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State Counsellor receives Yunnan Provincial Party Committee Secretary



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shakes hands with Mr. Chen Hao, Secretary of Yunnan Provincial Party Committee of Communist Party of the People's Republic of China in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar received Mr. Chen Hao, Secretary of the Yunnan Provincial Party Com-

mittee of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China on 3rd December 2018 at 4 pm at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting they cordially discussed and ex-

changed views on the matters relating to promotion of trade and investment in border areas, enhancing people-to-people contacts, close cooperation between concerned authorities for peace and stability in border areas, and

continued cooperation for better transportation, for poverty alleviation and rural development in Myanmar as Yunnan Province plays a vital role in bilateral relations between Myanmar and China.—MNA ■

Vice President U Henry Van Thio addresses IDPD ceremony

VICE President U Henry Van Thio, Chairman of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NCRPD) attended and addressed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) ceremony held at the Myanmar International Convention Centre II (MICC-II) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The ceremony was attended by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Union Ministers Dr. Win Myat Aye, Nai Thet Lwin and U Kyaw Tin, Deputy Ministers Rear-Admiral Myint Nwe, U Kyaw Myo and U Soe Aung, Hluttaw representatives, diplomats, Permanent Secretaries, representatives of United Nations organizations, NCRPD members, NGOs, INGOs and guests of honors, persons with disabilities, invited guests and officials. The ceremony was opened with a song entitled "serving the country" performed by students from the Kyimyindine School for the Blind.

Following this Vice President U Henry Van Thio addressed the ceremony saying that starting from 3 December 1992, this day has been designated and observed as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities by the United Nations (UN). Myanmar had observed the day annually starting from 3 December 1994 and this year, 2018, it is being observed for the 25th time.

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Sixth-day meeting of Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's tenth regular session conducted

The sixth-day meeting of Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's tenth regular session was held at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meeting hall yesterday.

Condolences and 2-minute silence for Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Maung Thein Khaing

In the meeting Daw Khin Saw Wai of Rathedaung constituency tabled a motion of condolences on the demise of Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Maung Thein Khaing of Sittway constituency. Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker obtained the decision of the Hluttaw and announced the Hluttaw putting the motion on record. The Hluttaw representatives then stood and observed a two-minute silence in honor of Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Maung Thein Khaing of Sittway constituency.

U Min Thu swear-in as Union Minister for Union Government Office

U Min Thu appointed as Union Minister for Union Government Office then sworn in before the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat.

Appointment of Kachin State Minister for Security and Border Affairs

Following this, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker informed the Hluttaw about the appointment of Col. Nay Lin Tun as Kachin State Minister for Security and Border Affairs sent by the President and Hluttaw put on record the appointment.

Joint Bill Committee report on bill amending law to protect farmer rights and enhance benefit



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat. PHOTO: MNA

Next, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee member Daw Nwe Nwe Aung read the findings and comments report of the committee on the bill amending for the second time the Law of Protection of the Farmer Rights and Enhancement of their Benefits that the two Hluttaws were in disagreement.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker announced for Hluttaw representatives who want to discuss the report to enroll their names.

Hluttaw discuss and approves International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University Bill and Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association Bill

Afterwards, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee joint secretary Dr. Myat Nya-na Soe tabled a motion on the seven clauses of International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University Bill in which the two Hluttaws were in disagreement. Dr. Win Myint of Bago Region constituency 11, U Kyaw Naing of Yangon Region constituency 12, U Min Thein of Taungdwingyi constituency and Tatmadaw Pyithu Hluttaw representative Lt-Col Khin Maung Kyi discussed the motion and obtained the decision of the Hluttaw by clauses

and approved it.

Similarly, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee member U Zaw Win tabled a motion on the five clauses of Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association Bill in which the two Hluttaws were in disagreement. Daw Shwe Shwe Sein Latt of Bago Region constituency 3 discussed the motion and obtained the decision of the Hluttaw by clauses and approved it.

Union level members explains US\$ 93.779 million EDCF loan from EXIM Bank of Korea

Later, Union level members explained about the US\$ 93.779 million Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) loan from EXIM Bank of Korea.

First, Union Minister for Transport and Communication U Thant Sin Maung explained that pledge of EDCF Loan was sent by the government of Republic of Korea (ROK) on 5 January 2018. The interest rate is 0.01 percent and if the implementing entities are small and medium enterprise or medium to large companies of ROK, the interest rate will be reduced to zero percent. The total loan period is 40 years inclusive of a grace period of 15 years.

The project using this loan

will provide government online services to the people with ease and data flow between government entities, businesses and the people will speed up. The success of e-Government works will develop the economy of the country while important governmental data and information are securely stored and maintained in the Government Integrated Data Center (eGIDC). As such the Union Minister explained to the Hluttaw to approve the EDCF Loan.

Next, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Win explained that the loan is in accord with fiscal year 2018-2019 Union Budget Law, 2017 Public Debt Management Law, mid-term debt management strategy and development assistance policy as well as to the strategy of the recently published Myanmar sustainable development project (2018-2030). The Deputy Minister said the matter is submitted to the Hluttaw through the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker for the Hluttaw to discuss and approve it.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker then announced for Hluttaw representatives who want to discuss the matter to register their names.

Hluttaw discusses and approves Myanmar becoming a member of IRRDB

The matter of Myanmar becoming a member of IRRDB (International Rubber Research and Development Board) and payment of annual fee sent by the President was first discussed in support by U Yan Lin of Kyaiklat constituency. Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw explained in details about the benefits of be-

coming a member of IRRDB and the submission made to and permission obtained from the Union Government on the payment of annual fee. Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker announced the approval of the Hluttaw on the matter after obtaining the decision of the Hluttaw.

Union level members explains about Yuan 80 million loan from PRC and Hluttaw votes to approve the loan

As a final agenda of the meeting, Union level members explained to the Hluttaw about interest free Yuan 80 million loan from People's Republic of China (PRC) for Ministry of Transport and Communication passenger carriages' purchasing project.

Union Minister for Transport and Communication U Thant Sin Maung first explained that the loan is to purchase 28 passenger carriages that will be used in the Yangon-Mandalay express train service. Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Win on the other hand responded to discussions made by Daw Shwe Shwe Sein Latt of Bago Region constituency 3, U Aung Thike of Seikpyu constituency and Daw Cho Cho of Ottwin constituency and said the matter is submitted to the Hluttaw through the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker for the Hluttaw to approve it.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker announced the Hluttaw's approval of the matter after Hluttaw representatives voted 465 for 12 against and 7 abstaining.

The seventh-day meeting of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's tenth regular session will be held on 6 December it is learnt.—Aung Ye Thwin, Aye Aye Thant (MNA) ■
(Translated by Zaw Min)

Chinese embassy hosts dinner in honour of Secretary of Yunnan Provincial Party Committee of CPC

THE Embassy of China hosted a dinner in honour of Mr. Chen Hao, Secretary of Yunnan Provincial Party Committee of Communist Party of the People's Republic of China, at the Horizon Lake View Resort Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the dinner, Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang extended greetings, and Mr. Chen Hao and Union Minister

U Kyaw Tint Swe presented toasts to each other for China-Myanmar cooperation.

Afterwards, Union Ministers, Mr Chen and invited guests enjoyed the dinner.

Also present at the dinner were Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Lt-Gen Ye Aung, U Thant Sin Maung, Dr. Than Myint, U Soe Win and U Kyaw Tin, Deputy Ministers and officials.—MNA ■



Embassy of China hosts dinner for Mr. Chen Hao, Secretary of Yunnan Provincial Party Committee of Communist Party of the People's Republic of China in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



Vice President U Henry Van Thio delivers the speech at the International Day of Persons with Disability (IDPD) ceremony at MICC-II, Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Vice President U Henry Van Thio addresses IDPD ceremony

FROM PAGE-1

Of the world's population of over seven billion, one tenth is disabled and 80 per cent of them are living in developing countries. The difficulties and problems faced by persons with disabilities are not due to their weaknesses but more so for the other constraints of thoughts and views.

According to research findings, disabilities are directly related to a country's development and there is a connection between disability and poverty. In some countries of the world, only a third of the disabled were employed. The gap in primary school attendance between children with and without disabilities ranges from 10 to 60 per cent.

Starting from the early part of the 21st century, the affairs of the disabled were being observed with new thoughts and from new angles all over the world to come to an understanding. In doing this countries had conducted for the basis of full inclusiveness and increasing protection on equality but there still remains many challenges to be overcome.

The rights of the people with disabilities who had lived a lonely life due to misunderstanding, ignorance, superstition and fear became a special matter for UN organizations and international organizations to look into. That was why the 61st UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on 13 December 2006.

Myanmar ratified the UNCRPD on 7 December 2011 and as per the convention the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015), Rules on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) were enacted and a Strategy on Development of Persons with Disabilities (2016-2025) was established and approved.

To effectively implement the law, rule and strategy, a national level committee, work committees, states/regions and Nay Pyi Taw Council committees and sub-committees were formed. National committee meetings were held a total of two times to date, once in 2017 and once in 2018. This month, it will be held for the third time. Work committee meetings were held twice in 2018, a meeting to establish a fund for

persons with disabilities was also held once in 2018. At those meetings, decisions were made on projects and work processes related to development of the rights of the persons with disabilities and development inclusive of persons with disabilities.

According to the 100-day work program, conventions on children, women and persons with disability were published in Braille for persons with impaired vision. A project for persons with impaired hearing to have access to news and information was also implemented and the outcome is preparing and publishing in hand sign language of conventions on women and persons with disabilities. Translators of hand sign language are being trained and developed and courses for hand sign language assistants were also being conducted continuously.

NCRPD was formed on 14 September 2017 and related committees were formed to effectively setup and implement policies, projects and work processes for long term development of rights of persons with disabilities.

On the implementation part, distribution of introduction to Rules on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, implementing a project for massage system where persons with disabilities had an advantage and arranging vocational training for persons with disabilities to create job opportunities were conducted.

