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The Global NEW LIGHT of MYANMAR

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President U Min Aung Hlaing and Spouse Daw Kyu Kyu Hla open 2026 Tazaungdine Mathoe lotus robe-weaving contest

President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla inaugurated the 2026 Maravijaya Buddha Image Tazaungdine Mathoe lotus robe-weaving contest at the fountain square in Maravijaya Buddha Park yesterday evening.

The President and his wife cut the ribbon to open the lotus robe-weaving contest.

Member of the Buddha Image Board of Trustees U Thant Swe struck the auspicious gong to signal the start and the weaving teams began weaving the Matho Thingan golden lotus robes on the ceremonial looms.



President U Min Aung Hlaing observes contestants weaving Mathoe (overnight) robes at yesterday's event.

Simultaneously, artistes from Myanma Radio and Television under the Ministry of Information, cultural troupes from the Department of Fine Arts under the Ministry of Culture, Hotels and Tourism, and artistes from the Myawady Music Troupe under the Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare performed the song "Myaing Myaing Saing Saing La Tazaungdine", accompanied by music and dance. Those attending the ceremony simultaneously released small hot-air balloons and helium balloons into the sky.

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Myanmar encourages green energy, digital trade cooperation during ASEAN-China Week

DEPUTY Minister for Commerce U Win Myint Khaing called for deeper ASEAN-China cooperation on green energy, digital trade and supply chain connectivity during the high-level thematic dialogues of the ASEAN-China Week 2026 held on 23 November in Chongqing.

"Myanmar welcomes the upgraded ASEAN-China Free Trade Area 3.0 protocol, which is set to take effect on 1 December 2026. Its enhanced provisions on the digital economy and supply chain links would open new doors for businesses

SEE PAGE 5

Chinese Cultural Expo Fosters Youth Ties in Yangon

A Chinese Cultural Exhibition was held at the Eastern Language & Business Centre (ELBC), a private high school in Yangon, on 22 November.

The event was organized by the Yangon Chinese Cultural Centre and ELBC,

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The Chinese Cultural Exhibition in progress.

2026 Taunggyi Tazaungdine Balloon Festival Soars with Record Entries



A hot-air balloon rises majestically into the evening sky at the 2026 Taunggyi Tazaungdine Balloon Festival. **PHOTO: ZWE MARN**

THE 2026 Taunggyi Tazaungdine Hot-Air Balloon Festival, a beloved Shan State tradition dating back to 1894, is drawing massive crowds of locals and tourists as it nears its 25 November finale.

This year's festival features a record number of entries, prompting organizers to launch daytime competitions early on 13 November ahead of the official opening on 16 November. According to judging committee head U Tin Win (Painting), a record 449 daytime character balloons, more than double last year's tally, are competing this year, requiring nearly 45 launches per day. Seven judging panels are evaluating entries round-the-clock at Awaiya Ground based on strict criteria, including design, ascent time, aesthetics, and firework safety.

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Water Flowing to the Sea While the Heartland Thirsts: Lessons for Myanmar's Dry Zone

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Tazaungdine Festival at Maravijaya Buddha Image thronged with visitors

NATIONAL

Motto of 106th National Victory Day 2026

Strive together for national prosperity

10th Waxing of Tazaungmone, 1388 ME
4 December 2026

Objectives for 106th National Victory Day

10th Waxing of Tazaungmone 1388ME
4 December 2026

- To establish a peaceful, prosperous and modern nation through the unity of all ethnic people
- To preserve and protect the national dignity, integrity, cultural heritage and characteristics
- To put special emphasis on the development of human resources and modern technology sectors of the State
- To nurture young people's capabilities, creativity and leadership qualities, enabling them to serve as a key driving force in the nation's future development.





Images highlight a colourful spectacular array of hot-air balloons ready to take flight at the Taunggyi Thzaungdine Festival. **PHOTO: ZWE MARN**

2026 Taunggyi Tazaungdine Balloon ...

FROM PAGE 1

Yesterday, on the eve of the Tazaungmone full moon, the festivities kicked off with a citywide Kathina procession in the morning and a traditional robe-weaving competition at Culamuni Lokachantha Pagoda in the evening. At the balloon grounds, spectators watched 39 daytime animal and character balloons – ranging from swans and peacocks to pandas and Godzilla – take flight, followed by 14 teams competing in the evening's illuminated Seinnapan and firework-laden Nyameekyi categories. — Ko Htwe+Thitsa/ST

46th respect-paying ceremony for veteran cartoonists held in Yangon

THE 46th respect-paying ceremony for veteran cartoonists was held at LTH Book Hall at the Secretariat in Yangon on 23 November.

A total of 13 veteran cartoonists attended the ceremony: Chit Swe (86), Shwe Min Thar (85), Myint Thein (85), Maung Maung (85), Aung Aung (84), Tin Aung Ni (84), Maung Pachi (79), Ngwe Kyi (78), Than Htun (78), Kyaw Tin Myint Thit (78), Maung Maung Lay (77), Thit Htun (77) and Akein (77).



The 46th respect-paying ceremony.

Each cartoonist received K550,000 at the ceremony, with donations from well-wishers across the country helping to make the event possible. In addition, writer Khin Khin Lay donated K1.3 million, while the family of Lu Min and Khin Sabai Oo donated K1.3 million. — Htun Htun/MKKS

Veteran Star Marks 80th with Yangon Concert

A music concert entitled 'Cho's Sweet 80th Concert' featuring veteran Academy Award-winning actress-cum-singer Cho Pyone will be held at the Yangon Convention Centre (YCC) in Mayangon Township, Yangon Region.

At the concert, Cho Pyone will be joined by veteran singers from the film and music industries, who will perform several songs in tribute to her as a birthday gift.



This image illustrates a poster for Cho Pyone's concert, celebrating her 80th birthday.

"I would love to meet everyone at this memorable evening, where many of my beloved fellow artistes will join me on stage. It will be a wonderful opportunity to revisit songs from different generations and cherished artistic memories together, as well as enjoy a variety of exciting programmes," said Cho Pyone.

The Cho's Sweet 80th Concert will take place from 4 pm to 9 pm on Sunday, 27 December. — ASH/KNN

Myanmar Writers' Association Strongly Condemns ICJ's Final Judgement of 19 November 2026

1. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered its final judgement on 19 November 2026 in the case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar, alleging that acts of genocide had been committed in northern Rakhine State. The ICJ issued a unilateral ruling that the acts constituted genocide.
2. Concerning the said incident, Myanmar did not commit genocide; rather, during the conflict, it was solely a military operation conducted in response to the ARSA terrorists—a terrorist group that infringed upon and violated the sovereignty of Myanmar as well as the local ethnic nationalities residing within the country. Due to the terrorist killings committed by the ARSA terrorist group, towns, villages, and homes were destroyed. The incidents in which residents and Bengalis were forced to flee their homes have already been accurately presented and argued with documented records.
3. Regarding these incidents, Myanmar has been subjected to unjust accusations. Even during the issuance of provisional measures, before the final judgement was delivered, Myanmar had strictly complied with the directives in accordance with international standards. In the final judgement in this case, nine out of the 15 judges agreed with the decision, while six judges disagreed and voted against it. It is understood that the decision was not made unanimously by all the judges. The ICJ's decision was entirely unjust.
4. Therefore, in the long-term interests of the State and its citizens, Myanmar will resolve its internal affairs through the cooperation of all ethnic nationalities and people of Myanmar. As the final judgement in this case is entirely unjust, the Myanmar Writers' Association hereby issues this statement expressing its strong opposition to and condemnation of the judgement.

Myanmar Writers' Association

NATIONAL

President U Min Aung Hlaing and Spouse Daw Kyu Kyu Hla open 2026 Tazaungdine Mathoe lotus robe-weaving contest

FROM PAGE 1

The President, his wife and party observed the operations of weaving the lotus robes at 15 looms representing Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, regions and states.

The President and his wife, together with pilgrims who visited the Tazaungdine lighting festival at the Maravijaya Buddha Image, also enjoyed the release of hot-air balloons. The President and his wife cordially greeted members of the Sangha and pilgrims visiting the Buddha image and the festival.

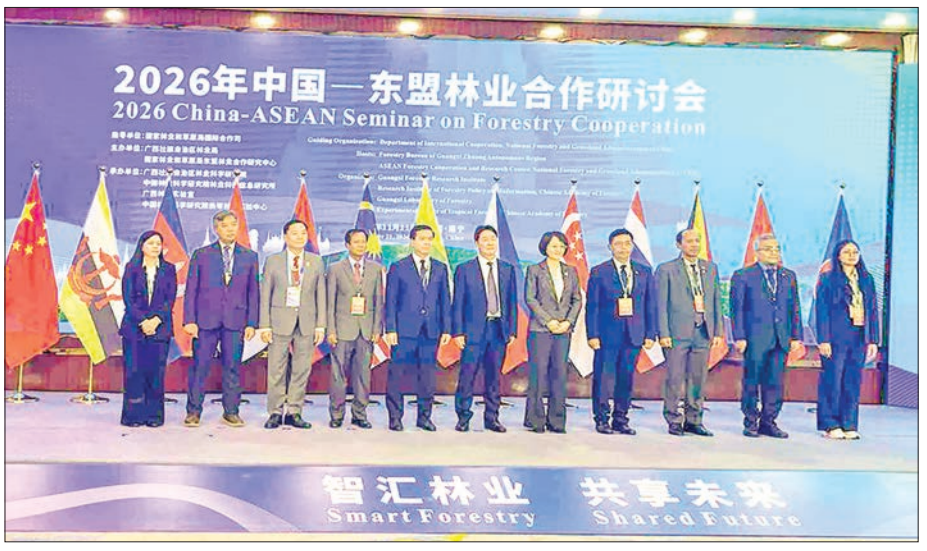
Also present at the ceremony were Vice-President U Nyo Saw and his wife Daw San San Aye, Vice-President Nan Ni Ni Aye, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Yi and his wife, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Aung Lin Dwe and his wife, Chief Justice of the Union U Tha Htay, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services General Ye Win Oo and his wife, Union-level dignitaries and Union ministers and their wives, senior Tatmadaw officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and officials.

