

NATIONAL

Ministry of Information discusses lowering fees for foreign filmmakers

PAGE-3

NATIONAL

Mandalay University sets up museum in commemoration of Dr. Than Tun

PAGE-3

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Friday, 28 December 2018

Message sent by President U Win Myint to honour opening ceremony of 19th Anniversary Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference, Seminar

(28 December, 2018)

I wish to honor and welcome the Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners Conference which has been successfully held annually without interruption for the 19th time according to the good

tradition with the noble aim of promoting the development of Myanmar traditional medicine sector, which embodies Myanmar traditional qualities and heritage.

At this auspicious time, I send these good wishes for the health and wellbeing of the Myanmar traditional medicine practitioners.

SEE PAGE-2

30th anniversary of Daw Khin Kyi's death commemorated

TO commemorate the 30th anniversary of the death of Daw Khin Kyi, wife of National Leader General Aung San, a ceremony known as "Soon", a meal offered to monks, was held at the residence of her daughter, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, at No. 54, University Avenue Road in Yangon yesterday morning.

The State Counsellor offered meals and robes to 16 members of the Sangha, including Chanmyay Sayadaw Ashin Janakabhivamsa, in commemoration of her late mother before receiving sermons from the monks.

In the afternoon, leaders from different faiths including Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Bahá'í prayed for Daw Khin Kyi. — MNA

(Translated by
Win Ko Ko Aung)

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi offers "soon" a day meal to Sayadaws in commemoration of her mother's death. **PHOTO: MNA**



INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

Children rehearse songs, dances for Muse District Children's Literature Festival

PAGE-2

LOCAL NEWS

Asian openbill storks hibernating around Meiktila Lake

PAGE-4



BUSINESS

Special trains available for New Year travelers

PAGE-5

BUSINESS

Domestic gold rate on the rise in line with global market, but price dips due to dollar depreciation

PAGE-5

I hope that everyone will cooperate and participate and work for the advancement of the traditional medicine community by making use of the advice given by experienced traditional medicine practitioners

FROM PAGE-1

Myanmar traditional medicine is a truly genuine Myanmar traditional heritage which has developed in parallel and in correlation with Myanmar's natural environment, climate, traditional thinking and beliefs and society.

Myanmar traditional medicine is also a very powerful and effective medical practice which has protected and promoted the health of Myanmar society throughout history. The Union Government is giving encouragement and protecting Myanmar traditional medicine to ensure that it endures for a long time and develops systematically as a traditional cultural heritage as well as a medical practice which can provide the healthcare needs of our citizens in collaboration with western medicine. Furthermore, we have incorporated and recognized Myanmar traditional medical practice as a component of the National Health Policy in order to elevate the standard of Myanmar traditional medicine and also to provide a higher level of health care coverage to the public through the use of Myanmar traditional medicine.

Just as we are opening more traditional medicine hospitals and traditional medicine clinics to

provide health care to the public through the use of Myanmar traditional medicine, we have established a university of traditional medicine to produce well qualified traditional medicine practitioners to develop human resources.

The qualifications and skills of traditional medicine practitioners produced by the said university will improve only if the present curriculum, teaching methods and the qualifications of the teachers are re-assessed and improved; only then will the community of traditional medicine practitioners be developed and elevated.

In Myanmar traditional medicine, there are two sectors namely, providing treatment through the use of traditional medicine and the production of traditional medicine. In the sector for providing health care treatment using traditional medicine, because the traditional medicine practitioners have been trained and organized from the ground up at present, we have been able to train and produce not only practitioners with Myanmar traditional medicine degrees but also practitioners with Master's degrees. I am very happy and proud of this.

In the sector for the production of traditional medicine also, we were having only family owned

enterprises in the past; now there are efforts to upgrade the level of traditional medicine production to ISO/GMP certification level. I am very encouraged and satisfied because of this. Now that the advisory board for traditional medicine has been established, I hope that everyone will cooperate and participate and work for the advancement of the traditional medicine community by making use of the advice given by experienced traditional medicine practitioners.

In conclusion, I send this Message of Greetings by expressing the hope that at this conference which has been held with the aim of providing more effective health care with wider coverage to the public, the Ministry of Health and Sports, responsible officials from the Department of Traditional Medicine, Traditional Medicine Council, Association of Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners, Advisory Board for Traditional Medicine, Myanmar Traditional Medicine Producers and Medicine Entrepreneurs Association, all traditional medicine practitioners from the length and breadth of Myanmar, will all discuss and exchange views in unity and friendship. I also hope that by raising the momentum of the development of Myanmar traditional medicine, the public will receive better health care. ■

Children rehearse songs, dances for Muse District Children's Literature Festival

STUDENTS from basic education high schools and a private high school in Muse Township rehearsed their various performances yesterday for the Children's Literature Festival held today in Muse Town, Muse District, Shan State (North).

Students from B.E.H.S (1), B.E.H.S (2), B.E.H.S (3) and Kyaw Private High School rehearsed for aerobics, tassel

dance and the theme song of the children's festival. The rehearsals took place at Mingalar Muse (Myothit Project Housing), Muse Township, Shan State (North) at 9 am yesterday.

The Children's Literature Festival will include competitions on storytelling, poetry, colouring, puzzle assembly, games, literature talk and

ethnic literature and culture galleries, book sales booths, departmental galleries, basic education department's galleries and galleries of the private school.

The Muse District Children's Literature Festival will be held from 28 to 30 December. —Muse District IPRD ■
(Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)



U Ye Naing, Director-General of the Information and Public Relations Department, examines preparing for Muse District Children's Literature Festival. **PHOTO: U SHINE PHYU**

Rehabilitation Dept, JPN collaborate to promote blind massage therapists



Director-General of the Department of Rehabilitation U Win Naing Tun attends the 4th committee meeting to promote massage services by blind therapists yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE 4th committee meeting on promoting massage services by blind therapists was held at the Zabuthiri Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The meeting was organized with collaboration from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement, Japan Heart, and International Medical Volunteers.

During the meeting, the Director-General of the Department of Rehabilitation, U Win

Naing Tun, said his department will continue to work with Japan to set a standard exam and a standard curriculum for blind massage therapists.

Officials from the Department of Rehabilitation, Japan Heart, the Myanmar National Association of the Blind, the Nagomi Massage Clinic, and officials from schools for the blind also attended the meeting. —Maung Min Naing ■
(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

“Myanmar is now on the path to democracy. A nascent democracy can be compared to a toddler learning to walk; we have to be careful not to falter at this stage and need to maintain a proper balance. If we wish democracy to survive, we have to respect the rule of law and existing rules and regulations.”

(Excerpt from the message extended by President U Win Myint on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy which falls on 15th September, 2018.)



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



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, leaders from different religions including Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Bahá'í and guests pose for documentary photos following a ceremony to pray for Daw Khin Kyi, wife of National Leader Bogyoke Aung San. PHOTO: MNA (NEWS ON PAGE-1)

MoI discusses lowering fees for foreign filmmakers

THE Union Minister for Information, Dr. Pe Myint, said lowering the rates and service charges for filming will encourage foreign filmmakers to make movies and documentaries on Myanmar's culture and natural environment.

The Union Minister made these remarks during a coordination meeting at his ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. The meeting was held to discuss lowering the fees foreign filmmakers have to pay for filming in Myanmar, in order to attract more foreign film agencies to the country.

Dr. Pe Myint said encouraging more foreign films and documentaries on Myanmar's natural scenery and culture will promote the image of the country in the eyes of the world. This, in turn, will promote tourism, he said.

Our neighboring countries attracted more foreign filmmakers after they reduced service

charges and other related processes, he added.

The Deputy Minister for Information, U Aung Hla Tun, also took part in the meeting.

At the meeting, Daw Thida Tin, the Deputy Director-General of the Information and Public Relations Department, presented the department's plans for attracting foreign filmmakers to Myanmar. Officials from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Religious Affairs and Culture, Transport and Communications, Labour, Immigration, and Population, Planning and Finance, and Hotels and Tourism discussed lowering the rates and service charges for filming, and presented their ministerial role in the endeavor.

Later, a discussion was held among participants after which Dr. Pe Myint concluded the meeting with a closing speech. —MNA (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Mandalay University sets up museum in commemoration of Dr. Than Tun

THE History Department of the University of Mandalay opened a museum housing 330 artifacts yesterday, in honour of leading Myanmar historian, Dr. Than Tun (1923-2005).

The Union Minister for Education, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, the Chief Minister of Mandalay Region, Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, Myanmar Historical Commission Vice-Chairman Dr. Toe Hla, and Mandalay University Rector Dr. Thida Win opened the museum with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Speaking at the opening ceremony held at the Department of History, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi said he hoped the museum, the first of its kind in Myanmar, will help students and teachers in their research and studies.

He also expressed thanks to those who helped establish the museum.

“I believe that today's youth will love and preserve our cultural heritage when they see the antiques which were used by our ancestors,” said the Union Minister.

He said the Ministry of Education has been encourag-



Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi and officials cut ribbon to open the first in-university museum at Mandalay University. PHOTO: MNA

ing research into the history of Myanmar, and it has been urging scholars to delve into the history of neighbouring countries and find out their strengths and weaknesses in different areas, including the social and economic sectors.

The Union Minister also called for stimulating student interest in history by holding exhibitions and paper reading sessions.

Afterwards, Dr. Toe Hla

explained the purpose behind the opening of the museum. After the ceremony, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi toured the museum. He also went to a photo exhibition on successive eras of Mandalay University organized by the university's library.

The first-ever photo exhibition at the Mandalay University was opened by Dr. Myo Thein Gyi and Dr. Thida Win. —MNA (Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint addresses the coordination meeting for lowering fees for foreign filmmakers, in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

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Asian openbill storks, black cranes, ruddy shelducks hibernating around Meiktila lake

WITH the winter setting in, several species of birds, including the Asian openbill stork, have arrived in the area around Meiktila lake for hibernation, said Ko Hla Myo Aung, a local bird watcher.

