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Tuesday, 2 January 2018



18,000 Buddhist monks gather at the Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday to consecrate the Shwedagon Pagoda during the holy ceremony.
PHOTO: HTIN AUNG (INSEIN)

18,000 monks consecrate Shwedagon

President U Htin Kyaw, First Lady, attend holy ceremony, provide offerings to 18,000 monks

THE Union government of Myanmar held a ceremony to consecrate the Shwedagon Pagoda in Buddhist Era 2561, along with 18,000 members of the Sangha (Buddhist monks), and

offer provisions to the monks at the majestic Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday.

The ceremony began at 6:30 a.m. at the Shwedagon Pagoda, and it was attended

by President U Htin Kyaw and First Lady Daw Su Su Lwin.

The ceremony was formally opened by Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Dr. Eiddhi Bala, Yangon Region Sangha Nayaka

Committee Chairman; President U Htin Kyaw; Union ministers Dr. Pe Myint, Thura U Aung Ko, U Ohn Win, U Thein Swe and Dr. Than Myint; U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Re-

gion Chief Minister; and Yangon Command Commander Maj-Gen. Thet Pone by cutting the ceremonial ribbon and pressing a button.

SEE PAGE-3



BEST BANK IN MYANMAR

Awarded by EUROMONEY 2017

Umbrella and diamond orb fixed at Nan Oo Pagoda in Ayeyawady Region

A CEREMONY to hoist a golden umbrella, diamond orb and pennant shape vane atop Nan Oo Pagoda at the Nan Oo Home for the Aged, Nan Daw Kyun Village, in Danubyu Township in Ayeyawady Region, was held yesterday.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint, Speaker of Ayeyawady Region Hluttaw U Aung Kyaw Khaing, Ayeyawady Region Municipal and Religious Affairs Minister U

Kyaw Myint, well-wishers, invited guests and local people attended at the ceremony.

The ceremony was opened by three times recitation of Namo Tassa. They then carried the umbrella, relics, diamond orb and pennant shape vane round the pagoda.

Then U Win Myint and well-wishers stored relics in the upper reliquary of the pagoda and hoisted the umbrella tiers atop the pagoda.

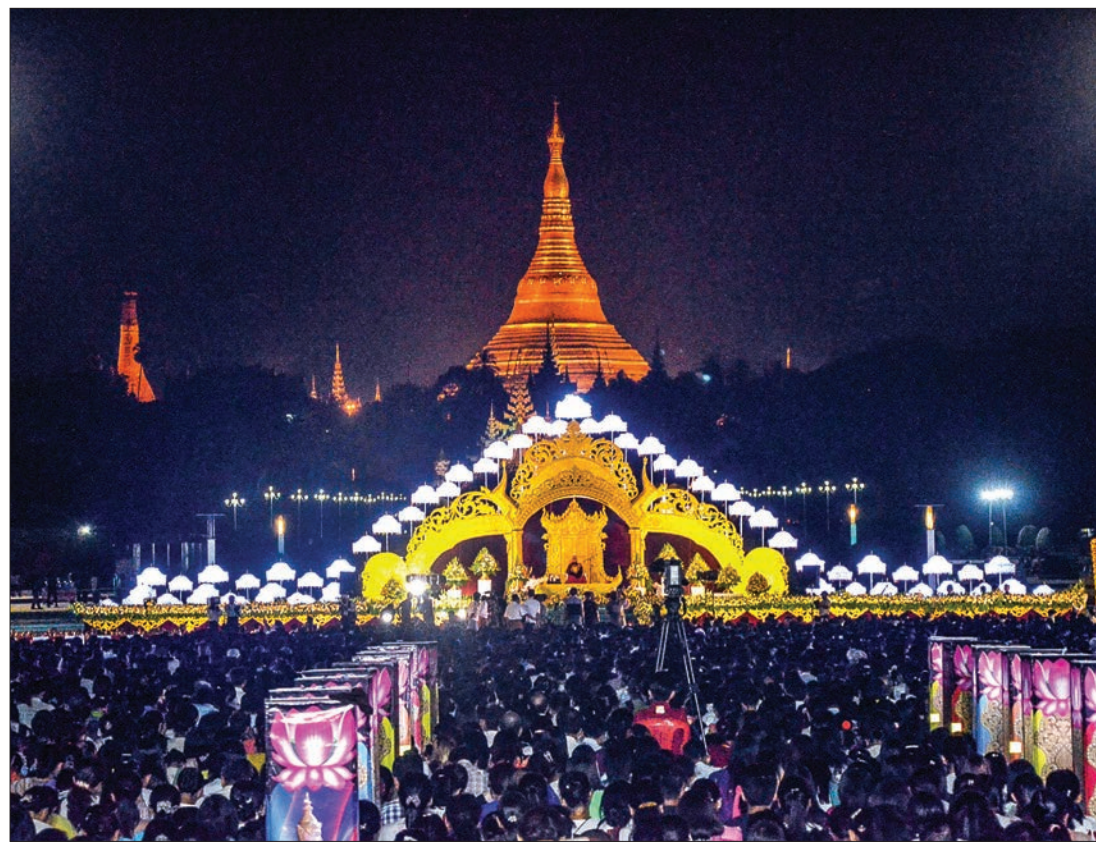
Afterwards, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint and party visited the Kyaikkalunpon Pagoda, which is situated in Danuphyu Township, Ayeyawady Region.

He signed the guest of honor book and offered cash donations to the Board of Trustees, after which he received the Donation Certificate from the officials of the Board of Trustees.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint and well-wishers fix the tiers of golden umbrella to Nan Oo Pagoda in Danubyu Township in Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: MNA**

Yangon Region Government holds New Year Dhamma Donation Ceremony



Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Nanda Mala Bivamsa delivers the sermon at the New Year Dhamma Donation Ceremony at the People's Park near Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday night. **PHOTO: ZAW GYI**

YANGON Region Government held a New Year Dhamma Donation Ceremony at the People's Park at the foot of Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday evening.

Yesterday evening, Rector Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Nanda Mala Bivamsa gave a sermon.

Among the congregation were Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, regional ministers, Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint,

government officials and devotees from townships in Yangon Region.

Commenting on the sermon, Daw Nwe Nwe Win of North Okkalapa Township said, "It is a mingalar (auspiciousness) to start a new year by listening to the sermon of well-known Sayadaws. Today's sermon is about the importance of living a life with morality. If people live according to this way of live taught by the sayadaw, they'll become good person to their communities.

The sermon was very useful for me and I wish that this good tradition is maintained in the following years."

The New Year Dhamma Donation ceremony will be held for three days until 3 January. Sitagu Sayadaw and Sayadaw Ashin Sanda Dika will deliver their sermons on the second day and third day respectively.

Similar New Year Dhamma Donation ceremony was held by Yangon Region Government for five days from 1 to 5 January 2016. — Zaw Gyi ■

Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Mr. Lee Sang-hwa as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Lee Sang-hwa was born on 26 March 1968. He graduated from Korea University in February 1991 specializing in Spanish Language and Literature. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in April 1991. He served as First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations in New York from 2000 to 2003, and as Counsellor at the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Colombia from 2003 to 2006. He also served as member of the transition team for the 8th United Nations Secretary General Designate Ban Ki-moon in 2006 and as assistant to the United Nations Secretary-General from 2007 to 2014. He served as Deputy Director-General of the Policy Planning Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea in 2014 and as policy advisor to the Minister in 2015. He has been serving as Director-General of the North Korean Nuclear Affairs Department since September 2016. He is married with two daughters.—Ministry of Foreign Affairs ■

Fresh pigeon pea supplies fail to stimulate market

ALTHOUGH fresh supplies of pigeon pea have started entering the Mandalay market, the market has failed to pick up, according to U Soe Win Myint, owner of Soe Win Myint brokerage.

"The new stocks of pigeon pea are selling for Ks42,000 per bag, while they are being bought for Ks40,000 per bag. The old stocks are selling at Ks35,500. However, only merchants are buying the old stocks to store them," said U Soe Win Myint.

"Pigeon pea from Kyaukpadaung, Magway and Tada-U are entering the Mandalay bean market. However, the local farmers are not getting a high price

for growing high-quality pigeon pea. Cultivating pigeon pea costs between Ks50,000 and Ks60,000 per acre," said U Zaw, a local pigeon pea grower from the Magway Region.

The price of pigeon pea and mung bean — a green gram which is mainly exported — has remained low on the local market in 2017, while Myanmar has suspended the export of various pulses to India. Local bean merchants and growers expect Myanmar's pigeon pea exports to the Indian market to resume, as well as penetrate other markets in 2018, it is learnt. — Zin Oo (MMAL) ■

18,000 monks consecrate Shwedagon

FROM PAGE-1

The second part of the ceremony was then held on “Victory Land” in the northwest section of the Shwedagon Pagoda platform, where the congregation received the Nine Precepts from Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa, Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, followed by the recitation of parittas by the members of the Sangha.

