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President U Htin Kyaw and wife welcome MPs who attend the dinner in commemoration of 71st Anniversary Union Day in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

President hosts reception and dinner in commemoration of 71st Union Day

President U Htin Kyaw and his wife Daw Su Su Lwin hosted a reception and dinner to commemorate the 71st Anniversary Union Day in the square in front

of Nay Pyi Taw City Hall yesterday evening.

First, the President and his wife cordially greeted those present at the reception, including

union ministers, members of states/regions ethnic national culture groups, Hluttaw representatives, representatives of political parties, states/regions

ethnic affairs ministers, leading members of the peace process and delegates. Next, the President and his wife had dinner with the attendees. During dinner,

artists from Myanma Radio's modern music troupe together with ethnic nationals provided entertainment through songs.

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'BANK OF THE YEAR IN MYANMAR 2017'

Awarded by Financial Times (The Banker)

71st Anniversary Union Day State Flag raising ceremony held in Nay Pyi Taw

THE 2018 71st Anniversary Union Day State flag hoisting and saluting ceremony was held in front of the Nay Pyi Taw City Hall yesterday morning, where 71st Anniversary Union

Day Convening Central Committee chairman Vice-President U Myint Swe read a Union Day message sent by the President.

The 71st Anniversary Union Day was held with the four aims of perpetuation and awareness

of the Union spirit, to successfully build internal peace with the unity of ethnic nationals, to build a Democratic Federal Republic through the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong and to ensure the economic development of the entire Union by encouraging the growth of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

The flag raising was held at 5:30 am when the state flag hoisting team, along with members of national races, raised the flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Departmental personnel, social service organisations staffs, ethnic nationals and invited guest participating in the flag ceremony took their respective places at 5 am.

The State flag saluting ceremony was held at 7 am, when the Tatmadaw (Army, Navy, Air) Guard of Honor marched into the square in front of Nay Pyi Taw City Hall to take up their places.

Next, the 71st Anniversary Union Day Convening committee chairman Vice-President took the salute of the Guard of Honour.

Afterwards, the Vice-President and those in attendance saluted the state flag, while the



Vice President U Myint Swe reads the message sent from President U Htin Kyaw to 71st Anniversary Union Day celebration. **PHOTO: MNA**

national anthem was played by the Guard of Honour.

Vice-President U Myint Swe then read the Union Day message sent by President U Htin Kyaw, after which the ceremony came to a close.

The ceremony was attended by Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker, Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker, Union ministers, Union Attorney — General, Union Auditor General, Union Civil Service Board Chairman, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, Central Bank of Myanmar Governor, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Chairman, Anti-Corruption Commission

Chairman, high ranking Tatmadaw officers from the Commander-in-Chief's (army) Office, Union Supreme Court judges, Nay Pyi Taw Command commander, deputy ministers, Deputy Attorney — General, states/regions ethnic affairs ministers, Hluttaw representatives, heads of departments, departmental personnel, ethnic national cultural troupes, family members of Tatmadaw regiments based in the Nay Pyi Taw council area, members of social service organisations, representatives of ethnic nationals and invited guests. — Myanmar News Agency ■

71st Anniversary Union Day celebrated in Panglong

THE 2018 71st Anniversary Union Day ceremony was held yesterday morning at Panglong monument, Panglong, Loilem Township, Loilem District, in southern Shan State.

The ceremony began with state ministers, departmental personnel, NGO members, as well as ethnic national literature and culture groups taking their respective positions, followed by saluting the state flag and recognizing the country's fallen national martyrs, after which the national anthem was sung. The ceremony was then opened with ethnic national students from Panglong University, Technology University singing the song "Basis of unity – Panglong Conference", as students performed dances.

Also, the 71st Anniversary Union Day message sent by the President was read by Shan State Minister for Planning and Economy U Soe Nyunt Lwin and Shan State Minister for Finance U Sai Shal Talon then signed the visitors' book and took commemorative group photos with ethnic nation-

tionally, prizes were distributed to winners of university level essay and poem competitions, basic education high school and middle school level essay competitions held in commemoration of 2018 71st Anniversary Union Day, as well as outstanding sports personnel and figures in literature. The prizes were handed out by state ministers and officials.

Participants then witnessed performances by ethnic national literature and cultural groups and the universities' ethnic national dance troupes. The 2018 71st Anniversary Union Day ceremony was concluded with ethnic nationals of the union dancing to the song "Htawara Myanmar" (eternal Myanmar).

Shan State Minister for Planning and Economy U Soe Nyunt Lwin and Shan State Minister for Finance U Sai Shal Talon then signed the visitors' book and took commemorative group photos with ethnic nation-



Shan state ministers and people participate in the 71th Anniversary Union Day celebration in Panglong. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

al dance troupes.

Afterwards, state ministers and departmental heads visited display booths sponsored by the Computer University and Technology University, health care clinic, Information and Public Relations Department, Loilem

District office's photo booth and wall posters booth. The 71st Anniversary Union Day pamphlets, produced by the Information and Public Relations Department Head Office, were also distributed. The 71st Anniversary Union Day ceremony was attended by

Shan State ministers, the Loilem cantonment commander, Shan State Hluttaw representatives, ethnic national literature and culture groups, political parties, students from universities, prize winners and local residents. — Moe Lwin Oo (Loilem) ■

President hosts reception and dinner in commemoration of 71st Union Day

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The reception and dinner were attended by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice President U Myint Swe and his wife Daw Khin Thet Htay, Vice President U Henry Van Thio and his wife Dr. Shwe Hlwan, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint and his wife Daw Cho Cho, and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and his wife Daw Nan Kyin Kyi. Also present were Chief Justice of the Union U Htun Htun Oo, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal U Myo Nyunt and his wife Daw Htay Yi, Chairman of the Union Election Commission U Hla Thein and his wife Daw Aye Thidar, Tatmadaw Deputy Commander-in-Chief and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win and his wife Daw Than Than Nwe, and Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speakers and

their wives. Also in attendance were Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Legal Affairs And Special Cases Assessment Commission Chairman Thura U Shwe Mann and his wife; Union Ministers and their wives; Union Attorney General, Union Auditor-General, Union Civil Service Board Chairman, Central Bank of Myanmar Governor and their wives; Chief of Staff (army, navy, air); high-ranking Tatmadaw officers and their wives; Hluttaw Affairs committees chairmen; Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman and his wife; deputy ministers; Hluttaw representatives; chairmen and representatives of political parties; states/regions ethnic affairs ministers; heads of departments and invited guests.

After the dinner, the guests were entertained by artists from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Department of Fine Arts and states/regions cultural dance troupes in the City Hall open-air stadium. —Myanmar News Agency ■



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi greets ethnic people at the dinner in commemoration of the 71st Anniversary Union Day in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



Vice President U Henry Van Thio greets ethnic people who attend the dinner in commemoration of 71st Anniversary Union Day. **PHOTO: MNA**



Vice President U Myint Swe greets dignitaries who attend the dinner in commemoration of 71st Anniversary Union Day. **PHOTO: MNA**



Cultural dance troupe performs at the dinner in commemoration of 71st Anniversary Union Day in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

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China invites Myanmar traders to showcase products at 123rd Spring Canton Fair

CHINA has invited traders from Myanmar to showcase their products at the 123rd Spring Canton Fair, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

"Goods from Myanmar will seek to penetrate international markets at the exhibition. Participating in the trade fair can prevent illegal trading, as well as promote the trading

sector," said U Yan Naing Tun, the Director General of the Trading Department. Traders from both countries can rapidly export goods, while developing trading and markets, which can create job opportunities for local people, he added.

The Canton fair is held in Quanzhou city, China, every year in April and May. The ex-

hibition will be held in two phases at the National Pavilion and International Pavilion. Phase-1 will mainly showcase electronics and household electrical appliances, building materials and hardware, along with machinery equipment, from 15 to 19 April, 2018.

And, phase-3 will display food and drink, household items,

fabrics and home textiles from 1 to 5 May, 2018. Entrepreneurs from Myanmar can attend the 123rd Spring Canton fair as exhibitors or visitors. Entrepreneurs who would like to attend the Canton fair can register at the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization, according to the Ministry of Commerce. —Zar Lin Thu (AMIA) ■

Zwekabin cable car project 50 per cent completed

THE installation of cable cars on Kayin State's famous Zwekabin Mountain is 50 per cent complete, said U Banyar Zaw, Chairman of Myanmar Native Land Public Company.

"The project began in May 2017 and now it's 50 per cent complete. The whole project is slated for completion by March 2019," he added. The project is being developed on six acres of land with more than US\$12 million investment from Chit Lin Myaing Company using Swiss technology and including parking lots for both big and small vehicles, stalls, hotels, resorts and parks.

He continued that "Zwekabin Mountain is located seven miles south of Hpa-an and is 2,734 feet above sea level.