"With the Meiktila lake drying up with the onset of winter, Asian openbill storks, black cranes, and ruddy shelducks (*Tadorna ferruginea*) can now be spotted in the area surrounding the lake.

I have come to watch the birds here as I like to observe them. Last year, the birds headed to the Oakhnaeboat and Galongone villages. But this year, they are hibernating in the Meiktila lake area," he said.

Asian openbill storks are found in Thailand, Pakistan, Middle of Sri Lanka, India, and

Asian openbill storks are seen at Meiktila lake. **PHOTO: CHAN THAR (MEIKTILA)**

Myanmar. The Asian openbill storks feed on water snakes, frogs, and large insects.

They swallow their prey whole or crush them into pieces before swallowing them.—Chan

Thar (Meiktila) ■

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Tourists visit southern Myanmar on motorbikes

A GROUP of 14 motorcyclists entered Myanmar through the Myawady border gate on 16 December and toured the Myawady-Mawlamyine-Dawei-Myeik-Kawthoung route. They then proceeded to Thai-

land via Kawthoung on 20 December.

The bikers toured the country through an arrangement with BK Holiday Travel and Tours and under the supervision of the Ministry of

Hotels and Tourism.

An increasing number of foreign tourists are coming to Myanmar via air, sea, and land to explore its natural beauty and archaeological sites and experience its eco-tourism

and culture-based tourism. The authorities are trying to develop tourism sites and reduce restrictions to promote the industry in the open season.—GNLM ■ *(Translated by Hay Mar)*

Police columns destroy the poppy field in Shan State. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Police destroy poppy fields in Hopong, Pinlaung, Hsihseng Tsps

A Hopong Tsp Police force, led by Police Major Min Han, destroyed 27 acres of poppy fields located about 1 mile south of Laikan Village, Hopong Tsp, in Shan State on 26 December, according to the information released by the Myanmar Police Force.

Similarly, authorities destroyed 35 acres of poppy fields in Htitali Village, Lumphatchan Village and Wapyun Village in Pinlaung Township, and 17 acres of poppy fields in Nakhike Village, Hsihseng Township in Shan State.—GNLM ■

(Translated by JT)

Myanmar, Bangladesh conduct coordinated patrol

A COORDINATED patrol between Myanmar and Bangladesh was conducted at the border posts 51/5 to 52 at 10:40 am on 26 December, according to the information released by the Myanmar Police Force.

The Myanmar patrol was led by Acting Police Major Aung Shwe Oo from No.5 Border Police sub-division (Aung Thaby-

ae), Area 1, Maungtau Township while the Bangladesh patrol was led by Naib Subedar Md. Salim Uddin of No. 11 Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB).

After discussing near the border posts 51/5, the troops of Myanmar and Bangladesh conducted the patrol along the border.—GNLM ■

(Translated by JT)Myanmar border guard force conducting the coordinated patrol. **PHOTO: MPF**

Domestic gold rate on the rise in line with global market, but price dips due to dollar depreciation

By Nyein Nyein

WHILE the price of gold had risen in the domestic market, taking cues from global prices, a weak dollar has caused domestic prices to slip, said U Ohn Myaing, the general secretary of the Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association.

neurs Association.

The price of gold fell slightly to K1,039,500 per tical yesterday evening from K1,042,000 on 26 December, said gold traders.

“If global gold prices increase, domestic prices also see a rise. But global gold prices are not that high. Domestic gold

prices have slipped slightly due to the depreciation of the dollar versus the Kyat. Gold prices fell to K1,039,500 per tical yesterday afternoon from K1,042,000 per tical,” said U Ohn Myaing.

In October, the lowest rate for pure gold reached K969,000 per tical and the highest rate

stood at K1,040,000 per tical. Last month, the lowest rate for gold stood at K1,027,100 and the highest rate was K1,044,500.

Domestic gold prices topped K900,000 on 21 July, 2017. With global gold prices soaring, domestic prices also rose between August and Sep-

tember this year. They reached a high of K985,000 on 28 August and fell to K969,000 on 30 August. Gold prices touched a fresh peak of K1,047,700 on 20 September. ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Watermelon, muskmelon growers face huge losses on delayed entry into China

OVER 2,000 fruit trucks from Myanmar were finally allowed to pass Wantain Gate into China after being held for 7 hours yesterday as well. With Myanmar fruit trucks having to wait at least two days before being allowed entry into Wantain market, watermelon and muskmelon cultivators are facing huge losses as the delay is affecting the quality of fruits, said U Soe Lwin, the chairman of the Sagaing Region Watermelon and Muskmelon Growers and Exporters Association.

“A Chinese inspection team is checking Myanmar fruit trucks before they enter the Wantain market.

As the team is understaffed, the inspections are getting delayed.

And the Chinese govern-

ment is not extending their organizational strength. The market gate usually closes at 4:30pm and our fruit trucks end up queuing on the road,” he added.

“Watermelons and muskmelons can only be kept for three or four nights. If the fruits are not fresh, they fetch lower prices.

Although the regional fruit commodities group and the border gate officials tried to find a solution to gain entry at the border gate on 23, 24, and 25 December, their efforts were to no avail,” said U Soe Lwin.

Watermelons and muskmelons are being cultivated in 17 townships of Sagaing Region. Since 2010, the townships have been cultivating only watermelons and musk-

melons as their main crops. Fruits from these townships are sent to China’s Wantain and Myanmar’s Muse 105th mile fruit markets.

“With nearly half the farmers in Sagaing Region cultivating watermelons and muskmelons, we have sent a letter to the Sagaing regional government on 27 December, asking it to help find a solution to ensure smooth border sales,” said U Soe Lwin,

The chairman of the fruit depot at Muse Town’s 105th Mile trade zone has also submitted a letter dated 25 December to the Muse 105th Mile trade department to help negotiate with the concerned Chinese authorities.—Myo Min Tun (Monywa) ■

(Translated by Hay Mar)



Myanmar trucks laden with watermelons wait for inspection to enter China.
PHOTO: HAN HTAY (LASHIO IPRD)

Special trains available for New Year travelers



A passenger train about to leave at the Yangon Railway Station.

PHOTO: SOE MYINT MAUNG

MYANMA Railways announced they will be operating special trains, traveling routes between Nay Pyi Taw – Yangon and Yangon – Mandalay for the New Year holidays, running from 29 December to 1 January 2019.

The special Nay Pyi Taw – Yangon train will operate on 28 December, departing from Nay Pyi Taw at 9:30 pm and reaching Yangon at 7 am the next morning.

The special Yangon – Mandalay train will depart on 29 December from Yangon at 6 pm, arriving in Mandalay at 9 am the next morning.

The Mandalay – Yangon special train will run on 30 December, departing from Mandalay at 6:15 pm and arriving in Yangon at 9:15 am the next morning.

Yangon – Nay Pyi Taw special trains will operate on 1 January, departing from Yangon at 9 pm and arriving in Nay Pyi Taw at 7 am the next morning.

Tickets for these special trains can be purchased at Yangon Central Station starting at 7 am today. Ticket prices have been changed for these special trains.—Pwint Thitsar (Translated Zaw Htat Oo)

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Vietnam posts decade-high growth of 7.1% in 2018

HANOI, Vietnam — Vietnam's growth soared to more than 7 percent this year, its highest in a decade, helped by a surge in its manufacturing sector.

The country has long been one of Asia's fastest growing economies — GDP growth topped 5 percent over the past five years — largely driven by the exports of cheap manufactured goods, from Nike shoes to H&M T-shirts, as well as tech products like Samsung phones and Intel computer processors.

But this year's growth surpassed the communist government's target of 6.7 percent, hitting 7.08 percent, according to figures released Thursday by the General Statistics Office in Hanoi.

"The processing and manufacturing sector was the bright point and the main driver for the overall growth" with a 12.98 percent increase, said GSO head



Vietnam has long been one of Asia's fastest growing economies, largely driven by the exports of cheap manufactured goods. PHOTO: AFP

Nguyen Bich Lam.

He added the economy would remain robust next year with the expected contribution

of manufacturing projects such as Vinfast, a local car assembly company owned by Vietnam's largest private conglomerate

Vingroup.

Run by Vietnam's richest man Pham Nhat Vuong, Vingroup also recently unveiled its

first made-in-Vietnam mobile phones in an effort to gain a slice of the lucrative market.

However, the World Bank predicted a slowdown over the next two years if Vietnam does not protect itself from escalating global trade tensions.

"As an open economy, Vietnam needs to maintain a responsive monetary policy, exchange rate flexibility and low fiscal deficits to enhance its resilience against potential shocks," said Sebastian Eckardt, the bank's lead economist for Vietnam.

A bruising trade war between the US and China has caused reverberations around the region, as Washington and Beijing have slapped tit-for-tat tariffs on more than \$300 billion worth of goods.

But relations have eased after both sides agreed to a 90-day truce earlier this month.— AFP ■

Huawei expects 21% revenue rise despite 'unfair' treatment

BEIJING, China — Chinese telecoms giant Huawei expects to see a 21 percent rise in revenue for 2018, its chairman said Thursday despite a year of "unfair treatment" which saw its products banned in several countries over security concerns.

Huawei would report sales revenue of \$108.5 billion, up 21 percent year-on-year, rotating chairman Guo Ping said in a New Year message to staff.

Guo also said the firm had signed 26 commercial contracts for its 5G technology despite what he described as a year of "incredibly unfair treatment".

"Huawei has never and will never present a security threat," Guo wrote in the message titled "Fire is the Test of Gold".

"Setbacks will only makes us more courageous, and incredibly unfair treatment will drive us to become the world's number one," he added.

The company has been under fire this year, with Washington leading efforts to blacklist Huawei internationally.



Huawei has been under fire this year, with Washington leading efforts to blacklist the firm internationally. PHOTO: AFP

A top Huawei executive was also arrested in Canada earlier this month at the request of the US, which is engaged in a bruising trade war with China.

This month, Britain's largest mobile provider BT announced it was removing Huawei equipment from its 4G cellular network after the foreign intelligence service singled out the company as a security risk.

