

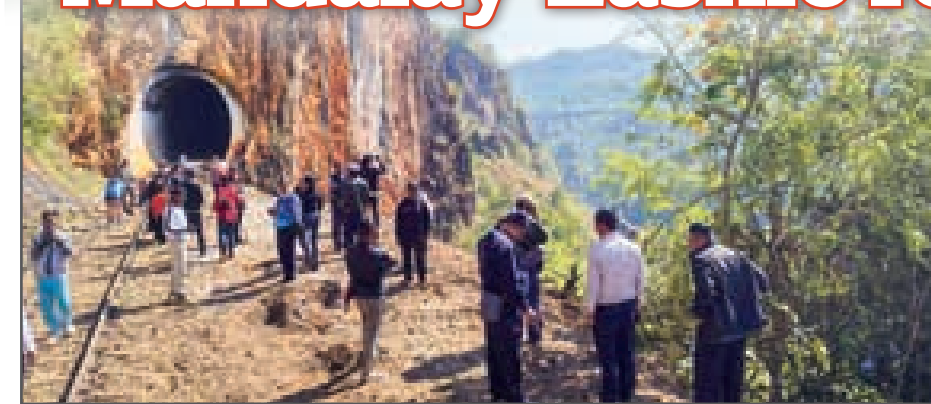
# The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

## 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.



## RBE and BEL trains launch on Mandalay-Lashio route



Top & Above: Photos show a Battery Electric Locomotive (BEL) train ready for its journey and MR (Myanma Railways) personnel working hard to repair rail tracks.

**T**he Ministry of Transport and Communications is operating passenger train services on various railway routes to facilitate public travel by train. The Battery Electric Locomotive (BEL) train operates on the Zeepingyi-PyinOoLwin-Gokteik section of the Mandalay-Lashio route. BEL Up Train 131 runs from Zeepingyi to PyinOoLwin, while BEL Down Train 132 runs from PyinOoLwin to Zeepingyi. In addition, RBE trains operate on the Gokteik routes: Gokteik 1 from PyinOoLwin to Gokteik and Gokteik 2 from Gokteik to PyinOoLwin.

These services have been operating regularly every Saturday and Sunday since 19 December.

The BEL Up Train 131 departs from Zeepingyi Station at 6 am and arrives at PyinOoLwin Station at 7:30 am. The Gokteik 1 RBE train then departs from PyinOoLwin Station at 8 am and arrives at Gokteik Station at 11:30 am. The Gokteik 2 RBE train departs from Gokteik Station at 12:30 pm and arrives back at PyinOoLwin Station at 4 pm. Passengers wishing to continue their journey from PyinOoLwin to Zeepingyi may take the BEL Down Train 132, which

departs from PyinOoLwin Station at 4:15 pm and arrives at Zeepingyi Station at 6 pm, according to reports.

On the morning of 19 December, BEL Up Train 131 departed from Zeepingyi Station carrying 47 passengers. Upon its arrival at PyinOoLwin Station, it was warmly welcomed by departmental staff, village elders, residents, and Shan traditional dance troupes from PyinOoLwin District.

The Zeepingyi-PyinOoLwin and PyinOoLwin-Zeepingyi BEL train service consists of one upper-class passenger coach, two ordinary-class passenger coaches, and one brake coach. Ticket prices are K5,000 for the ordinary class and K10,000 for the upper class for a one-way journey.

On 19 December, the PyinOoLwin-Gokteik-PyinOoLwin RBE train service carried 62 passengers from PyinOoLwin Station to Gokteik Station. Along the route, passengers enjoyed several scenic attractions, including Pwekawk, Wetwun, and Samse. The train stopped at Nawngkhio Station, where residents welcomed the service to mark its maiden trip.

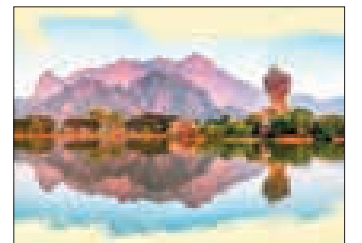
**SEE PAGE 3**

## Article E-Cigarette Danger: A Growing Global and National Burden

By Dr Aung Tun

**PAGE 8-9**

**NATIONAL PAGE 2**



MOHT names top 5 Dec travel destinations

**NATIONAL PAGE 7**



CBM injects over THB8M into business sector on 18 Dec

**NATIONAL PAGE 11**

Initial auditions for Academy receptionists set in 2 sessions

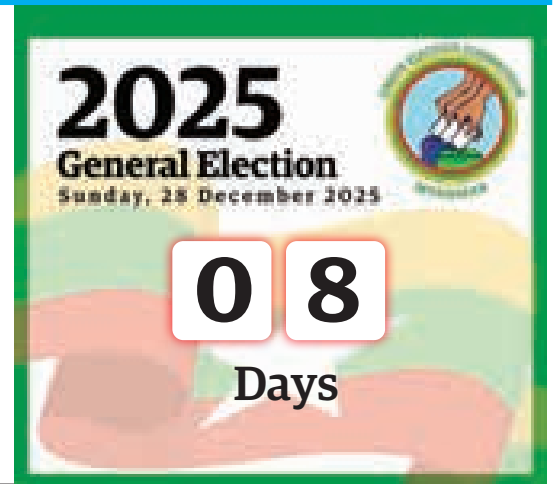
# NATIONAL



## 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.**

### Four National Objectives for 78<sup>th</sup> Independence Day 2025

1. 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
2. To strive forward for national unity and Union peace to implement sustainable and balanced development
3. To establish a genuine, disciplined democratic system completely by exercising the freedom and justice in accordance with the laws and regulations
4. To advance other economic sectors and promote MSMEs based on regional products

### 33<sup>rd</sup> SEA Games Closing Ceremony Live Today

THE closing ceremony of the 33<sup>rd</sup> South-East Asia Games, hosted by Thailand, will be held on the evening of 20 December (today) at the Rajamangala Stadium in Bangkok.

The ceremony will be broadcast live on MRTV HD Channel starting from 6:30 pm Myanmar Standard Time on 20 December until before the 8 pm news programme. The ceremony will continue to be broadcast on MRTV Entertainment Channel, MRTV Sports Channel and MRTV NRC Channel until the end of the closing ceremony. — MNA

### Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Education Department of Myanmar Examinations

#### Announcement

19 December 2025

MATRICULATION Examination will be held in March 2026 according to the following schedule: -

#### 2026 Matriculation Examination Schedule

Date	Time	Subject
11-3-2026 (Wednesday)	9 am to 12 pm	Myanmar
12-3-2026 (Thursday)	9 am to 12 pm	English
13-3-2026 (Friday)	9 am to 12 pm	Mathematics
14-3-2026 (Saturday)	9 am to 12 pm	Chemistry/Geography
16-3-2026 (Monday)	9 am to 12 pm	Physics/History
17-3-2026 (Tuesday)	9 am to 12 pm	Biology/Economics

## MOHT names top 5 Dec travel destinations

PYIN OOLWIN, Taunggyi/Inlay, Kalaw, Chaungtha Beach and Hpa-an are the best and most ideal destinations for going on vacation in December, said the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

December is the travel season in Myanmar, and the weather is pleasant, plus it is also a festive month, so it is the best time for travelling, it said. It has also recommended five local popular destinations- Pyin OoLwin, Taunggyi/Inlay, Kalaw, Chaungtha Beach and Hpa-an for travelling in December.

In Pyin OoLwin, an annual flower festival is held in December, and a vast array of rare flower species are beautifully displayed at the National Kandawgyi Gardens. Taunggyi and Inlay are the perfect destinations for travelling, and visitors can enjoy boating on the Inlay Lake and explore the people of the lake (Inntha) and their traditions and the floating market.

For those who want to en-



Image depicts the five best destinations for visiting in December, recommended by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

joy the cold weather and take an adventure trip, Kalaw is the best for go trekking. For a vacation at Chaungtha, December is the best time for swimming, touring popular islands and enjoying the sunset, plus visitors can create a good memory and fun activities if they coincide with festive days, said the ministry.

Also, for visiting Hpa-an, December is a perfect time to go sightseeing in Kayin State's

beautiful nature; climbing Mount Zwegabin, exploring natural caves and enjoying the beauty of sunset by the river in the cold weather can give you a breathless experience, it said.

