhist Council, Tipitakadhara Dhammabhandagarika Sunlun Sayadaw Bhaddanta Sundara and Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovidā Sayadaw Bhaddanta Setthañāna Lankara held a question and answer session on Sutanta Pitakat, and 15 members of the Sangha recited it.

Vice-Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, Shwebo Sayadaw Aggamaha Pandita Bhaddanta Candavamsa Lankarabhivamsa, who presided over the paper-reading session, gave an Ovada Katha.

State Ovadacariya, Secretary of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovidā Selection Examination Ovadacariya Body Hla Yadana Sayadaw Aggamaha Pandita Aggamaha Saddhammajotikadhaja Bhaddanta Narada Bhivamsa supplicated matters related to the papers.

Professor of State Pariyatti Sasana University (Yangon)



The Union minister and his wife, and officials, offer Dhamma gifts and books to venerable Sayadaws and nuns.

Aggamaha Ganthavacaka Pandita Dr Bhaddanta Ketu read his paper titled “The History of Buddhist Council in Myanmar”, and Mawkyun Sayadaw Tipitakadhara Dhammabhandagarika Bhaddanta Silakkhandha Bhivamsa of Pitakathonpon Nikaya Monastery in Dagon Myothit (South) Township, “The world’s longest academic qualification

examination (Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovidā)”.

Union Minister for Religious Affairs U Tin Oo Lwin and departmental officials raised religious questions, and the resource person Sayadaws replied to the questions.

Chairman of the Education Branch of the SSMNC Aggamaha Ganthavacaka Pandita Bhadd-

anta Paññasami Bhivamsa of Taingkyi Abhivamsa Monastery of Myataung Buddhism Learning Centre in Mandalay read his paper titled “The land where Pitakat holder Sangha members emerge”. Moreover, two venerable Sayadaws from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh read out their messages.

Registrar of State Pariyatti

Sasana University (Mandalay) Aggamaha Ganthavacaka Pandita Dr Bhaddanta Kumuda also submitted his paper “Inscribing the Pali Roman-script stone inscriptions of the Sixth Buddhist Council, and converting the Pali Canon, Atthakatha and Tika from lead letter texts into computer-based versions.” The resource person replied to the questions. Rector of International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University Aggamaha Pandita Dr Hsekinda gave a supplementary clarification on AI technology.

At the ceremony, two venerable Sayadaws from Australia and Sri Lanka read out the messages.

ITBMU Professor Maha Ganthavacaka Pandita Dr Bhaddanta Candamukha read his paper titled “Tripitaka scriptures in the Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar”.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of SSMNC Chairman Thanlyin Minkyaung Sayadaw Abhidhaja Maha Ratha Guru Aggamaha Saddhammajotikadhaja Dr Bhaddanta Candima Bhivamsa and members of the Sangha, nuns, Sitagu Sayadaw and venerable Sayadaws who came there from abroad. — MNA/TTA

## Indian Navy Goodwill delegation arrives in Yangon



Naval Training Command Headquarters Commander Commodore Khun Aung Kyaw and officials welcome the Indian Navy Goodwill delegation.

A goodwill delegation led by Indian Navy Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, PVSM, AVSM, NM, arrived in Yangon yesterday evening for a goodwill visit to the Republic of the Union of

Myanmar. Senior officers from the Tatmadaw (Navy), the Indian Naval Attaché to Myanmar, and officials welcomed them at Yangon International Airport.

The goodwill delegation will visit the Shwedagon Pagoda and remain in Myanmar until 6 May to visit famous landmarks and continue bilateral naval goodwill activities. — MNA/MKKS

## Jefferson Centre reopens in Mandalay, strengthening US-Upper Myanmar ties

THE American Embassy in Yangon announced on 30 April that the Jefferson Centre in Mandalay, which has served as a vital bridge between the United States and Upper Myanmar for decades, has officially reopened.

According to the statement, Charge d’Affaires Mr Doug Sonnek hosted a special reception on 29 April to commemorate the completion of extensive renovations of the centre to the historic heritage building following the 2025 earthquake.

The embassy’s statement highlighted that the Jefferson Centre has stood for decades as a significant and connecting point between the US and Upper Myanmar. The recent renovations reaffirm a commitment to providing a safe, modern space for young leaders, scholars and students to connect and collaborate, engage in mutual learning,



The newly reopened Jefferson Centre in Mandalay. Charge d’Affaires Mr Doug Sonnek is pictured alongside attendees at the special reception.

and pursue creative innovations. The US Embassy expressed great pride and pleasure in welcoming the community back to a stronger and safer Jefferson Centre. — MT/ZN

# NATIONAL

## Hluttaw Must Serve as Reliable Pillar for State and People

THE representatives of the people are responsible for fulfilling their aspirations in harmony with the people, said Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Yi at the meeting with representatives of the Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and Region Hluttaw in Bago Region at Oktha Pysone Hall of Bago Region Hluttaw yesterday morning.

At the meeting, the Speaker said that Hluttaw representatives are serving the duties of the legislative estate among the three estates of the State. They have to strive to enable citizens to live in peace and prosperity under the legal framework.

Moreover, the Speaker noted that in serving the duties of legislative measures, the Hluttaw representatives have to verify all measures, whether existing laws conform with the current period, need to be amended, revoked or revised for promulgation, and these laws can protect the people.



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Yi meets representatives of the Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and Region Hluttaw in Bago Region yesterday.

The Speaker stressed that the Hluttaw representatives from the legislative estate need to coordinate with those from the executive and judicial estates. The Hluttaw is a legislative body formed with the Hluttaw representatives elected by the people. As such, they need

to specially emphasize the will of the people and implement it.

The Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker underscored that Hluttaw representatives need to know the current situation of the State in real-time. If so, they can address the measures covering the whole nation and the desires

of the people as much as possible. That is why he urged them to strengthen the Hluttaw as a reliable body for the State and the people.

He continued that Hluttaw representatives have to open their offices to directly hold relations with the people to collect

personal needs of the people and local requirements to be resolved.

In addition, the Speaker underlined that Hluttaw has to lead the people to understand the policies of the government and its undertakings with trust. In operating a democratic government, the Hluttaw and the government have to carry out their tasks in harmony while emphasizing the development of the State and further promoting cooperation in the ASEAN region. Moreover, Hluttaw representatives have to uplift their capacity for enabling the Hluttaw to take an important role in the State and the people.

In the afternoon, the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker, together with Bago Region Chief Minister U Myo Swe Win, met town elders and businesspersons at Oktha Yadana Hall and held cordial discussions on regional development and peaceful and stable measures. — MNA/TTA

## Yangon to enforce orderly installation of power, telecom cables

CABLES for telecommunication and electricity must be installed systematically to align with the city characteristics, said U Mya Tun Oo, Union minister for Transport and for Digital Development and Communications, at the meeting on systematic installation of cables for telecommunication and electricity and systematic car park facilities in Yangon Region at the Office of the Yangon Region government yesterday morning.

The Union minister stressed that relevant departments and communication companies have to cooperate in the systematic installation of cables. As the underground cable network connections already implemented along Pyay Road are functioning well, the project must be continued as planned along Kaba Aye Pagoda Road and Waizayanta Road. The Union minister guided the communication network expansion



Union Minister U Mya Tun Oo chairs the meeting on systematic installation of telecommunication and power cables in Yangon Region yesterday.

coordination committee, and the district-level communication cable systematic installation bodies have to remove the undisciplined cables in districts and townships in Yangon Region.