Preparation and publishing of a reference book on usage of words related to disabilities and preparation to publish Rules on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in hand sign language for persons with impaired hearing was also underway. Handbook on Employment of Persons with Disabilities for Employers had been prepared and published to create more job opportunities for persons with disabilities and these books will be distributed at this ceremony. According to the technological age, an Information Communications Technology Training Center for persons with disabilities including persons with mental impairment was opened and courses conducted.

Furthermore establishment of a process to register and categorize disabilities that is vital for persons with disabilities

to participate and benefit from relevant courses and development programs provided by the government and other partner organizations is also underway.

In addition to this, cash assistance was provided to a total of 24,984 persons with disabilities, 12,855 in fiscal year 2017-2018 and 12,129 in fiscal year 2018-2019 (6 month period). Awareness work on danger of mine that is connected to disabilities is being conducted and starting from fiscal year 2017-2018, a total of 400 mine affected person, 112 in Kachin State, 16 in Kayah State, 39 in Kayin State, 85 in Shan State, 62 in Bago Region and 86 in Taninthayi Region were provided with cash assistance.

In addition to fulfill the works and duties of the national committee, a Technical Assistance Group is formed with Department for International Development to establish exact work processes for each committee and to conduct according to international norms. In addition to training school based and community based trainings, works programs for education, health, work opportunity, legal, knowledge of disability for persons with disability were also included in the relevant fiscal years.

In conclusion, the Vice President urged all to work towards fulfilling the seven pledges made at the Global Disability Summit.

Next, representative of UN organizations Ms. June Kunugi read the message of the UN Secretary General.

Afterwards, Vice President U Henry Van Thio presented a Handbook on Employment of Persons with Disabilities for Employers to the Permanent Secretary U Myo Aung from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population and also presented awards to winners of IDPD honor award. Next, Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nai Thet Lwin, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye and representative of UN organizations Ms. June Kunugi presented document of honors to winners of IDPD competitions and international sports competitions.

After the presentation of document of honors, a video record on activities of persons with disabilities were shown followed with a dance performance by students from School for the Deaf (Mandalay).

Finally Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities acting chairman U Thein Lwin delivered a message of appreciation.

Vice President U Henry Van Thio and ceremony attendees then took commemorative group photo and observed the IDPD exhibition.

The theme of the 2018 International Day of Persons with Disability is "Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality." — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)



Vice President U Henry Van Thio looks at documentary photos displayed at the International Day of Persons with Disability (IDPD) ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



Union Supreme Court sits to pass judgment on special criminal appeal cases, hear special civil appeal cases

THE UNION Supreme Court convened at Union Supreme Court room number 1 at 9:30 am yesterday with Chief Justice of the Union Supreme Court U Htun Htun Oo and Union Supreme Court judges passing judgments on four special criminal appeal cases, along with hearing three special criminal appeal cases and two special civil appeal cases. — MNA ■

Hundred Myanmar Classic Book Series launched

UNION MINISTER for Information Dr. Pe Myint attended a ceremony to launch the three volume 100 Myanmar classic book series at the Sule Shangri-la Hotel in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

Speaking at the event, Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint said the Ministry of Information is making efforts for literature development and encouraging reading by holding paper reading sessions, book fairs and literature festivals.

Meanwhile, libraries in townships have established book clubs and organizing literature talks inviting those who are knowledgeable as part of efforts for development of public talks in the country, he added.

He continued to say that Literature talks led by authors are always included in the literature festivals held nationwide. It is known to all that the State Counsellor also held a literature talks with youths.

The Union Minister disclosed that the Ministry of Information will hold a literature festival later in December in Nay Pyi Taw to encourage more extensive reading.

He also expressed thanks to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, region and state governments for success of the nationwide literature festivals.

Regarding the efforts for development of literature, Ministry of Information has carried out the tasks considering them as a good legacy from ancestors and has innovated new ideas for development of the literature the country, he added.

“For example, there are two significant programs of the Sarpay Beikman. We are working hard to re-publish the Myanmar Encyclopedia after editing and amending. Myanmar Encyclo-

pedia is one the achievements of the Sarpay Beikman in its glory days from 1950 to 1960,” said the Union Minister.

The working on publishing the Myanmar Encyclopedia started in 1950s and came to a circulation in 1960s-1970s.

The encyclopedia brought pride to the people of Myanmar and it is still being reliable for reference.

However, the time demands to amend and edit facts and fig-

Ministry of Information will hold a literature festival later in December in Nay Pyi Taw to encourage more extensive reading.

ures in the book as it turned 50 to 60 years.

“To fulfil this needs, the Tun Foundation offered its assistance in doing the work, and at present, the Tun Foundation and the Printing and Publishing Department are working together for updating the Myanmar Encyclopedia,” said the Union Minister.

The encyclopedia is expected to come out in the near future, he added.

Hundred Myanmar Classic series introduced to the people today is one the achievements of the Sarpay Beikman and is a compilation of outstanding literary works that emerged from the early days of Myanmar literature to the year 2000.

It includes books and papers which were relied upon by Myanmar literature communities and were influential in those days.

Publishing the hundred My-

anmar classic series is aimed at providing opportunities to our next generation to get easy access to the influential books and to develop their spirit of book loving through reading and enjoying literature.

Besides, the move is also aimed at providing international researchers with ready information for doing their research work on Myanmar people’s experiences, knowledge, intelligent, thinking, characters, culture, customs, language and standard of literature.

However, it was found that publishing such kind of a book series needs collective efforts from all in reality though just thinking for publishing is easy.

“Just Sarpay Beikman and Ministry of Information can not carry out such huge task. Therefore, we formed a committee chaired by Sayargyi U Thaw Kaung with members literature experts who can find and search outstanding and influential novels, short stories, poems and plays,” said the Union Minister.

The Union Minister also expressed thanks to those who contributed their works in pub-

lishing the book series.

He also requested the experts to continue to contribute towards the remaining tasks as their expertise was playing an important role in publishing the books.

The Myanmar classic book series was arranged by Sarpay Beikman of the Printing and Publishing Department under the Ministry of Information.

Vice-Chairman of the Myanmar Classic Books Series committee Dr. Khin Aye (Maung Khin Min-Danubyu) made an opening remark concerning the Myanmar classic book series.

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint presented a set of books as a token of appreciation to the authors who wrote the preface and who assisted in writing the Myanmar classic book series. Saya U Aye Cho (M.A) accepted them on behalf of the contributors.

Ministry of Information Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung presented payment for copyright and honourarium of “Maung Yin Maung and Ma Me Ma” by James Hla Kyaw to the family members of the writers. Deputy Director-General (Rtd)

U Maung Win accepted the honourarium on behalf of the successor of the honourarium, Saya U Aye Tun.

Ministry of Information Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung presented the payment of an honourarium and copyright of “Ta Nan Pyaw Yin Thway Taw” by Sayagyi U Latt to successor U Ko Ko Naing; the payment of an honourarium and copyright of “Yadanabon” by Sayagyi Shwe Oo Daung to member of Sayagyi Shwe Oo Daung’s Literary works committee U Nyein Chan (Saya Nyi Pu Lay); and the payment of an honourarium and copyright of “Hmar Taw Pone” by Sayagyi Thakhin Kodaw Hmaing to successor Sayama Daw Mya Mya Aye.

The Director General of Printing and Publishing Department U Aung Myo Myint presented complementary books to the committee members for publishing the three volumes of Myanmar classic book series, and Saya U Kyi Win (Lawka Ah Mon) accepted it on behalf of the committee members.

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Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint delivers a speech at the ceremony to launch the 100 Myanmar Classic Book series.
PHOTO: MNA

Domestic gold prices likely to fall around Ks1 mln

By Nyein Nyein

THE price of domestic gold might continue to fall to Ks1 million per tical (0.578 ounce), said U Ohn Myaing, general secretary of the Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association.

Pure domestic gold was sold at Ks1,017,000 per tical yesterday. The dollar exchange rate and fuel oil prices are currently on the downward side. Domestic gold prices and US dollar exchange rates are directly related to the global market. With the local currency strengthening against the US dollar, domestic gold prices are likely to keep falling, according to the Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association.

“It is pretty hard to predict in the local market as to whether or not pure gold prices would dip below Ks1 million per tical. Yet, it might fluctuate to around Ks1 million. The fuel oil price is

positively related to the dollar exchange rate. As Myanmar’s currency is gaining in the market, gold prices will simultaneously plunge. The price is forecast to fluctuate at around Ks1 million”, said U Ohn Myaing.

Although domestic gold prices fluctuate, depending on global gold prices, it is not traded higher than global prices, said U Tin Tun, chair of the Mandalay Gold Entrepreneurs Association.

The domestic gold price was around Ks1,040,000 per tical in early November and, thereafter, it has gradually dropped to Ks1,017,000. The price is likely to go lower than the current prevailing price, said U Myo Myint, chair of the Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association.

Pure gold reached its lowest at Ks969,000 per tical and Ks1,040,000 per tical in October. Last month recorded the lowest rate of Ks1,027,100 and the

highest rate of Ks1,044,500 in November.

Meanwhile, gold transactions remained cool. The market is likely to recover in early 2019, U Ohn Myaing, general secretary of Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association, pointed out.

“Gold trading is not as good as expected. At the crop harvest time, Myanmar’s demand for gold normally slows down. This being so, the price slipped a bit. I think the gold market will recover in January 2019 due to a steady demand”, he said.

The domestic gold price reached above Ks900,000 from 21 July 2017. With global gold prices soaring, domestic gold prices were on the high side between August and September. It reached a high of Ks985,000 on 28 August and fell to Ks969,000 on 30 August. It hit a new peak of Ks1,047,700 on 20 September. ■
(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Oil prices slumping as global crude oil price dips

DOMESTIC fuel oil prices continued their downward slide in recent days, as global crude oil prices dipped to \$50 per barrel on 30 November.

