

# The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR

## Myanmar, Russia to advance deals from State visit

Myanmar and the Russian Federation will promote cooperation in defence and humanitarian issues in addition to other sectors.

**C**hairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing yesterday morning received Ambassador Mr Iskander Azizov of the Russian Federation to Myanmar at the Office of SAC Chairman in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, the Senior General and the Russian Ambassador frankly exchanged views on achieving success in the enhancement of friendly relations and cooperation during the official State visit of the Senior General to the Russian Federation, continuous implementation of the agreements signed during the official State visit of the Senior General, and more plans to continue discussions over remnant topics.

They also discussed the plans to promote cooperation in Hluttaw affairs between Myanmar and the Russian Federation and sending delegations to Hluttaws in the Russian Federation, promotion of cooperation in defence and humanitarian issues as well as other sectors, and exchange of goodwill visits between the two countries.

Also, present at the meeting were Council Joint Secretary General Ye Win Oo and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Lwin Oo. The Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Myanmar was accompanied by the Military Attaché of the Russian Federation to Myanmar and officials. — MNA/TTA



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing shakes hands with Mr Iskander Azizov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Myanmar, during the latter's courtesy call on the former yesterday.

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Annual Saopha Market Day held in Kengtung

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Lend a helping hand to individuals with Down syndrome

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# NATIONAL

## Towards a Prosperous Future: Achieving Harmonious Development in Myanmar's Key Sectors

MYANMAR must achieve harmonious development across the economic, social, educational, and health sectors to become a peaceful, prosperous, modern, and developed nation.

Education is essential for all.

*(Excerpt from the speech given by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting to provide guidance to outstanding students for the 2023-2024 academic year on 26 April 2024)*

### Objectives of 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Armed Forces Day 2025

- (a) To actively participate in serving three main functions of Tatmadaw national defence duty, training duty and public benefit duty upholding Our Three Main National Causes;
- (b) To steadfastly carry out measures for State development and genuine, eternal peace by ending the armed conflicts under the Constitution (2008) and NCA;
- (c) To protect the State and its citizens from dangers and provide sector-wise assistance for the safety and socioeconomic development of the people;
- (d) To provide necessary assistance to hold a free and fair multiparty democratic general election by Tatmadaw for the emergence of a Union based on democratic and federal systems after carrying out measures per the stipulations of the State of Emergency.



#### Myanmar Gazette

### Heads of Service Organizations confirmed and appointed

1. The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of U Than Htway, Director-General of the Department of Political Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, after the one-year probationary period.
2. The State Administration Council has appointed the following persons as Heads of the Service Organizations shown against each of their names on probation from the date they assume charge of their duties.

Name	Appointment
(a) U Soe Naing Tun Deputy Director-General Department of Administration, Finance and Health Amyotha Hluttaw Office	Director-General Amyotha Hluttaw Office
(b) U Tin Latt Soe Deputy Permanent Secretary Union Minister's Office Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation	Managing Director Myanmar Pearl Enterprise Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

## Bookings surge for Taunggyi-Inlay-Ywangan tours ahead of Thingyan holiday

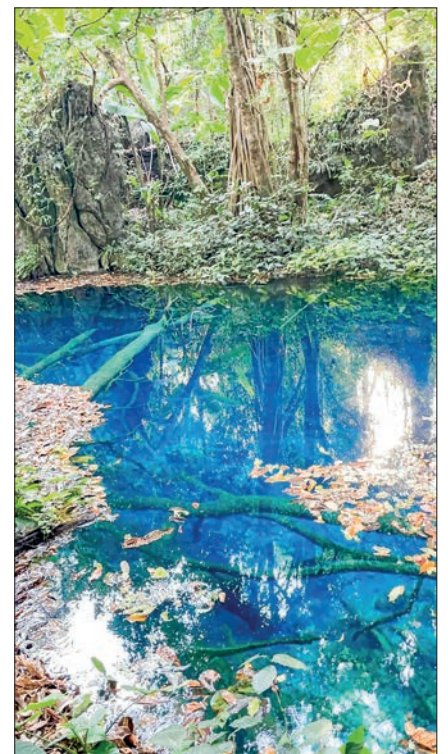
FOR the forthcoming Thingyan holiday, reservations for the Taunggyi-Inlay-Ywangan tour have mounted, according to tour organizers.

Many people have already booked for the tour since March as they seem going to escape the summer heat, said Ko Jimmy from the Kalaw Car Rental and Photo Free Service.

“Nearly all group bookings for Thingyan include Inlay. Their visit takes at least three days—spending the first day in Kalaw and second day in Inlay and Taunggyi, and another day in Ywangan and Pindaya. It seems Inlay is the most popular destination and people are eager to go places like a waterfall because the temperature has risen,” he said.

For Thingyan vacation, he has received some bookings from Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw, he said. It is now summer holiday so families have gone on vacation by renting a car and there is visiting of friend groups as well.

Among overseas trips, Bangkok will be a major destination and local



This image showcases the Blue Lake in Ywangan.

visitor arrival is also expected to rise in Taunggyi, Kalaw, Inlay, Pindaya, Bagan-NyaungU, Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw and Bago. — MT/ZS

### Bank Holiday

ALL Banks will be closed on 1<sup>st</sup> (Tuesday) April 2025, "BANK HOLIDAY", under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

Central Bank of Myanmar



# 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.

*(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)*



State Administration Council Vice-Chair Defence Services Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win meets Tatmadaw members and families of Kalaw Station.

**V**ice-Senior General Soe Win underlines peace and stability are required to successfully hold a free and fair multiparty democratic general election and to enable representatives of political parties to conduct canvassing successfully.

Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief

## Election date set in December 2025 or early January 2026

Only when the free and fair election has been completed successfully will three State powers be handed over to the elected government.

tempts of internal and external organizations and some persons not wishing to see peace, stability and development of the State to cause disintegration of Tatmadaw and disunity between Tatmadaw and the people, and efforts of Tatmadaw to prioritize security and stability to strengthen the sovereignty of the State by upholding Our Three Main National Causes.

The Vice-Senior General underscored that the ultimate goal of the State Administration Council is to successfully hold a free and fair multiparty democratic general election. To achieve this, necessary preparations are being made in advance, including conducting a population and housing census.

### Salient points from the speech delivered by the Vice-Senior General in meeting with Tatmadaw members and families at Kalaw Station

1. If Tatmadaw members come across misconduct by conscription committees at various levels, they have to promptly report it to the relevant authorities.
2. Only when the free and fair election has been completed successfully will a government comprising the Hluttaw formed with elected representatives, the president, chief ministers of regions and states be constituted and will three State powers be handed over to the elected government.
3. Tatmadaw members have to cooperate with the Myanmar Police Force, people's militia (local) troops, relevant people's security and terrorism eradication squads as well as people in enhancing security measures.

(Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win yesterday morning met Tatmadaw members and families of Kalaw Station at the hall of the station.

On the occasion, the Vice-Senior General explained the political progress of the State, declared a State of Emergency and assume three powers of the State by Tatmadaw in accord with the Constitution (2008) since the ruling party government acted unlawfully and forcibly seized the State power again in the 2020 multi-

party democratic general election, staging only protests in the early period of the assumption of Tatmadaw. He continued that some armed groups that had signed the NCA (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement) joined forces with other ethnic armed groups and began disrupting and attacking Tatmadaw. Due to foreign instigations, terrorist groups emerged, carrying out various activities aimed at destabilizing the country's security, stability and peace. The Vice-Senior General noted at-

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# NATIONAL

## Election date set in December 2025 or early January 2026

### FROM PAGE 3

He recounted that the Chairman of the State Administration Council announced to the world during the official state visits to the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus that the multi-party democratic general elections are planned to be held in December 2025 or as early as January 2026.