He urged four telecommu-

nication operators and communication service companies to cooperate in all activities. Moreover, he noted that efforts must be made to cooperate in implementing ways to enhance the overall efficiency of

the network system by sharing resources among operators to help address the current global fuel crisis, which is having a significant impact.

The Union minister also instructed officials to take action

against undisciplined vehicles, motorcycles and trishaws under the traffic rules.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Aung Naing Thu reported on the work process and future tasks in Yangon Region to manage the systematic installation of cables for communications and electricity.

Director-General U Myo Swe of the Directorate of Telecommunications presented the situation of allowing communication services in Yangon Region, and the cooperation of operators.

The Union minister coordinated discussions of participants in relevant sectors.

Also present at the meeting were Chief Justice Daw Sanda Thwe of the Yangon Region High Court, regional ministers, departmental officials and responsible officials from communication companies. — Zwe Htet Ko (IPRD)/TTA

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# NATIONAL

## Union Information Minister inspects Wazira Cinema upgrade

UNION Minister for Information U Htein Lin inspected the upgrading of the Wazira Cinema on Bogyoke Aung San Road in Kyauktada Township, Yangon, into an international-standard theatre yesterday morning.

The Union minister was first briefed at the Wazira Cinema Hall by the deputy minister, the director-general of the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD), the chairman of the Myanmar Architectural Council, and officials from Shwe Taung Company on the history of the cinema, the progress of renovation work and the project's completion status.

The Union minister then said that as the Wazira Cinema will not only serve as a cinema but also as a venue where film, literature, drama, and music come together, it must be managed for long-term operation. He added that, as an ancient heritage cinema, it should be properly valued and preserved. He instructed that the directives given during the Head of State's

visit regarding the renovation be implemented, and that the work be completed in phases, with requirements and plans for further work carried out systematically.

Afterwards, the Union minister, accompanied by officials, inspected the progress of the upgrading of the Wazira Cinema and the completion of the parking lot at the Myanmar Railways yard opposite the cinema, and coordinated the necessary arrangements. In the afternoon, the Union minister met members of the Motion Pictures Censorship Board at the meeting hall of the Film Promotion Division of the IPRD in Bahan Township, Yangon.

During the meeting, the Union minister said he had a warm meeting with censor members working to ensure that Myanmar films, foreign films, online films, television-broadcast foreign films, and foreign films and series with Myanmar subtitles are screened in accordance with the Motion Pictures Law as well as the Television and Video Law,



Union Information Minister U Htein Lin is seen during his inspection tour of Wazira Cinema and his meeting with Motion Pictures Censorship Board yesterday.

and he expressed his gratitude for their efforts, experience, wisdom, and the time they sacrifice in reviewing and screening films. He also said that entrepreneurs involved in screening Myanmar and foreign films, private broadcasting companies, and ministry-affiliated content providers share the responsibility of educating and entertaining the public, and that while filmmaking is an art requiring creativity and imagination, overly creative content can be harmful to the public, so original creators must exercise caution and censors must carefully scrutinize and evaluate

such works.

The secretary of the motion pictures censorship board and the director of the IPRD then explained the ongoing work, and on behalf of the censorship board members, Academy Daw Swe Zin Htike and other attendees presented and discussed their respective views on film and video censorship, after which the Union minister coordinated the discussions and delivered the concluding speech.

The Union minister, along with officials, also visited the Documentary Film building on Sasana Yeiktha Road in Bahan

Township, Yangon, to inspect the building, which will host film courses as part of the 100-day project.

The chairman and officials of Forever Group then briefed the Union minister at the Documentary Film building on the television channels and training schools operated by the group, and then the director-general of the IPRD briefed him on the 100-day plan.

Afterwards, the Union minister coordinated the discussions, inspected the Documentary Film building, and issued necessary instructions. — MNA/TH

## MoT holds 149<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Myanmar Railways

THE Ministry of Transport held a ceremony to commemorate the 149<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar Railways at 1 pm yesterday at the Myanmar Railways Head Office in Nay Pyi Taw.

The ceremony was attended by Deputy Minister for Transport U Aung Myaing, Deputy Minister for Digital Development and Communications U Thet Win Aung, the permanent secretary from the Ministry of Transport, and other officials.

Deputy Minister U Aung Myaing first delivered a speech

marking the 149<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar Railways.

The managing director of Myanmar Railways then briefed participants on the department's activities for the 2025-2026 financial year.

Afterwards, deputy ministers and attendees watched a documentary commemorating the 149<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Deputy ministers, the permanent secretary, director-general, and managing director then presented awards to 91 officers and staff members who



Deputy Minister U Aung Myaing speaks on the occasion of the 149<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Myanmar Railways in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

had performed their duties with excellence at various railway

stations, divisions, factories, and hospitals during the 2025-

2026 financial year. — MNA/MKKS

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# NATIONAL

## MR launches DEMU express trains on Yangon-Mandalay railway

MYANMA Railways has begun operating 5 Up, and 6 Down express passenger trains on the Yangon-Mandalay route using modern air-conditioned DEMU train sets to improve travel convenience for the public.

Track upgrading works on the Yangon-Toungoo section were completed with a Japanese ODA loan, while the Toungoo-Nay Pyi Taw and Nay Pyi Taw-Mandalay sections were upgraded with state funds. As a result, train speeds have increased and journey times have been reduced.

Inauguration ceremonies were held at the Yangon Railway Station and Mandalay Railway Station yesterday



The launching ceremony of modern air-conditioned DEMU trains on the Yangon-Mandalay section is in progress yesterday.

morning, attended by regional chief ministers, the deputy

minister, officials, and residents. The trains departed at

6 am from both Yangon and Mandalay.

The DEMU train consists of six carriages — four first-class and two upper-class — with a capacity of 312 passengers. Ticket fares for the full journey are K34,000 for first class and K48,000 for upper class. The trains stop at nine stations, including Bago, Toungoo, Pyinmana, Nay Pyi Taw, Yamethin, Thazi, and Kyaukse.

The journey now takes about 10 hours, significantly reduced from the previous travel time of around 19 hours, due to improved tracks, modern signalling systems, and upgraded locomotives and coaches. — MNA/KZL

## MRESA launches AML/CFT, FATF training for Yangon realty agents



The opening ceremony of a multiplier training programme on AML/CFT & FATF-related knowledge for real estate agents is underway in Yangon yesterday.

THE Myanmar Real Estate Services Association (MRESA) held the opening ceremony of a multiplier training programme on AML/CFT and FATF-related knowledge for real estate agents at Sky Star Hotel in Tamway Township, Yangon, yesterday morning.

The training covers the duties and responsibilities of real estate agents under AML/CFT frameworks, reporting procedures, and cooperation with relevant supervisory authorities, as well as the FATF global standards, methodology, and procedures.

At the ceremony, the Chair of the Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Com-

mittee and Vice-Chair of the Joint Bill Committee of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Dr Nanda Kyaw Swa delivered the opening remarks, followed by a welcome speech from MRESA (Central) Chair U Khin Maung Than.

The President of the Thai Real Estate Broker Association, Mr Prawitt Anusiri, gave a knowledge-sharing presentation on AML/CFT compliance by estate agents, including reporting to the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) and cooperation with government authorities.

The MRESA (Central) Third Vice-Chair, U Kyaw Tint, explained AML/CFT duties,

reporting systems, and FATF standards, while Yangon Region Real Estate Services Association Chair Daw Myat Mo Mo outlined action plans and progress reports implemented in cooperation with the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) during the period 2020-2026.