Next, the President and wife, union ministers, chief ministers of states and regions and Yangon Command Commander presented offerings to 45 revered monks led by the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Chairman and Sitagu Sayadaw.

Later, the President donated Ks1 million to Shwedagon Pagoda, while donors contributed gold, silver and cash.

This was followed by an explanation by Thura U Aung Ko, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture, about reli-

gious matters. Next, the Sitagu Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Nanisara delivered a sermon to the congregation, and the attendees shared merits gained from the donation.

Afterwards, the 18,000 monks, led by the Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, including senior monks from foreign countries, recited the consecration verses.

The ceremony concluded with the three-time recitation of “Buddha Sasanan Ciran Tittahtu”, (May the Sasana endure forever).

The President, his wife and other attendees then offered meals to the 18,000 members of the Sangha.

In the afternoon, a ceremony to offer rice to the 18,000 monks was held at the four entrances of the pagoda. Union Ministers, Yangon Region ministers and donors offered rice and other provisions to 18,000 monks. —Myanmar News Agency ■



Sayadaws consecrate the Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



President U Htin Kyaw and Union ministers open the ceremony to consecrate the Shwedagon Pagoda. **PHOTO: MNA**



President U Htin Kyaw and First Lady Daw Su Su Lwin donate alms-offerings to Sayadaws. **PHOTO: MNA**



President U Htin Kyaw and First Lady arrive at the Shwedagon Pagoda to attend the ceremony to consecrate the pagoda. **PHOTO: MNA**



The congregation led by President U Htin Kyaw and First Lady Daw Su Su Lwin share merits gained following the ceremony to consecrate the Shwedagon Pagoda. **PHOTO: MNA**

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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.

Over 1,200 patients receive free eye treatment in Indaw, Katha District



Patients waiting to receive free eye treatment at a camp in Indaw Township, Katha District. **PHOTO: LU AUNG (KATHA)**



A woman examined by eye specialist at the monastery compound in Indaw Township.

MORE than 1,200 patients are listed to receive free eye treatment at a camp held in the Myoma Pariyatti monastery compound, Indaw Town in Katha District, Sagaing Region, from 31 December 2017 to 1 January

2018.

"All the patients were examined by eye specialists. A few patients were treated at the Indaw public hospital, while those requiring emergency treatment were brought to Mandalay Gen-

eral Hospital.

The overall expenditure for the patients' treatment was borne by local corporate donors from Indaw Township, as well as Shwe Indaw family restaurant.

The free eye treatment pro-

gramme was held with the aim of improving the patients' vision and physical appearance.

Professor Doctor Yee Yee Aung led the team of eye specialists, comprising 10 eye surgeons.—Lu Aung (Katha) ■

Railway accidents rise in 2017-2018 FY

THE number of railway accidents increased in 2017-2018 FY, compared with the same period in 2016-2017 FY, according to Myanma Railways (MR).

Although MR is ensuring safe travel, accidents still occur on the Yangon city circular railway, leading to at least seven fatal cases per month due to the negligence of traffic rules

on the part of passengers.

A survey report showed that many accidents occurred as people, particularly those living near the railways, failed to observe the traffic rules. Some 74 persons were injured and 121 died in 2013-2014 FY; 80 were injured and 96 died in 2014-2015 FY; 54 became injured and 77 died in 2015-2016

FY; 77 were injured and 102 died in 2016-2017 FY; and 70 were injured and 54 died in 2017-2018 FY due to accidents, said U Kyaw Kyaw Myo, general manager of MR.

"People break the rules by walking, sitting, lying or chatting on the rails. In some cases, people cross the rails, even when a train is speeding

towards them. These are the main causes of accidents," he added.

MR has been conducting continuous educational talks and distributing pamphlets, as well as erecting billboards at the basic education school near the railway station, to reduce the incidence of accidents. — 001 ■

Electrical fire engulfs hostel in Ngaputaw

AN electrical fire occurred on Bogoyoke Street in Southern Ward, Ngaputaw Township, Patheingyi District, Ayeyawady Region on Saturday night, according to a police report.

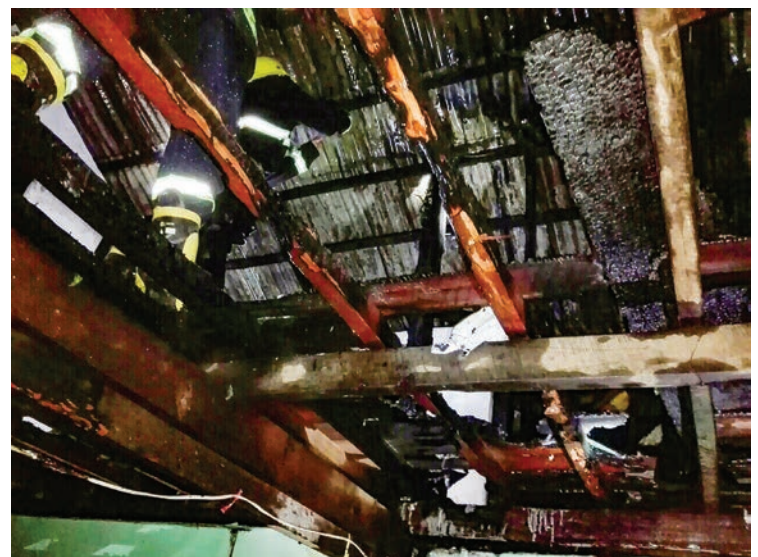
No injuries have been reported after the fire destroyed the building. According to the investigation, the fire started at the upper level of the hostel owned by Saw Eal Shi Mu at around 7.45 pm on that day due to damaged wires. The blaze

quickly spread to other parts of the building.

The loss due to the fire is estimated to reach more than Ks3 million, said firefighters.

With the assistance of local police and residents, firefighters successfully controlled the flame within 10 minutes.

Police are still investigating the case and action is being taken against the house owner under the existing law.—Hla Min Htut (IPRD) ■



No injuries have been reported after the fire destroyed the building in Ngaputaw. **PHOTO: HLA MIN HTUT (IPRD)**

Myanmar's trade with EU hit over US\$1.35 billion as of October this FY

MYANMAR'S trade with members of the European Union (EU), during the first seven months of the current financial year (FY), reached over US\$1.35 billion, comprising \$893 million in exports and \$459 million in imports, according to statistics released by the Ministry of Commerce last Friday.

Since April, Germany was ranked first among EU countries with the largest trade value, of some \$338 million with Myanmar, followed by Britain in second place, with about \$200 million. France was listed in third place with trade valued at some \$168 million, while Italy stood at fourth place with an estimated trade value of \$127 million. Myanmar's trade with the Netherlands reached about \$117 million.

The value of bilateral trade with Spain was some \$101 million, while that with Belgium was \$96 million. Trade with Denmark brought in more than \$60 million.

Trade values with Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Poland, Finland, Bulgaria, Romania, Luxembourg, Austria, Hungary, Estonia, Ireland, Portugal and Malta was less than \$50 million each.

Beyond the regional trade regime, Myanmar has established trade links with EU member countries.

Myanmar mainly exported rice, pulses, tea leaves, coffee, apparel from the garment sector on cut-make-pack basis and fisheries products, while cosmetics, food and beverages and consumer goods were imported into Myanmar.

Myanmar reinstated the

EU's Generalised Scheme of Preference (GSP) starting 19 July, 2013.

Myanmar can enjoy GSP while exporting fisheries, rice, pulses, agro products, bamboo and rattan finished products, forestry products, apparels, as well as finished industrial goods.

The trade value with EU countries was about \$1.42 billion in FY 2016-2017, \$653 million in FY 2015-16, \$631 million in FY 2014-2015, \$543 million in FY 2013-2014, \$400 million in FY 2012-2013 and \$404 million in FY 2011-2012.

EU member countries also made investments in several sectors, especially into petroleum and natural gas enterprises, manufacturing, transport, hotels and tourism, and livestock businesses. — Ko Htet ■

India-Myanmar bilateral border trade continues to decrease

BILATERAL border trade with India totalled US\$52.98 million in the past nine months of this fiscal year, a decrease of over \$15 million against the same period of last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

As of 22 December, neighbouring India bought over \$11.86 million worth of commodities from Myanmar, whereas exports between the two countries reached more than \$41 million.

Over the past 265 days, bilateral trade from the two border gates showed a decline in both exports and imports, according to the ministry's statistics. Border trade between the two countries is conducted mainly through the Tamu and Reed cross-border points.

However, the country mostly uses marine trade routes for bilateral imports and exports.

Myanmar normally exports ginger, saffron, turmeric, bay leaves and other kinds of fruits and vegetables, plus human hair, fishery and forest products to the neighbouring country and imports medicines, oil-cakes, electronic products, motorbikes, cotton yarn, non-alloy steel and other construction materials.

The total border trade between Myanmar and neighbouring countries topped \$5.6 billion since April, which saw an increase of \$170 million compared with the same period of last FY. However, total border imports decreased in value by \$18 million against last year.—Shwe Khine ■



JANUARY SPECIAL

Rice Cake and Dumpling Soup (USD 22⁺⁺)

This January, the chefs at Mugunghwa are serving guests an elegant taste of Korea with a special menu promoting the refined flavours of the restaurant's famed rice cakes and dumpling soup.



