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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. V, No. 362, 9th Waxing of Tagu 1380 ME

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Saturday, 13 April 2019

MyanmarSat-2 to be launched in June

VP U Myint Swe attends fifth coord meeting on establishing satellite system



Vice President U Myint Swe addresses the fifth coordination meeting on establishing satellite system in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

VICE President U Myint Swe, Chairman of the Leading committee on establishing satellite system attended the fifth coordination meeting of the committee at the Ministry of Transport and Communications in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

In his opening address the

Vice President said this was the fifth coordination meeting of the committee and the 13-member committee led by the Vice President was setup by the Office of the President on 25 January 2017 to implement seven tasks on establishing a satellite system.

In the past four coordination meetings 19 decisions had

been made of which 12 were implemented while 7 were under implementation. These 7 work processes under implementation required time and all need to cooperate toward setting up a deadline and completing them. Preparation to establishing a Space Agency and collection of Space Laws were the work processes

requiring time and preparation to putting up an EOS (Earth Observation Micro-Satellite) was a priority work.

To support the leading committee and to implement the works quickly a work committee on establishing satellite system and four sub-committees were formed. The four sub-committees

were Myanmar-owned satellite system technical sub-committee, Myanmar-owned satellite system legal affairs and rules sub-committee, Myanmar-owned satellite transponder leasing sub-committee and Myanmar-owned low-orbit satellite launching sub-committee.

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Have A Joyful Thingyan Festival & An Auspicious New Year, 1381 M.E.

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Batch No. 30 of Law Officers refresher course concludes



Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo delivers the speech at the accomplishment of the training. **PHOTO: MNA**

BATCH No. 30 of the Union Attorney-General's Office's Level 3 Law officers refresher course held their certificate giving ceremony at the UAG Office yesterday.

Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo delivered a speech where he told the trainees to use the skills they have learnt in this training to work effectively and

within the law regarding prosecution and court procedures.

The UAG said law officers must resolve the losses plaintiffs have suffered within the legal framework but must also emphasize their work on maintaining the legal rights of defendants.

He said law officers must continuously review laws and conduct themselves in line with

the ethics of law officers and staff rules while being free of corruption.

The permanent secretary, directors-general, deputy directors-general, directors, deputy directors, course teachers and students of the UAG Office attended the certificate giving ceremony. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

World Heritage Committee members explained progress of listing Bagan as UNESCO World Heritage site

A MEETING to discuss the progress for listing Bagan as a UNESCO World Heritage site was held at the National Museum in Yangon yesterday.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Kyi Min, Myanmar Ambassadors from 21 countries member to the World Heritage Committee, Ambassadors and officials from donor countries of Japan, China, South Korea, India, Germany, Italy, Columbia, Switzerland, Canada, France, and USA, and officials from UNESCO, JICA and World Bank affiliated organizations, Bagan in our Heart implementation group, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture.

Deputy Minister U Kyi Min delivered a speech at the meeting. He said the historical buildings and monuments of Bagan are a priceless heritage to our country and receives national-level preservation efforts. He said his ministry submitted the proposal to include Bagan as a UNESCO World Heritage site in January 2018 and international experts have already come and conducted field inspections.

He said cooperation to preserve Bagan's heritage and uplift the image of the nation was started as early as 2014 between the governments, local residents and organizations situated in Mandalay and Magway regions, CSOs, local and foreign experts, relevant

departments, and UNESCO.

The Deputy Minister said the 43rd meeting of the World Heritage Committee will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 30 June to 10 July 2019. He said he has high hopes for a decision regarding Bagan to be included in the world heritage list during that meeting. He wholeheartedly thanked UNESCO, the Italian government, the World Bank, and local and foreign experts for their contribution in compiling a comprehensive proposal for adding Bagan as a world heritage site.

Next, the Director-General of the Department of Archaeology and National Museum explained the tasks for including Bagan as a world heritage site, and the Director of the World Heritage Division explained Bagan's integrity and value, and future tasks for proposing inclusion as a world heritage.

This was followed by U Myo Swe Than, professional designer of the Bagan in our Heart implementation group, explaining the photo exhibition and tasks accomplished for Bagan. —Myat Sandi

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Deputy Minister U Kyi Min delivers the speech the meeting for listing Bagan as a UNESCO World Heritage site. **PHOTO: HLA MOE**

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Head of Service Organization confirmed

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the appointment of U Thet Oo, as Director-General of the Survey Department under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.

Sri Lankan FM pays homage to Uppatasanti Pagoda



Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mr. Tilak Marapana pays homage to Buddha image at Uppatasanti Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

SRI LANKAN Foreign Minister Mr. Tilak Marapana and party who were in Nay Pyi Taw visited the Uppatasanti Pagoda yesterday morning.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister and party were first explained about the history of the pagoda by the pagoda trustee board member U Kyi Lwin.

Next, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister paid homage to the jade Buddha image in the pa-

goda offering fruits, flowers and water.

Afterwards Sri Lankan Foreign Minister signed the visitors' book, went to the white elephant hall at the eastern staircase of the pagoda and fed the white elephant.

Later, in the afternoon the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister left Nay Pyi Taw for Bagan. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)

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“ Our country is still in poverty with necessities in every sector; which is why we need to carry on our struggle and work hard in all sectors. In the international arena, we are facing pressure, criticisms and misunderstandings. The challenges and difficulties our country and our people are facing today are many. Although every issue cannot be solved easily, we will have to make utmost efforts to solve these issues according to each priority sector.

(Excerpt from the speech by President U Win Myint at the ceremony to take oath of office at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 30th March 2018)

“ We face various kinds of internal and external challenges while we endeavor for political, economic and social development of our country. As we are aware of the importance of our international responsibility, we have adopted a path consistent with the needs and situation of our country respecting at the same time the views and opinions of the international community.

(Excerpt from the speech by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the 2nd Anniversary of NLD Government on 1st April 2018)

MyanmarSat-2 to be launched in June

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Implementation of establishing own satellite system was being conducted in three steps. The first step was to lease other country's satellite transponder and at the moment MyanmarSat-1 was being leased.

The second step was joint ownership and to implement this step, on 1 June 2018, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Department of Information Technology and Cyber Security signed an agreement with Intelsat Global Sales & Marketing Limited. The amount required for the agreement was US\$ 155.7 million of which 30 percent was paid in two installments in the 2018 six month budget. In fiscal year 2018-2019, 50 percent would be paid in four installments and in fiscal year 2019-2020 the remaining 20 percent would be paid in two installments.

The jointly owned MyanmarSat-2 would be launched in June 2019 and around mid-September 2019 it would be used with new technologies. Furthermore once the channels used on MyanmarSat-1 were transferred onto MyanmarSat-2, lease fee for MyanmarSat-1 would no longer need to be paid. In this satellite, Myanmar would use six 432 MHz C-band and six 432 MHz Ku-band totaling 864 MHz. Relevant ministries were required to use the leased satellite channels efficiently and cost effectively in education, health and other sectors.

The third step was to launch a Myanmar wholly owned satellite. This step would be conducted when satellite channel usage increased, technological experience had been obtained and when we could control the satellite on our own. “Launching a wholly owned satellite is expensive and, as a priority,

efforts will be made towards launching a less expensive Earth Observation Micro-Satellite” said the Vice President. Hokkaido University, Japan has proposed to launch such a satellite and the equipment and ma-

preparations were required, matters for cooperation, difficulties faced and suggestions were to be openly discussed, said the Vice President.

Next, work committee chairman Union Minister for

Launching a wholly owned satellite is expensive and, as a priority, efforts will be made towards launching a less expensive Earth Observation Micro-Satellite.

Vice President U Myint Swe

chineries to be installed on the satellite has already been designated it is learnt. Estimated cost need to be calculated and efforts must be made towards launching it as soon as possible.

Space Laws were to be collected and prepared to establish a Space Agency. Future work processes, sectors where

Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung explained about works conducted on establishing a satellite system.

Afterwards, Leading committee members Union Ministers Lt-Gen Sein Win, U Kyaw Tint Swe, U Ohn Win, Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, U Soe Win and U Kyaw Tin, Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Aung Thu, U Tha Oo and U Win Maw Tun, Deputy Attorney General U Win Myint, Permanent Secretaries and officials.— MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Meeting on arrangement for drug rehab center (Wethtikan) land held

A MEETING to discuss arrangement for 80 acres of drug rehabilitation center (Wethtikan) land released by Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC) to Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Department of Rehabilitation was held at the center's meeting hall yesterday.

At the meeting Pyithu Hluttaw Women and Children's Rights Committee chairman Dr. Daw Khin Soe Soe Kyi (Pyay constituency) and Department of Rehabilitation Director General U Win Naing Tun explained about arrangements made for the 80 acres of land issue.

Hluttaw representatives and officials from civil society organizations then discussed on sector wise cooperation arrangements.

Department of Rehabili-

tation Director General U Win Naing Tun said CCDAC released the center to the department on 1 February 2019.