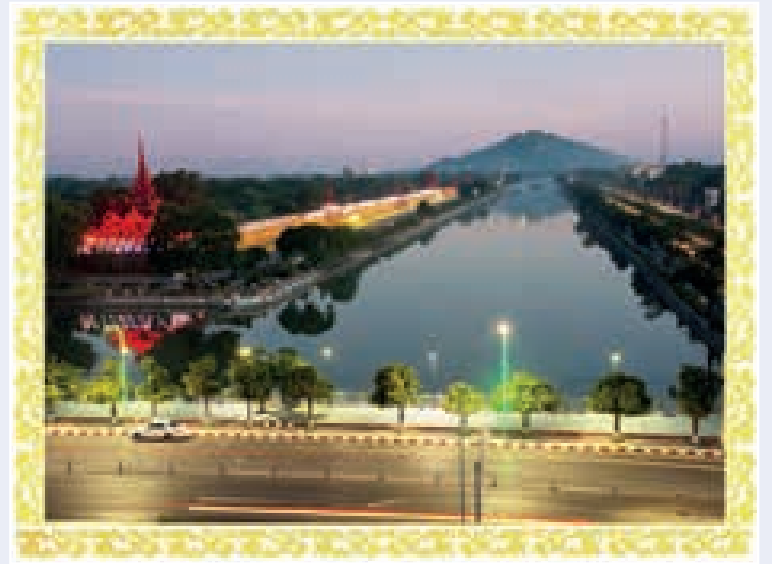
The domestic tourism rebounded as of this year's Thadingyut, and many people have prepared to go on vacation on the Kayin New Year, Christmas Day, and New Year holidays, according to sources from the travel industry. — MT/ZS

# NATIONAL

## Call for Unity, Steadfastness Amid Attempts To Divide

All citizens must stand orderly and united through thick and thin. We must never lose sight of our main goal and persevere it without deviation regardless of any attempt by the detractors to divide, incite and provoke us.

*(Excerpt from the speech delivered by General Aung San at 7:40 pm on 1 January 1947)*



## Artistes perform for Kyaukme residents in Shan State (North)

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, who also serves as Chairman of the Working Committee on Information and Development of a Resilient and Strong Social Community, departed from Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning together with film and music artistes to perform for residents of Shan State (North) and arrived in Kyaukme Township in the evening.

The Union minister and his team were warmly welcomed by residents and service personnel at the entrance to Kyaukme, where they took commemorative photographs with the artistes.

A meeting was then held at the Kyaukme Township Hall to discuss the Information and Development of a Resilient and Strong Social Community, dur-



This photo shows the venue packed with local spectators at an entertainment programme in Kyaukme yesterday, attended by Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn.

ing which the video clip "Moving Forward to the Goal" was shown.

Next, the Union minister delivered an address at the meeting.

Afterwards, the Union minister presented Buddha images,

30 sets of MRTV DTH satellite systems and accessories, and 20 sets of MRTV DVB-T2 set-top boxes, which were received by the Kyaukme District administrator.

The entertainment programme continued with performances by film stars Su Pan Htwa, Pwint, Saung Yoon San, and Sithu Win; actors and singers Han Htoo Zhan, Za Zhan Han Thar, and Than Tha Moe Theint; and singers Sitthway, Htet Inzali, Poe Phyu Phyu, Nwe Oo Thakhin, and MRTV singers Tra Ru Aung, Saw Daniel, Saw Raster, One Kay Zin, Phu Akri Saung, Myat Su Chel, Ingyin Naing Oo, May Thu Myo, La Wun May, and Khatta. Locals also joined the programme and cheered enthusiastically. — MNA/MKKS

## MoFA handovers advance voting ballots of Myanmar citizens living abroad to UEC



The hand over event for the advance voting battots of Myanmar citizens abroad underway at the UEC Office on 18 December 2025.

FOR the 2025 Multiparty Democratic General Election, ar-

rangements for advance voting by Myanmar citizens residing

abroad were carried out, with polling stations opened on designated dates at 50 Myanmar Embassies, Myanmar Permanent Missions, and Myanmar Consulates-General.

The advance voting ballots of Myanmar citizens abroad, which were returned from the Myanmar Embassies, Myanmar Permanent Missions, and the Myanmar Consulates-General, were handed over to the Union Election Commission by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 18 December 2025. — MNA

## RBE and BEL trains launch on Mandalay-Lashio route

### FROM PAGE 1

AFTER departing from Nawngkhio Station, the train arrived at Gokteik Station. Passengers crossed the Gokteik Bridge, taking in the natural scenery of forests, mountains, rivers, and caves, and capturing memorable photographs with the bridge as a backdrop. The train then returned from Gokteik Station to PyinOoLwin Station. After that, BEL Down Train 132 continued the service from PyinOoLwin Station to Zeepingyi Station.

In the future, the train services will operate every weekend. The ticket price for the PyinOoLwin-Gokteik-PyinOoLwin round trip is K15,000 per passen-

ger. Tour companies and travel agencies wishing to rent an entire RBE train may do so for a group of 24 passengers for K30,000 per person, totalling K720,000 for the round trip.

According to the instructions of the Head of State, the PyinOoLwin-Zeepingyi route has been launched using the Battery Electric Locomotive (BEL) with a horsepower of 1,600, manufactured by the New Locomotive Assembly and Manufacturing Factory in Nay Pyi Taw. The PyinOoLwin-Gokteik-PyinOoLwin route is operated by the RBE train to allow passengers to enjoy the natural beauty of the area. — MNA/MKKS

# 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)*

## Groundbreaking held for Russia-Myanmar foliar spray plant as Department of Cooperative marks 121<sup>st</sup> anniversary

THE groundbreaking ceremony and signing event for the Russia-Myanmar foliar spray production factory, jointly developed by Russian RUMA Organic company and Aung Than Htike Agriculture Development company, was held yesterday at Plot 1662 in Ahlinlo village-tract, Zabuthiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.

The event was attended by Union Minister for the President's Office Ministry 3 U Maung Maung Tint, Union Minister for the President's Office Ministry 4 U Tun Ohn, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations Dr Wah Wah Maung, Union Minister for Cooperatives and Rural Development U Hla Moe, Union Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman U Than Tun Oo, deputy ministers, Fund RC-Investments resident representative Mr Artemi Alimov, Russian Embassy Counsellor Mr Andrei Lunak, departmental officials, and representatives of RUMA Organic and Aung Than Htike companies.

After the groundbreaking event, Union Minister U Hla Moe said the project marks an initial step in an important initiative that will provide long-term support for the develop-



The groundbreaking ceremony for the Russia-Myanmar foliar spray production factory in progress yesterday, attended by Union Ministers, Representatives from the Fund RC-Investments, RUMA Organic and Aung Than Htike companies, the Russian Embassy, and dignitaries.

ment of Myanmar's agriculture sector and the socioeconomic status of farmers. The Myanmar Investment Commission allowed RUMA Organic Company of Fund RC-Investment to import, produce, distribute, and sell organic foliar fertilizers in the Pynmana District of the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.

He added that the Head of State places special focus on this project, and as it represents an opportunity to demonstrate the strong friendship and co-

operation between Myanmar and Russia, the factory must be constructed as quickly as possible within the designated timeframe. The domestic production of organic foliar fertilizers would reduce costs for agricultural entrepreneurs and farmers, while also helping to cut foreign currency expenditure.

The Russian officials and companies' representatives clarified the investment in the Myanmar agricultural sector,

bilateral cooperation and factory construction processes.

Union Minister U Hla Moe also attended the 121<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Myanmar's Cooperative held at Office 16 of the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development.

Speaking at the event, the Union Minister said the cooperative system is an organizational framework in which entrepreneurs and farmers who share common interests and objectives come together to

work collectively. The Cooperative Department should make efforts to connect the farming products with the market and cooperate proportionately at different levels to promote the living standard of people.

Director-General U Aung Thura of the Cooperative Department beefed up the development measures for the cooperative sector in each financial year, and the first prize winner of the impromptu talk under the topic "Cooperative Department and Sustainable Development of Cooperative Societies" explained cooperatives-related matters.

The Union minister then presented gifts to Deputy Minister U Myint Soe on behalf of the retired staff.

The Union minister and party presented awards to recipients of honorary titles, staff who won excellent performance award, cooperatives societies, staff who won awards at the Civil Service Academy, outstanding awards recipients from Cooperative Accounting Vocational Training Centres, children of staff who achieved distinctions in four subjects in the 2024-2025 matriculation examination, winners of the impromptu contest and staff who won special lucky-draw prizes. — MNA/KTZH

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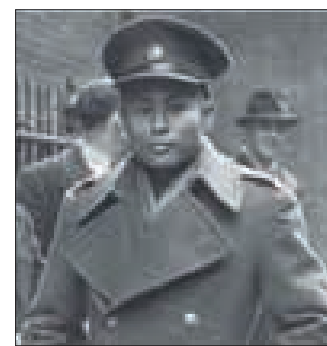
Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

# 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)



## Kayin New Year Festival held in Hpa-an

MARKING the 2765 Kayin Era, the Kayin New Year festival was held at the Thiri Ground in Hpa-an yesterday.

At the event, the attendees saluted the National Flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Kayin national flag, and the fallen heroes.

After the ceremonial procedures, the patron of the event read out the message sent by Acting President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and State Security and Peace Commission Chairman Senior General Thadoe Maha Thray Sithu Thadoe Thiri Thudhamma

Min Aung Hlaing to the occasion, whereas the Kayin State Ethnic Affairs minister read the message sent by Union Minister for Border Affairs and for Ethnic Affairs Lt-Gen Yar Pyae.

