1. The Union Government has been working with deep regard towards not only obtaining a ceasefire but to resolve political problems through discussions using political means and to end the internal armed conflict that had remained rooted for many years.
2. It is also strengthening the ceasefire with 10 Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) that had signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and was conducting political discussions in stages towards achieving basic principles that are the basic foundation of establishing a Federal Democratic Union. At the same time, it is striving for the participation of eight EAOs that had not signed the NCA in the political discussions.

President, First Lady, and State Counsellor attend Christmas celebrations in Nay Pyi Taw

14th Waxing of Nattaw 1380 ME
(21 December 2018)

President, First Lady, and State Counsellor attend Christmas celebrations in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Vice President U Henry Van Thio and wife Dr. Shwe Hlwan welcomed President U Win Myint and First Lady Daw Cho Cho, and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Former President U Htin Kyaw and wife Daw Su Su Lwin, Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat and wife Daw Yin May, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaing Thane and wife Daw Nant Kyin Kyi, Chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union U Myo Nyunt, Chairman of the Union Election Commission U Hla Thein and wife, wife of Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw, light candles at the pre-Christmas celebration at the residence of Vice President U Henry Van Thio.

PHOTO: MNA
The Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw tenth regular session held its 11th day meeting in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the session, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat announced that the Hluttaw had put on record the appointment of U Sai Pan Saing alias U Sai Tun Sein alias U Kyaw Sein as Mandalay Region government minister for Shan Ethnic Affairs. Next Speaker U T Khun Myat announced that the Hluttaw had put on record the appointment of U Thant Sin Maung of Mandalay Region convention on Road Traffic 1968 and Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals 1968, and then U Tin Tun Naing of Seikkyi-Khanaung to constituency, Dr. Tin Win of Bago Region constituency 5 and U Ye Lwin of Ahlon constituency took part in the discussion.

Then Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw announced that the Hluttaw would obtain the approvals of these motions at 11th regular session of Hluttaw’s meeting. Memorandum of Association (MoA) on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility

Regarding the Memorandum of Association (MoA) on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility, Dr. Than Win of Mandalay Region constituency 1, U Bo Bo Oo of Sanyangou constituency, and U Saw Tun Mya Aung of Pauk constituency took part in the discussion and Deputy Minister for Education U Win Maw Tun submitted the report and which was approved by the Hluttaw.

The members of Union level organizations discussed the Government’s annual debt report for fiscal year 2017-2018 and findings of the Joint Public Accounts Committee Report. Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw, and officials – concerned from the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Electric Industry and Energy and Ministry of Planning and Finance clarified the reports. The Secretary of the Joint Public Accounts Committee U Khin Maung Thaw submitted the report and which was approved by the Hluttaw.

 Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Mahn Win Khaih Thaw.

Money Rules

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee member U Zaw Tabled a motion on Myanmar Mine Rules and approved the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Dr. Than Win read and clarified a 30-month performance report. Followed this, Speaker U T Khun Myat announced that the Hluttaw had put on record the report.

Union Legal Supporting Group Secretary U Khin Zaw made a clarification of the 6-month-work report and Supreme Court Judge U Thar Hayu continued the discussion. Speaker U T Khun Myat announced that the Hluttaw had put on record the report. Approval of Myanmar Mine Rules

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee member U Zaw Tabled a motion on Myanmar Mine Rules and approved the rules paragraph-by-paragraph.

Next, Hluttaw representatives discussed Vienna Convention on Road Traffic 1960 and Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals 1968, and then U Tin Tun Naing of Seikkyi-Khanaung to constituency, Dr. Tin Win of Bago Region constituency 5 and U Ye Lwin of Ahlon constituency took part in the discussion.

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“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.)

President, First Lady, and State Counsellor attend Christmas…

FROM PAGE-1

Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Aye Tha Aung and wife, Chairman of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Thura U Shwe Mann and wife, Union Ministers and wives, Chairman of the Union Civil Service Board Dr. Win Thein and wife, Chairman of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission U Win Mra and wife, Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr. Myo Aung and wife, Kayah State Chief Minister U L Phaung Sho and wife, Deputy Ministers and wives, members of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union, members of the Union Election Commission, members of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, members of the Anti-corruption Commission, members of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, chairman of the Hluttaw affairs committees, representatives of the Hluttaw, departmental officials, bishops from Christian Churches and invited guests.

The ceremony was opened by Rev. M.D. Chang Hkaw with his Christmas prayers and Vice President U Henry Van Thio extended greetings.

Afterwards, President U Win Myint extended Christmas greetings.

Afterwards, Rev. Dr. Toe Toe prayed for the people and the leaders of Myanmar.

On behalf of the churches in Myanmar, Monsignor Basilio Soe Lin Aung extended greetings, which was followed by Christmas songs.

Next, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi extended Christmas greetings.

Afterwards, Rev. Dr. Aye Min delivered a Christmas sermon and extended greetings.

President U Win Myint and First Lady Daw Cho Cho, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the attendees enjoyed the Christmas dinner together.

During the dinner, vocalists entertained the guests with Christmas songs.

At the conclusion of the dinner, President U Win Myint, First Lady and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sliced the Christmas cake together.

Afterwards, President U Win Myint, First Lady, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, former President U Htin Kyaw and wife Daw Su Su Lwin, Vice President U Henry Van Thio and wife Dr. Shwe Hlwan lit the Christmas candles.

Afterwards, The Most Revd. Stephen Than Myint Oo said Christmas prayers.

The ceremony came to an end with Christmas songs.—MNA

FROM PAGE-1

3. As it is important to hold discussions when conducting the peace process to reduce the mutual concerns that exist between the Tatmadaw and EAOs on military matters, the announcement made by Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Office on 21 December 2018 is welcomed.

4. The National Reconciliation and Peace Centre will continue to strive towards strengthening the ceasefire with 10 EAOs that had signed the NCA and to achieve political agreements and it will also strive towards the participation of eight EAOs that have not signed the NCA in the political dialogues of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.
VP U Myint Swe addresses opening ceremony of 8th MSMEs Product Exhibition & Competition

The Vice President said under the leadership of MSMEDWC, MSMEs Product Exhibitions & Competitions were conducted in states and regions starting from February 2018. They have been held in Mandalay, Magway, Pathein, Taunggyi, Monywa, Bago and Yangon successfully.