Domestic fuel oil prices reached their highest record in mid-October. But on 26 November, oil prices per litre plunged by Ks180 for 92 Octane, Ks160 for 95 Octane, Ks65 for diesel and premium diesel, compared to the highest price in October.

On 30 November, oil prices were about Ks865 for Ks92 Ron, Ks945 for 95 Ron, Ks1,025 for premium diesel and Ks1,005 diesel. Yet prices fell to Ks855 for 92 Ron, Ks925 for 95 Ron, Ks1,015 for premium diesel and Ks1,005 for diesel yesterday, according to the local oil retail market.

The drop in domestic oil prices has been attributed to

the fall of global crude oil prices and the depreciation of the dollar exchange rate.

The prices are likely to continue lower, petrol entrepreneurs forecast.

At present, Myanmar imports about 600,000 gallons of fuel per month, mainly from Singapore, as a lack of terminal facilities limits the country from opening a direct link with oil exporting countries.

There are 12 state-owned fuel stations across the country. The government has handed over 261 state-owned filling stations to private enterprises, in a bid to promote the role of the private sector. There are 2,000 fuel stations and 50 companies in Myanmar. — Ko Htet ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Exports through Muse gate drastically falls over past one and half months

CHINA’S trade suspension of some agro products reduced the volume of exports through the Sino-Myanmar main checkpoint, the Muse gate, from 1 October to 23 November this year.

Over the past six weeks, exports through Muse drastically slumped, by \$189 million, compared to the same period last year, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

Some 75 per cent of the trade between China and Myanmar is carried out through Muse, which recorded the largest trade volume among border checkpoints. It also witnessed the majority of the country’s rice exports.

Nevertheless, from the second week of October, tight restrictions by China on rice, sugar and corn imports through

Muse has been reported, halting trade.

China has set import quotas on some agro products, including rice. Tax is exorbitantly high for merchants when the import volume exceeds the quota limit, resulting in an increased illegal flow of rice into China. Therefore, China’s confiscation of rice in border areas often occurred.

Muse gate saw exports

worth \$331.76 million and imports of \$205.8 million during nearly the past two months, totaling \$537.58 million. The figure plunged from \$733.37 million last year.

Myanmar’s border trade with China amounted to \$648 million, which decreased from \$829.8 million last year, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Rice, various types of peas, sesame seeds, corn, fruits and vegetables, dried tea leaves, fishery products, rubber, minerals and animal products are exported to China.

Myanmar imports machinery, plastic raw materials, consumer products and electronic tools from China. — Ko Khant ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

MTG

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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.

Hundred Myanmar Classic Book Series launched

FROM PAGE-4

Following this, Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint and attendees took commemorative photographs. The ceremony was attended by officials from the Ministry of Information, members of the committee for publishing the Myanmar classic book series, authors who wrote introductory

chapters and assisted with the edition, family members of the writers, departmental heads and others. The first volume of the Myanmar classic book series includes "Maung Yin Maung and Ma Me Ma (1904)" by James Hla Kyaw, "The Roselle Leaves seller; Maung Haming (1904)" by Wunsaye U Kyi, and "Chit Yoe Ah

Hman (1907)" by Ma Aye Khin.

The second volume contains "She Pyi Soe (1914)" by U Latt, "Yadanabone (1917)" by Shwe Oo Daung, and "Eternal Love or B.A. Maung Ba Lwin (1920)" by Maung Ba Than. The third volume includes "Ta Nan Pyaw Yin Thway Taw (1920)" by U Latt, "Nay Ye Ye (1920)" by P

Moe Hnin, and "Hmar Taw Pone (1921)" by Thakinkodaw Hmaing. Each volume is 700 pages, and will be distributed throughout the country by the Sarpay Beikman books shops in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw. These books are being sold for Ks. 12000. — MNA (*Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun and Win Ko Ko Aung*)

HIV infection rate at record high in Yangon, Sagaing, Shan, Kachin

ACCORDING to a press release issued by the World Health Organization, Myanmar has the fourth highest rate of HIV infections in Southeast Asia. The HIV infection rate is at a record high in Yangon and Sagaing regions, as well as in Shan (North) and Kachin states, said Dr. Tin Myo Win, chairman of the Union Peace Commission (UPC).

Tuberculosis (TB) and hepatitis B are also serious health issues, which are threatening members of the public. World AIDS Day 2018 was held on 1st December in Yangon People's Square. At the event, the UPC chairman said, "We have to re-

spond to big challenges by conducting HIV prevention awareness training courses in ethnic communities in remote areas. We also need to reduce the discrimination against people living with HIV disease.

"HIV is infecting people who are injecting narcotic drugs in the northern region in Myanmar. Also, the use of Yaba among the youth has become a big issue. One organization alone cannot prevent or reduce the outbreak and spread of HIV disease. We need cooperation from partner organizations and NGOs," he added.

"There were about 227,000

people living with HIV in 2017. Myanmar had 11,000 new infections reported in 2017, declining from 28,000 in 2000. During these years, over 70 per cent of key affected populations have new infections."

The Ministry of Health and Sports has been taking enacting prevention and protection measures, in compliance with the 2016-2020 National Strategic Plan, and in cooperation with other partner organizations, which include awareness campaigns and HIV blood tests, along with providing Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Treatment, said the Deputy Minister for

Health and Sports.

"We aim to eliminate mother to child transmissions by 2025. We hope HIV free communities will emerge in 2030 through cooperation between the Ministry of Health and Sports and other partner organizations," said the deputy minister.

This year's theme for World AIDS Day is "Know Your Status". The HIV virus was first discovered in Myanmar in 1988. The HIV virus can be transmitted from one person to another through contaminated blood, sex and from mother to children.—Zar Ni Maung

(*Translated by Hay Mar*)

Contract signed to purchase white sesame grown under GAP system

LOCAL farmers from Monywa participating in the agricultural project to increase incomes from exports of oil crops entered into a purchase contract with the International Best Manufacturing Co. Ltd on 3 December in Sagaing Region Agriculture Department's meeting hall, Monywa Town, to purchase the white sesame grown under the Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) system.

"This contract is a first for Sagaing Region. Next, we are making arrangements to sign contracts to develop the sunflower market. The company will purchase 600 baskets of white sesame grown on Budalin farmland. According to the contract, the company will purchase only those sesame cultivated under the GAP system. The sesame and sunflower are being grown with the GAP system in Myaung, Myinmu, Budalin and Salingyi townships.

"Currently, we are developing the market for local farmers. The company has also planned to purchase not only sesame, but also sunflower and groundnut grown



A contract signing ceremony between local farmers from Monywa participating in the agricultural project and International Best manufacturing Co., Ltd held in Monywa, Sagaing Region. **PHOTO: MYO MIN THU (MONYWA)**

with GAP", said U Khin Muang Nyunt, the head of Sagaing Region Agriculture Department.

At the contract signing ceremony, Sagaing Region Agriculture Department head U Khin Muang Nyunt delivered a speech, while International Trade Centre (ITC) project manager Dr. Thit Thit Lwin explained the project to increase incomes from the export of oil crops, along with conducting practical sessions for local farmers to learn about the GAP system. Then, International Best Manufacturing Co. Ltd di-

rector U Than Htway explained about the contract. "We started to purchase white sesame in Magway Region. After which, we will extend our purchases to Budalin Township, Sagaing Region. Later, we will proceed to Shwebo, Wetlet and Myinmu to procure white sesame. But we only purchase high and medium quality sesame," said U Than Htway, Director of International Best Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

Following the speeches, local farmers covered by the Budalin Township project and the

company signed a contract to purchase white sesame.

"The company purchases the sesame from us. This is the very first time we have made a sale through the signing of a contract. We planned to grow white sesame and black sesame. We expect to sell around 50 baskets. We have already received the training to grow the crops with GAP," said U Nyan Maung Than, a local grower from Dan Daing Village in Budalin Township.

"We have entered into a contract with the company, because the company will pay more money for sesame grown with the GAP system. The sesame cultivated under the GAP system will be paid Ks 1000 per basket, which is more than the prevailing price. But, if the quality of the crops is not up to the standard agreed to, either because of the poor weather or for other reasons, the company will pay the price, depending on the quality. The crops cultivated under the GAP system is good for export, said U Tun Tun Oo, the chairman of Saging Region Edible Oil Millers Association. — Myo Min Tun (Monywa)

(*Translated by Hay Mar*)

Experts discuss awareness, capacity building regulations for agro biotechnology in Nay Pyi Taw

THE MINISTRY of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation hosted a workshop on Awareness and Capacity Building on Regulations for Agricultural Biotechnology in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr. Aung Thu expressed his hope that the workshop would be successful in writing biosafety policies, a biosafety framework and laws which are necessary for Myanmar.

“Myanmar needs to perform research on new agro technologies and new products, even as genetically modified agriculture products and livestock products are being produced

globally,” said Union Minister Dr. Aung Thu.

Myanmar needs laws and regulations for scrutinizing genetically modified agricultural products which have the potential to be imported, and to develop biosafety policies that are in conformity with the natural environment and social environment.

Consideration must be given to apply advanced scientific cultivation technologies in rural development businesses, such as the agriculture sector and livestock sector.

His ministry is giving priority to producing cost-effective and international-standard agricultural products for the nutrition, safety, and health of con-



Union Minister Dr. Aung Thu addresses the workshop on Awareness and Capacity Building on Regulations for Agricultural Biotechnology in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

sumers, said the Union Minister.

Afterward, Ms. Rachel Nelson from the USDA reviewed international research, and Dr. Rhodora R Aldemita (OIC-Director) from ISAAA reported on the aim of the workshop and the step-by-step method to be undertaken in the discussion programs.

Dr. Carl Ramage, Dr. Rhodora R Aldemita, Dr. Aye Min,

Dr. Saturnina C. Halos and Bhagirath Choudhary discussed issues related with genetically modified crops.

The workshop was held with the cooperation of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation, with the intent to be

supportive in compiling a Biosafety Framework and Law of Myanmar.