The Tazaungdine Festival of Lights and the hot-air balloon launching and offering competition are held annually with great enthusiasm and grandeur at the Buddha Park of the Maravijaya Buddha Image in Dekkhinathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory, during the Tazaungdine festival season.

During this year's festival, various religious and festive activities are being held on the platform of the majestic Buddha Image, including recitations and offerings by chanting groups, the lighting and offering of 9,000 oil lamps, fireworks displays, the launching and offering of large decorative hot-air balloons and diamond-shaped hot-air balloons, and the weaving and offering of Mathoe golden lotus robes.

The Buddha Park is also being beautifully illuminated with LED lights, while stalls selling locally produced traditional Myanmar snacks are displaying and selling their products. In addition, renowned artistes are entertaining festivalgoers with lively music and traditional theatrical performances. — MNA/TTA

2026 World Forestry Conference Takes Root in Nanning



A group commemorative photo session of the 2026 World Forestry Industry Conference in China, attended by Deputy Minister Dr Thaung Naing Oo.

A Myanmar delegation led by Dr Thaung Naing Oo, Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, attended the 2026 World Forestry Industry Conference held on 21 and 22 November at the International Convention and Exhibition Centre in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China.

At the opening ceremony of the conference, Mr Wei Tao, Governor of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Mr Li Yunqing, Administrator of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, and Mr Wu Zhimin, Assistant Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), delivered opening remarks. Then Ms Sui Guohua, Vice-Governor of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, gave a presentation on the development of the forestry industry sector in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

In the afternoon, the China-ASEAN Forestry Cooperation Forum of the 2026 World Forestry Industry Conference continued, where Vice Governor Ms Sui Guohua, Deputy Minister Dr Thaung Naing Oo, Mr Shi Zhongjun (Secretary-General of the ASEAN-China Centre), and Mr Dian Sumajaya (Senior Official from the ASEAN Secretariat) delivered opening speeches.

In his speech, the deputy minister stated that Myanmar, with forests covering 41.15 per cent of the country's total land area, is rich in forest resources. He noted that short-term and long-term plans are formulated and systematically managed in accordance with Myanmar's forest policies and laws to ensure the sustainability of forests. He added that while various forest plantations are being established nationwide according to their respective ecosystems, efforts are also being made to develop wood-based industries, value-added products, modern furniture, and engineered wood products. He remarked that through research and innovation, modern technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), shared experiences, and continuous cooperation between ASEAN member states and the People's Republic of China, communities will become more resilient to climate change and natural disasters, achieving sustainable development in the forestry sector.

Subsequently, relevant experts presented and discussed the increasingly important role of digital and AI technologies in the development of the forestry industry, sustainable forest management, and cross-border ecological security programmes.

Afterwards, the deputy minister toured the booths showcasing forest products and modern machinery used in forest management operations at the International Convention and Exhibition Centre, and visited the Nanning Qingxiushan Ecological Conservation Park near Nanning. — MNA

Falam's renovation efforts inspected



Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Han and officials inspect recovery efforts in Falam, Chin State.

REHABILITATION work is under way in Chin State, including the renovation of the partially damaged three-storey reinforced concrete (RC) building of the District Law Office in Falam. Arrangements are also being made to temporarily reopen the Township Law Office.

Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Han inspected the renovation work yesterday morning, accompanied by Chin State Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Khin Maung Htwe and members of the Chin State Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Committee. He instructed officials concerned to systematically store salvaged materials to prevent wastage and to give priority to ensuring that the renovation work meets the required quality standards.

He also inspected the completed renovation of the partially damaged residence and office building of the Assistant Director of the District Sports and Physical Education Department, as well as the resumption of office operations. He then visited the town's main tennis court and the site of the sports hall, which was destroyed.

He also inspected the completed renovation of the office building of the Falam Township Land Records Department, and the resumption of its operations. He instructed officials to conduct necessary field inspections to prevent land-related disputes and ensure that land maps and historical land records are systematically maintained. In addition, he inspected the completed renovation of a two-unit, single-storey staff housing building under the Department of Urban and Housing Development and the accommodation arrangements for staff, as well as the renovated building of the Maternal and Child Welfare Association. — District IPRD/MKKS

NATIONAL

Tazaungdine Festival at Maravijaya Buddha Image thronged with visitors

ON the second day of the Tazaungdine Festival at the Maravijaya Buddha Image, the entire festival grounds have been bustling with crowds since the morning. Visitors include those performing meritorious deeds, pilgrims, shoppers, staff members and their families enjoying leisure outings, local communities, and pilgrims from across the country.

"I visited the festival yesterday, and today I have come back with my family. I wanted to observe the Matho golden lotus robe weaving and offering competition. I also wanted to watch the oil lamp offering ceremony and the hot-air balloon festival. As it is also a public holiday, the festival is packed with people enjoying themselves peacefully and happily. May everyone enjoy the peaceful and joyous Tazaungdine Festival," said U Aye Win, a service personnel from Chauk.

A total of 15 looms representing regions and states, including Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory, made lotus robes in the competition on the platform of the Maravijaya Buddha Image.



A serene evening view of the Maravijaya Buddha Image during the Tazaungdine Festival in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: AYE PYAE MAUNG**

The festival grounds were also bustling with devotees performing meritorious deeds by offering flowers, water and oil lamps to the majestic Maravijaya Buddha Image, lighting and offering 9,000 oil lamps, reciting the Patthana discourse and Buddhist devotional verses, and dispersing loving-kindness.

Officials carried out security checks and provided necessary guidance to ensure that pilgrims could pay homage to the majestic Maravijaya Buddha Image conveniently and smoothly. Wheelchairs and small vehicles were also provided to assist monks, persons with disabilities and elderly visitors with their transportation needs. Ministries and the Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee released hot-air balloons from the designated sites in the precinct of the Buddha Image.

People visited significant monuments such as the stone inscription Ceti, Mucalinda Lake, Nagayon Pagoda, Gandakuti chambers, Thudhamma public rest houses, Maravijaya Monastery and Agga Dhipati Sasana Beikman, as well as the water fountain square to enjoy night scenes of the Tazaungdine festival.

At the Tazaungdine market fair located in the northern part of the precinct, 520 stalls sell personal goods, MSME products, domestic goods from One Region One Product, handicrafts, traditional costumes, and traditional ethnic goods at fair prices.

Aung Zabu theatrical troupe performed theatrical dances and songs, drama and stage shows to attract large crowds of visitors. Moreover, renowned vocalists presented song entertainment to the visitors. The festival at the Buddha Image will last till 24 November, the full moon day of Tazaungmone. — Than Min Aung+Jaing Law/TTA

YU Geology Alumni holds homage paying ceremony for teachers

ORGANIZED by the geology alumni, the ceremony to pay respect to teachers was held at the University of Yangon's Mandalay Hall on 22 November.

This ceremony was held to pay respect to teachers who taught geology at the university from 1982 to 1986, and 25 teachers attended the ceremony.

"Paying-respect ceremonies are a tradition to express gratitude and respect towards teachers who taught us as well as it is an event that aims to maintain the teacher-student relation from generation to generation," said a former geology student.

The ceremony was held with the aim of preserving the bond and closeness between teachers and students, as well as enabling alumni to reunite and share fellowship and memories. — TWA/ZS



The ceremony to pay respect to teachers by the University of Yangon's geology alumni is in progress.

Scan QR to visit GNLM website

Yangon Phases Out Overhead Telecom Cables

THE Ministry of Digital Development and Communications will gradually replace overhead telecommunications cable lines across Yangon with underground cable networks under a long-term plan, according to the ministry.

The ministry has also instructed telecommunications operators to use equipment that meets prescribed standards and follow established procedures when installing cables in Yangon. They have also been directed to provide quality telecommunications services at reasonable and affordable rates.

The conversion to underground cable networks aims to improve the city's urban landscape, clear away tangled telecommunications wires and reduce the risk of fire hazards. At present, the plan is to begin the work in areas such as Dagon Myothit (North) and South Okkalapa townships, rather than in downtown areas, where limited space and the lengthy process of obtaining permits could delay implementation.

The conversion to an underground telecommunications cable network is expected to take approximately two years. The work will take into account factors such as underground drainage systems, building conditions and the difficulty of locating and repairing faults in underground cables. — ASH/KNN

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NATIONAL

Soybean tops Shan State's 14-crop yield strategy

THE Shan State Department of Agriculture has designated soybean as one of its 14 target crops for the 2026-2027 financial year, with the aim of increasing production and achieving the targeted yield.



A thriving sunflower plantation flourishes in Shan State. **PHOTO: THE SHAN STATE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT.**

"Shan State grows 14 major crops, and soybean has been added to the list of target crops this year. We are working with the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to produce value-added soybean products such as soybean chips, soybean paste and tofu. Processing agricultural raw materials into food products, producing natural fertilizers and developing products for the energy sector will help increase farmers' incomes. To achieve these goals, we will cooperate with the Department of Industrial Supervision and Inspection and the Department of Small Industries, as well as conduct awareness-raising activities," said U Nyein Tun, Deputy Head of the Shan State Department of Agriculture.

