



News from the Front Lines



# MYANMAR INSIDER

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

VOLUME 12 - ISSUE 127 - JANUARY 2025

**4000 KYATS** 

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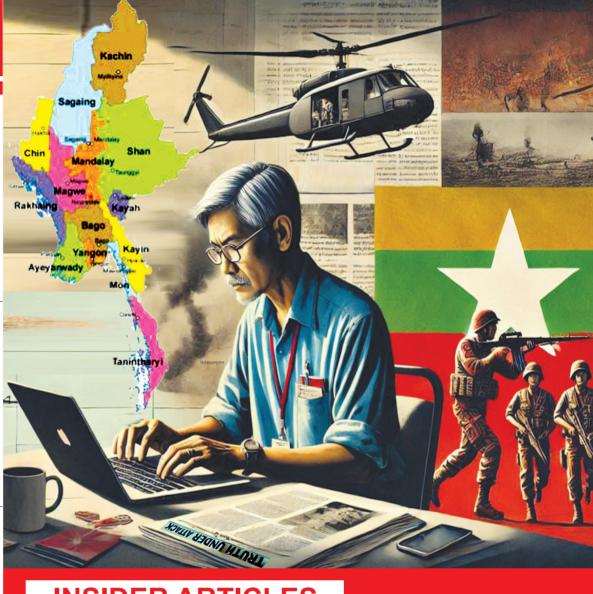
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## Is Ai Really that Deep?



Deepseek (shēndù qiúsuô - which literally translated as 'depth seek search') is the latest deep learning Ai (Artificial Intelligence) model coming out of China and taking the the Ai world by storm. Headlines included:

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## THE MYANMAR INSIDER



Dear MI Readers....

Those of you who are hoping that there will be a major regime change on Feb 01, after the expiry of the current six month term of the SAC, 'fat hope' probably would be the right word. Hence, we did up the article on the Audacity of Hope, borrowing the title from Barack Obama's book.

We also highlighted the two views of contrast; one where the sun is setting on the NNCP terrorists and the other where they are even infringing onto Yangon - Nay Pyi Taw expressway. Hence, our Sunset and Swan Song columns.

The new Ai tool called 'Deepseek' is now out for the world and it is quite impressive. We talked about it on 'How Deep is the Ai?'.

The weather is really good, especially in the morning. I urge all of you to make hay while the sun shines. Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, Ngwe Saung, Southern Shan, Mon State are still within green zones. Feel free to venture out please. Why don't you also pick up golf while you are in Myanmar? Cheap, good, healthy and you can learn without paying exorbitant tuition fees.

Before long, the fury of global warming is going to set upon all of us and we will all know how scorching hot Myanmar summer is going to be. Any air-con servicing must be done now before the demand exceeds the supply of technicians availability. And if you are into solars and inverters, now is the time to install, as the electricity situation will definitely get worse in the summer.

Yours Sincerely, Jeffery Windsor



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# **Audacity of Hope**

## Charlie Greene

If we are strictly following the 2008 constitution, an interim government has to be formed before the elections can take place. And the emergency government in charge now apparently cannot do that, according to the constitution. The latter is tasked with the main aim of trying get the country into stability (which obviously has not happened, hence rounds of six months extensions).

In an ideal situation, with enhanced security, the SAC is supposed to return the power to the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC). NDSC would form an interim government mainly tasked with holding the free and fair elections. You can obviously see the dilemma here, when the Senior General give the power to the NDSC, where the head of NDSC is the President.

Anyhow, we can see the shift in focus of the current regime from just simply playing the role of an emergency administration to focusing on the duties of a full fledged government; the forming of three commissions long overdue, after slight reshuffling of top defence positions within Tatmadaw.

First, one of the only two Navy Seals in Myanmar, Admiral Tin Aung San is no longer the Defence Minister. The writing is already on the wall, probably due to his over achievements on the rebels salients. He is still holding onto the DPM post after getting reassigned as a Minister for the PM office. It also means that two (navy) admirals are now ministers for PM office.

The second major shift happened when Joint Chief of Staff (for Army, Navy and Airforce) Maung Maung Aye was removed from the potential to be the future Senior General to become Tin Aung San's replacement and take the position of one of the many DPMs. This position as the joint Chief is now occupied by a 53 years old young and upcoming Kyaw Swar Lin, who is currently in the best position to succeed the Senior General.

### **Trio of Committees**

The first of the long overdue committees/commissions to address lack of co-ordination among minis-

tries is the one for industrial development, headed by former #3 man himself, General Mya Tun Oo. Supported by ministers from industry, natural resources, electric power, energy, science and tech, construction, this commission is tasked with bringing Myanmar out of raw exports of agriculture and natural resources into becoming an industrial state.

But there can be no industrial development without sufficient and regular supply of electricity. Hence, the second commission: Electricity and Energy Development. Chaired by Admiral Tin Aung San, and supported by ministers of electric power, energy, investment, agriculture, rural development, natural resources, industry, commerce and science and tech, this ministers abundant commission is supposed to address the most pressing issue of everyone in the whole country. Whether this

is just for PR or the top echelon of ministers can really do something to untie this Gordian knot, for the betterment of the country, only time will tell.

Last but not least, the agri and livestock development commission hopes to address consistently low yields in agri and livestock sectors, hoping to rescue the sector that employ 70% of the population, out of the backyard of productivity scores. Chaired by General Nyo Saw, the all powerful economic tsar who control the Tatmadaw economic enterprises. The team includes ministers from agriculture, investment, rural development, natural resources, industry, and commerce, this commission will really test the leadership skills of the General, whether he can really drive the development of these sectors or just a star behind the unpublished financials of MEC (Myanmar Economic Corporate) and MEH (Myanmar Economic Holdings).

In summary, the position of our top leadership has changed from just being here for just a while to planning for the development of country for the long term. How it would translate into specific actions and time horizons is up to anyone's guess for the time being.

"This position as the joint Chief is now occupied by a 53 years old young and upcoming Kyaw Swar Lin, who is currently in the best position to succeed the Senior General."

# Famous Tea Leaf (La Phet) Culture Aims for UNESCO Recognition

We don't know if it represents the culture of Myanmar. But after the water festival (Thingyan) has been designated as a UNESCO intangible heritage, a flea of applications or would-be agendas followed the possible succession route. Instead of taking the initiatives of other kinds, walking down the path of past success may be a distinct culture of Myanmar. Perhaps, that itself should be included as part of UNESCO cultural heritage of us.

Now, after Thanakha (yellow paste we put on our faces), people are following up to put La Phet eating culture up as the next hill to concur.

Myanmar has been using the tea leaves for drinking, eating, and medicinal purposes since the Konbaung of Myanmar's monarchical era. It is noteworthy that Myanmar is the only country where tea is consumed in the form of a salad.

A historical researcher said: "Stone inscription in the Kone Baung era shows Myanmar has been using green tea used in boiling water for



drinking. The traditional Myanmar Atar Thingyan festival, which is a heritage of Myanmar culture, has been recognised as the first intangible cultural heritage of humanity in Myanmar. If Myanmar's tea is recognised as a World Cultural Heritage, the value of tea will increase, which is a matter of pride and great joy."

Tea is primarily planted in hilly re-

gions of Myanmar. The characteristics colour, texture, aroma, and taste of tea tend to vary depending on the climate and environment. Since the Kone Baung era, tea has been a traditional Myanmar meal. Currently, a traditional culture of serving tea salad and green tea to guests is thriving both in urban and rural areas of Myanmar.

The tea leaf salad is consumed with

peanuts, sesame, fried shallots, dried shrimp, garlic, and chilli peppers. Moreover, it is also enjoyed with various combinations such as tomato, thinly sliced cabbage, tender papaya leaves and boiled maize. By promoting Myanmar's traditional tea as an integral part of the world's cultural heritage, there would be opportunities to increase production and expand the market.



# **Sunset on the Horizon**

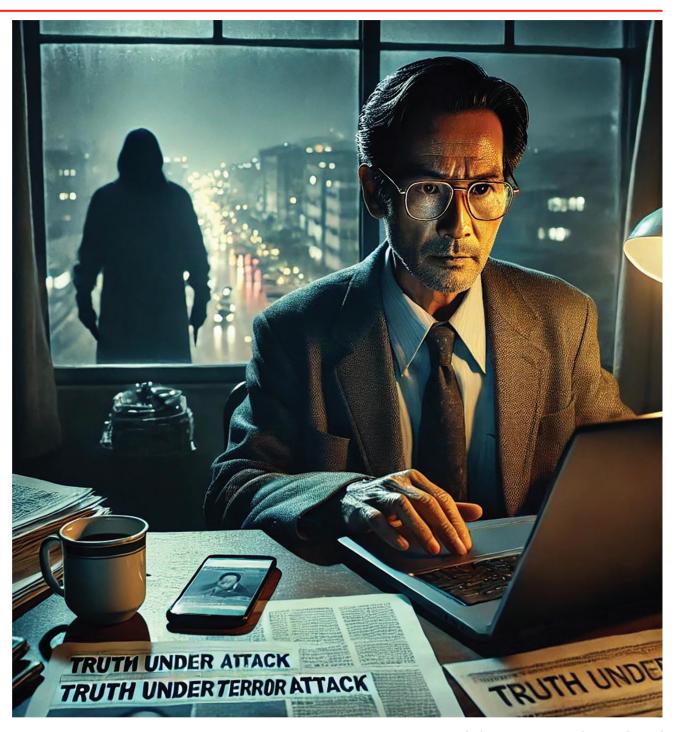
## UAC

According to the opinion of the majority, the Facebook has become a repertoire of Myanmar culture and civility online. Everyone in Myanmar under the disguise of anonymity seems to be somehow involved in trolling, swearing, slander and hate speech. With Facebook management now removing the factchecking algorithms to appease Trump, the aforementioned behaviours are likely to exacerbate. The elderly wonder why such type of uncouth behaviours and insolent curses come out of the most peaceful minds of the majority Buddhist populace.