Healthy Business Lunch Set

(USD 19⁺⁺/set)

Mugunghwa's healthy business lunch combination of Korean famous food items with the healthy fresh juices.

Available on: Daily Lunch

À La Carte Menu : Starting from \$10

Service Hours : Lunch : 11:30 am ~ 2:30 pm
: Dinner : 6:00 pm ~ 10:00 pm

Location : Hotel Building, 1F

For Reservation:
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Our chef's creations include ;

- 'Drunken' beer duck
- A classic aromatic crispy duck
- Teochew duck,

plus a large variety of refined soups, salads and noodle dishes.



DIM SUM SET LUNCH

(USD 17⁺⁺)

Toh Lim's dim sum menu brings an authentic taste of Hong Kong to the heart of Yangon.

Guests are treated to ;

- Two appetizers

A dim sum selection consisting of

- Five hand-chosen dishes
- A choice of rice or noodles, and
- A fruit platter

with accompanying chinese desserts.

À La Carte Menu : Starting from \$5
Set Menu : Starting from \$50

Service Hours;
Lunch : 11:30 am ~ 2:30 pm
Dinner : 6:00 pm ~ 10:00 pm

Location : Hotel Building, 14F
For Reservation;
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Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends the ceremony to fix the golden umbrella atop Myenitaung Pagoda in Lewe Township, Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Golden umbrella hoisted atop Myenitaung Pagoda

A CEREMONY to fix the golden umbrella atop Myenitaung Pagoda in Lewe Township near Nay Pyi Taw Airport was held in conjunction with a ceremony to consecrate the pagoda yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by Buddhist monks led by Aye Lar Town, Myothit Dhamma Rakhita Monastery principal Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vimala and guests led by Commander-in-Chief of

Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, Deputy Commander-in-Chief and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win.

First the congregation took the Eight Precepts from Aye Lar Town, Myothit Dhamma Rakhita Monastery principal patron Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vimala.

Next, Tatmadaw Command-

er-in-Chief and wife, Tatmadaw Deputy Commander-in-Chief and Commander-in-Chief (Army) and officials donated, diamond orb, vane, golden umbrella and other offerings to the Members of the Sangha. Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nyanisara delivered a sermon and the congregation shared the merit gained. Members of the Sangha consecrated the pagoda. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin meets ethnic culture officials in Hpa-an



Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin holds the meeting on construction of office for Ethnic Literature and Culture in Hpa-an **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nai Thet Lwin together with Deputy Permanent Secretary U Aung Soe Win, visited a construction site for the office of Ethnic Literature and Culture Department and the Department of Protection of Ethnic Rights in Hpa-an, Kayin State on 31 December.

The Union Minister was welcomed there by Kayin State Minister for Mon Ethnic Affairs U Min Tin Win, Kayin State Minister for Bamar Ethnic Affairs U Teza Htut Hlaing Htwe and other officials. The Union Minister

called for timely completion of the project, minimizing waste and loss in accord with allotted fund after he heard reports presented by U Myint Thu, a project engineer at the briefing hall.

The branch offices of the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs are being constructed in Hpa-an, Loikaw, Mawlamyine, Bago and Patheingyi by the Building Department under the Ministry of Construction. The afore-said buildings are planned to be opened on 71st anniversary of the Union Day.—Myanmar Digital News ■



Workers carrying sacks of rice at the Maungtau Border Trade Zone in Maungtau. **PHOTO: NAY WIN TUN**

Maungtau border trade zone conducts trade worth US\$2 million

TRADE zones in Maungtau, Rakhine State, carried out trade worth US\$8.311 million during fiscal year (FY) 2017-2018, according to official statistics from the Maungtau Border Trade Zone.

Exports during FY 2016-2017 were worth \$5.918 million, while for this fiscal they were \$8.311 million. Therefore, exports are

expected to exceed \$2.366 million more than last year.

Myanmar's main exports to Bangladesh are rice, ginger, silk, cotton, onions, fish, prawns, dried fish, bamboo, cane and other industrial goods.

The imports arriving through the Maungtau Border Trade Zone from Bangladesh

have ceased since the violent attacks in October 2016.

The trade zones between Myanmar and Bangladesh mostly rely on the swell and ebb of the river, and the Kanyin Chaung trade zone is being developed to pave way for larger cargo vessels, according to officials.—Myint Maung, Zeyar ■

116 died, 863 injured in 555 traffic accidents on highway in 2017

SOME 555 traffic accidents occurred along the Yangon-Man-dalay Highway in 2017, killing 116 and injuring 863.

During 2016, there were some 744 traffic accidents, killing 170 persons and injuring another 1,304.

Just in December 2017, seven were killed and 67 injured in 45 traffic accidents.

The number of deaths and injuries, however, were fewer in 2017 than those in 2016, an official from the Ministry of

Construction said.

Of the 555 vehicle accidents in 2017, 153 were involved in speeding, 74 were due to drowsy driving, 22 due to undisciplined road crossing or jay-walking by pedestrians, 81 due to reckless motorbike driving, 59 due to reckless driving, 137 because of flat tyres while driving, 24 due to cars breaking down, and five because of slipping on the roads.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Correction

Please read "Rector Prof. Dr. Mar Mar Win" in the caption of the story "31st Convocation ceremony of Yezin University of Veterinary Science" on page-12, 1st January Issue of the Global New Light of Myanmar. —Ed ■

Students bring home glory at world's 1st Global Robotics Competition

Following is the interview with the team of Myanmar students who achieved sixth out of 163 teams at 1st Global Robotics Competition.

By Nandar Win and
Win Win Maw

One hundred sixty three teams from 157 countries competed in the First Global Challenge 2017 Robotic Competition held in Washington D.C. from 16 to 18 July, with the Myanmar team finishing sixth in the competition. Six Myanmar students, Maung Wai Yar Aung from Yangon Technological University (YTU), Ma Yuzana Win from the University of Information Technology (UIT), Maung Wai Yan Htun from Goethe Institute, Thailand, Ma May Pyae Sone Kyaw from UIT, Maung Phone Thiha Kyaw from YTU and Maung Kyaw Za Zaw from ILBC were interviewed about participating in the competition.

Q. Tell us about the competition and the (host) country.

A. Yuzana Win: We participated in the First Global Challenge 2017 Robotic Competition held in Washington D.C., with 163 teams from 157 countries competing in it. All teams needed to make their own robots in their countries to compete in it. We stood sixth.

Q. Our team consisted of different schools. How was it organized? Which organization made the selection?

A. Yuzana Win: Phandee-yar: Myanmar Innovation Lab announced the competition by posting it on notice boards at technology universities, such as YTU and UIT, and conducted talks to apply for participating in the competition. Then they conducted interviews. From this, they formed a team with selected students.

Q. What were the preparations that were made so our team could compete in the competition?

A. Wai Yan Htun: Phandee-yar selected us, and seven students were formed into a team. About one to two months was given to construct the robot. A robot kit box was sent from the U.S. to build the robot. The materials in the robot kit box were something new for our team members. In order to familiarize ourselves with



The team of Myanmar engineering students participate in the First Global Challenge 2017 Robotic Competition. **PHOTO: HLA MOE**



The team of Myanmar students give thump-up at the First Global Challenge 2017 Robotic Competition held in Washington D.C.. **PHOTO: HLA MOE**

the materials, we started out by constructing a small robot. But the (robot kit box) materials were unfamiliar for us and we had to spend quite some time reading about it in the Guide Book included, as well as online. We tried building a small robot repeatedly, before we built the actual robot (to compete).

A. Wai Yar Aung: We divided the team into hardware and software groups. I'm in the hardware part. We (hardware members) constructed and tested a small robot first. Then we discussed what would be the most effective way to construct the robot for competition, and how to compete in accordance to the game de-

sign. After repeated constructions, we ended up with this one. Once we had the final design, we repeatedly tested it to ensure that it operated in accordance with the competition rules. At each stages of constructing the robot, we discussed and coordinated with the software members.

Q. Explain about the part played by software members.

A. Phone Thiha Kyaw: Once the hardware part was completed, we (software members) worked together with the hardware members. The software part was divided into Java and Block Programming. We competed with Block Programming. We

made careful preparations on the electronic portion. The requirement of the software portion was also coordinated and prepared with the hardware portion. We repeatedly practiced with the robot here. After that, we went to Washington D.C. There, we were given two days to prepare. During that period, we practiced with the robot and learned of more requirements. We repaired our errors during those two days.

