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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, left, greets Nai Htaw Mon, Chairman of the New Mon State Party, in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

New Mon State Party, Lahu Democratic Union agree to sign Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

TWO more armed ethnic groups agreed yesterday to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), bringing the total number of signatories to 10 and allowing them to participate in

the upcoming 21st Century Panglong-Union Peace Conference.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received delegations from the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Dem-

ocratic Union (LDU), both of whom agreed to sign the NCA, at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The delegation from the

New Mon State Party was led by its Chairman Nai Htaw Mon, and the delegation from the Lahu Democratic Union was led by its Chairman Kya Khun Sar.

SEE PAGE-3

Ready to begin repatriation: Government

MYANMAR is ready to launch the repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh despite a delay announced by Bangladesh authorities.

Under the agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh, repatriation was slated to begin yesterday.

"We are ready to accept the first batch of returnees today as agreed, because under the agree-

ment with Bangladesh, we must start the repatriation within two months and today is the day we slated to launch the repatriation," said Dr. Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement at the press conference in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Myanmar has prepared two reception camps on its side of the border to take back up to 300 people per day.

"I want to reiterate that we are ready to accept the returnees from Bangladesh according to the list we sent to Bangladesh. To carry that out, we need international cooperation," said U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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'BEST BANK IN MYANMAR'

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Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw discusses compensation for farmlands

By Kyaw Thu Htet and
Hmwe Kyu Zin

SIX questions were raised and a bill was tabled during the fifth-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw meeting held yesterday morning.

U Mya Sein of Dagon Myo-thit (Seikkan) constituency asked about the plan to transfer the non-judge personnel of the court such as the bailiff, clerks and peons who are posted at a duty station for a long period. Union Supreme Court Judge U Myint Aung replied that most of the courts do not have staff houses, except for the Yangon and Mandalay regions, so it would be difficult to transfer the court staff. As such, there is no plan to transfer the non-judge personnel of the court, said the Union Supreme Court judge.

Responding to a question raised by U Win Win of Minbu constituency on the plan to pay compensation to owners of farm-



Union Supreme Court Judge U Myint Aung. **PHOTO: MNA**

lands through which the Pakko-ku-Kyangin railroad passed and the planned Minbu-An railroad section, where the earthworks have been conducted, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said a compensation award of some Ks3.24025 billion for 2,292.16 acres of farmlands in Minbu (Saku) Township had already been paid, and 15 village tracts in Minbu (Saku) Township still have to be compensated.

The assessment and meas-



Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo. **PHOTO: MNA**

urement of the farmlands affected by the Minbu-An railroad section in Minbu (Saku) Township were made, and based on the confirmation by the Magway Region farmland management group, a compensation award of Ks72.933 million for 31.66 acres in the Kanyay village tract, Minbu Township, was made in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The assessment and measurement of the remaining farmlands in the four affected village tracts are being made, and once the

Magway Region farmland management group has confirmed the amount, the ministry will request the compensation money in the nearest fiscal year. Once it is received, the compensation will be paid, explained the deputy minister.

In reply to a question raised by U Khun Than Htoo of Hsihseng constituency on the plan to erect MPT communication towers for mobile phone connections in the eastern part of Hsihseng Township and the western part of Maukmai Township, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo said there is no plan to erect communication towers in the Pa-O Self-administered Zone in the eastern part of Hsihseng Township and the western part of Maukmai Township, but once the fund to fulfil the telecommunications requirement is set up with financial input from the telecommunications operators, such towers will be erected according to the country-wide pri-

ority requirement.

U Kyaw Myo also replied to mobile phone communication questions raised by U Sai Kyaw Moe of Mongpan constituency and U Se Ki Kaw of Mongkat constituency and a question on the plan to open a new district road transport administration office in Myaungmya by Dr. Soe Moe Thu of Myaungmya constituency.

Next, Union Supreme Court Judge U Myint Aung tabled a bill amending the Caste Disabilities Removal Act to the Hluttaw, and the Hluttaw Bill Committee read and explained the committee's report on the bill.

Judge U Myint Aung said the Caste Disabilities Removal Act was enacted in 1850 and is still in use, and there is a need to amend it to bring it in line with the current situation.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker then requested Hluttaw representatives who wanted to submit an amendment to the bill to enrol their names. ■

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw discusses bill on wildlife, natural resources

By Aye Aye Thant,
Myo Thu Hein

Asterisk-marked questions were asked and answered, two bills were discussed, a bill was tabled and a motion was made during the fifth-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw meeting held yesterday morning in the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting hall.

During the meeting, a question by U Myint Naing of Rakhaing State constituency (5) on the plan to distribute piped water to five wards in the town of Kyauktaw Township was answered by Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw. The piped water that is being distributed to five wards in the town is supplied from Shaukchaung Dam, and according to a test conducted by the irrigation department, the water contains iron, manganese, aluminium and slurry. The water from Shaukchaung Dam flows directly to a water collection tank and two settling tanks. More slurry entered the water when the water from the dam was directly distributed



Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

to the town.

In the past, the settling tanks were cleaned and chlorinated once every three months but will now be cleaned every month to enable the distribution of clean water. Water will be collected in the collection tanks during the night, and it will be allowed to settle for six hours before being distributed in the daytime. Extension works will be conducted in the 2018-2019 fiscal year with funds from the state government, replied the deputy minister, together with a reply from the Ra-



Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung. **PHOTO: MNA**

khine State government.

Next, a bill on the protection of wildlife and the conservation of natural areas was discussed by the Hluttaw representatives.

U Pu Gin Kam Lian of Chin State constituency (5) discussed amending the sentence "not more than seven years imprisonment or a fine of a minimum of Ks0.5 million to a maximum of Ks1.5 million" in chapter 11, clause 38, of the bill.

The prison term is vague, as it can be (as little as) one year. Those who committed the crime

negotiate with people in power for a prison term of only one year, instead of seven years. The fine of Ks0.5 million to Ks1.5 million is low compared to the income obtained from the sale of wildlife and natural products, which can amount to tens of millions of kyat, and thus, the fine should be totally removed. The amendment to clause 38 should be a prison term of three to five years, said the Hluttaw representative. Seven more Hluttaw representatives also took part in the discussion.

The 2017 bill to amend the vacant, fallow and virgin lands management law was then discussed by the Hluttaw representatives.

Next, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung submitted a Myanmar travel bill to the Hluttaw, and Hluttaw Bill Committee member Daw Nwe Nwe Aung read the report on the bill to the Hluttaw.

Later, U Pe Chit of Yangon Region constituency (9) tabled a motion urging the government to prevent the destruction and losses of natural resources in Myanmar as a national duty.

MP U Pe Chit said within a 20-year period from 1994 to 2014, millions of tonnes of hardwood in the country were lost through illegal logging, as well as rare wildlife such as elephants, bears, tigers, leopards, peacocks and snakes, all of which fell prey to poaching.

Gems from Mogoke and other mines were lost through illegal mining and the Ministry of Mines did not know the exact amount of losses incurred. According to the audit by the union auditor general in 2014, some 98 mining businesses are in arrears of providing 6.4 tonnes of gold according to the agreement. Ignoring the law cannot be handled by enacting new laws and restrictions. There is a need to protect the valuable natural resources of the country, said MP U Pe Chit.

Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than received the decision of the Hluttaw on accepting the motion, and the motion was accepted.

The sixth-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw will be continued on 25 January. ■

New Mon State Party, Lahu Democratic Union agreed to sign NCA

FROM PAGE-1

At a news conference at the meeting hall of the NRPC following the meetings, the State Counsellor expressed her delight at the progress made towards peace.

“I thank our ethnic national brothers and sisters and ethnic Mon and Lahu nationals for helping in the enduring existence of the union, peace in the union and development based on peace. I believe we are not doing this for ourselves but are taking the next step for the next generation.”, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said.

Ten other groups have not

yet signed the ceasefire, including the Karenni National Progressive Party, the Arakan National Council, the United Wa State Army and the Kachin Independence Army.

The NMSP and the LDU agreed to sign the NCA after meeting with the State Counsellor and the Tatmadaw's Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing, said NMSP representative Nai Aung Min, reading from a statement.

Also present at yesterday's meetings were the Union Minister for the State Counsellor's Office U Kyaw Tint Swe, Peace Commission Chairman



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi poses for documentary photo together with delegations of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Lahu Democratic Union and officials. **PHOTO: MNA**

NMSP, LDU to sign NCA

New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) released a Press Statement on 23 January regarding their intention to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Following is the full text of the statement.

Press Release

A delegation led by New Mon State Party (NMSP) Chairman Nai Htaw Mon and a delegation led by Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) Chairman Kya Khun Sar met with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Nay Pyi Taw today.

At the meeting, matters relating to signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and the peace process were cordially and openly discussed.

As a result of this meeting, NMSP and LDU announced that they would be signing the NCA soon.