The young Kayin people of the Kayin Literature and Culture Association briefed on the history of Kayin National Day in Myanmar, as well as the Poe Kayin and Sakaw Kayin languages. The MC presented biographies of elderly Kayin people, and officials presented gifts to the elderly.

State Chief Minister U Saw Myint Oo and officials



The Kayin New Year Festival is in progress yesterday in Hpa-an, Kayin State.

cut the ceremonial ribbon to inaugurate the ceremony and released white doves representing peace.

The ceremony was held in

accordance with the traditions of the Kayin people.

After the ceremony, the chief minister and party observed the cultural booths of

Myanmar, Mon, Shan, Pa-O and Kayin ethnics, including the displays of departments, local products of MSMEs. — Saw Myo Min Thein (IPRD)/KTZH

## Myanmar delegation joins global anti-scam conference in Thailand



Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Kyaw Kyaw participates in the discussions at the International Conference on the Global Partnership against Online Scams in Bangkok, Thailand.

THE International Conference on the Global Partnership against Online Scams was held on 17 and 18 De-

cember at the Inter-Continental Bangkok Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand.

The opening cere-

mony took place on the morning of 17 December, and Myanmar delegation led by Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Kyaw Kyaw, ministers and deputy ministers from Rwanda, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, India, and China, and representatives from a total of 58 countries and international organizations including UNODC, totalling more than 300 participants, were also in attendance.

The conference was jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and UNODC. At the event, Foreign Affairs Minister of Thailand Mr Sihasak Phangketkeow

made an opening speech, and UN Secretary General Mr Antonio Guterres and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mr Volker Turk sent video messages. Then, Ms Delphine Schantz, UNODC Regional Representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, remarked, and the representatives from different countries, including Myanmar, discussed online scam-related matters.

During the discussion, Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Aung Kyaw Kyaw said the Head of State formed the “Central Supervisory Committee on Combatting Online Fraud and Online Gambling” on 10 December, aiming to eliminate

online scams. He added that Myanmar is neither the source of online scams nor a beneficiary of their proceeds, and that funds obtained from such scams do not enter Myanmar’s banking system. The country rescued victims of human trafficking and is actively cooperating with relevant embassies and organizations to repatriate them safely to their home countries. Only about 0.4 per cent of those entering border areas do so legally, while the remaining cross borders illegally. The genuine international cooperation can effectively eliminate online scam networks, and countries of origin must implement

effective preventive measures for their citizens, and transit countries need to strengthen border control measures to cut off the movement of people and illicit financial flows.

On the second day of the conference on 18 December, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand Mr Vijavat Isarabhakdi, and Ms Delphine Schantz discussed ways forward, and the partnership agreement was signed by conference participants such as Peru, Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates, Nepal and TikTok company.

The Myanmar delegation arrived back in Yangon yesterday afternoon. — MNA/KTZH

### Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma 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).

# NATIONAL

## Tatmadaw columns take control of Singu, Letpanhla Village

TATMADAW columns yesterday reoccupied Singu Town and Letpanhla Village, temporarily controlled by PDF terrorist groups.

Tatmadaw columns have been able to gradually regain control over areas previously under the temporary rule of terrorists. With the support of the local population, Tatmadaw columns organized themselves with necessary logistic facilities to control Singu Town and Letpanhla Village, where Madaya and PyinOoLwin PDF terrorists opened their headquarters.

With the air and heavy weapon supporting fire, Tatmadaw columns launched the counter-terrorism operation through the Yadana Theingi-Nakha-Pyinchauung-Lamintha route, Pantin-Myakantha route, the Madaya-Singu-Tayawbin-Nyaungwun-Thayagon route, and the eastern bank of the Ayeyawady-Kyauknganwa-Yaydaw-Shwehlay route step by step. On 18 December,

they occupied around Letpanhla Village, temporarily controlled by terrorists and the whole of Singu town yesterday. Terrorists withdrew in disarray.

Tatmadaw columns clashed with combined terrorist groups 50 times and seized 22 dead bodies of enemy, 47 arms and accessories used in the terror acts, while some officers and other ranks nobly sacrificed their lives for the State.

The PDF terrorists, operating under the names of CRPH and NUG, occupied the areas under their temporary control and carried out destructive actions within towns and villages. They entered religious buildings, schools, government offices, hospitals, and private homes to establish bunkers. They used civilians' houses as defensive positions and carried out shooting attacks. Moreover, they planted explosives and destroyed major roads and bridges in the region — including the Ayeyawady

Bridge (Yadana Theingi), Kyauksarit Bridge, and Zayatwin Bridge. They also set fire to factories, workshops, and government offices that contribute to the country's development, thereby actively undermining economic and social progress.

Furthermore, those terrorists maliciously attempted to mine and blow up the sluice gates, dam embankment, and sluice gates of the Hsedawgyi reservoir. So, Tatmadaw successfully prevented these destructive acts in time.

During their retreat, the terrorists reportedly continued their previous methods of looting, forcibly taking valuable and privately owned property from civilians. They illegally entered officially permitted gold mining areas within the region to carry out unauthorized extraction, and used arms to seize valuable items from the population. They transported gold, mineral ores, and other precious items

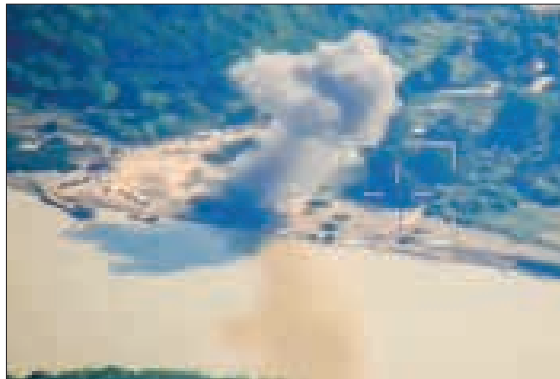
on vehicles abandoned by displaced people and attempted to flee across the Ayeyawady River. According to field reports, Tatmadaw columns deployed tactical operations to intercept and counter these actions.

The terrorists, in a desperate attempt to flee westward across the Ayeyawady River, have become disorganized and directionless. Tatmadaw col-

umns, combining ground and tactical operations, continue to pursue and eliminate these terrorists. Reports indicate that security operations are being intensified to ensure that civilians who temporarily fled from Singu Town and Letpanhla Village can safely return home, and to enable the swift restoration of government administrative functions in the area. — MNA/TTA



The map illustrates the advance of columns to retake Singu Town and Letpanhla Village, Mandalay Region.



Photos from left to right highlight Tatmadaw columns retaking Singu Town, Mandalay Region, and pursuing retreating terrorists to crush them.

## PDF attack destroys Kanbalu Bridge; Repaired in one day

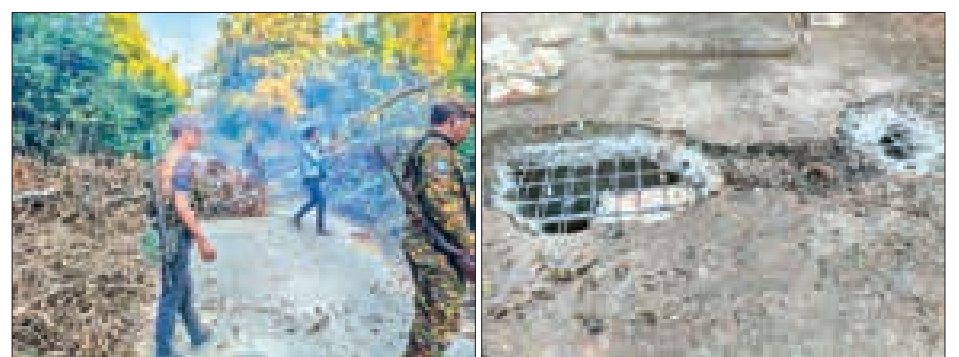
PDF terrorists and their affiliated groups have been recklessly carrying out acts such as planting mines and blowing up roads and bridges used by the public, to undermine national stability and security, disrupting the flow of goods within regions, and damaging the socioeconomic lives of local communities.

In this regard, at around 3:30 am on 17 December, a PDF terrorist group reportedly planted

mines and blew up a reinforced concrete bridge measuring approximately 30 feet in length and 27 feet in width, located between mileposts seven mile four furlongs and seven mile five furlongs on the Kanbalu-Sabal Nantha Road in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region. When security personnel went to inspect the site following the report, it was found that the explosion had damaged an area of about two feet in

diameter on the bridge deck. The bridge had also been blocked with tree branches to prevent the passage of people and vehicles.

As a result, a joint team comprising security personnel carried out repair work on the damaged bridge and removed the branches used to block it. The repair work was completed at 4 pm on 18 December, and the bridge has since been reopened for normal passage by



Images display the bridge on the Kanbalu-Sabal Nantha Road damaged by a mine blast perpetrated by PDF terrorists.

people and vehicles.

