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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. V, No. 271, 7th Waxing of Pyatho 1380 ME

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Saturday, 12 January 2019

State Counsellor arrives back in Nay Pyi Taw from Myitkyina



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is seen off by officials as she arrives at Myitkyina Airport to depart for Nay Pyi Taw following her visit to Kachin State Day in Myitkyina. **PHOTO: MNA**

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Chairperson of the Central Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races who was in Kachin State, Myitkyina left for Nay Pyi Taw on a special flight

yesterday morning. The State Counsellor and party were seen off at the Myitkyina airport by State Chief Minister Dr. Khet Aung, State Hluttaw Speaker U Tun Tin, State High Court Chief Judge U Tu Ja, state ministers,

Hluttaw representatives and officials.

The party led by State Counsellor arrived in Nay Pyi Taw at 10 a.m. and were welcomed by U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister of the Office of

the State Counsellor, Nay Pyi Taw Council chairman Dr. Myo Aung, Deputy Minister for the Office of the Union Government U Tin Myint and officials at the Nay Pyi Taw International Airport. — MNA ■

VP U Henry Van Thio discusses digital economy development

THE SECOND meeting of the Digital Economy Development Committee (DEDC) was held at the Ministry of Planning and Finance in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning. Vice President U Henry Van Thio, in his capacity as patron of the committee, delivered the opening speech at the meeting.

History of the DEDC

In his speech, the Vice President explained the purpose of the DEDC, saying it was formed to establish digital corporations and incorporate digital technology in the agricultural, livestock, and production sectors, and in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in order to raise their competitive abilities and production capacity so as to increase national revenue. In addition, citizens from rural areas and the rest of the country will be able to raise their living standards using digital technology, said the Vice President.

Digital businesses will change our world

He said the income from digital businesses for ASEAN countries in 2015 was US\$150 billion and it was projected to reach up to US\$1 trillion by 2025. Similarly, the income from digital businesses around the world in 2016 was equal to 15.5 per cent of the global GDP, and was projected to rise up to 25 per cent in 2020.

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UEC, ministries hold coord meeting on 2020 general election

Union Election Commission (UEC) and ministries held a coordination meeting yesterday morning at the UEC Office in Nay Pyi Taw to conduct general elections (GE) 2020. The meeting was attended by UEC Chairman U Hla Thein and members, officials from commission office, directors general, deputy permanent secretaries, deputy directors general and official from 12 ministries related to the election.

The UEC Chairman said the meeting was being held to meet with ministries who would be cooperating and conducting the GE 2020. A strategic program (2019-2022) has been drawn up in relation to the GE 2020 election process works and the program was drawn based on post-election suggestions of relevant election sub-commissions of all levels, political parties, civil society organizations and election moni-



UEC Chairman U Hla Thein delivers the speech at the coordination meeting with the ministries concerned in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

toring groups. The cooperation and participation of relevant ministries play an important role in implementing the strategic program. The Commission would start preparing voters list in 2019 and only when the trio of commission, General Administration Department and Immigration & Population Department conduct

this work can a true and correct voters list be achieved.

The commission was holding elections under the five norms of free, fair, transparent, credible and reflecting the will of the people and members of election sub-commissions at all levels and personnel on duty from ministries are to cooperate fully. Sim-

ilarly Hluttaw Election Law section 87 states that commission, sub commission members at all levels and their members, Constitutional Tribunal members, polling station heads, members could not be charged through civil or criminal law for discharging their duties in accordance with the law to the best of their

abilities. As such, they were to conduct their election duties and responsibilities courageously and truthfully in accordance with rules, regulations and procedures. The strategic program has 11 chapters and it has been distributed in advance so that ministries know their roles and assistance they have to provide. Relevant ministries were urged to cooperate fully towards the successful holding of the GE 2020, said the UEC Chairman.

Next, UEC Office Director General U Khin Maung Oo explained about arrangements made for GE 2020 and status of ministerial department wise cooperation specified in the strategic program chapters. Officials from ministerial departments participated in relevant sector wise discussions and suggestions. — MNA (Translated by Zaw Min)

47th Myanmar Health Research Congress held in Yangon

OPENING ceremony of 47th Myanmar Health Research Congress was held at Yangon Region Department of Medical Research on the morning of 8 January.

In his address to the opening ceremony, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe said the ministry is instilling the development of a research culture in the medical and medical related universities, schools and health care service providing departments. All are urged to participate in drawing up a road map to raise and develop the health research sector which is the basic foundation towards increasing capacity and effectiveness of the national health care system. This congress is where knowledge and experience are shared to researchers, medical experts and management personnel. It is necessary to utilize the research findings discussed and submitted at the congress in real life works.

To conduct applied research K 1,000 million was allocated in Fiscal Year 2017-2018, K 500 million in FY 2018 April to September and K 1,500 million in FY 2018-2019 and more is planned to be allocated in the coming fiscal years. These funds are urged to be utilized in applied research on management of ministry's projects, increasing expertise on subjects and topics and raising capacity in managing medicines and medical equipment. INGOs/NGOs and other organisations



Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe addresses the opening ceremony of 47th Myanmar Health Research Congress. PHOTO: MNA

are urged to increase health research after obtaining permission and assessment from ethics review committee or institutional review boards of Public Health University. Researchers are urged to participate in drawing up a road map to increase research capacity in pre and post graduate courses of medical and medical related universities. The expectation is to conduct multi-centric researches by connecting and linking up internationally with universities, organizations, foundations, pharmaceutical companies and private sectors. For the health research sector to fulfill the requirement of the ministry and to support and complement national health project works researches on ordering and distribution of medicines and

medical instrument/equipment; diseases and illnesses that occurs in the country; region and rate of occurrence; medical human resources requirement; current strength, mobilization and allocation; management and administrative system of the ministry; organisation and setup of hospitals, speed, ease and systematic diagnosis and treatment of patients; systematic care, treatment and management of patients in emergency wards; human resources of the ministry and financial resources are urged to be conducted.

Myanmar health research registry is also being established so that priority can be set and reviewed for important sectors where there are weaknesses in conducting research. Medical

Research Department (Pyin Oo Lwin) is starting to give research capacity raising certificate courses and scholarship trainings were sent by connecting with international universities.

In this congress, 90 research posters and 141 papers will be read and discussed. Compared to past years there is an increase in both quality and quantity. Future generations must be instilled with interest to conduct research. A Research Utilization and Monitoring Committee will be formed to monitor the utilization of research findings and recommendations. In accordance with the theme of this congress "Ensure WASH: A global agenda to improve quality of life" government, experts in various subjects and partner organizations are to co-

operate toward raising and developing social quality by filling in the omissions and requirements in sectors such as water, personal hygiene, and cleanliness of surrounding sectors. Analytical, thinking and expertise in the subject matter of each individual researcher will also be increased. Research works are a weapon that increases expertise and in-depth knowledge of subjects, enable achievement of Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), support social, economic and health development of the State and the people said the Union Minister.

Next, the Union Minister inspected the health related research posters and exhibits displayed at the congress.

Afterwards, paper reading session of the congress was held and was chaired and co-chaired by Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe and Department of Medical Research acting Director General Prof. Dr. Zaw Wei Soe. The 47th Myanmar Health Research Congress was held until 11 January in Department of Medical Research (Yangon) and 141 papers and 90 posters were read and included 10 symposiums and 8 scientific talks. The congress was attended by medical researchers from Myanmar and researchers from INGOs/NGOs, US, Japan, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, UK and the Republic of Korea.—MNA (Translated by Zaw Min)

VP U Henry Van Thio discusses digital economy development



Vice President U Henry Van Thio delivers the opening speech at the second meeting of the Digital Economy Development Committee at the Ministry of Planning and Finance in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

FROM PAGE-1

Statistics showed that digital businesses would grow 2.5 times faster than other businesses and investing in digital businesses could garner 6.7 times more benefits than investing in other types of businesses, said the Vice President.

He said the digital economy, also referred to as digital trade and e-commerce, would bring about the 4th Industrial Revolution by incorporating e-Government and e—Community systems.

The Vice President said over

80 per cent of mobile phone users in Myanmar own a smartphone, and this is a perfect opportunity to leapfrog development in our country's digital sector.

He said adapting to the 4th Industrial Revolution would require creating a digitally connected society to enable the public to receive the necessary skills and technology to adapt along with the times. He said this would allow people from both rural and urban areas to have access to digital services such as electronic trading, digital healthcare, and

online education.

Myanmar must anticipate digital change

The Vice President said e-commerce, digital payment, and digital markets must be developed in order for the public to have widespread usage. He said government services and payments must become available over a digital network too. He said an innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem needed to be established in Myanmar to encourage the digital economy

and the emergence of new jobs related to technology.

The Vice President said we must create an attractive environment for foreign investors so that we can bring about a digital transformation and establish a digital economy ecosystem. He said we must consider the effects on businesses employing conventional selling techniques and the lives of workers without adequate digital skills who may face unemployment. He said we must plan carefully to handle the digital disruption.

The Vice President said experts from the private sector have conducted capacity development courses for civil servants and in technological universities. He said many of Yangon's technological universities and hospitals have been outfitted with high-speed fiber optic networks and international technology companies have been invited to bring internet connectivity into every school. He said plans were underway to build innovation centers in Yangon and Mandalay, and the Digital Myanmar Report has been officially published.

