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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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The waters of Inle Lake are becoming contaminated from the fertilizer and pesticides used in the cultivation of floating gardens. **PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE**

Yangon circular railway to be upgraded

Myanma Railways yesterday began a project for upgrading the western Yangon commuter rail network between Yangon and Danyingone stations, said U Tun Aung Thin, General Manager of the Lower Region Administration of Myanma Railways.

“The project to upgrade the first part of the railway section started today. We are going to undertake the project by dividing the circular railway into three segments,” he said in a press conference in Yangon yesterday. The first part of the project focuses on the railway between Danyingone and Insein stations, which is 3.75 miles long. This first project started on 21 February and is expected to be completed by 31 May.

The second part will renovate the railway between Insein and Kyeemyindaing stations, which is 5.5 miles long. Upgrading of this section is scheduled to start on 1 October and is expected to be finished by the end of January, 2019.

The third part of the project will renovate the railway between Kyeemyindaing and Yangon stations, a distance of 2.75 miles, and will commence on 1 February in 2019 and be completed at the end of March.

SEE PAGE-4

Myanmar doubles down on effective water management

MYANMAR is facing pollution problems because its water resources are not being effectively maintained, said Vice President U Henry Van Thio yesterday.

“We need to manage our country’s water resources effectively,” said the Vice Presi-

dent, stressing the importance of implementing the Integrated Water Resources Management project by key water-related ministries for effective and efficient utilisation, conservation and storage. Additionally, effective management would result in fair water allocation among

ministerial-level water users and better water and budget sharing among states and regions, he said.

“There is so much potential for the utilisation of our water resources. Like many other countries, we are facing problems of too much water

or too little water and water pollution,” said the Vice President in his opening remark at the World Water Day 2018 celebration in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, in his capacity as the Chairman of the National Water Resources Committee.

SEE PAGE-3

‘BEST BANK IN MYANMAR’

Awarded by FinanceAsia 2017

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses housing, infrastructure loans

THE seventh regular session of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw held its ninth-day meeting yesterday morning at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meeting hall in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw building, Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, a bill on the registration of deeds, considered as approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, was put on record by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Explaining the loans provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), sent by the President, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win said the interest rate of 8.5 per cent was set after coordinating with the JICA, the Ministry of Planning and Finance and SME committee representatives, as well as by taking into consideration the interest rates of other local loans. If each loan duration is set at three years in the total duration of 40 years, loans can be provided 13 times, and if the loan duration is set at five years, loans can be provided eight times. More SME businesses can get loans, as the number of loans provided will be higher. As only secured loans were provided during phase-1 of the project, the provision for unsecured loans, through the CGI system, to provide loans to people without guarantor in phase-2 of the project will be one of the concessions made. SME business owners should co-operate by providing the required information completely when ap-



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is being convened in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

plying for loans, said the Deputy Minister. The Hluttaw approved the matter after a majority of the Hluttaw representatives supported it and a decision was taken.

This was followed by the deputy ministers explaining the utilisation of Ks26,011.131 billion from the emergency funds included in the 2017 Union Budget Law sent by the President. Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe said the fencing of 182.68 miles of land border between Myanmar and Bangladesh was conducted in three stages, and 126.68 miles had already been completed. Some 56 miles, up to B-1, the border junction of Myanmar-Bangladesh-India, is yet to be fenced. In the fourth stage, 11.5 miles of border fencing was conducted in the 2016-2017 fiscal year (FY), and in the 2017-2018 FY, 3.2 miles of barbed wire fencing

was extended by 2 feet with a modified design. The extension of 2 feet of barbed wire fencing with a modified design on 11.5 miles near BP-68 and BP-69 will be conducted with the 2017-2018 FY President's emergency fund of Ks20 billion, explained the Deputy Minister.

Similarly, Deputy Minister for Defence Rear Admiral Myint Nwe and Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung explained the respective works of the ministries. Next, the deputy ministers explained the 15 billion Japanese yen loan provided by JICA, US\$360 million loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund (AIF), and \$80 million from ADB for the Ministry of Construction project works, sent by the President.

U Kyaw Lin said the 15 billion

yen loan for the development of housing will fulfil housing requirements and allow low-income people to own a place while reducing the use of government funds. The permission of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is sought to approve the loan, explained the deputy minister. Similarly, the \$360 million loan is for the development of roads in the Greater Mekong Sub Region. The Yangon-Pathein road, Bago-Thanyin road and Yangon-Mandalay road are the main arteries of the economy of Myanmar and from there, it can connect to the most developed economic zones, and they will be the most used roads by the people. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is requested to approve the loan, stated the Deputy Minister. The \$80 million loan from ADB is for the socio-economic and infrastructural development of the

cities in Myanmar, Mawlamyine, Hpa-an and Myawady that are along the Greater Mekong Sub Region economic corridor road and supports the sustainable development goal of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and thus the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is requested to permit the loan, explained the Deputy Minister.

In the same way Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win said the 15 billion yen loan for the housing development project is for the sale of housing units in Yangon, constructed by the Department of Urban and Housing Development during the housing development project phase one, and in the second phase, it is for the sale of new housing units constructed according to the JICA standard. In the second phase, loans will be provided to people who want to buy houses not only with loans provided by the Construction and Housing Development Bank but also by other private banks under PFI (Private Finance Initiative). Loan agreements will be signed between PFI banks and Myanma Economic Bank. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is requested to permit the Ministry of Planning and Finance and the Ministry of Construction to implement the programme enabling the homeless to become home owners, said Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win.

SEE PAGE-7

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives Ambassador of Cuba to Myanmar

PYITHU Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint received Bangkok-based Ambassador of Cuba to Myanmar Mr. Hector Conde Almeida in the guest room of the Pyithu Hluttaw building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The two sides discussed matters related to bilateral co-operation between the two governments, the parliaments and the people.

Also present at the meeting were Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U T Khun Myat and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw office.—Myanmar News Agency



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint shakes hands with Ambassador of Cuba in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee holds coordination meeting

THE coordination meeting of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee on the 2018 Union Tax Bill was held in the second-floor meeting hall of building D of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on the afternoon of 21 February. The coordination meeting was attended by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker; Joint Bill Committee and Public Account Joint Committee Chairman U Aye Tha Aung; Joint Bill Committee and Public Account Joint Committee deputy chairmen, secretaries, joint secretaries and committee members; Legal Affairs

and Special Cases Assessment Commission members; officials from the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Planning and Finance and the Union Attorney General's office; business persons from the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry; and officials from the Myanmar Publishers and Book Sellers Association and the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw office.—Myanmar News Agency



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomes Ambassador of the Argentine Republic Mrs. Maria Alicia Cuzzoni de Sonschein. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor receives Argentine Ambassador to Myanmar

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received H.E. Mrs. Maria Alicia Cuzzoni de Sonschein, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Argentine Republic to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Nay Pyi Taw, at 10:45 am yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to bilateral relations and to enhance cooperation in economic, trade, education, sports, culture and technology, including South-South Cooperation and Forum for East Asia – Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC). —MNA ■



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba Mr. Hector Conde Almeida in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor receives Cuban Ambassador to Myanmar

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received H.E. Mr. Hector Conde Almeida, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cuba to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Nay Pyi Taw, at 10:00 am yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed matters pertaining to bilateral relations and to enhance cooperation in health, education, climate change, including through frameworks such as Forum for East Asia – Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and South-South Cooperation. —MNA ■

Myanmar committed to effective water management

FROM PAGE-1

Myanmar receives good rainfall, except in the central dry zone, and has many rivers and natural lakes, as well as groundwater aquifers.

U Henry Van Thio also stressed on the need to promote the capacity of the staff and all stakeholders related to the water sector and to update the relevant laws and regulations to promote the quality of services.

The demand for water in Myanmar's cities has increased with the increase in population and urbanization, while the demand for water in the rural areas has also increased due to expanding cultivation and other rural-based economic activities.

He also said the government must cooperate with citizens to develop the water-related sectors, such as water supply and water treatment, sanitation, personal hygiene and clean environment, agriculture, livestock, hydro power and industry tourism, while avoiding an impact on the environment.

"We need to promote awareness, discussion and sharing of information,



Vice President U Henry Van Thio addresses the World Water Day 2018 celebration in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

knowledge and technology, and mutual cooperation among water users. We need to raise awareness and share knowledge with the general public through education and the sectors concerned to convey the importance of water resources for the economic, social and all-round development of all the sectors and their protection," he added.

The theme for World Water Day 2018 is "Nature for Water."

In December 2017, Myanmar hosted the 3rd Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Yangon, which is an important event for the Asia Pacific countries.

During the summit, sound water cycle

management, governance and inclusive development, extension of safe and sustainable drinking water, and improved sanitation and wastewater management services at the local and national level, as well as the establishment of a regional system to monitor financial support for water-related sustainable development goals were discussed.