Security personnel continue to carry out necessary security proce-

dures in accordance with established protocols to identify, arrest and take action against the terror-

ists responsible for planting mines and destroying the bridge used by the public. — MNA/KZL

## Nation's full potential must be fostered alongside preservation of natural culture

- ❖ "National culture is the lifeblood of a country or a nation."
- ❖ "At a time like this, the capabilities of the entire people, including the new generation youth, to preserve national culture must be enhanced through the power of fine arts."

*(An excerpt from the speech delivered by Acting President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Chairman of the State Security and Peace Commission, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the ceremony to present certificates of honour and the dinner to mark the 26<sup>th</sup> Traditional Myanmar Cultural Performing Arts Competition on 13 October 2025)*

## Wholesale palm oil price set at K6,050 per viss

THE Supervisory Committee on Edible Oil Import and Distribution under the Ministry of Commerce is working to ensure the availability of safe edible oils for consumers at reasonable prices while meeting domestic demand.

To meet domestic demand, palm oil is imported from abroad, and measures are taken to ensure that domestic prices remain reasonable in line with price fluctuations in palm oil-exporting countries.

The committee has announced that the basic wholesale reference price for palm oil at the Yangon market for the period from 19 to 25 December 2025 is set at K6,050 per viss, based on market and price developments in edible oil-producing and exporting countries.

Action will be taken under the Essential Goods and Services Law against any fraudulent activities in the domestic market, including selling at prices higher than the reference price and stockpiling for speculative purposes.

The basic wholesale reference price of palm oil is announced every Friday, and consumers can view it on the Department of Consumer Affairs' website [www.doca.gov.mm](http://www.doca.gov.mm), its Facebook page, and the Facebook page of the Myanmar Oil Dealers' Association. — MNA/TH

## CBM injects over THB8M into business sector on 18 Dec



The facade of the Central Bank of Myanmar (head office) in Nay Pyi Taw.

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold eight million baht to business entities on 18 December.

CBM announced on 17 December that it would sell US\$32 million.

CBM pumped \$30,000 and 3.36 million baht into the market, along with \$650,000, selling to edible oil importing companies.

CBM sold over \$2 million into the edible oil importing companies on 16 December, in addition to an injection of

\$400,000 and 300,000 yuan into the market.

CBM sold over \$3.4 million to edible oil importing companies on 15 December, after injecting over \$2.43 million into the edible oil import sector on 12 December.

CBM announced on 11 December that it would pump \$28 million into the fuel oil import sector.

CBM sold over \$836,900 to edible oil importing companies and over \$587,700 to fuel oil importing companies

on that day.

CBM sold over \$152,700 to edible oil importing companies on 10 December.

CBM made an injection of over \$21 million, 2.4 million yuan and 1.5 million baht in November.

CBM injected over \$2.48 million, 5.75 million yuan and 4.98 million baht in October, along with sales of over \$54 million purchased from CMP companies.

CBM aims to curb the instability in the foreign ex-

change market and currency devaluation. According to CBM's notification on 15 March 2024, it has been collaborating with law enforcement agencies to combat and prosecute those who attempt to manipulate the currency market under the existing laws. CBM allowed authorized dealers (private banks) to operate online foreign exchange trading freely as per the market rate, depending on supply and demand, starting from 5 December 2023. — NN/KK

## YGEA warns of legal action against fake news spreaders

THE Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) issued a warning that spreaders of fake news will face legal actions under the existing law.

YGEA declared that power of attorney has been granted to advocates: U Kyaw Nyein (Phaungtawthi) and Daw Khin May Than, according to the directives of the association located at 42/50 (first floor) of Shwewontha Street (lower), Pabedan

Township, Yangon.

YGEA has been officially registered since 2017 in accordance with existing laws and procedures. A certain group has been fabricating false information and making accusations and criticism against YGEA to damage the reputation and public perception of individuals leading the association.

Circulating fake news in the name of

the YGEA to cause misunderstanding and unauthorized use of the logo to mimic the association are found.

Thus, YGEA warns that engaging in unlawful activities will be subject to legal actions. Moreover, those members who fail to pay the annual membership fee for over ten years and cannot be contacted as per the listed address and phone numbers will be removed. — NN/KK

## YSX stock trading values exceed K869M in Nov

THE grand trading value of the eight listed companies on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) topped K869.9 million from 272,588 shares traded in November 2025, according to YSX's statistics.

At present, shares of eight listed companies: First Myanmar

Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB), First Private Bank (FPB), TMH Telecom Public Co Ltd (TMH), the Ever Flow River Group Public Co Ltd (EFR), Amata Holding Public Co Ltd (AMATA) and My-

anmar Agro Exchange Public Co Ltd (MAEX) are traded in the securities market.

MAEX topped the trading on equity with over K538 million from 168,430 shares, followed by MTSH with stocks worth K106 million from 30,136 shares, FMI

with K91 million from 10,616 shares, FPB with over K44.6 million from 20,930 shares, EFR with K43 million from 25,615 shares, AMATA with K9 million from 2,526 shares, MCB with K7.99 million from 1,042 shares, and TMH with K7.18 million from 2,493 shares.

The stock trading values were estimated at K530.7 million with 151,197 shares traded in October.

The stock trading in September is up by over K339 million (121,391 shares) compared to that of November. — NN/KK

# OPINION

## Strive to ensure unity among national brethren

THE Kayin National New Year Day reaches 2765<sup>th</sup> time, which falls on 19 December 2025, as well as 1<sup>st</sup> Waxing of Pyatho, 1387 Myanmar Era. New Year's Day is interpreted as a good and auspicious day. From the moment the old year ends and the Kayin New Year begins, it is believed that Kayin people will enter the New Year with renewed spirit, fresh energy, and enthusiasm.

Regardless of differences in birthplace, region, language, literature, culture, religion, and traditional customs, all ethnic nationalities have lived together, sharing the same land and water, and have cooperated in unity within the Union. In accordance with the fact that the Kayin ethnic group is one of the indigenous ethnic groups of Myanmar, they are living not only in Kayin State but also throughout the entire country. They are especially numerous in Mon State, Taninthayi Region, Bago Region, and Ayeyawady Region.

The Government continues its efforts to ensure peace and development of the nation and is working to improve the basic socioeconomic conditions of citizens, promote good health, provide quality education, create employment opportunities, increase incomes for all, and reduce poverty. Since the development of the nation depends on the socioeconomic progress of each individual, every citizen should strive to improve socioeconomic well-being, in line with the goals set for the country, including Kayin State.

Although successive governments have worked towards achieving a durable nationwide peace, misguided ideas, narrow self-interests placed above the interests of the nation and all ethnic people, and selfish motivations have prolonged armed conflicts and acts of violence to this day. Regrettably, these circumstances have caused various hardships and suffering for the people and all ethnic nationalities.

The Government continues its efforts to ensure peace and development of the nation and is working to improve the basic socioeconomic conditions of citizens, promote good health, provide quality education, create employment opportunities, increase incomes for all, and reduce poverty. Since the development of the nation depends on the socioeconomic progress of each individual, every citizen should strive to improve socioeconomic well-being, in line with the goals set for the country, including Kayin State.

All ethnic national communities, including the Kayin people of Kayin State, must work together in unity to achieve the necessary peace, rule of law, and socioeconomic development in the country. Everyone should cooperate and work together to reduce armed conflicts and violent disturbances in various regions, including Kayin State. If so, all ethnic nationalities can build the Union as a strong, disciplined, multiparty democratic system and a democracy-based federal state.

# E-Cigarette Danger: A Growing Global and National Burden

By Dr Aung Tun

**E**-CIGARETTES (Electronic Cigarettes), also known as Vapes, Vapourizers, or Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), are smoking devices that use an electrical mechanism to produce heat and vapour containing various chemical substances, rather than smoke from combustion like traditional cigarettes.

## 1. Key Components and Ingredients

The main components of an e-cigarette are the Battery, the Atomizer (for vapour and heating), and the E-liquid/Juice.

The E-liquid, which is vapourized and inhaled, contains several key components:

- **Nicotine:** A highly addictive substance found in both e-cigarettes and regular cigarettes, which makes the body dependent on smoking.
- **Propylene Glycol:** A chemical component used to create the vapour.
- **Glycerin:** A Humectant (moisture-retaining substance) combined with Propylene Glycol. While the FDA has approved it for safe use in food and medicine, it is not approved for inhalation.
- **Other Chemicals:** Illegal products, and even legal ones, may contain carcinogenic chemicals in very low amounts, and reports indicate a long-term cancer risk.

## 2. Global Burden of E-Cigarette Use

E-cigarette use is rapidly spreading worldwide, particularly among young people, and is becoming a significant public health burden.

- **Total Users:** The estimated global number of e-cigarette users (Vapers) reached 82 million in 2021, a significant increase from 68 million in 2020. (The South-East Asia



region accounted for about 14.3 million users in 2021).