During the workshop, a review of biotechnologies for crops, important scientific methods for food production and conservation of bio crops were discussed. — MNA ■

(Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)

Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe attends opening ceremony of new Taekwondo Centre



Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe, Korean Ambassador Mr. Lee Sang-hwa and officials formally open a new Taekwondo Centre in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe attended the opening ceremony for a new Taekwondo centre yesterday morning at the Youth Training Centre Stadium (Thuwunna) in Thingangyun Township, Yangon.

First Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe, Korean Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Lee Sang-hwa, Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun,

Director General for the Department of Sports and Physical Education U Myo Hlaing, donor Mr. Shin Hyun-suk from Booyoung Group and chairman of Myanmar Taekwondo Federation U Mya Han participated in the ceremony by cutting the ribbons.

In his opening speech, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe expressed his thanks to the

donor and organizers for the new Taekwondo centre, where Taekwondo athletes can conduct training camps, regional and state tournaments can be held, youth Taekwondo athletes can conduct their training and a new generation of athlete can be produced.

Moreover, Taekwondo does not require much space for those practicing the sport, and there are many benefits for students of this sport, such as lower blood sugar levels, hypertension, diabetes and other diseases, he added.

During the ceremony, Korean Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Lee Sang-hwa, donor Mr. Shin Hyun-suk from Booyoung Group and chairman of Myanmar Taekwondo Federation U Mya Han delivered speeches. Following this, they observed a Taekwondo demonstration.

They then awarded prizes to winners at a tournament. The new Taekwondo Centre has been under construction since 2016, and included a donation of US\$ 400,000 by the Booyoung Group of ROK. — MNA ■

(Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung)

Seven villages in Htilin Tsp provided with solar panels



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

The Htilin Township Rural Development Department has provided solar panels to seven villages in the township, Gangaw District on 2 December.

The program was part of the scheme of the National Electrification Project.

The solar power is to benefit 656 houses, 7 monasteries, 2 high schools, 4 middle schools,

1 primary school, 4 rural health care centres and electrify 58 lamp posts in the township.

The ceremony to hand over the solar panels was witnessed by Magway Region Hluttaw Representative Daw Yin Yin Aung and Township administrator U Min Teihdih. — U Kyaw Than Swe ■

(Translated by JT)

management@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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Only if civil service is efficient can our country be improved

CIVIL services institutions are fundamental to our democratic system. As Myanmar moves towards a truly democratic system of government, the role of civil servants is becoming of ever greater importance.

A strong moral compass and personal values of patriotism and integrity are what draw most individuals into our civil service. With these same values, they can fulfill and smooth the vital functions of government and serve the people.

All of us who have borne the responsibility of holding elected office understand the essential contributions that civil servants make to the will-being of the country.

To operate a governance machinery, public servants must loyally serve every administration with discipline and dedication.

During the British colonial rule in Myanmar, highly qualified, effective and efficient civil service personnel were produced by the Public Service Commission to effectively run the government machinery.

This meant that a capable and committed civil service, founded on the principles of integrity, impartiality and accountability, was sine qua non for a government.

In the early days of our independence, the political system our country adopted was a parliamentary democratic system, also called a multi-party democracy.

To operate a governance machinery, public servants must loyally serve every administration with discipline and dedication.

competitive examinations held by the then-Public Service Commission. Those selected and appointed civil officers were called B.C.S, Burma Civil Service officers, and when Burma was part of the British colony of India, they were called I.C.S India Civil Service officers.

While negotiating with the British government for our independence, General Aung San asked the ICSs and BCSS to work with the incoming Burmese government, if they wish, after gaining independence, saying openly that he could not guarantee the salaries and rights given to them by the British government.

Yet, ICSs and BCSSs, before the meeting with General Aung San, had already made their decision to continue to serve the country and the people.

This story shows the important role of civil servants and their professionalism in the nation's governance. They have written a good record of their work, in struggling to build our country after independence.

We do believe that our civil servants, who are accountable to the government elected by the people, has the potential to become one of the finest civil services and can continue to bring integrity, professionalism, nonpartisanship, intelligence and dynamism, when carrying out the government's programmes.

Time to change standard and quality of rice in Myanmar

Dr. Maung Nyein Aung (Taze), Photo: Phoe Khwar

Simple and unsophisticated operation is there in Myanmar regarding the business sector of paddy and rice in the country such as (1) local dealing and (2) foreign trading. In the context of local dealing, the people such as peasants and farmers, brokers, rice traders, and rice millers involved in the sphere. In the foreign deal, persons involved such as big rice merchants, large rice millers, rice exporting traders, rice exporting companies, and rice buyers from foreign countries.

Local rice dealers have to negotiate among themselves about the financial transaction for the paddy and rice deal. In making the deal possible, these people have to talk and refer the quality of paddy and rice. When referring the quality, they usually pointed a "standardize" quality for determination in the transaction. This is being called "standardization" of rice.

In the local marketing, the quality of rice has been based on the moisture, rice quality, clean and unsoiled status. Usually, the moisture has been pegged and marked as (14) per cent benchmark. When the percentage of moisture is more than the fixed marker, then the paddy and rice price rolled down.

The buyers such as the merchant, broker and rice miller used the agreed instrument in determining the moisture, and downgraded the price of rice accordingly. The peasants and farmers have to sell out the paddy at a lower price. In checking the quality and cleanliness, the rice is placed on the palm of the hand for examination. When



the rice is found to be discolored, mixed in variety rice, laced with dust and dirt, then the price of paddy is lowered. The peasants and farmers have no alternative but to accept the embarrassing low price.

This standardization has been in used for about (50) years in Myanmar. Therefore, it is time to adopt the international norm and standard in use today.

In the rice export business, foreign buyers and local sellers mainly talked about the quality of rice in determining the transaction price. They talked over the quality of rice. The norms used over the standard are still the old terms being existed during the British rule in the country. Even existing prescribed norms vide Order Num-

ber 1/ 2014 issued on 9 January 2014 by the Department of Rice and Rice Produce under the Ministry of Commerce are not in conformity with the existing international standard.

Customarily, Myanmar is not using the original name of the paddy in the transaction, but referred the term over the group of rice, resulting in dilemma for dealing with foreign buyers. Myanmar used the terms such as Emata (5), Emata (10), Emata (15) and Emata (25) in selling the rice, and that the foreign buyers enquired and asked the meaning of Emata.

When we referred Emata Group, there are varieties of paddies in that category. This category is all mixed up with many

sorts of paddy, resulting with very low price. Therefore, it is now the right time to call "Myanmar White Rice", and that it is to be classified as Grade (A), Grade (B) and Grade

of damaged paddy, inclusion of red rice, dust, sand, filth, degree of moisture, and poor rice polishing process.

Since the Myanmar rice

This standardization has been in used for about (50) years in Myanmar. Therefore, it is time to adopt the international norm and standard in use today.

(C). Moreover, other rice should be termed as "Myanmar Glutinous Rice" and "Myanmar Parboiled Rice".

In the current standardization for the quality of rice in Myanmar, it is found that the terms are not in conformity and compliance with the norms of the coder rules, the norms of the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the norms of the International Rice Research Institute. Therefore, the export of Myanmar rice is facing many facets of difficulties and hindrances in the price negotiations. There are times that the deal encountered with worst ending.

Regarding the norm and standardization of rice, the variety of specifications included such as that of the length, width, roundness, content of nutrient, inclusion of broken rice, size of broken rice, enclosure of raw paddy, inclusion

fixed at (46) pounds equal to one "Tinn". However, nowadays in various parts of the country, the transactions in the sales of rice stand out in (52) pounds, (54) pounds, or (56) pounds. It is in fact not in line with the international standard of rice deal if compared to other countries.

There is no norm and standard in the transaction of rice using the weighing system of "pound" in many countries. The system in use is with the weighing of ton / kilogram in the rice deal. If the sales and the deals are done only in the local context of the rice market among the business people, there is no problem at all. However, in the international deal, it is difficult to use the different and dissimilar unit of measurement.

In the deal for the matter in the context of rice export, Myanmar rice dealers are thinking and considering locally, while the foreign buyers bring in the terms using the term of international norm. Myanmar side is using the cultivation term "acres" and measurement term "Tinn", while the foreign buyers bring in the terms such as "hectare", "ton", "kilogram", resulting with the delayed calculation to come up on a par with the international norm with different language. It is therefore, time to convert the measurement and weighing into "hectare" and "kilogram".

In conclusion, it is to say that Myanmar is doing commercial and trade businesses with the international community, the ASEAN countries, and foreign countries, and that the writer would like to advice and urge that it is time to change and convert in the standardization of weighing systems of the country in line with the norm, standard and model of international practices.

Translated by UMT (Ahlon)

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The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global New Light of Myanmar.—Ed

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

THE Office of the President issued Press Release No. 26/2018 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 1 December.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 1 December.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 5 December issue of *The Global New Light of Myanmar*.—GNLM

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of Service Organizations appointment confirmed

THE President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the appointment of the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.

Name	Appointment
(1) U Naing Swe Oo	Director-General Politics and Security Department Office of the President
(2) U Khin Maung Win	Director-General Social and Culture Department Office of the President
(3) U Maung Maung Ohn	Director-General Department of Houses Office of the President
(4) U Myo Thant Pe	Director-General Consular and Legal Affairs Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(5) U Soe Han	Director-General Political Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(6) U Win Kyaw Aung	Director-General Department of Policy Affairs Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor
(7) U Win Naing Tun	Director-General Department of Rehabilitation Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

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Farmers harvest rice in Ayeyawady Region.

Multidimensional Welfare in Myanmar launched in Nay Pyi Taw

A NEW report “Multidimensional Welfare in Myanmar” jointly produced by the Department of Population under the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population and the World Bank, was launched yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe has called for effectively helping the people facing the disadvantages in townships making the best use of the date of the report.

The ministry is distributing the data in the report online and offline.

