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State Counsellor attends prize-presentation of 9th Yangon Photo Night-2017

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi graced the prize-presentation ceremony of the 9th Yangon Photo Night 2017 at the French Cultural Institute in Yangon yesterday.

The ceremony was organized by the Yangon French Cultural Institute and the French Embassy on Pyay Road here at 6 pm yesterday.

In his opening address, Director of the French Cultural Institute Mr. Charles Bonhomme honoured Myanmar photographers for depiction of the ethnic peoples and the freedom of expression at the show which was visited by 1.5 million people around the world. Mr. Bonhomme also expressed his pleasure for being able to organize the show at Maha Bandoola Park in downtown Yangon for the first time.

The State Counsellor in her address said she had visited the Yangon Photo Night for six years in a row and found it ever interesting and new. She said the photo exhibition was a showcase of the gradual progress of young Myanmar photographers most of whom became masters in this profession through this competition. Initially they were not real photographers, she noted, adding, the important part of the competition was the cre-

ative ideas and views of Myanmar youths who had high potentials. She then thanked the Cultural Institute of the French Embassy for organizing the show and for encouraging the artistic skills of Myanmar citizens with high regard and trust. Encouraging the art in reality was supporting a world-wide interesting subject, she noted.

She also expressed that the country welcomed any event which would bring about understanding and peace between human beings, diverse cultures, and diverse viewpoints as conflicts cannot be solved without understanding.

Following her address, the presentation ceremony continued.

The State Counsellor presented the first prize to Khun Latt, who won the first prize in the professional category, with his "The Forgotten War".

The Yangon Photo Night 2017 was divided into the amateur and professional categories, selecting 15 best photos among 80 photo-stories.

The best 2016-2017 Myanmar photo-stories were selected by a panel of judges who were expert photographers with years of international experience. —*Myanmar News Agency*



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivering an address at the prize-presentation ceremony of the 9th Yangon Photo Night 2017 which depicts the ethnic peoples and the freedom of expression. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

Voices from UPDJC working committees

THE Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee-UPDJC held its working committee meetings at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Nay Pyi Taw for four days from 8 to 10 March.

The UPDJC Secretariat reviewed the four-day meeting yesterday morning in which the voices of some of the participants have been presented below as follows:

U Hla Maung Shwe (member

of the UPDJC Secretariat):

The main part of the review meeting is how we are going to compile the facts that the work committee has produced and how we are going to present them to the

UPDJC. Furthermore, we touched upon the preparatory works for the upcoming Peace Conference.

He continued to say that the meetings between the working committee and the Secretariat would continue before the start of the Conference. Although the delegates of the four-day work committee meeting were new participants they were all active and energetic, he pointed out. "I found the meeting results becoming smoother and more appropriate thanks to the daily dialogues of the Secretariat," he said.

Dr Salai Hlyan Hmone Sar Khaung: We reviewed the plans that our working committees discussed at the Union Peace Conference. When we carried out the plans on the ground, we have found that some were in conformity with our plans and some were

not. We reviewed them at the meetings.

Based on the experiences at the meetings, we will make preparation for discussions in detail with full facts and figures in next meetings.

Besides, we should also include the sector-wise experts in the discussion.

In my view, papers which came out from the national-level political dialogues are very good and include voices of the people. The voice of the people plays an important role in making peace.

Sai Kyaw Nyunt (Member of the Joint Committee's Secretariat): Thanks to the working committees, we could get ideas for the next meetings. We hope that discussion in the next meetings will be easier.—*Mi Mi Pyo and Aye Aye Thant (Myanmar News Agency)*



Sai Kyaw Nyunt.
PHOTO: KYAW ZIN HTIKE



Dr Salai Hlyan Hmone Sar Khaung.
PHOTO: KYAW ZIN HTIKE



U Hla Maung Shwe.
PHOTO: KYAW ZIN HTIKE

Arms and ammunition grabbed from border police guards in Maungtaw Township

WHEN police took five people to their outpost in at Aungzan village in Maungtaw Township for questioning, they attacked and wrestled the police members and got away with three guns and some ammunition.

Acting on information provided by a villager that illegal goods were carried by five motorcycles yesterday evening at Aung-

zan village in Area No 2 of the township, police members led by Aungza outpost commander went there for inspection. When they found the five motorcyclists the police took them to their outpost, and when searched police found beer cans, circuit chips and remote controls in their possession.

While police were questioning the five suspects, they wres-

tled the five police members, took away with them two unloaded BA94s and one BA63 together with a magazine containing 15 rounds, and fled towards border milepost 43.

Border police guards are in hot pursuit of the gun grabbers and the Bangladesh border guard force has been informed about the case. — MNA

OSWSCs to be opened in Yangon and Mandalay

ONE Stop Women's Support Centres (OSWSC) have been planned for the Yangon and Mandalay region, said Dr. Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs and The Ministry of Health and Sports have planned to open the OSWSCs in Yangon and Mandalay region with an aim of providing services and shelter for the women victims who are suffering from domestic violence," said Dr. Win Myat Aye on Wednesday at the International Women's Day event in Nay Pyi Taw.

"Young rape cases are oc-

curing more and more across the country. Children are not safe to stay in their community. Currently, the social welfare department is preparing to draw up an action plan to reduce the young rape cases," she added.

A case is classified as young rape if the victim is under 16 years of age.

The action plan has two parts: prevention and response. A help line was established in November 2016 through which people can inform authorities of rape-related crimes round the clock by calling 067-404222/067404999.

There were 71 rape complaints from the help line be-

tween the opening date and 10 February, 2017.

The help line solved 40 cases of young-rape and 30 cases of domestic violence.

Although the government is taking measures to eliminate cases of violence against women, there are still some weaknesses in the system.

Rape cases are on the increase across the country. Police statistics show that 682 cases of rape occurred in 2015, including over 230 cases of young-rape, while there were 761 cases of rape from January to October 2016, including over 380 cases of young-rape.—Myitmakha News Agency

New rubber factories to be built in Mon State this year

WITH the aid of the Swiss Agency for Development and Corporation, new rubber factories will be developed in Mon State within this year, according to Mon State and Producers Association. Rubber Planters

To produce high-quality rubber products, the two factories are planned to be constructed in Paung and Kyaikmayaw townships. The Swiss agency pledged to provide both technical and financial assistance for the project.

"We plan to implement the pilot project during this year and cannot tell the target end date of the project," said U Thet Oo, central executive member of the association.

Between 3,000 and 10,000 tonnes of rubber, especially RSS3 rubber, are set to be produced from the two new plants, with developers planning to build similar factories in other townships.

Plans are underway to invite rubber planters and manufacturers to invest in the project.

Roughly 90 per cent of rub-

ber manufacturers in Myanmar are rubber planters who are still facing technological and financial challenges to produce high-quality products to penetrate global markets.

"The industry has some weaknesses. Currently, local planters continue to produce rubber using traditional methods," said U Than Lwin, one of rubber planters in Innadagaw

Township.

The vast majority of Myanmar's rubber goes to China through cross-border trade stations, while other countries import a different class of rubber by sea.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, Japan and India have made an offer to purchase Myanmar's rubber.—Myitmakha News Agency



The latex of the rubber tree is the main source of natural rubber. PHOTO: REUTERS

Eight Bengali were captured on illegal boat invading on Myanmar Water

WHILE Myanmar Navy boat were patrolling on the Myanmar Sea Territory, eight Bengalis were captured on March 9 on a suspected boat.

During the Navy patrol boat patrolling in 15 mile north-west of Mayyu island on Myanmar Sea Territory, a suspected boat was found. The boat drove away while

being asked to be inspected. The Navy patrol boat followed and captured the boat with eight fisherman in it. They are from in Takene town including Bangladesh National Jamar Husaung, 27.

Under the Myanmar Immigration Law, the eight Bengali were filed in lawsuit.—Myanmar New Agency



Eight Bengalis captured on illegal boat on Myanmar Sea Territory are seen. PHOTO: MNA

Crime NEWS

Mini bus caught fire on Yangon-Mandalay Expressway

A mini bus was being fired on yesterday evening at 11 pm between 80/2 milepost and 80/3 milepost on the Yangon-Mandalay High Way, according to the High Way Police Station.

A pilgrim vehicle, Hyundai mini bus drives by Thiha Aung Zaw from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw was on fire caused by

wire erosion. The vehicle was completely burnt though, 23 passengers on board were not injured.

The driver was filed a suit by the MyoChanung High Way Police Station under the criminal law's act 279/285 for vehicle (Pa) 12/17.—Than Oo (Laymyathnar)



Car caught by fire is seen. PHOTO: HIGHWAY POLICE

Heroin and Yaba seized

A combined team comprising Namhkam Myoma police seized heroin and Yaba from a motorbike on the Shweli bridge, Namhkam township on Friday, according to the Namhkam police station.

Acting on a tip-off, the combined team stopped to search the motorbike driven by Kyein Sone Chi and seized heroin weighing 224 grams and 9,750 Yaba tablets. On the same day, a combined team comprising officers and staff from Mandalay anti-narcotic police unit 17 searched a house of Nyunt Lwin between Yuzana and Inkyin road, Thuka Mingalar ward 2, Patheingyi township and found 4,400 Yaba tablets and ice weighing 15 grams.

Similarly, a combined team comprising officers and staff from Lashilo anti-narcotic police unit 24 searched a motorbike driven by Ma Nankham Aye with Ma Namkham Yun onboard and seized heroin weighing 30 grams and 2,145 Yaba tablets near oriental toll gate, Nawngkhio township. A combined team comprising officers and staff from Pin Laung unit 26 seized 1,620 Yaba tablets from a motorbike driven by Maung Oo near Htee Ga Naing Ywarhit, Naung Tayar town.

Police have filed charges against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force



Buddhist devotees participate in Tabaung Festival at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday, donating provisions to 177 Buddhist monks and 27 Buddhist nuns. The festival will end today at the pagoda, with a ceremony to share merits gained. PHOTO: KO CHIT

A meeting for UPDJC secretary's group held

A meeting of UPDJC's joint committee secretary group to make a future plan and to analyze the negotiation results of Union Peace dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) was held yesterday at National Reconciliation and Peace Center in Nay Pyi Taw.

Member of secretary U

Khin Zaw Oo, Dr Hlyan Hmon Sar khaung, Sai Kyaw Nyunt, U Zaw Htay, U Sai La, U Nang Ngan Lin, U Hla Maung Shwe, Daw Saw Mra Yarzar Lin, Min Kyaw Zayar Oo, Major General Soe Naing, U Myo Win, U Tar Hla Pe, U Aung Soe, U Khun Myint Htun and U

Myint Soe were present at the meeting.

