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Union Chief Justice U Htun Htun Oo delivers an address at the opening ceremony of the Asia-Pacific Judicial Conference on Environmental and Climate Change Adjudication held in Hilton Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

APAC Judicial Conf. on Environmental and Climate Change Adjudication begins

UNION Chief Justice U Htun Htun Oo attended and addressed the opening ceremony of the Asia-Pacific Judicial Conference on Environmental and Climate Change Adjudication held at the Hilton Hotel, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning. The conference was jointly organized by the Union Supreme Court, Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Asian Judges Network on Environment (AJNE).

The conference is held with the aim of strengthening in trying cases related to the natural environment and cli-

mate change. It is also aimed for judges and legal experts to discuss widely on cooperating among Asia-Pacific countries for fairness in maintaining the natural environment, hearing and judging natural environment cases, and strengthening the need to follow precedence and best practices in the area of environmental management.

The conference will be held for two days on 29 and 30 October and challenges related to environment and climate change, enacted laws on protection and maintaining of the environment, implementation of the laws, trials relating to environment and

climate change and challenges and the role of judges in the era of climate change will be discussed by people participating in wide ranging sectors from different views and angles.

The conference is attended by Chief Judges, judges, judicial officers and high ranking officials from ASEAN countries, South Asia countries, Pacific region countries, Britain, Australia, United States of America, Brazil, New Zealand and Kiribati; officials from ADB and UN Environment Programme; experts from Train-the-Trainers Program Environmental Champion; legal experts; Constitutional Tribunal

of Myanmar Chairman; Union Minister; Union Supreme Court judges; Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw commissions and affairs committees chairmen, secretaries and members; officials from Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation; professors from legal departments of Yangon and Mandalay Universities; chairmen of Yangon and Mandalay bar associations; district level judges; judicial officers from Union Supreme Court and media personnel. The conference was hosted by Myanmar. — MNA ■

Conservation of Inle Lake discussed in Taunggyi

A PRE-WORKSHOP on Inle Lake conservation and development was held at Royal Taunggyi Hotel in Taunggyi, yesterday.

Shan State Chief Minister Dr. Lin Htut addressed the pre-workshop and said Inle Lake is a natural heritage filled with a multitude of fauna dependant on Inle Lake and is also a resting place for winter birds. He said the calm surface of the lake is home to 259 inland bird, 92 water bird, 61 fish, 3 turtle, 94 butterfly, 23 amphibian, 86 tree, 527 medicinal plant, 184 orchid, 12 aquatic plant, and 11 bamboo species.

The Chief Minister said 444 villages inhabit Inle Lake. The culture and traditions of the Intha, Lisu and Pa-O people can still be seen in Inlay Lake.

He said Inle Lake is facing environmental concerns caused by excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, increased population, rising use of firewood, rapid growth in agriculture and tourism and climate change.

This was followed by a discussion on the conservation and development of Inle Lake between Mrs. Lise Nordgaard, Minister Counsellor of the Norwegian Embassy in Yangon, and Mr. Biplove Choudhary, UNDP Department Chief. — Maung Maung Than (Taunggyi), District IPRD ■

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Global Media & Information Literacy Week held at NMDC in Yangon



Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint delivers the address at the Global Media & Information Literacy Week held at the National Management Degree College in Yangon, yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

GLOBAL Media & Information Literacy Week was held at the National Management Degree College in Yangon yesterday.

Speaking at the ceremony, Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint stressed the importance of analytical reading and critical thinking to resist the challenges and disinformation of the digital age.

“In the age of Media Information Literacy today, information flows to the people easily and speedily, and it influence the majority of the people. Hence, people need to read analytically and critically to be able to counter disinformation,” said the Union Minister.

He stressed the role of Media Information Literacy, empowering the people to understand the media and information and to take advantage of and make the best use of the media and information age.

The event was held with the aim of disseminating the knowledge on understanding media and information. Literacy campaign was conducted on a grand scale in Myanmar in the past and the Media and Information Literacy came today.

Despite a fairly literate rate at the time, there is still a high percentage of illiteracy in the country and that’s why the literacy campaign was held; to eliminate illiteracy and improve literacy rates among the people, said Dr Pe Myint.

Many university students from Yangon, regions and states travelled to different parts of the country and conducted the literacy campaign 50 years ago.

The Ministry of Education has resumed this literacy programme.

As for the Information and Public Relations Department, under the Ministry of Information, many literacy campaign and related festivals are being held and an event titled “All who can read should read” will be held on 30 and 31 November in Nay Pyi Taw.

“Reading is a must to those who are literate and information can be gained from reading literature. Everyone needs to know and receive information and this kind of society can be free from cheating,” said Dr. Pe Myint.

“People from democratic nations are to elect their leaders who will administer their nations and people need to know if their leader bears conduct, behaviour, traits and integrity. Only when people know about him fully, can they choose and elect their representatives who will administer properly,” said the Union Minister

“Only then, can we fully understand the role of media and information and analyse with it. In our daily lives, we can take advantage of our media and information age by reading with analytical approach. Then we can reject bad news and use good news that can be beneficial to us,” said the Union Minister.

Next, the principal of National Management Degree College, Dr. Tin Tin Htwe, and UNESCO Head of Office in Myanmar Ms. Min Jeong Kim delivered separate remarks. This was followed by the Union Minister, attendees from the Myanmar Press Council, news and media organizations, officials from IMS/FOJO, and faculty members of the

National Management Degree College taking a commemorative photograph together.

Afterwards, roundtable talks on Global Media & Information Literacy Week continued and Dr. Daw Thida Tin, the Deputy Director-General of the Information and Public Relations Department, acted as coordinator at the event. Myanmar Book Aid & Preservation Foundation Executive Director Dr. Thant Thaw Kaung, Dr. Zin Mar Kyaw, Associate Professor & Head of Journalism Department from the National Management Degree College, Myanmar ICT for Development Organization, MIDO U Khant Phyto Lwin, Chief Reporter and editor of 7day newspaper and Journal U Aung Thit Lwin joined the discussion titled “Why understanding on media and information is important for society.”

National Project Officer from UNESCO Daw Naing Naing Aye acted as coordinator and Starcom Myanmar Co, Ltd, Content Writer Ko Khant Hein Thu, The Joint Peace Fund, Communication Officer Ma Sagar War Aung, Eleven Media Group Editor Ko Myo Min Htike and Daw Nan Pyae Phyto Kyaw, assistant lecturer from National Management Degree College participated in the discussion titled “Understanding on Youths, Media and Information”, and attendees raised the questions. The Global Media & Information Literacy Week has been held around the world since 2012, and Myanmar has now held it for the first time at the National Management Degree College in Yangon.— MNA ■

President’s Office continues announcement of illegal drug arrests, seizures acting on tip-offs

THE Office of the President issued Press Release No. 21/2018 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs’ arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 27 October.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 27 October.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 31 October issue of *The Global New Light of Myanmar*.—GNLM ■

U Myo Tint appointed as Non-Resident Ambassador of Myanmar to the Republic of Peru

THE President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Myo Tint, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Federative Republic of Brazil, as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar concurrently accredited to the Republic of Peru.—MNA ■

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Appointment of Permanent Secretary

THE Union Government has appointed Dr. Tha Tun Kyaw, Director-General of the Union Minister’s Office of the Ministry of Health and Sports, as Permanent Secretary of the same ministry. ■

Police seizes 9,640 WY tablets in Maungtaw Tsp

WHILE security forces were conducting naval patrols along the Naf River on 29 October at 1:30am, they saw a suspicious boat to the north of U Saw Hla Island in Myanmar’s side.

Although security forces signalled the boat to stop for inspection, the men on the

boat rowed away and tried to escape. Security officers fired a warning shot but the suspects jumped off the boat and swam away.

A total of 9,640 WY/R psychotropic tablets worth Ks 2,000 per tablet Ks19,280,000 were found on the boat. Investigations continue.— GNLM ■

Correction

A story on Page 3 of the 28 October edition of the *Global New Light of Myanmar* contained an error. In the first column of the story with the headline “President urges Three Pillars of Democracy in Ayeyawady Region to work together for reforms, democratic transition”, a sentence should read “The judicial sector needs to be just and correct. Corruption needs to be eradicated increasingly”.— Ed ■

SME loan

The Union Government has borrowed ODA from JICA as a two-step loan for SMEs, in order to fulfill the need for finance, and Kyats 60 billion loans has been extended to SMEs within 3 years. It is also planned to extend a loan of additional Kyats 200 billion to the SMEs beginning from 2018-2019 FY. In addition, the State-owned Myanmar Economic Bank also plans to extend a loan amounting to Kyats 250 billion as SME loans.

(Excerpt from the report on the current work of the Union Government, delivered at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 19 September 2018)

Senior General meets departmental personnel, local residents in Cocogyun Township

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met with departmental personnel and local residents from Cocogyun Township at the Town Hall, Cocogyun Township, Yangon Region, yesterday morning.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was accompanied by Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Tin Aung San, Lt-Gen Myo Zaw Thein and high ranking officers from Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office, Yangon Command Commander Maj-Gen Thet Pone and officials and was welcomed by senior Tatmadaw officers from the local navy base and departmental officials upon arrival at Cocogyun Town.

