

NATIONAL

5th graduation ceremony of woman army cadets takes place at Officer Training School (Army) in Hmawbi

PAGE-3

NATIONAL

MOHS takes steps to boost breastfeeding rate

PAGE-2

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Thursday, 27 December 2018

National level Universal Periodic Review meeting held

THE first coordination meeting of a national-level committee on implementing recommendations of Universal Periodic Review – UPR was held yesterday morning at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw. Vice President U Myint Swe, Chairman of UPR, delivered an opening speech at this meeting.

Present at the meeting were Vice Chairmen of the committee Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Dr. Win Myat Aye, U Kyaw Tin and Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo, committee members Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Chairman U Win Mra, Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Aung Thu, Rear Admiral Myint Nwe, Maj-Gen Than Htut, U Khin Maung Tin, U Aung Hla Tun, Dr. Daw Mya Lay Sein and U Sett Aung, Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General, Joint Secretary of Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation, Secretary of the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association and officials.

In his opening speech, Vice President U Myint Swe said that the Universal Periodical Review (UPR) is a process which makes a periodic review of the human rights records and which carries out in accordance with the implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution



Vice President U Myint Swe delivers the opening speech at the coordination meeting on National level Universal Periodic Review – UPR in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

65/251. Myanmar has submitted the first and the second UPRs to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - OHCHR in Geneva, Switzerland in 2011 and 2015 and which were under review by the UN Human Rights Council.

During the Second Cycle of UPR, Myanmar received 281 recommendations from 93 countries. Out of 281 recommendations, Myanmar accepted 166 recommendations.

With the aim of implementing these recommendations, a workshop was held on 9-10 August 2016, organized by the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission in Nay Pyi Taw. Similarly, another workshop was convened under the aegis of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) and the Lutheran World Federation (Myanmar) on 21 and 22 June 2018 in Nay Pyi Taw. Based on the results of this workshop, the MNHRC submitted the recommendations to the Office of the President; thereby the National-level committee on implementation of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was formed with five functions and 25 members on October 19, 2018.

A preliminary meeting on National level Universal Periodic Review – UPR was held on

12 November 2018 and which was led by Deputy Minister for Home Affairs and officials. The meeting had designated and identified ministries and organizations that would be held accountable for carrying out the implementations process of 12 sectors. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be accountable for 41 issues to sign the international human rights treaties, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission would be held accountable for 7 issues concerning its commission, the Ministry of International Cooperation would be held accountable for 4 issues to cooperate with UN Human Rights Mechanisms, the Office of the Union Attorney-General would be held accountable for 19 issues of reformation of democracy, peace, rule of law and

human rights, the Ministry of Planning and Finance would be held accountable for 12 issues of economic development, the Ministry of Home Affairs would be held accountable for 10 issues of formation of good governance system and land confiscations, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement would be held accountable for 15 issues of promoting gender equality and vulnerability together with 15 issues of discrimination, the Ministry of Education would be held accountable for 13 issues of health and education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture would be held accountable for 18 issues of interfaith, freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly, the Ministry of Labour,

SEE PAGE-2

Cooperation among the relevant work committees, ministries and organizations is needed in order to get a complete national report in time.

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

Inner-Mongolia company donates cash for "Thwe Chin Doe Yae Pwe Daw Se" festival in Nay Pyi Taw

PAGE-6

NATIONAL

MSWRR holds workshop to draft National Guideline on promoting job opportunities for PLWDs

PAGE-6

LOCAL NEWS

Group calls for need to protect Taung Zalal, cherry blossom trees in Chin State

PAGE-4



LOCAL NEWS

100 Myanmar migrant workers return from Thailand

PAGE-4

National level Universal Periodic Review meeting held

FROM PAGE-1

Immigration and Population would be held accountable for 7 issues of National Scrutiny Cards, internal displacement and human trafficking, and the Office of the State Counsellor would be held accountable for 5 issues of ceasefire and national reconciliation. The UN Human Rights Council would undertake a review, for the third time, the situation of Myanmar's human rights in 2020, and national report on implementing the second recommendation would be submitted by July, 2020, and arrangements would be made to submit the draft national report to the National level committee by December, 2019. Co-operation among the relevant work committees, ministries and organizations is needed in order to get a complete national report in time.

The UPR process was a privilege for Myanmar to let the world know about the improvement of the human rights' situation. As for the relevant work committees, ministries and organizations, efforts should be made to carry out the implementation. In order to show the improvement of human rights situation in Myanmar, inclusiveness should be emphasized to implement the process of national report. The attendees were urged to make suggestions and discussions



Union Minister Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe.
PHOTO: MNA

openly regarding the difficulties they encounter in the work process.

Next the secretary of the Committee Maj-Gen Aung Thu explained about the UPR process, measurements of preliminary coordination meeting and on-going process.

Regarding the 166 recommendations of UPR, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin explained about 41 issues of International Human Rights treaties and 4 issues to cooperate with UN Human Rights Mechanisms, Chairman of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission U Win Mra explained about 7 issues concerning its commission, the Office of the Union Attorney-General U



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye.
PHOTO: MNA

Tun Tun Oo explained about 19 issues of reformation of democracy, peace, rule of law and human rights, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Sett Aung explained about 12 issues of economic development, Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs U Tin Myint explained about 10 issues of formation of good governance system and land confiscations, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye explained about 15 issues of promoting gender equality and vulnerability together with 15 issues of discrimination, Director-General of the Technical, Vocational Education and Training Department Dr. Aye Myint explained about 13 issues



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin.
PHOTO: MNA

of health and education, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture Permanent Secretary U Tun Ohn explained about 18 issues of interfaith, freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population Deputy Director-General U Shein Win explained about 7 issues of National Scrutiny Cards, internal displacement and human trafficking, Deputy Minister for Office of the State Counsellor U Khin Maung Tin explained about 5 issues of ceasefire and national reconciliation.

Following this, Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin, Chairman of the Myanmar National



Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo. **PHOTO: MNA**

Human Rights Commission U Win Mra, Deputy Minister for Defence Rear Admiral Myint Nwe, Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Than Htut, Deputy Minister for Office of the State Counsellor U Khin Maung Tin, Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun, Deputy Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Daw Mya Lay Sein, Ministry of Home Affairs Permanent Secretary U Tin Myint and Director-General U Zaw Htay from the Office of the State Counsellor clarified on the process of the Universal Periodic Review - UPR. The meeting came to a close after a closing speech by the Vice President. — MNA

(Translated by
Win Ko Ko Aung)

MOHS takes steps to boost breastfeeding rate

MINISTRY of Health and Sports has called for making collective efforts by departments concerned and non-governmental organizations to boost breastfeeding rate in Myanmar.

A survey shows that only 51.2 per cent of babies are breastfed from their birth to sixth months old, and it is found today that children under two years old are suffering anemia, said Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe yesterday at the meeting on promoting breastfeeding in Myanmar.

"It is important to make efforts with added momentum to promote systematic breastfeeding, and the better outcomes will be achieved if breastfeeding and vaccination works are widely carried out," said the Union Minister at the Stakeholder



Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe delivers the speech at the meeting of Stakeholder Endorsement on Recommendations of Becoming Breastfeeding Friendly in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Endorsement on Recommendations of Becoming Breastfeeding Friendly at the ministry.

In his speech, the Union Minister also called for laying down tasks for national health project based on the outcomes of the

survey, urging the committees concerned with the breastfeeding to keep forward their trajectory on monitoring the works.

Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe also urged the related departments to work together

with the international non-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, community based societies, Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association to improve the situation.

Dr. Thar Tun Kyaw, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Health and Sports and Dr. Lwin Mar Hlaing, Deputy Director of the ministry, explained the backgrounds, processes, results and suggestions related to systematic breastfeeding processes in Myanmar.

At the beginning of his speech, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe spoke of systematic breastfeeding's benefits for children getting healthy early life, body and brain growth, strong immune system that prevent from infectious diseases and reducing possibility of obesity and diabetes when they are older, and for mothers—reducing suffering from breast cancer, ovarian cancer and cervical cancer.—MNA

■ (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

“ ‘Race’ is a collective noun applied to those who have lived through good times as well as bad together for long years, and who have accepted that they have a common destiny. It is a name given to a group of people who believe in their distinct, common identity. Although due consideration should be given to race, religion and language, a true patriotic spirit depends on a traditional desire to live together through weal or woe.”

(Excerpt from the speech given by General Aung San on the middle terrace of the Shwedagon Pagoda on 20th August, 1946)



Myanmar traditional Htamane festival in Tabodwe month. PHOTO: HTAY LWIN (AMARAPURA)

5th graduation ceremony of woman army cadets takes place at Officer Training School (Army) in Hmawbi

THE 5th graduation ceremony of woman army cadets took place at the Officer Training School (Army) in Hmawbi, Yangon Region, yesterday, with a speech by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Before giving his speech, the Senior General received the salute of the cadets on the parade ground.

In his speech, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing praised the role of women in the world, saying that outstanding women are found at the top positions in the field of politics as well as in the civil service.

Myanmar is encouraging the role of women while promoting the role of women is among the top topics at the global forums including at the United Nations, he said.

It has been found that the role of women in the armed forces in the world has improved and they have assumed high-ranking positions, he said.

To promote the role of women in the Tatmadaw, the armed



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives the salute of 5th graduation of woman army cadets at the Officer Training School (Army) in Hmawbi, Yangon. PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF DEFENCE SERVICES

forces has produced women officers and at present, six women pilots have become the first fighter pilots of Myanmar, said the Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Meanwhile, female military officers of the Tatmadaw have shown their outstanding skills by bringing gold medals from the ASEAN shooting contest every year to the country, he said.

He urged the graduating female officers to carry out their duties bravely and diligently.

Myanmar is home to all ethnic people and the constitution of the country guarantees equal rights to all ethnic groups, and regional development works are being carried in their regions, he said.

At present, the Tatmadaw has suspended military operations until 30 April, 2019, and ethnic armed groups are urged to take part in the peace making process if they wanted democracy and development of the country, said

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

In his concluding remarks, he said the Tatmadaw would keep on taking part in development and peace process of the country. He urged the graduating officers to be mindful of their manners so as not to hinder the goal of the country nor to tarnish the image of the Tatmadaw,

The Senior General received the salute of the graduating company of cadets and left the parade grounds.