Q. Explain about the actual competition.

A. Kyaw Za Zaw: All 163 teams were provided with the same robot parts. Each team constructed their robot using their

own thoughts and processes. At the competition, we found 163 different robots made by the 163 teams. We competed under the theme of acquiring clean water by identifying and separating clean and unclean waters. The game (competition) was constructed by designating clean water as blue balls and unclean waters as orange balls. The blue balls were to be collected and put into water reserves, while the orange balls were collected and put into a laboratory for testing. Our robot was constructed for this game. Our robot was able to collect all the blue and orange balls. The robot was also able to classify and separate the blue and orange balls. According to the rules of the game, the area was flooded at the end, so our robots would no longer be on the ground, but needed to hang onto bars placed at the side. If the robot could do all these activities, we received full marks.

A. Phone Thiha Kyaw: It was a two days competition. On the first day, we competed three times. We won two and lost one. The next day, we competed three times and won all. We received many points and we stood sixth among 163 competing teams.

Q. Let us know more about the experience obtained from the competition.

A. Kyaw Za Zaw: Some made robots to throw the balls, while others made robots to carry the balls. We gained much experience from observing how robots were made. The most exciting part of the competition was 20 minutes before the game started when we discussed the strategy with our allied teams. We also reviewed the weaknesses and strengths of each of the robots.

We took part in six games. I controlled and drove the robot myself. Five minutes before the start of the game, the six teams, three from one side and three from another side, took their positions. This was when the excitement was at its peak. During the competition, our robot lost its connection and the Technical Team helped us sort out the problem. We lost some points due to these sorts of errors.

SEE PAGE-10

Auspicious New Year to bring about a Union strong and great

NOW that the year 2017 has just come to an end we are entering the New Year 2018. But, according to the Myanmar Era the old year has not ended yet. Whatever it is, for most of the countries around the world the old year has already ended, hence the need for us, Myanmar citizens to make efforts to bring in the New Year with auspiciousness together with other countries of the world.

With the change into the New Year, we have left the old one in the past. The period of changing into 2018 was a time of great rejoicing for us. People always claim, “The Old Year came to an end. Now let us welcome the New Year.” On such an occasion, we need to brace ourselves and work together to have a meaningful New Year to bring about happiness, good will and well-being for all mankind with positive thoughts and “cetana”. We should review how we have fared individually during the previous year. Being laypersons, we are not free from human failings or errors, as the saying goes, “To err

is human, to forgive divine.” We are required to consider as to whether we have done any wrong-doings or mistakes—in actions, words or thoughts.

The New Year Wish for this year is to bring forth a New Year of Peace prevailing all across our country. Every individual must contribute their physical strength and intellectual capacities for a smooth and successful march towards our goal of Peace and Development.

and family life and our human society.

Positive transformations of our deeds in such a transitional period into the New Year are auspicious. It is a joyful period for people, especially the youths to have a good time and enjoy the New Year with joy and rejoicing. But, we must always take care not to fall into the trap of over-indulgence in enjoying food or other behaviors such as excessive drinking, reckless driving or rowdy behavior which can become a nuisance to others.

The New Year Wish for this year is to bring forth a New Year of Peace prevailing all across our country. Every individual must contribute their physical strength and intellectual capacities for a smooth and successful march towards our goal of Peace and Development. We will be able to celebrate happy events every year only if harmony and peace is achieved in the whole country based on reconciliation, a positive attitude, “metta” and “cetana”.

By taking lessons from experiences we encountered in the year 2017, we must make collective efforts to build up a Union strong and great based on justice, freedom and brotherhood among all national ethnic races. ■

By Min Thein
(Nay Pyi Taw)

THE mild winter that comes together with a polite greeting also carries the unforgettable memories of the past. It

was the time the entire people were awakened with national spirit and the students leaving their classrooms for the national movement, the ethnic peoples of Myanmar signed the Panglong Agreement with full Union spirit, the Union Jack was lowered and

the State Flag of Myanmar was raised. Those memories never wane or vanish. They always come back together with the arrival of the cold season.

Cold season flowers

Most of the cold season



The State Flag is hoisted at the ceremony to mark Myanmar's 69th Anniversary Independence Day.
PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Harmonious steps

flowers are beautiful but lack aroma. Unlike them, Thazin flower has both beauty and aroma. Under the mist of the cold season, I came to remember the words of my late parents, who were Independence mawgun award winners, which said, “Growing on the tall trees above the ground, Thazin flower with sweat smell represents tranquility and warmth.”

Sacrifices

“Independence” is a word easy to write and spell. The restoration of independence is a hard job, and it's a common knowledge. We became an independent state after a long struggle during which the leaders and the ethnic races made lots of sacrifices in terms of life, blood and sweat, my father told me 35 years ago.

Father also said, “You will not notice the value of health as long as you are healthy. Likewise, you will not know the value of air and water as long as they are available. But when you become unhealthy or water and air become insufficient you will understand their values.

The price of freedom

“Similarly, you cannot evaluate the price of independence, at the time when there is liberty. You will understand its value only when you lose it. So, everyone who knows this situation don't want to fall into slavery again. We like people who know well the worthiness of independence, as we had faced the hardships of living under suppression with much bitterness. If we do not want to lose it we must safeguard it.

“An independent country will be prosperous only if it can develop and strengthen its economy. You must always cherish and remember the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the interest of the people and the country with full trust in the national cause. We must always remember the gratitude they owed to us. And we must safeguard the independence at the risk of our lives as they had restored it by sacrificing their lives, blood and sweat.

Special importance

“Myanmar is a sovereign state and union with a long

and significant history. The progress and deterioration of the country depends on the people, and they are the persons who choose the party and the leaders and who entrust them with the power. If the persons who lead the country are corrupt, the country is likely to face deterioration. So, good leaders are of vital importance for the people. People can be organized through the media, gatherings and talks. As I am a journalist, I know well about the media's influence over the people. During the time, talks and assemblies could always raise the sacrificing spirit. We must aware of irresponsible acts against the people. If all know their duties and rights, every New Year will be auspicious.”

Eternal duty

Tradition actually is the work of human beings. People will be more valuable if they have fine traditions. We must take pride of living under the shadows of our ancestors with fine traditions and it encourages our spirit to work harder. So we annually hold our Independence Day with much enthusiasm patriotism and pride. The holding of the Independence Day is our eternal duty.

Myanmar has changed from planned economic system to market-oriented economy. When compared with the neighbouring countries and East European countries that walked on the same path. Myanmar has sufficient legal infrastructures. It has laws that are supportive to the market economy even before 1998, and after the year, it adopted more. The appreciation of multiple ideologies, the respect for everyone's religious freedom, and the co-existence is a culture as well as the essence of democracy.

What should be aware of is that the central government and the region/state governments should make decisions through the Constitution. The distribution of task must also be within the constitutional framework. The force that is ensuring the check and balance system of the democratically elected government is the people. The aspiration and

attitude of the people have indirect influence over the party leaders. If the public aspiration is too strong, there are instances in which the government after making some adaptations has to follow it. The most important thing is the harmony between the government and the people.

Unity as the foundation

It is a common knowledge that the upward trend or the downward trend or the fine qualifications or the poor condition of a country depends of the unity of its people. If the people are giving priority to the narrow minded racial view, localism, party and ideology the country will be in a downward trend facing weakness in every sector. Non-disintegration of national solidarity is the main element of the national politics. The government is taking all necessary measures in making way for the involvement of national politics. The government has adopted the essence of democracy – justice, liberty, unity, transparency and accountability – as the norms of its practice and its goal.

Experiences

In establishing new countries and reforming the existing ones the sharing of power is in its specific way. The system of the sharing of power varies depending on the history, adopted political system, and the efforts and the goal of the leaders of a specific country. Even between the democracies the system is different. The countries are developing themselves under the concept that fair and majority acceptable ideologies flourish only when there is a robust political dialogue. So, all the national races must maintain the unprecedented national solidarity with Union spirit so that the country can stand tall in the international community.

There must be coordination and integration for unity in diversity that may ensure harmonious steps, and through the harmonious steps we all should strive to reach the goal of eternal peace as stated in the 70th Anniversary Independence Day objectives. ■

Translation by
Tin Maung Than

Myanmar is a country where different national races live together and where diverse cultural traditions and religions co-exist. Building harmony and unity out of diversity is of the utmost importance. As we thus unite, the emergence of a federal union acceptable to all is of the essence.

Excerpt from the message sent by U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, to the 7th International Day of Democracy on 15 September, 2017.

The Beauty of Myanmar's Traditional Dance



Photo: Min Min Tun

POEM

Rock of Fragile Eternity

In Bernard Shaw's 'Major Barbara', Barbara herself said,
I stood on the rock I thought eternal;
And without a word it reeled
And crumbled under me'.
Think of yourselves and you'll get a shock
'cause we all are standing on the same rock.
Incredibly, the rock is cracking in disarray;
Our skin's beauty is, thus, nothing but braaivleis.
What we all have to do is to make this moment best,
Possibly we have to carve it out the crest.
We wish all fire would cease.
Be people from all walks of life at peace!
Let all flowers blossom!
Let all children recite lexicon!
Let all people say their prayers under the moon!
Let dreams come true soon!
Without dwelling on past failures,
And on glorious past achievements,
Why not we establish fraternity
As we are standing on the rock of fragile eternity.