This was the eighth such event which was jointly conducted for Kayin and Mon State. Next, local MSMEs as business persons, bankers, retailers, consumers and departmental officials come to check out the products of MSMEs in this sort of exhibition and competition. MSMEDWC had arranged for MSMEs to meet and obtain advice and comments from market experts. As this was done in the past events, MSMEs were able to follow the advice and comments of the experts and improve the production and packaging. The result of this was that a total of 93 products of MSMEs, 25 from Shan State, 22 from Sagaing Region, 16 from Bago Region, 30 from Yangon Region were now being sold in well-known departmental stores.

In Kayin and Mon State agriculture products such as rubber and fruits like durian and coconut were produced while rice, tea, and hotel business. Together with travel and hotel business, local foodstuffs, products, services and transport sector will also develop.

When local MSMEs succeed and develop, there’ll be more job opportunities for the people creating an environment where skilled labours from the region that were working abroad can return back to the region.

To raise capital for MSMEs, the Government was connecting with the government of Japan to conduct JICA Two Step Loan Phase II. JICA and the Ministry of Industry will hold a seminar in Mawlamyine on 18 December to inform the MSMEs about the requirements and processes of obtaining the loan.

MSMEs were to grasp the opportunities that were within reach. MSMEs needed to have the ability to show their strengths using strategies while providing products and services that the consumer prefers and requires. They were to accept the responses, information and suggestions from the market and strive toward achieving sustainable development so that they could be in the market for long.

The numerous religious buildings and structures, natural beauty, beaches, waterfalls, traditions of ethnic nationals are the other strengths of Kayin and Mon State that attracts travel and hotel business. Together with travel and hotel business, local foodstuffs, products, services and transport sector will also develop.

When local MSMEs succeed and develop, there’ll be more job opportunities for the people creating an environment where skilled labours from the region that were working abroad can return back to the region.

From the success and development of MSMEs resulting in increase in job opportunities, people’s socio-economic situation and livelihood will improve. All are urged to continue striving towards the establishment of successful MSMEs that fulfill market requirement, products and services said the Vice President.

Next, MSMEDWC members Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nang Htwe Myint and Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan about the status of works conducted for the development of MSMEs in the states.

Afterwards Union Minister U Khin Maung Cho, Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nang Htwe Myint, Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan, Tanin-thayi Region Chief Minister Dr. Daw Lei Lei Maw and Deputy Minister U Aung Htoo accepted donations made by companies and businesses to conduct the exhibition and competition and presented certificates of honor to the donors in return.

Later, officials from CB Bank presented bank loans to MSMEs.

Following this Vice President U Myint Swe and party attended the opening ceremony of 8th MSMEs Product Exhibition & Competition held at Strand Road, Mawlamyine.

At the opening ceremony Vice President U Myint Swe, Union Minister U Khin Maung Cho, Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nang Htwe Myint, Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan, Tanin-thayi Region Chief Minister Dr. Daw Lei Lei Maw and Deputy Minister U Aung Htoo attended the opening ceremony and party attended the opening ceremony of SME Center held at Small & Medium Industrial Development Bank (SMIDB) Mawlamyine branch.

At the event Vice President U Myint Swe, Union Minister U Khin Maung Cho, Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nang Htwe Myint and Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan inspected the exhibits in the 8th MSME Product Exhibition & Competition.

At this the Vice President and party attended the opening ceremony at Small & Medium Industrial Development Bank (SMIDB) Mawlamyine branch.
Commander-in-Chief meets Myanmar Press Council

COMMANDEER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received a delegation of Myanmar Press Council members led by Chairman Hanthawaddy U Ohn Kyaw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The meeting was attended by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, and the Myanmar Press Council. The meeting was facilitated by the Commander-in-Chief and the Chair of the Myanmar Press Council.

During the meeting, the Senior General discussed promoting relations between the Tatmadaw and the Myanmar Press Council and said the Tatmadaw was always ready to be on friendly terms with the MPC and any other organization. He had always viewed the media as the fourth pillar of the nation and believed in the importance of strengthening national development, said the Senior General. He said peace and stability within the country was important and one of the duties of the media was to make sure that national development trod firmly and surely along its intended trajectory. No matter what kind of pressure was exerted, it was the duty of every citizen to ensure the best interest of the country, and as both the Tatmadaw and the MPC were citizens of this country, it was their duty as well, said the Senior General.

Next, an official read a statement from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services on achieving ceasefire and lasting peace, on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief.

Afterwards, MPC Chairman Hanthawaddy U Ohn Kyaw said the meeting with the Tatmadaw produced positive agreements, adding that the Commander-in-Chief said he would arrange for private media agencies to be able to gather news throughout the states and regions by consulting with the relevant ministry of border affairs and security to gather news from their respective state or regional minister. The Chairman said this would create new opportunities for news gathering. He said the Tatmadaw would, except for military operations, impart relevant news concerning their functions. He said the Tatmadaw would insert advertisements relating to it in private newspapers and a workshop on news publishing between the Tatmadaw and news agencies would be held in Yangon next month. The MPC Chairman said the Tatmadaw would routinely hold press conferences and add that yesterday’s meeting further strengthened the existing relations between the Tatmadaw and the MPC.

Announcement on ceasefire and eternal peace

FOLLOWING is an announcement about ceasefire and eternal peace made by the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Office on 21 December 2018.

1. With regards to Myanmar’s peace process on 12 December 2018, MNTJF, PSI and ULA announced that they’ll stop all military operations and will continue to participate in national reconciliation and peace process without resorting to military means and of the Union of Myanmar Peace Commission also made an announcement on the same day welcoming the announcement made by the three groups and said that it will continue to cooperate and coordinate in reaching a ceasefire agreement and to conduct political discussions.

2. With regards to this matter Tatmadaw considered that discussions need to be conducted with each ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) in Northern Command region, North East Command region, Eastern Command region, Middle East Command region and Triangle Command region that had not signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

3. In order to conduct these discussions Tatmadaw will cease all its region wise military operations from 21 December 2018 to 30 April 2019. During this period when troops movements are suspended military operation area wise ethnic armed organisations are to coordinate and discuss about ceasefire and peace matters with National Reconciliation and Peace Centre and when required a Negotiation and Discussion Group consisting of Tatmadaw senior officers from Commander-in-Chief (Army) led by Lt-Gen Ya Pyae and Commander of the relevant Command will also hold discussions.

4. At the same time, ten EAOs that had signed NCA are to continue the discussion according to NCA and if required the Negotiation and Discussion Group will hold discussion with each group.

5. While conducting discussions for ceasefire and eternal peace, EAOs are required to follow the four of the six peace policies of Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief.

(a) To abide by the agreements
(b) Not to take advantage of peace agreements
(c) Must not be a burden on the local populace
(d) To abide by the laws enacted by the Union

6. In addition to this EAOs must control and take responsibility not to use force to attack one another or intimidate local ethnic nationals.