At the moment, youths sent by their parents were being cared for in the center. When the center was transferred to the department there were 31 youths and at the moment there were 17 youths. Youths sent by their parents were cared for 8 weeks said U Win Naing Tun.

Arrangements were made to treat people who want to be off drug and in addition to the treatment, arrangements to rehabilitate and provide social protection was being made. Courses will be conducted with fund from the Union budget. Furthermore vocational training courses were also planned for their long term livelihood, added U Win Naing Tun.



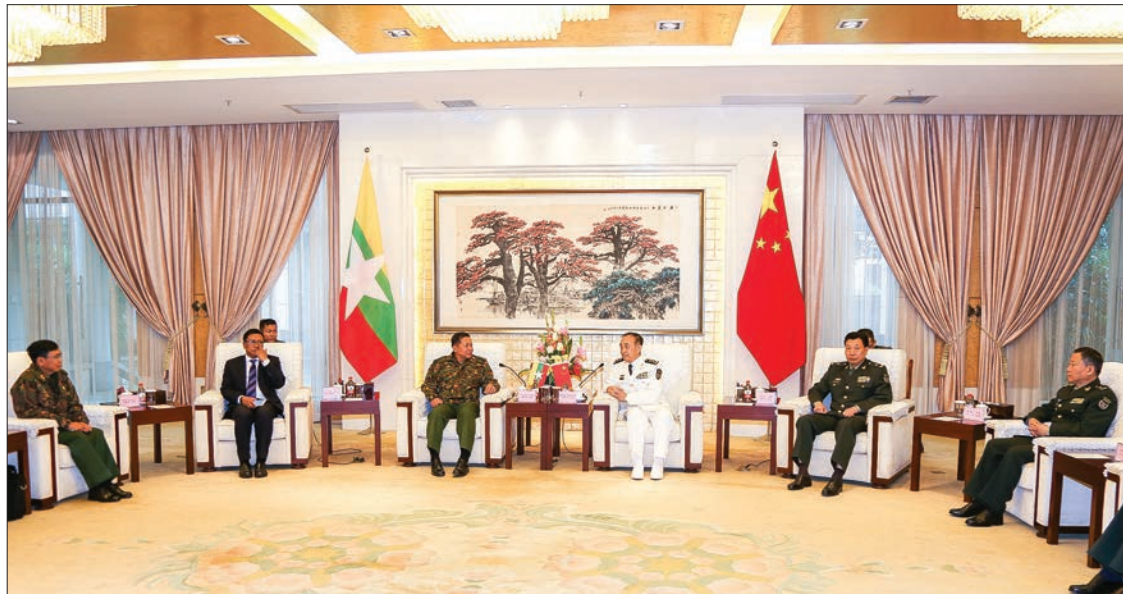
Department of Rehabilitation Director General U Win Naing Tun addresses the meeting to discuss arrangement for 80 acres of drug rehabilitation center (Wethtikan) land. PHOTO: MNA

The meeting was attended by Hluttaw representatives, Pyay Township admin-

istrator, district and township level departmental officials, civil society organizations in

Wethtikan area and ward administrators. — MNA (Translated by Zaw Min)

Senior General meets Commander of the Southern Theater Command, returns to Nay Pyi Taw



Defence Services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets with Commander of the Southern Theater Command Vice Admiral Yuan Yubai in China. **PHOTO: COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S OFFICE**

TATMADAW Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and party who were in China left Guiyang Airport

yesterday morning and reached Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport. The Senior General and party were welcomed by Depu-

ty Commander of the Southern Theater Command Maj-Gen Tao Guang and senior officers from the Chinese People's Liberation

Army. Next, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief met with Commander of the Southern Theater Command Vice Admiral Yuan Yubai and held discussions.

At the meeting matters relating to the status of increasing friendship between the two militaries, cooperation in protection of border areas, increasing cooperation between the two militaries in culture, sports, health and other sectors to increase friendship between the two militaries were discussed.

After the meeting the Myanmar Tatmadaw delegation led by Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief was hosted to a luncheon by Commander of the Southern Theater Command.

Later in the afternoon Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief and party left Guangzhou Baiyun In-

ternational Airport and arrived back in Nay Pyi Taw Airport where they were welcomed by Tatmadaw Deputy Commander-in-Chief and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win, Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, Chief of General Staff (Army, Navy and Air Force) General Mya Tun Oo, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Tin Aung San, Commander-in-Chief (Air Force) General Maung Maung Kyaw, high ranking officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Nay Pyi Taw Command commander, Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang and officials according to news released by the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Myanmar export and import status for fiscal year 2018-2019 from October to February

Myanmar's total export for fiscal year 2018-2019 February was US\$ 1,330.02 million of which \$ 751.51 million was through normal export while \$ 578.51 million was through border trade export. Total import for the same period was \$ 1,392.83 million of which \$ 1,221.58 million was through normal import while \$ 171.25 million was through border trade import. The total trade for fiscal year 2018-2019 February was \$ 2,722.85 million and there was a trade deficit of \$ 62.81 million.

Myanmar's total export for fiscal year 2018-2019 from October to February was \$ 6,590.03 million of which \$ 3,687.21 million was through normal export while \$ 2,902.82 million was through border trade export. Total import for the same period was \$ 7,420.68 million of which \$ 6,249.14 million was through normal import while \$ 1,171.54 million was through border trade import. The total trade for fiscal year 2018-2019 October to February was \$ 14,010.71 million and there was a trade deficit of \$ 830.65 million according to monthly reports of Central Statistical Organization. — MNA

16th traditional Rakhine sandalwood grinding event commences in Yangon

THE 16th traditional Rakhine sandalwood grinding event was held Rakhine Damayone (religious building) on Arzarni Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, yesterday.

The event is facilitated by the Ministry of Rakhine Ethnic Affairs of Yangon Region with participation from township teams of the Rakhine Literature and Culture Association (Yangon) and civil society organizations.

Firstly, U Zaw Aye Maung, the Regional Minister for Rakhine Ethnic Affairs, explained how Rakhine's version of the Thingyan festival was formed. This was followed by explanations of the scented wood grinding event by Rakhine Traditional Thingyan Implementation Committee Chair U Soe Win and Patron Daw Saw Khin Tint, who is also Chair of the Rakhine Literature and Culture Group (Yangon).

The event then commenced with participants from Rakhine Youth Association, Thazin Pyo Phyu Sittway Association, Lay Taung Yinkwin Association, Rakhine Women Association (Yangon), MraukU Township Association, Taungup Township Association, Thandar Myay Hantar Khamthu Association, Rakhine Alumni Association, Ra-

khine ethnic people in Yangon, and Mon Literature and Culture Association collectively grinding sandalwood. The sandalwood paste collected from the event will be used as scented water to sprinkle on the images of the Buddha in the same damayone on the eve of Thingyan.

Daw Saw Khin Tint spoke a bit about the event where she said: "Rakhine traditional Thingyan is celebrated in three stages.

The first stage is the sandalwood grinding event. The second stage is pouring scented water on the Buddha images. And the third is splashing water on each other in accord with Rakhine culture. But we will not be doing the third stage this year. It's because of the unfortunate events occurring in Rakhine State. We will use the scented water collected here to pour on the Buddha images on Eve of Thingyan Festival and

wish for the peace of Rakhine people and all citizens of the country. Our Union will only be peaceful if Rakhine State is peaceful too. This is why I wish to request all ethnic nationals of the Union to participate in our sandalwood grinding event and join us in praying for swift peace and stability in Rakhine State and the entire country." —Ko Ko Zaw

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Rakhine damsels participate in traditional sandalwood grinding festival in Yangon. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

Channel K kicks off in Grand Launch

THE Grand Launch of Channel K was held at Mya Kyun Thar Park yesterday.

The event was formally opened by Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, MRTV Director-General U Myint Htwe, Yangon City Development Committee Secretary Daw Hlaing Maw Oo, KMA Group of Companies Chairman U Khin Maung Aye, and other officials after they cut ceremonial ribbons.

The opening ceremony was started with a shadow theatre performance and video clip titled 'Shu maw thar yar Mya Kyun Thar' was played.

Dr. Pe Myint then delivered a speech. He said Ministry of Information is operating the state-run media and is also carrying out development of private media. The private media industry comprises of periodicals and TV channels. In the broadcast

media sector, only Shwe Than Lwin and Forever companies received permission in the time of the previous government administration.

The incumbent government took measures to grant permission to further private media and has given permission to five channels to be operated with the MRTV and DVB T-2 Multi-Channel Playout System.

He continued to say that as there were many business personnel to operate the TV channels but MRTV could provide only five new private TV channels, the MoI hired a company to select winners for the TV channels accordingly. He said there were 42 applicants and the selection committee chose five out of them after careful screening processes. The five TV channels are currently running, he said.

The Union Minister said Channel K tested its broadcasts and is now broadcasting full programmes. He expressed his delight for Channel K's progress.