"As a result of the 3rd Asia-Pacific Water Summit, the "Yangon Declaration" was adopted, and we are cooperating with the Asia-Pacific Water Forum to discuss the outcome at the World Water Forum 2018 in March in Brazil," the Vice President said.

The United Nations General Assem-

bly had designated "2018 to 2028" as the International Decade for Action for Water for Sustainable Developments.

In Myanmar, the World Water Day celebrations are being organised by the National Water Resources Committee since 2014.

Myanmar has frequently suffered from destructive earthquakes and water-related extreme events, such as cyclones, periodic flooding, and droughts, besides landslides, which resulted in the loss of several lives and damages, posing major challenges in terms of water quality control and wastewater management.—MNA ■

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

Kyaw Myaing

SENIOR TRANSLATORSZaw Min,
zawmin.gnlm@gmail.com
Win Ko Ko Aung,
kowink2aung@gmail.com**INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR**Ye Htut Tin,
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**LOCAL NEWS EDITORS**Tun Tun Naing (Editor),
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor),
nwenwe9131@gmail.com**TRANSLATORS**Khaing Thanda Lwin,
Hay Mar Tin Win,
Ei Myat Mon
Zaw Htet Oo
Kyaw Zin Lin
Kyaw Zin Tun**REPORTER**May Thet Hnin,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
mayreporter.mm@gmail.com**PHOTOGRAPHER**

Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar

COMPUTER TEAMTun Zaw,
Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,
Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin**EDITORIAL SECTION**(+95) (01) 8604529,
Fax — (+95) (01) 8604305**CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION**San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114**ADVERTISING & MARKETING**(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
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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.

Tourism and Investment Festival to be held in Kawthoung

WITH the purpose of upgrading the tourism industry and sharing facts concerned with the opportunities for investors in the tourism sector, a Tourism and Investment Festival will be held in Kawthoung on 24 and 25 February.

A coordination meeting of the Tourism and Investment Festival was held at the Bayinnaung Hall of the Kawthoung District General Administration Department yesterday.

At the Festival, there will be booths representing: the department of Directorate of the Hotels and Tourism, the regional Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), the Salon ethnic people's traditional cultural booth, Travel and Tourism companies from



Kawthoung is the starting point for all Myanmar-based cruises to the vast Myeik Archipelago. **PHOTO: MDN**

Thailand, local owners of hotels and tourism agencies, Dawei and Myeik regional booth, a forest and pearl booth, international stand-

ard regional resorts showroom, local businessmen's booth, a local products booth and local cultural displays.

Classic and modern music entertainment and Myanma traditional dances will be included.—
Myanmar Digital News ■

Zoological Garden (Yadanarbon) to be renovated

THE Zoological Garden (Yadanarbon) in Mandalay will be renovated as a place where visitors can relax and take it easy besides studying the animals according to an administrator of the Zoological Garden (Yadanarbon) U Thein Min Aung.

"A sport arena will be built

that will include a water polo pool that visitors can use when they visit. Natural landscapes such as waterfalls and streams will also be created for the zoological garden. I invite all the people to come to visit and unwind at the Zoological Garden (Yadanarbon) because the zoo

and park will be renovated and there will be new features" he added.

Another reason for revamping the zoological garden is to let visitors learn more about the importance of rare animal preservation and for them to share this information with

others. Visitors can also learn about the importance of breeding techniques of particular species of animals. In addition, elephant dances and snake dances are shown every Sunday and another show featuring monkeys dancing will be arranged.—
Myanmar Digital News ■

New cable car transport project in Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda

A PROPOSAL to undertake a new cable car project at the Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda was submitted to the office of the Mon State government on February 20.

The Kyaikhtiyo Great Green Co., Ltd proposed the project in which cable cars will transport visitors to the Golden

Rock via the new cable transport route from the Kyaikhtiyo branch road to Gaung Say Kan road.

The new route will be 2,396 meters long from the main station to the return station at the Mote Soe Taung.

The company will also ex-

tend the 13-mile long road from the Kyaikhtiyo branch road to the main station as a four-lane road. The project is expected to be completed in 2019, said U Saw Shwe Aung, managing director of the company.

Eighty cable cars will be used in the cable transport

service, and a cable car has a seating capacity of 10 people.

There will be a 400-meter footpath from the return station to the bottom of the pagoda in the project. A car park, free guest houses and toilets will also be built near the main station.—
Myanmar Digital News ■

Yangon circular railway to be upgraded

FROM PAGE-1

"There are two railroad tracks between Insein and Danyingone stations. Starting today, we began to upgrade the inside railroad track. So, the transportation service can be provided using one railway but train schedules are the same as usual," said U Kyaw Kyaw Tun, General Manager of the Myanma Railways.

During the project, the

train that runs from the Yangon station to the University of Computer Studies is temporarily unavailable, but it's being substituted with the YBS's No. 78 bus line that is providing public transportation from the Yangon Station to the Danyingone Station. The Yangon circular rail network, the cheapest way of getting around in Yangon, is running 220 times a day with 25 trains, servicing 90,000 people a

day. The whole loop is 29.5 miles long. The upgrading project includes filling new crushed stone in railroad tracks, substituting railway ties and rails, renovating buildings at the stations, fencing along the railroads, and refurbishing platforms at the stations.

After the project is completed, the travel time on the whole loop will be decreased to 110 minutes from 170 minutes.—
Myanmar Digital News ■

Correction

The caption on the photo on the front page of the Thursday, 22 February edition of the Global New Light of Myanmar contained a typographical error: The correct caption should read: "President U Htin Kyaw, third from left, accepts a gift presented by the president of MRCS Professor Dr. Mya Thu. Photo: MNA



A farmer harvests sugarcanes in a village near Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

Authorities to take action against errant sugar re-exporting companies

COMPANIES that defy prescribed rules while re-exporting refined sugar will face action from the government from 28 February 2018, according to news released by the Commerce Ministry.

The Commerce Ministry has allowed Myanmar merchants to re-export sugar in the 2015-2016 fiscal year with the aim of obtaining hard currency earnings, enhancing trade and creating job opportunities.

However, the authorised companies need to strictly ad-

here to the prescribed rules and regulations. The companies will be inspected to check if they are abiding by the set rules. Some companies are reportedly selling the sugar imported under the re-export system in the domestic market. If the import list does not tally with the volume of re-exports, the companies will face legal action.

Therefore, the trade department has already issued a notice to the companies to check their re-export list against the actual record by

25 January. Myanmar's merchants import sugar mostly from Thailand and India, and also from Brazil, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. It is then re-exported to China through the Sino-Myanmar checkpoint, as Myanmar sugar millers are unable to produce quality sugar that meets the export criteria for lack of advanced refining machinery.

Some 2 million tonnes of sugar are traded annually under the re-export system. —Ko Khant ■

Inflation rate in January 2018 declines to 4.4%

THE annual rate of inflation in January 2018 was 4.4 per cent, registering a small decline compared with the rate in December 2017.

The year-on-year inflation rate was 5.23 per cent in January 2018, as against January 2017.

In January 2018, Rakhine State recorded the highest inflation rate at 8.68 per cent, followed by the Mandalay Region at 6.41 per cent and Kachin State with 6.35 per cent.

Yangon city recorded an inflation rate of 3.71 per cent, while Nay Pyi Taw recorded 3.27 per cent.

Previously, the inflation rate was evaluated based on the 2006 survey. The base year

was then changed to 2012. The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) conducted a household income and expenditure survey in 82 townships in November 2012.

The inflation rate in the first five-year plan from the 2011-2012 fiscal year (FY) to the 2015-2016 FY rose. In a bid to reduce the inflation rate, the authorities concerned are making efforts based on the policies of finance, currency, trade and foreign currency control, in the second five-year national development plan.

The consumer price index (CPI) in January 2018 was much higher than that of January 2017, on account of high prices of liquor, food, house rental charges and repair costs, house

utensils and maintenance costs, as well as health and transport costs. The CPI in January 2017 was registered at 132.41, with the index slipping to 131.96 in March. Thereafter, the CPI rose again and was recorded at 139.34 in January 2018.

The CPI in Mon and Rakhine states in January 2018 showed a small decline compared with the previous month. Apart from these, other regions and states saw an increase in their CPI, according to statistics released by the CSO, operating under the Ministry of Planning and Finance, last Monday.