The Multidimensional Welfare in Myanmar report uses detailed data available in the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, which covers a wide range of topics than most



Union Minister U Thein Swe delivers the speech at the launching ceremony Multidimensional Welfare in Myanmar held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

censuses. This includes demographic characteristics, disability and mortality, literacy and education, employment and education, housing conditions, as well as household assets and amenities.

Myanmar’s national measure of multidimensional welfare is referred to as the “Multidimensional Disadvantage Index” (MDI).

To adapt the needs of My-

anmar, the report uses the term “disadvantage” to refer to deprivations in a particular domain or indicator—i.e. a household is considered to have a disadvantage if its members fail to meet

a cut-off in an indicator.

The MDI consists of 14 non-monetary indicators from 6 domains (education, employment, health, water and sanitation, housing and assets) chosen through a two-stage consultative process beginning in September 2017.

Spatial diversity of disadvantage occurs not just at the state and region level but also at the township level within each region, according to the report.

The Multidimensional Welfare in Myanmar report provides useful information for development policy in three areas. First, MDI is a new measure of identifying people’s needs from various non-monetary perspectives and provides a multidimensional view of people’s well-being in Myanmar. — GNLM ■ (Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)

Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi attends inauguration of Myanmar UNEVOC Centre

UNION MINISTER for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi attended the inauguration of the Myanmar UNEVOC Centre and National TVET Seminar Transforming TVET in Myanmar at the Government Technical Institute (GTI) in Insein, Yangon Region, at 8 a.m. yesterday.

Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, Yangon Region Minister for Planning and Finance U Myint Thaung, and representing UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for TVET, Mr. Shyamal Majumader, opened the ceremony by cutting the ribbons. In his opening

speech, Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi said that out of 290 UNEVOC Centres, Myanmar would take part in the network while studying the experiences of other nations where technology and profession thrive in. Training classes would be conducted to help develop Myanmar’s culture and development of its socio-economic life. The National Education Strategic Plan includes upgrading professions and training using high quality standards to improve education and management systems, in line with the demands of the labour market.

As for the Ministry of Education, measures are being taken to carry out the transformation of the education sectors, in cooperation with UNESCO – UNEVOC International, while striving to develop technology, professions and training sectors with the support of the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

At the National TVET Seminar Transforming TVET, a solution could be sought regarding the obstacles and challenges facing the technological and vocational opportunities. Efforts are being made to enhance cooperation among the members of

UNEVOC networks by learning from their experiences, as Myanmar would build a long-term partnership to empower higher qualities of technology and professionalism.

Myanmar would seek to ensure that sustainable development goals of UNESCO could be set up to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, that will be all-inclusive, along with high quality education that can contribute to sustainable development through seminars, he added. The introductory speeches were given by UNESCO-UNEVOC Interna-

tional Centre for TVET by Mr. Shyamal Majumader and Yangon Region Minister for Planning and Finance U Myint Thaung. Following this, the National TVET Seminar Transforming continued, as participants took part in discussions on technology and vocational trainings, skills and development for the changing of world orders, requirements for becoming high-quality standards of schools and organizations, and pursuing high-quality education, vocational trainings and ongoing processes. — MNA ■

(Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung)

IPRD staff receive news writing, releasing skills in Nay Pyi Taw

The writing and releasing of news is the main job of the Ministry of Information, and to speed up and make the delivery of news more systematic, courses on news releasing were conducted for the staff of the Information and Public Relations Department. Accordingly, an opening ceremony was held yesterday morning at the Dekkhina Training School, Information and Public Relations Department (Head Office) in Nay Pyi Taw.

In his speech at the opening ceremony, Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun said that it is important to release news that the public needs in

a timely manner. The Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD) has offices in states, regions, districts, townships and towns throughout the country, and is in a position to play an important role in collecting news.

In the digital age, in which technologies are rapidly developing and changing, the staff must have the ability to change the way they do their work.

The staff can not only become proficient in working with technologies, but must also follow the ethics, rules and procedures, as prescribed in the News Media Law, which is why these

training courses are offered regularly, said the Deputy Minister.

The course was attended by 35 staff members from states and regions who were photography technicians grade 2. They will be taught about the News Media Law, the ethics of journalism, flow of news, searching for news sources, basic news writing, feature writing, the importance of media in an emergency, the views of readers, the press conference sector, publishing of news online and news photography subjects will be taught by outside experts in both discussions, lectures and practical work.

After the ceremony, the



Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun delivers the speech at the opening ceremony of new writings and publishing course. **PHOTO: MNA**

Deputy Minister inspected the library, a mini-museum and exhibition, a children’s reading room and other works conducted at the Dekkhina District IPRD Office.

The Deputy Minister remarked that the district based centers should contact and co-

ordinate with civil services organisations (CSOs), youths and students, so that they make use of the centers. He also said that youths should be encouraged to use the volleyball and Sepak Takraw courts at the office. — Zaw Min Lwin (IPRD) ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Oil prices surge more than 5% on cut pledge, US-China deal



Russia's President Vladimir Putin (r) said he and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman 'have agreed to extend our agreement' to limit oil output. **PHOTO: AFP**

BEIJING — Oil prices soared more than five per cent on Monday after Russia and Saudi Arabia renewed a pact to cap output, while the US agreed to halt raising tariffs on Chinese imports, stalling a trade row that many feared could hit demand for the commodity.

Russian President Vladimir

Putin said Saturday he and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "have agreed to extend our agreement" to limit production as prices slump on global markets. An existing deal committing OPEC and non-members to cuts expires this year.

While there was no announcement on how much would

be cut and for how long, the pact between the world's two biggest crude exporters was cheered by oil traders, with Brent jumping \$2.82 to \$53.75 and West Texas Intermediate up \$2.98 at \$62.44 on Monday. "While we still need to know by how much OPEC will curb its production, Putin's comment does clear a barrier

for OPEC in stabilizing prices as Russia has been ambiguous about its stance," Ahn Yea Ha, a commodities analyst at Kiwoom Securities told Bloomberg News.

Both main contracts have plunged by about a third since hitting four-year highs at the start of October, hit by a number of factors including easing demand, high production, softer-than-expected US sanctions on Iran and a global growth slowdown.

Another major reason for the sell-off has been the ongoing trade row between China and the US, which has seen the world's top economies swap tariffs on imports worth hundreds of billions of dollars fuelling fears about the impact globally.

However, Donald Trump and Xi Jinping on Saturday announced a deal that will see the US hold off raising levies on Chinese goods on 1 January and China promise to buy more from the US, while entering a 90-day period of talks to bring an end to the dispute. Traders are now looking ahead to a weekend meeting of OPEC and key non-OPEC members in Vienna, where they will make an announcement on their cuts plans. — AFP ■

Top US, Mexico diplomats meet in Washington amid migrant crisis

WASHINGTON (United States) — Mexico's new Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard met with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday for what he called a "friendly" meeting amid tensions over the migrant crisis at the border.

The talks came one day after Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador took office as Mexico's new president.

"Friendly conversation as a first approach towards a long standing understanding between Mexico and the USA," Ebrard said on Twitter.

"I thank him for his attitude and respect towards the new administration of President Lopez Obrador."

Lopez Obrador, known as AMLO for short, is a leftist who was sworn in on Saturday, five months after a landslide election win.

On Sunday, Pompeo and Ebrard discussed a "shared commitment to address our common

challenges and opportunities for the future," according to State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert.

The two countries are grappling with how to handle the thousands of Central American migrants who are camped at the common border — in the short and long terms.

President Donald Trump is pressuring Lopez Obrador to accept a deal to keep asylum-seeking migrants in Mexico while their claims are processed in the United States.

Last week, Ebrard said he would like to see a sort of "Marshall Plan" to foster development in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, akin to what the United States did to help rebuild Europe after World War II.

Ebrard said such a plan would help shrink the number of migrants fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries and heading to the United States.



Central American migrants -mostly from Honduras - wanting to reach the United States in hope of a better life, remain at a shelter in Tijuana, Baja California State, Mexico on 24 November 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

New shelter in Tijuana for migrants

On Sunday, officials in the Mexican border city of Tijuana shut down a makeshift shelter in a sports complex housing migrants, citing unsanitary conditions, and moved them to a different facility.

Of the original 6,000 migrants who had massed in the city, only about 2,000 went to the new center, a city official told AFP.

Cold temperatures and driving rain made conditions in the open-air shelter too difficult.

Another 500 remained near the original site, fearing the

move was a precursor to being deported, and were sleeping in the streets, the official said.

The whereabouts of the rest were not known.

The migrants, most of them from gang-plagued Honduras, had travelled for weeks hoping to reach the United States.

A week ago, US authorities fired tear gas and rubber bullets at about 500 migrants including women and children who had tried to breach the US-Mexico border. The confrontation prompted hundreds of migrants to either head home or seek to remain in Mexico. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump tweets China has agreed to reduce, remove tariffs on US cars

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump tweeted Sunday that China has agreed to reduce and remove tariffs on US cars, a day after the two countries struck an accord in Argentina to put off imposing new duties.

China currently imposes a 40 per cent tariff on US automobiles. The rate was raised by 25 percentage points in July as part of countermeasures against Washington imposing tariffs on Beijing for alleged theft of intellectual property and technology. —Kyodo News ■

Possibility for DPRK leader's visit to Seoul left open: Moon

SEOUL — South Korean President Moon Jae-in has said that a possibility for the visit by Kim Jong Un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), to Seoul was left open, local media reported Monday.

Moon made the remarks during a press conference with local reporters on a flight to New Zealand for his state visit after participating in the Group of 20 summit in Argentina.

Moon noted that whether Kim would make a reciprocal visit to Seoul within this year depended on his determination.

During the Pyongyang summit in September, Kim promised to visit Seoul at an early date in return for Moon's trip to Pyongyang.

