

# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Thursday, 4 January 2018

## Honouring the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Independence Day



### Independence Day message from the president

In tandem with our efforts to strengthen the fundamental building blocks of democracy, we are continuously working on areas such as education, health and reforms in the economic and foreign investment sectors. We are also focusing our efforts towards improving the socio-economic situation of our citizens.

**FULL MESSAGE ON PAGE-3**



PHOTO: SAW THEIN WIN



## BEST BANK IN MYANMAR

Awarded by EUROMONEY 2017

## 2<sup>nd</sup> National-level Political Dialogue's CSO Peace Forum continues in Nay Pyi Taw

The 2<sup>nd</sup> National-level Political Dialogue's CSO (Civil Society Organisation) Peace Forum continued as its second day, yesterday morning, at MICC-II, Nay Pyi Taw.

Members of the National-level CSOs, Union-level CSOs, Peace Forum Committees, representatives from the regions and the states, representatives of the disabled, as well as other officials participated in the forum.

During the forum, commit-

tee members of the Union Level Committee CSOs for Peace (UCCPF), Ban Sai Bu and Naw Ta Kaw Htoo, delivered a brief about the process of the meeting and the discussion on the first day of the forum.

UCCPF members U Myat Thu Win and Saung Win then handed over the process of issuing policy papers to members of UCCPF.

They later discussed the topics separately, regarding the papers and policies, which

were submitted by the representatives of the regions and states.

Following the discussion sessions which took place for two days, they put forth their suggestions and concluded the forum.

They also submitted two papers regarding Federal-based policy and Rehabilitation policies with the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC). —Myanmar News Agency ■



U Myat Thu Win and Saung Win hand over the policy papers to members of UCCPF. **PHOTO: MNA**



Buddhist devotees are seen at the New Year Dhamma donation ceremony in Yangon. **PHOTO: ZAW GYI**

## New Year Dhamma Donation Ceremony continues in Yangon

A New Year Dhamma Donation Ceremony continues at the People's Park at the foot of Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday evening attracting about 250,000 people.

Shwe Parami Tawra Sayadaw Ashin Sandadika gave a sermon at the third-day ceremony.

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

Myint, government officials and devotees from townships in Yangon Region.

Commenting on the sermon, U Maung Maung Soe, Mayor of Yangon said, "All sermons delivered by Sayadaws this year have taught the people how to develop the country based on loving kindness each other."

The number of Buddhist devotees has increased year by year, reaching about 250,000 this year.

The three-day ceremony began on the New Year Day.

Before Ashin Sandadika, Dr Nanda Marla Bivumsa and Sitagu Sayadaw Dr. Nannisara delivered their sermons respectively. During the ceremonies, wellwishers donated refreshment to the devotees.

Similar New Year Dhamma Donation ceremony was held by Yangon Region Government for five days from 1 to 5 January 2017. —Zaw Gyi ■

## Four guns lost during ARSA attacks in Maungtaw discovered

FOUR guns which were lost during the ARSA attacks in Maungtaw were recovered near Thinbaw Hla village, Taung Pyo Ware

Township, Maungtaw, yesterday.

The security forces found an unknown packet near Mae Di and Thinbaw Hla Chaung

village, Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State, where they discovered the lost weapons, it was learnt. — Myanmar News Agency ■

## Botahtaung BEHS No.6 to host Children's Literature Festival

CHILDREN'S Literature Festival Yangon, jointly organized by the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Education and Yangon Region Government, will be held from 6-8 January, 2018 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Basic Education High School No. (6) Botahtaung (Saint Paul).

A coordination meeting was held yesterday morning in Basic Education High School No. (6) in Aung Kyaw Hall. At the meeting, Botahtaung Township Pyithu Hluttaw representative Daw Myint Myint Soe explained about the festival, while Information and Public Relations Department Deputy Director General U Aye Kywe discussed the status of work completed for the festival.

The festival will include books exhibitions, books sales, a poetry reciting competition, sto-

ry-telling competition, debates, painting competition, origami competition, scrabble tournament, jigsaw puzzle, games, sports and shows during the three days.

On the first day, there will be 28 entertainment programs by students from various schools. Also, 38 entertainment programs and 28 entertainment programs are scheduled for the second and third day, and will include a Kyaukse elephant dance program.

During the festival, workshops on children's literature will be conducted.

Children's literature festivals have also been held in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Mawlamyine, Taunggyi and Monywa. The festival is being held in Yangon for the sixth time and is open to the public. — Aung Min Han ■



Girls looking through microscope in science lab at Children's Literature Festival. **PHOTO: MNA**

# Independence Day message from the president

The following is the translation of the message sent by President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Independence Day.

Dear esteemed citizens,

On this auspicious occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence Day, I send these good wishes to all ethnic nationals and citizens born and living in this Union to be blessed with auspiciousness, good health and happiness. Since olden times, our country has existed as an independent and sovereign country under our own King. Our people who were born and brought up in this Union, have never committed aggression against others and have also never let others commit aggression against us. We have this basic innate correct stance. The colonial imperialist waged three wars against our country which was a sovereign nation. We lost our sovereign kingdom in 1885 and became slaves of a conquered nation. To liberate ourselves from this life of slavery, all the ethnic national races, from the mountains to the plains, sacrificed their lives, blood and sweat to escape from slavery. As a result of these efforts, we were able to achieve our Independence, a symbol of our success on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1948. Although Myanmar gained independence, due to the evil system of divide and rule practiced by the colonial imperialists, mistrust and discord emerged among our ethnic national brothers and sisters and we have been beset with internal armed conflicts for many years which have adversely affected our national development and progress. At the moment, all national ethnic races are striving to achieve eternal peace using all available means. We have been able to successfully convene the Second Session of the Union Peace Conference



- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong and agreement has been reached regarding some basic principles of the federal structure. As we work on national reconciliation and the peace process, we are working for the emergence of a democratic state based on the principles of freedom for all ethnic national races, justice, equality, and right of self-determination. As we build the Democratic Federal Republic in accordance with the results of the political dialogues, we all need to work collectively for creating a suitable constitution for the country. In tandem with our efforts to strengthen the fundamental building blocks of democracy, we are continuously working on areas such as education, health and reforms in the economic and foreign investment

sectors. We are also focusing our efforts towards improving the socio-economic situation of our citizens. As we work for national development, at the same time, we are working for political stability, prosperity, unity among all the ethnic national races, economic development, comfortable socio-economic life of the people, and preservation of our good cultural heritages and traditions. By encouraging and supporting the private sector which is very important and the main engine of growth of the economy, the socio-economic life of the people will be improved. The most critical element in the history of the struggle for independence is the united power of all our ethnic national brothers and sisters. The long-term perpetuation of the

Independence once achieved can only be accomplished by the unity of all our ethnic brothers and sisters. Therefore, in order for all of us to live in this Union without disintegration, for the cessation of all armed conflicts and to gain eternal peace, with respect for human rights and for all ethnic nationals to enjoy equal rights, all ethnic national Union citizens should solemnly accept the following Independence Day national objectives:

1. All nationalities to collectively preserve and protect non-disintegration of the Union; non-disintegration of national unity; and perpetuation of national sovereignty.
2. To strive hard to draw up a constitution suitable for the Union in accordance with democratic principles and norms for the emergence of a Democratic Federal Union.
3. To strive hard and exert our utmost efforts to implement the peace process as quickly as possible.
4. For all nationalities to work together with the State to achieve the goal of "lasting peace" through political dialogues.
5. By encouraging the private sector which is the main engine of growth for the economy, to collectively exert our efforts for improving and advancing the socio-economic life of the people.

I therefore urge all ethnic national Union citizens to participate collectively with firm resolve to implement the above objectives on this auspicious day, the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence Day. (*Unofficial Translation*)

## Opening ceremony of independence movement, international film festival held in Yangon

IN honour of the 70<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, the opening ceremony of the 2018 International Film Festival was held at the Myanmar Motion Pictures Association hall in Wingaba Street, Bahan Township, Yangon, yesterday evening.

The ceremony was organised by the Myanmar Motion Pictures Association and Kaung Kin Thit Media, which is primarily supported by the Korean Media Foundation.

Before the opening speech by Yangon Region Mayor U Maung Maung Soe, all the attendees at the ceremony stood and saluted the nation's martyrs



Yangon Region Mayor U Maung Maung Soe delivers an opening speech at 2018 International Film Festival. PHOTO: MNA

for a minute.

Next, Chairman of the Myanmar Motion Pictures Association Director U Kyi Soe Tun

explained that the stories in the movies focused on the nation's independence struggle.

Director U Kyi Soe Tun,

and the chairman of Korean TV, opened the ceremony. The chairman of the Korean Media Foundation presented a paper on similar movements of independence and religious endeavours by Sayadaw U Oattama and Korean Manhelli Sayadaw, who fought against the imperialists. Then they exchanged certificates of honour and took documented photographs together.

Attendees at the festival were Vice Chairman of Yangon Region Hluttaw, patrons of the Myanmar Movie Association, members of the Free Funeral Service Society (FFSS) and officials from the Korean embassy.

The audience watched "Nga Ba", a Myanmar movie, which is about how Myanmar farmers were tortured during the Japanese and English occupation.

The festival will be held until January 5, 2018.

Other movies to be shown during the festival include "Michael Collins", "The Prophecy" and "Spirits Homecoming".