Low- and moderate-income families are bearing the burden of a high consumer price. —Ko Khant ■

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

တနင်္ဂနွေနေ့စဉ်: **"Sunday Special"** အချက် (၈)
မျက်နှာပေါင်းသော The Global New Light of Myanmar
နေ့စဉ်ထုတ် သတင်းစာကို အောက်ပါမြို့များတွင် ဖတ်ရှုနိုင်ပါပြီ

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Independent journalists visit troubled areas in Maungdaw

Three dead, one hurt in IED explosion in Maungdaw Tsp

"Sunday Special" အချက် (၈) မျက်နှာ ပါဝင်သည်

နေပြည်တော်
မြန်မာ့ရေးရာဌာန၊ ရုံးအမှတ် (၇) နေပြည်တော်၊
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နေပြည်တော်
နေပြည်တော်သတင်းစာတိုက် (တပ်ကုန်း)
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ရန်ကုန်
The Global New Light of
Myanmar သတင်းစာတိုက်၊ အမှတ် ၁၅၀၊
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မန္တလေး
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ကလေး
အောင်ဇေယျာရပ်ကွက်၊ မြို့နယ်အားကစားကွင်းအနီး၊
ကလေးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၇၃၂၂၁၃၃

မြင်ကြီးများ
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ဝင်္ကေ
ရဟန်းတော်လမ်းနှင့် တက္ကသိုလ်ရိပ်သာလမ်း၊
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ဖုန်း - ၀၄၃၂၃၀၆၈

လာရှိုး
ဟူးမွန်ကျေးရွာထိပ်၊ ဟူးမွန်ဆည်ဘယ်ဘက်ခြမ်း၊
(၁၂) ရပ်ကွက်၊ မန်ဆူဘုရားရှေ့၊ အဝေရာလမ်းမ၊
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ခြောက်
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Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko greeting children at the Mary Chapman School in Dagon Township, Yangon. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko makes donations to Mary Chapman School, Islam Home for Aged

UNION Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko arrived at the Mary Chapman School for the Deaf in the Yangon Region, Dagon Township, Thantaman Street, yesterday morning and donated Ks5 million, which was accepted by school principal Daw Nyunt Nyunt Thein.

The Union Minister first explained the reason for the do-

nation, and after the donation was made, the school principal presented a document of honour and expressed his gratitude.

Next, Thura U Aung Ko toured the school and met with the trainees attending a cooking course.

Later, the Union Minister went to the Islam Home for Aged in Thingangyun Township, Pyithaya Road, and donated Ks 5 mil-

lion after explaining the purpose of the donation. The donation was accepted by Islam Home for Aged secretary Haji U Hla Wei, who thanked the Union Minister.

The event was attended by Yangon Region Social Affairs Minister U Naing Ngan Lin, officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and other invited guests. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Discussion on reform work for public servants

UNION Civil Service Board Chairman Dr. Win Thein received 359 Group International Japan Co. Ltd. CEO Mr Banyan Zaw, the Kanematsu Corporation, Yangon, Chief Representative Mr Taro Sakai, General Manager Shinichiro Mitsuhiro and the accompanying delegation at the Nay Pyi Taw Union Civil Service Board guest room yesterday morning.

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to the reform work for public servants conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japanese companies, and the database core system, as well as the digital staff IDs with grant aid and yen credit, to be established by JICA.—Myanmar News Agency ■



UEC Chairman Dr Win Thein meets 359 Group International Japan Co. Ltd. CEO and Kanematsu Corporation personnel. **PHOTO: MNA**

Forest Department, ICIMOD conduct international workshop

The Forest Department and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) held the opening ceremony of an international workshop at the forest research department's assembly hall on the morning of 21 February. The workshop was held to discuss the national-level climate change reduction work programme

among partner countries in the Himalayan Mountain region, and the Reducing Emissions-from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) sector, supporting the sustainable development goals.

In his address, Forest Department Director General Dr. Nyi Nyi Kyaw said the experience of the national-level climate

change reduction work programme among partner countries in the Himalayan Mountain region and REDD+ sector supporting sustainable development goals, as well as the experience of REDD+ in partner countries and organisations will be shared, and the project outcomes and research findings will be submitted, discussed and suggestions

provided during the workshop.

The Forest Department and the ICIMOD have been jointly implementing the project to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in the Himalayan Mountain range region since 2016.

The project works include Gap Analysis of REDD+ in Myanmar, conducting capacity

building courses from REDD+ work processes, conducting forest management courses, talks, demonstration planting, establishing sapling farms and conducting courses to support the socio-economy for the locals in Taunggyi District, Pindaya Township, Pwe Hla, Sha Pya and Nan Kon villages.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Suspects with gun found near Maungtaw coast

SECURITY forces of Gawdutharra Coast in Maungtaw, Rakhine State, caught five men who were in possession of a gun, 1 bullet, Ks1,280,000 and 1,050 Bangladeshi takas in cash. Two of the men are Bangladeshi citizens, while the other three, Husaung Ahmet, Ali Hussein and Saw Yusalan, are suspected of having crossed into Bangladesh.

An initial inspection has revealed that the money and gun belonged to Saw Yusalan. Further investigations will be conducted to see if they have connections with the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army terrorist group.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Five terrorist suspects are detained by police. **PHOTO: MNA**



Home made gun and other things seized from five suspects. **PHOTO: MNA**

JPN gov't five INGOs sign Exchange of Notes on Grant Aid to Rakhine State

TO assist in humanitarian aid program and in works of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance and Resettlement in Rakhine-UEHRD, Japanese government and UN agencies signed Exchange of Notes on Grant Aid to Rakhine yesterday.

The signing ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw was attended by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye and representatives from the UN agencies.

The Union Minister expressed thanks to the Japanese government for the aid.

Japanese Mr. Tateshi HIGUCHI, representatives of five international organizations signed the Exchange of Notes for grant assistance projects in Nay Pyi Taw on 22 February for implementing projects with total grant assistance of 2.2 billion Yen in order to improve humanitarian and development situation in Rakhine State.

UN-Women is expected to sign the Exchange Note separately in the near future.

The Project for Responding to the Humanitarian Situation in Rakhine State would get grant

assistance of 1.1 billion Yen.

The project aims to improve regional stability and the humanitarian situation, and contribute to better living conditions for people affected by the incident, school enrollment rate, child protection and psychological care for women and girls etc.

Immediately after the terrorist attacks that occurred at the end of August last year in Myanmar's Rakhine State, emergency assistance has been implemented by the International Red Cross Committee (ICRC) etc.

Providing humanitarian aid for food, health and sanitation, living environment and promoting cohesion among communities would be vital once the repatriation of IDPs and those who have fled to Bangladesh commence officially.

Through World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), this project will provide humanitarian assistance to affected people and communities such as food distribution,



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye and participants pose for the documentary photo. PHOTO: MNA

child protection, protection of displaced persons, shelter maintenance, child education and health care.

Meanwhile, the project for Inclusive Development and Empowerment of Women in Rakhine

State would be provided with total grant: 1.1 billion Yen.

This project, to be implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and

the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) will support people who were affected by inter-communal clashes since 2012 and the situation after the 2017 attack on the security forces.—GNLM ■



UEC Chairman U Hla Thein holds talks with Knut Ostby, UN resident coordinator from UNDP in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

UEC Chair U Hla Thein receives UNDP delegation

U HLA THEIN, chairman of the Union Election Commission (UEC), received a delegation led by Knut Ostby, UN resident coordinator from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), at the UEC office in Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning.

During the meeting, the UEC chairman referred to the success of the 2017 by-election,

preparations for holding the 2018 by-election and the support of the UNDP during elections since 2015.

"Assistance is being provided for the process of democratisation in Myanmar. As for the UNDP, it will continue to support the upcoming elections, as well," said Knut Ostby.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses ...

FROM PAGE-2

Furthermore, U Maung Maung Win said the development of the Greater Mekong Sub Region roads with \$360 million is important for the Myanmar transport sector. The east-west corridor will link Viet Nam, Laos and Thailand via the Thilawa Special Economic Zone in Yangon to Patheingyi in the Ayeyawady delta region. The north-south corridor road in Myanmar will connect the People's Republic of China and India via the Yangon-Mandalay road.

The project is related to the east-west corridor road and north-south corridor road, and the permission of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is requested to approve the loan of \$360 million to upgrade the Yangon-Patheingyi road, Bago-Thantlabin road and Yangon-Mandalay express road, said the Deputy Minister.

Similarly, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is requested to ap-

prove the loan of \$80 million with which the socio-economic and the infrastructure sector development of Mawlamyine, Hpa-an and Myawady can be conducted, explained U Maung Maung Win.

An announcement was then made for the Hluttaw representatives who wanted to discuss the loans to enrol their names.