In November, New Zea-

land's intelligence agency barred Huawei equipment in the rollout of the country's 5G network on the same grounds.

Australia and the United States also enacted similar bans earlier this year, leaving Canada the only country in the "Five Eyes" intelligence network not to take steps against the Chinese firm.

Huawei founder Ren is a former People's Liberation

Army engineer and there are concerns of close links with the Chinese military and government, which the firm has constantly denied.

Last week, the Chinese tech firm sought to dispel the fears around its technology by taking the unprecedented step of opening its research and development labs to media.

"Banning a particular company cannot resolve cybersecurity concerns," Huawei's rotating chairman Ken Hu told reporters.

"Huawei's record is clean."

Meanwhile, chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou, who was arrested on December 1, is fighting extradition to the US where she faces charges of violating Iranian trade-related sanctions.

She has been released on bail and is now living under electronic surveillance in a luxury home in Vancouver.

Following her arrest, two Canadians were detained in China on grounds of national security in what has largely been seen as retaliation for Meng's case.— AFP ■

China central bank to maintain prudent monetary policy, keep yuan stable

BEIJING — China's central bank said Thursday it would continue a prudent monetary policy and keep the domestic currency basically stable.

The People's Bank of China will strengthen counter-cyclical adjustments while making monetary policy more forward-looking, flexible and targeted, it said in a statement issued after a quarterly meeting of the monetary policy committee.

The prudent monetary policy should be "neither too loose nor too tight," while liquidity will be kept at a reasonable and ample level, it said.

It will continue to deepen reform of the financial system and improve the "two-pillar" policy framework, which includes monetary policy and macro-prudential policy, and further improve the transmission mechanism of monetary policies, the statement said.

It will optimize financing and credit structure so that the private sector will be better supported while the real economy will be better served.— Xinhua ■

Ex-president Rajoelina wins Madagascar vote: electoral commission

ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar — Former Madagascan president Andry Rajoelina has returned to power after beating rival Marc Ravalomanana in last week's highly contested run-off vote, according to results published Thursday by the electoral commission. Rajoelina won 55.66 percent against 44.34 percent for Ravalomanana, it said.

The results may be contested after Ravalomanana claimed fraud.

The electoral commission chief Hery Rakotomanana said

"efforts were made to respond" to concerns raised by both candidates which included a review of the counting software.

The two-round election was plagued by mutual accusations of vote-rigging in a country with a long history of instability.

Rajoelina and Ravalomanana are former presidents and long-time rivals.

They each spent lavishly on campaigning, with promises and handouts distributed liberally to voters, who are among the poorest in Africa.—AFP ■



Presidential candidate Andry Rajoelina casts his ballot during the presidential election in Antananarivo, Madagascar. PHOTO: AFP

Trump declares end to US 'policeman' role in surprise Iraq visit



During a visit to Iraq, US President Donald Trump sought to defend his "America First" policy of pulling back from multinational alliances, including what to many Americans seem like the endless wars in the Middle East. PHOTO: AFP

AL-ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq — President Donald Trump used a lightning visit to Iraq — his first with US troops in a conflict zone since being elected — to defend the withdrawal from Syria and declare an end to America's role

as the global "policeman."

Trump, accompanied by his wife Melania, landed late Wednesday at Al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq after what he described as a stressful, secrecy shrouded flight on a "pitch black" Air Force

One.

He spoke to a group of about 100 mostly special forces personnel and separately with military leaders before leaving a few hours later after a visit that sparked controversy in Iraq.

A planned meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi was scrapped and replaced by a phone call, the premier's office said.

Trump invited Abdel Mahdi to visit Washington and he accepted, according to the White House.

The president was seen shaking hands with camouflage-clad personnel, signing autographs and posing for photos at the base.

Morale-boosting presidential visits to US troops in war zones have been a longstanding tradition in the years following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.

Trump has been soundly

criticised for eschewing such a trip in the first two years of his presidency. But speculation had been mounting that he would finally make the gesture following his controversial plan to slash troop levels in Afghanistan and his order to withdraw entirely from Syria.

Trump sought to defend his "America First" policy of pulling back from multinational alliances, including what to many Americans seem like the endless wars in the Middle East.

"It's not fair when the burden is all on us," he said. "We don't want to be taken advantage of any more by countries that use us and use our incredible military to protect them. They don't pay for it and they're going to have to."

"We are spread out all over the world. We are in countries

most people haven't even heard about. Frankly, it's ridiculous," he added.

'Enough time'

Trump told reporters he had overruled generals asking to extend the Syria deployment, where about 2,000 US forces, joined by other foreign troops, assist local fighters battling the Islamic State jihadist group (IS).

"You can't have any more time. You've had enough time," he said he told the top brass.

Trump's visit appeared to take Iraqi authorities by surprise and prompted criticism including from former prime minister Haider al-Abadi.

The way in which Trump visited was "not commensurate with diplomatic norms and relations with sovereign states", Abadi said.—AFP ■

UAE reopens Damascus embassy after seven years

DAMASCUS, Syria — The United Arab Emirates reopened its embassy in Damascus Thursday, the latest sign of efforts to bring the Syrian government back into the Arab fold.

The UAE broke ties with Syria in February 2012, as the repression of nationwide protests demanding regime change was escalating into a devastating war.

Nearly seven years later, the Emirati flag was raised again during a ceremony attended by diplomats and journalists.

An acting charge d'affaires

has already started working, an Emirati statement said, stressing that the UAE was "keen to put relations back on their normal track".

It said that the resumption of ties aimed to "support the sovereignty and independence of Syria" and face "the dangers of regional interferences".

Rumours of the Emirati embassy reopening had circulated in recent days as renovation work was spotted getting under way at the building.

A visit to Damascus by Suda-

nese President Omar al-Bashir earlier this month had been interpreted by some observers as a sign of regional efforts to end Assad's diplomatic isolation.

- Pariah no more? -

Syria was suspended from the Arab League in November 2011, as the death toll was escalating and several regional powers bet on Assad's demise.

The conflict has now killed more than 360,000 people.

Assad's seat at the helm, which he inherited from his father in 2000, appeared to be hanging by

a thread until Russia's 2015 military intervention turned things around.

Government forces and allied militia have since steadily regained significant ground. They now firmly control the Damascus region and several key trade routes in the country.

The past few days have seen a flurry of diplomatic activity that looks set to continue until the next summit of the Arab League, due in Tunis in March.

"Recent discussions on this issue have not yielded a consen-

sus," Hossam Zaki, the League's deputy secretary general, told reporters in Cairo on Monday.

"This does not rule out a possible change of the Arab position in the future," he added.

Ali Mamluk, Syria's intelligence chief and a key figure in the Assad regime, travelled to Egypt last week on an official visit.

With military operations winding down in several parts of the country and the capital fully secure, Damascus is also working on breaking its physical isolation.—AFP ■

Ensuring human rights in an Independent country

DURING a preliminary meeting on 12 December, the national committee tasked with carrying out the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) identified 12 areas where 166 of the recommendations accepted by the government will be implemented.

The 12 areas include 41 issues pertaining to the signing of international treaties on human rights; 7 issues concerning the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission; 4 issues involving cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms; 19 issues concerning the reformation of the democracy, peace, rule of law, and human rights; 12 issues involving economic development; 10 issues relating to the formation of a good system of governance and the confiscation of land; 15 issues pertaining to the promotion of gender equality and vulnerability together with 15 issues on discrimination; 13 issues involving health and education; 18 issues concerning interfaith dialogue, freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly; 7 issues relating to National Scrutiny Cards, internal displacement, and human trafficking; and, 5 issues involving the ceasefire and efforts towards national reconciliation.

As Myanmar works to promote human rights in line with democratic standards, all citizens must participate in the efforts made by the government to achieve its goal before the set schedule.

human rights and working to promote them in the country.

In spite of Myanmar's genuine efforts to ensure democratic rights, it is regrettable that some countries and U.N. agencies have accused the country of violating human rights.

At such a time, the implementation of the UPR recommendations, which include suggestions from the international community, will serve as an opportunity for Myanmar to let the world know about its efforts to promote human rights and its democratic standards.

As Myanmar works to promote human rights in line with democratic standards, all citizens must participate in the efforts made by the government to achieve its goal before the set schedule.

Historical Gway Chaung fort: Myanmar's model of reflective patriotism

By Uncle Pyinnya

GAZING at motorized boats and small ships moving downstream and upstream along the mighty Ayeyawaddy, me and my better half sat down under the shade of a typical spiky tree of dry regions (hta-hnaung...Acacia leucophloea) inside the fort on a hillock. Our three loving daughters were taking photographs in turns with the backgrounds of the brick walls of the forgotten military stronghold.

Unlike the previous forts that we have studied earlier, this "Gway Chaung Fort" is an underground fort constructed with grandeur, which our girls studied with much interest.

After taking tons of photographs with much content, they came to us. I asked whether they have put on records the obelisk of the fort, the girls replied that they had already taken photos at two inscriptions of the fort. Raising a question, the youngest wanted to know whether "Gway Chaung" is correct or "Kway Chaung" is accurate.

Whatever the correct name may be, I told them that the most important part is the history of the military strongholds.

When I asked the year that the fortress was built, the middle girl checked with her photo in the camera and replied that it was built in 1860 and completed in 1863. Suggesting them to review the "Min Hla Fort" at the north-west on the west bank of the Ayeyawaddy, they replied that it was recorded to have built in 1861.

I told them to check the military strongholds namely "Sin Kyone Fort" at old Ava; "Thabyaytan Fort" at old Sagaing Bridge east; and "Asaykhan Fort" at Sagaing. They were built in 1874 and 1875 respectively. I asked them which one is the earliest.

The eldest replied that the "Gway Chaung Fort" is the earliest. I told her that she was right and told them that Rakhine and Tanintharyi were annexed in 1824 and the whole of lower Myanmar was subjugated in 1852.

With a view to protecting the remaining lands, King Mindon Min had ordered to build the military strongholds.