#### Funding no longer comes easy

Along with obscenity, expletives, profanity and vulgarism, the keyboard warrior arm of NNCP terrorists thrive on the same Facebook. The West is always against calling them terrorists, preferring may be 'Freedom fighters' perhaps, but let's keep the champagne on ice first, till after you finish reading this whole article. Targeting the military, government officials, pro government individuals and those they deem somehow related to the current administration, these terrorists had enjoyed support of the majority of the plebeians in 2021 and 2022. Their main aim is fund raising, even if the generosity of the educated segment has now run dry. In order to continue to receive funds from Myanmar diaspora and sympathisers, they have to be seen to continue to wage war against the current re-

And waging wars is expensive. The NNCP forces do not have the complete control of specific territories. The ones that they are in are under the EAO's (Ethnic Armed Organisations) authority. EAOs have income from land such as Wa from selling rare earths to China, Kachin from selling Jade to China and Kayins (Karens) getting rent for operating scam cities like Shwe Kok Ko on their lands near the border. Unlike the EAOs, NNCP group does not have income from the territories since they own none. Donations made up of the majority of their incomes. With Trump issuing executive order on January 24 to



"The ones who preach the truth based on hard facts, like myself, would have support of neither the government nor these news agencies, who extol the freedom of expression so much."

halt all foreign aid for 90 days, the funding for NNCP terror group, including their associated fake news media channels out of Chiang Mai, would not be as liquid as before. This change of US administration would push them to look for more retail donations. At the same time,

since the latter is drying up too, they have to muster their performance to continue to squeeze blood out of the stone.

That means more assassinations, extra violence, new robberies, further kidnappings and guerrilla attacks. They may have to upscale their targets too, as the murders of teachers, civil servants, ward administrators would no longer wet their mob's appetite. These actions also have turned off many who originally supported their cause, in the early years of the campaign. NNCP terrorists are in fact hoist by their own petard.

#### Beating a dead horse

The elections is support to be happening at the end of the year. So far there is no indication that the military government is not stepping down. They will be transition to the civilian government after the elections. Thereafter the country can continue to move forward. Then, why beat a dead horse!

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With support from India and China and perhaps Thailand, the government can function without the West or ASEAN. There is no need to negotiate with NNCP people or give in to their demands. The fight for territories, win or lose, NNCPs are just pawns in the game of chess played between the government and the EAOs.

The only danger for the population is the one that I have mentioned above; more violence, new assassinations, etc., to enrich a few remaining 'smart' leaders of the terror group.

### Trying to take out a journalist

On January 13, I received a message from my father, conveying the fact that the leaders of military intelligence and counter terrorism units warned him of myself being in the hit list of people to be assassinated within the month of January. Sure, I am pro Myanmar, hence anti disintegration of the country. Knowing the facts and extent of voters'

fraud, I cannot support someone who cheated in the election and the group trying to restore that administration. I strongly believe elections is the start of the way forward for the country.

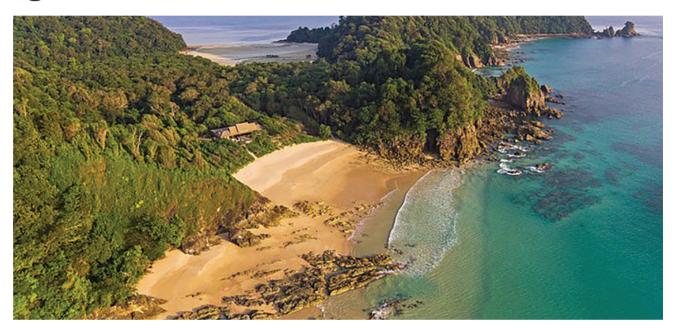
Yet, as with all terrorists, any opinion holder who do not agree with them is their enemy. Even though I was totally not involved in the production of the infamous video of cele Phyu Phyu Htwe, I was targeted as the newsman who would stand for the truth and not stand on their side.

I had to temporarily move out of my house and stay in a hotel as a precautionary measure. The fake news agencies will shout their hearts out about press freedom and security of journalists, provided it concerns the journalists who agree with them. The ones who preach the truth based on hard facts, like myself, would have support of neither the government nor these news agencies, who extol the freedom of expression so much.

# Tourists Heading to Wah Ale Resort

With prices ranging from \$600 to \$900 per night per person, tourists seem to be getting their money's worth in the exclusive Wah Ale Resort on Lampi island in Lampi Marine National Park. The visitors included tourists from Russia, Italy, the UK and other EU countries.

Lampi Marine National Park is the only of its kind in Myanmar. Lampi Island is the "Mother island" of the Moken, the sea gypsies who roamed the Andaman Sea with their traditional boats and who have now settled inside the park. The Park covers a group of islands in the Myeik Archipelago in the Tanin Tharyi region of southern Myanmar. The Park was declared an ASEAN Heritage Park in 2003. It protects evergreen and mangrove forests, beaches and dunes, coral reefs, sea grasses and a rich biodiversity of over 1000 re-



corded species.

"Being a nature resort, travellers enjoy nature differently from the one in urban. They can breathe in fresh sea air, sunbathe on the beach. and enjoy the beauty of coral reefs and underwater by snorkelling and paddling canoe-kayak. Some watch birds walking around the forest. The main reason the travellers visit this site is that it is a fine nature-based destination," said Kyi Oo, head of the park.

# Thar Kay Ta Crocodile Farm Reopens

The Thar Kay Ta Crocodile Farm was closed during the Covid has since reopened from November 2024 onwards. Local and foreign visitors alike can now tour the only farm of its kind in the country. The farm is located within Thar Kay Ta

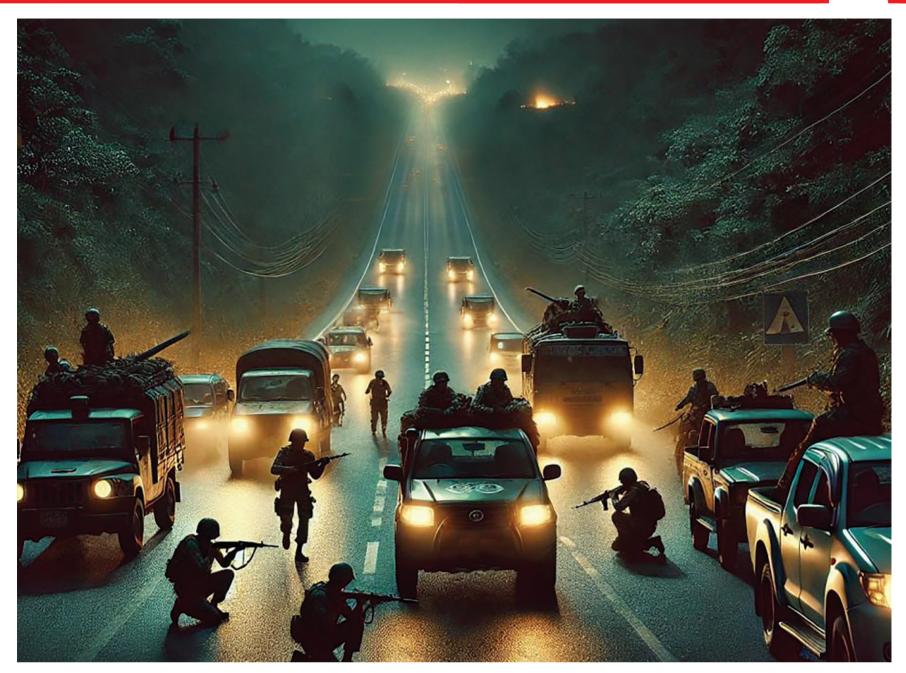
industrial zone within Thar Kay Ta township in Yangon.

"Although the farm has only been recently reopened, we've seen a steady stream of tourists, including some foreigners, to study our reptiles. Our staff provides daily services, including showing visitors the crocodiles, feeding them as part of a charity initiative, and ensuring the safety of all visitors. We tend to see more tourists during holidays. For instance, a Russian tourist visited yesterday. We even have



foreign tourists visiting when the farm is technically closed, so we've ensured everything is prepared for both domestic and international visitors during the tourist season. We welcome everyone to come and see the saltwater crocodiles, especially Crocodylus porosus, which are released into the natural water from hatching," said Myat Khine Mar, Deputy Director in charge of the Crocodile Farm and the Water Quality Inspection and Freshwater Research Branch.

The Thar Kay Ta Crocodile Farm is a popular destination for tourists too. Chinese visitors particularly regard crocodiles as a symbol of good luck. The entrance fee is 5,000 Kyats for foreign visitors, 1,000 Kyats for locals and free for under-five children.



# The Rebels' Swan Song or Tatmadaw Pyrrhic victory?

## Charlie Green

Previously in my article on how to know if the Myanmar military is losing, I stated inter alia that, losing the regional command centres would be a canary in the coal mine. Regrettably it happened and now the rebels and the terrorist forces have significantly more territories under their control than a year ago. I don't want to be a wet blanket to those who are hoping for the Tatmadaw to recover the lost ground. The writing is already on the wall when these regional command centres fell. It surely is a bitter pill to swallow in the history of Tatmadaw. Until the first week of January 2025, Yangon - Nay Pyi Taw expressway seems to be a sanctuary and out of harm's way for civil servants and other travellers plying this route. They neither have to hide their identities nor dress differently. They need not be in fear of being identified as civil servants

and get kidnapped or killed. That all changed on the January 11 when PDF terrorists came up to 110 mile marker, along the highway, trying to do the same thing that they did along Nay Pyi Taw - Mandalay expressway last month. Security forces nearby quickly arrived before they can terrorise and start blackmailing the travellers and civilians.