Representatives from township-level associations also demonstrated practical reporting processes, including monthly and quarterly submissions, as well as Customer Due Diligence (CDD), Enhanced Due Diligence (EDD), and reporting systems such as TTR and STR, before the ceremony concluded. — Bala/KZL

## Embassy warns Myanmar workers against carrying prohibited items to S Korea

THE Myanmar Embassy to the Republic of Korea (ROK) announced on 29 April urged Myanmar workers to avoid bringing prohibited items strictly, as violations could lead to heavy fines and permanent entry bans.

A group of 123 new manufacturing workers, dispatched under the Employment Permit System (EPS) through the Government Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), arrived at Incheon International Airport on 28 April via Korean Air flight KE492. During the entry process, the Myanmar Labour Attaché had to assist several workers who were found carrying restricted items.

The embassy cautioned that if any of the following items

are discovered, they will be confiscated, and the individual may face a ban from entering South Korea or a fine of up to 10 million Won: meat and meat products, dairy products, animal products, fruits and vegetables, and seeds and plants.

As Chargé d'Affaires of the embassy, Ambassador U Myo Myint Maung greeted the newly arrived workers via a video call. He encouraged them to prioritize their health, strictly adhere to workplace safety regulations and the laws of both countries, and stay focused on their original goals. He also reminded them that they may contact the embassy at any time should they encounter any difficulties. — MT/ZN



New Myanmar workers arriving at Incheon International Airport on 28 April.

# NATIONAL

## Union Labour Minister attends International Workers' Day Ceremony

THE International Workers' Day ceremony was held yesterday morning at the Hlinethaya (West) Township Hall and was attended by Union Minister for Labour U Khin Maung Soe and relevant officials.

Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe first read out a congratulatory message from President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Agga Maha Thray Sithu Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma U Min Aung Hlaing, on the occasion of the International Workers' Day celebration.

Afterwards, a video clip was shown showing the labour affairs activities of the Ministry of La-

hour, and a labour representative and an employer representative spoke in honour of the International Workers' Day.

The Union minister and officials also toured the photographs of labour affairs activities displayed in honour of International Workers' Day.

In the afternoon, the Union minister and officials visited the Skill Training Centre (Yankin) in Yankin Township, attended the International Workers' Day ceremony at the centre's conference hall, received a donation of K10 million from Thukha Su San Company Limited for the Workers' Hospital (Htantabin),

and expressed their gratitude.

Subsequently, the Union minister met officers and staff members of the training school and instructed them to systematically draft and implement skill training and assessment programmes that meet labour market demands and enable trainees to become truly proficient, while emphasizing that the courses should be effective, practical, and supportive of national economic development, and highlighting the importance of promoting green skills and green jobs to protect the environment and facilitate a transition from technical proficiency to sustain-



Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe reads out the congratulatory message from President Agga Maha Thray Sithu Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma U Min Aung Hlaing at yesterday's International Workers' Day event.

able green business practices.

The Union minister and officials then visited the Yangon Region Social Security Board Office on Maha Bandoola Park Road to meet with staff and doctors-in-charge from the Yangon Region, where the Union minister instructed them to strive for the efficient delivery of healthcare

services and cash benefits provided by the Social Security Board to better serve insured workers and work toward the realization of a nationwide coverage scheme, and subsequently inspected the medical services being provided at the Social Security Board-Care Well Clinic at the same location. — MNA/TH



Images at top and above show the detention site of 43 undocumented Chinese nationals arrested near Wammai Village in Kali, Kunhing Township.

AUTHORITIES arrested 43 foreign nationals illegally residing in Myanmar near Wammai Village, Kali, Kunhing Township, yesterday.

A joint task force conducted a search following reports of illegal entrants at the jetty of the Thanlwin River

and detained the individuals early in the morning.

Preliminary statements indicate they had been involved in illegal online gambling activities and were attempting to return to China when apprehended.

The government con-

tinues coordinated efforts with relevant agencies and neighbouring countries to combat online fraud and illegal gambling, and will take action in accordance with the law while repatriating foreign nationals as appropriate. — MNA/KZL



## Myanmar reports no new COVID-19 cases

THE Ministry of Health tested 43 samples from 8 pm on 31 March 2026 to 8 pm on 30 April 2026, and no new cases were detected.

Currently, there is no need to worry about infection and deaths from COVID-19, but all need to follow personal hygiene methods, and the high-risk groups.

- Elderly people (aged 60 and above)
- People with diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, and cancer
- Pregnant women (especially those beyond the third month of pregnancy) are prioritized to receive COVID-19 booster shots.

More detailed COVID-19 information can be found on the website of the Ministry of Health, moh.gov.mm.

Myanmar CDC  
Public Health Department,  
Ministry of Health

### Public Notice

THE Anti-Corruption Commission has established corruption prevention units within ministries to curb corruption effectively.

The ACC used SMS on mobile phones to ask the public who sought services at an office of the department of the relevant ministries via short code No "1111" for feedback, including the public feedback programme (PFP).

According to the PFP, the proper replies of the citizens via short code No "1111" will provide the quality of services of each department and the requirements for corruption prevention to be fixed.

Therefore, the public should reply to the questions of the ACC and corruption prevention units of the ministries via SMS at short code "1111". Such doing is a supportive measure for PFP, and the people are urged to cooperate in the operations.

Anti-Corruption Commission

## Yangon palm oil wholesale reference price shows uptick

THE wholesale reference rate of palm oil set for the Yangon market slightly increased to K7,380 per viss this week ending 7 May, up from K7,285 per viss last week ending 30 April, according to the Supervisory Committee on Edible Oil Import and Distribution.

The rise in palm oil price was attributed to a sharp drop in the palm oil output in major producing countries starting from January 2026, strengthening Malaysia's ringgit, Indonesia's tax hike in palm oil export from 10 per cent to 12.5 per cent starting from 1 March, and the Department of Consumer Affairs' speculation on the market price.

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.



Workers are seen organizing jerrycans of cooking oil for distribution and sale.

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 annually imported through Malaysia and Indonesia to meet domestic demands. — NN/KK

## Tender invited for Hajj pilgrimage services

THE 2026 Hajj Pilgrimage Evaluation Committee invited travel companies to submit a tender to provide Hajj pilgrimage services. The Committee invited travel companies that are established in accordance with the Myanmar Companies Law and its regulations, and that have obtained recognition (Mu'assasah licence) from the Saudi Arabian Embassy to Myanmar, to submit tenders to coordinate Hajj services for 350 pilgrims.

Tender form and bid documents are available at the Yangon Region Religious Affairs Office located on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Mayangon Township, Yangon at 09 2038563 and the Islamic Religious Affairs Council Myanmar located at 184, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Bo Sun Pak Road, Pabedan Township, Yangon at 01 388146 from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm between 1 and 3 May.

Completed tender forms must be sealed and submitted to the Yangon Region Religious Affairs Office located on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Mayangon Township, Yangon, at noon on 4 May.

The tenders will be opened and evaluated in the presence of bidders at 2 pm on 4 May at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Yangon Branch), located on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Mayangon Township, Yangon. The successful bidder will be confirmed at that time.

The committee will make the final decision. Late submission or application that do not meet the specified requirements will not be considered, the committee stated. — NN/KK

## MyanTrade eyes US market for Pawsan rice exports

THE Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization (MyanTrade) hosted a virtual meeting on 29 April to discuss the potential of exporting Myanmar's Pawsan rice to the United States.