The construction site of Zwekabin cable car project in Kayin State. **PHOTO: MDN**

Elderly people and children cannot climb up. There is Buddha's hair at the top of the mountain. Zwekabin is a landmark for the people in Kayin State. The whole project is aimed at achieving var-

ious developmental tasks in the region where peace and stability is restored."

Under the agreement, the Chit Lin Myaing Company is entitled to 75 per cent of the total

profit while the Zwekabin Myay Development Company receives the other 25 per cent. Upon completion of the project, two cable cars will be able to transport 51 visitors up and down the mountain. Precautionary measures have already been made to ensure safety for visitors.

Zwekabin Pagoda's festival is annually held for five days from 13 waxing to 2 waning of Tabaung. Zwekabin pagoda festival attracts thousands of Buddhist pilgrims across the country. Zwekabin Mountain is Kayin State's leading tourist attraction site and is visited by both domestic Buddhist pilgrims and tourists. The cable car project will be the first of its kinds in Myanmar and is expected to boost tourism in the region.—Myanmar Digital News ■

The number of Bagan sand painters decreases

THE number of sand painters in Bagan has decreased due to a decline of paintings purchased.

"Most foreigners were interested in sand paintings and there were a few local people who bought sand paintings. This year, the number of foreigners who visited Bagan declined so sale of sand paintings was apparently lower. However, now temporary tattoos on hands have become popular in Bagan among visitors" said a dealer of sand paintings in the Thatbyinnyu Temple.

Sand paintings come in various sizes depending on the pictures that are created. Furthermore the price of sand pictures depends of the level of intricacy of the design. One

reason for the decline of people purchasing sand paintings is that they take a long time to create. In addition it's not worth the artist's time to create paintings and receive a small amount of money for their work; therefore the number of sand painters has declined.

"Temporary tattoos on hands are easier to create than sand painting so most of the artists turn to temporary tattoos. However locals who still practice sand painting expect foreigners to buy their paintings. Temporary tattooing on hands attracts not only local visitors but also some foreigners" said one of the dealers of sand paintings in Old Bagan City.—Myanmar Digital News ■

Solo trekker successfully reaches his final destination

MARKING the 71st anniversary of Union Day in Myanmar, a fifty-year old man walked alone across townships in Thaninthayi Region, and he accomplished his solo trek today when he reached the Shwe Wei Thiri stadium this morning.

U Aung Thu started his solo mission from the Cape Bayint Naung in Kawthaung Township on 24 January. He arrived at Dawei on 7 February and kept on walking across townships in Dawei District.

U Moe Naing, head of the Department of Sports and Physical Education in Thaninthayi Region, U Thee Hlaing, a solo cyclist, and members of the Ministry of Health and Sports welcomed him at the stadium. They awarded him with track

suits as a tribute to his successful solo mission. U Aung Thu is from Kan Phyar ward in Myeik. This is his fifth successful solo trek. The first time, he walked from his home town of Myeik to Myanmar's administrative city Nay Pyi Taw to mark the SEA Games hosted by Myanmar in 2013.

His second trek was from Kawthoung to Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw. The third time, he walked from Myeik in Thanintay Region to Nat Mauk in Magway Region, where General Aung San was born, to mark the 100th birthday of General Aung San in 2015. The fourth time, he walked from Myeik to Mawlamyine in Mon State to honour the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.—Myanmar Digital News ■



A farmer works in the muskmelon farm in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Watermelon and muskmelon growers earn small profit despite soaring prices

HIGH farming costs have led to smaller profits for watermelon and muskmelon growers this year, despite higher selling prices, according to a report in Myanma Alinn yesterday.

Watermelon and muskmelon fetched a high price last year, and this year has also seen high prices. Nevertheless, only small profits remain for growers after deducting transaction costs, truck fares, and cultivation costs, as labour and other general costs were paid from the small profits. Growers can trade at healthy profits only if fertilizer

and pesticide prices are lower, a grower from Tatkon Township, Nay Pyi Taw, told Myanma Alinn.

Muskmelon cultivation begins in October, with the harvest in December. The winter season runs from December to March, and middle season begins in November and ends in January.

The expense for growing crops on an acre costs Ks1.5 million, including land treatment and planting costs. Also, transportation costs are Ks700,000 to 1 million for a 12-wheel truck, said U Kyaw Win, a watermelon grower, as quoted by Myanma

Alinn.

When watermelon and muskmelon sells at a good price, it can cover the high input costs. However, growers take on debt when fruits sell for lower prices.

The Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producer and Exporter Association has undertaken projects to boost production of watermelon and muskmelon in the Sagaing and Mandalay regions, with the assistance of Winrock International Organization, which is funded by the USAID. — Myat Thu (AMIA)

Rice export earnings increase US\$500 million over last FY

EARNINGS from rice exports in the past ten months of this fiscal year (FY) were US\$500 million greater than in the same period of the last FY, according to a report in Myawady Daily last Saturday.

From 1st April to 19th January this FY, some 2.82 million tons of rice were exported, with an estimated value of \$876 million. During the same period in the last FY, over 1.13 million tons of rice, valued at \$372 million, were shipped to foreign buyers.

Myanmar sought to export 2 million tons of rice to foreign countries this FY. Cur-

rently, the export volume has exceeded the target.

Previously, Myanmar's rice exports were heavily dependent on border trade. However, the rice trade via sea routes has now expanded. This fiscal year, 60 per cent of rice exports will be shipped by sea, whereas 40 per cent is to be exported through border gates.

While there were only 29 foreign countries buying rice last year, Myanmar's rice has now shipped to more than 45 countries through sea routes, securing new market shares in foreign countries. — GNLM

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- Market Place by City Mart (6.5 Mile)
- Market Place by City Mart (Damasidi Road)
- Market Place by City Mart (Junction City)
- City Mart (Aung San Stadium)
- City Mart (47th street)
- City Mart (Yankin)
- City Mart (China Town)
- City Mart (Myay Ni Gone)
- City Mart (FMI)
- City Mart (Junction Square)
- City Mart (Junction Maw Tin)
- City Mart (Sule Square)
- City Mart (Star City - Thanlyin)
- City Mart (Waizayandar)
- City Mart (Hledan)
- City Mart (Myanmar Plaza)
- City Mart (Junction 8)
- City Mart (St. John)
- Ocean North Point (9 mile)
- Ocean Shwegonedine

Ocean City Mart SUPERCENTER City Mart Supermarket

Myanmar's staple commodity prices on high side

PRICES of Myanmar's produce continues increasing in the domestic market, according to a report yesterday in Myanma Alinn.

Despite a bulk flow of 288,000 viss (a viss equals 1.6 kg) to the Yangon market on 7th February, onion prices are still rising, as wholesale onion prices range from Ks1,200 to 1,800 per viss.

Also, the price of pigeon peas, which remained unchanged at some Ks350,000 for

a number of months, rose at the end of January. Pigeon peas (red gram) RC fetched Ks431,000 per ton on 7th February, and some 40 containers of pigeon peas were traded in Yangon market. The price increased to Ks440,000 per ton on 8th February, with forty containers trading. Further, the news of India's demand in beans and pulses shook the market and the price increased slightly.

Similarly, the price of low quality rice increased by Ks2,000

per bag, due to the low supply of fresh rain rice in the Yangon Region. Last month, fresh rain rice was worth Ks21,000 per bag, whereas old summer rice fetched Ks25,000 per bag. In early February, the price of fresh rice was Ks23,000 per bag, while old summer rice increased to Ks27,000.

The harvest season for the summer paddy is approaching. When that rice enters the market, the price may change. —Khin Hsaing

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The Report to the People on the Progress of Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State

Introduction

1. The current issues in Rakhine State are not only the concern of Rakhine State alone but also the concern of the country as a whole. The stability, peace and development of Rakhine State are absolutely critical for the whole country to become stable, peaceful and developed.

2. While there is so much work to be done for rule of law and development across the country including Rakhine State, the Government is putting a great deal of determined efforts into promoting rule of law and enhancing development. In doing so, the national level development projects and plans as well as those for Rakhine State have been implemented. The implementation of those plans and projects is found to be highly relevant to and in line with the recommendations put forward by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State submitted its interim report in March, 2017. The implementation of the recommendations of the interim report started from 1 April, 2018 and in order to increase the momentum, the Government established the Committee for Implementation of Recommendations on Rakhine State with 19 members on 9 October, 2017. The Committee has to release its Report to the People on the progress of its implementation every four months. This report covers the period from 1 April, 2017 when the implementation of the recommendations started before the formation of the Committee up to 31 December, 2017.