The main crops grown in Shan State are rice, maize, groundnuts, sesame, sunflower, mung beans, pigeon peas, long-staple cotton, sugarcane, onions, garlic, potatoes and soybeans.

To further expand the cultivation areas and increase the yields of target crops, the Department of Agriculture is working with relevant departments to identify and address needs and shortcomings relating to seeds, water, soil management and agricultural technology, intending to achieve the targeted production levels. — Thitsa (MNA)/MKKS

Myanmar encourages green energy, digital trade cooperation during ...

FROM PAGE 1

and bolster economic ties between ASEAN and China," he said.



The image showcases the high-level thematic dialogues of the ASEAN-China Week 2026 in Chongqing, China, attended by Deputy Minister U Win Myint Khaing.

Myanmar is also strengthening its data security and consumer protection systems, partly through engagement with international partners. Myanmar is promoting electric vehicles and solar energy as part of its sustainable development efforts, with solar power emerging as one of the most cost-effective ways to meet a growing share of electricity demand, he said.

He also invited Chinese and ASEAN investors to explore opportunities in electric vehicle production, charging infrastructure, solar power generation, solar equipment and related technologies.

Earlier, the opening ceremony also featured speeches by Chen Xinwu, mayor of Chongqing, Zhang Lizhong, secretary-general of the ASEAN-China Centre, and Mallika Jirapunvanit, first deputy speaker of Thailand's House of Representatives. Dato' Astanah Abdul Aziz, deputy secretary-general of ASEAN for the ASEAN Political-Security Community, also addressed the cooperation between ASEAN and China.

A series of initiatives were unveiled, including a partnership on AI-driven energy transition, the ASEAN-China Media Cooperation Report (2021-2026), a travel initiative, and the inauguration of the China (Chongqing)-ASEAN Medical Exchange and Cooperation Centre. Chongqing also rolled out 10 cooperation plans with ASEAN nations.

The morning session drew high-level dialogues with senior officials from Brunei, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, alongside representatives from the China International Communications Group, Laos and the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization.

In the afternoon, a commemorative forum titled "Together for a Shared Future: Embarking on a New Journey of Win-Win Cooperation" centred on the regional geopolitical outlook, opportunities and challenges facing ASEAN-China relations and practical cooperation, intending to build consensus on investment and trade, and technological innovation. — KK

MSY village project activities inspected in Thazi

YESTERDAY, officials conducted a field inspection of activities implemented under the Mya Sein Yaung (MSY) Village Project in Ushitgon (South) Village. The project is overseen by the Department of Rural Development, under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, specifically through its Thazi Township office in Mandalay Region. The initiative aims to create employment opportunities for rural residents, increase family income, and reduce poverty.

Township Head Daw Mya Thet Win of the Thazi Township Department of Rural Development, Staff Officer Daw Toe Toe Sein, and project staff reviewed the agricultural activities carried out in Ushitgon (South) Village using K43 million in Mya Sein Yaung (MSY) project funds. Daw Mya Thet Win, Head of the Thazi Township Department of Rural Development, inspected the status of livestock and trading operations, as well as the completeness of the required monthly record-keeping forms, and provided the necessary coordination to address any requirements.

According to the Head of the Thazi Township Department of Rural Development, a total of K43 million has been disbursed to 175 borrowers in Ushitgon (South) Village. This includes K32.4 million provided to 127 individuals engaged in agricultural activities, and K10.6 million provided to 48 individuals engaged in livestock farming. — Hein Htet Soe (Mahlaing)



Officials inspect an agricultural project in Thazi Township.

Chinese Cultural Expo Fosters Youth Ties in Yangon

FROM PAGE 1

with support from the Myanmar Chinese Calligraphy and Painting Association, the Myanmar Chinese Women's Association and Bowen School.

"The event aims to promote cultural exchange between young people from Myanmar and China and help them gain a better understanding of traditional Chinese customs and culture," said an official from the Yangon Chinese Cultural Centre. The programme featured question-and-answer sessions, musical performances, games, Chinese calligraphy and painting activities, demonstrations of traditional Chinese paper crafts and scented sachet-making, as well as traditional Chinese food served to participants. — ASH/MKKS

NATIONAL

16 suspects linked to online scam and gambling arrested at Yankin's Golden City



The image, including an inset, reveals the arrest location and detained scammers alongside seized scam-related items.

AS the Government is carrying out effective and stringent arrests and legal actions against online scam and gambling activities that destroy the socioeconomic lives of all humanity, a total of 16 individuals – four men and 12 women – who were committing online scam and gambling offences at the Golden City housing complex on Yankin Road, Ward 1, Yankin Township, Yangon Region, were apprehended on 22 November along with equipment used in conducting the online scam and gambling activities.

Acting on a tip-off, security personnel and departmental officials investigated online scam and gambling activities in Ward 1 of Yankin Township. At 10 pm on 22 November, those authorities arrested three men and six women along with one laptop, one printer, one tablet, 14 assorted mobile phones, one WIFI device and K1 million at room 1602 on the 16th floor of Building 3 at Golden City Housing on Yankin Road.

The authorities also raided room 3201 on the 32nd floor of Building 1 at about 11 pm and arrested one man and three women who committed online scam and gambling activities, along with 13 laptops, two tablets, two WIFI devices, seven mobile phones and one CCTV. Moreover, three women committing online scamming and gambling were arrested along with one laptop and five mobile phones from room 0602 on the 6th floor of building 4 at about 11:50 pm.

According to preliminary interrogations of those apprehended, the rooms were rented for them by a Chinese national, Mr Jiang Hong Feng (also known as Kyan Hong Feng), who resides in Room 2702 of Building 5. In conducting the online scam and gambling operations, they had to act as customer service representatives for the targets, and preliminary inspections of the seized laptops and mobile phones revealed that they were operating online slot gambling games via Zaw Play.Com (Myanmar Online Casino Slots & Sports Betting).

It has been reported that once the necessary investigations are completed, effective and stringent legal action will be taken under existing laws against the 16 apprehended individuals involved in the online scam and gambling activities, and the seized operational equipment will be processed further in accordance with established procedures. — MNA/TTA

Aunglan inspects concrete road project



Officials oversee the ongoing concrete road project in Aunglan Township.

THE Department of Rural Development, under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, inspected the ongoing construction of a concrete road implemented under the Model Village Project in Maukhon Village, Aunglan Township, Magway Region, yesterday.

Aunglan District Department of Rural Development Head U Win Naing and engineering staff inspected the construction of the concrete access road leading to the village multipurpose hall, measuring 500 feet long, 12 feet wide and six inches thick. He met village elders and residents, urging them to ensure timely completion in accordance with prescribed quality standards for long-term durability.

The concrete road project is being constructed using K14.9 million in Model Village Project funds for the 2026-2027 financial year and K15.1 million contributed by the public, with technical assistance and close supervision from DRD staff. Work commenced in the second week of October this year and is currently 90 per cent complete. Upon full completion, the road will ensure year-round convenience and improved transportation for local villagers. — Sein Lwin (Rural)

323 arrested in online scam crackdown in southern Shan State

A total of 323 Chinese and Myanmar nationals involved in online scams and gambling were arrested, along with a large quantity of related equipment, near Warmpon Village in Mongnawng Town, Kehsi Township, Shan State (South), at around 6:30 am yesterday.

The arrests were made during a search operation conducted by joint security teams following tip-offs about online scam and gambling activities in the area. The operation uncovered a compound about 1,800 metres northwest of Warmpon Village, containing five temporary workshop tents, eight residential tents, a kitchen hall and a storage hall.

Those arrested comprised 301 Chinese men, one Chinese woman and 21 Myanmar women. Authorities also seized several firearms, including one Beretta-22 pistol, one CZ 9mm pistol, one Smith-22 long gun and five AK-47 rifles with four magazines, as well as six rounds of .22-calibre ammunition.

Other seized items included 15 large and two small power stations, six medium-sized solar stations, 54 laptops, 217 mobile phones, five all-in-one computers, 33 Starlink receivers, 30 routers, eight medium-sized air coolers, two internet signal booster sets and a large generator.

Authorities also confiscated two Tiger four-wheeled vehicles, one Lexus vehicle, three large and three small freezers, two rice steamers, one large gas stove and other equipment.

According to information obtained during interrogation, the arrested Chinese nationals were casual workers from various provinces of China who had connected through social media platforms, including TikTok, Telegram and QQ, before illegally entering Myanmar to engage in online scams and gambling. They had reportedly been operating in the area for approximately 40 days.

Their modus operandi involved identifying wealthy individuals in China through social media platforms such as WeChat, Momo and QQ, establishing friendly relationships with them and persuading them to invest in joint business ventures. Once the victims transferred their money, the perpetrators would cut off all contact.



This image shows a row of makeshift huts used by arrested online scammers in southern Shan State.

The Government has designated the investigation, exposure, prevention and suppression of online scams and gambling as a national responsibility, given the serious threat these activities pose to the socioeconomic well-being of people in Myanmar and around the world.

Authorities said that effective legal action would be taken against those arrested in accordance with existing laws after the necessary interrogations had been completed, while the seized equipment would be dealt with in accordance with established procedures. — 100/ST

NATIONAL

Value-added training on dairy and meat products conducted

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Livestock Federation, the Training on Value-Added Dairy Products Production and the Training on Value-Added Meat Products Production were conducted in collaboration with Thailand's Department of Livestock Development (DLD).



The training on value-added dairy and meat products in session.