New Mon State Party and Lau Democratic Union
23 January 2018, Nay Pyi Taw



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomes Kya Khun Sar, Chairman of Lahu Democratic Union. **PHOTO: MNA**

Dr. Tin Myo Win, Deputy Minister for the Ministry of the State Counsellor's Office U Khin Maung Tin, and Deputy Minister for the President's Office U

Min Thu. Together with NMSP Chairman Nai Htaw Mon were General Secretary Nai Aung Min, Nai Layika Kaung, Nai Win Hla, Nai Banya Le, and

Nai Aung Mangay, while LDU Chairman Kya Khun Sar was accompanied by Kya Solamon and Kya Sheh Bo.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Vice President U Myint Swe holds talks with Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Committee for Implementation of the Recommendation on Rakhine State. **PHOTO: MNA**

VP U Myint Swe receives Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai

VICE President U Myint Swe received Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State, and its members at the Hall for Envoys of the Presidential Palace, Nay Pyi Taw, on January 23 at 3 p.m.

They exchanged views on the implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, stability and the peace

process in the region; issuance of the immigration and national verification cards; relocation and development of socio-economic status; cooperation between international organizations and United Nations agencies; humanitarian assistance; resettlement; and the work processes of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine at the meeting.—Myanmar News Agency ■

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

Efforts underway to boost tourist arrivals to Myanmar's natural islands

THE Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and relevant organisations are making collective efforts to boost international tourist arrivals to Myanmar's natural islands.

Myanmar has several natural resources and countless attractions. Besides its cultural sites, Myanmar's Mergui Archipelago, which is part of the Taninthayi Region and is in the Andaman Sea, is gaining popularity among luxury travellers in the international marketplace because of its natural value.

There are more than 800 islands in Mergui Archipelago. Some islands have been opened to visitors under an arrangement with the ministry.

The ministry is trying to implement marine tourism to promote the country's smokeless industry, said a spokesperson.

Sustainable development



Coral reefs seen in Mergui Archipelago, Taninthayi Region. **PHOTO: KYAW HAN (HOTEL & TOURISM)**

of marine resources plays an essential role in implementing eco-tourism in the country, he added.

To raise public aware-

ness on water pollution, departmental staff and officials from the Hotels and Tourism Ministry and related government departments on Sunday

participated in a campaign to collect waste from Myinkhwa, Saytan, Athepone and Zardatgyi islands. —Kyaw Soe (Kaw-thoung)

Teenage girl killed in head-on collision in Thaton tsp

An 18-year-old girl was killed in a head-on collision between a car and a motorbike on Yangon-Mawlamyaing Road on Sunday (21 January).

The motorbike, which was headed towards Thawunna from Belin Town, hit a Hino Ranger car between mile posts No. 137/2 and 137/3 near Ngoketo Village in the TadaU village-tract, Thaton Township, Mon State.

The motorbike, driven by Min Min Soe, 17, was trying to overtake a line of vehicles and crashed into a car driver by U Pan Aung, 43, coming from the opposite direction. Ma Hla Hla Ei, a Grade-9 student, was riding pillion and was thrown off the road on impact.

Maung Min Min Soe, 17, who was driving the motorcycle, sustained serious injuries in the crash and is being treated at Theintseik cottage hospital. The police have filed charges against the two drivers for reckless driving, as defined in Section 304 (a)/338 of the Penal Code.—Thet Oo (Thaton) ■

YBS route to be linked with water bus, circular train, airport schedules

THE Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA) is planning to link Yangon Bus Service (YBS) routes with water bus, circular train and airport schedules, according to YRTA.

"First, YRTA initiated the YBS on 6 January, 2017, abolishing the bus line control committee and its bus service system. As for the second project, we are trying to link YBS routes with water bus and cir-

cular train schedules," said Daw Nilar Kyaw, the Region Minister for Electricity, Industry and Transport, at the first anniversary celebrations of the YBS, held in Yangon. Initially, a private company, Lu Htu Meik Swe, will operate two YBS routes with 50 buses, which will run from the Hlaw Karr gate to Yangon Railways Station and from University of West Yangon to Yangon Railways Station.

Further, another private company, Batsone MyinKwin, will also operate a YBS route with 50 buses, which will run from Yangon International Airport to Yangon Railways Station. Currently, some 93 bus lines are operating with 5,300 buses through 22 operators. Nearly 1,000 new buses, bought by private companies and the government, have yet to start bus line operations.—GNLM ■

Five-storey ward in Yangon Central Women's hospital to be complete in March

THE construction of a new five-storey ward in Yangon Central Women's hospital will be completed in March, according to a report in the Myawady Daily yesterday.

The new ward is being constructed to accommodate the increased number of patients. The new five-storey ward will include an emergency treatment ward; a

maternity ward; a room for chest X-ray equipment and laboratory disease detection devices; 12 special operation rooms; four office rooms; an anaesthetic room; and rooms for training, workshops, exams and conferences.

"Currently, it is an 800-bed hospital. However, more than 900 patients are being treated now. Upon completion

of the five-storey building, the hospital will be able to accommodate more inpatients for medical treatment at the hospital," said Dr. Pa Pa, senior medical superintendent of the hospital.

The Yangon Central Women's hospital is treating some 500 outpatients and more than 900 inpatients per day on average.—GNLM ■

Myanmar-Korea trade reaches \$510 million in current financial year

THE value of bilateral trade between Myanmar and South Korea exceeded US\$510 million in the current financial year, according to the monthly trade report of the Ministry of Commerce.

The total bilateral trade value included \$321 million in imports and \$189 million in exports.

In November alone, bilateral trade was worth more than \$51 million, including some \$14.237 million in exports and \$37.652 million in imports.

In the first eight months of this fiscal year (FY), Myanmar-East Asia trade exceeded \$9.358 billion, including \$4.269 billion in exports and more than \$5 billion in imports.

Myanmar imports cosmet-

ics, food products, electronics equipment, mobile devices and other goods from South Korea and exports agricultural products, including cashew nuts, mangoes, rice, beans and pulses.

The trade between the two countries last FY was valued at \$866 million.

The value of bilateral trade was \$666 million in the 2011-2012 FY and \$623 million in the 2012-2013 FY. The external trade value with South Korea reached a record high of nearly \$1.6 billion in the 2013-2014 FY. The trade value declined to \$862 million in the 2014-2015 FY and \$656 million in the 2015-2016 FY. Efforts are being made by the authorities to enhance bilateral trade with South Korea.—Swe Nyein ■

Fuel price rises to record high in domestic market

FUEL prices reached a record high in the domestic market in the past three years, according to a report in the Sunday edition of Myawady Daily.

According to information provided by gas stations, fuel prices in the local market have returned to their highest level since 2014. In the market, 92 Octane was sold for Ks820 per litre on 19 January, while one litre of 95 Octane cost Ks850; diesel, Ks830; and premium diesel, Ks850.

The pump price for 92 Octane was Ks940 per litre, while

one litre of diesel cost Ks950 in late 2014 in the retail market. After 2014, fuel prices reached a record low of Ks500 per litre for 92 Octane, while the cost of 95 Octane dropped to Ks600 per litre. Since mid-2017, the prices of fuel have been on the rise in the market.

“Fuel prices are not stable even in the international markets. This affects the local fuel market. Experts predict that fuel prices are expected to increase in the domestic market, as fuel prices usually rise in the high season,” a retailer said.—GNLM ■



Farmers work as they harvest paddy at a village in Kangyidauk, Ayeyawady. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH**

Rice millers urge gov't to prevent illegal paddy exports to China

RICE millers from the Yangon and Mandalay regions have submitted a complaint to the concerned ministries regarding illegal paddy exporters to China, according to a report in City News yesterday.

China does not allow some agro products, including rice, to be imported through its border gates. When rice exports exceed the quota set by China,

the tax rate is exorbitantly high, leading to illegal rice trade. The state also loses revenue as a result of illegal trade, an official from the Mandalay Region Rice Millers Association told City News. Traders say only genetic paddy is being exported for cultivation. However, it was found that they were exporting a huge volume to China.

Chinese merchants visit

the Mandalay Region and buy the paddy in bulk. This kind of trade started from last summer's crop season.

The direct export of paddy without milling is hurting the rice millers. Such trade can also indirectly affect the feed-processing businesses.

There are some 1,100 rice millers in the Mandalay region.—GNLM ■

Myanmar's export value to EU countries is double import value

THE value of Myanmar's exports to EU member countries, as of November in the current fiscal year (FY), reached US\$1 billion, while imports from the European Union were worth some \$512 million, totalling \$1.51 billion, according to statistics released by the ministry of commerce last Friday.

Since April, among the EU countries, Germany had the largest trade value with Myanmar of some \$385 million, followed by Britain with \$225 million, France with some \$178 million, and Italy with an estimated value of \$140 million. Myanmar's trade with the Netherlands reached some \$133 million.

The value of bilateral trade with Spain was \$114 million,

while that with Belgium was \$105 million. Trade with Denmark fetched more than \$67 million. Trade values with Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Poland, Finland, Bulgaria, Romania, Luxembourg, Austria, Hungary, Estonia, Ireland, Portugal and Malta was less than \$50 million each.

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

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

Myanmar reinstated the

European Union's generalised scheme of preference (GSP) from July 19, 2013. Myanmar can enjoy GSP for the export of fisheries, rice, pulses, agro products, bamboo and rattan finished products, forestry products, apparel and finished industrial goods.