Closing remarks

The main purpose of today's meeting, said the Vice President, was to analyze the strengths, requirements, and challenges of the digital economy system, and to approve a draft roadmap for the Digital Economy Development Committee (DEDC) that was in line with the country's existing situation. He said the roadmap would be a living document that could be edited and improved overtime.

He said the roadmap would have 6 strategy frameworks, 9 priority projects, and short-term and long-term action plans designed depending on the needs of the current strategy. He concluded by urging the attendees to pour out ideas and suggestions that would enhance the livelihoods of the people of Myanmar.

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SWRR Ministry provides aid to displaced people in Rakhine State

A CEREMONY to provide assistance to the displaced people and local residents was held yesterday at the Rakhine State government's office, where Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye attended and delivered a speech.

In his opening speech, Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye said that efforts were being made to fulfill the requirements of the local residents who stayed away from their own places due to conflicts through the cooperation of Union Government and Rakhine State government, and we understood that there remained many requirements

before making a systematic resettlement while distributing the provisions, cash and other assistances to them.

Moreover the government is striving to ease the people's sufferings and worries out of loving-kindness while working together to bring about a good result in the long run for the displaced people through mutual trust and transparency.

Then Union Minister handed over rice provision worth K 40 million for one month, mats and blankets worth K 9.9 million for 970 households.

Next the Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu and displaced people accepted the



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye hands over cash assistance at the ceremony to provide aid to displaced people from Ponnagyun, Buthidaung, Kyauktaw and Yathedaung townships in Rakhine State. **PHOTO: MNA**

supply and expressed their thanks.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

has lakh provided a total of K 70 lakh cash assistance, including K 20 lakh for provisions and relief aids to the displaced people

in Ponnagyun, Buthidaung, Kyauktaw and Yathedaung townships. — MNA (Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung)



A donor family hands over a gold plate to a member of the Shwedagon Pagoda's Board of Trustees.
PHOTO: MNA

174 gold plates, cash donated to Shwedagon Pagoda at 563rd ceremony

SHWEDAGON PAGODA Trustee conducted a 563rd ceremony to donate cash and present certificates to the donors at Shwedagon Pagoda platform near the old Buddha image hall of southern stairway.

At the ceremony, wellwishers donated cash donation that was accepted by Board of Trustees alternating chair

and members and in return presented certificates of honors to the donors.

The donors, attendees and the Board of Trustees members then took five precepts from Trustee Board Ovadacariya (Patron) Yangon Region, Bahan Township Nyaungdon Pali Takkatho Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Pawara Bivamsa

Agga Maha Gandavasak Panita, State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee member, shared merit, listened to a sermon and concluded the ceremony.

A total of 152 donors donated 174 gold plates and cash totaling over K 197 million it is learnt.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)

VP U Henry Van Thio discusses digital economy development

FROM PAGE-3

DEDC members give presentations

U Soe Win, Union Minister for Planning and Finance and DEDC Chairman, explained the short-term action plans necessary for Myanmar to implement the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 in time.

Permanent Secretary U Tun Tun Naing, DEDC's secretary, explained the completed tasks outlined during the first DEDC meeting, and tasks performed by relevant departments and the private sector for developing the digital economy sector. DEDC member U Mya Moe Aung explained the completed tasks concerning the digital economy development roadmap.

Attendees discuss digital ventures

Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications, U Tar Oo, permanent secretaries, department heads and experts

from the private sector discussed cyber security and adding digital awareness modules in primary school curriculums. They also discussed international e-Commerce, Myanmar e-Trade, providing services to taxpayers using modern ICT technology, bringing internet connectivity to schools in remote rural areas, and developing the digital economy sector.

Vice President U Henry Van Thio responded to the discussions and said it was important to continue working on establishing data centers throughout Myanmar.

He said it was important to balance constructing the necessary infrastructure for developing the digital economy with emphasis on cyber security. He instructed for the discussions made at the day's meeting to be incorporated into the committee's draft roadmap and to assign appropriate tasks to the departments and organizations.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

MoALI to host 11th ASEAN Ministerial meeting on Rural Development, Poverty reduction in October

RURAL Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation held a coordination meeting in preparation for hosting the 11th ASEAN Ministerial meeting on Rural Development and Poverty reduction, and its related meet-

ings yesterday.

At the meeting held at the department in Nay Pyi Taw, Director-General of the Department of Rural Development said that the 11th ASEAN Ministerial meeting on Rural Development and Poverty reduction meet-

ing would be held during the month of October, 2019, and a presentation ceremony for the ASEAN Rural Development and Leadership Quality awards will also be held.

Prize-selection commission has been formed with the representatives of NGOs, CSOs and Private Sector, and the process would be carried out in line with the rules and regulations.

At the meeting, social development and empowerment, Women Entrepreneurs Association, Association for Food Security and Cooperation, Myan DHRRA/Development for Human Resources in Rural Area, Network Activities Group and UMFCCI discussed their cooperation in holding the events sector wise.—Maung Min Naing

(Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung)



The preliminary meeting ahead of the 11th ASEAN Ministerial meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Reduction taking place in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Basic film production course titled "Smart Phone Director" to be opened at FDC

THE Basic Film Production Course entitled "Smart Phone Director" to be conducted from 14 to 19 January at the Film Development Centre of the Information and Public Relations Department in Yangon.

The six-day course is jointly conducted by the IPRD and Basic Media Education (Editing) of South Korea at No. 50 Shwe Taung Kya Road, Film Development Centre, Bahan Township.

The course has offered art creation, shooting skills with mobile phone cameras, drawing a shooting schedule, film editing and film development.

The training course will be lectured by U Aung Tin Htun, former MWTV Chief Director from South Korea and Mr. Jun Mir, former MWTV News PD & Media Education Team.—MNA

(Translated by JT)

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MIC approves nine investments with over 2,200 job opportunities

THE Myanmar Investment Commission-MIC held the meeting 1 / 2019 at its office in Yangon yesterday.

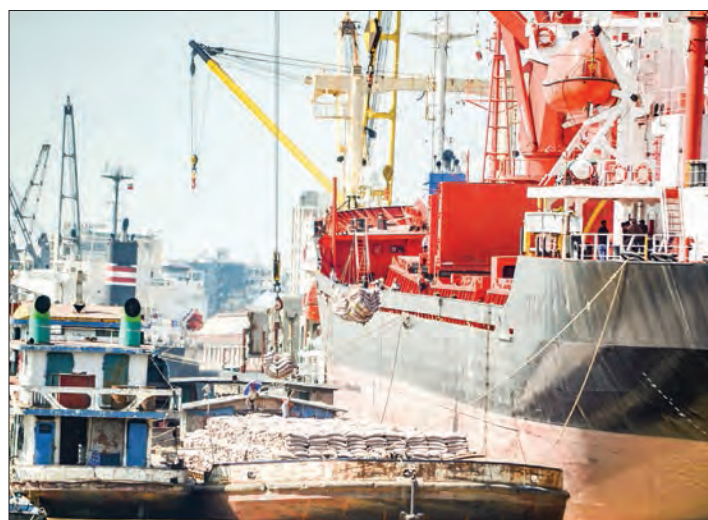
The meeting approved nine projects in meat processing, production, sales and distribution of rice and rice related products, manufacturing and marketing of animal feed, manufacturing and marketing of day old chick, man-

ufacturing of garment on CMP basic, power plants, LPG project based on pipeline jetty, warehousing and logistics services and automobile repair vocational training school which will create 2,227 job opportunities for citizens. The meeting was attended by U Thaung Tun, Chairman of MIC, Dr. Than Myint, Vice Chairman and 11 members.—MNA■



Myanmar Investment Commission meeting (1 / 2019) held in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Maritime trade reaches \$5.9bln in Q1 of current FY



Myanmar's maritime trade makes up approximately 80 per cent of the country's total trade. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH**

MYANMAR'S maritime trade in the first quarter (Q1) of the current fiscal year has touched US\$5.982 billion, an increase of \$443 million compared with the corresponding period of the last FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

From 1 October to 28 December, maritime exports totalled \$2.147 billion while imports stood at \$3.835 billion. During the same period in the previous fiscal year, Myanmar's trade via sea was pegged at \$5.538 billion, with exports valued at \$1.728 billion and imports registered at \$3.810 billion.

Roughly 80 per cent of the country's total trade is conducted through the maritime routes. According to data from the ministry, Myanmar's maritime trade stood at \$14.6 billion in the 2012-2013FY, \$20.375 billion in the 2013-2014FY, \$22.369 billion in the 2014-2015FY, \$20.56 billion in

the 2015-2016FY, \$21.432 billion in the 2016-2017FY, and \$25.019 billion in the 2017-2018FY. In the last six-month mini-budget period, the country shipped goods worth \$14.231 billion via sea.

In the first quarter of this FY, Myanmar's border exports reached \$1.469 billion while imports stood at \$665 million. Myanmar's major import items are divided into four groups — capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer goods, and CMP products. The country predominately exports seven groups of commodities, namely, agro, animal, fisheries and forest products, minerals, manufactured goods, and other miscellaneous products.