The training courses were held from 15 to 21 November at the Livestock Product Research and Development Centre (LPRDC - DLD) in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

During the seven days, both courses were conducted simultaneously, with value-added product specialists from Thailand's LPRDC - DLD delivering both theoretical and hands-on instruction.

In the dairy sector, the training covered production methods for yoghurt, ice cream, various types of cheese, condensed milk, raw milk processing, and milk-based cosmetics, alongside field visits to dairy workplaces in the Chiang Mai area.

In the meat products sector, the curriculum included systematic slaughterhouse management, production techniques for dried/smoked meat and processed ready-to-eat meat products (such as smoked meat, BBQ, and steak), as well as study tours to meat processing factories and livestock farms.

The Myanmar trainees also attended the certificate presentation ceremony on 21 November, after completing the courses. — TWA/ZN

Tourism digital marketing training course batch 2 organized

BATCH 2 of the tourism digital marketing training course was conducted at the Hotels and Tourism Training Centre located at the Yatha Condominium at the corner of 31st Street and Maha Bandoola Road in Yangon Region, according to Yangon Tourism.

It was organized by the support of the Yangon Region Tourism Committee and the supervision of the regional department for hotel and tourism development implementation and training.

It opened on 9 November, and the director of the regional department for hotel and tourism development implementation and training delivered an opening speech. A total of 34 trainees joined batch 2, which was conducted from 9 to 20 November. — TWA/ZS



The tourism digital marketing training course batch 2 in progress.

Shwe Kokko Phase II demolition: 13 of 63 illegal buildings destroyed, 50 remain



Map shows the ongoing systematic dismantling of scam hubs.

THE government is systematically demolishing illegal buildings in the Shwe Kokko area, where large-scale online scam and illegal gambling operations were previously conducted, to prevent such activities from resuming at the sites.

As of yesterday, demolition work on one five-storey building in Phase II of the Shwe Kokko area, using heavy machinery, was 50 per cent complete. Work on another five-storey building was also under way, with 20 per cent of the demolition completed.

The remaining 63 buildings in Phase II, which were used for online scam and illegal gambling operations, have been classified into three categories for systematic demolition: those to be demolished using heavy machinery, those to be brought down through controlled explosions, and those located too close to residential properties to allow either method, which will instead be dismantled floor by floor by manual labour.

So far, 13 buildings have been demolished: four through controlled explosions and nine using heavy machinery. The remaining 50 illegal buildings will also be demolished systematically.

The government is working with neighbouring and other regional countries to completely eradicate online scams and illegal online gambling, which pose growing threats to global socio-economic stability and national security. — 100/MKKS



An El Niño awareness campaign in action in Pinlaung Township.

Pinlaung holds El Niño awareness sessions in 8 villages

THE Department of Rural Development, under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, conducted awareness activities and field inspections in Linpong, Yaykanlaung, Sinkat, Yaycho, Kyaungna, Bantbain, Lintee and Yunpya villages, Pinlaung Township, Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, Shan State (South), yesterday to inform the public about the El Niño phenomenon and prevent potential drinking water shortages. Pinlaung Township Department of Rural Development Head U Kyaw Swa and officials met local communities across the eight villages to highlight the risks of hot, dry conditions, water scarcity and severe shortages stemming from El Niño. The township DRD head and officials utilized educational posters to detail heat-precaution guidelines, proper methods of storing drinking water in advance, and measures to conserve and use water systematically without wastage. Officials also conducted on-site inspections of drinking water storage conditions in the villages to assess local preparedness. Field inspections and public awareness activities are ongoing across vulnerable villages in Pinlaung Township under the supervision of the Department of Rural Development to ensure rural residents maintain adequate access to clean drinking water. — Poe Thakhin (Rural)

OPINION

Advancing regional development through collective efforts

Every country must value and preserve its national culture, literature, language and traditional customs. Ethnic literature and languages, traditional arts, traditional attire, festivals and social customs are valuable cultural heritages that reflect the national identity of each respective ethnic group. Preserving these heritages means firmly safeguarding their original identity while continuing to develop and adapt in keeping with the changing times.

Maintaining national identity and preserving cultural heritage require peace and stability throughout the country. Achieving peace and stability is not solely the responsibility of the government; every citizen must participate responsibly in this effort. Everyone must conduct themselves in a disciplined manner and abide by the established laws and regulations. Only then can their respective community's function under the rule of law and contribute to maintaining peace and stability. This will enable Myanmar society as a whole to enjoy the benefits of peace and prosperity and undertake development activities.

> Regional development can only be successful if it is undertaken according to priorities set for each region. While giving priority to densely populated areas that are in need of development, short-term and long-term plans must be implemented to ensure the gradual development of other areas as well. Efforts should be made to accelerate development in areas that need it most, without discrimination between states and regions. At the same time, various measures must be taken through planned programmes to develop human resources among the people. Only then can the country and its citizens achieve comprehensive development.

Regional development cannot be achieved through economic growth alone; improvements must also be made simultaneously in public health, education and the overall quality of life of the people. A healthy and strong human resource base is a fundamental driving force for the development of the country and its regions, while quality education is also a key resource in shaping the success of future generations. Therefore, in addition to ensuring that local people have access to healthcare and educational services, priority must also be given to developing transport networks, electricity supply, clean drinking water and basic infrastructure in accordance with the specific needs of each region.

Regional development can only be successful if it is undertaken according to priorities set for each region. While giving priority to densely populated areas that are in need of development, short-term and long-term plans must be implemented to ensure the gradual development of other areas as well. Efforts should be made to accelerate development in areas that need it most, without discrimination between states and regions. At the same time, various measures must be taken through planned programmes to develop human resources among the people. Only then can the country and its citizens achieve comprehensive development.

Peace is the foundation of regional development, while mutual trust and understanding are also key forces in building everlasting peace. Therefore, all relevant stakeholders should work together with sincerity and goodwill to resolve differences through mutual respect, tolerance, understanding and dialogue; reduce and eliminate violence and conflicts; and rebuild trust within communities.

ARTICLE

Water Flowing to the Sea While the Heartland Thirsts: Lessons for Myanmar's Dry Zone

By Khin Maung Myint

From the days of my childhood in the 1930s to my nineties today, one enduring image from central Myanmar has remained etched in my memory. During the height of the dry season, when the rains have long vanished, and the village ponds have cracked into baked clay, villagers walk out onto the glaring white sandbanks of dried-up creeks and riverbeds. Under a punishing sun, with patient, backbreaking labour, they dig shallow pits – Let-yet-twin – by hand, waiting for precious subsurface water to slowly seep into the hollow pit so they can scoop it up, pot by pot, for themselves, their children, and their livestock.

For nine decades, I have watched empires fall, borders shift, and modern technology transform the world. Yet in the heartland of Myanmar, the daily struggle for a single pot of clean water has remained stubbornly unchanged. That people in Myanmar's Dry Zone (Anya) – across Magway, Mandalay, and lower Sagaing – are still forced to spend hours of their lives extracting drinking water from dry sandbars in the twenty-first century is not a misfortune, but a chronic gap in rural water infrastructure that can be resolved.

Myanmar is a country richly endowed by nature. Great river systems – the Ayeyawady, the Chindwin, the Thanlwin, and the Sittoung – along with countless tributaries and mountain streams, carry immense volumes of fresh water down from the northern highlands and across the central plains before emptying into the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Yet every year, hundreds of billions of cubic meters of life-giving water flow unused into the ocean while communities living just miles from these great waterways suffer acute shortages for human consumption, livestock, and agriculture.

During the monsoon, rivers swell and flood surrounding lowlands; six months later, those same communities are parched. The tragedy of the Dry Zone has never been an absolute lack of water in the nation; rather, it has been the unmet challenge of capturing, storing, treating, and distributing the water that already passes through our land.

The Neighbouring Example: How Thailand Harnesses Its Water

We need not look far to see how a South-East Asian neighbour with a similar monsoon climate solved this very challenge. Since my retirement, I have travelled extensively through the Khorat Plateau – known as Isan – in northeastern Thailand, a region that historically shared many of the same arid, sandy-soiled, monsoon-dependent hardships as central Myanmar. For generations, Isan was defined by erratic rainfall, dry creek beds, and seasonal poverty. Yet over the past several decades, I have witnessed firsthand how rural water security was systematically transformed through coordinated infrastructure and decentralized engineering.

This transformation is deeply personal to my family. My son served as one of the Project Managers on several of these vital construction works, overseeing the building of diversion weirs and irrigation canals in Isan, as well as a major reservoir initiated by the late monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) – one of the two largest dams built in the country at the time. Constructed across the Huai Samong River in Prachinburi Province (the Naruebodindrachinta Reservoir), this vast engineering project was designed with multiple interlocking goals: to store monsoon runoff for dry-season agriculture, to prevent destructive seasonal flooding downstream, and to maintain sufficient freshwater flow to push back against seawater rising far upstream into the Bang Pakong River during the dry months, protecting both municipal drinking supplies and vital agricultural orchards and fields from salinity.

Rather than leaving rural communities at the mercy of seasonal extremes, Thailand invested consistently over decades in a multi-tiered water management network:

• **Multi-Purpose Reservoirs and Check Dams:** Large Royal-initiated dams like the Huai Samong reservoir – alongside thousands of medium- and small-scale reservoirs, kaem ling ("monkey cheeks" flood-retention basins), and community check dams – were built across rivers and seasonal streams. These structures trap monsoon runoff where it falls, recharge groundwater tables, prevent destructive flash floods, and preserve vital reserves for the dry season.

• **Canals and River-Pumping Stations:** Extensive lined irrigation canal networks and electric or solar-powered river-pumping stations lift water from major rivers such as the Mekong, Chi, and Mun onto higher agricultural plateaus. By overcoming elevation barriers, Thailand turned single-crop, rain-fed subsistence land into productive, year-round farmland.