The Economic and Social Development of Rakhine State

3. Since both domestic and foreign investments play an important role in the state's economy, the Rakhine State Investment Commission was established on 7 July, 2017 and the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration opened its state office on 30 October, 2017. Till now, they have verified and granted concessions to a total of 48 investment projects, including 6 livestock and fishery projects, 2 construction projects, 11 hotel and tourism projects in accordance with the Myanmar Citizen Investment Law, as well as 1 mining project, 27 energy projects and 1 service business in accordance with the Foreign Investment Law, with an aim to create job opportunities for local people.

4. Whenever expropriation of private land is unavoidable to execute investment projects, the owners are entitled to compensations for their land and losses. To date, compensations have been provided to 1,001 local people who lost their land and crops due to land expropriation for investment and development projects. The fund to compensate another 7 local people has also been requested in 2018-

2019 FY Budget.

5. As a form of Corporate Social Responsibility, the contributions made by the investors to the socioeconomic development of Kyaukpyu are as follows: 50 villages are supported MMK 30 million each to use as revolving funds for village development activities; and heavy equipment operator training was conducted in cooperation with Caterpillar Company. In education and infrastructure sectors, Shwe Gas Project and Southeast Asia Oil and Gas Pipeline Project have contributed MMK 7.62907 billion and USD 876257.65 respectively.

6. Previous experience has shown that large-scale projects, including SEZs, can have negative consequences on the environment, other economic sectors and local people; therefore, the Environmental Conservation Department and the Management Committee of Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone have been discussing and coordinating to conduct the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in a comprehensive approach.

7. Also, the coordination and cooperation with ILO are taking place to conduct labour market assessment - LMA. While preparing for LMA, trainings have been delivered to local people to enhance their vocational skills. There have been 22 types of vocational training including those for women provided to a total of 2,160 trainees. With the support of GIZ, dress-making training course was provided in Yangon for the local women from Kyaukpyu, and other vocational training on ironwork, welding, and electrician training and the training on modern agricultural techniques were also conducted. During the reporting period, 250 jobs can be created in Smart garment factory, Khine Pyi Soe garment factory and Shwe Kyar hand weaving workshop. Likewise, Shwe Project and Southeast Asia Oil and Gas Pipeline Project also offer jobs to 520 local people.

8. As transportation is an important component of socioeconomic development, high priority is given to improving transportation in Rakhine State. Starting from April up to December, 2017, roads and bridges damaged after the attacks in Maungdaw were repaired and earthen roads, gravel roads, concrete roads and concrete bridges were built. Heliports were also constructed. Currently, twenty bridges and two new mountain roads on May Yu Mountain are under construction.

9. In the land transport sector, 6 more bus lines have been expanded in addition to the 42 existing bus lines. For water transport, transportation along the Rakhine coastline and rivers is improved with Kisanpadi (1) and (2) vessels running along the Sittway-Kyaukphu route and Aung Takhon vessels running along the Sittway-Buthidaung route. As a part of the Kalatan Multi Modal Transit

Transport Project supported by the Indian Government, six cargo vessels of 300 ton capacity started running on 26 June, 2017. In the air transport, approval has been obtained to build the new Mrauk U airport through public private partnership (PPP). At Munaung Airport, construction of 200 foot over-run to the south to the existing runway (4,500'x100') and RESA earth leveling work has been started. Also in Sittway Airport, construction of the expanded terminal building (180'x60') has been completed;

10. In the Communications sector, mobile phone penetration is now over 85% and there have been more than 1 million internet users.

11. The efforts made in the electricity sector, starting from 1 April, 2017 up to 31 December, 2017, have resulted in the increases of electricity supply in terms of the number of hours a day, which is illustrated in the following diagram.

12. For drinking water supply, building and repairing 26 earthen ponds were completed in the villages in Rakhine State. Thinechaung Earthen Dam (with capacity 249 million gallons) and Dotantaung (1) Check Dam (with capacity 20.39 million gallons) were constructed. Construction of concrete reservoirs, repair of earthen ponds, installation of pipes connecting reservoirs to water collecting tanks were also carried out. Additionally, 234 rural drinking water supply projects were implemented in 233 villages, sourcing water from hand-dug wells, ponds, springs and other sources. A variety of comprehensive rural development activities were also undertaken in 7 villages through Village Development Project, in 235 villages through CDD Project and in 97 villages through Emerald Green Project.

13. In support of agricultural production, mechanization was promoted by giving out loans of MMK 447.953 million to farmers to buy 233 machines and equipment for farming and fishery, and by selling 2 tractors and 575 hand-operated

tractors in installments. Moreover, 23,332 baskets of seeds of pure paddy variety, 30 baskets of seeds of winter peanuts, 4 baskets of seeds of green gram, 796 packets of vegetable seeds were distributed to 4,553 households. The training on agricultural techniques was provided to 90 farmers with the support of KOPIA project. The farming equipment operator training was conducted for four times and benefitted 110 trainees. Besides, 1,261 farmer trainings were delivered in all townships of Rakhine State.

14. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are important drivers of the development of the regional economy. Loans are given out to SMEs with the repayment terms from 3 to 5 years at an interest rate of 9%. Cooperating with JICA, Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank provides two step loans, with 3 to 5 year repayment terms, at an interest rate of 8% to farmers all over the country including Rakhine State. As agricultural loans have been provided to farmers in Rakhine State, loans of MMK 86181.15 million were given out for monsoon crops to the farmers in 17 townships and loans of MMK 2408.55 million were given out for winter crops to the farmers in 7 townships in 2017-2018 Financial Year.

15. In the tourism sector, the new Myanmar Hotel and Tourism Law have been drafted and submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw through the President's Office. Once that law is approved and enacted, there will be more opportunities for small scale family hotel businesses.

16. Encouraging investments and development of businesses, the company registration process has been streamlined by reducing the procedures up to 4 steps from previous 13 steps, and also reducing the registration fee from MMK 1 million to MMK 500,000. Additionally, a telephone hot line (1887) has been set up to provide information needed for incorporating a company or making an investment.

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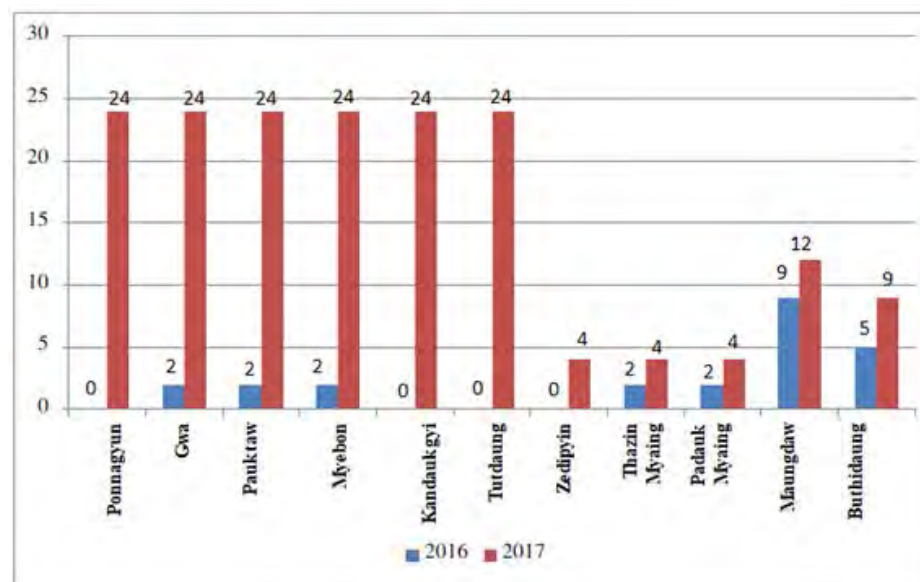


Figure: Increase in electricity supply (in hours)

The Report to the People on the Progress of Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State

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17. As efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change, the following activities have also been implemented: 11,764 acres of community forests have been established; 1,644 acres of Gwa Chaung mangrove forest is planned to designate as protected area; and 390,000 trees were grown through community tree planting movements in 2017-2018. Regarding production and distribution of climate resilient seeds, 441 acres of monsoon paddy seed nursery was established, 415,687 acres was planned and grown for crop diversification during 2017-2018 Financial Year. Improving irrigation systems is another important effort for agricultural development. As such, 100%

of 75 projects were completed, including construction, upgrade and repairs of irrigation systems, embankments, spillways, concrete water gate, check dams, and reservoir dams. In Rakhine State, 26 environmental education programs were organized during the period from June to November, 2017 and 5,174 people attended those programs.

Citizenship

18. Since the time the current Government took office, the Muslim people who applied for going through the national verification process were verified in accordance with the Law and the numbers of people who benefitted from those processes are listed below.