The trade authorities have been making efforts to boost external trade by promoting domestic production.—Swe Nyein ■ *(Translated by KTL)* ■

Thai-Myanmar border trade reaches \$937 mln in Q1

THE value of border trade between Myanmar and neighbouring Thailand totalled US\$937.4 million in the first quarter of the 2018-2019 Financial Year, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce. During the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year, the value of bilateral border trade was pegged at \$376 million. Between 1 October and 28 December 2018, Myanmar's exports to Thailand were valued at \$700 million, while imports were estimated at \$237

million. The Tachilek, Myawady and Kawthoung gates witnessed a small decrease in trade. Meanwhile, trade at the Hteekhee border gate picked up dramatically, boosting the total trade figure. Normally, the Myawady gate sees the largest trade among the Myanmar-Thailand checkpoints.

The value of trade stood at \$588.49 million at Hteekhee, \$209.39 million at Myawady, \$60.64 million at Myeik, \$56.72 million at Kawthoung, \$15.8 million at Tachilek, \$5.89 million at

Mawtaung, and \$0.45 million at Maese.

Myanmar primarily exports fishery products such as crab, fish, and shrimp, as well as onions, sesame, dry tea leaves, coconut, and turmeric to Thailand.

It imports capital goods such as machinery, raw industrial goods such as cement and fertilizers, consumer goods such as cosmetics, and food products.

—Ko Htet ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Trade deficit narrows to over \$800 mln in Q1

MYANMAR has managed to reduce its trade deficit in the past three months of the 2018-2019 Financial Year to US\$883 million from \$1.23 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

From 1 October to 28 December, external trade increased to \$8.1 billion, with exports estimated at \$3.6 billion and imports of \$4.5 billion. For the same period in the previous fiscal year, the country's external trade was pegged at \$7.6 billion.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, animal products, minerals, forest products, and

finished industrial goods, and imports capital goods, intermediate goods, CMP raw materials, and consumer goods.

The country's export sector relies more on agriculture and manufacturing. While export earnings from the CMP (cut, make, and pack) garment businesses are rising, the country's reliance on natural resources such as natural gas and jade is lessening.

The government has been trying to reduce the trade deficit by screening luxury import items and boosting exports. In the current fiscal year, maritime

trade totalled \$5.98 billion, while border trade fetched \$2.1 billion, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

The country's trade deficit stood at \$91.9 million in the 2012-2013 FY, \$2.5 billion in the 2013-2014 FY, \$4.9 billion in the 2014-2015 FY, \$5.4 billion in the 2015-2016 FY, \$5.5 billion in the 2016-2017 FY, and \$1.3 billion in the last mini-budget period, according to statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO).—Mon Mon ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Exports of animal products rise by \$166 mln

MYANMAR'S exports of animal products between 1 October and 4 January topped US\$180 million, increasing significantly by \$166 million from \$13.8 million recorded in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year, the Commerce Ministry reported.

Private sector exports of animal products stood at \$180 million, while public sector exports were valued at \$0.238 mil-

lion. Until 28 December, there were no public sector exports of animal products. Myanmar sells animal products mainly to neighboring countries — China, India, and Thailand. According to the ministry's statistical report, the country earned about \$1.5 billion from the export of seven major groups of products — agricultural, animal, forest and aquaculture products, minerals,

manufactured goods, and other marketable products. Over the first 96 days of this FY, the country shipped \$3.723 billion worth of products, with exports of agro products valued at \$784 million, marine products at \$236 million, minerals at \$296 million, forest products at \$48 million, manufactured goods at \$1.975 billion, and other miscellaneous products at \$121 million. —Swe Nyein

Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Win Myint

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Win Myint, on the occasion of the 71st Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Petro Poroshenko President of Ukraine

On behalf of the Ukrainian people and my own behalf let me extend my sincerest congratulations on the occasion of the Independence Day of Myanmar.

I hope the development of constructive cooperation on bilateral and multilateral tracks between Ukraine and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar will contribute to further deepening of mutual understanding and strengthening of friendly relations

between peoples of our countries.

Taking the opportunity I wish you, Your Excellency, good health and success in Your responsible state activity, as well as peace and harmony to the friendly people of Myanmar.

From Andrzej Duda President of the Republic of Poland

On the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, on behalf of the Polish

Nation and myself I have the honour to convey to You Mr. President my best wishes.

I wish to assure you of the unchanged will of the Authorities of the Republic of Poland to further development of mutually friendly bilateral relations, especially economic and cultural ones.

Please accept, Mr. President my best wishes of successes and personal well-being for Mr. President and all the Citizens of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

■

Foreign Head of State sends felicitations to State Counsellor

The following is message of felicitations from Foreign Head of State / Government sent to State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the occasion of the 71st Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Andrej Babis Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Let me extend my most sincere congratulations to

you and the people of your country on the anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my firm conviction that the friendly relations between our

two countries will continue to develop successfully and dynamically in many areas.

I wish you, Excellency, lots of success and good health. ■

Myanmar opium cultivation continues to drop: UNODC report

THE area of opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar dropped to 34,300 hectares in 2018, down 9.1 per cent from the 41,000 hectares recorded in 2017, said Maj-Gen Aung Thu, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs and member of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control, yesterday.

He disclosed the figures in his address at the ceremony to release the Myanmar Opium Survey 2018.

The cultivation is found in Shan, Kachin and Kayah states, mostly found in Shan State, according to the report.

Myanmar drafted its 15-year drug eradication plan in 1999 and extended it further five years until 2019.

In cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-UNODC and the Office of the Narcotic Control Board-ONCB of Thailand, the Union Government is carrying out opium-substitute sustainable development programs in Hopon, Loilem and Pinlaung townships in southern Shan State and Tachilek in eastern Shan State.

The country approved its National Drug Control Policy in November 2017 and announced the new policy to the world in February 2018 and it was welcomed by the international communities.

To implement the new policy, the CCDAC drafted a

master plan mainly focus on reduction of opium cultivation.

He commented that “the Government of Myanmar is pleased to see further declines in opium cultivation, but we also agree that there is still much to do, and we will continue to support programmes that provide viable alternatives to opium.”

At the ceremony, Ms. Miwa Kato of UNODC also delivered an address and Resident Representative Mr. Jeremy Douglas made the power point presentation about the report. —MNA ■

*(Translated by
Kyaw Zin Lin)*



Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Thu addresses the audience at the launching of the Myanmar Opium Survey 2018. **PHOTO: MNA**

Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture receives Chinese cultural counselor



Deputy Minister U Kyi Min receives Chinese cultural counselor Mr. Tian Shanting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

DEPUTY Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Kyi Min and Mr. Tian Shanting, cultural counselor at the Chinese Embassy in Yangon held talks over cooperation in cultural sector yesterday.

At the meeting yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, they discussed

matters relating to cooperation in holding the Gala Show Paukphaw Carnival of Happy Chinese New Year 2019 to be held in Yangon, enhancing cooperation in the field of culture as well as exchange programs between China and Myanmar. **MNA ■ (Translated by JT)**

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Child Day Care Center opening ceremony held at MRTV in Nay Pyi Taw

UNION MINISTER for Information Dr. Pe Myint and wife Daw Khine Nwe Oo attended the opening ceremony of a Child Day Care at Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) in Nay Pyi Taw at 10:30 am yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and wife Daw Khin Nyunt, Director-General of MRTV U Myint Htwe and wife Daw Moe Sandar Myint, Director-General of Information and Public Relations Department U Ye Naing, Director-General of Printing and Publishing Department U Aung Myo Myint, Director-General of Department of Social Welfare Dr. San San Aye and officials.

Firstly, Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint, Deputy Minister U

Aung Hla Tun, Director-General U Myint Htwe and Dr. San San Aye cut the ceremonial ribbon to open Child Day Care Center. Afterward, children from the center entertained the attendees with poetries, dances, and songs. The Union Minister and his wife, Deputy Minister and his wife and officials offered toys for children and inspected preparation of lunch for children and presence of toys and accessories for children in the center. The Child Day Care take care of children of staffs from MRTV and there were 12 one-year-old children, 18 two-year-old children, 21 three-year-old children and 5 four-year-old children, totaling 56 children are attending the center. —MNA ■ (Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)



Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint and officials visit the newly opened Child Day Care Center at MRTV in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister Dr Aung Thu receives US Ambassador to Myanmar



Union Minister Dr. Aung Thu meets with US Ambassador Mr. Scot Alan Marciel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr. Aung Thu received US Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Scot Alan Marciel at his office in Nay Pyi Taw on 10 January.

During the meeting, they

discussed matters related to enforcement of the Law Amending the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law (2018), the ministry's undertakings for granting land ownership to farmers,

cooperation in getting technology for farmland management and advices, and pest control in farmland and micro loans assistance for farmers. —Maung Min Naing ■ (Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)

“Responsible Administration and Businesses” workshop to be held in Bago

A workshop on anti-corruption under the title, “Responsible Administration and Businesses” organized by Anti-Corruption Commission of Myanmar and Bago Region Government with the technical support of UNDP will be held at Bago City Hall in Bago on 17 January.

Bago Region Government, Anti-Corruption Commission,

Myanmar Press Council, UM-FCCI, experts, Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, local business persons, representatives from civil society organizations will participate and discuss in the workshop.