• **Tube Wells and Village Water Treatment Plants:** At the community level, deep, properly cased tube wells tap reliable aquifers, while compact, standardized village water treatment plants clarify, filter, and chlorinate raw surface or groundwater. Today, metered, piped clean water reaches rural households across Thailand's provinces, freeing villagers from the daily physical toll of hauling water from distant riverbeds and dramatically reducing waterborne disease.

Turning Desert Sand into Farmland: The Israeli Model

If Thailand demonstrates what can be achieved within a neighbouring monsoon basin, Israel offers an even more striking lesson in overcoming extreme aridity. More than half of Israel is true desert, receiving only a fraction of the annual rainfall that falls even in Myanmar's Dry Zone. Yet through relentless engineering, institutional discipline, and technological innovation, Israel transformed barren desert sand into thriving agricultural land and now produces more freshwater than it consumes.

Central to this transformation is pressurized, precision agriculture – often referred to as forced or pressurized irrigation – combined with total water reclamation and conservation:

• **Pressurized Drip Irrigation:** In central Myanmar, where water is pumped or diverted onto fields, it is typically distributed through open, unlined earth ditches. Under the scorching Anya sun, up to half of that water is lost to evaporation and deep seepage before it ever reaches a crop. By contrast, pressurized pipe networks deliver measured drops of water and dissolved nutrients ("fertigation") directly to the root zone of each plant. Pioneered in Israel, this method achieves 90 to 95 per cent water-use efficiency, preventing soil salinization and allowing high-value crops, such as pulses, oilseeds, cotton, and fruits, to flourish even in sandy soils.

• **Wastewater Recycling and National Conveyance:** Israel treats and recycles roughly 85 to 95 per cent of its municipal wastewater for safe agricultural use, ensuring that water is used twice before returning to the hydrological cycle. Simultaneously, a national water carrier system – backed by large-scale desalination along the coast – moves water from water-surplus regions to the arid Negev desert in the south. Every drop is metered, priced realistically to prevent waste, and managed as a strategic national asset.

A Practical Blueprint for Myanmar's Heartland

Myanmar does not need to invent any sophisticated technologies, nor does it need to wait for costly, experimental methods. We already possess the great rivers, the reliable seasonal monsoons, and the fertile alluvial plains that desert nations can only dream of. Bridging the gap between our abundant rivers and our thirsty heartland requires a disciplined, four-part strategy:

1. Capture the Monsoon Surge Locally: Construct a dense network of small- and medium-scale retention reservoirs, diversion weirs, and earthen check dams across the seasonal streams feeding into the Ayeyarwady and Chindwin basins. Holding water back in the upper watersheds slows runoff, prevents soil erosion, and naturally recharges the shallow aquifers that dry-zone villages depend on.

2. Lift Water to the Plains: Expand solar- and grid-powered river-pumping stations along the Ayeyawady, Chindwin, and Mu rivers to lift water onto adjacent dry terraces, paired with concrete-lined distribution canals to minimize seepage.

3. Standardize Rural Water Supply: Move beyond emergency drought relief by establishing permanent, standardized village water supply systems, combining deep hydrogeological tube wells and protected surface intakes with simple, locally maintainable filtration and chlorination units, so every household has piped water at the turn of a tap.

4. Modernize Dry-Zone Farming: Introduce subsidized, small-scale pressurized drip and micro-sprinkler kits for Dry Zone farmers, supported by agricultural extension services. Using half the water to grow twice the yield will raise rural incomes while easing pressure on stressed rivers and aquifers.

A Call for Practical Action

As global leaders prepare to gather at the UN Water Conference in Abu Dhabi during December to address the world's pressing water challenges, Myanmar's own path forward is clear. Water security is not merely an engineering problem; it is the foundation of human dignity, public health, and rural prosperity. Having lived nearly a century, I have seen how swiftly a nation's landscape can change when practical wisdom meets determined action. We do not lack water in Myanmar; we lack the infrastructure to keep it where our people live. After ninety years of watching our villagers kneel on glaring white sandbars to dig Let-yet-twin for a drink of water, it is long past time we brought the river to the village.

Author's Note

This article was born out of nearly a century of lived memory in Myanmar, combined with firsthand field observations and dedicated independent research. Following my retirement, I spent extended periods staying at various water management construction sites across Thailand where my son – a water resources engineer – served as a Project Manager on major reservoir, weir, and irrigation projects. Watching those systems take shape on the ground, alongside years of rigorous online research, showed me how a monsoon nation can conquer seasonal scarcity.

My appreciation for Israel's water engineering, meanwhile, began decades earlier in the 1990s during my service at the Myanma Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) Corporation. Through casual conversations with an Israeli telecommunications engineer stationed in Yangon during the construction of ten automatic telephone exchanges across district towns, I first learned how his country had turned barren desert sand into thriving farmland through pressurized drip irrigation – a lesson I later explored in depth through independent research. While I write as a concerned elder rather than a water specialist, my hope is that these reflections offer a practical perspective for engineers, policymakers, and fellow citizens working to bring lasting water security to Myanmar's heartland.

Scramble to save climate fight after COP collapse



COP31 President and Türkiye's Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change Murat Kurum (C) attends a plenary session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31) at the Antalya Expo Centre, in Antalya on 22 November 2026. **PHOTO: AFP**

OFFICIALS voiced dismay on Monday at the collapse of UN climate talks, urging the world not to abandon joint efforts to curb the deadly warming of the planet.

A final agreement was rejected on Sunday at the COP31 climate summit, with delegates failing to strike an agreement over fossil fuels amid resistance from oil-producing countries.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres voiced "profound frustration" while key player China expressed disappointment — but insisted the green transition was "irreversible".

The EU issued a plea to salvage multilateral efforts to fight climate change, which is worsening the risk and impact of deadly storms, floods and droughts.

"It is absolutely crucial that the multilateral process stays alive," said European Commission spokeswoman Anna-Kaisa Itkonen, calling the talks' failure a "terrible outcome".

Familiar fault lines emerged at COP31 over fossil fuels, with the EU and Saudi Arabia locking horns over the pace of the shift away from coal, oil and gas.

Oil-producing states blocked any mention of phasing out fossil fuels in the final deal at the conference co-hosted by Türkiye and Australia.

Negotiations chair Chris Bowen who unsuccessfully sought to broker consensus among nearly 200 nations, conceded he could not overcome what he called "unbridgeable red lines".

Geopolitical worries

Bowen, Australia's climate minister, said the summit backdrop was "the most complicated and fraught geopolitical environment in living memory", as soaring energy prices and fallout from the Middle East war complicated the search for unity.

Under pressure to show progress in a year of climate-linked disasters from heatwaves in Europe to floods in Nepal, Bowen sought an overarching "cover decision" to prove countries were still united in tackling the crisis.

Faced with oil producers' resistance, Ireland's climate minister Darragh O'Brien vowed: "We will not endorse a cover decision ... that does not even mention fossil fuels, which is the key driver of climate change."

O'Brien, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, added: "We will not accept a COP that greenwashes fossil fuel."

Panama, Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands also objected and as the deal imploded, COP31 became the longest climate summit on record, running two days past schedule.

Former US vice president Al Gore, a climate advocate, said it was "outrageous that a handful of petrostates have veto power over any mention of fossil fuels".

The COP process is "in need of significant reform", Gore said on X, as most countries sought "to move forward in good faith."

Source: AFP

NATIONAL

Fuel reserves arranged for Tazaungdine holiday travel period

FUEL reserves have been pre-positioned, with arrangements in place for the prompt replenishment and sale of fuel at petrol stations along routes expected to see heavy traffic during the extended Tazaungdine holiday period, helping ensure convenient and safe travel for the public.


Fuel bowsers await deployment to replenish petrol station supplies.

Fuel tankers have been deployed to deliver additional reserve supplies to petrol stations, ensuring that travellers can purchase the fuel they need without difficulty. Further deliveries of fuel reserves have also been arranged to meet increased demand throughout the holiday travel period.

The public can conveniently purchase fuel in major cities and along travel routes in accordance with the prescribed regulations, according to the Ministry of Electricity and Energy. — MNA/ST

Yaksawk opens agricultural technology training

THE Department of Rural Development, under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, opened a free agricultural technology training course in Sanyayoo Village, Yaksawk Township, Shan State (South), yesterday to equip rural residents with agricultural knowledge and introduce science-based farming techniques.


This image shows an agricultural technology training session in Yaksawk Township.

Taunggyi District Department of Rural Development Head U Nyunt Win and Township Management and Administration Committee Chairman U Min Soe Naing delivered opening speeches at the ceremony.

Yaksawk Township Department of Rural Development Head U Ye Min Aung then explained the objewctives of the training course and expected benefits, after which instructors outlined the curriculum section by section.

A total of 20 trainees from Sanyayoo Modern Model Village are attending the 10-day course, where experienced trainers are providing instruction free of charge on techniques for preparing Effective Microorganism (EM) solutions, producing rice and sunflower seeds, producing and applying organic fertilizers and pesticides, modern scientific farming techniques, crop yield improvement practices, and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). — Thaw Zin Htoo (Rural)

Htantabin opens shampoo and soap-making training

THE Htantabin Township Department of Rural Development, under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, Toungoo District, Bago Region, held the opening ceremony of a livelihood-support shampoo and soap-making training course for the 2026-2027 financial year yesterday in Moemakha Village.