Things did not end there. On January 14 early morning, another group of terrorists tried the same trick again, attempting the same terroist propaganda show on the freeway near Thar Ga Ya at 170 mile marker. This time security forces were closer and fired the some artillery at the upcoming terror brigade. The terrorists quickly retreated into dense

"Until the first week of January 2025, Yangon - Nay Pyi Taw expressway seems to be a sanctuary and out of harm's way for civil servants and other travellers plying this route."

woods and villages in between.

There is no denying that NNCP terrorists become more emboldened as the fake news media spread numerous successful campaigns by the EAOs and rebel forces, on the northern and western fronts. This salient might be one of the series of rebels' swan songs but unsuccessful it might be, the victory on the Tatmataw side may turn out to be a pyrrhic one eventually.

After these events, even some ministers chickened out and travelled with all this entourage by plane to Yangon, instead of the usual land route.

On the individual front, I would urge people, especially civil servants and media personnel, to be doubly cautious and take extra precautions when travelling along the Yangon - Nay Pyi Taw expressway now. Better be safe than sorry. You will thank me later.



# **News from the Front Lines**

## Charlie Green

## The North

TNLA forces were asking the PDF to get out of their areas of control, despite the latter's contribution during the salient to capture Lashio.

There were talks of agreement reached between Tatmadaw and MNDAA rebels with the help of China, which included the return of Lashio to the central government and withdrawal of MNDAA forces. But the story has not been confirmed by the Myanmar government. As a sign of continuing negotiations, Tatmadaw is still conducting air raids in some cities within the control of MNDAA.

Air attacks are also ongoing in areas controlled by KIA and PDF forces within Kachin territories.

### The East

Tatmadaw is taking an offensive move politically by signing an agreement with Laos to mutually handover those individuals under warrants of arrests issued by respective

The more is targeted at NNCP terrorists and their sympathisens who might be hiding within laos.

#### The South

There were unconfirmed reports that special forces from China have landed in Mae Sot, the border town in Thailand right across the small river from Myawaddy. Chinese government is forced to act, after bad publicity arising out of famous people getting kidnapped and forced to work in the scam city compounds of Myawaddy. The three countries of China, Thailand and Myanmar has also signed an agreement to cooperate on stamping out criminal activities across the border lines.

EAO leaders are now getting scared Saw Chit Thu of BGF, for example, is holding press conferences boast-

"As a sign of continuing negotiations, Tatmadaw is still conducting air raids in some cities within the control of MNDAA."

ing he would not allow illegal activities in Kayin lands, ever though he himself and KNU signed the aggrements with these scam centers in the first place.

Meanwhile, chief of police in Thailand has instructed the police force in Mae Sot to arrest all illegals and send them back to their respective countries. The days of NNCP terrorists operating out of Thailand with impunity, may soon be over.

### The West

After the video of AA (Arakan Army) soldiers mercilessly killing POWs from Tatmadaw came out in social media, AA is forced to admit that some of their soldiers have committed war crimes and they have been punished accordingly. Offensive by AA has slowed down somewhat, after Tatmadaw carried out numerous air assaults on AA controlled areas, storage facalities and encampments.

# Support to be Provided to Internally Displaced People

SG Min Aung Hlaing has unveiled a plan to allocate necessary support from the National Natural Disaster Management Fund to internally displaced people (IDP) due to terrorist attacks while that data are being collected in regions and states, during the meeting of the Union government held on January 17.

According to the definition of "natural disaster" in the Natural Disaster Management Law, the expressions "violence and armed insurgencies" are included, and so arrangements are being made to allocate necessary support from the National Natural Disaster Management Fund.

The temporarily displaced people after the terrorist attacks are the ones who fled their places as the armed insurgents launched terrorist attacks in towns and villages and



invaded these areas unlawfully, and they also include the ones who fled for their safety due to violence and threats of terrorists and terrorist groups.

The data are being collected to provide the needed support in regions and states. All living in temporary camps like monasteries, wards, villages and staff quarters of their relatives, and those living in apartments by renting on their own and other plans are included in the data collection processes.

With so many regions, towns and cities out of control by the administration, and daily escalation of people running away from these areas, the numbers are likely to be substantial and the Fund is unlikely to be sufficient to adequately address the needs of these IDP effectively.

# 10,000+ Online Businesses Apply for Registration



Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Commerce has stated that over 10,000 businesses have applied for online business registration. Nearly 1,300 companies and 9,000+ individual business owners have applied for registration which started from October 2, 2023, till 2 January 2025.

"A legitimate registration of online businesses will enhance accountability and responsibility for both consumers and business owners. Starting from January this year, we have been conducting field inspections to verify the information provided by the applicants. Only businesses that meet the requirements will be issued registration certificates," said an official from the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Online businesses were officially designated as essential services from July 2023, through a notification. It has also been emphasised that businesses operating online without a registration certificate will face action under the Essential Goods and Services Law.

# Tanin Tharyi Region Hosts Nine Hornbill Species

There are over 60 species of hornbill in the world, and 11 of these are found in Myanmar. Out of these 11, nine are home to Tanin Tharvi Region.

The male hornbill measures 27-30 inches in length and the female hornbill is 26-27 inches in length. The hornbill is renowned for its profound display of loyalty and devotion, and they are one of the top endangered species in the world.

The hornbills are widely poached for illegal wildlife trade. Some of the common species are being traded on Facebook pages of Myanmar around \$50 - \$100 per bird. The hornbill population is going downhill every year.

"Myanmar possess 11 species of hornbill out of 60. There are nine species in Tanin Tharyi Region. The Lampi

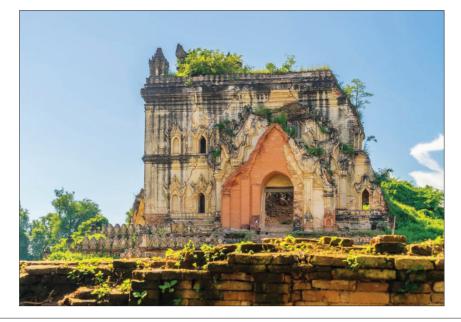
Marine National Park here has unique species like mammal bat and hornbill. Most of the hornbills reside in the mangrove forest. Different countries have different shapes of hornbills. For example, the hornbill in India is grey. The ones in Myanmar have huge long yellow beaks and tails, the chest and wings are black, and the belly and thigh are white. Bird catching including hornbill is prohibited in Lampi Marine National Park," said Kyi Oo, warden of the park. The hornbill lays eggs in the late cold season and early summer, and the eggs hatch after 45 days. During the breeding period, the entrance hole of the nest is covered with food scraps and mud by the male and only a small hole is left for the male to feed the female and her young.



## Inwa Seeks New Preserved Destinations

With the significant increase in tourist arrivals to Inwa, other attractions in the city should be preserved and developed to attract more tourists, said Bo Shate (Ratanapura), a researcher and writer from Inwa. Besides domestic tourists, many foreign tourists are targeting Inwa. Currently, major tourist destinations include Bagaya Monastery, Mei Nu Brick Monastery, Ratanagiri Pagoda, Daw Gyan Pagoda, Wingaba Myintmo Taung Pagodas and Inwa Fort.

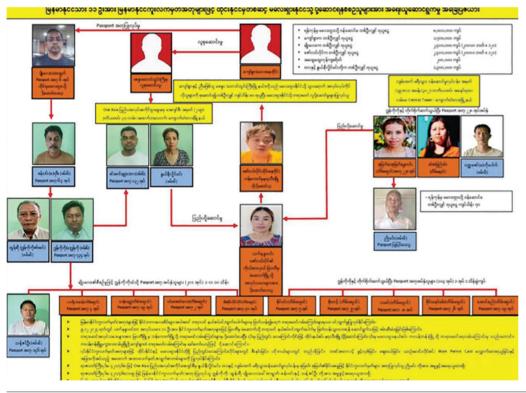
He suggested that roads should be built and ancient sites should be restored to attract more tourists. "We



have seen many foreigners visiting this year. Currently, they are Bagaya Monastery, Mei Nu Brick Monastery, Ratanagiri Pagoda, Daw Gyan Pagoda, Wingaba Myintmo Taung Pagodas and Inwa Fort. In addition, other places should be restored in original forms and developed to attract more tourists," he said.

Inwa was busy with visitors during the Thadingyut, Tazaungdaing, and New Year periods, creating more local income opportunities. Like the Bagan Ancient Cultural Heritage Zone, Inwa locals should be trained to become guides to explain the history of ancient pagodas, he added.

# Suspects Arrested for Using Fake Passports to Send Workers Overseas



Security forces of the Myanmar - Thai Friendship Bridge I in Myawaddy - Mae Sot crossing seized 11 fake Myanmar passports from 11 Myanmar youths, in December 2024.

Investigations found that Managing Director Nwe Ni Hlaing Min and Director Khin Maung Shwe (aka) Bala of One Asia job agency from Kyauk Ta Dar township of Yangon took 8 million Kyats from each nine people out of 11, whereas Managing Director Su Myat (aka) Su Myat Nanda Win from Hlan Htet travel agency from 3rd floor of Central Tower in Kyauktada township took 7 million Kyats each from the remaining two. In exchange the eleven received fake Myanmar passports from these agencies to cross the border into Thailand via Myawaddy.