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

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

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Trade Mark Ads

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Foreign Head of State sends felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

The following is message of felicitations from Foreign Head of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

**From Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard
President of the Republic of Peru
Your Excellency Mr. President,**

I have the pleasure of addressing Your Excellency in order to express to you, on behalf of the Republic of Peru and my own, my warmest congratulations on the occasion of the commemoration of the Seventieth Anniversary of the National Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

On this special occasion, I would like to express the commitment of my Government to continue working, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation for the benefit and progress of our Peoples.

While reiterating my best wishes of prosperity and well-being for your noble Nation, I take this opportunity to express to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest and most distinguished consideration.



Thura U Shwe Mann meets with Singaporean Ambassador H.E. Ms. Vanessa Chan Yuen Ying in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Thura U Shwe Mann receives Singapore's Ambassador to Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw

CHAIRMAN of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Thura U Shwe Mann received H.E. Ms. Vanessa Chan Yuen Ying, Singapore's Ambassador to Myanmar, at the Hluttaw affairs

building I-11 in Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and co-operation between the two countries, trade and investments.— Myanmar News Agency ■



U Aung Hla Tun, Deputy Minister for Information holds talks with Japan MIC delegation. **PHOTO: MNA**

Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun receives Japan MIC delegation

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun received a delegation, led by Mr Seiji Takagi, Director-General for International Affairs, Global Strategy Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, from Japan yesterday morning at the meeting hall of the Ministry of

Information. At the meeting, they discussed media challenges during the transition period to democracy; the status of the signing of the capacity building project, to be conducted in co-operation between Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV), the Ministry of Information and

Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; a study tour of MRTV personnel to Japan; the status of drawing up amendments to the broadcasting media law; and the status of continued cooperation in television broadcasting.— Myanmar News Agency ■

Trial of two Reuters reporters begins

THE trial of two Reuters reporters charged under the Myanmar Government Secrets Act began yesterday morning in Yangon Region Northern District Court, at which the prosecution's first of 25 witnesses, a high-ranking police officer, testified. Two reporters, Wa Lone, 31, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 27, were detained on 12 December after they had been invited to meet police officers over dinner in Yangon.

The reporters said they were arrested soon after being handed documents at a restaurant by two policemen they had

not met before.

Police Lt-Col Yu Naing, Head of Yangon Northern district Police Force, told the court yesterday that authorisation was sought that evening from President U Htin Kyaw's office to proceed with a case under the Official Secrets Act.

"The accused were arrested around 9 o'clock on the 12th, and the letter to ask permission from the president's office was ready at 10 o'clock," said defence lawyer Than Zaw Aung, referring to the court testimony of Police Lieutenant

Colonel Yu Naing.

A case was opened against the two Reuters reporters by Police Lt-Col Yu Naing on 10 January in Northern District Court.

An information officer for Yangon Region Northern District Court Deputy District Judge U Ye Lwin said an appeal for bail by the two defendants was also heard yesterday.

A ruling on the bail application for Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo will be announced at the court's next hearing on 1 February, defence lawyer U Khin Maung Zaw said.— Zaw Gyi ■

MPF will manufacture new cancer drugs, HIV drugs

MYANMAR Pharmaceutical Factory (MPF), formerly known as Burma Pharmaceutical Industry (BPI), will manufacture new cancer and anti-HIV drugs in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, said U Ko Ko Aung, Managing Director of MPF.

He was speaking at the media conference held in the meeting hall of MPF Insein factory on 23 January.

"We are planning to manufacture new products in the coming fiscal year. We will conduct research for production, especially on medication to relieve pain from cancer and anti-HIV drugs. By increasing product manufacturing, we can reduce the number of medicines bought from abroad," he added.

There are two pharmaceutical factories in the country: MPF Insein and Kyaukse. MPF is producing some 148 products this fiscal year (FY). Its produc-

tion value increased up to Ks50 billion this FY.

The Ministry of Health and Sports has bought products worth Ks32 billion from MPF. Also, MPF distributed products worth Ks18 billion to the Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population; and other sales representatives.

MPF has constructed a new building to manufacture more products and meet the World Health Organisation's guidelines on genetically modified organisms. Besides this, MPF has changed the packaging on its BPI-brand pharmaceutical products.

The media conference was attended by officials of MPF, the Ministry of Health and Sports, professors and office superintendents, as well as doctors and officials from the food and drug administration.—Min Thit (MNA) ■



Advisory Board for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State, Committee for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State hold meeting

THE advisory board for the implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State, led by Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, former deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of Thailand, and the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, led by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye, met in the meeting hall of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning.

The meeting was attended by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ye Aung, U Kyaw Tint Swe, U Thaung Tun, U Win Khaing, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi and U Kyaw Tin; Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Than Htut, secretary of the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State; Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, joint secretary of the committee; Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) in Rakhine Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet; and members, permanent secretaries, directors general, managing directors and officials of the committee.

At the meeting, Union



First meeting of the Advisory Board and the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Minister for Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe said the stability, peace and development in Rakhine State depends not only on the people of Myanmar but the entire human society, especially the two societies in Rakhine State. With regard to the events in Rakhine State, the country had formed an inquiry commission, led by Vice President U Myint Swe, and an advisory commission on Rakhine State, led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

In addition to this, a committee for the implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, led by Dr. Win Myat Aye, was also formed. Suggestions and support of the advisory board for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State are also welcome, said the union minister.

Next, Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, leader of the advisory board, said the members of the advisory board included people from the political and

economic sectors. The advice and experiences of the advisory board will be provided to the committee. This will be an opportunity to exchange experiences on Rakhine State events, and the advisory board will be able to work together with the committee, said the leader.

Further, Dr. Win Myat Aye, chairman of the committee, explained about the committee's works and the UEHRD in Rakhine. Chief Coordinator Dr. Aung Tun Thet explained about

humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State, the resettlement works and the development project committee.

The advisory board and the committee then discussed the status of implementing recommendations on Rakhine State.

Later in the evening, the committee for implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State hosted a dinner for the advisory board in M Gallery Hotel, Nay Pyi Taw.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Ready to begin repatriation: Gov't

FROM PAGE-1

"We have heard the news that the Bangladesh side is not ready. As we have not received any official word, we contacted the Bangladeshi Embassy in Yangon and they said they have many steps to be taken," U Kyaw Tin, Minister of International Cooperation, told reporters in Nay Pyi Taw.

Under the Physical Arrangement for Repatriation signed by the two sides in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 January, Myanmar would will receive verified returnees at Taung Pyo Letwe and Nga Khu Ya reception centres, while adding Hla Pho Kaung as a transit camp for the returnees.

"We will increase the number of returnees depending on the situation. We will review the repatriation process within three months," said U Thaung Tun, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Gov-

ernment.

Asked about coordination between the two governments, Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye said Myanmar will carry on the repatriation process after seeking agreement with Bangladesh when the neighbouring country offers coordination.

"The governments of the two countries are trying to solve this issue, but some are trying to complicate this issue so that they can get international attention," said Union Minister U Kyaw Tin.

He also said that Myanmar sent forms to be filled out by returnees with the help of UNHCR and Bangladesh signed an agreement with UNHCR to carry out the repatriation process on their side and they need to take time to carry out several steps on the ground.

Asked if a time limit is set

for the repatriation, Dr. Win Myat Aye said the government is fully carrying out repatriation efforts and were ready to receive the returnees as of Tuesday.

"The repatriation is targeted to be accomplished within two years, or, it can finish before the two-year time frame, or it can take longer than the set time," said Dr. Win Myat Aye.

Regarding access to Rakhine State by reporters, Union Minister U Thaung Tun said journalists would get freedom of access to information, but safety is considered first in conflict areas and authorities are managing the situation there so as not to create unnecessary problems.

Seventeen journalists will soon go to Rakhine State along with the Rakhine Advisory Board, he added.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint receives Singapore's Ambassador to Myanmar Ms Vanessa Chan in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Dr. Pe Myint receives Singapore Ambassador and experts from French Communications

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint separately received Singapore Ambassador to Myanmar Ms Vanessa Chan and experts from French Communications, Ms Florence Bonetti and Mr SPHenri Clelorme, at the Ministry of Information guest hall yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting with Ms Vanessa Chan, Dr. Pe Myint discussed matters related to library works conducted in the two countries, the upgrade of libraries in

Myanmar to community centres and community libraries, Singapore's solution to preventing the spread of hate speech on social media and the status of media works in the two countries.

At the meeting with the two experts from French Communications, ways to engage in effective public relations were discussed.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and other officials also attended the meeting.—MNA ■

Energy Globe National Award and Yoe-Sone community forest

ENERGY Globe Award is the most prestigious environmental award in the sphere of the conservation of the natural environment of the world, awarded annually by the Energy Globe Foundation. Emphatically speaking, it is referred as the Noble Prize in the sphere of conservation for natural environment of the planet. It is annually awarded to projects focusing on energy efficiency, renewable energies and the conservation of resources. For five sectors in all—earth, water, air, fire and youths on a worldwide scale, prizes were awarded initially. But, from 2016 on, a new sector under the name of “sustainable plastic,” was added to the original five. The foundation was established by “Wolfgang Neumann,” an Austrian Energy Entrepreneur.