"Min Hla Fort" was built in Myanmar Era (1223), and the year had been put on record with a special Myanmar verse about the fort.

At that juncture, I explained



Gway Chaung Fort. PHOTO: ZEYATU

my daughters how our ancestors fought back with bravery and courage against the imperialists from this Gway Chaung military stronghold in defence not to lose the whole country.

My youngest daughter remembered what I had told them earlier about the stories that happened at other forts where Myanmar warriors were not permitted to fight back the aggressors at the directive of the King's Palace.

When the British imperialist annexed lower Myanmar, they smuggled teak logs out of the country and were fined with cash as punishment, for that in reprisal they had conspired to take possession of the whole country. On 14 November 1885, British Army Officer John Prendergast and his ten thousand soldiers with full arms and ammunition started the offensive on warships of Naval Brigade from Thayetmyo Township to upper Myanmar along the Ayeyawaddy River.

They arrived at Gway Chaung Fort on 17 November. Even before arriving at the fortress, Myanmar warriors defended and fought back for many days from both sides of the Ayeyawaddy.

Heavy cannon balls and assorted gun fires were targeted at the fort, and that Myanmar patriots responded with cannons and available weapons in bravery.

Other British infantry troops approached the Gway Chaung Fort from the back of the hillock and surrounded the area, and they signaled the warships in the river

to stop firing in maneuvering the warfare. Taking by surprise, the British soldiers broke up the fortress gate and entered inside, while other soldiers climbed up using ladders from the eastern wall.

When I explained these events of heroic defence to my daughters, they imagined, checked and gaped to the river as well as the back of the fort with much interest. They gazed at the fort wall in the east that the enemies climbed up through the ladders during the attack.

I told them that the fight was enraged and furious in close combat such as face to face and men to men,

I told them that losing independence is simple compared with regaining it, which involves great sacrifice and struggle for hundreds of years ...

and that the British used the bayonets while Myanmar warriors fight back with all sorts of swords. The battle lasting three and half hours was so fierce and violent that both sides sustained heavy casualties.

Due to imbalance of strength in forces, Myanmar warriors retreated from Gway Chaung Fort at 1:00 pm in the afternoon.

On the same day, "Min Hla Fort" on the western bank of Ayeyawaddy was attacked by the invaders, in the same war tactic

of offensive from land and river. The patriots from "Min Hla Fort" also retreated from the fort at about 3:30 pm in the afternoon. 17 November was a distressing day as both the "Min Hla Fort" and the "Gway Chaung Fort" were abandoned.

The British forces moved along the river upstream facing resistance from Myanmar soldiers, and finally arrived and covered Myingyan Township on 25 November and stopped over at Yandabo Village. On 26 November, a peace mission team dispatched from the King's Palace was responded in

When there is no alternative due to powerlessness, Myanmar surrendered. The King's Palace sent royal order in which no Myanmar forces were to make defensive and fight back, resulting with the "Sin Kyone Fort", "Asay Khan Fort", and "Sagaing Fort" remained completely powerless, although they had eight thousand strong warriors ready to fight back.

Around this time, a telegram from the Royal Palace had arrived at Min Hla. It read: "Do not defend against the British. Defenders will be noted as rebels."

Receiving the royal order not to engage and fight back the British, mixed feeling and responses exploded among the Myanmar patriots such as that of close fists in strong anger; that of bursting out in dismay; that of knocking head against the fort wall in anguish; that of breaking the guns and weapons; that of retreating elsewhere leaving the arms behind; that of taking the arms and ammunition with the intent to fight back at an appropriate time in future and stayed with the close relatives; that of broken hearts among the patriots.

The British troops left Thayetmyo Township and arrived at Mandalay after two weeks on 28 November; and King Tibaw Min and family were taken away on 29 November. Perhaps, the month of December on that particular year witnessed the intangible Christmas gift to Her Majesty the Queen of England.

On 1 January 1886, the British made Myanmar a province of In-

dia, and Myanmar became a colony after the Third Anglo-Burmese War. From that day on, Myanmar was subjugated with diverse events including disunity among the nationals in the chronicle, making things difficult in escaping from Colonial rule.

Taking this opportunity, I told my daughters that the main reason for bringing them to this (150) years old "Gway Chaung Fort" is to instill and inspire them with patriotism by citing efforts of our ancestors in the defending the country and self-sacrifices of our predecessors.

I told them that losing independence is simple compared with regaining it, which involves great sacrifice and struggle for hundreds of years; that weakness of the country and lack of development are due to loss of independence; that of many factors in disadvantages the country has to embrace; that of the need to protect independence and making the country strong; that of striving for development to come on a par with other foreign countries; that of the importance of patriotism; and that of visiting historical places to arouse patriotic spirit.

Convincing my daughters, that the feeling and outlook that they have before visiting the Gway Chaung Fort and the sense of attitude and mind-sets being changed after the first-hand experience of visiting the fortress. My daughter answered, "The Gway Chaung Fort looks the same in my eyes, but now my perspective and viewpoint has changed".

I replied that I am very happy to hear their correct sentiments towards the independence.

Candidly, I told them that first and foremost I thought they are taking photographs with the background of the fort just to upload on the Facebook for fun.

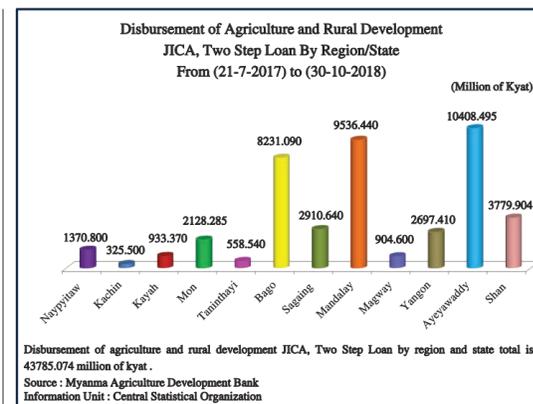
They responded that their snapshots with the backdrops of the Gway Chaung Fort could edge over other normal photographs of beauty as they have historical value on patriotism.

I told them, "Let's go back to Magway as Granny is waiting for the loving granddaughters for lunch at home."

Offering my hand to my better-half, she stood up and said, "Ko Ko!!! Your talks have activated the life of this Gway Chaung Fort."

She softly murmured, "Let them know about Patriotism".

Translated by UMT (Ahlon)



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued on Thursday 27 December 2018)

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS RECORDED AT 09:30 hrs MST:

During the past (24) hours, weather has been partly cloudy in Sagaing and Tanintharyi regions, Chin State and generally fair in the remaining regions and states. Night temperatures were (3°C) below December average temperatures in Yangon Region, (2°C) below December average temperatures in Mandalay Region, Northern Shan and Kayah states and about December average temperature in the remaining regions and states. The significant night temperatures were (-2°C) in Haka, (1°C) in Heho, (2°C) each in Pinlaung and Ramthlo, (4°C) in Loilin and (5°C) each in Putao, Namhsan and PyinOoLwin.

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF 28 December 2018: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Bago, Yangon and Tanintharyi regions, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin and Mon 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: Likelihood of isolated to scattered rain or thundershowers in Bago and Tanintharyi regions, Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 December 2018: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 December 2018: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 December 2018: Generally fair weather.

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

A moderate earthquake of magnitude (5.0) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about 17) miles southeast of Mawlaik, latitude 23.40°N, longitude 94.52°E, focal depth (74) kilometers about (58) miles southeast of Tamu seismological observatory was recorded at (07)hr (05)min (50)sec MST on 27 December 2018.

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Taliban urge US to exit Afghanistan or face Soviet-style defeat

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban warned the United States Thursday it would face the same fate as the Soviet Union in the 1980s if it did not leave Afghanistan, as Washington considers slashing troop numbers.

In a taunting message sent on the 39th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of the war-torn country, the Taliban said US forces faced “humiliation” and could “learn a great deal” from the experience of their Cold War foe.

The Soviets pulled out of Afghanistan in 1989, ending a decade-long occupation and precipitating a bloody civil war and the emergence of the Taliban.



In this photograph taken on 11 April 2017, US soldiers take up positions during an ongoing operation against Islamic State militants in the Achin district of Afghanistan's Nangarhar province. **PHOTO: AFP**

“Take heed from the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan and abandon thoughts

of testing the mettle of the already proven Afghans,” Taliban spokesman Za-

biullah Mujahid said in a statement in English, Dari and Pashto.

Mujahid said any future relations between the Taliban and the United States should be based on “sound diplomatic and economic principles” rather than conflict.

The Taliban have not formally responded to the news that Trump had decided to withdraw roughly half of the 14,000 US troops in Afghanistan.

But a senior commander told AFP that the group was “more than happy”. The Taliban have long insisted on the withdrawal of foreign troops as a condition for engaging in peace talks.

The White House has so far not confirmed the widely-publicised move

that left foreign diplomats and Afghan officials in Kabul stunned and dismayed.

It came last week as US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad met with the Taliban in Abu Dhabi, part of efforts to bring the militants to the negotiating table with Kabul.

That was the latest in a series of meetings between US officials and representatives of the Taliban that began in the summer.

There are fears Trump's decision could undermine Khalilzad's negotiating position, embolden the Taliban, and further erode morale among Afghan forces, which are suffering record losses.—**AFP ■**

Saudi king orders major government reshuffle



Ibrahim al-Assaf, a former finance minister, is set to replace Adel al-Jubeir as the foreign minister. **PHOTO: AFP**

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — King Salman of Saudi Arabia ordered a major government reshuffle Thursday, replacing the ministers of foreign affairs and information, a royal decree said.

The shake up comes as the kingdom grapples with international outrage over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a scandal that has tipped Riyadh into one of its worst international crises. Ibrahim al-Assaf, a former finance minister, will replace Adel al-Jubeir as foreign minister, the decree said. Jubeir was demoted to minister of state for foreign affairs, it added.

Turki al-Shabanah was appointed as the new minister of information, replacing Awwad al-Awwad — who was named as an advisor to the royal court.

Turki al-Sheikh, a close aide to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was removed as the head of the kingdom's sports

commission and named entertainment authority chief.