- **Youth Prevalence:** According to WHO data, at least 15 million children aged 13 to 15 globally use e-cigarettes. In countries surveyed, children are on average nine times more likely to use e-cigarettes than adults. Current usage rates among youth aged 16-19 in some countries range from 7.7 per cent to 9.4 per cent.
- **Gateway Effect:** Strong evidence suggests that e-cigarette use by young people who have never smoked can lead to nicotine addiction and nearly triple the chances of them moving on to regular cigarette use.

## 3. WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) Cop11 Resolution

I attended the Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) as a WHO Guest Advisor. The meeting was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 16 to 22 November 2025. The main focus of the conference was the

urgent need to address Emerging and Imitation Tobacco Products, particularly e-cigarettes.

### At the conference:

- It was emphasized that e-cigarettes are a dangerous **Gateway Effect** that can lead young people towards regular cigarette use by causing nicotine addiction.
- All Member States resolved to **prioritize protective measures** for youth against e-cigarettes and to **establish strict regulations**.

## 4. Myanmar's Burden

E-cigarette use is also increasing in Myanmar, especially among students and youth.

### Myanmar's Prevalence and Impact

- **Prevalence Among Smokers:** A 2020 study of tobacco smokers in Myanmar found that 11.6 per cent (95 per cent CI: 5.1 per cent-24.3 per cent) of respondents had Ever Used an e-cigarette.
- **High-Risk Groups:** Use is significantly higher among males, students, youth aged

18 to 29, and residents of the Mandalay Region.

- **Youth Danger:** Data from the 2016 Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) showed that smoking among students aged 13-15 in Myanmar increased from 6.8 per cent in 2011 to 8.3 per cent in 2016. The entry of new products like e-cigarettes normalizes tobacco use, necessitating stronger preventative measures.
- **Health Burden:** Currently, 56,841 people die annually in Myanmar from smoking-related diseases. The rise in e-cigarette use will exacerbate this long-term health burden.
- **Social Consequence:** A recent incident in Singapore, where a Myanmar teenager had their long-term immigration pass revoked and was deported for possessing a Kpod containing etomidate, illustrates the severe social consequence of e-cigarette-related legal violations.

## 5. Adverse Health Effects

Although e-cigarettes do not produce smoke from combustion, the resulting vapour (Aerosol) contains chemicals harmful to health.

- **Respiratory Diseases:** Can cause lung inflammation, or cause or worsen conditions like asthma and other respiratory diseases.
- **Cardiovascular Issues:** Nicotine causes elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate, and raises the risk of heart disease.
- **Brain Development Impairment:** Nicotine can harm the developing brain of adolescents, reducing concentration and learn abilities.
- **Cancer Risk:** Some compounds, such as Formaldehyde, released when E-liquid

is heated, pose a cancer risk.

## 6. Is it Addictive?

Yes, it is addictive. Nicotine, the main ingredient in e-cigarettes, is one of the most highly addictive substances. Nicotine stimulates the Reward System in the brain, causing a rapid addiction and prompting the user to seek repeated use.

## 7. Is it Worse than Regular Cigarettes?

- It cannot be considered safe.
- Regular cigarettes are extremely harmful because their combustion process releases thousands of hazardous chemicals, including tar and carbon monoxide.
- E-cigarettes may have fewer toxic substances than regular cigarettes because they do not involve combustion, but they still contain nicotine, Propylene Glycol, Glycerin, and other chemicals, meaning they are not completely safe.
- The Critical View: E-cigarettes must be seen as a dan-



gerous Gateway that leads non-smokers, especially youth, to nicotine addiction and subsequently to regular cigarette use.

## 8. Can it be Used as a Smoking Cessation Aid?

While there is some evidence that e-cigarettes may be used to quit smoking, their safety and long-term effectiveness remain controversial.

- **Official Recommendation:** Most health organizations, including the WHO, do not officially recommend e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation method.
- **Pattern Change:** Since e-cigarettes continue to deliver nicotine, using them may simply be a change in the pattern of nicotine use, not a true cessation.
- **Recommendation:** Individuals who wish to quit smoking should seek medications or advice officially recognized by

the Ministry of Health.

## 9. Myanmar's Prevention and Control Measures

To combat the dangers of tobacco and e-cigarettes, Myanmar enacted the "Control of Smoking and Consumption of Tobacco Products Law" on 4 May 2006, and the "Order 453/2001" concerning standardized packaging and printing of Pictorial Health Warnings on tobacco products, which were revised and enacted on 12 October 2021, came into force on 1 April 2022.

Under these laws and orders, the import, sale, distribution, possession, use, and purchase of e-cigarettes (Vape) and imitation tobacco products are legally banned. This order takes effect from 31 December 2024.

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with relevant departments, continues to strive for more effective enforcement, inspection, seizures, and legal action against the illegal trade of e-cigarettes/vapourizers.

In the Cigarette Pictorial Health Warning Global Status Report 2025, released in October 2025, Myanmar's efforts in tobacco control are highly ranked globally:

- **Pictorial Health Warning (PHW):** Myanmar is ranked 18th globally for requiring PHWs to cover at least 75 per cent of the cigarette packaging.
- **Plain Packaging:** Myanmar is the second country in the Asian region to prepare for the implementation of Plain Packaging.

## 10. Call to Action

E-cigarettes are not an escape from the dangers of smoking but a path to a new nicotine addiction that threatens the health of the younger generation. While WHO resolutions, Myanmar's ro-

bust laws, and international-standard preventive measures provide strength in tackling this danger, individual understanding, cooperation, and conscious avoidance are the key to success.

Let us collectively protect the health and future of the new generation by acknowledging the dangers of e-cigarettes and all tobacco products.

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# NATIONAL

## Myawady sees demolition of 482 more online scam hub buildings

THE government continues to conduct joint operations in the Shwe Kokko area and the KK Park area, where suspects commit telecom fraud and online gambling activities. The combined teams comprising

security personnel and administrative bodies are involved in these operations, which include entering the areas, dismantling and removing illegal buildings, and taking further action in accordance with the law.

Yesterday, the authorities demolished four illegal buildings in Section 3, and a total of 482 buildings out of 635 illegal buildings have so far been demolished in the KK Park area.

Moreover, authorities deported five Thai nationals through the Myanmar-Thailand Friendship Bridge I yesterday. The combined team start-

ed searching operations in Myawady and its vicinity area starting 8 December, and found further 11 illegal buildings yesterday.

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



This map shows ongoing demolition measures in the KK Park Section 3.



Images depict scam-related materials and items being razed by fire.



These four photos reveal the illegally built four-and two-storey flats before and after the demolition in the KK Park Section 3, Myawady Township, Kayin State.

## Myanmar migrant workers abroad can seek help from Labour Attachés

THE Ministry of Labour encouraged Myanmar migrant workers in foreign countries to ask for help from labour attachés if they face something difficult abroad and made public phone numbers and email addresses for help on 18 December.

The ministry released contacts of labour attachés appointed in the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Thailand (Bangkok, Mae Sot, Ranong, Chiang Mai) and Tokyo in Japan.

The Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok announced that it has assisted migrant workers in Thailand in accessing their rights under Thai labour law if violated and urged workers to report any issues to the labour attaché's phone numbers, providing specific details during



The Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, is assisting in settling a labour issue.

office hours.

Similarly, the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul said it has helped Myanmar nationals, including migrant workers, in the Republic of Korea in accordance with existing laws.

On 6 December, the embassy provided new passports for 25 Myanmar EPS workers who lost their passports in a fire at a flyover construction site located at Mokpo in South Jeolla Province. — MT/ZS

## One-Stop Women Support Centres open to shelter violence-affected women

ONE-STOP Women Support Centres (OSWSC) have been opened in Yangon, Mandalay, Mawlamyine, Lashio, Loikaw, Monywa, and Sittway to provide temporary shelter for women who have been subjected to violence.

Women make up more than half of the country's population, and when they are subjected to various forms of violence, it greatly hinders the country's development. Therefore, protecting and promoting women's rights is, in other words, essential to national development and to the enhancement of human resources. This can be achieved by recognizing women's capabilities and qualities and by addressing the obstacles faced by girls and women in advance.

Myanmar has established the Myanmar National Women's Committee and regional women's committees at the national level to implement international and ASEAN agreements on women's development.

At present, a wide range of activities to prevent violence against women is being implemented, including support for women who are victims of violence through assistance with court costs, travel and living expenses, access to safe shelters, and referrals to other necessary services. — ASH/MKKS



Images display posters to promote the prevention of violence against women.

# NATIONAL

The new film 'Pan Myaing Lel Hma Uyin Hmu', which has been screening in Yangon since 12 December, is receiving huge applause and positive comments from the artistic community and cinemagoers as a movie that benefits the country and the people.

The film places special emphasis on the education sector, vividly portraying the goodwill, selflessness, dedication, and compassion of teachers. Director Win Lwin Htet preserved the essence of the original work while skillfully highlighting the sacrifices made by education staff for the benefit of the younger generation.