The purpose of the film festival is to promote bilateral relations between Myanmar and Korea, lift the national spirits, and remember the struggle for independence and historical records.—Myanmar News Agency ■

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www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

**ACTING CHIEF EDITOR**Aye Min Soe,  
ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**EXPATRIATE CONSULTANT EDITOR**Mark Angeles,  
markangeles@gmail.com**SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT**

Kyaw Myaing

**SENIOR TRANSLATORS**Khin Maung Oo,  
editor2@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
Zaw Min, zawmin.gnlm@gmail.com**INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR**Ye Htut Tin,  
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**LOCAL NEWS EDITORS**Tun Tun Naing (Editor),  
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor),  
nwenwe9131@gmail.com**TRANSLATORS**Khaing Thanda Lwin,  
Hay Mar Tin Win,  
Ei Myat Mon  
Zaw Htet Oo  
Kyaw Zin Lin  
Kyaw Zin Tun**REPORTERS**May Thet Hnin,  
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
mayreporter.mm@gmail.com**PHOTOGRAPHER**

Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar

**COMPUTER TEAM**Tun Zaw (Chief of Computer Team),  
Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,  
Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,  
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,  
Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin**EDITORIAL SECTION**(+95) (01) 8604529,  
Fax – (+95) (01) 8604305**CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION**San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,  
Hotline - 09 974424114**ADVERTISING & MARKETING**(+95) (01) 8604530,  
Hotline - 09 974424848  
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
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globalnewlightofmyanmarVisitors feeding rhinoceros at Yangon Zoological Garden. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

## Yangon Zoo hosts 1.5 million visitors last year

THE Yangon Zoological Garden, a major tourist attraction in Yangon City, hosted some 1.5 million visitors last year, according to a report in the Myawady Daily.

The Yangon Zoological Garden was opened in 1906. The zoo is renowned for its collection of flora and fauna, as well as wild animals, including mammals, birds and reptiles. It is surrounded by the Shwed-

agon Pagoda, Kandawgyi Garden and Karaweik Hall.

The Yangon zoo draws millions of visitors from home and abroad every year. A majority of the visitors come to the zoo to enjoy the elephant dance performed by Mo Mo, the clever oldest female elephant, born in 1953. “The number of visitors to the zoo is increasing year by year. Most visitors are from the countryside. The Yangon

zoo hosts more than 10,000 visitors daily, especially during the weekends and public holidays. On the weekdays, it receives some 5,000 visitors per day,” said U Myo Kyaw Thu, administration manager of the zoo.

He said that the 112<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Yangon Zoo would be celebrated on January 13 and 14 within the garden, and the public would be invited to visit the zoo.—GNLM ■

## Chinese national involves in gambling ring arrested in Myitkyina

A Chinese national who is illegally running game machines was arrested in Aungnan ward, region-6, Myitkyina, Kachin State on 2 January.

Acting on a tip-off, members of Kachin State MPF raided a game center and apprehended Mr Zhang Wen Win

along with two women and 11 men who got involved in the running and playing of games, 29 items are being served as evidence including gambling money in the amount of K 653500 and 15 motorbikes.

The Chinese national rented a house in the ward which

was used as a game centre a week ago and all his game machines are new ones, said U Khin Maung Than, a ward administrator. Action is being taken against the Chinese national in accordance with the gambling laws by the local police station.— EPN ■

## The Sixth Literature Talk in Mawlu being held

THE sixth Literature Talk was held at the Tharaphi Hall of Mawlu High School in Indaw Township, Sagaing Region yesterday.

“In order to upgrade the education sector in Mawlu for all ages, a literature talk was held. The event on the first night was success. This

is the sixth time for Mawlu” said Ko Htun Win Latt, one of the members of Book Lovers Club.

“He also spoke words of thanks to the headmistress of Mawlu High School for managing the venue to hold the literature talk show” he added.

At the talk show, the writ-

ers Ma Thida (Sanchaung) gave a reading of stories including “Let’s Love by One-self” and Bay Lu Wa (the actor) talked about the title “The Preamble of Myanmar”. The writers of the talk show, Nay Win Myint and Khin Khin Htoo will speak today.—Myanmar Digital News ■

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Painting show to mark the new year opened

A painting show to mark the new year was opened at Mandalay-taung Gallery at the foot of Mt Mandalay in Aungmyethazan Township, Mandalay on 1 January morning. The arts show titled “new year with new vigor” covered 120 paintings which are the masterpieces of Dr Zaw Lin Tun, Author Swe Naing Sit, Bagyi Kaw, U Hla Than, Ko Maw Si, Moe Oo and Samon. The painting show which runs from 1 to 5 January is drawing a large number of visitors including well-known artists, painting enthusiasts and students from National Culture and Arts University (Mandalay) and The State School of Arts.— Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay) ■

### New Year Festival of Larhu Ethnic People held

The New Year Festival for Larhu people was traditionally held in Yepusan Sanpya Village, Tachilek Township yesterday.

The festival was held in order to preserve and promote the traditional culture, to strengthen the relations of Larhu people from different places and to foster friendships between other ethnic groups and Larhu people. The festival is a famous one for Larhu people and it was held when the pine trees, damson fruit and cherry trees start to blossom. At the ceremony there was dancing and other forms of traditional entertainment performed by Larhu people.—Myanmar Digital News ■

### Vehicle catches fire on Yangon-Mawlamyine Road

A vehicle caught fire at milepost 112/1 on Yangon-Mawlamyine Road between Kawbein and Kyuntaw villages in Kyaikto Township, Mon State at around 11 am on 2 January. The cause of the fire is believed to have started from an overheated battery. The local firefighters and villagers led by the Head of township police force, Police Major Myint Thein Oo extinguished the fire. No one was injured in the accident. The estimated loss of property in the fire is about Ks 2 million. The driver fled from the scene. A file has been opened by the local police department and an investigation into the case has begun.—Myanmar Digital News ■

### 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](mailto: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.

Trucks seen at the 105-mile trade zone Muse, northern Shan State. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

# China imports honey from Muse border

China has been regularly importing honey from Myanmar on a weekly basis, mainly through the Muse (105<sup>th</sup>-Mile) trade zone, according to the border trade authorities.

The official figures show that the People's Republic of China imported 60 tonnes of honey, valued at US\$42,000, between 16 December and 22 December. The world's most populous nation bought the same volume of honey in the previous week,

ending 15 December.

Efforts are being made to ensure a healthy demand for Myanmar's honey and its related valued-added products, and to penetrate the international market, according to domestic honey exporters. As part of the efforts to promote the country's productivity, beekeepers have been provided with technical training in target villages in Shan State since 2013.

An exporter said that many

international buyers were paying attention to the country's organic honey, which has a good sales potential in the global market.

As of now, Myanmar is continuing to export honey to China, Japan, Thailand, Germany and Canada. According to official statistics, the country exported 2,400 tonnes of honey, worth \$43.4 million, to overseas countries in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

—Shwe Khine ■

# International Finished Gemstone and Jewellery Exhibition

With an aim to develop the gemstone finishing sector, establish a world class gem market, obtain tax income for the country through sales of finished gemstone and create job opportunities for associations working in the gemstone sector, an International Finished Gemstone and Jewellery Exhibition will be held daily from 10 am to 8 pm in Lotte Hotel on Pyay Road in Yangon from 11 to 14 January.

The exhibition will be held

under the guidance of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation and with the support of the Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association. The exhibition will put on sale investment-grade, high-value gems for collectors, local and foreign gem businesses. The exhibition will also include talks and discussions conducted by international gem experts.

## Eight-hundred invitations

were sent out via Myanmar embassies in 37 countries and the exhibition will include about 100 sales booths. Arrangements were made so that those who buy the gems will get the necessary permits and documentation upon payment of the gem tax that will allow them to bring the purchases out of the country. Lucky draw programmes and fashion shows will also be included in the exhibition, it is learnt.

— Myo Min Thuya ■

**Government exports increased by \$572 million in current FY**

**THE Myanmar government exported locally produced products valued at US\$3.3 billion this fiscal year (FY), which saw an increase in value by \$572 million, as against last year, according to the Commerce Ministry.**

This time last year, the government sold \$2.734 billion worth of commodities to overseas traders. According to the ministry's statistics, the government exported mineral products worth \$295 million.

forest products worth \$8.38 million, manufacturing goods worth \$2.28 billion and other kinds of products valued at \$721 million, between 1 April and 22 December, 2017. The figures indicate that the export of minerals by the government sector decreased by \$104 million, compared with last year's total that reached \$399 million. This year, the government did not export any agricultural products, whereas the private sector exported agro products worth

**\$2.145 billion. Over the past nine months of this FY, total exports by both the government and private exporters topped \$9.99 billion, registering an increase of \$1.7 billion, compared with the last FY. Myanmar continues to trade with Asian countries, ASEAN member states, island nations, Middle East countries, European and African states, and other western countries, mainly through sea routes, and is seeking new trading opportunities.—Swe Nyein ■**

# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

တနင်္ဂနွေနေ့တိုင်း: **"Sunday Special"** အချစ်ပို (၈)  
မျက်နှာပိုင်သော The Global New Light of Myanmar  
နေ့စဉ်ထုတ် သတင်းစာကိုအောက်ပါမြို့များတွင်ဖာယူနိုင်ပါပြီ

## နေပြည်တော်

ပြန်ကြားရေးဝန်ကြီးဌာန၊ ရုံးအမှတ် (၇) နေပြည်တော်၊  
သတင်းနှင့်စာနယ်ဇင်းလုပ်ငန်း (ရုံးချုပ်)၊

စီမံရေးရာဌာန၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၆၇ ၄၁၂၁၀၈

## နေပြည်တော်

နေပြည်တော်သတင်းစာတိုက် (တပ်ကုန်း)  
ဧည့်သည်ခန်း၊ ဓလေ့လမ်းခန်း၊ နေပြည်တော်၊

ဖုန်း - ၀၆၇ ၃၆၁၄၈၊ ၀၆၇ ၃၆၁၂၉

## ရန်ကုန်

The Global New Light of  
Myanmar သတင်းစာတိုက်၊ အမှတ် ၁၅၀၊  
ငါးထပ်ကြီးဘုရားလမ်း၊ ဝဟန်းမြို့နယ်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊  
ဖုန်း - ၀၁၀၆၀၅၃၂၀၉၉၇၄၄၂၄၁၁၄