The director-general and officials from the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization, the consul-general and officials from the Myanmar Consulate-General in Los Angeles, USA, the Myanmar commercial attaché to the US, officials from the Department of

Agriculture, representatives from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) and representatives from Well Luck Co Ltd of the United States attended the meeting.

MyanTrade Director-General Dr Htein Lin and Consul-General Daw Win Lei Phyu of the Myanmar Consulate-General in Los Angeles delivered opening remarks. Afterwards,

MRF President U Ye Min Aung and officials discussed matters with representatives from Well Luck Co Ltd regarding procedures to export Myanmar's Pawsan rice to the US and the FDA regulations of the US. Sending a sample of Myanmar's Pawsan rice to the US and then conveying about one container of Myanmar's Pawsan rice as an initial stage was discussed, MyanTrade stated. — NN/KK

## EOI invited for urban development project at Yinpyan railway station

THE Tender and Evaluation Committee of the Mandalay Region government invited domestic and foreign companies to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to carry out urban development projects at Yinpyan railway station. Myanma Railways intends to imple-

ment an Urban Development Project on a 7.5143-acre plot within the Yinpyan railway station yard in Chanayethazan Township, Mahaangmyay District, Mandalay Region, with the aim of fostering economic activities and infrastructure development related to railway trans-

port.

The project will be carried out under the BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) system, covering design, construction, financing, and operation. The EOI form can be obtained free of charge at the General Manager's Office

(Upper Myanmar), 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Mandalay Station by 15 May.

Individuals can enquire about details by dialling 09 891750134 of the Business Department, Myanma Railways (Head Office) in Nay Pyi Taw. — NN/KK

# OPINION

## Hand in hand with the Government to develop the nation

**I**N RECOGNITION of workers, who are a vital driving force essential to national economic development, Labour Day has been commemorated annually. The observance of the commemorative day has reached its 88th anniversary on 1 May 2026.

The government is promoting and supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to expand domestic employment opportunities, reduce unemployment, boost domestic production, increase exports, and substitute imports. Under the new administration, certain restrictions have been eased, and loans are being provided to facilitate the growth and development of MSMEs.

The State and Tatmadaw are enhancing the abilities and morale of young people so that they can broaden their knowledge and gain access to opportunities. Tatmadaw stand together with the people, and all of its actions are solely for the benefit of the country and its citizens. Therefore, successive generations of youth are expected to continue taking responsibility for and safeguarding the nation. The reason maritime and aviation youth training courses are being conducted for young men and women is to pass on the responsibilities and heritage that future generations will continue to carry forward.

Workers, who are the country's main productive force, are able to enjoy greater social security and healthcare services. By increasing public trust in the social security system, productivity can be improved, which in turn significantly contributes to the national economy. With this objective, workers' hospitals, social security clinics, departmental clinics, traditional medicine clinics, mobile medical units, as well as contracted clinics have been established to provide healthcare services to insured workers.

Labour attachés have been appointed and assigned in countries such as Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand. In countries where there are no labour attachés, protection and assistance are provided through Myanmar embassies and consulates-general in the respective countries. For Myanmar workers employed abroad, labour attachés, together with Myanmar embassies and consulates-general, take responsibility for addressing grievances, workplace injuries, and fatalities, and coordinate with relevant parties to ensure that workers receive their entitled rights and benefits.

Efforts are being made to promote and enhance education in order to nurture a strong human resource base equipped with knowledge and skills. Upon completing at least the KG+9 level in the education system, vocational training is also provided to enable individuals to become skilled in agriculture, livestock breeding, and industrial fields.

In addition, efforts to eliminate child labour have been carried out through five-year plans since 2019, with the industrial manufacturing sector and the trade and commerce sector designated as priority areas for implementation. School dropouts who enter the workforce prematurely reduce the number of knowledgeable and skilled professionals needed for the country's future. Therefore, it is urged that everyone cooperate and participate in efforts to eliminate child labour.

The Government, employers, and workers are cooperating through a tripartite approach to develop a skilled labour force and to create more employment opportunities. In honour of International Workers' Day, workers have to work hand in hand with the Government for the development of the nation.

# A Visit to the Moegaung Pagoda Festival

By Maung Maung Aye

**I**HAD six consecutive holidays in the middle of February, so I paid a visit to the Moegaung Pagoda located on Moegaung Pagoda Road in Yankin Township in one evening. It is near the Kanbal Railway Station Road, which is busy with daily traffic and people.

When I reached the Moegaung Road, it was 5 pm on 13 February. Many stalls were mushrooming around the precincts. Moegaung monastery is near the Moegaung Pagoda. I looked up at the signboard reading the 'Moegaung Buddha Pujaniya Festival (10 February)'. Then, I walked ahead towards the western archway gate. Many crowds were jostling against each other. Due to the six-holiday continuum, many pwe-goers (festival-goers) arrived.

I shouldered my way through them. I smelt a few odours wafting from the stalls. I heard some noises coming from Zat Pwe (theatrical performance show). I felt my handphone in my wallet, took it out and took documentary photos about the bustling situations of the pwe. Then, I hurried to the western archway gate that was the nearest to the Moegaung Pagoda Road. I had to pass the stalls selling religious books, flowers, joss-sticks, etc.

Legend has it thus: This Moegaung Pagoda was one of 84,000 pagodas or stupas built by King Asoka with the deposition of Buddha's hair relics and bodily relics in them. Its original name was "Siri Mingala Ceti". It is 99 feet high. During its renovation, heavy rain fell. It is called 'Moegaung Pagoda', meaning a heavy rain after this phenomenal event. Even the 'Moegaung' Consort cum Mon Queen Shin Saw Pu, had renovated it.

As soon as I got to the precinct, I paid homage to the Moegaung Pagoda that was sublime and glittering under the floodlights. To my heart's content, I said prayers. I sat in meditation for some minutes. Then, I stood up and walked again. With the zephyr blowing, it was pleasant on the platform. I walked clockwise. I saw a man striking a big bell, some reciting "Maha Samaya Sutta" in a Tazaung (prayer hall), some telling rosary beads, some offering flowers to the sacred images and some children running about on the platform. There were Dhamma Beikman and Tazaungs in which the Buddha images were housed. Venerable Sivali image and Venerable Uppaguta, 28 Buddha images were found on the platform, and I also saw a leafy and branchy Bodhi tree (Wisdom Tree).

To my amazement, I saw a middle-aged woman with a child near her massaging the shoulders and arms of the seated Statue "Bo Bo Gyi" near the western archway gate. When I enquired about this statue, she replied to me that it was the statue of a great alchemist

grounds around the pagoda. I saw rows of market stalls with temporary roofs. There were also

merry-go-rounds, Ferris wheels, and Myanmar theatres. I enjoyed walking between the varieties of Myanmar snacks and trying just a little. Some stalls sold products from all over Myanmar - baskets, mats, bags, handwoven textiles, etc. Some enjoyed Myanmar foods and snacks.



I looked up at the advert signboard. It showed the name of the

Festival was celebrated on the



watching their happy and carefree movements. Near the playground, there were toy stalls. Some sellers used megaphone loud hailers to announce the prices. Parents and children could hear the prices clearly.