If Kim travels to Seoul, he would become the first DPRK leader visiting South Korea since the Korean Peninsula was divided with an armistice agreement that ended the 1950-1953 Korean War. — Xinhua ■

Japan, Uruguay agree to export beef to each other

MONTEVIDEO — Japan and Uruguay agreed Sunday to allow each other's beef imports as a way of expanding bilateral trade during the first visit by a Japanese leader to the Latin American country.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said he was delighted at the trade deal at a joint press conference with Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez following their talks in Monte video. —Kyodo News ■

China media lauds ‘momentous’ trade truce but questions linger

BEIJING — China’s state-run media hailed the trade war truce with the United States as “momentous” on Monday but warned of complex negotiations ahead, even as President Donald Trump said Beijing agreed to cut car tariffs.

Asian stock markets opened higher after US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping agreed on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Argentina at the weekend to hold off on imposing new tariffs while negotiators seek a deal.

Trump announced another apparent breakthrough late Sunday on Twitter, saying China had agreed to “reduce and remove” tariffs on cars.

The ceasefire follows months of tensions and punitive custom duties on hundreds of billions of dollars worth of goods that raised fears of an escalation that would harm the global economy.

Both sides gained from hitting the pause button, with Trump avoiding further hits to US agricultural exports, and Xi staving off an escalation of the pressure

that higher tariffs would place on his country’s slowing economy.

China’s nationalist Global Times tabloid welcomed the Buenos Aires agreement as a “momentous step forward” that brings “huge potential for fair trade”.

“It is hoped that the trade teams from both countries will reach as many practical agreements as possible and as quickly as possible to hasten China-US cooperation,” the daily said.

The Communist Party’s official mouthpiece, the People’s Daily, described the announcement as an “important consensus” that shows the two countries’ common interests “outweigh differences”.

‘Worse before it gets better’

Asian stock markets opened on a high note on Monday, with Tokyo up by more than one percent and Hong Kong and Shanghai rising more than two percent.

After being spooked by the conflict, investors returned to buying following the long-awaited meeting between the two presi-

dents.

But observers warned there were still major issues that need to be resolved, including access for US companies and intellectual property protection.

“We anticipate that things are still likely to get worse before they get better, and that the negative sentiment impact created by the trade narrative will create additional market volatility,” said Kerry Craig, global market strategist at JP Morgan Asset Management.

Under the agreement, Trump is shelving a plan to raise tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports from 10 per cent to 25 per cent from the start of next year — but the hike will kick in if negotiators fail to reach a final deal within 90 days.

The United States has slapped 25 per cent tariffs on another \$50 billion worth of Chinese imports and they remain in effect despite the truce.

China has hit back with similar tariffs on \$110 billion worth of goods made in the United States.

The US leader tweeted on

US-China tariffs

Imposed, scheduled or threatened

In effect

US imports from China

*Value of goods subject to tariffs, US\$ billion

25% tariffs imposed

10% tariffs imposed

50*

Already imposed by US in 2018

200

Imposed on Sept 24

Avoided

Under Donald Trump and Xi Jinping’s ‘ceasefire’ in the US-China trade war

Was set to rise to 25% on Jan 1, 2019

Additional tariffs that had also been threatened by US

Chinese imports from US

50

Already imposed by China in 2018

60

Imposed on Sept 24

China also agreed to scale back tariffs on US cars, according to Trump on Twitter

© AFP

Charts showing tariffs imposed by US and China against each other. PHOTO: AFP

Sunday that China had agreed to scale back tariffs on cars, but he did not explain which would be removed and which would be reduced.

Beijing had reduced auto import duties from 25 per cent to 15 per cent in July. But it added a 25 per cent tariff on US cars as trade tensions soared, bringing them to 40 per cent.

Trump wants China to do more to reduce its \$335 billion trade surplus with the United States, further open up its econ-

omy and take action to curb the alleged theft of intellectual property.

The Global Times said the two sides would discuss expanding market access, protecting intellectual property and “joint control of cyber crime”.

“Both parties agree that they will endeavour to have this transaction completed within the next 90 days,” the newspaper said, invoking a deadline that only the US side had mentioned on Saturday. —AFP ■

Russian army receives over 1,800 UAVs in last 6 years

MOSCOW — The Russian army has received over 1,800 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) of different types over the last six years, the Russian Defense Ministry’s official newspaper “Krasnaya Zvezda” (Red Star) reported on Tuesday.

“Over the last year, a qualitative leap has been made in the development of unmanned aerial vehicles. Almost 400 military units and subunits were formed, and they received over 1,800 modern unmanned aerial vehicles,

which allows them to conduct reconnaissance at the depth of 500 km,” the newspaper said.

The technical characteristics of Russian UAVs are constantly being improved, the newspaper added. “In particular, the development of promising systems that are capable of fulfilling tasks at the depth of 3,000 km, is underway,” the newspaper added.

Moreover, new UAVs can be used for electronic warfare, communications, and fire damage. —Tass ■



“Over the last year, a qualitative leap has been made in the development of unmanned aerial vehicles,” the Russian Defense Ministry said. PHOTO: TASS

1 killed, 19 hospitalised from building fire in India’s Mumbai

NEW DELHI — A 70-year-old woman was killed and 19 others were hospitalized Sunday after fire broke out inside a high-rise building in India’s financial capital city of Mumbai, police said.

The fire broke out at 18-storey Samrat Ashoka building located on Keshavrao Khade Marg near Mahalaxmi Racecourse in south Mumbai. “At least 96 res-

idents were stranded in their flats due to the fire and smoke, who were rescued by firefighters. Unfortunately among the rescued Laxmibai Koli, a 70-year-old woman succumbed during treatment,” said a police official.

Police said 19 people were admitted in the hospital. “Many of the people rescued were taken to hospital but discharged immediately,” the official said.

According to officials, the fire started in the electrical wiring inside a duct on the third floor and then spread to other floors.

The officials said it took several hours for firefighters to bring the fire under control. Chances of fire in Indian buildings are usually high as people ignore safety standards. —Xinhua ■

Fiji committed to empowering persons with disabilities

SUVA — The South Pacific island nation of Fiji said on Monday that it is committed to empowering persons with disabilities in the country.

Some 13 per cent out of Fiji’s 880,000 population live with some form of disability, permanent secretary for Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Josefa Koroivueta said when speaking at the In-

ternational Day of Persons with Disabilities on Monday, according to a government statement.

The secretary said the theme “Empowering Persons with Disabilities and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality” focuses on empowering individuals with disabilities, so as to achieve inclusive, equitable and sustainable development envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development which pledges to “leave no one behind.”

The ministry is in the process of formulating a plan for a national council for people living with disabilities and will be going around the country for consultation sessions.

Monday’s event also had displays by the disabled students who are part of the grass root training program. —Xinhua ■

Act now or risk disaster, nations told at UN climate summit

KATOWICE (Poland) — After the starkest warnings yet of the catastrophic threat posed by climate change, nations gathered in Poland on Sunday to chart a way for mankind to avert runaway global warming.

The COP24 climate summit comes at a crucial juncture in the battle to rein in the effects of our heating planet. The smaller, poorer nations that will bare the devastating brunt of climate change are pushing for richer states to make good on the promises they made in the 2015 Paris agreement.

Three years ago countries committed to limit global temperature rises to well below two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), and to the safer cap of 1.5°C if at all possible.

But with only a single degree Celsius of warming so far, the world has already seen a crescendo of deadly wildfires, heatwaves and hurricanes made more destructive by rising seas.

UN General Assembly president Maria Espinosa told AFP that mankind was “in danger of disappearing” if climate change was allowed to progress at its current rate.

“We need to act urgently, and with audacity. Be ambitious, but also responsible for the future generations,” she added.

In a rare intervention, presidents of previous UN climate summits issued a joint statement as the talks got under way, calling on states to take “decisive action... to tackle these urgent threats”.

“The impacts of climate change are increasingly hard to ignore,” said the statement, a copy of which was obtained by AFP. “We require deep transformations of our economies and societies.”

At the COP24 climate talks, nations must agree to a rulebook palatable to all 183 states who have ratified the Paris deal.

The road to a final rulebook is far from smooth: the dust is still settling from US President Donald Trump’s decision to ditch the Paris accord. G20 leaders on Saturday wrapped up their summit by declaring the Paris Agreement “irreversible”. But it said the United States “reiterates its decision to withdraw” from the landmark accord.

The UN negotiations got off to a chaotic start in the Polish mining city of

Katowice Sunday, with the opening session delayed nearly three hours by a series of last-ditch submissions. A string of major climate reports have cast doubt over the entire process, suggesting the Paris goals fall well short of what is needed.

Data doesn’t lie

Just last week, the UN’s environment programme said the voluntary national contributions agreed in Paris would have to triple if the world was to cap global warming below 2°C. For 1.5°C, they must increase fivefold.

While the data are clear, a global political consensus over how to tackle climate change remains elusive.

“Katowice may show us if there will be any domino effect” following the US withdrawal, said Laurence Tubiana, CEO of the European Climate Foundation and a main architect of the Paris deal. Brazil’s strongman president-elect Jair Bolsonaro, for one, has promised to follow the American lead during his campaign. Many countries are already dealing with the droughts, higher seas and catastrophic storms climate change is exacerbating. “A failure to act now risks pushing us beyond a point of no return with catastrophic consequences for life as we know it,” said Amjad Abdulla, chief negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, of the UN talks.—AFP ■

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Changing the Annonng Group Co., Ltd (464-466-468-470, Tran Van Giau St., Tan Tao Ward, Binh Tan Dist, HCMC, Vietnam) pesticide products marketing from Huynh Zaw Co.Ltd to the new distributor Advance Agriculture Solution Co.,Ltd (#02-219 Building (B), Swe Daw City, Mingalardon Township, Yangon, Myanmar)will distribute the following pesticides.

