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President U Win Myint receives outgoing Indian ambassador



President U Win Myint meets with Indian Ambassador Mr. Vikram Misri at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

PRESIDENT U Win Myint received Indian Ambassador Mr. Vikram Misri, who has completed his tour of duty in Myanmar, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, they discussed promotion of Myanmar-India bilateral relations and cooperation, democratic reform and the internal peace pro-

cesses in Myanmar, bilateral trade, promotion of investment and tourism sector, health and science, energy issues, and the export of beans and pulses to India.

Also present at the call were Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government U Min Thu and officials.

— MNA ■

(Translated by ZM)

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receives ASEAN Secretary-General



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with Secretary-General of ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw at 09:45 a.m. on 18 December 2018.

During the meeting, they discussed about the recent developments in Rakhine State including the measures taken by the Government of Myanmar for the repatri-

ation of verified displaced persons, the dispatch of a needs assessment team from the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) to facilitate the repatriation process and the programme entitled “Strengthening Myanmar Government to Lead National Disaster Response through Structured Capacity Building Programme.”—MNA ■

ASEAN Secretary-General’s office, Union government discuss ASEAN cooperation in returnee repatriation

A COORDINATION meeting of high-level officials for discussing ASEAN cooperation in receiving returnees in Rakhine State was held between the office of the ASEAN Secretary-General and the Myanmar Government at the Ministry of

Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement yesterday.

In this meeting, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye said Myanmar was consistently striving for the stability and

development of Rakhine State. The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State has already been formed and that they were doing their best for implementation of the suggestions, he said. He expressed his wish for the undertakings to be objective,

and added that this cooperation would support the activities of the trilateral MoU signed between the Myanmar Government, the Red Cross, UNDP and UNHCR.

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves ROK Government's EDCF Loan US\$ 93.779 mln

THE Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw tenth regular session held its tenth-day meeting at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meeting hall yesterday where Government of Republic of Korea's (ROK) Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) Loan US\$ 93.779 million was approved.

30-month work report of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Public Accounts Committee put on record

At the meeting Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Public Accounts Committee Vice Chairman (1) U Saw Than Htut read and submitted the committee's 30-month work report after which Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat announced the Hluttaw putting the report on record.

Paragraph wise decision on 2017 Myanmar Gemstone Bill

Next Hluttaw approves a motion tabled by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee joint secretary Dr. Myat Nyana Soe on 2017 Myanmar Gemstone Bill in which the two Hluttaws were in disagreement after Hluttaw representatives discussed and decided on it paragraph by paragraph.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves EDCF Loan

Afterwards Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung explained again about the EDCF Loan US\$ 93.779 million for e-Government Integrated Data Center (e-GIDC) construction project. The e-GIDC will construct its own Cloud system or cloud computing technology



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

where the country's data and information can be stored without requiring it to be stored in any foreign countries and thus there'll be added protection and security as well as reducing expenses.

e-GIDC will be constructed in the administrative center of Nay Pyi Taw and a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) will be constructed in Thanlyin Township that is 400 km away to protect against damage from natural disaster.

Once the construction of e-GIDC is completed e-Government services such as online payment, taxation, e-mail, e-ID, e-Visa, One-stop-services, Online news, Instant messages will be available 24/7 safely, securely and speedily. As the development of e-Government works will support the country's all-round development the Hluttaw is requested to approve the loan explained the Union Minister.

In his explanation on the matter Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung

Maung Win said the ministry will manage and administer the signing of the loan agreement, utilization of the loan, loan principle and interest payments.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker then announced the Hluttaw's approval of the matter after the Hluttaw voted 453 for; 9 against and 2 abstaining.

Hluttaw discusses government debt report for FY 2017-2018 and report (10/2018)

Following this Annual Report on the government debt for financial year 2017-2018 and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Public Accounts Committee Report (10/2018) on the finding and comments on the Annual Report were discussed by Dr. Daw Thet Thet Khaing of Dagon constituency, U Khin Cho of Hlaingbwe constituency, U Win Maung of Magway Region constituency 6, U Bo Gyi of Chauk constituency, Dr. Saw Naing of South Okkalapa constituency, U Hla San of Magway Region constituency

1, U Tun Tun of Pwintbyu constituency, Daw Wint War Tun of Shadaw constituency, Tatmadaw Amyotha Hluttaw representative Lt-Col Myo Tun Aung, Daw Khin San Hlaing of Pale constituency and Daw Cho Cho of Ottwin constituency.

Hluttaw discusses Union Legal Supporting Group six-month report

Later Hluttaw representatives discussed the Union Legal Supporting Group six-month report.

In his discussion U Win Win of Minbu constituency said the report openly mentioned that some ministries were strong while some were weak in connecting and working with the Group in assessing and reviewing the complaints received. Therefore, in future reports names of ministries, state/region governments, departments and organizations that are weak in cooperation should be mentioned suggested U Win Win.

The report was also discussed by U Win Myint Oo @ U Nay Myo of Nyaungshwe constituency, U Nyan Lin of Shwepyitha constituency and U Kan Oo of Salin constituency.

Hluttaw discusses national plan annual report for FY 2017-2018 and report (13/2018)

As a final agenda of the day FY 2017-2018 National Plan Annual Report sent by the Union Government and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Public Accounts Committee Report (13/2018) on the finding and comments on the Annual Report were discussed by Daw Naw Chris Tun @ Dr. Arr Kar Moe of Kayin State constituency 7, U Wai Sein Aung of Rakhine State constituency 1, U Zaw Hein of Taninthayi Region constituency 7, U Thant Zin Htun of Dekhinathiri constituency, U Zon Hle Htan of Chin State constituency 4, Daw Cho Cho of Ottwin constituency, U Hwei Tin of Chin State constituency 11, U Khin Cho of Hlaingbwe constituency, U Khin Myo Win of Taninthayi Region constituency 12, Dr. Khun Win Thaug of Kachin State constituency 11, U Tun Tun Oo of Mandalay Region constituency 2, U Than Soe @ Than Soe (Economic) of Yangon Region constituency 4, Daw Aye Mya Mya Moe of Kyauktan constituency and U Aung Myo Latt of Mandalay Region constituency 5.

The eleventh-day meeting of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's tenth regular session will be held on 21 December it is learnt. —Aung Ye Thwin, Aye Aye Thant (MNA) ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker receives EU/IDEA representative, party

PYIDAUNGSU Hluttaw Deputy Speaker and Joint Public Accounts Committee Chairman U Tun Tun Hein received Dr. Johann Hesse of European Union (EU) Delegation in Myanmar and party at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw D Block first floor meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting matters relating to EU and International IDEA's support and implementation process on Parliamentar-

ry Oversight for Better Service Delivery and implementation were discussed.

Present at the meeting were Joint Public Accounts Committee Deputy Chairmen U Aung Min and U Saw Than Htut, committee members and advisors, International IDEA Myanmar representative Mr. Mark MacDowell, JPAC Support Team members and officials from Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office.—MNA ■



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein meets with a delegation led by Dr. Johann Hesse of European Union (EU) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Myanmar now on path to democracy: President U Win Myint

Myanmar is now on the path to democracy. The nascent democracy may be compared to a toddler learning to walk; we have to be very careful not to falter at this stage and we need to be vigilant and mindful not to lose balance. If we wish democracy to survive, we have to respect the rule of law and at the same time abide by the existing rules and regulations.

(Excerpt from the message sent by President U Win Myint on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy on 15 September 2018.)



Ancient Heritage Yoke Soun Kyaung and Nuns.
PHOTO: ZAW ZAW WEI (SINBYUKYUN)

VP U Myint Swe attends 2018 International Migrants Day ceremony

Vice President U Myint Swe delivered an opening address at the 2018 International Migrants Day ceremony at the Myanmar International Convention Centre- II (MICC-II) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The event was attended by Union Ministers U Kyaw Tint Swe, Dr. Pe Myint, U Thein Swe, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, Dr. Myint Htwe and Dr. Win Myat Aye, Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Than Htut, and U Kyaw Myo, MPs from the Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw, ambassadors and diplomats from embassies in Myanmar, permanent secretaries, UN officials, representatives from INGOs, NGOs and invited guests.

In his opening speech, Vice President U Myint Swe said that the purpose of marking this event was to raise public awareness on the experiences faced by Myanmar migrant workers, safeguarding their rights, and measurements being taken by the Union Government and its associate partners in order to safeguard the rights and social wellbeing of migrant workers, and future schemes going forward.

The UN General Assembly declared December 18 to be International Migrants Day in 2000, and it has been seven years since Myanmar has been marking this event, said the Vice President.

The Vice President said migrations throughout the world have increased across the globe on account of differences between economic development and population growth in many countries, employment opportunities, labour workforce, wages of inequality, occurrence of natural disasters, man-made conflicts, socio-economic crisis, and development news, having easy access to communication and transportation technologies.

According to the UN, it is



Vice President U Myint Swe delivers the opening speech at the ceremony to mark 2018 International Migrants Day in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



estimated that one out of every seven people in the world today are international migrants.

According to the 2014 population census, approximately two million workers from Myanmar are employed in foreign countries although Myanmar has vast potential to achieve economic development. According to the 2017 World Bank report, the remittance amount of Myanmar migrant workers amounted to US\$ 395 million in 2016 and US\$ 700 million in 2017.

The Vice President said we can observe that the number of international migrants is on the rise due to the mechanisms of globalization, and that they can contribute to the socio-economic and human resource development in their country of origin and their host country. In many countries, migrant workers enjoy fundamental rights and services with low standards while facing threats, bullying, violence, discrimination, lack of due respect and dignity.

As for the migrant workers, endeavours are needed to accumulate relevant information and costing while learning required skills for the workplace, basic language skills, their culture and traditions before their departure. Or else, they might happen to encounter many hardships and difficulties, said the Vice President.

Although the process on migration might be harsh, it can be beneficial to the whole community if the relevant organizations could manage with humanitarian spirits and systematic approaches, and which can help poverty-alleviation and joblessness. Moreover the remittances can increase the inflows of foreign currency, accumulation skills and capital investment, making creativity, embarking on a new venture and commitment to community.