## မန္တလေး

လမ်း (၂၀ x ၂၁) ကြား၊ (၈၂ x ၈၃) လမ်းကြား၊ ပုလဲဝေ  
ရောင်ရမ်း၊ မန္တလေးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၂၃၂၇၂၅၀၂၃၂၅၅၀

## တောင်ကြီး

ရုံးကြီးလမ်း၊ သစ်တောရပ်ကွက်၊ တောင်ကြီးမြို့၊  
ဖုန်း - ၀၈၁၂၁၂၁၆၄၊ ၀၉၂၅၁၄၄၇၇

## မကွေး

နတ်မောက်လမ်း၊ တပ်မ (၈၈) တပ်နယ်ဈေး အနီး၊  
မကွေးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၆၃၂၇၃၁၂

## ဘဏ္ဍိုက်

ဗြိသိပ် (၃ - ၈)၊ အမှတ် (၁) လမ်းသွယ်၊ ဗြိဟတ်လမ်း၊  
ကျိုင်းတုံမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၈၄၂၂၄၂၂

## ကလေး

အောင်ဇေယျရပ်ကွက်၊ မြန်မာအားကစားကွင်းအနီး၊  
ကလေးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၇၃၂၂၁၃၃

## မြစ်ကြီးနား

အမှတ် (၄၁)၊ စရာရပ်ကွက်၊ အောင်ဆန်းလမ်း၊  
မြစ်ကြီးနားမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၇၄၂၂၄၂၂

## စစ်တွေ

ရွှေဘိုလမ်းနှင့် တက္ကသိုလ်ရိပ်သာလမ်း၊  
မီးခတ်ကြီးအနီး၊ မန်ကျည်မြို့နယ်ရပ်ကွက်၊ စစ်တွေမြို့၊  
ဖုန်း - ၀၄၃၂၃၀၆၈

## လားရှိုး

ဟူးမွန်ကျေးရွာထိပ်၊ ဟူးမွန်ဆည်ဘယ်ဘက်ခြမ်း၊  
(၁၂) ရပ်ကွက်၊ မန်ဆူဘုရားရွာ၊ အရေလမ်း၊  
လားရှိုးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၈၂၂၄၀၆၇

## ခြံ

မေတ္တာလမ်း၊ ရှမ်းချောင်းရမ်း၊ ကလေးကျေးရွာအုပ်စု၊  
ခြံမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၅၉၄၂၁၈၃

## မော်လမြိုင်

ကြာအင်းအကျွန်း၊ မော်လမြိုင်မြို့၊  
ဖုန်း - ၀၅၇၂၂၅၂၊ ၀၅၇၂၂၅၂၆

## မုံရွာ

နန္ဒဝန်ရပ်ကွက်၊ ဆက်သွယ်ရေးတံတိုင်းအနီး၊  
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Ethnic Mro national's new homes in Maungdaw Township. **PHOTO: NE WIN TUN**

## New homes to benefit ethnic Mro people

THE Rakhine State government has been building new homes in the Maungdaw Township for the security and social development of ethnic groups, such as Mro, Khami, Thet and Daingnet, among others. These groups were earlier living in the mountainous areas.

The new Kaingyi village, beside the Maungdaw-Angumaw road in southern Maungdaw Township, is being developed for the ethnic Mro. Some 50 houses in the village were built, through an arrangement with the Yangon Region government, while 64 houses were built with

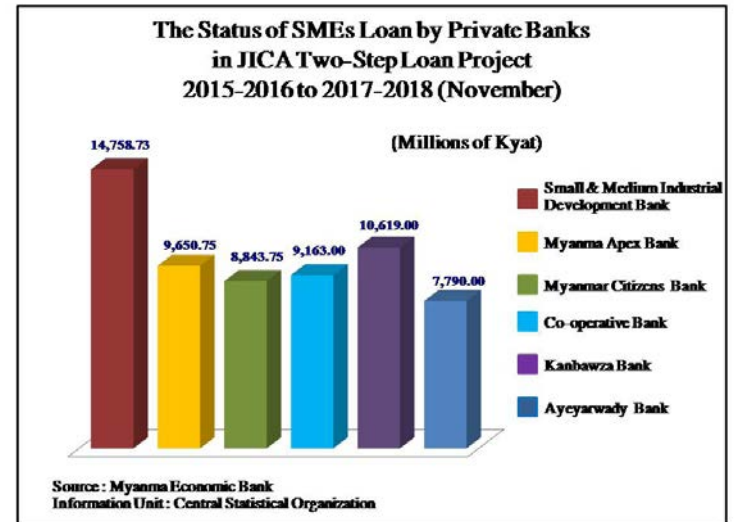
assistance from the Bago Region government. In addition to these houses, the Taninthayi Region government is building a school, while a village clinic is being built, with the help of donations.

Similarly, in northern Maungdaw township near Kyeinchaung-Khamaungseik road, more Mro villages are being constructed.

Also, the Khamingyi Village was constructed beside the Khamaungseik-Taungpyo road, where the Sagaing Region government is building 45 houses for ethnic Rakhine nationals, while

houses for Mro, Khami, Daingnet and Chin nationals will be built in Myawady village.

Additionally, some 44 houses in Thittonena Gwasone village are being built through an arrangement with the Ayeyawady Region government, while the Ministry of Border Affairs is constructing Khonhtaing (Mro) village on the Khamaungseik-Kyeinchaung road, which will include a school and clinic. The government expects that the construction of such villages will improve the livelihood and social conditions of many people.—Myint Maung, Zeya ■



## Over 70 people die in road accidents in Myeik district in 2017

MORE than 70 people died in road accidents in Myeik district in 2017, according to the No. 76 Myeik traffic police office.

The number of road accidents has increased year by year. The traffic police announced that 191 traffic accidents occurred in 2016, killing 49 and injuring 408 persons in the four townships within Myeik district. Also, 205 accidents occurred in 2017, killing 74 and injuring another 343.

To reduce road accidents, traffic police are continuously conducting awareness talks and distributing pamphlets. Most of the accidents caused by small vehicles occurred due to speeding.

The traffic police have filed charges against reckless drivers under sections 279, 337, 338 and 304 (A) of the Penal Codes, according to officials at the No. 76 Myeik traffic police office.—Min Thu ■

# Armed groups attack regional HQ in Kachin State

IN recent weeks, armed groups have attacked military installations, local militias and public roads in Shan and Kachin states, resulting in several deaths and numerous injuries.

On the evening of 13 December, a local regimental headquarters in Kutkai Township in northern Shan State came under attack by men with small arms and heavy guns. Four 107mm rounds exploded near the vicinity of the regimental headquarters.

On the evening of 23 December, armed groups attacked Lashio-Muse Union Road near Monyu Village, Muse Township with small arms and heavy guns. Heavy gun rounds hit

Monyu Village and Tonkhan Village, killing one villager and injuring three. In the afternoon of 24 December, Yin Kwe Taung camp and Namkhaing camp in Kutkai Township, where troops are stationed for security of the Lashio-Muse Union Road, and Namphatka regimental headquarters were attacked by armed groups. In the afternoon of 26 De-

cember, Namkhaing camp was attacked again by small arms and heavy weapons fire.

Similarly, on the mornings of 24 December and 31 December, armed groups attacked the Muse 105 mile trade zone. On the morning of 25 December, the people's militia responsible for the security of Mongko Township came under attack near the bridge at the exit of the town. On the morning of 28 December, IEDs and mines were set off on a road about 1500 meters from Manji and Kyukok villages.

There were more attacks using landmines on the Muse-Namkham road on the afternoon of 30 December.

Furthermore, on 30 December a force of about 70 armed people attacked the regimental headquarters in Shaduzut Village, Tanai Township, Kachin State from three different directions.

The attack lasted from about 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. with officers, troops and family members resisting the attack. Two



KIA/TNLA armed forces have attacked in Kachin State and northern Shan State. **PHOTO: MNA**

soldiers were killed. On the same day, a remote landmine set up on Myitkyina-Phakant Road in Phakant Township exploded about 2000 meters from Don Bon Kha Village, injuring two travellers and damaging a car.

KIA/TNLA forces in Kachin State and northern Shan State were reportedly attacking in Kachin State, scaring local residents and hindering the flow of goods. Regimental headquarters was also attacked, endangering

family members and children. Tatmadaw columns are conducting security operations and regional stabilisation matters, according to the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief's Office.—Myanmar News Agency ■

# Independence Day and National Obligation

By Maung Khaing Mar  
[Upper Minhla]

OUR Mother Land, Myanmar, became a sovereign independent nation on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1948, reaching 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar Independence on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018 to come. Being a geographically important country, it has various kinds of national ethnics. Throughout the history the people lived in the atmosphere of peace and tranquility under the reign of their kings on the thrones. Yet, the British Imperialists with modern weaponry, well-trained troops and better military strategy waged the First Anglo-Myanmar War of Aggression on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1824 in the era of Third Myanmar Kingdom, occupying Rakhine and Taninthayi Region in 1826. On 5<sup>th</sup> April 1852 they waged the second Anglo-Myanmar War, ending in 1854.

After the Second Anglo-Myanmar War, the British occupied from Rakhine, Myayhte up to Sit-taung and Kayinni border. During the Third Anglo-Myanmar War of Aggression in 1885, Yadanarbon Kingdom fell under the defeat of the British Forces, with King Thibaw taken out of the country together with his royal family. From that time on, Myanmar Kingdom entered the British Kingdom in the Occident.

From the stage of plunging under the control of the British Empire with our own kingdom destroyed, our national leader Bogyoke Aung San managed to regain the Independence we lost, with the collective efforts of all the national populace under his leadership. Our Bogyoke also addressed, "Independence is the victory-like flower for us, not the gift of a coin thrown into the beggar's bowl out of pity." As said by Bogyoke Aung San, the Independence was actually achieved by sacrificing lots of lives of our ancestors, absolutely not easily. Accordingly, it is the national obligation for us to safeguard the Independence.