After the ceremony, the Senior General gave words of advice and congratulations to award-winning cadets and their parents. In the evening, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla attended the dinner in honour of the 5th graduation of female army cadets, according to the news released by the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Dagon University celebrates Silver Jubilee

DAGON University observed its 25th Anniversary Silver Jubilee Celebration yesterday on its premises in Yangon Region yesterday.

Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, Chief Minister for Yangon Region, U Phyo Min Thein, Regional Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, and Yangon Regional Social Affairs Minister, U Naing Ngan Linn, launched the celebrations with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein then delivered opening remarks.

Next, Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi also delivered a speech, saying Dagon University was founded in November 1993 and initially started out with 11 academic degree programs taught by 14 teachers including the rector.

Now, with the support of teachers and staff members of the university, the university has 22 departments and 26 subject areas. Using the 25 years of experience of the university, we will move forward with achievements and means of the various teaching, learning and training

methods, while we are in cooperation in research projects in ensuring national, regional and global well-being.

Afterward, regional Minister U Naing Ngan Linn and Pro-Rector Dr. Nu Nu Yi delivered the closing speeches and took documentary photographs with the attendees. The Union Minister and entourage then looked around the science fair commemorating the university's 25th anniversary, and the teaching aid exhibition. —MNA

(Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)



Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi greets participants as he visits the Dagon University's 25th Anniversary Silver Jubilee Celebration yesterday in Yangon Region. PHOTO: MNA

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Group calls for need to protect Taung Zalal, cherry blossom trees in Chin State

TAUNG ZALAT or the rhododendron, the symbol of Chin State, and cherry blossom trees are becoming scarce in the state on account of visitors cutting down branches and plants every year, and therefore, there is a need to protect the trees, said Green Kennedy Group Chairman U Ngi Shing Khual, also known as U Hlaing Aung.

"Taung Zalal flowers and cherry blossoms bloom on the roadsides every December. Visitors have been plucking flowers and cutting down branches of the trees to take back home. The flowers and branches of the trees wither in arid areas. Taung Zalal and cherry blossoms make the Chin State look beautiful," said U Ngi Shing Khual.

As part of eco tourism efforts in

Chin State and to attract more tourists, the Green Kennedy Group, which was formed in 2012, has planted about 20,000 cherry and pine trees on two acres of land in Ar Lwe village.

On 12 December, the group launched a campaign to prevent visitors from plucking flowers and breaking off branches of Taung Zalal and cherry blossom trees in the villages near Tiddim-Kalay road and around the Kennedy mountain. The group made posters and stickers with messages, such as "Let's preserve the nature of the state" and "Do not destroy the state's natural beauty", in the local dialect of Chin and Myanmar languages.—Zo Hei Sa

(Translated by Hay Mar)

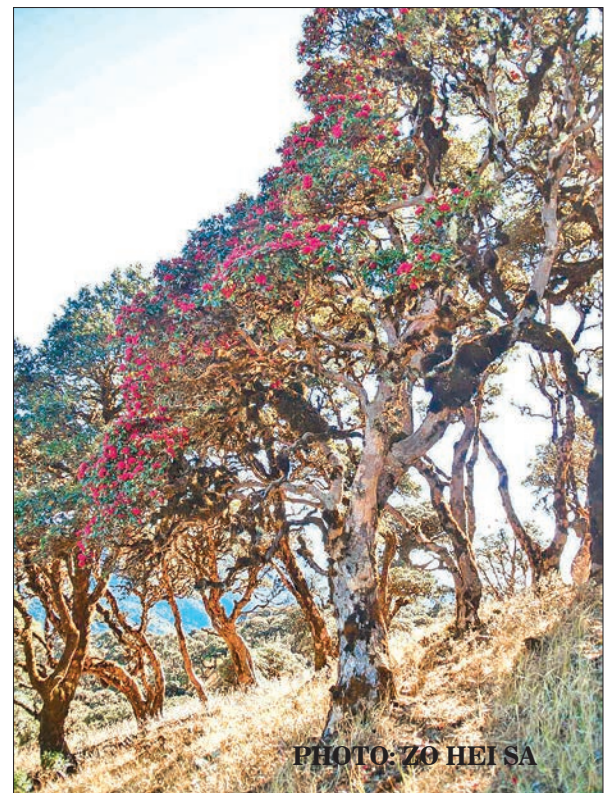


PHOTO: ZO HEI SA

Upgrade project: Yangon Circular Railway adds 20 more trips to help passengers

By Nyein Nyein

THE Yangon Circular Railway is adding 20 more trips to its timetable for ease of passengers during the railway upgrade project, said U Zaw Lwin, the divisional traffic manager for the No.7 Division of Myanma Railways.

The project to upgrade the Yangon Circular Railway began on 21 December. "Prior to the project, the Yangon circular railway was running 153 trips a day, while the Yangon suburban network was running 68 trips a day. While the upgrade work is on, trains will run 20 more trips. So, the rail schedule has now increased to 173 trips a day," said U Zaw Lwin.

"The rail schedules for short routes will be increased, while trains travelling both clockwise (right) and counter-clockwise (left) along the railway loop will

have their schedules cut," he said.

The Yangon Circular Railway operates five routes — Yangon-Kyimyindine, Yangon-Insein, Insein-Hlawga, Yangon-Paywatseikgone, and Kyaikkalae-Insein. The Yangon suburban railway operates six routes — Yangon-Toekyaungkalay, Yangon-Ywathagyi, Yangon-Oakphosu, Yangon-Thilawa, Yangon-East Yangon University, and Yangon-Dagon University.

The Myanma Railways plans to discuss the accommodation of passengers from those railway stations which face transportation difficulties on account of the upgrade work with the Yangon Region Transport Authority.

"Yangon railway commuters may face some difficulties due to irregular rail timetables. We are trying to fix such issues to provide full service," said U

Zaw Lwin.

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

The western part from Insein to Kyimyindine railway stations, spanning 5.5 miles, and the eastern part from Danyingon to Paywatseikgone, spanning 7.25 miles, are being upgraded simultaneously, starting 21 December.

"While work is ongoing, trains travelling upstream and downstream will run on a single-track railway, while the other track is upgraded. We are trying not to reduce the number of trains by a great extent. The Hledan Thirimyaing and the Thamine Myothit stations have been temporarily opened for the duration of the project. Work on

that section will be finished within 4 months," said U Zaw Lwin.

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

"When the 3.75-mile Kyaikkalae-Paywatseikgone railway section is upgraded, both tracks will be closed. That phase of the project will take 6 months," he added. 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 Myanma Railways (Lower Myanmar).

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

100 Myanmar migrant workers return from Thailand

A total of 100 Myanmar migrant workers who were detained in Thailand for various reasons while working in southern Thailand were brought back to Kawthoung under the arrangement of the authorities of the two countries.

Local authorities in Kawthoung welcomed 82 men and 18 women who returned by boat through Ranong, Thailand.

The authorities including police, immigration and labour officers provided necessary assistance to them

and staff of the health department gave medical care to them.

The migrant workers are from Taninthayi, Yangon, Bago and Magway regions, Mon, Rakhine, and Chin states. After scrutinizing them to ensure they are free of drugs, not linked to terrorism, not involved in making counterfeit Kyat notes, not carrying weapons or explosive materials, not criminals, they were brought back to their homes.—Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)

(Translated by JT)



Migrant workers arriving back Myanmar from Thailand.

PHOTO: KYAW SOE (KAWTHOUNG)

Handicraft industry eyes international markets



Handmade bamboo baskets displayed in a market. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

EFFORTS are being made to develop the handicraft industry under a four-year project from 2018 to 2022, with assistance from the Netherlands, said U Kyaw Thu from the Myanmar Rattan and Bamboo Entrepreneurs Association.

“Handicrafts made of rattan and bamboo are only being sold in the local market. The industry is facing difficulties when it comes to manufac-

turing high-end products and penetrating the international markets. The Netherlands will provide Euro 1.9 million to the handicraft industry to help solve these problems,” he said.

Under the project, the Netherlands will help about 30 producers, such as rattan and bamboo finished product companies, handicrafts and lacquer ware firms participate in

international fairs, gain market share, and open handicraft design courses.

Myanmar’s bamboo forests are the largest in the world, after China and India. While its neighbors have made a significant headway in the bamboo products industry, Myanmar needs to make efforts to penetrate the international market.—GNLM

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Imports outperform exports in Myanmar’s trade with Singapore

THE value of Myanmar’s imports exceeded exports in bilateral trade with Singapore in the first month of the current fiscal year, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

Singapore is Myanmar’s second-largest trade partner in the region after Thailand. Myanmar’s exports to Singapore in October totalled US\$17.7 million, while imports stood at \$310 million. The total trade between the countries was pegged at \$328 million.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, footwear, textile and clothing, minerals, and animal products to Singapore. It imports plastic, fuel oil, capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer products, metals, and chemicals.

Myanmar’s bilateral trade

with Singapore was registered at \$1.99 million in the last mini-budget period, \$3.83 billion in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, \$2.96 billion in the 2016-2017 FY, \$3.69 billion in the 2015-2016 FY, \$4.89 billion in the 2014-2015 FY, \$3.6 billion in the 2013-2014 FY, \$2.82 billion in the 2012-2013 FY, and \$3.05 billion in the 2011-2012 FY.

A Singapore-listed enterprise invested \$21.5 million in Myanmar in October, according to data released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

Singapore ranks first on the list of countries with the largest FDI inflows in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, followed by Japan and Thailand. — Ko Khant

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Agro exports increase in current fiscal year

MYANMAR’S exports of agricultural products between 1 October and 14 December increased slightly to over US\$573 million from \$562 million during the same period last year, according to trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The agriculture and natural gas sectors saw the highest exports in the current fiscal year. Myanmar’s main agricultural exports include rice and broken rice, pulses, corn, and rubber. It also ships fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro products to other countries.

Agricultural exports have not seen a remarkable increase in trade value in the

2018-2019 FY due to China’s tight confiscation of some agro products, including rice, at the border since the second week of October. Inclement weather in the previous rainy season and the fall in rice prices in the global market have also led to a drop in maritime rice trade.