Hence, he continued that as peace and stability are required to successfully hold a free and fair multiparty democratic general election and to enable representatives of political parties to conduct canvassing successfully, Tatmadaw members have to cooperate with the Myanmar Police Force, people's militia (local) troops and relevant people's security and terrorism eradication squads as well as people in enhancing security measures.

The Vice-Senior General stressed that only when the free and fair election

has been completed successfully will a government comprising the Hluttaw formed with elected representatives, the president, and chief ministers of region and states be constituted and will three State powers be handed over to the elected government.

He emphasized that some conscription committees have failed to comply with legal procedures in summoning people's military servants. As a result, certain conscripts have faced difficulties and hardships due to illegal and unnecessary financial misconduct during the conscription process. Efforts are being made to resolve these recurring issues. Therefore, if Tatmadaw members come across misconduct by conscription committees at various levels, they have to promptly report it to the relevant authorities.

He instructed officials to fulfil the basic needs and education and health

of the families from the regiments and units in the areas with transportation difficulties.

The Vice-Senior General highlighted that Tatmadaw has already provided appropriate rights and entitlements to soldiers at all ranks according to their respective levels. Hence, officials need to supervise provisions of deserved rights for Tatmadaw members to ensure their welfare.

He noted that Tatmadaw members, by the nature of their duties, face difficult, harsh, and exhausting responsibilities. They must always maintain physical strength and stamina, and their mental determination must remain strong as needed.

The Vice-Senior General heard reports of Tatmadaw members and families individually and coordinated with officials on the measures they reported.

The Vice-Senior General presented foodstuffs to Tatmadaw members and families while Daw Than Than Nwe, his wife, gave cash awards to the maternal and child welfare association.

The Vice-Senior General cordially greeted Tatmadaw members and families.

The meeting was also attended by Shan State Chief Minister U Aung Aung, senior Tatmadaw officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, the commander of Eastern Command and officials.

He then inspected the breeding of DYL pigs, layers and broilers at local battalions and gave necessary instructions to officials.

In the morning, the Vice-Senior General paid homage to Hsutaungpyae Hnee Pagoda in Kalaw and offered alms to the Sayadaw. — MNA/TTA



ICRC Resident Representative Mr Arnaud de Baecque calls on Union Minister U Ko Ko Hlaing.

### SAC Chairman Office Ministry 2 Union Minister receives ICRC Resident Representative

UNION Minister for Ministry 2 at the Office of the State Administration Council Chairman U Ko Ko Hlaing received Mr Arnaud de Baecque, Resident Representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), yesterday morning at the parlour of the Office of the State Ad-

ministration Council in Nay Pyi Taw.

Both sides exchanged views on humanitarian assistance matters and existing and ongoing activities of ICRC in Myanmar. Officials from the Office of the State Administration Council were present at the meeting. — MNA

### Union Minister and Union Attorney-General receives ICRC Head in Myanmar

UNION Minister for Legal Affairs and Union Attorney-General Dr Thida Oo met Mr Arnaud de Baecque, Resident Representative of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Myanmar yesterday at the diplomatic reception hall of the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

They discussed matters related to

translating the four Geneva Conventions from English into Myanmar. They also exchanged views on organizing a workshop on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) for legal officers from the Ministry of Legal Affairs in collaboration with the ICRC. The deputy minister, and deputy attorney-general and other officials also attended the meeting. — MNA/KZL



The ICRC Head calls on Union Minister Dr Thida Oo yesterday.

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# NATIONAL

## Diplomatic staff, families donate gold plates to Shwedagon Pagoda

STAFF members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Myanmar embassies, consulates-general and representative offices abroad, along with their families donated gold plates to the Shwedagon Pagoda. The donation includes two gold plates weighing six ticals each and thirteen gold coatings weighing one tical each, with a total cash

donation of K6.25 million.

The ceremony took place at 8 am yesterday near the southern archway of the Shwedagon Pagoda. During the ceremony, Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe handed over the gold plates worth K6.25 million to the Pagoda Board of Trustees, which gave honorary certi-



Deputy Prime Minister MoFA Union Minister U Than Swe poses for the documentary photo alongside diplomatic staff at yesterday's event.

ificates back to the Deputy Prime Minister. Afterwards, Deputy Prime

Minister and Union Minister U Than Swe together with the donors, participated in the offering

ceremony, fitting the gold plates to the Shwedagon Pagoda. — MNA/KZL

## MoI Union Minister meets former Nepali PM, ex-Thai Deputy FM



Photos from left to right showcase Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn receiving Nepal's former Prime Minister, Thai former Deputy FM, and Chinese Professor Dr Zhang Weiwei yesterday.

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn met former Prime Minister of Nepal Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal and former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand Mr Sihasak Phuangketkeow separately yesterday morning at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw.

They are in Myanmar to attend the forum on

“Forum on Myanmar Beyond 2025: Challenges and Opportunities in the Multipolar World”. During the meetings, they cordially discussed ensuring the successful organization of the forum, providing effective recommendations, and strengthening bilateral relations.

In the afternoon, the Union minister received and

met Professor Dr Zhang Weiwei and his delegation from Fudan University, People's Republic of China, at Horizon Lakeview Resort in Nay Pyi Taw.

Deputy Minister U Ye Tint, the permanent secretary and officials also attended the meetings. — MNA/MKKS

## Myanmar hosts ACDM Working Group 9<sup>th</sup> meeting



The commemorative group photo of the ninth meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management Working Group on Preparedness, Response and Recovery yesterday.

MYANMAR hosted the ninth meeting of the ASEAN Com-

mittee on Disaster Management (ACDM) Working Group

on Preparedness, Response and Recovery and related meetings in Yangon yesterday.

Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Kyi said the meeting is an implementation of the commitment of ACDM to enhance disaster preparedness, response and recovery in the ASEAN region.

Over the past decade, ASEAN has shifted from focusing on politics and economics to focusing on socioeconomic development and disaster management.

Like other ASEAN member states, Myanmar enacted the Disaster Management Law and Regulations in 2013 and 2015 respectively to ensure effective and rapid disaster management activities. The ACDM also redrafts the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme and the work committee members should draft the work programmes that can be implemented practically based on the resources of the member countries and

the region.

The meeting was attended by the co-chairs of the Working Groups from Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore, representatives from the Working Group member states, Brunei Darussalam, Laos, the Philippines and Thailand, representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Centre (AHA Centre), and representatives from Indonesia and Timor Leste as observers. The meetings will be held for two days. — MNA/KTZH



# NATIONAL

## Union Info Minister hosts dinner for experts to Forum on Myanmar Beyond 2025

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn hosted a dinner yesterday at the Horizon Lakeview Resort in Nay Pyi Taw for the international experts in geopolitics and geoeconomics and observers who will participate in the “Forum on Myanmar Beyond 2025: Challenges and Opportunities in the Multipolar World”.

Also present at the dinner were Union Ministers U Ko Ko Hlaing and Dr Kan Zaw, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman U Than Tun Oo, SAC Chairman’s Advisory Board members, Deputy Ministers U Ye Tint and Daw Nu Mra Zan, departmental officials, experts in geoeconomics and geopolitics from China, Russia, India, Japan, Thailand, Italy, and Nepal and other invitees.

Before the dinner event, the Union ministers cordially greeted the attendees. Then, the video clip “Golden Land Myanmar”



The dinner for global experts to the Forum on Myanmar Beyond 2025 in progress yesterday, hosted by Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn in Nay Pyi Taw.

was played.

Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn made a speech, appreciating the arrival of international experts to the forum and added that the world is transitioning into a multipolar

system. With this shift, how will various challenges and opportunities arise and how will the small nation be positioned in this multipolar world? And so, the experts are invited to join the discussion to find solutions

to the questions. The attendees are the ones with proper experiences, and their opinions and discussions are also valuable to the country.

He appreciated the international experts, embassies,

organizations and individuals for participating in the forum.

Professor Dr Zhang Weiwei from Chinese Fudan University and Indian Researcher Mr Sripathi Narayana from the Indian Council of World Affairs made a greeting speech, and Chairman of Myanmar Narrative Think Tank U Ko Ko remarked.

The Union ministers posed for documentary photos together with the attendees and had dinner together with them. During the dinner reception, the artistes from the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture entertained.

The Union minister presented cash prizes and flower bouquets to the artistes.

The international experts in geopolitics and geoeconomics and observers visited the Maravijaya Buddha Image and the Gem Museum on the same morning. — MNA/KTZH

## Day 4 of 2025 Matric Exams: 185,000+ take Chemistry, 22,800+ Geography

THE fourth day of the 2025 matriculation examination continued yesterday morning, with a total of 185,664 candidates sitting for the Chemistry exam and 22,846 candidates sitting for the

geography exam nationwide, including at overseas examination centres.

This year, the Chemistry exam was conducted at 813 examination centres, including 12

overseas centres and 801 domestic centres. A total of 195,603 candidates had registered for the exam, of whom 185,664 attended, while 9,939 were absent, resulting in an attendance rate

of 94.92 per cent.

For the Geography exam, 674 examination centres were set up, comprising one overseas centre and 673 domestic centres. Of the 25,240 registered

candidates, 22,846 sat for the exam, while 2,394 were absent, leading to an attendance rate of 90.52 per cent, according to the Ministry of Education. — MNA/MKKS



Yenangyoung.



Myitkyina, Kachin State.



Kyaiklat, Ayeyawady Region.



Mongthauk, Nyaungshwe, Shan State.



Kyaukpadaung, Mandalay Region.



# NATIONAL

## Visitors enjoy Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival

**T**HE Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival in Minbu (Sagu) Township, Magway Region, featured two nights of traditional music performances on 18 and 19 March. Famous artistes entertained and pilgrims and locals enjoyed the shows in a peaceful and happy atmosphere.

The performances took place on a special stage near the main bridge, starting at 8 pm

each night. Min Htwe theatrical troupe led the event, with well-known actors, singers, and musicians performing with Shwe Khine Zaw's Myanmar orchestra. At the second night, over ten thousand visitors participated in the lively event.

This year, the festival runs for 75 days from 2 February to 17 April including the Maha Thingyan holidays. — Maung Maung (Minbu)/KZL



Photos capture festival-goers enjoying water and festivities at Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda Festival.

## Annual Saopha Market Day held in Kengtung

KENGTUNG in eastern Shan State hosted its annual Saopha Market Day on the morning of 20 March in front of the Saopha's Tomb in Ward 3. This event, held once a year, commemorates and honours past Saophas (Shan chieftains) and allows vendors to sell goods for just one day.

The tradition dates back to 1368 AD, during the reign of Saopha Sao Sit Pan Tu. Historically, this area — now known as Aung Mye Park in Ward 3 — served as a gathering place for Shan Saophas before they embarked on journeys or military expeditions. They would stay for two or three nights, granting ranks to commanders and gathering weapons and troops before departing. By 1632, the market was relocated to the current Myoma Market in Ward 1 as trade increased,

Today, the annual Saopha Market Festival continues in its original location, with vendors setting up stalls along Loimwe Road from behind the Saopha Stupa to the Parlian Gate and along Zaytangyi Road. The market extends to the EPC Road Junction, bustling with traders and visitors.

The event is particularly lively, featuring a wide variety of local crops, traditional foods, ethnic clothing and consumer goods. Visitors from near and far come to buy, take photos and pay respects at the eight stupa tombs, where offerings of fruits, flowers, candles and incense sticks are made.

For the Shan ethnic community, this market is a symbol of tradition and prosperity, with people believing that purchasing goods here brings blessings

for health, social well-being and business success. As a result, both locals and visitors — from

children to the elderly — gather in large numbers to shop and celebrate this unique an-

nual event. — Aung Zin Myint (IPRD) and Myint Mo (Tachilek) /KZL



Shoppers flock to annual Saopha Market Day in Kengtung, 20 March 2025.



# OPINION

## Lend a helping hand to individuals with Down syndrome

**D**OWN syndrome occurs when an individual has an extra partial or complete copy of chromosome 21. While the exact cause is not yet known, Down syndrome has always been a part of the human condition. It affects people worldwide and can result in a range of effects on learning, physical characteristics, and health.

Nobody wishes to suffer from the impacts of Down syndrome disorder, but some individuals inevitably experience such health conditions. Therefore, access to healthcare, early intervention programmes, inclusive education, and relevant research are crucial for the growth and development of these individuals.

Moreover, society should not discriminate against people with Down syndrome or their families for any reason and must be ready to offer support to those affected.

In December 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared 21 March as World Down Syndrome Day. To raise public awareness of Down syndrome, the Assembly encourages all Member States, relevant United Nations organizations, other international organizations, and civil society—including non-governmental organizations and the private sector—to observe World Down Syndrome Day in a fitting manner.

Due to various factors related to the health conditions of parents, the estimated incidence of Down syndrome is between 1 in 1,000 and 1 in 1,100 live births worldwide. Each year, approximately 3,000 to 5,000 children are born with this chromosomal disorder. It is important to note that individuals with Down syndrome should not feel ashamed or guilty about their condition. These efforts contribute to providing better healthcare and support for people with Down syndrome, according to the United Nations.

Addressing healthcare needs is essential for improving the quality of life for individuals with Down syndrome. It includes regular check-ups with healthcare professionals to monitor their mental and physical condition, as well as providing timely interventions such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, counselling, or special education.

Individuals with Down syndrome can achieve an optimal quality of life through parental care, medical guidance, and community-based support systems, such as inclusive education at all levels. These factors enable their participation in mainstream society and help them fulfil their potential. The theme for World Down Syndrome Day 2025 is 'Improve Our Support Systems,' emphasizing the need for tailored support that provides individuals to uplift their lives and health conditions to be able to stand tall in society.

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By Atul Aneja



**T**OP scholars and thinkers drawn from Russia, India, China, Italy, Japan, Thailand, and Myanmar are set to brainstorm a roadmap for Myanmar that will allow it to confront serious challenges and avail exciting opportunities beyond 2025.

The high-level meeting of minds will take place in Nay Pyi Taw in the presence of Myanmar's top leaders, officials, intellectuals, diplomats, and prominent members of the civil society on 21 March. (State Administrative Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is expected to address the con-

ference.)

The prestigious conclave, hosted by the freshly minted think tank Myanmar Narrative and Myanmar's Ministry of Information is taking place amid major power shifts in the global system. Consequently, the conference has been aptly titled – Forum on Myanmar Beyond 2025: Challenges and Opportunities in the Multipolar World.

In the past few months, the global system has evolved rapidly, opening fresh challenges but also revealing brand new opportunities that Myanmar can avail to mark a positive transition beyond 2025.

The shift from a unipolar world to a multipolar world has markedly sharpened; in fact, the phenomena of multipolarity have become significantly energized in recent years and months. Civilizational states such as India, China, and Russia along with Europe and the United States are now

set to pillar a new world order. Multilateral organizations such as the BRICS-plus, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, ASEAN, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are set to play a significantly bigger role in shaping the global landscape.