Township Head U Naing Lin Ko of the Department of Rural Development in Htantabin Township first spoke on the occasion that the livelihood-support shampoo and soap-making training course was opened and conducted with the aim of creating employment opportunities in rural areas and producing skilled workers. He explained the benefits to be gained from the training and the lessons to be taught, and urged the trainees to study hard so that they could earn additional income for their families. He also explained the arrangements to link them to post-training investment funds and employment opportunities.

The township head and responsible officials from the Department of Rural Development in Htantabin Township then handed over teaching aid materials to the trainees. A total of 20 trainees from Moemakha Village and nearby villages are attending the livelihood-support shampoo and soap-making training course. Two skilled instructors will provide free training for five days starting today, covering both theory and practical work, according to U Naing Lin Ko, Township Head of the Department of Rural Development in Htantabin Township. — Cho Lay (DRD)


Responsible officials present teaching aid materials to trainees.

Chaungzon's farm road construction inspected

OFFICIALS conducted a field inspection yesterday of the ongoing farm road construction work in Panpha Village, Chaungzon Township, Mon State. The project is being implemented by the Chaungzon Township Department of Rural Development under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development to facilitate the transport of locally produced crops throughout the year.

U Myint Naing Oo, District Head of the Mawlamyine District Department of Rural Development, Daw San San Maw, Township Officer of the Chaungzon Township Department of Rural Development, and responsible officials, together with village officials and local elders, inspected the construction of a 1,420-foot-long, 18-foot-wide and four-foot-nine-inch-high laterite and gravel farm road, along with the construction of a slab culvert along the road.


Officials oversee the farm road construction project in Chaungzon Township.

The district head instructed the project supervisor to complete the farm road and associated works on time and in line with the prescribed standards and specifications. Necessary coordination and arrangements were also made to ensure smooth implementation of the project.

The farm road construction and associated works are being implemented during the 2026-2027 financial year with a budget of K237.45 million from the Mon State Government Fund. The Chaungzon Township Department of Rural Development is responsible for implementation, and the project commenced in the second week of September. The project has now achieved more than 45 per cent completion, according to Daw San San Maw, Township Executive Officer of the Chaungzon Township Department of Rural Development. — Ah Htwe (DRD)

Japan to mull second capital as disaster HQ if major quake hits Tokyo

THE Japanese government plans to set up an emergency disaster response headquarters outside the Tokyo metropolitan area, possibly in a secondary capital, in the event of a major earthquake directly beneath Tokyo, a source familiar with the matter said Monday.



File photo taken on 21 April 2025 shows high-rise buildings in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO**

While core government functions are not expected to be lost in the wake of such a quake, the government believes it needs to prepare for damage beyond expectations, according to the source.

The government's business continuity plan, which is due to be revised soon, is expected to call for studying alternative locations for a disaster response headquarters.

Under the current plan, if the headquarters cannot be established at the prime minister's office in Tokyo, one of three alternative sites would be used. They are a government building housing the National Disaster Management Agency and other offices, the Defence Ministry, and a regional disaster response base in Tachikawa, western Tokyo.

The draft revision retains those three sites, while noting that "it is necessary to prepare for every eventuality to ensure the continuity of government operations." — Kyodo

Countries agree new ways to achieve safe chemical use

COUNTRIES have agreed new measures to speed up efforts aimed at preventing the harmful effects of chemical products on health and the environment, the UN said.

Three years after the adoption of the Global Framework on Chemicals in Bonn, the first progress conference was held last week in Geneva under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Adopted by 110 countries, the GFC aims to achieve safe and sustainable management of chemicals — involved in around 95 per cent of manufactured goods — throughout their life cycle, from production to disposal. Attended by representatives from 140 countries, the Geneva conference adopted indicators to monitor progress on the framework's targets.

Most of the 28 targets are meant to be reached by 2030 — by which time global chemical production is projected to have doubled from 2017 levels.

The global chemical industry contributes an estimated $5.7 trillion to global GDP and supports approximately 120 million jobs, according to UNEP.

"There is no time to lose," said UNEP chief Inger Andersen.

"The decisions taken in Geneva give countries and stakeholders a stronger basis for measuring progress, identifying where gaps remain and directing support where it is most needed.

"What matters now is quickly translating these commitments into real action that delivers safer chemistry, cleaner production, healthier workplaces and economies that protect people and planet." — AFP

Godzilla, Ultraman pioneer's hometown aims to nurture next-gen creators

A northeastern Japan city that was the birthplace of Eiji Tsuburaya, the special-effects pioneer behind Godzilla and Ultraman franchises, is drawing on its "tokusatsu" culture to attract tourists and nurture the next generation of creators. Sukagawa in Fukushima Prefecture has built a public-private effort around the special-effects genre known in Japan as "tokusatsu", which uses miniatures, costumes and other practical techniques to create fantasy and science-fiction productions.



Photo taken on 26 October 2026 shows miniatures used in filming displayed at the Sukagawa Tokusatsu Archive Centre in Sukagawa, Fukushima Prefecture. **PHOTO: KYODO**

The genre includes productions such as Ultraman, a long-running television superhero series, and Godzilla, a city-stomping, fire-breathing monster featured in films running from the 1950s to the present day.

Monuments to Ultraman heroes and monsters line the streets of the city centre, while at the site of Tsuburaya's childhood home, his relative Makoto Tsuburaya, 66, runs a toy store and cafe featuring about 800 Ultraman-related items as well as the director's personal camera. — Kyodo

"The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping" tops North American box office in opening weekend

LIONSGATE'S dystopian film "The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping" topped the North American box office during its opening weekend with an estimated US$120 million, according to data by measurement firm Rentrak on Sunday.



A view of atmosphere from the premiere of Lionsgate's "The Hunger Games: Sunrise On The Reaping" on 16 November 2026 in New York City. **PHOTO: MIKE COPPOLA/GETTY IMAGES/AFP**

The prequel film marks the sixth instalment in The Hunger Games franchise. Directed by Francis Lawrence, it stars Joseph Zada as a young Haymitch Abernathy, alongside an ensemble cast. Set 24 years before the events of the original The Hunger Games, the film revisits the world of Panem, beginning on the morning of the reaping for the 50th Hunger Games, also known as the Second Quarter Quell.

"The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping" has received an approval rating of 68 per cent based on 178 reviews to date on review-aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes. Audiences surveyed by market research firm CinemaScore gave it an average grade of "A-" on a scale ranging from A+ to F. — Xinhua

ECONOMY
WORLD

Cambodia unveils new boat route, facilities at West Mebon Temple in Angkor park

CAMBODIA'S APSARA National Authority (ANA) has installed new tourism infrastructure, facilities, and a visitor route at the recently restored 1,000-year-old West Mebon Temple in the UNESCO-listed Angkor Archaeological Park, said an ANA news release on Monday.



Tourists visit the West Mebon Temple in Siem Reap province, Cambodia on 19 November 2026. Cambodia's APSARA National Authority (ANA) has installed new tourism infrastructure, facilities, and a visitor route at the recently restored 1,000-year-old West Mebon Temple in the UNESCO-listed Angkor Archaeological Park, said an ANA news release on Monday. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Built in the mid-11th century as a Hindu sanctuary, West Mebon sits on an artificial island at the exact centre of the West Baray, the Angkor area's largest reservoir. Reaching the monument requires a short boat trip across the massive basin.

Chan Samnang, head of the ANA's Tourism Management and Development Office, said the upgrades are designed to ensure a safe, orderly experience following the temple's official reopening last week after a 14-year restoration project.

"The new visitor route around West Mebon Temple, together with the route along the embankment of the West Baray, is intended to provide tourists with additional options and a unique sightseeing experience different from visits to other temples," he said. — Xinhua

Russia and China set sights on new bilateral trade record

TRADE between Russia and China could reach $280 billion in 2026, Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said during a Russia-China Financial Dialogue meeting.

"Mutual trade is growing. Over the first 10 months, total trade turnover reached around $240 billion, practically the same level as the whole of last year," Siluanov said.

The two countries set their previous trade record in 2024, when bilateral trade reached $244.8 billion. If the forecast is realized, 2026 would mark a new record in economic cooperation between Moscow and Beijing. — SPUTNIK

Israel's national airline to resume direct flights to Morocco after over 3-yr suspension

ISRAELI flag carrier El Al announced Sunday it would resume direct flights to Morocco on 21 December after more than three years of suspension, with ticket sales already launched.

With Israeli security authorities now granting the necessary approvals, El Al said in a statement that it would operate twice-weekly flights between Tel Aviv and the historic Moroccan city of Marrakech.

Flights were halted following the outbreak of the multi-front conflict in the Middle East in October 2023. Their return was recently delayed following the aerial incident involving a Flydubai aircraft en route to Tel Aviv in late September and the tightening of security requirements that followed. – Xinhua

Thai PM highlights auto sector's role during talks with foreign automakers

THAILAND'S Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul described the auto industry as a key driver of the Thai economy through investment, jobs, technological advancement and exports.



Staff members prepare to display a model of BYD ATTO 2 electric vehicle (EV) of Chinese automaker during the 2026 Bangkok International Motor Show at the Impact Arena convention venue in Bangkok on 25 March 2026. **PHOTO: AFP**

The government supports a balanced and sustainable transition that backs both combustion-engine vehicles and electric vehicles, he said during a Monday meeting with executives from five major Chinese and Japanese automakers, according to a government statement.

Anutin noted that the government would expand charging stations and fast-charging technology, but the shift to electric vehicles must take into account the readiness of the power grid and the existing combustion-engine industry.

