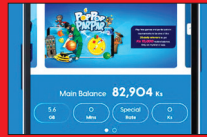




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# MYANMAR INSIDER

INSIDER NEWS ON BUSINESS, LUXURY, REAL ESTATE, LIFESTYLE & LEISURE

VOLUME 11 - ISSUE 123 - AUGUST 2024

4000 KYATS

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Ks-4000







# Mahar Myat Muni Pagoda Mandalay



## THE MYANMAR INSIDER

www.myanmarinsider.com

VOLUME 11 - ISSUE 123 - AUGUST 2024

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## THE MYANMAR INSIDER

Dear MI Readers....

Last month was the month of heavy rains, hence this month undoubtedly is that of heavy floods. People need assistance and rescue and MI team did their part on humanitarian assistance in Bago.

Unfortunately, floods are not the most dangerous thing Myanmar population is fearing right now. After the unceremonious fall of Lashio, everyone is more or less chicken out on how and where to run from the war zones. People from the north of Lashio and half of Pyin Oo Lwin have abandoned their cities and are now residing in the three central cities of Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon. The rich and the upper middle class, including some from military top brass, are also scared in turn, deciding which foreign country to escape to, or rather, which country would be willing to give more than 14 days of visiting rights.

A huge blow to the Tatmataw brand as well as to the sacrifice of thousands of soldiers who had given their lives for defending these regions decades ago.

Meanwhile, the price controls are starting to fail. Hence our article on why price controls will not work. Government is trying its best to control the country facing struggles on all fronts, yet it is definitely a thankless job, as we highlighted in our cover story, just blame the government please.

Last our scholars did a prediction on what would be the future like for Myanmar when the fighting finally ends. Not a pretty prophecy for anyone.

Be safe and best wishes,

Yours Sincerely,  
Jeffery Windsor

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# Just Blame the Government Please!

Charlie Greene

Starting with diplomats from the West to Myanmar diaspora working abroad to the working or unemployed locals around your neighbourhoods, everything happening in Myanmar could only be attributed to the fault of one i.e., the current military government. Diplomats, especially those who are doing nothing now for Myanmar development at present, kept on blaming the administration for every single failure, and the only purported solution from their point of view seems to be bring back the crooked Su Kyi back from the dead. The blame is even more notable from those who contributed nothing but hot air for Myanmar stability and recovery. At least China and India have been constructively engaging Myanmar on many fronts, putting the money where their mouth lies.

Myanmar diaspora continued their funding and support of terrorist activities within the country, cheering on the NNCP (NUG, NLD, CRPH, PDF) terrorists and EAOs who has done nothing but brought heartaches and agonies to the local population in many destroyed towns and villages. While these compatriots working overseas continue to enjoy their earnings in stable currencies in peaceful countries, spare a thought for those who had to run away en masse from Kyauk Mae, Lashio and Thandwe, because the embolden attacks backed by their \$ and cyber support. The irony is if these supporters are given an ultimatum of either having to stay in Koh Kant, Kayin, Kayah, Sagaing or in Nay Pyi Taw, they would have chosen the last city whole heartedly.

The working or employed locals do not fare so well either. Most of them are gifted with dubious ethics, spending their times wisely playing video games, tiktok or watching porn, doing the bare minimum work and expecting to be treated like rare earth. Putting an extra effort or carpe diem do not apply to their brilliant minds. Yet they would be world #1 in the Guinness Book for the population who swear, smear, slander, stain and sully the government, our military and its leaders the best. How can this be! MI examines the reasonableness behind



the blame game based on genuine anecdotes.

## The risky world of Microfinance

ABC micro-finance (names have been altered) was the biggest lender after the government in Mon State, prior to Covid. The company has a supervisor/manager Ms Alice Aye Mon who went around with her as-

sistance to disburse micro loans to the farmers in different townships of the state. Instead of actually supervising the distribution of funds, she eventually ended up touring the state with her young toy boy, while just leaving the funds the company disbursed at the branches with just the branch officers (who are simply responsible for collection of debts). She bribed her assistant to

refrain from reporting the infringements to the company's management. Alice eventually became so daring to the extent of creating false invoices and hotel vouchers and went AWOL in totality.

Due to her sheer adeptness, Ms Saw Yu, a branch officer in Ywar Lut village of Chaung Zone township managed to steal 55 million Kyats (a lot of money then), through just lending all the money to herself, using the farmers documents to create fake loans. Another branch officer in Thaton township, Mr Aung Mg also used the same modus operandi to lend the company funds to himself (both of them, using documentations from previous borrowers), defrauded more than 120 million Kyats from the company, sending his uneducated daughter to Japan and setting up businesses for his sons, using these funds.

“The only purported solution from their point of view seems to be bring back the crooked Su Kyi back from the dead..”

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When the investigation came, Alice took no responsibility at all, saying this was solely the fault of the branch officers. Only when the investigation discovered her fraudulent claims and mismanagement altogether, she suddenly disappeared and tried to half-heartedly apologise to the management for her misdeeds through an email.

All three of them has been found guilty of Criminal Breach of Trust, Theft and Misuse of Company's funds and properties. Aung Mg had served his time and gave his farmlands to the company in lieu of some of his debts. Alice Aye Mon and Saw Yu are still on the run from warrants of arrests issued by the courts and the police. The competencies of the country law enforcement ensure that they would remain loose unless the company hires bounty hunters themselves. The company had wanted to enrich the lives of farmers and the rural population yet eventually lost their confidence in the integrity of the local staff. And hence, it since withdrew from lending across three different states within the country. Besides the farmers and the poor being deprived of access to micro finance, more than twenty permanent jobs were lost. To lose a company that is supplementing the government efforts to develop the rural economy speaks of volume of the lasting damage to the development of these states at grassroots levels. Yes, blame the government please, for the poor and farmers not having access to finance. Blame the government please for not providing employment opportunities to crooked staff and over-motivated employees. Blame the leaders and ministers for failing to get the companies to come over to less-developed States and Regions.

#### The most polite population on earth

If you do know how to read Myanmar language, just look at the Facebook pages of anti establishment, pro Su Kyi forces who want the country and its military to fail. Their pages are full of swearing, cursing, condemning, profanities, foul languages, especially on leaders and military personnel, based on fake news most of the times. A few who tries to tone down the rhetoric were tyrannised and intimidated in various forms to cower away from



“A few who tries to tone down the rhetoric were tyrannised and intimidated in various forms to cower away from speaking the truth and for civility”

speaking the truth and for civility. As an historical example, based on fake news that previous President Office Minister Soe Thane has kept or stolen \$11 Billion of government money (totally maliciously created information), he and his family were always sworn and cursed at in the anti establishment Facebook pages, even if he is acknowledged as most honest, uncorrupted minister of pre-Su Kyi era, by the international community. His successful children were also tormented, slander and cyber bullied. Su Kyi supporters even wrote to the University where his daughter is a tenured professor to sack her because of her being the daughter of an alleged killer. These criminals also coerced wikipedia to alter her biography to include the falsehood of her being the daughter of a killer. Mind you, he has nothing to do with the change of government, which had happened due to elections fraud by Su Kyi administration.

How would the government and its leaders function under such circumstances! How can they ever get

proper respect from other countries, if people from their own countries, keep on attacking and accusing them and their own families based on malicious agendas and allegations. “A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes!,” said Mark Twain. Yet, there is not an ounce of self policing or control, on these platforms. The current 66D criminal charges are also weak. Most people were just given fines amounting to a couple of hundred dollars.

Observe the Facebook situation in Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam or Thailand. Such a contrast from Myanmar in terms of civility and courtesy in these countries. Oh no, it is not the fault of Facebook, Su Kyi, terrorists, uneducated population, celebrities and artists, or ethnical teachers. It is the fault of the government or Myanmar military. Just blame the government please, for all the impertinence, insolence and impudence happening online.

#### The un- population

An insinuation of having to deal

with the majority of uneducated, untrained, untrainable, unschooled, unread, illiterate, uninformed population in this country would definitely spark a tumult in the Facebook with a barrage and bombardment ranging from expletives to death threats set upon the writer or the speaker. Mind you, Myanmar population want the freedom, especially the freedom of speech; just not when other people counter their illogical and incoherent blasphemies with facts and data.

Let me give you an authentic anecdote. An agricultural entrepreneur named Mr Chan decided to start planting rubber trees on two acres of his hilly land in Mon State. He bought the seedlings himself and deployed his farm supervisor, farm worker plus two external daily wage workers to plant all the sprigs. He also get one of his managers from Yangon Office to monitor the work. It cost him more than 1.5 million Kyats last year. When it came to revisit the plantation this year, as fate would have it, more than 95% of the plants do not survive. It was surprising as rubber is the primary tree of value that is abundantly grown in this Mon State. So what's the culprit then? It turned out that the plastic bags that were used to hold the seedlings were not removed when transplanted into the ground. How can this simple mistake be made! Either they do not know this simple act of having to remove the plastic cover (the UN- population) or all five of them do not want to bother doing their jobs properly. The end result has been the same!

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While a Thai entrepreneur in similar situation was paying their staff extra bonuses as most of the seedlings he planted last year blossomed into baby trees this year, this entrepreneur from Myanmar is having to fork out another 2 million Kyats to redo the same thing of last year, wasting previous time and resources. How would the latter possibly increase the wages of his staff! Who is to blame here? Probably the government please!

Slayers of ‘Conan the Destroyer’

Conan the Destroyer would have cried if he encountered damage done to the country by its own Myanmar people. They would made him so small in his feats. They destroyed Myanmar businesses, Myanmar brands, leaders, personalities and success stories.

Probably the best beer in South East Asia, Myanmar Beer, was targeted first. Until now, a lot of F&B establishments who are anti government, are not having the national beer on their menus. They also tried to destroy Mytel, including the assassination of its CFO. The only online platform who could compete with Alibaba in Myanmar, rgo47, was also left in ruins due to their cyber terrorism. Myanmar largest bank KBZ was bombed many times, due to its unwillingness to side with the terrorists. And if someone ever ask why Myanmar do not have large corporate brands like neighbouring Thailand, they would answer that it is the government fault.

In the meantime, the terrorist keeps on bombing the highways, blowing up the rail tracks, drop bombing the schools, hospitals and bridges, blasting the transmission towers, burning the transformers, shooting randomly at express buses and extorting money from travellers through intimidation. And it is the



government fault that Myanmar have lousy logistic and appalling power infrastructure too.

The speciality of just asking for money

Myanmar people, including some in position of power, are good at doing nothing effective but extracting from budgets or not using the brain and just asking for money.

Let me just give you one final example. One so called accountant of a real company keeps on asking for an increasing amount of money for the diesel fuel. The amount began to go up to twice the expense of the previous weeks. The boss who was overseas tell her that there must be something wrong with the generator to be costing that much in fuel. The accountant gave the flimsy excuse that there are longer times without power supply during the week, hence the bills mounted. Eventually when the boss returned and directed her to check the generator, it turned out that the fuel pipe was leaking inside the machine. Any extra effort other than just giving excuses is unfamiliar to most staff. The only thing the accountant is proficient in is asking for money from the boss and distributing that money. A very competent professional indeed.