Cooperation and systematic arrangement are also needed to have a safe migration. In doing so, effective results could be come out through cooperation among all ministries, respective regional countries, international organizations and partnership organizations.

The United Nations has adopted the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, Myanmar has carried out the inclusive frameworks of the Sustainable Development Plan _MSDP in cooperation with ministries, partnership and organizations. Myanmar signed the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers at 31st ASEAN Summit held in Philippines. Discussion on this issue had been made at the ASEAN meetings in Singapore and the progress in 2019 could be appraised.

Regarding the international migration, the intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration _ GCM has been in Morocco from 10-11 December, 2018. Myanmar has participated in the implementation process of the conference together with other countries.

As for the Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population, a five-year-framework on Myanmar migration workers (2018-2022) had been drawn up, in cooperation with relevant countries, miniseries and organization.

Moreover efforts are being made to protect the rights of Myanmar migrants' workers through the negotiation with the regional governments where Myanmar workers mostly work in. All the licensed oversea employment agencies and relevant government ministries are urged to carry out their jobs in accordance with rules and regulations.

With the aims and objectives of holding the 2018 International Migrants Day ceremony, cooperation among the International Organizations for migrant workers, INGOs, relevant ministries are of crucial importance to have a safe migration while protecting them with the humanitarian spirit.

Then Vice President U Myint Swe posed for documentary

photographs together with the attendees.

Following this, the second session of the event continued and videos on the movement of migrant works had been shown.

Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe delivered addresses on the 2018 International Migrants Day.

Next, International Organization on Migration (IOM) Chief of Mission Mr. Akio Nakayama read the messages from the United Nations Secretary General and International Organization for Migration (IOM) Director General.

Afterwards, Union Minister U Thein Swe presented certificates of honor to officials of Education and Development Foundation, Group on Cooperating for Myanmar People's affairs and Bangkok based Myanmar Migrant Workers Network who helped of Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand, including the education, health and social affairs of the family members. The Union Minister also presented education support money for children of migrant workers.

The attendees viewed the documentary photo of activities on migrant workers, displayed books and magazines.—MNA ■

*(Translated by
Win Ko Ko Aung)*

Vice President U Henry Van Thio attends Christmas dinner

VICE President U Henry Van Thio attended a Christmas dinner at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The ceremony was held by the Federation of Myanmar Catholic Bishops, the Myanmar Council of Churches, the Myanmar Evangelical Christian Alliance (MECA), the Myanmar Christian Propagation Cooperative Federation and it was attended by Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat and wife Daw Yin May, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Than and wife Daw Nant Kyin Kyi, Chairman of the Myanmar Constitutional Tribunal U Myo Nyunt and wife Daw Htay Yi, Chairman of Union Election Commission U Hla Thein and wife Daw Aye Thida, Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Tun Tun Hein and wife Dr. Sein Sein Thein, Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Aye Tha Aung, Union ministers and their wives, the Union Attorney-General, deputy ministers, bishops, representatives of Christian churches and



Vice President U Henry Van Thio poses for a documentary photo with attendees at the Christmas thanksgiving and friendship dinner at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

invited guests.

At the ceremony, Major Nay Lin Tin, member of the Myanmar Council Churches, said prayers. Afterwards, Mahn John Hsane Hgyi of the Federation of Myanmar Catholic Bishops and Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko extended Christmas greetings.

Rev. Dr. Aye Min, Chairman of Myanmar Evangelical Christian Alliance (MECA) sent out good wishes to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, leaders of the country and the people.

Afterwards, General Secretaries of the Christian federations Rev. Dr. Maurice Hlyan Nar, Dr. Yaw Han, and Maurice

Nyunt Wai read the bible.

Afterwards, Chairman of the Myanmar Christian Propagation Cooperative Federation Rev. U Aung Thet Nyunt delivered a Christmas sermon and Rev. Mahn Parmar Stan extended greetings.

Next, Rev. U Ohn Mying and attendees sang psalms, followed

by prayer said by Steven Than Myint Oo, Chairman of the Myanmar Council of Churches.

While the attendees enjoyed dinner, vocalists Phyu Phyu Kyaw Thein, Jesse, Sayar San Pi, Sa Lukar and Mai Kyi Kyi Win sang songs of thanks and psalms.—MNA

(Translated by JT)



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint meets with Myanmar Engineering Council Chairman Dr. Charlie Than in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint receives Myanmar Engineering Council Chairman

UNION MINISTER Dr. Pe Myint received Myanmar Engineering Council Chairman Dr. Charlie Than and party at Ministry of Information, Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting matters relating to cooperating with Ministry of Information to inform the people about the role of Myanmar Engineering Council, effort of Myanmar

Engineering Council toward raising the level of universities teaching engineering subject to Asia Pacific level and holding a fifth year anniversary event of Myanmar Engineering Council were discussed.

Also present at the meeting were Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun and officials. — MNA ■

Bangladesh Ambassador visits Sittway

BANGLADESH Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Manjurel Karim Khan Chowdhury and party arrived in Sittway, Rakhine State yesterday morning and met separately with Dhamma Thukha Monastery Sayadaw, Rakhine State Chief Minister and State Hluttaw Speaker.

During the meeting with Dhamma Thukha Monastery, Sayadaw Agga Maha Ganda Vasaka Panita Bhaddanta Thawma, the Ambassador asked about religious matter and the Sayadaw explained about Brah-

ma-viharas (or four cardinal virtues or sublime state of mind) – loving kindness or benevolence (metta), compassion (karuna), emphathetic joy (mudita) and equanimity (upekkha).

Next the Ambassador and party met with Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu in Rakhine State government office guest hall and Rakhine State Hluttaw Speaker U San Kyaw Hla in Rakhine State Hluttaw Building guest hall at 11 a.m. and twelve noon respectively.

In the meetings matters re-

lating to cooperating for more development in trade and economic matters in the border regions and cooperating to successfully conduct the repatriation of returnees to Rakhine State were discussed and views exchanged.

Later in the afternoon, the Ambassador and party visited a Cyclone Shelter in Chaung Nwe Min Gan Village, Sittway that was constructed with donation from Bangladesh Government.— Mawsi, Ko Min ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)



Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu meets with Bangladesh Ambassador Mr. Manjurel Karim Khan Chowdhury at the Rakhine State government office in Sittway yesterday. **PHOTO: TIN SOE**

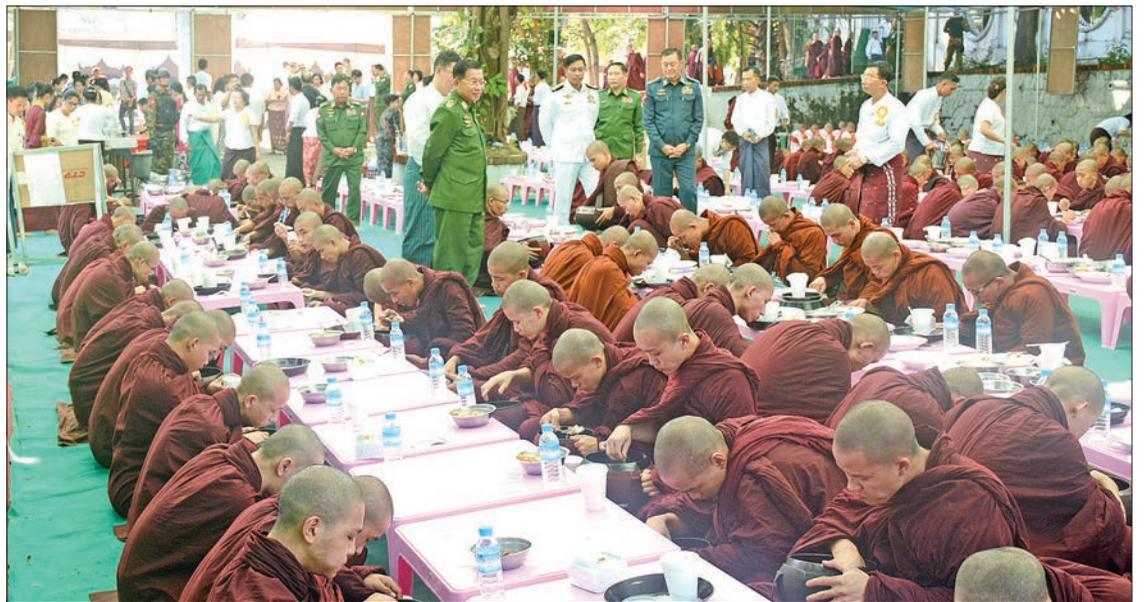
Senior General, wife and family offer 'soon' to Sanghas, novices, nuns

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla and family offered 'soon' (day meal) to Sanghas, novices and Thilashins (nuns) yesterday. The Sanghas, novices and Thilashins were sitting in the 31st Tharmanay Kyaw examinations that were held at the Tatmadaw Dhammayone, Shin Samanes Dhammayone

and Mingala Byuha Dhammayone examination centers in Shwedagon Pagoda from 17 to 19 December.

At first, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief and party gave encouragement to the Sanghas, Novices and Thilashins sitting for the examinations.

Next they offered 'soon' to Sanghas led by Dwi pitakadhara



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla and family offer meal to Sanghas in Yangon.

PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE C-IN-C OF DEFENCE SERVICES

Pali Paragu Bhaddanta Waziya Pani Linkara Vimansa.

Afterwards they offered

'soon' to Sanghas, Novices and Thilashins sitting for the examinations according to news

released by the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. — MNA ■



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Ambassador of France Mr. Christian Lechery at Zeyathiri Beikman in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE C-IN-C OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives French ambassador

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received French Ambassador H.E. Mr. Christian Lechery at the Zeyathiri Beikman, Kon Myint Thar, Yangon yesterday morning.