7. They are also responsibility for the smooth and safe transportation and the lives and properties of the people.

8. If there is any occurrence of matters mentioned in 5, 6 and 7, Tatmadaw will prevent and respond as necessary.

9. At the same time, persons displaced by armed conflicts will be resettled back to their places of origin and Tatmadaw will provide necessary assistance and cooperation.

10. Tatmadaw will do the best it can toward the progress of ceasefire and peace discussions as well as implementing socio-economic development of ethnic national regions.

11. On the third anniversary of signing the NCA, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief had told both signatories to the NCA and the EAOs that have not yet signed the NCA that the Tatmadaw is committed to finishing the peace process in 2020 and to achieving eternal peace desired by the people. This announcement is made to urge all EAOs to make the same commitment and to continue the implementation of the work towards signing the reintegration for security and the Union Accord.

Unofficially Translation

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint receives Vietnamese information Deputy Minister

UNION Minister for information, Dr. Pe Myint received a delegation led by Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Mr. Phan Tam at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, the topics on exchanging information between the media organizations from both countries, arranging study tours, exchanging the radio and television programmes, opening Viet Nam’s news bureau in Myanmar, streamlining social media and updates on the drafting the media law were cordially discussed.

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

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)
‘All Who Can Read Should Read’ campaign continues its second day in Nay Pyi Taw

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint attended the ‘All Who Can Read Should Read’ campaign on its second day at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-II, Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning. The aims of the ongoing event were to develop a reading habit to those who can read across the country and to hold the ‘All Who Can Read Should Read’ campaigns across the country.

The Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint, along with Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun and Departmental heads of Ministry of Information, toured through and observed booths of the campaign at 9.15 am.

Afterward, the Union Minister posed for documentary photos with government officials, employees and event officials.

The booths of ‘All Who Can Read Should Read’ campaigns were teeming with government employees, students and people who love books. The second day of ‘All Who Can Read Should Read’ campaign was started in the morning and Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun, Ministers of the Region and State, parliamentary members, literati, writers, paper readers, librarians, library foundations, stakeholders, book lovers and invited guests were present.

In the paper reading session, Myanmar Library Association Vice-Chairperson Dr. Sandar Oo chaired and U Ko Lay Win, Director-General of the Basic Education Department presented his paper on the topic “Development of school libraries in the basic education sector and activities to promote reading”. Later, Dr. Hlaing Hlaing Gyi, University of Yangon Library, presented her paper on the topic “Youth and Culture of Library”.

Next, a roundtable discussion followed. U Ye Myint Kyaw led the discussion and U Tin Nyunt, Dr. Sandar Oo, Daw Aye Hlae Tun, and U Myo Aung participated in the talk under the title “Development and cultivation of reading habits”. Associate Professor of Department of Libraries and Information Studies Dr. Tun Aung Kyaw chaired the paper reading session in the afternoon and Department of Information and Public Relations Deputy Director U San Win read his paper on the topic “Tasks should be worked for the promotion of reading habit”. Discussion led by U Kyi Win (Lawakamun) and followed by U Ohn Myint-Maung Yint Mar (Kyaung Kone), U Win Cho, Dr. Khin Lay Soe, U Aung Than Hut and Ma Thein Nu San was held under the title “Current issues for all who can read to read and ways to overcome”.

‘All Who Can Read Should Read’ campaign has been held from 20 to 21 December and it will be expanded on 22 December from 9 am to 4 pm on the request of public service employees and students who want to visit after their exams. The booths will display on an extra day from 9 am to 4 pm.—MNA (Translated by Myat Thanndar Aung)

Presidential spokesperson explains pensions increase and GAD move

A FORTNIGHTLY press conference was held at Presidential Palace press hall yesterday afternoon.

At the press conference, spokesperson from the Office of the President Director General U Zaw Htay first read the news announcement of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) dated 21 December.

Next, Director General U Zaw Htay responded to questions raised by the media.

Responding first to a question on the reason why pensions have been increased by 10 to 20 percent Director General U Zaw Htay explained that the matter was approved at a Union Government meeting (cabinet) held on 12 December. After the approval of the cabinet a notification was issued by the Ministry of Planning and Finance on 19 December.

In his Myanmar New Year greetings message delivered on 18 April 2018 President U Win Myint said the government had calculated and arranged to increase the salaries and wages of public servants by 10 to 20 percent. Director General U Zaw Htay explained that the matter was approved at a Union Government meeting (cabinet) held on 12 December.

Director-General U Zaw Htay speaks to journalists in the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

As per that speech the salaries and wages of public servants were raised 10 to 20 percent on 1 April 2018 and at the same time, pensions of public servants who became pensioners after 18 April 2018 were also increased 10 to 20 percent.

However, there were more than 810,000 pensioners before 18 April 2018 and the pension rates for them had not yet been increased. That was why an announcement was made on 19 December 2018 to increase the pensions of these pensioners by 10 to 20 percent said the Director General. This was to fulfill a pledge made by the President and there was no other reason beyond this, added the Director General.

On the question of whether the General Administration Department (GAD) has been transferred and if so whether it was conducted due to someone’s advice, Director General U Zaw Htay explained that last week when Ko Aung Thuya from BBC raised a similar question asking whether GAD was being transferred to the Office of the President, it was denied because it was not being transferred to that office. GAD was being transferred from the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Ministry of the Office of the Union Government. Instructions and guidelines have already been made and the transfer was being done according to procedure.

This transfer was due to the appointment of Union Minister U Min Thu to the Ministry of the Office of the Union Government. In his Myanmar New Year speech in 2018, the President had said that arrangements were being made to reduce central control in preparation for a federal union administrative system that would be established in the future.

According to the Constitution the President leads the cabinet in the Union Government. At the Union level, there is a Union Government led by the President. Looking down vertically, there’ll be State/Region Chief Ministers and State/Region ministers. According to the Constitution the State/Region Chief Ministers are accountable to the President. State/Region ministers in State/Region Governments are accountable to the President through the Chief Ministers.

In the administrative pillar there was the President and the cabinet. Vertically below were State/Region/Nay Pyi Taw Council, Chief Ministers. And then the Chief Ministers and the state/region cabinet followed by district and township level administration.

As per the Constitution it would be the President, Chief Minister and administrators. According to this GAD was being transferred to Ministry of the Office of the Union Government. This was to be in line with the Constitution as well as to be in line structurally as well. This was mentioned in the President’s speech as well. So this was being done to be in accordance with the Constitution and as per the strategic vision of the President’s speech. It was not because someone suggested or insisted.