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1.	Rinhmyn 720 WP	Mancozeb 640 g/kg+ Metalaxyl 80g/kg WP	P	2015-2558
2.	Anrogen 0.3G	Fipronil 3g/kg G	P	2015-2559
3.	PIUP 480 SL	Glyphosate 480 g/l SL	P	2016-3183
4.	Megastar 276 SL	Paraquat dichloride 276g/L SL	P	2015-2568
5.	Xophic 300 EC	Pretilachlor 300 g/L + Fenclorim 100g/L EC	P	2015-2569
6.	Benride 700 WP	Niclosamide 700 g/kg WP	P	2015-2570
7.	Toxis 25 EW	Deltamethrin 25% EW	P	2015-2571
8.	TRIOC Annonng 12 WG	Metaldehyde 120 g/kg WG	P	P2017-2574
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Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PACITA VOY. NO. (030 W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 04-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/A.I.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES**
Phone No: 2301185

Invitation for Bids

Loan Agreement No. MY-P14 dated 16/October/2015
IFB No. 17(T)DPTSC(PTP)/2018-2019

1. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received ODA Loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The Bid is invited by Department of Power Transmission and System Control (DPTSC) for Package 2: Supply and Installation for 500kV Transmission Line as follows;

Sr. No	Invitation for Bid	Descriptions	Issuing Date	Submission Deadline Date and Time	Non-refundable Document Fee
1	MY-P14, JICA, ODA Loan	Package 2: Design, Supply and Installation for 500kV Transmission Line between Phayargyi and Hlaingthayar Substation	6 th /12/2018	5 th /03/2019 (13:00hr)	Purchase order with Myanmar Kyats which is equivalent to USD 1,000

2. The Eligible Nationality of the Bidder shall be Japan in the case of single contractor. In case of a joint venture, such joint venture will be eligible provided that the nationality of lead partner is Japan, that the nationality of the other partner is Japan and/or the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and total share of work of Japanese partners in the joint venture is more than fifty percent (50%) of the contract amount. This scheme is based on applicable guidelines of Japanese ODA loan.

3. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the website (<http://www.moee.gov.mm>) or the documents from the Material Planning Department, Department of Power Transmission and System Control, Ministry of Electricity and Energy, Office No.27, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

4. Bid Documents must be delivered to the address above mentioned on or before the deadline date and time.

5. The Bid must be accompanied by a bid security of not less than two hundred million Japanese Yen (JPY 200,000,000).

6. Technical Bid will be opened on 5th/03/2019 at 13:00 hr at the Department of Power Transmission and System Control, Ministry of Electricity and Energy, Office No.27, Nay Pyi Taw in the presence of representatives from Bidders.

7. Any Request for the extension of bid submission deadline shall not be allowed.

Tender Committee
Department of Power Transmission and System Control
Ministry of Electricity and Energy, Office No.27
Nay Pyi Taw Myanmar
Telephone: 067-3410282, 3410209

Michelle Obama shelves Paris, Berlin trips for Bush funeral

WASHINGTON — Former US first lady Michelle Obama said Sunday she was canceling book tour visits to Paris and Berlin to attend the funeral of former president George H.W. Bush, who died Friday aged 94.

"It's important to me to join the Bush family in celebrating President George H.W. Bush's exemplary life," she tweeted.

"This will unfortunately preclude my visits to Paris and Berlin. I've been deeply touched by the enthusiasm for my memoir, and I'm working to reschedule my trip for next year."

In a second message, she said she hoped readers and ticket holders would understand the decision "and join me in paying tribute" to Bush and "his tremendous contributions to our world."

Released on 13 November, Obama's memoir, "Becoming," sold more than two million copies in North America in its first 15 days. The 54-year-old mother of two — America's first African American first lady and wife of the first black US president — is wildly popular at home and abroad, loved for her warm personality, intelligence and women's activ-

ism. In the book she writes that she can "never forgive" Donald Trump for questioning her husband's US citizenship, accusing him and other "birthers" of putting her family at risk. She also digs into personal issues, detailing a miscarriage, how she conceived daughters Malia, 20, and Sasha, 17, by in-vitro fertilization, and marriage counseling. Being published in 31 languages, the memoir is also a bestseller in Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Israel, Korea, Finland, South Africa and Chinese Taipei, among other countries.—AFP ■



The 54-year-old mother of two — America's first African American first lady and wife of the first black US president — is wildly popular at home and abroad, loved for her warm personality, intelligence and women's activism. **PHOTO: AFP**

'Ralph' beats the 'Grinch' to stay atop North American box office

LOS ANGELES — Disney animation "Ralph Breaks the Internet" held the top spot in North American theaters for a second straight weekend, taking in an estimated \$25.8 million, industry tracker Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday.

The sequel to 2012's "Wreck-It Ralph" sees the title character (voiced by John C. Reilly) and friend Vanellope von Schweetz (Sarah Silverman) venture into the weird world of the internet, with predictably screwy results.

"The Grinch," Universal's family-friendly feature about the

not-so-friendly green creature from Dr. Seuss's manic menagerie, placed second, with \$17.7 million for the three-day weekend and a cumulative domestic total of \$203.5 million. Benedict Cumberbatch voices the irritable title character.

In third was MGM's boxing drama "Creed II," with a take of \$16.8 million.

This latest in the "Rocky" series stars Michael B. Jordan as Adonis Creed as he takes on the son of the boxer who killed his father. Sylvester Stallone, of course, plays aging ex-champ

Rocky Balboa, now a restaurant owner and Adonis's mentor. Holding in fourth place was "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald" from Warner Bros., at \$11.2 million, pushing its worldwide total past \$500 million. The Harry Potter prequel stars Eddie Redmayne as Newt Scamander; also starring are Jude Law and Johnny Depp. Placing fifth, and in its fifth week out, was Fox's "Bohemian Rhapsody," with \$8.1 million. Rami Malek plays rock group Queen's talented front man Freddie Mercury. —AFP ■

Sonali Bendre to return to Mumbai after cancer treatment in US

MUMBAI — Actor Sonali Bendre Behl, who was diagnosed with high grade cancer, is excited to return to the city she calls "home" after undergoing treatment in New York for about five months.



Actor Sonali Bendre Behl. **PHOTO: PTI**

In the first week of July,

Sonali had revealed that she has been diagnosed with a "high grade cancer" and was undergoing treatment in New York.

In an emotional statement, the actor had then said the cancer metastasised which "we frankly did not see coming."

Sharing the news on Instagram Sonali said, "They say 'Distance makes the heart grow fonder'. It sure does.

But let's never underestimate what distance teaches you. Being away from home in the city of New York, I realised I was walking amongst so many stories. Each trying to write their own chapter in different ways. Each struggling to do it but never giving up. Each taking it #OneDayAtATime."

She further said, she is now her way back, to "where her heart is".

"It's a feeling I can't describe in words but I'm going to try — it's the joy to see my family and friends again, the

excitement to do what I love and mainly the gratitude for the journey I've had up until this moment."

Without divulging any details about her treatment, Sonali said, "The fight is not yet over.

But I am looking forward to this happy interval. It's time to learn that there is a new normal out there and I can't wait to embrace it and #SwitchOnTheSunshine."

Her post ended with a quote by Chris Martin, Sonali said, "And as my adventure with life continues these words by Chris Martin hit home, 'Everything you want is a dream away. Under this pressure, under this weight We are diamonds taking shape...'"

Sonali, best known for her role in '90s movies such as "Sarfarosh", "Diljale" and "Duplicate", is married to filmmaker Goldie Behl. The couple has a 13-year-old son Ranveer.—PTI ■

School uniforms presented during school uniform research achievements show in Beijing



in
Picture

A student presents a set of school uniform at Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology in Beijing, capital of China on 2 December 2018. More than 80 sets of school uniforms were presented during the school uniform research achievements show. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Researchers say ancient ring may bear Pontius Pilate name

JERUSALEM — Israeli researchers say an inscription on an ancient ring discovered near Jerusalem may include the name of Pontius Pilate, the Roman official who Biblical accounts say sentenced Jesus to death.

It would be a rare example still in existence of an inscription with the name of the man believed to have sent Jesus to his crucifixion.

The researchers recently announced their analysis of the inscription on the ring — which was actually found some 50 years ago — in *Israel Exploration Journal*.

The journal is published by the Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

They say the copper-alloy ring, dated to around 2,000 years ago and used to apply a seal, was found at Herodium, an ancient palace built by King Herod near Jerusalem and Bethlehem, today located in the occupied West Bank.

The palace later became a fortress for Jewish rebels fighting the Romans.

An inscription in Greek letters reads "of Pilatus", while the ring also depicts a wine vessel known as a krater.

The researchers say it is unlikely that the ring belonged to Pilate himself, though possibly to a member of his administration or someone else entirely.

"Since the inscription on the ring reads 'of Pilatus', the first association that comes to mind is Pontius Pilatus, the prefect of the Roman province of Judaea 26–36 CE, under Emperor Tiberius Caesar," they write.

It adds however: "Since the name Pilatus is rare, it is not inconceivable that this ring belonged to Pontius Pilatus himself. However, we think it implausible that a prefect would have used a simple, all-metal, copper-alloy personal sealing

ring with a motif that was already a well-known Jewish motif in Judaea before and during his rule."

The Israel Museum says the only other object from Pilate's time bearing his name is a stone with an inscription found in Caesarea, today located in Israel along the Mediterranean coast.

The stone is part of the museum's collection.

The authors of the journal article on the ring are Malka HersHKovitz, Gideon Forster, Yakov Kalman, Rachel Chachy and Roi Porat of Hebrew University as well as Shua Amrai-Stark of Kaye College of Education in the Israeli city of Beersheba. —AFP ■



The ring bearing the name of Pontius Pilate was found at Herodium, an archaeological site near Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. **PHOTO: AFP**

Newly discovered supernova sheds new light on star origin

WASHINGTON — An international team of astronomers discovered a supernova that might provide an unprecedented look at the first moments of a violent stellar explosion.

The papers published in the latest *The Astrophysical Journal* described a mysterious signature in the light from the explosion's first hours.

This category of supernova, called "Type Ia," generates many of the elements around us but the mechanism that sets off a Type Ia supernova explosion has remained elusive, according to the researchers.