Union Information Minister Dr. Pe Myint delivers a speech at the Grand Launch of Channel K. PHOTO: MNA

With emergence of TV channels, there would be competitions in the industry, he said, adding that some would enjoy success while some face challenges.

However, the competition conventionally drives improvement and development of quality TV programmes for the people in the future, he said.

Next, U Phyo Min Thein and U Khin Maung Aye delivered congratulatory speeches on Channel

K's launch.

The entertainment programme of the grand launch included a special presentation of Channel K's theme song by the brand ambassadors, a Thingyan performance by Myo Shwe Man Thar Lay Poe Chit theatre troupe, a performance on the changing film landscape by music bands and artistes, another Thingyan performance by U Myo Min theatre troupe, song perfor-

mances by Ni Ni Khin Zaw, Soe Pyae Thazin, Phyu Phyu Kyaw Thein and Sai Sai Kham Leng, and concluded with a rendition of 'Shwe Pyi Thingyan' by Yan Aung.

The Grand Launch event was attended by Hluttaw MPs, government departmental officials, artistes, invited guests, and media personnel. —Ye Kaung Nyunt, Zaw Gyi

(Translated by GNLM)

Most Sagaing travelers visiting Bat Caves, Forest Museum: official



Travelers visiting the Forest Museum in Zin Forest Reserve, Kanbalu Township. PHOTO: WIN OO (ZAYYARDINE)

MOST travelers visiting Sagaing region are heading to the Bat Caves and the Forest Museum in the Zin Forest Reserve, Kanbalu Township, according to an official with the bat caves and environmental awareness and resort center.

The Forest Museum has seven animals preserved through taxidermy, 10 types of animal parts and bones, photos

of animals inhabiting the forests in the region, and more than 50 species of wild animals.

"Among the many significant places of interest in the region, most of the travelers are frequenting the bat caves on their return trip from the Zalon Mountain in Bamauk Township. Thereafter, they are visiting the Forest Museum. Around 400 to 700 travelers visited the

Forest Museum per month in 2019," said the official with the bat caves and environmental awareness and resort center.

The center is located at Milepost 65 on the Shwebo-Myitkyina road, 5 miles and 2 furlongs far east of Zin village in Kanbalu Township.—Win Oo (Zayyardine)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Myanmar, Bangladesh conduct coordinated riverine patrol

MYANMAR Border Police personnel led by acting Police Major Kyaw Win from Maungtau Township, Area 5, No. 2 Border Police Company on board two vessels including Shark Fast Attack Boat 002 of vessel force (Maungtau) and a Border Guards Bangladesh personnel led by Naib Subedar MD. Montu Mia of Nhilla BOP camp on board two motor launches con-

ducted a coordinated riverine patrol along the Naf River from the mouth of Sabeiyn creek at nautical mile 11 to the mouth of Pyuma creek at nautical mile 15 on the morning of 11 April.

After the coordinated patrol, the two parties had a discussion on board Shark Fast Attack Boat, according to news provided by Myanmar Police Force. — MNA



Border guard personnel of Myanmar and Bangladesh coordinate a naval patrol along the Naf River. PHOTO: MPF

Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Essential for sustainable development

By Dr Aung Tun

APRIL 7 of each year marks the celebration of World Health Day. In 1948, the first World Health Assembly decided to celebrate 7 April of each year, with effect from 1950, as the World Health Day. The celebration is marked by activities which extend beyond the day itself and serves as an opportunity to focus worldwide attention on these important aspects of global health. Each year World Health Organization selects a theme highlighting a particular priority area of public health. The theme of World Health Day 2019 is: Universal Health Coverage: Everyone, Everywhere.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Essential for sustainable development

Universal health coverage (UHC) may be defined as all people and communities have access to quality health services where and when they need them, without suffering financial hardship. It includes the full spectrum of services needed throughout life—from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care—and is best based on a strong primary healthcare system.

Primary health care covers the majority of our health needs throughout our life including services such as screening for health problems, vaccines, information on how to prevent disease, family planning, treatment for long and short-term conditions, coordination with other levels of care, and rehabilitation. It is about caring for people and helping them improve their health or maintain their well-being, rather than just treating a single disease or condition. Primary health Care is the most efficient and cost effective way to achieve universal health coverage around the world.

Achieving UHC is one of the key targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, and it is the focus of World health day in 2019. All UN member states have accepted to try to achieve UHC by 2030, as part of Sustainable Development Goals. Some countries have already made significant progress towards UHC.



The State Counsellor attends the launch of the NHP 2017-2021 on 31-3-2017 at MICC2, Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MOHS

But half the world's population still do not have full coverage of essential health services. About 100 million people are still being pushed into extreme poverty (defined as living on 1.90 USD or less a day) because they have to pay for health care. Over 800 million people (almost 12% of the world's population) spent at least 10% of their household budgets to pay for health care.

In Myanmar, large health coverage gaps remain, in particular for the poor and marginal-

inputs (e.g. human resources, physical infrastructure, essential medicines and supplies, financial resources) and to weaknesses in key functions such as supportive supervision, referral, supply chain, health management information system, and public financial management. Limited oversight, leadership and accountability further exacerbate these challenges.

Myanmar is undergoing rapid demographic, health and social transition. The country's

ening is the principle pre-requisite for UHC, which is not merely about health financing. Achieving UHC critically hinges on ensuring the supply of sufficient quantity and quality of the needed services—from the public and the private providers of health care. To achieve the target goals of strengthening the healthy system towards the provision of equitable universal coverage it is vital to focus on ways to improving health outcomes, enhancing the financial protection and ensuring the consumer protection

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar prioritizes the needs of the people and the voices of the people. The government recognizes the importance of healthy individuals and populations for sustainable development. The Government of Myanmar is committed to moving towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030. The Mission and Goals of Myanmar Universal Health Coverage (UHC) are: to strengthen the health systems towards the provision of equitable universal coverage through (1) improving health outcomes; (2) Enhancing financial protection, and (3) Ensuring consumer satisfaction. Realizing the current critical challenges and to achieve the aspirational goals, nine strategic areas have been identified.

This may be an ambitious goal, but many acknowledge the importance of the 'journey' as a mean to achieving people-

centered development. UHC is also one of the main targets for the health-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, and Myanmar has subscribed to reaching the SDGs by 2030. With critical momentum at the global, regional and national levels, the Ministry of Health and Sports has a unique opportunity further to improve the lives of the people by building a responsive and efficient health system.

National Health Plan (2017-2021): Making progress towards UHC in Myanmar

Efforts to move towards UHC will be guided by three successive National Health Plans (NHPs), starting with the NHP (2017-21). In collaboration with key stakeholders including the government, ethnic nationalities, civil society, private sectors, and development partners, the Ministry of Health and Sports has formulated the National Health Plan (2017-2021) with an overall aim of achieving the UHC by 2030. The NHP (2017-2021) was launched in March 2017 at MICC II in Nay Pyi Taw. The opening speech was delivered by the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. This event was attended by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Members of Parliament, Peace Commission Chair, Union Ministers, Ambassadors, Development Partners, Ethnic Health Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and Private Sector.

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In Myanmar, large health coverage gaps remain, in particular for the poor and marginalized segments of the population.

ized segments of the population. The health status of the Myanmar population is still poor and does not compare favorably with other countries in the region. Life expectancy at birth, for example, is 64.7 years in Myanmar, the lowest among ASEAN countries. Moreover, hidden behind the national averages are wide geographic, ethnic and socioeconomic disparities.

Strengthening strong health systems for UHC in Myanmar

The Myanmar health system currently faces many challenges. These relate to the availability and distribution of

70% of the population lives in rural areas and out of pocket health expenditure is relatively high though it has started declining due to the government's consistently increasing health expenditure in recent years. There is available evidence that poor accessibility to health care services is associated with locations, socioeconomic status and with education level. There is triple burden of communicable diseases, an unfinished agenda for women's and children's health, and a rise in conditions related to injury and diseases of aging.

Health System strength-

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TRISTAR TYRE

INDOOR SKYDIVING

Tackling negative emotions leads us away from injustice

THE Myanmar traditional New Year day falls in mid-April. Thingyan means transitioning from the old to the New Year, and this is the time we say goodbye to the old year and welcome the new.

Since the days of yore, Myanmar people have celebrated the annual festival by pouring water on each other, which signifies the washing away of past impurities and beginning the New Year free from stains.

This is also the time when members of communities, individually and collectively, reflect and communicate for the sake of harmony and peaceful coexistence.

The splashing of water traditionally symbolizes purifying not only impurities, but also the shortcomings of the past year, and moving forward with a clean mind in the New Year.

During the four-day Thingyan festival period, some people spend their holidays at meditation centres to purify their minds, some worship at pagodas and spend time in monasteries observing the Eight Precepts, some release caged birds and fishes, and some perform other meritorious deeds.