Some were saying that this was done because someone had suggested and we also heard that. So we want to say clearly that this was not the case. This was done according to the basic principle and reform strategy, to strengthen and make the administrative machinery more effective, said the Director General.—Thuya Zaw

(Translated by Zaw Min)
Price of Myanmar honey spikes as demand from Japan rises

WITH demand from Japan on the rise, the price of Myanmar honey has shot up to US$1,700 per ton, said beekeepers from Mandalay.

Last year, honey fetched $1,300-1,500 per ton, while prices have touched $1,500-1,700 this year.

“Demand for Myanmar honey is high in Japan and Thailand this year, with buyers offering high prices. However, demand from Canada has slowed,” according to the Trade Information and Research division of the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization.

With Japan offering a good price, other countries have also scaled up their purchase price. If demand from Canada rises, a ton of honey may fetch up to over $3,000. High demand from Japan and Thailand has pushed up honey prices in the domestic market, too.

There are around 900 registered beekeepers in Myanmar. The country produces 7,000 tons of honey and exports 2,400 tons every year.

Every year, Myanmar exports honey to the United States, Canada, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, China, and Japan. Beekeeping can help reduce the rate of poverty in rural areas by creating more job opportunities, said officials.

Myanmar produced 10,875.81 metric tons of honey between the 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 financial years, of which 8,471.24 metric tons were shipped to other countries.

The Myawady border trade camp handled the largest volume of trade, totalling over K5.8 billion in value.

The trade value via ITCs at border points stood at K1.3 billion at Tamu, K16.9 million at Muse, K24 million at Tachileik, K3,862.2 million at Lwejel, K435 million Kanpiktee, K620 million at Kawthoung, K34 million at Reed, K3.8 billion at Mawtaung, and K95 million at Kengtung.

The Trade Department has issued 1,366 ITCs so far, with 292 cards issued between 1 April and 30 Sep, and 20 cards between 1 Oct and 7 Dec.

— Zwe

Border trade through ITCs exceeds K12 bln

BILATERAL trade between Myanmar and Bangladesh in October fell sharply to over US$9 million from $20.3 million during the same month last year, registering a decline of 21.5%, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The trade figures for October, the first month of the current fiscal year, includes exports of $7.7 million and imports of $2 million. Last October, exports were valued at $18.8 million and imports were valued at $1.5 million.

Myanmar’s exports exceed imports in bilateral trade conducted by sea or land. In bilateral border trade, goods move mainly through the Sittway and Maungtaw trade stations.

The products traded by the two countries include bamboo, ginger, peanuts, saltwater prawns and fish, dried plums, garlic, rice, mung beans, blankets, candy, plum jams, footwear, frozen foods, chemicals, leather, jute products, tobacco, plastics, wood, knitwear, and beverages.

During the six-month mini-budget period, the country’s total trade with Bangladesh reached nearly $243 million, an increase of more than $50 million compared with the total value of $192.3 million in FY2017-2018.

According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, this year saw no new investments from Bangladesh. Last year, Myanmar received $1.5 million in investments from its neighbour.

— Swe Nyein (Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)
Sharing the treasures of independence

MYANMAR will celebrate the 71st anniversary of its Independence Day on 2019. The citizens of the country have been living under colonialism since 1 January, 1948. As we enter the 71st year of independence, we take a step back and reflect on how freely we have worked and lived over the years.

One way is to take a long, hard look at how the people have enjoyed the fruits of independence, which included declared democratic rights. Democracy encompasses freedom of speech, expression, creativity, thought, and the right to work among other things.

Myanmar’s journey to democracy can be divided into three parts. In the pre-democracy era, our forefathers sought the well-being of the ordinary people while struggling for independence. They wanted a self-governed system to be implemented once the country attained independence. However, this was not to be. The parliamentar
y democracy established in 1944 post independence could not last a decade later in 1952.

Although it was short-lived, people did see some positive effects of the parlia
tmentary system. But with some regions facing insecurity and distress within their borders, including internal conflicts, a divide appeared between political factions, parties, and ethnic organi
cations, and the people were unable to fully experience the fruits of inde
dependence.

After the parliamentar
y democracy ended in 1952, 1824 saw the establishment of the British Empire, which lasted for 71 years. This was followed by the colonizers occupying the country, and the people without defending their independence were subjected to attacks.

When encountered with outside aggression, Myanmar fought back with national
determination, emerging on the other side of the conflict.

The glory of Myanmar collapsed and shattered between 1824 and 1836. Following the defeat of the First Anglo-Myanmar War, the British occupied the Kone Baung Dynasty in Upper Myanmar and occupied the whole country. By 1826, they had annexed Kabaw Valley, while Myan
mar Diplomatic Mission as peace mediator was established in the British court.

While negotiating for the return of the Union Jack to Myanmar, the British government accused the Burmese of treachery and failure to fight against the colonizers.

After the war, the country was divided into three parts: Upper Myanmar, Lower Myanmar, and Rangoon.

Towards the close of the 19th century, after the year 1881, the British and France were vying to gain an edge in controlling the trade and economy of the South East Asian countries.

The British always acted in malice by finding loopholes to amass the whole country. They behaved in a particular way by engaging in various wars, which took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

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Despite EASA approval, no takers for MNA’s aircraft maintenance service yet: official

By Nyein Nyein

WHILE the Myanmar National Airlines has obtained approval from the European Aviation Safety Agency for its maintenance workshop for ATR aircraft, local airlines are yet to make use of the facility, said U Aye Tun, engineer, MNA.

“We plan to provide maintenance services for local aircrafts at our workshop, but so far, we have only received queries from local airlines. None have signed up for our maintenance services,” he said.

MNA recently obtained EASA’s Part 145-001 Maintenance Organization certificate for servicing ATR 72-100/200 series and ATR 42-400/500/72-212A aircraft.

The MNA signed an agreement with France’s ATR to set up a maintenance workshop on 16 July, 2014. Local airlines can save costs by using the maintenance service for ATR aircraft which is being provided within the country, he said.

“We are still estimating the cost of maintenance facilities. When we have customers, we will be in a better position to calculate costs. Then, we can set the maintenance costs for respective parts. We will also be able to point out how much customers will save if they use the local maintenance service,” said U Aye Tun.

“We are also exploring other markets for our maintenance services. There has been no query from neighbouring countries so far,” he added.

“Local airlines such as Air KBZ, Golden Myanmar, and Asian Wings primarily use ATR aircrafts. While we are using aircrafts from three manufacturers, 90 per cent of local airlines are using only ATR aircrafts,” said U Aye Tun.