Maung Win War



in
Picture

People donate provisions to 18,000 Buddhist monks during the holy ceremony at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday. Union Government held a ceremony to consecrate the Shwedagon Pagoda along with 18,000 Buddhist monks and to donate provisions to 18,000 monks. **PHOTO: SAW THEIN WIN**

Interview with Myanmar students who bring home glory at the world's first Global Robotics Competition

FROM PAGE-7

Q. Which countries were awarded prizes?

A. Wai Yan Htun: After completing in four games, we were at the top standing as number one. But in the last two games, others overtook our points and we ended up in sixth place. The five teams above our team were European teams. Myanmar is in sixth place, but we stand at first among Asian teams.

Q. What is your advice to brothers and sisters who will compete in next year's competition?

A. Wai Yan Htun: By competing for the first time, we found many new and strange things. We are sharing this so that those who compete next year will have less difficulty. The main thing I want to say is that we are not lagging behind in ASEAN. We are number one in Asia. It is with this moral force that we want to request our brothers and sisters to raise



The team of Myanmar students prepare for the 1st international robotics competition. **PHOTO: HLA MOE**

Myanmar's flag next year.

I am not a handicapped person, as I can see and hear. But I saw two participants from a country who were deaf. They built their robot using sign languages. I found this admirable and respectable. Some who came to compete from countries like

Syria and Afghanistan, where wars were raging, won prizes. So don't give any reason and say we could not do this or that. Look at people like these. They are the heroes of this competition. They compete with others, even though they were facing many difficulties. This is the good experience

I gained from this competition and the respect I had (for the competitors).

A: Yuzana Win: Compared with males, females sometime think that they are unable to do as much as males do and lack confidence. Don't think like that.

Females can do whatever the male does, in any sector, equally. Study hard on newly developed technologies and if you have the will, success can be achieved.

Q. What are the benefits for yourself, your school and your country by achieving success?

A. May Pyae Sone Kyaw: There are many benefits received from the competition. I'm proud to be able to hoist our country's flag at sixth place. This is something to be proud for the country. It is something that other students can feel proud and imitate. This is my first experience. Before this, I didn't have the confidence that I could do this. Now I have much confidence. This will be a strength on which I will base my future conduct.

Sixty per cent of the members of the competing teams were women. Some were led by women. The Afghanistan team is a women's team. I want women in our country to have the confidence that they can do this.



People protest near the university of Tehran, Iran on 30 December, 2017 in this picture obtained from social media. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

What has brought Iranian protesters to the streets?

LONDON — Iran warned of a tough crackdown on Sunday against demonstrators posing one of the boldest challenges to its clerical leaders since nationwide unrest shook the Islamist theocracy in 2009.

How serious are the protests?

Political protests are rare in Iran, where security services are pervasive. And yet tens of thousands of people have protested across the country since Thursday. The demonstrations are the biggest since unrest in 2009 that followed the disputed re-election of then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

They began in Iran's

second city of Mashhad in the northeast on Thursday and spread to Tehran and other urban centres. Iranians vented their anger over a sharp increase in prices of basic items like eggs, and a government proposal to increase fuel prices in next year's budget.

Some protesters also vented their rage over high unemployment and savings that were lost after investments in unlicensed credit and financial institutions turned sour.

The demonstrations, initially focused on economic hardships and alleged corruption, turned into political rallies. Anger was soon directed at the

clerical leadership in power since the 1979 revolution, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the ultimate authority in Iran's cumbersome system of dual clerical and republican rule.

How will the government respond?

The government's main challenge is to find a way to suppress the uprising without provoking more anger. So far, while the authorities have threatened to take strong measures, in practice they have largely been restrained. Although two protesters were killed and hundreds arrested, many believe the police have shown some self-con-

trol throughout most of the demonstrations.

Iran's National Security Council held urgent meetings and so far has decided to block social media and messaging apps to restrict the flow of information and calls for demonstrations. The state has a powerful security apparatus it can call upon. But so far it has refrained from despatching the elite Revolutionary Guards, the Basij militia, and plain-clothed security forces who crushed the 2009 uprising and killed dozens of protesters. In the meantime, the government backed down on plans to raise fuel prices and promised to in-

crease cash handouts to the poor and create more jobs in coming years.

What are the main demands of protesters?

Iranians across the country want higher wages and an end to alleged graft. Many also question the wisdom of Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East, where it has intervened in Syria and Iraq in a battle for influence with rival Saudi Arabia. The country's financial support for Palestinians and the Lebanese Shi'ite group Hezbollah also angered Iranians, who want their government to focus on domestic economic problems instead. The wide spectrum of slogans showed

that the wave of demonstrations cover a range of social classes who have different demands. Unlike the unrest in 2009, the latest protests appear to be more spontaneous without a clear leader. This may be a more dangerous scenario for authorities, because it means they cannot round up the figureheads, a solution that was employed in 2009. Some demonstrators even shouted "Reza Shah, bless your soul", a reference to the king who ruled Iran from 1925 to 1941, and his Pahlavi dynasty was overthrown by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Islamic Republic's first leader.—Reuters ■

Venezuela raises minimum wage 40 per cent, stoking world's fastest inflation

CARACAS — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro announced a 40 percent increase to the minimum wage as of January, a move that will foment what many economists already consider hyperinflation in the oil-rich but crisis-stricken nation.

In his televised year-end address, leftist Maduro said the new wage level would protect workers against what he calls Washington's "economic war" to sabotage socialism.

"Good news!" said the former bus driver

and union leader, speaking next to a Venezuelan flag in a midday address.

Most economists say the government is in fact fomenting a vicious cycle in a country already wrestling with the world's fastest inflation.

To counter those price increases, Maduro has been raising the minimum wage, but quickening inflation coupled with a depreciating bolivar currency has plunged millions into poverty.

Venezuelans will now earn some 797,510 bolivars a month, fac-

toring in food tickets, or just over \$7 on the widely used black market index. Millions will still be unable to afford three meals a day, while the increase is likely to stoke inflation further.

Prices went up 1,369 percent between January and November, according to figures released earlier this month by the opposition-led Congress, which estimated the 2017 rate would top 2,000 percent. The Venezuelan government no longer publishes inflation data on a regular basis.

Opposition politicians say Maduro's refusal to overhaul Venezuela's state-led economic model and stop excessive money printing will only create more misery in 2018.

Maduro, however, spent much of his half-hour address blaming others for the country's woes. He said foreign and local media were spreading "negative propaganda," while Venezuela was facing "attacks" on its currency and attempts to "sabotage" its oil industry.—Reuters ■

German police allow some rail traffic to resume at Berlin station

BERLIN — German federal police said they had allowed long-distance rail traffic to resume at Berlin's Zoo train station on Sunday after firefighters extinguished a fire that caused large amounts of smoke, but local railway traffic was still halted.

A fire department spokesman told broadcaster N24 that 15 people had been rescued from the

smoke-filled platform, and one was being treated for light injuries. He had no details on the cause of the fire. Germany remains on high alert for potential Islamist attacks a year after a failed Tunisian asylum seeker killed 12 people in an attack on a Berlin Christmas market located a short distance from the Zoo train station.—Reuters ■

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 4th JANUARY 2018 (Independence Day), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

Russia's most unique Mil

MOSCOW—The Helicopter Experimental Design Bureau led by aircraft designer Mikhail Mil was established in Moscow on 12 December, 1947.

Over its entire history, the Mil Design Bureau has designed 13 baseline helicopter models, from the light to the super-heavy classes, including the world's most popular Mi-8 rotorcraft.

Today the Mil Moscow Helicopter Enterprise (part of Russian Helicopters Group) is one of the world's most renowned helicopter developers whose rotorcraft are operational in more than 100 countries and are the mainstay of the helicopter fleet in Russia and some countries of the CIS, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

According to the data of Russia's state arms seller Rosobornexport, post-Soviet states continue operating a considerable number of Mi-8, Mi-24 and Mi-26 helicopters. These helicopters are especially popular due to their low cost and the availability of trained flight and technical personnel.

Mi-1, the first serial-produced helicopter

The first Soviet serial-produced rotorcraft was initially called the Mil helicopter-1. It performed its debut flight in 1948 and went into service in 1951 while its serial production began three years later.

The Mi-1 was equipped with a 575 hp engine and could fly at a speed of up to 170 km/h at an altitude of no more than three km. Two passengers could also stay in the chopper's cabin, apart from the pilot. The helicopter's design was based on the classical single-rotor configuration with the three-blade main and tail rotors. For many decades, Mi-1 helicopters were actively used both in civil aviation and in the country's armed forces. Mi-1 rotorcraft were involved in the delivery of both mail and cargoes, the evacuation of ill and injured persons from hard-to-access areas and were also used for the treatment of agricultural land.

Overall, about a dozen of the helicopter's modifications were developed for various conditions of its operation. The helicopter's production came to a halt in 1960. Overall, more than 2,600 such



PHOTO:TASS

rotorcraft had been built.