In other words, the unipolar era that began after the collapse of the Soviet Union has ended. Power has now been defused and new players and organizations are on the horizon, demanding a seat on the high table. As the Ukraine conflict shows signs of winding down, mainly because of the United States and Russia are now inclined to work together, it appears that the Atlantic Alliance is showing deep internal cracks.

As the old order frays, there is now a justified demand for a Yalta 2.0 – a conversation between the big players of the multipolar world and others from the Global South to define a new world order. This would replace the old

world order anchored by Yalta 1.0, the conference before the end of World War 2 in the famous city of Crimea, which resulted first in the post-war bipolar and then unipolar world order, after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

The arrival of Donald Trump as the 47<sup>th</sup> President of the United States has been a complete game changer, arguably opening significant new opportunities for Myanmar.

Russian thinker and philosopher Alexander Dugin, author of the Fourth Political Theory, who will address the conference, is of the view that Trump has started a much larger conservative revolution, with the intent of spreading it beyond the United States, with Europe, right now, as the focus.

Trump's war on "globalism" – an ideology to establish a single super-state by pursuing a policy of "regime change" when sovereign states resist, is likely to be discussed during the conference.

The US president, right from the start has also rightly targeted the cultural dimensions of globalism – Woke culture, cancel culture, LGBTQ movement as well as an attack on religion, tradition, and family.

The forum is likely to brainstorm how Myanmar is likely to benefit from the sudden fall from grace under Trump of institutions such as USAID, the agency that had been reportedly assigned to implement the notorious BURMA Act – a transparent attempt to engineer regime change in Myanmar.

In financial terms, the BURMA Act provided \$75 million for the so-called refugee assistance programmes, especially for those camping in Thailand. Significantly, it has earmarked \$25 million for the NUG and PDF, its armed wing, wrongfully calling it "non-lethal assistance".

The assembled experts will examine whether the changing

global situation will offer fresh opportunities for internal reconciliation, paving the way for an amicable transition after 2025.

Delegates at the conference are also likely to debate whether in the chaotic global transition, will Myanmar have a fresh opportunity to reconstruct its geopolitical architecture where engagement with four key players – India, China, Russia, and the US along with two multilateral organizations, ASEAN and BRICS+, would be key. Perhaps for the first time since World War II, Myanmar will be able to simultaneously and deeply engage without contradiction, its four key partners – India, China, Russia, and the US along with ASEAN, especially Thailand, without fundamentally antagonizing any of them.

Many other themes will be on the forum's radar. In the future, will Myanmar be able to fully leverage its prized geographi-

cal location to foster prosperity? For instance, if peace descends, Myanmar can advance the development of the trilateral Asian highway project, which involved India, Myanmar, and Thailand, with the intent of extending it further to Vietnam. Simultaneously, Myanmar can consider extending the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) to India, though this may require a deeper conversation between India and China, two countries which have begun a normalization process following the Kazan BRICS summit in October 2024.

In the maritime domain, Myanmar has developed two major deep-water ports – Sittway and Kyaukphyu, which can attract a sizeable chunk of commercial ships on account of their advantageous location along the sea lanes in the Bay of Bengal. Besides, with the Vladivostok to Chennai shipping route opening up between Russia and India, Myan-

mar can explore the possibility of leveraging its ports as trans-shipment hubs in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Finally, post-2025, Myanmar can exponentially develop its geo-cultural heft by bringing its world-famous historical sites, including Bagan, onto the international tourism map. Myanmar can also become a major destination in an expanding Buddhist circuit, which has a footprint across Asia and Eurasia.

To sum up a galaxy of keynote speakers including Professor Dugin, Professor Zhang Weiwei from China's Fudan University, Brigadier (Retd.) Vinod Anand, Senior Fellow at India's prestigious Vivekanand International Foundation (VIF), Mr Madhav Nepal, former Prime Minister of Nepal and Mr Sihasak Phuanketkeow, former Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, and several other top scholars and international relations experts are, for the first time, opening a public debate on how Myanmar, weaving into a new multipolar global order, can have another historic chance to usher in peace, prosperity and an unprecedented opportunity for cultural advancement.

merging back together. Essentially, the emulsion is a salad dressing with the oil droplets held in suspension throughout the saline solution. In practical terms, this would allow the PBPGs to be applied simultaneously with agrochemicals using the same emulsion.

To see how well the emulsion worked, the researchers did two tests. First, the researchers compared the survival of PBPGs in the emulsion to the survival of PBPGs in the saline solution alone. Samples of each were stored at room temperature. After four weeks, the population of P simiae in the emulsion was 200 per cent higher than the population in saline; the population of A. brasiliense in the emulsion was 500 per cent higher.

Second, the researchers wanted to see how well pesticides would work when incorporated into the emulsion. For this, the researchers incorporated the pesticide fluopyram into the emulsion, preventing the droplets from

## Researchers demonstrate new technique for boosting plant growth with bacteria

*The new method stabilizes these microbes, allowing for the creation of customized probiotics for plants.*

**R**ESearchers have successfully demonstrated a technique for encapsulating bacteria, which can subsequently be preserved and applied to plants to promote their growth and protect them from pests and infections. The technique paves the way for a variety of crop applications that will enable farmers to use these beneficial bacteria in conjunction with agrochemicals.

"Many of the beneficial bacteria we know of are fairly fragile, making it difficult to incorporate

them into practical, shelf-stable products that can be applied to plant roots or leaves," says John Cheadle, co-lead author of a paper on the work and a PhD student at North Carolina State University. "The technique we demonstrate here essentially stabilizes these bacteria, making it possible to develop customized probiotics for plants."

At issue are plant growth-promoting bacteria (PGPBs), which are microbes that benefit plant health and growth, helping plants

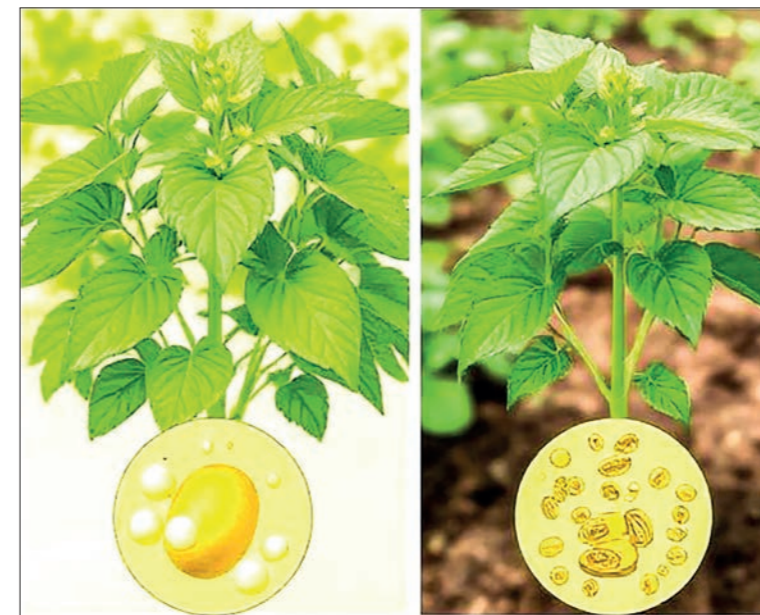
extract nutrients from the environment and protecting them from pests or pathogens.

"A longstanding challenge for making use of these bacteria has been that if you tried to come up with a single application that the paper and INVISTA Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at NC State. "We wanted to develop a solution that would

allow bacteria to be used in conjunction with chemicals already in widespread use by growers."

"By the same token, a healthy plant microbiome allows the plants to make better use of nutrients available in the soil and more resistant to pathogens," says Tahira Pirzada, co-corresponding author and a research scholar at NC State. "This may allow growers to use less fertilizer and pesticides without hurting crop production."