They also arranged to send them to Malaysia from Thailand through illegal routes. The Myawaddy Myoma police station filed cases against the above owners/directors of these agencies. Police in Yangon has also apprehended the suspects in Yangon. The agencies also admitted to making fake legal residence permit card TR-38 pink cards issued by the Thai government. The creator of fake passports, John Ko, now under arrest, has admitted to making around 750 fake Myanmar passports so far

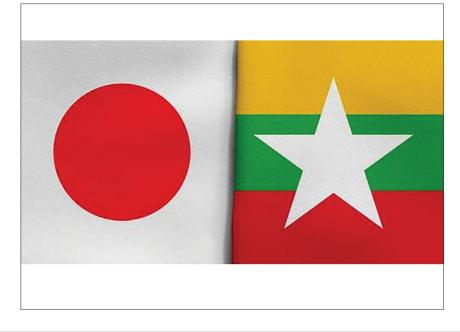
# New Myanmar - Japan Friendship Association

The government has approved the formation of Myanmar-Japan Friendship Association on January 2, 2025. The association applied for a registration permit as a local association to the Union Registration Board some months ago.

The Myanmar - Japan Friendship Association aims to enhance the friendship and socioeconomic ties between Myanmar and Japan. It promotes sector-specific communication based on existing bilateral relations, strengthens bilateral friendship, and fosters cooperation in various supportive projects and programmes initiated by the Japa-

nese government, NGOs, and other organisations in Myanmar.

The Myanmar - Japan Friendship Association is organised aiming to enhance Myanmar - Japan friendship and socioeconomic of two countries, promote the sector-wise communication of people of two countries based on existing bilateral relations, strengthen the bilateral friendship and promote cooperation in comprehensive supportive projects and programmes launched by the Japanese government and NGOs and related organizations in Myanmar.



# Yangon Region Approves 60 investment Projects in 2024



Yangon Region Investment Committee has approved 60 new investment projects for the calendar year 2024, expecting to generate 29,290 job opportunities, according to the committee's report.

Of these 60 approved projects, 17 were funded by Myanmar investors, with a total investment of over 33 billion Kyats, while 43 were foreign-invested projects, amounting to over \$53 million.

# Terrorists Arrested for Shooting Railway Station Administrator

The administrator of the Holm Street Railway Station in Sangyoung Township of Yangon region, got shot by terrorists coming into his office, on December 24 of last year.

After immediate investigation by Security forces, Zaw Zaw Bo (aka) Tun Tun Aung and May Myat Thinzar Kyaw (aka) Nge Nge were arrested in their residence in Insein Township, together with one pistol, five bullets and a Toyota vehicle. Based on the confession of the former suspect, another offender Kyaw Zin Oo (aka) Kyaung Saya, was arrested in Htantabin township of Yangon region, with one Glock pistol, 14 bullets and one grenade on the same day.

Based on the confession of May Myat Thinzar Kyaw, security forces further raided the house of Sai Naung Htet (aka) Argyi in Hlinetha-



ya (East) township on the following day and arrested him together with one pistol, two magazines, some bullets and two smoke bombs.

The offenders confessed that they were members of the Free Land Attack Force (FLA) comprising 15 members, and their leader Nay Myo

Nwe is currently living in Mae Sot of Thailand. They claimed they have been following the latter's instructions and conducted destructive actions accordingly.

Nay Myo Swe ordered them to assassinate the station administrator on December 22. Two days later,

they hired the Toyota car and proceeded to the victim's office and shot him dead.

In addition to the above undertaking, these offenders had also launched grenade attacks at the Tamway electrical manager office on November 23, and another two bomb attacks at the Tamway development administrator office on December 10, both under the instructions of the FLA leader from Mae Sot, Thailand.

The arrested suspects also teamed up with other members of the group to detonate three time bombs at the fence of the power supply office in Insein Park in May 2023, one timer bomb at the fence of Tamway development administrator office in June and three remote mines at CCTV box near Min Dhamma traffic light in Mayangon Township in August of the same year.

# Man Arrested after Bank Robbery in Mandalay

Security forces conducted an investigation following an armed robbery at KBZ Bank branch at Maha Nwe Zin ward of Maha Aung Myay township of Mandalay Region on January 11. An unidentified man arrived at the bank pretending to withdraw money, and started threatening the bank staff after taking his gun out of his pouch. He instructed the staff to put the money into his bag.

Unfortunately, when he got out of the bank, the bank staff and people arrested him together, and he fired the gun. The deputy bank manager of the bank got hit. The crowd immediately overwhelmed the offender Aung Pyae Phyo (aka) Yaung Ni from Amarapura. He was arrested with one homemade pistol and five 9mm bullets. People were probably getting fed up with NNCP terrorists using the pretext of political uprising to extort and rob people and businesses. Hence, their combined citizens' arrest, despite the danger of getting shot.



Police further seized two homemade guns and 18 makeshift weapons at his parents' house in Hman Tan ward of Amarapura on the same day, and 18 bullets and one motorcycle at the house he rented in the same ward.

The offender confessed that he attended the PDF terrorist training in Saigaing township together with his friend Ko Naing Oo (aka) Laung Char (under investigation) in June 2021. He bought the guns and magazines from that friend, supported financial assistance to PDF terrorist groups many times, and robbed the bank to provide funding for the PDF terrorist groups.

## **MAI** Renews IOSA Registration



Myanmar Airways International (MAI) proudly announces the renewal of its IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) registration, reaffirming its commitment to meeting the highest global aviation standards. As an IOSA-registered airline since 2012, this accomplishment highlights MAI's dedication to operational excellence and passenger safety.

The IOSA program is globally recognized for its rigorous evaluation of airline safety. IOSA is a global industry standard for airline operational safety auditing, designed to assess the safety management system, quality assurance, and process management in all operational ar-

eas of an airline. Passing this most difficult audit for any airline is an excellent professional achievement. IATA member airlines must prove their conformance with the high standards of civil aviation every two years; this is a mandatory requirement for membership in the association

"We are honored to achieve this milestone once again," said Kyaw Soe Hla, MAI's Chief Operating Officer (COO). "This is a testament to the tireless efforts of our team and the trust of our passengers, who inspire us to set higher benchmarks every day."

# Launch of Three New Small Development Projects with India's Support

MOUs on the Government of India's support for three new Small Development Projects, with a strong focus on social infrastructure, designed to promote gender empowerment, livelihood-linked skilling initiatives, and support for marginalized sections of society were signed by Government of Myanmar, and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India, Yangon, in Naypyitaw.

Two of these projects involve support for vocational training and classroom infrastructure at Home Science Schools across 10 states and regions in Myanmar. The projects will span across 11 cities, includ-

ing Yangon, Mandalay, Mawlamyine, Taungoo, Myitkyina, Pyapon, Pathein, Ywangan, Sittwe, Hakha, and Dawei. The third project will focus on operating vocational training and providing teaching aids for the rehabilitation of ex-drug addicts in 5 states and regions, including Yangon, Mandalay, Kachin, Shan, and Kayin.

The framework MOU for Indian Grant Assistance for the Implementation of Small Development Projects (SDP) was originally signed on 27 July 2010 and extended twice, in July 2015 and July 2020.



# Nine Arrested for Selling Fake ID Cards and Official Documents



Police has arrested nine offenders involved in making fake citizenship scrutiny or ID cards, labour cards, wards and police recommendation letters in January.

The very first suspect Ma May Thu Khine was arrested in Taunggyi Township on January 8. Other suspects were apprehended on the following days. The nine suspects confessed that Kalar Gyi (aka) Jimmy Thaung (still at large) and Pyay Thein Htike (still at large) created the fake citizenship scrutiny cards, labour cards, ward and police recommendation letters for them, and they communicated Tet Pu (still at large) to sell these cards at 30,000 Kyats per card

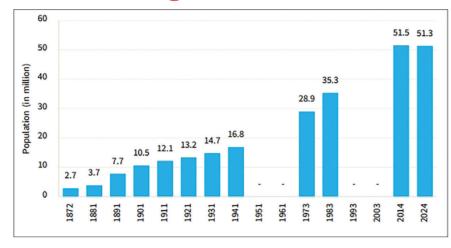
A small transactional price for the dealers but a large price for the nation to pay.

## GOVERNMENT

# **INSIDER**

## **Myanmar Population Shrinking**

Myanmar population is shrinking, according the the latest census conducted in October 2024. Even though 30% of the country has been surveyed in details, amidst constant threats of terrorist attacks on census personnel, the published figures provided a guide to extrapolate the direction of the population growth. The total population of Myanmar as per the 2024 census is announced to be 51.3 million including 32.2 from the census and 19.1 from estimated data. A gender ratio of 46.9% males and 53.1% females were recorded. The most populous region is Yan-



gon with 14.4% of the population, and the least populous region being

the Kayah State with 0.6%. Based on historical census data, Myanmar

population was only 7.7 million in 1891, 10.5 million in 1901, 28.9 million in 1973, 35.3 million in 1983 and 51.5 million in 2014. The government attributed the population decline are due to birth rates, death rates, and migration.

However, if you do take into consideration of Myanmar diaspora overseas, the population among people of Myanmar origin might have increased. Considering Thailand alone, the diaspora is estimated to be between 5 and 10 million.

## **India-Myanmar Business Conclave 2025**

The Embassy of India in Yangon, in association with the India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce (IMCC), organized the India-Myanmar Business Conclave 2025 at the Pan Pacific Hotel, Yangon on January 10, 2025. The event provided an important platform for policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders to connect and engage in fostering closer economic and trade ties between India and Myanmar.

The Conclave served as a platform to understand ongoing bilateral mechanisms and main areas of cooperation and to deliberate on future avenues for mutual collaboration. Discussions centered around major initiatives with the potential



to boost economic and trade cooperation, including the incentivization of the Rupee-Kyat trade settlement mechanism, early conclusion of the Coastal Shipping Agreement, petroleum, energy and power cooperation, and digital payment collaboration, such as the RuPay card and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with Myanmar.

