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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Myanmar, Japan hold third cherry tree planting ceremony to mark friendly ties

U T Khun Myat, the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, along with dignitaries from Myanmar and Japan planted Japanese cherry trees in the compound of the Yangon Region Hluttaw yesterday.

Speaking at the third ceremonial planting of Japanese cherry trees, Speaker U T Khun Myat said he took pride in holding the ceremony in the commercial city of Yangon, and expressed his hope that the planting of cherry trees in Myanmar would strengthen friendship between the people of Myanmar and Japan, and boost diplomatic relations. The planting will also promote close relations between the two countries, the two parliaments, and the two peoples, he said. As part of the third Myanmar-Japan Sakura Festival, about 3,900 cherry trees and Maple trees provided by the Myanmar Cherry Foundation and the Japan Yuko Sakura Friendship Association will be planted in Kachin, Kayah, and Chin states and in Yangon and Mogok.

> The (cherry trees) planting will also promote close relations between the two countries, the two parliaments, and the two peoples ...
>
> U T Khun Myat

Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat plants the trees together with dignitaries of Myanmar and Japan in the compound of the Yangon Region Hluttaw yesterday as part of Myanmar-Japan friendship. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended the first Myanmar-Japan cherry tree planting ceremony, held in Nay Pyi Taw in January, 2017.

The second ceremony was held on 14 January last year at the Myanmar International Convention Centre in Nay Pyi Taw, with 200 cherry trees planted near the centre and along the Zawana Road to the Hluttaw.

From January to February, 2018, 1,250 cherry trees were planted in Chin State and 800 trees were planted in Mogok, PyinOoLwin, Kalaw, and Inle.

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Union Minister discusses environmental issues in Singapore

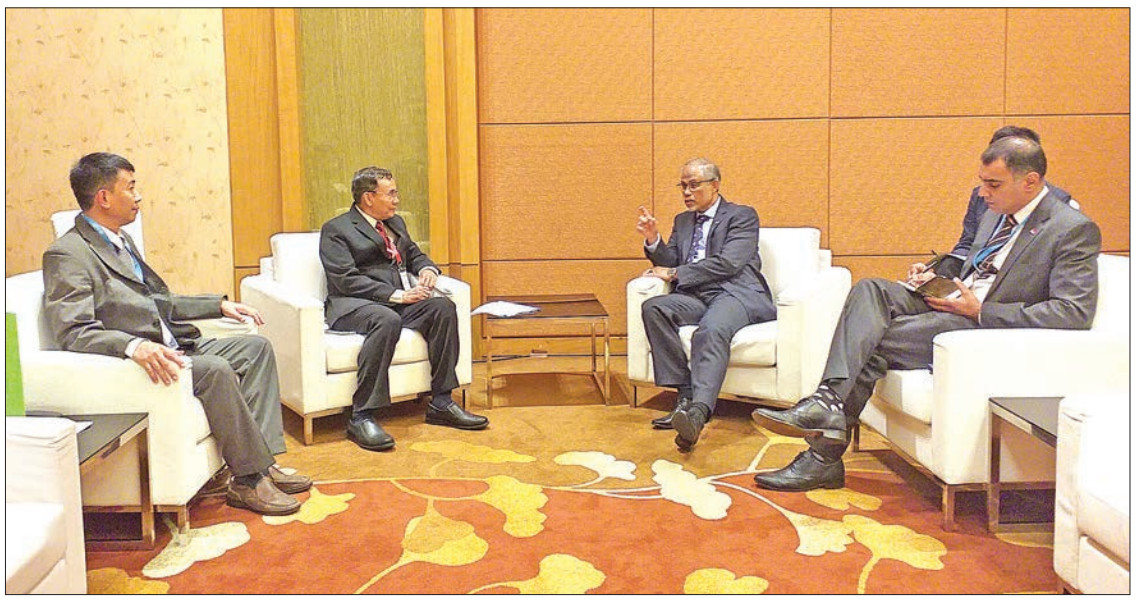
UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win attended the third session of the UN Environment's Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, held in Singapore on 24 and 25 January, with 41 international counterparts.

The meeting reviewed the progress on the implementation of the UN Environment Assembly resolutions in Asia and the Pacific, laid down formulating policy objectives and funfing principles for sustainable consumption and production through innovative means, identified priorities in the Asia Pacific, engaged with the private sector on environmental solutions, and discussed challenges and opportunities to strengthen the regional environmental agenda for delivering the sustainable development goals and regional commitments to international agreements.

The meeting also dealt with climate change, natural disasters, adequate supplies of food, energy, and water resources, current issues and challenges.

On 24 January morning, Union Minister U Ohn Win met Japan's State Minister of the Environment and discussed waste management and environmental concerns; reduction of waste harmful to the natural environment and public health; waste-from-energy projects; policy, laws, rules, and directives on waste management; holding Japan-Myanmar environmental conservation week; and, running for capacity building programmes for government staff.

In the afternoon, the Union Minister held talks with the Singaporean Minister of Environment and Water Resources. Their talks focused on environmental challenges, appropriate measures for food sufficiency and alleviation of the impact of climate change, regional cooperation to attain the sustainable development goals, capacity building programmes, and bilateral cooperation.nThe meeting passed and issued a declaration on the points to be approved at the fourth session of the forum, which will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, in March 2019.—MNA ■ *(Translated by TMT)*



Union Minister U Ohn Win holds talk with Singaporean Minister for Environment and Water Resources in Singapore. **PHOTO : MNA**

SWRR Ministry provides cash for nursing homes, day nursery schools in Taungup, Thandwe

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye, Rakhine State Chief Minster U Nyi Pu and officials make intimate interaction with the children. **PHOTO: MNA**

RAKHINE State's Settlement and Socio-economic Development Working Committee Chairman and Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye accompanied by Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu and Deputy Minister U Aung Soe attended the ceremony to provide cash assistance at the Taungup Town Hall in Taungup yesterday.

During the ceremony, cash assistance of K 4.9 million was distributed to seven self-reliant nursery schools, K 4.866 million for Shwe Myittar Home for the Aged, and K 1.26 million for three Mother Circles (day nursery schools) in planning stage. Toys and nutritional snacks were also distributed. A Hluttaw representative expressed thanks in return.

The union minister also visited the shrimp and crab breeding farm in Abay Village, and coordinated with the local residents near the village the matters of job opportunities, health and education.

The union minister then attended another ceremony to provide cash assistances at Dwar Yar Wati Hall in Thandwe Town and handed over K 5.961 million to Myittar Wati Home for the Aged, K 1.4 million to two self-reliant nursery schools, K 3.0781 million to five Mother Circles to be opened and toys and nutritional snacks for children.

The union minister then, together with volunteer organizations, town elders, children and officials have commemorative photos taken.

In his speech at the ceremony, the union minister said Union Government is prioritizing ethnic affairs and internal peace, forming Rakhine State Peace, Stability and Development Committee and implementation committees for all nationals to enjoy equal rights.

The works on providing social pension for the aged above 85 and cash assistances for pregnant women and children aged under 2, are also being carried out, along with educative programs for nutrition, personal hygiene and family planning, he added. The children's physical and intellectual development are systematically being promoted in accord with the early child care knowledge as this is a project that is certain to bear benefits in the future nation.

The ministry's social protection and social care works will be much more efficient, with the cooperation of states and regions' authorities, volunteer organizations and people, the union minister said.—MNA ■ *(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)*

ICOE Chairperson arrives in Myanmar

AMBASSADOR Rosario Manalo, Chairperson of the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE), Former Deputy Foreign Minister of the Philippines and former chair and current Representative of the Philippines to CEDAW, landed in Myanmar at 4:40 pm yesterday.

The ICOE Chairperson was welcomed at Yangon International Airport by U Zaw Phyo Win, Deputy Director-General of the Strategic Studies and Training Department, U Zaw Tun Oo, Deputy Director-General of the Protocol Department, and other officials.

Similarly, Ambassador Mr. Kenzo Oshima, member of the commission, Former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and Former Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, will arrive in Myanmar at 4 pm today.

The Independent Commission of Enquiry was established as part of Myanmar's national initiative to address reconciliation, peace, stability and development in Rakhine State. —MNA ■ *(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)*

Chairperson of the Independent Commission of Enquiry, Ambassador Rosario Manalo, is welcomed by officials at Yangon International Airport yesterday. **PHOTO:MNA**

Myanmar, Japan hold third cherry tree planting ceremony …

Chairman of Japan-Myanmar Parliamentary Friendship Association, Mr. Ichiro Aisawa watering the cherry tree. **PHOTO: MNA**

Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat poses for a documentary photo together with dignitaries of Myanmar and Japan. **PHOTO: MNA**

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"While we are working to transform the country's areas into tourist attractions, the third ceremony to plant cherry trees has arrived. The news that Myanmar is attractive because of its cherry trees will spread among travellers throughout the world," said U T Khun Myat.

The cherry trees being planted in Myanmar have been genetically modified so that they thrive in Myanmar's climate.

Tourists arrivals in Myanmar increased from 3.44 million in 2017 to 3.5 million in 2018, an increase of 3.15 per cent.

To attract more tourists, Myanmar has granted visa exemptions to tourists from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Macau since 1 October, and is granting visa on arrival to Chinese nationals who travel to Myanmar by air. The Speaker said visa on arrival is now available for Chinese travellers who arrive by air. "Moreover, visa on arrival is also being issued to Indians arriving by air, through a relaxation of visa rules. Myanmar has also opened international entry and exit points at its border with India. Visa relaxations introduced in 2018 will begin to bear fruit in 2019. So, the number of visitors to Myanmar will increase in the coming year. Yangon, the heart of Myanmar, is the country's main entry point, welcoming a large number of visitors arriving by air from various parts of the world annually. Of the 3.55 million visitors in 2018, 1.4 million, or nearly half the foreign visitors, came to Myanmar through Yangon. Hence, the tourist promotion program in Yangon covers the whole country," he said. He said the timing of the planting ceremony is perfect as it coincides with the Myanmar Ethnics Culture Fest, which showcases the traditions and cultures of the brethren.

"It is a pleasure for the host to show their Japanese guests the unique lifestyles, costumes, and cultures of ethnic races. Myanmar and Japan are good old friends. Joint commemorative events like this one will pave the way for enhancing cultural exchange programmes and tourism promotion programmes in the future," he said. He then expressed his thanks to the Yangon Region Chief Minister, cabinet members, departmental personnel, private organizations, and participants from Japan and Myanmar for the success of the third Myanmar-Japan Sakura Festival, and called for inclusive involvement in the upcoming Sakura festivals to promote tourism.