A government agency tasked with bringing up one of the Myanmar sector has a lot of paid local ex-

perts. The Chairman rather than making the best use of them, to effectively develop the sector, is only interested in attending the national events, travelling to and fro Nay Pyi Taw, extracting the agency budget and doing the the least possible every month. No strategy, no tactics, just grab all the power, get all the benefits, ask for all the welfare and awards from government solely for himself. This is not fiction! How can Myanmar develop with these types of attitudes and capabilities in both private and public sec-

tors? Well may be it is also the fault of the government. Detractors may argue these cases may not be representative of the population, but I beg to differ. Whatever the reality might be, we can all agree that it is always easy to find an excuse and blame the government. What we all need to is to put in some elbow’s grease to effectively get the job done through putting in an extra effort for the sake of future generations. Above and beyond the call of duty perhaps!

License to Govern Extended

(Rhyme like Micheal Jackson’s “You are not alone”)

Another six months gone  
Myanmar’s still at war  
How could this have come?  
Six months extension done.

Losses don’t said goodbye  
Someone tell me why  
Do I have to run?  
And leave my home to burn

Everyday I sit and ask myself  
How did peace slip away?  
No-one whispers in my ears and says  
That you are not alone

I am here with you  
Have the new president  
Says a temporary event

But you are just alone  
No one’s here with you  
Things are falling apart  
Lashio as a start.

“ How can Myanmar develop with these types of attitudes and capabilities in both private and public sectors? ”



# CMP Industry Struggling with Labour Shortage

Nori Lynn

Garment factories in Myanmar's industrial zones have received more orders than last year, yet they are facing a shortage of local workers. "As a garment factory, the incoming orders are good. The orders from Bangladesh has reached us, not a few, but many hundreds of thousands. We received a lot more orders than before. In terms of order receipt, the normal practice is to order in four months. Now, they order for a year in advance," said a garment factory owner.

Garment factories now have more opportunities to receive such orders from abroad, but currently, factory workers are moving to garment industries abroad, he said. "It is good to have more orders, but without workers, there are difficulties. When we get more orders, we face a labour shortage."

"Now, there are industrial zones along the border with China, so the



workers go there illegally. As long as they can show their competence in CMP works, they are employed with accommodation and meal allowances. Most people go illegally. They don't need a passport to go illegally," he said.

According to an HR manager of a garment factory, the current situation is creating a demand for work-

ers in garment factories and the industry players want workers to seize this opportunity to get employed. "Now we need workers, so we would like people to come and work. There are also opportunities. That's why some have gone back home to other cities to bring their relatives to work. Some employees bring their own elder sister and younger sister

to the same factory," he said.

MI has confirmed the situation with the Myanmar diplomatic personnel in neighbouring countries. Majority of the foreign owned CMP factories have shifted most of their production, especially to neighbouring Laos, due to a variety of reasons, not limited to haphazard power supply, security issues, access to qualify workers and import restrictions. These business owners brought along most of their qualified staff out of Myanmar to neighbouring countries. Friends and relatives of these staff then followed. The same circumstances are being repeated in other industries capable of relocating at short notice to neighbouring countries. Some of the IT support call centres to banks have relocated to Malaysia, as most IT staff forced their foreign bosses hands into moving them overseas, for fear of having to enlist in the military.

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# Tenders to Lease Rest Camps on Yangon - Mandalay Expressway

Four parking lots in total, including the current 76th-mile rest camp on the Yangon - Mandalay Expressway, will be leased through a competitive bidding system. In addition, the land that has been reclaimed, the land that has not yet been leased, and restrooms located next to the expressway will be leased through an open tender system, according to the Ministry of Construction, the ministry in charge of the expressways.

The facilities to be leased include two Nay Pyi Taw Rest Camps (100 x 100 feet), one Thee Gon Rest Camp (100 x 200 feet), and one Sagar-inn Rest Camp (200 x 104 feet) along the Expressway. Interested entrepreneurs can buy tender forms at Office No 11, Nay Pyi Taw from July 15 onwards. Tender applications must be submitted during office hours on 9 August. The date and time for the adjudication of tenders will be announced at a later date.



## MAI Celebrates 31st Anniversary

August 15 marks a significant milestone as Myanmar Airways International (MAI) celebrates 31 years of excellence in the aviation industry. In gratitude to its loyal passengers, MAI is offering up to 31% off all international and domestic flights throughout August. This special offer applies to travel until the end of December 2024. Tickets can be conveniently purchased through all

direct sales channels and Passenger Sales Agents (PSAs). Additionally, customers can take advantage of the Weekend Exclusive on the MAI website, [www.maiair.com](http://www.maiair.com). Enjoy a 5% discount on international flights with promo code MAIUABI and a 10% discount on domestic flights with promo code MAIUABD when purchasing with an MAI-uab Visa Card

## RGN - NNG - RGN Flight Now Every Week

Yangon - Nanning - Yangon flight will become operational once a week, starting from July 1 of this year 2024. Yangon International Airport Officials welcomed Ruili Airlines Flight DR5019, which arrived from Nanning, People's Republic of China, at around 13:00 on July 1.

Ruili Airlines' RGN - NNG - RGN direct flight resumed on July 1, 2024. Ruili Airlines will operate direct flights between Yangon and Nanning every Monday. Passengers can enquire about flight schedules and book tickets at [www.rlair.net](http://www.rlair.net).







## Finally Wan Yi is in Town

After so much misconceptions, misinterpretations and misjudgements of Chinese intentions on Myanmar, who would be in a better position to explain what is the true Chinese foreign policy towards Myanmar. Chinese Foreign Minister and member of Polit bureau Wang Yi made a two days visit to Myanmar. He held

meetings with Senior General, former Senior General Than Shwe during the trip.

He promised to support upcoming elections in Myanmar, the validity of existing territorial integrity and sovereignty, and oppose attempts to disrupt peace and development within Myanmar. Finally Myanmar

leaders, especially the current cabinet members, have heard the policy that has been in place for so long, reiterated from the horse's mouth. We will have to wait and see how it would stem the tide of anti China public sentiment that has been raging since Lashio has to be surrendered by Tatmataw. At least the

market likes the visit and the promises. By the end of the first day of Wan Yi visit, gold price has fallen back from the highs of 9.1 million Kyats per tikel to 7.5 million Kyats by day end.





## Why Price Controls Will Not Work

UAC

Any first year student of economics would be able to tell you the price of goods and services could only be determined by the forces of demand and supply and any effort to affect otherwise would end up creating consumers' and producers' surpluses, which would eventually result in negative externalities.

Yet efforts across the world by different governments to somehow control the prices of consumer goods are uncontrollably persistent, from rich first world countries who exercise rent controls (EU) or control the property prices (Singapore), to developing countries to those in the badly managed countries category.

Price controls are not new. In fact, in the code of Hammurabi by the King of Babylon in 1800 BC included the set prices for the wages of craftsman and labourers some 3800+ years ago. Nowadays governments of various forms set controls by blunter blades of political pressure and haphazard response to inflationary pressures. Recent data from the World Bank showed that 89% of developing economies meddle with price of energy, 76% with price of food stuff, 13% with price of

construction materials.

What mechanisms are there to control prices? The common ones included the price floors, where the minimum price that has to be paid to producers such as farmers and industries of essential national goods. Then, there were price caps aka price ceilings routinely set on indispensable consumer goods and services. We also come across techniques such as rent control in developed countries to provide affordable housing to the poor and the homeless. In mid 2019, Germany voted to freeze rent for 5 years. And price caps on a variety of goods and services exist in Spain, Holland and French. The current Biden administration even set controls on some drug prices in USA. At least half of

the developed world has the minimum wages set into law, which itself is a form of price control.

Reasons for price controls are uncomplicated; the altruistic reasons remain to redistribute the economic burdens and wealth, to provide stability to the prices and the economy and potentially deflate the price of essential goods and services. This in turn would secure economic stability. Price caps aka ceilings help the poor afford necessities of life, while price floors prop up livelihoods of farmers. Keeping buffer stocks also stabilise volatile commodity prices.

### Do they really work?

The obvious advantage especially on price controls on essential goods and services is to prevent traders

and producers from price gouging. The secondary objective may be to prevent monopolistic behaviour among suppliers. The setting of minimum wages ensures at least a basic standard of living for wage earners.

As of now (August 2024) in Myanmar, the government has imposed price ceilings over foreign currencies, gold, rice, edible oil, bus fare, etc., with varying degree of initial success. Plus minimum wage law has already been in place since 2015.

### Let us look at experiences of some developing countries.

Venezuela even has its parliament decree a fair price and cost law, to adopt the concept of price controls into law. They even made inflation illegal, i.e., it is illegal for traders and procedures to increase the price of goods without approval from government.

Yet years after its adoption price controls, Venezuela now has the world's highest inflation rate. There are reduced availability of staple goods, with supermarkets having more and more empty shelves.

“ In fact, in the code of Hammurabi by the King of Babylon in 1800 BC included the set prices for the wages of craftsman and labourers some 3800+ years ago. ”

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People have difficulties in finding cooking oil, chicken, powdered mil, cheese, sugar and meat. Government using its regular inflows of foreign currencies through the sale of crude from its vast oil reserves, imported by spending \$7.5 billion on food imports to alleviate the shortage. But due to incompetence and corruption within the administration, vast shipment of food rotted before reaching the shops and public.

The famous Albert Einstein define insanity as to do the same thing over and over agin and expecting a different result.

Another South American country did the same thing. Argentina fixed prices of nearly 1,500 products as of last October, to control its on food prices. Now the country is facing an inflation rate nearly as high as that of Venezuela. Controls did assure a kind of stability in the country, preventing riots and chaos due to hyper inflation. But they came at a cost; Argentina has no economic growth since 2008, wages increases has fallen steadily behind less than inflation, making people lose their purchasing power and become steadily poorer.

### The bad and the ugly

However well intentioned price controls are, they cannot overcome

## “ Due to sub normal profits or losses, ceilings lead to underinvestment, hoarding and black markets.”

the economic forces of demand and supply in the long run. Price caps will cause the creation of excess demand and setting minimum prices will produce excess supplies.

Producers are better off at not producing rather than selling at government controlled prices, that would cause them to make losses. If they are forced to sell at these price ceilings, they would some how produce a lower quality version. Due to sub normal profits or losses, ceilings lead to underinvestment, hoarding and black markets.

Once started, these controlled prices are hard to remove. Economic theory suggests that it is best to implement ceilings when market prices are low, yet politics is such that elected officials are always slow to react and started with these control measures when they are faced with prospects of hyber inflation. It is better not have the controls in the first place, if the timing could not be right. But it is easier said than done in public affairs.

Prices are used to allocate scarce

resources efficiently. Price controls distort thesis signals, leading to inefficient allocation, resulting in unwanted producer or consumer surpluses. They can even cause severe shortages if prices are set near or below producers' costs, which discourages production. They cause disruption in the market, losses for producers and a noticeable change in quality. The final long term impacts would be shortages of those products under control, rationing, deterioration of quality, illegal markets, unofficial channels.