Discussions at the Conclave helped identify key sectors for collabora-

tion, including infrastructure development through projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, as well as opportunities in agriculture, renewable energy, technology, and tourism. These areas hold immense potential for fostering regional growth and connectivity.

Over 300 businesspersons participated, including banking leaders, prominent business groups, and senior office bearers from leading business associations like UMFCCI, Overseas Agro Traders Association, and Myanmar Pulses, Beans, Maize, and Sesame Merchant's Association

## **Customs Dept New Exchange Rate for Tariff Computation Could Cause Higher Inflation**

Customs Department announced that weekly foreign exchange rates used in levying Customs tariffs be set at 3,588 Kyats. The exchange rates for Customs duty computations are now 3,588 Kyats against a \$, 2,637 for the S\$, 105 Kyats for the Thai baht and 492 for yuan, baed on the announcement.

Notification from the Ministry of Planning and Finance stated that the Customs Department will amend the weekly exchange rate as per the online trading rate, instead of the rate based on the reference rate of the CBM, while collecting customs tariffs starting from January 1, 2025. This meant that the base value of imported goods will be increased significantly (~30%) compared to the previous rate at 2,800. The increase would certainly be passed down to the consumers, providing further impetus to the cost push inflationary pressures.





## Microfinance Stats: 174 Companies Serving 3.2M+ Members

Ministry of Planning and Finance reports that 174 companies, comprising domestic, foreign, and joint ventures, are actively operating in the micro finance sector. This includes 53 foreign companies, 112 local companies, and nine joint ventures. Together, these companies operate across all 15 regions and states of Myanmar, providing services to approximately 3.22 million members and disbursing loans amounting to about 2 billion Kyats.

Digital financial services are the primary tools used by these companies for loan disbursement and repayment collection. Based on latest info, the Central Bank and micro finance companies are collaborating to revise the maximum lending and savings limits to reflect current socioeconomic conditions.



## **Myanmar Thanaka Culture for UNESCO Heritage list**



Efforts are being made to put the 'culture of Myanmar's Thanaka' into UNESCO's world intangible cultural heritage list, after successful attempt in adding the traditional Myanmar New Year Atar Thingyan (water festival) last year. Chinese New Year was also included in the heritage list in the same year.

The team from the ministry is making preparations to submit the 'culture of Myanmar's Thanaka' to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO by March 31, 2025.

Although Myanmar has many intangible cultural heritages, none have yet been listed as part of the World Intangible Cultural Heritage List. However, for over a thousand years, using Myanmar's Thanaka (the yellow collar mask like paste that the people adorn on their faces and bodies) as the traditional customs and practices have been passed down through generations. Today, the art of Myanmar's traditional Thanaka remains a significant cultural symbol of the nation and is preserved with care.

## A Popular Archaeological Museum

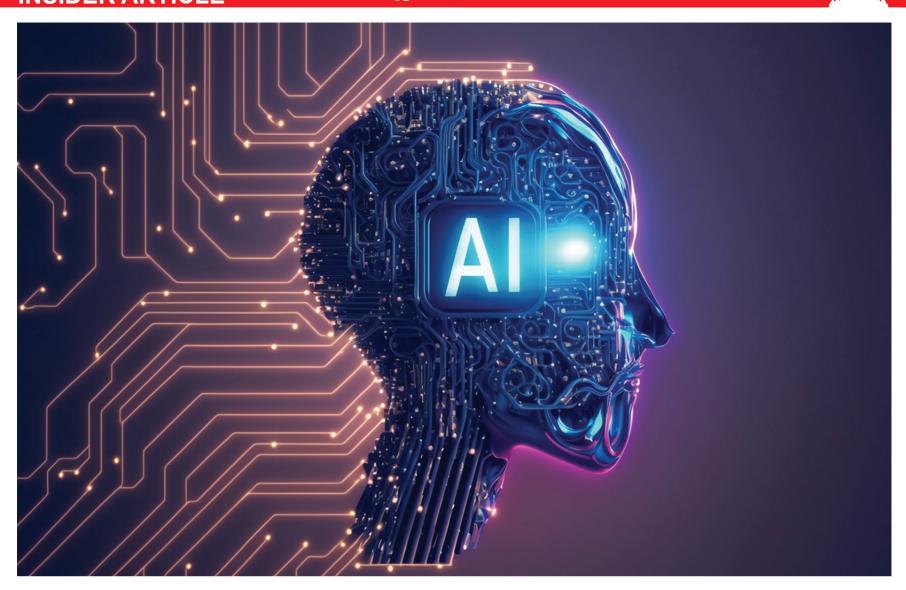
Bagan Archaeological Museum located in Nyaung U Township in Mandalay Region has collected more than 48 million Kyats from the admission of local and foreign tourists in the first nine months of the current financial year, according to the Department of Archaeology and National Museum (Bagan branch) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture.

From April to December of 2024, more than 45,000 domestic and 300 international travellers visited the museum.

"Admission fee is 1,000 Kyats for locals while foreigners pay 10,000 Kyats. The visitor numbers are larger on weekends and usually peaks in December," he said. There is on average 100-200 visitors per day regularly and more on weekends.

Except Monday and public holidays, the museum is open from 09:30 to 16:30 daily and free admission is provided for children under 12 years old, monks and nuns.





# Is Ai Really that Deep?

## Charlie Greene

Deepseek (shēndù qiúsuô - which literally translated as 'depth seek search') is the latest deep learning Ai (Artificial Intelligence) model coming out of China and taking the the Ai world by storm. Headlines included:

- Insane Performance
- Ai Breakthrough
- Deepseek is Insane
- This is scary
- OpenAI (Chat Gpt) replacement
- Next revolution in coding
- Best LLM (Large Language Model)
- Deepseek shocks Ai industry

Deepseek just revolutionise Ai forever among many other positives that Ai experts and reviewers have attributed to the newly appeared open sourced LLM model by a Chinese Ai company.

The Company itself is fully funded by Chinese hedge fund High-flyer. Both Deepseek and High-flyer are stationed in Hangzhou, Zhejiang. The city known as the 'House of Silk' during old times, now houses many of the China and global tech giants. Advanced manufacturing, IT, research, Ai, all happening in this city of 13 million people.

Trump vision of keeping America ahead of China in the Ai world may now be in tatters. Even Eric Schmidt (ex-google CEO) has to revise his statement of last year that China is behind US by at least 2-3 years in the world of Ai. He recently said, after the unveiling of Deepseek, that China did a lot of catchup in the past six months to get to par with the US. Sam Altman, CEO of open Ai, even took a jab at Deepseek, saying, "It is relatively easy to copy something that you know works. It is extremely

difficult to do something new, risky, and difficult when you don't know if it will work".

The bottom line is that Deepseek is performing at par or exceeding the OpenAI at benchmark tests and that's when the pricing comes into play. Deepseek model delivers almost the same performance at around 96% discount. (\$100 vs \$4).

## What is Deepseek R1?

Deepseek R1 model is gunning straight for OpenAI's throne. Imagine getting performance similar to OpenAI's o1 or even the o1 Pro, but for free (or 4%% the cost for the API). Deepseek lets you run R1 on your own machine or the cloud if you prefer. And yes, Deepseek also have an app version.

Unlike o1, which locks researchers out with a black-box approach, R1 offers transparency. It's open-source, meaning developers can study, modify, and even fine-tune it freely under an MIT license. This openness has drawn praise from AI experts, many of whom describe it as the next big thing in AI.

While of Pro costs a steep \$200/month, DeepSeek-R1 provides nearly the same functionality for free—or at an unbelievably low price. This has got a lot of users thinking on whether they should continue or cancel their \$200 OpenAI subscriptions.

## How deep is your learning?

DeepSeek-R1 excels in multiple domains:

Reasoning and Analytics: Matches OpenAI o1 in chemistry, mathematics, and even coding challenges.

To Page - 17

"The bottom line is that Deepseek is performing at par or exceeding the OpenAI at benchmark tests and that's when the pricing comes into play."

### From Page - 16

Efficient and Runs Locally: Deepseek can run smoothly on devices with limited computational power, such as smartphones or personal laptops, thanks to "distilled" versions of the model. Versatility: Runs both locally and on servers, giving users control over their data and processes. This flexibility extends to features like accessing the web, handling complex tasks, and processing uploaded PDFs, which it performs seamlessly.

However, as with most models, it occasionally hallucinates answers to abstract questions. But its ability to execute practical tasks outweighs these quirks. A couple of reviewers did complain about bias in answers generated out of Deepseek too.

#### Value proposition

One of Deepseek R1's most gamechanging aspects is its cost-effectiveness. For example, tasks that cost \$300 on OpenAI o1 can be executed for under \$10 with R1. This affordability has made high-performance AI attainable for smaller businesses, researchers, and developers without significant budgets.

DeepSeek's success is not just about technical breakthroughs but also about overcoming geopolitical challenges. Despite U.S. export restrictions on latest Nvidia advanced AI chips, DeepSeek built R1 efficiently and affordably using older chips. This demonstrates that innovation is not solely dependent on massive



# "This demonstrates that innovation is not solely dependent on massive budgets or cutting-edge hardware."

budgets or cutting-edge hardware. The AI community has taken notice, with users worldwide testing and integrating R1. Developers are using it to create tools like Perplexity AI clones, chat apps for PDF analysis, and browser-based AI solutions—all at remarkably lower costs and faster speeds.

Open AI has introduced o3 mini, a new reasoning model, now available for free. Plus-tier subscribers also benefit from extensive o3 mini usage. However, while Deepseek AI offers unlimited access and o3 mini comes with significant limitations. This still makes OpenAI much more expensive than DeepSeek, which remains essentially free.