## Sovereignty in perpetuity

The learned defines, "A State/Nation is comprised of Population, Territory, Government and Sovereignty." Of them, sovereignty is of the greatest vitality for a nation because a country without independence can never be a sovereign nation or vice versa. Sovereignty is derived from the ancient Latin word *Superanus*. V.V. Yevgenyer, the Russian legislator define sov-

ereignty as "a right to decide of its own accord, as for a country, in its internal or external affairs, without violating principles and restrictions of the international law."

In the Article 2, sub-article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations it is described, "The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members." Our national leader, Bogyoke Aung San as well addressed in putting forward the motion for the Absolute Independence to the parliament held on 18th June 1947, "Just at the time of saying the sovereign republic, it does not need to explain its meaning any longer. It is very clear to understand. Sovereignty has many characteristics. In fact, a country itself already has the sovereignty. People are not satisfied with the word, "country." They regard that only the word a sovereign nation is perfectly meaningful."

So, though a country is independent in outward appearance it cannot be designated as the actually independent sovereign nation if another country or organization intervenes in a nation's sovereignty—legislative, judicial and executive powers. Void of the sovereignty, the country loses its independence. Taking the fact into consideration, we, the entire national populace collectively should safeguard for not disintegration of the mother land, the Union of Myanmar and national consolidation as well as for the eternal survival of the national sovereignty.

## Emergence of the new Constitution in accord with democracy standards

Every individual sovereign nation is required to promulgate its own constitution. A Constitution is usually born out of the democratic movement, so the democracy standard of a nation can be known by studying its Constitution. After gaining Myanmar's Independence three Constitutions emerged in the country. The first-ever constitution was drawn up based upon the agreements of 1947 Panglong Conference, which ceased to exist on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1962 when the Tatmadaw took the power.

Afterward, the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1974 Constitution drawn up by the Revolutionary Council and Burma Socialist Programme Party [BSPP] came to the invalidation when Tatmadaw took the State Power after 1988 uprising. As for the country which is noticeably following the process of the global democratic movement, Myanmar has laid down 7 roadmaps for the national rec-



The Union Jack is lowered on 4th January 1948 and Myanmar become an independent republic, named the Union of Burma.

onciliation and principles for the Union Peace, in which renewal and approval of the Constitution with the agreement of the Union had been included. Also, the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference held during 24-28 May 2017 had already laid down 37 points of the principle as the first phase of the Union. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference as well some agreements sure will successfully be laid down. For shaping the State which is lagging behind in democratic movement into the Federal Democratic Union, the whole national populace collectively must make concerted efforts in the respective sectors assigned to us for the emergence of the Constitution in accord with the democracy standards.

## Peace process

On 13 June 2017 the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi addressed to the parliamentarians in the Sweden Parliament, "Peace process under way in Myanmar which is not yet familiar with democracy and made up of various kinds of the national ethnic races is very complicated, thus the country is facing with myriads of challenges. Though successive governments in Myanmar made efforts for the national peace they did not gain success on various reasons. Peace is the major necessity for the development of a nation, simultaneously influencing over all the national sectors. As of 2011-2012 the State Government has been implementing the peace process as a priority.

But, due to depth and sobriety of the peace process it needs to march toward the peace goal, without losing sight of the major objective with great tolerance. For this, at the closing ceremony of 2<sup>nd</sup> session of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor and Chairperson of Conference Convening Commission said, "Let us move to the goal in marching toward the peace by looking forward with the brighter future in our minds with quick steps."

## Toward eternal peace goal through political dialogues

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of signing Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Chair of the National Reconciliation and Peace Center addressed, "Let us solve all the political issues in means of negotiation with the cooperation of all the organizations desirous of peace for building up the eternal peace."

Looking back into peace talks in the past, from the peace talk held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1963 to the talks with KIA in 1980 with the Burma Communist Party in 1981, all were unsuccessful on various reasons. In later periods peace talks were held in a different form. In the reign of U Thein Sein administration NCA was successfully signed with 8 armed ethnic groups. At the present time when the incumbent NLD-led government is taking office 2 session of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference had been successfully held, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> ses-

sion to be held soon.

Between the past two conferences, national-level political negotiations were held in convenient regions, though not being all the places. Based upon the points acquired through those talks, UPDJC discussed 45 points at the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference, 37 out of which were laid down as the common agreement, being a considerable success. The incumbent government is implementing for the achievement of the eternal peace through the political negotiations, by taking lessons from advantages and disadvantages experienced in the past. Thus, all the national populace desirous of peace should take part hand in hand with the government.

## Socio-economic development of the people

While implementing national reconciliation and peace process, socio-economic development is underway. Though not achieving remarkable economic development in the first year, economic reforms are being found to have been made presently, for example as regards the investment, there is no longer classification between foreigners and local nationals, and new acts for companies has been promulgated by abolishing the former one. State Counsellor added, "It is impossible to look at the goal alone. It needs to choose the right path to the goal." Here natural environment and sustainable development need to be taken into consideration.

Private sector is the very fundamental for people's socio-economic development. Programmes for lending loans of 2-month period from MEB to agriculture, livestock breeding and SMEs are being announced.

## Need to successfully implement

To sum it up, as the eternal peace cannot be achieved in the land the national development lagged behind others, though being an independent sovereign nation, failing to savor the taste of the dependence to the full. Accordingly, we hereby urge our brethren to successfully implement the national objectives of 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence Day 2018 laid down by the State for shaping the country into the federal democratic union, while establishing the eternal peace. ■

(Translated by Khin Maung Oo)

# Myanmar's Independence and Myanmar politics

As known by all, Myanmar's sovereignty was seized by the British Imperialists by force. In other words, Myanmar's Independence was lost since then. The then political system was imperialism, in which an individual person or organization treats others unfairly or the superior nations tend to dominate over the inferior ones and interfere in the affairs of other nations.

At that time, Myanmar suffered severely under the colonial yoke of the British imperialists. The only desire of most Myanmar people at that time was to live freely, and to spend and donate generously, after liberating themselves from colonial rule.

Throughout the history of Myanmar's struggle for independence, our main objective was to gain independence. But we must note that the objective went astray due to holding different kinds of political doctrines by the then national leaders. Bogoyoke Aung San, our national leader pointed out very clearly, to make people understand the fact that people tend to change their objectives in regard to political power and authority, although they

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have fought for the national cause together. Political doctrines, that is, political "isms" differed in different periods—period of struggle for national liberation, Independence struggle in pre-war years and post-war years. Regarding this, Thakin Aung San said on one occasion, "Really genuine politics is not that easy as the kind of politics [Ta Baung—random utterance interpreted as prophecies] frequently repeated by people. Making efforts for the betterment of the country is easier said than done. National unity needed for gaining the Independence of the country must be essentially built up."

In the revolutionary period of the anti-fascist movement there was a great unity between revolutionary leaders and the people, managing to successfully move to the goal. Yet, in the period of struggling for the national liberation, that is, for gaining Independence there was a need for unity among leaders and unity among the people. Political ideas and political parties differed in those periods, as it did in the period after gaining independence.

As regards the different political parties and ideas in pre-independence and post-independence days, our national leader Bogoyoke Aung San warned us to be careful about the political split and national awareness. He urged people to stand altogether on a similar objective and to be united for national rehabilitation. National unity is of great importance not only for independence but also for national peace, stability and development.

On account of disunity in the country, political splits occurred too many times. What is greatly in need in the country is none other than national unity. Peace, stability and development can be achieved only if there is unity in the country. Peace will be achieved through unity, and thence the long-awaited goal of the Myanmar people will be realized – i.e. the emergence of a Democratic Federal Republic. ■

## The role of pen and sword in regaining

# Myanmar Independence

By Maha Saddhamma Jotika  
Dhaja, Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar Independence today the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the writer's stray thoughts linger back into Myanmar long history. There is a saying in English, "The pen is mightier than the sword". In many cases of other nations that saying is true. But as far as Myanmar history is concerned the dual role of the pen and the sword in the building of Myanmar nation and the retention of it has multiple evidences.

Turning briefly the pages of Myanmar history we will get the following picture:-King Anawrahta [1044-1077 A.D] who founded the First Myanmar nation [Kingdom, Union, or Empire] used both pen and sword in his nation buildings. He introduced and established Theravada Buddhism and the Buddhist monasteries and Pariyatti schools which produced men of learning whose pens served religion, state and people. Four languages Pali, Pyu, Mon and Myanmar flourished in Bagan Kingdom through which learned pens trained good citizens of excellent brain and brawn. His military strength composed of four regiments viz...

1. Elephantry
2. Cavalry
3. Chariotry and
4. Infantry under the commands of five knights errant
  1. Kyanzitha the spear man,
  2. Byatta the equestrian,
  3. Nga Htwe Yu, the skilled toddy palm climber
  4. Nga Lone Lephe the ploughs man and
  5. Nyaung U Hpe, the peerless swimmer.

They all were products of monastic schools of both Pariyatti and Pwe Kyaung types. Pariyatti schools gave only literary learning and character training whereas Pwe Kyaung schools run by ex-monks gave training not only in vocational subjects but also in martial arts.

Similarly in the building of second Myanmar Nation [Union, Kingdom or Empire] in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century A.D well-known as Taungoo, similar monastic schools produced men of letters and might. The unifier kings —Min Kyi Nyo, his son Tabin Shwe Hti and his son-in-law Bayint Naung were men of letters and might trained at the Pariyatti and Pwe Kyaung monastic schools. Poet laureate Nawade I and peerless ratu verse composer Prince Nat Shin Naung were both writer-cum-fighters of that times.