Chief Minister of Bago Region Government, Chairman of Anti-Corruption Commission of Myanmar, commission

members, regional ministers, Regional Hluttaw representatives, NGOs, elders of the community, business organizations, officials from respective administrations and departmental officials and staffs of the commission will be present at the workshop. —MNA ■ (Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun inspects for holding of Children Literature Festival

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun arrived No (3) Basic Education High School, Sagaing, at 5:30 pm yesterday and inspected preparation for holding the Children Literature Festival, Children Literature Exhibition and Book

Sales there.

The Festival will be held from 9 am to 5 pm on 13 January and 14 January. People who are interested in literature are invited to participate in the festival. —MNA ■ (Translated by Myat Thandar Aung)



Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun inspects the preparations for Children's Literature Festival in Sagaing. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR



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Our hands are resolutely joined in harmony

10 JANUARY was a joyous day for Kachin State. It marks the 71st anniversary of the Kachin State Day, the day when our ethnic brothers and sisters are happily reunited in the celebrations. State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended the celebrations for the Kachin State Day, and showed us that she stands with the ethnic nationals of the State.

Happiness and goodwill are byproducts of peace. If the entire country were enveloped in happiness and mutual affection, there would be no reason for it to not be peaceful.

If we could foster understanding and deep connections with each other to build peace, then development would surely follow. Strong relationships among our people will, without a doubt, allow the entire country to develop swiftly and uniformly.

At the 71st Kachin State Day ceremony, the State Counsellor said: "The responsibility of systematically bringing about a firm and solid situation in ten years' time, as President U Win Myint said, rests on each and every one of us.

The first step is the most important one to be taken on a journey. Let me remind you that the first step we took to establish a strong and developed Union is the step towards peace."

If all ethnic nationals cooperate with trust in the peace process then development will emerge as surely as a fish takes to water. The Union government will be able to fulfill the wishes of all ethnic nationals as quickly as possible.

In her meeting with representatives of organizations, religious leaders, and ethnic nationals in Kachin State, the State Counsellor said she was not one to make a promise and not deliver. She said when she gave a

promise she saw it through to the end. She said she only makes promises she is certain of accomplishing. She said the Union government was implementing procedures in other states and regions on an equal footing.

Trust and transparency among the people are positive signs for the country. It is heartening to see people from different religions and races coexisting peacefully and openly in Kachin State.

This is an example of the Union spirit that exists in the hearts of all our ethnic nationals. The State Counsellor's visit to Kachin State on this auspicious day encapsulates the loving affection, unity, harmony, and mutual communication shared by the people living there.

We believe strong relations with ethnic nationals will help bring about peace and uniform development in the whole of Myanmar.

By Naing Ye Win

TODAY, human trafficking has become the most important and challenging issue after violence and drug trafficking. Countries around the world are implementing anti-trafficking initiatives individually and unilaterally. Myanmar has also reached to a certain point in anti-trafficking actions enthusiastically within regionally and internationally. Myanmar has taken human trafficking issue as national mandate and implementing measures for protecting people against human trafficking since 1997. Human trafficking which links with a whole mankind is more than just a crime against person, it's also an exploitation as human trading and violation of human rights where each case is full of complications. Therefore, this could not be solved solely at the case but needs to take up broader aspects to tackle the issue.

Human trafficking is thought to be one of the fastest-growing crimes and the worst violation of human rights around the world, thus, no country is tolerating this and countries have been fighting against human trafficking in many

ways and working in a combined manner Under UN Charter's Article (1) and Article (3), it is stated that human rights are to be respected and it is every country and its citizen's obligation to fight against human trafficking, which is contradictory with Universal Declaration of Human Rights – UDHR on 10 December 1948.

Myanmar becomes one of the members of Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, TIP Protocol and SOM Protocol adopted by the United Nations in the year 2000 in Palermo, Italy. On 13 September 2005, Law on prevention of human trafficking was enacted. Union Minister for Ministry of Home Affairs has founded a committee to prevent human trafficking and taken a lead role as Chairman to fight these crimes enthusiastically. Similarly, committees on the fight against trafficking in human beings were formed in regions/states, district/townships and community-based human trafficking monitoring groups were organized to carry out these missions.

In addition to this, Myanmar was a member of Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Human Trafficking (COMMIT) in Mekong region in 2004 and

was a host of 2nd Senior Officials meeting and 1st Inter-Ministerial Meeting in 2004, 7th Senior Official meeting in 2010, 12th Inter-Ministerial Meeting in 2017. Formal diplomatic notes on anti-human trafficking has been signed with neighboring countries such as

was signed between Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in Myanmar and Ministry of Social Development and Human Security in Thailand for repatriation, social re-inclusive and rehabilitations of the victims of human trafficking.

... that there are five kinds of human trafficking -- forced labor, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, forced adoption, and debt bondage - and a new form of human trafficking discovered in 2018 -- commercial surrogacy. ...

Thailand and China and together have been coordinating actions against human trafficking along the border. Myanmar-Thai diplomatic notes on anti-trafficking were signed on 24 April 2009 and the notes were re-evaluated. Myanmar is also an active member of ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children – ACTIP).

Standard Operation Procedure

The law enacted upon human trafficking in 2005 is being revised to bring into line with present circumstances and efforts are made to be confirmed in Hluttaw.

In order to have more effective actions against human trafficking, booklets of guidelines for government lawyers, coordination guideline booklets for anti-trafficking police and local police officers, booklets of

procedures for anti-trafficking police officers, booklets of coordinated prosecution guideline for local police officers and law enforcement officers, planning of internationally recognized social re-inclusion and rehabilitation, proactive implementation of prevention measurements and more effective judgment programs are being carried out.

Furthermore after taking legal actions against offender, it is also important to balance the social re-inclusion of the victims. So as to tackle human trafficking crimes, campaign to enhance awareness and educational programmes have been conducting across towns, villages and schools. Hotline numbers are established and short messages or texts can be sent via telecommunication network which is being beneficial to anti-trafficking actions.

Statistics observed over human trafficking in Myanmar showed that there are five categories for human trafficking -- forced labor, forced marriage, sex exploitation, forced adoption and debt bondage – and that there are five kinds of human trafficking -- forced labor, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, forced adoption, and debt bondage – and a

new form of human trafficking discovered in 2018 – commercial surrogacy. After enacting human trafficking law in 2005, a total of 1609 human trafficking case and 4556 exploiters were persecuted and estimated 3850 victims were being prevented from being trafficked. Myanmar like any other developing countries in the world, faces rare job opportunities, minimum earned wages and natural disasters which results in local and international migration which in turns supports trafficking to continue. At the same time, the fact that victims misjudging exploiters as benefactor and unwilling to cooperate in anti-trafficking also gives exploiters a good chance to take advantage. That's why it is important to penetrate the unforeseen strings attached from the era's policy is also one of the fact to consider in anti-trafficking sectors.

Finally, in line with the motto "Fight against human trafficking for humanitarian purpose", we need to commit to combat human trafficking as our social obligation while cooperating hand to hand with international community to build equitable and secure human society.

(Translated by HYME)

Find collaborative solutions to combat human trafficking

Empowering youth for better society in modern age

By Htet Wai Aung (Sagaing)

ACTIVE role of youth plays a vital role as part of human resources in the implementation for the continuous development of a nation on this planet. Looking back into the chronicle of Myanmar independence struggle, the images of young people were vividly seen in all fronts. Present youth today are poised to shoulder the onerous tasks and hold the responsibly of the nation in the years ahead.

Should be in the forefront

Most important setting of the nation is empowering the youth and the seniors neck and neck in the endeavor of nation building, as the young people have reasonable outlook, personal ability and wisdom. They should serve for the advantage and benefit of the country to the best of their ability after sharing the knowledge, technical knowhow and moral values among themselves. These prospective

and hopeful rising stars should be in the front pages of the country.

Top notch roles in the international arena are being occupied by the youth, representing the powerful strength of each nation, who always uphold the interest of the people and the nation. They have the ability to put the nation at a place to be on a par with developed countries, so as to stand tall with dignity in the world.

Great expectation in acquiring the high technology and the ardent endeavor of the youth are very much desirable for the development of a nation, and that all the growth and progress are derived from modern expertise.

Undeniable factor is that the high tech poses as the driving force for the development of a nation as well as to elevate into powerful nation, reflecting and confirming with the evidence of super development through science and technology.

Modern household items such as computer, television, washing machine, and air conditioner are

the result of technology, and they are the products of the business community and the technology experts whom worked in cooperation in creating most updated and modern apparatuses.

Various stages included that of manufacturing from normal goods to value added merchandise, that of combining the technology and the artistic designing, that of creating newest version of each and every hot selling items, and that of working in team spirit for the good of the nation.

In this fast moving world, people seek comfort and ease through devices and luxury goods such as that of air conditioners to beat the heat, that of heaters to prevent from extreme cold, that of washing machine with instant dryers to avoid outside bad weather. The items are so wide ranging that writing down would result with tons of papers.

Talking about computers, its paraphernalia and relevant devices would be unending, as it represent as a complex window

of modern technology. Computer is instrumental and brings in all requirements of human needs for practical and pragmatic use, and that it has wide ranging of applications from the very basic to the most advanced functioning.

Modern day situation

Internet-based technology is the most advanced and popular know-how in today's world and the people across the world is using the World Wide Web among themselves exchanging economic, education and social matters, with the rising number of users.