At present, MNA flies to 28 domestic airports and international destinations, including Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Chiang Mai, and Bodh Gaya. It will expand its service to Chengdu from 28 December.

The Myanmar National Airlines was established on 15 September, 1948, as the Union of Burma Airways (UBA). After a period in isolation, along with much of Myanmar’s industry, the airline was recently rebranded as Myanmar National Airlines. It completed its 70th year of operation this year.

Kayin ethnic people to hold first harvest feast in Einme

A Kayin Ethnic Harvest Feast will be held, for the first time, in Taung Su Village, Ywar Thit Gyi village-tract, at the Einme Township of the Ayeyawady Region on 6 January 2019.

The feast will be held the same day as the Kayin New Year Festival. Several entertainment programs including, Myanmar traditional boxing, a stage show, a Kayin literature and poetry competition, and a Kayin traditional don dance performance will be organized prior to the New Year Festival and the feast.

A flag-raising ceremony will be held at 6 am on 6 January to mark the Kayin New Year, while the harvest feast will be held at 9 am.

The purpose for celebrating the Kayin New Year and the harvest feast is preservation of Kayin language, literature and culture, and Kayin national unity and development.—Township IPRD

Artist Zarni to hold 2nd solo show at Gallery 65 from 22-24 Dec

ARTIST Zarni, an artist from Mandalay, will present select watercolor paintings at a solo exhibition in Yangon this weekend, according to the event’s organizer.

The exhibition entitled ‘Ultramarine Blue’ will be held from 22 to 24 December at Gallery 65, a contemporary art gallery situated on the Yawminygy Road in Dagon Township, Yangon.

Artist Zarni said that a total of 36 watercolour paintings will be displayed at the three-day exhibition and each 15” x 22” painting will be priced at US$350. The subject matter of the paintings will include beautiful landscapes, ancient buildings, and other historic structures, especially from the Sagaing Region and the Bagan ancient cultural zone in the Mandalay Region. The artist will also include two paintings depicting Yangon’s well-known structures, including the Boggyoke Market downtown.

The exhibition will be open to the public between 10 am and 6 pm daily.

This will be Zarni’s second solo event. He held his first solo show in October 2017 and plans to hold a third solo event in February 2019 in his hometown Mandalay, where he will exhibit only paintings with an outdoor theme. The artist said he plans to hold solo exhibitions every year.

The 32-year-old artist studied at the State School of Fine Arts in Mandalay eight years ago. Since entering the art scene, Zarni has participated in several art exhibitions and his works can mostly be found at collective art shows. Artist Zarni said that he has participated in 50-60 group art shows and is planning to take part in a group exhibition next month.—Junior Lwin

Photo supplied by artist

PHOTO: TOWNSHIP IPRD

PHOTO: Khaing Thanda Lwin

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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NATIONAL

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concludes its 10th session

FROM PAGE-2

Annual report on national plans for FY 2017-2018

Hluttaw representatives discussed the annual report on national plans for FY 2017-2018 and following this, Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr. Tun Naing and officials from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation and Ministry of Planning and Finance clarified the report. Member of the Joint Public Accounts Committee Daw Shwe Shwe Sein Lat tabled a motion on this report and which was approved by The Hluttaw.

Union Financial report and the Joint Public Accounts Committee report (14/2018)

Then Hluttaw representatives discussed the Union Financial report and the Joint Public Accounts Committee report (14/2018) and which was discussed by Daw Cho Cho of Otwain constituency, U Khin Cho of Haingbwie constituency, U Bo Gyti of Chauk constituency, Daw Khin San Hlaing of Pale constituency and Daw Wint Wah Tun of Shartaw constituency. Next Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Sett Aung replied the queries raised by the Hluttaw representatives. Member of the Joint Public Accounts Committee Daw Cho Cho Win tabled a motion on the Joint Public Accounts Committee report (14/2018) and which was approved by the Hluttaw.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat summarizes the 10th regular session of the Hluttaw's meetings

After this, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat delivered a conclusion speech. He said that a total of four laws, including the second Law Amending the Protection of the Farmers’ Rights and Enhancement of their Benefits Law had been enacted, and another two bills approved by the Hluttaw had been submitted to the President to make into laws. The by-law of the Mining Law was also approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday.

He added that 11 days of Hluttaw meetings, the Hluttaw had approved to set up a new ministry, to appoint a Union Minister and a Judge of the Union Supreme Court besides putting records on three matters on foreign loans, signing five international treaties, three matters concerning foreign loans required to obtain approval from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, five matters to be signed in the international treaties, annual report on the Government’s debt for FY 2017-2018, an interim report on taxation, annual report on national planning, annual report on Union Financing, and interim report on Union Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission.

Regarding the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Development Funds in 2018-2019 FY, instructions were made to submit proposals, at the latest on 31 December 2019, to use Pyidaungsu Hluttaw development funds and, to date, 212 townships had submitted proposals, out of which permission was granted to 81 townships. The remaining townships have been notified to submit their proposals on time.

A total of 30 bills left to be carried out

While the Hluttaw was in session, a total of 30 bills, including four bills at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, 18 bills at the Pyithu Hluttaw, eight bills at the Amyotha Hluttaw, left to be enacted at the Hluttaw.

The Hluttaws will turn to three years soon, and Hluttaw representatives were urged to perform their duties in accordance with the rules and regulations, said the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker then announced the successful completion of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's tenth regular session.

MNA adds new ATR plane to its fleet

MYANMAR National Airlines inducted an ATR 72-600 XY-AMM aircraft to its fleet yesterday. The airlines took delivery of the 72-seater aircraft at the Yangon International Airport yesterday.

The new plane is the 8th aircraft of the ATR 72-600 series to be used by the airlines. The new aircraft will make its maiden flight from Yangon to Pathein in Ayeyawady Region on 25 December.

The night flight between Yangon and NyaungU is also scheduled to be operated with the new aircraft, according to the MNA.

The MNA is expanding its routes to local and foreign destinations and it will extend its service to Chengdu, China, thrice a week, starting 23 December.

The welcoming ceremony for the new ATR aircraft from France was held at the Yangon International Airport.

At the ceremony, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, U Win Khant, and the CEO of Myanmar National Airlines, Captain U Than Htun, delivered the welcoming speeches.

Innwa Bank celebrates opening new branch

Yagon Command Commander Maj Gen Thein Pone opens the new branch of Innwa Bank in Mingaladon Township, Yangon. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

OPENING ceremony of Mingalardon (Wireless) branch of Innwa Bank in commemoration of 71st Independence Day was held in the bank branch's compound yesterday morning.