Most of the helicopters that were produced in Poland were purchased by the Soviet Union. Poland developed two modifications of this helicopter, the SM-1 and the SM-2.

Interestingly, the Mi-1T, an upgraded version of the Mi-1, was tested in 1957 as a military communications laying rotorcraft. The helicopter's boards were furnished with telephone wire coils, which helped the rotorcraft lay a 13 km communications line per flight.

Mi-8, the most mass-produced helicopter

The Mi-8 is one of the most mass-produced helicopters in history. Over 5,000 helicopters of the Mi-8/17 family have been registered in 92 countries. More than 1,500 Mi-8 helicopters have been delivered to foreign customers since 1991.

People nicknamed the Mi-8 "Kolya" or "Mykolka" (the Ukrainian version of the diminutive name of Kolya).

The helicopter performed its debut flight on June 24, 1961. It has been in operation since 1965. A total of over 12,000 Mi-8 helicopters have been produced. The rotorcraft is powered by two 2,000

hp engines allowing it to develop a speed of up to 270 km/h. The early versions of the Mi-8 helicopter have been in service since the war in Vietnam and have proven their worth in all local conflicts over the past 40 years.

Overall, more than 130 Mi-8 modifications have been developed, including heavily upgraded versions – the Mi-8MT, the Mi-17 and the Mi-171 – for civil and military operators.

The Mi-17-1V is the most popular model. Moreover, up to 90% of these helicopters are exported. This model can be delivered with different equipment sets. The Mi-171Sh is a popular model for Russia and CIS countries. Since 2016, the Russian troops have been receiving the Mi-8AMTSh-VA, a new modification of the Mi-8 helicopter, for operation in the Arctic.

A report by Flight International analytical center focused on the prospects of the development of the Air Force in different countries indicates that there were 2,555 helicopters of the Mi-8/17 family in the world as of late 2015, making up 13% of the world's entire helicopter fleet.

Mi-10K, the 'flying crane'

This is the civil version of

the Mi-10 military and transport helicopter optimized for carrying out construction and assembly works and nicknamed 'the flying crane.' This is a version with "short legs" and an additional pilot's cabin under the fuselage.

The helicopter performed its debut flight in June 1965 and its production began in 1975. Overall, 17 such helicopters were produced and four others were re-equipped from the baseline Mi-10 rotorcraft. The designers fully gave up hydraulic claws and the external platform and reduced the running gear height, which lowered the rotorcraft's weight and its drag.

Instead of TV cameras that failed to be effective in controlling the helicopter during loading and unloading operations, the Mi-10K was furnished with an additional suspended pilot's cabin with a panoramic view and a third set of control levers.

The experimental Mi-10 set a record on 23 September, 1961, lifting 15,103 kg of cargo to an altitude of 2,200 m. The serial production of Mi-10 rotorcraft, which began in 1964, equaled only 24 helicopters. They failed to find a broad use as the hydraulic claws' grab required equipping the cargoes with reciprocal clutches.

Mi-12, the most powerful

helicopter by its cargo lifting capacity

It is the heaviest and the most powerful helicopter by its cargo lifting capacity in the entire history of world aviation. It performed its debut flight on 10 July, 1968 and on 6 August, 1969 it set a world record for helicopters unbeaten up to date by lifting a cargo of 44,205 kg to an altitude of 2,255 m. Overall, Mi-12s have set seven world records.

For its development of the super-heavy helicopter, the Mil Design Bureau was awarded the Sikorsky Prize conferred by the American Helicopter Society for outstanding achievements in rotorcraft engineering.

As its specific feature, the Mi-12's rotors are mounted at the far edges of the inverse tapered wings. The rotorcraft was developed as a super-heavy helicopter with a lifting capacity of no less than 30 tonnes to transport intercontinental ballistic missiles for units of the country's Strategic Missile Force. The 105-tonne super-heavy chopper was powered by four 6,500 hp engines. The Mi-12 could develop a speed of up to 260 km/h and had a crew of six men.

The helicopter's front fuselage accommodated a two-deck

helicopters

cabin. Its tail housed a drop-down cargo ramp with side flaps, which formed an aperture when opened for loading cargo and hardware. A huge cargo hold occupied the helicopter's central part. However, the troops had no need for such a giant rotorcraft and both helicopters were turned into museum exhibits. However, the experience of designing and testing these exceptional helicopters came in handy afterwards.

Mi-14 amphibious helicopter

This is the sole domestic shore-based amphibious helicopter. Its serial production was organized in late 1973. A total of 273 such helicopters were produced in 1973-1986. This rotorcraft was extremely necessary for the Soviet Navy as an anti-submarine helicopter. But it was also widely used for peaceful purposes to transport passengers and cargo, carry out search and rescue operations and fight forest fires. A derivative of the Mi-8 rotorcraft, it had the following basic modifications: the antisubmarine warfare helicopter (the Mi-14PL), the rescue helicopter (the Mi-14PS) and the helicopter trawler (the Mi-14BT).

The primary difference in the Mi-14's design compared to the Mi-8 is the sealed boat bottom installed instead of the reinforced floor, which allows the helicopter to land on the water with a sea disturbance of up to 3-4 points. The Mi-14 was also furnished with additional fuel tanks, which allowed it to perform long air patrols. The Mi-14 became the first Soviet helicopter with retractable running gear.

Today Mi-14 helicopters have been removed from oper-

ation in the Russian Navy but are used in civil aviation and by the Emergencies Ministry on a limited scale, and are also in service in Poland where they have been upgraded. Another four Mi-14 helicopters are operational in Ukraine and at least one is in service in Georgia.

At the St Petersburg International Maritime Defense Show on 2 July, 2015, Russian Helicopters Group (part of state hi-tech corporation Rostec) presented the project of resuming the production of Mi-14s. The helicopter is expected to be heavily upgraded and used both in the military and civil spheres.

The Mi-14 has a whole range of unique features, including its lifting capacity and the ability to land on the water surface, Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Yuri Borisov said in 2015 during his visit to the Kazan Helicopter Enterprise.

As the deputy defense minister said, the Mi-14 had not been produced over the past 20 years and, therefore, it was now necessary to resume the production of the helicopter's new modification that would meet modern requirements.

Mi-24, the flying IFV

The world's most frequently used helicopter in combat. It participated in over 30 local conflicts: in combat operations in the Pamir Mountains, in Caucasian gorges, in tropical forests of equatorial Africa and in scorching Asian deserts. This is the first Soviet combat helicopter. It gained military glory in Afghanistan where it was nicknamed the 'Crocodile.'

The Mi-24 is the sole attack



Mi-24 attack helicopter. It has been operated since 1972 by the Soviet Air Force and its successors, along with more than 45 other nations. Soviet pilots called the Mi-24 the "flying tank". PHOTO: TASS

helicopter capable of performing troop landing functions and nicknamed the flying infantry fighting vehicle (IFV). It is designed to provide fire support for troops on the battlefield and carry out tactical airborne force landings. It can also perform transport functions. The helicopter made its debut flight on September 19, 1969. The Mi-24 was serial-produced from 1970 to 1989. A total of about 3,500 Mi-24s were manufactured. In 1978, the Mi-24 set an absolute world record for helicopters, developing a speed of 368.4 km/h.

Mi-24 helicopters are currently operational in the armies of about 45 countries. Overall, foreign customers received 171 Mi-24 assault gunships in 1991-2014.

The Mi-24 became a symbol of the transport and attack helicopter. The Mi-24Ps with the canon armament were the most popular models from 1991. There were also deliveries of the Mi-24V helicopter armed with a quad-barreled 12.7mm machine-gun. Today the troops are receiving the Mi-35, an upgraded version of the Mi-24 helicopter.

Mi-26, the 'flying cow'

The world's most powerful serial-produced helicopter by its weight-lift capacity nicknamed the 'flying cow' for its dimensions. The Mi-26 is designed to accomplish transport, evacuation, firefighting and other missions. The helicopter performed

its debut flight on 14 December, 1977. It has been serial-produced since 1980 and a total of over 300 such helicopters have been manufactured.

It is equipped with a single eight-blade main rotor and a five-blade tail rotor, two turboshaft engines and fixed tricycle landing gear. Depending on the helicopter's modification, the crew can comprise five-six members. The Mi-26 can develop a maximum speed of 270 km/h and has a maximum flight range of 800 km with main fuel tanks and a service ceiling of 4,600 meters. The helicopter is capable of carrying up to 85 paratroopers on its board or 60 injured persons on stretches or up to 20 tonnes of cargo inside it or from an external sling.

About 15 modifications have been derived from the Mi-26 helicopter. In 2015, Russian Helicopters rotorcraft manufacturer launched the serial production of the Mi-26T2, an upgraded version of the Mi-26. It is furnished with new avionics, which makes it possible to cut the crew from five to two or three men and use the helicopter at night. Besides, it does not require special aerodrome maintenance means and is suited for long-term autonomous basing. The helicopter set a record in 1996, lifting 224 parachuters to an altitude of 6,500 meters.