Starting from 2000, the Energy Globe Award was awarded in 3 categories—global award, regional award and national award. Energy Globe National Award for 2018 was awarded to Yoe-Sone Community Forest, in Wundwin township, Meikhtila District. It was awarded at the 18th Energy Globe Award Ceremony held at Teheran, Iran on 15 and 16 January 2018. Yoe-Sone Community Forest was chosen by the Myanmar Forest Department, participating in the competition. Becoming a winner of the global award under the management of rural people can be said to be an epoch-making triumph.

Community Forest was initiated starting from 1995. Its major objective is to upgrade people's participation in the management of Myanmar's forest resources.

Community Forest was initiated starting from 1995. Its major objective is to upgrade people's participation in the management of Myanmar's forest resources. People themselves managed the whole industry whereas the Forest Department took part only in the sector of supporting what were needed. Fascinatingly enough, at the time of starting Community Forest it was designated to support only firewood and wooden posts, the basic necessities for the villagers. But under the instruction issued on 16th August 2016 it was upgraded up to the emergence of forest-orientated economic enterprises. Community Forest was launched as of 2015, consisting of 84 members. It has an area of 550 acres in all. Out of 550 acres, 70 acres were conserved as the natural forest reserve, with the remaining 480 acres divided among families in proportion to grow crops and forest mixed, mainly pulses and jute. To our great delight, we heard that these families managed to gain better living standards of having motor vehicles and houses of their own by selling out resin extracted from jute. Last but not least, we wholeheartedly congratulate efforts of “Yoe-Sone,” Community Forest which managed to implement a regional and national development project.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their works to the **Global New Light of Myanmar** at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon or by email to dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Real name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.).— Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar news office

By Maung Sarga

HLUTTAWs comprising of people's representatives elected by the entire national populace under the Constitution, 2008 formed and assigned the Union Government, Region and State Governments including Nay Pyi Taw Council, Self-Administered Division and Self-Administered Zone. Under the Constitution, district and township level administration duties are assigned to government service personnel, with ward and village-tract administration duties assigned to those with good reputation who are respected by the respective regions.

The Union Government, the respective regional cabinets and administrative bodies at different levels are taking responsibilities of management for the national development and progress in multi-sectors. In doing so, the whole national populace have the rights to suggest, criticize and point out in constructive ways, together with the collective participations in the government's activities. Yet, it is of great importance not to happen seditious activities to the government. Here is a brief account of sedition for our people to be well convinced of it.

Meaning of seditious deeds

Under section 124 (A) if the Penal Code, whoever by word, either spoken or written, by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, makes attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites, or attempt to excite disaffection toward [the Government established by law for Union or for the constituent units thereof] shall be punished with 20 year imprisonment with fine or 7 year imprisonment with fine or shall be punished with fine only.

Here, anyone is meant for not only the person writes seditious statements but also those who announce or distribute the statements, and they can also be arrested under the section. Every individual who publishes this seditious writings is responsible either. He cannot deny that he is not responsible for this as he himself

does not write it. Sedition can be made in various ways—by word, either spoken or written, by signs or by visible representation. Seditious deeds include description by music, publications, performances such as films and puppets, sculptures, photographs, paintings and such and such.

Aims of committing sedition

Three aims and objectives of making seditious deeds are to bring into hatred toward the government, to bring into contempt to the regime, and to excite disaffection toward the government. Disaffection includes disloyalty and grudges. Making disaffection is meant for making someone lose affection toward another. According to the explanation of section 124 (A) of the Penal Code disaffection includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity.

Hatred and contempt are not the same in nature. Contempt is the feeling that somebody or something is without value and deserves no respect at all. Though not having feelings of hatred, a person may have feelings of contempt toward others. A person with feelings of contempt may have kinds of pity, so he cannot be asserted to have hatred. Words—either spoken or written to arouse disloyalty toward the government is meant for making sedition to the regime.

Meaning of the government

Concerning the word, “the government,” in section 17 of the Penal Code it is defined that the word “Government” denotes the person or persons authorized by law to administer executive government in any part of the Union of Myanmar.

Under the prescription, if someone commits an attempt to incite sedition to the Union Government, Region and State Cabinet including ward or village-tract administrative bodies, that is, any person or persons in authority in any part of the country, he is committing seditious deeds.

Difference between defamation and sedition

Under section 499 of the Penal Code, whoever, by words either



spoken or intended to be read, or by signs or by visible representations, makes or publishes any imputation concerning any person, intending to harm, or knowing or having reason to believe that such imputation will harm, the reputation of such person, is said, except in the cases hereinafter excepted, to defame that person. Under section 500 of the Penal Code, whoever defames another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both. Under section 153 (A) of the Penal Code whoever by words, either spoken or written, by signs, or by visible representations, or otherwise, promotes or attempts

to promote feelings of hatred or enmity between different classes of [persons, resident in the Union] shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

Inciting hatred, contempt, or disaffection toward the government is tantamount to making seditious actions, thus to be arrested under section 124 (A) of the Penal Code.

In defamatory cases, one may assert that his allegation against someone else does not constitute offence as that is true, whereas in seditious cases that statement is unacceptable. Defamation is the offence made over a person only, but sedition is the offence com-

mitted against the government. It is the beginning of high treason. It is intentionally made for emergence of violence, riots and revolt to overthrow the regime.

Failure to constitute an offence

In section 124 (A) of the Penal Code, here are detailed explanations concerning sedition. Explanation 2—Comments expressing disapprobation of the measures of the government with a view to obtain their alteration by unlawful means, without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection do not constitute an offence under this section. In explanation 3, it is described, comments expressing disapprobation of the administrative or other action of the Government, without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection do not constitute an offence under this section.

Under those prescriptions, freedom from willingness to bring into hatred, contempt or disaffection toward the government is the major key in making critical remarks or writing toward the government.

Without a hint of hatred, contempt or disaffection toward the government, disclosure and expression about the disapproval of the government's actions with

a view to lawful change, do not constitute an offence of sedition.

Exemplary precedents

Here are some exemplary precedents concerning seditious actions.

- [1] In making decision as to whether the speech constitutes an offence of sedition or not, it needs to be taken into consideration concerning the objectives of the speaker, understanding of listeners over the speech to the full, time and location that the speech is made. [U Dama-daya V King-Emperor 1923, 1Ran-211]
 - [2] The essence of the whole speech and its main objective must be studied, absolutely not a passage or a mere word. In case there are words that will cause sedition in the speech, it actually constitutes an offence under section 124 (A). [Lay Maung V The King, 1939 RLR 239]
 - [3] In making seditious speech, the speaker should be severely punished provided that he makes the speech vigorously enough for the listeners to have aspiration for making a revolt against the government, all of a sudden. [The King V U Datthana 1940 RLR.681]
 - [4] For a case to constitute an offence of sedition under section 124(A), there is no need to prove other evidence of making riots or terrorism. And, there is no need to prove from outside evidences, apart from the words, in deciding that the speaker has intentions to cause sedition or not. [The King V U Saw Hla Pru and one. 1947, RLR, FB.82]
- In brief, suggestions and criticisms with good intention toward the government leading the country do not constitute an offence of sedition, but it needs to avoid deeds and speech that will bring into hatred, disloyalty, feelings of revenges to each other.
- May all of us cooperate with loving-kindness! ■

Translated by Khin Maung Oo

Either Abuse or Desecration of National flag is a crime

By: Tommy Pauk

THE citizens of every nation salute their own National flag. National flag symbolizes the independence, sovereignty and identity of a concerned country. In order to show respect to the country, the foreigners have to salute the national flag of the country in which they visit or stay. That is an obligation. The people around the world pay tribute to the national flags of respective nations in order to express recognition on sovereignty, independence and the identity of Union States. Every country has enacted law or regulations to protect desecration of the national flag. Anyone, regardless of local and foreigners, who desecrate the national flag or violate the state flag law, shall be punished in accordance with the law.

However, if somebody fails to respect it or desecrates it, we consider that act as an insult or disrespectful act. Furthermore, if anyone violates the provisions of **The Union Flag Law** (The State Peace and Development Council Law No. 8 / 2010), he or she will have to be dealt in accordance with this law.

The following is an excerpt from **The Union Flag Law** (Law No. 8 / 2010). The readers including foreigners those who are working and visiting should know or learn Prohibitions and Penalties contained in the **The Union Flag Law** (Law No. 8 / 2010)

Chapter IV Prohibitions and Penalties

13. No one shall carry out any of the following in respect of the Union flag:
 - (a) writing, painting, fixing, printing or marking anything such as word, number, picture and symbol on the Union flag;
 - (b) (i) causing destruction of the colour, size, shape or proportion;
 - (ii) applying in places, regions, and purposes which have not been allowed;
 - (iii) applying disrespectfully;
 - (c) hoisting any flag of local organizations above or at the same level of the Union flag.
 14. No one shall, in respect of hoisting, holding and applying the Union flag:
 - (a) hoist the Union flag at half-mast without the order of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar;
 - (b) cover with the Union flag at the opening ceremony of the stone sculpture, stone pillar and statue;
 - (c) cover the corpse with the Union flag except in burial by the State or military funeral;
 - (d) bury the Union flag with the corpse in the State or military funeral.