### What about us

Foreign currency: The controlled exchange rates were put in place post 2021. Since then the spread between the CBM rates and the reality has gone wider and wider. The current CBM rate hovers around 3,000 Kyats per \$ whereas the actual rates are now above 6,000 Kyats per \$ (100 differential). There is simply no one transacting at the former controlled rate. CBM said small change is available for people going abroad but the truth is there is no such bank offering that facility at this point of time. If you need FX, be prepare to look high and low for black market traders and offer them whatever they asked. Feel free to report them to authorities if they did ask for an exorbitantly higher swap value. Foreign currencies are in short supply. Even some government department has to resort to outside purchases as the wait list and duration become unbearable. Even though most of

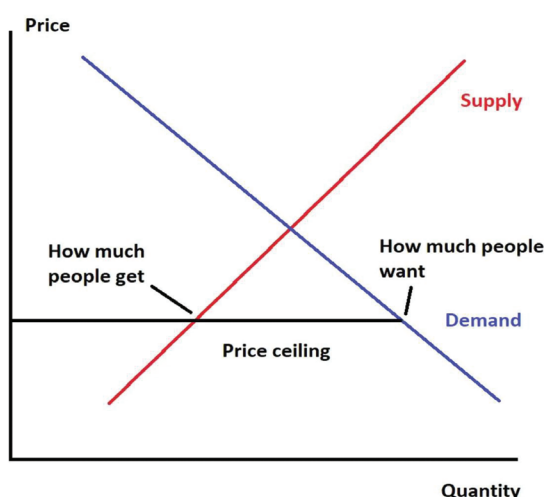
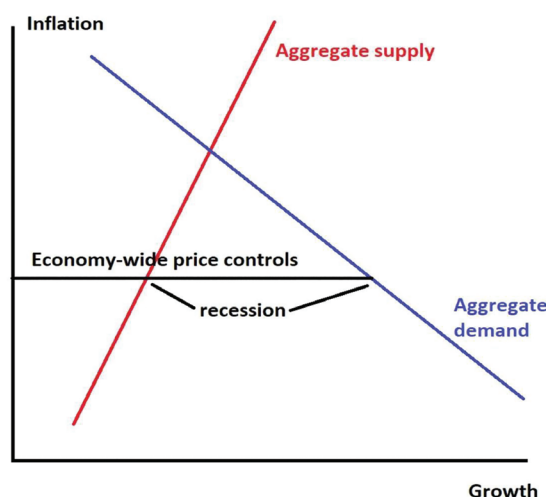
the underground traders have been put into prisons, house arrests or been on the run, the situation is heading south, without an endless and sufficient supply being released into the market by the CBM. Even if it is achievable, the administrative process itself will enrich only the insider few and some financial institutions. The controls are going to get harder and harder to administer without further damage to the confidence on the recoverability of Myanmar economy.

Gold: Gold entrepreneurs have gone underground for the bulk of trading. The actual gold shops are only selling a minuscule amount of pure gold at controlled prices when the price controls started. Then the arrests came. Then promises by them to stay within the price limits. Now, they are selling at price ceiling set, but added on an enormous amount of handcraft service fees so that the final transacted price equate to the market price of gold.

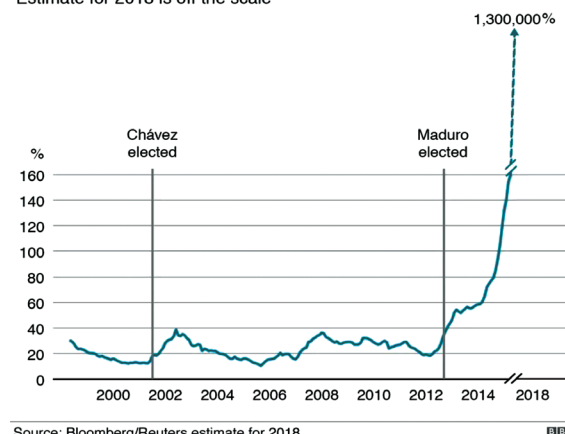
At the time of writing, the government/Gold Association set price is at 47 Lakhs per tickel while the market offer is at 75 Lakhs per tickel (60+ % differential). In essence, consumers paid the market price (set price plus the handcraft service fees added). Only gold shops benefited by cheating honest customers who sell gold by offering them only controlled rates. Again, the gold sellers who want to receive the market price has to hunt around for who knows who of gold shops and deal with them in secret. So much for the success of price control operation on this gold. Probably the only beneficiaries are gold shop owners who acted as if they have been given license to cheat consumers and a few good men from Special Investigation branch who are at liberty to blackmail the shop owners in return.

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“ The final long term impacts would be shortages of those products under control, rationing, deterioration of quality, illegal markets, unofficial channels.”



Venezuela's inflation spiked after Maduro's election  
Estimate for 2018 is off the scale



Source: Bloomberg/Reuters estimate for 2018



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Rice: Apparently under the leadership of MRF (Myanmar Rice Federation), rice is to be sold to general public at set prices at shops and supermarkets. After the controls failed at these establishments, MRF itself took on the role of supplier through online sales. Yet the three listed phone numbers on the announcements were totally offline. Their website was down frequently. We have tried ordering ourselves, but we were not successful so far. The rice retailers shops are selling at

5-10% mark up to the government set price, plus they have reduced the quality.

MI has spoken to some of these shops; they all have reduced the quality of the Pawsan rice (the most commonly eaten variety) via reducing the number of process the rice has to go through plus removing the vitamin/mineral fortifications as well as the quality of the packaging. Edible oil: Some of you may have noticed some queues forming within certain wards of Yangon. These are people queuing for edible oil at boating controlled prices. These

for show events waste people's time and are totally unproductive for the country. Now a days no one is able to get the oil at controlled price. The shop owners would simply tell the people that they have no stock. Hoarding is rampant. Most edible oil were transported out of Yangon into suburbs and rural areas where the monitoring of controls is close to non existent. Office staff in Yangon has to go to places such as Dala, or Hlaing Thar Yar, to get the cooking oil at market prices. The law governing the quality of the edible oil has been in place hence quality im-

provements are expected, but price controls are pushing the traders to stockpile the edible oil in Yangon and ship them to where they can get better prices within the country.

So how do the price controls fare in Myanmar? Simply they are not working. The faster the authorities grasped the reality, the quicker they can introduce the alternate policy measures that would actually be a plus to the economy. Take note that appropriate fiscal and monetary policies can reduce inflation without the economic costs associated with the imposition of price controls.

## Terrorists Resumes Rocket Attacks, Killing 10 in Lashio

The vibrant town of Lashio in the northern Shan State has turned into an ex-apocalyptic city, rubbish piling up and spewing everywhere, with broken down infrastructure, deprived of essential services and personnel. Most of the town residents have abandoned the township, as combined terrorist forces of TNLA and NNCP terrorists launched attacks on the city, using drop bombs and rockets in its many wards and villages.

Protected by the military North Eastern Command HQ as well as an Airforce command, Tatmataw responded forcefully resulting in a stalemate, where the terrorists and the rebels occupied the hills and the jungles surrounding the city while the Tatmataw forces remained in full control of the town.

Many civilians including some children have been killed due to the rockets and shells fired by the terrorists onto the civilian areas in the city. Most of the residents have joined the exodus that happened around the middle of July, leaving most of their fixed possessions behind.

Unfortunately, Lashio has fallen into the hands of EAO & the terrorists at the time of reporting as of August 12.



## Mine Blast Derails Mawlamyine - Yangon Train

The Down train for the Mawlamyine - Yangon trip derailed after the mine explosion planted by insurgents (part of NNCP terrorists) while passing through Thein Seik - Don Wun railway stations in Thaton

Township of Mon State. No injuries have been reported after the train derailed, but the services between the two stations were immediately suspended.

The Up train from Yangon carrying

695 passengers arrived at Kyaik Hto at noon and proceeded to the incident place where the Down train from Mawlamyine with 459 passengers got derailed. The two express trains exchanged passengers in the

same evening to transport them to their destinations.

Regional officials and security forces members proceeded to the site promptly for inspection and the Myanmar Railway staff pulled up the derailed locomotives and two carriages to reopen the railway section as quickly as possible.

Since February 2021, terrorist groups have been perpetrating 206 mining attacks and explosions within railway areas and stations, 166 blasts on railway bridges, and 42 instances of blazing stations and employee housings. As we said many times prior, while countries such as Laos and Indonesia are starting to run bullet trains, the terrorists and EAOs are still setting up explosives on 1949 'prehistoric' rail tracks of Myanmar.





## Four Dead in Boat Accident near Yangon

A passenger boat capsized near Bar Ga Yar Jetty in Yangon River around 08:00 on July 10. Search and rescue operations were immediately carried out by civil defence personnel from near by fire brigades.

The rescue teams manage to save eight passengers while the remaining eight, comprising of three high school students and five adults, remained missing by day end.

So far, only four bodies have been recovered downstream along the river. The accident happened after the smaller boat hit a larger vessel and capsized with its passengers on board.



## Cholera Outbreak in Yangon Region



MOH teams together with those from Yangon Region government have been actively working to control the outbreak of severe diarrhoea in several townships within Yangon City. Number of patients administered to RGH (Rangoon General Hospital) has steadily gone up since the middle of June to more than 1,000.

Roadside food stores in Thar Kay Ta and Daw Bone townships remained closed indefinitely as they have been identified as the source of the outbreak. The government is intensifying its efforts to control the outbreak. Yangon residents are advised to refrain from eating at places where hygienic practices are found to be wanting, wash hands frequently, use proper toilet facilities and only drink boiled water to avoid the risk of contracting cholera.

## Terrorists Tried to Blow up Another Bridge in Thaton

Terrorist attacks along the Yangon - Maw La Myine highway continued. This time KNLA and PDF terrorists planted explosives on a reinforced concrete bridge at 134 mile marker in Thaton Township of Mon State, on the morning of August 2. The short bridge measures just 10 feet in length and 40 feet in width, but the destruction of it would interrupt the traffic in totality along the highway.

MI team passed over the targeted bridge on August 3. The repairs have been quickly completed within the same day and the the traffic from opposite directions can pass the bridge in turn, from the next day onwards. We spoke to some of the security personnel and the damage only affected part of the bridge and left a big hole on that part.