We find similar evidences in the case of the building of the Third Myanmar Union or Empire Its founder, Alaungpaya was hailed from a farmer's family, trained at the monastic schools of both Pariyatti and Pwe Kyaung type. His ancestors' had some royal blood in the remote past. When he began his re-unifying campaigns he first formed 68 comrades-in arms of high military caliber. Their names proved their ethnic nationalities' origin such as Rakhine, Mon, Chin, Kachin, Shan and Bamar. They also were the products of monastic schools both Pariyatti and Pwe Kyaung types. They did not have modern arms. They only avertable locally was thick bamboo sticks ဝါးရင်းတုတ်. With these primitive weapons they could successfully carry out national unification

formation of Burma Research Society with its publications Journal of Burma Research Society JBRS and later new literary movement well known as Khit San Sarpay promoted a greater role of pen in our national freedom struggle. The magazine called Ganda loka had the motto မြေအုတ်များ ခြိုလေရာ၊ ကျောက်အုတ်များဖြင့်, တည်ဆောက်အံ့ Bricks are fallen down, but we shall build with hewn stones. This movement produced the first batch of modern Myanmar writers Zawgyi, Min Thu Wun, Dagon Taya, Shwe U Daung, Dagon Shwe Hmya, Tet Toe, P. Monin, etc... Later followed by younger generations, Thakhin Nu, Thakhin Aung San, Thakhin Tin, Thakhin Ba Swe, Thakhin Ba Nyaing, Thakhin Ba Sein, Thakhin Thein Pe [Thein Pe Myint] headed and guided by the veteran boycotter Thakhin Ko daw Hmaing.

More literary activities followed Translation Society, Naga Ni Journal Red dragon journals etc... led by Thakhin Nu, Thakhin Aung San, Pantanaw U Thant etc... These pens not only translated world's famous fictions by Shakespear, Charles Dickens, Deniel Defoe, Alexander Dumas, Jules Veen, Leo Tolstoy etc.... but also non-fiction especially political literature —Karl Marx's work, HG. Wells, etc... Fabian socialism of English brand and radical socialism or communism of Stalin and Lenin lar and were translated, read and admired Thakhins, new Myanmar national leaders were writing on Myanmar situation and current international affairs, alerting Myanmar people to catch the opportunity to liberate the country by any means. Just as Journal of Burma Society Gandaloka, Translation Society and Naga Ni Journal had far-reaching reading effects on Myanmar reading public due to the pens of new generation of writers. The 0 way magazine The Voice of the fighting Peacock was the mouth piece of University Students' Union. Thakhin Aung San proved his ethical principle as the editor of the 0 way Magazine by not disclosing the identity of the writer of "Hell hound at large" a sarcastic piece of writing in the said magazine by U Nyo Mya even though the then University Principal Mr. Sloss was threatening Thakhin Nu and Thakhin Aung San to expel if they refused.

These young pens turned young swords with the outbreak of Second World War first in the

West, then later spread to the East.

Young Thakhins had learnt in English history the Irish struggle for independence. In the war with Nazi Germany Ireland did not join UK but remained aloof. England's difficulty is Irelands opportunity. Now for young Thakhin's "British Colonist difficulty is Myanmar struggle freedom's opportunity". So, they went out of the country for allies. First they went to China which was already confronting Japanese aggression. Japanese military got hold of that moment's chance of Myanmar young Thakhin by promising them grant of independence to Myanmar, the moment Japanese army stepped on Myanmar sail. They gave military training on the island of Henan to the young Thakhin to drive out the British Colonial Government.

One by one, starting with Thakhin Aung San, altogether 30 Thakhins went out incognito to be trained in modern warfare. They became Yebaw Thonegyaik 30 Comrades-in-arms after the fashion of 68 comrades-in-arms of Alaungpaya. Thanks to that training Myanmar modern army was formed by Thakhin Aung San [now Bogoke Aung San]. Here is the clear evidence of the dual role of pen and sword in our national struggle for independence.

Again when the time for resisting Japanese Fascists and co-operating with the Western Alliances, these 30 comrades-in arms played well their dual role of pen and sword. Myanmar literature of Japanese Occupation Period had a wealth of the stories of dual role of pen and sword in driving out the Japanese fascists.

When the Second World War ended another round of dual role of pen and sword was called upon to play. The Simla White Paper and Myanmar rejection of it on threat of armed rebellion, dialogue with element. A flee of the British Labour Government for the grant of independence, the Pinlong Conference for the making of Burma Union and the drafting of the Federal constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar outside the British Common wealth of Nations and the adoption of the policy of neutralism in the cold war were the collective achievements of the pen and the sword. Today that dual role of the pen and sword is still needed for our present and future. The objectives of 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar Independence spotlight that dual role.

The pen and the sword, the brain and the brawn must always go together in our country.

military  
c a m p a i g n s  
and establishing the  
Third Myanmar Empire. Some  
of his 68 comrades-in-arms rose to the  
position of military commanders such as Maha  
Siha Sura, Tein gya Min Khaung and Bala Min Htin. In  
the Second Konbaung Period emerged Maha Bandula Myawaddy  
Min Gyi U Sa, Kin Wun Mingyi U Kaung and Yaw Mingyi U Pho Hlaing.  
They served their country's cause both by pens and swords.

After Myanmar was annexed to the British India and Myanmar last King Thibaw was deposed and the entire royal family was deported to Ratanagiri, India, there arose a series of anti-British Colonial rule resistances in armed rebellions. For nearly 3 to 4 years the British had to "pacify the country". Details of these armed risings can be found in the Book "The Pacification of Burma" by Charles Crosswaith.

For a few years there seemed that peace was restored under Pax Britanica as the policy of anglicanization for creating black Englishmen so-called liberal education. English liberal education had the impact of roror blades that cut both ways. If did make colonial people black Englishmen who were used in the colonial services in English bureaucratic machinery. On the other hand it served as an eye-opener to the colonial peoples. Through English education, they got the chance of contact with the outside word, changes being taken place in the neighbourhood and beyond. So temporarily dormant patriotism began to erupt.

But erupting patriotism took the line of peaceful dialogue with the colonial masters. Education was the first initiative. The 1920 Yangon University Boycott was the clear evidence of the role of pens used by the leaders and followers of University Students Union who were ethnic nationalities of all religious and faiths. They won the first round of success in their struggle for national freedom by introducing National education at National University and National Schools and boycotting the University and schools which trained only servicemen with slavish mentality.

Parallel with such movements, there were also literary movements for freedom from colonial rule. The

## Independence Day

Let the humanity cherish  
With my country awake  
For flowers of different race ,creed and religion  
Blossoming with broad vision.

Where sharing knowledge with wisdom  
To fulfill everyone's dream  
In rainy season, winter and summer  
Ahead our culture glitters.

Now, let our country is hopes bloom  
With our citizens name and fame  
Each day striving hard to achieve  
So one day living with flying colours.

Minn Minn Zan  
(Kyaunggon)

# Person who tries never loses: UCSM student

The following is an interview with Maung Nay Oo Kyaw, studying in the University of Computer Studies, Mandalay (UCSM), who won the first prize in the World Skills Korea competition held in the Republic of Korea from August 16 to September 14.

By Nandar Win and  
Win Win Maw

**Q. Tell us about World Skills Korea and how you came about competing in it.**

A. World Skills Korea is a programme that is held in Korea. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) provides support to apply for the competition. A competition for students from UCSM, UCSY (University of Computer Studies, Yangon) and YCC (Yadana-bon Cyber City) was held, and I was selected to represent Myanmar in Korea. I studied and competed in computer science programmes held in Suwon, Seoul and Jeju cities, Korea.

Korea did not participate in this competition. Myanmar, Nepal, Viet Nam, Laos, Mongolia, East Timor, and some Latin American countries participated in it. Some countries competed in groups of two and three. My teacher and I were from Myanmar. We were asked to compete as guests. This is the first time Myanmar was invited.

**Q. What prize did Myanmar win and how was it won?**

A. I won a gold medal in the competition. East Timor came in second, and Guatemala stood third. I had to try very hard to win the prize. It was not easy. Before competing in Korea, they gave me training. I studied hard at that time and kept my focus. I studied thoroughly before I left for Korea. I studied the surveys and thesis papers. I also reviewed the subject that I was competing in, as I had to do it there.

**Q. What did you learn**



Maung Nay Oo Kyaw make a presentation with the titled "Country Report, Myanmar". **PHOTO: HLA MOE**

**from the competition? What sort of difficulties did you face?**

A. I gained a lot of experience. I competed for the first time in an international competition. I was very excited during the competition and when I got the prize. I did not even know what to say when I won the prize. It was not a simple matter for me. It had many meanings. I was able to make a name for Myanmar and for my school, as well. When I won the prize, everyone was interested in my school. I gave the name of my school with a big smile on my face. I am happy that I was able to do something for my school. I was also able to make my par-

ents proud.

Of course, there were some difficulties. Some things are not as easy as I thought. The first competition was for two days. I had absolutely no experience. I only knew about it when I was in Korea. There was not much time, and I had to study very quickly in the time I had. When I was competing, I was not quite confident of my abilities. However, I was able to compete well. I was not able to sleep much during the competition days. I slept only for three to four hours a day.

Those were the main difficulties I had. English was being spoken there, but it is a bit difficult to talk with the Koreans.

They prefer to speak Korean, so we had to communicate in sign language sometimes.

In this sort of international competition and programmes, language is important, especially English. I could not speak Korean, but there is a need to speak English fluently. Only then is it possible to communicate.

**Q. What sort of benefits did you gain from this competition?**

A. I was able to do much during this competition. I am glad that I represented Myanmar, which competed for the first time, and was able to prove its abilities. The runner-up, Guatemala, had experience in

other countries, too. I had no experience participating in international competitions, but I competed for the first time and won. I am glad that I was able to make Myanmar proud. I was also awarded additional prizes by the country.