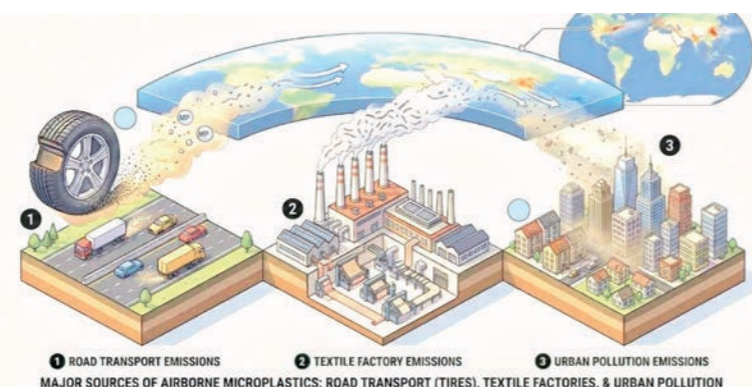
Festival-comers came from different walks of life. Most pwe-goers wore nice clothes, and they looked affordable. Young people enjoyed walking back and forth in the festive area and often ate delicious food. Some were families walking together with their family members. A lot of lovers reached there because Saint Valentine's Day will be held tomorrow. Amongst them, I saw a woman beggar wearing old or torn clothes hugging her baby to her breast. She was pitifully asking for money and food for her and her baby's survival. I gave away a one-thousand note to her.

I saw some BBQ stalls along the Moegaung Pagoda Road. They sold fried quails, fried eggs, fried chicken, fried duck, grilled pork, mutton, and steaks. The young people prefer to eat them. Some stalls sold traditional Myanmar snacks like Yay Mont and Myanmar traditional snacks.

People from near and far flocked to this festival. Even though it was at night, they did not worry about going home. There was a taxi parking yard and many vehicles, such as Hilux cars, Dynas, and YBS buses, in front of Moegaung Pagoda. So, it was easy for them to return home.

To conclude, my visit to the Moegaung Pagoda in Yankin, a historic and wish-fulfilled pagoda, was a rewarding trip because I gained merits due to my good deeds in the precincts. Besides, I could enjoy the pleasant festive night during my holidays. It was bound that my visit there would be a memorable one in the future.

## Scientists find where airborne microplastics really come from: Study



This infographic illustrates how road transport, textile manufacturing, and urban activity serve as primary contributors to the global spread of airborne microplastics.

**M**ICROPLASTICS are floating through the atmosphere and spreading across the globe, but their true origins have been misunderstood. New research shows land sources emit over 20 times more microplastic particles into the air than the ocean, challenging earlier beliefs. Scientists also discovered that previous models dramatically overestimated how

much plastic is in the atmosphere. The atmosphere plays a major role in spreading microplastics across the planet, carrying these tiny particles to even the most remote regions. People and animals can inhale them, raising concerns about potential health effects. Once airborne, microplastics can also fall back to Earth, adding to pollution in oceans and soils around the world. A new study from the Department of Meteorology and Geophysics at the University of Vienna provides a clearer picture of where these airborne microplastics come from. Using global measurements and computer models, the researchers estimate emissions from both land and ocean sources. Their key finding is striking: more

than 20 times as many microplastic particles are released into the air from land than from the ocean. The study was recently published in Nature. Sources of Airborne Microplastics Scientists have long known that microplastics are present in the atmosphere worldwide. These particles eventually settle in distant and isolated locations. They originate from direct sources such as tyre abrasion and textile fibres, as well as from previously contaminated land and ocean surfaces that release particles back into the air. Until now, the scale of these emissions and the contribution of each source were not well understood. Earlier research often pointed to the ocean as the main contributor, but the new findings challenge that assumption. Comparing Models With Real-World Measurements To better understand the problem, researchers Ioanna Evangelou, Silvia Bucci and Andreas Stohl compiled 2,782 individual measurements of atmospheric microplastics from studies conducted around the world. **SOURCE: ANI**

# NATIONAL

## MRCs, IFRC hold pre-disaster talks on heatwave, monsoon preparedness



The Heatwave and Monsoon Season Preparedness (Pre-Disaster) Meeting is underway at the Myanmar Red Cross Society Yangon Branch on 28-29 April 2026.

THE Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCs), in collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), held a Heatwave and Monsoon Season Preparedness (Pre-Disaster) Meeting in a hybrid format at the MRCs Yangon Branch on 28 and 29 April.

The meeting aimed to

review experiences, achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from disaster response activities during the 2025-2026 period, and to strengthen preparedness to mitigate risks in the upcoming season.

Discussions focused on major natural hazards commonly affecting Nay Pyi Taw and other regions and

states, as well as on logistics readiness and procurement arrangements for future disaster response.

Officials from MRCs, IFRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Red Cross societies from Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, and the Republic of Korea attended the meeting. — ASH/KZL

## Meteorologist warns of summer storms, lightning risks in pre-monsoon period

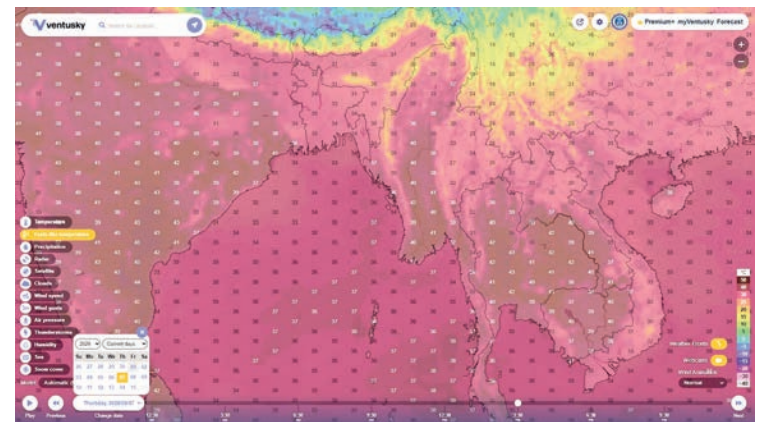
METEOROLOGIST U Win Nang has issued a warning for the public against sudden summer storms, strong winds, and lightning strikes that typically occur in the evenings during this pre-monsoon phase.

According to forecast maps from the Ventusky ICON Model, a significant temperature rise between 6 and 8 May may lead to convective rain. These conditions are expected to cause localized heavy rain, strong gusts, and lightning strikes, particularly in Upper Myanmar, Shan State, and mountainous regions.

After 8 May, cloud density is expected to increase in the Andaman Sea and South Bay

of Bengal, signalling a potential expansion of rainfall areas. During May's second week, temperatures may surge again. Temperatures in Central and Lower Myanmar may be between 37°C and 40°C, and the "Feels-like" is projected to reach 41°C to 44°C. Residents in the Ayeyawady, Yangon, and Magway Regions are expected to experience the most intense heat.

Sea surface temperatures in the Bay of Bengal are currently between 30°C and 31°C, and consistent southerly winds carrying moisture from the sea may continue to flow into Myanmar, resulting in the sultry weather. — MT/ZN



Weather forecast maps from the Ventusky ICON Model as of 1:45 pm on 1 May.

## Yangonites flock to recreational spots to escape scorching heat

PEOPLE have been visiting recreation places located in or near Yangon as an activity to escape the intense summer heat, according to sources from the tourism industry.