Of late, the price of mung bean SQ (Special Quality) has bounced back to K980,000 per ton on the back of increasing demand from India over the last few months.

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and erratic weather conditions. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Miners seek permits for 66 blocks in Taninthayi Region

A total of 41 miners have sought permits for 66 blocks in Taninthayi Region, stated the Dawei Watch, citing data from the Taninthayi Region’s Department of Mines.

The licence applications made by 25 artisanal miners for 25 blocks and 16 small-scale miners for 41 blocks are currently being reviewed by the regional mining block assess-

ment team.

Earlier, artisanal miners were not allowed to mine, while small-scale mining permits were only granted by the concerned ministry.

After the by-laws of Myanmar Mines were enacted in February, miners can seek permits from regional departments. Under the new rules, miners looking for a small-scale

permit have to apply through a company, while artisanal miners can apply for permits individually.

There are 19 large-scale mining blocks and 34 small-scale mining blocks in Taninthayi Region for coal, limestone, glass sand, quartz, and other industrials minerals.—GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Yangon gov’t plans to promote aquaculture in region

THE Yangon regional government is making arrangements to promote aquaculture in the region, which has thriving livestock breeding, fishery production, and export businesses.

Although machines are being used in the agricultural sector, the fishery industry is still chiefly operating on manual labour. By promoting aqua-

culture businesses, the government hopes to create better job opportunities for the people.

Among the aquaculture businesses, the government is looking to promote the fish-farming sector as fish exports have already gotten their due place in the international fish market.

The Fisheries Depart-

ment in Zeephyugone Village in Twantay Township in Yangon Region has over 1,200 acres of land, of which 400 acres has been identified for the construction of a world-class fisheries university. The government is also establishing fish-farming zones to promote the sector in the region.—GNLM

(Translated by Hay Mar)

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MSWRR holds workshop to draft National Guideline on promoting job opportunities for PLWDs

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Dr. Win Myat Aye, opened remarks at the workshop for drafting a National Guideline for creating job opportunities for people living with disabilities (PLWDs), at Mingalar Thiri Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his opening remarks, the Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye said the country is heading for socio-economic development and also developing aspects of the social welfare sector, including education, healthcare and social protection. He said his ministry is also cooperating with Asia Pacific Development Centre on Disability (APCD) and Shwe Min Thar Foundation (Myanmar) for elevating the livelihood and development of PLWDs.



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye delivers the opening speech at the workshop for drafting a National Guideline for creating job opportunities for people living with disabilities (PLWDs). **PHOTO: MNA**

Most of the international community has implemented their own National Guidelines

for creating job opportunities for PLWDs, so Myanmar needs to plan its own guidelines for the

rights of PLWDs, said the Union Minister. He said when the draft guideline is complete, it

will be published in Myanmar, English and Japanese languages and distributed at the ASEAN Regional Forum 2019 to be held in Thailand. He said they are also implementing the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project together with ASEAN member countries Cambodia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, and in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Development Centre on Disability (APCD). He concluded by urging attendees to be actively involved in the discussions.

The workshop was attended by Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, departmental officials, and officials from APCD, Shwe Min Thar Foundation (Myanmar) and invited civil society organizations. —MNA ■ (Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)

Inner-Mongolia company donates cash for “Thwe Chin Doe Yae Pwe Daw Se” festival in Nay Pyi Taw

INNER Mongolia Kincaid Industrial Group donated K 200 million to the Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association (MEEA), for funding the “Thwe Chin Doe Yae Pwe Daw Se” festival, in a donation ceremony at the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin first thanked the MEEA for leading facilitations for the festival, followed by an opening speech from U Yaw Set, Chair of Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association (MEEA).

Joint general-secretary of MEEA, Dr. Aung Ye Zaw, next

spoke on matters related to holding “Thwe Chin Doe Yae Pwe Daw Se” festival, and Inner Mongolia Kincaid Industrial Group’s Mr. Zhang Rui explained the cash donation for the festival.

Next, Mr. Zhang Rui and Mr. Aimin from Inner Mongolia Kincaid Industrial Group handed over the cash donation to Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin, who is also honorary patron of MEEA, and he handed over honorary certificates to the two representatives. General-Secretary of MEEA, U Min Banyar San, also delivered a speech.

Afterwards, Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin delivered a closing speech, and MEEA and Inner Mongolia Kincaid Industrial Group observed the exhibition booths on display.

Present at the ceremony were Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nai Thet Lwin, Deputy Minister U Hla Maw Oo, Director-General, Deputy Permanent Secretary and Deputy Director-General, MEEA’s Chair U Yaw Set and members, donor Inner Mongolia Kincaid Industrial Group’s Mr. Zhang Rui and members and officials. —MNA ■ (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)



Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin accepts cash donation for funding the “Thwe Chin Doe Yae Pwe Daw Se” festival, from Inner Mongolia Kincaid Industrial Group members. **PHOTO: MNA**

Over 500 farmers in Meiktila get land ownership certificates



Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung presents the certificate of farmland ownership to a local farmer. **PHOTO: U CHAN THAR(MEIKTILA)**

Over 500 farmers from 33 village tracts in Meiktila Township were issued farmland tenure certificates on 26 December. The certificates, also known as Form 7, were issued and land tenure was granted to a total of 516 farmers during a ceremony held at the Kandaw Mingalar hall and attended by the Mandalay Region Chief Minister, Dr. Zaw Myint Maung.

Authorities have so far scrutinized 691.74 acres of farmland according to Section-6 of the Farmland Law, 2012.

The farmland ownership certificates were handed out in accordance with the Farmland Land Rule 14 (A). Under the rules and regulations, local

farmers can sell or mortgage all or part of their land.

Local farmers who have received Form 7 can also enter into a partnership with foreign investors, under the Foreign Investment Law, said Dr. Zaw Myint Maung.

Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, the Regional Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Minister, Dr. Soe Than, the Regional Electricity, Energy, and Construction Minister, Dr. Zarni Aung, and Meiktila District Administrator U Thet Lwin gave the farmland ownership certificates to local farmers during the ceremony. —U Chan Thar(Meiktila) ■ (Translated by Hay Mar)



A pedestrian walks past an electronics stock indicator at the window of a securities company in Tokyo. PHOTO: AFP

Tokyo stocks rebound after Christmas slump

HONG KONG (China)—Japanese stocks recovered slightly on Wednesday after suffering their worst finish in almost two years, but other Asian markets were mixed after President Donald Trump marked Christmas with a renewed attack on the central bank.

Tokyo plummeted to a 20-month low on Tuesday on fears over the US economy and a government shutdown. That came after a brutal run on Wall Street that saw US stocks sink for a fourth straight session.

As the US stock market looked on track for its worst December since the Great Depression, Trump on Tuesday berated the Federal Reserve for its stewardship of the economy, a regular recent complaint.

However Tokyo opened higher on Wednesday though the gains were pared slightly during the morning session. Chinese stocks opened slightly lower, while Seoul also dropped.

Financial markets in Aus-

tralia, Hong Kong and New Zealand are closed for a public holiday.

Markets have been roiled by ongoing uncertainty in the US, with Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin berated for holding a call with the six biggest US banks and then reporting on Twitter that the six CEOs have “ample liquidity” available. Investors were also unnerved by weekend news reports that Trump had asked about the possibility of firing Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, accounts that Mnuchin said Trump has denied.

‘Panic mode’

Analysts said investors had been spooked by Trump’s unpredictable behaviour.

“The markets are in panic mode that the US economy is tanking, expecting the benefit of Trump’s fiscal stimulus will falter in 2019,” said Stephen Innes, head of Asia-Pacific trade at OANDA.

“After all, it was the US mar-

ket that was carrying the weight of global risk sentiment on its shoulder. If the US economy turns south, global capital markets are in for a world of hurt.”

However Norio Miyagawa, senior economist at Mizuho Securities, said that despite the recent market rout, there has been no clear sign of a recession in the US.

“Our judgement is that the US economy remains solid at the moment” though investors need pay attention to the possible impact of US trade rows with other countries on financial markets and business outlooks, he said in a note. The euro was moving narrowly against the dollar on Wednesday.

“The jury is out on this one, US political uncertainty vs weak EU economy,” said Innes.

“Most days I would favour the weak EU economy, but the swamp and numerous political sinkholes in Washington are too hard to ignore,” he said in a note. —AFP ■

China’s central bank drains liquidity from market

BEIJING—China’s central bank drained liquidity from the financial system on Wednesday.

The People’s Bank of China (PBOC) conducted 20 billion yuan (about 2.9 billion US dollars) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 2.55 per cent and 10 billion yuan of 14-day reverse repos at 2.7 per cent, according to a PBOC statement.

The PBOC said the operation was aimed to stabilize capital supply at the end of the year and maintain reasonably affluent liquidity in the banking system.

As reverse repos worth 40 billion yuan matured on Wednesday, the PBOC effectively withdrew 10 billion yuan of funds from financial institutions.

Through reverse repos, the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

On Wednesday, the volume-weighted average of the benchmark 14-day repo rate traded in the inter-bank market was up 148 basis points, the strongest rise in five years.—Xinhua ■

India picks Japan, Europe standards for fast EV chargers



Toshiyuki Shiga, president of the CHAdeMO Association promoting the Japan-developed CHAdeMO quick charging method for electric vehicles, and chief operating officer of Nissan Motor Co, speaks with reporters in Tokyo on 22 May, 2012. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

NEW DELHI—The Indian government has decided to adopt Japanese and European standards for electric vehicle-charging infrastructure as the world’s fourth-largest automobile market is entering an eco-friendly car era. The Ministry of Power says it requires charging stations to have connectors compatible with Japan’s “CHAdeMO” and Europe’s two platforms—“Combined Charging System,” known as CCS or Combo, and “Type-2 AC”—for fast EV chargers. The Japanese and European standards and China’s “GB/T” are three major international platforms for fast chargers, with Combo also commonly used in the United States. CHAdeMO is promoted by a Japanese industry group known as the CHAdeMO Association, which mainly consists of automakers, car component makers and utilities.

