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Message of Greetings from President U Win Myint on the 72nd Anniversary Union Day

Dear esteemed ethnic national brothers and sisters,

Today is the 72nd Anniversary of the Union Day, when we can express our pride in our success at uniting our ethnic brethren. On this auspicious occasion, I send my Message of Greetings, and good wishes for peace and auspiciousness, to the people residing in the Union.

Though we had lived together through weal and woe with the united strength of the ethnic people, we had to abandon our sovereignty, and we lost our independence in the 19th century, when our country was annexed by the British colonialists. After the loss of independence, the unity of all ethnic people was shattered due to the divide-and-rule tactics of the colonialists.

Our national leader Bogyoke Aung San and ethnic leaders rebuilt the unity of all national races and sacrificed their lives to regain the independence that we had lost. General Aung San and ethnic leaders held the Panglong Conference as part of efforts for regaining independence for the hilly regions without separating them from the mainland. It was on 12 February, 1947 that they signed the historic Panglong Agreement, pledging to make a united demand on behalf of all ethnic people for independence. The auspicious day which showed the Union spirit and the solidarity of all ethnic people, and on which the Panglong Agreement was signed, was designated as the Union Day, and today is the 72nd anniversary of that day.

The Panglong Agreement bore fruit, and we regained our independence and sovereignty on 4 January, 1948. However, due to the legacy of evil and a variety of reasons, misunderstandings, mistrust, and doubt crept in among the ethic people, leading to 70 years of armed conflicts, and the fire of armed conflicts has not yet ceased.

Only the united strength of the ethnic people and their commitment can help preserve and perpetuate independence and sovereignty and prevent the disintegration of the Union.

The most important requirement for the perpetuation of the Union, in which ethnic people with different languages, literature, culture, and customs are residing together, is building a democratic federal Union.

Today, to build a future nation as a federal democratic Union, the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong is in progress. At the 21st Century Panglong, the Union Government and ethnic armed organizations, which have signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, are holding negotiations, and, so far, 51 basic principles for a democratic federal Union have been signed into the two parts of a Union Accord. Meanwhile, based on the policy of inclusiveness, the country is on the road to peace through negotiations with ethnic armed organizations which have not yet signed the NCA.

The Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong is a pragmatic step towards realizing the dream of building a federal democratic Union that people from all ethnic nationalities of the country aspire towards.