In particular, beaches and resorts, which can offer a natural and cosy environment for relaxation, have been more popular. In addition to Chaungtha and Ngwehsaung beaches, Kyaukhnyat, Zalattaw and Sal Eain Tan are popular day-trip destinations for tourists who wish to go for



Visitors at Zalattaw. PHOTO: HTOO MYAT KYAW TRAVEL & TOUR

relaxation during the summer months. Camping sites located near Yangon have recently become popular among local tourists to escape the summer heat.

The weather is so hot that people go on trips to cooler places. They take long-distance journeys during long holidays, but they go to camps or resorts near Yangon to relax during short holidays, according to a travel agency.

During this public holiday, some have gone on vacation with family, and there are people who

go on trips by connecting with travel companies.

The peak season began in Thadingyut, with visitor arrivals increasing again, as many local tourists arrive in Bagan-NyaungU, Taunggyi, Kalaw, Inlay, PyinOoLwin, Hpa-an, Kyaiktiyo, Chaungtha and Ngwehsaung, as well as overseas destinations.

Also, some people have already made preparations for their early-monsoon trips to Hpa-an, which is very beautiful, especially in the rainy season. — MT/ZS

### Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanmar Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit [www.moi.gov.mm/mal](http://www.moi.gov.mm/mal), [www.moi.gov.mm/km](http://www.moi.gov.mm/km), [www.moi.gov.mm/nlm](http://www.moi.gov.mm/nlm) and [www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper](http://www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper).

News and Periodicals Enterprise



## Sweden fetes king's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday with flypast, banquets

*In a recent interview, the Swedish King reflected on the weight of responsibility tied to his royal duties, contrasting his current role with his younger reputation as a car-loving playboy.*

SWEDEN feted its longest reigning monarch King Carl XVI Gustaf's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on Thursday with a choral tribute, a flypast and a gala banquet to be attended by royals from around the world.

The king, the longest reigning monarch in Swedish history, took part in a morning thanksgiving celebration, called a Te Deum,

at the palace chapel.

It was to be followed by a military honour guard, a flypast over the palace and a royal salute and a choral tribute before a lunch at City Hall. A banquet was to be held in the evening, with a number of European royals and dignitaries invited, as well as Thailand's royal couple.



Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf (L) and Sweden's Queen Silvia applaud from the balcony as members of the Swedish Armed Forces pay tribute to the King at the Outer Courtyard of the Royal Palace in Stockholm, Sweden, on 30 April 2026, during celebrations to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf.

PHOTO: JONATHAN NACKSTRAND / AFP

Attendees at the events include King Harald, Queen Sonja and Crown Prince Haakon of Nor-

way; King Rama X and Queen Suthide of Thailand; Queen Sofia of Spain; and King Frederik,

Queen Mary, Queen Margrethe and Princess Benedikte of Denmark. — AFP

## Statue pops up on London plinth bearing Banksy's name

A large statue has appeared on a plinth in central London with Banksy's name scrawled on the base, prompting speculation Thursday that it may be the famously enigmatic street artist's latest work.

The statue — of a suited man marching, with one leg off the plinth, while carrying

a flag that is covering his face — reportedly first emerged on Wednesday just off the central street of Pall Mall.

Banksy, whose real identity has not been officially confirmed, has not claimed the piece as his own on his Instagram account.

The artist — best known

for his satirical murals, often using a distinctive stencilling style — typically uses the platform to confirm his works, posting images and a caption.

The appearance of the statue comes just over a month after a Reuters investigation claimed to have confirmed the artist's true identity. — AFP



The statue suddenly appeared in central London. PHOTO: AFP

## From school to postgraduate, girls now outnumber boys in Indian education across

INDIAN girls now outnumber boys in education across school, postgraduate, and MPhil programmes. Data from 2021-22 shows a reversal in the gender gap. The Gender Parity Index (GPI), which compares female to male enrolment, has crossed 1.0 at several educational levels. This indicates higher female participation.

Overall higher education shows a GPI of approximately 1.01. This means slightly more women are enrolled than men. The trend strengthens at postgraduate levels.

The GPI at the postgraduate level reached about 1.11. This signifies a notable female majority in these programmes. MPhil courses show an even wider gap. The GPI here is around 1.33, indicating substantially more women than men. At the PhD level, the gap narrows. The GPI is just below parity at 0.98. This suggests nearly equal enrolment of men and women in doctoral studies.

Girls' enrolment has also reached or surpassed boys in



Indian girls now outnumber boys in education across school, postgraduate, and MPhil programmes. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

several school education stages. Improved retention rates among girls contribute to this shift.

Reduced dropout rates for girls also play a role. Government initiatives have supported this growth. Better school infrastructure is a factor. Increased awareness about the importance of girls' education is also key. — ANI

# ECONOMY WORLD



This photo, taken on 24 April 2026, shows the Audi booth at the 2026 Beijing International Automotive Exhibition. **PHOTO: CHINA.ORG.CN**

## German, Chinese automakers forge deeper ties to seize new energy vehicle opportunities

*Audi's display stands as a prime example of this accelerated transition to electric vehicles.*

AT the ongoing 2026 Beijing International Automotive Exhibition, German automotive giants Audi, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz, joining forces with their Chinese partners like FAW Group and SAIC Motor, unveiled a slew of new electrified products, technologies, and experiences, signaling a concerted push to capture the immense opportunities in the booming new energy vehicle (NEV) sector.

Audi's display stands as a

prime example of this accelerated transition to electric vehicles. Beyond the launch of the mid-to-large-sized coupe SUV SQ8, the spotlight is firmly on its electric lineup, including the newly launched luxury all-electric sedan A6L e-tron and the upgraded Q6L e-tron family. These models are central to Audi's electrification strategy in China. Significantly, both the A6L e-tron and Q6L e-tron roll off the production lines at Audi

FAW NEV Co, Ltd, in Changchun, northeast China. This joint venture, established in 2021 with an investment exceeding 30 billion yuan (about US\$4.37 billion) and involving Audi, FAW, and Volkswagen Group China, is Audi's first dedicated pure electric vehicle production base in China. Spanning 1.54 million square metres with a planned annual capacity of 150,000 units, the facility is a "super smart eco-factory". — Xinhua

## Japan conducted intervention to stem yen's fall against dollar: sources

JAPANESE authorities intervened in the currency market on Thursday to stem the yen's rapid fall to the upper 160 range against the US dollar, government sources said, stepping into the market for the first time in one year and 10 months.

The government is believed to have judged speculative moves are heightening in

the foreign exchange market. The Japanese currency surged nearly five yen to the 155 zone against the dollar within hours on Thursday. Japan's top currency diplomat, Atsushi Mimura, on Friday declined to comment on the foreign exchange market intervention, saying, "I have no intention to comment on such matters." Af-

ter the yen weakened to 160.72 in Tokyo trading Thursday, its lowest level since July 2024, amid the Middle East crisis, the government likely intervened given the risk of further yen selling during thin trading in the Golden Week holiday period through next week in Japan, market watchers said. — Kyodo

### NEWS IN BIREF

#### French economy records zero growth in first quarter

FRANCE'S economy recorded zero growth in the first quarter of this year due to "sluggish" domestic demand and a "strongly" negative contribution from foreign trade, the national statistics agency INSEE said Thursday.

The first estimation of first quarter gross domestic product (GDP) shows the impact of the war in the Middle East, which began on 28 February.

As little as two weeks ago, the French central bank estimated that the country's economy could grow by as much as 0.3 per cent in January through March, while INSEE had cut its forecast from 0.3 per cent to 0.2 per cent growth at the end of March.