The CHAdeMO charging

method is used for 22 per cent of the world’s total EVs, with 22,647 charging stations in 71 countries as of September, the association said. Makoto Yoshida, its secretary general, hailed the move, saying, “The door to the Indian market has opened.” Japanese electronics firms would gain business opportunities and provide Indian companies with related technologies, he said. While qualifying CHAdeMO and Combo as its standards, the Indian government also intends to work out its own standard for the long term. “Japan will participate in India’s development activities,” Yoshida said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s administration has been pushing for EVs since he took power in 2014. In September, Nitin Gadkari, the minister of road transport and highways, said the country aims to have 15 per cent of the vehicles in the South Asian country electrified in five years.—Kyodo News ■

Viet Nam’s foreign investment attraction down in 2018

HANOI—Viet Nam has enticed foreign investment of nearly 35.5 billion US dollars so far this year, posting a year-on-year decrease of 1.2 per cent, its Foreign Investment Agency said on Wednesday.

Of the nearly 35.5 billion US dollars, nearly 18 billion US dollars were registered capital of 3,046 new foreign-invested projects, down 15.5 per cent in capital; roughly 7.6

billion US dollars were additional capital of 1,169 existing projects, down 9.7 per cent in capital; and nearly 9.9 billion US dollars were the money foreign investors used to buy shares or contribute capital to Vietnamese firms, up 59.8 per cent. Among countries and regions having investment in Viet Nam from January to late December, Japan was the biggest investor with near-

ly 8.6 billion US dollars, followed by South Korea with 7.2 billion US dollars, and Singapore with 5 billion US dollars.

In the 12-month period, realized capital of foreign-invested projects in Viet Nam stood at 19.1 billion US dollars, up 9.1 per cent, said the agency under the Ministry of Planning and Investment.—Xinhua ■

Safeguarding independence through peaceful means

NATIONS across the globe value their independence. They all have, at some point, made sacrifices, taken great risks, and struggled to attain or protect their independence through the collective will of their people.

Our forefathers swore to create a free and independent nation together, and they succeeded. But alas, the unity and solidarity that helped us achieve independence dissipated slowly when the time came for us to safeguard our new found freedom and build a truly independent nation.

Independence entails the right to live freely, right to work, resolving differences of opinions peacefully, and autonomy. People can choose to use peaceful or non-peaceful means to achieve independence. However, attempts to seize one's rights by taking up arms destroy both the peace and the independence people have worked hard for.

After independence, Myanmar saw clashes spark into a large-scale civil war. The government's authority shrank to Yangon and its vicinity, and the entire country was on the verge of dissolution. Eventually, peace was restored and the flames of civil war died down. But, the country was not wholly peaceful.

Armed conflicts do not benefit a country and its people in any way. Even in the modern world, there are countries that have attained independence but are on the brink of collapse due to internal armed conflicts. Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan have suffered continued assaults from the Taliban and ISIS militant groups, resulting in instability, threat to sovereignty, and heavy casualties. These countries have attained freedom, but they cannot stand as independent nations.

Compared to them, Myanmar is a much freer nation though it may yet have to work to ensure peace throughout the country. In terms of development, there is a sizeable gap between Myanmar and nations which have enjoyed unequivocal peace. Armed conflicts, whether on a large or a small scale, affect a nation's development and are by no means beneficial. Therefore, we must work towards resolving issues politically at the negotiations table diplomatically.

There are also countries around the world that have achieved independence but exist in a state akin to lawlessness. They stand ready to spiral into anarchy and lose their independence at the slightest provocation. This being the case, it is imperative that all of us unite to safeguard the independence we have gained through blood, sweat and tears and find peaceful, diplomatic solutions to achieve our wishes and desires.

Armed conflicts, whether on a large or a small scale, affect a nation's development and are by no means beneficial.

"People may be troubled by the uncertainty caused by fake notes in circulation, but collective effort is needed to tackle the issue of counterfeit currency..."

U Soe Min, Deputy Governor,
Central Bank of Myanmar.

Interview with U Soe Min, Deputy Governor, the Central Bank of Myanmar, and U Win Myint, Deputy Director-General, Currency Management Department, the Central Bank of Myanmar.

By Shin Minn
PHOTO: Lu Maw

CIRCULATIONS of counterfeit currency notes has jolted the public, and enveloped with worry and concern, which could eventually lead to sense of becoming deeply aggrieved to the citizens as well as the image of the nation. Therefore, the interview was conducted with U Soe Min, Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Myanmar, and U Win Myint, Deputy Director-General, Currency Management Department, Central Bank of Myanmar.

Question: People are worried about the news of counterfeit currency notes, and please explain the existing banking laws and regulations with regards to this matter.
U Soe Min: Myanmar Central Bank Law article (101) prohibited all acts on making fake notes and counterfeit coins. Anyone who breaches the rule is liable to fine in cash or three years imprisonment, or both punishments.

The article (102) prohibited the import of bogus notes and coins, and the wrong doers are liable (10) to (20) years imprisonment, and all equipment used are to be confiscated.

Question: Please explain in getting hold of counterfeit notes in possession.

Deputy Governor: We could not accuse and decide a person of committing crime for the possession of fake notes in hand. However, we may have to enquire whether the person is holding the fake notes without his knowledge or with some intention to use the illegal cash. The exact intention is to be ascertained, and that the task is to be carried out by the law enforcement agencies.

Question: What sorts of notes are found to be counterfeited?

U Win Myint: Generally, high valued denominations are being faked in the world, and that in Myanmar ten thousand kyat notes and five thousand kyat notes are in circulation, where old notes are being made into forged notes. The

new notes could not be faked due to high security systems.
Question: Please tell us about the recent phony cases.

DDG: Earlier, the fake notes are produced with color printer and color copier, and now they are imported from abroad. At the moment, which method used in making counterfeit notes and is yet to make announcement. The foreign security agencies are also investigating the links, and that the source of the problem must be uncovered so as to relieve the worry of the public.

Question: Kindly explain how to check the fake kyat notes.
DDG: There are ways and methods to check the fake notes and the authentic notes. The five thousand kyat notes could be checked by sensing the word Central Bank of Myanmar and the cash value by feeling with fingers. The genuine notes have a feeling of cut superficially, looking in upturn position one may find white elephant image and the wording five thousand, and that the silver security thread is partly unveiled and partly hidden.

The new five thousand notes are issued with color reflecting thread instead of normal silver color tread, and they are covered with varnish. The recent fake notes of ten thousand denominations are the old types. Real notes could be checked on the word Central Bank of Myanmar and the word five thousand that have the feel of cut superficially. When checking at upturn position, one may find the word CBM, and the security thread is half unveiled and half hidden, reflecting with the reddish and green colors. The notes are varnished.

Question: We heard that the fake currency notes are being punched and perforated. Please explain.
DDG: The people usually avoid appearing before the law courts and also afraid of confronting legal cases. The banks normally do not want to annoy the customers, and also worried in losing clients. When the bank customarily torn the notes, punched and perforated the currency, then the people generally and commonly forget that the issue of fake notes are actually in the purview of police jurisdiction. They never handed over the fake notes to the police stations, resulting with the difficulty on the part of the police force



U Soe Min



U Win Myint

and that it needs to fill up the form accordingly. Eventually, the case is to be reported to the police station and also informed to the Central Bank.
Question: When a citizen received a fake ten thousand note, he is sure to keep up in suffering and aggrieved for the loss of ten thousand kyat. What is the solution for that matter?
DDG: I would like to explain about the suffering and loss. The Central Bank has the responsibility and accountability only on the legal

The first step is to contain and control counterfeiting of currency through provisions in the law. The second is to issue notes with high security features. Third is to educate the public on ways to detect whether notes are genuine or fake. The last step is to trace the fake currency to its source and arrest the culprits.

to investigate the root cause and the source of the wrong doers. The fake notes are in circulations among the public and the situation is leading to problem to the public.
Question: Is there any instruction from the bank.
DDG: We have definite instruction being issued for the public. The bank employees have to explain the customers about the fake notes

tender notes that we have issued. The Central Bank may have no responsibility whatsoever on the fake notes. A person must check before taking the notes into one own hand.

When the new legal tender notes are being issued, the detailed features are already clarified to the public. When a person received a fake note, then the public

must cooperate with the law enforcement personnel, and on the part of the police, they must treat the people with receptive ways. This is the best way and solution not to let the people suffer.
Question: Please explain the ways and means in containing and stopping the fake notes.

Deputy Governor: Legal tender notes are always in the circulation. The first point is to contain and control with the law, and the second point is to issue legal tender notes in high security systems. Another point is to inform the public how to examine the notes and lastly to uncover the source of the fake notes and arrest the culprits. In this way we could contain and control the issue of fake notes. We have issued the notes with quality materials, and that the fake notes easily become frayed. The genuine notes are neat and durable. Normally, the small tread on the note is done with micro print. The genuine notes and the fake notes could differentiate in many ways.

Question: The public has less awareness about legal tender notes.
DDG: On the part of the Central Bank, we are indeed lacked in disseminating information. However, when the currency notes were issued, we informed all the security aspects to the public. We need to consider the information must not alarm the public. Another factor is to find out the source of fake currency makers with the cooperation of law enforcement agencies.
Question: Is there any solution to remedy the loss on the part of the person who got the fake note.
Deputy Governor: One must check the situation before the fake note comes into the hand, and also think about the consequences with regards to the fake notes. If the ten thousand kyat fake notes are spreading among the public, then

it may have the negative effect to the country, resulting with the lack of trust by the public towards the nation. Spending the fake notes is tantamount to smearing the image of the nation. People may be troubled by the uncertainty caused by fake notes in circulation, but collective effort is needed to tackle the issue of counterfeit currency.

The money in circulation across the world is faked in many countries, and that it becomes as super note, resulting with the issuance of new type currency.

One may lose the cash value; however, not to lose faith in the nation is more important. Another factor is to reduce spending currency notes and should shift to mobile banking. Moreover, the public is required to cooperate with the law enforcement agencies.

Question: Please explain the handling procedure on counterfeit notes in foreign countries.