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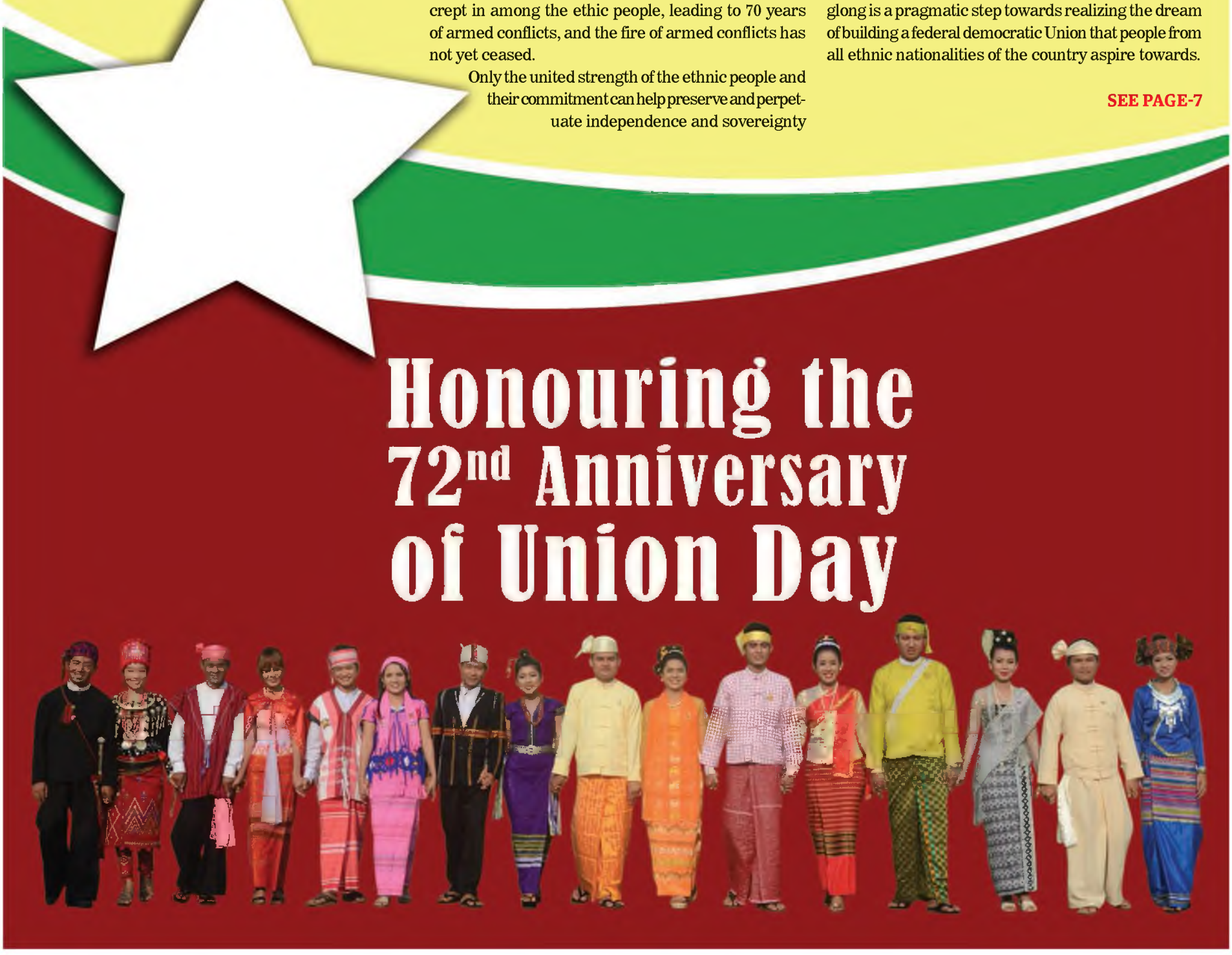

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 11th regular session holds seventh-day meeting

Aye Aye Than, Lu Maw (MNA)

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is being convened in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

AT the seventh-day meeting of Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 11th regular session held yesterday Hluttaw approves the Joint Public Accounts Committee report 2/2019 on status of tax collection during the six-month period from April to September 2018.

At the meeting Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat first announced the Hluttaw putting on record the Innovation Copyright Bill which was deemed as approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Next Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance explained about Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approving an agreement related to ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit signed by ASEAN finance ministers on 4 May 2018. Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker announced for Hluttaw representatives who want to discuss the matter to register their names.

Following this Deputy Minister for Office of the Union Government U Tin Myint, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win and Deputy Minister for Natural Resource and Environmental Conservation explained about the Joint Public Accounts Committee report 2/2019 on the committee's finding and comment of the status of tax collection during the six-month period from April to September 2018 and responded to discussions made by Hluttaw representatives.

Joint Public Accounts Committee joint secretary Dr. Sai Hsai Kyauksan then tabled a motion for the Hluttaw to accept and agree on the report and after obtaining the agreement of the Hluttaw, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker announced the Hluttaw's acceptance and agreeing to the report and put it on record.

Finally a Joint Public Accounts Committee report 3/2019 of the committee's finding and comments on fiscal year 2017-2018 Development Fund accounts of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw was discussed by U Sai Tun Sein of Mongpyin constituency, U Win Wai of Phaungpyin constituency, U Whey Tin of Chin State constituency 11, U Nan Mon Htin of Machanbaw constituency, U Khin Cho of Hlaingbwe constituency, U Lal Min Htan of Chin State constituency 10, Daw Cho Cho of Ottwin constituency, U Nyunt Win of Kanpetlet constituency, U Kan Myint of Thayet constituency, Dr. Than Win of Mandalay Region constituency 1, Daw Kyi Mo Mo Lwin of Singaing constituency, Daw Khin Than Nu of Mindon constituency, Daw Mi Kun Chan of Paung constituency, U Kyaw Tote of Mandalay Region constituency 7, U Yan Lin of Kyaiklat constituency, U Bo Gyi of Chauk constituency, U Nyan Hein of Thanbyuzayat constituency, Dr. Kyaw Ngwe of Magway Region constituency 10, U Aung Thike of Seikphyu constituency and U Soe Win of Rakhine State constituency 12.