France's economy had expanded by 0.2 per cent in the final quarter of 2025. — AFP

## OPEC grip on oil market weakening, supply recovery may take 6-9 months

THE dominance of OPEC in the global oil market is gradually weakening, and the current supply disruption linked to the Strait of Hormuz could take up to six to nine months to normalise, said June Goh, Senior Oil Market Analyst, Sparta Commodities.

In an exclusive conversation with ANI on Thursday, Goh said the reduced influence of OPEC is not a sudden development but a trend that has been evolving over the years, particularly with the rise of US shale production.

"I think the trend started

from back in the 2010s when US Shale became a big thing, and in the 2020s, there was another re-emergence of US crude being politically available in the market... So there is already a reduced dominance of OPEC plus in the oil market since then," she said.

She added that with the UAE now looking to increase its production capacity to five million barrels per day by 2027, OPEC+ is likely to have "lower significance" in the global market, although it will still remain a powerful player. — ANI



The photo shows a view of installations of an oil refinery. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

### Afghanistan's Herat launches women-only bazaar

A women-only market has officially opened in western Afghanistan's Herat province, providing a dedicated space where dozens of female entrepreneurs sell their products exclusively to women customers, local media outlet TOLONews reported on Thursday.

The initiative aims to create a safe and supportive commercial environment for women in business, according to the report. The market features a variety of women-made handicrafts, traditional products, and food items.

"This market is very useful for recognition and increasing women's future sales. Our trainees and our work are being introduced," TOLONews quoted Golafruz Najafi, a local entrepreneur as saying. — ANI

### Apple reports record March-quarter revenue

APPLE on Thursday announced financial results for its financial 2026 second quarter ended 28 March, with quarterly revenue of US\$111.2 billion, up 17 per cent year over year.

The company posted quarterly earnings per diluted share of \$2.01, up 22 per cent year over year. Its net income for the quarter increased to \$29.58 billion from \$24.78 billion a year ago. The company's service sales rose to \$30.98 billion from \$26.65 billion year on year, and its sales of iPhone increased to \$56.99 billion from \$46.84 billion a year ago. — Xinhua

### Nigerian airlines avert shutdown as Iran war hikes fuel prices

NIGERIAN airlines continued flying Thursday despite threatening a shutdown over sky-high jet fuel prices roiling the industry in Africa's top crude producer and most populous nation.

It is the second time a strike has been averted in as many weeks, with government talks with airlines having already resulted in a promise to grant carriers debt relief. Global crude oil prices have been hiked since the United States and Israel's attacks on Iran prompted Tehran to shut the Strait of Hormuz - soaring above \$126 per barrel on Thursday, the highest level since 2022. — AFP

## Japan, Malaysia's energy firm Petronas agree on stable supply of urea

JAPAN'S agriculture minister agreed on Friday with Malaysia's state-owned oil company Petronas to secure a continued and stable supply of urea, amid serious disruptions in global energy and fertilizer trade triggered by the Middle East conflict.

Norikazu Suzuki, who heads the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, made the request to Petronas regarding the key raw material for fertilizers. Sazali Hamzah, an executive vice-president of the firm, assured the Japanese delegation at the outset of their meeting, "Petronas will ensure that the urea supply to Japan will always be protected."

More than 70 per cent of urea imported by Japan come from Malaysia, according to the Japanese ministry.

Suzuki, who met the Petronas delegation led by Sazali, said Petronas agreed to discuss with the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations an extension of the current two-year contract to supply urea to Japan.

During his Malaysia trip,



Urea is the most widely used solid nitrogen fertilizer in the world, valued for its high nitrogen concentration of 46 per cent. **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/PEXELS**

Suzuki met several importers of Japanese products and promoted Japanese rice. He also visited a store of Jaya Grocer,

a local premium supermarket chain, where he toured sections selling Japanese fruits and beef. — Kyodo

## Air India Express reinstates operations in Gulf



Bahrain International Airport. **PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/FILE**

AIR India Express, India's first international value carrier, has announced the reinstatement of operations to Qatar and Bahrain, along with additional flights to the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia, starting 30 April. Flights have resumed from major Indian metros and regional gateways, including Amritsar, Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kochi, Kozhikode, Kannur, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Mumbai, Tiruchirappalli, Thiruvananthapuram and Varanasi. Air India Express will continue operating to Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah, Jeddah, Riyadh and Muscat, with the reinstatement

of established routes connecting India to the Gulf region.

Air India Express is A Tata Enterprise, operating over 500 daily flights that connect 45 domestic and 17 international destinations across South, Southeast and West Asia. The airline has a fleet of over 100 Boeing 737s and Airbus A320 aeroplanes. As India's most vibrant and inclusive airline, Air India Express embodies the spirit and confidence of India - warm, expressive, and proudly authentic. Encouraging travellers to 'Xplore More, Xpress More', the airline transforms flying into an experience that is personal and memorable. — ANI

# GLOBAL VIEWPOINTS:

## WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS



US Ships at Naval Station Rota, Spain 6 December 2022. PHOTO: REDDIT/FILE

## Trump weighs troop cuts in Italy, Spain amid Iran conflict

**US** PRESIDENT Donald Trump has hinted at a potential withdrawal of American military personnel from Italy and Spain, launching a scathing critique of both nations regarding their positions on the persisting conflict with Iran.

The move has further exacerbated the widening diplomatic chasm between Washington and its traditional European partners.

Addressing the media at the Oval Office, the US President confirmed that he is actively evaluating a scale-back of troop deployments. When questioned about possible reductions in the two NATO member states, Trump remarked, "Yeah, probably, I probably will. Why shouldn't I?"

He further expressed his dissatis-

*The move has further exacerbated the widening diplomatic chasm between Washington and its traditional European partners.*

faction with their lack of cooperation, stating, "Italy has not been of any help to us and Spain has been horrible, absolutely horrible."

These developments represent a fresh peak in hostilities between the

United States and its NATO allies, many of whom have declined to participate directly in the US-led military offensive against Iran or the mission to secure the Strait of Hormuz.

The President's remarks regarding Italy and Spain follow closely on the heels of his announcement that Washington is "studying and reviewing the possible reduction" of its military presence in Germany, indicating a systematic re-evaluation of the US strategic footprint across Europe.

Official data from late 2025 shows that the US maintains a significant presence in the region, with 12,662 active-duty troops in Italy and 3,814 in Spain, while Germany remains the primary hub with over 36,000 personnel. — ANI

## China predicts over 344 mln inter-regional trips on first day of May Day holiday

CHINA is estimated to witness over 344 million inter-regional passenger trips on Friday, the first day of this year's May Day holiday.

The figure represents a 3.4 per cent increase from the same period last year, the Ministry of Transport said on Friday.

Road trips are expected to reach 315.24 million, marking a 3.2 per cent increase from the same period last year. Railways are forecast to handle 24.8 million passenger trips, up 7.3 per cent year on year, and waterways are expected to see 1.73 million trips, marking a 4.9 per cent increase. — Xinhua



A bullet train runs in the city of Kunming, southwest China's Yunnan Province, 15 February 2026. PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ZHENG YI/XINHUA/FILE



It is a protest against the proposed cuts to subsidies for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the EU's new budget plan for the 2028-2034 period. "Tractors block a street during a farmers' protest near the Europa Building in Brussels, Belgium, 18 December 2025. PHOTO: LYU YOU/XINHUA/FILE

## Blockbuster EU-Mercosur trade deal enters into force

THE European Union's mammoth trade deal with South American bloc Mercosur provisionally enters into force Friday, despite a pending court ruling on its legality.