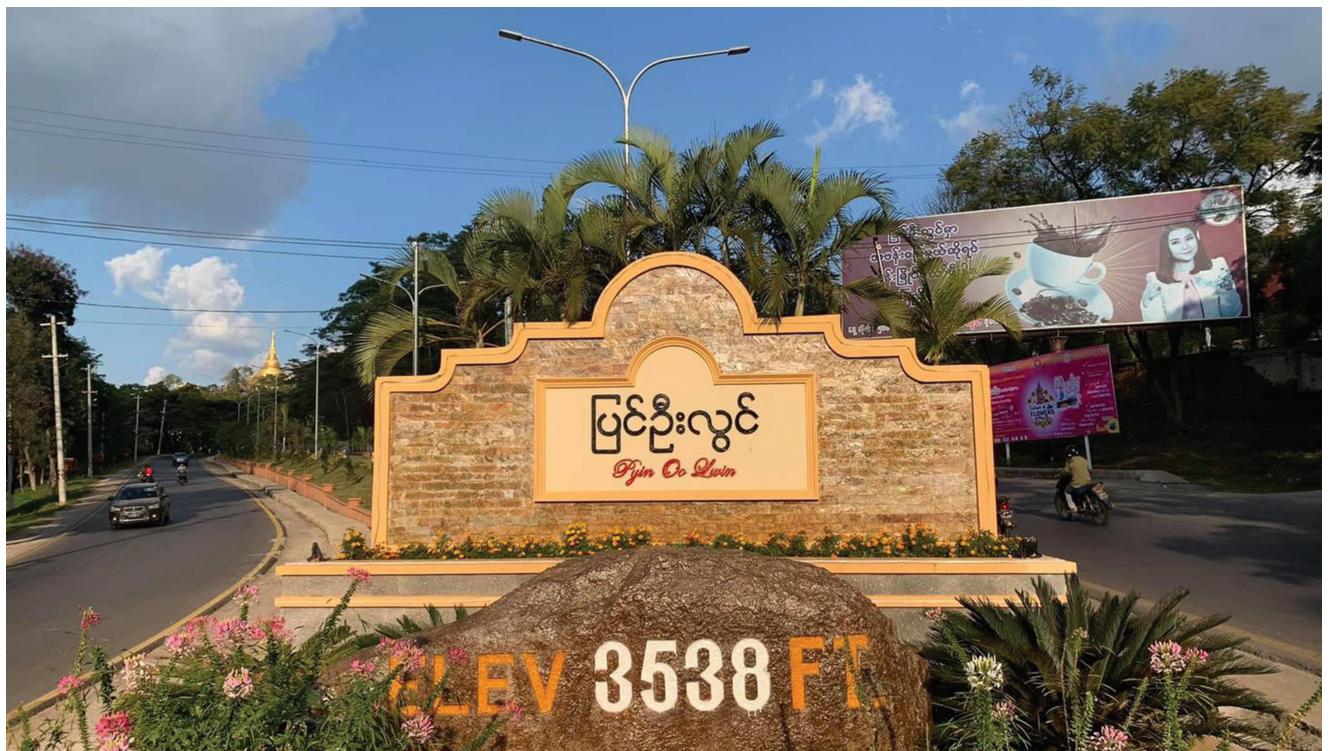
## GOVERNMENT

## INSIDER

**Private Hospital of International Standard in Pyin Oo Lwin**

MOH (Ministry of Health) is asking for the private sector to build and operate an international-level specialist hospital in Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Region, through the Built-Operate-Transfer (BOT) system. The hospital is to be built on state-owned land under the BOT format.

The hospital is expected to specialise in treatments for eye disease and cancer, urinary and kidney disease, kidney transplant surgery, and general health services, according to the MOH. Citizen investors and entities who wish to establish and open a private specialist hospital on state-owned land can submit proposals of interest in the hard copy and soft copy to the Department of Medical Services by September 2.

**1,300 Registered Private Schools**

According to the Private Schools Association, nearly 1,300 private schools have been granted registration, and 40 more private colleges and universities have applied for registration across the country. The Private School Supervisory Board

under the Ministry of Education has so far approved the registration of 1,288 private basic education schools in accordance with the national curriculum, and the board continues to review applications for school registration.

Nay Oak (St Paul), Chairman of the Association stated, "We have granted registration to 1,288 private schools for basic education for a period of two to five years. Although we haven't yet approved private universities and colleges, 40 have ap-

plied for registration. The regional supervisory boards are making necessary preparations to allow private schools that teach both national and international curriculums to open within this month."

All private schools must apply for registration with the respective supervisory boards of the states and regions under the following categories: (a) private schools for basic education (including those teaching international and national curriculums), (b) private high schools (including language schools), and (c) private schools for technology, vocational, and practical training.

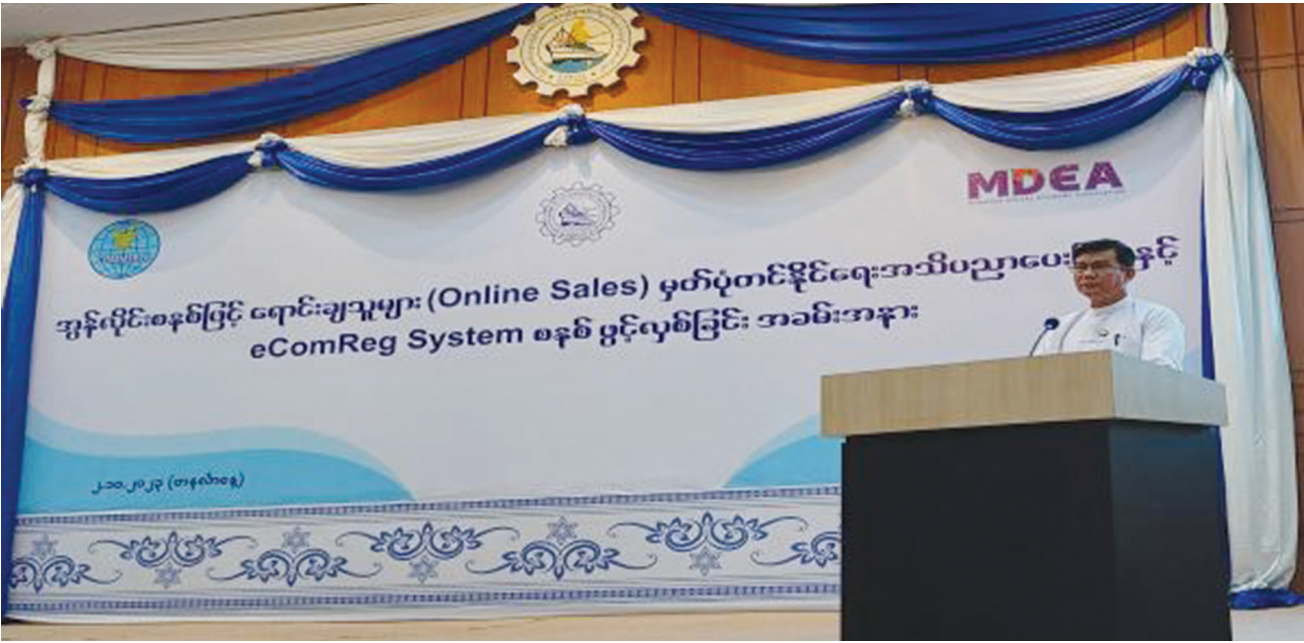
Additionally, school days, holidays, and exam days for all private schools must align with those set by the state. All private schools are required to teach Myanmar language, Myanmar history, and Myanmar geography to foster union spirit and preserve Myanmar traditions and culture. All basic education schools across the country must close on Sabbath days and Sundays during Lent.



BUSINESS NEWS

6,000+ Online Businesses Registered

More than 6,000 online businesses are officially registered till end July 2024, according to the Department of Trade under the Ministry of Commerce. The department is conducting the registration process in accordance with the Consumer Protection Law and other existing laws to ensure that consumer rights are protected in the online sales sector in Myanmar. The registration of online businesses began in November 2023, to protect consumers against online fraud and sale of goods. Even though the Department has issued notices to warn unregistered businesses, so far none has been taken to task.



Permanent Residents Still in Limited Numbers



Central Committee on Implementation of Permanent Residency (PR) in Myanmar held a work coordination meeting in Nay Pyi Taw to scrutinize and grant PR to more applicants. There are four types of PR and the implementation of PR system was initiated on January 2015. Until end of last year, there is a total of 751 applicants and 699 were approved by the Committee. 41 are in line to have personal interviews, comprising of 33 applicants and eight family members. The central committee members reviewed the individual biographies of applicants, perform interviews and gave suggestions for PR approval.

YSX Reaches Two-Month Low in July

The economists have proven that the stock market always precede the economy by nine months. If the status of the current YSX were anything to be inferred, Myanmar economy would likely to continue to be around the rock bottom till May of 2025. In the mean time, recession and sufferings would likely continue in the foreseeable future. The trading value of the eight listed companies on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) fell to 974 million Kyats with more than 320k shares traded in July from highs in the past two months.

March	1,340	560,687
April	473	177,812
May	1,550	603,906
June	1,700	593,392
July	974	320,000

At present, only eight companies are listed on the exchange; First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB), First Private Bank (FPB), TMH Telecom Public Co Ltd (TMH), the Ever Flow River Group Public Co Ltd (EFR), Amata Holding Public Co Ltd. (AMATA) and Myanmar Agro Exchange Public Co Ltd (MAEX). The trading value in July is 730 million Kyats lower than that of June.

2024	Value (Kyats in Million)	Volume (Number of Shares)
January	1,000	425,102
February	693	253,178



# Fraud Warning on Roaming Packages

Tim M Htut

While on a recent trip to Laos and China, I tried one roaming package from a local telco provider. I went into the downloaded ATOM app., clicked the 'Packages', chose 'roaming' and selected 'Asia 9 Roaming Pack (3 Days)'. I paid 14,599 Kyats. It said I would have 1,200MB for three days.

When I actually get online in Laos, the network that I was connected to was the one that is off the grid in most locations. I was moving around Laos from Vientiane to Luang Prabang to eventually into China. I was there for four days and my connectivity has been extremely poor. The speeds that I got were lower than 3G. I was off the grid most of the time. All in all, I do not think I would have used even 10% of the data allowance. Most of the time I simply lost patience as the connection was taking so long to even access instant messaging facilities, let alone Facebook or gmail.

I thought this was a one off event I

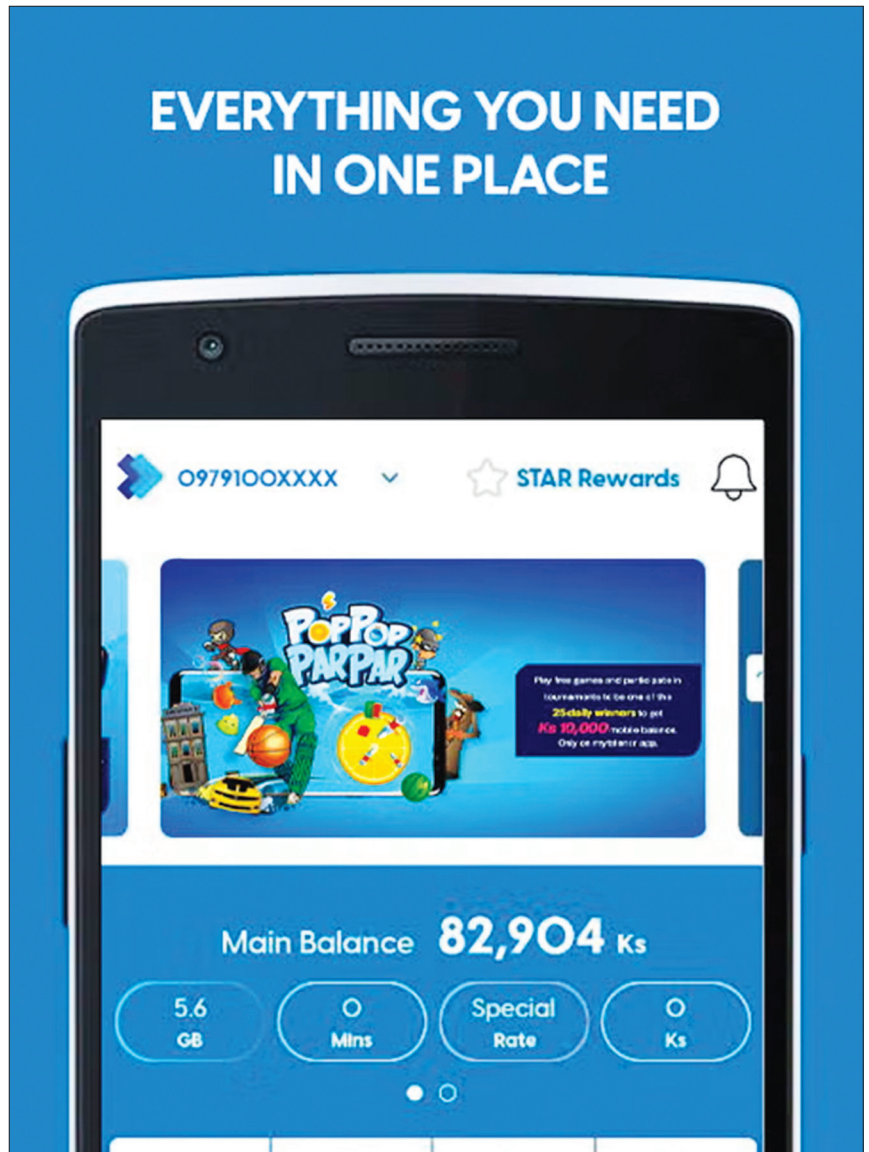
experienced hence decided to try an alternative. My expectation is such a far cry from the truth.