Sr.	Description	From 01/04/2010 to 31/12/2016	From 01/04/2017 to 31/12/2017
1.	Citizens	40	118
2.	Naturalized citizens	24	105
3.	Children under 18 of naturalized citizens entered into the list of eligible applicants for naturalized citizenship	22	129
4.	Children above 18 of naturalized citizens entered into the list of eligible applicants for naturalized citizenship	-	15
5.	Children of citizens and naturalized citizens to whom 10 year old citizenship scrutiny cards are issued	-	148
6.	Children of citizens and naturalized citizens to whom 18 year old citizenship scrutiny cards are issued	-	480
7.	People to whom NV cards are issued	2,457	5,162
8.	Biometric data collection	-	8,501
9.	Kaman people to whom the national ID cards are issued	-	3,336

19. If the people who want go through the verification process do not hold any forms of identification documents, they need to hold a NV Card first in accordance with the Law. As a form of advocacy for acquiring and holding NV cards, the members of the Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State have been briefing the rights and responsibilities, associated with holding NV cards, to Muslim village administrators, 100-household heads, local people and fishermen working on fishing boats on every visit of theirs to Rakhine State. During the NV processes, the necessary forms and documents for application of citizenship are also provided.

20. The Government seeks to actively engage the Islamic religious groups in the country to mobilize more participation and cooperation of Muslim people in the verification processes. This active engagement did result in discussions and negotiations between the Islamic religious groups and the members of the Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State as well as the statements issued by those Islamic religious groups, urging all the Muslim people in Rakhine State to cooperate with the authorities in the national verification process.

Freedom of Movement

21. With regards to the freedom of movement for people holding NVC Card or any forms of identification document, a road map has been developed with time-frames and milestones for removing restrictions. According to the road map, the initial steps have taken in the Maungdaw District, including intensifying security and raising awareness widely among the communities of both sides that actions will be taken against any acts by any side which harm, disturb or block the people from the other side moving around, in accordance with the existing laws, rules and regulations.

Internationally Displaced Persons (IDPS)

22. Work has been started for the closure of the Thetkelpyin IDP Camp and Aung Mingalar Ward in Sittway Township, and the Taungpaw IDP Camp in Myepon Township in line with the international standards.

23. The repair and construction work carried out to improve the shelters in the IDP camps is as follows:

- 50 shelters in the Say-tha-mar-gyi IDP camp, Sittway were refurbished;
- 12 individual houses were constructed in place of the shelters in the camp in Ram-ree;
- At the IDP camps in Sittway Township, 176 new shelters, 281 new units of shelters, 482 tube well pumps and 508 toilets were constructed.

Humanitarian Assistance

24. Humanitarian assistance has been provided by the Union Government, the public, UEHRD Youth Volunteer Program, Red Cross Movement, ASEAN countries, partner countries and various national and international organizations as follows:

- Food and non food items in a total value of MMK 479.60 million by the Union Government;
- Food and non food items in a total value of Swiss Franc 17 million by Red Cross Movement;
- Food and non food items in a total value of USD 730,000 by ASEAN countries;
- Assistance in a total value of MMK 443.75 million by UEHRD Youth Volunteers;
- Assistance in a total value of MMK 79.05 million by MA UK Myanmar.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

NMSP, LDU and Nippon Foundation hold joint press conference

THE New Mon State Party (NMSP), Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) and Nippon Foundation held a joint press conference in Kempinski Hotel Nay Pyi Taw at 3:30 pm yesterday.

Attending the conference were NMSP Chairperson Nai Taw Mon, LDU Chairperson Kyar Kun Sar and Nippon Foundation Chairperson Mr Yohei Sasakawa, as well as members of the media.

Mr Yohei Sasakawa began by saying that the Union Government and non-signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) have been working hard for two years to

reach an agreement. He said he is delighted the NMSP and LDU will sign the NCA on 13 February. He acknowledged that this is an important step in Myanmar's national reconciliation efforts. He said the Nippon Foundation only helped the union government of Myanmar and the ethnic armed groups to meet and build trust among each other. The Japanese government and Nippon Foundation supported the KNU with US\$40million after they signed the NCA, and they are ready to support the local residents from NMSP and LDU after they sign the NCA as well.

Next, Nai Taw Mon spoke to the media persons present. He supported the State Counsellor's cause for national reconciliation and unity. He said his group did not sign the NCA in 2015 because it was not all-inclusive at the time; but after meetings with all of their troops they have decided to finally sign the NCA.

He said they will continue working on all-inclusiveness and they welcome the support of the Nippon Foundation. He said they will try their best to achieve lasting peace and development for the people. Kyar Kun Sar then spoke to media persons saying



(From L to R)Kyar Kun Sar, Yohei Sasakawa and Nai Taw Mon. PHOTO: MNA

his group has been looking forward to signing the NCA. He said Lahu is in need of much devel-

opment and the local residents have been longing for peace. —Myanmar News Agency ■

We must work diligently to achieve peace

IT has been more than two years since the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was signed between the Union Government and armed ethnic groups. The aim of the agreement was to build a lasting peace by finding an answer to political problems through peaceful political dialogue, without needing the military to intervene to end the armed conflicts that have erupted in the Union since we regained independence.

The objective of establishing the Union was to create harmony after Bogyoke Aung San and ethnic leaders signed the Panglong Agreement on 12 February, 1947, as part of creating a Union in which there is mutual respect and recognition among all ethnic natives, and where democracy, equality and self-determination are guaranteed.

After the Panglong Agreement was signed, calling upon all ethnic peoples of the Union to live in harmony and peace, the country restored its independence and established the

Union. Sadly, the country has seen internal armed conflicts.

Conflicts rising from a lack of development have resulted in the destruction of the peace. Because if there was no peace, there would be no development. These two, peace and development, need to be seen and understood together, as both can not be performed separately. Both need to be carried out together.

Today, the Union Government has chosen the path of seeking solutions through negotiations and political dialogue; the various steps of the peace process and the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong are being carried out.

The peace process is the best means to end internal strife. The joint implementation of the NCA on equal terms within the

NCA framework is the only way to solve political problems through political means.

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) sign the NCA today in Nay Pyi Taw, bringing the total number of signatories to 10, and allowing them to participate in the upcoming 21st Century Panglong-Union Peace Conference.

We thanked ethnic Mon and Lahu peoples for helping to create peace in the union, and development based on peace. What we are doing today for peace is not for ourselves, but we are taking new steps for future generations.

We would like to urge Non-signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement to sign the agreement in order to solve the political problems at the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong.

Peace is sine qua non for development of our country, and so we must work diligently to achieve peace.

Non-signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement are urged to sign the agreement in order to solve the political problems at the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong.

The Negative impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights

Dr. Khine Khine Win

CORRUPTION is a disease which cannot cure itself and looks like a man-made disasters affecting the entire world of ours. It is an enormous obstacle to the realization of all human rights — civil, political, economic, social and cultural, as well as the right to development. Corruption may weaken democratic institutions both in new and in long-established democracies. When corruption is prevalent, those in public positions fail to take decisions with the interests of country and its society.

In countries where corruption is pervasive in the government, corruption should have detrimental effects on economic growth, stability in the long run.

It is witnessing that governments are trying to make progress in the fight against corruption in many ways. Many countries have made significant progress in curbing corruption; however practitioners are always on the lookout for solutions and evidence of impact.

Making an effort

Corruption is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit. Corruption may include many activities including bribery and embezzlement, though it may also involve practices that are legal in many countries.



Corruption as a Hindrance to the development of the country

Corruption tends to be the main hindrance in the path of development and people are confronting it around the world.

Just a few people are well aware of the link between the corruption and human rights because all forms of corruption practices may in the long run have an impact on human right. It is of vital important to adopt some techniques and mechanisms so as to remove, eliminate and eradicate corruption from the society

Protection Corruption

In Myanmar, one of the main objectives of the Anti-Corruption

Commission is to protect the State-owned property, humanity, rights and interest of the citizen due to the corruption. In this way, we can assume that we should find ways to address the destructive relationship between corruption and human rights which can mitigate its negative impacts.

Analysis

Although corruption does not include in the international laws, it is widely recognized that human rights violations occur mainly due to the practice of corruption.

According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) results tables for 2014 by the Transparency International Organization, it showed that Venezuela was listed in the 19 index and perceived

as the most corrupt country in Latin America and consequently the citizens of its country were suffered from it.

Markers of corruption

We can assess a country's level of acceptance for human rights by looking at the level of corruption reported about it. We can also get a general idea of the country's adherence to the rule of law and its administrative structure.

Corruption penetrates

Corruption is the biggest threat to all human rights. No matter who they are, all human beings have innate human rights and we should remember to respect each other's rights as well. Thus, if one were to directly or indirectly support corruption in a system, one is also hindering other people's rights. If one accepts or gives a bribe to steer towards a favoured decision than one is

already denying the other party's choice. The spread of corruption not only hinders human rights but it also defames the nation.