Moreover, this internet technology also caters motley assortment of services including education and entertainment around the clock online such as YouTube, movies, music, education, library services, arts and etc. Therefore, these technologies are instrumental for the youth in climbing up the ladder to the top notch position and enjoy the success.

It may be advisable that this technology should be studied by

all youth through proper approach such as slow and steady and win the race in tenacity, perseverance, steadfastness and determination. People are born and brought up in different ways and lifestyle, and therefore, the achievement in the skill would not be the same, but endeavoring, striving and making great effort would definitely achieve success.

Difficulties are everywhere

Choosing correct subject is very much vital resulting with many advantages that could help in becoming an expert and professional, despite the fact that there are hurdles. Difficulty is nothing but a simple phenomenon that could overcome if a person is ready and go for it, and that the lessons in life is most valuable.

At the end of the course or after graduating for the university, one should continue with lifelong learning. It defines as the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons,

making the youth as inventors for new creation as well as the dignified persons of the nation.

Youth as high hope and dream of the nation

Youth is the dream and high hope of the nation and that their ideas and ambition should be implemented as they are always energetic with the concept of new ideas and innovative thoughts on pragmatic approach.

Therefore, we have the responsibility and obligation in elevating and enriching the capacity of the youth with the encouragement and support of the government and social organizations.

In conclusion, the writer of this article would like to urge the stakeholders in accommodating the youth of the county in the building the new nation for the greater good of the people and the country in multifaceted sectors in leaps and bounds by leaving behind the obsolete old system and practices.

Translated by UMT (Ahlon)



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued on Friday 11 January 2019)

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS RECORDED AT 09:30 hrs MST: During the past (24) hours, rain has been isolated in Taninthayi Region, weather has been generally fair in Lower Sagaing and Magway regions, Chin and Rakhine states and partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states. Night temperatures were (3°C) to (4°C) above January average temperatures in Mandalay and Ayeyawady regions, (Eastern & Southern) Shan and Kayah states, (5°C) above January average temperatures in Bago Region, Kayin and Mon states and about January average temperatures in the remaining regions and states. The significant night temperatures were (-2°C) in Haka, (3°C) in Ramthlo, (4°C) in Putao, (5°C) each in Heho and Tiddim.

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is generally fair over the North Bay and West Central Bay and partly cloudy to cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF 12 January 2019: Rain will be isolated in Taninthayi Region and Mon State. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions, Kachin, Chin, Kayah and Kayin states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states. **STATE OF THE SEA:** Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (3-5) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of light rain in Taninthayi Region.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 12 January 2019: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 12 January 2019: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR Mandalay AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 12 January 2019: Generally fair weather.

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

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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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.

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Palm tower draws local, foreign tourists

A PALM tower built beside the palm tree forest on the Kyaukpadaung-NyaungU Road is attracting local and foreign travellers, said U Ba Nyar, a jaggery shop owner.

"Long ago, the small shops alongside Kyaukpadaung-Bagan-NyaungU were huts. Now, the shops have become big structures.

Dried palm-leaf shelters have been constructed in addition to the palm tower to attract local and foreign travellers," he added.

The palm shops sell only products made of palm. They also demonstrate traditional skills such as climbing palm trees and making jaggery, palm boxes and chairs, and traditional medicines.

"Tourists have shown an interest in observing the brewing of palm wine and the making of jaggery. They are willing to



The palm tower near the Kyaukpadaung-Nyaung U Road attracts locals and foreign travellers.

PHOTO: KO HTEIN (NGATHAYAUT)

sample the bitter tasting sap from toddy-palm spathe and sweet tasting jaggery," he said. "Tourists usually visit the palm forest in the morning and go to

the Bagan cultural zone in the evening. Local and foreign tourists like to eat coconut jaggery. Local people use 150 coconuts daily to produce coconut jaggery.

During the holiday season, the locals make coconut jaggery using 700 coconuts," said U Ba Nyar.—Ko Htein (Ngathayaut) *(Translated by Hay Mar)*

No parking fee for vehicles carrying pilgrims to Mann Shwe Sattaw pagoda

STARTING this year, vehicles carrying pilgrims to the Mann Shwe Sattaw pagoda will no longer be charged parking fees, according to the pagoda's board of trustees. The Mann Shwe Sattaw pagoda's board of trustees will organize the 70-day pagoda festival, starting 9 February. The festival will be organized by the main committee with the help of nine sub-committees. "Last year, pilgrims were unhappy with parking fee collectors, who were collecting money at the pagoda entrance. Therefore, we won't invite any

tender this year for both vehicle terminals. We are planning to implement a one-way traffic system to prevent traffic jams," said Colonel Min Oo, the Magwe Region Government's Security and Border Affairs Minister, at a media conference.

"Pilgrims are not happy with the collection of parking fees at the pagoda's entrance and rising hotel charges. Hotel rates are rising because hotels have to pay a commission to agents for bringing guests. Therefore, we have decided to do away with agents," said



Mann Shwe Sattaw Pagoda in Minbu. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

a member with the pagoda's board of trustees. —Zayya Tu (Magway) ■ *(Translated by Hay Mar)*

Two women arrested for smuggling drugs in Mansi

POLICE arrested two women in connection with a drug trafficking case in Mansi Township, Bhamo District, Kachin State, on Thursday.

During a search operation, an anti-drug squad led by police sergeant Mang Aik Hlaing stopped a motorbike headed to Hanhtet Village from Mangra

Village on the Hanhtet-Mangra Road around 3 p.m. on Thursday. They arrested the motorcyclist, identified as Thin Thin Khine, 37, upon finding 5,790 yaba tablets in her possession.

As part of further investigations in the case, police arrested another woman, identified as

Khin Mar Lwin, also known as Mar Lwin, 30, of Mawrawaddy Ward of Mansi Township. Khin Mar Lwin admitted to paying Thin Thin Khine K100,000 to transport the drugs, and told police she had taken a large quantity of drugs from another unidentified woman about 9 a.m. on Thursday.

Police have filed a case against Thin Thin Khine and Khin Mar Lwin under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law and are continuing their investigations to arrest others connected with the drug trafficking case.—U Kein Phyu ■ *(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)*

4.6 tons of illegally harvested hardwood logs seized in PyinOoLwin

TWO men were arrested for transporting illegally harvested logs of hardwood in PyinOoLwin Township, PyinOoLwin District, Mandalay Region, on Thursday afternoon, according to a police report.

Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comprising forest officials, police members, and ward/township administrative officials stopped and searched two vehicles en route to Muse from Mandalay around 3 p.m. on

10 January. The vehicles were stopped between the Hsingaung-junction and the bypass of PyinOoLwin Township.

The team found 53 logs of Padauk and Tamalan hardwood, weighing 4.224 tons, inside the

vehicles. The drivers of the vehicles were booked for transporting prohibited forest products under the existing forest law.—Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay) ■ *(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)*

21 bodies found on US-Mexico border as Trump visits

MEXICO CITY (Mexico) — Mexican authorities said Thursday they had found 21 bodies on the US-Mexican border after a drug-gang shootout in a town near where President Donald Trump was due to visit later in the day.

The bodies — some of them badly burned—were found Wednesday in the border town of Miguel Aleman, about 170 miles (270 kilometers) from McAllen, Texas, the city Trump was due to visit as he continues his push to build his long-sought border wall.

“We have reports there was a shootout yesterday (Wednesday) between two criminal groups that ended with 21 people dead,” the security spokesman for the state of Tamaulipas, Luis Alberto Rodriguez, told Mexican TV news channel Milenio.

“Some of them were burned.

Seven vehicles were also located... It was a confrontation between two rival groups that are involved in a turf war over drug-trafficking routes.”

The Mexican army found the bodies in a remote area following a tip-off, he said. Tamaulipas has become one of the most violent states in Mexico as rival drug cartels fight each other for its strategic position on the US border.

Mexico has been racked by drug-related violence in recent years — something Trump has alluded to in arguing his wall is needed to keep out violent criminals and narcotics. McAllen, where he was meeting with border patrol agents, sits across from Tamaulipas.

The US State Department has issued its most severe travel warning for the state because of



Tamaulipas has become one of the most violent states in Mexico as rival drug cartels fight each other for its strategic position on the US border. **PHOTO: AFP**

violent crime, classifying it alongside countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

More than 200,000 people have been murdered in Mexico since the government deployed

the army to fight the country's powerful drug cartels in 2006, including a record 28,711 in 2017.

Preliminary figures indicate the homicide record was broken again in 2018.— AFP ■

Spanish feminist movement faces far-right backlash

MADRID (Spain) — Several women's groups have called a series of protests against Vox, which won a surprise 12 seats in Andalusia's regional elections last month after campaigning on a nationalist, anti-feminist agenda.

It is the first time that a far-right party has won representation in a Spanish regional parliament since the country returned to democracy after the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco in 1975.

“What they want is a sudden stop in the advance of women's rights. We will not take a step backwards,” veteran Spanish feminist Ana Maria Perez del Campo told a news conference

on Wednesday. Vox initially demanded the scrapping of tough laws protecting women from gender violence in return for its crucial support for a coalition government in Spain's most populous region made up of the conservative Popular Party (PP) and centre-right Ciudadanos.

It argues that measures to fight gender violence are “ideological” and “discriminatory” against men. The condition sparked outrage and it was ultimately dropped under an agreement Vox reached with the PP.