Then, Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, the Chairman of the Japan-Myanmar Parliamentary Friendship Association, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung, and Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Phyo Min Thein delivered their addresses. Thereafter, the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker and participants posed for a documentary photo.

Afterwards, Myanmar traditional snacks were served.

The Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker and the attendees then took part in the Sakura festival, or cherry planting festival, held on the lawn at Gate No. 2 of the Yangon Region Hluttaw. —MNA /*(Translated by TMT, Kyaw Zin Lin)*

Union Minister U Thaung Tun highlights investment related reforms at 2019 World Economic Forum

UNION MINISTER for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Thaung Tun highlighted Myanmar's economic and investment opportunities and latest investment related reform initiatives during the meetings and bilateral discussions as part of Myanmar's participation in the 2019 Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forumheld in Davos-Kolsters, Switzerland, from 22 to 25 January 2015. Under the theme "Globalisation 4.0: Shaping a Global Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution," the Union Minister exchanged views on international procedures and best practices of investment and trade facilitation with heads of State and Government, Ministers, Senior Officials from International Organizations and business leaders.

Union Minister attended the Opening Session and Special address as well as Informal Gathering of World Economic Leaders, held on 22nd and 23rd respectively.

At the High Level Roundtable on Global Investment Trends held by the UNCTAD with the aim to discuss solution for the slowdown in global investment and global value chain, Union Minister, in the role of one of the lead Speakers, talked about legal reforms, procedural reforms and institutional reforms taken in Myanmar to facilitate investment. In explaining the economic and investment opportunities, Minister also drew the attention to newly initiated Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan and Myanmar Investment Promotion Plan to attract more than 200$ billion of sustainable, responsible and quality business over the next 20 years. In the sideline events under the themes "Bridging the Asian Demographic Divide", "Shaping ASEAN's agenda in the Global Context", "Smarter, Better, Faster Trade", Union Minister exchanged views with other senior officials and business leaders on investment and trade facilitation.

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Union Minister U Thaung Tun attends the 2019 World Economic Forum. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister U Win Khaing inspects Chauk oilfield in Magway Region

U WIN KHAING, the Union Minister for Electricity and Energy, met with staff at the Chauk oilfield hall in Chauk Township, Magway Region, on 25 January.

During the meeting, the Union Minister said the oil and natural gas sector plays an important role in national development, and thus, everyone working in the sector should be proud of their contribution. He told staff to work harder to increase the extraction of oil and natural gas. He also instructed them to ensure there is safety in the workplace, no wastage, and that the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is followed at every step of the work undertaken.

On 26 January, the Union Minister and the Magway Region Chief Minister visited the Myaing Township of Pakokku District. They toured the site for Myaing Onshore Drilling Rig 1, which will be employing the ZJ 70L SR-1, and were briefed on the extraction process by the Director-General of Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) and officials at the briefing hall.

Union Minister U Win Khaing (Right) inspects a oil tank as he visits Chauk oilfield in Magway. **PHOTO: MNA**

After the briefing, the Union Minister pressed a button to officially start the drilling machine. He and the Chief Minister then gave baskets of fruits to the staff and took a documentary photograph with them.

The geological field inspections for the Myaing Onshore Drilling Rig 1 were conducted in fiscal year 2016-2017, based on previous inspections. Officials are aiming to drill 8,500 feet into the ground for natural gas deposits. Future operations will be planned in accordance with the findings of the drilling operation.

In the afternoon, the Union Minister went to the briefing hall of oil well No. 1196, where the general manager of the oil field and other officials explained the increase in oil production at well No. 1196 and new well No.1213. The Union Minister made his suggestions to the staff and gave them cash bonuses and fruit baskets.

Oil well No. 1196 expanded its drilling depth on 25 December, and is currently producing 122 crude oil kegs a day. New well No. 1213 began drilling on 3 January and reached a depth of 4,150 feet on 19 January. It is currently producing 190 crude oil kegs.

In the evening, the Union Minister visited the hospital in Chauk oilfield and spoke to the staff.

Afterwards, the Union Minister met with officials from Goldpetrol JOC Inc., who are working with the ministry, at the Chauk oilfield's guest house and discussed ways to increase production, implement corporate social responsibility, besides employee affairs.

Expansion of old oil wells and construction of new ones at Chauk oilfield has increased production by 300 crude oil kegs from the existing 111 oil wells. The Chauk oilfield currently produces 1,700 crude oil kegs and 0.045 million cubic feet of natural gas daily. —MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Union Minister U Thaung Tun highlights investment related reforms at 2019 World Economic Forum

FROM PAGE-3

He underscored that Myanmar was now in the midst of a series of ambitious liberalization measures intended to open up new sectors to foreign competition and regional collaboration, making Myanmar an attractive destination for FDI going forward. Minister called attention to how the country is now seeking to foster the development of creative industries.

The Minister also praised the ASEAN Smart Cities Network, in which Mandalay is an active participant, as an effective initiative for ASEAN members to harness technological and digital solutions.

At a special event on Investment in Myanmar, Union Minister, as a Special Guest, held interactive discussion with entrepreneurs who are investing in Myanmar.

U Thaung Tun also delivered a statement on the position of Myanmar at the Informal Ministerial Gathering to launch the 2nd Joint Statement on Electronic Commerce, for which Myanmar has co-sponsored together with other 75 WTO members.

In his statement, Union Minister underscored that the Government of Myanmar "…reaffirms our commitment to doing all that is necessary to facilitate our successful transition toward an inclusive digital economy, and to supporting the expansion of e-commerce."

The Union Minister also noted that Myanmar shall "… capitalize on this transition to enhance public services delivery, and bring services closer to communities", and that in doing so Myanmar "will seek to expand connectivity and access to online services, support innovation and data literacy while ensuring security and online privacy."

During the sideline of the meeting, Union Minister also met separately with Senior Officials from WEF as well as ICRC.

He also discussed the expansion of business and investment in Myanmar and further cooperation with Presidents/ CEOs of JICA, Sumitomo Corporation, Ooredoo, GE Gas Power, Telenor as well as with Amata Corporation from Thailand Visa from the U.S, Geox from Italy in the separate meetings.

This year's WEF meeting brings together more than 3,000 attendees, including 65 heads of State/ Government, more than 300 government Ministers, UN Secretary-General and Senior Officials from International Organziations, and business leaders including some 800 CEOs to discuss major global issues of the day and to brainstorm on solutions to address these challenges, according to the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations.— MNA ■

Myanmar Scout delegation concludes Thai visit

THE Myanmar Scout delegates from universities, colleges and basic education high schools who attended the Thailand National Moot 2019 arrived back in Yangon yesterday.

The Myanmar scout delegation was welcomed by senior scouts, universities' youth scouts and families at the Yangon International Airport.

The Thailand National Moot 2019 was held from 21 to 25 January at Vajiravudh Scout Camp in Chonburi Province, Thailand and attended by the youth scout delegates from Indonesia, Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Bangladesh, Viet Nam and Thailand including Myanmar.

The Myanmar scout delegation led by Coordinator Mg Phyo Thura Win, exchanged experiences and traditional cultures with international youth scouts, and also studied the activities of Thai scouts and skills for scouts.

— Mg Myo ■

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Myanmar Scout delegates are seen together with delegates from other countries at the Thailand National Moot 2019. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Nearly 200,000 NRCs issued in Mandalay

NATIONAL registration cards (NRCs) also known as citizenship scrutiny cards, were issued to students, locals, and orphans from 28 townships of Mandalay Region under the Thitsa project at the Mandalay City Hall in Chanayethazan Township on 25 January. The project was launched under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population and the Mandalay Region Government, with the support of United Pacific Co. Ltd and Advanced Myanmar Star Co. Ltd.

At the opening ceremony of the project, the Union Minister for Labour, Immigration, and Population, U Thein Swe, pointed out the increasing importance of immigration functions due to the rising number of tourists, potential investors, and other visitors from abroad. The ministry has been issuing certain types of cards for the people depending on the result of their scrutinizing process, he said.

He said the census conducted in 2014 is supportive to the adoption of the national development plans. "A plan is under way to conduct an interim census in November this year. It will be a public-centred plan that will fulfill the needs of the people. The NRC issuance project began on 1 May, 2016. The project is being launched in all necessary places and field tours are being undertaken at the request of MPs. Currently field tours are being conducted in 13 townships of the Mandalay Region," he said.

Afterwards, Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, the chief Minister of the region, and Daw Aye Mi San, the Market Promotion Director for the two supporting companies, explained the assistance being provided for the field tours. Then, the Union Minister, the Chief Minister, and officials presented certificates of honor to the staff taking part in the project. Under the project, NRCs were issued to nearly 200,000 persons, including over 100,000 students of basic education schools, 710 inmates of 15 orphanages, and more than 80,000 locals on Friday.—MNA ■
(Translated by TMT)

Union Minister U Thein Swe (right) presents a citizenship scrutiny card to a school girl. **PHOTO : MNA**

Union Education Minister attends Education World Forum in London

Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi addresses the Education World Forum in London. **PHOTO: MNA**

Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, the Union Minister for Education, left for London by flight from Yangon on 19 January to attend the Education World Forum.

On 20 January, the Union Minister visited the Myanmar Embassy in London and met with staff and young people who are on internship or scholarship in the UK. They discussed the role of young people in transforming and developing the education sector in Myanmar.

On 21 January, the Union Minister attended the ASEAN Minister Breakfast held at The Cinnamon Club located in the former Westminster Library and hosted by Nadhim Zahawi, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families.

Afterwards, the Union Minister attended the Education World Forum at the Queen Elizabeth II Center and then joined the EWF Reception hosted by the Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt, the Secretary of State for International Development, at the Lancaster House later in the evening.

During the forum, the Union Minister engaged in discussions with officials from Cambridge Assessment English, McGraw-Hill Education, and other organizations.

On 22 January, the Union Minister led the discussions on 'Ministerial Exchange B: Extending Teaching and Learning Opportunity', where he explained Myanmar's education reforms. He attended a dinner hosted by the Irrawaddy Policy Exchange at the Royal Overseas League in the evening.

On 23 January, the Union Minister visited the Reay Primary School and attended a discussion on the Yangon University's Master Plan at The Open University - FutureLearn.

Afterwards, the Union Minister went to the British Council in London's Spring Gardens, where he participated in a discussion entitled 'Continuous Professional Development for Teachers' with delegations from Uganda and Nigeria. The Myanmar Ambassador to UK hosted a dinner for the Union Minister in the evening.

Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi departed from London on 24 January and landed in Yangon on the morning of 25 January. During his time in London, the Union Minister met with officials from organizations cooperating in Myanmar's education reforms such as the British Council, the DFID, The Open University, the University College London -Institute of Education, the Cambridge Assessment English, McGraw-Hill Education, and the Irrawaddy Policy Exchange. He also had the opportunity to visit primary schools and universities during his trip.—MNA ■ *(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)*

More projects to ensure sufficient water supply to Yangon : YCDC

TO ensure water supply to the growing population of Yangon, the Yangon City Development Committee plans to consecutively implement more projects until 2040, said U Myint Zaw Than, deputy section head, Department of Engineering (Water and Sanitation), under the YCDC.

"The YCDC and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are jointly drafting a master plan to supply sufficient water to the people of Yangon. As the water reservoir project is no longer being implemented, the Kukkowa, Panhlaing, and Toe rivers are being earmrked for potential new water resources. Through the new projects, the YCDC aims to meet the water demand of 80 per cent of Yangon's population in 2040, when over 500 million gallons of water will be daily distributed to 7.82 million people in Yangon. The YCDC is currently managing to provide 40 gallons per person on average," said U Myint Zaw Than during an inspection at the Lagonpyin water supply project.

At present, the Lagonpyin and Kukkowa water supply projects are being implemented in Dagon Myothit (East) Township. The Lagonpyin project started in 2013 and is slated to be completed in 2022. Upon completion of the project, four townships of Dagon Myothit will be provided 40 million gallons of water every day. The Kukkowa project began last year and after it is finished, 60 million gallons of water will be distributed daily. Currently, the YCDC supplies 205 million gallons of water to Yangon households, with 14 million gallons provided by the Hlawga reservoir, 27 million gallons by Gyo Phyu, 54 million gallons by Phu Gyi, and 90 million gallons by the Nga Moe Yeik dam under the Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department.

Underground water is being supplied in Dagon Myothit (south), Hlaingthaya, and Dala. Yangon's water supply currently covers only 2.3 million people. Therefore, the YCDC will continue water supply projects, aiming to reach 7.82 million people and cover 80 per cent of the population by 2040.

"Ten zones will be set to supply water. Pipelines will be connected through a network. Thus, if one water resource fails, other resources can be used to supply water," said U Myint Zaw Than.—Myint Maung Soe ■ *(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)*

Union Minister U Han Zaw inspects the Ngawon Bridge (Laymyathna) which will be inaugurated soon. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister inspects Ngawon Bridge (Laymyathna)

UNION MINISTER for Construction U Han Zaw on 26 January inspected the maintenance works of Yangon-Pathein road (Yangon-Nyaungdon section).

On arrival at Bo Myat Tun Bridge, the Union Minister heard a report on wear and tear preventive measures, and stressed continuous maintenance procedures for the Bridge. At the milepost 73/7, the Union Minister surveyed the durability of Kyaunggon Bridge and repair and maintenance of Pathein-Monywa road Pathein-Kangalay-Yaykyiroad section. During inspection of Ngawon Bridge (Laymyathna) that will be opened soon, he heard a report on preparatory works, Kangon Bridge (Khattu), Hningyan Bridge, Parahita Bridge, Htonpauk Bridge, No 1 and No 2 Ngadaing Bridge, Paukpinyoe Bridge, Panteinkyaw Bridge, Hsisonkon Bridge and Pandaw Bridge projects, presented by officials. In response, the Union Minister said transport was difficult in Ayeyawady Region as it depended solely on waterways in the past. At present, a network and roads and Bridges have facilitated transport, which will be followed by the economic, health, education and social progress. But the transport facilities should meet their standard.

He then observed the final touches of the Ngawon Bridge (Laymyithna) project and preparations for the opening ceremony.

The Bridge, which is 1968.6 feet long, is located on Khattu-Pandawgyiroad section. The facility was built with 1.2-metre bored piles, reinforced concrete, steel box girders and reinforced concrete slabs. The 24-foot wide Bridge is flanked by 3.5-foot walkways. Its clearance area in 173 feet wide and 20 meters high.

Afterwards, the Union Minister looked into the requirements of Targwa-Phayagon-Dambi road, a pilot project of Rural Development Department in Hinthada District. He also inspected the maintenance of Hinthada-Zalunroad section and Kyeinpinhse-Setkaw-Danubyu-Zalunroad section and duration of Ayeyawady Bridge (Nyaungdon). — MNA ■

(Translated by TMT)

Kayah traditional cultural booths attract visitors at Ethnics Culture Festival yesterday. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

Visitors take shelter from sunshine as they walk under the decorated umbrellas. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

Ethnics Culture Festival draws large crowd

THE Myanmar Ethnics Culture Fest continued for the third day, with Kyaikkasan Grounds, the venue of the festival, attracting a large crowd in the evening hours.

"First, we faced some difficulties as this is the first ever fest of its kind in Myanmar. But we could overcome them and hold the festival successfully thanks to the support of the Union Government, the Yangon Region Government, and the Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association (MEEA), the main sponsor," said U Khet Htain Nan, the chair of Kachin entrepreneurs association.

"If we have the wish to underpin the nation with the force of ethnic races, such festivals are the answer," he said.

In addition to Myanmar ethnic races, the booths of Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan and Taaung (Palaung), Kokang, Danu, PaO, and Wa self-administered areas were also crowded with Japanese tourists who are currently in Myanmar to attend the Myanmar-Japan Sakura festival, and travellers.

"Yangonites can now see with their own eyes the cultures, customs, and traditions of our ethnic brethren in one place, as the fest is being held in the city. I could see the costumes of ethnic races and taste their traditional dishes. It is a unique fest. I had never seen some of the ethnic dresses," said a visitor from Yankin, a township in Yangon.

"The Mano dance of Kachin ethnics was the heart of today's fest, as people of all ages from other ethnic races joined in with Kachin chorus dancers to express unity and progress. In fact, the Kachin ethnics performed Mano as a symbol of peace, progress, and prosperity," said U Khet Htain Nan

The fest is serving as a one-stop venue where people can enjoy ethnic dances, traditions, cultures, lifestyles, items, and foods, and buy local goods and souvenirs.—Thi Thi Min ■

(Translated by TMT)

China, Mandalay firms moot joint venture for eel farming

WITH plans to set up a joint venture for eel farming in the Mandalay Region, a group of 15 businessmen from China met with local entrepreneurs in the first week of this month to discuss the market conditions and stages of farming, according to the Agriculture and Market Information Agency.

"The Chinese businessmen plan to enter into a temporary partnership with Mandalay entrepreneurs. They want to breed eels using their farming technology. If the JV is formed, the Chinese businessmen want a 50-per-cent share in the profit. However, local entrepreneurs want to give them only a 30-per-cent share," said a businessman.

Eel in the bucket at a local market in Yangon. **PHOTO: FISH-AUNG WIN (PYAPON)**

Myanmar exports wild-caught mud eels to China. Since 2016, China's eel breeders have made business agreements with local farmers for eel farming in the Yangon and Ayeyawady regions.

"In 2017, officials from the Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF) went on a study tour to Viet Nam, where eel cultivation has been successful, and now, the MFF has successfully conducted experimental eel farming," said Daw Toe Nanda Tin, the vice president of the MFF.

Starting August 2017, eel varieties from across Myanmar were stocked for eel hatching operations, which began in October the same year.

The MFF aims to convert eel cultivation into a commercial business. It is preparing to stock eel species from eel-producing regions to proceed with further production.

Currently, the eel population in Myanmar is dropping owing to illegal fishing methods such as electrocution and overfishing.—GNLM *(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)*

Green betel nut demand growing at Myanmar-India border gates

THE demand for green betel nut in India has spiked in recent days, with large volumes of the commodity flowing out of Myanmar to the neighboring country through the border, according to the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization (MYANTRADE) under the Ministry of Commerce.

Green betel nuts produced in Kalay town of Sagaing Region and areas along the Chindwin River are being sent to the border areas. Green betel nuts are supplied to Myanmar-India border markets between January and March annually. This year, the volume has increased compared with previous years.

Transportation difficulties coupled with India's tax hike on betel nut importation have posed problems for merchants in the past.

Starting from early January 2019, there has been growing demand from India for green betel nut. About 20 local merchants trade betel nuts at the Myanmar-India border.

The price of a single betel nut ranges from K5-20, depending on the size.

Myanmar earned about US$10 million from betel nut exports in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, with export volume pegged at 4,000 tons.

Myanmar's exports to India include ginger, saffron, turmeric, bay leaves, areca nuts, other fruits and vegetables, fishery products, and forest products. Its imports include medicines, oil cakes, electronic products, motorbikes, cotton yarn, non-alloy steel and other construction materials.

The two countries perform border trade mainly through the Tamu and Reed points of entry. —GNLM ■ *(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)*

Local broom grass suppliers doing well due to foreign demand

MERCHANTS are increasingly purchasing broom grass to export it as a raw material, and therefore, people who harvest naturally growing broom grass in the forests, wild fields, and mountains are earning additional money, according to sellers of broom grass in Paung Township

Earlier, broom grass was being used to make value-added brooms to be placed in the market. Now, the grass is being cut down and sun-dried so that it can be sent to foreign countries as raw material. "Merchants are shipping broom grass to Pakistan and the UAE, where it is said to be used to make car cushions and other related parts.

The price is positively linked with the export permit," said Ko Tin Myint Maung, a seller from Pankon Village of Paung Township.

"Earlier, broom grass was harvested only for making brooms on a manageable scale. Now, export demand has prompted local residents to search and cut the grass. A man can harvest around 2,000 plants, while a woman can cut down about 1,500 plants a day," he said. Freshly cut broom grass is sun-dried for 6 days, said Daw Khaing Lwin, a purchaser from Paung Township.

This year, broom grass is selling for K 3 and is priced at K 5 in the Yangon market. In addition to Paung Township, broom grass is being purchased from Kayin, Taungoo, Ye, Myeik, and Dawei areas, according to depots. —Ko Hein (Paung) ■ *(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)*

Trade value with ITC stands at over K17.1 bln

Among the border gates, Myawady conducting the largest trade volume, valued at more than K 8.4 billion. **PHOTO : PHOW KHWAR**

THE value of border trade using the Individual Trading Card (ITC) amounted to K17.1 billion as of 11 January in this fiscal year (FY), which includes exports of K 3.2 billion and imports of K 13.9 billion, according to statistics provided by the Ministry of Commerce.

Among the border gates, Myawady reported the largest volume of trade, valued at more than K 8.4 billion.