The fallout over Khashoggi's murder is widely seen as the kingdom's worst diplomatic crisis since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, in which most of the hijackers were identified as Saudi nationals.

The critic's killing has tainted the image of 33-year-old Prince Mohammed — the de facto ruler and heir apparent — even though the kingdom strongly denies he was involved.

But so far it has not threatened to unseat the prince, who has effectively neutered his political rivals and tightened his grip on military and security agencies.

After the reshuffle, Prince Mohammed is set to maintain his political and security posts, including that of defence minister.—**AFP ■**

African summit sounds alarm about DR Congo violence

BRAZZAVILLE (Congo) — Five African heads of state on Wednesday voiced “strong concern over acts of violence” during the presidential campaign of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where voting has been postponed in two restive regions.

Clashes in some locations are enough “to compromise voter's peace of mind,” added a statement issued at the end of a one-day summit held in the neighbouring Republic of Congo.

A DRC representative was not present, but summit leaders decided that a delegation of foreign ministers would present “their conclusions” to DRC Pres-

ident Joseph Kabila on Thursday.

About a dozen people have died in DRC campaign violence according to various sources, which Kabila's government has denied. Opposition candidate Martin Fayulu also claims that he was prevented from visiting three cities, Kindu, Kolwezi and Kinshasa, during the campaign.

On Wednesday, eight nations in southern and central Africa mulled the situation in DRC, a country that has been a regional battleground twice in the last quarter-century.

The mini-summit was held in Brazzaville, four days before problem-strewn elections across

the border.

African leaders focused on “the electoral process in the DRC,” said Cyprien Sylvestre Mamina, secretary general for foreign affairs in the Republic of Congo. The meeting brought together many members of the the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

Those attending were Angola, Botswana, Congo, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. Five countries were represented by their presidents, while the others sent foreign ministers or lower-level officials.—**AFP ■**



Staff of the Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) configure voting machines on 20 December 2018, in Beni, ahead of the presidential election postponed on 30 December after a fire broke in the warehouse and destroyed electronic voting machines and ballot papers earmarked for the capital. **PHOTO: AFP**

US team to visit China for talks during trade truce: report

NEW YORK (United States) — A US government delegation will travel to Beijing in early January for the first face-to-face talks since President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart agreed to a truce in their tariff war, Bloomberg News reported Wednesday.

Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish will lead the US team for talks during the week of 7 January, Bloomberg said, citing two people familiar with the matter.

Word of the meeting follows small signs of progress — and the absence of new threats from Trump — while the two sides work to ease trade tensions by 1 March.

Washington and Beijing have exchanged tit-for-tat tariffs on more than \$300 billion in total



Washington and Beijing have exchanged tit-for-tat tariffs on more than \$300 billion in total two-way trade. PHOTO: AFP

two-way trade, locking them in a conflict that has begun to eat into profits and contributed to stock market plunges.

Trump initiated the trade war because of complaints over unfair Chinese trade practices

— concerns shared by the European Union, Japan and others.

The ceasefire began after Trump met with Chinese leader Xi Jinping at a G20 summit in Buenos Aires on 1 December and they agreed to hold off on

further tariffs or retaliation for 90 days.

On Sunday Beijing's commerce ministry said China and the US "made new progress" on the issues of trade balance and intellectual property during a phone call between officials from the two countries.

That call came after the two sides discussed "economic and trade issues" by phone earlier in that week, the ministry said.

Beijing on 14 December announced that starting 1 January it would suspend extra tariffs added to US-made cars and auto parts.

Talks also produced reports the country would restart purchases of soybeans from American farmers and ease investment rules for US companies. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

11 gov't forces wounded in clash with rebels in southern Philippines

DAVAO CITY — Eleven government forces were wounded in a landmine blast believed to set off by leftist rebels in southern Philippines on Wednesday, military officials on Thursday said.

The explosion at a village in Monkayo town, in Mindanao's Compostela Valley province of the southern Philippines, resulted in a clash that caused an unknown number of casualties, said Lt. Col. Ezra Balagtey, spokesperson of the military's Eastern Mindanao Command. —Xinhua ■

N Korea admits farming failures amid food shortages

SEOUL (South Korea) — North Korea has acknowledged "drawbacks" in its agricultural sector this year, echoing UN reports of declining crop yields in a country that remains heavily reliant on food imports and aid. Agricultural production is chronically poor in the North, which has periodically been hit by famine, with hundreds of thousands dying — some estimates say millions — in the mid-1990s. Premier of the government cabinet, Pak Pong Ju, referred to "drawbacks made by some farms and units in the past" at a national meeting of farming officials that took place in Pyongyang this week, state media said on Thursday. "He said that they failed to conduct seed production and management in a responsible way and also fell short of doing proper strain distribution," Pak was quoted as saying by the KCNA news agency in an English-language report. — AFP ■

Israel's parliament OKs general election in April

JERUSALEM — Israel's parliament on Wednesday approved a bill to dissolve itself and hold a general election in April as called by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government. The approval by the Knesset, the country's unicameral legislature, sets the election for 9 April, bringing forward the poll previously scheduled for November. — Kyodo News ■

US to take 'extraordinary' measures in face of migrant surge

EL PASO (United States) — The United States will take "extraordinary" protective measures to deal with a surge of immigrant children in custody, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said Wednesday after a second Guatemalan child died in custody.

Nielsen plans to travel later this week to the Mexico border region to witness medical screenings and conditions at Border Patrol stations, she said in a statement, as Congress and Donald Trump remain deadlocked over the president's demands for billions of dollars to fund a wall along the border.

"In response to the unprecedented surge of children into our custody, I have directed a series of extraordinary protective measures," she said in a statement after the "deeply concerning and heartbreaking" death of the child.

Nielsen has asked experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to investigate "the uptick in sick children crossing our borders" and to

identify what further steps border hospitals should take in preparation, her statement said.

Nielsen added that she has asked the US Coast Guard medical corps to assess and "make appropriate recommendations" about Border Patrol medical programs, and has sought additional medical professionals from the Department of Defense.

US Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan warned Wednesday that 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," he told CBS News.

Eight-year-old Felipe Gomez, who collapsed after running a fever, was among almost 25,000 migrant children in US custody, according to McAleenan — the greatest number ever recorded. "That's an enormous flow.

That's very different from what we've seen before," he said, adding that the onset of the flu season was putting further pressure on health care services.

In the last two months, the Border Patrol has apprehended 139,817 illegal aliens on the southwest border, compared with 74,946 during the same period a year earlier, Nielsen said.

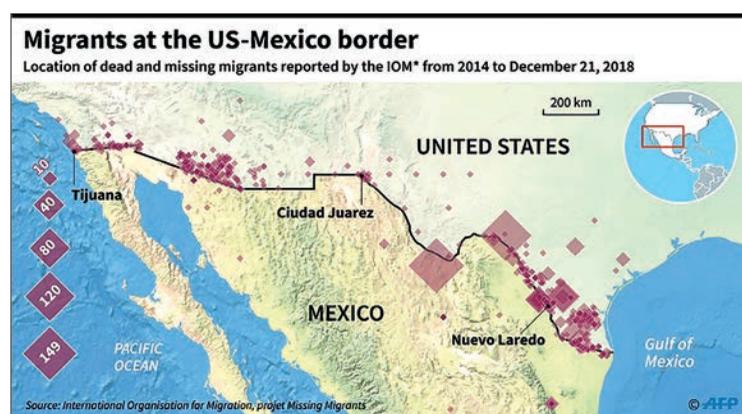
More than 68,500 were "family units" while almost 14,000 others were unaccompanied children, she said, and the system has been pushed to "breaking point." DHS officials said all children in border patrol custody would be given a thorough medical screening, reaffirming McAleenan's commitment to "secondary medical checks" with a focus on those under 10.

'Increasing' medical challenges

Guatemala has called for an investigation into the boy's death, which came just three weeks after a seven-year-old girl from the country died in similar circumstances. Gomez was detained with his 47-year-old father at a crossing in El Paso, Texas on December 18 and had been transferred to a New Mexico medical center showing signs of sickness on Monday, the CBP said.

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

The boy was later sent back



Dead and missing migrants at the US-Mexico border. PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh election campaign ends in anger

DHAKA (Bangladesh)—Bangladesh's deadly election campaign entered a final full day Thursday with followers of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina parading in the streets while her opponents insisted the vote would not be free and fair. Both sides launched new salvos in their war of words ahead of Sunday's polling.

Hasina accused the opposition of organising bomb attacks while the Bangladesh Nationalist Party said "the state" was aiding an assault on the opposition.

Flag-waving supporters of the ruling Awami League marched in Dhaka and other cities ahead of the official close of campaigning early Friday. The BNP, whose leader is in jail, said it had been prevented from holding its closing rally. At least six people—four from the BNP and two from the Awami League—have been killed since the campaign started on 8 November. The BNP and its Islamist ally Jamaat-e-Islami say more than 11,500 of their followers have been arrested and thousand of activists, including candidates, injured in attacks by ruling party followers. Amid international concern over events, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres appealed for calm.

Guterres "calls on all stakeholders to ensure an environment



Supporters of the ruling Awami League have paraded in the streets while the opposition BNP said it had been prevented from holding a closing rally. Supporters of the ruling Awami League have paraded in the streets while the opposition BNP said it had been prevented from holding a closing rally. **PHOTO: AFP**

free of violence, intimidation and coercion before, during and after the elections, so as to enable a peaceful, credible and inclusive poll," said a spokesman.

'Blind' opposition

Bangladeshis "must feel safe and confident in exercising their right to vote. Civil society and electoral observers should be fully supported to play their role in the process," the UN leader

added through his spokesman.

The United States called off an observer mission it was financing because of delays issuing visas. Sheikh Hasina, seeking a third straight term and a record fourth in all, has shrugged off opposition complaints of authoritarianism and said she needs more time to implement her ambitious economic plans. Amid a flurry of late campaign appearances on Wednesday, Hasina said the

"BNP-Jamaat alliance carried out bomb attacks in 88 constituencies". "There is no doubt that the people will surely reject them," she said.