During the meeting, the members discussed about the meetings of working committee, preparation for Union Peace Conference, office tasks of UPDJC and general issues.—*Thurazaw, Phyohtant(MNA)*



UPDJC secretary's group hold its meeting at National Reconciliation and Peace Center in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Bago river water deemed unsafe

BAGO river water is not safe to use because of human waste that is being dumped, according to the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), said the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation under the Bago region government.

NIVA conducted water quality research and water resources maintenance in the last week of February in the Bago River jointly with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation and the Ministry of

Transport and Communications. Bago river water was determined to be of the worst quality because of waste disposal into the river.

"NIVA group has conducted tests in the last week of February. Bago river water resources are becoming dingy because the local people are building toilets beside the river and disposing the waste into the river.

But authorities will implement cleaning tasks in March," said U Kyaw Min Zan, Bago Regional Minister for Resources and Environmental Conservation.

The 264-km-long Bago Riv-

er flows into the Yangon River. In the river valley region, there are three colours rating water resources: green for the best condition, yellow for slightly serious condition and red for the worst condition.

"Bago River falls into the red category, according to NIVA. We have planned to clean the river to make it green with the participation of the local people," said U Kyaw Min Zan.

Also, the regional minister has already demanded a budget allocation to build a retaining wall for the river.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

More job seekers eye logistics and distribution sector this year

MORE job hunters are eyeing the country's logistics and distribution sector this year than last year, with 10.7 per cent of job finders expressing a desire to join this sector, according to work.com.mm, a popular job website that connects jobseekers with employers online.

Since 2014, Euro Monitor International, the world leader in strategy research for consumer markets, predicted that the logistics and distribution sector in Myanmar will boom in the country as well as in the Asia-Pacific region.

The sector is still facing a shortage of skilled workers, although those types of workers are in high demand in the labour market, an expert said.

In February, more than 28,000 applicants were searching for new jobs through the website.

They are trying to get new employment opportunities in different sectors. The majority of applicants wish to join the accounting and finance sector, engineering, sales and marketing, telecommunication services and import/export trading. According to work.com.mm, Yangon, Mandalay, Ngapali, Nay Pyi Taw and Ayeyawady are the locations with the most vacancies.

Capital Diamond Star Group, the Banyan Restaurant, Ooredoo Myanmar, DKSH (Myanmar) Ltd and Max Myanmar Holding Co Ltd are the top companies offering the most jobs.—*Khine Khant*

Curfew imposed in Laukkai and Kongyan

THE Curfew order covering from 9 pm to 6 am is imposed in Laukkai and Kongyan starting on March 10.

The responsible persons were making announcement in loudspeaker in the townships.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Vehicles inspected in Haka for safe travel

A combined team from the departments concerned checked the passenger vehicles at all private bus line gate near Wamathumaung sports ground and state governments office on 10 March with an aim to ensure safe to travel, it is learnt.

A combined team comprising the heads of the state Road Transport Administration Department, business license and transport supervisory department, Haka township police

commander and the police major from traffic police checked whether the vehicle drivers are holding the licenses or not, the drivers, conductors are consuming the alcohol or not and the buses are strong enough to run.

The combined team has also conducted awareness training courses for the drivers and bus conductors including travelers to wear the seat belts.—*Haka district IPRD*



Members of combined team check the passenger vehicle in Haka. PHOTO: HAKA DISTRICT IPRD

Sessions asks 46 Obama-era US attorneys to resign

WASHINGTON — US Attorney General Jeff Sessions abruptly asked the remaining 46 chief federal prosecutors left over from the Obama administration to resign on Friday, including Manhattan US Attorney Preet Bharara, who had been asked to stay on in November by then President-elect Donald Trump.

Although US attorneys are political appointees, and the request from Trump's Justice Department is part of a routine process, the move came as a surprise. Not every new administration replaces all US attorneys at once.

A Justice Department spokeswoman confirmed the resignation requests included Bharara, whose office handles some of the most critical business and criminal cases passing through the federal judicial system.

Bharara met with Trump in Trump Tower on 30 November. After, Bharara told reporters the two had a "good meeting" and he had agreed to stay on.

On Friday, Bharara was unsure where he stood because he did not know if the person who contacted him about resigning was aware that Trump had asked him to remain in office, according to a source familiar with the matter.

It was not immediately clear if all resignations would ultimately be accepted.

A Justice Department spokesman said on Friday Trump had called Dana Boente, acting US deputy attorney general, to decline his resignation.

Trump also called Maryland US Attorney Rod Rosenstein, his pick to take over as deputy attorney general, to keep him in his post, the spokesman said.

Bharara, appointed by Democratic President Barack Obama in 2009, has pursued an aggressive push against corruption in state and city politics and is known for his prosecution of white-collar criminal cases. He



US Attorney General Jeff Sessions in Washington, US on 6 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

also has been overseeing a federal probe into New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio's fundraising.

In November, he announced charges against two defendants in connection with what he called a multimillion-dollar fraud and kickback scheme at Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc. He has also brought dozens of successful cases against insider traders, including a \$1.8 billion settlement and plea deal in 2013 with hedge fund SAC Capital Advisors LP.

His office has secured settlements with companies including General Motors Co and JPMorgan Chase & Co; won several convictions and guilty pleas of former employees of Ponzi scheme operator Bernard Madoff; and prosecuted Suleiman Abu Ghaith, a son-in-law of the late al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Bharara's priorities have often matched those set by Obama's Justice Department, which potentially puts him at odds with the Trump administration.

Amid an increase in civil rights investigations nationally,

for example, Bharara's office joined a lawsuit that led to a settlement in 2015 aimed at reducing violence in New York City's Rikers Island jail complex.

US Senator Chuck Schumer, a Democrat, said in a statement that he was "troubled" to learn of the requests for resignations, "particularly that of Preet Bharara."

As Schumer's chief counsel, Bharara helped lead the investigation of the dismissals of US attorneys in 2006 during the George W. Bush administration.

Robert Capers, US Attorney in Brooklyn, issued a statement saying he had been asked to resign. He said Bridget Rohde, the chief assistant US attorney in that office, would take over his role in an acting capacity.

The Justice Department said on Friday: "Until the new US attorneys are confirmed, the dedicated career prosecutors in our US attorney's offices will continue the great work of the department in investigating, prosecuting, and deterring the most violent offenders." —Reuters

Assad says yet to see real steps on Islamic State by Trump, US forces "invaders"

BEIRUT — Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said he had yet to see "anything concrete" from US President Donald Trump over his vow to defeat Islamic State and called US forces in Syria "invaders" because they were there without government permission.

Assad, in an interview with Chinese TV station Phoenix, said "in theory" he still saw scope for cooperation with Trump though practically nothing had happened in this regard.

Assad said Trump's campaign pledge to prioritise the de-

feat of Islamic State had been "a promising approach" but added: "We haven't seen anything concrete yet regarding this rhetoric."

Assad dismissed the US-backed military campaign against Islamic State in Syria as "only a few raids" he said had been conducted locally. "We have hopes that this administration ... is going to implement what we have heard," he added.

Asked about a deployment of US forces near the northern city of Manbij, Assad said: "Any foreign troops coming to Syria without our invitation ...

are invaders."

"We don't think this is going to help".

The US-led coalition has been attacking Islamic State in Syria for more than two years. It is currently backing a campaign by Syrian militia allies to encircle and ultimately capture Raqqa, Islamic State's base of operations in Syria.

Assad noted that the Russian-backed Syrian army was now "very close" to Raqqa city after advancing to the western banks of the Euphrates River. —Reuters

South Korea election to be free, fair, held by 9 May at latest — commission

SEOUL — A South Korean presidential election to choose a successor to ousted leader Park Geun-hye will be free and fair and held by 9 May at the latest, the election commission chairman said on Saturday.

The Constitutional Court dismissed Park Geun-hye on Friday over a graft scandal involving the country's conglomerates. Under the constitution, an election must be held within 60 days.

The chairman of the National Election Commission, Kim Yong-deok, said in a televised address he was concerned political differences could lead to an "overheated" atmosphere in the run-up to the vote and he called on the public to overcome "conflict" and take part. —Reuters

Most of dead in Damascus bombings were Iraqi—al-Manar

BEIRUT — Iraqis formed the majority of the people killed in a double bomb attack targeting buses of pilgrims in Damascus on Saturday, the correspondent in the city for Hezbollah's al-Manar TV said.

Al-Manar said at least 40 people were killed in the double suicide attack near the Bab al-Saghir cemetery, not far from the Old City of Damascus. —Reuters

Dutch bar plane carrying Turkish foreign minister from landing

AMSTERDAM — Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Saturday barred a plane carrying Turkey's foreign minister from landing, saying his visit would be a threat to public order.

The move comes after Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said he would travel to Rotterdam, despite a ban on him addressing a rally there.

The Dutch are due to vote in a national election on Wednesday, in which anti-immigration sentiment has played a prominent role.

Rutte said in a statement published on his official Facebook page that Turkey had upset discussions under which Cavusoglu would have been allowed to enter the country, by calling for a massive public rally.

A Turkish threat of sanctions if Cavusoglu were denied entry "made a reasonable solution impossible", Rutte said. —Reuters

Turkish president Erdogan calls Netherlands "Nazi remnants, fascists"

ISTANBUL — Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan branded the Netherlands "Nazi remnants, fascists" on Saturday after the Dutch government withdrew permission for his Foreign Minister to land there.

Rotterdam city authorities had on Friday withdrawn permission for him to attend a meeting to rally support for President Tayyip Erdogan's plans for extended powers, to be put to a referendum next month. Several other European cities have banned such meetings to be attended by Turkish officials. —Reuters

Russia, UK prepare ground for British foreign minister's visit

MOSCOW — Russia and Britain discussed relations between the two countries and preparations for a visit by British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson to Moscow, Russia's foreign ministry said on Saturday.

Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov met Britain's Minister for Europe and the Americas Alan Duncan on Friday to discuss bilateral relations which had "significantly deteriorated in recent years", the ministry said in a statement.

The two had talked about the situation in Ukraine, Syria, fighting international terrorism and other issues, it added.

The Russian foreign ministry statement did not say when Johnson would visit Moscow. —Reuters

Performances in One-Year Period

Pyithu Hluttaw endeavours to serve national interest and eternal peace

Myo Myint (MNA)

IF someone passes through the Grand Military Review and the Presidential Palace along Yazahtarni Road, the widest road in Nay Pyi Taw, the next view he will come across is the Hluttaw buildings which reflect the voice of the people.

Grandeur

The grandeur of the buildings is not only the indication of their glories. These facilities are places where echo of people's voices made by the representatives on their behalf can be heard. Now, one year has passed with the motto "People's voice, Hluttaw voice".

In retrospect, the Second Pyithu Hluttaw can be seen forming with 323 representatives from 11 political parties plus 110 Tatmadaw representatives totaling 433. On 1 February 2016, Pyithu Hluttaw elected Daw Khin Htay Kywe of Chaungzon Constituency as chairperson, representative U Win Myint of Tamwe Constituency as Speaker and Representative U T Khun Myat of Kutkai Constituency, Deputy Speaker.