However, there is hope in combating corruption. We must spread awareness and educate people on the negative effects of corruption. We must put in place laws, rules and regulations, build compassion, and maintain our understanding of human rights to counter corruption. The principles of human rights we ought to follow are non-discrimination, mutual respect, honor, and equality. If we respect other people's human rights then they will do so in turn and then we will be one step closer to abolishing corruption.

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Translated by
Win Ko Ko Aung and
Zaw Htet Oo



Youth and Environmental Issues

By Win Aung Kyaw

We, Myanmar people are one of the families in the global village.

Nowadays, globalization will affect not only to Myanmar citizens but also to our environment. In addition, young people who are our next generation should aware of the global changes and environmental issues which are crucial to our nation.

First, in accordance with the United Nations, defines "Youth" as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. UN statistics on youth are based on this describes age group for statistical consistency across all regions. According to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Myanmar own about 28 percent of young people on her total population. Moreover, young people include age group 10 to 19 (adolescents) and from age group 15 to 24 (Youth). For example, United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) organized the Millennium Youth Forum, which was hosted in Wollongong University (New South Wales, Australia) at 1999, only the young people of the above mention age group from the Asia and the pacific region can participate the UNEP program as Young Environmental Envoy.

Secondly, during the Millennium youth forum, young people from our Region had learnt Global Environmental Issues such as global warming, deforestation, desertification, acid rain, air pollution, and water pollution and so forth. Furthermore, Young Environmental Envoy shared their experiences, how to collaborate across the diverse culture concerning environmental issues which are needed to tackle as quickly as possible. We would say that we couldn't get the cross culture experiences, and collaboration for Environmental issues if we didn't participated in youth forum such as Young Environmental Envoy program.

Finally, last decades have seen many conventions, protocols and treaties concerning global environmental convention. Some significance examples of global environmental issues are Ozone layer depletion, loss of biodiversity, Global warming, Climate change, and nuclear issue etc. For example, nuclear power have high potential, however, problem associated with the nuclear is no less. Radioactive waste from nuclear power plant is the big issue we will face, if we don't follow safety regulations properly.

Moreover, Chernobyl tragedy was significant example of how nuclear waste can lead to catastrophe for people. Again, Nobody would like to see another Chernobyl happening.

To sum up, participating in the Millennium Youth Forum gave as a lot of cross culture experiences as well as the awareness concerning global environmental issues all mankind faces. We also become broad minded and could think globally. However, we will act as locally in accordance with Myanmar traditions and culture to develop our Nation as well. Young Environment program organized by UNEP gave us beautiful memory that will be in our mind throughout our lives. ■

Corruption is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit.



71st Anniversary Union Day State flag raising ceremony held in Yangon

By Thant Zin Win

The 71st Anniversary Union Day State flag raising ceremony was held at the Independence Monument in Yangon, Kyauktada Township, Maha Bandoola Park yesterday morning at 7 a.m.

First, guard of honour representing Yangon Command and Myanmar Police Force band took their respective positions in front of the Independence Monument and saluted the Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein.

Next, the Yangon Region Chief Minister saluted the state flag, along with the guard of honour and ceremony attendees, as the Myanmar Police band played the national anthem.

Following that, the Yangon

Region Chief Minister read the Union Day message sent by President U Htin Kyaw, after which the ceremony came to a close.

Present at the ceremony were Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, Yangon Region Command Commander Maj-Gen Thet Pone, Yangon Region High Court Chief Judge U Win Swe, the Yangon Region Hluttaw Deputy Speaker, Yangon Region government members, Yangon Region Advocate, Yangon Region Auditor, high ranking Tatmadaw officers, departmental personnel, members of civil service organisations, ethnic nationals, students and members of the public numbering 3,090. ■



Attendees salute the State Flag at the 71st Anniversary Union Day celebration in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

71st Anniversary Union Day ceremony in NLD HQ

By Zaw Gyi

The 71st Anniversary Union Day ceremony was held at the National League for Democracy (NLD) headquarters yesterday morning.

At the ceremony, Republic of Union of Myanmar independence architect Bogyoke Aung San and the martyrs were saluted, followed by 8 seconds of silence, which was observed for those who had lost their lives during the movements to create democracy.

Also, chairperson of the ceremony NLD central executive committee secretariat member U Nyan Win delivered an opening speech, noting that it is the 71st anniversary of the Union Day on which the father of independence, Bogyoke Aung San, and 23 ethnic national leaders signed the historic Panglong Agreement, the foundation of national unity, after discussing their wide vision, family spirit, mutual understanding and respect for the nation.

The Panglong Agreement is the symbol of unity and trust in the history of the independence movement. Without national unity there would not be

a Panglong Agreement, and independence would not have been achieved without the Panglong Agreement.

He continued, saying that freedom and equality were the basis of the 20th Century Panglong Conference, led by Bogyoke Aung San, creating a path toward national independence. In the same way, national reconciliation is the basis of the 21st Century Panglong Conference led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, seeking unity among ethnic nationals, peace and onward to a democratic federal union. Just as Bogyoke Aung San and ethnic national leaders ensure that nationalism and the union spirit come together to become the Panglong spirit, historical facts about ethnic nationals are to be viewed and established impartially, without bias and predispositions. Narrow mindedness and ultra-nationalism should be opposed.

That is why we all should strive toward assuring the success of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong. Let us work together in unity toward a democratic federal union, said U Nyan Win.

Afterwards, a four-point 71st Anniversary Union Day



The 71st Anniversary Union Day ceremony held at the National League for Democracy (NLD) headquarters yesterday. **PHOTO: ZAW GYI**

NLD declaration was read by central committee member, central information committee secretary Monywa Aung Shin, after which messages sent by veteran politician colleagues were placed into the record.

Commenting on the day's ceremony, Monywa Aung Shin said the ceremony is different from past ceremonies because tomorrow there will be new signatories to the Nationwide

Ceasefire Agreement, which is welcoming Union Day. That is why it is different. Many youths were seen to have attended the day's ceremony. This shows that youths are being encouraged by Union Day and the Panglong spirit. They are displaying their increasing understanding about the idea of the union.

The ceremony held by NLD was attended by NLD

Patron U Tin Oo, central executive committee secretariat members, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun and Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, Yangon Region Minister for Social Affairs U Naing Ngan Lin, Hluttaw representatives, diplomats from embassies in Yangon, NLD members and invited guests. ■

Palestinian leader seeks Russia's backing over Jerusalem

MOSCOW — Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas visits Russia on Monday in a bid to secure Russian President Vladimir Putin's support following Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The Palestinian leader was set to visit Moscow two weeks after a visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Abbas has refused any contact with US President Donald Trump's administration since Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital at the end of last year. Abbas is due to speak at the United Nations Security Council on 20 February.

Palestinians see the US decision, which broke with years of international diplomacy, as a denial of their claim to East Jerusalem as the capital of an eventual Palestinian state.

Israel took control of East Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War, annexed it and later declared it the indivisible capital of Israel.

The US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, has accused Abbas of lacking the courage needed to forge a peace deal with Israel.



Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas, pictured here with Vladimir Putin in May 2017, is seeking the Russian president's support following Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. **PHOTO: AFP**

Abbas in turn has rejected any mediation by Washington in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has promised his people to work towards full recognition of a Palestinian state by the United Nations.

Alexander Shumilin, a Middle East scholar at the Institute for US and Canadian Studies, called Abbas's visit "an attempt

to cosy up to Russia, a consistent ally, and to stop Netanyahu leading Moscow astray during an improvement in Russia-Israeli ties".

Netanyahu visited Russia on 29 January and along with Putin attended a memorial ceremony at the Jewish museum in Moscow for the victims of Nazi camps. He took the oppor-

tunity to accuse Iran of wanting to "destroy" the Jewish state.

In turn, the Russian president likened antisemitism to "Russophobia" and said Russia and Israel were "cooperating closely", particularly against "attempts to falsify history".

- Chances 'close to zero' -

For Shumilin, Monday's visit "is a necessary political

gesture for Abbas but can do little in the practical sense".

"It is also definitely not worth expecting a breakthrough from this visit," he added.

In 2016 Russia offered to host one-on-one talks without preconditions between Abbas and Netanyahu but these never materialised.

In January, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov estimated that chances of resuming direct talks between the two sides in the current situation were "close to zero".

Lavrov also said "we understand the emotions" Palestinians feel towards Trump.

"We keep hearing in recent months that the US is about to publish some 'major deal' that... will satisfy everyone," he said. But he added that Russia "has not seen or heard of such a document or even any statement".

With relations between Washington and Moscow at a record low for the post-Cold War era, Abbas may be expecting that "Russia-US relations will get even worse and then Russia could do something to spite the US", Shumilin said.—**AFP ■**

Revenge awaits families of IS fighters in Iraq's Anbar

RAMADI (Iraq) — In Iraq's Sunni-dominated Anbar province, residents struggling to rebuild after years of Islamic State group rule are adamant: there will be no return for the families of jihadists.