In 2009, the Mi-26T transported a 27-metre Alinghi 5 catamaran and then a Tu-134 passenger plane. No other helicopter

performed such operations in the entire history of rotorcraft engineering. It is worthy to note that Mi-26 helicopters performed 50 long-distance missions in the Arctic in 2017, delivering about 600 tonnes of cargo.

Perspective High-Speed Helicopter (PSV)

The PSV flying laboratory is an experimental rotorcraft based on the Mi-24 model. It is furnished with the main rotor's new all-composite blades. Some fuselage elements of the flying laboratory have been further developed to reduce air drag and improve the helicopter's aerodynamics at high speeds. The perspective helicopter is expected to go into serial production from 2022 and will be able to develop a speed of up to 500 km/h.

The helicopter took to the skies for the first time in late December 2015 at the flight testing center of Moscow's Mil Helicopter Enterprise. The PSV project aims to develop technological potential for increasing the speed of helicopters by 1.5 times compared to serial-produced rotorcraft manufactured today.

The new perspective helicopter has developed a speed of over 400 km/h for the first time, using the classical scheme with one main rotor. Foreign manufacturers have also achieved similar speeds but only with the use of the rotor scheme based on the propulsion force.—Tass ■



Mi-24 attack helicopter. It has been operated since 1972 by the Soviet Air Force and its successors, along with more than 45 other nations. Soviet pilots called the Mi-24 the "flying tank". PHOTO: TASS

“Star Wars: The Last Jedi” tops New Year’s weekend box office in North America

LOS ANGELES — Disney’s re-release of Lucasfilm’s “Star Wars: The Last Jedi” continued to lead the North American box office for a third weekend in a row with an estimated 52.4 million US dollars, crossing the one-billion-US-dollar mark at the box office worldwide and on its way to be the top-grossing movie of the year in North America.

“Star Wars: The Last Jedi” has brought in 517.1 million dollars in North American theatres through Sunday. Combined with an estimated international cume of 523.3 million dollars, the film’s estimated global cume stands at 1,040.4 million through Sunday, according to the studio figures collected by comScore.

The eighth installment in the “Star Wars” saga has topped another release of Disney, “Beauty and the Beast,” which grossed around 504 million dollars, for the top spot among 2017 releases in North America. It’s also the No 3 release of 2017 globally and the 24th of all time.

“Hollywood will ironically embrace a 2.3 per cent downturn in North American box office revenues after a rollercoaster of a



Actors Daisy Ridley and Mark Hamill. PHOTO: REUTERS

year that had many wondering if we would even hit the 11 billion dollars mark,” said senior movie analyst Paul Dergarabedian at comScore.

“2018 looks particularly

strong, but so does every year on paper so the big blockbusters will have to deliver the goods with fresh and innovative filmmaking to draw audiences out of their homes and out to the multiplex,”

he told Xinhua.

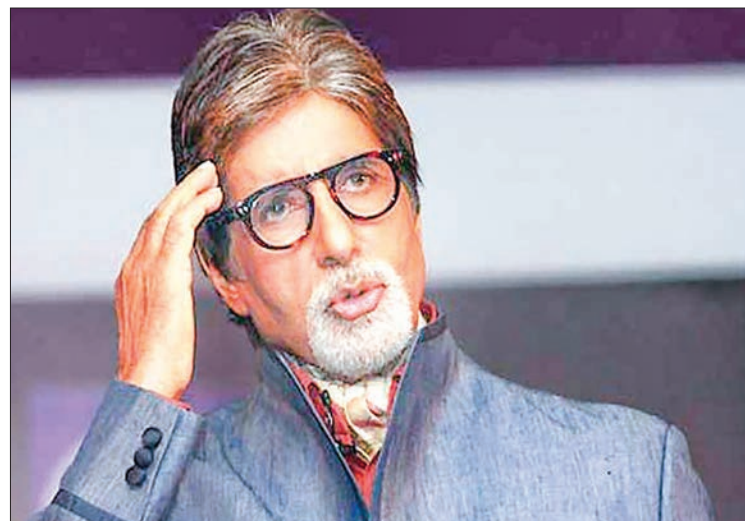
Sony’s action adventure comedy film “Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle” was not far behind in second place this weekend. It took in an estimated 50.57 million

dollars through Sunday, pushing its total to 169.8 million dollars in North America. Directed by Jake Kasdan and stars Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Kevin Hart and Karen Gillan, the sequel to 1995’s “Jumanji” follows four teenagers who are transported into the video game world of Jumanji and must work together to beat the game in order to return to the real world.

Universal’s musical comedy film “Pitch Perfect 3” came in third with an estimated 17.78 million dollars in its second weekend. A sequel to 2015’s “Pitch Perfect 2” and the third and final film in the “Pitch Perfect” trilogy, the film was directed by Trish Sie and follows the Bellas, now graduated from college, reuniting for one final performance in an overseas USO tour.

Both distributed by 20th Century Fox, musical biopic “The Greatest Showman” landed in fourth place with an estimated 15.27 million dollars in its second weekend, while the animated comedy film “Ferdinand” finished fifth with an estimated 11.65 million dollars in its third weekend.—Xinhua ■

The Crown impresses Amitabh Bachchan



Amitabh Bachchan. PHOTO: PTI

MUMBAI — Megastar Amitabh Bachchan says he is hooked to the period drama “The Crown” and feels being transported to the era of late 1940s while watching the show, which depicts the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

The 75-year-old actor took to his personal blog to praise the Netflix series.

“Been watching The Crown lately and inadvertently I find myself becoming a character in the times of Queen Elizabeth, and royalty and the events of

those years... We become a bit regal too in our demeanour... hehehahaha...” Bachchan wrote.

The “Pink” star lauded the team of the show for creating the historical drama in “its authenticity”. “But no you cannot but admire the amount of effort taken to present some of the works of these serials... In its authenticity, in its content and in the reality of events they cover or talk about... With great frankness and honesty...” he wrote. — PTI ■

Something big is happening: Michelle on sexual harassment

NEW YORK — Michelle Williams says she believes Hollywood is going through a moment of reckoning in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein sexual harassment scandal that sent shockwaves through the international entertainment industry.

The 37-year-old actor said it took some time for her to come to terms when the allegations came to light but is glad to see efforts being made to change the situation. “Every day seemed like such a long time. I’m checking my phone: what else is going on? It felt like the sky kept falling. Listen, it’s nothing compared to what people are going through who are the true victims of this situation, but it did put our world into constant flux...”

This is unmanageable, and we can’t take it anymore. So I think that’s why all this is happening now. And so, if that’s what it took, then I’ll be grateful for it. For it feels like something big is happening,” Williams told Harper’s Bazaar magazine.



Michelle Williams. PHOTO: PTI

The “Manchester By The Sea” actor, however, believes the discussion continues to revolve around the abuser and this might make the affected lot feel “revictimised”. “... Once again they’re (the perpetrators) the centre of attention. It’s still about them. Because at the heart of every predator is a narcissist.

“That’s the real pity of abuse: it doesn’t stop with the

event; the abuser becomes the centre of things for a very long time. So here we are now. But I think this has been a very moving time. I’ve had so many emotions,” she said.

The expose also caught hold of other influential men in Hollywood such as Brett Ratner, James Toback, Kevin Spacey, among others facing similar career-ending accusations.— PTI ■

Hundreds of Indonesian couples ring in the new year at mass wedding

JAKARTA — Hundreds of Indonesian couples celebrated New Year's Eve on Sunday night by tying the knot in a mass wedding in the capital Jakarta.

Nearly 450 couples gathered in a large tent in the city centre just hours before midnight to pray with their families before signing marriage certificates. Government officials oversaw each brief ceremony.

"We wanted an unforgettable experience and we're so happy that we decided to participate today," said Hartiningish, a 38-year-old East Javanese bride, while a live band played a set of traditional and pop music in the background.

Her husband, Ricky Ranga, 30, said the couple was grateful to the city administration for making the wedding possible.

Many couples wore matching colours and colourful traditional Indonesian outfits, with

some brides donning elaborate headdresses and grooms carrying traditional daggers called keris.

Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan congratulated those taking the plunge and said the city would now host the event every New Year's Eve. The city government raised donation funds to pay for token gold dowries for the couples to exchange.

Grooms in Indonesia traditionally present gold jewelry or money to brides on the wedding day. "We're planning to do this every year," Baswedan said, after posing for photographs with some couples.

Security was tight around the event's venue in the heart of the city, which took place just a few meters from the site of a militant attack in January 2016, when Islamic State-linked radicals killed four people using guns and bombs.



Couples take part in a mass wedding organised by the city government as part of New Year's Eve celebrations in Jakarta, Indonesia on 31 December, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Tens of thousands of police and military personnel have been deployed in Jakarta and across the country to safeguard holiday celebrations as the country remains on high alert.

One young pair from west Jakarta said they were looking forward to their honeymoon

in the holiday island of Bali, where an active volcano, Mount Agung, remains on alert for an imminent eruption.