According to the President and Vice President Election Law, meeting of elected Pyithu Hluttaw representatives was held and U Htin Kyaw (now the president) was elected as vice-president on 11 March 2016.

In accord with Section 115, Paragraph (a) of the 2008 Constitution, Bill Committee, Public Accounts Committee, Hluttaw Rights Committee, Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertaking Vetting Committee were formed with 15 Pyithu Hluttaw representatives in each committee on 5 and 8 February 2016.

Committees

Similarly, in accord with Section 115, Paragraph (c) of the 2008 Constitution, International Relations Committee, Farmer and Worker Affairs Committee, National Races Affairs and Peace Making Committee, Banks and Monetary Affairs Development Committee, Agriculture, Livestock Breeding and Rural

Development Committee, Education Promotion Committee, Health and Sports Development Committee, Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Committee, Transportation, Communications and Construction Committee, Electric Power and Energy Development Committee, Investment and Industrial Development Committee, Economic and Financial Development Committee, Public Affairs Management Committee, Citizen's Fundamental Rights Committee, Judicial and Legal Affairs Committee were formed to be able to conduct Hluttaw's functions effectively.

It can be said that Pyithu Hluttaw is a watchdog in the country practicing check and balances system. Its committees through coordination with Union level organizations also attend to the needs of people who make complaints or submit reports.

According to the constitution that states "The three branches of the sovereign power namely legislative power, executive power and judicial power are separated, to the extent possible and exert reciprocal control, check and balance among them.", it can be said that Pyithu Hluttaw is a watchdog in the country practicing check and balances system. Its committees through coordination with Union level organizations also attend to the needs of people who make complaints or submit reports.



Photo taken on 1 February 2016 shows Pyithu Hluttaw session in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

During the first year term, the Second Pyithu Hluttaw amended nine laws, enacted two new laws — State Councilor Law and Older Person Law — and revoked six laws, enacted two new laws after repealing two existing laws - Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law and Myanmar Investment Law — and approved one planning, budget and tax law totaling 20.

The ongoing sessions of Hluttaw debate eight laws introduced by the Pyithu Hluttaw, nine laws by Amyotha Hluttaw and three laws that are to be discussed in Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Urgent proposals

Twelve urgent proposals such as the one presented by Daw Khin San Hlaing of the Pale constituency calling for closer supervision of the swift undertaking of the handover of state-owned enterprises and properties during the transitional period were approved by the Pyithu Hluttaw. She presented her proposal that the central government should supervise what she called post-election developments prior to the transfer of state responsibility.

The pressing proposal pointed out the prompt leasing, handover and privatisation of state-owned land, factories and enterprises; aggressive removal of squats and the hasty management of the country's natural resources without supervision and transparency.

She suggested placing them under the close supervision of the union government in the interest of the people and the country as a whole. Though other 21 proposals were not approved they were discussed in the interests of the people.

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Photo shows Pyithu Hluttaw representatives attending Hluttaw session. PHOTO: MNA



Pyithu Hluttaw representatives sign attendance books before Hluttaw session. PHOTO: MNA

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

Pyithu Hluttaw serves interests of nation and people

>> FROM PAGE 5

Of the questions relating to executive affairs responsible to the Union Government or public affairs which are carried out by the Union Government, 467 verbal answers and 95 written answers were replied to questions marked with asterisk, and thus altogether 1759 questions can be raised including 1197 questions without asterisk in Pyithu Hluttaw.

With the aim of revitalizing the Hluttaws, the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw visited the Republic of Korea and Britain. During the visits, he discussed matters on friendship and cooperation, inter-parliamentary cooperation and legislative affairs.

Workshops

Nineteen Hluttaw committees could also organize workshops and seminars for 242 times within Hluttaw and meetings outside Hluttaw for 420 times including 59 overseas tours.

Myanmar hosted 37th ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly- AIPA from 29 September to 2 October 2016. At the assembly, meetings of the General Assembly, Political Committee, Economic Committee, Social Committee, Women Parliamentarians of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and Cooperation Committee of ASEAN Parliamentary Assembly were held successfully.

Capacity Development

To promote capacity of Hluttaw representatives and staff of Hluttaw Office, they are sent abroad to attend training courses and workshops and to make study tour in foreign countries.

In practicing legislative power which is the main task of Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw is approving laws beneficial to the people and amending, revoking and repealing some laws.

Parliaments are essential in countries where democracy is practiced. Hluttaw is formed with representatives elected by the people by holding free and fair elections. After that the Union Government and the respective Union level bodies are formed including election of the president and the vice-presidents.

Steadfastness

Only when people's voice can be heard uninterrupted will democracy flourish. With this end in view, the motto "People's

Voice, Hluttaw's Voice, People's Will, Hluttaw's Will, People's Expectation, Hluttaw's Implementation." is turned into reality. We firmly believe that people's representatives will be able to take shape the eternal peace in the country while discharging their duties.

May all the representatives serve the interests of the people with steadfastness in the years to come.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint gave interviews on performances of representatives in one-year period.

Question: Please let me know what kinds of law were discussed during the one-year period of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw.

Answer: State Councillor Law that will ensure building firmly the genuine democracy federal state desired by all people; Protecting Citizens' Personal Freedoms and Security Law to protect privacy and ensure security of all citizens; Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law to be able to enjoy the fundamental rights of people enshrined in the constitution; Older Person Law for the sake of the aged enabling them to enjoy health and social services and to be able to live in a safe community; and Myanmar Investment Law that will attract investments in the country in order to promote socio-economic life of people, to create job opportunities, and to apply advanced technologies were approved.

Moreover, Emergency Provision Act of 1950 which oppressed people for long and is no longer in line with the eternal principles and The Law Safeguarding the State from the Danger of Subversive Elements which does not meet the democratic standard and norms of human rights were repealed.

Budget allotment

Q: Concerning budget allotment, please express which sectors were allowed to use more budget and what were scrutinized.

A: Health budget was increased to reduce the burden of cost suffered by people and to be able to provide them with effective health care services. Similarly, to uplift the education standard and not to cause burden on parents education budget was also increased. Regarding scrutinizing, work projects are scrutinized thoroughly with the National Planning Bill for 2017-2018



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint. PHOTO: MNA



lease without transparency for construction of private hospital at the corner of Bogyoke Road and Pyay Road in Lanmadaw Township in Yangon Region which does not benefit people; a request to the Union Government to stop construction works which sought approval from MIC on 20 acres of land owned by Myanmar Port Authority between Botataung Pagoda Road and

Cooperation with international communities

Q: What have been done so far for democracy transitional process through international cooperation?

A: The Speaker and responsible persons met leaders and parliament speakers of foreign countries and exchanged views on democratic transitions, human rights, peace and stability, friendship and cooperation,

Of the questions relating to executive affairs responsible to the Union Government or public affairs which are carried out by the Union Government, 467 verbal answers and 95 written answers were replied to questions marked with asterisk, and thus altogether 1759 questions can be raised including 1197 questions without asterisk in Pyithu Hluttaw.

MPs of Pyithu Hluttaw participate in debates at the parliament.

fiscal year focuses on minimizing loss and wastage, ensuring firm and strong investment and serving the state and the people.

Q: How does Hluttaw engage in internal peace process?

A: As regards national reconciliation and internal peace process, Hluttaw representatives are actively participating in Union Peace Conference, the 21st Century Panglong, Joint Committee of Union Peace Conference and national level political dialogues.

Approved proposals

Q: What kind of proposal were approved during the one-year period of Hluttaw?

A: Urgent proposal calling for closer supervision of the swift undertaking of the handover of state-owned enterprises and properties that is the prompt leasing, handover and privatisation of state-owned land, factories and enterprises during the transitional period which the union government should supervise post-election developments prior to the transfer of state responsibility; an urgent proposal calling for ceasing the

Bo Aung Kyaw wharf; a request which urged the Union Government to revoke private rights for systematic conservation of Bago Kandawgyi watershed area and designate it as restricted forest area; an urgent proposal calling for taking punitive action against some members of Myanmar Human Rights Commission who cannot curb the human rights abuse; and a proposal urging the Supreme Court of the Union to revamp the corrupted judiciary system were approved in the interests of the people.

peaceful coexistence and humanitarian affairs in frank manners.

Q: Mr Speaker, let me take this opportunity to request you to express your opinion.

A: As the main duty of the Hluttaw is to make legislation, Hluttaw is engaged in making legislation that will be beneficial to people and the state; and amending and repealing laws which are not in conformity with the current age and which are not up to the mark of democratic norms. Hluttaw is also supporting national reconciliation and internal peace.



Pyithu Hluttaw representatives vote down secret ballot to elect Vice President during a parliament session in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Modi wins landslide election victory in India's biggest state

NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party won a landslide victory in India's most important battleground state on Saturday, in a personal triumph that will strengthen his claim to a second term as national leader.

Wresting control of Uttar Pradesh is a ringing endorsement of Modi's stewardship of Asia's third-largest economy after his high-risk decision last November to scrap high-value banknotes worth 86 per cent of the cash in circulation.

The Election Commission of India said Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had won a clear majority, according to partial results. The BJP was on course to win 309 of 403 seats in the state assembly, the biggest majority for any party in the state since 1980.

Almost four in ten voters backed Modi's party, the election commission said as it tallied the last votes, close to the party's vote share in Uttar Pradesh in the 2014 national election when it won the biggest national majority in three decades.

"I give my heartfelt thanks to the people of Uttar Pradesh. This is a historic victory for the BJP; a victory for development and good governance," Modi told his 28 million followers on Twitter.

Investors hope victory will embolden Modi to embark on more reforms, including the launch of a national sales tax, to boost economic growth.



Supporters of India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) celebrate after learning of the initial poll results outside the party headquarters in New Delhi, India, on 11 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

"The outcome of this election will enable Modi to sharpen his winning anti-corruption and improved governance policies as he begins to position himself for the 2019 general election," wrote analysts Shailesh Kumar and Sasha Riser-Kositsky of macro advisory firm Eurasia Group.

Modi threw himself into the Uttar Pradesh campaign after his party got off to a slow start, addressing dozens of rallies and turning the contest into a test of

his personal popularity and his radical move to abolish big banknotes to rein in corruption.

Celebrations erupted outside BJP offices in state capital Lucknow and Delhi, with party workers dancing and splashing each other with paint in keeping with the Holi festival of colours that Hindus are celebrating this weekend. Modi's campaign manager, Amit Shah, credited the BJP victory to a corruption free and pro-poor administration.

The BJP will discuss who will become the next chief minister of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday evening, Shah told reporters.

Results for four other state elections put the BJP ahead in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand but losing control of the coastal state of Goa. In the northeastern state of Manipur, the BJP trailed the Congress party.