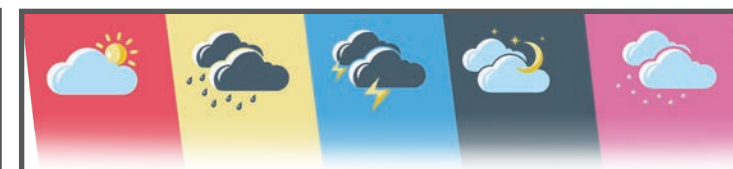
Deputy Governor: Counterfeit notes may have the consequences of criminal act and therefore, it is best to entrust the fake notes into the hand of police force. When we received the different foreign currencies, we transfer back to the foreign countries to get back the value in cash. We examine the notes with device as well as by hand. When their side found the fake notes, we failed to get the cash value.

In Singapore, they handed the fake notes to the police, and it is the international practice.

Question: Any more information for the public on the currency matters.

Deputy Governor: Spending through the banks, using mobile banking system and credit and debit card system would bring down the physical counting of bulky cash system, benefiting with more time to examine the legal tender notes. If and when the public saw the fake notes in hand, one should hand them over to the authorities, and in this way we would be able to uncover the source of culprits.

Translated by UMT (Ahlom)



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued on Wednesday 26 December 2018)

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS RECORDED AT 09:30

hrs MST: During the past (24) hours, weather has been partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Bago, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi regions, Kachin, Shan, Chin and Rakhine states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states. Night temperatures were (2°C) below December average temperatures in Mandalay and Yangon regions, Northern Shan and Kayah states and about December average temperature in the remaining regions and states. The significant night temperatures were (-1°C) in Haka, (1°C) in Pinlaung, (2°C) in Heho, (4°C) each in Putao, Loloil and Ramthlo, (5°C) each in Namhsan, Tiddim and Mogok, (6°C) each in Hsipaw, Nawnghkio, Mongyan and PyinOoLwin.

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF 27 December 2018: Light rain will be isolated in Taninthayi Region. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions, Kachin, Shan, Chin and Rakhine states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (3-5) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Decrease of night temperatures in Upper Sagaing Region, Kachin, Shan and Chin States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 December 2018: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 December 2018: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 December 2018: Generally fair weather.

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

A slight earthquake of magnitude (3.9) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about (23) miles southeast of Gangaw), latitude 22.02 °N, longitude 94.45 °E, depth (69) kilometers about (64) miles northwest of NyaungU seismological observatory was recorded at (01)hr (17)min (34)sec MST on 26 December 2018.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their work to the **Global New Light of Myanmar** at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, in person, or by email to ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Own name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.).— Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar

US border chief urges health funding as second child migrant dies

WASHINGTON (United States) — America's border security head warned Wednesday officials were overwhelmed by the "enormous flow" of families crossing from Mexico, appealing to Congress for health care funding after a second child died in custody.

US Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said the agency was unable to cope with the thousands of arrivals, as most facilities were built decades ago for men arriving alone.

"We need help from Congress. We need to budget for medical care and mental health-care for children in our facilities," McAleenan told CBS News.

The official said he expected almost 25,000 migrant children to be in US custody by the end of the year — a greater number than ever before.

"That's an enormous flow, that's very different from what we've seen before," he said, add-



US President Donald Trump wants a wall on the Mexico border, which he claims will stem migration from Latin American countries plagued by gang violence and poverty. **PHOTO: AFP**

ing that the onset of the flu season was taxing the ability of staff to properly care for every child.

Guatemala has called for an investigation into the eight-year-old boy's death, which came just

three weeks after a seven-year-old Guatemalan girl died in similar circumstances.

The boy was detained with his father at a crossing in El Paso, Texas on 18 December and had been transferred to a New Mexico medical center showing signs of sickness on Monday, the agency said.

Staff diagnosed him with a cold but later discovered a fever. He was discharged midday, with prescriptions for ibuprofen and the antibiotic amoxicillin.

The boy was later sent back to the hospital suffering from nausea and vomiting. He died shortly before midnight on 24 December.

The CBP said it had not established an official cause of death but would "ensure an independent and thorough review of the circumstances." Late Tuesday McAleenan announced the agency was "conducting secondary medical checks upon all children in CBP care and custody" with particular focus on children under 10. — AFP ■

Indonesia rescuers scramble to reach isolated tsunami-struck towns

CARITA (Indonesia) — Indonesian search and rescue teams Wednesday plucked stranded residents from remote islands and pushed into isolated communities desperate for aid in the aftermath of a volcano-triggered tsunami that killed over 400.

But torrential rains hampered the effort and heaped more misery on the region, as officials warned another killer wave could hit the stricken area.

The disaster agency cautioned residents to stay clear of the coast, as fresh activity at the Anak Krakatoa volcano, which sits in the middle of the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra islands, threatened to spark another tsunami.

The agency also said that wind was blowing "ash and sand" from Anak Krakatoa to the nearby towns of Cilegon and Serang on Java, and advised residents to wear masks and glasses if they had to venture outdoors.

A section of the crater — which emerged at the site of the legendary Krakatoa volcano, whose massive 1883 eruption killed at least 36,000 people — collapsed after an eruption and slid into the ocean, triggering Saturday night's killer wave.



Survivors return to salvage items from destroyed or damaged homes in Sumur on Java island on 24 December 2018, two days after a tsunami — caused by activity at a volcano known as the "child" of Krakatoa — hit the west coast of Indonesia's Java island. **PHOTO: AFP**

It struck without warning, washing over popular beaches and inundating tourist hotels and coastal communities, leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake.

The disaster agency slightly raised the death toll Wednesday to 430, with 1,495 people injured and another 159 missing.

Nearly 22,000 people have been evacuated and are living in shelters.

"There's a chance the number of fatalities will rise," agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho told a press briefing.

Medical workers have warned that clean water and medicine supplies were running low — stoking fears of a public health crisis — as thousands of displaced survivors cram shelters and hospitals.

Many have been left homeless by the killer wave, and fear going back to their communities.

"I'm here because people said there could another tsunami," Etin Supriatin said from an evacuation centre in shattered Labuan.

'No reason to stay'

The disaster agency dis-

patched helicopters to drop supplies into hard-to-reach communities, while hundreds of residents on tiny islands in the Sunda Strait were airlifted or taken by boat to shelters. "We tried to stay because it's our island, but after a while we got scared," said Sariyah, a 45-year-old resident of tiny Sebesi island, who evacuated to the mainland on a boat.

"My house has been destroyed so there's no more reason to stay."

Sniffer dogs are being used to find those still missing as grief-stricken relatives line up at identification centres.

But hopes of finding any survivors beneath the rubble have dwindled. Tubagus Cecep, 63, waited nervously at the area's main identification centre to see if a body was that of his missing son. "I'm scared my son is dead, but if I keep my faith in God maybe he could have been swept away somewhere and is still alive," he said. At the Tanjung Lesung resort, cars and minibuses had been thrown against buildings, concrete walls cracked into small pieces and trees uprooted. A wooden sign that read "Good Times" lay on the ground. — AFP ■

4 killed, 4 injured in house collapse in India's Bihar

NEW DELHI — At least four people were killed and four others injured Wednesday after part of an old house collapsed in eastern Indian state of Bihar, officials said. The house collapsed in Panchmahalla area of Jehanabad district, about 47 km south of Patna, the capital city of Bihar. "This evening a house collapsed here in a congested locality, killing four people and injuring four others, who were rescued and removed to hospital immediately," Ramesh Kumar Jha, additional collector of Jehanabad told Xinhua over the telephone.

"We are right now at the spot overseeing rescue work and all the trapped ones have been rescued." Following the incident, police teams and disaster response force personnel rushed to the spot to carry out rescue work and retrieve bodies from underneath the debris. Deadly accidents due to failing infrastructure are not rare in India. Construction experts blame the lax administration and corruption in India for flouting building rules that often result in using poor quality materials, inadequate supervision and poor safety standards. — Xinhua ■

Putin to become key guest at Belt and Road Forum in China

BEIJING — Russian President Vladimir Putin will become a key guest and participant of the second international Belt and Road Forum due in April 2019 in the Chinese capital of Beijing, Russia's Ambassador to China Andrei Denisov said on Wednesday.

"We believe that a major event of the first half of 2019 will be the coordinated visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to China, who will take part in the second summit of the Belt and Road Forum," Denisov said.

"According to the Chinese partners' preliminary estimates, some 40 heads of state and government are expected to arrive, and the forum will have a rather

large programme and various meetings will be held.

They tell us that the Russian president will be a key guest and the most important participant among foreign guests, that's why the programme for him will have a special character and will envisage events as part of his visit to China," the ambassador stressed.

The diplomat noted that the details of the Russian leader's visit to China were being coordinated. "Both we and our Chinese colleagues want him to visit not only Beijing. But this depends on the work schedule of both our president and our Chinese partners," Denisov said.

The Belt and Road Initiative



President Vladimir Putin. PHOTO: TASS

unites the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road projects, which were proposed in September 2013. It stipulates the signing of bilateral memorandums on cooperation with states located on transport Eurasian routes (more than 40 documents have already been signed), along which "economic

development corridors" will be established.

The first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in Beijing in May 2017.

It involved 29 heads of state and government, as well as leaders of major international organizations.—Tass ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

IS claims deadly attack on Libyan foreign ministry

WASHINGTON (United States) — The Islamic State jihadist group has claimed a suicide attack on the Libyan foreign ministry that left at least three people dead on Tuesday.

Three "soldiers of the caliphate" armed with suicide belts and automatic weapons were able to "storm the headquarters of the foreign ministry of the apostate Libyan government in central Tripoli," according to an IS statement distributed on social media.—AFP ■

IS claims deadly Iraq attack

TAL AFAR (Iraq) — The Islamic State group on Tuesday claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack that rocked the former jihadist stronghold of Tal Afar in northern Iraq and killed two people.

"A car bomb exploded near a cafe in the Ras al-Jadah district in the centre of Tal Afar," said Abed Alaal Abbas, an official in the city some 70 kilometres (40 miles) west of Mosul.

The blast "killed two and wounded 11 other civilians", he told AFP.

Iraq's joint operations command confirmed the toll.

IS claimed responsibility for the attack on the Telegram messaging application, saying the blast killed three.

It was the first attack in Tal Afar since Iraqi forces retook the city from the IS in August last year.