At the meeting matters relating to Myanmar-French

military relations, cooperation in defence, exchanging information for fighting against terrorism, investment opportunities in Myanmar, provision of protection under the law for French nationals living and working in Myanmar, maintaining and protection of nature and the

environment, climate change, and development of health and education in Myanmar were discussed by both sides, according to news released by the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. — MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

MOI & MOHS discuss promoting sports

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun received Deputy Minister for Health and Sports, Dr. Mya Lay Sein, at the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. They discussed disseminating general knowledge on sports and promoting interest in sports among the

public, invoking widespread public interest in State and Regional-level sports competitions, and for networking local media with the International Olympic Committee to promote the sports media role in the country. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and Deputy Minister Dr. Mya Lay Sein discuss nationwide sports promotion. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Election Commission talks on new electoral roll compilation software

The Union Election Commission (UEC) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) held a meeting on nationwide voter list update launch and planning at the UEC office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Attending the meeting were UEC Chairman U Hla Thein, UEC members U Aung Myint, U Soe Yel, U Hla Tint, U Myint Naing, and U Than Htay, officials from the UEC office, and state and region election sub commissions, focal persons for voter list compilations, and IFES officials.

The UEC Chairman delivered remarks at the meeting. He said the UEC transitioned from compiling voter lists by hand to an electronic system in 2015. He said the first software used has a lot of weaknesses but the 2020 general elections must be conducted based on a similar software. He said the election sub commissions throughout the



UEC Chairman U Hla Thein delivers the speech at the coordination meeting on beginning electoral roll compilations in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

country were asked to submit the strengths and weaknesses of the software and a new software is currently under development.

The UEC Chairman said Chapter 3 of the unpublished Strategic Plan 2019-2022 includes setting up a comprehensive and legitimate voter list compilation sector. He said suggestions made during this meeting will

be gathered into a guidebook for compiling voter lists. He said the data input system outlined in the guidebook will be taught to election commission officials and IT professionals in States and Regions from 9 to 11 January next year. The coordination meeting will continue today. —MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint inspects 'All Who Can Read Should Read' campaign preparation

YESTERDAY afternoon Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint inspected preparations made for the successful holding of "All Who Can Read Should Read" campaign that is scheduled to be held at Myanmar International Convention Centre-II (MICC-ID), Nay Pyi Taw from 20 to 21 December.

First Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint inspected the books on display in the mobile library vehicles that will be exhibited. Next the Union Minister inspected the exhibits in the exhibition, preparation made for the opening cer-

emony, books on display, meeting rooms and arrangements made for luncheon and provided guidance where necessary.

The campaign will be held for two days under a theme of "All participate and help for all who can read reads" with an aim of encouraging and developing the good practice and habit for all in Myanmar who can read to read.

"All Who Can Read Should Read" campaign will include discussions and paper readings and interested persons are invited.

— MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint inspects palm-leaf writing bundles, parabaik and books to be displayed at 'All Who Can Read Should Read' campaign in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

ASEAN Secretary-General's office, Union government discuss ASEAN cooperation in returnee repatriation



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye and ASEAN Secretary-General Mr. Lim Jock Hoi, center, pose for a documentary photo with attendees of a high-level meeting on ASEAN cooperation. **PHOTO: MNA**

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The Union Minister also said this undertaking would support the implementation of the agreements between Myanmar and Bangladesh. He said it is an important collaboration for not only countries in the region but also for the international community because it would be an example of cooperation with ASEAN countries.

Secretary-General of ASEAN Mr. Lim Jock Hoi also delivered his remarks and said

he was very glad for the trust placed on ASEAN by the Myanmar government. He said needs assessments based on the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) Guidelines would be conducted in accordance with the host country's rules and regulations, prioritized processes, and protocols.

Next, Executive Director of AHA Centre, Ms. Adelina Kamel, explained about the duties of the needs assessment team and the

assistant director from the ASEAN Secretary-General's office explained on ASEAN ERAT's local training program. Attendees gave advice and discussed based on the explanations given.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Thu, Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung, representatives from Rakhine State Government and officials.— MNA (Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)

Two villagers attacked by unidentified men

TWO villagers from Kyeinchaung (Middle) Village in Maungtau Township were attacked by unidentified men while fishing in a creek on the night of 17 December.

Maung Thar Hla and Saw Tun Oo were abducted from their boat by unidentified men who

approached in two boats.

However, Maung Thar Hla jumped into the creek and managed to escape, though he suffered five machete wounds. Saw Tun Oo was brought to the bank of the creek where he reported that three men cursed in other languages, while punching and

kicking him. The victim then ran across the creek to seek help, where he was picked up by the head of Ahtet Pyuma Village and ten villagers. The unidentified attackers reportedly left the area by boat, heading towards the Naf River.— District IPRD ■

(Translated by JT)

St. Mary's Cathedral hosts 5th Asia Interfaith Youth Network Conference

MYANMAR hosted for the first time the Asia Interfaith Youth Network Conference in Yangon yesterday morning. The 5th conference of Asia Interfaith Youth Network was held at St. Mary's Cathedral in Botahtaung Township, Yangon.

First representatives from Asia Interfaith Youth Network sang an interfaith song and Asia and Pacific Interfaith Youth Network presenter Mr. Takashi Hashimoto delivered a message of greeting.

Next, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko delivered a speech saying the conference was jointly organized by Asia Pacific Interfaith Youth Networks, ACRP Seoul Peace Education Centre (SPEC) and United States New York based United Nations recognized RFP (Religion for Peace) International.

It is with honor and much happiness to learn that RFP International aims to cooperate and work towards peace process for all, transform and terminate conflicts among different religions in the countries of the world, develop united and just social structures and to protect the world.

Today's conference is held together with interfaith religious leaders, project regions

of Asia Pacific Interfaith Youth Network and interfaith youths in Asian countries such as Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

RFP Myanmar is an independent NGO that is not under the control of Ministry for Religious Affairs and Culture or any other entity. The ministry is assisting it to conduct religious, and works beneficial for the country according to the law.

RFP International occasionally conduct interfaith youth network conferences continuously in Myanmar as well as Asian countries and is believed to establish friendship, understanding, unity among youths of different religions that will successfully implement world peace said the Union Minister.

Next, attendees including RFP Asia Senior Advisor Rev. Masamichi Kamiya and U Aye Lwin of RFP Myanmar address the meeting.

The conference was then conducted under the theme of interfaith cooperation participating in climate change movement. The conference will be held until 20 December it is learnt.— MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Press Release No. 28/2018
10th Waxing of Nattaw, 1380 ME
(17 December 2018)

Additional statistical bulletin on drug seizures, acting on information

- In order to prevent and eradicate the dangers of narcotic drugs and psychotropic drugs, the Office of the President has formed the **Drug Activity Special Complaint Department** on 26 June 2018 to systematically accept and respond to reports on drug abuses and other related cases from the general public.
- With orders from the Office of the President, the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department relayed information on reports on drug-related offenses up to 15 December 2018 to the Ministry of Home Affairs to take action, as displayed below:

No	Nature of report	Details on seizure and legal action taken
1	Information received of Daw Si Ma from Kyauk Mhaw Village, Htigyaing Tsp, Sagaing Region, selling illegal drugs.	On 11-12-2018, police searched Daw Si Ma (a) Daw Hla Yin's house in Kyauk Mhaw Village, Htigyaing Tsp. Police discovered Daw Si Ma (a) Daw Hla Yin, 58, together with WY psychotropic tablets. A case has been opened with MaMaSa (Htigyaing) MaYa(Pa) 45/2018 under Section 19-A of the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
2	Information received of Musha from Shwebonetha Ward, Bokpyin Tsp, Taninthayi Region, selling illegal drugs.	On 9-12-2018, police searched Musha(a)Zaw Min Naing's house in Shwebonetha Ward, Bokpyin Tsp. Police discovered Musha(a)Zaw Min Naing, 37, together with WY psychotropic tablets. A case has been opened with MaMaSa (Bokpyin) MaYa(Pa) 45/2018 under Section 19-A/20-A of the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
3	Information received of Thein Zaw Win from Wine Wine Lal Restaurant in 10 th street, Oakkyuttan (10) Ward, Toungoo Tsp, Bago Region, selling illegal drugs.	On 11-12-2018, police searched at Wine Wine Lal Restaurant where Thein Zaw Win lives in 10 th street, Oakkyuttan 10 Ward, Toungoo Tsp. Police discovered Thein Zaw Win, 45, together with WY psychotropic tablets. A case has been opened with MaMaSa (Toungoo) MaYa(Pa) 24/2018 under Section 16-C of the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
4	Information received of Htein Lin (a) Kyaw Moe living in Myodaw Newspaper Staff Housing, Thayettaw (North) Ward, Kyimyindine Tsp, Yangon Region, selling illegal drugs.	On 14-12-2018, police searched Htein Lin (a) Kyaw Moe's house in Myodaw Newspaper Staff Housing, Thayettaw (North) Ward, Kyimyindine Tsp. Police discovered Htein Lin (a) Kyaw Moe, 45, and Aung Naing Win (a) Aunggyi, 31, living in the same ward and Khin Aung, 48, Swen Htet Hein(a) Tone Tone, 23, Hein Wanna Aung (a) Tutpi, 21, and Ma Hnin Wutye Lwin (a) Thel Thel, 26, from (5) Ward, Kamayut Tsp, together with WY psychotropic tablets. A case has been opened with MaMaSa (Kyimyindine) MaYa(Pa) 31/2018 under Section 19-A/20-A/21 of the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
5	Information received of selling illegal drugs on the hill in Group (10), Ward 4, Kutkai Tsp, Shan State (North).	So far 28 cases have been opened as of last weeks, 25 men and 3 women have been arrested, together with heroin and stimulant tablets. On 14-12-2018, further investigation led to patrol in Ward 4, Kutkai Tsp and police arrested Zaw Mine, 20, from Ponehtun Village, Manphyine village tract, together with '88/1' psychotropic tablets. A case has been opened with MaMaSa (Kutkai) MaYa (Pa) 137/2018 under Section 19-A of the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.