Afterwards at the local navy base meeting hall, the navy base commander explained about regional information, status of conducting regional security works and works conducted for development of Cocogyun.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services then gave instructions to provide trans-



Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets with Cocogyun Township department staff and local residents at the meeting hall of Cocogyun Township yesterday. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF**

port with Tatmadaw aircrafts and naval crafts when required and to prepare for providing assistance and supports as soon as there are natural disasters.

Next the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services met with departmental personnel and local residents of Cocogyun Township in the town hall. At the meeting the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services said development works on Cocogyun region was started on 2011 and even

though some developments can be seen now, more needs to be done. It is not enough to construct basic infrastructure for regional development as local people must also have the will to develop their region.

For regional development, products from the region need to be produced and the products must be of good quality. With the aim of having a market and to create job opportunities, the regional military forces are leading, assisting and support-

ing the production and transport of coconut products, said the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services.

After his speech, the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services presented foods and books which was followed by a local elder saying words of appreciation. The Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services then gave instructions and comments to ensure proper coordination.

After the meeting the Com-

mander-in-Chief of the Defence Services went to Cocogyun Town Basic Education High School where the school headmistress explained about teaching status and requirements. The Senior General then gave instructions and comments and then inspected the school library. He also met with students in the school assembly hall according to a news release issued by the Office of the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief, it is learnt. — MNA ■

High Level Working Group on labour affairs holds finalizing meeting on preventing forced labour

THE International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Myanmar Government held a coordination meeting of High Level Working Group (HLWG) on Cooperation of Labour Affairs to finalize discussions on Good Practice Guidelines for Preventing Forced Labour at the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The good practice guidelines are part of the action plan for the elimination of forced labour signed between the ILO and the Myanmar Government.

Attending the meeting were Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein

Swe, HLWG members comprising of permanent secretaries, directors-general and officials from government ministries, ILO's Liaison Officer Mr. Rory Mungoven, and other officials.

In his speech delivered at the meeting, the Union Minister first mentioned that the meeting they were at now was to approve of the curriculum and schedule for the training of trainers (ToT) and other training courses, to finalize discussions on the Good Practice Guidelines for Preventing Forced Labour, and to discuss implementation of a national complaint mechanism for elimination of forced labour.

The good practice guidelines were sent by the ILO as a follow-up to the 23 May HLWG meeting which focused on a compilation of Do's and Don'ts and training course schedules, said the Union Minister.

He said increasing the capacity of technical working group members and providing ToT courses to government officials and Tatmadaw officers will spread the elimination of forced labour through all levels of management, in addition to conducting seminars and trainings in the states and regions as part of priority 3 of the action plan.

The Union Minister said



Union Minister U Thein Swe attends the workshop on preventing forced labour in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

there needs to be cooperation with ILO to review and select government officials and Tatmadaw officers as participants to the ToT course.

He said a workshop is slated to be held in December to garner experience from other countries in setting up a national complaint

mechanism to replace the existing complaint mechanism which will reach the end of its course on December this year.

The meeting commenced afterwards and the attendees discussed the good practice guidelines and the training schedules. —MNA ■

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

Community Based Tourism launches in Taninthayi Region

A ceremony was held to launch Community Based Tourism (CBT) in Sanhlan Village, Launglon Township, Taninthayi Region on 25 October.

At the ceremony, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung, Taninthayi Region Chief Minister Dr. Daw Lae Lae Maw, Taninthayi Region Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Myint Maung and Community Based Tourism Chairman U Aung Myo cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the entrance gate of CBT.

Union Minister U Ohn Maung delivered an opening speech, saying everyone's support is required to implement CBT and the local people's living standard will develop by implementing CBT.



Union Minister U Ohn Maung, Chief Minister Dr. Daw Lae Lae Maw and officials cut the ribbon to launch Community Based Tourism (CBT) in Sanhlan Village. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF HOTELS AND TOURISM

Next Taninthayi Region Chief Minister Dr. Daw Lae Lae Maw gave an opening remark while Hotels and Tourism Dawei Branch Director U Nyo Aye, CBT Chairman U Aung Myo, U

Harry Phone Thant provided detailed explanation about the CBT implementation process.

The ceremony was attended by Taninthayi Region government ministers, Hluttaw

representatives, departmental heads, hotel businesses and tourism entrepreneurs, CBT committee members and village elders.—Ministry of Hotels and Tourism ■

Organic market opens end of Oct in YGN

AN organic market will be opened in the compound of the Agriculture Department (Yangon Region) facing Yangon Technological University (Gyogone) on 31 October.

The market will sell organic fruits, vegetables and other organic products will be put on sale at a single location, according to the Yangon Region Agriculture Department.

The organic market will

be opened in cooperation with Agriculture Department and Myanmar Organic Farming and Production Association every Wednesday from 8 am to 12 noon.

"The organic market is opened so that local people and consumers can consume healthy organic vegetables. Myanmar has yet to issue certificates recognizing organic products so those who want to

sell their organic products in the market can sell with FDA recommendation certificate," said an official from the Yangon Region Agriculture Department.

At the moment, the sellers do not need to pay rental fees for a space in the market but they may need to pay fees later to cover the cost of setting up and removal of sales point.

At the market, organic

foods from organic zones including Agriculture Department's organic fruits will be displayed in more than 10 shops. Dragon fruits from Sagaing Region and Shan State will also be put on sale at the organic markets, according to the Yangon Region Agriculture Department.

For now, organic products are sold at Myay Pa Dey Thar Kyun and Kandawgyi every week.—Zwe ■

MNA receives EASA Part 145 certificate

MYANMAR National Airlines (MNA) received EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) Part 145 Maintenance Organization Approval Certificate and a ceremony was hosted onboard the Princess Pantwar cruise ship at Health Jetty, Yangon on 28 October.

EASA Part 145 is a European standard approval of organizations performing maintenance on aircraft and aircraft components.

MNA was permitted to establish an EASA recognized large aircraft maintenance workshop in 2015 for purchasing six ATR 72-600 aircrafts from ATR Company. After three years of operating the maintenance workshop, MNA received the international standard maintenance certificate.

U Win Khant, Perma-

nent Secretary of Ministry of Transport and Communications, said, "MNA has been in existence for over 70 years and is the national flag carrier of Myanmar. Today, we are proud of our airline because we received a recognized international standard maintenance certificate. We hope to maintain this achievement."

At the ceremony, U Min Lwin, Director-General of the Civil Aviation Department handed over EASA Part 145 Maintenance Organization EASA 145-0801 certificate to Chief Captain U Than Tun, CEO of MNA.

In the past, these airplanes were maintained only with certificates of Myanmar Civil Aviation Department. There are now about 20 ATR airplanes in Myanmar including the seven owned by MNA.

Maintenance of these planes are being conducted by Myanmar engineers, thus saving foreign currency.

Myanmar National Airlines was established on 15 September 1948 as Union of Burma Airways (UBA). After a period in isolation, along with much of Myanmar's industry, the airline has now been reborn as Myan-

mar National Airlines.

At present, MNA flies to 28 domestic airports and international destinations including Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Chiang Mai and Bodh Gaya. MNA also plans to extend its service to cities in China such as Chengdu and Wuhan later this year.—Myint Maung Soe ■



PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG SOE

TTCL meets with government officials to set up 388 MW LNG plant

By May Thet Hnin

TTCL Public Company Limited, a joint venture between Japan and Thailand, is in talks with the Union Government to establish a Liquefied Natural Gas plant capable of generating 388 megawatts.

As part of this project, a combined-cycle power plant will be constructed on 8.16 acres of the compound of Ahlon power plant. An LNG terminal will be constructed on 15 acres near Yangon River in southern Dala Township, said U Htet Aung Mon, general manager of TTCL

Public Company Limited.

A gas pipeline connecting to the LNG plant and 230 KV new transmission line projects will also be carried out.

The LNG gas pipeline network is planned to start from LNG terminal, pass through Twantay canal, and Seikkyi Kanaungto port and then cross the Yangon River to Ahlon plant. The pipeline will be 24.4 km long.

LNG will be imported from foreign countries. Natural gas will be transported in LNG form through LNG terminal, said U Htet Aung Mon. The project will supply power to

the national grid.

Funding for this project is allocated over US\$350 million. About 440,000 tons of LNG will be consumed per year. Upon receiving investment approval, the company expects to join hands with the government for 25 to 30 years.

To implement this project, TTCL submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Electricity and Energy in July 2017 and shortly thereafter, the two parties conducted a series of discussions.

The Ministry granted Notice to Proceed (NTP) to the company in January 2018. The

company still needs to put forward reports and reviews to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation and the Ministry of Electricity and Energy after carrying out a feasibility study.

Reports must then be proceeded to the business committee and only after a cabinet discussion will the project be given approval, said U Ye Lwin, Hluttaw representative from Ahlon Township constituency. The feasibility study to implement the project is currently underway. The three townships—Ahlon, Dagon

Seikkan and Lanmadaw- were combined to hold the first public discussion for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) activities on 29 October. More public consultations and hearings will be conducted in Seikkyi Khanaungto, Thanlyin and Dala townships. EIA/SIA final report will be put forward to the government through the related ministry. Upon approval, the construction is slated to begin mid-2019. The project aims to generate power term within 28 months from the starting date. ■

EU delegations meet with worker representatives for possible impact of EU's GSP withdrawal

By Nyein Nyein

EUROPEAN Union mission and worker representatives negotiated possible impacts caused if EU suspends the Generalised Scheme of Preferences to Myanmar, at the EU office yesterday.