The Union flag shall not touch the ground of cemetery;

 - (e) touch the Union flag with ground, water; floor which are under the Union flag while hoisting and lowering or applying it;
 - (f) tear and destroy the Union flag, cause intentionally to affect the glory of the Union flag.
 15. No one shall apply the Union flag:
 - (a) to pack and tie to any object;
 - (b) as a flooring;
 - (c) as a trademark of any goods, painting in clothes, decoration except for performing on behalf of the Union or the entire nation.
 16. Whoever violates any prohibitions contained in sections 13, 14 and 15 of this Law shall, on conviction be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or with fine not exceeding three lakh kyats or with both.
- No matter citizen or foreigner, who abuses the national flag, must be punished in accordance with prescribed law. The importance of the usage of National flag should be seriously taught at schools. In addition, all citizens of Myanmar ought to abide by the Union Flag law. ■

Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief receives NMSP and LDU chairmen

TATMADAW Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received New Mon State Party (NMSP) Chairman Nai Htaw Mon and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) Chairman Kya Khun Sar separately in Bayint Naung Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The NSMP and LDU agreed yesterday to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief said Mon State has

a good foundation for regional development.

“The NMSP joining with the Government and the Tatmadaw on the peace path will bring more opportunities for regional development. Removing suspicions and walking on the peace path will make the country develop more. People will also be welcoming this with much joy. The biggest desire of the Tatmadaw is stability, peace and development of the country



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets with Lahu Democratic Union delegation led by Chairman Kya Khun Sar. **PHOTO: MNA**



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing poses for a documentary photo together with New Mon State Party (NMSP) delegation in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

and the Tatmadaw is ready to cooperate”, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said.

NMSP (Mon) group chairman Nai Htaw Mon said his group has accepted the agreements reached at the 8th meeting between the Delegation of Political Negotiation (DPN) of the United Nationalities Federation Council (UNFC) and Union Peace Commission (PC) and decided to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The group

requested the assistance of the Government and Tatmadaw for the smooth signing of NCA and to conduct future works.

“The group will work for peace in the country, protect the life and property of the people and work for the benefit of the people”, said the NMSP group chairman.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also received LDU Chairman Kya Khun Sar and party in Bayint Naung hall in Nay Pyi

Taw yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting, the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief explained about increasing regional development for Lahu ethnic nationals, matters relating to education, health, eradicating drugs, and assistance from the Tatmadaw.

The LDU Chairman spoke about the trust and reliance he and his group has with the Tatmadaw.—Myanmar News Agency ■

600 tonnes of illegal timber seized in Mon State last year

MORE than 600 tonnes of smuggled wood were seized in Mon State in 2017, according to a report in the Myawady Daily on Monday.

According to official statistics provided by the Mon State Forest Department, authorities confiscated 47.2 tonnes of teakwood, 492.37 tonnes of hardwood and 73 tonnes of other wood varieties, totalling 613.53 tonnes, throughout the year.

Usually, the confiscated timber and logs are sent directly to Myanma Timber Enterprise, where the authorities sell them to private entrepreneurs through a bidding system, said U Min Thein Myint, head of the forest department.

There are some 277 lumber mills in Mon State. Forest authorities conduct regular monthly inspections at timber production workshops across the state as part of their plan to eliminate the unlawful extraction of wood.

The department seized wood and timber weighing more than 583 tonnes in 2016.—GNLM

Paper reading on anti-corruption concludes in Yangon

THE second day of the paper reading on anti-corruption was held at the Park Royal Hotel in Yangon yesterday morning.

The paper reading on anti-corruption was jointly organised by the Anti-Corruption Commission and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, with the title “Promote Integrity to Counter Corruption.”

During the session, U Aye Lwin and U Nyunt Wai read papers on “Fighting against Corruption and Uplifting Morality.”

U Zeya Thu read a paper on “The Role of Media in Promoting Integrity and Combating Corruption.”

Dr. Khine Khine Win read a paper on “To Combat Corruption is to Promote Human Rights.”

U Thwin Lin Aung read a paper titled, “Approaching Anti-Corruption from the Point of View of Integrity.”

U Myint Thwin read a paper on Anti Corruption Training, Daw Phyu Phyu Zin read a paper on “Lifting the Prestige of Economy for Anti-Corruption,” while U Zaw Two read a paper on “Regional Development and Accountability.”

U Aung Soe read a paper



Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission U Aung Kyi delivers the speech at the 2nd day of the paper reading on anti-corruption held in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

on “Reduction in Corruption in Jail,” and U Win Myint Than read a paper on “Overtaking Singapore.”

In the afternoon session, the moderators conducted reviews of some 26 papers.

Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission U Aung Kyi expressed his thanks to all the participants, including scholars, non-governmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations at the paper reading session.

Following the paper reading, a press release was issued. U Aung Kyi clarified matters related to the ongoing processes, future tasks and procedures of the commission.

Later, U Han Nyunt, a member of the Anti-Corruption Commission, read out the announcement (1/2018).

Further, U Aung Kyi replied to questions raised by the media about the bill for an anti-corruption law, the number of complaint letters received in

two months, the budget allocation of the commission and other related issues.

The paper reading session is aimed at widening the outlook and knowledge of the people and accelerating the processes and objectives of the commission, uplifting morality and adopting preventive measures with systematic approaches. Moreover, the 2018 workplan is being carried out to eliminate this malpractice once and for all.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Israel accuses UN rights forum of bias over Palestinians

GENEVA — Israel accused the United Nations on Tuesday of continuous discrimination against it over its treatment of Palestinians and called for reforms of its human rights body.

The Human Rights Council's regular examination of Israel's record, the first since 2013, comes after US President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem last month as the capital of Israel, angering Palestinians, Middle East leaders and world powers.

Aviva Raz Shechter, Israel's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, told the Human Rights Council that her country had always stood up for human rights and democratic values.

"It has done so while facing serious threats to its security, and while needing to integrate diverse communities and religious groups," Shechter told the

Geneva forum.

The Council has taken a strong position against Israel's occupation of territory seized in the 1967 Middle East war; its treatment of Palestinians there, and its building of Jewish settlements.

Israel withdrew soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005. Most countries consider the settlements, in areas of the West Bank and Jerusalem the Palestinians see as part of an eventual independent state, illegal, but Israel disputes this and continues their expansion.

An "unparalleled number of one-sided biased and political resolutions adopted regularly by the automatic majority of its members testify not only to the unfair treatment of the State of Israel, but also to the deficiencies of the Council itself and its

agenda," Schechter said.

"...this theater of the absurd cannot go on forever."

Washington says the Council is stacked with opponents of Israel and US ambassador Niki Haley told the Council last June that it was reviewing its participation given what it sees as its "chronic anti-Israel bias".

Israel considered its relations with the Palestinians to be "of the highest priority" and it would continue to seek a lasting solution that would enable the two peoples to live side by side in peace and security, she said.

Jordan's diplomat Akram Harahsheh, speaking first in the three-hour debate, condemned what he said were "attempts to prejudge the identity of occupied Jerusalem" and called on Israel to withdraw from all territories occupied since 1967. —Reuters ■

UAE military ordered not to escalate Qatar crisis: official

ABU DHABI — A military official in the United Arab Emirates said on Tuesday its forces had instructions not to escalate an ongoing diplomatic crisis with Qatar.

UAE military aircraft would also fly alternative routes over Saudi Arabia to avoid the possibility of interception by Qatari warplanes, air force brigadier general Helal Saeed al-Qubaisi told reporters at a news conference in the capital Abu Dhabi.

The UAE said on Monday that Qatari warplanes had twice intercepted its civilian

aircraft during routine flights to Bahrain, but Qatar called the claim "completely untrue".

Qatar said the UAE allegation followed incidents on 21 December and 3 January in which it accused UAE military aircraft of violating its airspace. Abu Dhabi denies the charges.

The UAE is one of four Arab countries, along with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, that imposed travel, diplomatic and trade sanctions on Qatar in June 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Doha denies the charges. —Reuters ■

Turkey seeks no clash with Russia, Syria, US, but will pursue Syria goals: minister

ANKARA — Turkey seeks to avoid any clash with Syrian, Russian or US forces during its operation in northern Syria but will take whatever steps it needs for its security, Turkey's foreign minister was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

The United States and Russia have both urged Turkey to show restraint in its military campaign, Operation Olive Branch, to crush Kurdish YPG

control over the Afrin district on its southern border. Syria has condemned the incursion.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who says the YPG is an extension of a Kurdish group waging a decades-long insurgency inside Turkey's borders, has also pledged to drive Kurdish fighters out of the mainly Arab town of Manbij.