According to a legend for children, Sakya, the king of gods, descends from his heavenly abode during the festival to wander in the human world. He records the names of those who perform meritorious deeds and do not curse or harm others in a book bound in gold. The names of those who do not behave properly are noted in a dog leather book.

The message from the legend is important not only for children, but also for people from all communities. This message is important for us as individuals and as a community, and encourages us not to

get angry or make others angry during the Thingyan festival. It is especially important for us to avoid certain things during the Thingyan period, and we must refrain from negative emotions such as anxiety and anger.

At present, we are on the path towards establishing a Democratic Federal Republic.

This is a rare opportunity for us and we have reached this stage with great difficulty through years of struggle and toil.

We need to prevent any deed which can harm the rule of law and communal peace in any region of our country. This is because it can result in our deviating from the road to democratic transition.

At this time of the year, we all must take care of our negative emotions before they lead to perceptions of injustice, grievance, bitterness, hatred, or even, violence.

May the people have peace and be free from danger.

We need to prevent any deed which can harm the rule of law and communal peace in any region of our country. This is because it can result in our deviating from the road to democratic transition.

Thingyan in Myanmar history and literature

By Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja, Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

SANSKRIT word Songaran (သတ်ခရန်) has been adopted into Myanmar word (သတ်ခရန်) (Thingyan) which means change (1) from cold season to warm season ; (2) change from old to new lease of life of nature and environment; (3) change of the sun from the Tropic of Capricorn to the Tropic of Cancer ; (4) change of the charge of holding the head of Athi Brahma Deva from one devi to another devi.

Hindu Brahmani culture has an influence on Myanmar long before the arrival of Buddhism to it. It was the festival of the victory of Saka Deve (Thunder god) who cut off the head of Brahma Deva because he won in their contest for the solution of a mathematical problem. Blood gushed out of the Athi Brahma Deva's head were smeared on his body as a token of this resounding victory. So Hindu Brahmans sprinkle and splash each other's body with red coloured water to present. Athi Brahma's blood. The head of Athi Brahma Deva was put in the charge of seven devis of the week, Sunday to Saturday, who each by turn had to hold the Athi Brahma Deva's head because it was dangerous to throw it on the earth or into the ocean as earth will burn to or ocean will dry up. Hence Songaran (oMuFef) means change of duty.

When Buddhism arrived in Myanmar, Myanmar Buddhist celebrate Sogaran (သတ်ခရန်) in Buddhist way. Only clean and cool pure water is used to clean and cleanse the environment one's body and soul. So Myanmar Thingyan Festival is featured with the characteristics of nature, environment and physical and spiritual aspects of human beings. The atar o (twmtdk;) an earthen pot with clear, cool and scented water and a bouquet of 7 springs of flora, representing seven days of the weak is placed at the entrance of the house to usher in the Thingyan Festival.

Legend has it that at this time Sakka deva (Thunder god) descends to earth to inspect if human beings are behaving good. He is accompanied by two assistant devas-Martali deva the registra and Vithugyone, the driver of the vehicle of Saka Deva. Usually inspection lasts one day. But some years two days. After finishing the inspection duty, Saka Deva and his assistant devas ascend to their deva kingdom. On the Dooms day, the two inspection record books were examined. Good human being recorded in the gold record are awarded by sending them to deva kingdoms, but bad human beings recorded in the do-skin record book were sent down the hells.

Myanmar Kings celebrated Thingyan festival at the court. Myanmar chronicle has the full account of Thingyan festival celebrated by King Narathihapate (1254-87A.D). "A long enclosed corridor was constructed between



Thingyan Festival Pagan Kingdom.

the palace of Bagan and the jetty of Loka Nanda on the Ayeyawady River. The King his queens and all concubines were freely and happily sprinkled splashed scented fresh water of the river.

In the Loka Byuha Kyan (In-yone Sardan) compiled by Minister Thiri UZana in which all court festivals and ceremonies were recorded in detail.

Good will, loving kindness (metta) and cheerful heart vibrate the spirit of Thingyan. Regardless of race, religion and creed, friends or strangers all can participate in this Thingyan festival,

enjoy Thingyan food, snack or soft drink, put on face body Thingyan Thanakha oeyfcg, , natural makeup from Thanakha bark.

Thingyan has been depicted, presented and re-enacted in Myanmar visual and performing arts and Myanmar Visual Arts ပန်းဆယ်ဖို့. Thingyan festival is depicted in mural paintings and you can find the scenes of Thingyan festivals. In Myanmar literature Thingyan festival has always been a favorite celebration. Hpho Thudaw U Min, the well-known writer of Late Konbaung Period of Myanmar literature history, composed Tagu

Thingyan as follows:

တန်ခူး
တောင်ရွက်ညှာ ခါလင်လို့
တောသစ်တဲ့ နံကြိုင်
သုတ်မြူးလေဆောင်က
ပန်းကန်တော်ဝတ်မှုန်ကျင်း
သင်းဖျံလို့လှိုင်
ကြယ်နှစ်မြိုင်သွယ်ဆိုင်ပင်
စိကြယ်နှင့်၊ ငွေလသော်တာတို့
ယုန်ချတောင်တော်စွန်းမှာ
ထွန်းထိန်လို့လင်း

Tagu (April)

The New Year in its graciousness

With fragrance every where
As touched the arid nakedness
Where leafless trees are bare
The gentle passage of the breeze
Has scattered

Blooms of Gantgaw trees
The silver moon is riding high
As Yugan mountain in the sky
And stars out-shining
stars that be
Engaged in radiant rivalry
(Theophelus in a Burmese
wonderland)

It would form volumes if re-enactments of Thingyan festivals in performing arts of the past were collected.

The writer wishes to give the readers only a summary of re-enacting in performing arts including films of his time. Still in vogue are the Thingyan songs of Myo Ma Nyein of high repute.

Among them Mya Nanda song is the top. He was inspired by the old Myanmar poem about Mandalay hill and Mandalay city.

အသက်ကလေးရယ်တဲ့ ရှည်စေလို့
မြန်နွာ ရေညှိသန့်တဲ့
ဖန်တောင်ရိပ်ခို
ခေါင်းလောင်းသံ တဖျံလို့
ရွှေတို့ ညှိတော်ပိုးနီတယ်၊
ဘေးရန်ကင်းရှင်း။

For the longevity of your life
Take shelter in the shade of
Mandalay Hill
Which is caressed by fresh water
of Mya Nanda lake.

Pleasant bells are ringing softly
And the booming of clock drum
drive away all evils and enemies
"Mya Nanda" his Thingyan song

မြန်နွာရေညှိရစ်ခါသန့်တဲ့
ရွှေခန်းတောင် ရိပ်ခိုတယ်၊ ခိုတယ်၊
ကိုလူပျိုရယ် မြလေးလေး နန္ဒာ နန္ဒာ
ရေညှိညှိရစ်ခါသန့်တဲ့
ရွှေခန်းတောင်ရိပ် ခိုတယ်၊ ခိုတယ်၊
ကိုလူပျိုရယ် ဖျော်ခင်းလေးသာပါ
ဘိတယ်၊
အတိတ်ကောင်းယူမယ့်
သင်္ကြန်ခါတော်ဝယ်။

Chorus: Young lads taking
shelter
In the cool shade of Mandalay
Hill
Encircled by the cool fresh water
of Lake Mya Nanda nearly
You'll be happy and lucky
Good fortune awaits you in New
Year

In the films of Myanmar, many hits were made by film actors and actresses such as Khin Than Nu, Win U, May Than Nu and Zin Waing. In the film "Thangyan Moe" actor Zin Waing, and actresses Khin Than Nu and May Than Nu played leading roles. In the film "Maung do Chery Myey" actor Win U and actress Khin Than Nu were leading roles.

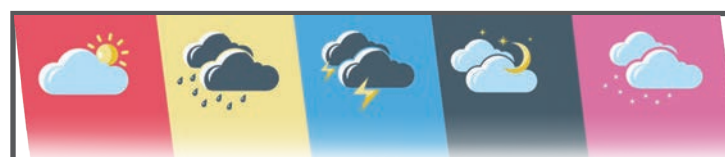
Thingyan Festival is the background of Myanmar hit films.

Today Thingyan Festival begins weeks before its date. Due to long vacation in Summer Myanmar people today celebrate Thingyan Festival in advance. "Walking Thingyans". Akyo Thingyans Harbinger Thingyans are held soon after matriculation Exams are over. This year floating Thingyan festival is held on Inlay Lake.

Myanmar people never miss Thingyan whether at home or abroad. Myanmar embassies hold Thingyan festivals participated by Myanmar and foreigners. The write himself performed dance and sang songs in Thingyan festivals of Myanmar Embassy, 19A, Charles Street, London in 1957-60. Hail Maha Thingyan of April 2019!