U Thant Swe, Administrative Director of Myanmar Economic Corporation, Director of Projects U Khin Maung Soe and Managing Director of Innwa Bank Limited U Aung Nywe Oo conducted ribbon cutting ceremony and officially open the new branch's signboard by pressing of a button by Yangon Command Commander Maj Gen Thein Pone.

Innwa Bank Limited Mingalardon (Wireless) is the 53rd branch of Innwa Bank and it is situated in Tarmadaw Garment Factory's compound, Mingalardon Township, Yangon. Banking services such as accepting deposit, saving, advancing of loans, payment order, bank guarantee and debt cards will be available and Innwa Bank Limited is offering an easy and convenient banking service for people across the country.

Beside of remittance of funds service, 9 per cent interest rate on saving accounts, up to 10 per cent on fixed deposit depending on the period of saving as the wish of savers and also offering loans to needy borrowers.

Five arrested for drug use in Katha District

POLICE raided a home in Katha Town, Katha District, Sagaing Region, on Thursday night and found five men with 0.5 grams of opium powder and drug-related equipment.

The five men, identified as Aye Min Tun, Tun Naung, Thurain Tun, Myo Htike Min, and Win Min Thu, were charged with drug use under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.

The men were detained after the township police received a tip and raided the home of Ma Yamin Tun in Ma-hase new ward in Area-5, Katha Town, around 11:40 pm on 20 December. While Ma Yamin Tun was not at home, the five men were found with the drugs and equipment. Meanwhile, in two separate cases, police arrested two men and seized 8 grams of opium powder, 150 WV brand yaba tablets, and over Ks880,000 cash from them in Kawlin and Pinlebu townships the same day—La Aung (Katha) (Translated by Khang Thanda Luin)

The five arrested men are charged with drug use under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
‘Under the table’: Cambodia’s surrogate mothers risk jail for Chinese couples

PHNOM PENH (Cambodia) — Pregnant and scared, Yin hides in a house on the outskirts of Phnom Penh — one of an untold number of Cambodian surrogate mothers risking jail time for lucrative pay-outs from Chinese clients.

The end of China’s one-child policy has driven desperate couples too old to bring a baby to term to poorer countries in the Mekong region, where “a womb-for-rent” industry is brushing up against legal barriers.

Cambodia banned commercial surrogacy in 2016 but still has brokers — and eligible young women — skirting the ban for a price.

Yin, 24, was offered $9,000 by a Cambodian intermediary to carry a Chinese couple’s baby, a fortune for her rice-farming family in rural Kampong Thom province, three hours from the capital.

“I hesitated at first because I was afraid of how the girls in my village would look at me,” Yin, who did not want to give her real name for fear of being discovered, told AFP.

With money scarce, she agreed and was moved to a house in Phnom Penh to live with other women who underwent the same process.

China — with more than 90 million women eligible for a second offspring after the one-child policy was eased — forbids commercial surrogacy, driving couples yearning for a biological child to Southeast Asian countries where the practice is poorly regulated. But a string of high-profile controversies in Thailand, including custody tussles and a case of a couple accused of abandoning their baby after it was born with Down Syndrome, prompted the country’s junta to ban it in 2015.

Parents immediately looked across the border to Cambodia, but the government swiftly banned it a year later, worried about victims of trafficking.

Meanwhile, a network of

US defense chief quits as Trump announces Syria withdrawal

WASHINGTON — US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis quit Thursday as President Donald Trump weathered an escalating backlash at home and abroad over his sudden decision to pull all troops from Syria.

Trump steadfastly defended the withdrawal of the 2,000-strong force from Syria, vowing that the United States would no longer be the “policeman of the Middle East” and insisting that the Islamic State military had been defeated.

Mattis, a retired general seen as a moderating force on the often impulsive president, made little attempt to hide his disagreements with Trump.

“Because you have the right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours,” Mattis said in a letter to Trump, “I believe it is right for me to step down from my position.”

Mattis hailed the coalition to defeat the Islamic State and also defended NATO, the military alliance between North America and Europe whose cost-effectiveness has been questioned by the businessman-turned president.

“My views on treating allies with respect and also being clear-eyed about both malign actors and strategic competitors are strongly held and informed by over four decades of immersion in these issues,” Mattis wrote.

French National Assembly approves ‘yellow vest’ tax cuts

PARIS (France) — The French National Assembly on Friday approved a package of emergency concessions first announced by President Emmanuel Macron in a bid to end the violent “yellow vest” protests.

The tax cuts for low-income workers were put forward by Macron in a televised address earlier this month to help cool weeks of protests that brought major disruption to the country.

The measures include a “quick, strong and concrete response” to the crisis, said the labour minister Muriel Pénicaud in a debate which lasted into the early hours of Friday morning.

The measures include the removal of a planned tax increase for a majority of pensioners and tax-free overtime pay for all workers. Economists estimate the cuts will cost up to 15 billion euros ($17 billion).

The concessions will now move to the Senate for approval.

Tens of thousands of people joined rallies across France on consecutive Saturdays in a movement which sprung up over fuel tax hikes but snowballed into a wider contest of wills against the presidency.

Police this week said they would start removing barricades at roundabouts and on motorways after the demonstrations began to run out of steam.

The protests, which at times spiralled into violence, took a toll on the economy, with businesses counting the cost of supply disruptions, smashed property and a dearth of shoppers and tourists who stayed away from city centres.

On Thursday the president told critics of the fuel hikes “you’re right” after 1.15 million people signed a petition suggesting several other ways to fight fossil fuel pollution.

Macron called the petition a “citizens’ act”.

“Your message, I heard it. I am responding to you directly, you are right,” Macron wrote on the website Change.org. He reminded the petition signers that his government has cancelled the planned increase in fuel tax and that no hikes in gas and electricity prices would be made during the winter.

While restating that reducing fossil fuels which contribute to climate change was a necessary action, Macron added that it “must not put the problems of the end of the world in opposition to the problems at the end of the month” — alluding to the anger of the “yellow vest” protest movement about the cost of living in France and the difficulty in making ends meet. —AFP
Sydney pummelled by hail the size of tennis balls

SYDNEY (Australia) — Australia’s largest city was picking up the pieces Friday after a series of lightning and hailstorms pummelled cars with ice blocks the size of tennis balls.

The authorities issued a severe storm warning, but that was not enough to prevent damage that is already running into the tens of millions of dollars.

“As of 6:30 am we are at 15,000 claims and AU$80 million (US$57 million) in damages,” the Insurance Council of Australia told AFP.