The recapture of the city, which lies between Mosul and the Syrian border, was hailed as a major victory against the jihadists, who seized nearly one third of Iraq in a sweeping 2014 offensive.—AFP ■

Queen warns of 'tribalism' in Christmas address



A picture released on 24 December, 2018 shows Britain's Queen Elizabeth II posing for a photograph after she recorded her annual Christmas Day message, in the White Drawing Room of Buckingham Palace in central London. PHOTO: AFP

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Queen Elizabeth II warned of religious "tribalism" in a Christmas message on Tuesday delivered against a backdrop of Britain bickering over its impending exit from the EU.

The tone of the 92-year-old monarch's annual TV appearances reflected a sombre mood sweeping the island nation as it ponders the perils of leaving the European project after 46

years in March. British royalty traditionally steer well clear of politics — a unifying position that puts them above the daily fray of Westminster and Downing Street.

But the queen came close to breaking that mould on several occasions during a five-minute appearance recorded earlier this month and played simultaneously on Britain's main TV stations.

"Some cultures believe a long life brings wisdom. I'd like

to think so. Perhaps part of that wisdom is to recognise some of life's baffling paradoxes, such as the way human beings have a huge propensity for good, and yet a capacity for evil," the queen said while seated in front of a fireplace and Christmas tree. "Even the power of faith, which frequently inspires great generosity and self-sacrifice, can fall victim to tribalism," the queen said.

'Respect'

The queen's address crowns a stormy month that saw Prime Minister Theresa May survive a leadership challenge staged by her party's most hardened opponents of Brussels.

May's entire strategy for a negotiated exit from the European Union is in danger of falling apart at the finish line. The prime minister this month pulled a scheduled vote on a deal she had reached with the EU in November after admitting that it would overwhelmingly lose. London's split from Brussels without

a trade agreement would threaten to unleash economic doom over the short term. Those who back Brexit say it is a price worth paying for regaining sovereignty from officials in Brussels who they say subject Britain to their own rules. The debate over the whole process is as emotional and personal for many as it was the day Brexit was backed by a 52-48 majority in a 2016 vote. The queen appeared to be scolding both sides of the widening political divide. "Even with the most deeply held differences, treating the other person with respect and as a fellow human being is always a good first step towards greater understanding," the queen said.

She concluded by noting that message of peace carried by the birth of Jesus in the Christmas story was particularly relevant now. "I believe his message of peace on earth and goodwill to all is never out of date," she said.

"It can be heeded by everyone; it's needed as much as ever."—AFP ■

Trump blasts US central bank again over rate hikes

WASHINGTON (United States) — US President Donald Trump on Tuesday renewed his attack on the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy, blaming the central bank's interest rate hikes for a tanking market.

With stocks on track for their worst December since the

Great Depression, Trump has regularly berated the Fed for its stewardship of the economy.

"They're raising rates too fast because they think the economy is so good," Trump told reporters in a Q&A following his annual Christmas teleconference with US troops. "But I

think they will get it pretty soon," added the president, who has dubbed the supposedly independent central bank "crazy" and "out of control."

Trump's comments came after Asian markets suffered a holiday rout on fears about the US economy and a govern-

ment shutdown in Washington, now in its fourth day. Closed on Monday for a national holiday, Tokyo plummeted at the open on Tuesday, suffering its worst finish since April 2017 after a brutal holiday-shortened session on Wall Street that saw US stocks sink for a fourth straight session.

Markets have been roiled by ongoing uncertainty in the United States, with Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin berated for holding a call with the six biggest US banks and then reporting on Twitter that the six CEOs have "ample liquidity" available.—AFP ■

Two Koreas pledge to restore road, rail links

SEOUL (South Korea) — The two Koreas on Wednesday held a symbolic groundbreaking ceremony for reconnecting and repairing roads and railways across the divided peninsula, with the North calling on the South to push through joint projects despite sanctions on Pyongyang.

The connection of railways and roads is among a series of measures aimed at improving bilateral ties agreed upon in September by liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in and the North's leader Kim Jong Un.

Seoul stressed that the ceremony would not herald the start of actual work on

reconnecting and modernising links between the two Koreas — which remain technically at war after their 1950-53 conflict ended without a peace treaty.

A South Korean Unification Ministry spokesman described it as a mere “expression of a commitment”, adding that construction would depend on “progress on the North's denuclearisation and circumstances concerning sanctions”.

But the North's top railway official Kim Yun Hyok reiterated Pyongyang's stance that the South stop toeing the US line on maintaining sanctions on the North until it gives up its nuclear

weapons. “If (the South) keeps looking around to check someone's mood and continues wavering, reunification would never be achieved,” Kim said at the ceremony at the Panmun railway station in the North's border city of Kaesong.

Moments later, some 10 delegates from both the South and the North lined up along the railroad and pulled yellow levers to link up the railway tracks in a symbolic gesture.

Exempt from sanctions

There were concerns that the train and other materials brought into the North for the ceremony



South and North Korean officials unveil a direction signboard for Seoul and Pyongyang during a groundbreaking ceremony for reconnecting and repairing roads and railways across the divided Korean peninsula at Panmun Station in North Korea's border city of Kaesong on 26 December, 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

ny could breach various sanctions imposed on the isolated regime over its nuclear weapons, but the UN Security Council reportedly granted a waiver for the event. The two sides wrapped up their joint railway and road inspections for the projects this month.

South Korea has set aside some \$620,000 for

the endeavour. The ceremony comes as the United States ramps up efforts to convince Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons. Following a rapid rapprochement earlier this year that culminated in a historic summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, progress has stalled with both sides

accusing each other of dragging their feet and acting in bad faith. Critics say North Korea has made no concrete commitments and is unlikely to surrender its nuclear arsenal, while Washington's policy of maintaining pressure through isolation and sanctions has left Pyongyang seething.—AFP ■

Three students killed in China university lab explosion

BELJING (China) — Three students were killed in a laboratory blast at a Beijing university on Wednesday, the city's fire department said.

“There was an explosion at the experimental

site during a scientific research experiment” on wastewater treatment in the Environmental Engineering Laboratory, the Beijing Fire Department said.

“The accident caused

three students to die,” it added in a statement posted on its social media account. The incident happened just after 9:30am (0130 GMT) at the Beijing Jiaotong University in the western part of the city.

Some 30 fire engines were sent to the scene, and took nearly an hour to get the blaze under control. Local authorities are launching an investigation into the cause of the incident.—AFP ■

Bangladesh journalists attacked ahead of poll

DHAKA (Bangladesh) — At least 10 journalists were injured as ruling party activists allegedly attacked a motel in a central Bangladesh town when they were covering this week's national election, a senior journalist said on Tuesday.

A group of baton-wielding men attacked the motel in Nawabganj town late Monday, where journalists from several local media were staying overnight, Masud Karim, a special correspondent of the Bengali national daily Jugantor said.

“The miscreants vandalised 16 cars. At least 10 journalists from Jugantor and Jamuna TV were injured during the attack,” he told AFP, alleging the police delayed responding to their distress call.

The newspaper also said one of its reporters has been missing since

Monday evening.

It blamed the student and youth wings of the ruling Awami League party for the attack, although police said they did not know the identity of the attackers.

“We rescued them (the journalists) from the situation,” district police chief S M Shafur Rahman told AFP, rejecting the allegations police did not respond to the attack in time. The chiefs of both outlets demanded immediate arrests of the attackers but the police chief said no formal complaints had been filed.

Violent clashes have marred the run-up to the 30 December election, with the opposition saying hundreds of its activists and dozens of candidates have been injured in attacks by followers of the ruling party.

Six people have been

killed, including two from the ruling party.

Two news cameramen were also attacked by alleged pro-government activists in the central Munshiganj district on Tuesday, the online edition of the private NTV station said.

Top journalist lobby group Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) demanded the attackers be punished. “The state and the government will have to shoulder the responsibility and take steps to curb such attacks,” BFUJ President Molla Zalat said.

Press freedom has been under the spotlight in the South Asian nation as opposition and rights group have accused Prime Minister's Sheikh Hasina's government of muzzling dissent through controversial anti-press laws.—AFP ■

TRADEMARK CAUTION

Simex Outdoor International GmbH, a company incorporated in Germany and having its registered office at Schiefbahn Straße 12 41748 Viersen, Germany is the owner and proprietor of the following Trademark:



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In respect of “Backpacks, Knapsacks” in **International Class 18**; “Sleeping bags, included in this case, air beds, air pillows, couches, camping furniture; containers, not of metal or masonry, included in this class; camping accessories (included in this class)” in **International Class 20** and “Tents, tarpaulins, hammocks, nets (included in this class)” in **International Class 22**.

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Daw La Min May, H.G.P

For Simex Outdoor International GmbH,
C/o Kelvin Chia Yangon Ltd.,

Level 8A, UFC Tower, Corner of Mahabandoola Road & Thein Phyu Road, Botahtaung Township, Yangon,

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Dated 27th December 2018

Imm@kcyangon.com

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U Thant Zin Aung, H.G.P
For G7 Sin Ma Live
Seafood Restaurant Pte.

Ltd.,

C/o Polaris Partners
Myanmar Co. Ltd.,

Unit 10, 19th Floor, Sule Square
Office Tower, Sule Pagoda
Road, Yangon, The Republic of
the Union of Myanmar

polarispartners.gp@polaris.com.mm

Dated 27.12.2018

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V ANNEMIEKE VOY. NO. (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ANNEMIEKE VOY. NO. (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T3 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S SAL HEAVY LIFE GMBH

Phone No: 2301928

Japan formally announces IWC withdrawal to resume commercial whaling

TOKYO — Japan will withdraw from the International Whaling Commission in 2019 to pave the way for the resumption of commercial whaling for the first time in about three decades, the government said on Wednesday, a decision likely to draw international condemnation.

Following the pullout, Japan plans to hunt whales in nearby waters and within its exclusive economic zone beginning in July but not in the Antarctic Ocean where the country has carried out so-called “scientific whaling” for what it says are research purposes.

The announcement comes months after Japan threatened to leave the international organization that has long been deeply divided between pro- and anti-whaling nations and others that support one side or the other.

Under IWC rules, Japan’s withdrawal is expected to become

effective on 30 June following notification to the commission by 1 January.

The rare withdrawal by Japan from an international organization will likely bring questions about its motivation. Tokyo is a member of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea that calls for the use and conservation of maritime resources via international entities.