This time I tried using another provider, while in Thailand. Using MP-T4U app, I clicked the 'Packages'. Under 'Other Services', they show three 'Roaming Packs'. Two of them are 'Rate Cutters', which are unsuitable for me. I selected 'Data Roaming Pack 1024MB'. It offers the data roaming in 10 Asian countries up to the limit set, for 7 days. I bought it for 15,000 Kyats.

My experience was at par with what I have had in Laos. The connection was poor. Hotspot totally did not work. I was totally without internet other than in the hotel and within some wifi available areas in Bangkok.

How could this be! I felt I got cheated of 30,000 Kyats in total by two telco providers. There are no regulators that would verify whether these packages offer what they are promising. I did call up the hotlines

“There are no regulators that would verify whether these packages offer what they are promising.”



around a month later to complain on the above mishaps and both telcos are supposedly investigating. All our readers - you have been warned. Buy your overseas roaming packages wisely. Else prepare for a

heavy dose of cognitive dissonance later on. At present, buying the SIM card of the home country at the airport of arrival, unfortunately, might be the best option I could recommend.

## Floods as Predicted Came Early

Nelson Tim



As if the government's hands were not full, floods are happening everywhere across the nations. As of the date of reporting, water levels at, at least five rivers of significance are above their danger zone, with imminent floods to many towns and cities along their path.

Railway lines have been shut down between Bago and Pha Yar Gyi Stations along the Yangon - Mandalay line, as well as between Bago and Kali Stations along Bago - Maw La Myine line. Flooding has also impacted some areas along Patheingyi - Hintha Da - Kyan Khin railway sections, due to water levels exceeding nearly a foot above the railings.

Currently Yangon - Patheingyi road is also inaccessible to smaller vehicles to due flood covering the main road. Travellers are advised not to travel towards the West unless in cases of absolute necessity. Thathon - Hpa Ann Road is also flooded, cutting off access to the East towards the border with Thailand. Meteorological service expects the bad weather to continue in the near future.





# Myanmar Athletes Back after First Rounds

Nelson Tim



Two Myanmar athletes competed in two types of sporting events, Badminton and Swimming, at the 2024 Paris Olympics in France. Thet Htar Thuzar (currently world #43) in the Badminton Championship,

and Phone Pyae Han in the men's 100-metre Swimming. Both bowed out from the world competition after failing to qualify in the first round. Thet Htar Thuzar, Ms suffered two consecutive losses



to in the first round group matches to two higher ranked player from Japan and Canada. Phone Pyae Han also has to leave the competition after failing to qualify in the first heat of men 100m free style event, where

only the top 16 proceeded to the second semi final round. He stood #73 out of 79 swimmers.



# Donation Bhabhatron II Simulator to the Yangon General Hospital

The Bhabhatron II Advanced Telecobalt Cancer Therapy Machine and Digital Radiotherapy Simulator, was handed over to the Yangon General Hospital, in dedication to the people of Myanmar, in the presence of Hon'ble Minister of Health Dr. Thet Khaing Win, by Ambassador Abhay Thakur, on July 18. Bhabhatron II is the latest and the most effective technology for delivering radiotherapy to cancer patients in critical need. The versatility of this machine allows treatment of cancer in different parts of the body and has been widely accepted



as an efficient treatment modality by various cancer centres in India

and abroad. The completion of this important grant assistance project

in Myanmar reflects India's commitment to improving the health and well-being of the people across Myanmar. This initiative is part of India's developmental cooperation programme, under which both project related and humanitarian assistance are extended to our friendly neighbours. India has supplied medical equipment and extended capacity building assistance to hospitals and health sector personnel, in Mandalay, Monywa, Sittwe and Naypyitaw previously.

# Floods in Bago Compromises 10000 Acres of Farmlands

Floods in Bago region has subsided somewhat from the most detrimental highs but initial reports highlighted that approximately 10,000 acres of farmlands have deluged with heavy rains and water. Since the middle of July, most villages around the city of Bago has been submerged under water, with the water levels reaching up to 10 ft. It would take till until the end of August for the flood waters to fall back to the canals and rivers. So far the death toll has been reported to be five, including one child. Because

of the inundation, the rice crops output is likely to be impacted, with associated price increases due to drop in supply. For a government dipping its hands into price controls to ease inflationary pressures on necessities, it is definitely going to be good news as most of the crops in the submerged farms are unlikely to survive. The water levels are still around 6ft level when the majority of donations and rescuers, including our team from Myanmar Insider arrived. As usual with all the flood situation,



the affected population is in need of clean drinking water and food supplies. Some of the household we

visited are already suffering from diarrhoea or cholera like symptoms.





# What will Myanmar be Like in 10 years

Nori Lynn

If you are asked to state one unique profession within Myanmar, fortune tellers might come into your mind. People here consult them whenever fortunes do not favour their circumstances. Yet most are simply prying on people's misfortune to earn themselves a living. For how would Myanmar look in ten years time, we will not seek the answers in the soothsayers parlours at the base of pagodas. Instead, we will look at the current state of affairs objectively and scientifically to come up with a possible outcome on the path that the country will proceed.

As Xi Jinping has stated in his Governance of China book, the development is like a boat. Once you miss it, the boat is never going to come back for you. Myanmar has missed the boat to an enormous opportunity to progress from 2017 until now. After the stellar growth years of 2012 - 2015, the people chose an incompetent leader who spoke well on stage and committed economic suicide by focusing on nonsense and lack of focus on things that matter

for economic development. Myanmar has become the poorest country in ASEAN in 2017 (World Bank data) and has never recovered from that infamous standing. It has fallen even behind the hyper populated Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, because of the economic mismanagement under Su Kyi era, instead of credible investments in infrastructure, Myanmar was left to dwell on the remains of the past infrastructure, a significant portion of which was built before 1960s. Her administration most visible infra projects are not railways, highways, bridges or roads, but 'Welcome to xxxCity', signs put up in every town

and city across the country.

FDI has fallen well short of what other ASEAN countries of similar population are garnering. Vietnam and Thailand are receiving inward investments in billions of \$, while the FDIs into Myanmar is still at miserable double digit millions on average for the past four years.

Short of employment opportunities, most educated and capable has gone abroad. Think of 5-10 million strong Myanmar diaspora in Thailand. You can go into almost all shops and speak Burmese and they would bring out one staff who can communicate with you. Because of lack of investment in infrastructure

and diminishing FDI, Myanmar workers are deprived of the skills needed to earn increased wages in a competitive global environment. They have no experience with latest technologies nor are they well verse in productivity in an office environment. The route learning that the universities taught them only prepares them to memorise. They had not learn how to self learn or even google search, let alone use Ai or programming. Even word processing skills are elementary.

Years of not focusing on production and exports have led to continuous budget deficits that added to the national debt burdens. If you are not producing anything you cannot become rich. If you think of the products that Myanmar produce, other than natural resources, not many things would come to your mind. CMP perhaps. Agriculture products in unprocessed form. That's it. How can we possibly come out of the poverty trap!

**“ Her administration most visible infra projects are not railways, highways, bridges or roads, but ‘Welcome to xxxcity, signs put up in every town and city across the country. ”**

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Recent attempts at price controls over foreign currency, gold, rice, edible oil, etc., are fulfilling their intended purpose. Inflation has not gone down. Due to political instability and losses on the military front, local business confidence is in the trenches. No one is opening new shops, renting new premises, but just buying gold and \$ and amassing them, adding no value to economic growth. Hence stagflation sets in. It is not going out of fashion any time soon.

People are scared. All cash the rich in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw have, are being directed towards the great escape to a foreign land. The well to do in the second tier towns have used up their buffer funds to relocate the whole families into the safe heavens of Nay

“Who would have thought that Lashio would fall, with the largest regional military command (RMC) centre as well as an airforce?”

Pyi Taw and Yangon. Who would have thought that Lashio would fall, with the largest regional military command (RMC) centre as well as an airforce? Who would then give the definite assurance that nothing will happen to whatever you own in Mandalay? Who would guarantee that Mandalay would not experience what has happened to Lashio. Once the artillery shells start to rain down upon the city, it would be too late to move out in an orderly manner by then.

With losses of major territories on

most states and some divisions, this civil conflict is not likely to end in the foreseeable future. That would commit a lot of national income into the war efforts, depriving other much needed areas of their budget allocations, further downgrading the education system, public healthcare and infrastructure development.

**Which country are we starting to look like?**

A country where the local wages remain stagnant. A country where the poor remains under the poverty line

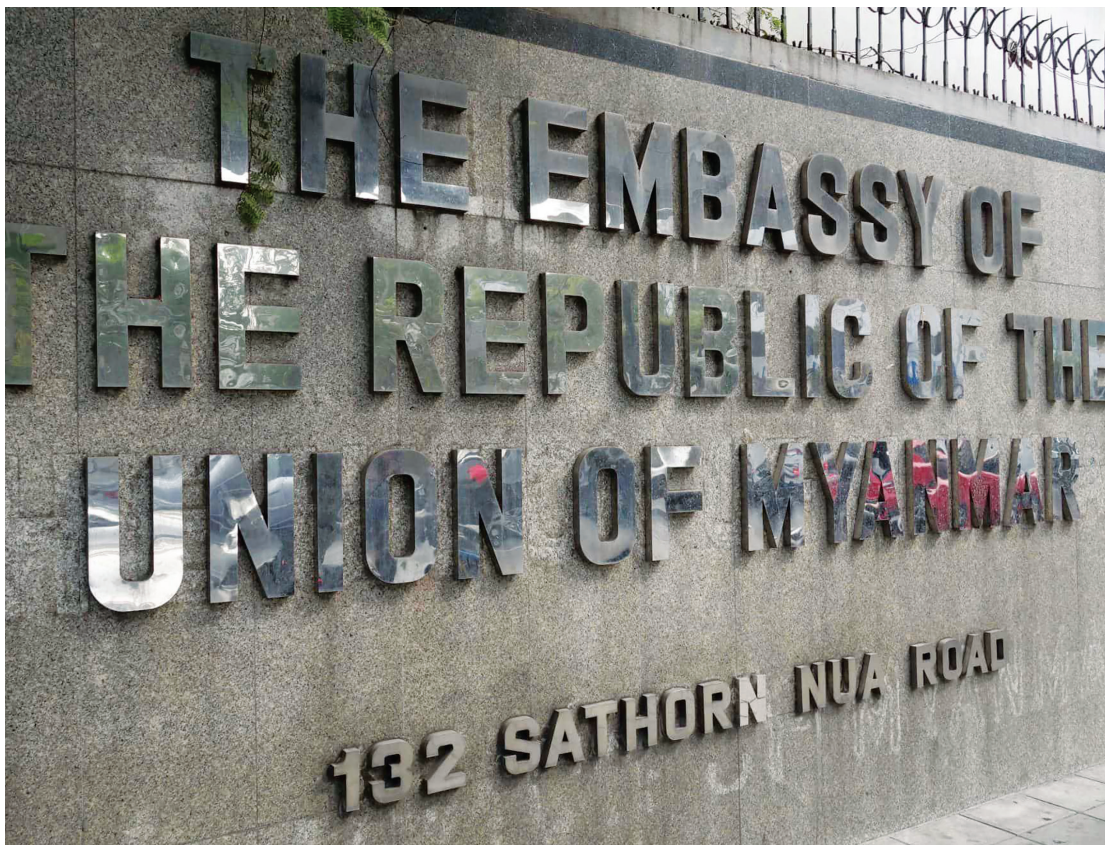
and extreme poor are forced to eat out of rubbish. A country still at civil war in some significant parts of the country. A country that relies on its own diaspora form overseas transferring back \$ to augment their national income. A country with poor infrastructure, slums and with a bad safety record. A country where their diaspora was doing most menial jobs overseas ranging from maids to cleaners to nurses to construction workers.