The potential applications for Deep-Seek R1 are limitless. DeepSeek is transforming AI from an elite tool into a universal resource—accessible, affordable, and open for everyone. The question isn't whether it will change the game. It already has. In a world where AI seems to be getting more expensive and exclusive, DeepSeek feels like a breath of fresh air. Sure, it's not perfect, but it's close enough to make the big players nervous. And that's saying something. From political perspective, it could be the evidence of China rolling out the concept of 'shared prosperity' globally.

## Let's use it now!

If you haven't checked it out yet, go to chat.deepseek.com to try out the depth of its brain. You can also install the Deepseek app available on the App Store and the Google Play Store. It has the logo of a light blue whale.

# The New Sea and Lake Garden Near Chaung Thar



Visitors are heading to the Sea and Lake Garden near Chaung Thar Beach in Ayeyawady Region, as the new Mangrove View resort opens. The private beach is located within fifteen minutes drive from the famous Chaung Thar beach. The garden offers zipline rides, wall climbing, kayak, boat rides, mangrove exploration and other attractions which no other resorts previously offered.

With much depreciated Kyats and many attractions within the country under conflict zones, the locals are filling the places up hard and fast. "It is very crowded on weekends and holidays. When I went there on Sunday, it was quite crowded", said a person who went to the Sea and Lake Garden.

Chaung Thar beach is more popular among locals due to cheaper prices and easily availability of street food and sea food, compared to the nearby Ngwe Saung beach down South, which serves a more upscale clientele.

# Ga Nun Kyun Mangrove Conservation Forest Designated

in Mon State

The government has officially designated a 9,284-acre area in Tha Ton Township of Mon State, as the Ga Nun Kyun (Crab Island) Mangrove Conservation Forest. This initiative aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of mangrove ecosystems, improve management practices, protect biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of natural disasters like tidal waves and cyclones. The designation also seeks to provide sustainable resources such as fish, crabs, and prawns for local communities. This conservation effort is expected to enhance the ecosystem for aquatic



species, support the socioeconomic development of local communities, stabilise the coastal environment and mitigate climate change impacts. It will also help prevent natural disasters such as soil erosion and

shoreline degradation, reaffirming the vital role of mangroves in maintaining ecological balance.

# Moe Yun Gyi Hosting 30,000 Winter Birds



The migrating winter birds from the North typically arrive in Myanmar from late October to March, to escape their harsh winters via one of the nine different routes. Some years, they stay until April before returning to their breeding grounds.

Approximately 30,000 birds made up of 132 species arrived at the Moe Yun Gyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary in Bago Region between October 2024 and January 2025, based on the estimates of the warden of the sanctuary.

The 25,600-acre Moe Yun Gyi Lake is home to a variety of wintering bird species this year, including the common grebe, blue wagtail, common coot, red-wattled lapwing, grey heron, wild duck, Pacific golden plover, purple swamphen, red jay, river tern, whistling duck, and common curlew. Moe Yun Gyi Wildlife Sanctuary itself is home to 120 species of mammals, 28 species of amphibians and reptiles, 33 types of insects, 77 species of domestic birds, 44 species of fish, and 74 species of aquatic plants.

# 8 Billion Kyats Allocated for Rural Solar Systems

At least the government is fighting its won battle to combat the shortage of electricity, especially in rural areas. In 2024 – 2025 financial year along, solar home systems are being implemented in villages within Shan State (East) and Ayeyawady Region using over 8 billion Kyats budget from the Union Budget Fund, according to the Department of Rural Development.

"For this year, rural electrification projects using solar home systems are being implemented in villages within Shan State (East) and Ayeyawady Region, funded by the Union Budget Fund. Additionally, two villages in Bok Pyin Township, Tanin Tharyi Region, benefitted from projects supported by the Mekong - Lancang Special Fund 2022. Similarly, under the Mekong - Lancang Special Fund 2023, two projects are planned for De Da Ye Township in Ayeyawady Region and Bok Pyin Township in Tanin Tharyi Region," said Myo Myo, Director of the Rural Electrification Division of the Department of Rural Development.



# India-Myanmar Food Festival in February

As part of the "Mekong - Ganges Cooperation" initiative, an India -Myanmar Food Festival will be held at the Secretariat compound along Anaw Yatar Road and Thein Phyu Road in Yangon, in February.

The festival is scheduled to be held from 15:00 to 21:00 on Sunday, February 23 at the Secretariat building. It will be organised collaboratively by the Indian Women's Association in Yangon and the Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs Network, with support from the Embassy of India.

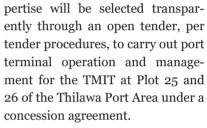


# **Myanmar Port Authority Tender for TMIT**

Myanmar Port Authority has put up advertisements inviting qualified local and international companies to

participate in an open tender for the longterm Operation and Management of Thilawa Multipurpose International Terminal (TMIT).

The most qualified company with solid experience and technical ex-



Interested parties are invited to submit the tender and the applications must be submitted by February 20, at the International Relations and Human Resource Development Department of the Port Authority. Tender forms are available at the same department located on the first floor of 10 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon. Pre-Bid Presentation will be held at the Training Room of the Port Authority.

Individuals can enquire about details through o1 8391272, 01 8391273, 09 5146637, and email tmit.tender@gmail. com and dgmirhr@mpa.gov. mm.



# 15 New Hotel Projects in Tanin Tharyi

Despite lack of secure land routes to reach the southernmost state of Tanin Tharvi, efforts are being made to expand tourism services in specific cities within the region: Dawei for domestic travellers, Myeik for both domestic and Thai tourists, and Kaw Thoung for international visitors.

Tanin Thayi Region Tourism Committee announced the approval of pre-construction permits for 15 hotel projects, along with new licences for 14 hotels and several guesthouses in the region. In addition, the committee is working on developing new tourist routes across the Tanin Thayi Region to expand its appeal. Currently nationwide highway buses are no longer plying the route



between the city of Maw La Myine of Mon State and any of these three cities, due to frequent attacks by NNCP terrorists operating along the motorway. Most of them venture onto the roads in the quietest areas of the 200 miles stretch between the former and the uppermost city of Dawei in the Tanin Tharyi State.

Than Ke from Maw La Myine was one such victim. He has to fork out 150,000 Kyats to the terrorists to let his car go when he was stopped between Than Phyu Za Yat (town of the death railway) and Yay, on a business related trip. He is determined to avoid such ventures in the future to avoid putting his life at risk.

With air fares reaching more than \$200 for one way to any of these three cities in Tanin Tharyi (more expensive than the fare to Bangkok and greater than one month pay for many), it will be donkey's years before ordinary Myanmar citizens can fly into these cities as the government hopes.

# **Assassinations Right in the Middle of Yangon!**

## Nelson Tim

Recently on the Facebook and other social media pages, there appeared a video of a assassination of a pedestrian waiting to cross in the middle of the Kannar Road (aka Strand Road) in Kyi Myint Daing township of Yangon.

At first, the victim crossed one (left) side of the road. He was waiting to cross the other side, but due to traffic, stood on one of the island road dividers, in the middle. At the same time, the video showed a rugged looking, thug-like individual trying to cross the left side, following the footsteps of the victim. The thug was also seen trying hide the weapon with some used polypropylene or polyethylene bag (used for storing rice). The thug did not seem to care about incoming traffic, as a taxi was seen slowing down while he followed quickly to towards the victim. Once he caught up with the target, he shot the victim dead and simply walked away. The victim fell like a



'Once he caught up with the target, he shot the victim dead and simply walked away." stone onto the road, as passing cars watched dumbfounded because of that just happened in front of their very eyes.

Investigations are ongoing and at the time of writing, the government has not announced the identity of victim yet. The streets of Yangon being safe for everyone might be a thing of the past real soon.

# Firmer Foreign Policy for China?

**UAC** 



Based on a recent press conference by given by Wang Yi in December 2024, the foreign policy of China is unlikely to change significantly for the upcoming year of 2025.

At the same time, the summary of his speech highlighted the fact that China will become much firmer especially when dealing with nations or groupings of similar stature; it promises to be a firm force...

- for peace in a world of turbulence and conflicts.
- for unity in the face of division and confrontation.
- for openess in the face of decoupling and severing supply chains
- for justice in the face of counter currents of unilateralism and bullying.
- for inclusiveness in the face of ideological differences.

These principles would continue to serve well for developing countries here in Asia and in Africa, yet it also means that the world would still continue to see a tug of war between the the super powers from the West and China and its allies.

## Livestock Farmers to Receive Insurance Coverage

Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD) stated that livestock farmers can buy insurance to protect financial loss from contagious diseases now, under the Animal Health and Livestock Development Amendment Law. The State Administration Council enacted the Animal Health and Livestock Development Amendment Law on 15 January 2025.

Before the recent amendment, the Law stated that LBVD could provide opinions on damage claims, compensation for asset loss or seeking assistance, triggered by infectious livestock disease in the farms of individuals or institutions. Insurance coverage beyond compensation and damage claims is now added to the amended law.

Those individuals or institutions to establish livestock breeding farms or livestock monitoring camps, those engaged in domestic livestock



producing, processing or selling, livestock breeding, artificial insemination equipment, honey bee breeding, livestock products, genetically modified organisms, feedstuff, veterinary medicine, animal equipment, and those executing slaughterhouse or butcher house business on commercial purposes all fall under the premises of LBVD.



# No need to Worry, HMPV Virus Under Enhanced Surveillance

If you are feeling a sense of déjà vu, you are not alone. Union Health Minister Minister has just said that the public need not worry as surveillance of respiratory diseases caused by the HMPV virus is being stepped up. Although it was not him, the previous Health Minister said the same thing about Covid before the disease came knocking hard.

The minister made the remarks at a coordination meeting in January, on the prevention and control of respiratory diseases common in the cold season. He said, the ministry continues to monitor international and regional disease outbreak information, statements and recommendations from the World Health Organization.