Congress won in Punjab state, offering at least some consolation after Rahul Gandhi, heir

apparent to the party leadership, failed again to make an impact. In Uttar Pradesh, a largely poor and agricultural state of 220 million people, Modi pitched himself as a man on the side of the poor prepared to hit the corrupt rich hard with his demonetisation drive.

The scale of the victory suggests Modi's appeal cut across caste and community in a state where most people traditionally vote along religious and social lines.

Critics accuse his party of stirring communal tensions to shore up votes among its core Hindu base, particularly after its campaign got off to a slow start.

None of the BJP's opponents, including the ruling Samajwadi Party, managed a vote share above 23 per cent, official returns showed.

"The Samajwadi Party wholeheartedly accepts the verdict of the people of Uttar Pradesh," spokesman Ghanshyam Tiwari said, conceding defeat. Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav was expected to resign later on Saturday.

The election decimates the field of credible opponents who could halt Modi's march to a second term at the 2019 general election.

Victory in Uttar Pradesh will also make it easier to overcome resistance to the BJP's legislative agenda in the upper house of parliament, where the ruling party is in the minority.—Reuters

China-US trade war brings nothing but harm: commerce minister

BEIJING — A trade war between China and the United States is not in line with the interests of the two countries and will bring nothing but harm, China's Commerce Minister Zhong Shan said on Saturday.

Cooperation is the "only right choice," and the two countries should work to enhance cooperation and manage differences, Zhong said, stressing the role of economic and trade cooperation as a "ballast" and "propeller" in bilateral relations.

Speaking at a press conference on the sidelines of the annual parliamentary session, Zhong said the two countries, whose interests are closely interwoven, have seen their economic and trade relations on the right path since they forged diplomatic ties.

"Any form of protectionism is not in line with the interests of the two countries," he said.

Zhong said he looks forward to meeting his US counterpart Wilbur Ross, who became secretary of commerce



Chinese Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan answers questions at a press conference on structural adjustments and innovation for the fifth session of the 12th National People's Congress in Beijing, capital of China, on 11 March, 2017. PHOTO: XINHUA

under the US new administration late last month.

He expressed the belief that the two countries' leaders

and governments will make the right judgment on bilateral trade ties, pledging efforts to guide China-US economic and

trade ties in the right direction.

Zhong was appointed commerce minister to replace Gao Hucheng last month.—Xinhua

Indonesia arrests nine suspected militants

JAKARTA — Indonesian police arrested nine suspected militants on the island of Sulawesi, a police spokesman said on Saturday, in an operation that media reported had targeted a group with affiliations to Islamic State.

With investigations continuing, police spokesman Martinus Sitompul declined to give further details, but media reported police had also seized bomb-making materials meant for use in attacks on police and official buildings.

The suspects were all members of Mujahidin Indonesia Timur, a group that had been controlled until last year by one of the first Indonesian militants to pledge loyalty to Islamic State.

Santoso had been the country's most-wanted men before he was killed in a gunbattle with police and military forces last July, and security officials have been expecting reprisal attacks.

Some members of his group were believed to be still hiding in Sulawesi's dense jungles.—Reuters

Opinion

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with your name and title.

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

Best wishes to all matriculation students

Dr. Nu Nu Win

THE Matriculation Examinations are being held during these days and up to this day, things have been going smoothly except for the news that there were some mistakes in the Mathematics Paper. Although such a mistake should not have happened, it is quite easy to solve this. The solution is to give full marks to all those who answered these questions. A similar incident happened when we were Senior Assistant Teachers who were participating in the evaluation of Matriculation Examination papers. Although it should not happen again in the future, this kind of problem can be solved with tact and discretion.

For students who are sitting for this Examination, it is an important milestone as the marks they obtain are very important for entry into different Universities. So, from the side of teachers, students and parents, it is still very important for a student do to well in these examinations. As these marks will determine which university or college a student will be admitted to attend, it is natural that all parents and students want to get the best results. So in some cases, parents would even resort to unethical methods. This sort of behavior is of course contrary to the Goals and Values of an Education System.

For the time being, under this current system, we all need to get the best results possible.

So, for all these students, the most important thing for these days is your Health. Your health should be in peak condition. You should take care of your sleeping hours and eating styles.

A person should have at least five hours of sleep (if possible 8 hours of sleep) every night. If you don't have enough sleep, you will not be able to recall all the things you have studied last night or early in the morning. It will all be jumbled up in your memory and it will be difficult for you to recall what you want from your memory bank. So, please try to get sound sleep, at least five hours each night.

Now, let's discuss about your eating style. Regarding your eating style and life style, remember that the weather is very hot during this month of March. It is very hot in most parts of our country, so we should choose carefully what we eat during the summer months. And also, do not go out in the sun without a hat or an umbrella. Getting a heat stroke can be quite dangerous. So please do not go out in the scorching sun and also do not drink ice-water as soon as you come back into the house from the scorching sun. And also try to eat only simple foods which will not hurt your health.

To get the best out of your study hours, choose a nice quiet place where there are no disturbances. Do not study near the windows as there can be many distractions. This way you will be able to focus well on your lessons. After studying about an hour or so, take a rest to refresh, but it should not be more than 10 minutes. If you get sleepy, divert your attention and watch one or two cartoon segments if possible. This should not be for more than five minutes.

You should study all the important lessons before you go to the examination hall, and do not try to study just five or ten minutes before you go in. The last things you studied are usually the first things you forget.

Remember well the important words of advice given here. May you all be able to answer all the subjects very well and may you all pass the Matriculation Examinations with flying colours; may each and every one of you be successful in the pursuit of your career goals.

Sand Pagoda Festival of the Month Tabaung

Maha Saddhmma Jotika dhaja Sithu, Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

THE 12th month of Myanmar Luner Calendar Tabaung corresponds to March. It is the last month of Myanmar year, and it is a transition month between winter and summer, still covering winter for its first half from the 1st to the 15th and entering into summer in its second half-16th to the 30th. Days are getting warm while nights still remain cold. There is a Myanmar old saying about Tabaung. "နေ့ ငူလို့၊ ညခိုင်း တပေါင်းလ၊ လာခိုင်း" . "Days are warm and nights are chilly, Tabaung is the month so unruly" .

Tabaung's astrological name is Mina (Pices) and its zodiacal sign two fishes. Outara phala guni (ငတ္တရမလင်္ဂ) an asterism of two stars in Leo, resembling the rear leg of a couch is the star of Tabaung. Being the beginning of Spring time, all trees, plants and creepers bloom in Tabaung. But Tharaphi (Orchocapus Siamensis) and Pon Nyet (callophyllum Inophyllum) are traditionally designated flowers of Tabaung.

According to Wawhaya Linatha Dipani (Treatise on Vocabular-

ing to herald summer, doves coo continuously to prepare for their mating game. Sparrows repair and renovate their nests in anticipation of upcoming monsoon. Swarms of wasps and bees buzz around honey juicy wild flowers while butterflies flutter away with the nectar they have gathered early. As the Sun declines in the west, blue mountains appear behind the veil of haze. The smell of farm fire burning somewhere is being wafted by the breeze. At dusk a gentle breeze brings in sweet fragrance of wild flowers. The nocturnal life of nature begins as the waxing Tabaung moon gradually climbs above the tree tops. Cacophony of cicada insects create an eerie atmosphere while glow worms twinkles make the surroundings fantastic. It is as though the incessant sounds of cicada insects accompany the dainty movements of the ripples in the lakes. The entire nocturnal scene is caressed by the silvery moonbeams. That is poetic Tabaung. It is about poetic Tabaung that Ashin Kaludayi composed 60 stanzas of Pali poem to request Lord Gotama Buddha to take a pleasant

In Myanmar literature Tabaung is described as the queen of all months because it is in Tabaung that natural landscape bursts forth all its beauties and splendors. Sky and clouds change their colours and designs. Woodlands put on all hues, foliage bears a variety of green, brooks carry away fallen leaves of copper and gold colours. Lakes turn emerald green or sapphire blue, cuckoos sing to herald summer, doves coo continuously to prepare for their mating game.

ies) Tabaung has two meanings. Firstly Tabaung means Ta and paung meaning all yearnings or longings or reminiscences. Because the month is so pleasant, so beautiful and so senic that you cannot help but recalling your sweet memories or longing or yearning for your loved ones. Secondly it is the month of Htan-paung-boiling down toddy juice to get htan nyet (Jaggery) or palm sugar.

In Myanmar literature Tabaung is described as the queen of all months because it is in Tabaung that natural landscape bursts forth all its beauties and splendors. Sky and clouds change their colours and designs. Woodlands put on all hues, foliage bears a variety of green, brooks carry away fallen leaves of copper and gold colours. Lakes turn emerald green or sapphire blue, cuckoos

land journey through the glades to Kapilavatthu which was his royal father's kingdom which he left 6 years ago when he renounced his mundane life to become a forest recluse. The Buddha did take that journey to return to his father.

Myanmar nature writers take Tabaung as their favourite theme. They are never tired of praising the beauties of Tabaung "Tawla" (Journey through the glades in Tabaung) an epic poem of travelogue by a monk poet of Inwa Period named Shin Uttama Kyaw is an unsurpassing literary piece that described nature in Tabaung. In 12 season poems that flowed out from the prolific pen of Pho Thudaw U Min of late Konbaung Period the stanza on Tabaung runs as follows:-

“ပန်းရွှေဖိုကြိုင်လျှောက်တို့၊
ပိတောက်ကယ်တဲ့သင်းဖျို၊
ငတ္တရာ ဘရုဏ်က၊
တိမ်တဲ့မှာ ရောင်ခြည်လင်းလို့၊



PHOTO: PHOE KHWA

လမ်းသော်တာနှင့်တူမကွာ ထိန်ဝါလှ၊ ထွန်းကား
့ခါတို့၊
သောင်းသဲလယ်ပို့၊ ရေညိုကရစ်ပို့၊
လေညှင်ငယ်လှာ၊
စုံတောမှာမြိုင်ထဲက ဝမ်းသာ၊ ရွှေစင်ရော်တို့၊
ဖေါ်ခေါ်သံ ခောင်းမယ်ကွာတယ်၊
မြူးပျော်ကြလို့။”
“This is the time when climbing high,
Orion glitters in the sky,
And shining with the moon at night
Mingles with her's his yellow light
The sweet scent of the Tharaphee
And faint smell of Padauk Tree
Is wafted from the misty trees.
Upon a gentle southing breeze
About the sandbanks of the stream
The white arms of a river gleam
I hear the clamorous return
Of wild duck and of silver Tern” .
Sand Pagoda festival is traditionally held in the month of Tabaung. The earliest historical evidence is traced in the literature of Inwa Period. Shin Maha Thilawuntha one of four noted monk poets of that time composed many Pyos (Pyos are poems of epic proportions) one of them named "Buddha Pati Pyo" has the description of Tabaung and the Sand Pagoda festival as follows.