Later, the policy, basic principle and project works in the National Planning Bill and the Union Budget Bill for the six-month period from April to September 2018 were discussed by Daw Cho Cho of Ottwin constituency, Dr. Khun Win Thaung of Kachin State constituency (11), Naw Chris Tun @ Dr. Arr Kar Moe of Kayin State constituency (7), U Khin Cho of Hlaingbwe constituency, Daw Yin Min Hlaing of Gangaw constituency, U Kyaw Ni Naing of Shan State constituency (11), U Myo Win of Mon State constituency (8), Dr. Hla Moe of Aungmyethazan con-

stituency, U Whey Tin of Chin constituency (11), U Tun Wei of Phaungpyin constituency, U Wai Sein Aung of Rakhine State constituency (1), Dr. Tin Tin Win of the Bago region constituency (5), U Naing Htoo Aung of Natogyi constituency, U Tun Tun of Pwintbyu constituency, U Soe Aung Naing of Kyonpyaw constituency, Daw Shwe Shwe Sein Latt of the Bago Region constituency (3), U Bo Gyi of Chauk constituency, U Khin Maung Thi of Loilem constituency, Daw Khin San Hlaing of Pale constituency, U Yi Mon @ Maung Tin Thit of Pobbathiri constituency, Daw Cho Cho Win of Mawlaik constituency, U Tin Tun Naing of Seikkyi Khanaungto constituency, U Maung Maung Oo of Insein constituency, U Kyaw Myo Min of Moenyio constituency, U Kyaw Kyaw of Rakhine State constituency (4) and U Pyu Lwin of the Magway region constituency (12).—Myo Myint, Aye Aye Thant (Myanmar News Agency) ■

Developing MSMEs can create job opportunities

MYANMAR'S economic sector is said to be made up of 1 per cent large companies and the remaining per cent small and medium enterprises spread across the country. Despite the widespread production from local SMEs, the majority of people in the country purchase imported commodities from foreign SMEs.

The main reason for this is that most, if not all, international businesses have a quality assurance mechanism that ensures all of their exports are of high quality and fit for distribution around the world. In a way, their production system transforms raw materials into high-valued end products that appeal to the customer. Because of this, the demand for locally produced commodities is low and the economy cannot create enough jobs for its people.

Even though Myanmar is a country rich in all kinds of natural resources, it does not have the means to transform these into high-end products and so simply imports it in its raw state. This lowers GDP of the economy and slows its development.

In recent years, there has been much effort to empower SMEs and just a week ago, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Committee (SMEDC) held its second meeting in Nay Pyi Taw. During the meeting, Vice President U Myint Swe, who is also the chairman of SMEDC, announced that regional competitions for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) will be held in nine regions and states across Myanmar. This will give a chance for the MSMEs to exhibit their products and attract potential customers or investors.

"Following the exhibitions in nine regions and states, Nay Pyi Taw will host the national level exhibition," said Vice President U Myint Swe at the meeting. The first MSMEs regional competition will be held in Mandalay Region from 23 to 25 February.

The Vice President said an announcement was sent on 19 January to the Nay Pyi Taw Council, the various regions and states, and self-administered Division and zones to send feedback on forming their own local SME Development Agency. These local agencies are urged to be formed with 7 to 11 members. As each region and state slowly develops a system to review the quality of their local products, they can collaborate with experts and local or foreign organizations to improve their quality or acquire the necessary technology to produce high-end products that can penetrate into the international market.

In this endeavour, the State will give continuous support to its MSMEs to develop and strengthen the economy.

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In this endeavour, the State will give continuous support to its MSMEs to develop and strengthen the economy.

An Initiative Approach of Ministry of Health and Sports for Promoting Health Literacy in Naga Land of Myanmar

(Dr.Than Lwin Tun, Dr.Kyaw Thu Swe, Dr.Phyu Phyu Aye)
(Ministry of Health and Sports, Myanmar)

NAGALAND is a self-administered zone (SAZ) consisting of 3 townships within Sagaing Region, in the northwestern part of Myanmar. As stipulated by the 2008 Constitution, the Naga SAZ comprises the townships of Leshi, Nanyun and Lahe, its administrative seat. The Naga people represent one of the most distinct ethnic groups in Myanmar, not only because of their well-known traditional warrior costume but also because they have been guaranteed a Self-Administered Zone. However, they are yet one of the most vulnerable populations and Nagaland is the least developed part of the country, in great need of basic health care, education and infrastructures. There are no proper roads



Naga ethnic people perform the traditional dance as they celebrate their traditional new year. PHOTO: MNA

for motor vehicles and therefore, it takes about two or three days to reach outlying villages. Food and supplies for the local people are delivered by motorcycles, especially in rainy season. Deprivation of proper infrastructures, and difficulties in communication and transportation are the root causes of several complicating consequences in Nagaland, including malnutrition, disease outbreaks and low levels of health knowledge and literacy. While a self-administered zone, the provision of healthcare remains the responsibility of the Union Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS). The assignment of ministry's staff in the isolated area has been a challenge for long a time.

The Nagaland got attention in 2016 after reports about a mysterious infectious disease outbreak had been mentioned in news media. The disease, which was not yet identified at that time, started affecting people living in HtanKhawLanma village of Lahe Township in June of 2016. The

disease spread quickly to other villages, including those in Nanyun Township and a number of children had been reported dead. The health authorities in both regional and union levels were notified about the outbreak and reported symptoms of the disease were fever, coughing, rashes, red and sore eyes. After hearing the news, the health officials from MOHS traveled to the area and confirmed that the so-called mystery disease was actually a measles outbreak. Measles is a highly infectious disease caused by the measles virus and spreads easily through the coughs and sneezes of those infected. It may also be spread through contact with nasal secretions. But, it can be prevented effectively by measles vaccination. In response to the outbreak, the MOHS as well as the directorate of medical services of the Ministry of Defense sent medical teams to the areas where the outbreak occurred, and set up a vaccination program. On the special request from the Ministry of Health and Sports, Basic Health Staff actively participated in a 6-month temporary assignment under the management of Sagaing Region Health Department and leadership of MOHS and Sagaing Region Government. U Thant Zin Oo, a Health Assistant, received an award from the State Counselor in 2016 for his



Naga ethnic model and movie star, Marie Cole.

outstanding performance in the health campaigns in Nagaland.

Naga community is comprised of several tribes and clans, and Naga People speak 89 different languages and dialects. However, there are many similarities between the different languages spoken. Language barriers also pose significant challenges when providing effective health education messages and quality healthcare. The modern-day society is celebrity-obsessed. The celebrities influence the people to embrace an array of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that affect health of the people in general, because celebrities are highly influential people whose actions are watched and often imitated by their audiences. In order to disseminate the health information messages correctly and effectively in Nagaland, the Chief Minister of Sagaing Region Government appointed a Naga ethnic model and movie star, Marie Cole, as the Health Literacy Promotion Ambassador for Nagaland-2018.

This innovative approach in health promotion sector is particularly important for the people of Nagaland and recorded as the first appointment of a Health Literacy Promotion Ambassador to the remote communities of the country.

The Union Health and Sports Minister has also guided the health care professionals to improve their efforts to increase public understanding of health issues as well as to promote health literacy as a priority.

It is anticipated that the health advocacy with a local celebrity from the Naga community will lead to increased awareness of healthcare and the adoption of positive hygiene habits in Naga SAZ.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Notification 25/2018

8th Waxing of Tabaung, 1379 ME

22 February, 2018

Permission to register as a political party

People Life for Development Party headquartered at No. 23, first floor, at the corner of U Aung Myat Street and 123rd Street, Golden View Tower in Mingalar Taungnyunt Township, Yangon Region, has been permitted to register as a political party in accordance with Section 9 of the Political Parties Registration Law on 22 February 2018.

The registration slot of People Life for Development Party is 107.

(Hla Thein)

Chairman

Union Election Commission

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Notification 26/2018

8th Waxing of Tabaung, 1379 ME

22 February, 2018

Permission to register as a political party

The Karen National Democratic Party headquartered at U Aung Myat Road, Ward No.7 in Hpa-an, Kayin State, has been permitted to register as a political party in accordance with Section 9 of the Political Parties Registration Law on 22 February 2018.

The registration number Karen National Democratic Party is 108.

Sd/-

(Hla Thein)

Chairman

Union Election Commission

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Notification 27/2018

8th Waxing of Tabaung, 1379 ME

22 February, 2018

Termination of registration and dissolution of political party

1. The Union Election Commission had permitted the Kayin State Democracy and Development Party to set up as a political party with registration no. 41 of the Notification (92/2010) on 19-8-2010, the Karen Democratic Party with registration no. 51 of the Notification (9/2012) on 1-2-2012 and the Karen United Democratic Party with registration no. 88 with Notification (18/2015) on 17-6-2015.
2. Kayin State Democracy and Development Party, Karen Democratic Party and United Karen National Democratic Party applied to the Union Election Commission to combine them and to be registered as one political party under the name of "Karen National Democratic Party and the UEC has permitted the Karen National Democratic Party as a political party with registration No. 108 and with Notification 26/2018 on 22 February 2018. Hence, according to the Political Parties Registration Rule 25 of the Union Election Commission and Directive No. 1/2013, Kayin State Democracy and Development Party, Karen Democratic Party and United Karen National Democratic Party, which were registered as political parties, shall be abolished. Properties owned by each abolished party shall be handed over to the Karen National Democratic Party.
3. It is hereby announced that the registration for the following parties have been terminated and the parties dissolved as of 22 February: Kayin State Democracy and Development Party, Karen Democratic Party and Karen United Democratic Party.