Manbij, to the east of the Afrin region, is part of a far larger

area of northern Syria controlled by mainly Kurdish forces. Any attack there would raise the prospect of protracted conflict between Turkey and allied Free Syrian Army factions against the US-backed Kurdish fighters.

"Terrorists in Manbij are constantly firing provocation shots. If the United States doesn't stop this, we will stop it," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was quoted as saying

on Tuesday.

"Our goal is not to clash with Russians, the Syrian regime or the United States, it is to battle the terrorist organisation," broadcaster Haberturk quoted him as saying.

"I must take whatever step I have to. If not, our future as a country is in jeopardy tomorrow. We are not afraid of anyone on this, we are determined... We will not live with fear and threats,"

Cavusoglu said.

Preventing Turkey from driving Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the US-backed umbrella group dominated by the YPG, out of Manbij is a central goal for Washington, US officials say.

The United States hopes to use the YPG's control in northern Syria to give it the diplomatic muscle it needs to revive UN-led talks in Geneva on a deal that would end Syria's civil war.

Ankara has been infuriated by US support for the YPG, which it sees as a domestic security threat, one of several issues that have brought relations between the United States and its Muslim NATO ally close to breaking point.

"The future of our relations depends on the step the United States will take next," Cavusoglu said.

He said Turkey, which carried out a seven-month military operation in northern Syria two years ago to push back Islamic State and YPG fighters, would continue to act where it thought necessary.

"Whether it is Manbij, Afrin, the east of the Euphrates or even threats from northern Iraq, it doesn't matter," Cavusoglu said. "If there are terrorists on the other side of our borders, this is a threat for us." —Reuters ■



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan chairs a security meeting in Ankara, Turkey on 23 January, 2018. PHOTO: PREUTERS

World's first ever aluminum aircraft engine developed in Siberia



Yak-52
plane. PHOTO:
TASS

NOVOSIBIRSK — An aircraft engine fully made of aluminum has been developed at the Novosibirsk State Technical University. This is the first engine of this kind in the world, the Novosibirsk Region Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation Policy said on Tuesday.

“The world’s first aircraft engine fully made of aluminum has been developed by designers of the basic Novosibirsk State Technical University. Even the parts exposed to the highest loads are made of aluminum, namely, the crankshaft, cylinder barrels and the flywheel,” the ministry said in a statement.

According to the developers, all engine parts were previously made of steel. The developers have been able to replace them

with aluminum thanks to special technology, which helps apply a thin layer of aluminum oxide characterized by high hardness to aluminum parts.

As a result, the new engine has become 50 kg lighter than its predecessor and weighs about 200 kg. Its power has increased by 10% while fuel consumption has been reduced by 15%. As the University’s press office said, the new engine uses regular fuel.

The new engine can be mounted on Yak-52 two-seat planes whose old engines have used up their potential. The engine’s ground trials on January 19 were successful and the developers will now test the engine’s stated potential of 2,000 hours and carry out its flight tests.—Tass ■

Facebook says it can’t guarantee social media is good for democracy

SAN FRANCISCO — Facebook Inc (FB.O) warned on Monday that it could offer no assurance that social media was on balance good for democracy, but the company said it was trying what it could to stop alleged meddling in elections by Russia or anyone else.

The sharing of false or misleading headlines on social media has become a global issue, after accusations that Russia tried to influence votes in the United States, Britain and France. Moscow denies the allegations.

Facebook, the largest social network with more than 2 billion users, addressed social media’s role in democracy in blog posts from a Harvard University professor, Cass Sunstein, and from an employee working on the subject.

“I wish I could guarantee that the positives are destined to outweigh the negatives, but I can’t,” Samidh Chakrabarti, a Facebook product manager, wrote in his post.

Facebook, he added, has a “moral duty to understand how these technologies are being used and what can be done to make communities like Facebook as representative, civil and trustworthy as possible.”

Contrite Facebook executives were already fanning out across Europe this week to address the company’s slow response to abuses on its platform,

such as hate speech and foreign influence campaigns.

US lawmakers have held hearings on the role of social media in elections, and this month Facebook widened an investigation into the run-up to Britain’s 2016 referendum on EU membership.

Chakrabarti expressed Facebook’s regrets about the 2016 US elections, when according to the company Russian agents created 80,000 posts that reached around 126 million people over two years.

The company should have done better, he wrote, and he said Facebook was making up for lost time by disabling suspect accounts, making election ads visible beyond the targeted audience and requiring those running election ads to confirm

their identities.

Twitter Inc (TWTR.N) and Alphabet Inc’s (GOOGL.O) Google and YouTube have announced similar attempts at self-regulation.

Chakrabarti said Facebook had helped democracy in ways, such as getting more Americans to register to vote. Sunstein, a law professor and Facebook consultant who also worked in the administration of former US President Barack Obama, said in a blog post that social media was a work in progress and that companies would need to experiment with changes to improve.

Another test of social media’s role in elections lies ahead in March, when Italy votes in a national election already marked by claims of fake news spreading on Facebook. —Reuters ■



A giant logo is seen at Facebook’s headquarters in London, Britain on 4 December, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

One dead, eleven injured as volcano erupts near ski resort in Japan

MAEBASHI, Japan — A Japanese Ground Self-Defence Force member died and 11 other people were injured as a volcano erupted on Tuesday morning near a ski resort in eastern Japan, spewing cinders and possibly causing an avalanche, the government and local authorities said.

Mt Motoshirane in Gunma Prefecture erupted around 9:59 am, and an avalanche reportedly followed shortly after, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. While a separate peak comprising the same Mt Kusatsu-Shirane erupted in 1983, Mt Motoshirane had been dormant for the past 3,000 years.

The GSDF said a 49-year-old male member died, while Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera said five other members were seriously injured and two more sustained minor injuries, all due to raining volcanic stones. The GSDF earlier said they were likely hit by an avalanche.

The affected were among a group of about 30 GSDF members taking part in ski training in the area. The GSDF said it is still investigating what happened.

Volcanic stones also hit a gondola lift at the ski resort and injured at least four peo-

ple on board with shattered glass and stones also crashed through the roof of a rest house to where about 100 people had evacuated, rescuers said.

Local officials said Taiwanese and British tourists were among people temporarily stranded at a nearby mountain peak.

A police source said at one point that the number of injured totaled 12, with two of them in serious condition, adding they included GSDF members.

In the afternoon, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said one person died and 11 others were injured, and that the government has not learned of additional casualties or people missing.

Video footage taken at the ski resort and uploaded on the internet showed black smoke and what appear to be volcanic stones falling as well as snow sliding down the hill.

Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc said a power outage occurred near the ski resort.

Following the eruption, the weather agency raised the volcanic alert status to 3, a level that restricts entry to the mountain, while warning of large amounts of ash flying in the area.—Reuters ■



US Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis (L) shakes hands with Indonesia's President Joko Widodo during his visit to the presidential palace in Jakarta, Indonesia on 23 January, 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Indonesia looks to US to relax limits on its special forces

JAKARTA — Indonesia said on Tuesday it was pinning its hopes on US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis to help ease American limitations on ties with an elite Indonesian special forces unit, imposed over human rights abuses in the 1990s.

The United States announced in 2010 that it had lifted its outright ban on US military contacts with the Indonesian special forces unit, known as Kopassus, which was accused of rights abuses in East Timor as it prepared for independence.

But legal restrictions meant to ensure the US military does not become entangled with rights abusers prevented contacts with Kopassus from advancing beyond preliminary levels, US officials say. "For a while there have been sanctions against Kopassus ... (Mattis) will try to remove this," Indonesian Defence Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu told reporters in Jakarta, following talks with the US defence chief. "One of the sanctions is clearly that they are not allowed to go to America.

They can't do training together, and he will reopen this." Mattis expressed hope for deepening defence ties with Indonesia but he did not directly address Kopassus in his remarks to the press after talks with Ryacudu in Jakarta. US officials told reporters travelling with Mattis that they were exploring possible ways to expand contact with Kopassus, while complying with US law. Mattis' trip came as Indonesia, a vast archipelago of 17,000 islands, appears increasingly ready to assert its

sovereignty in the contested South China Sea. Indonesia has clashed with China over fishing rights around the Natuna Islands, detaining Chinese fishermen and expanding its military presence in the area in recent years.

In July, Indonesia renamed the northern reaches of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea as the North Natuna Sea, a move seen as a significant act of resistance to China's territorial ambitions in the South China Sea. —Reuters ■

Indonesian office workers flee as quake shakes capital

JAKARTA — Office workers fled high-rise buildings in the Indonesian capital on Tuesday after a strong earthquake shook the city, but there were no immediate reports of deaths or injuries.

The relatively shallow quake of magnitude 6 struck off the island of Java, the US Geological Survey said, and authorities ruled out the risk of a tsunami. Many people ran along the streets of downtown Jakarta, pointing at the buildings above them, witnesses said. Metro TV showed patients being evacuated from a hospital.

The quake struck about 104 km (64.62 miles) west of the city of Sukabumi, at a depth of 33 km (21 miles). Jakarta is about 100 km (62 miles) away.

"We felt the earthquake for three to five minutes," said Rudy Togatorop, 35, who works at the Chilean embassy.