The values of trade via ITCs at border points were: K 1.8 billion at Tamu trade camp, K19 million at Muse, K44 million at Tachilek, K 3.39 million at Lweje, K 673 million at Kanpiketee, K 760 million at Kawthaung, K 87 million at Reed, K 4.9 billion at Mawtaung, and K 279 million at Keng Tung, according to statistics provided by the Ministry of Commerce.

The total trade value with ITCs stood at K 45.94 billion in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

The Ministry of Commerce issued 292 ITCs in the 2012-2013 FY, 261 cards in the 2013-2014 FY, 317 cards in the 2014-2015 FY, 146 cards in the 2015-2016 FY, 248 cards in the 2016-2017 FY, 168 cards in the 2017-2018 FY, 91 cards between 1 April and 30 September in the interim budget period, and 69 cards between 1 October and 11 January.

The Trade Department created ITCs to boost border trade and has issued, to date, 1,593 ITCs.— Zwe ■

(Translated by Hay Mar)

28 JANUARY 2019
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Going organic

WITH the world moving towards healthier organic crops, our country, too, announced the Myanmar organic standards yesterday, which farmers and stakeholders engaged in organic farming need to follow.

The Myanmar Organic Standards, which are based on the ASEAN organic standards, have been devised to supply safe and nutritious food to the people and to ensure farmers follow rules and standards for organic farming.

Organic farming is a method of crop and livestock production that involves much more than choosing not to use pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics, and growth hormones.

The principal goal of organic production is to develop enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment.

'Certified organic' is a term given to products produced according to organic standards and approved by a certifying body.

> To boost the agricultural sector with safe crops, the country needs to tackle the challenges of erratic weather, capacity and technical know-how to produce value-added products, and dependence on foreign demand.

A grower wishing to have his produce certified as organic has to apply to a certification body, requesting an independent inspection of the farm to verify that it meets the organic standards. Farmers, processors, and traders are each required to maintain the organic integrity of their product and to maintain a document trail for audit purposes.

Products from certified organic farms are labelled and promoted as 'certified organic'.

Our country's farmers and stakeholders are turning to organic farming.

The organic standards generally prohibit products involving genetic engineering, synthetic pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, synthetic drugs, synthetic food processing aids and ingredients, and ionizing radiation.

To harvest certified organic products, prohibited products and practices must not be used in farming.

Organic farming presents many challenges. Organic cultivation of some crops is more challenging than others; however, nearly every type of crop can be produced organically.

To boost the agricultural sector with safe crops, the country needs to tackle the challenges of erratic weather, capacity and technical know-how to produce value-added products, and dependence on foreign demand.

For our agricultural produce, we have set the target of meeting the international standards in terms of safety and nutrition in the future, which will be mandatory.

The change in the global agriculture sector has brought opportunities to our farmers.

Our stakeholders and farmers are urged to adhere to our organic guidelines and standards as the time has come for us to improve our food standards so as to meet ASEAN standards and compete successfully in foreign markets.

How can we control noise pollution?

By Mayu Myo Aung (MNA)

WASHINGTON-BORN Edward W. Kellogg and Massachusetts-born electrical engineer Chester Williams Rice invented the loudspeaker in 1925.

Myanmar under the British rule started to use the loudspeakers, thus prompting the British to enact laws concerning with the electroacoustic transducer. In "the Police Act Section 39" proclaimed in 1945, the people were not allowed to use or switch on the loudspeakers in public areas without the permission of authorities concerned, according to Section 41(A).

DEATHS FROM NOISY ENVIRONMENTS

According to a report by the British Medical Association, those living in noisy environments may reduce lifespan and may increase risk for stroke.

Those who live in an environment of 60 decibels are four per cent higher in death rate than those who live under 55 decibels. A decibel is a unit for measuring how loud a noise is; normal conversations produce about 55 decibels. The noise produced by a loudspeaker could raise more than 100 decibels. If a person who keeps listening to a sound of more than 75 decibels, tends be hard of hearing, suggested by World Health Organization.

The Administrative Laws for wards and village tracts were proclaimed by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 24 February, 2012; first amendments to these laws were made on 28 March, the second ones on 20 January 2016. The third amendments were made in 2016. "The administrator of a ward or a village tract will have to carry out his duties in accordance with legal procedures" included in the amendments. In Sub-section(h), permission of using loudspeakers will be allowed after close scrutiny; actions will be taken against violators or formal documents will be sent to them. In connection with loudspeakers 1) the owner, the association or the borrower will have to apply three days in advance by giving reasons and duration, 2) by-law-1 will allow from 6am to 9pm after scrutiny. In order not to disturb the public, loudspeakers would be used in public areas just to let the people hear. They are to be used only in the case, not in other purposes. The cessation of use of loudspeakers must be abided by the owners. If necessary, the consent of the Police Force must be sought and regulations, discipline and directives must be abided by the users. In Section-18, the dwellers in the ward or village tract must seek permission from the administrator and at the same time prescribed rules and regulations are proclaimed. If they fail to abide by rules and regulations prescribed in Section 27, 17, 18 and 19, the users must be fined by not more than K 5000 or 7 days of imprisonment by the Court. Although high levels of noise are not much hazardous to health, they could cause harmful effects to the elderly, the infants, pregnant women, and students, thereby restricting noises by laws in some countries.

MANY FAILURES

Among the topics in the public, people have discussed about high-pitched loudspeakers and sound boxes in wards and villages. State lottery sale-ads, traditional medicines ads, purified water trolleys and pickled fruit trolleys keep hanging around on street corners, by using bullhorns, making people suffer from noise pollution day by day. During the open seasons, blaring of loudspeakers and sound boxes from respective donation pandals were heard , making people in the surroundings ear-splitting. No one pays heed to the laws; wards and village administrators fail to take against the venders. When loudspeakers are used in ceremonies, festivals and funfairs, the appropriate statutory rules and regulations must be abided by; in addition, health concerning with the elderly, infants and patients should be taken into consideration. The users should be reminded that if loudspeakers tend to create noises to disturb the environment, actions can be taken against the owners. ■ *Translated by Arakan Sein*

Eliminate leprosy-related discrimination, prejudice and stigma to end leprosy for good

By Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia

LEPROSY-RELATED discrimination, stigma and prejudice are the most powerful barriers to ending leprosy for good, especially given the disease is 100% curable when detected early. Though the number of leprosy cases has steadily declined worldwide, an estimated 200 000 cases continue to be reported every year, with India accounting for more than half. Significant numbers are detected elsewhere in the WHO South-East Asia Region, Brazil, sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific.

Though leprosy is often equated with serious deformity and disability, the percentage of patients that present with these symptoms is down to 6%, demonstrating the disease is being diagnosed earlier than ever. More than that, however, it demonstrates that leprosy needn't cause the disability and deformity that fuels leprosy-related discrimination, stigma and prejudice.

As core public health interventions such as active case-finding, improved treatment regimens and strengthened surveillance continue to drive-down leprosy's incidence and spread, the disease's bio-social components must be brought to the fore. As outlined in WHO's Global Leprosy Strategy 2016-2020, policies that promote inclusion and aim at ending leprosy-related discrimination, stigma and prejudice should be front and center of all leprosy programmes, both as goods in themselves as well as powerful tools to achieve a leprosy-free Region and world.

First among them is empowering people with leprosy to be agents of social change. This could include training them in advocacy and social mobilization to enhance community buy-in and secure high-level support and funding for leprosy programmes. It could also include helping them form psycho-social support networks to reduce emotional and economic distress, thereby promoting the active participation of persons affected by leprosy in society more generally.

Second is the need to promote access to purpose-built social and financial support for persons affected by leprosy. While the inclusion of leprosy-affected persons in vocational training is already underway in most endemic countries, these programmes should be expanded wherever possible. As part of this, clear information on how they can be accessed should be made available to every eligible person, thereby ensuring no one is left behind.

And finally, the human rights of persons affected by leprosy must be prioritized. Notably, in recent years India, along with other countries in the Region and beyond, has repealed legislation that discriminates against persons affected by leprosy: In 2016, for example, it repealed the draconian colonial-era Lepers Act, while earlier this month it repealed a law allowing leprosy as legitimate grounds for divorce. Both initiatives are to be commended.

WHO remains committed to providing Member States the normative and material support needed to chart bold progress and congratulates WHO Goodwill Ambassador and chairman of the Nippon Foundation Mr Yohei Sasakawa on being awarded the 2018 International Gandhi Peace Prize for his contribution to ending leprosy in India and across the world. On World Leprosy Day we must renew our focus on accelerating towards a leprosy-free world and ensuring the disease is no longer a source of shame and anxiety, stigma and prejudice, but is rather a challenge all of us can unite around to overcome. That opportunity must be grasped, and a leprosy-free world secured for all. ■

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 27 January, 2019)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 28 January, 2019: Likelihood of light rain will be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region, (Southern and Eastern) Shan, Chin, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 January, 2019: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 January, 2019: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 January, 2019: Generally fair weather.

Correction

In the 27 January 2019 edition of The Global New Light of Myanmar, the article on page 8-9 titled, "We are joining hands for Lymphatic Filariasis elimination in Myanmar, will you?", the mosquito in the picture is the Aedes albopitus, which transmits Dengue infection. The photo above is the actual mosquito that should be depicted, the Culex quinquefasciatus, which is the carrier for Lympatic Filariasis.—Ed

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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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish **"Letter to the Editor"** that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

PTTEP investment budget of $3,256 mln for 2019 includes Zawtika project, exploration

The PTT Exploration and Production Public Company Limited (PTTEP) has announced a five-year investment plan (2019-2023) to add value to legacy assets through exploration and production (E&P) activities and to support investment opportunities in areas rich in petroleum to sustain the company's long-term growth.

Phongsthorn Thavisin, PTTEP Chief Executive Officer, said the company has set aside US$3,256 million (equivalent to K5,007,728 million) for PTTEP and its subsidiaries in 2019, of which $1,840 million (K2,829,920 million) is capital expenditure (CAPEX), and $1,416 million (K2,177,808 million) is Operating Expenditure (OPEX).

The company is also targeting average petroleum sales volume of 318,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (BOED).

The allocation of CAPEX has been divided according to three main objectives. The first is to maintain the production plateau of existing projects in Thailand and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with a CAPEX of $1,159 million (K1,782,542 million). These projects include the S1 Project, the Bongkot Project, the Arthit Project, the MTJDA Project, and the Zawtika Project.