Mandalay's Legendary Myoma Amateur Music Association troupe perform during Thingyan Festival.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 12th April, 2019)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 13th April, 2019: Rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Kayah, Kayin and Mon states and partly cloudy 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 rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing and Tanintharyi regions, Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13th April, 2019: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13th April, 2019: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13th April, 2019: Partly cloudy.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Weather will be partly cloudy in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and Yangon regions.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special

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

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

DEPUTY CHIEF EDITORAye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT**

Kyaw Myaing

SENIOR TRANSLATORSZaw Min
Zaw Htet Oo
Win Ko Ko Aung**INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR**Ye Htut Tin,
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**LOCAL NEWS EDITORS**Tun Tun Naing (Editor),
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor),
nwenwe9131@gmail.com**TRANSLATORS**Khaing Thanda Lwin,
Hay Mar Tin Win,
Ei Myat Mon
Kyaw Zin Lin
Kyaw Zin Tun**REPORTER**Nyein Nyein Ei,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**PHOTOGRAPHER**

Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar

COMPUTER TEAMTun Zaw, Thein Ngwe,
Zaw Zaw Aung, Ye Naing Soe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Thein Htwe**EDITORIAL SECTION**(+95) (01) 8604529,
Fax - (+95) (01) 8604305**CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION**San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114**ADVERTISING & MARKETING**(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.comPrinted and published at the **Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory** at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the **Global New Light of Myanmar Daily** under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.glnldaily@gmail.com
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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

7-Mile beach in PyinOoLwin crowded with visitors

THE 7 Mile Resort, located on the Dokhtawady River at the Lonkaungpin village-tract in PyinOoLwin Township of Mandalay Region, is attracting crowds of visitors this summer.

The 7-Mile beach derives its name from the farm that was originally situated at the location near the 7/4 mile post. The beach is only 20 miles, or about an hour's drive, from Mandalay and can be reached by car or motorbike.

The 7-Mile resort is quite popular among travelers making short trips to central Myanmar, especially in the summer. The resort offers several recreational and other activities to visitors.

As a tourist attraction in Mandalay Region, which enjoys a prominent place in Myanmar's tourism sector, the 7-Mile beach

Families play on the beach at the 7-Mile Resort near PyonOoLwin. **PHOTO: MG THEIN (IPRD)**

can help create jobs for locals, improve their livelihood, and earn revenue for the region.

With its low cost facilities and scenic beauty, the 7-Mile beach is a draw for visitors

headed to Mandalay Region.—
Mg Thein (IPRD)

(Translated by La Wonn)

Ayeyawady dolphin count conducted between Mandalay and Kyaukmyaung towns

A dolphin spotted by surveyors in the conservation area. **PHOTO: WCS MYANMAR**

A COUNT of Ayeyawady dolphins was conducted in the conservation area between Mandalay and

Kyaukmyaung towns this month, according to an official with the Fisheries Department.

"During the survey, the number of Ayeyawady dolphins in the Ayeyawady dolphins' protection zone was recorded. Meanwhile, the authorities patrolled the zone to check for electric-shock fishing and took action against it," he added. While collecting data on the Ayeyawady dolphin population within its protection zone between Mandalay-Mingun and Kyaukmyaung towns, 20 dolphins were spotted in two days (2 and 3 April), and 17 dolphins were recorded on 4 April.

In Wetlet Township, 10 dolphins were found in Indaung Village on 2 April, and 3 in Kyuntawgyi Village, and 7 in Natmawoo

Village on 3 April. On 4 April, 10 dolphins were spotted in Indaung Village and 7 dolphins in Ywartanshay Village of Madaya township.

The dolphin survey was conducted by a team of four officials from the Fisheries Department, a member from the Wildlife Conservation Society, and five officials from the Marine Police Force. The authorities arrested fishermen for carrying out electric-shock fishing near Ngapyinin village, Singu Township, and handed them over to the township's Fisheries Department. — Myo Win Tun (Monywa)
(Translated by La Wonn)

Tourist arrivals via Tachilek border reach almost 22,900 in one week

TACHILEK, a Myanmar-Thailand border, hosted nearly

22,900 international visitors during a week between 5 and

11 April, according to the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Tachilek branch office).

The figures included about 21,200 Thai people plus 343 visitors from third world countries paid one-day trip within Tachilek border town, while over 230 foreign travelers joined Mongphyat-Kengtung trip.

According to an official data, there were more than one million foreigners visiting the country via the Tachilek border from 1 April, 2018, through 4 April, 2019. They visited the well-known destinations across Tachilek, including Lwemwe area, Pintauk Waterfall, Talaw

market, Bayintnaung statue, Wankaung market, Koemyosin spirit house, the replica of Shwedagon Pagoda, Kohtet Waterfall, Padaung Village, Chinese temples and Buddhist monasteries.

The development of border tourism tops the government's list of priorities. This kind of service business is believed to help the country raise their earnings obtained from natural environment and a wide variety of tangible and intangible cultural heritages.—GNLM

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

Tuk-tuk takes tourists to Tachilek. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

955.33 tons of green gram from Khayan, Thongwa exported in 22 days

WITH the aim of getting a good price, growers from villages in Khayan and Thongwa townships adopted a collective sales scheme for green grams cultivated through good agricultural practices. The growers said they sold 955.33 tons of green grams in 22 days — from 7 to 28 February — for export.

Furthermore, the growers said they are currently sending the harvested green grams to a warehouse in Khayan Township.

The Regional Farmers Development Association aimed to cultivate green grams using GAP, and bring about a stable market for green grams through group sales. Officials from the townships' Agriculture Departments discussed agricultural techniques with growers. Myint Myat Taw Win Company exported the green grams to foreign markets.

“Previously, green grams were cultivated the wrong way, including the misuse of pesticides, and growers lacked knowledge about their cultivation. But now, growers are earning more profits and are becoming satisfied with the sales as they are getting good rates,” according to the Regional Farmers Development Association.

Green gram grown in Myanmar has a market in China and other countries, unlike mung bean, which is solely dependent on demand from the Indian market. On 29 March, India, the main buyer of Myanmar pulses, announced an import quota of 150,000 tons each for mung bean and green grams, and 200,000 tons for pigeon peas for its financial year starting 1 April, according to the pulses market. — GNLM

(Translated by La Wonn)



PHOTO: KO KYAW (THONGWA)

Gold price rebounds within a week

THE price of pure gold in the domestic market has bounced back to above K1,055,000 per tical (0.578 ounces) over the past few days, after plunging to K1,041,000 in the first week of April, according to traders.

The prevailing price of gold in the local market is around K1,055,000, up by about K1,500 compared with last week's price.

The price of gold in the domestic market is related to prices in the global gold market. With global gold prices witnessing an upward trend in recent days, local prices are also on the rise.

“Gold price in the domestic market is likely to remain on the higher side. The market is seeing regular trading,” said gold traders.

The local gold price touched the highest level of above K1,080,000 in mid-February, tracking the upswing in global gold prices.

The price of gold in the domestic market has remained above K900,000 per tical since 21 July, 2017. With global gold prices on the rise, the domestic gold price touched a high of K1,047,700 on 20 September last year. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Expired aquafeed being sold in the market: MFF

By Aye Yamone

IMPORTED encapsulated aquaculture feed is being distributed in the market even after the expiry date, according to the Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

“Some imported feedstuff being sold in the domestic market has been found to be expired. We cannot say for sure that the imported products expired before being shipped. Otherwise, they may be expiring as they are not being sold. But, expired feedstuff is being distributed in the market,” said U Win Kyaing,

General Secretary, MFF.

There is a possibility that the feed has expired as the sales are not good, although Myanmar fish and shrimp breeding businesses are trying to use encapsulated feed, he said.

Expired food or drugs are destroyed in foreign countries for the safety of humans and animals, he added.

“Another possibility is that there might be a production surplus in highly competitive foreign markets and expired products are piling up. This being so, our

country may be the target for expired food as our food safety mechanism is still weak,” said U Win Kyaing.

“Expired aquaculture feedstuff may lack nutrients and include fungi, and at times, it may lead to food poisoning. That can harm the growth of fish and shrimp, and affect the digestion system and cause other side effects,” he said.

Myanmar primarily imports aquatic feedstuff from Thailand and Viet Nam.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Imports surpass exports in Myanmar's trade with Singapore in Oct-Feb

MYANMAR'S imports outperformed exports in bilateral trade with Singapore in the first five months of the current fiscal year, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

Singapore is Myanmar's second-largest trading partner in the region, after Thailand. For the period between October, 2018 and February, 2019, Myanmar's trade with Singapore totalled US\$1.47 billion, with exports to Singapore valued at just \$101 million and imports pegged at

\$1.36 billion.

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

Myanmar's bilateral trade with Singapore was registered at \$1.9 billion in the last mini-budget, \$3.83 billion in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, and \$2.96 billion in the 2016-2017FY.