**Q. What do you want to say to the youngsters who will compete next year?**

A. Earlier, Myanmar was not invited. Now they will start thinking about us. Youngsters who want to compete can contact KOICA and their own schools. As it is an international competition, there is much to study.

Firstly, you have to be well versed and learned in the subject that you chose. My preparation for the competition began a long time before. I combined the experiences in the past four to five months to study. The subject I competed in was my area of interest. I want to tell youngsters to concentrate on what they do. Be persistent. American President Abraham Lincoln said, "You can be slow. It is not your fault. But you must not stop." So always study, and do your best. A person who tries hard never loses. If there are competitions, do not hesitate. Progress is faster if there is competition.

If someone else represents Myanmar instead of me, I think he or she will be able to perform well. They can do what others can do. If they cannot do something better than others, at least they can do it equally well. Try hard. Opportunities are within your grasp for those who always try. ■



Maung Nay Oo Kyaw, University of Computer Studies, accepts the gold medal in the World Skills Korea Competition. **PHOTO: HLA MOE**



Gold Medal won by Maung Nay Oo Kyaw. **PHOTO: HLA MOE**



Maung Nay Oo Kyaw share his experiences of competition in Korea at Yangon University. **PHOTO: HLA MOE**

# Winners of titles and medals announced

THE Government of the Union of Myanmar issued eight notifications on 4 January, 2018 to mark the 70th anniversary of Independence Day. Under Notification 1/2018, religious titles are conferred upon senior Buddhist monks who are performing the duties of the Buddhist religion, as well as upon lay disciples who are supporting the Buddhist religion by donating alms and offers. Honorary titles and medals are awarded under Notification 2/2018, whereas Notification 3/2018 is concerned with the conferring of the Thingaha medal 4/2018 with the good military service medal, 5/2018 with the good civil service medal, 6/2018 with the good police service medal, 7/2018 with the state police service medal, and 8/2018 with the public service medal and law and order enforcement medal.—Myanmar News Agency ■

## Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

*The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:*

From His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn R. Kingdom of Thailand  
Excellency,

On the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I wish to extend my cordial felicitations and best wishes for Your Excellency's health and happiness as well as for the progress and prosperity of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and her people.

I am confident that our existing close ties of friendship and cooperation, through good understanding and mutual benefits, will become closer and further developed in the years to come.

From General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.)  
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand  
Excellency,

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government and the Thai people, I have the honour to extend to Your Excellency and, through Your Excellency, to all the Myanmar people our warmest congratulations and best wishes on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I have further the honour to express my sincere gratitude to Your Excellency and Madam Su Su Lwin for graciously attending the Royal Cremation Ceremony of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej on 26 October 2017. Your Excellency's attendance, despite postoperative care, clearly reflected the inseparable bonds between our two countries.

In commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the

Establishment of our Diplomatic Relations in 2018, I very much hope that our joint efforts to celebrate this auspicious occasion will be successful and achieve our mutual goal of deepening the cooperation between Thailand and Myanmar.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

From Madam Halimah Yacob  
President of the Republic of Singapore  
Your Excellency,

On behalf of the people of Singapore, I offer my warmest congratulations on the auspicious occasion of Myanmar's 70<sup>th</sup> Independence Day.

Bilateral relations between Singapore and Myanmar have grown from strength to strength since diplomatic ties were established in 1966. I am confident that our two countries will build on this strong foundation and further enhance relations in areas of mutual interest such as trade and investment, finance, vocational education, legal cooperation, health, and aviation connectivity.

As the ASEAN Chair in 2018, Singapore will work closely with Myanmar and other ASEAN Member States to foster a close-knit, resilient and innovative community for the benefit of our peoples.

I wish you good health and success, and look forward to welcoming you and Daw Su Su Lwin in Singapore at a mutually convenient time.

From His Majesty Akihito  
The Emperor of Japan

His Excellency the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar,

On the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I have great pleasure in sending Your Excellency my heartfelt congratulations and sincere good wishes for Your happiness and for the prosperity of the people of Your country.

From Mr. Shinzo Abe,  
Prime Minister of Japan  
His Excellency U Htin Kyaw,  
President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I am delighted to convey to Your Excellency my warmest congratulations and best wishes for the prosperity of Myanmar.

It was a great honor that we were able to host Your Excellency and Madam in Japan last December. We were able to conclude the Universal Health Coverage Forum 2017 successfully thanks to Your Excellency's attendance. I hope that Your Excellency's visit has become an important milestone for strengthening longstanding friendship between Japan and Myanmar and enhancing our existing cooperation in every field including politics, economy and culture.

Along with my wishes for Your Excellency's good health and further prosperity of Myanmar people, please kindly accept Your Excellency, my highest consideration

SEE PAGE-12

## Foreign Heads of State, FMs, send felicitations to State Counsellor

*The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:*

From Mr Don Pramudwinai  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand  
Excellency,

On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I have the honour of extend my warmest felicitations and best wishes to Your Excellency and, through Your Excellency, to all the Myanmar people for the continued progress and prosperity of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and her people.

As Myanmar and Thailand are celebrating our 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Diplomatic Relations in 2018 in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and the Royal Thai Embassy in Yangon are planning a number of activities such as commemorative

reception, academic seminars, exchange of cultural troupes and so on. I look forward to working closely with Your Excellency to celebrate this auspicious occasion together for the closer ties between our two countries and peoples.

I also wish to reiterate that Thailand will stand side by side with Myanmar, our "natural strategic partner", to ensure peace, stability and prosperity of our two countries and peoples in the years to come.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mr. Lee Hsien Loong  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore  
Dear State Counsellor,

Congratulations on the joyous occasion of Myanmar's 70<sup>th</sup> Independence Day!

mar's 70<sup>th</sup> Independence Day!

Singapore and Myanmar are old friends and close neighbours. We cooperate on a wide range of issues, including trade and investment, finance, culture, vocational education and legal cooperation. The Bilateral Investment Treaty that is under negotiation will further strengthen links between our businesses and bolster investment interest. As the Chair of ASEAN in 2018, Singapore looks forward to working closely with Myanmar and other ASEAN Member States to build a resilient and innovative ASEAN to deal with challenges and opportunities ahead.

I wish you continued good health and success, and look forward to welcome you to the ASEAN Summits in Singapore.

SEE PAGE-12

# Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

## FROM PAGE-11

From The Honourable Donald J. Trump,  
President of the United States of America  
Dear Mr. President,

The American people send their congratulations and best wishes to the people of Myanmar as they celebrate your country's independence on January 4.

The democratic values the people of Myanmar endorsed in the 2015 election remain crucial to the long-term success, stability, and prosperity of your nation. The United States will remain a friend and partner to Myanmar in its ongoing democratic transition.

From H.E Mr. Vladimir Putin,  
President of the Russian Federation  
Dear Mr. President,

Please accept my sincere greetings on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Independence of Myanmar.

Relations between Russia and Myanmar are traditionally characterized by their friendly nature. I am confident that further development of construction interaction on issues of bilateral and international agenda serves the core interests of the peoples of our countries.

I wish You good health and successes as well as peace and prosperity to all Your compatriots.

Respectfully Yours,

From Shri Ram Nath Kovind,  
the Hon'ble President of the Republic of India  
Excellency,

On behalf of the Government and the people of India and on my own behalf, I extend to you my warm greetings and felicitations on the occasion of your Independence Day.

India and Myanmar share strong ties of the culture, religion, language and ethnicity that have over the years bolstered our close and friendly relations. During the visit of our Prime Minister to Myanmar in September this year, we had jointly agreed and set forth a broad agenda of cooperation. We seek to accomplish this ambitious developmental agenda to further build up on our close and friendly ties.

I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes for your personal well-being and for the continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Myanmar.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

# Foreign Heads of State, FMs, send felicitations to State Counsellor

## FROM PAGE-11

From Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore  
Dear Daw Suu,

Best wishes on the auspicious occasion of Myanmar's 70th Independence Day! Myanmar has made steady strides in recent years in its transition to democracy. I am confident that Myanmar will navigate through these challenging times under your leadership.

Singapore and Myanmar share a close and enduring friendship, underpinned by frequent exchanges and excellent cooperation in many sectors. Singapore looks forward to working closely with Myanmar during our ASEAN Chairmanship in 2018 to uphold ASEAN unity and centrality. It is crucial that we build resilient and innovative societies that can add value and create opportunities for our people.

I wish you and the people of Myanmar good health and happiness!

Dear Daw Suu, it was good to see you again at the recent ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting that you chaired so successfully.

Please accept warmed personal greetings from my family and me for the New Year. We look forward to receiving you in Singapore soon!

From Mr. Shinzo Abe,  
Prime Minister of Japan  
Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,  
State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I am honoured to extend to Your Excellency my warmest congratulations and best wishes for the prosperity of Myanmar.

It was my pleasure to meet Your Excellency again in Manila last November and have fruitful discussion on how Japan and Myanmar can strengthen cooperation in many fields. Taking this opportunity, I

reiterate that Japan will continue to provide full support for democratic nation-building by the Myanmar government.

Along with my wishes for your good health and people's great prosperity, please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration. I look forward to welcoming Your Excellency at the Tenth Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting held in Japan this year.

From Taro Kono,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan  
Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,

On the 70th anniversary of Independence Day of the Republic of the Union Myanmar, I wish to extend to Your Excellency my warmest congratulations to Your Excellency.

In support of Your Excellency's efforts for Myanmar's democratic transition, national reconciliation and economic reforms, the Japanese government will provide its full support to the efforts in terms of cooperation between the government and the people. I am looking forward the time we can exchange views for promoting bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

I would like to express my wishes for your good health and for further prosperity of Myanmar.  
(Unofficial Translation)

From Mr. Dmitry Medvedev,  
Prime Minister of the Russian Federation  
Dear Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,

On behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation and in my personal capacity I congratulate You on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of Independence of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I am confident that development of Russia-Myanmar relations, expanding cooperation in spheres of trade and economy, science and technology, culture, humanitarian and other areas of serve long-term interests of our two countries.