The PTT Exploration and Production Public Company Limited has announced a five-year investment plan to invest in areas rich in petroleum. **PHOTO: PTTEP MYANMAR ASSET**

The second objective is to increase petroleum reserves and future production, for which PTTEP has allocated a CAPEX of $490 million (K753,620 million) to support the Final Investment Decision (FID) of key development projects, including the Mozambique Rovuma Offshore Area 1 Project, the Algeria Hassi Bir Rekaiz Project, the Vietnam B & 48/95 and the Vietnam 52/97 Project, and the Contract 4 (Ubon) Project. To meet the third objective of enhancing existing resources that support long-term growth, the company has allocated $191 million (K293,758 million) for exploration activities, including its projects in Myanmar and Malaysia. To achieve the planned operational continuity, PTTEP has also allocated $16,105 million (K24,769,490 million) for its five-year operations (2019-2023).—GNLM ■

Two girls perish from fatal fall at Taw Naw waterfall, Kawkareik Tsp

At 11:30 am yesterday, two young girls identified as Ma Su Myat Wai, 19, and Ma Myo Nandar Kyaw, 19, were taking pictures on top of Taw Naw waterfall, located near the Kawkareik-Myawaddy Asia Highway in Kawkareik Township, when they fell 200 feet to the base of the waterfall.

Reportedly, Ma Su Myat Wai was taking photos near the top of the waterfall when she slipped, prompting her friend to grab her in an attempt to save her from the fall, but unfortunately, both girls tumbled over the edge.

Ma Su Myat Wai died at the scene, receiving fatal injuries to her head from hitting the rock walls on her way down. Her body was sent to Kawkareik General Hospital. Ma Myo Nandar Kyaw, who suffered a broken jaw and serious injuries to her head, was sent to Myawaddy General Hospital, but passed away while receiving treatment.

Ma Su Myat Wai was from Pa Ye Village in Myawaddy Tsp and Ma Myo Nandar Kyaw was from Ywama Village, DaikU Tsp in Bago Region. The two friends were on a trip with eight other friends at the time of the incident.

PHOTO: TIN WIN HLAING (KAWKAREIK)

Police are investigating into the case.—Myat Ko (Dawr Na Myay)■ *(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)*

Rare Ayeyawady dolphin killed by electric shock fishing

AN Ayeyawady dolphin was found dead on Saturday from the silted shore in the east of Sin Ywar Village in Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Region.

The dead male dolphin is 6.5 ft long and has been transported to the ship of Ayeyawady dolphin conservation in Mayanchan jetty in Mandalay, according to U Kyaw Hla Thein from Wildlife Conservation Society - Myanmar Program. Dolphin conservationists suspected of electric shock fishing the cause of the dolphin death as no injury was found on the carcass. During the law enforcement for Ayeyawady dolphin conservation, 50 illegal fishing boats and related fishing gears were caught, and 18 fishermen were also charged with illegal fishing, according to the news release by Wildlife Conservation Society - Myanmar Program.

Moreover, a total of 197 fishing boats were also seized during the tour of monitoring for forbidding fishing in breeding season.—Nyi Tu ■ *(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)*

Carcass of rare Ayeyawady dolphin found at a village in Patheingyi. **PHOTO: NYI TU**

‘Yellow vests’ back on France’s streets to challenge Macron

PARIS (France)—Thousands of “yellow vest” protesters returned to the streets of France on Saturday to protest against President Emmanuel Macron’s policies, clashing with police in several cities in a challenge to his bid to quell the movement.Police fired tear gas and water cannon to push back protesters at Place de la Bastille in Paris, one of the regular protest sites, as some demonstrators threw stones from a building site.

The local prefecture reported 223 arrests in Paris.The interior ministry estimated numbers for the 11th week of protests were at 69,000 across France, compared to 84,000 last Saturday. In Paris, the official count was 4,000 demonstrators against 7,000 the previous weekend.

Clashes erupted too in western France in Nantes and Evreux and in the southern city of Montpellier, where a police officer was injured by “a pyrotechnic device” said a statement from the local prefecture.

In Paris and other cities, the yellow vest movement had called to continue the protests into the night. But police quickly dispersed several hundred protesters in the capital’s symbolic Republique square using tear gas, water cannon and stun grenades to clear the area, AFP journalists said.

Jerome Rodrigues, one of the leaders of the yellow vest movement is evacuated after getting injured in the eye during clashes between protesters and riot police on the sideline of an anti-government demonstration called by the Yellow Vests “Gilets Jaunes” movement in Paris on 26 January, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

The protests erupted in mid-November over Macron’s economic reforms, but have since grown into a wider rallies calling for the resignation of the former investment banker who critics say is out of touch with the economic struggles of ordinary French people. Interior Minister Christophe Castaner on Twitter criticised “rioters disguised as yellow vest protesters” after Satur-

US calls to ‘stand with freedom’ in Venezuela as EU gives ultimatum

UNITED NATIONS (United States)—The United States pressed all nations on Saturday to “stand with the forces of freedom” in Venezuela, encouraged by a tougher European line as Russia stood in the minority in backing embattled leader Nicolas Maduro.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made a forceful case at a special session of the United Nations Security Council, where he described Maduro as part of an “illegitimate mafia state” responsible for Venezuela’s economic collapse.

With mounting protests over Venezuela’s crisis in which more than two million have fled shortages of basic food and medicine, Pompeo asked all nations to follow the US in recognizing opposition leader Juan Guaido as the interim president.

“Now it is time for every other nation to pick a side. No more delays, no more games. Either you stand with the forces of freedom, or you’re in league with Maduro and his mayhem,” Pompeo said.

He called on all nations also to end financial transactions with Maduro’s government, which has struggled to pay bills despite the country’s oil wealth.

Pompeo denounced Russia and China, which have stood by Maduro, saying that they were “propping up a failed regime in the hopes of recovering billions of dollars in ill-considered investments and assistance made over the years.” Russia has denounced the United States for interference and attempted to block the Security Council meeting, but it was voted down with nine of the 15 members agreeing to go forward.

But Russia blocked a draft Security Council statement seen by AFP that would have offered “full support to Guaido and called the National Assembly that he heads “Venezuela’s only democratically elected institution.”

“Venezuela does not pose any threat to peace and security. The intention of the United States is to orchestrate a coup d’etat,” said the Russian ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia.

He accused the United States of continuing to treat Latin America as a “backyard where you can do anything you want” and, in a shot at the Europeans, said Russia would not raise France’s populist Yellow Vest protests at the Security Council. —AFP ■

Venezuelan FM rejects EU ultimatum for new election

UNITED NATIONS (United States)—Venezuela’s foreign minister rejected a European ultimatum on Saturday to hold elections within eight days, insisting that Nicolas Maduro remained the legitimate president despite US-led pressure. “Nobody is going to give us deadlines or tell us if there are elections or not,” Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza told a special session of the United Nations Security Council.

“Europe, putting yourself at the tail of the United States? Not even the United States, but of the Donald Trump government?” he said. “From where do you get the power to issue deadlines or ultimatums to a sovereign people? From where do you come up with such interventionist and, I would even say, childish action?” Hours earlier, Britain, France, Germany and Spain told Maduro that he had eight days to organize elections or they would recognize opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim president.

The United States, Canada, and a number of Latin American nations have already recognized Guaido amid a mounting political and economic crisis that has led more than two million Venezuelans to flee in recent years. —AFP ■

Israel took ‘years’ to find cross-border tunnels: Hezbollah chief

BEIRUT (Lebanon)—Israel took “years” to discover cross-border tunnels from Lebanon, the leader of the Hezbollah movement Hassan Nasrallah said on Saturday in a rare television interview.

“The Israelis discovered a number of tunnels after many years, and it’s not a surprise, the surprise is that these tunnels, they took some time to find,” Nasrallah said on the al-Mayadeen channel.

Earlier this month Israel concluded an operation to unearth and destroy tunnels which the army accused Hezbollah of digging across the border from Lebanon.

“Yes, there are tunnels in southern Lebanon,” Nasrallah said, in his first comments on the issue since Israel announced the operation on 4 December.

The Hezbollah leader refused to specify whether they were built before the 2006 war between his militia group and Israel, or who had constructed them.

The month-long war killed more than 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and more than 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers.

“One of the tunnels discovered in recent weeks is 13 or 14 years” old, said a smiling Nasrallah.

The Israeli operation brought to light the “failure” of the country’s intelligence services, he added.

Israel’s army said on 13 January it had destroyed all cross-border tunnels, either with explosives or by filling them with a cement-like material to make them unusable. —AFP ■

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At least 18 dead in twin bomb attack on Philippine church

JOLO (Philippines)—UPDATES death toll, wounded; ADDS Duterte spokesman comments, details, background. At least 18 people were killed when two bombs hit a church on a southern Philippine island that is a stronghold of Islamist militants, the military said on Sunday, days after voters backed the creation of a new Muslim autonomous region.

The first blast occurred inside the Catholic church on war-torn Jolo on Sunday morning as mass was being celebrated, and was followed by a second explosion outside as troops responded, the regional military spokesman said.

Most victims were churchgoers along with soldiers. The door, pews and glass windows of Mount Carmel Cathedral were blown off, military photos showed, with bodies strewn across the ground, according to an AFP photographer on the scene. President Rodrigo Duterte's spokesman condemned the incident as an "act of terrorism and murder".

"We will pursue to the ends of the earth the ruthless perpetrators behind this dastardly crime until every killer is brought to justice and put behind bars. The law will give them no mercy," Salvador Panelo said in a statement. Five soldiers, a member of the coast guard and 12 civilians were killed while 83 others were wounded, said regional military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Gerry Besana.However the regional police chief Graciano Mijares put the death toll at 27, with 77 people wounded.

The second bomb was left in the utility box of a motorcycle in the parking area outside the church, a military report said. The army said it airlifted some of the wounded to the nearby city of Zamboanga for medical treatment. Authorities said the notorious Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group could be behind the blasts.

"When you talk about terrorism in Sulu, the primary suspect is always the (Abu Sayyaf) but we are not discounting the possibility that there are other perpetrators," Besana told AFP. —AFP ■

3rd Aussie minister quits politics in week

CANBERRA—The Australian government has lost its third minister in a week with the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion, announcing he will quit politics at the next election.

Scullion made his announcement on Saturday, only days after Kelly O'Dwyer, the minister for women and minister for jobs and industrial relations, and Michael Keenan, the human services minister, announced they would not contest the general election, which is due in May.

However, Scullion refuted suggestions that the government's poor performance in the polls was the reason behind his decision.

"I wouldn't write the coalition government off, I tell you you'd be making a mistake," he told reporters in the Northern Territory, the region he has served as a senator since 2001.