Sd/-

(Hla Thein)

Chairman

Union Election Commission

'America's pastor' Billy Graham, counsel to presidents, dies at 99

WASHINGTON — Reverend Billy Graham, the influential Southern preacher who became a spiritual advisor to several US presidents and millions of Americans via their television sets, died Wednesday. He was 99.

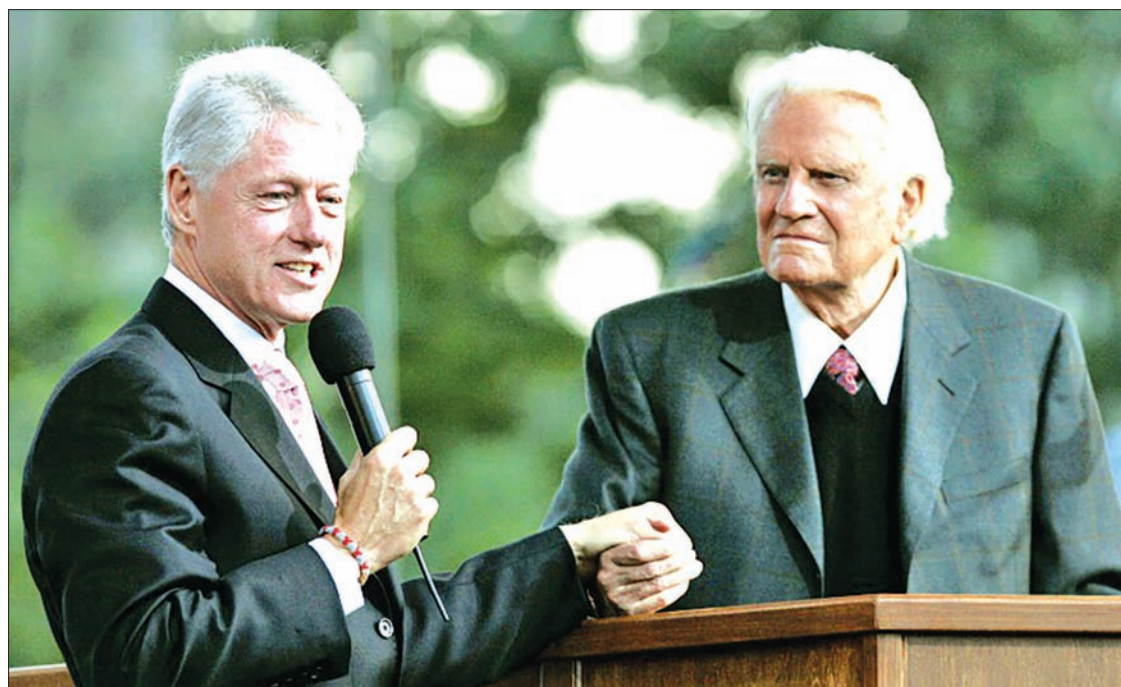
The one-time backwoods minister who eventually became the world's foremost Christian evangelist, spread a message of spiritual redemption at tent and stadium revival meetings, in a career that spanned decades.

Graham, who died at his home in Montreat, North Carolina, "changed our country and the world," President Donald Trump said in a statement. "He was one of the towering figures of the last 100 years — an American hero whose life and leadership truly earned him the title 'God's Ambassador.'"

Trump's predecessor Barack Obama described Graham as "a humble servant who prayed for so many — and who, with wisdom and grace, gave hope and guidance to generations of Americans."

"Billy Graham was America's pastor," said former president George H. W. Bush.

The Southern Baptist



Evangelist Billy Graham, seen here with Bill Clinton in June 2005, served as advisor to a dozen US presidents. **PHOTO: AFP**

preacher was close to the Bush family, and former president George W. Bush said a private meeting with Graham in 1985 helped him quit drinking.

More recently he was portrayed in the Netflix drama series "The Crown" as giving counsel to the young Queen Elizabeth II as she confronted the burdens of rule. Graham was a pioneer of "televangelism" to convert souls

to Christianity as television got off the ground in the 1950s.

Born on 7 November, 1918, he was raised as one of four children on a dairy farm in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Graham had a spiritual awakening in 1934 and enrolled in the Florida Bible Institute, now Trinity College of Florida. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1939. In 1950, he founded the

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) in Minneapolis, Minnesota and launched a weekly "Hour of Decision" radio program.

Advisor to US presidents

His ministry led him to preach the gospel around the country — and the world.

Over the course of his career, he was consulted by presidents

Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy. For a time he was Richard Nixon's chaplain and golf partner. George H.W. Bush invited him to pray at the White House in 1991 for guidance through the first long day of the Gulf War.

But of all the US leaders — almost all of whom have described themselves as practicing Christians — Graham found only Jimmy Carter to match him in dedication to his faith.

"Carter alone among the presidents... taught the Bible throughout his life, wrote books of religious meditations, and needed no help with Scripture or its challenges," wrote authors Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy in a Graham biography, "The Preacher and the Presidents" published in August 2007.

Carter described Graham in a personal tribute as "broad-minded, forgiving, and humble in his treatment of others, he exemplified the life of Jesus Christ by constantly reaching out for opportunities to serve." Graham also has been credited with helping hasten the end of segregation in his native south by refusing to preach to segregated audiences after 1953.—AFP ■

More than 76,400 Afghan refugees return to homeland so far this year

KABUL — Over 76,400 Afghan refugees have returned or been deported from neighboring Pakistan and Iran since the beginning this year, the UN Migration Agency (IOM) reported Wednesday.

"The total number of undocumented Afghan returnees since 1 January 2018 from Pakistan is now 3,032. In the same time pe-

riod, 73,390 individuals returned or were deported from Iran," said IOM in a statement. According to the agency's official figures, within the past one week, from 11 February to 17 February, some 299 undocumented Afghans returned from Pakistan, and 11,236 returned from Iran.

The IOM has provided

post-arrival assistance to 90 per cent of returnees from Pakistan and 4 per cent from Iran within the period. The organization has also provided assistance to returnees in categories which included "78 Special Cases, 49 Medical Cases and two Single Females" over the past week. — Xinhua ■

Six killed in attack on South Africa police station

PORT ELIZABETH — An armed gang stormed into a rural police station in South Africa on Wednesday and stole firearms in an attack that left five officers and a soldier dead, police said.

The robbers entered the police station in the southern village of Engcobo shortly after midnight, opening fire on the officers and seizing two others, who were later shot and killed, police spokesman Vish Naidoo said.

"During the early hours of this morning six people were killed when robbers attacked Engcobo police station," Naidoo told AFP.

"Five of the six were on-duty police officers. Three police

officers were killed at the police station when robbers attacked the station and randomly opened fire on the members." Naidoo said the robbers made off with firearms and bundled two other officers into a police car. The bodies of the two were later found dumped on the side of a road.

The attackers also shot and killed a soldier as they fled.

Attacks on police are common in South Africa, which has one of the highest crime rates in the world.

At least 57 police officers were killed in the line of duty in the 12 months between April 2016 and March 2017, according to the latest crime statistics available.—AFP ■

Russia delivers humanitarian aid to Syria's Latakia

LATAKIA — The Russian Center for Reconciliation of the opposing sides in Syria has delivered around 10,000 boxes of medicine to a hospital in the Syrian city of Latakia, the Center's medical officer Anton Yershov told reporters.

"The shipment includes broad-spectrum antibiotics, anti-fever drugs for children and drugs for the symptomatic treatment of various diseases," he said. More than 50 kinds of medicine have been delivered to the hospital, while around

20,000 syringes will be distributed among dozens of the city's other medical facilities.

"There is enough pill-form antibacterial drugs for seven to ten clinics to use for about two months," Yershov pointed out.—Tass ■

Scientists recreate virtual copy of Mexican underwater cave

MEXICO — Scientists from all over the world will soon be able to dive into a virtual 3-D replica of a vast underwater cave off Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, where the oldest skeleton in the Americas was found seven years ago.

Anthropologists, cave experts, archeologists and photographers are working to fashion a virtual copy of the cave known in Spanish as Hoyo Negro, or black hole, where the skeleton of Naia, a young girl, who lived more than 13,000 years ago was found in 2011.

The first results of their work were presented Wednesday night by archeologist Alberto Nava, who discovered the cave in 2007.

That cavern is part of something much bigger, believed to be the world's largest underwater cave network. Its

existence was made public last month. "Some day I will have a complete replica," said Nava of the bell-shaped Hoyo Negro cave off the coast of Quintana Roo state.

The exact location is being kept secret by the National Institute of Anthropology and History in order to protect it from being raided.

Scientists around the world are drooling over the fossils found in the cave: the remains of 42 animals from the late Pleistocene period, including saber tooth tigers. Scientists say that 13,000 years ago the sea level there was 80 to 100 meters lower than today.