Hasina focused a speech broadcast by video late Wednesday to supporters in Dhaka on the impressive economic growth of the past decade. She has promised to increase annual growth to 9.0 per cent from the current 7.8 per cent, expand electricity

coverage and put the country on course to raise average incomes to more than \$5,400 by 2030. Hasina slammed the opposition for failing to recognise Bangladesh's achievements. "They are blind despite having eyes," she said.

"I call upon people to continue the pace of improvement and give us more scope to serve again." The Awami League leader won a landslide victory in 2008 and the BNP boycotted the 2014 election—saying it was not free and fair—gifting her a return to power. But since her last victory, civil society and rights groups have accused Hasina's government of silencing dissent and muzzling the press. BNP leader Khaleda Zia, a political arch-rival of the prime minister, was jailed for 17 years this year on graft charges.

"The election process has turned into a farce," BNP spokesman Fakhru Islam Alamgir told reporters. "All the attacks are made on BNP people." "It is very unfortunate and unimaginable that these attacks are being sponsored by the state itself," he added, according to the Daily Star.

The BNP-led opposition alliance has accused police of siding with the Awami League and said they were barred from holding a final rally on Thursday. —AFP ■

India busts IS-inspired militant group

NEW DELHI (India)—India's anti-terror agency Wednesday said it had busted a local militant cell inspired by the Islamic State group that was planning to carry out bombings and target prominent political figures. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) said 10 members of an obscure militant group "Harkat ul Harb-e-Islam" were arrested in multi-city raids and a further six suspects were being questioned over their alleged links with the outfit.

NIA spokesman Alok Mittal said arms and ammunition

were recovered from the raids over 17 locations, including in the capital New Delhi, as the group prepped for striking several targets ahead of the high profile Republic Day national event on 26 January. "They were at an advanced stage of carrying a series of blasts," Mittal told reporters at a press conference in New Delhi. "They wanted to explode remote-controlled bombs and even conduct fidayeen (suicide) attacks." Mittal said the group had attempted to make suicide vests and developed a home-

made rocket launcher, adding the unknown mastermind of the module was based abroad. One of the accused is an engineer, he said. Authorities have previously claimed to have foiled similar IS-inspired cells but there is no evidence of the militant group's presence in the country. Indian Muslims have largely remained insulated from IS influence, with only a handful of young men from the country's nearly 175 million minority community joining the militant group that gained worldwide prominence after capturing large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria in 2014.

But India's security agencies have voiced concern over the radicalisation of men over the internet. In 2014, a group of four Mumbai engineering students travelled to Iraq to join the group. One of them later returned to India. But some activists have accused security agencies of falsely charging Muslim men for terrorism, due to discrimination against the community in the Hindu-majority country of 1.25 billion people. —AFP ■



PHOTO: AFP

Canadian to face drug charges in China court

BEIJING (China)—A Canadian is to appear before a court in northeastern China on Saturday for drugs charges, a government-run news portal said, amid frosty relations between Beijing and Ottawa.

The Liaoning People's High Court identified the man as Robert Lloyd Schellenberg.

In a brief statement published Wednesday, the court said he is appealing a drug smuggling case at 2:00pm (0600 GMT) on Saturday but gave no further details.

A government news portal, runsky.com, said Schellenberg is Canadian and had smuggled an "enormous amount" of drugs. China still has the death penalty for drug trafficking.

Canada's foreign ministry did not immediately comment on the matter.

Ties between Beijing and Ottawa have been strained after China detained two Ca-

nadians—former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and China-based businessman Michael Spavor—whom they accuse of engaging in activities that "endanger China's security".

Kovrig is a senior advisor at the International Crisis Group think tank, while Spavor facilitates trips to North Korea, including visits by former basketball star Dennis Rodman.

Though no link has been officially made, the arrests seem to be in retaliation to Canada's 1 December arrest of Meng Wanzhou, a top executive at Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei. She was detained on request from the United States, which has accused her of violating sanctions of Iran.

Another Canadian, a woman named Sarah McIver, is also being held pending deportation for working illegally in China. —AFP ■



Handout photo taken on 5 January, 2010 and received on 12 June, 2018 via the Nature website shows crevasses near the grounding line of Pine Island Glacier, Antarctica.

PHOTO: AFP

American adventurer completes solo trek across Antarctica

WASHINGTON — An American adventurer has become the first person to complete a solo trek across Antarctica without assistance of any kind.

Colin O’Brady, 33, took 54 days to complete the nearly 1,000-mile (1,600-kilometer) crossing of the frozen continent from north to south.

“I accomplished my goal: to become the first person in history to traverse the continent of Antarctica coast to coast solo, unsupported and unaided,” O’Brady wrote in an Instagram post after covering the final 77.5 miles in 32 hours.

“While the last 32 hours were some of the most challenging hours of my life, they have quite honestly been some of the best moments I have ever experienced,” he wrote.

“I was locked in a deep flow state the entire time, equally focused on the end goal, while allowing my mind to recount the profound lessons of this journey. I’m delirious writing this as I haven’t slept yet.”

His voyage was tracked by GPS, and live updates of the trip were provided daily on his website *colinobradyc.com*.

O’Brady and an Englishman, Army Captain Louis Rudd, 49, set off individually on 3 November from Union Glacier in a bid to be the first to complete a solo, unassisted crossing of Antarctica.

In 1996-97, a Norwegian polar explorer, Bor-

ge Ousland, made the first solo crossing of Antarctica but he was wind-aided by kites on his voyage.

Finishing ‘in one go’

O’Brady and Rudd set off on cross-country skis dragging sleds called pulks which weighed nearly 400 pounds (180 kilograms).

O’Brady reached the South Pole on 12 December, the 40th day of his journey.

He arrived at the finish point on the Ross Ice Shelf on the Pacific Ocean on Wednesday after covering a total of 921 miles.

Rudd is about a day or two behind.

O’Brady said he made the decision over breakfast to finish his journey in one continuous push.

“As I was boiling water for my morning oatmeal, a seemingly impossible question popped into my head,” O’Brady wrote on Instagram. “I wonder, would (it) be possible to do one straight continuous push all the way to the end?”

“By the time I was lacing up my boots the impossible plan had become a solidified goal,” he said. “I’m going to push on and try to finish all 80 miles to the end in one go.”

The New York Times described O’Brady’s effort as among the “most remarkable feats in polar history,” ranking alongside the 1911 “Race to the South Pole” between Norway’s Roald Amundsen and England’s Robert Falcon Scott.—AFP ■

Indonesia hikes danger level for deadly tsunami volcano

CARITA (Indonesia) — Indonesia on Thursday raised the danger alert level for a volcano that sparked a killer tsunami at the weekend, after previously warning that fresh activity at the crater threatened to trigger another deadly wave.

Authorities also widened a no-go zone around Anak Krakatoa to five kilometres (three miles) — up from a previous two kilometres — and warned shell-shocked residents to stay away from the coast, after more than 400 were killed by Saturday night’s killer wave.

Plumes of ash burst into the sky as pyroclastic flows — hot gas and other volcanic material — flowed down the crater, raising the risk of rough seas for boats in the vicinity.

Authorities raised the crater’s status to high alert, the second-highest danger warning, while aviation of-

ficials ordered flights to be redirected away from the area.

“We’ve raised the status of (the volcano) since this morning because there’s been a change in the eruption pattern,” Kus-Hendratno, a senior official at the Krakatoa observatory, told AFP Thursday.

The new flows posed no immediate danger to area towns as the volcano sits in the middle of the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra islands.

But the status change sparked new fears with many local residents already scared and refusing to return to their communities over fears of another tsunami.

“This worries me,” said Ugi Sugiarti, a cook at the Augusta Hotel in hard-hit Carita. “I’ve already left.”

Sukma, a security guard at the shattered



Indonesian authorities raised Anak Krakatoa’s status to high alert, the second-highest danger warning.

PHOTO: AFP

Mutiara Carita Cottages, added: “Just please pray for us and that everything will be okay.”

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

At least 430 people

were killed, with 1,495 people injured and another 159 were missing.

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

Indonesia, a vast Southeast Asian archipelago, is one of the most disaster-hit nations on Earth due to its position straddling the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, where tectonic plates collide.

—AFP ■

MYANMAR PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 4th JANUARY 2019 (Independence Day) and 6th JANUARY 2019 (Karin New Year day) loading, Unloading and delivery for goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

Mandalay region Government Mandalay City Development Committee Invitation for Open Tender

- Open Tenders are invited local and International Companies for long term rental of Mandalay Convention Centre, located on Theik Pan Road, between 69th and 70th Street, managed by Mandalay City Development Committee.
- Tenders will be processed as follows:
 - Date of Sale of tender forms (7-1-2019)
 - Closing date and time for submission of tenders (25-1-2019)(12:00) hrs
 - Venue of opening tender (Meeting Hall, MCDC)
 - Date and Time of opening tender (28-1-2019)(09:00) hrs
- Tender forms will cost kyats (50000) and detailed information shall be available at Administration Department of MCDC with contact ph no: +952 4064750.