"I believe they will be re-elected and I think it's a sensible decision of the Australian people," Scullion said.

"It has been the greatest honour of my life to serve the people of the Northern Territory for the last 17 years in the Australian Senate."

"I thank all Territorians for their support over this time," he added.

Scullion was sworn in as the Indigenous Affairs Minister in 2013, holding the position under three different leaders of the governing Liberal National Party (LNP).

O'Dwyer announced her decision to quit politics one week before Scullion, saying she was doing so for the "very personal reasons" of wanting to spend more time with her children.

Keenan cited similar reasons to O'Dwyer for his decision, saying he had become "an absent father" during his 15 years in politics.

"I have always worked hard as a member of parliament and as a minister, but after doing this for 15 years, I cannot commit to another term," Keenan said on Friday.

"Over the Christmas break, it became very clear to me personally that times have changed and that this decision was the right one for my family and myself," Keenan said.—Xinhua ■

Photo taken on 18 December, 2017 shows the Palaceside Building in Tokyo which houses the head office of The Mainichi Newspapers major daily. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Threatening letters, possibly containing cyanide, sent to drug firms

TOKYO—Six major pharmaceutical manufacturers in Tokyo and a newspaper company have received threatening letters demanding money and containing a white powdery substance believed to be highly poisonous cyanide, Tokyo police said on Saturday.

Suspicious envelopes arrived on Friday at the companies, including the Tokyo headquarters of The Mainichi Newspapers. They each had a message on an A4 piece of paper saying, "I will make fake medicine containing potassium cyanide and distribute it. Send 35 million won in bitcoins by 22 February. If not, a tragedy will happen."

The police are investigating the case as attempted blackmail. Investigative sources said a drug maker in Osaka Prefecture also received a similar letter.

The letters were sent under different names, including Shoko Asahara, the executed AUM Shinrikyo cult founder whose real name was Chizuo Matsumoto, and people linked to gangsters. They also carried different addresses, such as detention facilities in Tokyo.The police said similar threatening letters had also been sent to some pharmaceutical manufacturers in Tokyo in January last year.

An official at The Mainichi Newspapers said the company had voluntarily submitted the letter to the police and that it will fully cooperate in the investigation.—Kyodo News ■

Aussie Thai cave rescue divers named dual Australians of the Year

CANBERRA—Two divers who helped rescue 12 Thai boys and their football coach from a flooded Thai cave have been jointly named 2019 Australians of the Year.

Richard Harris and Craig Challen were awarded the honour at a ceremony in Canberra on Friday night by Prime Minister Scott Morrison, becoming the first joint winners since 1967.

Harris, an anaesthetist from South Australia (SA), and Challen, a technical diver and cave explorer, were about to depart for a cave-diving holiday when they were called in to help rescue the football team from the cave in July 2018.

The Australian of the Year selection panel recognized the men for their "selflessness, courage and willingness to help others." Morrison described the two men as "humble heroes who put their own lives at risk."

"You did us proud," he said.

Accepting the award, Challen said he was "astounded."

"I am really somewhat astounded that the pursuit of a hobby for the last 22 years has led to so much interest and acknowledgement and me being up here tonight," he said.

"I dearly hope that I can prove myself worthy of it."

Shortly after emerging from the cave for the final time, Harris was informed that his father had died back home during the rescue operation. He said that the duo did not expect to be awarded for their part in the rescue mission.

"After Thailand we had no idea that all of this stuff was going to go on," he told News Corp Australia.Governor-General Peter Cosgrove in July awarded Harris and Challen the Star of Courage.

Seven other Australians who were involved in the cave rescue were also honoured with bravery awards.—Xinhua ■

Swimmers return to bathe with Palau's golden jellyfish

KOROR (Palau)—Swimming with the famous golden jellyfish in Palau can be put back on the bucket list following a two-year ban, but bathers may be stung with a hefty price increase for the pleasure.

The government ordered the famed Ongeim'l Tketau Jellyfish Lake closed to swimmers in 2016 because of dwindling numbers of the unique creature —blamed on warming waters although with some suspicion sunscreen on bathers may also have contributed.The conservation move proved costly for tour operators with the loss of Palau's most popular attraction contributing to a slump in tourism numbers.But authorities in Koror State, which owns the resource, say stocks are now recovering and tourists are again being welcomed at Jellyfish Lake.

"The jellyfish are returning, tourists are visiting again," Dora Benhart, the outreach officer of Korr State's conservation department said.Swimming with the jellyfish on Mecherchar island, about a 45-minute boat ride from Koror, is "one of the most unique attractions" Palau has to offer, according to the Visitors Authority chairman Ngirai Tmetuchl.

It is estimated to attract at least two-thirds of the annual visitors to the western Pacific archipelago which peaked at 160,000 in 2015.The numbers slumped to 108,000 last year which Tmeuchl said was caused by a combination of factors, including restrictions on Jellyfish Lake.

The rare species of golden jellyfish, believed to exist only in this marine lake, does have a sting but it is mild and often undetectable making swimming among them a popular experience. The jellyfish population, which once swelled to around 20 million, slumped in 2016 because of El Nino, a climate pattern linked to warming waters in the central and eastern areas of the equatorial Pacific. Palau President Tommy Remenegsau called for the lake to be closed, and while it was never officially shut down by Koror State, the dwindling jellyfish numbers saw a self-imposed ban by tour operators who stopped taking visitors to the island rather than charge them US$100 to see nothing.—AFP ■

Germany should phase out coal mining by 2038: commission

BERLIN (Germany)—Germany should end all coal mining for electricity production by 2038, a government-appointed commission said Saturday, laying out a roadmap to phase out the polluting fuel. The transition is expected to cost up to 80 billion euros ($91 billion) over 20 years, half of which will go to the regions shuttering plants in the west and east of the country, with the rest helping prevent electricity prices from rising, the commission said.The panel, consisting of politicians, climate experts, unions and industry figures from coal regions, reached this decision on Saturday morning after a final marathon 24-hour session, several members told AFP. It followed months of bitter wrangling as pressure mounts on Europe's top economy to step up its commitment to combating climate change. The commission's findings will now be passed on to the government, which is expected —barring a surprise—to follow the recommendations of the panel it set up. Under the plan, several plants that use lignite or brown coal, which is more polluting than black coal, will be closed by 2022.

Despite its green reputation, Germany remains heavily reliant on the dirtiest of all fossil fuels. **PHOTO: AFP**

Other plants will follow until 2030, when only 17 gigawatts of Germany's electricity will be supplied by coal, compared to today's 45 gigawatts. The last plant will close in 2038 at the latest, the commission said, but did not rule out moving this date forward to 2035 if conditions permit. The affected regions, where tens of thousands of jobs directly or indirectly linked to brown- and black-coal energy production, will receive 40 billion euros as compensation over the next two decades.

Nuclear power phaseout

Two billion euros will also be spent each year over the same period to stop customers from facing rising electricity prices. Environmental groups had pushed for Germany to shutter its more than 100 coal-fired power plants by 2030 as part of efforts to meet Germany's target of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. But opponents warned against ditching coal too quickly, saying it could endanger energy supply and push up electricity prices. Despite its green reputation, Germany remains heavily reliant on the dirtiest of all fossil fuels, in part because of Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to phase out nuclear power by 2022 in response to the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

Coal accounted for more than 30 per cent of Germany's energy mix in 2018, putting it neck-and-neck with renewables like solar and wind energy.—AFP ■

Invitation for Prequalification and Bid

Date:28 January 2019

Loan Agreement No: MY- P4 dated 5 September 2014, and MY-P21 dated 1 March 2017

1. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received ODA Loans from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase I. The Prequalification (PQ) and Bid are invited by Myanma Railways as follows:

Invitation for PQ & Bid	Description: Ywathgyi Depot and Workshop	Issuing Date	Closing Date & Time	Non-refundable Document Fee
IFP No: MR/ PQ/CP105	Track Works, Earth Works, Depot Area External / Depot Access Works, Civil Structure Works, Architecture Works, Building Works (construction), and Telecommunication Works, Electrical Power Works, and Depot Equipment Works (design build).	28 January 2019 (Monday)	12 March 2019 (Tuesday) 2:00p.m	USD 100 (or) MMK 160,000
IFB No: MR/ BD/CP105		Applicants who passed the PQ will be invited to purchase the bidding documents, and the closing date / time of the offer will be informed later.		USD 1,000 (or) MMK 1,600,000

2. Prequalification will be conducted through procedures in accordance with the applicable Guidelines for Procurement under Japanese ODA Loans, and is open to all Applicants from eligible source countries, as defined in the Loan Agreement. The Eligible Nationality of the Applicants shall be Japan in the case of the prime contractor. In case where the prime contractor is a joint venture, such joint venture will be eligible provided that the nationality of the lead partner is Japan, that the nationality of the other partners is Japan and/or the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and that the total share of work of Japanese partners in the joint venture is more than fifty percent (50%) of the contract amount.

3. Interested eligible Applicants may obtain the PQdocuments on the submission of a written application to the Tender Office in the Head office mentioned below during the office hours from 9:30a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday (except public holidays).

Managing Director,
Myanma Railway, Ministry of Transport and Communications
Nay Pyi Taw Railway Station Compound, PobbaThiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
Telephone: +95-67 77024, Facsimile number: +95-67-77164
Email address: dgm.planning.mr@gmail.com, dgmplan.rail@mrt.gov.mm (not for submission but for clarification)

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V MCC HALONG VOY. NO. (903/905)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC HALONG VOY. NO. (903/905) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-01-2019 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

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The scupture of a head is displayed at the "Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa" exhibit at the Block Museum in Chicago. **PHOTO: AFP**

US exhibit portrays Africa's interconnected medieval past

CHICAGO (United States)—A first-of-its kind exhibition opening Saturday at a Chicago museum is challenging long-held views of the Middle Ages, exhibiting African artifacts that place the continent at the center of global trade and culture.

The traveling exhibition "Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time" debuts at the Block Museum on the suburban Chicago campus of Northwestern University, before traveling to other North American museums.

The exhibit showcases more than 250 items, including many rare and precious artifacts on loan from West African institutions in Mali, Morocco and Nigeria, and traveling for the first time outside of their home countries.The aims is to showcase what scholars have known for some time—that Africa was part of an interconnected world in the Middle Ages that brought wealth to the continent, and spread cultural and religious practices far and wide.

Africa "was definitely an economic engine" during the Middle Ages, said the Block Museum's Kathleen Berzock, who spent seven years curating the exhibit.