At the meeting, trade unions showed strong opposition against consideration of trade sanctions on the country.

“Disagreement letter to EU’s consideration of GSP withdrawal has been released and sent to them”, said the president of the Confederation of Trade Unions in Myanmar.

“It is not a constructive approach regarding trade sanctions to deal with EU’s allegation that Myanmar is accused of blatant violation of human rights and workers’ rights,” he maintained.

“If EU suspends GSP, our GDP will decrease. It will also harm the foreign investments and employment market. Therefore, EU will be responsible for negative impact”, said U Maung Maung.

“EU has been participating in Myanmar’s transition. The GSP withdrawal can affect its participation,” said U Naw Aung, Vice-Chair of Myanmar Indus-

tries Craft and Services Trade Unions Federation.

“EU needs to judge whether its GPS withdrawal is a good option to deal with disputes over Rakhine, Shan and Kachin States,” said U Naw Aung.

At present, EU delegations arrived in Myanmar and they are discussing with Civil Society Organizations including trade unions. Myanmar reinstated EU’s Generalised Scheme of Preferences from 19 July 2013. EU Commissioner for Trade mentioned on 5 October concerning sending of EU’s mission to Myanmar in order to consider trade sanctions. ■

Bilateral trade with Thailand worth \$2.39 billion in five months

THE value of trade between Myanmar and neighbouring country Thailand reached US\$2.39 billion from April to August of the past mini-budget period, comprising export worth \$1.23 billion and import valued \$1.15 billion, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Thailand tops on regional trade line-up with the largest trade value. Myanmar’s main export items are fishery products such as crab, fish and shrimp, as well as onions, sesame, dry tea leaves, coconut and turmeric, while consumer goods,

cosmetic machinery, food products, and agricultural equipment and trucks are imported into the country from Thailand.

Bilateral trade was registered at \$5 billion in the 2017-2018 FY, \$4.28 billion in the 2016-2017 FY, \$4.86 billion in the 2015-16

FY, \$5.7 billion in the 2014-2015 FY, \$5.6 billion in the 2013-2014 FY, \$4.68 billion in the 2012-2013 FY and \$4.5 billion in the 2011-2012 FY.

There are 77 existing Thailand-listed enterprises in Myanmar, with capitals estimated at \$3.96 billion. – GNLM ■



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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95th anniversary of establishment of Republic of Turkey observed

UNION MINISTER for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung and wife attended a ceremony commemorating the 95th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey held at Sule Shangri-La Hotel, Yangon yesterday evening.

The ceremony starts off with the playing of the national anthems of Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Republic of Turkey.

Next Ambassador of Turkey to Myanmar H.E. Mr. Haydar Kerem Divanlioglu and

Union Minister U Ohn Maung delivered messages of greeting.

Afterwards the Union Minister and wife, the Ambassador and wife cut the cake commemorating the 95th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and then took commemorative group photo.

The Ambassador and wife then hosted a dinner for the attendees. The event was attended by ambassadors and charge d'affaires of foreign embassies, UN resident representatives and invited guests. — MNA ■



Union Minister U Ohn Maung delivers message of greeting at the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey. **PHOTO: MNA**

Accidental shooting kills man at police station in Bogalay

AN ACCIDENTAL SHOOTING by a police killed a detainee at a police station in Bogalay, Aye-yarwady Region, on 28 October.

A police who is on duty accidentally pulled the trigger of his gun as he tried to tease two

detainees. The shooting killed another detainee namely Tun Min, 19, who came out of the bath room.

Constable Aung Thu has been arrested for the shooting.—Township IPRD ■

Union Minister U Win Khaing attends dinner honoring 26th Council meeting of AAET

UNION MINISTER for Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing attended a dinner honoring 26th Council meeting of ASEAN Academy of Engineering and Technology (AAET) on the evening of 27 October in Novotel Hotel, Yangon.

In his address at the dinner Union Minister said that in the transition to Industry 4.0 cooperation among ASEAN countries become more important and more innovation is required for further development in economic, social and humanitarian matters in ASEAN countries. Next, the Union Minister accepted the Senior Fellowship and Academy of Engineering Technology for Developing World Fellowship presented by AAET.

AAET is formed with members consisting of eminent engineers, technologists and industrialists from the ten ASEAN member states and is registered with the ASEAN Secretariat as an ASEAN Secretariat-affiliated non-profit Civil Society Organization (CSO) and this is the first



Union Minister U Win Khaing at a meeting before the dinner honoring the 26th Council meeting of ASEAN Academy of Engineering and Technology held in Novotel Hotel in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

time Myanmar is hosting the AAET Council meeting.

AAET's main objective is to contribute combined intellect and experience of its members in academia, government and industry for the economic advancement of the ASEAN region and its people in sustainable manner. AAET had initiated various programs and activities to increase the awareness of the importance of science, technology and innovation in the ASEAN region, as

well as assisting in promoting the socio-economic development and enhancing the competitiveness of the ASEAN member states.

Myanmar participated in AAET for more than a decade and of the 256 AAET members, there are a total of 67 Myanmar of which 2 were Senior Fellows, 47 were Fellows and 16 were Associate Fellows. The 15 member Council includes Dr. Sein Myint and Dr. Aung Kyaw Myat from Myanmar it is learnt. — MNA ■

Chinese budget airline 9Air launches direct flight between Yangon and Guangzhou

THE Chinese budget airline 9 Air launches direct flight services between Yangon and Guangzhou on 28 October. The Chinese budget airline 9Air starts its services at Yangon International Airport, which is the largest and busiest airport in Myanmar capable of handling 20 million passengers.

The travellers are now able to enjoy the low-cost flights from Guangzhou to Yangon. Following its first direct international flight between Guangzhou and Manda-

lay operated on October 2. This new route will meet the needs of business travelers, family visits and general tourism between Yangon and Guangzhou.

9 Air utilizes brand-new Boeing 737-800 aircraft, designed to accommodate 189 passengers. The low-fare price starts at US\$ 82 without tax to Yangon and US\$ 75 without tax to Guangzhou.

Presently, 9 Air has 16 Boeing 737-800, serving over 40 domestic routes in total. Additionally, the

fleet size of 9Air is expected to reach 20 aircraft by the end of 2018 and 80 aircraft by 2025.

After the launch of the Guangzhou-Mandalay, Guangzhou-Yangon routes in the second half of 2018, 9Air will start several other international routes including Guangzhou-Kalibo (Philippines), Guangzhou-Bangkok (Thailand), Guangzhou-Da Nang (Viet Nam) and Guangzhou to popular cities in Japan. — GNLM ■

World News

Chinese State Councilor meets Philippine foreign, finance secretaries for closer cooperation

DAVAO (the Philippines) — Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with his Philippine counterpart Teodoro Locsin and Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez in Davao City on Monday.

In the meeting with Locsin, Wang said that under the guidance of the leaders of the two countries, China-Philippines relations have maintained the momentum for development in

the past two years, which is in the interests of the two peoples.

China is willing to develop all-round cooperation and manage differences properly with the Philippines for a more stable, peaceful South China Sea, Wang said.

The Chinese side is also willing to closely work with the Philippine side to promote and deepen pragmatic cooperation in security, development, culture

and maritime affairs, so as to explore new broad prospect for China-Philippine relations, the Chinese State Councilor said.

For his part, Locsin said that his country is content with the ever-improving bilateral relations and the ever-strengthening bilateral cooperation with China.

The Philippine side is willing to continue to properly manage differences, push forward pragmatic maritime cooperation, and

actively participate in the Belt and Road Initiative, he said.

In a meeting between the Philippine economic management team led by Finance Secretary Dominguez and Wang, they discussed updates on the status of the economic cooperation agreement. Wang said the development of China-Philippine relations has provided favorable political guarantees for economic and trade cooperation. The

bilateral economic cooperation can expand to new areas, including projects of the Belt and Road Initiative, so as to benefit the two countries and their people. The Philippines is welcome to participate in the China International Import Expo (CIIE) which is slated to be held from Nov. 5 to 10 in Shanghai, and is willing to create better conditions to expand the Philippine exports to China, Wang noted.—Xinhua ■

Syrian opposition draws up 'road map' for constitution

ROME—The Syrian opposition on Monday presented a “road map” to peace, including steps to be taken ahead of an election and guidelines for a plan to write the country’s post-war constitution.

The document, drawn up by representatives of the opposition invited to Rome by the Catholic Sant’Egidio community, will be presented to key players in the conflict – from Russia to Turkey and the EU – over the next few weeks.

The leaders of Turkey, Russia, France and Germany on Saturday called for a political solution to the devastating seven-year civil war and a lasting ceasefire in the last major rebel-held bastion of Idlib.

Their statement called for a committee to be established to draft Syria’s post-war constitution before the end of the year, “paving the way for free and fair elections” in the war-torn

country.

A rival UN plan for a committee to write the constitution ran aground last week, with UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura saying Damascus rejected the UN having a role in the selection process.

The “road map”, presented Monday by the High Negotiations Committee (HNC), the main opposition force, as well as several minor groups, details the shape a new government and parliament could take.

It calls for the make-up of the committee to “reflect the composition of the country” and says all “arrangements/rules/law aiming at dissolving/obstructing/impeding the political activities of the opposition” must be scrapped.