Reverse gains

But Maria Silvestre, a sociology professor at the University of Deusto in Bilbao, said Vox had

sent the message that “we are the right which wants to change things.”

“All the advances of recent years... they want to reverse,” she told AFP.

Formed in late 2013 by disgruntled PP members, Vox wants the national health service to cease paying for abortions and an end to “subsidised radical feminist associations”.

Around 50 women are killed each year in Spain by their partner or former partner and there has long existed cross-party consensus on measures to fight violence against women.

The Spanish parliament in 2004 unanimously passed Europe's first law specifically crack-

ing down on gender-based violence that offered free legal aid and established special courts for victims.

Vox “have ensured that something that was not discussed is once again being debated,” Silvia Claveria, a political science professor who specialises in feminism at the Carlos III University in Madrid, told AFP.

Silvestre said there was “clearly” a “reaction” to the feminist movement, which marked International Women's Day in March with an unprecedented strike targeting gender inequality that was followed by over five million women and massive street protests across Spain.

'Patriarchal reaction'

The case of a group of five men dubbed “the pack” accused of gang raping a woman at Pamplona's famous bull-run in 2016 has also sparked repeated protests and fuelled Spain's own version of the #MeToo movement.

The men were found guilty of sexual abuse rather than the more serious offence of rape, sparking a debate over Spain's sexual offences legislation.

Women have also seen gains in politics as well over the past year. The cabinet which Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez appointed after he took office in June has nearly twice as many women as men in ministerial posts, with women holding key portfolios like economy and justice.— AFP ■



Feminists have held massive street protests across Spain. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

US military removes some equipment from Syria: official

WASHINGTON (United States) — The US military has removed some equipment from Syria, a defense official confirmed Thursday, following a report that the drawdown ordered by President Donald Trump is now underway.

“I can confirm the movement of equipment from Syria,” the official told AFP. “For security reasons, I am not going to provide further details at this time.” Trump's shock announcement on 19 December that he was withdrawing all 2,000 American troops from the conflict-racked Middle Eastern country concerned allies and prompted the resignation of his then defense chief Jim Mattis.—AFP ■

Increasingly isolated Venezuelan president begins new term

CARACAS (Venezuela) — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro began a new term on Thursday with the economy in ruins and his regime more isolated than ever as regional leaders declared his re-election illegitimate and shunned his inauguration.

The 56-year-old socialist leader was sworn in by Supreme Court president Maikel Moreno as an audience of hundreds, including a handful of South American leftist leaders and Venezuela's military top brass, cheered and applauded. “I swear on behalf of the people of Venezuelan — I swear on my life,” Maduro said solemnly as he took the oath of office for a second six-year term.—AFP ■

S Korean court upholds ruling in Hitachi Zosen forced labor case

SEOUL — A South Korean court on Friday upheld a ruling ordering Japanese shipmaker Hitachi Zosen Corp to compensate a plaintiff for wartime forced labor.

The Seoul High Court dismissed the company's appeal of a 2014 ruling by the Seoul Central District Court in which the company was ordered to pay 50 million won (\$44,794) to the South Korean plaintiff.— Kyodo News ■

Xi makes his day: Kim boosted by China talks, say analysts

SEOUL (South Korea)—North Korean leader Kim Jong Un came away from his fourth meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping with his hand strengthened in nuclear talks with the US, analysts say, even as Seoul urged him to do more. Beijing is Pyongyang's sole major ally and key provider of trade and aid, their ties forged in the blood of the Korean War. The relationship had soured in recent years as China became frustrated with its neighbour's nuclear antics but warmed dramatically in 2018 as Kim and Xi met three times, each occasion coming shortly before Kim's summits with US President Donald Trump and the South's Moon Jae-in.

A second Kim-Trump meeting is expected soon, and the North Korean and Chinese leaders had far deeper security discussions this time in Beijing than in any of their talks last year, pointed out Lim Eul-chul, professor of North Korean studies at Kyungnam University.

Kim and Xi agreed to jointly study and co-ordinate "the management of the situation of the Korean peninsula and the denuclearisation negotiations in particular", the North's official KCNA news agency reported. That will give China a central role in future US-North Korean discussions, Lim told AFP, even if it is not in the room at the time.

"Closer ties between China and North Korea in pursuit of a security alliance will not be welcomed by the US," Lim told AFP. "It could be a challenge to Washington to face Pyongyang officials with firm backing from



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (l) shaking hands with China's President Xi Jinping (r) during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on 8 January 2018. PHOTO: AFP

their neighbour."

The negotiation process has stalled since Kim and Trump's first high-profile encounter in Singapore, where they signed a vaguely-worded statement on denuclearisation and have since disagreed on what it means.

Pyongyang is demanding the easing of sanctions imposed over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, while Washington insists they must remain in place until it gives up its atomic arms—something it has made no public promise to do.

China—which regards north-east Asia as its back yard and is engaged in a range of disputes of its own with the US, including a trade spat that threatens to upset the global economy—also wants the sanctions relaxed. Xi agreed with the "principled issues" raised by North Korea in talks

with the US and that its "reasonable points of concern should be resolved properly", according to Pyongyang's official KCNA news agency.

Pyongyang has a long history of playing major powers off against each other, with Kim's predecessor and grandfather Kim Il Sung adept at winning backing from the then Communist rivals Beijing and Moscow in turn. "North Korea uses engagement with China to reinforce its leverage with the United States, and vice versa," said former US diplomat and Korea specialist Mintaro Oba. It could be "annoying" for Pyongyang to have to face Beijing emphasising its "superiority" in their relationship, he tweeted, but that was "a small price to pay for a strengthened position" in talks with Trump.

'Tangible achievements'

Expectations of a second Trump-Kim summit have mounted in recent days, with the US leader saying the two were negotiating over its location and Seoul's President Moon Jae-in saying Kim's Beijing trip was a sign it was "imminent". Speculation over possible locations has swirled among Korea-watchers, with the candidates including Hanoi in Communist-ruled Viet Nam, Ulan Bator in Mongolia—which Kim can reach by train—Sweden, which has a long history of mediating between Pyongyang and Washington, and even the US state of Hawaii. But whether a meeting will take place still depends on what Pyongyang brings to the table in preliminary talks between the two, said Kim Han-kwon, analyst at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy. —AFP ■

Philippine president continues to enjoy high trust, approval ratings: poll

MANILA—Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte continues to enjoy high trust and approval ratings, according to an independent poll released on Friday.

A survey by Pulse Asia Inc. conducted from 14 December to 21 last year showed 81 per cent of the 1,800 Filipinos aged 18 and above surveyed nationwide approved of Duterte's performance or the way Duterte runs the country, up by six percentage points from his September 2018 rating of 75 per cent.

The survey further showed that Duterte's trust rating also increased by four percentage points from 72 per cent in September 2018 to 76 per cent in December 2018.

"Most Filipinos express appreciation for the performance (of Duterte)", Pulse Asia said, adding that Duterte scored "majority approval and trust ratings across geographic areas and socio-economic groupings."

The survey also showed that only seven per cent of Filipinos disapprove of Duterte's performance while six per cent have small or no trust in him.

Duterte assumed the presidency in June 2016. He vowed to stamp out corruption and improve law and order in the Philippines by waging war against criminals and terrorists. —Xinhua ■

Canadian ex-envoy held in China gets consular visit

OTTAWA (Canada)—A Canadian former diplomat held by China was granted a second consular visit Thursday, as more nations backed Ottawa's demand that he and a detained compatriot be released.

"Today, Canadian consular officials in China visited with Michael Kovrig," said a brief statement from Canada's foreign ministry.

No details of his condition were provided due to Canadian privacy laws, but officials said they would press for further access to both him and businessman Michael Spavor.

The men were arrested in China last month, accused of activities that "endanger China's security"—a phrase often used by Beijing when alleging espionage.

Though no link has been officially made, the

arrests are thought to be in retaliation for Canada's 1 December detention on a US request of Meng Wanzhou, a top Chinese business executive accused of violating Iran sanctions.

Ottawa on Thursday also renewed its call—backed by Australia, Britain, France, Germany, the European Union and the United States—for the Canadians' immediate release.

And it announced added support from the Netherlands, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

The Kovrig visit came after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raised the cases with US President Donald Trump, whose administration began trade talks with Beijing this week.

On Monday, Trudeau and Trump in a telephone call denounced the "arbitrary" detentions. —AFP ■



Michael Kovrig. PHOTO: AFP

Kabul faces water crisis as drought, population strain supply

KABUL — Standing in his garden in Kabul, Baz Mohammad Kochi over- sees the drilling of a new well more than 100 metres deep after his first water reservoir dried up. He is not alone.

A shortage of rain and snow, a booming population and wasteful consumption have drained the Afghan capital's water basin and sparked a race to the bot- tom as households and businesses bore deeper and deeper wells in search of the precious resource.



A shortage of rain and snow, a booming population and wasteful consumption have drained the Afghan capital's water basin and sparked a race to the bottom as households and businesses bore deeper and deeper wells in search of the precious resource.
PHOTO: AFP

“The water level has dropped so much that it is now necessary to reach other underground basins 100 metres, even 120 me- tres” deep, says well dig- ger Mohammad Aman as his dilapidated machine pierces the ochre earth in Kochi's yard.