"The driving idea behind the exhibition is that in the medieval period, Africa, and particularly West Africa, was playing an absolutely critical role in bringing together regions that extended from Europe to North Africa to the Middle East," Berzock said.

Recent discoveries, new history

Organizers said the exhibit was the first time that a US museum had partnered with African counterparts to challenge notions of the continent isolated from the rest of the world during the eighth through sixteenth centuries.

On display are artifacts that show evidence of global economic trade in African goods and materials, with emphasis on the role of West African gold. These include rare fragmentary artifacts discovered at Saharan archeological sites, as well as African sculptures made of French copper, European religious artifacts made of African ivory, and other pieces of gold, ceramic, glass and textile.

The objects tell a pre-slavery, pre-colonial narrative largely left out of history books and school classrooms, organizers said.

"This history has not been brought to the fore," said Abdulkerim Kadiri, acting Director-General of Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments, who traveled to the United States for the show opening. —AFP ■

Thai pop idol condemned for Nazi swastika T-shirt

BANGKOK (Thailand)—A member of Thailand's most popular all-girl band donned a shirt portraying Nazi Germany's state flag with a swastika emblazoned across it during a televised rehearsal on Saturday, drawing "shock and dismay" from the Israeli embassy.

Images of Hitler, swastikas and other Nazi regalia are fairly commonplace on T-shirts and memorabilia in Thailand, a phenomenon blamed on a lack of historical understanding rather than political leanings.

The latest faux pas was committed by Pichayapa "Namsai" Natha, one of the singers of BNK48, when she wore the red-and-black top complete with swastika during the group's rehearsal on Friday. The deputy chief of mission of the Israeli Embassy in Bangkok took to Twitter to express "shock and dismay" at the outfit, given that Sunday is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. "Presenting Nazi symbols by the band's singer hurt the feelings of millions around the world," said Smadar Shapira.

The 19-year-old singer will be meet with the ambassador of Israel on Sunday afternoon, Shapira told AFP.

On Saturday night, Namsai apologized tearfully onstage during a concert.

"I want this to be an example for everyone, please forgive me," she said, bursting into tears. She later claimed full responsibility for her ignorance in an apology posted on her official Facebook page. "Please give me advice so that I can grow up to be a good adult in the future... I cannot fix the mistake but I promise I will not let it happen again," Namsai wrote in Thai.

Fans of BNK48, a domestic offshoot of Japanese girl group AKB48, came to Namsai's defence. "I'm over 40 and I don't know anything about this topic. When I saw the shirt, I didn't think it would be a problem," said fan Prasit Rudeekriengkrai.

Others blamed Thailand's education system, which does not focus much on world history.

"What do you expect? When we were in school, they teach only about Thailand and Myanmar wars," Samruay Kraspra said. Thailand has gotten in trouble in the past for its flippant use of Hitler and Nazi-related imagery. In 2013, Bangkok's prestigious Chulalongkorn University was forced to apologize after its students created a mural depicting Hitler during graduation celebrations. A Catholic school was also left red-faced in 2011 after students dressed up in Nazi uniform for a sports day parade.—AFP ■

The swastika was one of the most recognisable symbols of Nazi Germany. **PHOTO: AFP**

Jennifer Lopez doesn't need to get married to be happy

LONDON—Jennifer Lopez believes getting married does not ensure one happiness. The singer-actor, who has been dating sportsperson Alex Rodriguez since 2017, said things were difficult for her as she grew up with the idea of "fairy tale" that revolved around marriage.

"I grew up with the fairy tale, 'A prince is going save you', 'Wait for true love and that's what makes you happy', 'If you're not married, you're not happy'. Well, let me tell you, my daughter is eons above me already," Lopez said in the March issue of Red magazine.

She recounted the incident with her daughter, Emme when the 10-year-old voiced her thoughts on marriage."She said to me when she was eight, 'I don't know if I want to get married, mommy'," the singer recalled."And when she said that I was like 'Yes!' because I've been teaching her to love herself since she was little," she added.Lopez has been married three times. —PTI ■

John Cena to feature in upcoming Netflix movie

LOS ANGELES—John Cena is set to star in an action-comedy by Jason Bateman.

The currently untitled project, which comes from Netflix, will be both directed and produced by Bateman.According to Variety, the film revolves around a family stuck in an old abandoned movie studio where the sets come to life.

This is Cena's first Netflix outing.

His last release was the blockbuster "Transformers" first spin-off, "Bumblebee". The professional wrestler-actor is also attached to star in another Paramount film, family comedy "Playing With Fire". Production begins next month.

The film reunites Bateman with "Game Night" scribe Mark Perez, who is writing the film.

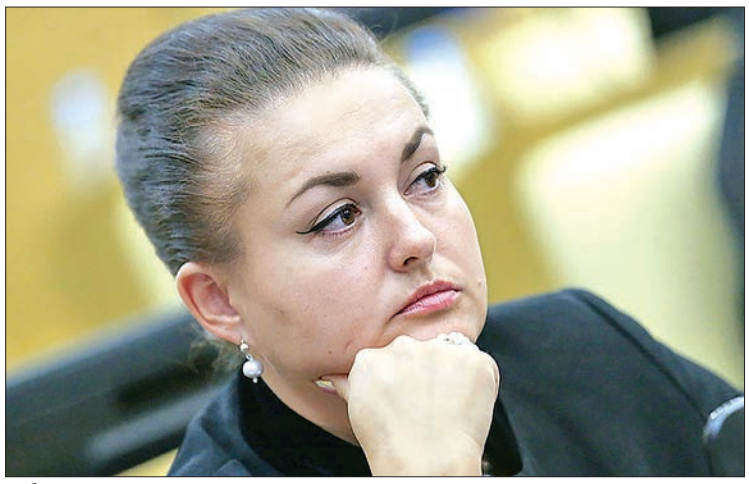
Bateman stars in Netflix's crime show "Ozark" and has been nominated for a SAG Award for actor in a drama series. He has also directed some episodes of the show.—PTI ■

Russian cosmonaut Yelena Serova believes women able to work alongside men in outer space

MOSCOW—Russia's team of cosmonauts should include women since they are able to complete the same tasks as men in outer space, Deputy of the State Duma (lower house of parliament), Russian cosmonaut, the Hero of the Russian Federation, Yelena Serova told TASS.

"The Russian team of cosmonauts should necessarily include women. We should not set any quota on the number of men or women in the team, that would have been unprofessional. I doubt that there are no women in our country able to fulfill the same tasks in outer space as men," Serova, who made a six-month flight into space in 2014-2015, said.

Earlier a source in the rocket and space industry told TASS that Russia's state-run space corporation Roscosmos would put together a team of female cosmonauts to conduct flights into outer space, and a search for candidates will be launched among space experts.



Yelena Serova. **PHOTO: TASS**

According to Serova, Russia was among the first countries to allow women study and work alongside men. "In many professions, sometimes predominantly male ones, women have proved to be top-ranked specialists, talented employees, responsible and thorough frontline workers. I have always said and will repeat that our country can only achieve prominent results in absolutely any field in a coherent union of men and women," she emphasized.

The deputy added that requirements to female cosmonauts in future teams would be similar to those to other candidates. "No more and no less. All candidates should be on an equal footing," she stressed.

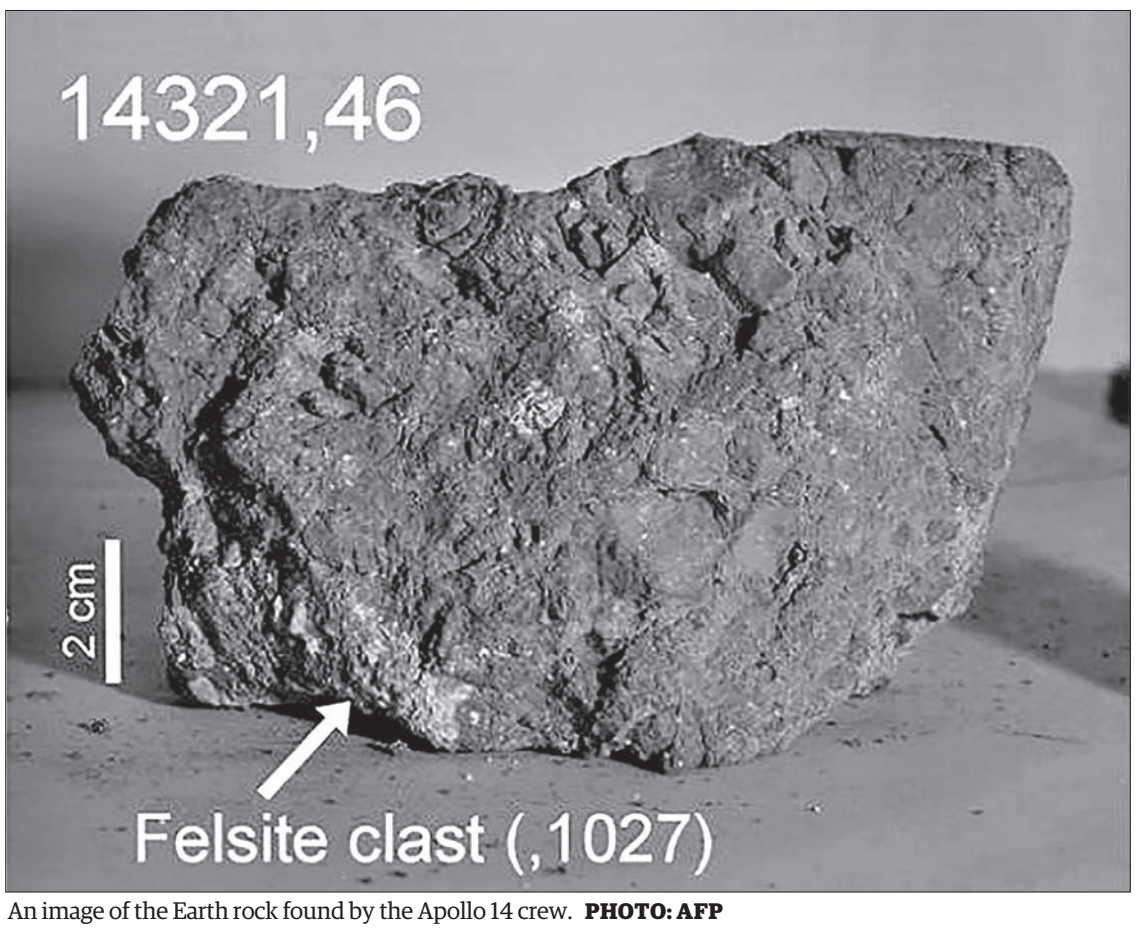
Women did not join the new space crew, which was formed in summer 2018. Some specialists later attributed this to a specific national mindset and far less women aspiring to become cosmonauts. Any Russian citizen not older than 35 years with a higher education in engineering, or in the scientific and flight sectors and with work experience was able to toss their hat into the ring, but only male candidates were selected.