“Catfish, carps and all their members
Frolic in the river,
Seagull and Sheldrake make lovely call
Aquatic birds braminy duck hamsa and river
Tern, Gleeefully greet each other in ecstacy.
On the silvery sandback is

celebrated
The festival of Sand Pagoda.
From the above poem we may safely assume that in Tabaung, the Sand Pagoda Festival was yearly celebrated in Inwa Period. As all pagoda festivals are associated with Buddhism and since Buddhism was well established in Myanmar long before Inwa Period, it is possible that Sand Pagoda festival originated in the time much earlier than Inwa Period. One evidence to the exist-

Myanmar nature writers take Tabaung as their favourite theme. They are never tired of praising the beauties of Tabaung “Tawla” (Journey through the glades in Tabaung) an epic poem of travelogue by a monk poet of Inwa Period named Shin Uttama Kyaw is an unsurpassing literary piece that described nature in Tabaung.

ence of a Sand Pagoda in early Bagan is the well-known Shwezigon Pagoda of Bagan. It was King Anawrahta (1044-1077), who built that Pagoda on the Sand bank of the Ayeyarwady River. Originally it was known as “ရွှေသံခဲတော်” Shwe The Khon meaning Pagoda on the sand bank.
Buddhist literature gives us the origin of building sand pagoda. Buddha Sasanika Kyan (ဗုဒ္ဓသာသနိက ကျမ်း) says that “the building and worshipping of Sand Pagoda was a cultural tradition of Buddhist reli-

gion dating for back to aeons of time. History of the first building of Sand Pagoda was mentioned in Apadan Pali Palinuapadaka Maha thera Apadan (အပဒါနိ ပါဠိတော် ပုလဲနွေဝါတ မဟာထေရ် အပဒါနိ). It is as follows:-
“In the time of hundred thousand kabas (cosmic Aeon) ago there lived a hermit named Devala in a hermitage at the Himalayas. The hermitage was created by the devas. He had many pupils and disciples. One day he came out from the her-



PHOTO: PHOE KHWA

he made with three thousand small bells and worshipped it day and night.

In the month of Tabaung, water in all aquatic bodies ebbs and sand banks appear in them, on these and banks, seasonal crops-maize, corn, ground nuts, peas, sweet potatoes, tomatos and vegetables and fruits are cultivated by Myanmar peasants. After their products are sold out they have enough cush and long rest which they use in religion and socio-cultural activities.

Myanmar kings made Sand Pagoda festival the seasonal festival of Tabaung. It was held at the palace as well as every river side or water front town and village. Their Majesties and the whole court came out to worship Sand Pagoda on the sand bank ceremonially, followed by public entertainments.

Sandgrains are countless. So also are the Buddhas already revealed and the future Buddhas to be revealed. So sand pagoda represent them.

Structures of a Sand Pagoda are simple. They are of five graduated tiers tapering to the top. Each tier of white sand flanked by bamboo matting and posts. The five tiers represent five layers of Mt. Meru, the legendary mountain in Buddhist Cosmology. After all five tiers are filled with pure white sand paper flags, streamers, festoons and flowers are artistically arranged on them and offertories are placed there. Public procession of village folks in their finery coming out with performing artists behind make three or seven rounds of the Sand Pagoda. The monks after consecrating the Sand Pagoda ministered five moral precepts to the gathering, speak religious meaning of the Sand Pagoda Festival and performed libation

ritual to share out the merit with all sentient beings.

Sand Pagodas last till next monsoon when they are washed away. But some are encased by brick and cement to last long as သံခဲတော်. Nowadays Sand Pagoda festivals are held at remote rural areas, as with water fronts. In its place Tabaung Festival of Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon comes in.

It was on the full moon day of Tabaung in the Maha Sakart year of 103 that Shwedagon Pagoda was built. To commemorate the founding date of the Pagoda, Tabaung Festival is held every year.

In the days of Myanmar monarchy, the Governor of Hanthawaddy, on behalf of the King paid a ceremonial visit to Shwedagon Pagoda on the full moon day of Tabaung. He worshipped it and donated many of fertories. Theatrical performances were held for public entertainment.

The following is an excerpt from the book The Burma, His Life and Notions by J.G. Scott who used a pen name Shwe Yoe. It is his remark on Tabaung Festival he saw in 1882.

“The greatest of all pagoda feasts is, of course that of the Shwe Dagon in Yangon with its pilgrims, not only from the furthest parts of Myanmar and far-away Shan hills, but also from over the seas, from Siam, and Cambodia, and Korea. But the vastness of the gathering and the proximity of the great town spoil the national character of the festival, and introduce too many elements of nineteenth century civilization in the shape of merry-go-rounds and hack carriages. A “Jungle” feast is not only characteristic but more appreciated in its way by both town and country folk”.

Tattooed devotees transform in Thai temple trance

WAT BANG PHRA, (Thailand) — Deep in trances, devotees of a Thai temple charged through gathered crowds on Saturday mimicking the beasts on their tattoos.

Some had their hands curled into tiger claws, some became crocodiles, some were transformed into Hanuman, the monkey god.

The annual tattoo festival at Wat Bang Phra, about 80 km (50 miles) from Bangkok, draws thousands of devotees every year who come to recharge the power of sacred Sak Yant tattoos.

The tattoos are inked by Buddhist monks using

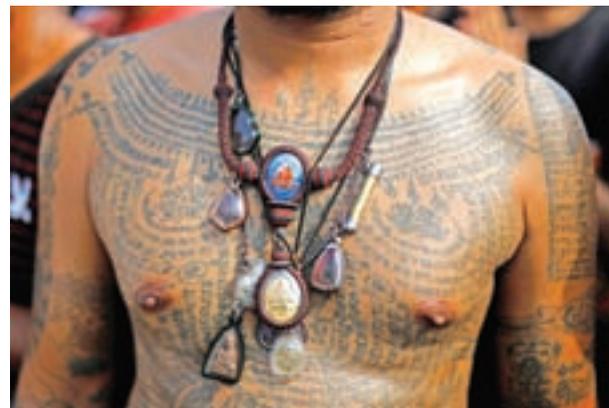
sharpened bamboo sticks or long metal needles. Originally etched for warriors needing protection in battle, they are also believed to bring luck and give strength.

But every year, their magic power needs to be restored at the festival, where thousands of devotees pay their respects to the temple's master tattooist.

Not everyone goes into a trance. Those who do take on the characteristics of their tattoos.

They try to charge towards the temple, but are held back by a wall of temple guards and soldiers.

—Reuters



A devotee attends the religious tattoo festival at Wat Bang Phra, where they come to recharge the power of their sacred tattoos, in Nakhon Pathom province, Thailand on 11 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Opponents of S Korea's ousted Park rally to call for her arrest

SEOUL — Opponents of South Korea's ousted leader, Park Geun-hye rallied in the capital, Seoul, on Saturday to demand that she be arrested, a day after she was thrown out of office over a corruption scandal involving the country's conglomerates.

The Constitutional Court ruling on Friday to uphold a parliamentary vote to impeach Park infuriated hundreds of her supporters, two of whom were killed as they tried to break through police lines outside the court. A third man, aged 74, had a heart attack and died on Saturday, a hospital said.

Park's critics were out in central Seoul on Saturday, where they have been gathering every weekend for months, while the former president's conservative supporters also took to the streets not far away, though fewer in number.

Police were out in force with riot shields but there were no reports of trouble.

"Impeachment is not the end. We've not dispersed, we're still going forward, united," said one anti-Park protester who gave his name as T H Kim.

"She's a citizen now. If she's done something wrong, she has to be arrested."



People react at a rally against South Korea's ousted leader Park Geun-hye in Seoul, South Korea on 11 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Park, 65, is South Korea's first democratically elected leader to be forced from office. Her ouster followed months of political paralysis and turmoil over a corruption scandal that also landed the head of the Samsung conglomerate in jail and facing trial.

The court ruling marked a dramatic fall from grace of South Korea's first woman president and daughter of Cold War military dictator Park Chung-hee. She served as his first lady after the 1974 assassination of her mother.

At times, Park and her

supporters have bridled at associating her with her father, who seized power in a 1961 coup and ruled for 18 years until he was gunned down by his security chief in 1979.

Though she has spent years in the public eye, she has remained an enigma.

Now, having lost presidential immunity, she could face criminal charges over bribery, extortion and abuse of power in connection with allegations of conspiring with her friend, Choi Soon-sil. Both women denied wrongdoing.

Park did not appear

in court on Friday and did not make any comment after the ruling. She spent the night in the presidential Blue House though would leave at some time and return to her Seoul residence, a spokesman said.

Choi In-sook, a spokeswoman for protesters opposed to Park, told Reuters they were also demanding the resignation of acting president Hwang Kyo-ahn.

Prime Minister Hwang, a Park loyalist, became acting president when parliament voted to impeach her on 9 December.—Reuters

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Malaysia, N Korea to begin formal talks over return of Malaysians — minister

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia will in the coming days begin formal talks with North Korea on the return of nine Malaysians stranded in Pyongyang, the Southeast Asian nation's foreign minister said on Saturday, after they were barred from leaving the country amid a diplomatic spat.

The two countries have sparred over the 13 February killing in Kuala Lumpur of Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, and this week the incident sparked a diplomatic standoff as both countries slapped travel bans on each other's citizens.

But Malaysian officials have since diffused tensions, saying ties with

the reclusive state will not be severed.

Foreign Minister Anifah Aman said North Korea had indicated they were ready to start negotiations.

"They want to start talking. We do not know what their demands are — we need to figure out what we can do to get the best result," he told reporters on Saturday.

He said many countries had offered to mediate between the two but that "no countries will act as a third party" or mediator.

He added no time or location had been set yet for the official negotiations.

Two Malaysians — staffers at the United Nations — were able to fly out of Pyongyang earlier this week using UN passports,

leaving nine behind, including three children.

Malaysia has accused the nuclear-armed state of masterminding Kim Jong Nam's murder and identified eight North Koreans, including three still in Kuala Lumpur, in connection with the killing.

North Korea has in turn criticised Malaysia's handling of the investigation.

Kim Jong Nam, who had been living under Beijing's protection in Macau and had been known to criticise his family's regime, was killed using the highly toxic VX nerve agent. The chemical is classified by the UN as a weapon of mass destruction.

Anifah said the government is in "constant

communication" with the stranded Malaysians. He added that they had been offered support from other foreign missions in Pyongyang, including the provision of supplies from outside North Korea.

Malaysia's police chief on Friday officially confirmed the victim was Kim Jong Nam, something Pyongyang has denied.