Omar Shihaan al-Alwani, who fought against the group, warned that revenge awaits the relatives of IS fighters who try to come back.

"Anbar is a tribal society. If someone's brother or father is killed, he takes blood revenge by killing someone from the murderer's tribe," Alwani said.

The bearded 35-year-old wore a red-chequered headscarf as he sat in his traditional reception room, two months since Iraq declared victory over IS.

"We do not want IS fighters to come back and start a spiral of revenge," he said.

"We're totally against that. If they come back then blood will flow and neither tribes nor military operations will be able to stop it."

That sentiment is a far cry

from the support the jihadists once enjoyed in the western desert region.

The radical group's predecessor emerged from Iraq's Sunni heartland in 2006 and was welcomed by many Anbaris, who saw it as offering protection against Shiite-dominated authorities in Baghdad.

The jihadists were kicked out by pro-government forces, but five years later, in late 2013, tribal fighters allied with the group revolted against Baghdad.

The jihadists seized the chance to take over large areas of territory.

But many tribes turned against IS, especially as its brutality became apparent.

The group imposed a hard-line interpretation of Islam, sending religious "police" to flog people in public and executing members of tribes who refused to pledge allegiance.

- 'Intruders' -

Today residents, still counting the cost of IS rule in blood

and destruction, insist they do not want to repeat the errors of the past.

"They are outcasts and society rejects them," said Khamis al-Dahal, 60, as he got his hair cut at a barbershop.

"The government is not going to force us to accept back people who killed men, women and children in Anbar."

Some take a more moderate line — but are still very wary.

"We are not against them returning but the timing is bad and would risk provoking unrest and a return to bloodshed in the streets," said former tribal fighter Omar Ibrahim.

"They should be in a camp under the supervision of the Iraqi government and they should receive daily instruction on how to live together and to combat extremist ideologies."

Some are already living in camps. Currently around 380 families of jihadists, women and children, are detained in two Anbar camps where conditions are harsh.—**AFP ■**

Suspected poacher eaten by lions in South Africa



JOHANNESBURG — A suspected poacher was mauled to death and eaten by a pack of lions close to the Kruger National Park in South Africa, police said on Monday, adding that little was left of the victim's body.

The remains were found at the weekend in the bush at a private game park near Hoedspruit in the northern province of Limpopo, where animals have been poached in increasing numbers over recent years.

"It seems the victim was poaching in the game park when he was attacked and killed by lions. They ate his body, nearly all of it, and just left his head and

some remains," Limpopo police spokesman Moatshe Ngoepe told AFP.

A loaded hunting rifle was found near the body on Saturday morning. Police are trying to establish the victim's identity.

Last year, several lions were found poisoned near a farm in the same province with their heads and paws sawn off. Lion body parts are used in traditional medicine. Poachers also often target rhinoceroses in South Africa's game parks to feed a booming demand for rhino horn in China, Viet Nam and other Asian countries, where it is believed to have medicinal qualities.—**AFP ■**

The new upgraded air defence missile is capable of intercepting single and multiple strikes, including with the use of new generation intercontinental ballistic missiles. **PHOTO: TASS**



Russian military test fires new upgraded air defence missile — media

MOSCOW — The Russian military test fired an upgraded air defence missile at the firing range Sary-Shagan in Kazakhstan, Russian newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda reported on Monday.

“We have successfully test fired a new upgraded air defence missile,” the newspaper quoted Andrei Prihodko, the deputy commander of Aerospace Forces’ air and missile defence task force, as saying.

“The missile’s tactical and technical characteristics regarding the range, precision and operational lifetime are significantly higher compared to present-day weapons,” Prihodko said. The new upgraded air defence missile is capable of intercepting single and multiple strikes, including with the use of new generation intercontinental ballistic missiles, he added. —Tass ■

Judge was ‘misled’ to get Kim Dotcom warrant: lawyer

WELLINGTON — Lawyers for Megaupload founder Kim Dotcom questioned the validity of the internet mogul’s arrest Monday, claiming New Zealand authorities misled a judge to obtain a warrant.

More than six years after an armed police raid saw Dotcom arrested and his empire dismantled, the German national is still fighting extradition to the United States.

The legal battle reached the Court of Appeal in Wellington on Monday, where Dotcom’s lawyers will attempt to overturn two previous court rulings that went against him.

The 44-year-old is accused of industrial-scale online piracy via Megaupload.

If extradited, Dotcom and

his co-accused — Finn Batato, Mathias Ortmann, Bram van der Kolk — will face US charges of racketeering, fraud and money laundering carrying jail terms of up to 20 years.

The hearing that opened on Monday is set to examine New Zealand’s extradition laws in minute detail.

Barrister Grant Illingworth, representing Ortmann and van der Kolk, said New Zealand authorities had concealed crucial information when applying for an arrest warrant ahead of the January 2012 raid.

He said the application before a District Court judge failed to disclose that New Zealand’s GCSB intelligence service illegally spied on Dotcom before police moved in.

Illingworth said the judge should have been given all relevant information.

“We say that there was misleading conduct at this stage because there was no reference to the fact that information had been gathered illegally by the GCSB,” he said.

The then-prime minister John Key apologised to Dotcom when the spying was revealed in 2012, acknowledging that as a New Zealand resident the GCSB had no right to snoop on him.

Dotcom was not present for the hearing’s opening day.

The appeal is expected to wrap up this week, although a decision from the three judges presiding over the case could take months.—AFP ■

UK presses fraud charges against Barclays over Qatar loan



Barclays PLC and four of its former bosses, including former chief executive John Varley, will face trial in 2019 over alleged fraud linked to emergency fundraising from Qatar. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON — Britain’s Serious Fraud Office on Monday charged a unit of Barclays over alleged fraud linked to emergency fundraising from Qatar during the financial crisis a decade ago, the bank said.

The announcement follows a decision by the SFO in June last year to charge Barclays PLC, or the unit’s parent group, over the same alleged offence.

“The SFO has today charged Barclays Bank PLC with the same offence in respect of the loan as charged against Barclays PLC on 20 June 2017,” a statement from the bank said on Monday.

Barclays PLC and four of

its former bosses will face trial in 2019 on allegations over the Qatari fundraising, it had already been announced.

Barclays former chief executive John Varley and ex-executives Roger Jenkins, Thomas Kalaris, and Richard Boath have all been charged with conspiracy to commit fraud over a June 2008 bid to raise capital.

Barclays PLC, Varley and Jenkins have also been charged with providing unlawful assistance over allegations linked to an October 2008 fundraising.

It will be the first time that a British bank has faced a criminal trial over its conduct during the financial crisis.—AFP ■

London City Airport closed after WWII bomb found

LONDON — London City Airport was closed on Monday as military experts worked to remove a World War II bomb found in the neighbouring dock.

The unexploded ordnance was discovered in King George V Dock, during planned works near the runway of London’s most central airport.

The bomb was discovered at around 5:00am (0500 GMT) on Sunday and a 214-metre exclusion zone was imposed “to ensure that the ordnance can be safely dealt with whilst

limiting any risk to the public,” police said.

Homes within the exclusion zone were evacuated overnight and the local authority was providing residents with temporary accommodation and support.

Police remained at the scene on Monday.

“The operation to remove the ordnance is ongoing in partnership with our colleagues in the Royal Navy,” London’s Metropolitan Police said in a statement.

City Airport operates short-

haul flights and is located in east London, close to the Canary Wharf business district.

It is the capital’s fifth-biggest airport.

“The airport remains closed this morning,” said its chief executive Robert Sinclair.

“All flights in and out of London City on Monday are cancelled.

“I urge any passengers due to fly today not to come to the airport and to contact their airline for further information.”—AFP ■

China's envoy met North Korea's ceremonial leader while in South Korea

BEIJING — A high-ranking Chinese official met with North Korea's ceremonial leader Kim Yong Nam during their visits to South Korea to attend the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Olympics, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang did not disclose what Han Zheng, the seventh-highest ranking official in the ruling Chinese Communist Party, dis-

cussed with Kim Yong Nam, who visited South Korea with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's younger sister Kim Yo Jong.

China, which has been the main economic lifeline of North Korea, is believed to hold some degree of influence over Pyongyang. Geng, meanwhile, said China "welcomes" the historic talks Saturday between South Korean President Moon Jae In and the North's high-ranking delegation, one day after the two

nations' athletes marched under a unified flag at the Games' opening ceremony. An improvement in inter-Korean relations is "good for regional peace and development," Geng said, adding it should be "extended to joint efforts to preserve peace and denuclearization."

Talks with North Korea should be carried out on a "daily basis" not only with South Korea but also with all relevant parties including the United States, the

spokesman said. During Saturday's formal meeting in Seoul, Moon was invited by North Korea to visit Pyongyang, but neither side made mention of Pyongyang's nuclear issue, a South Korean presidential office source said.