Only four women have traveled into orbit in the history of Soviet and Russian space exploration: Valentina Tereshnkova, Svetlana Savitskaya, Yelena Kondakova and Yelena Serova. Meanwhile, NASA has sent 47 women into space.—Tass ■

China tests new generation of faster, bigger maglev

CHANGSHA—China's major train maker on Saturday tested a new generation of maglev train with a designed speed of 160 km per hour, about 60 per cent faster than the current model, in Changsha, capital of central China's Hunan Province.The new model has a 30-per cent increase in traction efficiency and can carry six more tonnes in weight compared with the previous generation, according to Tong Laisheng, head of the maglev research institute of the CRRC Zhuzhou Locomotive Co, Ltd, the developer.It can carry up to 500 passengers with three carriages, Tong said. China's first medium-low-speed maglev rail line was put into commercial operation in May 2016 in Changsha.

The new model is expected to lay a technical foundation for introducing medium-speed maglev train systems in the future, Tong said. CRRC Zhuzhou Locomotive is also developing a more advanced maglev model with a top speed of 200 km per hour.—Xinhua ■



An image of the Earth rock found by the Apollo 14 crew. **PHOTO: AFP**

Oldest piece of Earth found on moon

HOUSTON—A rock sample collected by Apollo 14 astronauts in 1971 from the moon's surface might well be the oldest piece of the Earth, according to recent research.The investigation of an international team of scientists revealed that the sample contains a fragment of ancient crust which scientists believe is very likely to have formed deep beneath the Earth's surface.

Published in the journal of Earth and Planetary Science Letters, the analysis found that the rock is composed of quartz, feldspar and zircon, which are very common on Earth but highly unusual on the moon.

The researchers inferred that a large comet or asteroid hit the Earth and launched the rock from earth into space, where it collided with the surface of the moon about 4 billion years ago. On the lunar surface, the rock was subsequently mixed with other materials into one sample.

"It is an extraordinary find that helps paint a better picture of early Earth and the bombardment that modified our planet during the dawn of life," the study co-author David Kring, a Universities Space Research Association scientist at the Lunar and Planetary Institute in Houston, said in a statement.—AFP ■

Microplastic contamination found in common source of groundwater

CHICAGO—A study of the University of Illinois (UI) has identified microplastic fibers, along with a variety of medicines and household contaminants, in two aquifer systems in US state of Illinois.

The researchers collected 17 groundwater samples from wells and springs, 11 from a highly fractured limestone aquifer near the St. Louis metropolitan area and six from an aquifer containing much smaller fractures in rural northwestern Illinois.

All but one of the 17 samples contained microplastic particles, with a maximum concentration of 15.2 particles per liter from a spring in the St Louis area. The researchers found that concentrations from the field areas are comparable to those of surface water concentrations found in the rivers and streams in the Chicago area.

The researchers also identified a variety of household and personal health contaminants along with the microplastics, a hint that the fibers may have originated from household septic systems.

There is still a monumental amount of work to be done on this subject, said John Scott, a researcher at the Illinois Sustainable Technology Centre and the study's co-author. He anticipated that microplastic contamination in both surface water and groundwater will be a problem for years to come.

"Even if we quit plastics cold turkey today, we will still deal with this issue for years because plastic never really goes away," Scott said. "It is estimated that 6.3 billion metric tons of plastic waste have been produced since the 1940s, and 79 per cent of that is now in landfills or the natural environment."

"It is such a weird concept that these materials are intended for single use, yet they are designed to last forever," Scott added.—Xinhua ■

Cyclists participate in the public cycling event in Twantay yesterday. **PHOTO: PHYO THIHA**

Over 400 take part in public cycling event in Twantay

A public cycling event was held in Twantay, Ayeyawady Region, early in the morning yesterday, under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Myanmar Cycling Federation(MCF). The event was also supported by the Twantay Cycling Club (TTCC).

More than 400 cyclists, including children under the age of 10 years, took part in the event, said an official with the MCF.

The event was held for the first time in Twantay and saw participation of children and adult cyclists from the Bicycle Network Myanmar (BNM) from Yangon, said an official with the bicycle network. "It was a good event for raising public awareness on the sport, as cycling is one of the more affordable and convenient sports in Myanmar," he added.

About two or three such events are hosted across Myanmar every month to raise awareness about the benefits of cycling.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Yadanarbon claim win against Yangon United at MNL derby

THE Yadanarbon F.C., former champions of the Myanmar National League, beat defending champions, the Yangon United, by 3-2 in a thrilling match yesterday at the Bahtoo Stadium in Mandalay, the home turf of Yadanarbon.

The Yadanarbon lineup included only young local footballers — Keeper Pyae Lyan Aung , Zaw Ye Tun, Myat Kaung Khant, Captain Ye Ko Oo, Win Naing Tun, Kyaw Thet Oo, Thet Naing, Hlaing Bo Bo, Hein Nay San, Win Naing Soe, and Nay Myo Aung.

The Yangon United lined up with Keeper Sann Sat Naing, Htoo Khant Lwin, Min Ko Thu, Pyae Phyo Zaw, Kyaw Zin Oo, Kosuke, Captain Yan Aung Kyaw, Kyi Lin, Miller, Mg Mg Lwin, and Sylla. Though young, the Yadanarbon team displayed no hesitation, with striker Win Naing Soe scoring an icebreaker at the 16th minute.

With focused play, Yangon managed to score an equalizer at the 30th minute. The goal was scored by Miller.

Thereafter, goals by Hlaing Bo Bo at the 48th minute and Win Naing Tun at the 58th minute put Yadanarbon back in the lead with a 3-1 score. Team Yangon refused to give up, with Kaung Htet Soe netting a goal at the 71st minute.

Both the teams fought hard in the later minutes to keep possession of the ball. The home team, Yadanarbon, finished the match with a 3-2 lead.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Quagliarella equals Batistuta Serie A record

MILAN (Italy)—Sampdoria forward Fabio Quagliarella bagged a brace on Saturday as he equalled Gabriel Batistuta's record for scoring in 11 consecutive Serie A games, in a 4-0 win over Udinese.

Quagliarella, who turns 36 next week, matched the mark after converting a penalty after 31 minutes, and added a second, again from the spot, on 56 minutes.

The evergreen forward also had a role in the other two goals —in the build-up to Karol Linetty's third on 68 minutes, and the decisive cross for Manolo Gabbiadini to tap in ten minutes later.

He left to the pitch to a standing ovation six minutes from time.

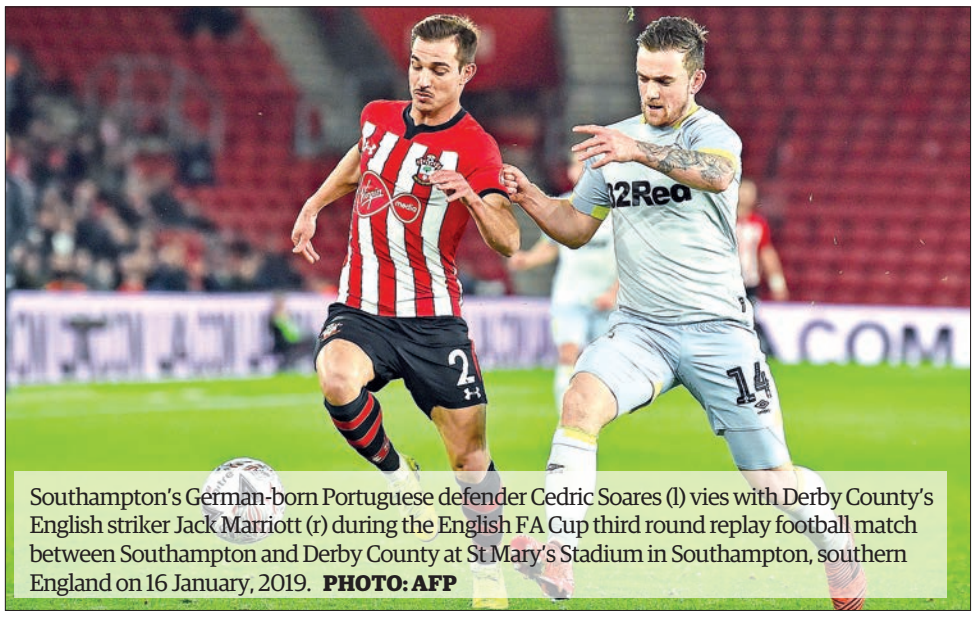
Batistuta scored at least one goal per game in the opening 11 games of the season in 1994-1995 for Fiorentina. The Argentine went on to finish the season as the top scorer with 26 goals.

Quagliarella has had one of the best seasons of his career with Sampdoria. He has scored 14 goals in his 11-match run for a total of 16 this season, to go top of the Serie A scorers ahead of Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo (14).The 25-times capped Italian international scored a career best 19 goals last season.

He joined the Genoa club in 2016 having previously played for teams including Juventus, Napoli and Torino.

Sampdoria moved up to sixth, the final Europa League berth, and just one point off the Champions League places.—AFP ■

Sampdoria's Italian forward Fabio Quagliarella celebrates after scoring a goal during the Italian Serie A football match between Sampdoria and AS Roma on 24 January, 2018 at the Luigi Ferraris Stadium in Genoa. **PHOTO: AFP**



Southampton's German-born Portuguese defender Cedric Soares (l) vies with Derby County's English striker Jack Marriott (r) during the English FA Cup third round replay football match between Southampton and Derby County at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton, southern England on 16 January, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

Southampton defender Soares joins Inter Milan on loan

MILAN (Italy)—Southampton defender Cedric Soares has joined Italian side Inter Milan on loan with an option to buy, both clubs confirmed on Saturday.

The 27-year-old Portuguese international has played more than 100 games and scored twice since joining the Premier League side in 2015.

"Cedric Soares is a new Inter player. The 27-year-old defender joins the Nerazzurri on loan from Southampton FC with the option to make the deal permanent," Inter said in a statement.

Southampton said the "move further helps to achieve Ralph Hasenhuttl's desire for a leaner squad, with the manager having also overseen the emergence of young right-back Yan Valery, as well as Kayne Ramsay, since his arrival at the club." Inter Milan are third in Serie A—16 points behind leaders Juventus.—AFP ■