Tenders committee

Mandalay City Development Committee

Government of Mandalay Region

Mandalay City Development Committee Invitation of Expression of Interest (EOI)

- The Buildings on the 3.1672 acre land owned by MCDC (Former Nadi Myanmar Hotel, 62nd Street, Between 36th & 37th Street, Maha Aung Myay Township Mandalay) are to be upgraded. Call for tender with PPP will be made for the implementation of Mix-Used Development project including business infrastructure, investment and services. Therefore, those who are interested, local companies or consortium cooperating with foreign entrepreneurs are invited to submit EOI.
- The entrepreneurs who are interested will be charged 500000 kyats for EOI application form to credit account number D-2 (3.5.2) Yandanarpon Bank limited. Then forms for EOI are available at cleansing department-
 - EOI forms can be taken from 26-12-2018 to 20-1-2019
 - Last date for the submission of EOI form is 21-2-2019 at 16:30 (during office hour)
 - Address- Cleansing Department
Mandalay City Development Committee
19th Street, 63rd Street
Second floor of Nanshae Market
Ph-02-4072003
Mandalay City Development Committee

Trade
Mark
Ads

Call
Thin Thin May,

09251022355,
09974424848

Bank Holiday

All Banks will be closed on 31st (Monday) December 2018, 1st (Tuesday) January 2019 “International New Year Days” being public holiday under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

Central Bank of Myanmar



People gather and queue to buy lottery tickets at the Nimet Abla lottery stand on 14 December 2018 in Istanbul. Each year in the run-up to the New Year draw, thousands of people flock to the most famous lottery stand in Istanbul, drawn by the promise on display. **PHOTO: AFP**

Turkey's 'Big Sister Nimet' lottery selling hope for 90 years

ISTANBUL (Turkey)—Each year in the run-up to the New Year draw, thousands of people flock to the most famous lottery stand in Istanbul, drawn by the promise on display: “Nimet Abla will make you win.” For 90 years, the lottery booth has drawn large numbers of Turks, filled with hope in these troubled economic times, largely because it has convinced people that it is there that they have the best chance of winning. And so the people flock to the booth, ignoring what is a growing chorus of the pious who consider gambling a sin. Excited customers take a selfie in front of the ticket counters in Eminonu district, close to one of the most beautiful Ottoman mosques in Istanbul, Yeni Cami.

A dozen security guards form a cordon around the stall to stop queue-jumpers, redirecting them towards the end of the queue which extends for several hundreds of metres.

With a waiting time of up to three or four hours at the weekend, those wishing to buy tickets have to be patient. Fortunately for Kemal, he has plenty of it. “I’ve been trying my luck with Nimet Abla for 50 years,” the retired man says. “I have never won... for now!” Nimet Abla, which means “Big Sister Nimet” in Turkish, owes its name and fortune to founder Melek Nimet Ozden. A formidable businesswoman, she ruled over the lottery world for half a century, after selling her first ticket in 1928. Following her death in 1978, her nephew, who is today called Nimet Abi (“Big Brother Nimet”), took over the business, and it continues to prosper. “We sell more and more tickets each year,” Nimet Ozden, 64, tells AFP. He says they sold three million tickets last year, “a tenth of all lottery tickets in Turkey”.

Carefully cultivated legend
As well as the historic booth

in Eminonu, Nimet Abla has two other outlets selling tickets in Istanbul, to which customers flock from all over Turkey.

This year the New Year jackpot is worth 70 million Turkish lira (around 11.5 million euros). One ticket costs 70 lira (11.5 euros), but there is also “a half-ticket” or even a “quarter of a ticket”.

In the last few days before the draw on 31 December, the queues begin as early as 6:00 am and last as late as 11:00 pm.

Like seagulls swirling around a trawler returning from a day’s fishing, street vendors try to snatch customers from Nimet Abla with cries of: “No time to wait! We sell the same tickets!”

To stand out from the more than 15,500 authorised national lottery ticket sellers, Nimet Abla relies on its reputation as a lucky charm. It was something the founder cultivated very early on, investing heavily in advertising. —AFP ■

‘Aquaman’ makes a big splash to top N. American box office

LOS ANGELES (United States)—New Warner Bros. release “Aquaman” made the biggest waves in North American theaters over the weekend with \$67.4 million in ticket sales, industry tracker Exhibitor Relations said Wednesday.

That put it well ahead of two other new holiday-timed releases, as Disney’s “Mary Poppins Returns” took in \$23.5 million for the three-day weekend, flying slightly higher than Paramount’s “Bumblebee” at \$21.7 million.

“Aquaman” stars Jason Momoa in a title role infused with new swagger by director James

Wan, with Variety calling Momoa’s Aquaman “a bare-chested Hawaiian super-stud with long, shaggy surfer hair and all-over tribal tattoos.”

“Mary Poppins,” while lacking truly boffo opening numbers, is expected to follow past musicals in enjoying a long box-office run.

The sequel to the 1964 movie stars Emily Blunt as the stern but kind-hearted nanny (Julie Andrews in the original), backed by Lin-Manuel Miranda of “Hamilton” fame. Dick Van Dyke, Mary Poppins’ Cockney-accented friend in the original film, makes a cameo. —AFP ■

Transmongolian: the beauty queen breaking barriers

ULAANBAATAR (Mongolia)—Make-up artist Solongo Batsukh braves Mongolia’s below-freezing temperatures in just a skimpy black dress and light pastel pink coat—the country’s trailblazing transgender beauty queen wants to look good in any weather. “I don’t like to look puffy,” the 25-year-old said as she drove to a beauty salon that hired her to promote its products and services via Facebook live videos.

It’s with this typical bluntness, confidence and attitude that taboo-breaking Batsukh strutted into the country’s first ever Miss Universe Mongolia competition in October. Though she fell short of representing her country at the Miss Universe contest in Thailand on 17 December, her participation shed another light onto a group living on the edges of a deeply patriarchal country with conservative views about sexual orientation. Had she won, she would have joined Miss Spain’s Angela Ponce as the first transgender contestants in Miss Universe’s 66-year history.

“I wanted to inspire as many women as possible,” Batsukh told AFP. “But I’m still proud that I got the chance to compete in this contest, and the ‘Solongo’ I created was a true winner in my heart,” she said. Her participation didn’t please everyone, dredging up negative reactions

on social media. “The world would have a negative image of our country if a man represents us while there are thousands of beautiful and real women in our country,” one person wrote on the Facebook page of Miss Universe Mongolia.

‘Correct misunderstandings’

But Batsukh isn’t deterred by such abuse. Born Bilguun Batsukh, she grew up as a boy in the semi-arid central province of Dundgovi. She couldn’t pinpoint her gender identity until she learned about different gender orientations as a university student in her early 20s.

It was when she started working as a programme officer at Youth for Health, a non-governmental organisation that provides safe-sex education for LGBT people, that she realised she was a woman born in a man’s body. She started wearing wigs, putting on dresses and taking hormone therapy. Batsukh is among the few LGBT people who have dared to come out in Mongolia, where some 80 per cent of the community remain in the closet, according to a UN survey.

“It is extremely difficult for transgender people to be employed,” said Baldangombo Altangerel, legal programme manager at the LGBT Centre. —AFP ■



Batsukh is among the few LGBT people who have dared to come out in Mongolia, where some 80 per cent remain in the closet, according to a UN survey. **PHOTO: AFP**

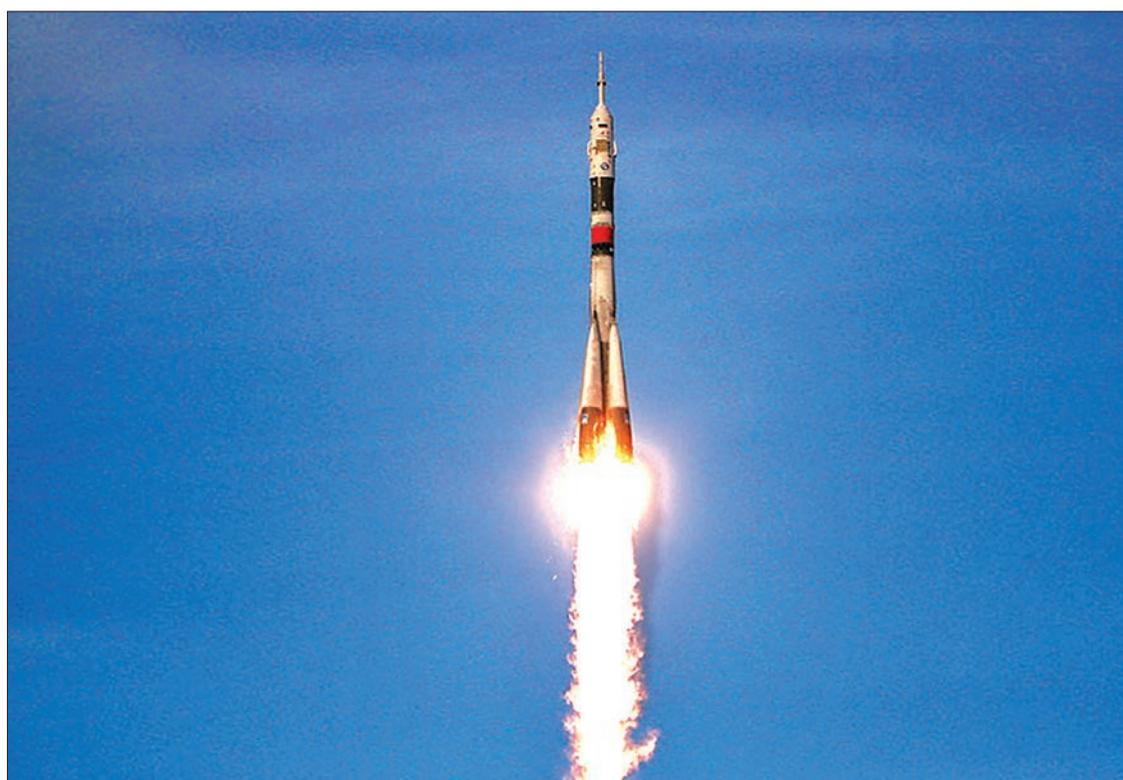
Soyuz carrier rocket launched from Vostochny spaceport

VOSTOCHNY SPACEPORT — The Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket with two Kanopus-V remote sensing satellites and 26 small foreign spacecraft has been launched from the Vostochny spaceport on Thursday, a TASS correspondent reported.

“The Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket was launched at a scheduled time,” Russia’s Roscosmos space agency said.