**Can you imagine that country? Its name starts with ‘P’.**

Myanmar is not there yet in totality, but on the verge of becoming one. But unless we shake up and shape up quickly, we will be that country with all the above characteristics, in less than half a decade.

Consider yourself warned my fellow citizens!

## CDM Employees in Thailand Seeking Removal From Blacklists



Myanmar Embassy to Thailand has announced that it has started receiving applications from former civil servants who has gone AWOL on CDM, to get themselves removed from blacklist for reentry into Myanmar.

Information Team of the State Administration Council announced that, based on their reasons for absence, the Government would ease the delisting of some ex-government employees who have been blacklisted for going AWOL, resulting in human resource losses and adversely affecting the services provided by the government. The government also want to help them reintegrate within the framework of the law.

These employees are to report to their respective departments, the nearest sub-township, township, district, region and state administrative bodies, Myanmar embassies, military attaché offices and consulates starting July 15, 2024.

Following this announcement, the government employees currently in Thailand have started applying for delisting at the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok, it said. Thailand is the home to the largest diaspora of Myanmar, both legal and illegal, with some estimates amounting to nearly 10 million.

## Terrorist Forces Targeted Town near Mandalay in an Attempted Control over Expressway

PDF terrorists, part of NNCP terror group, launched a brazen attempt to seize the key town of Na Htow Gyi in the Mandalay region. Once Na Htow Gyi falls, it would cut off the access to the central Myanmar cities such as Myin Gyan, Bagan, Magway, Pakkokkhu, etc. It sat

along one of the two roads that connects Myin Gyan (and consequently the other aforementioned cities) to Mandalay. The other road is already frequented and semi-controlled by the terror group. The road passed through the famous Myo Thar golf course, making it redundant at

present. Na Htow Gyi is also only a few kilometres away from the Yangon - Mandalay expressway and terrorists controlling the town would make the highway unsafe for travel most of the times.

Tha assault started on the morning of August 10, with targeted attacks

on government offices, police stations, security outposts and banks. The outcome cannot be assessed with reasonable certainty at the point of reporting (August 12).





## New Chinese Consulate Appointments

There was a new Chinese Ambassador appointed for Myanmar. Ms Ma Jia has previously worked in Myanmar

before as a Third secretary in the consulate. She hailed from her last appointment as a Minister

Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in India.

Another lady, Ms Gao Ping also has

joined as a chief counsellor in the Mandalay office of the Chinese consulate.

## People Fighting for the Doctors

Thousands of people protested in the eastern city of Kolkata to condemn the rape and murder of a doctor in a state-run hospital that also provoked demonstrations across India demanding better safety for women. The protests were held at more than 100 locations across Kolkata and spread to surrounding towns in the state of West Bengal and rallies also took place in several other Indian cities.

The 31-year-old female trainee doctor was raped and murdered at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, her brutalised body discovered around August 9. Large crowds of women and men marched through the streets of Kolkata, with a candlelight rally at midnight coinciding with the start of India's Independence



Day celebrations. Many government hospitals in cities

across India suspended all services except emergency departments

earlier this week, as junior doctors sat outside in protest, demanding justice for the victim. "Doctors nationwide are questioning what is so difficult about enacting a law for our security," Dhruv Chauhan, from the Indian Medical Association's Junior Doctors' Network, told the Press Trust of India news agency. "The strike will continue until all demands are formally met."

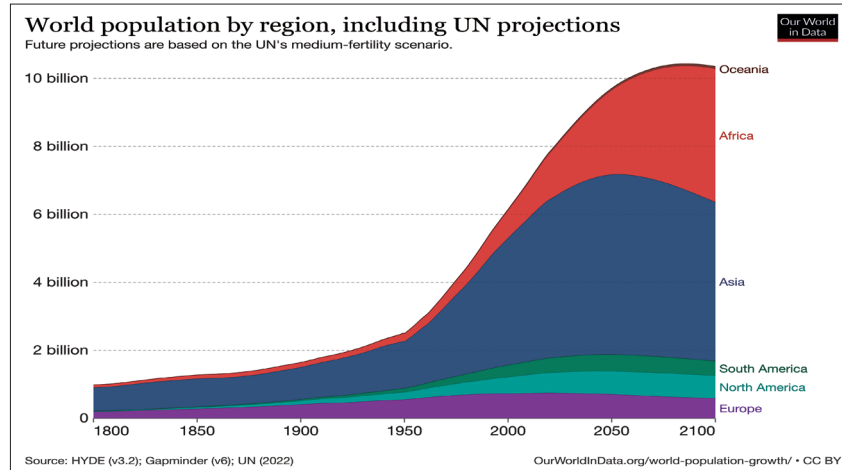
In contrast to Myanmar, where the doctors went away to join CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement) and abandoned patients in hospitals and emergency rooms, Indian doctors are well loved and respected by their populace and hence, people are fighting for the safety of these doctors and the overall female population.



# World Population to Peak this Century

UN expects that the world's population will peak in the mid 2080s, growing over the next 60 years from 8.2 billion people in 2024 to around 10.3 billion in the mid 2080s, and sliding to around 10.2 billion by the end of the century. The projection is based on a report published on July 11, titled 'World Population Prospects 2024'.

The size of the world's population in 2100 is now expected to be 6% lower — or 700 million fewer — than anticipated a decade ago. "The demographic landscape has evolved greatly in recent years," said Li Junhua, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. "In some countries, the birth rate



is now even lower than previously anticipated, and we are also seeing slightly faster declines in some high-fertility regions. The earlier and lower peak is a hopeful sign.

This could mean reduced environmental pressures from human impacts due to lower aggregate consumption. However, slower population growth will not elimi-

nate the need to reduce the average impact attributable to the activities of each individual person."

Since 1990, average global fertility has dropped by nearly one child per woman. Over half of countries now have fertility rates below replacement level, with China, Italy, Korea, and Spain experiencing ultra-low rates under 1.4 births per woman. Populations have peaked in 63 countries including China, Germany, Japan, and Russia, with projections of a 14% decline over the next three decades. Another 48 countries like Brazil, Iran, Türkiye, and Vietnam are expected to reach peak population between 2025 and 2054.

## China Expands Visa-Free Transit Policy

China's National Immigration Administration (NIA) announced that the country's 144-hour visa-free transit policy has been expanded to three more entry ports, taking the number of ports covered by the policy to 37. The three new ports included Zhengzhou Xinzheng International Airport in Henan Province, Lijiang Sanyi International Airport in China's Yunnan Province, and the Mohan railway port (entry point from Laos) in Yunnan.

Starting from this month, eligible foreign nationals (unsurprisingly NOT including Myanmar) can enter China through Zhengzhou aviation port visa-free, with their stay limited within Henan Province. Additionally, people entering Yunnan visa-free are allowed to stay in more areas of the province. Previously,



they could only stay in the provincial capital Kunming whereas now, they can visit nine city or prefecture-level areas including Kunming, Lijiang, Dali and Xishuangbanna, according to the NIA.

Henan, where many ancient dynasties had established their capitals, is home to sites of great historical interest including the Shaolin Temple, White Horse Temple, the Longmen Grottoes, etc to name just a few.

Yunnan boasts multiple UNESCO World Heritage sites, such as the Old Town of Lijiang, the Hani rice terraces, etc. It also has other attractions such as whole year round water festival at Xishuangbanna and the famous Pu'er tea and coffee plantations. It is also home to over 20 ethnic groups.

At present, foreign nationals from 54 countries such as the United States, Canada, and Britain are

eligible for the 144-hour visa-free policy for the purpose of short-term activities such as travel and business visits.

It said the 72/144-hour visa-free transit policy has played an important role in the country's high-level opening-up, facilitating the exchange of people between China and other countries, and promoting exchanges and cooperation. It pledged to continue to improve and optimise the policy and welcome foreign visitors with a more open mind.

China had recorded 14.64 million inbound trips made by foreigners in the first half of this year, up 153% year on year. Among them, 8.54 million entered China visa-free, accounting for 52 per cent of the inbound trips and representing a year-on-year surge of 190%.

## Robust Growth in China's E Commerce



E commerce sector in neighbouring China, saw robust growth in the first half of 2024, fuelling momentum for consumption recovery in the world's second-largest economy. Online retail sales during this period surged 9.8% year-on-year to 7.1 trillion yuan (about \$996 billion), of which the retail sales of goods reached 5.96 trillion yuan, marking an increase of 8.8%, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce (MOC). The MOC said that digital products, services consumption, and trade-in programmes were the three new drivers for consumption growth during the period. In terms of digital

products, AI learning machines and smart wearable devices grew 136.6% and 31.5%, respectively. For services consumption, online travel and catering services grew 59.9% and 21.7%, respectively.

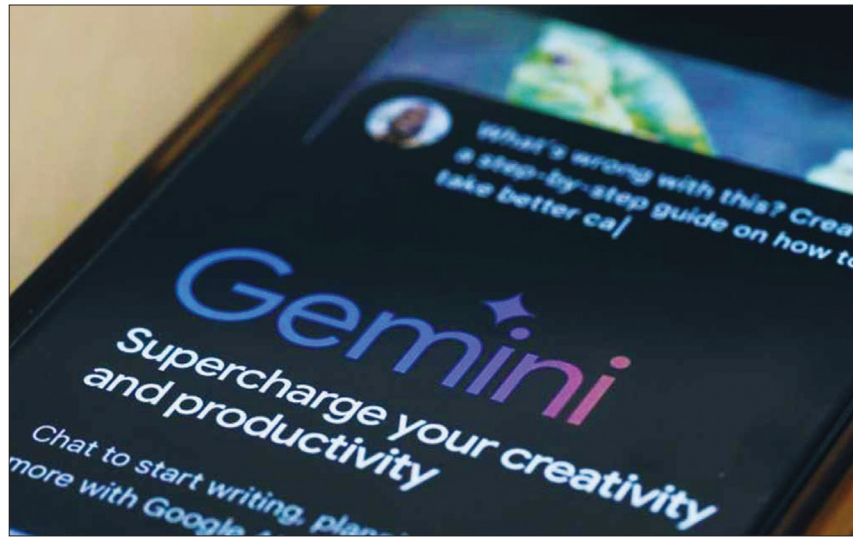
E-commerce platforms in China coordinated to offer trade-in services for more than 400,000 products and recycling services covering over 300 categories of goods. The trade-in services saw sales of refrigerators, washing machines, mobile phones and TVs increase by 82.1%, 70.4%, 63.9 % and 54.3%, respectively, on major online shopping platforms.