Naia's remains, almost a complete skeleton, were from a female who apparently entered the cave even though she probably knew it was risky, experts said.—AFP ■



Archaeologist Alberto Nava is creating a virtual replica a vast underwater cave found off the coast of Mexico. **PHOTO: AFP**



Sewage water runs next to the Nuseirat power plant in the Gaza Strip on 10 June 2017. **PHOTO: AFP**

Gaza to pump sewage straight into sea as crisis worsens

GAZA — Municipalities in Gaza announced Wednesday they will pump sewage straight into the sea from the Palestinian coastal enclave due to fuel shortages and the desperate humanitarian situation in the strip.

"The beaches of the Gaza Strip will be completely closed and sewage will be pumped into the sea because the municipalities are unable to provide fuel" for treatment plants, said Nizar Hejazi, head of the Gaza City municipality.

Hejazi also noted "the policy

of collective punishment (which) continues to be imposed on the population," in a statement representing municipalities across the strip.

"We announce a state of emergency in the cities and municipalities of the Gaza Strip," Hejazi said, noting services would be cut by as much as 50 per cent.

The only power plant in Gaza stopped operating last week due to lack of fuel, leaving the strip totally reliant on imports.

Israel has imposed a crippling blockade on Gaza for more

than a decade, while Egypt has also largely sealed its border in recent years, with both citing security measures.

Residents currently receive only a couple of hours power per day.

The Rafah crossing with Egypt was opened for four days from Wednesday for humanitarian cases, only the second such opening this year.

Last month the United Nations envoy warned the enclave was on the verge of "full collapse".—AFP ■

Precision cancer therapy works in 3/4 of patients

MIAMI — A precision cancer treatment that targets rare genetic mutations that exist in about 5,000 people in the United States instead of the tumor's location in the body has shown success in three-quarters of patients, researchers said Wednesday.

The medicine, called larotrectinib, is made by Loxo Oncology of Stamford, Connecticut and was granted breakthrough therapy designation by the US Food and Drug Administration in 2016. Taken orally once or twice a day, it interferes with an on-switch for cancer growth caused by an acquired genetic defect, known as tropomyosin receptor kinase (TRK) fusions.

"This is truly a magic bullet for our patients with TRK-positive cancer," said co-author Leo Mascarenhas, deputy director of

the Children's Center for Cancer and Blood Diseases at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

Infants, children, adolescents and adults with a range of cancers -- including salivary gland, infantile fibrosarcoma, thyroid, colon, lung, gastrointestinal, melanoma and other cancers -- were included in the study published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The 55 patients ranged in age from four months to 76 years, and entered the trial from 2015 to 2017. They suffered from either locally advanced cancers or tumors that had spread to other parts of the body.

Three quarters of patients enrolled responded to the therapy, typically within two months of starting the regimen.

"A total of 13 percent of the patients (seven patients) had a



An acquired genetic defect, known as tropomyosin receptor kinase (TRK) fusions are found in a range of cancer types but tend to be unusual in common cancers, occurring in between 0.2 per cent and three percent of cases. **PHOTO: AFP**

complete response, 62 percent (34) had a partial response," said the report.

Another 13 percent (seven) had stable disease. Nine percent (five) had progressive disease, and four percent (2) could not be evaluated because their

conditions deteriorated or they withdrew from the study.

"No patients discontinued treatment due to drug-related side effects," said the report.

An initial analysis of the trial -- carried out at more than two dozen sites around the world

-- was released at a major US cancer conference in June 2017.

If larotrectinib gains approval for wider use, it could treat thousands of patients with these forms of cancer around the world.

Researchers don't know exactly how many people could be helped by the treatment globally, since current screening practices often do not test for this particular genetic flaw.

"Screening strategies that include assays with the ability to detect TRK fusions will be needed in order to identify patients who may benefit from larotrectinib," said the report.

TRK fusions are found in a range of cancer types but tend to be unusual in common cancers, occurring in between 0.2 per cent and three percent of cases.—AFP ■

Trump suggests arming teachers at emotional meeting with shooting survivors

WASHINGTON—US President Donald Trump suggested arming teachers to deter mass shootings as he faced broken voices, tears and demands for action at a meeting with survivors of the gun rampage that killed 17 people at a Florida high school.

Trump also promised “very strong” background checks on gun owners during the poignant “listening session” on Wednesday, in which he heard first-hand accounts from bereaved parents and friends, and schoolchildren who narrowly escaped with their own lives.

As he sat with these people, Trump was photographed holding a piece of paper with notes suggesting questions or other things to say to them.

As seen on the pho-

tographs, these included “What would you most want me to know about your experience?” and “I hear you.” Social media lit up with criticism of Trump’s apparent need for help in sounding compassionate to people who are suffering.

Trump’s proposal to arm educators received a cool response, too, from a teacher who survived the shooting as well as the local sheriff at a town hall meeting in Florida.

“A gun-free zone, to a maniac -- because they are all cowards -- a gun-free zone is ‘Let’s go in and let’s attack,’ Trump said.

“If you had a teacher who was adept at firearms, they could very well end the attack very quickly,” Trump said, suggest-

ing that 20 percent of a school’s teachers could be trained to carry concealed weapons.

“This would only be obviously for people who are very adept at handling a gun,” Trump added.

The televised White House meeting came as students staged street protests across the country to demand stricter gun laws following the murder of 14 teens and three teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

Holding signs reading “Never Again” and “Be The Adults, Do Something,” teenaged survivors of last Wednesday’s shooting rallied outside the Florida state Capitol in Tallahassee. “No longer can I walk the



President Donald Trump takes part in a “listening session” on gun violence with parents, students and teachers at the White House. **PHOTO: AFP**

halls I walked millions of times before without fear and sadness,” Stoneman Douglas student Florence Yared told a crowd that included thousands of supporters.

- ‘My daughter has no voice’ -

The White House meeting was attended by Stoneman Douglas students, their parents

and also the parents of victims of the Columbine, Sandy Hook and other shootings.

Andrew Pollack, whose 18-year-old daughter Meadow was among the Stoneman Douglas victims, told Trump he was there “because my daughter has no voice. She was murdered last week.”—AFP ■

At least 15 dead in airstrike in northern Yemen: report

NEW YORK— At least 15 people were killed in an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition aircraft in northern Yemen, Reuters news agency reported, quoting residents.

The aircraft hit two cars transporting passengers and a truck on a main road south of the Saada provincial capital, Reuters said, adding that 15 people died in the strike while several others were wounded. — Kyodo News ■

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Fresh rocket fire on Syria enclave kills 13

GHOUTA — Rockets fired by Syrian regime forces killed at least 13 civilians in the besieged rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta near Damascus on Thursday, a monitor said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 13 people were killed in Douma, the main town

in Eastern Ghouta, three of them children.

“It was raining on the area so there are no warplanes but it seems the regime chose to use rockets instead,” Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Britain-based war monitor, said.

“The rocket fire hasn’t

stopped this morning. Around 200 ground-to-ground rockets struck Douma alone,” he said, adding that the number of wounded across the enclave on Thursday topped 120.

The latest deaths brought to at least 335 the number of civilians killed since Sunday, when

the regime intensified its bombardment of Eastern Ghouta.

According to state media and the Observatory, at least 15 people have been killed by mortar rounds and rockets fired in the other direction, by Islamist and jihadist groups, over the same period. —AFP ■



Smoke billows over the Syrian rebel-held town of Hamouria after an air strike on 21 February 2018. PHOTO: AFP



Police sealed off the area around the US embassy compound. PHOTO: AFP

Explosive device thrown into US embassy compound in Montenegro

PODGORICA — A suicide attacker blew himself up after throwing an explosive device into the US embassy compound in Podgorica, the Montenegrin government said Thursday.

Authorities in Podgorica have not released any theories as to the motive for the attack in the country which recently joined NATO despite opposition from some of the population and from where a number of jihadists have travelled to Iraq and Syria.

“In front of the @USEmbassy MNE building in #Podgorica, #Montenegro an unknown person committed suicide with an explosive device.

Immediately before, that person threw an explosive device,” the government tweeted, saying the device was “most probably” a hand grenade.

It said the attack-

er threw the explosive device “into the US embassy compound” from an intersection near a sports centre.

An AFP correspondent was unable to reach the site as police sealed off the area.

A US State Department spokesperson confirmed “a small explosion near the US Embassy compound” saying officials were “working closely with police to identify the assailant(s)”. On its Twitter account, the embassy said it had cancelled all visa services for Thursday, adding that access for US citizens “will be available today on an emergency basis”.