"If we're together, there's no need to be afraid of (the volcano), we will just enjoy," Ruri Nurhayati, 22, said, just minutes after marrying her partner An-

drianus, who goes by one name.

The couple were accompanied by a wedding party of 20 friends and family members, and joined New Year's Eve revellers setting off fireworks in the city centre, while others left the venue in cars bedecked with flowers. —Reuters ■

Young Japanese stand-up finding his feet in the world of comedy

TOKYO — Once in a while, a maverick who is eager to blaze a trail comes along in the entertainment world. Tokyo- and Chicago-based stand-up comedian Saku Yanagawa considers himself just that — a world-traveling comic who delivers his unique, biting perspective shaped by life lived in Japan.

In a country where "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down" and political satire and commentary, especially on Japanese TV and in the mainstream media, are often frowned upon, Yanagawa is quick with the quip.

"Did I tell you the one about Prime Minister Shinzo Abe?" he asked in English in a recent interview. "He opened up a fried chicken restaurant in Tokyo, but it only serves right wing."

Hailing from Nara Prefecture, probably better known for stags than gags, the 25-year-old Yanagawa got his start in comedy in 2014 through a TV show about Japanese stand-up Rio Koike, a.k.a. "Jimmy T," who made his own mark on the New York comedy scene. "I thought, 'Wow, he's cool. I want to do that. So I looked for him on Facebook. I found him,

messed him and went to New York the next day," Yanagawa said of Koike who has now returned to Japan to write a book about how to master English.

As a boy, Yanagawa aspired to be a pro baseball player but damaged his arm playing short-stop. He jokes he did not make it big because his need for Tommy John surgery went undiagnosed.

While studying at Osaka University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in literature

specializing in theater and music, Yanagawa went to the Big Apple to meet Koike, his eventual mentor, who spent several years there. "I went to all the comedy clubs in Manhattan and talked to the owners and told them I want to get a spot. I told them I'll wash dishes and clean the floors (if I have to)."

Since then, Yanagawa has been on a mission to perform regularly, settling into the comedy scene in Chicago, the backdrop

for the iconic 1980 film "The Blues Brothers," which became a formative creative influence on him as a teenager. "When I was 18 years old I watched The Blues Brothers with John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd...That's the reason I went to Chicago actually, and I like the Chicago Cubs," he said.

The way sharp wit can be a useful tool in life was apparent to him from an early age, Yanagawa says, drawing him to comedy where wisecracks are weaponized.

"Without using gadgets or props you can make people all over the world laugh. Since I was a kid, I really loved comedy. For example, I fell in love with the "Ace Ventura" movie with Jim Carrey." Yanagawa said in order to get his shot in Chicago he had to convince club owners to take a chance. He has since had stage-time at famous locales like Laugh Factory, The Second City and Zanies Comedy Club.

"First I had to do open mics... (Club owners) would watch my sets and say, 'Wow you're funny. Where are you from?' I told them I'm from Japan but I came to the States by myself and they started

to respect me and would ask me to perform. Every day, they would hold open mics at more than 10 comedy clubs, that's why Chicago is a brilliant city."

In November, Yanagawa took his talents to Africa for two weeks, performing in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda. He was invited as one of the headliners in the Kigali International Comedy Festival and appeared on Kenya's "Churchill Show," which is broadcast nationally and hosted by comedian Daniel "Churchill" Ndambuki.

He appeared in Rwanda's first ever comedy festival after a Kenyan comedian whom he met in Japan hooked him up with the organizers.

"I really wanted the challenge to see if my comedy would work in Africa," he said, adding that he was also searching for a place to perform outside of the United States and Japan.

The Churchill Show, filmed in Nairobi is considered one of the most high-profile TV programs in East Africa, but even a show of that status was apparently not prepared for a Japanese guest, much to Yanagawa's amusement. —Kyodo News ■



Japanese stand-up comedian Saku Yanagawa is introduced on Kenya's "Churchill Show," one of the most high-profile TV shows in East Africa, on 9 November 2017. Based in Tokyo and Chicago, Yanagawa is aiming to become the first Japanese regular on "Saturday Night Live." **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**



Crystal Palace's Wilfried Zaha. PHOTO: REUTERS

Zaha says to stay at Palace despite Man City, Chelsea links

LONDON — Crystal Palace striker Wilfried Zaha has said he has no intention of leaving the London club in the January transfer window, dampening the hopes of potential suitors in the Premier League.

Zaha has had a productive season with 17th-placed Palace, scoring four league goals and providing an assist while adding energy and dynamism to their attack. According to British media reports, the Ivory Coast international, who had an unsuccessful spell at Manchester United, has come under the ra-

dar of Manchester City, Chelsea and Arsenal.

Asked if he is staying at Crystal Palace following their goalless draw with league leaders City, Zaha told BBC Sport: "Yep, I am."

Palace boss Roy Hodgson said last week he could not guarantee that Zaha would stay beyond the January transfer window but British media reports said the manager has been assured by the owners and chairman Steve Parish that no deal would take place. — Reuters ■

Taguchi unifies IBF, WBA flyweight titles

TOKYO — Japan's Ryoichi Taguchi defeated Milan Melindo of the Philippines by decision to add the IBF light flyweight crown to his own WBA title on Sunday.

It was the finale of a world title tripleheader at Tokyo's Ota Gymnasium that saw IBF minimumweight champ Hiroto Kyoguchi and WBO flyweight champ Sho Kimura each retain their titles.

The lanky 31-year-old Taguchi got off to a cautious start, jabbing and keeping the stocky but cat-quick Melindo from closing and unloading on him with his ferocious combinations.

But while the Filipino appeared to land the fiercest blows, Taguchi opened cuts over both of his opponent's eyes as the fight went the distance. With both fighters tiring in the 10th round, Taguchi raised the tempo a full notch and showed that he, too, could fight in close.

"The end was good for me," said Taguchi, who was making his seventh title defence. "It was brutal."

"When I started boxing, I dreamed of being a world champ, of defending my title seven times and winning



PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

a unification fight. So this is pretty great." Earlier, Kyoguchi scored an eighth-round technical knockout over Carlos Buitrago of Nicaragua to win the first defense of his IBF minimumweight crown. The 24-year-old Kyoguchi won his belt in July, just one year and three months after his pro debut, the shortest time needed for a Japanese fighter to win a world title. Kyoguchi was able to keep the third-ranked Buitrago at bay with his left jabs, while setting him up for his powerful right. After pummeling his opponent repeatedly with his right in the eighth round, the referee stopped the fight.

"My jab was overall my best punch," Kyoguchi said. "I was able to land them well. In the middle rounds, I lost my fear." Also making his first title defense, Kimura beat lefty Toshiyuki Igarashi in a ninth-round TKO to retain his WBO flyweight title.

In an entertaining brawl, Igarashi consistently frustrated the hard-punching champ by ducking and dodging his big right. And though it looked like Kimura might punch himself out of the fight, Igarashi could not score enough points without coming in and absorbing the punishment that eventually finished him.—Reuters ■

Controversial penalty earns West Brom draw with Arsenal

LONDON — Arsenal were denied victory on their manager Arsene Wenger's big day as West Bromwich Albion snatched a dramatic late point in a 1-1 Premier League draw on Sunday.

In Wenger's record 811th game in charge, James McClean deflected in Alexis Sanchez's 83rd-minute free kick to put Arsenal on course for three points.

But Calum Chambers was harshly adjudged to have handled in the penalty area and Jay Rodriguez converted an 89th-minute spot-kick to help his side climb off the bottom of the table.

The Arsenal players were furious with the decision and Wenger was spoken to by referee Mike Dean but his team did climb above Tottenham Hotspur into fifth place in the table.

"I did fight many years ago for referees to become professional, but unfortunately their levels do not go up. It is difficult to

accept," Wenger told Sky Sports.

A knee injury kept Mesut Ozil out of the Arsenal side and they missed the guile of the Germany international as they struggled to create any real openings in the first half.

After the break, Arsenal upped the tempo and Alexandre Lacazette twice went close to scoring, but was denied by a fine Ben Foster stop in the home goal before poking wide from close range.

Rodriguez then had space to shoot for goal, but his tame strike was easily beaten away by Petr Cech.

In the final 10 minutes, the game came to life.

Sanchez's free kick found the net after taking a flick off McClean who was standing on the edge of the wall.

"You can't turn your back on it like that," West Brom manager Alan Pardew said. "It is there for



Arsenal's Alexandre Lacazette and Alexis Sanchez in action with West Bromwich Albion's Matt Phillips at The Hawthorns in West Bromwich, Britain on 31 December, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

everyone to see. So he will have to learn."

As West Brom pressed for an equaliser, Kieran Gibbs tried

to clip a cross into the middle, the ball hit Chambers on the arm and Dean pointed to the spot.

Rodriguez stepped up and

calmly drilled the penalty down the middle to ensure Arsenal have won just twice in seven league games. —Reuters ■