"I was just sitting down, then I felt the build-

ing swaying. The emergency stairs were very narrow. I was worried if something would happen."

Indonesia is regularly hit by earthquakes in one of the world's most quake-prone regions. In 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami killed 226,000 people in 13 countries, including more than 120,000 in Indonesia.

In December, a quake of 6.5 magnitude killed at least three people when it hit Java, Indonesia's most densely populated island, at a depth of 92 km (57 miles), and buildings in Jakarta swayed for several seconds. Tuesday's quake was at a depth of 44 km (27 miles). The World Bank reckons natural disasters cost Indonesia 0.3 per cent of its GDP annually, but a 2015 report on disaster risk management prepared by Indonesia's government said a major earthquake, occurring once every 250 years, could cause losses in excess of \$30 billion, or 3 per cent of GDP. —Reuters



Office workers leave a building following an earthquake in Jakarta, Indonesia on 23 January, 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT
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China takes aim at hip-hop, saying 'low-taste content' must stop

BELJING/SHANGHAI — China's censors have a new target in a widespread clamp-down on popular culture: the country's nascent hip-hop scene, which resonated with Chinese youth last year on hugely popular television show "Rap of China."

Hip hop artists Wang Hao, known as "PG One" and Zhou Yan, known as "GAI" — the two winners of the show — have been sanctioned in recent weeks for bad behaviour or content at odds with Communist Party values. GAI was pulled from hit show "The Singer" last week.

The crackdown on hip-hop, still very much a new genre in China, reflects a broader squeeze on popular culture as the country's stability-focused leadership looks to rein in potential platforms for youthful dissent.

Beijing is eager to use popular culture to shape public opinion, including co-opting rap artists ahead of its five-yearly congress last year. With state support comes the insistence that Party values must take center stage in the artists' work.

The latest cleanup started



Chinese rap singer Zhou Yan, better known by his stage name GAI, performs during a New Year concert in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, China on 31 December, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

when PG One was forced to apologize for lewd lyrics, which critics said were insulting to women and encouraged the use of recreational drugs.

The official Xinhua news agency wrote that PG One "does not deserve the stage," and that "we should say 'no' to whoever

provides a platform for low-taste content." Other official media and companies quickly followed suit; the rapper's tracks were soon pulled from most online sites.

GAI, who had been in third place on The Singer, broadcast by Hunan TV, was cut from the program last week with no reason given. Rapper Vava was hastily edited out of the same station's flagship variety show "Happy Camp" because of her association with hip-hop culture.

"Hip-hop's prospects in China seem dim after Chinese rappers removed from TV shows," read one headline from influential state-run tabloid Global Times on Sunday.

The same paper this month said hip-hop — which it called a "tool for people to vent their anger, misery, complaints" — did not suit China and "cannot thrive" here. The campaign underscores a broader clean-up of cultural content from video games, online streaming and even performance art amid a drive to make cultural products adhere to mainstream socialist core values.

PG One, Vava and Hunan

TV could not immediately be reached for comment. GAI, who had tried to make his act more Party-friendly — including an impromptu performance in which he sang the words "long live the motherland" — did not respond to requests for comment. Chinese news portal Sina reported on Friday that China's broadcasting watchdog had said immoral and vulgar content should be kept off the air, including hip-hop — and even tattoos.

The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television did not respond to a telephone request for comment from Reuters on Monday.

This is not the first time Chinese musicians have run afoul of local censors. In 2015, China's culture ministry banned 120 songs — mostly rap — for "promoting obscenity, violence, crime or threatening public morality."

In July last year, Beijing's Municipal Bureau of Culture said it was "not appropriate" for Justin Bieber to tour in China because previous performances there had created "public dissatisfaction." —Reuters ■

Acting started coincidentally for me, says Dakota Fanning

LOS ANGELES — Actor Dakota Fanning, who has floored cine-magoers with her performances since she was six, says she never thought she would take up acting as a full-fledged career.

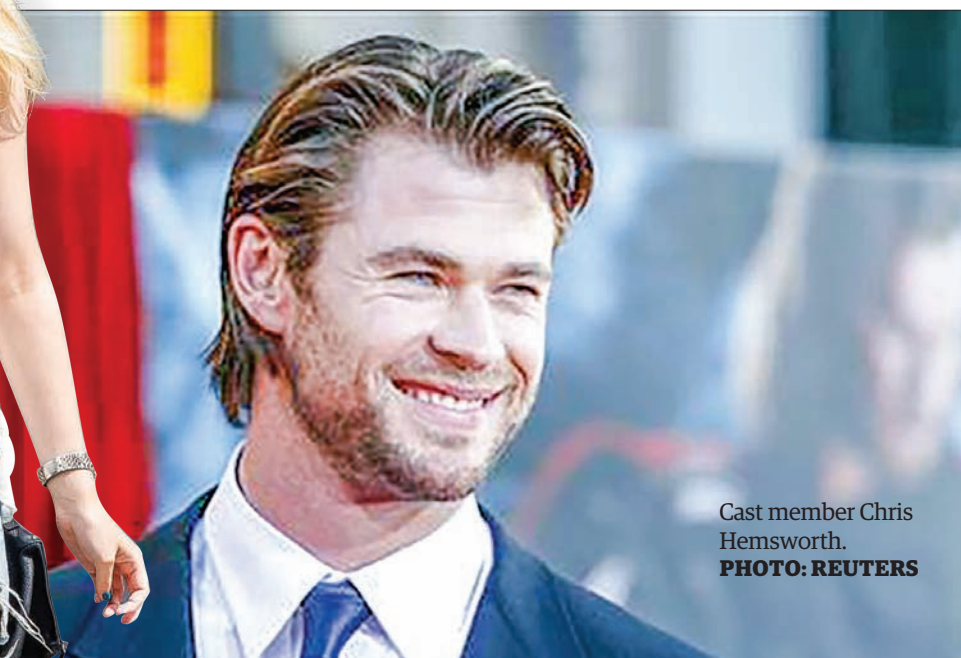
The 23-year-old actor said although she liked playing dress up as a child, she unknowingly ventured into Hollywood as her mother sensed her disinterest in studies, Entertainment Weekly reported.

"It all started so coincidentally for me. I did this commercials and I had a good time so I did another one, then I did a TV show which turned into a movie and then I was an actor all of sudden.

"I wasn't a kid that was like, 'I want to be in the movies.' Not at all. I just liked to play around the house and make up scenarios and my mom kind of noticed that

I was disinterested in all of the lessons she put me in. I just wanted to play at home so she put me in a drama camp to see if I liked doing that," Fanning said during Vulture and TNT's "The Alienist premiere" Q&A session at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. —PTI ■

Dakota Fanning.
PHOTO: REUTERS



Cast member Chris Hemsworth.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Leaving Thor a scary thought, says Chris Hemsworth

LOS ANGELES — "Thor" star Chris Hemsworth is officially done with playing the superhero and the actor says leaving the character behind is a "scary thought".

The 34-year-old actor, who played the Norse god in Marvel Cinematic Universe, said portraying the role felt like a "never-ending" event.

"Contractually, right now — yeah, this is it. I'm done. I won't be playing the character again. (The end seems like) a scary thought. This really seemed like this never-ending thing. And now it's potentially finishing," Hemsworth told USA Today.

The actor, who last reprised his role in "Thor: Ragnarok", is although ready to take the part forward in the film franchise if things transpire in the future.

Hemsworth will next be

seen in "Avengers: Infinity War", alongside other MCU veterans, such as Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr, Scarlett Johansson, Mark Ruffalo and Jeremy Renner. Also in pipeline is next year's "Avengers 4". "So who knows? There are 76 cast members in these two Avengers films. They will be the biggest films of all time, far bigger than my character. It's a conversation for further down the road, if it was going to happen," he said. —PTI ■

Manga cafes, capsule hotels increasing their female focus

TOKYO — Manga cafes and capsule hotels in Japan are generally considered the domains of men, their cramped, dark spaces not particularly alluring to female customers.

But with businesses realizing they are forgoing 50 per cent of their potential customer base, some have introduced new offerings designed to appeal to women, offering a relaxed, and most importantly, safe environment.

"This is my first time here," said a woman who visited Hailey's Cafe in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward recently. "It's bright and fashionable. It changes the image of a manga cafe."

Her boyfriend said, "The interior design, using timber materials, makes it a relaxing atmosphere."

The couple, both university students, used one of the manga cafe's "theater rooms" where customers can enjoy movies on a large screen with sound pumped through a high-quality audio system. The manga cafe allows people to enjoy drinks and snacks while reading various comic books and magazines of

the genre as well, allowing them to access the internet for gaming and to watch videos on a pay-by-the-hour basis.

Hailey's Cafe in Shibuya opened in last August. Its operator made an effort to ensure his establishment threw off the dark and oppressive image of the typical manga cafe, a decision the manager said has led to a higher-than-normal proportion of female customers.

It offers small, private rooms that users can lock with a key card. The spaces are all non-smoking, sound-proofed and allow the temperature and lighting levels to be controlled individually, with aroma oils provided for free.