The commission, within a nine-month timeframe, should not only prepare the constitution but also draft party and electoral law.—AFP ■

PM Modi discusses bilateral, regional and global issues with Japanese leaders

TOKYO—Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday met Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono and held productive, focused discussion on bilateral, regional and global issues.

Modi arrived in Japan on Saturday to attend the 13th India-Japan annual two-day summit which will seek to review the progress in ties and deepen strategic dimension of the bilateral relationship.

“Strengthening the strategic orientation of our relationship. Foreign Minister of Japan Taro Kono called on PM @narendramodi. Held productive and focused discussion on bilateral, regional and global issues,” Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted.

Modi also met Secretary General Toshihiro Nikai of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the Minister of Economy Trade and Industry (METI) Hiroshige Seko. He appreciated the Japanese support extended to the flagship initiatives in India.

“Secretary General of Liberal Democratic Party Toshihiro Nikai called on PM @narendramodi. PM appreciated his vision and experience in strengthening of our bilateral relationship, specially support extended to the flagship initiatives in India,” Kumar tweeted. Japan’s role in India’s economic journey continues to be integral to its transformation, Kumar added.



Modi addressed a gathering of vibrant Indian community in Japan and also interacted with some respected names in Japanese venture capitalists. **PHOTO: PTI**

“Minister of @METI_JPN Hiroshige Seko called on PM @narendramodi. Discussed ways to enhance our economic engagement, specially given METI’s role in strengthening our economic partnership,” Kumar tweeted.

Earlier, Modi addressed a gathering of vibrant Indian community in Japan and also interacted with some respected names in Japanese venture capitalists.—PTI ■

Woman bomber wounds 9 in first Tunisia suicide attack since 2015

TUNIS, (Tunisia) —A woman suicide bomber blew herself up near police vehicles on a busy street in the centre of the Tunisian capital on Monday after a three-year break in such attacks, injuring at least nine people, the interior ministry said.

Ministry spokesman Sofiene Zaag told AFP that all but one of the casualties were police, after a strong explosion rocked the up-market Avenue Habib Bourguiba in Tunis.

Ambulances arrived swiftly at the scene, which was cordoned off by security forces. Shops lowered their shutters and cafes emptied as panic gripped passersby.

An AFP photographer saw the bomber’s body, apparently mostly intact, lying on the ground under one of the neatly-trimmed box trees that line the avenue.

The interior ministry, in a statement, identified the assailant as a 30-year-old woman with no known extremist affiliations, and there was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Shortly before the blast, a small group of demonstrators had held a protest in the avenue against the killing near Tunis last week of a teenager by a customs agent.

The attack was the first in



Tunisian forensics inspect the site of a suicide attack in the Tunisian capital Tunis. **PHOTO: AFP**

the Tunisian capital since November 24, 2015 when a suicide bombing killed 12 security agents on a bus for presidential guards. That attack was claimed by the so-called Islamic State jihadist group.

The Islamist party Ennahdha, the second largest party in parliament, condemned Monday’s “cowardly attack” and urged all Tunisians “to unite in confronting terrorism”, while reiterating its full support for “mili-

tary institutions and the police”.

- Islamic State attacks -

Since the 2011 uprising that toppled dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, jihadist attacks in Tunisia have killed dozens of members of the security forces and foreign tourists.

In June 2015, 38 people were killed in a shooting rampage at the coastal resort of Sousse which targeted tourists, while an attack in March that year on the Na-

tional Bardo Museum in Tunis left 22 people dead, most of them tourists.

The terror attacks claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group decimated Tunisia’s crucial tourism sector, which made up seven percent of gross domestic product.

The country has been under a state of emergency since the November 2015 attack on the bus.

The state of emergency was extended earlier this month until

November 6, amid a tense political climate ahead of legislative and presidential elections planned for next year.

In March 2016, dozens of jihadists who infiltrated from neighbouring Libya assaulted security posts in the southern region of Ben Guerdane in what Tunisian authorities said was an aborted attempt to declare an “emirate”.

The attack, which went unclaimed, left 20 dead among security forces and civilians.

Calm over the past two years has led to a rebound in the tourism industry, with more than six million foreign travellers visiting Tunisia in the first nine months of 2018, according to government data.

Arrivals rose 16.9 percent to 6.3 million in the nine months to the end of September, surpassing the number for the whole of 2014.

Tourism revenues in the first nine months of 2018 totalled just over 1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion), a rise of 27.6 percent year-on-year.

Tourism Minister Selma El-loumi Rekik told AFP in May that she expected total arrivals to exceed eight million in 2018, higher than the seven million recorded in 2010, a benchmark year for Tunisian tourism.—AFP ■

Turkey shells US-backed Kurdish militia positions in Syria: state media

ISTANBUL (Turkey) — Turkey's military on Sunday fired artillery shells at a Kurdish militia in Syria that is backed by the United States but deemed a terrorist group by Ankara, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

The shelling targeted YPG positions on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River in northern Syria, Anadolu said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly threatened to launch a new offensive in Syria east of the Euphrates, and on Friday said he was giving the YPG a "final warning".

Anadolu reported that the strikes, which hit a hill near the Zur Maghar village across the Euphrates from the city of Jarablus in the Aleppo province, were in response to fire from the area.

The shelling comes a day after Erdogan hosted a summit in Istanbul on the Syrian conflict with the leaders of Russia, France and Germany.

The YPG, which holds swathes of northern and north-eastern Syria, forms the backbone of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Kurdish-Arab alliance that has received extensive American support in the



A Turkish tank near the border with the Syrian Kurdish city of Kobani. PHOTO: AFP

fight against the Islamic State group in the war-torn country.

However Ankara is bitterly opposed to the YPG, regarding it as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged a deadly insurgency in Turkey since 1984. The PKK is designated as a terror group by Turkey and its Western allies.

Washington's support of the YPG remains a major point of contention between the US and Turkey, and a large-scale offen-

sive east of the Euphrates could aggravate already tense relations between the NATO allies.

Turkey has also repeatedly threatened an attack on the YPG-controlled Syrian city of Manbij, where US troops are deployed.

To ease tensions, Washington and Ankara agreed to have troops conduct coordinated patrols around the city, and such a patrol went ahead on Sunday, Turkish armed forces said.

Earlier this year, Turkey launched operation "Olive Branch" in Syria west of the Euphrates, successfully ousting YPG forces from their enclave in Afrin.

Ankara has long opposed the YPG controlling a continuous stretch of territory on its border up to Iraq, fearing the creation of an autonomous region or even independent entity that could embolden Turkey's own Kurds. —AFP ■

Boko Haram jihadists attack military base in NE Nigeria

ABUJA (Nigeria) — Boko Haram jihadists launched a large assault on a military base in Nigeria's remote northeast region and killed one soldier, defence officials said on Sunday.

The attack on 145 Battalion in Gashigar, Borno State, began on Saturday and continued into early Sunday morning, said Nigerian air force spokesman Ibikunle Daramola.

"BHTs (Boko Haram terrorists) in 13 gun trucks...advanced towards the camp from two different directions," Daramola said in a statement.

Nigerian troops supported by helicopters "forced the Boko Haram terrorists to retreat from the camp," Daramola said.

"One soldier was killed in action while four others were wounded," said the Nigerian army in a statement posted on its official Twitter account.

The army repelled an assault on Gashigar in September by jihadists in trucks mounted with anti-aircraft guns.

There have been at least nine military base attacks since July, mostly in the northern part of Borno state, near the shores of Lake Chad.

Boko Haram has in recent months intensified attacks on military bases in Borno and nearby Yobe state, undermining repeated claims by the military that they have the upper hand.

Scores of soldiers have been killed, injured or missing in attacks but the military has repeatedly denied or played down losses to the jihadists.

More than 27,000 people have been killed in northeast Nigeria since the Boko Haram insurgency began in 2009, while nearly two million others remain homeless. —AFP ■

Israel minister makes history at UAE judo tourney

JERUSALEM — An Israeli minister attending a judo tournament in the UAE said on Sunday she hoped to hear her national anthem played at the event, in another milestone towards rapprochement with the Arab world.

Culture and Sports Minister Miri Regev's presence in the United Arab Emirates capital Abu Dhabi marked the first time a minister from Israel attended a sports event in the Gulf, Israeli

officials said. It is also the first time an Israeli delegation participates there under its national flag, after the International Judo Federation warned UAE organisers they would cancel the competition unless all athletes were allowed to participate on an equal footing.

Last year, tournament organisers in Abu Dhabi banned the flag and national anthem of Israel, which has no diplomatic relations with Gulf states.

"I'm very proud to be here in Abu Dhabi representing Israel along with the judo team and our flag," Regev wrote on her Facebook page.

"I hope we win a gold medal and experience the thrilling moment of playing Hatikvah in the Abu Dhabi arena," she said, referring to Israel's national anthem.

Three Israeli judokas won bronze medals on Saturday, the first day of the Abu Dhabi Grand

Slam, with Regev given the honour of awarding the medals for one of the categories. Regev's trip to the UAE, which began on Thursday, coincided with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to neighbouring Oman, the first for an Israeli leader since 1996. On the same day, an Israeli gymnastics delegation was in Qatar for the beginning of the world championships being held in Doha. —AFP ■

IS repels US-backed forces from east Syria holdout: monitor

BEIRUT (Lebanon) — The Islamic State group has ousted a US-backed coalition of Kurdish and Arab forces from its holdout in eastern Syria, killing dozens of fighters, a monitoring group said on Sunday.