Nine minutes after the launch, the Fregat upper stage with all spacecraft will separate from the third stage of the rocket carrier. In about an hour after

that, the Fregat will deliver Kanopus-V satellites and 26 foreign spacecraft to the orbit. Kanopus-V satellites will monitor technological and natural disasters and emergencies. Among foreign spacecraft that will be delivered to the orbit are Japan’s GRUS spacecraft, 12 US Dove satellites, South Africa’s ZACube-2 spacecraft, Spain’s KA Lume-1, Germany’s satellites D-Star ONE (iSat), D-Star ONE (Sparrow) and UWE-4, as well as 8 US Lemur spacecraft. This was the fourth launch from the Vostochny spaceport in Russia’s Far East.—Tass ■



The Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket will deliver Russia’s Kanopus-V remote sensing satellites and 26 foreign spacecraft to the orbit. **PHOTO: TASS**

High-tech zones key to China’s innovation-driven development: minister

BELJING—China’s national high-tech zones have played an important role in the country’s innovation-driven development in the past 30 years, Minister of Science and Technology Wang Zhigang said Wednesday.

High-tech zones, of which there are a total of 168, have become an important growth engine for China’s economic development, Wang said in Beijing at a symposium on the 30th anniversary of the high-tech zones.

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In 2017, high-tech zones gathered 52,000 high-tech enterprises, 38.2 per cent of the country’s total. The revenue of high-tech zones reached

30.7 trillion yuan (about 4.46 trillion US dollars), and the GDP reached 9.52 trillion yuan, representing 11.5 per cent of the national GDP. The total export volume of enterprises in the zones reached 478 billion US dollars in 2017, nearly 20 per cent of the nation’s total export of goods and services.—Xinhua ■

Scientists to study effects of climate change on Pacific coastline

LOS ANGELES—Four researchers at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego have earned state grants to study how climate change is shifting conditions on the Pacific Coast.

They were awarded 1 million US dollars from the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) to study topics ranging from saltwater bass populations to coastal cliff erosion, according to a release of the institution. They will create maps, models and other data sources that will help chart the changes to California’s coastline, and guide strategies to deal with

them. The grants of 250,000 US dollars to each scientist are part of a larger project to fund research on topics such as sea-level rise and coastal resilience, marine pollution, and renewable energy. The four scientists will lead their teams to focus on respective projects. Jennifer Smith, an associate professor of marine biology, is building 3D images of rocky intertidal zones to study how sea-level rise will affect the wealth of marine life in tide pools. Brice Semmens, an associate professor of marine biology, will develop a unique time series of bass species abundance dating back to the late 1940s.

These new data will provide valuable insights regarding the oceanographic drivers to these species, and will support effective fisheries management. Scientist Adam Young’s team will provide the first statewide high-resolution assessment of California coastal cliff erosion and retreat. The results will be used to detect erosion hotspots, map a coastal cliff stability and hazard index, and identify areas prone to future coastal erosion. Marine biology professor Ronald Burton will use DNA metabarcoding approach, a DNA-based method of species identification, to monitor fish spawning and population connectivity in Coastal Southern and Central California.

OPC was created in 2004 as part of the California Ocean Protection Act, with an aim to help protect, conserve and maintain healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems and the economies they support.—Xinhua ■



The Pacific coastline of Hualien, southeast China’s Taiwan. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Vietnam Airlines - Winter Schedule from 28 October 2018

Yangon - Hanoi	VN 956	Daily	18:55 - 21:20
Yangon - Ho Chi Minh City	VN 942	Daily	12:10 - 15:10
Hanoi - Yangon	VN 957	Daily	16:30 - 18:00
Ho Chi Minh City - Yangon	VN 943	Daily	09:20 - 11:10

For more information, please contact to Vietnam Airlines Myanmar:
Unit 5, Level 8, Office Tower 1, HAGL Myanmar Centre Tower, 192 Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar
• Tel: (+95) 1 934 5380, 934 5381, 934 5382 • FB: Vietnam Airlines - Myanmar • Email: reservation.mm@vietnamairlines.com



Vietnam Airlines Destinations with Best Connecting Time from Yangon

ITINERARY	FREQUENCY	DEPARTURE	TRANSIT	CONNECTING	ARRIVAL	TOTAL TIME
Yangon - Tokyo/Osaka/Fukuoka/Nagoya *	Daily	18:55	Hanoi	03:05	07:00 +1	09:35
Yangon - Seoul/Pusan **	Daily	18:55	Hanoi	02:15	05:30 +1	08:05
Yangon - Taipei	Daily	12:10	Ho Chi Minh city	01:40	21:10	07:30
Yangon - Paris	Daily	18:55	Hanoi	01:55	06:30 +1	17:05
Yangon - London	Tue, Thu, Fri, Sun	18:55	Hanoi	03:35	07:15 +1	18:50
Yangon - Frankfurt	Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun	18:55	Hanoi	01:55	06:00 +1	16:35
Tokyo/Osaka/Fukuoka/Nagoya - Yangon *	Daily	10:00	Hanoi	02:05	18:00	10:30
Seoul/Pusan - Yangon **	Daily	10:35	Hanoi	03:05	18:00	09:55
Taipei - Yangon	Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat	13:20	Hanoi	01:05	18:00	06:10
Paris - Yangon	Wed, Fri, Sun	13:35	Ho Chi Minh city	01:45	11:10 +1	16:05
London - Yangon	Mon, Wed, Sat	11:00	Ho Chi Minh city	03:05	11:10 +1	17:40
Frankfurt - Yangon	Mon, Wed, Thu, Sat	13:55	Ho Chi Minh city	01:45	11:10 +1	15:45

Note:
* The schedule is for Yangon - Tokyo (Narita Airport) only. Other routes to Japan have similar flight schedules.
** The schedule is for Yangon - Seoul only. Yangon - Pusan route has a similar schedule.
Schedules are based on local time at destinations; Time "hh:mm + 1" indicates time in the next day of the trip

Direct ticketing agencies: Nice Fare, Sun Far, Columbus, Seven Diamond, Asiana, Ha Ha, Oway, Croton, Unique Asia, Vimyan, Nice Style, Air Tour Myanmar, HIS



www.vietnamairlines.com

Vietnam Airlines
REACH FURTHER

Myanmar football team to play friendlies in Oman, Qatar



Myanmar U-23 national football squad. PHOTO: MFF

IN preparation for the 2020 AFC U-23 Championship qualifiers and the 2019 SEA Games, the Myanmar U-23 football team will play friendly matches with the Oman U-23 and Qatar U-23 teams in the second week of January, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

The football federation has received invitations from the

football associations of the two countries.

Myanmar will play a friendly match with Oman at Muscat, the capital of Oman, on 7 January. The match between Myanmar and Qatar will take place at Doha, the capital of Qatar, on 10 January.

The Myanmar U-23 team comprises young footballers who

won the silver medal at the recent Viet Nam international invitation cup. U Kyi Lwin is serving as the head coach for the team.

Information on the live broadcast, venues, and times for the matches will be released soon on the official Facebook page of the football federation, said a source with the MFF. — Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Thai club Samut Prakan City F.C. signs Myanmar star Kyaw Ko Ko

THAI League 1 club Samut Prakan City F.C. on Wednesday signed a one-year contract with Myanmar striker Kyaw Ko Ko, who was on a one-year loan to Thai League 1 club Chiangrai United from his home club, Yangon United, according to a statement from the football club.

Samut Prakan City and Yangon United reached an initial agreement on the move earlier this month. Ahead of the 2019 Thai League 1 season, Samut Prakan City is recruiting football stars from local ASEAN clubs to boost its team. "We had our eye on Kyaw Ko Ko and have signed him with complete confidence in his abilities. He is widely seen as

a bright and upcoming ASEAN star-footballer. We believe he will help us achieve greater success," said Surapong Kongthep, the manager of the SPC football club.

Kyaw Ko Ko said he was excited about joining Samut Prakan City. "I hope to be in top form to help the team do its best work ever, with the support of fans," he said. Kyaw Ko Ko will be wearing the No.10 jersey for Samut Prakan City in the 2019 Thai League 1, said a source with the Thai football club.

Samut Prakan City competed as Pattaya United F.C. in the previous season of Thai League 1, where they finished the campaign in the 8th place.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)



Myanmar striker Kyaw Ko Ko. PHOTO: SAMUT PRAKAN CITY F.C.

New Zealand back Boult's six-wicket burst with ton opening stand

CHRISTCHURCH (New Zealand)—An unbeaten 117-run stand by Jeet Raval and Tom Latham tightened New Zealand's domination of the second Test against Sri Lanka on Thursday as they backed up Trent Boult's sublime six-wicket haul.

With Raval on 72 and Latham on 40, New Zealand were 191 runs ahead at tea on day two of the Christchurch Test with all second innings wickets intact.

Sri Lanka resumed the day sensing they held a slight advantage at 88 for four in reply to New Zealand's first innings 178.

But a magic spell of swing bowling by Boult swung the game firmly New Zealand's way with six wickets



New Zealand's Trent Boult (centre) is congratulated by teammates Tim Southee (left) and Henry Nicholls after competing his six-wicket burst. PHOTO: AFP

for four runs in 15 deliveries.

It saw Sri Lanka bowling against 74 runs in arrears and

Raval and Latham have steadily increased the lead, batting from lunch through to tea in the

first wicketless session of the Test.

Raval, in his 16th Test, was closing in on his career-best 88 set last year against South Africa while Latham was looking for his 15th half century.

The pair put on 36 in just over an hour before lunch then comfortably accrued runs when play resumed, but not without anxious moments.

Raval brought up his seventh half-century with an outside edge off Dushmantha Chameera that went wide of gully to the boundary.

Latham, on 32, top-edged Suranga Lakmal to fine leg where the ball slipped through the fingers of a diving Chameera.

Sri Lanka's first innings was over quickly in the morning when they resumed with six wickets in hand and lost them in Boult's blitz.

He had Roshen Silva (21) caught at third slip by Tim Southee who also produced a spectacular one-handed catch to assist with the removal of Niroshan Dickwella (four).

Dilruwan Perera, Suranga Lakmal, Dushmantha Chameera and Lahiru Kumara were all baffled by Boult's late swing and went leg before wicket without scoring.

The pitch has continued to offer assistance to the bowlers but Lakmal and Lahiru Kumara have not been able to generate the same movement as Boult. —AFP ■