## AI Ad that Irked Some Olympics Viewers

Google confirmed that it had pulled an ad for its Gemini artificial intelligence after it landed flat with some Olympics viewers. The “Dear Sydney” ad, intended to tout capabilities of Gemini AI, featured a dad warmly describing how the tool wrote his daughter a fan letter from her to US hurdler Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone.

However, some viewers bashed the ad as promoting the notion that parents should coax their children to rely on AI rather than learn to express themselves. “While the ad tested well before airing, given the feedback, we have decided to phase the ad out of our Olympics rotation,” a Google spokesperson said. Social media posts fired off on an ar-



ray of platforms questioned whether the ad signalled a dystopian future in which human creativity atrophies due to AI. Syracuse University me-

dia professor Shelly Palmer said the commercial suggested that a poorly worded prompt to a generative AI tool can express a person's feeling

better than they could themselves.

“This commercial showing somebody having a child use AI to write a fan letter to her hero sucks,” author Linda Holmes wrote in a post on BlueSky. “Who wants an AI-written fan letter?”

Tech evangelists have touted the promised benefits of AI, but teachers, musicians, artists and others have accused its creators of training advanced computers to replace them. Early this year, Apple had an ad stumble of its own with a commercial showing musical instruments, paint cans and other creative gear crushed and replaced by an iPad to the tune of a song titled “All I Ever Need Is You.”

## Extreme Weather Events linked to Child Marriage



One of the negative consequences of catastrophic weather incidents around the world that most people might overlook is an increase in underage marriages. Researchers at Ohio State University conducted a systematic review of 20 studies connecting droughts, floods and other extreme weather events to increases in child, early and forced marriages in low- and middle-income countries.

Overall, the studies provide compelling evidence of the problem, said Fiona Doherty, lead author of the study and a doctoral candidate in social work at Ohio State. It's not that extreme weather has a direct effect on child marriages, Doherty said. “What these disasters do is exacerbate existing problems of gender inequality and poverty that lead families to child marriage as a coping mechanism,” she said. The study was published recently in the journal *International Social Work*.

## Thailand Targets 7.5% Tourism Revenue Growth

Thailand targets at least 7.5% growth in its vital tourism industry for 2025, aiming to generate a revenue of 3.4 trillion baht (about \$94.16 billion), said the country's tourism agency said.

With a transformation into high-value tourism, the kingdom will focus on upgrading its tourism supply chain to better accommodate high-quality tourists, along with promoting sustainable standards and charming destinations to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of income, said Minister of Tourism and Sport.

Effective Monday, Thailand expanded its visa-free entry scheme to include citizens from 93 countries and territories, allowing them to stay for up to 60 days without a visa, while those from 31 countries and territories are now eligible for visas on arrival. As expected, the list excludes Myanmar nationals.





# EX-Grameen's Muhammad Yunus to Head Interim Govt in Bangladesh

Tim M Htut

First, there was the students' riots that supposedly killed more than 120 students who are demonstrating against Sheikh Hasina's government. A couple of days later, former senior military leaders were throwing their weight behind the students. A week later, the demonstrations got more widespread with protestors trying to storm the Prime Minister's compound. With the help from the military, Sheikh Hasina took a copter out of the country she led and fled. The former prime minister is currently in India, trying to get a visa to enter the UK via an asylum process.

Meanwhile, although the military somehow helped remove Hasina out of her office, they are not assuming the power, possibly to avoid falling into a coup d'état accusation by international community. Learnt something from Myanmar perhaps. Instead, the senior military leaders asked the famous Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus (of previously Grameen Bank) to serve as the head



of Bangladesh's interim government. The decision was taken at a meeting of President Mohammed Shahabuddin (a ribbon cutter akin to the Queen's status) with chiefs of the three services and the coordinators of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement to finalise the outline of the interim government. Shahabuddin said other members

of the interim government would be finalised in consultation with other political parties of the country. According to reports, Shahabuddin said during the meeting that as Bangladesh is passing through a deep crisis and in order to resolve the problem, an interim government must be formed as soon as possible. He urged everyone to work together

to resolve the crisis.

Based on the historical performance of Nobel laureates such as Mandela or Su Kyi, on the economic front and development of the country, it would be best if Yunus interim government kept its literal meaning of the word 'interim' and get the elections done soonest possible.

## Durians from China, Anyone?

Nelson Tim

In terms of replicating the favourite and most exportable produce of neighbouring countries, China and Vietnam would probably take the top spots. Vietnam has taken

the famous Nga Myin (Horse Fish) from Myanmar, bred them in their rivers and tried to market it as their national fish export. China has experimented somewhat successfully

with Sane Ta Lone (One Diamond) mango of Myanmar to market to the whole world. While Myanmar has five days of water festival, Thailand supersedes it with one month

of Thingyan or Songkran. But China took the leadership by celebrating Water Festival the everyday of the year by creating a park in Xishaungbanna where people can play with water day and night for nearly 365 days of the year. If these countries do not succeed among competition, who else would do!

Now famous durians of Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar are at risk. Recently, the domestically grown durians of Sanya City in Southern China's Hainan Province, have entered the market season.

As the world's largest importer and consumer of durians, China has long relied on imports to meet its demand for durians. In recent years, with breakthroughs in cultivation technology, Sanya City, as the main production area of domestic durians, has been continuously developing the durian industry.





## Singapore Registers Fewer Marriages Last Year

The trend of falling birth rates in expected to continue in Singapore as the country registered 28,310 marriages in 2023, 3.7% lower than that of 2022. According to the Department of Statistics, except for fluctuations in marriage observed during the Covid, the number of marriages between 2014 and 2023 was stable overall.

The median age at first marriage for grooms and brides was 31.0 years and 29.5 years, respectively, last year, higher than 30.2 years for grooms and 28.1 years for brides in 2013. A total of 7,118 marriages ended in a divorce or an annulment last year, a slight increase from the 7,107 marital dissolutions in 2022.



## Indian Outbound Tourism to Grew at 11+% CAGR



India's outbound tourism market is expected to reach \$ 18.81 billion in 2024 and grow at a CAGR of 11.4% in the decade between 2024 and 2034 to reach approximately \$ 55.38 billion, based on one research paper from FICCI-Nangia.

The paper titled 'Navigating Horizons: The Rise and Future of Indian Outbound Tourism', released during the '3rd Outbound Tourism Summit' here in the FICCI office earlier this week, asserted that few emerging markets and opportunities for outbound travel include various South-east Asian, Middle Eastern, African and Eastern European countries. Myanmar could take advantage of that once the peace and stability returns to the country.

## Nearly 100k New Firms Established in Vietnam this Year

More than 95,200 new enterprises were established in Vietnam in the first seven months of 2024, a year-on-year increase of 6.3%, according to the General Statistics Office. Compare to Myanmar, the total number of companies within the country, all in all, just catch up with that figure. The combined registered capital of those businesses reached 854.6 trillion Vietnamese dong (\$33.9 billion), increasing 2.4% year on year. Most new comers are in the services sector, followed by industry and construction.

In terms of failures, more than 17,900 firms were estimated to withdraw from the market each month.







# You Think You just Fell out of a Coconut Tree

UAC

This phrase may not be as famous as ‘Yes We Can’ of Obama era, Vice-President Kamala Harris has created lots of slogans and tag lines, ranging from ‘We don’t look back’ to ‘Say it to my face’ to the above Coconut tree parody. She has secured enough support from Democratic delegates to become the party’s nominee for the presidential election in November of this year. This came after incumbent President Joe Biden announced that he was dropping out of the 2024 presidential race, under mounting pressure from within the Democratic Party and its supporters, post the first presidential debate, due to concerns about his fitness for office. Biden also offered his full support for nominating Harris as the Democratic presidential candidate. The momentum and the force is in



Harris favour with the latest opinion polls showing her ahead of Trump in most swing states. Plus, with many celebrities, youth voters and

minorities enthusiastically supporting her in large numbers, the keys to the White House would probably fall onto the first woman President

of America, provided Harris do not commit any major errors for the next 90 days.

## Harris Picks Minnesota Governor Tim Walz As Running Mate

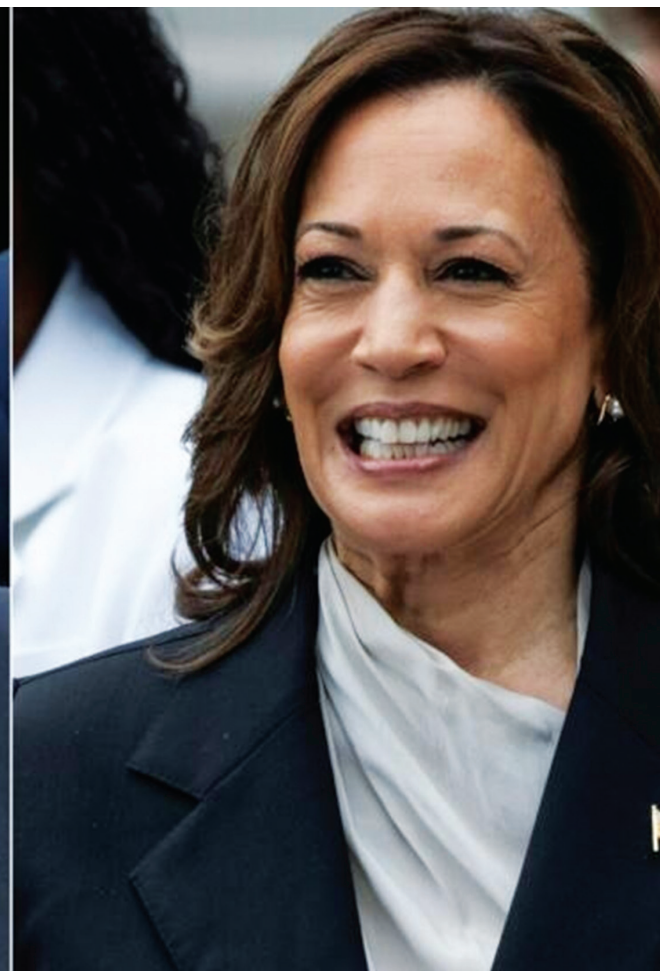
UAC

US Vice-President Kamala Harris, who has garnered enough delegates to secure the Democratic presidential nomination, boosted her campaign significantly by unveiling her running mate and showing off his joyful and fulsome performance on stage.

The VP candidate is no other than Tim Walz, the Minnesota Governor. “As a governor, a coach, a teacher, and a veteran, he’s delivered for working families like his. It’s great to have him on the team,” Harris said on the X platform.