- Out of the information sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs, so far 432 cases have been opened as of 15-12-2018, and 564 men and 109 women have been arrested with seizures of 5,594.37 g of heroin, 25.01 g of ICE, 38,569.74 g of opium, 329.6 g of low-quality opium, 12,263.28 g of opium powder, 7,273.99 g of speciosa, 198,983 stimulant tablets, 3701.03 g of marijuana, 0.1 liters of opium tincture, 227.4 g of opium blocks, 60 g of poppy seeds, 1.65 g of crushed stimulant tablet powder, 0.001 g of crushed ecstasy powder, 13 firearms, 194 different bullets, and 1 grenade. Efforts for fighting the drug trafficking has been stepped up and the ministry will report on further exposed cases.
- In addition to the investigations and arrests conducted on drug related complaints mentioned above, the Tatmadaw and Myanmar Police Force have also carried out separate investigations on drug complaints, search and arrests at border gates, and searches of vehicles acting upon given information.
During the previous week, multiple arrests were made in the border regions and joint-surveillance gates. On the road of Hopin-Lonetone-Nyaungpin Village, Hopin Tsp, Kachin State, one Hilux Surf car was stopped for investigation then four men from the car ran away and 5,720 g of heroin, 666,900 stimulant tablets and 14,370 g of opium blocks were discovered from the car. In Ward 1, Myawady Tsp, Kayin State, one man was arrested with 3,000 stimulant tablets. At Gold Power Car Gate, Mansu highway bus terminal in Lashio Tsp, Shan State, 2,400 stimulant tablets were discovered from a paper carton box sent to Monywa without the passenger. In Wonkyauing Village,

Namhsan Tsp, one man was arrested with 2,475 stimulant tablets. In Aungchantha Ward, Hsihseng Tsp, one woman was arrested with 4,295 stimulant tablets. In Yadanar Ward, Shwenyaung Tsp, two men were arrested with 1,010 stimulant tablets. In Naungparyin Ward, Mongton Tsp, one man was arrested with 1,120 stimulant tablets. At 144/3 milepost, near Lweiwonetoke Village, Hopong Tsp, cars were stopped for investigation then one woman from Mongsu-Taunggyi Express car was arrested with 2,640 g of heroin. In Katpakaung Village, Maungtaw tsp, Rakhine State, 292,500 stimulant tablets were discovered from a bag buried at water diversion canal of a shrimp lake. At Yaychanpyin Port, Sittway Tsp, one three wheel motorcycle was stopped for investigation then two men were arrested with 1,300,000 stimulant tablets and one three wheel motorcycle. In Aungkone Village, Lewe Tsp, Nay Pyi Taw, a stopped Toyota Landcruiser car and motorcycle were searched for investigation then 2,000 stimulant tablets were confiscated from three men and one woman. Near Nangmakyine Village, Indaw Tsp, Sagaing Region, on the road of Shwebo-Myitkyina road, one Toyota VOXY car was stopped for investigation then two men were arrested with 114,000 stimulant tablets, 4,410 g of heroin and one car. On the road of Baryanathikyaung road, Tat Katho Ward, Myeik Tsp, Taninthayi Region, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then one woman was arrested with 1,300 stimulant tablets and one motorcycle. In Watwon Village, Pyin Oo Lwin Tsp, Mandalay Region, one man and one woman were arrested with 1,200 stimulant tablets and one motorcycle. On the road to Peik Chin Myaung Cave, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then two men were arrested with 380 stimulant tablets and one motorcycle. Further investigation led to search in a house in Nyaungtork (South) Village, Nawngkhio Tsp, 3,177 stimulant tablets were discovered from the house. In Ward 1, Tagaung Tsp, one man and one woman were arrested with 1,988 stimulant tablets. Near Kan Daw Gyi Gate 1, Mingala Taungnyunt Tsp, Yangon Region, one man was arrested with 9,800 stimulant tablets. In No (6) Ward, Lanmadaw Tsp, one man was arrested with 9,500 capsules of Tramadol, 70 bottles of Mophine Injection, 1,900 tablets of Diazepam and 45 bottles of Diazepam Injection. In Shwemyintmoh Street, Shwelinban Village, Hlinethaya Tsp, one motorcycle was stopped for investigation then one man was arrested with 2,000 stimulant tablets and one motorcycle. In (42) Ward, Dagon Myothit Tsp (North), police searched at a house and one man and one woman have already fled then 25 g of heroin and 8,010 stimulant tablets were discovered from the house. There have been two seizures of ammunitions. In Bhaungsein Ward, Thanbyuzayat Tsp, Mon State, two men were arrested with 53 stimulant tablets, one gun and 88 cartridges. In Nawlin Village, Nawngkhio Tsp, Shan State, one man was arrested with 2,081 stimulant tablets and two guns. There have been two arrests involving foreigners. Near Hlaung Village, Muse Tsp, Shan State, four stopped six-wheel Dongfeng car were searched then three Chinese citizen men who entered to Myanmar illegally were arrested with 8,304 liters of Hydrochloric Acid, 17,280 liters of Acetone and four cars. At a KTV in Yemontaung Ward, Mahaangmye Tsp, 12 men, six women and one Chinese citizen man were arrested with 3.5 g of marijuana, 3.501 g of Ketanibe, 0.5 g of ICE, 1 tablet of Ecstasy and one Caldina car. In Hline Tsp, Yangon Region, at DHL Yangon Head Office, 900 g of Ketamine were found from two parcels which will send to foreign and further investigation is still in the process.

There have been 217 cases being opened between 9-12-2018 and 15-12-2018, and 280 men and 42 women have been arrested. Seizures were made of 14,058.011 g of heroin, 25.89 g of ICE, 1 g of opium, 2,524.2 g of speciosa powder, 19,596 g of speciosa, 2,432,066 stimulant tablets, 34.7 g of marijuana, 14,376 g of opium blocks, one tablet of Ecstasy, 903.501 g of Ketamine, 9,500 capsules of Tramadol, 70 bottles of Mophine Injection, 1900 tablets of Diazepam and 45 bottles of Diazepam Injection, 8,304 liters of Hydrochloric Acid, 17,280 liters of Acetone, three guns and 88 Cartridges.

- To seize further drugs and to arrest drugs dealers, people are urged to inform the Ministry of Home Affairs, region and state governments and to inform huge cases of drug trafficking and other suspicious cases directly to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President via following contact numbers:

Contacts

Auto telephone No. — 067-590200
Fax Phone No. — 067-590233
Email Address — antinarcotics@presidentoffice.gov.mm

Build a library at home

THE “All Who Can Read Should Read” Campaign will be held at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-2 (MICC-2) in Nay Pyi Taw from 20 to 21 December with the aim of encouraging the habit of reading among the people of Myanmar and to extend the campaign over the entire country.

According to the 2014 census, the average adult literacy rate (for the 15 years and above age group) in Myanmar stood at 89.52 per cent, with 92.6 per cent literacy rate among men and 86.9 per cent among women, in 2014-15.

The government hopes to achieve a baseline target of 93 per cent by 2021.

In spite of the high literacy rate, the number of people, especially from the present generation, who love reading are significantly low.

Reading enhances knowledge. But the habit is on the decline because of the proliferation of modern information technology. Mobile smart phones provide people easy access to information on the internet and allow exchange of information through SMS messages, while the influence of TV and films is gradually

seeping into individual lives.

Now is the time to think about the seriousness of this situation and think of ways to encourage our younger generation to find the time to read.

The upcoming campaign will work to stimulate the reading habit by honouring 20 most innovative libraries in the country and by conducting five discussions.

A total of 26 exhibitions and a book sales festival are also planned under the campaign.

The campaign will showcase antiques and machines which were used for writing and reading, including five types of palm-leaf writings, palm-leaf writing bundles, palm and palm leaves, parabaiks, writing materials for producing palm-leaf writings, cabinets where parabaiks were

stored, inked copies of stone inscriptions, 94 books on Myanmar, the transformation of Myanmar's alphabet, how palm-leaf writings were produced, video recordings of the Golden Letter of King Alaungpaya, and historical records related to writings across the ages. Rare books will also be on display as part of the campaign.

The Basic Education Department's exhibit will display a model library for children, movements aimed at children, activities conducted in children's libraries, and more.

The Department of Historical Research and National Library's exhibit will display old historical writings, such as the Maha Bandoola palm-leaf writing, agreements, and treaties in our history.

Reading helps gain an insight into the character, economy, society, and politics of a nation. Our youth must try to inculcate the habit.

As William Somerset Maugham said, “To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life.” So build a library at home.

“The Social Security Board caters to people in the 18-59 age group, but goes considerably beyond the age limit to provide as much support as it can”.

U Win Naing, Representative of Employers

Roundtable Discussions on the Reform Program in connection with Social Security benefits (Part two)

MRTV aired a live program (Part Two) on talks under the theme “On the Reform Program in connection with Social Security Benefits”, in which U Maung Maung Aye, Director-General of the Social Security Board; Daw Than Than Nu, Director of the SSB; U Win Naing, Representative of the Employers; Daw Phyo Sandar Soe, Representative of the Workers; and ILO National Project Coordinator Dr. Thein Than Htay have participated in the discussions.

By Khin Yadana
PHOTO: MAY OO MOE

Moderator: Kindly explain the current difficulties facing the Social Security Board.

Director-General: The social security project is implementing through the 2012 Social Security Law and that we have a lot of challenges. The social security project is aimed at covering the whole of the nation, and therefore, we have to expand many tasks such as an increase in number of hospitals and clinics. On the whole, there are (8) million in the formal sector and (14) million in the informal sector. We are trying to develop infrastructure, but we have budget constraint. When we encountered budget cut, we have to reduce the implementation costs.

The social security cost is borne by the funds contributed by the employers and the workers, and therefore, we have two types of budgets. One is union budget and the other is own budget. Pay and allowances of the officers and staff members are incurred for the government budget, while the expenditure for the capital assets, current normal expenditure, medical expense and benefit are incurred from the contributed budget.

Magway Region and Bago Region asked allocation for the construction of hospitals, for which we could provide with the approval of the government. However, we have scarcity of human resource problem. We need health staff from the Ministry of Health and Sports, for which the ministry could not provide us. We have infrastructure, but have no skill persons, resulting with difficulties.

We have (3) hospitals and (96) clinics, while hospitals have no problem with the easy access to them, but the clinics are located in far places from the worksites creating travelling hitches that need to make adjustments. Clinics



open at 9:30 in the morning and closes down at 4:30 pm, making difficulty for the workers to reach there in time.