# 'Made in India' First-Ever BMW

BMW India launched the first-ever BMW X1 Long Wheelbase All Electric at the Auto Expo 2025. The car can be booked at BMW dealerships across India from now onwards.

The BMW X1 Long Wheelbase All Electric becomes the first electric vehicle by BMW to be 'Made in India'. Locally produced at BMW Group Plant Chennai, the BMW X1 Long Wheelbase All Electric is avail-

able exclusively in the eDrive20L drivetrain.

Vikram Pawah, President and CEO, BMW Group India said, "Today, BMW has pioneered a disruption in the Indian premium automotive segment by launching the first-ever X1 Long Wheelbase All Electric. It's Big, it's an SUV, it's an EV and it's a BMW!"



# Trump Threatens to Take Control of Panama Canal, Seize Greenland and Make Canada part of the US



Incoming US president Donald Trump on Saturday slammed what he called unfair fees for US ships passing through the Panama Canal and threatened to demand control of the waterway be returned to Washington. He also hinted at China's growing influence around the canal, a worrying trend for American interests as US businesses depend on

the channel to move goods between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The Panama Canal, which was completed by the United States in 1914, was returned to the Central American country under a 1977 deal signed by Democratic president Jimmy Carter. Panama took full control in 1999. Canadians might be relieved to learn that the president-elect would not be sending the military to their sovereign land. Unlike the canal, he said he'd only use economic force to annex the democratic country to the north and make it the 51st state.

Renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America may be a strategy to divert his lack of ideas on executing campaign promises such as reducing groceries prices, but asking Denmark to cede Greenland to the USA may be a bridge too far even for the Greenlanders.

America has elected a president who cares nothing about his own ethics and the opinions of the world. His insistence on measuring everything on financial grounds and cost benefit analysis should allow current Myanmar government to 'carpe diem' for the next couple of years at least.

# Honda & Nissan to Merge

Honda and Nissan Motors have agreed to begin talks on merging under a holding company in 2026, which would create the world's third-largest automaker group, after Toyota and VW groups, to compete with US and Chinese electric vehicle manufacturers.

Honda and Nissan, Japan's second and third-largest automakers by volume, respectively, aim to conclude negotiations in June 2025, while Mitsubishi Motors Corp, Nissan's partner, will decide by the end of next month whether to join the merger, the automakers said. Each company would continue operating under its own brand within the holding company, which would be listed in August 2026. Honda would appoint the president and a majority of the board members at the new company, they said.

Struggling Nissan will push ahead with its restructuring measures before the two automakers conclude their merger talks, the companies said. Speaking at a press conference, Honda President Toshihiro Mibe said the merger aims to split hefty development costs and reduce



production costs by sharing components, especially for Electric Vehicles (EVs), potentially reshaping the global auto industry.

The Japanese automakers have been losing ground to their Chinese counterparts in the global EV market and they both hope that this merger would address some of their shortcomings to compete effectively with the Chinese.

# RCEP, FTAs Key to Attracting FDI to Cambodia

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and its bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) with China, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates are key factors to attracting foreign direct investment to the kingdom, a Cambodia official has said. "These regional and bilateral FTAs are magnets for foreign investors to Cambodia," Ministry of Commerce's Secretary of State and Spokesperson told the Chinese news agency Xinhua. "New investment will bring new capital, technologies and employment opportunities for our people.'

According to the January report from the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC), the country's foreign investments last year came from China, Vietnam, Singapore, the Cayman Islands, Malaysia, Japan, the United States, Thailand, Samoa, India, South Korea, Canada, Seychelles, the United Kingdom, Myanmar, Australia, Senegal, Russia and the Netherlands.



A total of 414 investment projects were approved last year, focusing mainly on agriculture and agroindustry sectors, infrastructure, manufacturing, and tourism, the report said, adding that those projects were expected to generate nearly 320,000 jobs.



# Sri Lanka to Establish International Gem, Jewellery Centre

Sri Lanka plans to establish an international gem and jewellery centre to enhance the global recognition of the country's gem and jewellery industry, the state media reported in January. Chairman of the National Gem and Jewellery Authority, was quoted as saying that the centre will feature comprehensive facilities, including gem and jewellery showrooms, gem museums, laboratory services for quality testing, freight transport services, and a hub for export-related activities.

Official data shows that Sri Lanka's gem and jewellery sector currently generates approximately \$ 400 million annually. Earlier this month, the President's Media Division (PMD) announced the government's goal to develop the sector further, aiming to exceed \$1 billion in gem and jewellery exports.

A move that Myanmar should emulate; a country that definitely produces most gems in South East Asia is resigned to giving such centre of world stature to neighbouring Thailand, where Bangkok holds on its own in the world trade of precious stones.

# Sri Lanka Tourism Income Soars over 53%

Sri Lanka earned approximately \$3.17 billion from tourism in 2024, latest statistics from the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) shows. This is a 53.2% increase compared to tourism earnings from the previous year. The data also showed that over two million tourists visited Sri Lanka in 2024, up 38.1% compared to 2023.

The Sri Lankan government is targeting \$5 billion in tourism revenue in 2025 by attracting 3 million tourists, tourism officials recently said.



# Pope Warns About AI, Fake News and 'Manipulating Minds'



We have more or less realised by now the dangers of fake news on social media after seeing how Myanmar have fallen back into the dark ages through spreading of lies and terrorist agenda via Facebook. Now even the Pope is joining the fight.

Pope Francis warned in the New Year address of the dangers of misinformation and its spread via social media and artificial intelligence (AI), cautioning it could be "misused to manipulate minds". In his traditional address to diplomats at the Vatican, the Pope lamented the increasing emphasised number of society, "aggravated by the continuous creation and spread of fake news, which not only distorts facts but also perceptions".

"This phenomenon generates false images of reality, a climate of suspicion that foments hate, undermines people's sense of security and compromises civil coexistence and the stability of entire nations," the 88-year-old pontiff said.

Pope Francis regularly rails against fake news. But his comments come two days after tech giant Meta — which owns Facebook — announced it was ending its third-party fact-checking programme in the United States, possibly to kowtow to Donald Trump and instead, adopting a crowd-sourced model to police misinformation similar to that of the Elon Musk-owned X.

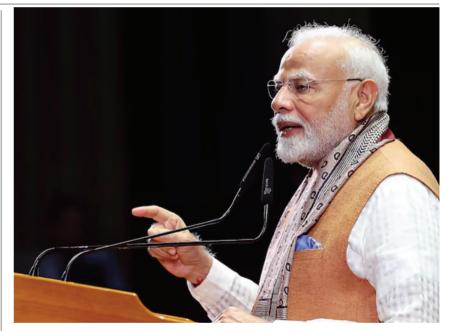
# World's Oldest Person Dies

Tomiko Itooka, a 116-year-old Japanese woman recognised as the world's oldest person, has died of old age, an official of the western Japan city of Ashiya where she lived said. Born on May 23, 1908 in Osaka as the eldest of three siblings, Itooka died Sunday night at the nursing home where she resided, the city government in Hyogo Prefecture said. Itooka became the oldest living person in Japan in De-

cember 2023 following the death of Fusa Tatsumi, a 116-year-old Japanese woman in Kashiwara, Osaka Prefecture.

She was subsequently recognised as the world's oldest living person by Guinness World Records in September 2024, following the death of the previous holder, Maria Branyas Morera, a 117-year-old from Olot, Catalonia, Spain.





# India Implements New Subscription Scheme

One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme was implemented in India on January to provide students and researchers from government-run higher education institutions and research and development centres with access to international scholarly journals.

"The goal is to ensure that India's academic and research communities are equipped with the best global resources, fostering innovation and enhancing the quality of research across disciplines," said an official statement issued by the Ministry of Education. The scheme

envisioned India's emergence as a leading global power driven by cutting-edge research, technological advancement, and self-sustained progress. "Through such initiatives, India is preparing to build on its rich legacy of knowledge, positioning itself at the forefront of global innovation and discovery," added the statement. The scheme would provide access to more than 13,000 scholarly journals from 30 major international publishers. It would benefit nearly 18 million students, faculty, and researchers.

# Ho Chi Minh City Celebrates First Metro

## Nori Lynn

Thailand has BTS, Malaysia has MRT, LRT and monorail, Indonesia got MRT; just to name a few of upcoming ASEAN nations with mass rapid capital train systems. Now is the time for the 'S Shaped' country to show it can keep up with the Jones.

Thousands of selfie-taking Ho Chi Minh City residents crammed into train carriages during the year end as the traffic-clogged business hub celebrated the opening of its first-ever metro line after years of delays. Huge queues spilled out of every station along the \$1.7 billion line that runs almost 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the city centre.

Vietnamese are all proud of their country more than ever; "I know it (the project) is late, but I still feel so very honoured and proud to be among the first on this metro," said one office worker. "Our city is now on par with the other big cities of the world," said another resident.

It took 17 years for Vietnam's commercial capital to reach this point. The project, funded largely by Japanese government loans, was first approved in 2007 and slated to cost just \$668 million. When construction began in 2012, authorities promised the line would be up and running in just five years.



# World's Longest Expressway Tunnel through Challenging Mountains

Tianshan Shengli Tunnel, the world's longest expressway tunnel, completed tunnelling in January, paving the way for the opening of a new shortcut linking southern and northern parts of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The 22+ km tunnel will reduce the driving duration across the middle section of the Tianshan Mountains from several hours to just about 20 minutes once the tunnel becomes operational.