The government is restructuring excise taxes on imported cars to make competition fairer and encourage carmakers to produce locally, he said. It is also offering faster investment approvals through a scheme called Thailand FastPass. — Xinhua

Lego picks Portugal to build its 8th factory

LEGO, the world's biggest toymaker by revenue, announced Monday plans to spend $1.1 billion to build a new factory in Portugal, its eighth worldwide and fourth in Europe.

"We're going to invest in a new factory in Estarreja, Portugal, which will be an investment of over a billion euros," Carsten Rasmussen, the Danish firm's director of operations, told AFP.

Construction will begin in the first half of 2027 in Estarreja, a central coastal town around 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Porto.

"It's an investment that's supporting our long-term growth ambitions... to cater to the European region," he said.



LEGO toys are displayed for sale at a Dollar General discount store in Inglewood, California on 29 September 2026. **PHOTO: AFP**

The new plant, the latest addition to Lego's European factories in Denmark, Hungary and the Czech Republic, will start producing bricks in 2030.

It "strengthens our network in Europe with more flexibility, more resilience, strength in our sustainability ambitions, et caetera," Rasmussen said.

"Portugal is a growing manufacturing country," he added, noting that "the economy is growing, we see the skilled labour is really, really good". — AFP

Nvidia reinstates Jensen Huang as CEO after US government input

NVIDIA on Monday reinstated Jensen Huang as chief executive after input from senior US government officials left its board confident he posed no national security risk, less than two weeks after the co-founder resigned due to an alleged spy scandal. President Donald Trump welcomed the move as a "correct and proper decision".

The board voted unanimously to bring Huang back as president, chief executive and board member, effective immediately, after a series of meetings left directors satisfied with his "candor and ability to lead", the company said in a statement. Nvidia did not name the government officials it consulted or say what they told the board.

The decision came three days after Trump publicly urged Nvidia to take Huang back, calling him "one of the truly most brilliant minds in the world" and saying he would "love to see Jensen be given a second chance". — AFP



A screen showing Nvidia's stock price and the reinstatement of Jensen Huang, on the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City on 23 November 2026. **PHOTO: AFP**

Malaysian manufacturers must adopt new technology to move up value chain: official

DOMESTIC manufacturers must move towards higher-complexity manufacturing and more sophisticated product lines to generate greater value addition and strengthen their long-term competitiveness, Investment, Trade and Industry Deputy Minister Sim Tze Tzin said on Monday.

This must include accelerating the adoption of automation, advanced robotics and end-to-end digitalization, which is essential to improving productivity and operational efficiency across production lines, Sim said in his opening address at the soft launch introducing the Manufacturing Supply Chain Expo 2027 (MSCX 2027). — Xinhua

Japan's Tamagotchi digital pet game marks 30 yrs, popularity grows overseas

TAMAGOTCHI, a handheld digital pet-raising game, on Monday marked 30 years since its launch, with total shipments already topping 100 million and its popularity transcending borders.

The game by Japanese toymaker Bandai Co allows players to feed and take care of a Tamagotchi, an alien creature that grows into various character types, depending on how well it is cared for.



Photo taken in Tokyo on 28 August 2025 shows a person holding up Tamagotchi Paradise devices. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Following its debut in 1996, the digital pet toy became a huge hit, winning over the hearts of young people, particularly female high school students who would hang the device with a chain attached to their bags. The egg-shaped gaming device has undergone transformations, with the addition of new functions such as enabling users to play together via infrared communication. Its popularity got a boost after the game was adapted into a TV animation.

In 2025, when the total number of Tamagotchi device shipments surpassed 100 million, 49 per cent were destined for Japan, counting for 33 per cent and Europe, the Middle East and Africa for 16 per cent. Tamagotchi devices are available in over 50 countries and regions.

The Tamagotchi Paradise device, rolled out in the summer of 2025, has a dial that allows players to zoom in and look at their pets at the cellular level.

Adults who used to play the game are picking up revived versions of the device, fuelled by their nostalgia for the Heisei era (1989-2019).

"We want to create an environment where Tamagotchi is part of people's everyday life," Bandai official Chisato Aoyagi said. — Kyodo

New Zealand retail sales volume rises 2.2% in Q3

NEW Zealand's total retail sales volume rose 2.2 per cent in the September 2026 quarter from the previous quarter, marking the largest quarterly increase since the December 2021 quarter, official data showed on Monday.

Fuel retailing, pharmaceutical and other store-based retailing, and motor vehicle and parts retailing recorded the largest increases during the quarter, according to the national statistics agency Stats NZ.

Among the 15 retail industries measured, 11 recorded higher sales volumes than in the June quarter. Fuel retailing rose 9.5 per cent, pharmaceutical and other store-based retailing increased 6.4 per cent, while motor vehicle and parts retailing grew 3.8 per cent, Stats NZ said.

All 16 regions recorded higher retail sales values in the September quarter, after seasonal adjustment, according to the agency.

Carolyn Young, CEO of Retail NZ, the peak body representing New Zealand retailers, said the figures showed consumers were still making purchases despite the cost-of-living squeeze. — Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V SITC YUANMING VOY.NO. (2617N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SITC YUANMING VOY.NO. (2617N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-11-2026** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 A.M to 11:20 A.M and 12 NOON to 4 P.M to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SITC CONTAINER LINE CO., LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V SITC JUNDE VOY.NO. (2624S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SITC JUNDE VOY.NO. (2624S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **24-11-2026** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 A.M to 11:20 A.M and 12 NOON to 4 P.M to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SITC CONTAINER LINE CO., LTD

ROLLING UPDATES
WORLD

UK PM to defend EU deal in the face of criticism from Brexiteers

UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham trumpeted his EU reset deal on Monday, as a string of former UK leaders warn him against reopening the country's Brexit wounds.

Burnham was to tell parliament that the agreements struck in Brussels on Friday were "a landmark moment" for Britain, according to excerpts of his statement trailed by Downing Street.

The deals mean there is a "very real prospect that the next decade can be a much better one for Britain than the one we have just lived through", Burnham was set to say in an afternoon speech.



(L-R) European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Britain's Prime Minister Andy Burnham and European Council President Antonio Costa join hands after a press conference following a EU-UK Summit at the EU Council in Brussels on 20 November 2026. **PHOTO: AFP**

Burnham and the EU's top officials sealed agreements to ease trade and youth mobility, although they kicked down the road disagreements over British university fees for EU students.

The UK government argues the agreements will add £17 billion to Britain's economy, easing cost-of-living pressures and providing opportunities for young people. Since becoming prime minister in July, Burnham has re-energized talk of closer ties with the European Union a decade after Britain voted to leave. He has even touted the possibility that the UK could one day apply to rejoin the bloc. — AFP

WHO chief pleads for peace in Ebola-hit DR Congo area

THE head of the World Health Organization on Sunday pleaded for peace in the epicentre of the Democratic Republic of Congo's Ebola outbreak that has killed nearly 5,700 people.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the frequency of attacks across the country's east had increased since the end of October, seriously affecting the Ebola response.



Medical workers clean up at an Ebola treatment centre in Goma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), on 4 June 2026. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

"Heavy fighting has been ongoing since yesterday in the vicinity of a hospital in Ituri — in an area close to where the Ebola outbreak first emerged," the UN health agency chief said on X.

He said medical staff had been sheltering for their lives in a maternity ward in the facility for more than 24 hours.

"The situation has disrupted the work of the hospital and the wider Ebola response, putting patients, families and health workers at grave risk," said Tedros.

He said the WHO was trying to arrange a safe exit for the team and "for the hospital facilities, staff and patients to be protected".

"The best medicine is peace," said Tedros.

A total of 5,678 deaths out of 11,613 cases have been confirmed in the vast central African country's worst-ever Ebola outbreak, according to the WHO.

The virus has spread across swathes of the DRC's east and northeast, which have been plagued by violence for more than 30 years.

In an update Saturday, the WHO said that while some areas had seen a slight decline in cases, "sustained, high-level transmission continues overall in the country".

Ituri and Nord Kivu remain the most affected provinces.

The high proportion of deaths occurring in communities, meaning outside of dedicated treatment centres, especially among young children, "continues to highlight challenges in early case detection and timely access to appropriate care", the WHO said. — AFP

ICAN proposes global aid database for nuclear-affected nations

THE International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, a Nobel Peace Prize-winning group, has proposed creating a database linking countries affected by nuclear weapons use or testing with those able to provide assistance, sources familiar with the matter said Sunday.

The proposal comes ahead of the first review conference of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which opens on 30 November.

The proposed database aims to speed up assistance to victims and environmental remediation in areas affected by nuclear weapons use and testing, while treaty member states continue discussing the creation of an international trust fund for such efforts.

In a report reviewing the treaty's implementation, ICAN said member states have committed to helping other parties address the humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons on affected communities.

But since the treaty's entry into force in 2021, the anti-nuclear group said some member states have failed to respect their commitments. — Kyodo

NEWS IN BRIEF

India, Nepal open new cross-border direct train

VISITING Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on Monday virtually flagged off the new cross-border Saryu-Kamala Express passenger train.

The new weekly train would connect two religious cities, India's Ayodhya in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh and Nepal's Janakpur. Its commercial operations would begin later this month. The train could cover over 600 kilometres in nearly 19 hours, with nearly 10 stops in between, said an official source.

Besides, both leaders virtually inaugurated a road bridge at Dharchula between India's northern hilly state of Uttarakhand and Nepal, and also laid the foundation stone for an integrated checkpost at Banbasa, a town in Uttarakhand bordering Nepal. – Xinhua

Delta Air Lines flight delay worsens though technical issue resolved

OVER 1,000 Delta Air Lines flights at its US Atlanta hub were delayed on Sunday due to a technical issue affecting the airline's flight operations system, though the technical failure was resolved later in the afternoon.