The number of workers expanded and now stands out at (12, 50,000), and the number of clinics remained unchanged. Health workers are in shortage, resulting with the patients for more waiting time. In some cases, they have to wait four to five hours that needs to be addressed.

Some workers would like to discuss on social security matters with social security office during office hours which is not feasible to accord due to loss of working time. The HR persons have been gathered at the industrial zone in providing information to them, however, they usually never engage in the debriefing session back to the workers at the worksites, making us in a tight position.

We asked them to keep in touch to get updated information for better management. The workers are holding different ID cards from different factories at different times, and carrying out in old procedures, making us difficult to manage contribution funds. The issuance and holding of ID cards are in a mess as it involved two to

three persons. The solution is to aim at the information and technology (IT) system and discard the existing paper-base system.

Stepping into the IT system, we need the cooperation of the employers and the trade unions, and therefore, we asked them to assist us. We are trying to the best of our ability for the good of the employers and the workers in accordance with the prescribed law and regulations. We always asked and discuss to work together.

Moderator: The representative of the employer may kindly explain the relationship among the employers, the workers and the social security board.

Representative of the Employer: I am representing the Myanmar Industries Association, and that I am responsible as Chairman for South Dagon Industrial Zone Management Committee. It is kind of employers' association. We would like to share our employers' views and our voices at an appropriate time while meeting with the responsible persons.

The Social Security Board is established on good foundation with considerate vision and working diligently. However, in the eyes

of the employers association, the SSB itself is not secured and sufficient while working for the social security of the workers. The SSB is facing many restrictions, and that I have witnessed by myself.

Generally speaking, the location of all the clinics should be in an appropriate distance from the accident prone worksites. However, the clinics are located at far places. We would like to have clinics at every industrial zone, for which I am aware of the fact that the responsible persons are also trying to fulfill this objective.

Meanwhile, we have been working with four outside private clinics in Hline Thar Yar, Shwe Pyi Thar, and Shwe Lin Ban zones. As they have private business working nature, we have no big problems. The employers are of the view that their duty and obligation is completed if they have contributed their portion of cash contributions whether the workers take treatment or otherwise. This is a bit extraordinary phenomenon in our country.

The tripartite meeting of this kind is rare in other countries. The amount of funds being contributed by the employers is enormous as it is contributed by the employ-

This is outstanding benefits of our country Myanmar.

The difficulty is getting land plot in the industrial zone for establishing medical clinics. We are trying to establish a clinic at the South Dagon Industrial Zone. The Union Government has handed down the authorization of land plot to the Yangon Regional Government; however, to reach into the hands of the SSB is quite difficult, and that required efforts are being exerted.

Similarly on district wise issue, our hospital is located at Nya Na Ba La Hillock in Htan Ta Bin Township, and that any health problem related to workers in Yangon East District and Yangon North District find it undesirable experiences going there.

Therefore, we are looking for an alternative in Yangon East District, but there are difficulties in getting the land plot, the doctors and the nurses for establishing mini-hospital. We are looking for private hospitals or private clinics in facilitating the workers in full time service such as care well clinics which is appropriate and suitable for the workers. The medical professionals are to attend the patients and actual expenses are to be settled by the SSB. This is an alternative solution.

We need to deploy the emergency ambulance vehicles as well as establishing more clinics, however, the good ideas are halted when we consider about the budget.

We could come together among the employers and the workers in solving the hurdles, and that at this juncture we need the professional idea and views from the perspective of the ILO and the legal experts, and what I have just discussed is the stances on the part of the employers.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Translated by UMT (Ahlom)



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued on Tuesday 18 December 2018)

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS RECORDED AT 09:30 hrs MST: During the past (24) hours, rain or thundershowers has been widespread in Kachin State, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing Region, isolated in Mandalay and Taninthayi regions, Chin State and weather has been partly cloudy in Lower Sagaing, Magway and Ayeyawady regions, Shan and Rakhine states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states. Night temperatures were (2°C) above December average temperature in Kayin State, (3°C) to (4°C) above December average temperatures in Upper Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago and Ayeyawady regions, (Southern and Eastern) Shan, Rakhine, Kayah and Mon states, (5°C) to (6°C) above December average temperatures in Lower Sagaing Region, Kachin, Northern Shan and Chin states and about December average temperature in the remaining regions and states. The significant night temperatures were (8°C) in Tonzang, (9°C) in Heho and (10°C) in Loilin. The noteworthy amounts of rainfall recorded were Tamu and Kawthoung (0.12)inch each and Mohnyin, Tiddim, Tonzang and Homalin (0.08)inch each.

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the West-central Bay and partly cloudy to cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF 19 December 2018: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State, scattered in Chin State, isolated in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Taninthayi regions, Northern Shan and Rakhine states. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (30-35)mph. Wave height will be about (6-9) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Upper Sagaing Region, Kachin, Northern Shan and Chin states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 19 December 2018: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 19 December 2018: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 19 December 2018: Partly cloudy.

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

A slight earthquake of magnitude (3.4) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about (3) miles west-southwest of Chauk), latitude 20.88 °N, longitude 94.78 °E, depth (46) kilometers about (24) miles southwest of Naung U seismological observatory was recorded at (09)hr (20)min (54)sec MST on 18 December 2018.

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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.

Yangon circular railway upgrade to be complete by end of 2019

THE project to upgrade the Yangon circular railway is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2019, said U Tun Aung Thin, the general manager of the Myanmar Railways (Lower Myanmar).

He made the remark at a meeting about the project held yesterday at the MR (Lower Myanmar) office. Work on the project is slated to start on 21 December.

The project has been divided into two parts. The Shwetaung Company will upgrade the eastern part of Yangon railway, while work on the western part will be carried out by A1 Company.

The western part from Insein to Kyimyintdine railway stations, spanning 5.5 miles, and the eastern part from Danyingon to Payautseikgon, spanning 7.25 miles, will be upgraded simultaneously.

"While work is ongoing, trains travelling upstream and downstream will run on a single track railway, while the other track will be upgraded. We will try not to reduce the number of trains by a great extent. The Hledan Thirimyaing and the Thamine Myothit stations will be temporarily opened during the project's term. Work on that section will be finished within 4 months," said U Zaw Lwin, the divisional traffic manager for the No.7 division of MR.

"When the project is in progress between the Danyingon and Payautseikgon stops,



A locomotive runs on the Yangon Circular Railway at Yangon Central Railway Station.

PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

the 3.5-mile Danyingon-Kyaikkale section will be upgraded, while one track will be kept open for train services. The railways will operate trains between the Kyaikkalae and Insein stations. Work on that part will take 4 months to complete," he said.

"When the 3.75-mile Kyaikkalae-Payautseikgon railway section is upgraded, both tracks will be closed. That phase of the project will take 6 months," he added.

Myanmar Railways will try to make sure services during rush hour are not affected so passengers do not face any inconvenience.

"This will pose some challenges. But, we will make sure not to reduce the number of

trains during rush hour," said U Tun Aung Thin, the general manager of MR (Lower Myanmar).

"As services will be temporarily halted on the Kyaikkalae-Payautseikgon section, MR is discussing ways to accommodate passengers from Mingaladon market, Mingaladon, Waibargi, and Oakkalapa railway stations with the Yangon Region's Transport Authority.

Over 2,400 passengers travel from those stations to Yangon every day. There are about 600 passengers travelling to Danyingon," said U Zaw Lwin.

"We will have to provide more routes to facilitate the passengers," said U Hla Aung,

the joint secretary of the YRTA.

Prior to the start of the project, the number of commuters using the Yangon circular railway and suburban railway totalled 88,168 per day on average.

In September, while the project work was on, there were 76,570 passengers on average per day. The month of October saw 74,284 passengers. A total of 8,015 foreign passengers used the services in November.

Train schedules will be notified at the respective stations, through vinyl hangings and pamphlets. The MR is providing services to about 80,000 commuters daily.

—Nyein Nyein ■
(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

ROK donates 650 tons of rice for natural disaster victims in Bago

THE Republic of Korea (ROK) donated 650 tons of rice for victims of natural disaster in the Bago region during a ceremony in the Taw Win Han Thar hall of the Bago region's government office on 18 December, under the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) Programme-3.

The Bago Region Chief Minister U Win Thein delivered a speech at the ceremony. The Agricultural Department's (Head office) Deputy Director General, U Aye Ko Ko, and General Manager of the APTERR secretariat, Mr. Chanpithya Shimpalee, also spoke at the event. The Representative for



Representative for ROK Embassy Mr. Jung Yung Soo and General Manager of APTERR Secretariat, Mr. Chanpithya Shimpalee, make donation to Bago Region Chief Minister U Win Thein. PHOTO: MNA

the ROK Embassy, Mr. Jung Yung Soo, then explained the role of APTERR in the donation.

Afterwards, Mr. Chanpithya Shimpalee and Mr. Jung

Yung Soo made the donation to the Bago region's Chief Minister. In turn, U Win Thein presented them with a certificate of honor and souvenirs.

The ceremony was also attended by Bago region ministers, the government secretary and officials, Agricultural Department officials, and personnel from regional agencies.

A total of 16,250 donated rice bags will be distributed among the townships of the region. As a donation, 3,471 bags will be handed to Toungoo, 6,173 bags to Yedashe, 272 bags to Kyaukgyi, 538 bags to Phyu, 182 bags to Ottwin, 18 bags to Htantabin, 1,850 bags to Bago, 526 bags to Thanatpin, 977 bags to Kawa, 258 bags to Waw, 745 bags to Nyaunglebin, 39 bags to Daik U, and 1,201 bags to Shwegyin township.—Tin Soe (Bago)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Myanmar Investment Commission discusses post-permit activities

THE Myanmar Investment Commission-MIC held its meeting 21/2018 at the meeting room of the commission in Yangon yesterday.