Thirteen Singapore-listed enterprises brought in investments of over \$1 billion in the October-February period, according to data released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

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

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Essential for sustainable development

FROM PAGE-6

The NHP (2017-2021) presents a unique opportunity that outlines a new path for the health system and it will help the country move towards Universal Health Coverage in an equitable, effective, and efficient manner. The NHP 2017-2021 aims to strengthen the country's health system and pave the way towards UHC, choosing a path that is explicitly pro-poor. The main goal of the NHP (2017-2021) is to extend access to a Basic Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) to the entire population by 2020-2021 while increasing financial protection.

The NHP also aims to promote further alignment at several levels:

- Among programs (e.g. by encouraging more integrated training, joint supportive supervision, better aligned referral mechanisms, a more streamlined health information system)
- Among development partners (DPs), through stronger oversight and coordination
- Among the different types of providers, through the engagement of Ethnic Health Organizations (EHOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and private-for-profit providers
- Among implementing agencies by ensuring that projects and initiatives contrib-

ute to the achievement of the NHP goals.

Extending the Basic EPHS to the entire population needs substantial investments by MoHS in supply-side readiness at Township level and below and in strengthening the health system at all levels. It also requires active engagement of health providers outside the public sector, including private-for-profit GP clinics, EHOs, NGOs and CSOs. Services and interventions need to meet the same minimum standards of care, irrespective of who provides them.

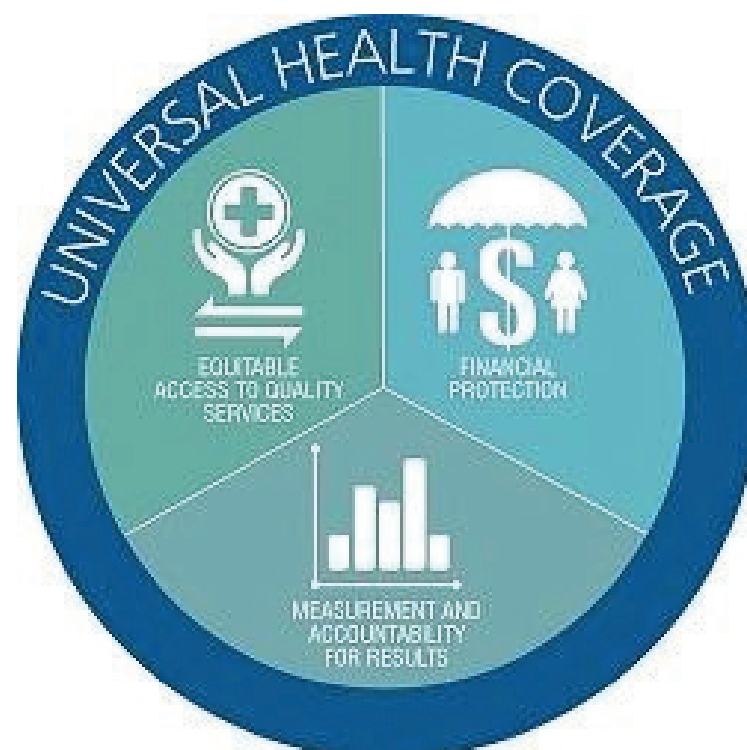
The National Health Plan (2017-2021) has set the overall approach for the next five years and what can and should be done, with the bigger goal of achieving Universal Coverage by 2030. The plan also aims to deliver a basic Essential Health package by 2020, and also build foundations for the next 15 years, bringing Myanmar closer to Universal Health Coverage.

UHC and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs): a mutually reinforcing agenda

Non-Communicable diseases are collectively responsible for almost 70% of all death world wide. In Myanmar, according to Hospital Inpatient Statistics in 2013, NCDs accounted for more than half of all morbidity and mortality. With regards to the leading causes of NCDs mortality, Cardiovascular Disease (CVD), Diabetes Mellitus (DM), Cancer and Chronic respiratory diseases represented the majority of NCD deaths.

The updated policy brief of NCD Alliance's 2014 brief UHC and NCDs: a mutually reinforcing agenda reflects the development in both the NCD response and UHC agenda since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. It makes the case for including NCDs in national UHC benefit packages in order to fully achieve the 2030 Agenda target of healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages.

The National Strategic Plan for Prevention and Control of NCDs in Myanmar (2017-2021) was developed by the Ministry of Health and Sports in consultation with all other relevant stakeholders with the aim of "Everyone in Myanmar lives a healthy and productive life- free of avoidable disability and premature death due to NCDs." Ministry of Health and Sports in Myanmar has consistently focused on addressing NCDs. NCDs have been recognized as public health priority in NHP (2011-2016) as well as in new NHP (2017-2021). NCD National



Policy and plan of actions were developed in 2012. A dedicated unit for NCD was established under Department of Public Health since early 2015 so as to accelerate NCD prevention and control activities in country with public

consequences of paying for health services out of their own pockets reduces the risk that people will be pushed into poverty because unexpected illness requires them to use up their life savings, sell assets, or borrow – destroying their futures and often those of their children. Myanmar aspires to achieve as part of its vision 2030 for a healthier and productive population. However, for the aspiration to be fulfilled there is much work that needs to be done, both in terms of Health System Strengthening (HSS) and in terms of changing peoples' behaviors and other social determinants of Health.

Universal coverage requires the involvement of all sectors of society. Myanmar should ensure that UHC meets the needs and aspiration of Myanmar people, with their participation.

Package of Essential NCD interventions (PEN) has been implemented in 90 townships and it is planned to cover the whole country by the end of 2019.

health approach reaching up to grass root level.

Package of Essential NCD interventions (PEN) has been implemented in 90 townships and it is planned to cover the whole country by the end of 2019. These interventions include screening of Hypertension, Diabetes, CVD and treatment of uncomplicated cases, early detection and referral of oral, breast and cervical cancers by BHS and mainly target to people especially living in rural areas.

More Intense Efforts are needed

UHC enables everyone to access the services that address the most significant causes of disease and death, and ensures that the quality of those services is good enough to improve the health of the people who receive them. Protecting people from the financial

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PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IS...





Decades of commercial mountaineering have turned Mount Everest into the world's highest rubbish dump. **PHOTO: AFP**

Peak break: China to add 'eco' toilet on Mount Everest

BELJING (China) — Climbers with pressing needs on Mount Everest will soon find an "eco-friendly" toilet at a Chinese campsite 7,028 meters (23,058 feet) above sea level in an ongoing campaign to deal with the peak's waste problem.

Decades of commercial mountaineering have turned Mount Everest into the world's highest rubbish dump as an increasing number of big-spending mountaineers pay little attention to the ugly footprint they leave behind.

Fluorescent tents, discarded climbing equipment, empty gas canisters and even human excrement pollute the well-trodden route to the summit of the 8,848-metre peak.

During the climbing season this spring, a Chinese expedition company will add what state media dubbed an "eco-friendly" loo at the higher campsite on the northern slope in Tibet.

"The toilet makes it easy to collect human waste produced by the climbers as there is a barrel with rubbish bags underneath the toilet," Xinhua quoted Pema Tinley, deputy secretary general of the Tibet Mountaineering Association, as saying.

The waste will be collected and brought down the mountain.

Similar facilities have been installed at lower camps, including at the 5,200-meter north base camp, in previous years, according to Xinhua.

The waste from the base camp is taken away daily and is provided to local farmers to use as fertiliser, the news agency reported in February, citing observations by its reporter and a member of the mountaineering management team.

The temporary toilets will be removed at the end of the climbing season.

Governments on both sides of the mountain have been battling the human waste and trash left by an increasing number of climbers.

In February, China banned non-climbers from accessing its Everest base camp in Tibet in an attempt to clean up its side of the mountain.

Meanwhile, engineers in Nepal are considering installing a biogas plant near the more popular south base camp that would turn climber poo into a useful fertiliser.

Currently raw sewage from the camp is carried to the next village — a one-hour walk — and dumped into trenches, where it risks contaminating water sources down in the valley.—AFP ■

Clues emerge in 'missing' ocean plastics conundrum

VIENNA (Austria) — It's a puzzle that has perplexed scientists for years: humanity dumps millions of tonnes of plastics into the world's oceans annually, yet only a tiny fraction remains visible on the surface.

Now an international team of researchers believe they may be closer to determining where Earth's "missing plastics" end up, using an unprecedented global effort to track and draw down one of the most polluting materials ever invented.

As images of plastic-clogged beaches and swirling gyres of detritus bobbing on the high seas are prompting governments and cities to curb their throwaway culture, a growing body of evidence suggests a deeper problem of plastic permeating all ocean depths.

Of the between 4-12 million tonnes that enter the oceans each year, just 250 thousand tonnes are thought to stay at the surface. Overall, more than 99 per cent of plastics dumped at sea over several decades are currently unaccounted for. As plastics degrade through erosion, UV light and microbial decay, their density changes, putting them at the mercy of ocean currents — and, once they get pulled lower in the water, much harder for experts to track.