Malaysia has so far refused to comply with North Korean demands to hand over the victim's body to the embassy. Foreign minister Anifah said on Saturday authorities were yet to discuss with their North Korean counterparts whether they would give the body over to the North Korean government or the family.—Reuters

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

Kachin State on the right track to development

Nanda Win + Chu Chu

IT is Kachin State where Maykha river and Malikha river meet lying in the north part of Myanmar with a total area of 34379.22 square miles. It is a hilly triangular region occupying lush and green grass and plants. The two rivers, namely Maykha and Malikha originate from the head of Ayeyawady River and form meanders adapting themselves to the obstacles, creating a confluence called Myintsone.

With famous Mt Khakab-ozazi, the state is complete with marvelous and fantastic elements including Hukaung plain. It is also blessed with abundant rivers and creeks, valuable timbers, as well as rare species of flora and fauna that could attract peoples from different countries.

Kachin State is sharing border with the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China and is blessed with priceless natural beauties and natural resources. It is made up of four districts, 18 townships, 30 towns, 160 wards and 2547 villages. Although the region is complete with natural beauties in abundance, its transport sector is still poor for various reasons.

To be able to bring about development in Kachin state, efforts have been made with added momentum and as a result, the state has been able to enjoy the fruits of development in various spheres in the one-year tenure of the new Kachin State government.

Over 1.3 million population

With a total population of over 1.3 million, Kachin State is home to Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Bamar, Rakhine, Shan, Naga and other national races. Although the majority of local people

are Christians and there are also Buddhists in the state. There are altogether 81 departmental bodies with over 50,000 government employees in service in Kachin State.

In Kachin State, there are 870,000 voters who have the right to choose 12 Amyotha Hluttaw representatives, 18 Pyithu Hluttaw representatives and 36 the state Hluttaw representatives from 20 political parties based in the region.

Crime prevention

The judiciary sector of Kachin State saw ten major cases—20 incidents, two cases on file, 18 remaining cases, seven others—148 incidents, 19 cases on file, one case closed, 128 remaining cases and ten prevented cases—232 incidents, 105 cases on file, 127 remaining cases in the year 2016-2017.

The security measures of Kachin State are being largely taken by the military command, operation control commands, state MPF commander office, state support company and district/township MPFs with the support of over 7500 people's militia. The above-mentioned forces are also responsible for defence of the state.

Over 440,000 acres of farmland

There are ten major crops grown in Kachin State which is made up of over 440,000 acres of farmland. As the per acre yield stands at 68.72 baskets, the region has been able to produce over 25 million baskets of paddy annually on average, ensuring 122.43 per cent of food security. The whole Kachin State is in a position of enjoying food security. As far as edible oil is concerned, the demand is 16096 metric tons and the supply is 17622.65 metric tons, ensuring



Arrival of relief items for local people in Kachin State are seen. PHOTO: MNA

109 per cent of edible oil security.

When it comes to livestock breeding, buffalo, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens and ducks are raised along with the production of fish and meat, eggs and dairy products, satisfying the de-

Being a Union highway, the Myitkyina-Swanparabwan-Putao road is being upgraded to be serviceable all the year round.

mand of local people.

With regard to jobs creation, private factories and mills were established in the state together with cottage industries, bringing about a large number of jobs for local people.

Extractive industry

In the extractive industry sector, Kachin State saw the production of 9.079 tons of tin in 2016-2017 along with 730.80 viss of gold produced in the gem sector.

As regards the jade mining sector, 10640.165 tons of jade were jointly mined by the government and gem companies on a mutually beneficial basis. The value of the jade mined is K 31316.238 million with K 6263.247 million in tax.

Diversion weirs and river-pumping project

The state has five dams, 462 diversion weirs and five river-pumping projects. The Kachin State government planned to carry out two projects by spending K 770.897 million of regional development fund. The nine projects are being implemented by Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department through the allotted fund of the Kachin State government in the fiscal year 2016-2017.

Construction of bridges

The Kachin State Road/Bridge Department under the Ministry of Construction built 119.623 (74/3) miles of road into tarred ones in the 2016-2017 fiscal year with 1085.941 (674/6) miles of road already in place in the state. In the meantime, altogether 650 bridges under 180 feet and eight bridges above 180 feet were constructed inclusive of box culvert in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

The road maintenance works

for Momauk-Lwejel road are being carried out by Northern Tawwin Jade Company through B.O.T system for security purpose. The Myitkyina-Nammati-Tanai-Panhasung road is also being built through B.O.T in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Under the B.O.T system, 20 miles (from 32/7 to 52/7) of road section has already emerged as gravel facility while its 300 meters long section went concrete as part of project to tar Myitkyina-Nammati-Tanai-Panhasung road section. Altogether 45 culverts, eight concrete outlets were constructed, while 11563 feet long drain on left side and 13358 feet long drain on right side went concrete. Apart from that, three major bridges are now under implementation.

Being a Union highway, the Myitkyina-Swanparabwan-Putao road is being upgraded to be serviceable all the year round. In doing so, the facility is being extended and concreted, and its Myitkyina-Tiyanswut section is being extended to 34 feet wide in order to go tarred. Under the project, the extension of a road section from Myitkyina to Tiyanswut village will be completed in the 2016-2017 year.

SEE PAGE 12 >>



Regional development tasks are being undertaken with the use of heavy machinery in Kachin State. PHOTO: MNA

PERFORMANCES IN ONE-YEAR PERIOD

>> FROM PAGE 11

Recreation facilities

When it comes to hotel and tourism industry in Kachin State, the state was facilitated with 26 hotels with 268 rooms for the local and international travelers. The Myitsone (Confluence of Maykha and Malikha Rivers) and Kareinnaw are popular tourist destinations in Myitkyina Township.

The Kachin State is complete with 32 public bazaars and the 16 state-run banks and 19 private banks that are offering banking services to the people. With a view to supplying adequate drinking water for the residents in Kachin State, over 300,000 gallons of water are being distributed from 67 drinking water plants to the 13,000 households daily.

The Kachin State government collected K 1906065914.9 million of tax revenues in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Kachin State government's production value stood at K 201320.8 million and its trade value amounted to K 230984.6 million whereas its gross domestic product (GDP) and service value was K 1121768.01 million and per capita income was K 852,542 in the 2016-2017 financial year.

Over 200,000 of working populace

It is found that the working population in Kachin State is over 200,000 and unemployment population is over 590,000 accounting for 25.71 per cent. To rein in the unemployment, Kachin State government has been trying its most for creation of job opportunities for the local people.

With regard to electric power distribution, 12 66/11 KV sub-power stations and two 132/66/11 power stations were constructed in Kachin State and the 66/11 KV sub-power station in Phakant Township and the 33/11 Nyaungpin sub-power station in Mohnyin Township are under construction. Altogether 798 villages in 30 townships in Kachin State have been facilitated with electricity and 1755 villages have been without electricity. In a bid to supply sufficient electricity to dwell-



Construction site of Kyargyikwin Diversion Weir in Mohnyin Township, Kachin State. PHOTO: MNA

ers in Putao and Machanbaw Townships, the Upper Namthwet hydropower project is being implemented on Namthwet Creek, about 7 miles northwest from Putao Township. The project that can generate 3.2 megawatts is 60 per cent complete.

Upon completion the project, electricity will be distributed to Putao and Machanbaw Townships along with 17 villages in Putao Township. Construction of power transmission lines and installation of transformers for the wards and villages in Putao, Nagmon and Sumbabum Townships and purchase of diesel-powered generators are scheduled to be made in 2016-2017 fiscal year.

Urban development

Apart from its development funds, the state government also utilized the funds contributed by the public in the building of 16 concrete roads (1/2.27 miles), 102 tarred roads (19/3.70 miles), 18 gravel roads (2/1.00 miles), and 31 sandstone roads (4/3.13 miles) at a cost of K 2167.90 million; two tube-wells, one hand-drilled well, and other 24 related works at a cost of K 106.36 million in the water supply project; 91 con-

crete bridges, eight brick-base wooden bridges, 28 conduits, and 11 other related works at a cost of K 612.67 million in the fiscal year 2016-2017.

The departmental quarterly and biannually mutual talks have been held for border trade promotion. In fiscal year 2016-2017 Kampaiktee and Lwajai camps exported USD 209.153 million worth of goods and imported USD 48.9 million worth of goods. So the total trade volume of the camps was USD 258.053 million

Kachin State government has been trying its most for creation of job opportunities for the local people.

Teacher-student ratio

The state has 11 universities and colleges, and 946 faculties and up to over 23,000 students, so the ration between them is 1:25. The state has 84

basic education high schools, over 30800 teachers and over 120000 students. So the ratio between them is 1:32.

The state has 119 basic education middle schools, over 2400 teachers and over 73000 students, so the ration between them is 1:30. In the primary sector it has over 1200 schools, over 7200 teachers and over 140,000 students. So the ratio between them is 1:19. A total of 15353 five-year-old boys and 14908 five-year-old girls were enrolled in 2016-2017. So the enrollment rate was 98.99 per cent.

The state's matriculation passed rate in 2015-2016 was 29.74 per cent. Its literacy rate was 91.10 per cent. It has 1016 libraries, it is planning to open more libraries to promote public knowledge.

Healthcare services

The Kachin State government has been offering healthcare services to the people through 58 hospitals, 13 private hospitals. There are 15 healthcare centers and 65 private clinics totaling 80 healthcare centers in Kachin State. The Kachin State government is providing healthcare services to the rural people by opening 71

rural healthcare centers and 287 rural healthcare branches. Arrangements are being made to offer better healthcare services to the people in Kachin State.

The state has 10 football grounds, six tennis courts, five golf courses and two weightlifting gymnasiums. The Kachin State government is making efforts to promote sport standard by opening gymnasiums, conducting trainings and organizing sport events.

Relinquished lands returned to owners

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued the announcements to be able to return the relinquished lands of the ministries concerned to the rightful owners by the central committee to scrutinize farmlands and relinquished land in Kachin State.

The people in Kachin State need to cooperate with the local government as regional development tasks will be undertaken only when peace and stability prevailed in the region. The Kachin State government has been making earnest efforts to promote education, health and road transportation sectors with the aim of nurturing outstanding people and improving socio-economic status of the local people.



An official presents relief items to a flood victim in Sotlaw Township. PHOTO: MNA



Kachin State government holds first four-month cabinet meeting. PHOTO: MNA



Yuri Dolgoruky submarine. PHOTO: TASS

Russian nuclear submarines hold underwater torpedo duel

MURMANSK — The Russian Northern Fleet's submarines Yuri Dolgoruky and Obninsk held an exercise to fire torpedoes against an underwater target, the fleet's press office reported on Friday.

"The crews of the strategic missile cruiser Yuri Dolgoruky and the multi-purpose nuclear submarine

Obninsk performed this exercise in a duel option," the press office said.

The fire was conducted using ordinary torpedoes without warheads.