The new technique revolves around a custom-made emulsion,



This innovation addresses the challenge of using fragile plant growth-promoting bacteria (PGPBs) in conjunction with agrochemicals, such as pesticides and fertilizers, which typically harm the bacteria. **ILLUSTRATION: CONCEPT ART**

# ARTICLE



# NATIONAL

## Myanmar deports 379 Chinese telecom fraud suspects, detains 253 more



Immigration and officials processing deportation of foreign telecom fraudsters yesterday.

THE government is strictly cracking down on online scams and online gambling through the Myanmar-China-Thailand Trilateral Cooperation, and transported 379 Chinese nationals via the Myanmar-Thailand Friendship Bridge II on humanitarian grounds and for bilateral relations yesterday.

Minister for Security and Border Affairs of Kayin State government Colonel Min Thu Kyaw, Deputy Director-General Mr Liu Ning Ning from China's Ministry of Public Security's Criminal Investigation Department and officials inspected the detention of foreign nationals and met relevant officials. During the meeting, they provided

proper instructions regarding the accurate data, food, accommodation, health, security of detainees and transfer processes without any delays.

The handover ceremony was attended by Kayin State Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Min Thu Kyaw, Deputy Director General Mr Liu Ning Ning from China's Ministry of Public Security's Criminal Investigation Department and representatives from Thailand's Tak Province Immigration Bureau, and Myanmar officials transferred the documents to the authorities of relevant countries.

In addition, Myanmar authorities detained 133 Chinese

nationals and 120 Ethiopians, totalling 253 for entering Maethawtalay in Myawady via illegal routes on the same day, and the officials checked the personal information and records of these detainees to repatriate them to their respective countries.

From 30 January to 20 March 2025, a total of 7,616 foreign nationals who entered Myanmar illegally were identified and detained. Of them, 4,950 were systematically handed over to the relevant countries via Thailand as per legal procedures, and the remaining 2,666 foreign nationals are ready for repatriation and are being well cared for. — MNA/KTZH

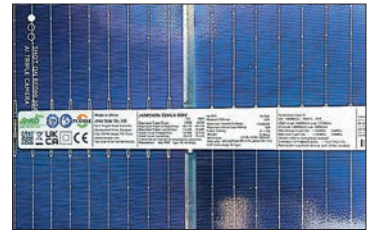
## Single-day illegal trade crackdown seizes goods worth K2,399M

UNDER the supervision of the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee, efforts to combat the illicit trade are continued effectively by the law.

On 19 March, the combined teams impounded five bamboo rafts, together with related things, that were used in the illegal gold mining works (worth K2.475 million) near the Ayeyawady River in Myitkyina Township, 3.845 tonnes of illegal teak and 1.044 tonnes of other timbers (valued at K26.736 million) in Sagaing and Monywa Townships, an unregistered Nissan AD van (estimated value of K10 million) at the Kantalu combined checkpoint in Sagaing Township, and 120 gallons illegal fuel (valued at K1.2 million) at the Yadanabon bridge combined checkpoint in Sagaing Township. The action was taken under the Forest Law, the Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law, and Customs procedures.

Similarly, the combined on-duty teams seized industrial materials (valued at K40.93 million) without official documents from two warehouses in Myeik an unregistered vehicle and two unregistered motorbikes (estimated value of K24.7 million) in Myeik Township, foodstuffs (valued at K26.64 million) without official documents at the Kaung Myat-Mann passenger bus station in Bago Township, and 0.564 tonne of illegal timbers (worth K48,268) in Toungoo Township. The action was conducted under the Forest Law, the Export-Import Law, and Customs procedures.

Additionally, the combined teams under the Mandalay Region Illegal Trade Eradication Task Force confiscated a Toyota HiAce microbus (estimated value of K27 million) carrying consumer goods (worth K14.456 million) without official documents at the Yadanabon bridge (Mandalay) checkpoint, a Nissan Condor van (estimated value of K30 million) carrying consumer goods (worth K4.452 million) without official documents at the Myitnge checkpoint, a Toyota Hilux Surf (estimated value of K33 million) carrying 13 kinds of consume goods (valued at K8.556 million) without official documents at the



The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported 38 arrests on 19 March, confiscating illegal goods worth approximately K2,399 million.

16<sup>th</sup>-Mile Kyaukchaw checkpoint, a Yutong bus (estimated value of K110 million) carrying consumer goods (worth K22.135 million) in Paleik Township, two trucks (estimated value of K73 million) carrying industrial materials (worth K29.592 million) without official documents on the outskirts of Kyaukse and a Man Tractor head with a trailer (estimated value of K71 million) carrying industrial materials (worth K130.03 million) without official documents near the detour round Kyaukse. The action was conducted as per Customs procedures.

The combined on-duty teams captured an unregistered Toyota Wish (estimated value of K9 million) in Pathein, an unregistered Wave X motorbike (estimated value of K300,000) in Maubin Township, foodstuffs (valued at K19.2 million) without official documents in Tachilek Township, 1.94 tonnes of illegal timbers and 4.3 tonnes of illegal charcoal (worth K272,507) in Uttara district, a MV SML-01 vessel (approximately K1,500 million) carrying industrial materials and consumer goods (worth K61.249 million) without official documents at the Mot-tama jetty, industrial materials and consumer goods (valued at K115.791 million) without official documents from two containers at the Asia World Port, and industrial materials (worth K7.308 million) without official documents at the Yangon International Airport (Import Desk). The action was conducted under the Forest Law, the Export-Import Law, and Customs procedures.

The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported 38 arrests on 19 March, confiscating illegal goods worth approximately K2,399 million. — MNA/MKKS

### Counter-argument to false information

## Media defames security forces

THE malicious media spread fake information, claiming that security forces torched the village and opened fire using heavy and small weapons in Ngatayaw village, Yesakyo Township, Magway Region, on 19 March, and the villagers had fled their villages.

According to a local security official, such news was invalid. Security forces conducted security measures in Yesakyo Township and did not take any security measures in Ngatayaw village on that day. Terrorists torched the villages and launched attacks using heavy weapons and drones. Subversive media outlets spread misinformation, covering up their terror acts and misleading the people about security forces. — MNA/KTZH



This screenshot validates misinformation.



# NATIONAL

## ICWA holds talks with Myanmar parties, NSPNC, NCA-signatory EAOs

THE Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), Myanmar political parties, NSPNC, and EAOs met at the India Centre in Yangon on 19 March for a discussion.

The meeting participants discussed topics such as constitutional frameworks and federalism, India's experience in managing a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual federal system, inclusive governance and power-sharing, and the relationship between Indian federalism and ethnic diversity.

The meeting was attended by three representatives from the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee (NSPNC) of Myanmar, including its Secretary, Lt-Gen Min Naing, and representatives from five of the seven armed groups that have signed the Na-



This photo showcases the discussion between the ICWA, political parties, NSPNC, and NCA-signatory EAOs.

tionwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA): Daw Saw Mra Razar Lin, Nan Yin Yin Soe, Colonel Saw

Kyaw Nyunt, Yebaw Myo Win, and Colonel Khun Okka. In addition, the following po-

litical party representatives were present: Chairman of People's Party U Ko Ko Gyi, Chairman

of Arakan Front Party Dr Aye Maung, Vice-Chairman of the National Democratic Force Party U Htet Aung Kyaw, Chairman of the Tai-Leng Nationalities Development Party U Sai Htay Aung, Chairman of the Arakan National Party U Tha Htun Hla, former Pyithu Hluttaw representatives Daw Khin Saw Wai and U Ye Htun, former Yangon Region Hluttaw representative Dr Nyo Nyo Thin, writer Kyaw Win, U Khin Maung Soe from the USDP, and U Saw Than Myint from the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party.