Over the past 30 years, Japan has lobbied for the resumption of commercial whaling of relatively abundant species such as minke whales while still a member of the IWC, but its attempts have always been stymied by vocal anti-whaling countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

A Japanese proposal to ease decision-making rules at the IWC was also voted down in an annual meeting held in Brazil in September, leading Tokyo to issue a veiled threat that it could poten-



File photo taken in September 2013 shows a minke whale caught in the sea off Kushiro, Hokkaido, under Japan’s research whaling programme. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

tially pull out.

Some towns in Japan such as Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, have a whaling tradition but have become the focus of intense international pressure by conservation groups. Protein-rich whale meat was a major source of nutrition in the postwar era when it was served in school lunches.

Around 200,000 tons of whale meat was consumed in Japan

each year in the 1960s, but it has fallen sharply to around 5,000 tons in recent years, according to government data.

Some lawmakers in the Liberal Democratic Party, headed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, stress the need to preserve local whaling traditions, but it is unclear whether demand will increase even if commercial whaling resumes.

Japan halted commercial whaling in line with a moratorium adopted in 1982 by the IWC. Since 1987, however, it has hunted whales for research purposes, a practice criticized internationally as a cover for commercial whaling.

If Japan leaves the IWC, it cannot continue its research whaling programme in the Antarctic Ocean.—Kyodo News ■

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V MCC MERGUI VOY. NO. (1835 / 1836)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC MERGUI VOY. NO. (1835/1836) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP/M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S’PORE)
PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V KOTA HARMUNI VOY. NO.(KHNI 9001 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KOTA HAMUNI VOY. NO. (KHNI 9001 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S ADVANCE CONTAINER LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V CHERRY VESTA VOY. NO. (004N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V CHERRY VESTA VOY. NO. (004N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V AREZOO VOY. NO. (SCY1045)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V AREZOO VOY. NO. (SCY1045) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S LAND AND SEA SHIPPING LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BANDUNG VOY. NO. (598N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR BANDUNG VOY. NO. (598N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SAMUDERASHIPPING LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V ANAN BHUM VOY. NO. (233 N/S)

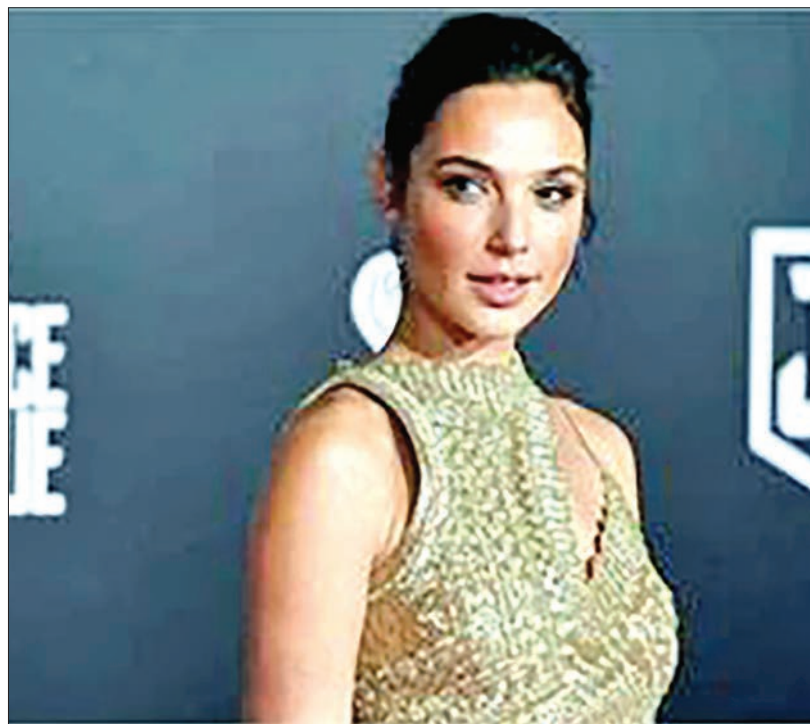
Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ANAN BHUM VOY. NO. (233N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINE

Phone No: 2301185



Gal Gadot has completed the shooting. PHOTO: PTI

Gal Gadot wraps 'Wonder Woman 1984' shoot

LOS ANGELES—Gal Gadot has completed the shooting of "Wonder Woman 1984".

The 33-year-old actress, who will reprise the title role in the follow-up to the 2017 DC superhero film, took to Instagram to share the news on Sunday. Gadot said the experience of filming the movie was as much amazing as they were working on the first 'Wonder Woman'.

"... This time was even more unique and special... We shot in four very different locations in three countries, and I'm so so proud of the almost 1,000 crew members who came to set every day, giving everything they have into our movie," she wrote. The actress thanked director Patty Jenkins for her guidance and trust.

"She always has our backs, she gives us the wings to dare, and everyday she helped us

find the most creative version of ourselves... I am so grateful to call her my friend. And to our amazingly talented cast who made every day enjoyable and fun, thank you."

Gadot also shared three photos from the film sets and said she is proud of the film the team had worked so hard at putting together.

"I love this character. And thank you to all of you for being the best fans in the world. It was you that made me push myself every day..."

"I'm so happy and excited, can't wait to share it with you in 2020," she said.

The sequel reunites Gadot with "Wonder Woman" co-star Chris Pine. Pedro Pascal and Kristen Wiig are joining the franchise.

The film is slated to be released on 5 June, 2020.—PTI ■

As TikTok videos take hold with teens, parents scramble to keep up

PARIS (France)—Millions of teenagers seeking their 15 seconds of fame are flocking to TikTok, but many of their parents are only now learning about the express-yourself video app—often to their dismay.

The social network became the most downloaded on Apple's App Store in the first half of this year according to market analysis firm Sensor Tower, beating out titans like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

The site, owned by China's ByteDance, boasted 500 million users as of June following its purchase last year of Musical.ly, which greatly expanded its reach in the US.

Analysts say it filled the void left by Vine, which introduced countless numbers of teens to the creative possibilities of ultrashort videos but failed to find a sustainable business model.

"TikTok capitalizes on short-term creative content that other platforms don't encourage, by their design and community," said Brian Solis at the US tech advisory firm Altimeter.

"If there is one thing Silicon Valley can learn from Chinese app development, it's that it is tuned in to viral-as-a-service, meaning that their most popular apps have really been about making content and personas viral and also hyper-engaged," he said.

Yet critics say its surging popularity among young girls in particular exposes them to caustic comments and other potential abuse by their peers, while offering a choice hunting ground for sexual predators.

The app itself promises a video-sharing community that's "raw, real and without boundaries" and claims to be appropriate for children aged 12 and older.

Parents aren't always convinced, given the numbers of young girls suggestively singing along to sexually explicit lyrics which are often degrading to women. Such videos are the stock in trade of Halia Beamer, an American 13-year-old who has emerged as one of TikTok's stars, chalking up more than five million followers.

'Dangerous characters'

Media reports have documented cases of users being bombarded with disturbing comments, while others have been asked for private contact details or to post provocative images.

Last summer the Indonesian government banned the app after more than 170,000 people signed a petition saying that lip-syncing in revealing outfits was not suitable for children. It was lifted only after TikTok representatives from China flew to Jakarta and promised to hire more people to weed out inappropriate content.

The US internet watchdog Common Sense says the combination of mature content and privacy risks means users should be at least 16.

"Because the age limit is so low, you attract a greater assortment of dangerous characters, and users lying about their age," Solis said. But raising the age limit would remove millions of people from the platform, and curb TikTok's exponential growth.

In France for example, 38 per cent of youths aged 11 to 14 have a TikTok account according to Generation Numerique, which tracks internet usage.

Girls are by far the majority among French pre-teens, with 58 percent saying they have an account compared with just 15 percent for boys. French police warned parents last month about the dangers, saying their teens "may be targeted by indecent sexual proposals".

"TikTok promotes dancing and singing in particular, things which are still pretty feminine that boys don't always dare to do," said Cyril di Palma, Generation Numerique's president.

Hard choices

ByteDance, whose app is called Douyin in China, says it works extensively to protect its users, with software that monitors content and "a continually growing team of moderators".

But Di Palma says many parents are still unaware of the risks, "and are astonished to see their little angels in poses inappropriate for their age."

The effects of early exposure to social media are so new that "parents, educators, even doctors... are either under-qualified or completely ignorant in the face of the need to guide a young generation in the dangers and possibilities of these new technologies," Solis said.

William Soally, a French father whose 12-year-old daughter is a dance fan, took action after seeing alerts about TikTok among YouTube users.—AFP ■



British actress Keira Knightley poses with her medal after being appointed a Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to drama and charity at an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace in London on 13 December, 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Keira Knightley considered quitting acting

LOS ANGELES—Hollywood star Keira Knightley has revealed that she thought of quitting acting following the overnight success of "Pirates of the Caribbean".

The actress said she nearly turned her back on Hollywood after suffering from Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In an interview with The *Sunday Times*' *Style* magazine, Knightley was asked if she ever thought about quitting acting, she said, 'I did think about it. Particularly at the point when I had a breakdown. I had PTSD and panic attacks. I literally couldn't work for a year and I didn't know whether there would be an end to that.'

"I have a super-solid background and thank f**k for that. My family and my small but very close group of friends just wrapped me up.

And I think, without that, it would have been a very different

story. I knew I always had somebody there to cuddle me who didn't want anything from me. Ultimately, I didn't want them (the media and paparazzi) to win. The only thing I want to do is make films," she added.

The actor said she found stardom "very intense and lonely".

'It was very intense and lonely. If there's a camera at a party, I don't think that's a party, so I was never interested in being in that scene. I always wanted to be top of the class, and I always wanted to be perfect, and I always thought that I could just do fame right.

"I tried being 5lb heavier, but then people say you have cellulite, and then 5lb lighter, and then you're anorexic and causing people to die. It was just so much.

But in a funny way I think I was quite lucky in that it was so insane that I sort of recognised it," she said.—PTI ■

Roscosmos subsidiary signs contract for third commercial launch of Soyuz

BLAGOVESHCHENSK—Glavkosmos Launch Services, a subsidiary of Russia's space corporation Roscosmos, has signed a contract for a third commercial launch of the Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket, the company's marketing director Yevgeny Solodovnikov told reporters on Wednesday.