Harris has selected Walz as her running mate, a pairing aimed at strengthening support for the Democrats among rural and white voters in Midwestern states. Harris, who is the daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants, with the choice of Walz, aims to broaden the Democratic Party’s appeal for a wider range of votes in this election, which is less than 90 days away.

Their performance together on stage, brought much energy, joy and enthusiasm to voters. Long lines of people as long as two miles queue up



to listen to their stump speeches. In stark contrast to Trump campaign

events, the stadiums and event halls were all filled up to the brim when-

ever Harris and Walz stopped for their campaign speeches.



## Changes in the Neighbourhood



Not long after Sheik Hasina run away from her position as well as her country Bangladesh, another top job became vacant in our eastern neighbouring state of Thailand. Srettha Thavisin nicknamed Nid is a Thai businessman and politician who served as the 30th Prime Minister of Thailand from 2023 until his dismissal on August 13, when the constitutional court dismissed him for appointing a minister with a past criminal conviction.

This is the 4th country leader to be dismissed by the constitutional court in a relatively short period of 16 years. The last removal came hard and fast after the same court ordered the dissolution

of the election winning move forward party, led by charismatic Pita Limjaroenrat.

Now the Thai parliament have to select another one to be the head of the government. The list is already out with seven potential candidate aiming for the top post. The most famous among them is Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the nominee from the populist Phue Thai party. If her last name sounded familiar, it is she is daughter of another run away ex prime minister, Thaksin. If she do get election in this week's vote, Shinawatras would become synonymous with the Ghandis and Kennedys of the political elite.

## Balloons Carrying Rubbish Hit Presidential Compound

Trash-Carrying balloons sent by North Korea hit the South Korean presidential compound, prompting Seoul to mobilise chemical response teams in the escalating tit-for-tat propaganda war between the two Koreas.

It is the first time the South Korean leader's office in downtown Seoul, which is protected by scores of soldiers and a no-fly zone, has been directly hit by any of the thousands of trash-carrying balloons launched by Pyongyang since May.

"The chemical, biological and radiological (warfare) response team has safely collected the trash balloons," the presidential security service said. "After investigation, results have confirmed that there was no danger or contamination of the object," it said.



## Trump Survived Assassination Attempt



Republican Party Presidential Candidate Donald Trump was hit in the ear in an assassination attempt by a gunman at a campaign rally on July 13 in Butler, Pennsylvania, in a chaotic and shocking incident set to supercharge political tensions ahead of the polarising US presidential election. The shooter, who has been killed on the spot, was a right wing fanatic, according to the FBI.

A bystander was also killed by the stray bullet and two spectators critically injured.

Trump raised a defiant fist to the crowd as he was bundled away to safety, and said afterward: "I was shot with a bullet that pierced the upper part of my right ear."

President Joe Biden condemned the violence, calling it "sick" and asserting that such acts had no place in America. The gunman, identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, opened fire from an elevated position outside the rally, targeting former President Donald Trump before being neutralised by Secret Service agents. The motive behind Crooks' actions remains unclear.

The director of Secret Service resigned following the investigation due to the lapse in security details during the event.



# Uncontrolled Wild Life Trade Across Borders

Just after the capture of an African lion, a Bengal tiger, a bear plus many other endangered and threatened wildlife in Ta Chi Lik in the Golden Triangle area far east of Shan State, Kayin State is also try-

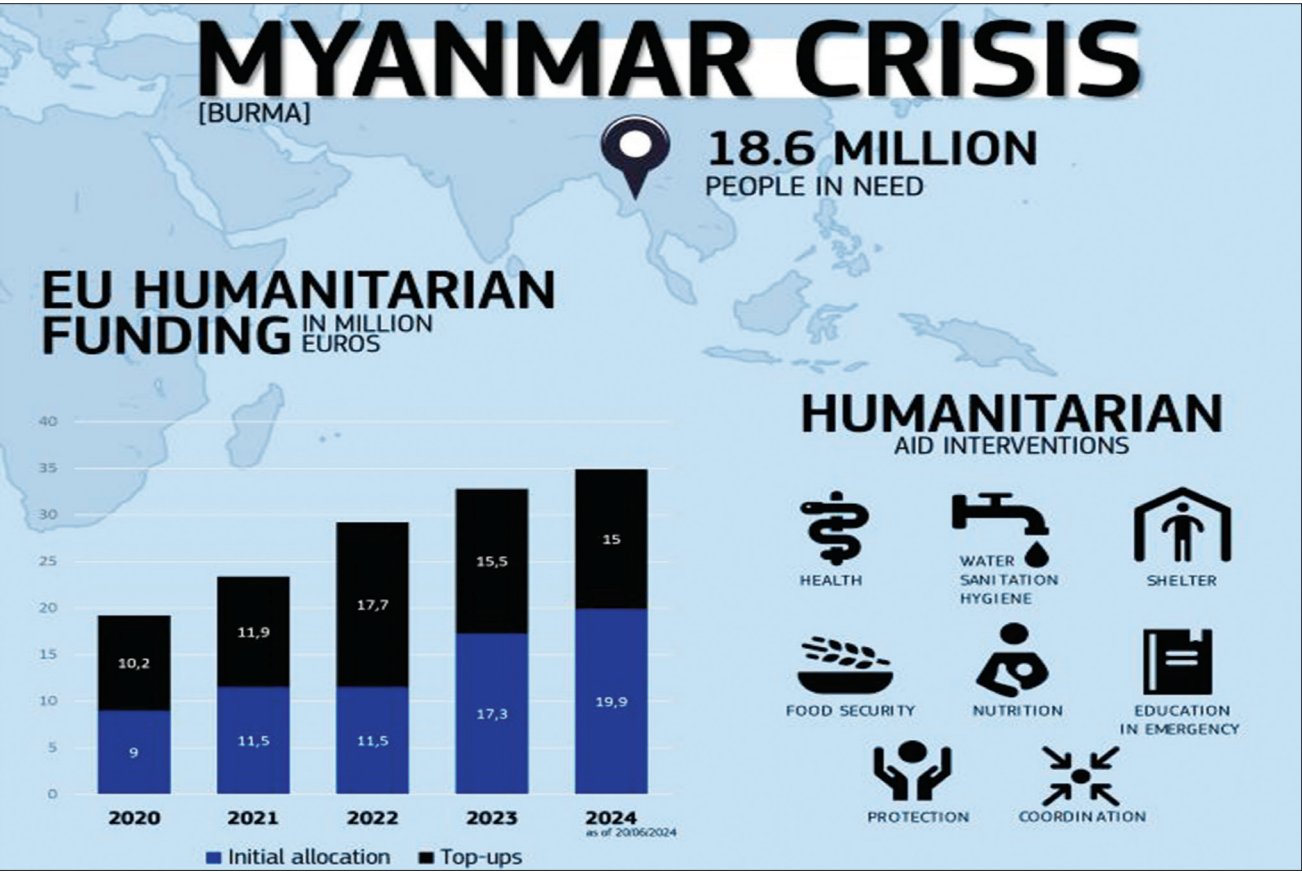
ing to prove that it is at par with the Shan State border. Thai authorities captured 38 containers containing my species of wildlife heading towards Mya Waddy town, towards Shwe Koke Ko area on July 29. The

latter is the famous sector along Myanmar - Thai border, where illegal gambling dens, pig butchering scams, human trafficking, etc., were openly run and controlled by the Chinese criminals, with the support

of the EAOs. The boxes contains crocodiles, several variety of snakes and other endangered species of small animals

# Response to Joint Press Statement by EU on Humanitarian Situation

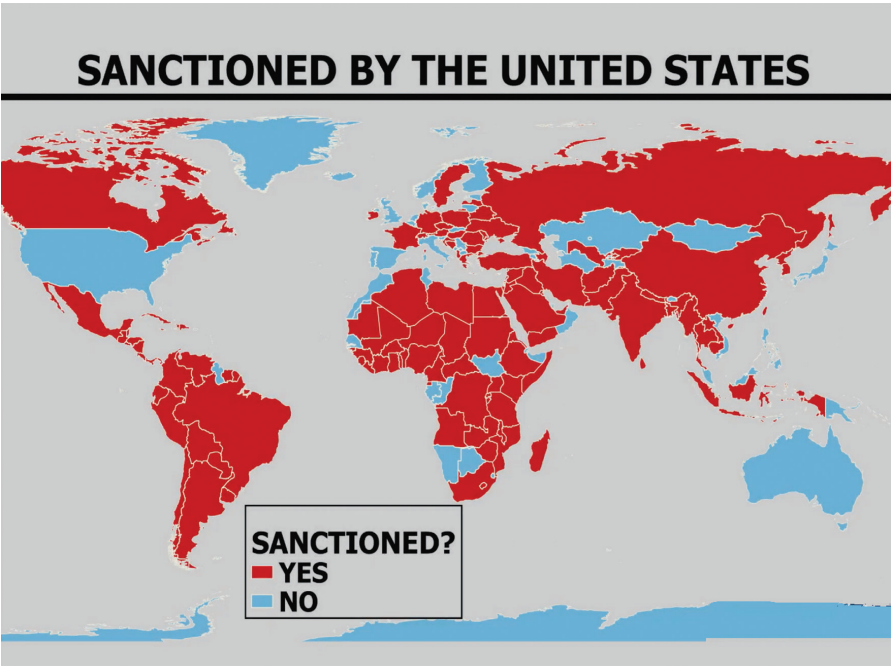
A joint press statement on the humanitarian situation in Myanmar was delivered by US Ambassador Robert Wood, Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs, on behalf of the EU and some countries at the media stakeout of the United Nations Headquarters in New York on July 15, 2024. The statement includes allegations, groundless and fraudulent elements, which are far from the reality. Myanmar firmly upholds its fundamental principle of assuring all available assistance reaches the needy population without any discrimination through cooperation at its best with the United Nations and countries that have genuine attitudes towards Myanmar to help. As such, the Government has been receiving all the humanitarian assistance for the needy people, which is provided through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre). The Government has been facilitating the travel access and delivery of humanitarian assistance requested by the UN and international organisations depending on security conditions as much as possible. The



Government has been taking necessary security measures with the utmost restraint to protect the lives and properties of its people. On the other hand, over 7,880 innocent civilians have lost their lives so far due to the inhumane attacks by terrorist groups in Myanmar. The joint

press statement neglects such terrorist acts. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2669 has been largely politicised. Myanmar reiterates its stance to uphold the 2008 Constitution, existing laws and fundamental principles as the only norms in im-

plementing national tasks. Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly rejects the groundless accusations contained in the politically motivated joint press statement of the EU and some countries that do not reflect the on-ground situation of the country.



# US Targets a Third of Countries with Some Form of Sanctions

According to the Russian news agency Sputnik, United States is the all round champion in the number of sanctions imposed on its adversaries and rivals, with one-third of all countries on Earth subject to some sort of restrictions. The announcement is based on a new analysis by the Washington Post published in July. Since 1990s, successive US administrations have made economic pu-

nitive measures and economic warfare the main instrument of their foreign policy, which all too often are ineffective and backfire, the analysis said. Decades-long sanctions on North Korea for instance have failed to dissuade Pyongyang from advancing its weapons programmes and developing intercontinental ballistic missile capabilities, the analysis said.





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