The agreement to create one of the world's biggest free-trade zones was sealed in January after more than 25 years of intermittent negotiations.

Together, the EU and Mercosur account for 30 per cent of global GDP and more than 700 million consumers.

The deal, which eliminates tariffs on more than 90 per cent of trade between the two sides, has proven divisive in Eu-

rope, with France leading opposition over concerns some of its farmers will be left worse off. But — backed by a majority of EU countries — Brussels ploughed ahead as it pushes to diversify trade in the face of challenges from the United States and China. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen on Friday hailed the start of the deal's implementation, stating on X: "Provisional application will show the agreement's tangible benefits."

She said that "as of now... tariffs start falling" and European companies "are gaining access to new markets". — AFP

# SPORTS

## Infantino confirms Iran's participation in World Cup in US at FIFA Congress

FIFA President Gianni Infantino reaffirmed on Thursday that Iran will participate in the 2026 FIFA World Cup and play its matches in the United States as originally scheduled.

Infantino made the remarks during the 76<sup>th</sup> FIFA Congress at the Vancouver Convention Centre, where football officials from around the world gathered to discuss tournament arrangements, rule changes and preparations for the upcoming event.

Addressing rumors over Iran's participation amid recent regional tensions, Infantino said, "Let me start confirming straightaway that of course Iran will be participating at the FIFA World Cup 2026. And of course, Iran will play in the United States of America." — Xinhua

## Howe says Saudi backers are fully behind Newcastle

EDDIE Howe said Friday he was certain that Newcastle's Saudi backers remain firmly behind the club's efforts to establish itself as one of the best in the world. The 48-year-old Magpies boss said he had held "constructive" discussions with Yasir Al-Rumayyan, governor of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), which holds an 85 per cent stake in the Magpies. Al-Rumayyan is also the chairman of the Premier League club.

The PIF said Thursday it was withdrawing its multi-bil-

lion dollar backing of LIV Golf at the end of the season, plunging the future of the breakaway tour into doubt. But Howe said he believed Newcastle's backers were still committed to the vision they had when they took control at St James' Park in October 2021. — AFP



Eddie Howe's Newcastle are 12<sup>th</sup> in the Premier League. PHOTO:AFP

## Boxing: Japanese stars Inoue, Nakatani make weight for Tokyo Dome showdown

UNDISPUTED super bantamweight world champion Naoya Inoue and challenger Junto Nakatani faced off and talked the talk Friday after making weight on the eve of their highly anticipated title match at Tokyo Dome.

Regarded as two of the world's best pound-for-pound boxers, they both hold unblemished 32-0 records ahead of the showdown in front of an expected record-breaking crowd of around 55,000 at the sold-out venue in central Tokyo.

The 33-year-old Inoue weighed in at the lim-

it of 55.3 kilogrammes (122 pounds), while the 28-year-old Nakatani tipped the scales at 55.1 kilogrammes.

Exuding confidence, Inoue said he was "looking forward" to Saturday's fight and planned to cement his boxing great status with a resounding victory.

"I want this to be the fight that makes people say 'Naoya Inoue was a legend,'" said Inoue, who indicated he was ready to vary his game plan depending on how the fight unfolds. — Kyodo



Undisputed super bantamweight world champion Naoya Inoue (L) and challenger Junto Nakatani pose together at their weigh-in in Tokyo on 1 May 2026, a day before their title match. PHOTO: KYODO

## Tennis: Japan icon Nishikori announces retirement at end of season



File photo shows Kei Nishikori of Japan playing a forehand en route to winning his bronze-medal match against Spain's Rafael Nadal at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics on 14 August 2016. PHOTO: KYODO

JAPANESE tennis icon and former world No 4 Kei Nishikori said on social media Thursday that he will retire at the end of the season.

Nishikori, Japan's most successful men's tennis player, said in early April he was "barely hanging on" in terms of his physical condition, after denying a report of his imminent retirement. In the announcement posted across multiple social media accounts, the 36-year-

old expressed his love of tennis and pride at his career achievements.

"Since I was a child, I was passionate about tennis and I have continued to pursue it with only one goal in my heart: to compete on the world stage," Nishikori wrote. "Reaching the ATP Tour, playing at the highest level of competition, and maintaining a presence in the top 10 is something I am extremely proud of." — Kyodo



## China implements historic zero tariffs for all African nations with diplomatic ties

China has granted zero-tariff access to all 53 African nations with which it holds diplomatic relations. This move aims to increase African exports and support industrial growth as a counter to global protectionism.

CHINA on Friday expanded its zero-tariff treatment to cover all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties, creating new opportunities for Africa to boost exports and industrialization amid the global headwinds of protectionism.

In the early hours of Friday, 24 tonnes of apples from South Africa cleared customs in south China's Shenzhen, becoming the first batch of African goods to benefit from the expanded zero-tariff policy.

China has already scrapped tariffs on 100 per cent of tariff lines for 33 least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa since 1 December 2024. The new zero-tariff policy will benefit the relatively better-off countries such as Kenya, Egypt and Nigeria.

Under the new arrangement, zero tariffs will apply to the 20 African non-LDCs in the form of a preferential tariff rate for two years, during which China will continue to promote the signing of the China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development agreement with relevant African countries. Officials said the agreement will fix zero tariffs as a long-term institutional arrangement.

China's commerce ministry said in a statement that the zero-tariff policy will lend a competitive edge to African products. — Xinhua



Customs officers inspect imported apples to be cleared under the expanded zero-tariff treatment to all 53 African nations at night at Shenzhenwan Port in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong Province, 30 April 2026. PHOTO: MAO SIQIAN/XINHUA

## Iran reportedly recovers buried munitions to rebuild strike capacity: US media

THE Iranian government has stepped up operations to recover missiles and various munitions that were "hidden underground or buried in rubble" following

ing aerial bombardments by the United States and Israel, according to a report by NBC News.

Citing a US official and two additional

sources acquainted with the situation, the report indicates that Tehran is leveraging the current cessation of hostilities to "quickly rebuild its drone and missile capabilities".

The recovery efforts are focused on extracting weaponry previously concealed or submerged under debris caused by the strikes. US officials reportedly believe these actions are intended to ensure Iran is prepared to "launch attacks across the Middle East" should President Donald Trump opt to restart military engagements.

According to NBC News, the push to excavate these strategic assets is viewed as a move to restore offensive capacity in anticipation of any future shifts in the regional security landscape.

This clandestine rearmament effort follows a sharp diplomatic escalation at the United Nations, where Amir Saeid Irvani, Iran's Permanent Representative, hit back at six Arab nations. — ANI



Women walk past a ballistic missile launch vehicle in Tehran on 11 February 2026, during a rally marking the 47th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

## First direct US-Venezuela flight lands Caracas

THE first direct flight between the United States and Venezuela in seven years landed Thursday in Caracas, a new sign of thawing relations after Washington deposed leftist leader Nicolas Maduro.

The flight operated by Envoy Air, a subsidiary of American Airlines, took off at 10:26 am (1426 GMT) from Miami en route to Caracas, where the United States has resumed diplomatic ties after years of tension.

Flight 3599 touched down less than three hours later.

Its manifest included senior officials from Washington flying to Caracas to meet the government, a prospect unthinkable just months ago.

Some took selfies as they disembarked. — AFP