Earlier, the company signed two contracts to launch South Korean remote sensing satellites CAS500-1 and CAS500-2 atop Soyuz-2.1a carrier rockets. They are scheduled to be launched in late April and late July 2020, from the Baikonur space center in Kazakhstan.

"We have signed a contract for the third launch. I will not reveal other details right now. The information will be made public early next year," he said.

The official added that the 11 October aborted launch of the Soyuz-FG carrier rocket, carrying Russian cosmonaut Alexei



Soyuz-2.1a lifts off successfully. PHOTO: TASS

Ovchinin and NASA astronaut Nick Hague, did not affect the demand for commercial Soyuz launches.

"After certain problems that have indeed taken place, Soyuz quickly returned to the launch services market, and we noticed

no decline in interest or demand. As Soyuz has already redeemed itself, we see no changes in the attitude of customers on the mar-

ket," Solodovnikov said.

He added that the company was looking for customers ready to launch their satellites together with Russia's Meteor-M 2-2 satellite next year. The launch, initially scheduled for 2018, was postponed until 2019 because the satellite was not ready yet.

"We are now working on sending other payload into space together with the Meteor next year, but we are waiting for more information from Roscosmos on when exactly the launch would take place," the Glavkosmos Launch Services official said.

Glavkosmos Launch Services, part of Russia's Roscosmos, was established to offer commercial launch services and is the supplier of launch services authorized to conclude commercial contracts for launching spacecraft using Soyuz-2 carrier rockets from Russian space centres.—Tass ■

Former NASA astronaut says sending people to Mars "almost ridiculous"

WASHINGTON—One of the first astronauts to orbit the moon has said that sending crews to Mars would be "almost ridiculous."

Former NASA astronaut Bill Anders, 85, was the lunar module pilot of Apollo 8, the first manned spaceflight to leave low Earth orbit and travel in the moon orbit in December 1968. The mission was vital in paving the way for Apollo 11's historic moon landing seven months later. In an interview with BBC Radio 5 Live, Anders said he is a "big supporter" of unmanned space programs, "mainly because

they're much cheaper."

He said the public support simply isn't there to fund vastly more expensive human missions.

"What's the imperative? What's pushing us to go to Mars? I don't think the public is that interested," he said.

However, his fellow crewmate Frank Borman, the commander of Apollo 8, struck a slightly more optimistic tone.

"I'm not as critical of NASA as Bill is," he told BBC Radio 5 Live. "I firmly believe that we need robust exploration of our

Solar System and I think man is part of that." The two former astronauts spoke to BBC Radio 5 Live as part of a special documentary on the 50th anniversary of their historic lunar mission.

Up till now, NASA has deployed two rovers on the surface of Mars, namely Opportunity and Curiosity, which beam signals back to earth. Its most recent exploration on Mars is the landing of the InSight spacecraft on 26 November, which is designed to study the deep interior of the red planet.—Xinhua ■

US scientists conclude more accuracy of global migration rate with new statistical approach

SAN FRANCISCO—US scientists from the University of Washington (UW) have come up with a greater accuracy in estimating global migration rate by applying a new statistical approach that corrects past errors and inaccuracies, a study showed recently.

Two UW researchers found that the rates of global migration between countries are higher than previously estimated but relatively stable, fluctuating between 1.1 per cent and 1.3 per cent of global population from 1990 to 2015.

Previous data of global migrant population were often full of errors, patchy and incomplete, because they mostly came from "unrealistic assumptions about the mass movement of people and yield migration rates that can fall far below reality," said the study published Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Two UW scientists, Adrian Raftery and Jonathan Azose, unveiled in their paper a new statistical method for estimating worldwide migration flows, called pseudo-Bayes approach, which can better measure the rate of flows of people between countries.

By adopting the new statistical approach, they found that about 45 per cent of migrants have returned to their home countries since 1990, a much higher estimate than other methods.

They incorporated elements of other statistical methods in the pseudo-Bayes approach and calibrated their estimates against a relatively reliable model of migration among 31 European countries.

They found that the results obtained by the pseudo-Bayes method were accurate to within a factor of three, better than many existing estimates. Their estimates supported by the pseudo-Bayes approach showed that about 67 million to 87 million migrants were recorded over each five-year period from 1990 to 2015.

Although the total number of migrants rose from 1990 to 2015, the migration rate over that period remained within a relatively stable range of 1.1 per cent and 1.3 per cent.—Xinhua ■

Chinese researchers increase efficiency of antibiotics degradation in water

BEIJING—Chinese researchers have developed a nanoscale catalyst to increase the efficiency of antibiotic degradation in water.

As humans or animals often cannot completely absorb antibiotics, antibiotics are often released into the environment. The presence of antibiotics in water has attracted global concern as it aggravates the antibiotic resistance issue.

The Fenton system is one of the most popular methods for eliminating antibiotics in water, but the existing Fenton system is limited in practical applications as the Fenton reaction needs to function under strong acid conditions.

Researchers from Hefei Institutes of Physical Science under the Chinese Academy of Sciences have designed a na-

noscale catalyst that could be applied in the Fenton system.

The catalyst proves effective in improving the Fenton system's efficiency for the degradation of the antibiotic tetracycline. The catalyst also broadened the pH application range of the Fenton system. The research has practical applications in water treatment. It was published in the journal Nanoscale.—Xinhua ■

Arthur 'praying' for Neymar Barcelona return

RIO DE JANEIRO—Barcelona midfielder Arthur Melo has expressed hope that Brazil teammate Neymar will return to the Catalan club, less than 18 months after his

world-record transfer to Paris Saint-Germain.

Neymar has scored 44 goals in 49 matches for the French side but there has been speculation that the 26-year-old

is unhappy and angling for a return to the Camp Nou.

"Personally, I'm praying that he comes because he is a great player," Arthur was quoted as saying by Brazil's Uol news portal. "That's unquestionable. The more top quality players we have, the better [for Barcelona].

"But only he knows. I don't know if there are negotiations and possibilities of him coming back.

He is a personal friend and a footballer who I admire a lot. I'd be really happy if he came back."

Neymar won two La Liga titles, a Champions League title, three Spanish Cups, a Spanish Super Cup and the FIFA Club World Cup in a four-year spell at Barcelona.

He became the most expensive footballer in history when he joined Paris Saint-Germain for 222 million euros in August 2017.

Arthur has been a regular starter for Barcelona since his July move from Gremio and has been capped six times for Brazil's national team since September.—Xinhua ■

Round 2 of AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers to be held in Mandalay

THE second round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship 2019 qualifiers will be held at the Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay. The draw for the second round of the qualifiers was held in November at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

For the second round, host Myanmar team has been placed in Group B with China PR, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

In the first round of the qualifiers, Myanmar won all three matches and secured a total of nine points, and secured the top position in Group B.

In the first round, Myanmar's Myat Noe Khin and Swe Mar Aung scored 7 goals for their team. Myanmar will play against China PR on 27 February, Bangladesh on 1 March, and the Philippines on 3 March.

The visiting teams' matches will take place on the same day. Bangladesh will play against the Philippines on 27 February, China PR will play against the Philippines on 1 March, and Bangladesh will play against China PR on 3 March. The Myanmar team's matches will start at 6 p.m., while matches between the visiting teams will take place at 3 p.m.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

mar's Myat Noe Khin and Swe Mar Aung scored 7 goals for their team. Myanmar will play against China PR on 27 February, Bangladesh on 1 March, and the Philippines on 3 March. The Myanmar team's matches will start at 6 p.m., while matches between the visiting teams will take place at 3 p.m.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Football awards night to be held today in Yangon

AN awards ceremony for the previous season of the Myanmar National League, the MFF & MNL Awards Night, will be held at the Novotel Yangon Max Hotel in Yangon today, under the supervision of the Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) and the MNL.

The ceremony is scheduled to start at 6 p.m., according to the MFF.

The awards for the Champion team, the best player, the top scorer, the cleanest player, and the Honorable Award will

be handed out to the MNL teams and youth teams at the event.

Players from the Yangon United F.C., the reigning champions of the MNL, are expected to attend the awards ceremony, the MFF said. While the champion team is known, the winners of the other awards have not been declared yet and will be announced at the ceremony.

Myanmar national striker Aung Thu was adjudged the best player for two consecutive years at the 2016 and 2017 awards nights.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Battle of supermaxis beckons at start of Sydney to Hobart race

SYDNEY (Australia)—Supermaxi Black Jack led a 85-strong fleet out of a hot and glittering Sydney Harbour on Wednesday at the start of one of the toughest yacht races in the world.

Thousands of spectators lined the harbour and watched on boats as the yachts sped away under clear blue skies and aided by 10-15 knot north-easterly winds in the 74th edition of the 628-nautical-mile (1,162-kilometre) Sydney to Hobart race. The winds are expected to pick up and push the fleet—which includes five supermaxis and 11 international entries—down the Australia's east coast, before dropping off on Thursday in weaker conditions compared to last year. The notoriously wild Bass Strait between Tasmania and the Australian mainland in particular is looking

to serve up erratic conditions, with crews expecting a tactically challenging contest as they try to avoid windless holes.

This means 100-footer super-

maxi Comanche's race record of one day, nine hours, 15 minutes and 24 seconds, set last year for the bluewater classic, should remain intact. "The real issue is linking all

the bits of wind up," said strategist Iain Murray on Wednesday of eight-time line honours winner supermaxi Wild Oats XI. His boat was first to Hobart in 2017 but was

stripped of the win after being handed a one-hour penalty over a near-collision. "There will be light spots and spots where there is not much wind.

Tricky conditions

"I think the boats that keep continuously moving fast (will benefit)... the difference between going fast is going five knots, or 10 knots or 12 knots and if you do that for a couple of hours it is a big difference." Other supermaxis in the run to be the first boat to cross the finish line in Hobart include InfoTrack and Hong Kong's Scallywag. The tricky conditions also mean the race to grab the handicap honours—which goes to the vessel that performs best according to size—is wide open, said owner-skipper Matt Allen of yacht Ichi Ban.—AFP ■



Yachts sail out of Sydney Harbour at the start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race on 26 December, 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona's Brazilian midfielder Arthur (l) vies with Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on 28 October, 2018. PHOTO: AFP