"It's quite difficult to decide where it all is because there are so many processes at work," Alet-



Of the between 4-12 million tonnes that enter the oceans each year, just 250 thousand tonnes — less than one per cent — stays on the surface. **PHOTO: AFP**

heaMountford, from Newcastle University's School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, told AFP.

"Even plastic at the surface can sink down and go back up again — it's moving between different possible sinks in different areas of the ocean at any time."

In a potential breakthrough, Mountford used a computer model of ocean currents for plastics of three different densities to project where most of the world's fragments collect once they start to sink.

The model showed significant build ups at depths varying thousands of metres in the Mediterranean Sea, Indian Ocean and the waters surrounding Southeast Asia. Much of the plastic ends up on the seabed — as researchers outlined earlier this year in a separate study that

found microplastic fibres in the guts of tiny shrimp that live at the bottom of the Mariana Trench — the deepest place on Earth.

While Mountford stressed that her research was preliminary, the results could help focus investigation on the ocean areas identified and enable better studies of the damage plastics cause to marine life.

Coastal collection

Mountford's work draws on that of Eric van Sebille, associate professor in Oceanography and Climate Change at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

He said that most plastic pollution research had traditionally focused on the fragments that stay on the surface — and with good reason. "We know the most about the garbage patches

so it makes sense to focus on them and if you look at the impact the surface plastic probably does have the most because most organisms live there," he told AFP. "But if you want to understand the complete problem then we need to get a deeper view."

Van Sebille's current research is based on the fact that plastic pollution is now so prolific that monitoring the waste fragments themselves can provide valuable insight into how oceans circulate.

His hunch — which should be borne out as modelling gets more sophisticated — is that the vast majority of plastics dumped in the oceans wash back ashore. This would account for the huge disparity in the volume entering the oceans and the smaller amounts that can be seen today.—AFP ■

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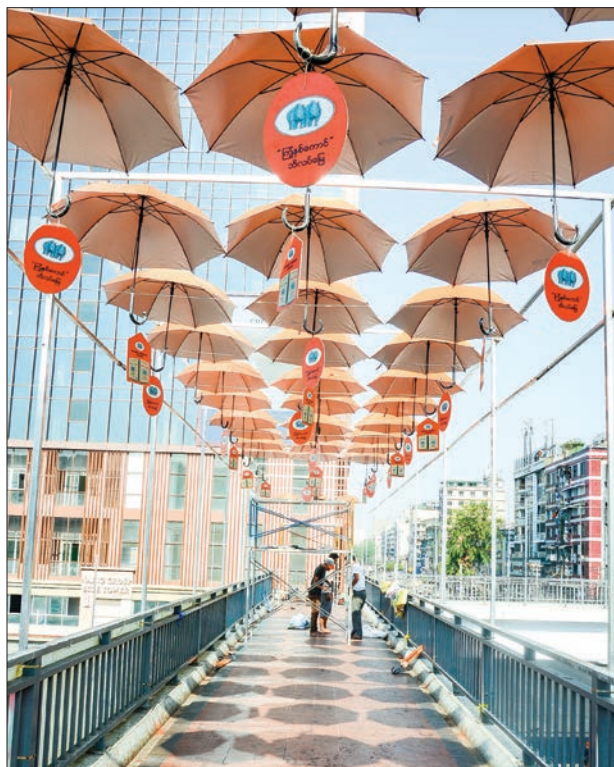
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The overpass in downtown Yangon is decorated to welcome the Thingyan Festival 2019. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWA**

Yangon ready to host Thingyan Activities



Yangon City Central Pandal in downtown Yangon is one of the 34 pandals allowed by the authorities for this year's Thingyan. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWA**



Water pandals adorned with bamboo structure archway in downtown Yangon. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWA**



The bank of Inya Lake is decorated for the 'Walking Thingyan' 2019. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWA**

Taliban announce spring offensive amid Afghan peace push

KABUL (Afghanistan) — The Taliban on Friday announced their annual spring offensive, which comes as the US and Afghan politicians try to negotiate a peace settlement with the Islamist militants.

Operation Fath — meaning “victory” in Arabic — will be conducted across Afghanistan with the aim of “eradicating occupation” and “cleansing our Muslim homeland from invasion and corruption”, the Taliban said in a statement.

The spring offensive traditionally marks the start of the so-called fighting season, though the announcement is largely symbolic as in recent winters the Taliban have continued fighting Afghan and US forces.

“Our Jihadi obligation has not yet ended,” the Taliban said.

“Even as large parts of our homeland have been freed from the enemy, yet the foreign occupying forces continue exercising

military and political influence in our Islamic country.”

Qais Mangal, a spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Defence, dismissed the Taliban's spring offensive as “mere propaganda.”

“The Taliban will not reach their vicious goals and their operations will be defeated like previous years,” Mangal said.

After suffering horrific

bloodshed in 2018, Kabul has in recent weeks enjoyed something of a lull in violence.

But on Monday three US Marines were killed in a Taliban blast at Bagram air base north of the city, and authorities in the capital are on high alert for new attacks. The administration of President Ashraf Ghani recently declared its own spring offensive, Operation Khalid, and the Talib-

an used that announcement as a justification for launching a new push. It shows “the enemy still seeks to attain its malicious objectives through the use of force”, the Taliban said.

'Position of strength'

The US has held several rounds of talks with the Taliban in a bid to bring an end to the war against the insurgents.

Separately, Afghan politicians have also met with the Taliban in Moscow.

A fresh round of talks is expected to take place later this month between Afghan political leaders, including some officials from the Kabul government, and the Taliban in the Qatari capital Doha.

The Taliban have long refused to speak officially with Kabul, dubbing the government a “puppet” of the West, and the militants have insisted that government officials are attending

only in a “personal capacity”.

Kabul-based military analyst Ateequllah Amarkhail said violence is likely to increase even as negotiations proceed.

The Taliban “want to enter the talks from the position of strength. Their operations are to challenge the government, and they want to have the upper hand,” Amarkhail told AFP.

He predicted “intense” fighting for 2019, with the renewed bloodshed taking a toll on civilians.

In 2018, a record 10,993 civilians were wounded or killed in Afghanistan, according to UN figures, and several thousand Afghan police and soldiers are dying each year.

Fed up with the \$45 billion annual price tag and what his military leaders termed a “stalemate”, US President Donald Trump last year decided to slash the number of American soldiers in Afghanistan.—AFP ■



Taliban fighters are seen in the file photo. The annual spring offensive traditionally marks the start of the so-called fighting season. **PHOTO: AFP**

Scientist superstar Katie Bouman designed algorithm for black hole image

NEW YORK (United States) — Anonymous to the public just days ago, a US computer scientist named Katie Bouman has become an overnight sensation due to her role in developing a computer algorithm that allowed researchers to take the world's first image of a black hole.

"I'm so excited that we finally get to share what we have been working on for the past year!" the 29-year-old Bouman, a postdoctoral researcher at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, gushed on her Facebook account Wednesday after the image was published.

The term "black hole" refers to a point in space where matter is so compressed that it creates a gravity field from which even

light cannot escape. The massive black hole in the photo released Wednesday is 55 million light years away at the center of a galaxy known as M87.

While the existence of black holes have been long known, the phenomenon proved impossible to witness.

In 2016, Bouman developed an algorithm named CHIRP to sift through a true mountain of data gathered by the Event Horizon Telescope project from telescopes around the world to create an image.

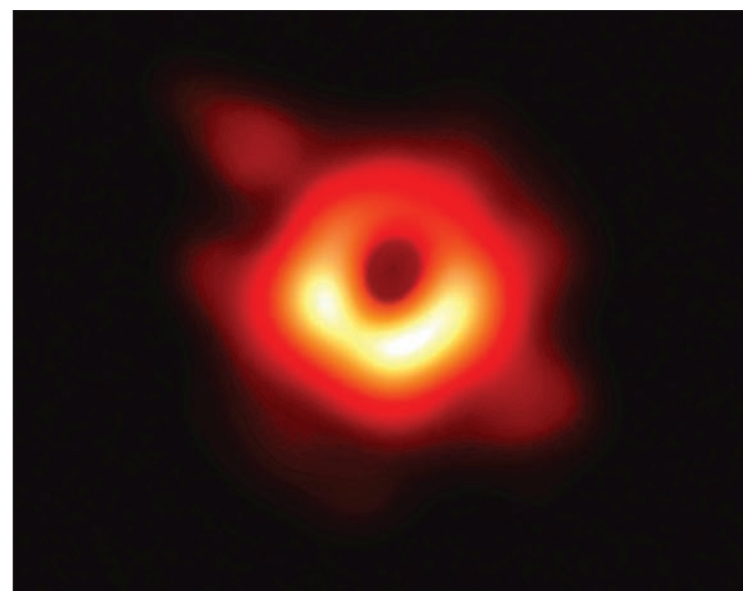
The volume of data — several petabytes (several million billion bytes) — was contained in a mountain of computer hard drives weighing several hundred pounds that had to be physical-

ly transported to the Haystack Observatory in Westford, Massachusetts, operated by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

To guarantee the accuracy of the image, the Harvard-Smithsonian Astrophysics Center, operated by Harvard University, gave the data to four different teams. Each team independently used the algorithm to obtain an image.