Myanmar's political and administrative institutions visited India from 5 to 7 November 2024 to study federalism, followed by discussions at the India Centre in Yangon, Myanmar, on 18 March 2025. — ASH/TH

## MOEAA: New job demand letters permitted only after relocating current workers

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agency Association (MOEAA), licensed overseas employment agencies will only be permitted to submit new job demand letters after signing contracts and dispatching workers to the respective countries.

These agencies must first complete the deployment of workers who are still awaiting dispatch to their designated countries before submitting new job demand letters. Additionally, authorities will provide further notifications regarding the quota of workers that each licensed agency is allowed to send abroad.

"Ahead of 30 January, agencies had already processed the dispatch of workers under employment contracts



This photo depicts Myanmar workers sent abroad under the EPS system.

with employers in Thailand, as well as under job demand letters from other countries. The remaining workers designated for despatch to these countries must be sent first before new demand letters can be submitted. The relevant authorities will soon announce the submis-

sion process for worker deployment and the quota of workers permitted for each country," said an MOEAA official.

Meanwhile, the issuance of the Overseas Worker Identification Card (OWIC) for departing workers will resume on 20 March. — ASH/MKKS



This picture captures the China-Myanmar media tea party for Q1.

## China-Myanmar Media Tea Party kicks off first quarter on 20 Mar

THE first quarter China-Myanmar media tea party took place at Wyndham Grand Hotel on 20 March in Mingala Taungnyunt Township, Yangon Region.

Minister Counsellor Dr Zheng Zhihong of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China to Myanmar and embassy officials, Chinese Professor Zhang Weiwei of International Relations at Fudan University and members, and representatives from Chinese media outlets in Myanmar and Myanmar

media outlets attended the tea party. The minister counsellor gave an opening remark. Zhang Weiwei also gave a remark at the event.

Attendees discussed matters related to the third session of the 14<sup>th</sup> National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference that opened on 4 March and People's Democracy which is most suitable for China's national conditions. — ASH/KK

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# NATIONAL

## Thukha Dagon Public Housing: Lot draw for eligible applicants



This photo captures flats at the Thukha Dagon Public Housing.

ELIGIBLE applicants can draw lots to rent 334 apartment units of the two buildings of Thukha Dagon Public Rental Housing, the Department of Urban and Housing Development (DUHD) said.

The department stated that 135 in Thakayta Township, 32 in Mingaladon Township and 167 in Thingangyun Township are titled to draw lots and the lists are notified to the respective township's General Administration Department. The Thukha Dagon Public Rental Housing grants a five-year lease permit.

DUHD granted a five-year

lease at Thukha Dagon public rental housing to those who have difficulty in accommodation. Unscrupulous fraudsters are attempting to scam vulnerable individuals with fraudulent listings by providing fake rental guarantees.

Furthermore, some who have rental resident permits are also found to rent them out again. Consequently, their lease permit will be cancelled and they will face legal action under the existing laws.

DUHD notified that five buildings that will be completely developed soon will be put out for lease.

The Housing Supervision Committee and Leasing and Disciplinary Committee notified that those who are allowed to stay at the housing units under the lease agreement must follow the rules and regulations of the contract. They must not rehire, transfer, sell or mortgage the apartment units to others. They must not fail to move into the apartment as well.

Those who violate the rules will get their rental permit revoked and the head of the household registration is subjected to legal action. — NN/KK

## China enforces mandatory packaging rules for fruit imports

ONLY fruits with good packaging can be brought into China starting from April, China's Customs in Dali City announced on 19 March.

China announced new packaging regulations in which one box per truck will no longer be allowed starting from 1 April. Only packaging with filler material in boxes will be accepted.

Only less than ten trucks of watermelons and more than 100 trucks of cantaloupes are seen flowing into the checkpoint at present. Watermelon fetches good prices yet the prices of cantaloupe are declining, according to the Khwanyo Fruit Depot.

China's inspection hindered fruit export and fruit trucks were struck on the Mongla-Dali route,

deteriorating fruit quality. Worsening delay will turn exports sour for perishable mangoes, as per Khwanyo Fruit Depot.

Melon farmers are now expecting better trade routes amid transportation hurdles.

Traders suggested that suppliers observe market conditions depending on supply and demand factors.

Myanmar's watermelon is primarily exported to China. However, traders are facing prolonged challenges amid the policy changes in China, fruit traders stressed.

Traders need to consider delivery time, price and profitability as watermelon is a perishable fruit while trying to explore new markets beyond China. — NN/KK



Images highlight Myanmar's export fruits in pristine packaging.

## CBM sells US\$300,000, CNY1.12M on 19 Mar

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold \$300,000 and 1.12 million yuan on 19 March.

It sold \$33 million on 18 March after it announced on 17 March to inject them into the fuel oil sector.

CBM sold \$33.5 million and over 156 million baht on 11 March after it announced on 10 March to inject them into the fuel oil sector.

CBM pumped \$197,032.72 on 10 March, \$335,000 and 1.98 million baht on 7 March, and over \$130,000 on 6 March into the financial market. CBM announced on 5 March that it would soon sell 50 million baht to importers. Later, it sold over eight million baht on that day.

CBM announced the sale of \$23 million and 150 million baht on 3 March for fuel oil importers. It injected that amount of foreign currencies into the fuel oil sector on 4 March. It sold \$550,000, 400,000 yuan and 638,550 baht on 3 March.

CBM pumped over \$88 million, 7.5 million yuan and 161 million baht in February and over \$124 million, over 13.8 million baht and over 4.8 million yuan in January.

CBM aims to curb the instability in the

foreign exchange market and the currency devaluation. According to CBM's notification on 15 March, 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



Greenbacks spotted at the exchange counter.

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WORLD WATER DAY 2025  
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“ရေအရင်းအမြစ်များ တည်မြဲစွာ ရေခဲမြစ်များ ထိန်းသိမ်းစို့”  
“Glacier Preservation”

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# Semiprivate booths to be introduced on Tokaido shinkansen trains

*Semiprivate booths with luxurious seats will be introduced by March 2028 on shinkansen bullet trains connecting Tokyo and western Japan.*

SEMIPRIVATE booths with luxurious seats will be introduced on shinkansen bullet trains connecting Tokyo and western Japan by March 2028, the operator said Wednesday, citing expected demand from inbound tourists and business travellers.

Central Japan Railway Co will replace 20 of the 68 seats in each first-class car on the Tokaido Shinkansen Line with six luxury seats. The booths

will have lockable doors, and the seats can be rotated for face-to-face conversations.

JR Central said the planned introduction of fully private booths on Tokaido shinkansen trains is now set for fall 2026. Each trainset will have two booths.