"It can be said that the film is directed for the second time by adapting the classic novel of Saya Ledwintha Saw Chit. The storyline is already strong. I also admire Saya Ledwintha Saw Chit for his loyalty to literature and the country. People like the film as the story has been good for years. First, the title is well chosen. Second,

## Film leaves lasting mark on nation, people



The above photo shows a scene from the film, while the top inset photo captures emotional moments of the audience as they watch the movie.



the intention and message of the story are good. Third, the theme is clear and strong, just like the style of Saya U Thukha. Just as the success of the three

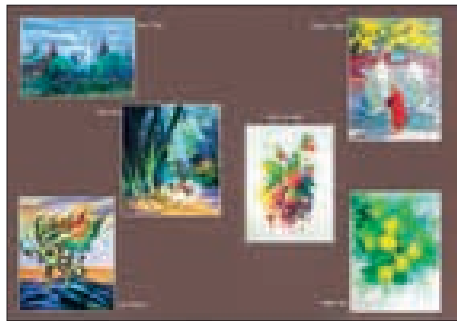
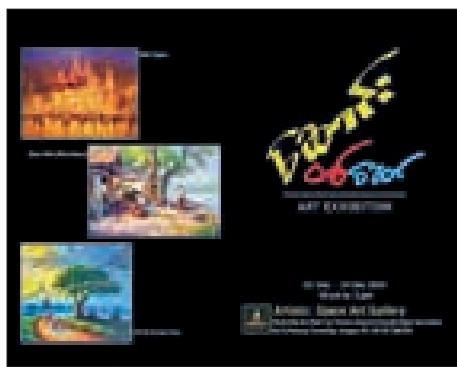
R's film. At a time when the education era is being implemented, this film should be considered a strong nomination for best script, best film and

special awards. Today, it is rare to see films that truly benefit the country and people, and so I believe 'Pan Myaing Lel Hma Uyin Hmu' will be the film that

the people love," said Alinka Kyaw Swa Academy director Pachi Soe Moe.

The film 'Pan Myaing Lel Hma Uyin Hmu', directed by Maung Tin Oo and starring Kyaw Hein and Nay Aung, highlighted the title, and due to its strong storyline, it received strong public support and became an Academy Award-winning film. Now, the clear and vivid portrayal of the life events of the original author, in addition to his story, the film lured the interest of education staff, university students, artistes and movie lovers greatly, and even moved them to tears. — Thitsa (MNA)/KTZH

## 'Saung Takhit' Art Exhibition opens at Artistic Space, Yangon



Images display some paintings in the catalogue of the 'Saung Takhit' Group Art Exhibition.

THE 'Saung Takhit' Group Art Exhibition will be held at Artistic Space Art Gallery in Botahtaung Township, Yangon Region, from 20 to 24 December, according to available information.

"Artistic Space Art Gallery will present a group art exhibition titled 'Saung Takhit' from 20 to 24 December. The exhibition will be open daily from 10 am to 5 pm. We respectfully invite everyone to come, view the artworks, and support the exhibition," said an official from Artistic Space Art Gallery.

The exhibition will feature a wide range of artworks by artists Min Kyaw, Zaw Win (Thaton), YLT (Ye Lwin Tun), Min Thar, Min Soe, Soe Paing, Aik Yee, Kyaw Thein and Hnin Su Wai. Visitors will be able to enjoy diverse subjects and styles, including watercolour, oil paintings, acrylic works and charcoal drawings.

The artworks on display vary in size, including 24 by 24 inches, 36 by 24 inches, 18 by 24 inches and 18 by 18 inches, among others. — ASH/KZL

## Initial auditions for Academy receptionists set in 2 sessions



The Shwekyo (Academy receptionists) selection session in progress in the previous year.

FOR the selection of stage assistants (Shwekyo) for the Myanmar Film Academy awarding ceremony for 2025 to be held in Nay Pyi Taw, the initial stage of the audition will take place in two sessions, according to the Myanmar Motion Pictures Organization (MMPO).

The preliminary selection will be held at MMPO. The first part is planned from 8 am to noon for application numbers from 0001 to 0125, and the second part from 1 pm to 5 pm for application numbers from 00126 to 00297.

"Depending on application numbers, we will call interviews for the shortlists. We will let them introduce themselves to judges by each trio and judge their facial look, height, gesture, personality and speaking skill, and they

must be well-dressed," MMPO first joint secretary U Chan Thar Kyi Soe told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

In the second part, judges will evaluate their acting and expression, and selection will be made by voting in stages.

Judges are Academy Khant Sithu, Academy Yan Aung, Academy May Than Nu and Academy Soe Myat Thuzar, as well as movie directors and MMOP executives, he added.

Twenty pairs were selected as Academy Shwekyo (receptionists) last year; however, only 10 pairs have been planned to be selected for this year, but the number may increase depending on the number of Academy prizes. — MT/ZS

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.

# ECONOMY WORLD

## Sri Lanka plans \$1.6B in cyclone recovery spending in 2026

*The natural disaster affected 2.3 million people, more than 10 per cent of Sri Lanka's population.*



Floods and landslides caused by Cyclone Ditwah left extensive damage throughout Sri Lanka. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

SRI Lanka's government announced plans on Thursday for \$1.6 billion in extra spending in 2026 to fund the country's recovery from Cyclone Ditwah, which killed more than 640 people.

The natural disaster affected 2.3 million people, more than 10 per cent of Sri Lanka's population, and floods and landslides caused by the cyclone left extensive damage throughout the country.

The government convened parliament on Thursday, interrupting a month-long recess, to discuss what President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has described as the most challenging natural disaster to hit the island.

Dissanayake presented a request for an additional 500 billion rupees (\$1.66 billion) for rebuilding devastated homes, roads, bridges and railways, as well as for cash handouts to help people regain lost livelihoods. "We need to allocate an additional 500 billion rupees for disaster relief and reconstruction over and above the money allocated for government spending in calendar 2026," Dissanayake told parliament. — AFP

## Cambodia wraps up SME capacity-building project backed by LMC special fund

A Lancang-Mekong Cooperation project on strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and technical cooperation in Industry 4.0 has concluded in Cambodia, said Cambodia's Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology & Innovation on Friday.

Cambodian Minister of Industry, Science, Technology & Innovation Hem Vandy attended an event on Thursday to mark the completion of the 18-month project (2024-2025) implemented in Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar under the LMC framework.

Vandy said the project has provided practical outcomes in building technical and entrepreneurial capacity among SMEs and fostering cooperation among the Lancang-Mekong countries. "This project has delivered concrete results in strengthening SME capacity, promoting the adoption of new technologies, and improving productivity and competitiveness," he said. — Xinhua

## Bleak end to the year as German business morale drops

GERMAN business sentiment fell to its lowest level in seven months in December, a survey showed Wednesday, with Europe's beleaguered top economy set to end the year on a gloomy note.

The Ifo institute's confidence barometer dropped to 87.6 points from 88 points in November, its second straight monthly drop and in line with analyst expectations.

"The year is ending with-

out any sense of optimism," said Ifo president Clemens Fuest.

The German economy is struggling to emerge from a long downturn, hit by a manufacturing slump, increasing competition from China and the US tariff onslaught.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz vowed to kickstart growth but, after an initial burst of optimism, gloom has set in as businesses complain there is little sign of serious reform or a promised public spending blitz.

In the Ifo poll, which surveys about 9,000 businesses every month, sentiment in the crucial manufacturing sector slipped as companies reported worse expectations for the future. — AFP

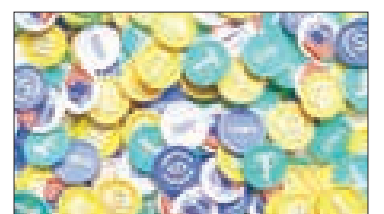


The German economy is in 'free fall', an industry group warned. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Stablecoins emerge as a key financial hedge against inflation across Africa

STABLECOINS are gaining traction across Africa as a vital hedge against rampant inflation and currency volatility. In nations like Nigeria (inflation over 30 per cent), Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and South Africa, users are adopting digital dollars such as USDT, USDC, and DAI to safeguard value, enable cross-border payments, and bypass unstable local currencies.

Driven by necessity, stablecoins offer 24/7 access, swift low-cost transfers, protection from FX restrictions, and dollar exposure without foreign accounts. Freelancers in Nigeria convert naira to USDT post-income; Kenyan users favor them for remittances; Ghanaian traders use them for imports; Zimbabweans prefer them over mobile money for



A stablecoin is a type of cryptocurrency that aims to maintain a stable value relative to a specified asset, a pool or basket of assets. **PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK**

storage; and Ethiopians circumvent controls for international payments. USDT dominates via Tron's liquidity, USDC appeals for transparency, and DAI attracts yield-seekers. Analysts view this as a structural shift, positioning stablecoins as a resilient alternative to flawed banking systems, serving as an inflation hedge and fallback during crises. — ANI

# Japan's Toyota to import US-made cars after Trump gripe

JAPANESE car giant Toyota said Friday it will begin importing three of its US-manufactured models into its home market next year, in an apparent move to placate Donald Trump.