A guard at the sports centre who asked not to be named said he “heard two explosions, one after another”. “Police came very quickly and the body of a man was taken away,” he told AFP.—AFP ■

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Aamir to shoot 'Thugs of Hindostan' climax in Rajasthan

MUMBAI — Aamir Khan's big release this year - "Thugs of Hindostan" - is nearing completion as the superstar says the last leg of shooting remains, which will be wrapped up in Rajasthan by the end of next month. Produced by Yash Raj Films, the Vijay Krishna Acharya film brings together Aamir and megastar Amitabh Bachchan for the first time on screen.

"I am going abroad for a few days. Once I am back, we will resume shooting the climax in Rajasthan. The film will be completed by March end," Aamir told reporters when asked about the status of the film. Last year, pictures of Aamir and Bachchan's looks had leaked from the film set.

Aamir had then said, "Ideally, the pictures should not have been leaked" and he maintains

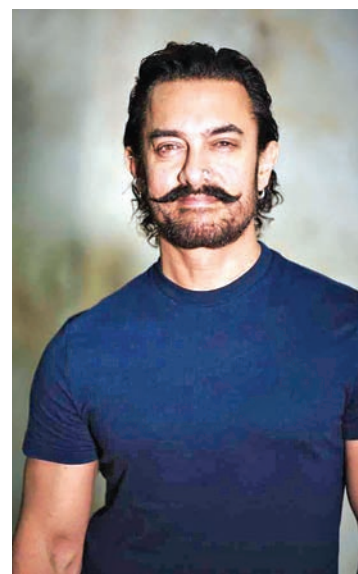
that the first look will only be put out with an official poster.

"My look is still (being) kept under wraps. Of course, I am wearing the earrings and the nose ring, but my hair is quite long in the film and that will be out with the poster," he said.

"Thugs..." also star's Katrina Kaif and Fatima Sana Shaikh.

The actor was speaking at the success bash of his last pro-

duction "Secret Superstar" here last night. Commenting on the massive success of the film not only in India, but also in China, Aamir said, "Some of my films have released in China and I've realised their emotional frequency is very similar to ours. Indian stories touch their hearts. Because our cultures are similar, I feel when we watch their films too we will like them." — PTI ■



File Photo of Amir Khan.
PHOTO: PTI

Stormzy storms Brits as grime makes mark at pop showpiece

LONDON — Grime star Stormzy was the big winner at the Brit Awards in London on Wednesday, which included an emotional tribute from Oasis star Liam Gallagher to the victims of the Manchester terror attack.

The south London rapper, who closed out the show with a water-soaked performance, beat off competition from folk-pop phenomenon Ed Sheeran to win the best male solo award and best album for "Gang Signs & Prayer".

"My mum and all my family are here, we done it!" he said on picking up his second award.

But the singer had harsh words for Prime Minister Theresa May's handling of last year's Grenfell Tower fire in London, in which 71 people died.

During a freestyle rap, he sang: "Yo, Theresa May, where's that money for Grenfell? What, you thought we just forgot about Grenfell?"

Stormzy had previously slammed the awards as being "so white", leading to sweeping changes in the ceremony's voting committee.

Rising British star Dua Lipa also claimed two awards for best female solo artist and best breakthrough artist, as Sheeran had an unexpectedly disappointing night.

US singer Ariana Grande was set to perform in honour of the 22 victims who died in a May terror attack at her Manchester show, but was forced to pull out due to illness.

Manchester rock icon Gal-



British singer-songwriter Dua Lipa (C) picked up two awards for best female solo artist and best breakthrough artist. **PHOTO: AFP**

agher instead stepped in, performing a stirring rendition of Oasis classic "Live Forever", with the cavernous O2 Arena lit up by thousands of mobile phone torches.

Kendrick Lamar was named best international male artist, receiving his award from football star Harry Kane, while Foo Fighters won the best international group category.

The US rapper later performed live, standing on top of a huge box containing a sports car, which was smashed to pieces as the song went on.

- White roses in solidarity -

The Brits have often been a magnet for controversy -- Pulp singer Jarvis Cocker invaded a

performance by Michael Jackson in 1996 and then-deputy prime minister John Prescott was doused by a bucket of ice water in 1998.

There were few drunken antics this year, although Gorillaz frontman Damon Albarn was cut off short when it appeared he was about to wax political during his acceptance speech for best British group.

"This country is a lovely place, it's part of a beautiful world, but don't let it become isolated," he said.

But the entire ceremony had a political edge, with many stars wearing badges of small white roses to highlight sexual harassment in the industry and

show solidarity with its victims.

"I think it's brilliant that it's come to the fore now," said Paloma Faith, who arrived holding real white roses. "But I just think I've not met a single woman in my entire life that hasn't experienced some kind of sexism or sexual harassment of any kind."

Singer-guitarist Sheeran, 27, was awarded the "global success" award, given to him by Rolling Stones guitarist Ronnie Wood who praised his talent and his ability to keep "his feet on the ground". His latest album "Divide" has smashed many records, including on streaming App Spotify, where it received 57 million listens on the day of its release. — AFP ■

Amitabh Bachchan starts following Cong leaders on Twitter, triggers speculation

NEW DELHI — Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan has started following some senior Congress leaders on Twitter of late, triggering speculation over his sudden interest in the party that he was once close to and had later drifted away from.

After following Congress president Rahul Gandhi and the party's official Twitter handle, he began following senior party like leaders P Chidambaram, Kapil Sibal, Ahmed Patel, Ashok Gehlot, Ajay Maken, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Sachin Pilot and CP Joshi from this month. He recently also started following party leaders Manish Tewari, Shakeel Ahmed, Sanjay Nirupam, Randeep Surjewala Priyanka Chaturvedi and Sanjay Jha on the micro-blogging site. Bachchan, who was once close to the Nehru-Gandhi family and was a friend of Rajiv Gandhi, is currently the brand ambassador of Gujarat. He has over 33.1 million followers on Twitter and follows only 1,689 people. His sudden love for the Congress and some other opposition leaders has taken the party by surprise.

Some other opposition leaders whom the actor has started following recently, include RJD chief Lalu Prasad, his daughter Misa Bharti, JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar, CPI-M's Sitaram Yechury. He also follows the RJD's official Twitter handle, NC's Omar Abdullah and NCP's Supriya Sule. — PTI ■

Vishal Bhardwaj postpones shoot of Deepika-Irrfan film

MUMBAI — Filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj has postponed the shooting of his film, starring Deepika Padukone and Irrfan Khan, citing health concerns of the two actors. While Irrfan has been diagnosed with a severe case of jaundice, Deepika's back injury, which the actor suffered while filming "Padmaavat" has resurfaced, the director said in a Facebook post. The shooting for the film was expected to start from next month in Nepal. "I am pushing back the film by a few months as both of my lead actors are down with different health problems. Irrfan is down with jaundice and it will take him a few weeks to recover and Deepika Padukone's back problem which had previously developed during the shooting of Padmaavat has now resurfaced.

"Her role in the film is very physically demanding and the doctor has advised her not to do any strenuous work for a couple of months... I want both of them to be strong and fit before we start the film," Bhardwaj wrote. The director also clarified that the film is not based on underworld don Sapna Didi's life.

He, however, asserted that her story was initially a reference point to the subject. Pro-

duced by Prerna Arora's Kri-Arj Entertainment, the movie is an adaptation of S Hussain Zaidi's book "Mafia Queens of Mumbai". Earlier, the movie was said to be based on the life and times of Ashraf Khan, popularly known as Sapna Didi, who was a feared name in the underworld. "I would also like to clear that the film is still untitled and is not based on Rahima Khan/Sapna Didi's life. Yes, it's a take-off from the story Femme Fatale from Hussain Zaidi's book 'Mafia Queens of Mumbai' but as we worked on this idea, the story and screenplay have taken on a new identity and shape which is nowhere close to the above-mentioned names. Hence, it's definitely not a biopic," Bhardwaj wrote. He added the look tests of the main leads have come out "exceptionally well". "In the past few weeks, I felt like I was back in the days 'Maqbool' while prepping with them. Deepika and Irrfan's look tests have come out exceptionally well." While this is Deepika's first film with Bhardwaj, Irrfan would reunite with the director for the fourth time, after "Maqbool", "7 Khoon Maaf" and "Haider". Deepika has previously worked with the actor in "Piku".—PTI ■



Visitors look at a painting at the National Museum. PHOTO: ZAW GYI

National Museum revives art exhibitions

By Zaw Gyi

THE National Museum of Yangon, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, the Department of Archaeology, and the National Museum and Library have organised the Museum Activity Art Exhibition, open to the public from 20 to 28 February at the National Museum.

The exhibit features 73 pieces of art by 73 famous traditional and modern artists ranging from oil paintings to watercolours.

The paintings depict the scenery of Myanmar, its traditional clothing, traditional festivals, and portraits of national leaders.

The National Museum's Chief Director, Daw Nang Laung Ngin, said the museum had not collected art pieces since 1990. Now the museum is collaborating with collectors and contemporary artists to help bridge the gap. She said there will be future exhibitions to showcase the museum's collections that have been out of the public eye

for too long.