It is learnt that a notification will be made when the eighth-day meeting of the 11th regular session of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Union Attorney-General receives delegation of Aichi Bar Association

UNION ATTORNEY-General U Tun Tun Oo received a delegation led by Mr. Nakagawa Shingo, Head of International Cooperation Division of the Aichi Bar Association, at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed implementing capacity development projects and the judicial sector between the Office of the Union Attorney-General, Japan's Ministry of Justice and JICA. They also discussed passing the Bill amending The Bar Council Act through the Hluttaw, the organizational structure of Japan's lawyer associations and responsibilities, developing the skills and ethics of lawyers, maintaining rules, and formation of lawyer associations. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Union Attorney General U Tun Tun Oo meets with Head of International Cooperation Division of the Aichi Bar Association Mr. Nakagawa Shingo in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of service organizations transferred

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has transferred the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names from the date they assume charge of their duties.

	Name	Appointment
(1)	U Nyi Nyi San Rector Central Institute of Civil Service (Upper Myanmar) Union Civil Service Board	Director-General Civil Service Selection and Training Department Union Civil Service Board
(2)	U Kyaw Soe Director-General Civil Service Selection and Training Department Union Civil Service Board	Rector Central Institute of Civil Service (Upper Myanmar) Union Civil Service Board
(3)	U Htin Kyaw Chief Inspector (Director-General) Office of the Anti-Corruption Commission Anti-Corruption Commission	Director-General Administration Department Office of the Anti-Corruption Commission Anti-Corruption Commission

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Myanmar, Korea to jointly produce movie to promote tourism

UNION MINISTER for Information Dr. Pe Myint and Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung attended a meeting for Myanmar and South Korea jointly producing a movie. The meeting was held in Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

Also present at the meeting were Ministry of Hotels and Tourism Permanent Secretary U Bharat Singh, Ministry of Information Director-General U Ye Naing and officials, Myanmar Travel Association Chairman U Thet Lwin Toe, representatives from Myanmar-Korea travel promotion group, Director academy Zinyaw Maung Maung, JBJ Entertainment Chairman Ms. Jeong Bunja and representatives.

Cooperating with SBS TV Channel of South Korea for development of Myanmar-Korea travel sector, raising the image of Myanmar through movie production and appointing Tourism Brand Promoter were discussed at the meeting.

Dr. Moe Ni Lwin's novel and script will be made into a movie titled "A winter once upon a time" directed by Zinyaw Maung Maung.

The movie is jointly produced by Myanmar and Korea with joint director from Korea and international level movie producing group.

The movie will include famous actors and actresses from Myanmar and South Korea. The movie will be shot in locations at Seoul, Busan and other major cities in South Korea, Mandalay, Sagaing, Pyin Oo Lwin, Bagan, Inle Lake region in Shan State, Chin State and Taninthayi Region aiming toward promoting travel sector in the two countries. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Union Ministers Dr. Pe Myint and U Ohn Maung hold talks with JBJ Entertainment Chairman Ms. Jeong Bunja and academy Zinyaw Maung Maung and representatives in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Coord meeting held in Kalay to increase electricity distribution in Sagaing, Chin

Union Minister U Win Khaing addresses the coordination meeting to increase electricity distribution in Sagaing Region and Chin State in Kalay yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

A COORDINATION meeting to increase electricity distribution in Sagaing Region and Chin State was held in Sagaing Region Kalay district electric engineer office meeting room on the afternoon of 9 February

At the meeting Union Minister U Win Khaing said the ministry is striving toward increasing the electricity usage in the country to 55 percent by 2020-2021 as well as to provide stable and full voltage electricity. Arrangements are to be made through calculating possible increase of electricity usage in Sagaing Region and Chin State. The image of the country is to be raised by providing electricity to the border town of Tamu. Staffs are required to work toward fulfilling the aims of the ministry and achieve success said the Union Minister.