A Syrian Democratic Forces commander, asking not to be named, confirmed the SDF retreat from the Hajin pocket near

the Iraqi border seven weeks into an offensive.

The SDF, who are backed by air strikes of the US-led coalition, launched its campaign to retake the IS holdout on 10 September.

But they have faced a fierce fightback from the jihadists, including under the cover of sandstorms, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights

says. "In counterattacks since Friday to Sunday dawn, IS has taken back all positions to which the SDF had advanced inside the Hajin pocket," the monitoring group's chief Rami Abdel Rahman said.

The Observatory reported 72 SDF fighters killed, as IS took advantage of the storm that hampered coalition air cover and dis-

patched suicide bombers as part of their fightback.

The SDF commander told AFP that his forces had faced a "strong dust storm" and lacked local knowledge of the terrain.

Unlike IS, "our forces don't know the area and can't move around in conditions of zero visibility," he said. "Military reinforcements and heavy weapons have

been sent to the front and some units will be replaced by more experienced ones," the commander said. "We will launch a new military campaign as soon as those reinforcements have arrived," he said. More than 300 SDF fighters and around 500 IS jihadists have been killed in the past seven weeks of fighting, the Observatory says. —AFP ■

Britain faces pre-Brexit budget battle

LONDON, (United Kingdom) — Britain's finance minister will try to navigate a political minefield on Monday when he unveils a budget that could be scuppered by the final terms of Brexit next year.

Philip Hammond's appearance in parliament was moved forward a month to give lawmakers a chance to consider it quickly and then focus on legislation needed to get Britain safely out of the European Union in March.

London and Brussels remain locked in negotiations and it is still uncertain whether Prime Minister Theresa May can get an eventual deal with the EU backed by lawmakers.

The spending plan that emerges from Hammond's red briefcase will be studied warily by May's ruling coalition partners from Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party.

The small group is a king-maker that could yet sink both the draft agreement with Brussels and May's government in



British Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond is to unveil a budget that could be scuppered by the final terms of a Brexit deal. PHOTO: AFP

protest over the emerging outlines of a Brexit deal.

This level of uncertainty forced Hammond to admit on Sunday that "frankly, we'd need to have a new budget that sets out a different strategy" should negotiations fail to salvage an agreement between all sides.

He also pledged to keep "fiscal buffers" in place to handle any scenario.

But Hammond argues that a workable solution is both possible and likely to bring a "Brexit dividend" that gives a boost to lagging economic growth.

"Of course we can never

know until we have actually done the deal, but everything tells me that it is very much in the interest not only of the UK but also of the EU," he told the BBC on Sunday.

"Everything I hear tells me that the 27 member states want a deal done with the UK." —AFP ■

Poison gas: World War I's weapon of terror

PARIS (France) — On 22 April, 1915, a greenish fog drifted over the battlefield north of Ypres in Belgium, choking to death some 5,000 French soldiers and heralding a new type of terror on the Western Front.

World War I saw the first widespread combat use of modern chemical weapons, starting with the 168 tons of chlorine released by the Germans over the trenches near Ypres.

Officers hoped the vomiting, suffocation and burns caused by poison gases would force troops to abandon positions in what quickly became a standoff between German and allied forces.

They also had a deep psychological impact, forcing soldiers to keep masks at the ready for fear of falling victim to a silent killer.

"Gas masks and their grotesque appearance became the ultimate symbol of a man turned into a mechanised, dehumanised phantom by modern warfare," said Doran Cart, a curator at the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri.

"That had a huge impact on civilians," he added.

The Germans' use of chlo-

rine prompted a chemical arms race in which scientists and military leaders worked hand-in-hand to develop more lethal weapons.

French researchers soon developed phosgene, with a more subtle "mouldy hay" odour that was harder to detect and the ability to cause suffocation hours after being inhaled.

It was quickly copied by the Germans as both sides sought agents which would seep into trenches and bunkers.

'Fighting for breath'

But the most infamous — and deadliest — was mustard gas, in reality an oily vapour first used by the Germans in July 1917, again near Ypres.

Known as the "King of Battle Gases", it acted by contact instead of having to be inhaled, getting through clothing to cause severe burns.

"It didn't always kill but the burns impaired people for a long period of time and required a very long nursing," said Edward Spiers, a professor of strategic studies at Leeds University in Britain.

"It slowed everything down. People had to try to de-

contaminate whole areas" before attempting to get through it, said Spiers, author of "A History of Chemical and Biological Weapons".

Overall an estimated 90,000 people were killed by gas attacks and a further 1.2 million injured, sometimes when the poisonous clouds released by artillery shells drifted back into an attacker's lines.

But despite the relatively small number of deaths compared with the 9.7 million soldiers killed in total during the war, the fear and suffering caused by chemical arms became symbols of a harrowing new era in modern warfare.

"I wish those people who talk about going on with this war whatever it costs could see the soldiers suffering from mustard gas poisoning," the British nurse Vera Brittain wrote in her memoir "Testament of Youth".

"Great mustard-coloured blisters, blind eyes, all sticky and stuck together, always fighting for breath, with voices a mere whisper, saying that their throats are closing and they know they will choke", she wrote.

'Psychological scar'

After the war ended officials quickly pushed to outlaw chemical weapons in war, signing the Geneva protocol in 1925, which nonetheless failed to set up a system for monitoring or punishing their use.

"The use of such weapons left a psychological scar in ways that conventional weapons did not," Spiers said.

"In most societies that used them the use of chemical warfare was vilified, but it was never quite removed from the world's arsenal," Spiers added.

As soon as 1926, French and Spanish forces would employ them against Moroccan rebels in the Rif Mountains.

"It truly is, and this hasn't changed since World War I, a terror weapon. It creates terror," Cart said.

But even though they are still used today — Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has been accused of repeatedly gassing rebels and civilians in his war-torn country — only in the first World War were poison gases used on a large scale in combat.

"What's occurring today is not primarily military but used against civilians," Cart said. — AFP ■

Brief in News

Merkel's party suffers heavy losses in key regional election: exit poll

FRANKFURT AM MAIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party suffered heavy losses in Sunday's regional election in Hesse state, according to an exit poll.

The CDU remained the largest party, but lost around 10 percentage points to score 28 per cent of the vote, public broadcaster ARD reported, while junior federal government partners the Social Democrats (SPD) shed almost 11 points to land on just 20 per cent. — AFP ■

Eiffel Tower to go dark for Pittsburgh victims

PARIS (France) — The Eiffel Tower will go dark at midnight on Sunday "to honour victims of the anti-Semitic attack" in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo said on Twitter.

"I express my support for the Jewish community and all of Pittsburgh's inhabitants," she added.

The rampage on Saturday took the lives of 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh's predominantly Jewish Squirrel Hill neighbourhood.

Robert Bowers, 46, has been charged in the shooting.

The lights on the iconic Paris landmark, one of the world's best-known and most-visited monuments, has been switched off several times in the past following terror attacks around the world. — AFP ■

Thai owner of Leicester City was killed in helicopter crash: club

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Leicester City's Thai boss Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha was killed along with four other people when his helicopter crashed shortly after take-off just outside the team's stadium, the club confirmed on Sunday.

"It is with the deepest regret and a collective broken heart that we confirm our chairman, Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, was among those to have tragically lost their lives on Saturday evening when a helicopter carrying him and four other people crashed outside King Power Stadium," the club said in a statement. — AFP ■



Members of a rescue team prepare to search for survivors from the Lion Air flight JT 610, which crashed into the sea, at Jakarta seaport on 29 October, 2018. The Indonesian Lion Air plane carrying 188 passengers and crew crashed into the sea on 29 October, officials said, moments after it had asked to be allowed to return to Jakarta. **PHOTO: AFP**

Indonesian Lion Air plane crashes into sea with 189 passengers, crew

JAKARTA, (Indonesia) — A brand new Indonesian Lion Air plane carrying 189 passengers and crew crashed into the sea Monday, officials said, moments after it had asked to be allowed to return to Jakarta. The Boeing-737 MAX, which went into service just months ago, vanished from radar 13 minutes after taking off from the Indonesian capital, plunging into the Java Sea. Video footage apparently filmed at the scene of the crash showed a slick of fuel on the surface of the water.

Disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho tweeted pictures of debris, including what appeared to be an emergency slide and various parts of a smashed mobile phone. Authorities were still searching for the remains of the plane, which lost contact with air traffic control around 6.30 am (2330 GMT), en route to Pangkal Pinang city, a jumping off point for beach-and-sun seeking tourists on nearby Belitung island. “The plane crashed into water about 30 to 40 metres deep,” Search and Rescue Agency spokesman Yusuf Latif told AFP. Images filmed at Pangkal Pinang’s main airport showed families of passengers crying,

talking frantically on their mobiles phone and hugging each other. Some were heard saying “Ya Allah” or “Oh God”.

Indonesia’s National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC) said there were 178 adult passengers, one child, two infants, two pilots and six cabin crew on board flight JT 610.