As of 5:45 pm Eastern Time, delays at, arriving and departing Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport had increased to 1,169, including 1,005 Delta Air Lines flights, up from 591 before noon, according to data from flight-tracking website FlightAware.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) initially issued a ground stop for Delta flights bound for Atlanta and later replaced it with a ground delay programme. – Xinhua

SPORTS

Myanmar reach 1/16 finals in 2026 SSL Gold Cup

Myanmar's national sailing team has reached a remarkable milestone at the 2026 Star Sailors League Gold Cup in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, advancing through two qualifying rounds to the 1/16 finals of this prestigious international sailing championship.

This achievement is particularly significant in the context of regional competition.

Singapore has been eliminated, leaving Myanmar, Malaysia and Thailand, alongside Japan as the only four Asian nations to have progressed to this stage. Myanmar sailors only began sailing keelboats in the latter part of 2025. Their introduction to the SSL Class itself began as recently as November 2025, giving the team approximately one year of experience in this highly competitive international sailing class.



Images capture the Myanmar sailing team in action against Uruguay and Oman duing the 2026 SSL Gold Cup in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

From a sailing heritage rooted in the establishment of the Yangon Sailing Club in 1924 to competing successfully on the international SSL stage in 2026, Myanmar has taken an important step forward in its sporting history. — MNA/TTA

Nippon Foundation, Liverpool FC use football to empower Thai children

THE Nippon Foundation, Japan's largest grantmaking organization, and Liverpool FC's charity arm launched a football-based education programme in Thailand on Monday to empower young people and develop their leadership skills.

An opening ceremony for the project, called "Leaders of Tomorrow", was held at a school in Bangkok, along with a demonstration course involving dozens of children.


Children take part in a demonstration course of an educational programme using football at a school in Bangkok, Thailand, on 23 November 2026. **Photo: Kyodo**

The Nippon Foundation and the LFC Foundation, the English Premier League club's official charity, joined forces to carry out the youth development initiative after reaching a partnership agreement in July last year.

The programme began in Japan, but the Nippon Foundation decided to expand it to Thailand, given its established presence in the Southeast Asian country.

The "Leaders of Tomorrow" initiative uses football-based activities and classroom learning to develop essential life skills among children, including teamwork, leadership and problem-solving. — Kyodo

Liverpool routs Man United as Pochettino endures disastrous debut

MAURICIO Pochettino had a nightmare debut as Manchester United coach as his side was beaten 4-0 away to Liverpool in the Premier League on Sunday afternoon.

The Argentine only arrived in Manchester on Wednesday and had little time to work with his new side, but he could never have expected to see the game all but over by the 13th minute.

United was down to 10 men after eight minutes after Leny Yoro was sent off for fouling Alexander Isak as the Liverpool forward ran through on goal, and the punishment was doubled when Dominik Szoboszlai scored from the resulting free kick.

Florian Wirtz made it 2-0 in the 13th minute with a volley from Rio Ngumoha's cross, and Ngumoha added his side's third after 66 minutes following Bradley Barcola's surging run and cross. — Xinhua



Newcomer women's doubles competition.

Pyaing San Badminton Tourney Draws 600+ Players

THE Pyaing San Badminton Tournament 2026, jointly organized by the Myanmar Badminton Federation (MBF) and Pyaing San Sport Event Management, represented by Justin Khine Htet Tun, was held from 21 to 23 November at the National Badminton Hall on Kyonegyi Road in Lanmadaw Township, Yangon. The tournament aimed to promote badminton in Myanmar and nurture a new generation of athletes.

The tournament featured men's and women's doubles competitions in the under-13, under-15 and under-17 age groups, as well as men's and women's doubles events for novice and amateur players.

Following the competitions, an award ceremony was held at which the first, second, and joint third-place winners received cash prizes and individual medals from U Aung Paing, President of the Myanmar Badminton Federation, and officials from Pyaing San Sport Event Management.

A total of 349 matches were played, with more than 600 players taking part in the tournament. — ASH/MKKS

Alcaraz beats Zverev to claim maiden ATP Finals title

CARLOS Alcaraz defeated world No 1 Alexander Zverev 6-2, 7-6 (7) in Turin on Sunday to claim his first ATP Finals title and become only the fourth man to win all four Grand Slam tournaments and the season-ending championship.

The 23-year-old Spaniard completed a perfect campaign with five wins from five matches, having swept through the round-robin stage before rallying past American Ben Shelton in the semifinals.


Carlos Alcaraz (2nd L, bottom) poses with the ballkids during the awarding ceremony after the men's singles final match between Alexander Zverev of Germany and Carlos Alcaraz of Spain at the ATP Finals tennis tournament in Turin, Italy, 22 November 2026. **Photo: Xinhua**

The victory gave Alcaraz his sixth title of the season and 30th of his career, while making him the first Spaniard to win the ATP Finals since Alex Corretja in 1998.

He also joined Andre Agassi, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic as the only men to have won all four Grand Slam titles and the ATP Finals.

"It's been an amazing week. I couldn't finish the week in a better way, so I'm really proud," Alcaraz said. — Xinhua



UK PM to defend EU deal in the face of criticism from Brexiteers
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WORLD

Pope praises 'spiritual' cycling at meeting with champs

POPE Leo XIV talked up the spiritual side of cycling at a meeting with some of the sport's biggest names in the Vatican on Monday.

Leo, a keen sportsman, met with cycling legends including Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain.

The pope said cycling could "offer beautiful spiritual experiences" and help with "fostering our inner life", according to a statement from the Vatican after the audience.

The Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), the sport's governing body which helped organize the meeting, said it would be donating several bicycles to the Catholic charity Caritas.

UCI said 100 cyclists took part, including also Paul Seixas, the 20-year-old French cyclist considered a rising young talent on the international stage.

"The victories, but also the defeats, the joys and the disappointments you have faced express the values and challenges that make up human existence," Pope Leo said.

"Cycling makes it possible to seek places of silence and contemplation, where one can cultivate listening to creation, away from the noise and traffic of the city," added Leo. — AFP



This photo taken and handout on 23 November 2026 by The Vatican Media shows Pope Leo XIV presented with an e-bike by the president of UCI, French David Lappartient, during an audience with the "World of Cycling" promoted by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) in The Vatican. **PHOTO: SIMONE RISOLUTI / VATICAN MEDIA / AFP**

Malaysia's Selangor state logs over 18,000 haze-related illnesses in Aug-Oct: official

A total of 18,451 haze-related illnesses were recorded in Selangor state between August and October this year during the recent transboundary haze, the state's top official for public health said on Monday.

Selangor state's Public Health and Environment Committee Chairperson Jamaliah Jamaluddin said the figure comprised three types of haze-related illnesses, namely upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs) with 15,554 cases, asthma (2,305 cases) and conjunctivitis (592 cases). — Xinhua

Modi offers flood-hit Nepal $1.6 bln aid package

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered a $1.6 billion "development cooperation" package to neighbouring Nepal on Monday in the wake of devastating Himalayan floods.

"We express our deep condolences for the loss of lives caused by the devastating floods in Nepal in August," Modi said, standing alongside his Nepali counterpart Balendra Shah in New Delhi.

"To support Nepal's reconstruction, and give fresh momentum to its long-term development, we announce a development cooperation package worth 240 billion Nepali rupees ($1.6 billion)," he said.

India did not immediately give specific details of what the development package included.

Shah was given a military honour guard parade at the presidential palace in New Delhi, on his first trip to a neighbouring country since taking office in March.



An aerial view shows houses lying deluged in sludge after flash floods at Devighat in Nepal's Nuwakot district on 27 August 2026. **PHOTO: AFP**

The rapper-turned-politician came to power following a wave of youth-led anti-corruption protests in September 2025.

Shah, 36, wearing his trademark sunglasses and dressed in black, was given a bear hug by Modi, 76, dressed all in white.

Unlike his predecessors, Shah had initially refrained from foreign visits since becoming prime minister.

His first overseas trip was to New York in September, where he addressed the United Nations General Assembly as Nepal reeled from a deadly tsunami-like flood, triggered by a high-altitude glacial mountain collapse, that killed more than 1,400 people and left 5,000 missing.

Nepal, a largely rural country that contributes little to global greenhouse gas emissions, estimates reconstruction will cost $4.78 billion.

Shah said it showed the "imperative to address the challenges of climate change through collective action".

In October, the United Nations' climate loss and damage fund agreed the modest sum of $20 million in aid to Nepal — the maximum amount countries can request in a single application — and the first time it has set aside money for any country. — AFP

Democrats fire starting gun on 2028 White House race

DEMOCRATS fired the starting gun Monday on the race to win back the White House, announcing plans for 12 debates to pick their standard bearer for 2028 as the party looks to build on its sweeping midterm election victory.

The first debate is scheduled for June next year, setting the stage for what could be a crowded contest to select a challenger to the Republicans, who must find a successor to term-limited President Donald Trump.

The announcement comes as Democrats celebrate their biggest majority in the House of Representatives since the early 1990s, with their victories this month transforming the balance of power in Washington and raising expectations for the next two years.



California Governor Gavin Newsom jokes with US Senator Cory Booker (R), Democrat of New Jersey, as he speaks with the media between meetings at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, 17 November 2026. **PHOTO: AFP**

"Democrats are on offence after our historic victories in the midterms, and the DNC is keeping our foot on the gas as we head into the 2028 cycle," Democratic National Committee chairman Ken Martin said.

The party will hold five debates in 2027 and seven in 2028, the final one scheduled for March of that year. — AFP