The post-permit activities of MIC-permitted businesses

were discussed in the meeting. The meeting was attended by U Thaung Tun, Chairman of Myanmar Investment Commission, Dr. Than Myint, Vice Chairman of MIC and 11 members.—MNA



PHOTO: MNA

MADB, MI, Sompoto to conduct trials for weather index-based crop insurance

WITH the approval of the Ministry of Planning and Finance, the Myanma Agriculture Development Bank, Myanmar Insurance, and Sompoto Japan Nipponkoa Insurance Inc. yesterday signed an agreement to test a weather index-based crop insurance scheme in Myanmar to protect farmers from losses due to adverse weather.

The insurance product designed by Sompoto Japan was transferred to MI after Dr. Sandar Oo, the managing director of MI, U Min Thu, the managing director of MADB, and Mr. Keiji Okada, a representative from Sompoto Japan, signed an agreement at the Myanma Insurance office.

“Farmers have to take loans from MADB to cultivate crops. It is hard for them to pay off their loans if their crops are damaged due to erratic weather conditions, which lands them in a debt trap. This being so, the weather index-based crop insurance



Officials sign the agreement at the ceremony among Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank, Myanmar Insurance and Sompoto Japan Nipponkoa Insurance. PHOTO: KHIN MAUNG WIN (THE MIRROR)

scheme will be implemented to help farmers tackle such problems,” said Dr. Sandar Oo.

“The trial stage is set for one year. During the trial stage, only paddy farmers will be allowed to avail the scheme. The pilot scheme will be implemented in Shwe-

bo Township of Sagaing Region and Pyay Township of Bago Region.

The weather index-based crop insurance will be available for purchase between February and April. Farmers will be able to buy the insurance when they get loans,” she said.

Crop insurance pays for liabilities, depending on the rate that both parties agreed to when the insurance was purchased. To set the premium, the insured amount (maximum amount payable) is calculated on the amount of rainfall, measured by the Satellite Map.

The weather index-based period is set from July to October. If the amount of rainfall does not reach the amount agreed upon in the first two months, farmers will get about 20 per cent of the premium rate.

If it fails again in the last two months, about 30 per cent of the premium will be paid.

“Although there are two types of crop insurance - yield-based crop insurance and weather index-based crop insurance, yield-based crop insurance resulted in losses in the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh and India. Therefore, we are determined not

to adopt yield-based crop insurance, which burdens the government in the agricultural sector,” according to the MI.

Myanma Insurance provides 29 types of insurance. Fire insurance is the most purchased, accounting for 43.65 per cent of insurance sold. That is followed by comprehensive motor insurance (33.31 per cent) and third-party liability insurance, marine, and aviation insurance (15.02 per cent). Life insurance accounts for 6.02 per cent of insurance policies sold. Myanma Insurance earned K61 billion during the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

Dr. Sandar Oo spoke about the benefits of the weather index-based insurance model at the signing ceremony.

The event ended after a commemorative photo session.—Myint Maung Soe/ Ko Khant ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Thrice-weekly Hangzhou-Yangon Flights launches

YANGON International Airport (YIA), Myanmar’s largest and busiest airport, announced yesterday that it has begun flying travellers directly from Hangzhou to Yangon, China, thrice a week via Sichuan Airlines.

The new route, which launched yesterday, is Sichuan Airlines’ second connection between Yangon and China, following the launch of the Yangon-Xi’an route in November this year. Sichuan Airlines will

use 180-seat A320 aircraft for the thrice-weekly flights.

The announcement comes against a backdrop of rising visitor traffic from mainland China, thanks to the Myanmar government’s new visa-on-arrival service. It is expected to boost tourism for both Yangon, Myanmar’s commercial capital, and Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province and southern terminus of the ancient Grand Canal waterway.—MNA ■



Sichuan Airlines launches its new route from Hangzhou to Yangon at Yangon International Airport. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Xi warns no one can 'dictate' China's path, 40 years on from reforms

BEIJING (China) — President Xi Jinping warned on Tuesday that no one can "dictate" China's economic development path as the Communist Party marked 40 years of its historic "reform and opening up" policy amid a stern challenge from the United States.

In a speech at the grandiose Great Hall of the People, Xi vowed to press ahead with economic reforms but made clear that Beijing will not deviate from its one-party system or take orders from any other country.

"The great banner of socialism has always been flying high over the Chinese land," Xi told the party faithful.

"The leadership of the Communist Party of China is the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the greatest advantage of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics," he said.

The commemoration of the reforms enacted under late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping on 18 December, 1978, came as China is locked in diplomatic spats and a bruising trade war with the United States.

The rivals have agreed to a 90-day truce as they seek to negotiate a solution, with the United States seeking a reduction in its massive trade deficit as well as deeper reforms in China to stop the alleged theft of intellectual property.

Without directly referring to the United States, Xi said China "poses no threat" to any country but warned that it would not be pushed around.

"No one is in a position to dictate to the Chinese people what should or should not be done," Xi said.

"We must resolutely reform what should and can be changed, we must resolutely not reform what shouldn't and can't be changed."



China's President Xi Jinping applauds during a celebration meeting marking the 40th anniversary of China's "reform and opening up" policy at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on 18 December, 2018. PHOTO: XINHUA

While Xi promised more reforms, he did not offer any specifics. The United States and Europe have long complained of lingering obstacles to fully entering China's massive market while Chinese companies enjoy the benefits of open Western economies abroad.

The reforms pulled hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and turned China into the world's second biggest economy.

But it is currently facing a debt mountain and a slowing economy, which grew by 6.9 per cent last year and is expected by the government to slow to around 6.5 per cent this year.

'One-party dictatorship'

Deng's reforms broke with the chaotic policies of his predecessor, Chairman Mao Zedong.

Tuesday's ceremony included the awarding of medals to more than 100 individuals whom the party recognized as key contributors to the country's development, from people involved in rural reform and poverty alleviation to China's richest man, Al-

ibaba founder Jack Ma, and retired NBA legend Yao Ming.

China now boasts the most dollar billionaires in the world with 620, according to Shanghai-based magazine publisher Hurun Report.

But the economic transformation has not brought changes to the Communist Party-controlled political system, with authorities harshly cracking down on the Tiananmen protests in 1989 and activists complaining of a deterioration of human rights in recent years.

"Reform and opening up let the Communist Party maintain its dictatorship and let it keep its rule from collapsing after the Cold War and survive," Beijing-based political analyst Wu Qiang told AFP.

"I think China now is state capitalism under a one-party dictatorship, or party-run capitalism," he said.

Second reform?

Wu said the trade war could be a chance for China to enact more changes.

"If the Communist Party is smart enough, it

may transform it into the starting point of a second reform and opening up and change the role of the party and the state," Wu said.

When the party enacted the reforms under Deng, China was still suffering from famine and was emerging from the Cultural Revolution, a period of intense social and political upheaval launched by Mao.

This new "revolution" started in the countryside, where authorities began to de-collectivise land and dismantle communes, but it quickly spread to cities.

Wary of an opposing power base in economically powerful Shanghai, Deng chose the extreme south of the country as the guinea pig for his reforms.

Southern cities including Shenzhen, which borders Hong Kong and was still a fishing village, were designated China's first Special Economic Zones that became powerhouses and models for the rest of the country.

Shenzhen has become a global technological hub, with China's internet giant Tencent and telecom titan Huawei choosing the city for their headquarters.

The poverty rate among the rural population dropped to 3.1 per cent last year from 97.5 per cent 40 years ago. —AFP ■

Embattled Australia PM eyes tax cuts before election

SYDNEY, (Australia) — Flagging in the polls and facing a rout in the May general election, Australia Prime Minister Scott Morrison looked to shore up support on Tuesday, teasing AUS\$9 billion worth of tax cuts.

"We support lower taxes," said treasurer and deputy prime minister Josh Frydenberg, touting "important" tax decisions ahead. A mid-year budget released on Monday showed the government running a smaller deficit than expected and possible surplus next year.

That amounts to a much-needed AUS\$9.25 billion (US\$6.7 billion) election war chest for Morrison.

His conservative coalition is ten points back in the polls and facing a thumping loss to centre-left Labour, according to a recent Newspoll survey. Hoping for a little Christmas cheer to improve his sagging

fortunes, Morrison looks almost certain to dole out the goodies to sceptical voters.

The government did not spell out what the tax cuts could be, but they were budgeted for in the fine print of the plan under "decisions taken but not yet announced."

"This is tax cuts (or possibly spending measures) due to be announced between now and next year's election," said Andrew Hanlan, an economist with Westpac.

Experts said the smaller deficit was thanks to higher tax revenues stemming from stronger growth and higher commodity prices.

Australia's economy has been growing steadily for decades, but has started to slow amid trade disputes between China and the United States and domestic pressures.

An election date has not yet been set, but it is widely expected by May next year.—AFP ■

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2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Services with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available free download at the Ministry of Electricity and Energy Website Portal (www.moe.gov.mm) as from 19 December, 2018. Tender forms will not be sold.

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NGOs launch legal action against France over climate

PARIS (France) — A group of NGOs including Greenpeace and Oxfam have launched a lawsuit against the French state accusing it of taking insufficient action to tackle climate change.

It comes after similar action was launched by farmers in Germany, and the Dutch government lost a landmark case brought by an environmental rights group on cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

“The failure of the state in the fight against climate change reflects a lack of respect in its obligation to protect the environment and the health and security of the population,” the NGOs said in a joint statement on Monday.

The French government will have two



Activists from Greenpeace, one of the NGOs who accuse France of not respecting its short-term climate objectives, take part in a march for climate in Paris earlier this month. **PHOTO: AFP**

months to respond to the legal action. “We are seeking redress for damages and asking the state to act straight away at all levels,”

Greenpeace campaigner Laura Monnier said.

The NGOs allege that France, where greenhouse gas emissions rose again in

2015, has not met its short-term climate objectives.

President Emmanuel Macron, who has attempted to paint himself as a

leader in fighting climate change since his election last year, recently backed down on anti-pollution fuel tax hikes in the face of country-wide “yellow vest” protests. In October, the Dutch government lost an appeal against a ruling which ordered it to slash greenhouse gases by at least 25 per cent by 2020.