In addition, U Lun Kwaye and other artists will give a painting demonstration on 26 and 27 February and they will donate the paintings to the National Museum.

A panel called Museum Talk was also held on 21 February at which U Lun Kwaye and other artists talked about the connection between the museum and artists.

The exhibit will open daily from 9am to 4pm. ■



Danish actress Alba August (L) and Danish film director Pernille Fischer Christensen pose during the photo call for the film "Becoming Astrid" at the Berlin film festival. PHOTO: AFP

Biopic explores secret scandal behind 'Pippi Longstocking'

BERLIN — A dark secret long held by Swedish author Astrid Lindgren led her to create one of the most beloved heroines of children's literature, Pippi Longstocking, according to a new biopic at the Berlin film festival.

"Becoming Astrid" by Danish filmmaker Pernille Fischer Christensen exposes the little-known backstory behind one of the world's most enduring girl characters, with her gravity-defying red plaits, abundant freckles and superhuman strength.

While still a teenager in conservative Sweden in the 1920s, the then Astrid Ericsson had an affair with her boss, the married editor-in-chief of the local newspaper, and fell pregnant.

The film examines the wrenching choices she was forced to make as a result, and the life lessons she drew.

"What happened here in this story made Astrid a really, really strong person," Fischer Christensen said. "One of the things she might have learned from this is you have to think for yourself."

"(Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel) Kant also said this but Astrid Lindgren says these things in a very, very simple way that just enters you when you are a child."

Fischer Christensen, 48, who called Lindgren "one of the most innovative and influential artists of our time", said Lindgren and her characters set an example for

generations of people. "I would not be the same person if I had not had Pippi," she said.

Cast out

The movie, which drew enthusiastic applause and a lot of tears at a press preview, introduces Astrid as a teenager living on her family's farm in a close-knit but judgemental tiny community.

Taken with her writing talent and independent streak, the editor, Blomberg, offers her a job but quickly falls in love with her and they begin a discreet affair. When she becomes pregnant, Blomberg insists he wants to marry her, but his wife refuses to give him a divorce and threatens to press adultery charges.—AFP ■

Aung La N Sang vs Brazilian champ in MMA matchup today

ONE Championship returns to Yangon with Myanmar hero Aung La N Sang in an MMA fight against Brazilian heavyweight champion Alexandre Machado for the title of ONE Light Heavyweight World Champion at Thuwanna indoor stadium in Yangon tonight.

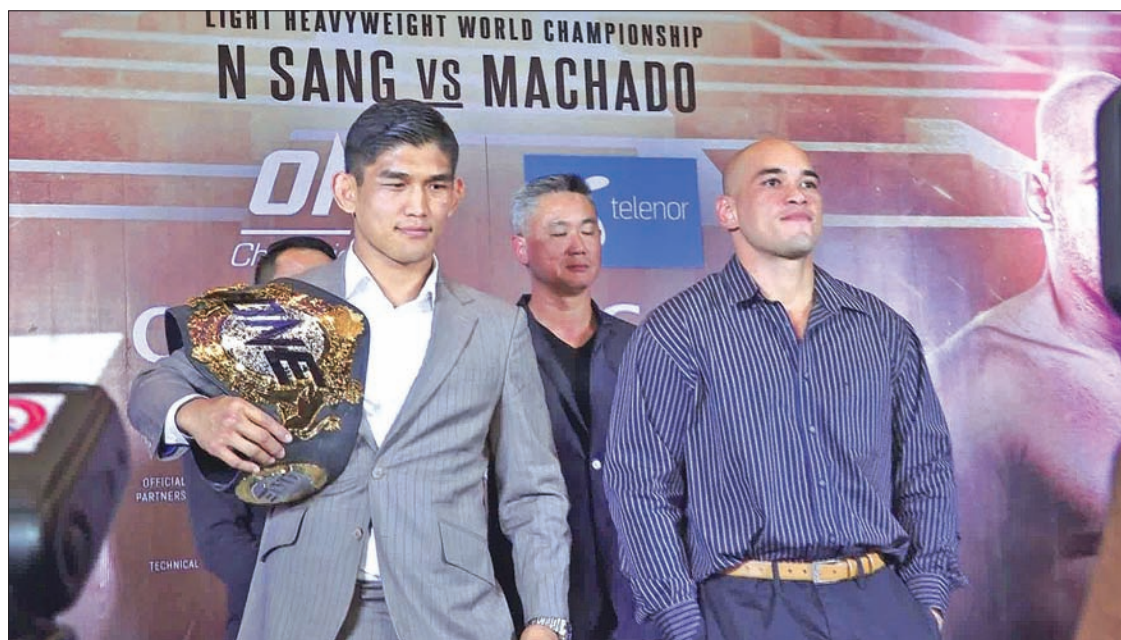
Aung La N Sang, also known as the Burmese Python, will fight against Machado in front of a partisan hometown crowd.

The fighters met with media representatives on Tuesday.

Aung La N Sang said he is ready and excited to compete for his second divisional belt.

He revealed that the unwavering fan support gives him strength and confidence.

"I am very excited for the upcoming championship fight. My opponent's jiu-jitsu skills are very excellent. I trained with the best trainer in Florida, USA. I am gaining weight for the fight.



ONE Championship Middle Weight Champion Aung La N Sang and Brazilian heavyweight champion Alexandre Machado seen at the media conference on Tuesday. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

The competitor is a really good athlete, so I trained to learn the top defence techniques for it. I think I will need to fight with him for two or three rounds. I have

confidence for the championship," said ONE Middleweight World Champion Aung La N Sang.

Alexandre Machado, the

Brazilian Heavyweight champion, also said he has trained six weeks for the fight, preparing for both physical and psychological challenges as he will face a My-

anmar crowd that will not be in his favour. "MMA is rather unpredictable because there are a lot of techniques involved in it. I have been training and preparing every possible technique for the fighting. There are lots of fans out there for Aung La, but I am also confident about my fight and I have no pressure on it."

Machado is heavyweight champion in Brazil, and also holds a black belt in jiu-jitsu.

Aung La N Sang won the ONE Middleweight World Championship in November by beating Alain Ngalani with a guillotine chokehold with just 29 seconds remaining in the first round.

Whoever wins tonight match will become a two division world champion.

The other bout scheduled for this evening will be featherweight fighter Phoe Thaw, who goes up against Sor Sey of Cambodia. —KyawZin Lin ■

Kanazaki brace leads Antlers to away win in ACL

SUWON — Mu Kanazaki scored in the opening stages of each half to lift J-League side Kashima Antlers to a 2-1 Asian Champions League Group H victory over Suwon Samsung Bluewings on Tuesday. Kanazaki broke the ice in the eighth minute at Suwon World Cup Stadium in South Korea, shooting into the bottom corner of the net at the far post. He added his second off a corner in the 59th minute, the Antlers target man bundling home the ball from point-blank range after teammate Yuma Suzuki's header was blocked. "Our opponents played stronger (at home). To get three points with that in mind was really big," Kanazaki said.

"This is a product of every player linking up on defense and attack, and competing aggressively," Antlers manager Go Oiwa said. "Scoring first was big."

Antlers keeper Kwoun Sun



Mu Kanazaki of the J-League side Kashima Antlers celebrates after scoring the opener against the Suwon Samsung Bluewings in the first half of an Asian Champions League Group H match in Suwon, South Korea on 21 February 2018. Antlers won 2-1. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Tae saved a 25th-minute penalty from Dejan Damjanovic after Leo Silva fouled Brazilian compatriot Waguinho in the penalty area.

The hosts got a goal back in the waning stages through

Brazilian midfielder Cristovam, but were unable to equalize. The win moved Antlers to the top of the group after an opening-round home draw last week. —Kyodo News ■

MNL defending champs Shan United plays undefeated Yangon today

IN what is probably the best match of Week 7 of the MPT Myanmar National League 2018, defending champion Shan United will play against Yangon at Yangon United Sports Complex this afternoon at 3.30 pm.

Both teams are undefeated this season, and the results of today's match will figure heavily into which team will sit on top of the league's rankings.

Yangon United is in first place with 16 points and a record of 5 wins, no losses and one draw. Defending champion Shan United is in second place with 14 points and a record of four wins and two draws.

Both teams attract fans that are loyal and supportive. "The reason I like Shan

United is I think it's one of the best football teams in the MNL, possessing a good coach and players. As my native town is Taunggyi, I love Shan United even more. I love my team along with its style of play and tactics. Last year, my team garnered the Championship title of the Myanmar National League. I believe Shan will win the match against Yangon today", said Myo Thet Naing, a medical student studying in Yangon.

"I'll be with my team, Yangon United, for today's match. Yangon has very good strikers this season, and my team will take the victory, I believe", said Min Soe Htut, a student from Yangon. —KyawZin Lin ■