I wish You, esteemed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, good health and successes in Your responsible work, and the people of Myanmar – well-being and prosperity.

Respectfully Yours,

From Mr. Sergey Lavrov,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation  
Dear Minister,

Please accept my sincere greetings on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of Independence of Myanmar.

We note with satisfaction positive dynamics of bilateral relations. We intend to promote Russia-Myanmar cooperation in a wide range of fields and to extend interaction on international arena for the benefit of the peoples of our countries, for maintaining stability and security in South-East Asia and Asia-Pacific Region.

I wish You and all colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar good health and new successes.

From Shri Narendra Modi,  
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India  
Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,

On behalf of the people of India and on my own behalf, I extend to you warm greetings and felicitations on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I fondly recall my visit to your beautiful country in September 2017. The visit has undoubtedly reinforced the vision we share to enhance our bilateral cooperation for mutual benefit.

India and Myanmar share close and friendly relations based on enduring ties of shared history, culture and people to people contact. I am confident that under your leadership, we would be able to further consolidate our bilateral ties. India will stand as a reliable partner in Myanmar's quest for development and will be oriented towards fulfilling the priorities of Government of Myanmar.

I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes for your personal well-being and the continued prosperity of the friendly people of Myanmar.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

North Korea reopens border hotline as Trump boasts of “bigger” nuclear button

SEOUL — North Korea reopened a long-closed border hotline with South Korea on Wednesday, hours after US President Donald Trump appeared to mock the North’s leader by saying he has a “bigger and more powerful” nuclear button than he does.

The North’s decision to open the border phone

line came a day after South Korea proposed high-level discussions amid a tense standoff over North Korea’s missile and nuclear programmes.

That followed North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s New Year address in which he said he was open to speaking with the South and would consider

sending a delegation to the Winter Olympics to be held just across the border in Pyeongchang in February.

US officials said Washington would not take any talks between North and South Korea seriously if they did not contribute to denuclearising North Korea. A State

Department spokeswoman said North Korea “might be trying to drive a wedge of some sort”. Kim ordered the reopening of the hotline at the truce village of Panmunjom at 0630 GMT on Wednesday, when South Korean officials at the border received a call from the North, the South’s unifi-

cation ministry said in a text message.

Officials on both sides were checking the line and conducting a conversation for about 20 minutes, the contents of which were not disclosed by the ministry.

That gesture came only hours after Trump, who has mocked Kim as “Little Rocket Man”, again ridiculed the North Korean leader on Twitter. “Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!” Trump tweeted.—Reuters ■

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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.  
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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.  
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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.  
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Corner of Mahabandoola Road and Thein Phyu Road,  
Botahtaung Township, Yangon,  
**The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.**  
Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018 lmm@kcyangon.com

**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**  
**M.V MCC SHANGHAI VOY. NO. ( )**  
Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC SHANGHAI VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4-1-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.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 MCC TRANSPORT  
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**CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE**  
**M.V PATHEIN STAR VOY. NO. ( )**  
Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PATHEIN STAR VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 4-1-2018 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.  
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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY  
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL  
SHIPPING LINES**  
Phone No: 2301185

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# YouTuber Logan Paul says suicide video was 'huge mistake'

LOS ANGELES — American YouTube star Logan Paul on Tuesday apologized for posting a video of a suicide victim in Japan, saying he had made a “huge mistake” and was ashamed of himself.

Paul, 22, whose almost daily video blogs on YouTube have over 15 million followers, apologized for laughing with friends about the body they filmed hanging on a tree in Japan’s so-called “suicide forest” and posted to the video-sharing channel.

Logan deleted the video on Monday after it caused a social media backlash.

“I’ve made a severe and continuous lapse in my judgment and I don’t expect to be forgiven. I’m simply here to apologize,” Paul said in a YouTube video called “So Sorry.”

He said the shots of he and his friends laughing nervously after the discovery of the body were “raw and unfiltered” reactions and that the video should never have been posted or even filmed.

“I’ve made a huge mistake. I don’t expect to be forgiven... I’m ashamed of myself. I am disappointed,” he added.

Logan shot the video on a



Liza Koshy accepts the Choice Female Web Star award and Logan Paul accepts the Choice Male Web Star Award. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

visit to Japan’s Aokigahara forest on the slopes of Mount Fuji, that is known for its high number of suicides. He promoted it on his Twitter account at the weekend as “the craziest and most real video I’ve ever uploaded.”

Reaction was swift with critics calling the video disgusting and tasteless.

“Paul believes he’s ‘making YouTube history’ by vlogging the body of a young person who died by suicide... You’re not Neil Armstrong bro, it’s simply a thing no one else has been tacky enough to do outside rotten. com circa 2000,” tweeted Caitlin Doughty, a Los Angeles mortician and author of “From Here to Eternity.”

Former “Breaking Bad” star Aaron Paul said suicide was no joke. “You disgust me. I can’t believe that so many young people look up to you,” the actor tweeted to Paul, who he is not related to. “Hopefully this latest video woke them up. You are pure trash. Plain and simple. Suicide is not a joke. Go rot in hell.”—Reuters ■

## China’s “Youth” leads box office for 3<sup>rd</sup> week

BEIJING — Veteran director Feng Xiaogang’s “Youth” continued to dominate the Chinese box office, earning 359 million yuan (55.3 million US dollars) in its third week, according to the latest statistics released by China Film News.

The romance film has raked in more than 1.18 billion yuan since hitting Chinese screens on 15 December.

Domestic comedy “The Ex-File: The Return of the Exes” came in second, grossing 293 million yuan in its first week.

Third place went to Chinese thriller “Gold Buster,” earning 250 million yuan since its release on 29 December.

The fantasy film “Legend of the Demon Cat” landed in fourth place, generating 225 million yuan last week. It has made 468 million yuan since its release on 22 December.

Rounding out the top five was another fantasy film, “Hanson and the Beast,” which grossed 170 million yuan in its debut week. —Xinhua ■

# NBC says Hoda Kotb to replace Lauer as ‘Today’ co-anchor

NEW YORK — Television host Hoda Kotb was named the new co-anchor of the NBC News “Today” show on Tuesday, replacing former co-host Matt Lauer several weeks after the longtime anchor was fired for inappropriate sexual behaviour, according to a network statement.

Kotb will join Savannah Guthrie during the first two hours of the popular program, starting at 7 am EST (noon GMT), and become the first pair of women to host the show along with weatherman Al Roker and Orange Room host Carson Daly. Kotb will continue co-hosting the 10 am hour of “Today” with Kathie Lee Gifford.

“It’s 2018 and we are kicking off the year right because Hoda is officially the co-anchor

of Today,” said Guthrie, 46, who announced the news during the program’s opening moments.

Kotb, 53, quickly filled in as co-host when Lauer was fired on 28 November after a female colleague complained to NBC officials about a pattern of inappropriate sexual behaviour that began while they were on assignment at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics in Russia, according to the network.

At least two other women went to NBC with similar complaints against Lauer following the first allegation. None of the women has been publicly identified.

“Repairing the damage will take a lot of time and soul searching and I’m committed to beginning that effort,” Lauer said after he was fired.

Reuters has not independently verified the accusations.

Kotb joined NBC News in 1998 as a correspondent and has co-hosted the fourth hour of “Today” with Gifford since 2008. She also hosts a program on Sirius XM satellite radio.

“Over the past several weeks, Hoda has seamlessly stepped into the co-anchor role alongside Savannah, and the two have quickly hit the ground running,” NBC News Chairman Andrew Lack said in an email to staff, according to Today.com.

#SavannahHodaTODAY was a top-trending topic on Twitter following the announcement as fans and NBC News colleagues congratulated the host on her new position. —Reuters ■



Television personality Hoda Kotb arrives at The Hollywood Reporter’s 23rd annual Women in Entertainment breakfast, in Los Angeles, California on 210 December, 2014. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

## Canadian scholar casts light on Soka Gakkai as group shows change

RALEIGH, (North Carolina) — Canadian scholar Levi McLaughlin remembers intensive Sunday rehearsals he had in the early 2000s with a men's orchestra run in Tokyo by the lay-Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai.

Because Soka Gakkai's charismatic leader Daisaku Ikeda is a Beethoven aficionado, the orchestra mainly played Beethoven symphonies. A violinist trained in Toronto, McLaughlin was the only foreigner in the Japanese religious group's music world.

"The rehearsal was from 9 am to 10 pm on Sunday, with many hours of Beethoven. Really intensive, amazing training and experience," recalls McLaughlin, the first non-member, non-Japanese researcher to spend years investigating non-elite Soka Gakkai members as well as Komeito, a Japanese political party backed by the group.

"I met one of the violinists and he said, 'Come to the rehearsal,'" McLaughlin, now an assistant professor of religious studies at North Carolina State University, said in a recent interview at his office in Raleigh. "And I ended up playing with them for four and a half years."

McLaughlin was in Japan from 2000 to 2004 to conduct research on Soka Gakkai, a period that included two years of graduate work at the University of

Tokyo. He first grew interested in Asian religion during a year of study in 1994 at Kwansei Gakuin University in Hyogo Prefecture, western Japan.

Soka Gakkai is said to be the largest active religion in Japan, with a claimed membership of 8.27 million households in the country. Komeito is the junior coalition partner of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party. McLaughlin, 45, has sought to learn about something missing from most research on Soka Gakkai — what is everyday life like for ordinary members, and what motivates their religious and political activities?

To answer these questions, he has extended beyond musical engagements to participation in local-level study meetings, gathering rare publications, and conducting interviews with ex-members and adherents from other faiths. His most valuable insights come from long-term relationships with local Soka Gakkai communities.