Environmental rights group Urgenda fought the successful case on behalf of some 900 Dutch citizens who accused the Netherlands of doing too little to prevent dangerous climate change. In Germany, dismayed farmers who have

suffered damage to their crops and dairy farms as a result of record drought have also filed a lawsuit, with the aid of Greenpeace, against Berlin to force action. Last month the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) said in a report that warming is on track toward an unliveable 3C or 4C rise, and avoiding global chaos will require a major transformation. A deal reached at the UN’s COP24 climate summit earlier this month was criticised for not matching the ambition of the world’s most vulnerable countries.—AFP ■

EU agrees to cut emissions from new cars by 37 percent by 2030

BRUSSELS (Belgium) — European Union members and the European Parliament on Monday agreed to slash carbon dioxide emissions from new cars by 37.5 per cent by 2030, the European Commission announced.

The announcement comes two days after the end of the COP24 summit in Poland where one of the largest disappointments for countries of all wealths and sizes was the lack of ambition to reduce emissions

shown in the final text.

Emissions from new vans will have to be 31 per cent lower than in 2021, according to Monday’s agreement.

“With this legislation in place, we are setting the right targets and incentives to tackle emissions from the transport sector,” said Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Canete.

“It will help our industry to embrace innovation towards zero-emission mo-

bility and further strengthen its global leadership in clean vehicles.”

The deal is a compromise between the demands of states like Germany which wanted a cut of 30 per cent and the European Parliament which had wanted a reduction of 40 per cent.

The European federation of transport NGOs, Transport & Environment (T&E), said it was a step in the right direction but not good enough. “Europe

is shifting up a gear in the race to produce zero emission cars.

The new law means by 2030 around a third of new cars will be electric or hydrogen-powered. That’s progress but it’s not fast enough to hit our climate goals,” said Greg Archer, clean vehicles director at T&E.

The automobile industry meanwhile had strongly rallied against the move warning that it could affect jobs.—AFP ■

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V HILDE VOY. NO. (1803830001)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V HILDE VOY. NO. (1803830001) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 19-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of 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.

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

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M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (005 N/S)

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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.

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M.V MAERSK WIESBADEN VOY. NO. (1827/1828)

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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 MCC TRANSPORT (S’PORT)
PTE LTD**

Phone No: 2301185

'Stronger, faster' Pacquiao turns 40 with lavish birthday bash

GENERAL SANTOS (Philippines) — Philippine boxing legend Manny Pacquiao said he is "stronger and faster" than ever ahead of his world title defence as he threw a lavish party with thousands of guests and a mass giveaway to mark his 40th birthday.

A car, pickup trucks and appliances were raffled off and President Rodrigo Duterte and celebrities were among the well-wishers at the all-night event, held at a sprawling shopping mall in his home city of General Santos.

"I feel stronger and faster, and by God's grace I am wiser at 40, feeling 25," Pacquiao said, making clear he's looking forward to facing American Adrien Broner next month.

"I believe the best is yet to come. You have not yet seen the best of Manny Pacquiao," he added.

The Filipino southpaw, 60-7 with two draws and 39 knockouts in a career that began in 1995, is to



Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte (centre) was a guest of honour at boxer Manny Pacquiao's 40th birthday party. **PHOTO: AFP**

stake his World Boxing Association's regular welterweight crown against Broner on 19 January in Las Vegas.

Pacquiao, winner of an unprecedented eight world titles in as many weight classes, has continued fighting after reversing

a decision to retire in 2016.

The rags-to-riches Pacquiao, who quit school and hawked food in the streets and later took up boxing in his teens to support his mother and his younger siblings, is also an elected Philippine senator.

"Boxing is my passion and public service is my mission," he said, wearing a dark suit and fedora hat.

The Filipino won his last title by stopping Argentina's Lucas Matthyse in July at Kuala Lumpur.

Speculation remains high that the Broner bout could be a warm-up for a sequel to 2015's "Fight of the Century", that Pacquiao lost to undefeated Floyd Mayweather on points.

A sedan and two pickup trucks as well as dozens of smaller prizes, like refrigerators, were raffled off at the party, which included a section that was open to the general public.

Entertainers put on a shadow play recounting the rise of the "people's champ" from abject poverty to becoming a multi-millionaire who doled out free housing to the poor and visited sick people in hospital.

Rock bands and gospel singers provided the music, children danced, and Pacquiao's wife, Jinky, serenaded him with a ballad. "We are so thankful. He never forgets to help us, his poor constituents," said Sarah Bagas, a middle-aged street sweeper who lined up for her raffle ticket and food stub in mid-morning. —AFP ■

Jeff Bridges to be honoured with Cecil B deMille Award at Golden Globes

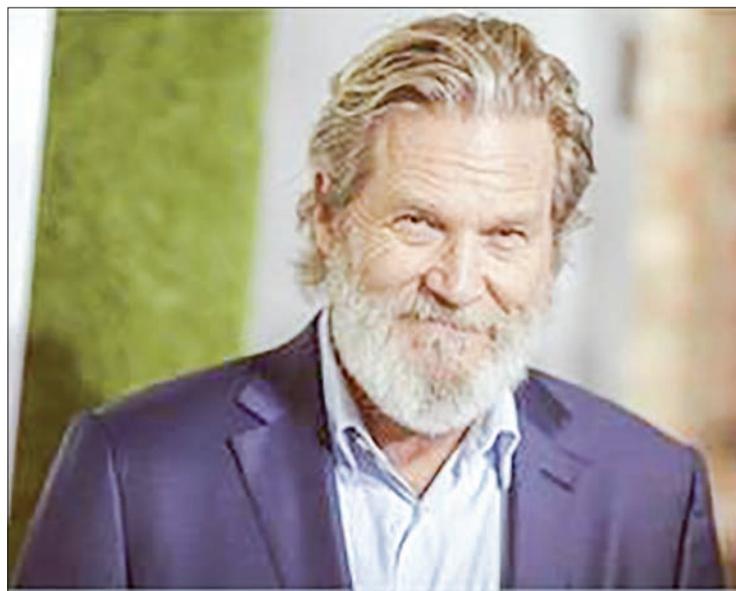
LOS ANGELES — Veteran actor Jeff Bridges is set to receive the Cecil B deMille honour at the 76th annual Golden Globe Awards, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) has announced.

The Cecil B deMille award is given annually to a talented individual who has made a lasting impact on the world of entertainment.

"The Hollywood Foreign Press Association is delighted to bestow the 2019 Cecil B deMille Award on Jeff Bridges. Bridges' brilliant body of work across diverse genres has captured the hearts and minds of audiences worldwide for more than six decades.

"We look forward to celebrating 'the Dude' and his remarkable career and philanthropic achievements at the upcoming Golden Globe Awards," said HFPA President Meher Tatna.

Bridges' first Golden Globe nomination came in 1984 for best actor in "Starman". Seven years later he received his second Golden Globe nomination for his performance in "The Fisher King", which also starred



Veteran actor Jeff Bridges. **PHOTO: PTI**

Robin Williams.

He got another Golden Globe nomination in 2001 for his role in "The Contender", Rod Lurie's political thriller, co-starring Gary Oldman and Joan Allen, in which Bridges played the president of the United States.

In 2017, he received another Golden Globe nomination for best supporting actor as a retiring Texas Ranger in "Hell or High Water", a modern action bank heist thriller set in West Texas.

Past honourees of Cecil B deMille Award include George Clooney, Robert De Niro, Audrey Hepburn, Harrison Ford, Jodie Foster, Sophia Loren, Sidney Poitier, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, Meryl Streep, Barbra Streisand, Denzel Washington, Robin Williams, and Oprah Winfrey.

Golden Globes award ceremony, which will be hosted by Sandra Oh and Andy Samberg, will take place on 6 January, 2019.—PTI ■

Da Vinci design jewel still key for Tuscan silk weavers

FLORENCE (Italy) — Five hundred years after the death of Leonardo da Vinci, a silk mill incorporating one of his designs is still shuttling some of the finest threads in the world across its looms.

Tucked away in the historic San Frediano neighbourhood in Florence, L'Antico Setificio Fiorentino was founded in 1786 and is one of the oldest silk workshops in Europe. Its looms date back to the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, but the jewel at its heart is a machine to unwind the reels of threads, designed by Renaissance genius Da Vinci, who died in 1519.

"It is a warping machine made in the late 17th century according to the maestro's original design, and we still make passementerie (tassels, cords, trimmings) today" using it, silk worker Beatrice Fazzini told AFP.

The polymath's device is used to prepare the threads before they are placed on the loom, following a technique that has been closely guarded down the centuries. Golden chenille, damask and taffeta with floral or geometric motifs are among the fabrics made here and sold for between 200 euros (\$226) and 1,500 euros (\$1,700) per metre. The workshop, which since 2010

has belonged to the family of Italian fashion designer Stefano Ricci, manufactures fabrics, lace and ribbons in styles and colours favoured by the historic House of Medici, an Italian banking family and political dynasty. It was during the Medici's rise to power that silk manufacturing enjoyed a boom along the banks of the Arno River.

Mustard yellow, petrol blue

Fabrics produced by L'Antico Setificio Fiorentino can be found in places of grandeur both home and abroad, from Italy's palaces and the famous Uffizi Galleries in Florence, to the royal residence in Denmark and the Kremlin in Russia. Pope Francis and opera singers Maria Callas and Andrea Bocelli have also worn garments created on its aged looms.

"It's a museum that is also a factory," said Briza Datti, interior designer and head of the commercial sector. The hand looms move to the weaver's rhythm and bear "the imprint of the family to which they belonged in the past," she says. The designs and fabrics produced down the ages are preserved in the workshop's historical archives, which can be visited by school children or tourists.—AFP ■

Tokyo tech venture's AI-mounted robot pet LOVOT goes on sale

TOKYO — The Tokyo-based tech venture Groove X on Tuesday unveiled an artificial-intelligence equipped robot pet that can sense people's emotions and communicate with them.

The doll-like robot named "LOVOT" will be shipped in the autumn of 2019 as a set of two with a price tag of 598,000 yen (\$5,300) plus a monthly service fee expected to be around 20,000 yen. A single

LOVOT will be available in 2020 and will cost 349,000 yen plus a monthly fee of around 10,000 yen.