Astronomers have long tried to get detailed data at the initial moments of the explosions and for the first time, they succeeded in February to discover a Type Ia supernova called ASASSN-18bt within the first day after its

explosion.

The astronomers realized that ASASSN-18bt looked unusual during its first couple of days.

"Many supernovae show a gradual increase in the light they put out," said Maria Drout, assistant professor at the University of Toronto and co-author on the discovery paper.

"But for this event, you could clearly see something unusual and exciting happening in the early times, some unexpected additional emission," said Drout.

Type Ia supernovae are thought to originate from the thermonuclear explosion of a white dwarf star, the dead core left over by a Sun-like star after it exhausts its nuclear fuel. Therefore, material must be added to the white dwarf from a companion star to trigger the explosion, but the nature of the companion

star and how the fuel is transferred has long been debated.

Scientists have presumed that additional light seen during the supernova's early times could be from the exploding white dwarf colliding with the companion star.

However, ASASSN-18bt's early brightness doesn't quite fit predictions, according to the study.

The new discovery supported a new hypothesis that there might be two distinct populations of Type Ia supernovae, those that show early emission and those that do not, without the need for a nearby star.

"We are finding that supernova explosions are more complicated than we previously thought," said the study's lead author Ben Shappee with University of Hawaii. —Xinhua ■



A Soyuz MS-11 spacecraft is mounted on the launch pad at the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. **PHOTO: AFP**

First manned space mission launches since Soyuz failure

BAIKONUR (Kazakhstan) — The first manned space mission to the International Space Station since an unprecedented accident in October, which raised concerns about Moscow's Soviet-designed spacecraft, will launch on Monday.

Oleg Kononenko of the Russian space agency Roscosmos, Anne McClain of NASA and David Saint-Jacques of the Canadian Space Agency brushed aside any possible safety concerns, saying risk was just part of the job.

They are set to launch at 1131 GMT Monday aboard a Soyuz from Baikonur in Kazakhstan for a six-and-a-half month mission.

The launch comes after a Soyuz rocket carrying Russia's Aleksey Ovchinnikov and US astronaut Nick Hague failed on 11 October just minutes after blast-off, forcing the pair to make an emergency landing.

They escaped unharmed but the failed launch was the first such incident in Russia's post-Soviet history and a new setback for the country's once proud space industry.

Ahead of Monday's launch a Russian Orthodox priest blessed the spaceship on its launchpad, in accordance with tradition, while the crew spoke calmly of the dangers involved.

"Risk is part of our profession," crew commander Oleg Kononenko told a news conference at Baikonur on Sunday, adding they "absolutely" trusted teams preparing them for the flight.

"We are psychologically and technically prepared for blastoff and any situation which, God forbid, may occur on board," the 54-year-old said.

Kononenko added that the

crew would conduct a spacewalk on 11 December as part of an investigation into a mysterious hole that has caused an air leak on the ISS.

Anne McClain, a 39-year-old former military pilot, said the crew looked forward to going up.

"We feel very ready for it," she said.

'Soyuz in my backyard'

Canada's Saint-Jacques, 48, described the Soyuz spacecraft as "incredibly safe."

The accident highlighted the "smart design of the Soyuz and the incredible work that the search and rescue people here on the ground are ready to do every launch," he said.

Saint-Jacques joked that he had received so much training ahead of the flight "that I felt at the end that I could build a Soyuz in my backyard."

Of the trio set to reach the ISS six hours after blastoff, both Saint-Jacques and McClain will fly for the first time.

Kononenko is beginning his fourth mission to add to an impressive 533 days in space.

Russia said last month the launch failed because of a sensor that was damaged during assembly at the Baikonur cosmodrome but insisted the spacecraft remained reliable.

The Soviet-designed Soyuz rocket is currently the world's only lifeline to the ISS.

Saint-Jacques will be the first Canadian astronaut to visit the space station since Chris Hadfield, who recorded a version of David Bowie's *Space Oddity* classic on board in 2013.

Canada's governor general and former astronaut Julie Payette is expected to be among the dignitaries to watch Monday's launch. —AFP ■



Liverpool players celebrate Divock Origi's late winning goal against Everton after a Jordan Pickford error. PHOTO: AFP

Liverpool stun Everton with freak goal as Arsenal overpower Spurs

LONDON — Liverpool stayed hot on the heels of Manchester City on Sunday after a bizarre late winner against Everton as Arsenal issued a powerful statement of intent on Sunday's Premier League derby day.

Jurgen Klopp's unbeaten side looked set to drop a precious two points in their dogged pursuit of City but they benefited from a bizarre error from Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford to win 1-0 and continue their Anfield hex over their city rivals.

Unai Emery's Arsenal are now 19 matches unbeaten in all competitions after their thrilling 4-2 victory against Tottenham at the Emirates lifted them to fourth in the Premier League, above fierce rivals Spurs on goal difference.

Chelsea recovered from the disappointment of losing their first match of the Premier League season to Spurs last week to beat Fulham 2-0 to climb to third in the table.

Liverpool started the Merseyside derby determined to salvage some pride after their midweek defeat to Paris Saint-Germain left their Champions League hopes in the balance.

There were chances for both teams in an entertaining encounter but the match appeared to be heading for a goalless stalemate as the seconds ticked away.

But then out of nowhere, England's Pickford made a terrible error, mishandling a high ball that appeared to be heading over his bar and spilling it into the

path of substitute Divock Origi.

The Belgium forward had the simple task of heading into the empty net to spark scenes of ecstasy at Anfield, with Klopp racing onto the pitch to celebrate.

"I have to apologise because I didn't want to be disrespectful but I couldn't stop myself. It just happened," Klopp told Sky Sports.

"The game was with unbelievable intensity. Both teams had chances. Both goalkeepers had outstanding performances. In the end it was a very weird goal. I can't imagine the disappointment of Everton. But we got it and we will take it. It is a brilliant night."

Arsenal guts

Earlier, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's penalty gave Arsenal an early lead in the north London derby before Eric Dier's header and a Harry Kane spot-kick handed Tottenham the lead at half-time at the Emirates Stadium.

But Aubameyang's superb long-range equaliser sparked a second half surge from the Gunners. Alexandre Lacazette came off the bench to put Arsenal ahead and Lucas Torreira sealed the points with his first goal for the club.

Capping a miserable day for Jan Vertonghen, the Tottenham defender was sent off in the closing stages after earlier giving away Arsenal's penalty.

"It is a very big match for our confidence. Now we have to continue our process," Emery

said. "It is a very big victory. We give this to our supporters because it's a very special match against Tottenham."

Emery has injected life into an Arsenal side that had stagnated in the final years of Arsene Wenger's reign but losses to Manchester City and Chelsea and a draw with Liverpool had raised questions about Arsenal's ability to compete with their biggest rivals.

Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino admitted his players suffered mentally and physically at the end of a draining week that included victories over Chelsea and Inter Milan.

In the first match of the day, a nervy Chelsea scored early through Pedro and late through Ruben Loftus-Cheek to see off London neighbours Fulham.

Sarri said he could see tension in his players at Stamford Bridge, even though last week's defeat at Spurs was their first loss in the league this season.

On Saturday, Manchester United dropped points in a 2-2 draw against struggling Southampton and are now eight points off fourth place, still with a negative goal difference.

Jose Mourinho's United host Arsenal on Wednesday knowing they cannot afford to lose as their chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League look increasingly remote.

City beat Bournemouth 3-1 to move to record their 12th win in 14 matches, with 38 points in the bag already and a goal difference of +37. —AFP ■

Tokyo 2020 vows no let-up as preparations lauded

TOKYO — Tokyo 2020 bosses vowed Monday there would be no let-up in their Games preparations, as the president of the IOC said some previous host cities were less prepared even with three months to go.

Yoshiro Mori, head of the 2020 organising committee, said they had won strong backing from Olympic officials in Tokyo for crunch meetings — with some 600 days until the Opening Ceremony.

"There were so many words of praise but we will not be conceited about this. I think we should not relax," said Mori, noting they would undoubtedly face "difficulties and uncertainties" in the run-up to the Games.

After a shaky start, Tokyo 2020's preparations have largely been brought back on track and with venue construction broadly on schedule, the last-minute scramble to complete stadia seen at previous Games has so

far been absent in the Japanese capital.

IOC head Thomas Bach said no city had ever been so well-prepared as Tokyo at the same stage.

"In some of the cities — even in most — we had to organise crisis meetings with the Executive Board a couple of months before the Games and some of them were maybe not where you are today already even three months before the Games," said Bach.

Nevertheless Tokyo 2020 still faces a host of potential pitfalls, including how to deal with the sweltering summer heat and keep a lid on the budget.

Tokyo 2020 officials have admitted that some measures introduced to beat the heat have placed added pressure on costs but stressed the next version of the budget due later this month will not exceed the \$12.6 billion earmarked in the most recent version last year. —AFP ■



The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games are ahead of schedule, says the IOC. PHOTO: AFP

Neymar injury concern after Bordeaux end PSG's flawless run

PARIS (France) — Paris Saint-Germain are again sweating on Neymar's fitness on Sunday after the superstar attacker left the field at Bordeaux clutching his groin before Andreas Cornelius' late header ended the French champions perfect start to the Ligue 1 season.

Brazilian Neymar was substituted 57 minutes into the hugely entertaining 2-2 draw the Matmut Atlantique stadium, in which he had opened the scoring and had looked in great form before having to head to the dressing room with what

looks to be an injury to the same adductor muscle that nearly stopped him from scoring the decisive goal in Wednesday's huge 2-1 win over Liverpool.

"I don't know at all (what his injury is). We have to be careful, he said it was not a problem to play tonight but the pitch was hard and I hope he will be in good shape after Strasbourg," said PSG coach Thomas Tuchel, referring to his side's must-win final Champions League group game at Red Star Belgrade in nine days' time. —AFP ■