It is a key project of the Urumqi - Yuli Expressway, which runs from the provincial capital of Urumqi in northern Xinjiang to Yuli County in the South. The expressway is expected to be fully completed and open to traffic in 2025. The total driving time between the two locations will be reduced from about seven hours to just over three hours. A truck driver from Urumqi who makes regular trips between the north and south of the Tianshan

Mountains, said the winding mountain roads would often freeze in the winter, and many trucks carrying coal, agricultural produce and livestock products would be stranded on the way across. "There will be no need to worry about such situations anymore when the tunnel opens next year," he said.

The construction of the tunnel began in April 2020 and has faced challenges such as extreme cold, high altitudes, high ground stress,

strong seismic activity and strict environmental requirements, according an engineer on the project.

Tianshan Mountains are known as a "geological museum", featuring numerous fault zones, 16 of which the tunnel passes through. Its No 2 ventilation shaft reaches a depth of 706 metres — taller than China's highest building, the Shanghai Tower. To address the immense challenges, the builders broke down the construction into smaller, more manageable segments, allowing for faster excavation. As a result, the original construction time was shortened by more than 25%, probably unheard of in the history of building highways or tunnels.

To minimise the environmental impact on the Tianshan No 1 Glacier and snow leopard habitats, on-site facilities were established to contain wastewater and fully utilize gravel, helping the project meet key environmental protection goals.

(Source: Xinhua)



## Thai PM Declares Her Assets

Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra declared more than \$400 million in assets, her party said, including more than 200 designer handbags worth over \$2 million and at least 75 luxury watches, valued at almost \$5 million.

The youngest daughter of telecom billionaire and ex-prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, Paetongtarn took office in September as the fourth member of the clan to lead a Thai government in 20 years.

She was obliged to declare her assets and liabilities to the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). She identified 13.8 billion baht (\$400 million) in assets, a document posted on media websites showed. Her investments were worth 11 billion baht and she had another billion baht in deposits and cash, her declaration said.

Her other assets included 75 watches valued at 162 million baht and 39 more timepieces, plus 217 handbags worth 76 million baht, as well as property in London and Japan, among other holdings.



She also declared liabilities of nearly five billion baht, according to the NACC document posted by local media, giving her a net worth of 8.9 billion baht (\$258 million). Thailand has lead the way in ASE-AN in terms of transparency of disclosure of assets of top politicians.

Don't expect to see it in Myanmar during our lifetime.

# Bitcoin May Smash New Record Highs in Anticipation of **Trump Policies**

Year 2024 became a real turning point for Bitcoin. Donald Trump's

election victory and his promises to make the US the "crypto capital" of with several other factors driving

the world have sent Bitcoin soaring,

the bullish streak.

in December. It is currently trading at approximately \$94,282, but under an optimistic scenario, Bitcoin could reach upwards of \$120,000 in Q1 2025, crypto experts predicted. crypto-friendly Trump's US presidential election win on November 5, there has been anticipation of a further favourable environment for Bitcoin. Total as-

Bitcoin's price is primed for new record highs after topping \$107,780

sets in Bitcoin exchange traded funds (ETFs) reached around \$113 billion in December driven by postelection tailwinds, according to Bloomberg analysis.

Trump's pick of digital-asset supporter Paul Atkins as his new Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) chair in early December lifted Bitcoin to \$100,000 for the first time. The token trended higher for most of 2024 after the launch of several US spot Bitcoin ETFs in January. This allowed trading on traditional market exchanges rather than cryptocurrency exchanges.



# 2.1+ Million Professionals in High-End Industries

The future is looking bright for China. Sectors such as pharmaceuticals and health, green energy and environmental protection, and smart city technologies are witnessing the most substantial growth. And a newly released report shows that talent resources in Beijing alone, have steadily grown in recent years, with the number of professionals in high-end industries reaching 2.1 million as of 2023, accounting for 26.2% of the capital's total talent pool.

2023 Beijing talent resource report, jointly released by the Beijing mu-



nicipal human resources research center and the Beijing Institute of Talent Development Strategy, mentioned that the supply of skilled talent in Beijing's high-tech industries is rapidly growing, with the pharmaceutical, healthcare, green energy, environmental protection and smart city sectors seeing the highest increases. Demand for talent is rising in four key industries: blockchain, green energy and environmental protection, pharmaceuticals and health, and smart manufacturing and equipment, the report also stated.

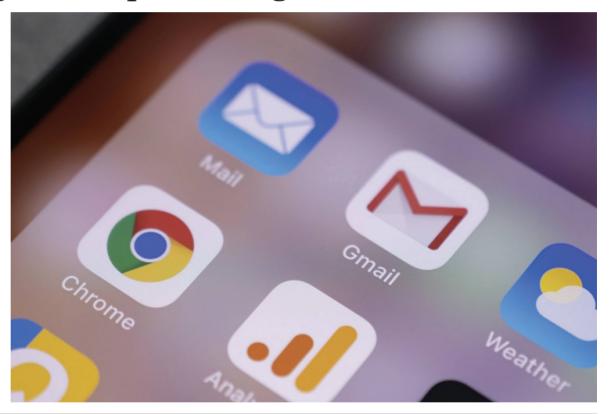
# Japan Orders Google to Stop Violating Antitrust law

Japan's competition watchdog plans to order US IT giant Google to halt violations of the country's antitrust law. The watchdog suspects that Google has unfairly pressured smartphone manufacturers to pre-install its search app.

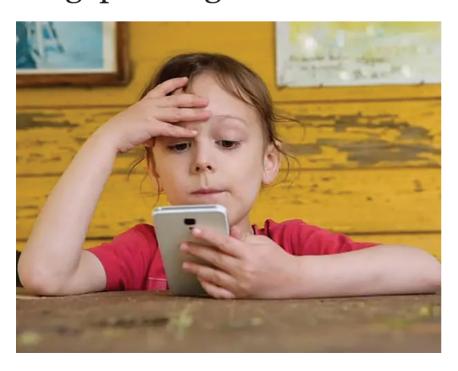
The Japan Fair Trade Commission determined that Google, which holds a dominant share of the online search market, has unfairly hindered competition. The watchdog has already notified the company of possible disciplinary measures and will decide on them after hearing its response, it said.

Google allegedly requires smartphone manufacturers using its Android operating system to pre-install Google apps, including the Chrome browser, as a condition for offering the Google Play Store.

Such monopolistic and dominant behaviour is also commonplace in many developing countries within ASEAN too. And unlike Japan, these countries do not have resources or power to ask the big tech companies to play fair in their markets too.



# Singapore Tightens Screen Time for Children

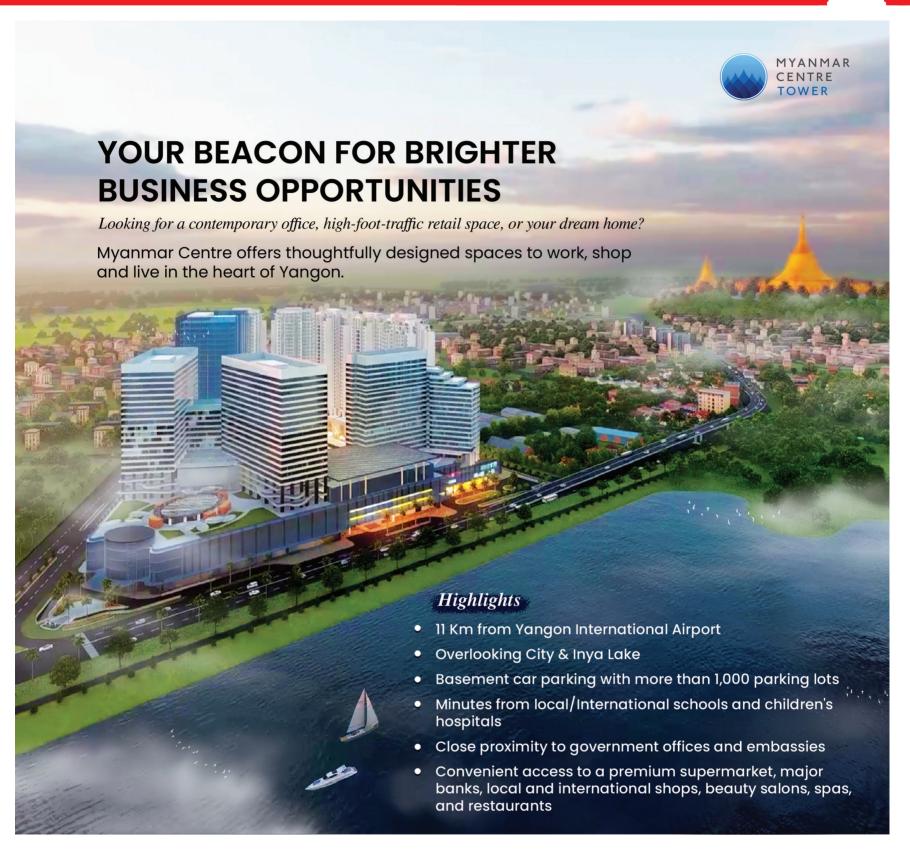


Countries are taking action in acknowledgment of dangers of social media especially on youth. After last month action by Australia, Singapore followed suit to introduce stricter measures to regulate screen use among children in schools and preschools as part of a broader multi-ministry health initiative.

From February 1, preschools will enforce updated rules banning screen use for children under 18 months and limiting it to teaching and learning purposes for those aged 18 months to six years, according to a joint statement by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Social and Family Development. Educators will also

be guided to prioritise "meaningful experiences" over sedentary activities such as prolonged screen time and sitting.

Primary and secondary schools have implemented similar measures, requiring students to store their phones in designated areas during lessons and restricting device use to specific times and locations, such as during recess or after school. The Ministry of Health has also revised its recommendations for parents, advising less than one hour of screen time per day for children aged three to six and less than two hours for those aged seven to 12, excluding schoolwork.









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