The US president has imposed painful import tariffs on countries around the world in an attempt to boost his country's manufacturers and reduce its colossal trade deficit.

Japanese firms sell millions of cars in the United States every year, but American vehicles are rare in Japan.

"They don't take our cars, but we take MILLIONS of theirs!" Trump said in April, ac-



Toyota said its three popular American models — the Camry sedan, Highlander SUV, and Tundra pickup truck — will be sold in Japan starting next year. **PHOTO: KYODO/FILE**

cusing Japan of treating its ally "very poorly on trade".

But on Friday, Toyota said its three popular American models — the Camry sedan, Highlander SUV, and Tundra pickup truck — will be sold in Japan starting next year.

The move is meant "to meet the diverse needs of a broad range of customers, while also helping to improve Japan-US trade relations", the firm said in a statement.

Toyota is the second-top-selling automaker in the United States, where it shifted more than 2.3 million vehicles last year. — AFP

## Nasdaq tumbles on renewed angst over AI building boom

TECH shares suffered another bout of weakness Wednesday on worries about an AI bubble, hitting US stocks as oil prices advanced following a US announcement of a blockade of tankers to Venezuela.

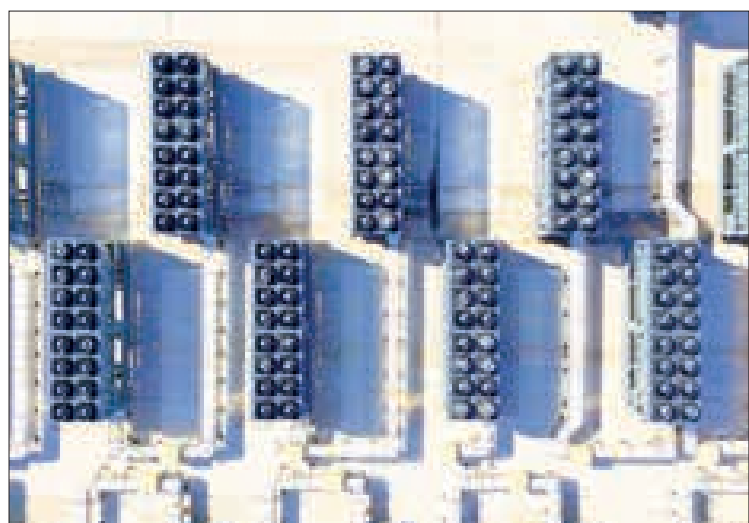
The Nasdaq led major Wall Street indices lower following reports questioning the financing of an Oracle project to build a data center in Michigan.

Art Hogan of B Riley Wealth Management described Oracle as "probably the poster child" for questions about AI project

financing and profitability.

"Investors are starting to be more differentiated and looking at the potential winners and the potential time frame before return on invested capital," Hogan said. "That doesn't mean we're anywhere close to the final innings of artificial intelligence. It just means investors are being more discerning."

Besides Oracle, which fell 5.4 per cent, other AI players such as Nvidia, Google parent Alphabet and Broadcom all lost more than three per cent. — AFP



Tech shares sold off on worries about the AI data centre building boom. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

## Mexican low-cost airlines Volaris and Viva agree to merger

TWO of Mexico's top low-budget airlines said Thursday they had agreed to merge, setting up a deal that could create one of the country's largest domestic carriers.

The airlines, Viva and Volaris, said the plan would expand access to low-cost air travel in

Mexico. Under the agreement, the companies would continue to operate under their existing brands and maintain their own operations, the groups announced in a joint statement.

"We expect the formation of the new airline group will allow us to realize significant growth

opportunities for air travel in Mexico," said Enrique Beltranena, president and CEO of Volaris. The deal, expected to close in 2026, is subject to regulatory approval in Mexico and could draw opposition from the budget airlines' main competitor, Aeromexico. — AFP

## Malaysia's domestic tourists up 9.6% year on year in third quarter

MALAYSIA'S domestic tourism continued to demonstrate resilience in the third quarter of 2025, recording 72.6 million visitors, representing a 9.6 per cent year-on-year increase, according to official data.

The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) said in a statement on Thursday that compared with the second quarter of 2025, visitor numbers edged slightly lower, dropping by 1.6 per cent.

According to the DOSM, domestic travel in the third quarter was influenced by public and school holidays, which together supported the growth in domestic tourism. — Xinhua

## Saudi Arabia cancels foreign worker levy for licensed industrial facilities

SAUDI Arabia has officially cancelled an expatriate levy on foreign workers employed at licensed industrial facilities, a move aimed at supporting the sector's sustainability and

global competitiveness, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Wednesday.

Industry and Mineral Resources Minister Bandar Alkhorayef said the decision

underscored continued government support for industry and would help boost competitiveness and expand the reach of non-oil exports in global markets, SPA said. — Xinhua

# GLOBAL VIEWPOINTS:

## WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS



**R**USSIA will not compromise on the deployment of NATO troops, strike weapons in Ukraine or Ukraine's NATO membership, this is absolutely unacceptable, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said in an interview with Sputnik.

"Ukraine's membership in the North Atlantic bloc, as well as the deployment of NATO military contingents and strike weapons on its territory, are absolutely unacceptable for us. We have spoken about this many times and explained our position, it is well known," Grushko said when asked which NATO-related issues in the Ukrainian settlement Moscow is unwilling to compromise on.

### Russia Ready for Legally Binding Security Guarantees on Reciprocal Basis

Russia is only prepared to formalize legally binding guar-

## Russia will not compromise on deployment of NATO troops in Ukraine: Foreign Ministry

antees with NATO countries on a reciprocal basis, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said.

"Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly stressed that we have never had, and do not have, any aggressive plans against NATO countries. And we are prepared to formalize legally binding security guarantees, but only on a reciprocal basis, of course," Grushko said.

— SPUTNIK



Russian Communist supporters take part in a protest in front of the EU representative office in central Moscow on 8 August 2024, to support Russia's military operation in Ukraine and to demand NATO to stop its expansion. PHOTO: TATYANA MAKEYEVA / AFP / FILE

## Signing of trade agreement between EU, Mercosur postponed until Jan: Reports

THE signing of the trade agreement between the European Union and South American trading bloc Mercosur has been postponed until January, media reported, citing a diplomatic source. The signing of the agreement was planned for Saturday. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen informed the EU summit participants of the postponement to January, the report said on Thursday. On Thursday, Brazil-

ian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said that, at Italy's request, he would propose to his Mercosur partners to postpone the signing of the trade agreement with the EU.

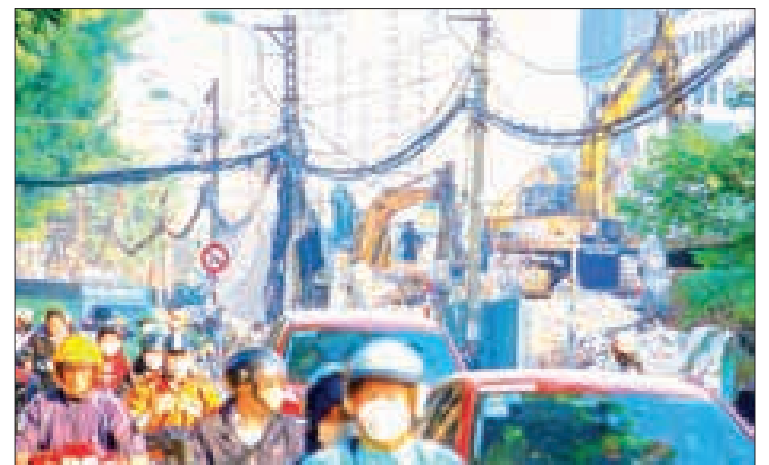
In September, the European Commission recommended that the Council and European Parliament approve the deals with Mercosur and Mexico, despite objections from several member states and key European agricultural organizations.

Throughout 2024, large-scale farmer protests swept across the EU, driven by fears that the agreement would flood European markets with cheap imports from countries adhering to lower sanitary and environmental standards. European farmers, already facing difficult conditions, warn that the deal could further erode their sales due to "unfair competition" from Latin American producers. — SPUTNIK



Rio de Janeiro is a significant port city and has been a vital maritime hub since its founding in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

## Vietnam's capital residents struggle as severe air pollution persists



This photo taken on 15 December 2025 shows a demolition site in Hanoi, Vietnam. (PHOTO BY VU TRUNG KIEN/XINHUA)

A thick blanket of smog has settled over Vietnam's capital Hanoi in recent days, blurring high-rise buildings and casting a gray haze across streets as fine particulate matter continues to rise to unhealthy levels.