Every year 80 million cubic metres (2.8 billion cubic feet) of water are extracted from Kabul's aquifers — nearly double the natural recharge rate

through precipitation, ac- cording to utility Afghani- stan Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation. As a result Kabul's water table has fallen at

least 30 metres (100 feet) in recent years, says Asian Development Bank depu- ty country director Shanny Campbell. Snow has fallen in the

city this month but it is not nearly enough to solve the water shortage — in some areas the level has dropped 20 metres in the past year.

“The problem we have in Kabul is the massive in- crease in population, im- pact of climate change and overall less precipitation and snowfall,” Campbell explains. Only around 20 per cent of Kabul is con- nected to the city's piped water system, leaving many residents to ensure their own supply by digging

wells that are often shared by several neighbours. Oth- ers buy water from private companies, or, like Moham- mad Nazir, fill up jerry cans at mosques or more than 400 public taps scattered around the city.

“There is no point turning on the taps — there is no water here,” says Na- zir, 50, who lives on a hill where the ground is too hard to dig a well and the city's pipes do not reach.

“It's the worst year we've ever lived.” —AFP■

Invitation for Price Quotations

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received financing from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of Electric Power Project (EPP). The IDA No. of the financing agreement is No. 5306 MM. The Electric Power Generation Enterprise (EPGE) of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy in its role as implementing agency of the EPP, intends to apply the portion of the proceeds of this credit towards eligible payments under the contracts for which this invitation for Quotation is issued.

MOEE now invites eligible suppliers to express the interest in supplying the following items.

Item No.	Reference No.	Description	Quantity	Units
1.	G-10 (Tender No. 35/ EPGE/ 2018-2019)	Laptop Computer	20	Nos

Eligible Suppliers having expressed interest will receive a Request for Quotation by E-mail, sealed Quotations will be submitted to the address below at the latest at the deadline (Tuesday 29th January 2019 at 2:00PM Myanmar Time), after which no Quotations will be accepted.

Suppliers will be selected following the shopping Method as per the “Guide for procurement of Goods, words and non-consulting services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers dated January 2011 (revised July 2014).

Please submit sealed Quotation to; U Khin Maung Win, Managing Director, Electric Power Generation Enterprise Office No. (27), Nay Pyi Taw, for detailed information please contact to U Soe Win, Chief Engineer, Gas Turbine section, mobile phone +959428601033 and U Aung San Win, General Manager, Procurement section, mobile phone +959457733044 or Office phone +95678104319, E-mail: procurementepge.wb@gmail.com. Please indicate your E-mail address as only electronic copies of the ITQ will be sent.

Congratulatory Message

We would like to offer our warmest congratulations to U Nanda, President of All Myanmar Hindu Central Council, on his receiving the title **Agga Maha Siri Sudhamma Mani Jotadhara**, which was conferred by the Union Government on 4-1-2019.

We wish him even greater prosperity, along with all people, and for Hinduism, as well as for the entire country.

**Members of the Executive Committee of
All Myanmar Hindu Central Council**

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V STL HARVEST VOY. NO. (3)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V STL HARVEST VOY. NO. (3) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12-01-2019 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P.L where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY**

AGENT FOR: M/S TOKO KAIUN KAISHA LTD

Phone No: 2301191, 2301178

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V KUO HSIUNG VOY. NO. (1096 S/N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KUO HSIUNG VOY. NO. (1096 S/N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12-01-2019 and cargo will 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
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING
LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. (111 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V CAPE FLORES VOY. NO. (111 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12-01-2019 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Reelpolitik: India election films get Bollywood vote

MUMBAI (India)—Bollywood filmmakers are seeking to cash in on this year's Indian general election with a host of political movies, some of which smack of propaganda according to critics. The Hindi film industry has a long tradition of producing politically tinged flicks but industry watchers say 2019's offerings are more partisan than ever before.

"What we have this year are quite a few films, some of which are biopics, that appear to be uncritical and unabashedly push the agenda of a particular party, its policies and political philosophies," said reviewer Nandini Ramnath. "The Accidental Prime Minister" and "Uri: The Surgical Strike" are released on Friday. Films about the lives of two prominent politicians air later in January while a biopic on Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also in the works. The silver screen and politics have often intertwined in India. Many actors have become politicians while Bollywood has not shied away from tackling political issues in its plotlines.

"Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro" (Let it be, friends) became a cult classic in 1983 for its satirical takedown of corruption while 2010's "Peepili Live" was praised for tackling the difficult subject of farmer suicides. Political movies have also fallen foul of the government. "Kissa Kursi Ka" (Story of the Chair) and "Aandhi" (Storm) were both banned by then prime minister Indira Gandhi in the 1970s. The former (1977) was viewed as satirising her politics while the latter (1975) was allegedly based on her relationship with her estranged husband, who died several years earlier.



The Hindi film industry has a long tradition of producing politically tinged flicks but industry watchers say 2019's offerings are more partisan than ever before. PHOTO: AFP

'The real and the reel'

Supporters of Gandhi's party, Congress, have tried to stir up controversy around the "The Accidental Prime Minister", holding protests and even going to court, unsuccessfully, to try to block its release. They claim it portrays senior Congress members in a bad light and is propaganda for Modi and his ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—allegations the director denies. The Hindi-language film sees veteran actor Anupam Kher, a vocal supporter of Modi, play the leader's predecessor Manmohan Singh, also of the Congress party, as premier. It is based on a memoir written by Sanjaya Baru, a former advisor to Singh.

"This film is not about politics but about the relationship between Dr Singh and Sanjaya Baru through Baru's eyes. They are both heroes of the film. It's not propaganda," director Vijay Gutte told AFP. Some social me-

dia users and film critics have accused Kher of comically mimicking Singh's slow and measured way of walking and talking but the actor believes he has captured his mannerisms perfectly.

"It will take you a little time to distinguish between the real and the reel," Kher tweeted last month when posting a photo of Singh alongside one of himself in character. "That is the authenticity and the sincerity one has applied in portraying #DrManmohanSingh," he added.

'Spread ideas'

Several movies touching on politics were released during India's last election year in 2014, notably "Youngistan" and "Bhoothnath Returns" in which superstar Amitabh Bachchan played a ghost running against an evil candidate. Filmmakers say it makes good business sense to release movies with a political backdrop in the run-up to an elec-

tion while others may be secretly hoping that they translate into votes as well. The nationalistic, all-guns-blazing "Uri: The Surgical Strike" which celebrates the Indian army's strikes on militants in 2016 in response to a raid that had killed 19 Indian soldiers, is likely to be popular. Modi was widely lauded for the operation and the film sees Vicky Kaushal play an army major in charge of avenging the attack—which India blamed on its arch enemy Pakistan—on the Uri base.

"Thackeray", a biopic about divisive Mumbai politician Bal Thackeray, who died in 2012, is tipped to be a hagiography designed to boost support for the Shiv Sena—a Hindu chauvinist party he led and founded. A Shiv Sena politician has written the screenplay of the movie which is scheduled to hit screens on 25 January, around what would have been Thackeray's 93rd birthday. —AFP ■

DNA request made in Cristiano Ronaldo rape case

LOS ANGELES (United States)—Las Vegas police have asked soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo to submit a DNA sample as part of their investigation into rape allegations made against him.

The Juventus forward has vehemently denied the accusations—with his lawyer, Peter Christiansen, telling AFP the request was standard procedure. "Mr Ronaldo has always maintained, as he does today, that what occurred in Las Vegas in 2009 was consensual in nature, so it is not surprising that DNA would be present, nor that the police would make this very standard request as part of their investigation," he said in a statement. The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department said it had made an official request to Italian authorities, adding it is "taking



Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo, pictured in December 2018. PHOTO: AFP the same steps in this case as in any other sexual assault to facilitate the collection of DNA evidence." Former model Kathryn Mayorga, 34, of Las Vegas, accused Ronaldo in a complaint filed last year in the state of Nevada.

She claims after meeting him at a Las Vegas nightclub, he raped her at his hotel suite on 13 June, 2009—just before he joined Real Madrid from Manchester United. Mayorga alleges she was paid \$375,000 to keep quiet. Ronaldo's lawyers have said that the non-disclosure agreement signed with the former model is "by no means a confession of guilt." Mayorga's attorney has previously said that the model agreed to an out-of-court settlement to keep her name from going public, but was inspired to speak out by the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment. Mayorga's attorney could not immediately be reached for comment on Thursday. —AFP ■



IN Picture

Exhibition of Le Corbusier held in Suzhou, E China's Jiangsu

Visitors view the exhibition of Le Corbusier at Suzhou Art Museum in Suzhou, east China's Jiangsu Province on 10 January 2019. An exhibition displaying the fine arts of Le Corbusier kicked off on Thursday.

PHOTO: XINHUA

China moon rover 'Jade Rabbit' wakes from 'nap'

BEIJING (China) — China's lunar rover got back to work on the far side of the moon Thursday after waking from a five-day hibernation, its official social media page announced.

"Afternoon nap is over, waking up and getting moving," the Yutu-2 (Jade Rabbit-2) posted on the Twitter-like Weibo.