Electrical engineers from Tamu and Kalay districts, Sagaing Region and Chin State then explained about electricity distribution status while Managing Director U Saw Win Maung provided additional explanations.

Next Director-General U Aye Kyaw explained about plans to provide electricity to Mawlaik, Homalin and Phaungpyin areas while Sagaing Region minister for electricity, industry and road transport U Than Nyunt Win and Deputy Minister Dr. Tun Naing provided additional explanations. The Union Minister coordinated on the discussions and explanations. — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)

PLWDs, maternity circles, social support groups in Magway receive financial support

PEOPLE living with disabilities – PLWDs in Magway Region, maternity circles and volunteer organizations received aid during a ceremony held at the General Administration Department's meeting hall in Magway on 10 February.

The Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Dr. Win Myat Aye, addressed the ceremony, saying social protection is the basis for socioeconomic development. He said PLWDs are provided not only financial assistance but also opportunities to learn vocational skills and an environment for acquiring employment. He said his ministry has collaborated with the Ministry of Education to provide lessons conducted in sign language for the deaf and they are in fact, successfully taking matriculation exams.

Chief Minister Dr. Aung Moe Nyo then delivered words of gratitude for the aid provided.

The Union Minister, Chief Minister and other officials then handed over the financial aid to the PLWDs in attendance and gifted toys and nutritional snacks for children. A regional Hluttaw MP spoke words of thanks for the aid provided.

The financial donation included K369,900,000 for 12,330 PLWDs in the region, K2,678,100 for maternity circles in Magway Tsp, K2,955,000 to a Hpan Khar Myay Home for the Aged, K6,534,000 Sarse Youth Development Philanthropic Centre, K1,000,000 for celebrating Bogyoke Aung San's 104th birth anniversary in Natmauk Tsp, K700,000 each to a Pre-KG school and two Tatmadaw Pre-KG schools in Magway Tsp, and K2,678,100 for five maternity circles. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye hands over cash assistance to authorities for people living with disabilities in Magway. **PHOTO: MNA**

Meeting on additional measles vaccination in Yangon Region held in Nay Pyi Taw

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe attends a meeting for additional measles vaccination program in Yangon Region held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

A MEETING on an additional measles vaccination program in Dagon Myothit East, Dagon Myothit Southern and Dagon Myothit Seikkan townships in East Yangon District and Hlinethaya, Shwepyitha, Mingaladon and Insein townships in Northern Yangon District, status of using QGIS software in vaccination works and future work was held at the Ministry of Health and Sports yesterday morning.

At the meeting Director-General Dr. Sithu Aung and project manager (vaccination expansion work) Dr. Htar Htar Lin explained about information program for the public in townships where vaccinations will be conducted, work guidelines for vaccination staff and volunteers, preparing data to use in information and explanation provided to townships where vaccinations will be conducted, coordinating meetings with cooperating INGOs and organisations, explaining work programs to participators and conducting trainings.

In response to the explanations, Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe said recently there were outbreak of measles in developed country like United States as well as in Southeast Asia countries of Thailand and the Philippines resulting in some fatalities. Measles is highly contagious and causes additional complications that results in fatalities and thus the Ministry will place great emphasis on measles prevention vaccination works said the Union Minister.

While conducting vaccination works, displaying of health information will be conducted at places like markets and schools. As private sector plays an important role in the success of a vaccination works, it will be conducted in coordination with Myanmar Private Medical Practitioner group. Work guidelines will be distributed to Public Health universities and basic health universities and will also be provided through Mobile Tablets distribution by the ministry and emphasis must be placed toward easing and smoothing the works of staffs conducting the vaccination works.

Next, project manager (vaccination expansion work) and officials explained about preliminary testing of QGIS software and future works.— MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Tourist arrivals up 11% in Apr-Jan

THE NUMBER of foreign tourists visiting Myanmar rose by 11 per cent between April 2018 and January 2019, compared with the year-ago period, according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

Between April 2018 and January 2019, Myanmar welcomed 691,312 foreigners, with 488,214 tourists arriving on a tourist visa and 203,098 travellers arriving on a job visa. Between April 2017 and January 2018, a total of 623,321 foreigners visited Myanmar, with 423,040 tourists arriving on a tourist visa and 200,281 travellers arriving on a job visa.