According to the global air-quality monitoring platform IQAir, the city recorded several consecutive days with fine particulate matter, known as PM2.5, reaching the "unhealthy" range over the past month. The peak occurred on 12 December, when

PM2.5 concentrations reached nearly 197 micrograms per cubic meter, about 13 times higher than the World Health Organization's recommended 24-hour limit. Nguyen Thu Ha, a furniture shop owner in downtown Hanoi, removed her mask and told Xinhua, "I felt tired, and my throat was harder to breathe through. Overall, I felt exhausted." Her shop sits along a busy road where dust particles blow inside throughout the day, forcing her to clean the products constantly. — Xinhua

# THAILAND 2025 XXXIII SEAGAMES 2025 19 - 29 December 2025

## SPORTS

### Myanmar bags silver, 6 bronzes at SEA Games on 19 Dec

**T**HE XXXIII South-East Asia Games are being held in Bangkok and Chonburi, Thailand, across various sports venues. Myanmar athletes are competing in cricket, shooting, futsal, volleyball, international rowing, dragon boat racing, wrestling and equestrian events.

Officials, including Myanmar Olympic Committee Secretary General and Deputy Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Htein Lin, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Aung Kyaw Tun, the head of the Myanmar sports delegation, the Director-General of the Department of Sports and Physical Education, members of the management team, presidents of national sports federations and other responsible officials, attended and observed the competitions yesterday.

Deputy Minister U Htein Lin, together with members of the Myanmar delegation management team, visited the Royal Thai Navy Rowing and Canoeing Training Centre in Rayong, Chonburi, in the morning to watch Myanmar athletes compete in international rowing and dragon boat events, including the men's and women's ten-paddler 500-metre races. He later trav-



Images capture Myanmar athletes receiving winning medals and cash rewards from the government, alongside dragon boat races in action at the SEA Games in Thailand.

elled to the Thai Polo and Equestrian Club Pattaya in Chonburi to watch Myanmar riders Saw Maung and Kyaw Wunna Aung competing in individual equestrian selection events.

Similarly, Deputy Minister U Aung Kyaw Tun, along with the head of the delegation, the Director-General of the Department of Sports and Physical Education and other management members, went to the Indoor Stadium Huamark of the Sports Authority of Thailand in Bangkok

to watch the fifth-place volleyball match between Myanmar and Singapore.

In yesterday's competitions, Myanmar took part in the women's cricket T20I third-place match against Indonesia; shooting events in the men's 50-metre rifle three-position individual and team competitions; futsal group matches against Vietnam; the fifth-place volleyball match against Singapore; international rowing finals in the men's and women's coastal beach double

sculls; dragon boat finals in the men's ten-paddler 500-metre event and the mixed 20-paddler 500-metre event; wrestling men's freestyle 57-kilogramme group matches against Indonesia, as well as men's freestyle 65-kilogramme group matches and finals; and individual equestrian selection events and finals.

In traditional rowing, the Myanmar men's dragon boat team won a bronze medal in the ten-paddler 500-metre event, while the women's team also se-

cured a bronze medal over the same distance, giving Myanmar two bronze medals in dragon boat racing. Athletes from the men's and women's dragon boat teams, who won a total of three bronze medals, along with members of the equestrian team – Than Naing Aung, Saw Maung and Nan Ko Win – who claimed a bronze medal in the Eventing competition combining dressage, show jumping and cross-country, received cash awards presented by Deputy Minister U Htein Lin.

In international rowing, Myanmar's Wai Yan Moe won a silver medal in the men's coastal beach double sculls final. In boxing events held yesterday, Myanmar added four bronze medals, with Htar Htar Nwe in the 54-kilogramme class, Kay Thwe Nyein in the 66-kilogramme class, Mya Moe Thu in the 50-kilogramme class and Su Myat Noe in the 57-kilogramme class all finishing third in their respective divisions.

After competitions on 19 December, Myanmar ranked seventh in the overall medal table with three gold medals, 21 silver medals and 47 bronze medals, making a total of 71 medals, according to available information. — MNA/KZL

### Myanmar medallists return from XXXIII SEA Games



Winning athletes are seen being welcomed back at the Yangon International Airport.

MEDAL-WINNING Myanmar national teams from the XXXI-II South-East Asia Games, who secured one silver medal and three bronze medals, returned to Yangon yesterday evening. The XXXIII SEA Games took place in Bangkok, Thailand, from 9 to 20 December 2025.

From Sepak Takraw, the

Myanmar men's quadrant team of Zin Min Oo, Aung Myo Kyaw, Thant Zin Tun, Zaw Min Khant, Shane Wunna Zaw and Yan Paing Oo won the silver medal. The women's quadrant team comprising Phyu Phyu Than, Phoo Phoo, Nay Chi Nway, Yamon Zin, Khin Hnin Wai and Cherry Lin Thit

claimed a bronze medal, while the mixed quadrant team of Shane Wunna Zaw, Zin Min Oo, Zaw Min Khant, Phyu Phyu Than, Phoo Phoo and Hnin Hnin Wai also secured a bronze medal. In sailing, Khun Tun Oo won a bronze medal in the men's ILCA4 event.

The athletes, together with other members of the Myanmar sports contingent who competed in the Games, arrived in Yangon by Myanmar Airways International flight. Officials from the Department of Sports and Physical Education, along with parents and relatives of the athletes, warmly welcomed and congratulated the returning teams at the airport. — MNA/KZL

### Kayin New Year Lethwei tournament draws large crowds in Yangon

THE Kayin New Year Lethwei tournament was held yesterday afternoon at the National Race Village in Thakayta Township, Yangon Region.

The tournament featured a total of 19 bouts, comprising ten two-round fights, six three-round fights, two four-round fights and one five-round fight.

Union ministerial-level officials and other dignitaries attended the event, including Deputy Minister for Ethnic Affairs U Zaw Aye Maung, Chairman of the Kayin New Year Celebrations Committee, Yangon Region Minister for Ethnic Affairs U Saw Jacob Htoo, executives from the Myanmar Lethwei Federation, as well as members of the public celebrating the Kayin New Year. Large crowds turned out to watch and cheer on the matches. — Bala/KZL



Daung Maik Thway (9 Club) delivers a kick while A (360 Sports) defends during a four-round bout.



## China turns Hainan Island into special customs supervision zone in opening-up drive

*The move is widely seen as a landmark in China's efforts to promote free trade and expand high-standard opening-up amid rising protectionism worldwide.*

**C**HINA on Thursday launched island-wide special customs operations in the Hainan Free Trade Port (FTP), the world's largest FTP by area, allowing freer entry of overseas goods, expanding zero-tariff coverage, and introducing more business-friendly measures.

The move is widely seen as a landmark in China's efforts to promote free trade and expand high-standard opening-up amid rising protectionism worldwide.

Under the new arrangements, the tropical island, covering more than 30,000 square kilometres and about a 1.5-hour flight from Hong Kong, has been designated a special customs supervision zone. This marks a new stage in the develop-



Staff members tie a mooring rope for a vessel carrying petrochemical raw materials at Yangpu Port in Danzhou, south China's Hainan Province, 18 December 2025. **PHOTO: GUO CHENG/XINHUA**

ment of the Hainan FTP, which enables freer flows of goods, capital, personnel and data, supported by zero tariffs, low tax rates and a simplified tax system.

Substantial progress has been achieved in developing the

Hainan FTP, and the essential conditions for its island-wide special customs operations have been met, Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng said at the launch ceremony in Haikou, the capital of south China's Hainan Province. — Xinhua

## Up to 18,000 could die in major Tokyo quake, mostly from fires: estimate

A powerful earthquake that has a high probability of occurring beneath Tokyo and nearby areas within the next few decades



Photo taken on 23 June 2025, from a Kyodo News helicopter shows a cluster of condominium buildings in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO**

could kill up to 18,000 people, with two-thirds of the estimated deaths caused by fires, a government panel showed Friday.

But the latest estimate, made on the basis of a magnitude 7.3 quake hitting the metropolitan area, is 5,000 lower than the previous calculation in 2013, reflecting an increase in seismic-prepared buildings and fire prevention measures in densely packed districts with many wooden houses.

For comparison, there were 15,900 deaths related to the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami that devastated northeastern Japan on 11 March 2011.

Economic losses from factory destruction and reduced production, meanwhile, are projected at 82.6 trillion yen (\$530 billion) in the worst-case scenario, down around 13 trillion yen from the previous estimate.

The government plans to update its disaster preparedness for a Tokyo inland earthquake and strengthen efforts to reduce damage and maintain core government functions under a new disaster management agency to be launched in fiscal 2026. — Kyodo

## Trump administration suspends US green card lottery

US homeland security chief Kristi Noem suspended a green card lottery on Thursday, saying it was used by the suspect in a mass shooting at Brown University.

Claudio Neves Valente, a 48-year-old Portuguese national, is accused of bursting into a building at the Ivy League school on 13 December and opening fire on students sitting exams, killing two and wounding nine.

He is also accused of killing a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) two days later.

Noem wrote on social media that Neves Valente "entered the United States through the diversity lottery immigrant visa programme (DVI) in 2017 and was granted a green card". — AFP