The private and semiprivate booths will be offered on about 30 per cent of Tokaido shinkansen services, the company said. — Kyodo

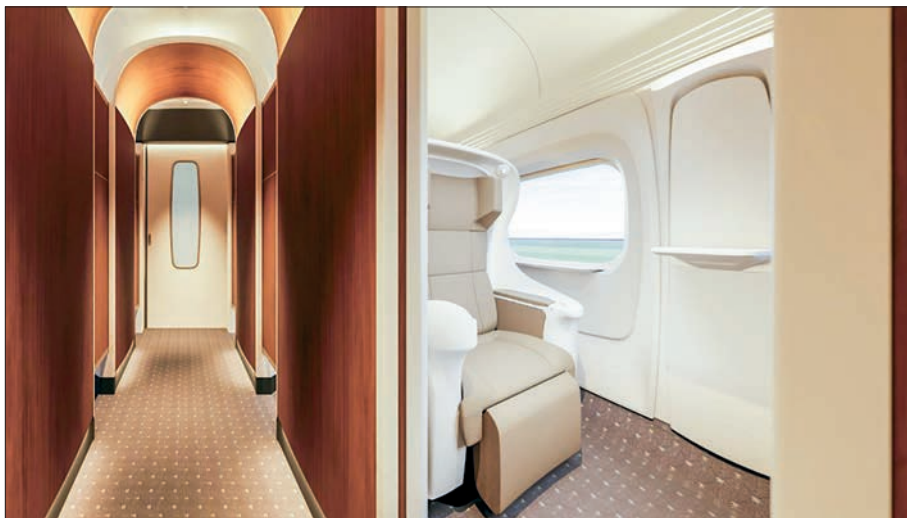


Photo shows an artistic rendering of semi-private booths to be introduced on some Tokaido shinkansen bullet trains. PHOTO: JR CENTRAL / KYODO

Germany's Siemens to cut over 6,000 jobs worldwide

GERMAN industrial giant Siemens said Tuesday it planned to cut over 6,000 jobs worldwide due to weak demand and increasing competition in China and in its home market.

The reductions, about two per cent of Siemens's global workforce, will mostly be made in the group's factory automation unit while a small number of positions will be lost in its electric vehicle charging business. "Muted demand primarily in the key markets of China and Germany coupled with increased competitive pressures have considerably reduced orders and revenue in the industrial automation business," said the group in a statement. — AFP

# Santander to close one fifth of UK branches amid online switch



The continued shift towards online banking will see Santander shut a fifth of its UK branches. PHOTO: AFP

SPANISH bank Santander announced Wednesday plans to close one fifth of its UK branches, impacting 750 jobs, as the switch to online banking gathers pace.

The group said it would close 95 branches, leaving it with 349, some of which would operate at reduced hours and without

counter services.

Of the 750 positions affected, only about 100 will be redeployed to other roles at the company, a source close to the matter told AFP.

The overhaul comes also as the bank's UK operations have struggled under strong domestic competition. — AFP

# Brazil unveils broader income tax exemption plan

Brazil's government announced a plan on Tuesday to exempt individuals with gross salaries of no more than 5,000 reais (US\$881.35) per month from income tax, local media reported. Currently, Brazil's income tax exemption threshold stands at 2,824 reais (\$497.78).

"This is a neutral project. It won't increase the country's tax burden by a cent. What we're doing is just making amends," said Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The bill addresses a promise Lula made during his 2022 presidential campaign.

The Ministry of Finance said the measure will probably benefit 13.4 million formal workers, or 32 per cent of all formal workers in Brazil, in addition to the over 10 million workers who already qualify for tax exemption. — Xinhua

# Feb foreign visitors to Japan hit monthly record of 3.26 mln

THE number of foreign visitors to Japan in February rose 16.9 per cent from a year earlier to a record 3.26 million for the month, driven by strong demand for winter sports and the Chinese New Year holiday trailing into the month, government data showed Wednesday.

The figure topped three million for the first time in February, driven by a surge in visitors from Australia and the United

States, the Japan National Tourism Organization said.

By country and region, South Korea led with 847,300 visitors, up 3.5 per cent and a record for the month. China followed with 722,700 visitors, a 57.3 per cent increase, driven in part by expanded flight connections between the two countries.

"This February had a shorter Lunar New Year holiday than last year. Yet,

the number of visitors to Japan rose from the year before," Japan Tourism Agency Commissioner Naoya Haraikawa told a press conference, adding that the rising trend is "robust."

The number of travellers from Australia and the United States also hit record highs for February, rising 33.5 per cent to 88,800 and 28.8 per cent to 191,500, respectively. — Kyodo

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# ROLLING UPDATES

## WORLD



Israeli demonstrators march into Jerusalem demanding an end to the Gaza war on 19 March.  
**PHOTO: AFP**

## Israel restarts ground operations, issues 'last warning' to Gazans

*The Israeli military announced the resumption of ground operations in the central and southern Gaza Strip, aiming to expand the security perimeter and create a buffer zone between northern and southern Gaza.*

ISRAEL bombarded Gaza and pressed its ground operations on Thursday after issuing what it called a "last warning" for Palestinians to return hostages and remove Hamas from power.

The renewed offensive shattered a relative calm that had pervaded since truce took hold mid-January.

Heavy air strikes began strafing Gaza early Tuesday,

killing more than 400 people, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Gaza rescuers said at least 10 more people were killed in a pre-dawn bombing near Khan Yunis Thursday.

On Wednesday, the Israeli military announced it had resumed ground operations "in the central and southern Gaza Strip to expand the security

perimeter and create a partial buffer between the north and south". As Israel defied calls from foreign governments to preserve the ceasefire, Gazans were left to once again comb through rubble to find the bodies of their loved ones. "We're digging with our bare hands," said a man trying to dislodge a child's body from a heap of concrete in Gaza City. — Xinhua

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Germany reopens embassy in Damascus after 13-year closure

GERMANY has reopened its embassy in Damascus after a 13-year closure, Syrian media reported on Thursday, coinciding with a visit by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

Baerbock's trip, her second to Syria since the collapse of former President Bashar al-Assad's government in December 2024, saw the reopening of the diplomatic mission. German media, citing Baerbock, reported that a small number of diplomats, fewer than 10, will be stationed at the reopened embassy.

During her visit, Baerbock held high-level meetings with Syrian leader Ahmed Al-Sharaa, foreign affairs chief Asaad Al-Shaibani, and representatives of Syrian civil society. Baerbock also toured the heavily damaged Jobar neighbourhood in Damascus, a district that bore the brunt of the country's civil war. Germany closed its embassy in Damascus in 2012 when the country's brutal civil war began. — Xinhua

#### US denies entry to French scientist over 'hateful' messages

FRANCE has expressed concern after US border agents read the contents of a visiting French space scientist's smartphone and deported him after accusing him of "hateful" messages against US policy.

Since Donald Trump returned to the White House in January, his government has cut federal research funding and sought to dismiss hundreds of federal workers pursuing health and climate research.

"I learned with concern that a French researcher who was heading to a conference near Houston was forbidden from entering US territory before being expelled," Higher Education Minister Philippe Baptiste told AFP on Wednesday. — AFP

#### S Korea's rival parties agree on national pension reform plans

South Korea's rival political parties agreed Thursday on national pension reform plans amid chronic worry about the pension fund depletion. The ruling People Power Party and the main opposition Democratic Party agreed to raise the pension contribution rate from the current nine per cent to 13 per cent.

Under the agreement, it will be lifted by 0.5 percentage points per year for eight years beginning in 2026. The nominal income replacement rate, or the percentage of pre-retirement income covered by the pension program, will be increased from the current 40 per cent to 43 per cent next year. — Xinhua

## Trump plans to sign executive order to dismantle Department of Education: Report

US President Donald Trump is planning to sign an executive order on Thursday (local time) that aims to eliminate the US Department of Education, delivering on his campaign promise, USA Today reported, citing senior Trump administration officials.

Trump is expected to sign the order at a White House ceremony, which will have the participation of several Republican

governors and state education commissioners.

Trump will instruct his education secretary Linda McMahon to take all necessary measures to facilitate the shut down of the Department of Education and return education authority to the States, USA Today reported, citing a White House summary of the order.

The order also called for the

"uninterrupted delivery of services, programmes, and benefits on which Americans rely".