The issue, which China characterizes as a dispute between Washington and Pyongyang, is attracting international attention as a major security concern.—Kyodo News



Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull had long resisted calls for an inquiry, but mounting political pressure forced his hand. **PHOTO: AFP**

Australia opens national inquiry into finance sector

SYDNEY — Australia opened a long-awaited inquiry into its massively-profitable finance industry on Monday after a string of scandals rocked confidence in the sector.

The country's "big four" banks — among the developed world's wealthiest — have been under increasing scrutiny in recent years amid allegations of dodgy financial and life insurance advice, and mortgage fraud.

There have also been claims of anti-money laundering laws being breached and benchmark interest rates rigged.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull had long resisted Labor opposition calls for a royal commission into misconduct, claiming it would be a waste of money, but mounting political pressure forced his hand. With uncertainty over the issue hurting offshore investor confidence, he announced the inquiry late last year to probe "the nation's banks, big and small, wealth managers, superannuation providers, insurance companies". Australian Bankers' Association head Anna Bligh said the hearings may be uncomfortable.

"It's important that it (the inquiry) gets to the matters that have disturbed the public," she told ABC radio.

"I do expect this will be painful for banks and their staff."

The Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry has the power to summon witnesses and take evidence.

While it can authorise police to apply for search warrants and witnesses who fail to appear may be arrested, it is not able to order compensation to those affected by any wrongdoings.—AFP



Kim Yong Nam (C), president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea, arrives at Gangneung Station in South Korea on 10 February, 2018, to watch a women's preliminary round ice hockey game between the unified Korean team and Switzerland at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Search operation at An-148 plane's crash site to continue for week at least

STEPANOVSKOYE VILLAGE (Moscow Region) — The main part of the search operation at the crash site of an Antonov An-148 passenger aircraft near Moscow may be completed in seven days, Russian Emergencies Minister Vladimir Puchkov said on Monday.

According to the minister, the status of the operation at the crash site had been switched from the rescue to search, since none of 71 people

onboard the plane survived in the tragedy.

"The rescue efforts have been wrapped up," Puchkov told journalists. "We officially state that all 71 people onboard of the aircraft are dead. Our deepest condolences to relatives and close ones." "The works at the scene are conducted round the clock," Puchkov said. "We plan holding the main stage of the search operation here at the site of the incident

in the course of seven days, because we have a big area of the scattered wreckage fragments, heavy snow and complicated ground profile."

The minister added that the priority at the moment was render all the necessary assistance to the families of the victims and cooperation was already underway with all regions, where the passengers came from.

Radio contact with the

An-148 passenger plane of the Saratov Airlines (flight 730 from Moscow to Orsk, Orenburg region) that took off from the Domodedovo airport at 14:24 Moscow time on Sunday was lost four minutes after the takeoff.

Fragments of the plane were found near the village of Stepanovskoye in Moscow Region's Ramensky district. There were 65 passengers and six crew members onboard the passenger jet.—Tass

Antonio Banderas bows to destiny to play Picasso

LOS ANGELES — It was written in the stars that one day Spanish star Antonio Banderas, who used to walk to school every morning past Pablo Picasso's childhood home, would have to play the great painter.

For years Malaga's second most famous son has been turning down offers to play its greatest, knowing that he "would be looked at with a magnifying glass."

But finally Banderas has said yes — twice.

He's playing Picasso in a 10-part television series on the artist's tumultuous life steered by Hollywood heavyweight Ron Howard, and in a film on the 33

days he took to paint his anti-war masterpiece "Guernica" written by the Spanish great Carlos Saura.

"Movies are very good for events," Banderas said, "but for somebody's life, 10 hours of TV is a very interesting vehicle."

Even so, with someone like Picasso "no matter how well you do it, you are going to face criticism", the 57-year-old actor told AFP from the set of the new series, "Genius Picasso".

"It was same for Picasso," Banderas insisted. "He knew when he painted 'Les Femmes d'Alger' people were going to try to kill him for it because it was not seen as proper

at the time."

Picasso loomed large over Banderas' childhood in Malaga, the Andalusian port where they were born only four streets apart.

Paloma: 'You sound like my father'

"He was a hero. I remember my mother holding my hand and taking me to school in the morning past his house on the Plaza de la Merced," said the actor, who without his hair is not physically unlike the artist.

Another thought also comforts Banderas. He once met Picasso's daughter Paloma when he first arrived in Los Angeles and spoke very little English.

"I started to speak Spanish with her" and after a while "she closed her eyes and I thought, 'Oh my God, I'm boring this woman.'"

"So I asked her if she was tired, and she said, 'No, not at all. When I close my eyes I can see my father, because you speak with the same accent as my him. That's how my father spoke, he spoke like you.'"

"I cannot compare myself with the most important artist of the 20th century, it would be stupid and ridiculous," said Banderas, who plays the artist in his later years, spending five hours a day in makeup before he steps onto the set.—AFP ■



Antonio Banderas as Picasso. PHOTO: AFP

Michael Jackson stole songs, says music producer Quincy Jones

NEW YORK, United States — Quincy Jones, the legendary music producer behind Michael Jackson, says that the late King of Pop plagiarized some of his hits.

"I hate to get into this publicly, but Michael stole a lot of stuff. He stole a lot of songs," Jones said in an interview full of eyebrow-raising comments published Tuesday by Vulture, the culture site of New York magazine.

"The notes don't lie, man. He was as Machiavellian as they come," the 84-year-old music veteran said. He specifically cited "Billie Jean" — a signature song off the Jones-produced "Thriller,"



Michael Jackson's own music producer, Quincy Jones, says the late King of Pop plagiarized some of his hits. PHOTO: AFP

er," the top-selling album of all times. Jones suggested similarities between the song and disco queen Donna Summer's "State of Independence," which was also produced by Jones and released several months earlier in 1982. Few listeners would immediately associate the two songs, although both open and are built on unusually lengthy synthesized bass lines.

Jones also said Jackson was "greedy" and should have given partial writing credit to keyboardist Greg Phillinganes for his song "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough."

Jones' allegations run against prevailing public perceptions of Jackson, who died in 2009 and is often viewed as a tortured soul with little financial acumen as he amassed wealth.—AFP ■

Christian Siriano champions 10 years of diversity on New York fashion runway

NEW YORK — Christian Siriano, a plus-size diversity advocate and red carpet designer who has dressed leading Hollywood ladies and Michelle Obama, celebrated 10 years in the business Saturday with a masterclass in the art of dressing women of all shapes and colors.

Actresses Whoopi Goldberg and Meg Ryan sat in the front row for a fall/winter 2018 collection that showcased diversity in all shapes, sizes and colors under a theme dubbed the "ultimate royal dinner party."

Men, women and trans models walked the red-carpeted runway at the hallowed environs of New York's Masonic Hall for the London-trained

designer's collection inspired by late 18th century British art.

Curve poster model Ashley Graham opened the show dressed in a floor-length red faux fur coat. Trans model Evie Acosta also walked.

There was plenty of black — Siriano dressed 10 women for the Golden Globe awards when Hollywood wore black to protest sexual harassment in the workplace — and plenty of bright red. There were hints of leopard print and male models in iridescent shorts and blazers. Red, yellow and blue dresses shimmered and sparkled.

"We've been dressing women of shape since day one," Siriano told Fashionista.com in an interview ahead of his show.—AFP ■



Model Ashley Graham. PHOTO: AFP

'Game of Thrones' creators to make new 'Star Wars' films

LOS ANGELES, United States — Lucasfilm announced plans Tuesday for a new series of "Star Wars" films made by the team behind "Game of Thrones," as it seeks to build on the lucrative sci-fi franchise.

David Benioff and DB Weiss, the creators of the smash-hit, Emmy Award-winning television series, will write and produce

new films that are separate from the main Skywalker saga and the trilogy being developed by Rian Johnson, writer-director of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi."

"David and Dan are some of the best storytellers working today," Kathleen Kennedy, president of Lucasfilm, said in a statement.

"Their command of com-

plex characters, depth of story and richness of mythology will break new ground and boldly push 'Star Wars' in ways I find incredibly exciting."

Benioff and Weiss released a joint statement saying they had been dreaming of traveling to "a galaxy far, far away" since seeing the original movie in 1977.—AFP ■

Ancient artifacts found in Natogyi Township

SOME ancient artifacts were unearthed at a site near mile-post 329/7 on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway in Padaung Village, Natogyi Township in Mandalay Region on 5 February.