When the storms hit, Sydneysiders looked on in desperation as cauliflower-shaped hail smashed through car windshields and turned the Harbour into a bubbling and splashing cauldron.

Many drivers sought refuge under roofed petrol stations and a few brave surfers in the water at the city’s famed Bondi Beach hid under their boards.

Hailstorms are fairly common in the state of New South Wales in the antipodean summer, although one on this scale has not been seen since 1999, when hailstones caused an estimated AU$1.7 billion in damage.—AFP

Costa Rica hits renewable energy mark for fourth year in a row

SAN JOSE (Costa Rica) — Costa Rica has generated more than 98 per cent of its power through renewable sources for the fourth year in a row, the state energy body said Thursday.

In 2018, just 1.44 per cent of the central American country’s electricity came from fossil fuel plants, the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE) said in a statement.

ICE power director Luis Pacheco said Costa Rica’s electricity generation system had made it “an example for the region and the world.”

River water is the main source of energy, providing 73.47 per cent of the country’s needs, followed by wind (15.6 per cent) and geothermal energy from its volcanos (8.38 per cent).

Costa Rica avoided using its fossil fuels plants in 300 days during 2018, the last instance came on 17 May.

October was the month in which it generated the most renewable electricity, some 976.78 gigawatts an hour, the ICE said.—AFP

Spanish court confirms 1.5 bln euro Prestige spill compensation

MADRID (Spain) — Spain’s Supreme Court on Thursday handed down a definitive ruling that the Spanish state be paid over 1.5 billion euros ($1.9 billion) in damages over the 2002 Prestige oil spill, one of Europe’s worst environmental disasters.

It confirmed an earlier ruling handed down in November 2017 by a lower court in the northwestern city of La Coruna, in Galicia off whose coast the Prestige tanker broke in two.

Neighbouring France, which was also affected, was awarded 61 million euros.

The Bahama-flagged Liberian tanker went down after sailing for six days damaged and adrift, spilling 63,000 tonnes of oil into the sea and coating 2,980 kilometres (1,852 miles) of shoreline in Spain, France and Portugal with black sludge.

The spill caused huge damage to wildlife and the environment, as well as to the region’s fishing industry, leading to an international cleanup effort.

The court said the final ruling on civil liability “fixes compensation at above 1.5 billion euros” to be paid by the vessel’s insurance company and its skipper.

The vast majority of the compensation will go to the Spanish state. The remainder will be split between the Galician authorities and local authorities, including in French areas. Firms, particularly in the fishing industry, which was badly hit, will also receive a small cut.

The ruling ends a legal marathon after Spain’s worst ecological disaster.

More than 300,000 volunteers from across Europe descended on the region to help with the clean-up.

Spain’s Supreme Court in 2016 found the Prestige’s Greek captain, Apostolos Mangouras, and its British insurer, The London P&I Club, as well as its owner Mare Shipping Inc, liable for the disaster.

It also sentenced Mangouras, who was 67 when the Prestige went down, to two years in jail.

The court said at the time that two major energy companies — Spain’s Repsol and Britain’s BP — had advised against using the Prestige tanker, a 26-year-old vessel with a carrying capacity of 11,000 tonnes.

It also cited in its ruling notes from the Prestige’s former captain, Stratos Kostazos, who had complained that the tanker was in bad shape and had refused to sail it in.

Mangouras blamed the spill on the Spanish authorities which ordered the ship out to sea after it sent out a distress call due to a crack in its hull.

The total cost of the damage had been estimated by Spanish courts in 2012 at 4.1 billion euros, of which 3.8 billion should be given to the Spanish state.

The French government in 2013 estimated the cost of the spill for French victims stood at 109 million euros.—AFP

Dozens of beaches across northwestern Spain were polluted after the Prestige tanker sank, leading the Spanish Supreme Court to rule, 16 years on, that more than 1.5 billion euros compensation must be paid, mainly to the Spanish state.

PHOTO: AFP

M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. (109 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. (109 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T/A.I.P.T where it will lie and be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie, at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANNA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING LINES

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANNA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301183

PHOTO: AFP

M.V AS FIONA VOY. NO. (003 W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V AS FIONA VOY. NO. (003 W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22-12-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T/T/A/I.P.T where it will lie, at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANNA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301185
Day 2 of ‘All Who Can Read Should Read’ campaign in Nay Pyi Taw

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint and Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun visit a book stall yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint and attendees pose for a documentary photo. PHOTO: MNA

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint observes a film roll machine. PHOTO: MNA

Books published in 2018 on display. PHOTO: MNA

Young men hand out pamphlets for ’All Who Can Read Should Read’ campaign. PHOTO: MNA

Students line up to observe a display of books published in 2018. PHOTO: MNA

An official explains about a radio receiver to students. PHOTO: MNA

Clay tablets with inscriptions on display. PHOTO: MNA

Students looking up in a dictionary on display. PHOTO: MNA
Cell-by-cell DNA science is ‘Breakthrough of 2018’

TAMPA (United States) — The US journal Science on Thursday coined as “Breakthrough of the Year” for 2018 new technologies that reveal how DNA cues individual cells to grow through time.

Experts say these methods will transform science over the coming decades, allowing an ever-clearer picture of the processes behind aging, healing and disease. “Just as a music score indicates when strings, brass, percussion, and woodwinds chime in to create a symphony, a combination of technologies is revealing when genes in individual cells switch on, cueing the cells to play their specialized parts,” said the report.

“The result is the ability to track development of organisms and organs in stunning detail, cell by cell and through time.” Modern methods build on the 2002 Nobel Prize-winning work of John Sulston and colleagues, who mapped the development of the roundworm Caenorhabditis elegans by painstakingly watching larvae mature cell by cell through microscopes,” said Jeremy Berg, editor-in-chief of the Science family of journals.

“With today’s technologies, especially massively parallel DNA sequencing and advanced fluorescence microscopy, the cells that comprise C. elegans have been mapped again using tag-analyze-assemble methods based on gene expression patterns within each cell.”

‘Revolution is just starting’

Scientific papers have been published this year on how a flatworm, a fish, a frog, and other organisms begin to make organs and appendages. International researchers are hard at work, looking for ways to apply these techniques to human cells—how they mature, regenerate, and what goes wrong when cancer, diabetes or even physical malformations occur.

Among the projects under

Gatekeeper at Japan’s ‘Suicide Forest’ hopes music can save lives

NARUSAWA (Japan)—From his hut on the edge of Japan’s “Suicide Forest”, Kyochi Watanabe blasts John Lennon’s “Imagine” into the night — hoping that music can lift people from their despair before it’s too late. The 60-year-old musician has been waging an eight-year battle to banish the vast forest’s morbid reputation by reaching out to those who come to end their lives. But now he fears his work is being undone. The forest, known as Aokigahara, made global headlines last year when YouTube star Logan Paul filmed an episode of his online series there, showing a suicide victim at the site.