The transport ministry had initially said there was a total of 188 people on board. The finance ministry said around 20 of its employees were on the plane. It was not immediately clear if any foreigners were on the downed plane, which Lion said was a new, airworthy plane that had only gone into service in August. The pilot and co-pilot had more than 11,000 hours of flying time between them, it added. “Lion Air is very concerned about this incident and will work with relevant agencies and all parties,” said spokesman Danang Mandala Prihantoro. The Flightradar website tracked the plane and showed it looping south on take-off and then heading north before the flight path ended abruptly over the Java Sea, not far from the coast.—AFP ■

Bangladesh opposition leader handed new jail term as supporters cry foul

DHAKA (Bangladesh) — Bangladesh’s imprisoned opposition leader Khaleda Zia was handed another seven years in prison Monday on corruption charges her supporters say are politically motivated to prevent her running in a general election.

Zia, arch-rival of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is already behind bars after being handed a five-year term in February on separate embezzlement charges.

That verdict triggered clashes between police and thousands of loyalists from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which Zia still leads from prison.

There was a small demonstration outside BNP headquarters Monday in the capital Dhaka, but the opposition vowed nationwide marches on Tuesday to protest against the verdict.

In Zia’s latest trial, Judge Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman found the 73-year-old guilty of abuse of power and embezzling 31.5 million taka (\$375,000) destined for a charitable fund.

The verdict was handed down in a temporary courtroom inside Dhaka Central Jail where Zia — who has been hospitalised for poor health — is the only inmate.

Her lawyers, who were also absent during the verdict, have consistently described the fast-track trial as “political vengeance” by Hasina, who has been accused of stifling her opponents.

“The people will never accept this judgement,” BNP sec-

retary general Fakhru Islam Alamgir told reporters.

The latest conviction is expected to further impede Zia’s chances of challenging her erstwhile ally Hasina in polls slated for December.

Zia boycotted the 2014 general election which saw Hasina returned to power.

The BNP had been hoping a higher court would overturn Zia’s earlier sentence, setting her free and paving the way for the veteran opposition leader to run against Hasina.

But the latest verdict throws up more hurdles for the opposition, which says 4,000 of its supporters have been arrested since September in a pre-election crackdown.

“This judgement is to keep her out of the election,” said Alamgir.

Family feud

Prosecutor Khurshid A. Khan said the latest charges against Zia dated back to 2005, during her second term as prime minister of the Muslim-majority democracy of 160 million.

“We finally got justice, despite some delay,” he told AFP.

Zia entered politics in the mid-1980s after her husband, a former military dictator, was assassinated in an abortive coup.

She faces dozens of separate charges related to violence and corruption that her lawyers insist are baseless.

Zia says the charges are designed to keep her family out of politics.—AFP ■

Thailand’s biggest party elects leaders as it gears up for election

BANGKOK, (Thailand) — The party of Thailand’s former premier — who was toppled by the military — chose its leaders on Sunday and said it is “confident of success” ahead of a much-anticipated election promised for February.

Pheu Thai, which backed ousted premier Yingluck Shinawatra, voted in stalwart Viroj Pao-in as party leader; members said in a briefing to the media.

Viroj has “worked hard during the party’s difficult times”, said Pheu Thai stal-

wart Sudarat Keyuraphan, who was made head of the strategic committee.

The junta, which seized power and toppled Yingluck’s administration in a coup in 2014, has postponed elections multiple times since taking over but has insisted the vote will now go ahead in February.

Parties are still under a partial political ban, which bars them from campaigning or holding rallies. It remains to be seen whether Pheu Thai can capitalise on previous suc-

cesses at the ballot without the star power of Yingluck and her older brother Thaksin, who was himself pushed out in a military takeover in 2006.

The siblings live in self-exile to avoid what they say are politically motivated court charges.

The wealthy and powerful Shinawatra clan has won every election since 2001 through populist platforms and welfare schemes that have angered Bangkok’s military-aligned elite. But large sections of so-



Thai politician Viroj Pao-in (c) leaves after being named the leader of Puea Thai party in Bangkok on 28 October, 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

ciety have grown weary of military rule and endemic inequality while protests have bubbled up in recent months calling for a return to democracy. “People vote for us not because of the

party’s name or how we look like but... (but) because we can fix their problems,” Sudarat said. “So we are confident about the success in the upcoming elections.” —AFP ■



The underwater Janos The Molnar cave system, named after the Hungarian pharmacist who discovered it in the 19th century, has become a hot tip for diving aficionados. PHOTO: AFP

Budapest's underwater wonderland draws divers from far and wide

BUDAPEST (Hungary) — Not every diver's dream is to watch shimmering shoals of fish swim through coral reefs in dazzlingly blue seas.

For Laura Tuominen, the ultimate diving experience is not to be found in the Red Sea or the Caribbean, but in a labyrinth of spectacular underwater caves beneath the pavements of Budapest.

The Hungarian capital is already famous worldwide for its steaming hot spas and thermal baths.

But the underwater Janos Molnar cave system, named after the Hungarian pharmacist who discovered it in the 19th century, has become a hot tip for diving aficionados.

Around seven kilometres (4.4 miles) in length and previously open only to scientific expeditions, the cave became accessible to the public — that is, qualified divers — when a diving centre was opened here in 2015. “We are under Budapest! It's amazing!” shouts Tuominen, a 39-year-old Finnish anaesthesiologist and passionate amateur diver, as she jumps into the warm waters from a platform mounted in the narrow space at the bottom of the entrance tunnel.

She is one of a group of hobby divers and speleologists, wearing dry suits and carrying double cylinders of compressed gas on their backs, who then descend into the gloomy

waters, the light from their torches gradually fading out of view.

The group is accompanied by a diving centre staff member who directs them with the help of “guideline” cords through the maze of narrow passageways and cavernous cathedral-like chambers.

'Very rare' urban setting

“It's the only underwater cave in Budapest open to divers. Speleology is a niche market. It doesn't have mass appeal. And our urban location makes us special. It's very, very rare,” says Attila Hosszu, who has run the centre since it opened. The advantage of being underneath a city is that “you don't have to haul your equipment up a mountain or down a deep valley to get here,” Hosszu adds.

The entrance to the centre is a discreet metal door near one of Budapest's main boulevards and just a block away from the Danube river that separates the city's two halves, Buda and Pest.

According to the diving centre's website, the cave was formed many millennia ago, when the geological fault line on which Budapest is situated cracked. The ascending thermal water ate into the rock to create caves close to the surface. “You can see amazing stalactites and stalagmites in Mexico. But you have to travel for days

to get there. Here, you just walk in and dive, it's very exciting,” says 38-year-old Russian Irina Litvinenko after getting off the tram on her way to the centre.

Outside on the streets, the autumn wind is blustery. But inside the centre, the air is still warm and humid, making the divers sweat as they get their equipment ready.

Explorations from the 1950s began to reveal the full extent of submerged canyons, halls and passageways. But until the diving centre opened three years ago, only scientists were permitted entry to explore or collect samples for laboratory examinations.

'Silence is precious'

Zoltan Bauer, who has been guiding groups through the cave since 2015, says visitors come mostly for the stunning underwater landscapes.

“There are only a few creatures in the cave,” the 29-year-old says, referring mainly to tiny crustaceans. “But what I really like is the shape of it, how it looks, its beautiful formations.”

Litvinenko, a Cyprus-based finance worker, is similarly entranced.

“Usually, cave diving is about going in and out of a tunnel. But this is like a Swiss cheese, you go down one hole and come back through another,” she enthuses. “For me, it's super-relaxing. In this technological world, silence is

precious.”

The water's balmy temperature of 20-27 degrees Celsius (68-80 degrees Fahrenheit) year round is another draw, says Marton Illes, a 37-year-old IT developer from Budapest, who lives nearby.

“This is my 15th dive here, but I'm just scratching the surface. There's so much to see down there, so many passages,” says the part-time diving instructor.

To preserve the cave's unique ecosystem, the daily number of divers is limited to 30. It costs 60 to 140 euros (\$68 to \$159) depending on the depth of the dive — maximum 90 metres (300 feet). The depth also determines the time limit, currently 150 minutes, but no-limit dives may be coming soon. Geologists, chemists, biologists, and maintenance engineers repairing safety ropes rub shoulders with tourists in the tunnel before a dive.—AFP ■

EU air quality slowly improving but still deadly: report

BRUSSELS (Belgium) — Air pollution is slowly easing in EU countries but still causes nearly half a million early deaths each year, the European Environment Agency (EEA) said in its annual report published on Monday.

Although pollution levels dropped slightly in 2015, they remain far higher than standards set by both the European Union and the World Health Organization, the report said.

The findings come just weeks after an EU watchdog said most member states fail to meet the bloc's air quality targets, warning that the toll on health in eastern European countries was even worse than in China and India.

The EEA said on Monday that exposure to fine pollution particles known as PM2.5 was responsible for around 391,000 premature deaths in the 28-nation bloc in 2015.

The report also found that 76,000 early deaths were linked to nitrogen dioxide and some 16,400 to ground-level ozone in

EU countries in the same year.

Fine pollution particles have been linked to respiratory illnesses and heart problems, with PM2.5, the smallest, posing the greatest health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs.

The EEA said a wider assessment included in the report found that early deaths each year due to PM 2.5 have been cut “by about half a million” since 1990.

It said this reduction was due to European air quality policies and local measures “which have led, for example, to cleaner cars, industry and energy production”.