The rover on Saturday went into standby mode to protect itself from temperatures reaching towards 200 degrees Celsius (390 degrees Fahrenheit), the China Lunar Exploration Program under the China National Space Administration (CNSA) said.

The 140-kilogram (308-pound) rover has since resumed activities, which will include taking a picture of the front side of the lander and exploration missions. The Chang'e-4 mission — named after a moon goddess — made the world's first soft landing on the moon's far side on 3 January.

The rover, named after the moon goddess's pet rabbit, successfully separated from the lander and drove onto the moon's surface last Thursday.

Beijing is pouring billions into its military-run space programme, with hopes of having a crewed space station by 2022, and



China's Yutu-2 is the first lunar rover to land on the far side of the moon. **PHOTO: AFP**

of eventually sending humans on a lunar mission. This is the second Chinese probe to land on the moon, following the Yutu (Jade Rabbit) rover mission in 2013.

China's space agency has said the mission "lifted the mysterious veil" from the far side of the moon, which is never seen from Earth, and "opened a new chapter in human lunar exploration".

Unlike the near side of the moon that offers many flat areas to touch down on, the far side is mountainous and rugged.

The moon is "tidally locked" to Earth in its rotation so the same side is always facing Earth.

The Chang'e-4 probe is equipped with instruments developed by scientists from Sweden, Germany and China to study the lunar environment, cosmic radiation and the interaction between solar wind and the moon's surface, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Chang'e-4 landed within the South Pole-Aitken (SPA) Basin, the largest and deepest impact crater in the solar system.

Scientists have said it is a key area for solving several unknowns about the moon, including its internal structure and thermal evolution. — AFP ■

Intelligent males may make female birds swoon: study

WASHINGTON (United States) — Male birds are often the ones with the most vibrant feathers, or the most elaborate songs, but researchers said Thursday that what female birds could really appreciate is a male who shows his intelligence.

The report in the journal *Science* aligns with one of Charles Darwin's old theories, which held that mate choice could contribute to the evolution of intelligence.

"Our study demonstrates that direct observation of cognitive skills can affect mate preference," said the study, authored by researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing and at Leiden University in The Netherlands. Researchers used 34 small Australian parrots, known as budgerigars, to test the notion that a suitor's smarts could outweigh style or songs.

A female bird was exposed



A report that shows that female birds prefer smarter males aligns with one of Charles Darwin's old theories, which held that mate choice could contribute to the evolution of intelligence. **PHOTO: AFP**

to two similar looking males, in a cage in which she could only interact with one at a time. Prior study designs like this have shown that females tend to lean toward males with slightly nicer appearances, or more appealing songs. Researchers could tell which male was preferred by the amount of time the female spent interacting with him.

Then, they swept away the lesser male to engage him in a special training session in opening a container filled with seeds.

The female — and her preferred male — received no such training, and were given open boxes of seed to eat from freely.

Next, the female was placed in a cage with a sealed box of seed, and was allowed to watch the trained male cleverly open his sealed box of seed.

She also watched the untrained male — whom she preferred at first glance — being unable to open his container. — AFP ■

AI beats expert doctors at finding cervical pre-cancers

TAMPA (United States) — Artificial intelligence may be poised to wipe out cervical cancer, after a study showed on Thursday computer algorithms can detect pre-cancerous lesions far better than trained experts or conventional screening tests.

According to the World Health Organization, cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cancer in women with an estimated 570,000 new cases globally in 2018.

Despite major advances in screening and vaccination, which can prevent the spread of human papillomavirus which causes most cases of cervical cancer, those gains have mainly benefited women in rich nations.

Some 266,000 women died of cervical cancer globally in 2012, 90 per cent of them in low- and middle-income nations, according to the WHO.

"Cervical cancer is now a disease of poverty, of low resources," said senior author Mark Schiffman, a doctor at the National Cancer Institute's Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics near Washington who has been searching for a cure to cervical cancer for 35 years.

"We are trying to find ways that are extremely cheap, extremely easy but very accurate, so that we can attack cervical cancer by vaccine and also a bit later through a simple technique that is cell-phone based or something like it," he told AFP.

Algorithm

Schiffman was part of a team that built an algorithm from an archive of more than 60,000 cervical images collected from Costa Rica. The pictures were taken using just a speculum, small light and camera — no advanced imaging required.

The study began in the

1990s, involving more than 9,400 women who were followed for up to 18 years. The AI technique, called automated visual evaluation, found precancerous cells with 91 per cent accuracy, according to a report published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*.

In comparison, a human expert review found 69 per cent of pre-cancers, while conventional lab tests like Pap smears found 71 per cent.

Among women aged 25-49, who face the highest risk of cervical cancer, the AI algorithm was even more accurate, finding 97.7 per cent of pre-cancerous cells.

"It performed much better than humans looking at those same pictures. It certainly performed a lot better than me," Schiffman said.

The goal is to roll out the technology in the next three to five years, enrolling more patients in clinical trials worldwide and eventually making it easily accessible everywhere.

Schiffman said a deal has just been struck with a major philanthropic group to assist in the process. The technology has not been patented on purpose, Schiffman said. The aim is to keep costs very low so that women most in need can benefit.

"I think now we have a possible tool that can go anywhere and not sacrifice scientific quality but actually offer a medically valid screen," he said.

Jennifer Wu, an obstetrician-gynecologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York who was not involved in the research, called the findings "very exciting." "This could really cut down on a lot of missed cases of cervical cancer, and allow more patients access to diagnosis and treatment," she told AFP. — AFP ■



Some 266,000 women died of cervical cancer globally in 2012, 90 per cent of them in low- and middle-income nations, according to the WHO. **PHOTO: AFP**



Myanmar young striker Win Naing Tun (white) attempts to pass the Qatar defender in the international friendly match in Qatar on Thursday night. **PHOTO: MFF**

Myanmar suffers narrow loss to Qatar in football friendly

THE Myanmar U-22 national football team suffered a narrow 0-1 defeat in a friendly match against the Qatar U-23 team at the Aspire Football field in Doha, Qatar, on Thursday night.

Both teams showed a strong defence for most of the match.

Qatar's Hassan scored an early goal at the 15th minute. In spite of speedy play

in the beginning, Myanmar strikers failed to penetrate Qatar's defence.

In the second half, Myanmar switched to power play with neat and tidy tackling, but Qatar managed to prevail with aggressive play.

The match intensified in the later minutes with team Myanmar dominating again. But their efforts were blunted

due to uncertainty of young attackers, who failed to score a goal till the final whistle.

Myanmar's line-up for the match included key young players — goal keeper Bhone Thitsar Min, Win Moe Kyaw, Myat Kaung Khant, Lwin Moe Aung, Soe Lwin Lwin, Hein Htet Aung, and Win Naing Tun. — Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Hantharwady United defence strong, says Yangon United's Min Ko Thu

TALKING about his former team, Yangon United defender Min Ko Thu said that the Hantharwady United has a strong defence, according to a statement from Yangon United. Min Ko Thu will play against his former team today.

"Hantharwady has a strong defensive team. We are prepared to take them on after having analyzed their weaknesses," said Min Ko Thu.

Yangon United will face Hantharwady United in the opening match of the MPT Myanmar National League 2019 at the Yangon United Sports Complex.

In his statement, Min Ko Thu has spoken about facing some pressure on playing against his former team, said a source.

"Although I am a new player, I have already built a good relationship with my teammates and we are ready to fight," said Min Ko Thu, who joined Yangon United this year.

"The match against Hantharwady United will be worth watching and I would like to invite fans to the match and thank them for cheering us."

Yangon United holds the championship of the 2018 MPT Myanmar National League, and its fans are hopeful of another victory.—Lynn Thit

Andy Murray to retire, Australian Open could be last event

MELBOURNE (Australia)—A tearful Andy Murray on Friday announced he would likely retire this year due to severe pain from a hip injury, saying next week's Australian Open could be the last tournament of a glittering career. The former world number one and three-time Grand Slam winner broke down at a press conference in Melbourne as he said the pain had become almost unbearable.

"I can play with limitations. But having the limitations and the pain is not allowing me to enjoy competing or training," the emotional Scot said. Thirty-one-year-old "Sir Andy" said he would like to finish at his home Grand Slam in Wimbledon, but ruefully admitted he might not make it that far. He will be remembered as the first British man to win Wimbledon in 77 years and as a player who battled his way to the top in a golden era for the game alongside Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal.



Briton Andy Murray's future is in doubt because of a painful hip injury. **PHOTO: AFP**

"Wimbledon is where I would like to stop playing, but I am not certain I am able to do that," he said. "I've been struggling

for a long time. I'm not sure I can play through the pain for another four or five months. "Pretty much done everything

that I could to try and get my hip feeling better and it hasn't helped loads."

He pulled out of last year's Australian Open to have hip surgery and only returned in June at Queen's Club in London.

He ended the season at Shenzhen in September after only a handful of appearances to concentrate on working his way back to full fitness.

But he was knocked out in the second round on his return at Brisbane last week and called it quits on Thursday after less than an hour of a practice match in Melbourne against Djokovic, with his movement clearly hampered.

"I think there is a chance the Australian Open is my last tournament," he said.

While he intends to begin his opening-round match against 22nd seed Roberto Bautista Agut next week, how his body withstands potentially gruelling five-set clashes in energy-sapping heat remains to be seen.—AFP ■