The big eyed robot, featuring a bevy of sensors, recognizes its owners' facial expressions and obeys commands, Groove X said.

Weighing 3 kilograms and standing 43 centimetres tall, the mechanical pet has an internal camera and learns the layout of its household so

it can move around without crashing into furniture.

The name LOVOT comes from a combination of the words love and robot, as it is designed to be "a new home robot that stirs your instinct to love," according to the company. Groove X was founded in 2015 by Kaname Hayashi, who was involved in the making of SoftBank Group Corp's humanoid robot Pepper. —Kyodo News ■

IKBZ's dash cam scheme to provide law enforcement technology

As part of efforts for enforcing traffic rules, IKBZ Insurance announced yesterday that it will provide dash cams to its customers.

The decision to gift dash cams to drivers came after the World Health Organization revealed its survey that Myanmar ranked second in road accidents and deaths in South East Asia.

Myanmar has seen a rise in road fatalities over the previous decade with 4,420 deaths in 2015,

up from 1,283 in 2005, as the volume of car traffic has increased considerably.

The dashboard cameras would come to the customers as a new year gift and the cams would bring safety to customers and their families on the road and prevent accidents due to negligence.

A dash cam can record the situation of the road and significant accidents. —GNLM ■

Israeli spacecraft gets special passenger before moon journey



The general manager of the Israel Aerospace Industries Opher Doron speaks to the media during a presentation of the space probe due to travel to the moon in early 2019 on 17 December, 2018. PHOTO: AFP

YEHUD (Israel) — Israeli scientists making final preparations to launch the country's first spacecraft to the moon added a special passenger on Monday that will accompany the journey.

A time capsule of three digital discs containing thousands of files was ceremoniously placed within the space pod by organizers wearing white dust coats at the plant where it is being constructed and tested.

They included drawings by children, pictures of Israeli symbols like the flag, Israeli songs and a booklet written by a Jewish man of his personal account of the Holocaust.

One of the founders of the nonprofit organization behind the launch, SpaceIL, compared the time capsule to prayers written on bits of paper that worshippers stuff into Jerusalem's Western Wall, one of Judaism's holiest sites.

"Today we are putting all those dreams on the spaceship like you would take a note and put

it in the Kotel, wishing for a bright future," said Yonatan Winetraub, using the Hebrew word for the Western Wall.

The spacecraft weighing some 585 kilogrammes (1,300 pounds) is expected to be launched in the coming months, though a precise date has not been set. Organizers are hoping for February.

It will be sent via a Falcon 9 rocket from American entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX firm and will take around a month and a half to arrive.

The launch will be from Cape Canaveral in the United States.

The cost of the project is some \$95 million (84 million euros), with private philanthropists providing funding. SpaceIL has also partnered with state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries, among the country's largest defence firms.

'Budget of almost \$10 mn'

Organizers say if successful it will not only be Israel's first

spacecraft to land on the moon, but also the first private one. Israel would be the fourth country to land on the moon.

It is called Beresheet, or Genesis in Hebrew, a name chosen by the public, and resembles a tall, oddly shaped table with round fuel tanks under the top.

It will measure the magnetic field as part of efforts to investigate how the moon was formed. The data will be shared with US space agency NASA.

"I've seen hundreds of kids look at the spacecraft and you see in their eyes that they say, 'Wow, if a small country can do this maybe little old me can do almost anything'," said Opher Doron, general manager of IAI's space division.

The project began as part of the Google Lunar XPrize, which in 2010 offered \$30 million in awards to encourage scientists and entrepreneurs to come up with relatively low-cost moon missions.

Although the Google prize expired in March without a winner having reached the moon, Israel's team pledged to push forward.

Asked whether the project had so far gone as planned, SpaceIL co-founder Yariv Bash said "hell no".

"Back when we got started, we thought it was going to be a two-year project, the budget would be less than \$10 million, and the spacecraft will weigh less than five kilogrammes," he said.

"And here we are eight years later with a project with a budget of almost \$100 million." —AFP ■

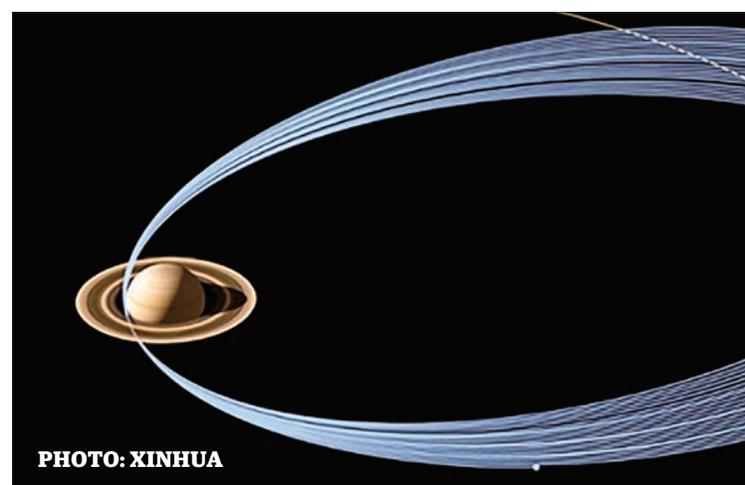


PHOTO: XINHUA

Saturn is eating away its icy rings: NASA

WASHINGTON — The United States space agency NASA confirmed that Saturn is quickly losing its rings due to the planet's magnetic field.

The study published on Monday in the journal *Icarus* has shown that the iconic rings are being pulled into Saturn by gravity as a dusty rain of ice particles.

The rings of Saturn, a ring system orbiting about the Saturn, consist of countless small particles made almost of water ice with a trace component of rocky material. Their origins remain controversial, but now they are disappearing. The "ring rain" drains an amount of water that could fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool in half an hour, according to the study's lead author James O'Donoghue with NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre.

The entire ring system will be gone in 300 million years, and taking into account the materials falling into the planet equator, detected by NASA's Cassini spacecraft, the rings may have less than 100 million years to live.

"This is relatively short, compared to Saturn's age of over 4

billion years," said O'Donoghue.

Tiny particles, previously in a balanced position between gravity and their orbital velocity, can get electrically charged by ultraviolet light from the Sun or by plasma cloud from small meteoroid bombardment, which changes the balance dramatically, according to the study.

Then, the ring particles will drop into Saturn's upper atmosphere where they vaporize and the water can chemically react with Saturn's ionosphere. Those reaction led to an increase in the lifespan of electrically charged particles called H₃⁺ ions and those ions, energized by sunlight, can glow in infrared light, according to the study. The NASA team observed the infrared light with Keck telescope in Hawaii.

"We are lucky to be around to see Saturn's ring system, which appears to be in the middle of its lifetime. However, if rings are temporary, perhaps we just missed out on seeing giant ring systems of Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune, which have only thin ringlets today," said O'Donoghue. —Xinhua ■

Myanmar wins 4 silver, bronze medals in 19th AUG



Karate athletes compete in the dual contest at the 19th ASEAN University Games yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

MYANMAR athletes won 4 silver medals in vovinam, chess and soccer competitions, and 4 bronze medals in sepak takraw, karatedo and vovinam competitions during the eleventh day of the 19th ASEAN University Games yesterday. At Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar



Myanmar and Thailand football players in action during the 19th ASEAN University Games yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



Players in action during basketball match between Indonesia and Thailand at the 19th ASEAN University Games. **PHOTO: MNA**

bagged third place in the men's sepak takraw four-member team competition.

Myanmar tied with Malaysia for third place in the wom-

en's karatedo team kumite competition.

In the vovinam competitions, Myanmar's Kyaw Thu Soe Aung won second place

in the men's single swordplay contest and Wyne Chit scored second in men's karate 54 kilo combat contest. Myanmar also garnered third places in Male + Female four-member team contest and in the women's dual display.

Myanmar finished at second place in both the women's chess contest and the football finals after beating 2-0 by Thailand. Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi awarded the gold medal to Thailand while Deputy Minister Dr. Mya Lay Sein conferred the silver medal on Myanmar. So far, Myanmar has won 24 gold, 26 silver, and 29 bronze medals.

—MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Chess player Ma Htet Htet Than Sein (left) from Myanmar plays against Maria L.A.V. Tilman from Timor Leste (right) in a match at the 19th ASEAN University Games yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Manchester United sack Jose Mourinho: club



MANCHESTER (United Kingdom) — Manchester United have sacked manager Jose Mourinho after the club made their worst start to a season in almost 30 years, the Premier League club announced on Tuesday.

The 55-year-old Portuguese's last match in charge was the 3-1 defeat by league leaders Liverpool on Sunday which left them 19 points

behind their opponents.

It is United's worst start in the league since 1990 and even his ambition of reaching the top four and a Champions League qualification spot is in danger with the club 11 points adrift of those places.

Despite the club having reached the Champions League knockout stages — they face an intimidating last-16 tie with Paris Saint-Germain — a mix of the results, dressing-room discord and criticism of the board's transfer policy proved potent factors in the decision to dismiss him.

"Manchester United announces that manager Jose Mourinho has left the club with immediate effect," a club statement said.

"The club would like to thank Jose for his work during his time at Manchester United and to wish him success in the future.

"A new caretaker manager will be appointed until the end of the current season, while the club conducts a thorough recruitment process for a new, full-time manager."—AFP ■

19th ASEAN University Games 2018						
10th - 19th DECEMBER, 2018, MYANMAR						
Date / Time- 18.12.2018 (18:00)						
Rank	Country	SEA Nations	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	THA	Thailand	62	52	38	152
2	INA	Indonesia	44	39	30	113
3	MAS	Malaysia	37	43	49	129
4	MYA	Myanmar	24	26	29	79
5	VIE	Vietnam	16	9	6	31
6	LAO	Laos	7	9	11	27
7	SGP	Singapore	5	12	18	35
8	CAM	Cambodia	5	10	12	27
9	TLS	Timor Leste	2			2
10	PHI	Philippine	1			1
11	BRU	Brunei				
Total			203	200	193	596