The footage sparked outrage and infuriated Watanabe, who had travelled from the western city of Osaka to go home. “He returned home, and he still sends me messages on Facebook,” he said.

Highest suicide rate in the G7

Aokigahara’s long history dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when Mount Fuji erupted and lava covered wide areas that have since transformed into a 50 square-kilometre (12 square-mile) forest. Local people have long worshipped the woods and its surroundings as a sacred place that reputedly enshrines a dragon. It is a foreboding place, thickly planted with tall trees that block out the sky, and carpeted with moss and gnarled roots.— AFP
Aung La N Sang honored with his statue in Myitkyina

ONE Championship’s two-division World Champion, Aung La N Sang, has been honored with a bronze statue, unveiled recently through the efforts of locals, at the Kachin National Manaw Park in his hometown, Myitkyina, in Kachin State.

The statue shows Aung La N Sang with his world championship belts resting on his shoulders. Aung La N Sang reacted to news about the statue on his social media page.

“When I heard the news about this statue being built, I was shocked and was totally against it. I am just reaching the prime of my career and don’t want any more added pressure. I was also worried about discontent from people who disagree with the building of this statue,” he said.

“But this is not about me. It is a reminder for all the boys and girls born in Dukatawng or anywhere else in Myanmar; that they too can become World Champions, or whatever they set their hearts and minds on. I know I have a lot of faults and may let many people down in the future. So don’t look up to me, just let this be a reminder that even if our upbringing is humble, with grit and God’s grace, our hard work will be blessed,” he added.

Aung La N Sang became the two-division world champion after capturing the ONE Light Heavyweight World Championship as well as successfully defending his ONE Middleweight World Championship twice. Aung La also won the Male Athlete of the Year and the Bout of the Year awards at the 2018 Global Martial Arts Awards ceremony, held in Singapore on 8 November.—Lynn Thit(Tgi)

Disgraced Smith admits failures, is desperate to return

SYDNEY (Australia)—Disgraced Steve Smith admitted Friday he failed as a captain by turning a blind eye to the ball-tampering scandal and said it has been hard watching Australia struggle from the sidelines.

The former skipper is still serving a one-year ban from the international and domestic game for his part in the incident that rocked the cricket world, in which sandpaper was used to try and rough up the ball in South Africa.

Asked what went on in the changing rooms before Cameron Bancroft and David Warner went out and attempted to cheat, he said: “I had the opportunity to stop it at that point rather than say ‘I don’t want to know anything about it’.

“And that was my failure of leadership. And, you know, I’ve taken responsibility for that.”—Speaking to the media in Australia for the first time since he broke down in tears at a press conference following the scandal in March, Smith said it was the only incident of ball-tampering that he knows about.

“The scandal had far-reaching consequences with a clean-out of top executives from Cricket Australia after a scathing review blamed its “arrogant and controlling” culture was partly to blame for players bending the rules. But while it initially unleashed a torrent of vitriol against the players, Smith’s tearful apology on arrival home tugged at the heartstrings.

Widely considered among the finest batsmen in the world today, Smith admitted there had been “dark days” since he grappled with his fall from grace. But with his suspension running out at the end of March, Smith now can see light at the end of the tunnel and is desperate to return, with the World Cup and the Ashes next year in his sights.

“I’m just moving forward day to day, and doing what I need to do to prepare to hopefully get another opportunity to play for Australia,” he said.

“And if that’s World Cup and Ashes, so be it. And no doubt the English crowd will be incredibly hostile. I’m ready for that, if that happens.”—He has spent the time away playing for his grade cricket club Sutherland, which he captained to the New South Wales Premier T20 championship on Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Smith has also had stints in Canada’s Global T20 competition and in the Caribbean Premier League.

But he suffered a setback this week when he was barred from the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League T20 tournament on a technicality. Some of the hardest times during his ban came when the diminished Australian team struggled in his absence.

“It’s been tough at times, particularly when the boys haven’t played their best in a couple of games, it’s been hard watching and knowing that I can’t go out and help them,” he said.—AFP

Myanmar bicyclists take part in China event

A CYCLING team from Myanmar named the Bicycle Network Myanmar (BNM), together with members of the Ruili Cycling Association (RCA) and the Mangshi Bicycle Association (MBA) of China, took part in an event in China from 16 December to 20 December, according to the BNM.

A total of 26 cyclists from Myanmar participated in the five-day tour for China and Myanmar riders. The cycling tour from Yunnnan to Mangshi included well-known places such as Central Dehong, the Dawn City, the hulusi Town, the Vientiane Ancient City, the Mongol Songs Special Zone.

Teams from Yunnnan’s Dehong and Ruili also rode with the Myanmar bicyclists to the China-Myanmar Friendship Center in Mangshi, in a display of friendship between the two countries.

“During the event, the Chinese and Myanmar riders got a chance to explore Dehong and take part in mountain biking,” said a source with the BNM.

“Tokyo 2020 unveils new budget, spending unchanged at $12bn

The bill for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics is set to be around $12 billion.—AFP

Tokyo 2020 unveils new budget, spending unchanged at $12bn

TOKYO (Japan)—Tokyo 2020 organisers unveiled the latest version of the Games budget on Friday, keeping their estimate unchanged as they face intense pressure to keep costs down.

The latest budget for the Games stands at 1.35 trillion yen ($12.1 billion), unchanged in yen terms from the version announced this time last year. Organisers have pledged the bill will not increase amid concerns that ballooning costs are putting off potential Olympic host cities. ‘As many aspects of the Games have become more detailed, Tokyo 2020 has seen increases in some areas but has successfully reduced expenditures in other areas,’ Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto said in a statement. ‘There is still a lot of work to be done to control expenditures, but with the cooperation of the IOC, Tokyo 2020 will continue to make best efforts to maximise revenues, contain costs and keep its budget within 600 billion yen’ for the organisers, he said. The city government will provide a further 600 billion yen and the national government 130 billion yen, both unchanged from the previous version.

Muto has previously said that measures to tackle the expected hot weather during the Tokyo summer—such as water sprinklers and special heat-ab sorbing paint on roads—could push up the bill. Friday’s latest estimate came after a dispute over what exactly counts as Olympic spending.

A report from government auditors made headlines in October when it revealed that a budget-busting 800 billion yen had been allocated by government ministries and agencies.—AFP