“Air pollution is an invisible killer and we have to intensify efforts to address its causes,” said Hans Bruyninckx, the agency's executive director. The mayors of Paris and Brussels recently called for Europe to hold an annual car-free day in a bid to ease air pollution, having held a vehicle-free day in their own cities in September.—AFP ■

Early Bird Sale: Refilling Station, Restaurant

A licensed refilling station with four 3,600-gallon tanks owned by a guarantor, with a concrete-floor structure type car parking for seven Express buses, a daily sales between K3.5 million and K4 million, and a restaurant of a two-story RC type building annex and scenic view which can attract foreigners, located at a strategic place on four-acre land on the Meikhtila-Kyaukpadaung Road. Price K400 million, payment is negotiable.

Contact: 09-49266711, 09-765031097

MINISRTY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS MYANMA RAILWAYS

Extension of Tender Closing Date

Myanma Railways Extends the Tender Closing Date as follows:

Sr No	Tender No	Description	Initial Closing Date & Time	Extension Closing Date & Time
1.	16/MR/INDIA (E) 2017-2018	Track Recording Car EM 80 And Small Track Maintenance Machineries	14.11.2018 (14:30) Hr	19.12.2018 (14:30) Hr

Managing Director, Myanma Railways
Ministry of Transport and Communication, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar



This photo taken on 26 September, 2018 shows three female motorcycle-taxi drivers waiting at a motorcycle-taxi stand in Bangkok. PHOTO: AFP

In the fast lane: Female motortaxi drivers on the rise in Bangkok

BANGKOK (Thailand) — Hair pulled back tightly as she lounges on her red scooter, Ar is a rare sight among the male-dominated ranks of Bangkok's motortaxi riders plying their trade on the Thai capital's treacherous roads.

A veteran of seven years who works in the bustling On Nut district, Ar is among the thousands of women drawn to the work as gender roles in Thailand evolve, attracted by the flexible hours, decent wages, and a sense of autonomy.

She welcomes the changes as offering a chance for women to gain more independence.

"I am glad there are more opportunities for women to become 'motorsai'," she said, referring to the road warriors whose distinctive orange jackets line the streets of Bangkok.

"A new generation of women now have to be tough and brave."

Although no official figures are available, observers say more women are choosing to brave the risky traffic-logged roads and discrimination for the flexible work schedule, which allows them ownership over their lives.

Chaloem Changtongmadun, president of Thailand's Motorcycle Taxi Association, said that working as a motorsai offered women a level of freedom not available in offices, shops or factories.

"Women don't find the work convenient when they become pregnant, take maternity leave or visit their hometown," he told AFP.

"They feel a closer connection with their families than when they worked in companies."

He believes that women today make up roughly 30 per cent

of Bangkok's 98,000 registered drivers although others say the numbers are probably lower.

In many parts of the Thai workforce gender expectations are still at play, with women typically filling service industry jobs and clerical positions.

"Thailand still has very blatant gender discrimination," said Kyoko Kusakabe, a professor at Bangkok's Asian Institute of Technology where she studies women's employment in the informal economy.

That is in spite of women shouldering many of the family responsibilities, especially in times of crisis, Kusakabe said.

Women are more likely to take up low-paid work in the informal economy while men "stay unemployed to look for a better job", she explained.

'Now things have changed'

Chaloem also attributes the increase in recent years to the struggling economy, which has been under pressure since a military junta took over in 2014.

Thailand's ever-shifting political landscape — where courts and coups have undercut civilian rule since 2006 — has hampered growth in what has been dubbed a "lost decade".

"Many people lost their jobs or couldn't make enough money to take care of themselves and their family," Chaloem told AFP.

Thailand also has one of the highest numbers of road deaths in the world, and Bangkok's motortaxi drivers embrace a life on the edge to provide a transport lifeline, weaving skillfully between long lines of cars.

As the industry has become more regulated, the drivers are

now less vulnerable to abuse from shadowy mafias demanding monthly payments.

Mototaxi queues — known as "wins" — also function in a more democratic fashion, like holding elections of leaders and allowing members of a queue to vote on certain decisions.

However, most of the women still require the support of a male relative in order to join a line, where there is usually a lot of competition.

Waiting for her turn on a shady Bangkok street in the Ari neighbourhood, Paveena — who goes by the nickname Yaya — says she could only secure her position because her brother vouched for her.

"My brother asked the win owner if I could borrow one of their (orange vests) so I could make more money," 36-year-old Yaya told AFP, explaining the second job was needed to support her family after the death of her mother four years ago.

Today, she earns about 1,200 baht (US\$37) for a full day's work — a relatively high income compared to Thailand's daily minimum wage of 330 baht.

Being able to make her own schedule also gave her the freedom to juggle her other job of selling school stationery.

Yaya said leaving a life of routine to buzz through the streets even helped her deal with her grief.

"Driving helped me get through the loss of my mother because I didn't have to think so much... I just drove," Yaya said.

Buayloy Suphasorn, 53, started 17 years ago and is considered a pioneer as one of the first female drivers on her win. —AFP ■

Rock star reception as Harry and Meghan start last leg of Pacific tour

WELLINGTON (New Zealand) — Prince Harry and Meghan arrived in Wellington on Sunday to a traditional Maori welcome, an official reception disrupted by a fire alarm and a rock star reception during a public walkabout.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are on the last leg of a 16-day, four-nation tour which was timed to coincide with the 2018 Invictus Games in Sydney.

They flew in from Sydney on a Royal New Zealand Air Force flight carrying the Kiwi team who took part in the Games, an Olympic style sporting event for wounded soldiers that Prince Harry helped found.

The royals held hands as they left the aircraft where they were greeted by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and mingled with the Invictus athletes before heading to a reception at the residence of the Governor-General of New Zealand Patsy Reddy.

The visibly pregnant duchess, with her hair in a bun, was wearing a black dress by ASOS Maternity and a calf-length brown chequered coat by Karen Walker, having changed during the three-hour flight from the burgundy dress she wore when boarding in Sydney.

They were welcomed to Government House with a traditional haka and performed a hongi greeting with indigenous Maori elders, in which they pressed noses together.

After visiting a newly unveiled UK War Memorial and laying a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier the royals received an excited reception as they went on a walkabout among thousands of fans, many scream-

ing and with some draped in Union Jack flags and others wearing an array of tiaras.

There were tears and applause as the royal couple were showered with gifts, including a New Zealand 'Buzzy Bee' toy, which Harry held aloft to the delight of the crowd.

"I can't believe this has happened, I can't believe that I met the royals," said Victoria O'Brien, still sobbing several minutes after the royal couple had moved past her.

The royals then returned to Government House for meetings with Ardern and the leader of the opposition Simon Bridges, ahead of a reception hosted by the Governor-General marking the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage.

Just before Bridges was to meet the prince a fire alarm went off, forcing the evacuation of the building and leaving dozens of women who were invited to the reception standing outside in the cold in their evening outfits, many holding drinks.

A Government House representative later said it was a false alarm caused by a vegetable steamer in the kitchen.

Harry and Meghan's itinerary over the following three days includes a hike and barbecue in the Abel Tasman National Park at the top of the South Island, a reception with Ardern at Auckland War Memorial Museum and a visit to the popular North Island tourist resort of Rotorua.

The couple will then head back to Auckland before flying out on Thursday to end a marathon tour which also took in Fiji and Tonga. —AFP ■



Britain's Prince Harry (2nd l) and his wife Meghan (3rd l), the Duchess of Sussex, chat with Maori elders as a warrior (r) makes a traditional challenge during an official welcoming ceremony at Government House in Wellington on 28 October, 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Chinese researchers develop new technique for low-cost solar cells

LANZHOU — Chinese researchers have developed a new photovoltaic technique that could improve the efficiency of solar cells and reduce their cost.

The new technique uses high-efficiency hole-and-electron-selective layers for both polarities on silicon substrate, which could improve the efficiency of solar cells to 15.1 per

cent, said Peng Shanglong, head of a research team at Lanzhou University in northwest China's Gansu Province.

He added that the new technique would allow the potential model of solar cells to avoid high-temperature processes, which makes it low-cost and efficient.

“Because of high equipment

costs and complex techniques, traditional solar cells have long been limited in use on a large scale,” Peng said. “It's of practical value to develop a new model of solar cells.”

The findings have been published on *Nano Energy*, a major journal covering the science and engineering of nanomaterials and nanodevices. —Xinhua ■

Zika virus detected in second Indian state

NEW DELHI, (India) — India's Zika outbreak is spreading, with officials saying on Sunday that the mosquito-borne virus has been detected in the western state of Gujarat after nearly 150 cases were reported this year in neighbouring Rajasthan.

Health authorities in Gujarat said a woman tested positive for Zika and was treated at a state hospital in the capital Ahmedabad, the first confirmed case outside Rajasthan this year.

“Only one case has been found so far. We are taking all precautions,” Gujarat Commissioner of Health, Jayanti Ravi, told AFP on Sunday. The state health de-

partment has rallied hundreds of doctors and medical personnel to perform emergency screenings for Zika, including more than 250 pregnant women with fevers.

Gujarat, which borders Rajasthan to the south, has been fumigating public areas in an effort to kill the mosquitos that carry the diseases.

Health authorities in Rajasthan have detected 147 cases of Zika since September, officials say. Almost 440,000 people were under surveillance in Rajasthan's capital Jaipur last month.

The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which carries Zika and other viruses like dengue fever, is widely

prevalent in India.

The country of 1.25 billion reported its first Zika cases in January 2017 in Gujarat but the latest case is the first in the state this year. Since Zika erupted on a large scale in 2015, more than 1.5 million people in more than 70 countries have been infected, with most in South America.