Trump's new order will set up a new test for the bounds of presidential authority following the Trump administration's efforts to close the US Agency for International Development, which was blocked this week by a federal district judge in Maryland. — ANI



Demonstrators gather outside of the offices of the US Department of Education in Washington, DC, on 13 March to protest against mass layoffs and budget cuts at the agency. **PHOTO: AFP**



# SPORTS

## Football: Japan beat Bahrain, become 1<sup>st</sup> non-host to reach World Cup



Japan's Daichi Kamada (15) opens the scoring in the second half of a 2026 football World Cup final-round Asian qualifier against Bahrain at Saitama Stadium in Saitama, eastern Japan, on 20 March 2025. **PHOTO: KYODO**

JAPAN became the first non-host nation to clinch a 2026 World Cup berth after beating Bahrain 2-0 at home through goals from Daichi Kamada and Takefusa Kubo on Thursday in the Asian final-round qualifiers, reaching the tournament for the eighth straight time.

The Samurai Blue secured their fastest-ever qualification, with three games to spare, after their six wins and one draw in Group C guaranteed they will finish in the top two and claim an automatic place at the finals to be hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Hajime Moriyasu's side endured a tough campaign on their way to the 2022 World Cup after losing two of their three opening matches in the final Asian round. It was a different story this time around as they stormed into the finals with a goal difference of 22 plus, dropping their only points in a 1-1 home draw with Australia in October. The 2026 World Cup will see the number of participating teams expand to 48 from the previous 32, with Asia getting as many as nine spots, up from a maximum of five. — Kyodo

## Myanmar fighters to compete in **ONE Friday Fights 101**

MYANMAR fighters Thway Lin Htet and Eh Mwi will participate in the upcoming ONE Friday Fights 101 to be held today where their matches will be part of the overall card.

A total of 12 bouts will take place at the event, and Thway Lin Htet will face Thai fighter Wantawee, while Eh Mwi will compete

against Israeli-American fighter Gordon. Thway Lin Htet has had three matches with ONE, winning two and losing one, while Wantawee who joined ONE earlier this year, has won his only bout. Eh Mwi, who has fought twice this year, won two and lost one, while 18-year-old Gordon will be making his ONE debut. — Shine Htet Zaw/KZL

Myanmar fighter Thway Lin Htet. **PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**



## Australia edge closer to World Cup with 5-1 thrashing of Indonesia



Jackson Irvine (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring Australia's third goal against Indonesia. **PHOTO: AFP**

TWO goals in two minutes helped Australia secure a 5-1 thrashing of Indonesia on Thursday to inch closer to World Cup qualification as Dutch legend Patrick Kluivert was well beaten in his first game in charge.

Indonesia missed an early pen-

alty before a Martin Boyle spot-kick and a Nishan Velupillay strike inside a frantic opening 20 minutes did the damage at Sydney Football Stadium.

A brace from Jackson Irvine and another by Lewis Miller sealed the win.

"The result today was very important and the fact that we did it with five goals, really pleased," said man-of-the-match Irvine. But Australian skipper Mat Ryan was not entirely satisfied.

"I think the scoreline flatters us a little bit to be honest," the goalkeeper said. "At the start of the game they had two big chances, and if they put one of them away, it could have been a different game. "But momentum is an important thing in sport and we've kick-started that winning momentum now in an important (FIFA) window, and it's important we learn and get better."

The win was a huge boost for Tony Popovic's men in the race to come second in Asian Group C behind runaway leaders Japan and automatically qualify for the 48-team tournament in North America next year.

Australia now have 10 points, four clear of Indonesia, with three games to play, including a crunch away fixture against China on Tuesday. — AFP



International Olympics Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach delivers a speech for inclusion of Boxing in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics during the second day of the 144<sup>th</sup> International Olympic Committee (IOC) session in Costa Navarino, Greece, 20 March 2025. **PHOTO: CAO CAN/XINHUA**

## Boxing confirmed for Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games

BOXING was officially included in the sports programme of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games following a vote at the 144<sup>th</sup> International Olympic Committee (IOC) Session here on Thursday.

The IOC Executive Board had provisionally recognized World Boxing as the international federation for boxing on 26 February, recommending the sport's inclusion to the IOC Session after a thorough assessment of governance and integrity criteria. Boxing was

initially excluded from the LA28 programme approved in 2022 due to governance issues surrounding its previous governing body, the International Boxing Association (IBA). After the IOC withdrew its recognition of IBA in June 2023, the future of boxing at the Olympics remained uncertain until consensus emerged around World Boxing. Boxing first appeared in the modern Olympics in 1904 and has featured in every edition except for Stockholm 1912. — Xinhua





## Trump sets two-month deadline for Iran to reach new nuke deal: CNN

Trump had previously mentioned his outreach to Iran's leadership in early March, expressing a desire for negotiations to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

**US** PRESIDENT Donald Trump has given Iran two months to reach a new nuclear deal in a letter to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, CNN reported Wednesday citing a source familiar with the letter's content.

Trump told Fox Business Network in early March that he had sent a letter to Iran's leadership proposing negotiations for a new nuclear deal.

He also told reporters at the White House that the United States is "down to final strokes with Iran" and "can't let them have a nuclear weapon".

"We have a situation with Iran that something's going to happen very soon ...



A file photo taken on 26 October 2010 shows the inside of reactor at the Russian-built Bushehr nuclear power plant in southern Iran, 1,200 kilometres south of Tehran. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Hopefully we can have a peace deal," he said. "I'm just saying I'd rather see a peace deal than the other, but the other will solve the problem."

According to the CNN source, the letter was presented to the President of the

United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan by Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff during the latter's visit to Abu Dhabi last week. Later, the UAE transferred the letter to the Iranians. In May 2018, during Trump's first

term, the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers. Trump reinstated sanctions on Iran, prompting Iran to scale back some of its nuclear commitments. — Xinhua

## WHO emphasizes prioritizing oral health for better outcomes

ON the occasion of World Oral Health Day, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia, Saima Wazed brought attention towards the need for prioritizing oral health to tackle diseases and bring about positive health outcomes in South-East Asia.



The Bangkok Declaration, titled "No Health Without Oral Health," was adopted at the WHO Global Oral Health Meeting in November 2024. **PHOTO: FDIWORLD DENTAL.ORG /FILE**

"World Oral Health Day, marked annually on 20 March, draws attention to oral health being a key indicator of overall health, well-being and quality of life. Oral diseases are among the most common noncommunicable diseases worldwide, affecting an estimated 3.5 billion people," Wazed said.

She noted that the World Health Organization is calling on the countries of the South-East Asia Region and partners for accelerated action, reiterating the commitments of the Bangkok Declaration "No Health Without Oral Health", adopted at the WHO Global Oral Health Meeting in November 2024. She noted that oral diseases and conditions cause physical symptoms, functional limitations, and a detrimental impact on emotional, mental and social well-being. Among the six WHO regions, South-East Asia reports the highest number — approximately 900 million cases of oral diseases and conditions — reflecting the region's large population. Our region also has the highest burden of oral cancer among all WHO regions. — ANI

### Moon Mission Timeline

#### Indian govt says it aims to land its astronaut on moon by 2040

INDIA'S federal junior minister in the Prime Minister's Office, in-charge of the Department of Space, Jitendra Singh Wednesday said India has planned to send its astronaut to the moon by 2040.

The minister made the statement in the lower house of the Indian parliament while replying to a question.

"India had a plan to set up its space station which will be known as Bharatiya Antriksh Station (Indian space station) and if everything goes as per plan, an Indian astronaut will be on the moon by 2040," Singh said. India has already announced that it will have its space station by 2035.

The minister further said Chandrayaan-4 (moon mission) will be launched through two launch vehicles and it will have five components. — Xinhua