With the minimum charge of 540 yen (\$4.90) per hour, "about 50 percent of our customers are women, as opposed to 20 per cent in general at other manga cafes," the manager said. "They are also relatively young. About 70 per cent of our female customers are in their 20s and 30s."

Some customers have begun to use the cafe in ways that not even the owners envisioned.



Photo: Kyodo News

A group of women, for instance, booked a room so they could watch videos of artists whose concert they have tickets to, getting themselves ready for the live performance.

The cafe also sees students come to work on internet-based study programs in its private rooms. Bay Hotel Akihabara, a capsule hotel in the Akihabara electronics district in central Tokyo, meanwhile, focuses specifically on a female clientele.

A capsule hotel, also known as a pod hotel, is inexpensive accommodation that offers tiny,

enclosed sleeping spaces stacked in a large shared room. Only a few such hotels are open to women only. Built at a location several minutes walk from the Akihabara railway hub, it is often booked out on weekends by women going to nearby events and concerts, according to its manager.

With the basic rate starting from 3,800 yen per night, it has 130 capsules — each 2-metres deep, 1-metre wide and 1-metre high. Bags are kept safely in lockers and some capsules have televisions. Showers and powder rooms with cosmetic and hair care products

are available, making the capsule stayover experience almost like that of a normal hotel. "Guests feel relaxed, unconcerned about other guests" because they are all female, the manager said, and the female factor also extends to providing a sense of security.

Often reservations are made by parents of high school students taking college entrance exams or those of university students who are job hunting in central Tokyo, the manager said, allowing the families to know that the young women have a safe, if small, space of their own.—Kyodo News ■

In Year of the Dog, Malaysia plays down, skirts dog decorations

KUALA LUMPUR — Some Malaysian businesses are skirting around or playing down the portrayal of canines in Chinese New Year decorations this year, wary of offending the country's Muslim majority in the Year of the Dog.

Dogs are considered "unclean" under Islamic tradition and Muslims are required to carry out a ritual of washing themselves if they are in contact with the animal.

Multicultural Malaysia has seen an increasing intolerance towards activities considered insulting to Islam, reflected in protests in recent years of beer festivals and concerts.

While Muslim Malays are the biggest ethnic group among Malaysia's 32 million people, Chinese make up the second-biggest group with 23 per cent of the population.

One shopping mall in the popular Kuala Lumpur tourist area of Bukit Bintang did not depict dogs in its decorations ahead of the new year in Febru-

ary, focusing instead on the 10th anniversary theme of the centre, Pavilion Kuala Lumpur.

Director of Marketing Kung Suan Ai said religious and cultural sensitivities were a determining factor in conceptualising decorations. The mall attracts three

million people of various backgrounds each month, she said. "One of the considerations we take in when we work on decoration concepts for Pavilion KL is to create something highly experiential... and also to be socially accepting (for) all," she said. Twelve



A staff poses with a dog-shaped gold figurine, at Chow Tai Fook Jewellery store ahead of the Lunar Year of the Dog in Hong Kong, China on 14 December, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

animals, including a dog and a pig, another animal Muslims consider as unclean, make up the traditional Chinese zodiac.

Malaysian Muslim leaders have been vocal about events that involve dogs before. After the 2014 Commonwealth Games opening ceremony in Glasgow, when athletes paraded with a Scottish terrier donning their country's name, local politicians aired their disapproval, calling the stunt "disrespectful".

In 2016, religious authorities asked popular pretzel chain Auntie Anne's to change the name of its "Pretzel Dog" to "Pretzel Sausage".

At MyTOWN, another Kuala Lumpur shopping centre where half the visitors are Muslim, the mall downplayed the depiction of dogs in its decorations. "We have the dogs but it's in how we (display) them. They are not the main object.—Reuters ■

Princess Eugenie to marry long-term boyfriend

LONDON — Britain's Princess Eugenie has got engaged to her long-term boyfriend Jack Brooksbank, Buckingham Palace said on Monday, with the pair set to marry later this year.

Eugenie, 27, is a granddaughter of Queen Elizabeth and eighth in line to the throne. She is the second daughter of Prince Andrew, the queen's third child who is known as the Duke of York.

"The Duke and Duchess of York are delighted to announce the engagement of Princess Eugenie to Mr Jack Brooksbank," Buckingham Palace said in a statement. "Her Royal Highness and Mr. Brooksbank became engaged in Nicaragua earlier this month." The wedding will be held in the autumn at St George's Chapel in Windsor — the same venue where her cousin Prince Harry will marry American fiancée Meghan Markle in May.—Reuters ■

Britain's Edmund beats Dimitrov to reach semis

Kyle Edmund of Britain celebrates winning against Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria at Quarterfinals of Australian Open at Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne, Australia on 23 January. **PHOTO: REUTERS**



MELBOURNE—Britain's Kyle Edmund bludgeoned his way past third seed Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 on Rod Laver Arena on Tuesday to reach the Australian Open semi-finals.

The unseeded 23-year-old, playing in his first grand slam quarter-final, showed no nerves as he blazed away with his fearsome forehand to sub-

due a nervy Dimitrov.

The Bulgarian struggled to reproduce the form that saw him beat home favourite Nick Kyrgios in the previous round, with his serve especially vulnerable.

Edmund broke decisively at 4-4 in the opening set with a thunderbolt forehand off a weak second serve.

Dimitrov took the second set but never looked completely comfortable against the ultra aggressive Edmund and a double-fault at 3-4 in the third set proved costly.

The players swapped breaks in the fourth set but Edmund broke again for a 5-4 lead to serve for the match.

A tense final game saw Ed-

mund double-fault but an ace brought up match point and then Dimitrov sliced a backhand long which was confirmed by Hawkeye.

Edmund is the only British man in the main draw after three-times grand slam champion Andy Murray withdrew to have surgery on his hip.—Reuters ■

North Korea participation to highlight opening ceremony

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — North Korea's participation at the next month's Winter Olympics will form an integral part of an opening ceremony that will highlight a key message of peace, Games organizers said on Tuesday.

The 2018 Winter Olympics is being held in the mountainous resort town of Pyeongchang, 80 km (49.71 miles) from the heavily-fortified inter-Korean border, and kicks off with the opening ceremony on 9 February.

Song Seung-hwan, who is serving as the executive creative director for the Pyeongchang ceremonies, said peace had been set as the main motif of the opening gala even before North Korea decided to join the Games.

"We have worked on all of our scenarios under the theme of peace," Song, a renowned actor and producer, told a news conference in Pyeongchang. "Although North Korea's participation was decided belatedly, we think this will serve as a good opportunity for us to convey our message more clearly."—Reuters ■

Aung La N Sang and Phoe Thaw showcase skills in front of media at one: quest for gold open workout

THE largest global sports media property in Asian history, One Championship (ONE), recently held on Open Workout at the Myanmar Plaza last 23 January, featuring reigning ONE Middleweight World Champion and hometown hero "The Burmese Python" Aung La N Sang, as well as ONE featherweight athlete Phoe Thaaw. The two martial artists showcased their incredible skills to media in attendance.

Both Aung La N Sang and Phoe Thaw are scheduled to appear at ONE QUEST FOR GOLD, which is set to take place on Friday, 23 February at the Thuwunna Indoor Stadium in Yangon, Myanmar. In the main event, ONE Middleweight World Cham-

pion "The Burmese Python" Aung La N Sang of Myanmar will compete against Alexandre Machado of Brazil for the vacant ONE Light Heavyweight World Championship. Phoe Thaw is set to face Sor Sey on the main card.

Aung La N Sang, ONE Middleweight World Champion, stated: "Winning the ONE Middleweight World Championship was the greatest moment of my career, and I will do everything in my power to make the people of Myanmar proud. The opportunity to become a dual weight world champion, and to win the ONE Light Heavyweight World Championship is a huge deal for me. It is always an honor to perform in front of my hometown fans, and

it is my pleasure to showcase my skills. Thank you everyone for coming out and for all the support. I will see everyone at the event." Phoe Thaw, ONE Athlete, stated: "Martial arts is growing rapidly in Myanmar and I am glad to be part of the movement. My last bout was incredibly difficult and I was tested fully, against my own countryman, so that just shows everyone that martial artists from Myanmar are very talented. I have to constantly work very hard to keep sharp and at the top of my game. Thank you to all the fans who have shown love and support for my career. I will continue to give my best."

32-year-old Aung La N Sang is Myanmar's most successful



Aung La N Sang answers question at ONE QUEST FOR GOLD on 23 January. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

athlete in history, whose impressive submission skills has earned him the moniker of "The Burmese Python". Born in Myitkyina in the mountainous Kachin State, he belongs to an ethnic minority known as the Kachin, Aung La N Sang captured the ONE Middleweight World Championship with a unanimous decision victory over Vitaly Bigdash in

June of 2017. In his most recent bout, Aung La N Sang needed less than one round to finish heavyweight kickboxing champion Alain Ngalani in ONE's first ever Open Weight Super-Bout. Next up, Aung La N Sang takes on Alexandre Machado for the vacant ONE Light Heavyweight World Championship.—GNLM ■