After a month of work, the four groups presented their results to the other teams.

"That was the happiest moment I've ever had [when] I saw all the other teams had images that were very similar, with the lower half brighter than the top half. It was amazing to see everyone got that," Bouman told The



The Event Horizon Telescope project provided the first ever image of a black hole and its fiery halo. PHOTO: AFP

Wall Street Journal.

"No one algorithm or person made this image," wrote Bouman, who in the fall will begin work as an assistant professor at the California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech).

"It required the amazing talent of a team of scientists from around the globe and years of

hard work to develop the instrument, data processing, imaging methods, and analysis techniques that were necessary to pull off this seemingly impossible feat," she said on Facebook.

"It has been truly an honor, and I am so lucky to have had the opportunity to work with you all." — AFP ■

Crude oil touted as health cure in Azerbaijan

NAFTALAN (Azerbaijan) — Immersed up to her neck in a dark viscous liquid, Sulfiya smiles in delight, confident that the fetid substance will cure her painful condition.

Sulfiya, a Russian woman in her 60s, has travelled to Azerbaijan's north-western city of Naftalan in the hope that crude oil baths at a local sanatorium will end her years of suffering from polyarthritis, a disease affecting the joints.

"This is so pleasant," she enthuses, despite the reek of engine oil.

Her naked dip in oil heated to just above body temperature lasts 10 minutes, after which an attendant scrapes the brown oil off her skin and sends her into a

shower. The native of Russia's Tatarstan region said she and her friends "have long dreamed of coming" for treatment in Naftalan.

The petroleum spa resort in the oil-rich Caucasus country is a draw for visitors despite its proximity to Nagorny Karabakh, a region disputed between Azerbaijan and Armenia in a long-running armed conflict.

After 10 days of bathing in crude oil Sulfiya says she now feels "much better" and has even reduced her medication for the polyarthritis that she has had for 12 years.

"It is a gift from God," agrees 48-year-old Rufat, an Azerbaijani journalist and opposition party member who is undergoing treat-

ment in the sanatorium called Sehirlı, or "magic" in Azerbaijani.

Azerbaijan's vast oil deposits were discovered in the mid-19th century, making what was at the time part of the Russian Empire one of the first places in the world to start commercial oil production.

Oil exports to markets all over the world are the largest sector of Azerbaijan's economy, but the crude that comes from subsoil reservoirs in Naftalan is not suitable for commercial use.

Instead the local oil is used to treat to cure muscular, skin and bone conditions as well as gynaecological and neurological problems.

According to a legend, which spa staff readily tell clients, the healing properties of Naftalan's "miraculous oil" were discovered by accident when a camel left to die near a pool of oil was cured.

The small town of Naftalan some 300 kilometres (185 miles) from the capital Baku became a popular health resort for Soviet citizens in the 1920s.

"In the past, when there weren't any hotels or sanatoriums, people would come to Naftalan and stay with locals," said one of the doctors at the Sehirlı sanatorium, Fabil Azizov, sitting in her office under a portrait of strongman President Ilham Aliyev.

"But as time passed, sanatoriums were built and treatment methods developed." — AFP ■



Oil is used to treat to cure muscular, skin and bone conditions as well as gynaecological and neurological problems. PHOTO: AFP

SpaceX carries out first commercial launch

CAPE CANAVERAL (United States) — SpaceX carried out its first commercial launch on Thursday with its Falcon Heavy rocket easing a Saudi telecoms satellite into orbit.

The bright white rocket rose with a roar and spewed thick gray smoke on the ground as it made its way up into clear blue skies over Cape Canaveral, Florida, trailing a long plume of orange fire.

About 34 minutes after lift-off, the shiny silver satellite was successfully deployed. Staff in the control room cheered and clapped. Earlier, boisterous spectators chanted along with the launch announcer who counted down the final 10 seconds before liftoff. The Falcon Heavy rocket exerts 5.1 million pounds of thrust — that of more than a dozen jetliners, SpaceX said.

The rocket carried a Saudi Arabian satellite operated by Arabsat, a year after sending SpaceX founder Elon Musk's slick red Tesla roadster into orbit as a test. The Falcon Heavy had been scheduled to lift off from the Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday but that was delayed because of strong winds in the upper atmosphere.

The job was to place the six-ton Arabsat-6A satellite into geostationary orbit about 22,500

miles (36,000 kilometers) above the Earth. It went off without a hitch. The satellite is designed to provide television, internet, telephone, and secure communications to customers in the Middle East.

Less than 10 minutes into the flight, the rocket's three boosters detached from the Falcon Heavy on schedule. Two of them, as planned, landed safely back on pads at Cape Canaveral, to a roar of approval from the crowd. It was quite a spectacle, with the boosters coming down gently, and vertically, fiery end first.

A third landed, also as planned, on a barge out in the Atlantic. "Three for three boosters today," a SpaceX webcast commentator said.

SpaceX has two operational rockets: the Falcon 9, which with 21 launches in 2018 dominates the US market, and the Falcon Heavy, which as its name suggests is designed to lift much heavier payloads into more distant orbits.

It consists of the equivalent of three Falcon 9 rockets combined, tripling its thrust.

In Falcon Heavy's first launch, in February 2018, a dummy dubbed Starman was placed behind the wheel of Musk's roadster, which is currently orbiting the Sun somewhere between Earth and Mars. — AFP ■

National soccer teams see no holidays in Thingyan period

MYANMAR soccer teams including U-18, U-15 and women U-19 will have to receive training in the

Thingyan new year festival period as they will compete in local and foreign matches.

U-18 and U-15 teams

will compete in International Invitational Football Tournament 2019 in Hong Kong from 19 to 22 April.

Myanmar women

U-19 team is also conducting drills during the new year festival period at the Thuwunna training grounds in preparation for

Asia U-19 second round qualifier match.— Shine Htet Zaw

(Translated by Tun Tun Naing)



Myanmar U-18 Coach U Soe Myat Min and players go through drills at the Thuwunna Training Grounds in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: SOE NYUNT**

Major threat: Brilliant ball-striking gives Koepka share of Masters lead

AUGUSTA (United States) — Brooks Koepka, winner of two of the last three major championships he has played, says his first-round 66 at the Masters on Thursday was one of his best on golf's major stages.

"That was probably the best ball-striking round I've had in a major championship," the 28-year-old said after matching fellow American Bryson DeChambeau for the lead.

"I drove it and I shaped it, flighted it, and coming into the

greens, controlling the spin, trajectory — everything there was about as good as I could have hit it today."

The bogey-free round was all the validation Koepka needed after the buildup to the Masters included criticism of his decision to lose almost 25 pounds — a move that coincided with a dip in form.

This week, Koepka, who won a second straight US Open title last year and followed up with a win in the PGA Championship,

conceded his restrictive diet was extreme, but he wasn't offering any apologies — noting that he'd taken flak in the past from pundits for bulking up too much in the weight room.

"I lift too many weights, and I'm too big to play golf," Koepka said. "And then when I lose weight, I'm too small."

"I'm going to make me happy. I don't care what anyone else says. 'I'm doing it for me,'" Koepka said, "and obviously it seems to work."—AFP ■



American Brooks Koepka on the way to a six-under par 66 and a share of the first-round lead at the Masters at Augusta National. **PHOTO: AFP**

'Very similar': Ferrari chief sees shades of father in Mick Schumacher

SHANGHAI (China) — Mick Schumacher is "very similar" to his famous father in how he conducts himself off the track, said Ferrari's Formula One team principal on Friday.

The 20-year-old son of seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher got his first full experience of driving an F1 car during testing in Bahrain earlier this month.

Mick followed in the footsteps of his legendary father in getting behind the wheel of a Ferrari, completing 56 laps on an emotional occasion for his watching mother Corinna.

Michael has not been seen in public since suffering a severe head injury while skiing in December 2013.

"The first time I saw him (Mick) after many years when he came back, I looked at him and don't think he really looked similar to Michael," said Ferrari's Mattia Binotto.

"But the way he's behaving is very similar -- the approach, the way he's interested in the

car, discussing conditions.

"He was always looking at the car, speaking to the mechanics. That's very similar to his father."

Speaking in Shanghai ahead of the Chinese Grand Prix, Binotto was keen not to lumber Mick with even higher expectations, with interest already intense in the youngster.

"The objective was not really to assess the performance in the very first day in an F1 car," said Binotto.

"More important for him is the learning phase. Day by day he is advancing a completely new challenge in his F2 season."

Following his European Formula 3 title last year, Mick made his Formula 2 debut in Bahrain, finishing eighth and sixth in the two races.

He joined the Ferrari Driver Academy in January, entering into a partnership with the team that helped his father win five F1 championships.—AFP ■