The ancient artifacts included broken pieces of clay pots, iron weapons, human skeletons and different sizes of

plates and cups, according to a source from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

A combined team led by Natogyi Township Administrator U Thet Lwin and Assistant Director of the Archaeological, Natural Museum and Libraries Department under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture

went to the site to check the artifacts. The artifacts are believed to be from an ancient tomb from the Iron Age and are being preserved by village administrator U Min Min. A proposal was presented to Mandalay Region government to designate the site as an ancient cultural area.—Myanmar Digital News

British illustrator Quentin Blake surprised at 70-year success

LONDON — Despite creating tens of thousands of drawings in a career spanning nearly 70 years, British illustrator Quentin Blake is still surprised at his success ahead of his latest exhibition.

Most well-known for his work with children's author Roald Dahl, Blake has illustrated more than 250 books by different authors and turned his attention

to large-scale works.

At the age of 85, he has slowed his schedule but has definitely not put down his pencil.

"I draw every day, yes, if I possibly can," he told AFP at the sidelines of an auction of literary classics with illustrated covers.

Dressed in white trainers and with bushy eyebrows and a mischievous look, Blake resembles one of his famous

characters. Matilda, the BFG and the Twits are just some of Dahl's creations brought to life by the illustrator. Ahead of a new exhibition at London's House of Illustration of Blake's rarely-seen nudes, he said he still cannot pinpoint the secret of his success. "It is hard for me to say. It always comes (as) a little bit of a surprise to me," said Blake.—AFP ■

Myanmar Arts Festival in Yangon to foster national unity

THE Myanmar Arts Festival was opened yesterday at the Sein Lan So Pyay Garden near the Yangon University Swimming Pool in Kamayut Township.

The festival is held with the sponsorship of the Myanmar Cultural Heritage Preservation Organization to mark the 71st anniversary of Union Day along with the aim to make the culture and arts of the national ethnic races more prevalent and generate a greater degree of friendship among the different groups.

"Today, we are trying to make peace in the country. Only if peace is made can democracy be achieved and ethnic people gain more rights. Being able to collect and display the culture and arts of the national races in Myanmar is a very good intention for strengthening national unity," U Phyo Min Thein said at the event.

While Myanmar becomes more of an open country, there will be some risks between Myanmar's ethnic cultures so we all should protect our heritages

together, he added.

He opened the festival by striking the auspicious gong, and visited the display rooms at the festival that will be held until 13 February.

Amarapura textiles and silk, Inlay silk and lotus fabrics, Kachin traditional hand-woven textiles, Kayan, Padaung and Chin hand-woven garments, Rakhine traditional goldsmith jewellery, Sagaing silversmith jewellery, Myanmar traditional lacquer ware products and Mon traditional slate tablets will be displayed from 9 a.m to 10p.m.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and regional ministers, Regional Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun and members of parliament, diplomats from the embassies in Yangon, chairperson and officials from the Myanmar Cultural Heritage Preservation Organization, writers, and ethnic people from different regions attended the opening ceremony of the festival.—Myanmar Digital News

Hong Kong Design Hits Runway at New York Fashion Week

NEW YORK — Industry elites and style influencers from the US and around the world were thrilled to see a spectacular runway show by leading Hong Kong fashion designers on Friday at the New York Fashion Show.

"Hong Kong fashion is spectacular. It needs to be in the mainstream," Dora Chu, a US fashion blogger famously known as Dora Spectacular, told Xinhua when asked her impression of the show staged by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) in America.

Ralph Chow, Regional Director, Americas, Hong Kong Trade Development Council, can agree no more.

"Hong Kong is well known for its unique culture, where both eastern and western culture can be reflected in our city, so you can find the uniqueness and also characteristics of all these design elements in the collections of fashion designers from Hong Kong," Chow said.

Designer Harrison Wong said it's his third time exhib-

iting on the New York runway. Wong's self-named collection is a contemporary apparel and accessories brand for urban men and women. His current collection has many oversized sweaters and unisex-looking sweatshirts as well as boxy tops and bottoms made with high-end fabrics and clean lines.

"I would describe my style as understated elegance," said Wong, who received a master's degree from the London College of Fashion.

He said his pieces are made with the highest quality materials and craftsmanship but are also affordable to demonstrate that fine designs are not determined by a price tag. Self-taught designer Annette Chan has been living in Hong Kong for decades and started her collection 11 years ago. She has since branched out on her own and now sees her clothes carried by Harvey Nichols in Hong Kong and Galleries Lafayette in Beijing, since 2013 she has been selling in the United States.—Xinhua ■

Bolivia's fabled carnival marches on despite deaths in floods

SUCRE — Bolivia Oruro Carnival got under way on Saturday with stunning costumes and parades, though the mood was dampened by the loss of 17 people killed in flooding and 8,200 families left homeless by heavy rains since November.

President Evo Morales said climate change had "shown up

at Carnival, leaving disasters, with the loss of human lives and of homes."

About 25,000 dancers take part in the pre-Lenten blowout that is Bolivia's biggest tourist attraction and brings as many as half a million people to the sleepy town.

The pageant along the city's

cobblestones is a mixture of Spanish colonial traditions with those of the ancient indigenous Inca and Aymara peoples in a ritual seeking better farming and good health.

In 2001, the UNESCO cultural organization declared the carnival an intangible cultural heritage of humanity.—AFP ■



Dancers take part in Oruro Carnival. PHOTO: AFP

2018 Asia Road and Para Cycling Championships concludes

By Kyaw Thu Htat

AT the final day of the 2018 Asia Road and Para Cycling Championships, hosted for the first

time by Myanmar, Sports and Physical Education Department Director General U Myo Hlaing fired the starting gun to begin the 176 km. Individual

Road Race Men Elite competition yesterday morning.

Fifty-four cyclists from 15 countries participated in the race, and Mirza Al-Hammadi of UAE came in first at 3 hours 50 minutes 32 seconds.

Fumiyuki of Japan and Mehdi Sohrabi of Iran came in second and third, respectively.

Winners were awarded medals by secretary general of Asian Cycling Confederation Onkar Singh, Myanmar Cycling Federation Chairman U Khin Maung Win and Indonesia Cycling Federation Chairman Mr. Oktohari.

The successfully completed 2018 Asia Road and Para Cycling Championships saw participation by 415 cyclists from 23 countries, including Myanmar.

Japan finished first with 3 gold, 3 silver and 2 bronze medals.

China came in second with 3 gold and 2 silver medals, while Hong Kong came in third with 2 gold, 5 silver and one bronze medal. ■



Cyclists compete in the Individual Road Race Men Elite competition at the 2018 Asia Road and Para Cycling Championships. **PHOTO: KO KO SOE NYUNT**



Winners and officials pose for a documentary photo.



Cycling Federation Chairman U Khin Maung Win presents gold medal to winner Mirza Al-Hammadi of UAE. **PHOTO: KO KO SOE NYUNT**

Barcelona frustrated in goalless draw with Getafe

MADRID — A disallowed Luis Suarez goal summed up a frustrating afternoon for Barcelona as the leaders of La Liga dropped points for the second week running after a 0-0 stalemate with Getafe on Sunday.

After needing a late equalizer to grab a point in the Catalan derby at Espanyol last weekend, Barca could not break down a well-organized Getafe side, who showed why they have the third-best defensive record in the league.

In irresistible form in front of goal in 2018, Suarez had the ball in the net just before half-time with a great finish from a Lionel Messi free-kick, but the home celebrations were cut short by the offside flag.

The Uruguayan striker then saw his header kept out by a brilliant Vicente Guaita save as the match moved into stoppage time, with Barca failing to score at home in La Liga for the first time since November 2016.

Ernesto Valverde's side remain unbeaten in La Liga after 23 games, extending their long-



A frustrating day for Luis Suarez as Barcelona dropped points at home for just the second time in La Liga this season. **PHOTO: AFP**

est run without losing from the start of a campaign.

However, they are now only seven points clear at the summit from Atletico Madrid, who won

1-0 at Malaga on Saturday with an early Antoine Griezmann goal. The Rojiblancos visit the Camp Nou in three weeks.

"We don't like to draw at

home, but that's football. Our opponents defended really well and we were unable to score," Valverde told beIN Sports.

"Maybe we lacked a bit

of spark, that's possible. It is strange for us not to score here at our stadium."

With Samuel Umtiti banned, Thomas Vermaelen not fit and Gerard Pique only on the bench, Valverde handed a first start to January signing Yerry Mina and partnered him in central defence with Lucas Digne.

That pair were rarely overly troubled, but at the other end Valverde's decision to bring both Paco Alcacer and Philippe Coutinho into the line-up did not have the desired impact.

They both lasted just over an hour, with Coutinho forcing a fine save from Guaita from a curling strike in the 58th minute.

Meanwhile, Ousmane Dembele came on in the second half for his first appearance since his latest spell on the sidelines, but the young France forward was also incapable of breaking down the Getafe back line.

Former Arsenal midfielder Mathieu Flamini came on towards the end to make his debut for Getafe, who are 10th. —AFP ■