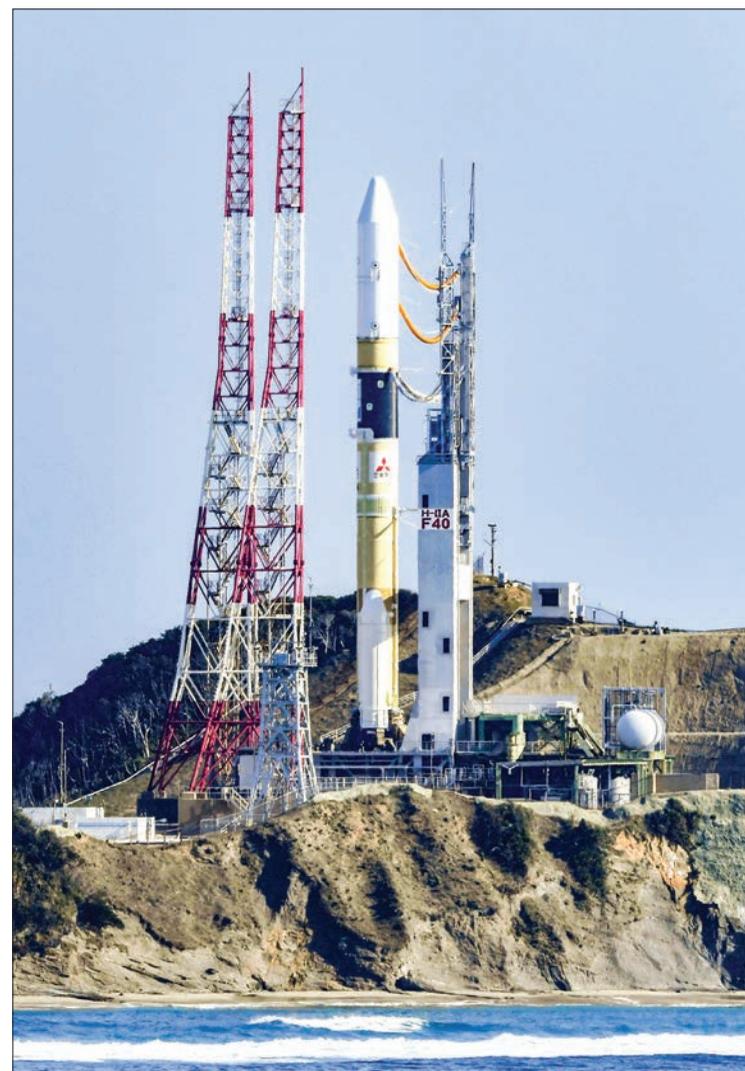
In rare cases, if pregnant women contract the virus their babies can develop brain defects.

Zika was also detected in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu in July 2017. The World Health Organization has said no vaccine is likely to be available until 2020.—AFP ■



Gujarat has been fumigating public areas in an effort to kill the mosquitos that carry the diseases.

PHOTO: AFP



H-2A rocket carrying an Ibuki-2 greenhouse gas observation satellite at Tanegashima Space Centre on 29 October, 2018. PHOTO: KYODO

Japan launches rocket carrying greenhouse gas observation satellite

TANEGASHIMA (Japan) — An H-2A rocket carrying an Ibuki-2 greenhouse gas observation satellite was launched on Monday from the Tanegashima Space Centre in southwestern Japan, successfully putting the satellite into its planned orbit.

The satellite, launched by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd, is more precise than its predecessor that was put up in 2009 and will orbit the earth at an altitude of 600 kilometres to collect data on carbon dioxide and methane gas.

The data will contribute to global efforts to tackle climate change based on the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep temperature rises this century well below 2 C above preindustrial levels.

The Ibuki-2 will also monitor air pollution by measuring the amount of PM 2.5, or particles 2.5 microns in diameter or smaller.

The rocket also carried the United Arab Emirates' Khalifa-Sat earth observation satellite and another small satellite developed by Japanese universities.—Kyodo News ■

Diabetes drug may help prevent blindness: study

SAN FRANCISCO — Researchers from China's Taiwan Province have found that a common drug used to treat type 2 diabetes may have an effect of lowering the possibility of developing a disease leading to blindness, the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) said on Sunday.

The San Francisco-based

academy said the research, disclosed at AAO 2018, its 122nd Annual Meeting being held in Chicago from 27 to 30 October, showed the diabetes patients who took the medication of metformin have a significant lower rate of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), one of the leading causes of blindness in Americans aged

50 or above.

The researchers studied the statistics of the health insurance research database in Taiwan from a period spanning from 2001 and 2013 and found that 45,524 type 2 diabetes patients who took metformin have better chances to avoid suffering AMD that affects about 2.1 million people in the United States.

The study suggests that metformin, which controls the blood glucose level in type 2 diabetes patients, can suppress inflammation and oxidative stress, the two major factors that play a key role in the development of both diabetes and AMD.

“Our study is the first to reveal the protective effect of metformin on the development

of AMD,” said lead investigator Yu-Yen Chen.

The AAO is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons, with a global community of 32,000 medical doctors, which is committed to advocating the protection of sight and empowering lives by promoting eye care and health for the public.—Xinhua ■



Myanmar U-21 men's players had a group photo taken in China. **PHOTO: MFF**

Myanmar U-21 to participate in Viet Nam U-21 Invitational Football Tournament

MYANMAR U-21 men's football squad is going to participate in Viet Nam U-21 Invitational Football Tournament to be held in Viet Nam during December, said a source of Myanmar Football Federation (MFF).

As part of preparations for taking part in the international football tournaments including the Viet Nam U-21 Invitational Football Tournament, Myanmar U-21 will conduct a con-

stant training. Myanmar U-21 will continue doing the training without breaking down after participating in the Vietnamese Invitational Football Tournament.

The Viet Nam U-21 Invitational Football Tournament is scheduled from 8 to 18 December. Myanmar U-21 will take part in the three major international football tournaments during 2019. Myanmar U-21 will take

part in AFF U-22 Championship in February, AFC U-23 Qualifier in March and 30th SEA Games in November during 2019.

Myanmar U-21 has begun training since 2 October and it is being steered by U Kyi Lwin. Myanmar U-21 takes part in Viet Nam U-21 Invitational Football Tournament every year. In 2017, Myanmar U-21 won the third-placed prize beating Thailand. —Htut Htut (Twantay) ■

Myanmar reaches next round winning Iran with 1-0

MYANMAR advanced the second round qualification of AFC U-19 Women's Championship winning Iran 1-0 in the last match of the first round qualification in Thuwunna Stadium, Yangon on 28 October.

Iran prioritized a defensive play against host Myanmar in the first half. Myanmar put one-sided pressure on the opponent Iran throughout the first half. Myanmar failed to take advantage of goal chances and the match ended a goalless draw in the first half.

In the second half of the game, Iran altered its play pattern opening attacking

line. Iran received a penalty kick at the 60th minute, but in vain, the penalty kick hit the goal post and went beside. Iran saw more goal chances than Myanmar throughout the second half.

Myanmar got a winning goal from the away kick by Hnin Mya Thazin at the 65th minute. Iran is above Myanmar with same three points but goal difference in the Group-F.

Myanmar reached the second round qualification of AFC U-19 Women's Championship by standing as the best second-placed team. —Htut Htut (Twantay) ■



Myanmar women's player (red) tries to score the goal against Iran in last group match. **PHOTO: MFF**

Elina Svitolina wins WTA Finals in Singapore



SINGAPORE — An unwavering Elina Svitolina claimed the biggest title of her career with

a gritty comeback victory against Sloane Stephens at the season-ending WTA Finals in Singapore.

The Ukrainian once again dug deep to triumph 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 in two hours and 23 minutes on Sunday. She is the first player to go through the WTA Finals undefeated since

Serena Williams in 2013.

Svitolina has been in brilliant, ag-

gressive form in Singapore, beating defending champion Caroline Wozniacki, Czech players Petra Kvitova and Karolina Pliskova at the group stage, and Kiki Bertens in the semi-finals.

Having started slowly in the semi-finals, it was Stephens who made the running early and she broke Svitolina to love in the second game. It was a matchup of similar styles between the athletic counterpunchers and lengthy rallies punctuated the contest.

Svitolina looked sluggish after playing the two longest matches in the tournament against Wozniacki and Bertens in the semi-finals.

She saved three break points in the sixth game but was unable to convert two chances of her own in Stephens' next service game.

Stephens' blistering forehand dictated, as she ran away

with the first set.

A more aggressive Svitolina went for her shots and clawed back into the contest. Even though she still struggled on serve, Svitolina attacked on return and broke twice to wear down a suddenly passive Stephens. Svitolina fittingly forced a decider in a tournament which has had a record-setting amount of three-set matches.

The 24-year-old's momentum continued as she produced an astounding run down winner to break Stephens in the second game. But Stephens wouldn't roll over as she attacked Svitolina's serve and broke in the fifth game.

The twists continued as Svitolina hit back immediately and stormed home as a wayward backhand from Stephens sparked jubilation from the number six seed. — AFP ■

Ukraine's Elina Svitolina celebrates with her winning trophy after defeating Sloane Stephens of the US in their singles final match at the WTA Finals tennis tournament in Singapore on 28 October, 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**