During the combat drills, each submarine fired one such torpedo. After the exercise, the torpedoes were lifted by a torpedo recovery boat.—TASS

Snowden shelterers in Hong Kong seek Canada asylum

TORONTO — Three families who helped shelter former US National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden in Hong Kong in 2013 after his mass leak of information about surveillance programmes have asked Canada for asylum, their lawyer said on Friday.

The families — three Sri Lankan adults, a Filipina, and three stateless children — have had long-pending asylum claims in Hong Kong that they fear may soon be rejected, lawyer Marc-Andre Seguin said in a phone interview from Hong Kong.

Seguin said the families had been thrust into

the spotlight after the September release of the Oliver Stone film "Snowden" which referred to their role in Snowden's flight from the United States in 2013 and, eventually, to Russia.

Seguin said the families and Hong Kong-based lawyer Robert Tibbo, who introduced his clients to Snowden, now face increasingly adverse circumstances in Hong Kong.

They said that they have been "actively sought by Sri Lankan operatives" in recent months and fear for their safety in Hong Kong, Seguin said. Reuters could not independently

verify their stories.

A spokeswoman for Canada's immigration minister said his office does not comment on current or possible cases and could not confirm or deny having received the applications.

Hong Kong authorities have yet to confirm that they are investigating claims Sri Lankan operatives were working in the territory, but a Security Bureau spokesman said it was illegal for foreign agencies to carry out law enforcement action within Hong Kong.

"Everyone in Hong Kong is protected by Hong

Kong laws regardless of his or her identity and background," the bureau spokesman said.

Snowden's leaks of classified information about government surveillance programmes caused an international furore over the reach of US spy operations. His defenders see him as a whistleblower who exposed the extent of government snooping on citizens. He has been allowed to remain in Russia for another three years and will next year qualify to apply for Russian citizenship, his Russian lawyer was quoted as saying in January.—Reuters

German police order Essen shopping mall shut due to attack threat

BERLIN — Police in the western German city of Essen have ordered a shopping centre in the centre of town to remain closed on Saturday due to "concrete indications about a possible attack".

"The current state of our investigations points to the threat being exclusively at the shopping centre," said the police in a state-

ment, adding it could give no further details about the nature of the threat.

Germany is on high alert following major radical Islamist attacks in France and Belgium and after a failed asylum seeker from Tunisia drove a truck into a Christmas market in December, killing 12 people.—Reuters



Police at the entrance of Limbecker Platz shopping mall in Essen, Germany, on 11 March 2017, after it was shut due to attack threat. PHOTO: REUTERS

Invitation For Open Tender

Sale of (400 ±) Metric Tons of Cathode Copper in United States Dollar,

RESERVE PRICE : The price of Cathode Copper is not less than the Copper price of London Metal Exchange on one day ahead of tender opening date.

CLOSING DATE & TIME : 7.4.2017 (16:30) Hours

Tender documents are available From the Mineral Development section, Department of Mines, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Office Building No.(19) Nay Pyi Taw and details can be asked to + 95-(0) 67-409378 and 409009 within the Office hours.

Tender Invitation Committee
Department of Mines
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV SENTOSA STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SENTOSA STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of B.S.W where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV NINOS VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV NINOS VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV IRRAWADDY STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV IRRAWADDY STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12.3.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING
LINE PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

'Avatar 2' movie "not happening" in 2018, James Cameron says

NEW YORK — The sequel to all-time box office champion "Avatar" has been delayed again and will not be arriving in movie theaters as expected in 2018, director James Cameron has said.

Cameron told the Toronto Star that he was working on all four planned movie sequels simultaneously and had no firm release date for "Avatar 2."

"Well 2018 is not happening. We haven't announced a firm release date," the Oscar-winning director told the newspaper in an interview published on Thursday, when asked about progress on "Avatar 2."

"What people have to understand is that this is a cadence of releases. So we're not making 'Avatar 2.' We're making 'Avatar 2,' 3, 4 and 5. It's an epic undertaking."

"It took us four-and-a-half years to make one movie and now we're making four. We're full tilt boogie right now," Cameron added.

The 2009 release of Twentieth Century Fox movie "Avatar," a fantasy adventure set in the distant magical world of Pandora, smashed box office records, taking in an as yet unrivaled \$2.8 billion worldwide.

The sequel was first set for a 2014 release and has been de-



Director James Cameron.
PHOTO: REUTERS

layed at least three times since then.

Fox did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Cameron's remarks.

Meanwhile, Disney this week gave fans a first glimpse of its Pandora theme park attraction that is due to open at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida in May.

The Pandora attraction features a Na'vi River Journey, floating mountains, luminescent plants, and an Avatar Flight of Passage ride — all inspired by the movie and its upcoming sequels, according to features on Disney-owned TV shows "Good Morning America" and "The View".

Pandora, the World of Avatar is due to open within the park's Animal Kingdom on 27 May.—Reuters

Divide and conquer: Sheeran smashes UK chart records with new album

LONDON — British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran's new album "÷" became the fastest selling by a solo male artist in British chart history on Friday, with hits from the record also dominating the singles chart.

"÷", pronounced "divide", sold 672,000 in its first week, making it the third highest seller of all time behind Adele's "25" and Oasis's "Be Here Now".

The third studio album by Sheeran, 26, has already

achieved "double platinum" status, the Official Charts Company said, and sold more copies than the rest of the top 500 records combined.

Lead single "Shape Of You", initially released in January, was the top selling single, achieving 141,000 combined chart sales. The entire top 5 is composed of other songs by Sheeran, and all 16 songs from the album appear in the top 20.

"Wow! What a phenomenal

week. I'm buzzing," Sheeran said.

The Official Charts Company said that the feat was something that no artist had come close to achieving before.

The album achieved success across all formats. It broke the record for highest first-week streaming sales, set by grime rapper Stormzy just last week, and even achieved the biggest one-week vinyl sales in over 20 years.

—Reuters



Ed Sheeran performs at the 59th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California, US, on 12 February 2017.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Kristen Stewart says coming out is worthwhile if she can help others

NEW YORK — Sporting a bleached-blond buzz cut, American actress Kristen Stewart hit the red carpet in New York to promote her new film "Personal Shopper", saying she hoped to help others by going public about her sexual orientation.

The 26-year-old, who used to date her co-star from the "Twilight" film series, Robert Pattinson, made headlines in February when she announced she was gay while hosting the US late night sketch show "Saturday Night Live".

"I always wanted to keep what was mine in private, mine. And then I thought like you know, you open it up a little

bit and you can help one or two people, it's absolutely worth it," she said on Thursday.

"Personal Shopper", directed by Olivier Assayas, tells the story of Maureen (Stewart), an American woman working in Paris, who is trying to connect with the spirit of her dead brother Lewis. The film has been described as a seductive, mysterious ghost-story, but Assayas said it was simply a coming of age tale.

"It's a character who is in a moment in her life where she has to somehow become herself because she's just lost her twin brother. So it's really like a character who is one half of herself and she will gradually rebuild her life and become someone," Assayas said.

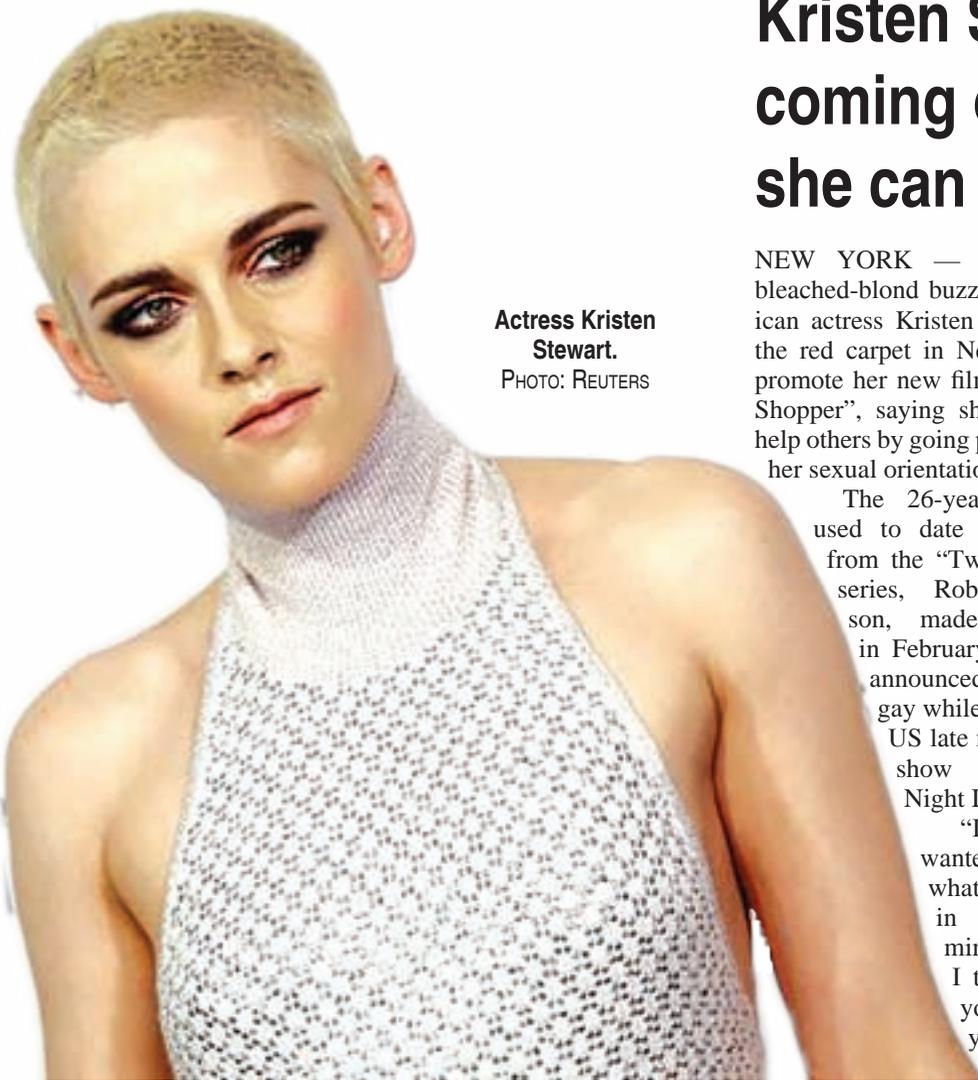
The film, which also stars Nora Von Waldstatten and Sigrid Bouaziz, first premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2016 and will be released in US theatres today.—Reuters

James Bond writers approached for next 007 movie

LOS ANGELES — James Bond screenwriters Neal Purvis and Robert Wade are gearing up to write the new, as-yet-untitled 007 film.

The writing duo are frequent collaborators with the 007 franchise, having penned many Bond pictures including "Casino Royale", "Quantum of Solace", "Skyfall" and "Spectre", the latter of which they boarded at a later stage, reported Deadline.