"I met a very big, very diverse spectrum of Gakkai members through music," said McLaughlin, also a piano player. "When you play music with people, you develop a strong bond. Music really helped me pursue my study of religion from the ground up." But building ties with the group has not always been easy. Some



Levi McLaughlin, an assistant professor of religious studies at North Carolina State University and an expert on Soka Gakkai, the lay-Buddhist organization that backs Japan's Komeito political party, speaks in an interview with Kyodo News at his university in Raleigh, North Carolina on 30 December, 2017. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

members tried to convert him and some encouraged him to play a leading role in Soka Gakkai International, the group's overseas umbrella organization that claims more than 1.5 million adherents in 192 countries and territories.

"I was always very clear about my role as a researcher," McLaughlin said. "I told people, 'It's better for Soka Gakkai to have a non-member perspective that reveals the humanity of the members. If I convert to Soka Gakkai, then you don't have that perspective anymore.'"

Referring to Komeito's loss of six seats to 29 in Japan's House of Representatives in the general election last October, he said the setback — despite the LDP's resounding victory with

284 seats — may reflect frustration among some Soka Gakkai members about what they perceive as Komeito's compromise on its founding pacifist principles.

They have criticized Komeito since 2015, when the LDP-Komeito coalition ushered in security legislation that allowed for a reinterpretation of the Constitution's war-renouncing Article 9 to enable Japan to exercise limited forms of collective self-defence.

While critics labeled the controversial laws "war legislation," Abe and other proponents described them as necessary steps for boosting deterrence in the face of North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons development, as well as China's military buildup and assertive territorial

claims in the East and South China seas. "Some Gakkai members, especially women who have been the engine that powers the religion's peace movement, have rebuked Komeito for abandoning peace advocacy," McLaughlin said. "You encounter a lot of silent members, people who decide not to vote or go to the polls and instead of voting for Komeito, they may be secretly voting for other parties. It's very difficult to know for sure."

With Abe now calling for increased national debate on a first-ever amendment to the Constitution — including his proposal to add a reference to the Self-Defense Forces in Article 9 — Komeito has maintained a cautious stance.—Kyodo News ■

## Cuba's Santeria priests wax positive as transition from Castros begins

HAVANA — Priests from Cuba's Afro-Cuban Santeria religion forecast on Tuesday that the upcoming retirement of President Raul Castro would signify "a moment of change" that accelerates the pace of reform on the Communist-run island.

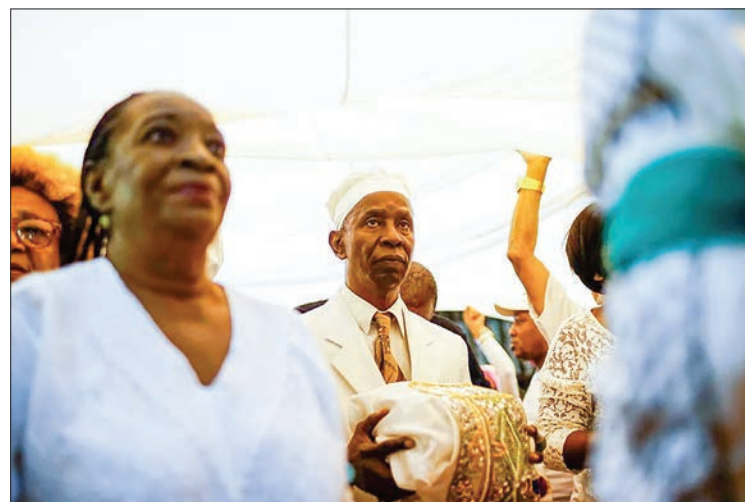
The ritual-filled religion, which fuses Catholicism with ancient African beliefs brought to Cuba by slaves, is practiced by millions of Cubans, many of whom eagerly await guidance from its annual forecast.

Victor Betancourt, a babalawo or Santeria priest, and member of the commission that writes the "Letter of the Year" containing prophecies and recommendations for followers, was upbeat at a news conference fol-

lowing the release of the letter.

"I am sure this is a moment of change, a moment that can

favour us, first of all because it is under the divinity of Yemaya, the Orisha (goddess) of feeding,"



Followers of the Yoruba religion perform after the delivery of the recommendations based on their annual predictions for the New Year in Havana, Cuba on 2 January, 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

he said, "and really that is what we need."

In a broader sense, Yemaya is goddess of the seas and of water, and is considered one of the most powerful and positive deities. Castro, 86, said last month he would step down as president in April. He took over in 2008 after his brother Fidel Castro, who had governed Cuba since leading the 1959 revolution, became seriously ill. Fidel Castro died in 2016.

"We hope that the new leader will bring new reforms," Betancourt said. "We are betting on reforms of the laws, in the food and health system, in social education that is contaminating the minds of the youth."

First Vice President Miguel Diaz-Canel, 57, is widely seen as

Castro's successor. "It is a moment of change ... to make changes. A time to change schemes that really do us harm," Betancourt said.

Cuba has been immersed for a decade in efforts to transform its Soviet-style economy in hopes of improving the country's sluggish performance.

But bureaucratic resistance has slowed progress toward a more market-oriented system and the crisis in ally Venezuela has left Cuba hard-pressed to pay for imports and recapitalize infrastructure.

The Letter of the Year prophesied "health in the complete sense of the term," and urged followers to "maintain a good social and moral conduct."—Reuters ■

# Merits and music at MFF Charity Cup 2018 on Sunday in Yangon

Kyaw Zin Lin

THE MFF Charity Cup 2018 will pit Shan United against Yangon United at 3.30 pm on Sunday at Aung San Stadium in Yangon.

The MFF Charity Cup is Myanmar professional football's annual match contested between the champions of the previous Myanmar National League season and the holders of the 2015 General Aung San Shield at Aung San Stadium. If the Myanmar National League champions also won the General Aung San Shield then the

league runners-up provide the opposition.

Organised by the Myanmar Football Federation, proceeds from the game are distributed to community-based initiatives and charities around the country. The first MFF Charity Cup was played in 2012, replacing the MFF Opening Cup.

The charity cup or the season's opening match, supervised by Myanmar Football Federation and Myanmar National League fulfills the social duties and obliga-

tions to places in Myanmar that are in need.

The cup testers must be qualified the Myanmar National League (MNL) 2017 Champion or the second place winner of the Bogyoke Aung San Shield 2017.

Shan United has secured the both the MNL championship and the Bogyoke Aung San Shield, so their opponent in the opening match is Yangon United, the second place winner of the Bogyoke Aung San Shield 2017.

Entrance fees for the MFF

Charity Cup are Ks2,000 for grandstand and Ks1,000 for ordinary seats.

All the funds received from Myanmar football fans will be donated to orphanages across Myanmar.

Entertainment will be provided before the match at 2pm, which this year includes actor Min Maw Koon, Thu Htoo San, Moe Moe, Eaint Chit and Bobby Soxer.

In this way, Myanmar fans can gain merits while also enjoying entertainment and football. ■

## Myanmar national futsal team to take training in Thailand

Myanmar national futsal team which is making preparations for 2018 AFC Futsal Championship left for Thailand this morning.

Myanmar team will take training from 3 to 11 January in Thailand and is expected to play four friendly matches. Negotiation is being made to play friendly matches against Thailand national futsal team, Thailand U-23 and two clubs.

The 16-member Myanmar national futsal team is led by U Htay Myint as head coach. The 2018 AFC Futsal Championship will be held in Taiwan early February. Myanmar team is pooled in Group (D) together with Jordan, South Korea and Bahrain.

Myanmar national futsal team secured second place in 2016 AFF Futsal Championship, third position in 2016 AFF Futsal Championship and qualified for the 2018 AFC Futsal Championship for the first time.—MDN ■

# Yadanabon FC recruits teen footballers

Kyaw Zin Lin

IN a rebuilding effort, Yadanabon FC has officially recruited striker Win Naing Htun, midfielder Pyae Sone Naing, midfielder Myat Kaung Khant and defender Aung Wunna Soe, according to the team's

website.

All have recently shown their abilities in international football matches, and all are under 19 years of age, being members of the country's U-19 national team.

Under the supervision of new head coach U Aung Kyaw

Moe, Yadanabon has already recruited a total of seven youth footballers in the current recruiting season of the Myanmar National League, including goalkeeper Chan Nyein Kyaw, defender Ta Lun Hote Htun and midfielder Bi Bi.

Yadanabon FC is a Myanmar

football club representing the Mandalay Region.

Yadanabon was a founding member of the Myanmar National League in 2009. In the first game of the 2017 MNL season, they drew a home attendance of 4,000, the highest in that round. ■

# Liverpool's Lallana aims to make up for lost time



Liverpool's Adam Lallana. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON — Midfielder Adam Lallana is ready to spearhead Liverpool's push for silverware this season after making his long-awaited first start of the season.

The England international, who sustained a thigh injury in the pre-season, played 86 minutes of Liverpool's 2-1 victory over Burnley on New Year's Day.

"It tests different parts of you, but I feel that I have learned so much from being out," Lallana said.

"I have come back strong. I had a couple of little setbacks along the way with a minor blister and then a tight muscle but that's what happens.

"Maybe it is credit to the manager over the last few games, just holding me back. I was able to get some good

training sessions in but I'm back now."

The 29-year-old provided a series of tireless performance in the midfielder last season, scoring eight goals in 31 appearances.

With Liverpool currently on a 16-game unbeaten run in all competitions, Lallana was relishing the prospect of delivering success in domestic and European competitions in the second half of the campaign.

"There's a lot to look forward to. We are in amongst the top four in the league and in the last 16 of the Champions League," he added. "There are so many great games to look forward to, like the FA Cup tie against Everton on Friday. I'm absolutely delighted to be back and part of a winning team again." —Reuters ■