However, it is still unclear as to whether or not Daniel Craig will reprise his role as 007 but producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G Wilson are keen for him to return.—PTI



Actress Kristen Stewart.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Thai contestant crowned Miss International Queen in transgender pageant

PATTAYA — Thai contestant Jiratchaya Sirimongkolnawin was crowned Miss International Queen 2016 on Friday at a contest billed as the world's largest and most popular transgender pageant.

The 25-year-old beat 24 other contestants for the crown, with the second and third place going to contestants from Brazil and Venezuela, respectively.

The pageant, which brings together transgender people from around the world, was launched over

a decade ago to help transgender women feel more accepted by society.

"It's like a new category, but the gender already existed a long time ago," said Jiratchaya, donning a white glittering and black side rim evening gown.

The contest, in its 12th year, was held at the Tiffany's nightclub in the Thai seaside town of Pattaya, which is famous for its transvestite cabaret.

Like other beauty pageants, contestants paraded in national costumes, evening

gowns and swimsuits.

For many, the contest represents a springboard for future opportunities.

Thailand remains a largely conservative society, with no laws recognising same-sex unions though it has a prominent lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

The 2016 show was postponed from November last year due to Thailand's mourning period of its late King Bhumibol Adulyadej who died at age 88 on 13 October.—Reuters



Contestant Jiratchaya Sirimongkolnawin of Thailand waves after she was crowned winner of the Miss International Queen 2016 transgender/transsexual beauty pageant in Pattaya, Thailand, on 10 March 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Tech workers find communal living a solution for high rents

SAN FRANCISCO — Zander Dejah, 25, pays \$1,900 a month rent to live in a downtown San Francisco house with at least 40 other people, many of whom sleep in bunk beds.

Dejah is a resident of The Negev, a communal living space that styles itself as a home for millennial tech workers to brainstorm ideas, write code and create apps, even if they have to share toilets and bathrooms with dozens of others.

Houses like The Negev, located in a neighbourhood known as "SoMa" or South of Market, have cropped up around San Francisco as an influx of young professionals, many of whom are tech workers, have faced the city's notoriously high rents and apartment shortages. It has three floors and roughly 50 rooms, filled with bunk beds, beer bottles and laptops, according to residents.

Dejah, born and raised



People work on their computers during a weekend Hackathon event in San Francisco, California, US, on 16 July 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

in New York, graduated last year with a degree in computer science and math from McGill University. Unemployed, he moved to California six months ago and found his room at The Negev on Craigslist.

"I thought New York was expensive," said De-

jah, who quickly landed a job as a virtual reality engineer at consulting firm moBack. "It's basically an extension of college. We sort of live in a frat house."

The home is certainly filled with parties on weekends, but the residents make sure to sit down every Sun-

day for a communal dinner, akin to a traditional family gathering. While some say communal housing provides a solution for many first-time workers fresh out of college, such housing also has created its share of controversy. Housing advocates have complained that

this new dorm-like style of living has pushed up rents and forced longtime residents to move out. Alon Gutman, who co-founded a company called The Negev and began leasing the building on Sixth street in 2014, said, "We have never made somebody move out of that building," adding that his tenants pay 30 per cent to 50 per cent less than others in the neighbourhood.

"We are trying to solve the housing crisis and increase density in a positive way." The Negev company runs nine communal properties, three of which are in San Francisco. The others are in Austin, Texas, and Oakland, California. The Negev properties, generally in run-down, low-income neighbourhoods, are restructured to accommodate a large number of tenants, Gutman explained.

Sarah Sherburn-Zimmer, executive director of the Housing Rights Com-

mittee of San Francisco, said housing problems have arisen because occupants leave buildings being converted to communal homes and cannot afford to move back in or the space is no longer suitable for them.

"The Negev house takes affordable housing and makes it unaffordable," said Sherburn-Zimmer. "All they've done is take away housing from people who had it and loved it and pushed them out to make a quick buck."

Kumar Srikantappa, 31, who also pays \$1,900 a month for a single room at The Negev, said he chose the house because of the social experience. After eight months there, the software engineer for Oracle Corp said he would soon be ready to live elsewhere.

"I met a bunch of friends, and I just want to move on to another location and into a bigger place," he said. "It's time."—Reuters

Dutch sculptor may create female version of Russian Internet star Zhdun

MOSCOW — Dutch sculptor Margriet Van Breevoort, whose sculpture Homunculus loxodontus became an Internet sensation in Russia under the name Zhdun, said she may create a female version of the creature.

Van Breevoort published a photo of the sculpture in progress on her Instagram page Friday, suggesting that its name will be Zhdunya, a female version of Zhdun.

The sculpture, named

Homunculus loxodontus its creator, was intended to symbolize patients' experience of waiting to see a doctor in the hope for better news and installed at the medical centre of Leiden University in the Netherlands. The photograph of the piece went viral in the Russian social media under the name Zhdun, roughly meaning "the one who waits." It was used in many jokes, including those mocking the work of the Russian Post.—Tass

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(12-3-2017 07:00am ~ 13-3-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	History And Mystery Behind The Caves
07:51	Am	Philatelic Pleasure
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Wonderful Indonesia (Electronic Media Trip)
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	The Precious Lands of Myanmar (Mandalay Region)
10:03	Am	News
10:26	Am	Tips on By-Election
10:44	Am	The Recycle Art: Tyre

(11:00 Am ~ 03:00 Pm)- Saturday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Pm ~ 07:00 Pm) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	News
07:26	Pm	Travelogue: "Anyar Myay" or Upcountry (Part - I)
07:50	Pm	Today Myanmar: Yangon Book Plaza
08:03	Pm	News
08:27	Pm	Myanmar National Poet And Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose - Min Thu Wun (Ep-2) Student Life & Early Literary Career
08:53	Pm	Myanmar Masterclass: Conceptual Art

(09:00 Pm ~ 11:00 Pm) -Today Repeat (09:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(11:00 Pm ~ 03:00 Am)- Saturday Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)
(03:00 Am ~ 07:00 Am) -Today Repeat (07:00 Am ~ 11:00 Am)

(For Detailed Schedule – www.myanmaritv.com/schedule)

Milan livid after Juve win with stoppage time penalty

MILAN — AC Milan came within seconds of ending Juventus' 17-month run of home league wins before a hugely controversial penalty gave the Serie A leaders a 2-1 win in a stormy match on Friday.

The penalty was awarded for handball by Mattia De Sciglio although Stephan Lichtsteiner's cross hit him at point-blank range and, in any case, appeared to strike his stomach rather than his hand.

After a long consultation between the referee and the goal-line assistant, and amid furious Milan protests, Paulo Dybala converted the spot kick in the seventh minute of stoppage time and give Juventus their 31st home league win in a row.

The win left Juventus 11 points clear of second-placed AS Roma who visit Palermo on Sunday. Milan, whose more modest aim is to qualify for the Europa League, are seventh.

Defender Mehdi Benatia gave Juventus the lead on the half hour from close range but Carlos Bacca levelled two minutes before halftime when he prodded the ball past Gianluigi Buffon from Gerard Delefoeu's pass.

Juventus dominated the sec-



Juventus' Paulo Dybala celebrates with teammates after scoring against AC Milan during the match of Italian Serie A between Juventus and AC Milan at the Juventus stadium in Turin, Italy on 10 March, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

ond half but could not seem to find a way past Gianluigi Donnarumma.

The 18-year-old Milan goalkeeper produced a superb double save when he parried Sami Khe-

dira's shot and then tipped Gonzalo Higuain's effort around the post from the rebound.

He made another outstanding save to block an Higuain shot in stoppage time but Juventus

were awarded the penalty immediately afterwards.

Milan were down to 10 men by that time after Jose Sosa was sent off for a vicious sliding tackle.—Reuters

Facebook signs soccer live-streaming deal with MLS, Univision

CHICAGO — Facebook Inc signed a deal with Major League Soccer and Spanish-language broadcaster Univision Communications Inc on Friday to stream at least 22 matches in English during the 2017 regular season.

As fans increasingly rely on the internet to watch games, social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter Inc have stepped up their focus on signing live-streaming sports deals.

The first match streamed on the social media platform will feature new MLS club Atlanta United hosting Chicago Fire on 18 March. The MLS will also produce 40 "Matchday Live" shows, including highlights and analysis, exclusive to Facebook.

The games will be streamed on the Facebook page of Univision Deportes, the multimedia sports business of Univision, while the shows will be available on MLS' Facebook page. The financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. Univision decided to use Facebook Live to live stream Mexican soccer matches in English last month. Under that deal, the broadcaster said it would stream 46 matches by Mexican soccer league Liga MX in 2017 on Facebook.—Reuters

Liverpool will have no plan B for Burnley clash — Klopp



Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp said he will not have a back-up plan in case things go wrong in Sunday's Premier League clash against Burnley at Anfield despite his side struggling against teams near the foot of the table.

Liverpool are unbeaten

against the current top six, but their five league losses have come against teams in the bottom half, including defeats to relegation-threatened sides Hull City, Swansea City and Leicester City.

"I know what people say and is not the first time people

have said something like this, but I don't have a Plan B in my mind," Klopp told reporters on Friday.

"We've spoken about the things we have to do, but not in the case of a team against the lower part of the table. We know how to play but in the end you have to make the right decisions.

"My job is to help them make the right decisions more easily. That is what training is for. It is a challenge."

Klopp paid tribute to James Milner, who has played as a left back this season, as the versatile midfielder prepares to make his 600th league appearances on Sunday.

Captain Jordan Henderson and forward Daniel Sturridge will miss the clash at Anfield through injury while striker Roberto Firmino is a doubt with a thigh problem after last weekend's win over Arsenal.—Reuters

Chelsea's Conte will not rein in touch-line enthusiasm

LONDON — Chelsea manager Antonio Conte has no intention of toning down his energetic touch-line antics and passionate goal celebrations ahead of Monday's FA Cup quarter-final against Manchester United at Stamford Bridge.

Former Chelsea boss and current United manager Jose Mourinho took exception to Conte whipping up the crowd when the London club were four goals ahead during the 4-0 Premier League win over the Manchester club in October.

"I've shown at Chelsea, not only Chelsea, every team that I managed, that I live the game with great passion," Conte told reporters on Friday.

"Sometimes I want to share my enthusiasm, my passion with my players, with my staff, also with the fans. I think it's normal. For me the most important thing is to try to win, then to think for another celebration."

Following October's clash, Mourinho told Conte that his antics had been "humiliating" for



Chelsea manager Antonio Conte. PHOTO: REUTERS

the visitors.

"I don't think it's important," Conte added when asked if he had discussed the incident with Mourinho. "Nothing we have to clarify with him."

With Chelsea 10 points clear at the top of the league table, Conte hinted he will field a strong side.

"For sure I try to make the best decision for the team because we want to go in the next round just like Manchester United," the Italian said.—Reuters