The number of tourists visiting Myanmar has increased in 2019 day by day. A total of 111,814 tourists arrived in Myanmar via the international airports, border checkpoints, and cruise liners this year. Among them, 75,326 tourists landed in Myanmar via the Yangon international airport and cruise liners, 24,968 tourists via Mandalay airport, 484 tourists via Nay Pyi Taw airport, 6,775 tourists via Tachilek border, 2,518 tourists via Myawady border, 852 tourists via Kawthoung border, 143 tourists via Hteekhee border, 740 tourists via Muse, and eight tourists via Tamu border gate.

Amid concerns regarding the political climate in Myanmar, tourists from North America and European countries have cancelled their bookings this year, but tourists from China, South Korea, Thailand, and other Asian counties are visiting the country regularly.

Grouped according to country, tourist arrivals on visas till December 2018 totalled 297,400 from China, 291,231 from Thailand, 104,376 from Japan, 65,057 from the United States, 63,911 from South Korea, 58,657 from Singapore, 53,329 from Viet Nam, 47,632from Malaysia, 43,281 from India, 43,218 from France, and 36,609 from the United Kingdom. Most of the tourists visited Yangon and Mandalay regions, and Shan State. The number of tourists visiting Myanmar was about 3.55 million in 2018, 3.44 million in 2017, 2.91 million in 2016, and 4.6 million in 2015, according to official statistics from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.— Zwe (Translated by Hay Mar)

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Office of the President
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(11 February 2019)

Reorganization of State Ministry

According to the agreement of Kachin State Hluttaw, the Ministry of Road Transport, Electricity and Industry under the Kachin State Government have been reorganized as the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Electricity and Industry.

Sd/ Win Myint
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

President's Office continues announcement of illegal drug arrests, seizures acting on tip-offs

THE Office of the President issued Press Release No. 6/2019 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 9 February.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 9 February.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 13 February issue of The Global New Light of Myanmar.—GNLM

Union Supreme Court sits to pass judgment, hear civil cases

CHIEF JUSTICE of the Union U Htun Htun Oo, Supreme Court judges U Tha Htay and U Myo Win of Special Appellate Bench sits at Union Supreme Court room number 1 yesterday morning and passed judgment on one (Certiorari) criminal case and five (Certiorari) civil cases and heard five other (Certiorari) civil cases.—MNA

Overheated frig-freezer fire engulfs two houses in Monywa

A FIRE reportedly started from an overheated fridge freezer in Monywa destroyed two houses yesterday.

The flame was put under control within 10 minutes after the fire which started at 2 am in Thida Street (Ward 3), Kantharoo Ward, Monywa.

About 100 firefighters put out the fire with eight fire engines from the Monywa Fire Services Department.

The fire spread to the nearby two houses, said U Nyi Nyi Zaw from Monywa Fire Services Department.

This fire engulfed two houses including refrigerator, two televisions, two meters, bicycle, fan and other consumer goods. The fire left four men and three women homeless.

Township police station is taking action against the suspect Ko Zaw Moe under the Section 285 of the Penal Code for reckless use of fire.— Myo Win Tun-Monywa

(Translated by La Wonn)

As IPRD completes 28 years, it must focus on central role in community: Dr. Pe Myint

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint attended a ceremony yesterday morning to mark the 28th year since the foundation of the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD). The event was held in the assembly hall of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw.

In his address, Dr. Pe Myint spoke about the requirement for IPRD staff to make their offices central to the community. "The IPRD provides news and knowledge to the people, collect news and information, and contacts and links up with people on behalf of the government. Now, the offices are being transformed into Community Centres and are linking up people as well as people and the government. In some places, recognition is being given to those who have made such an outstanding contribution to the community centres. These peoples are to be imitated," said the Union Minister.

The Union Minister said that staff must work to improve themselves, while carrying out their duties in the department. He said he has made this observation repeatedly, whenever he has met with staff.

"If the staff do their work with keen interest, they themselves will develop. If a staff person is doing his/her work properly and systematically, it will make others want to cooperate with him/her. This is because, such staff persons do their work not only as a duty, but with enthusiasm, as they value their work," he said.

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint presents the second prize to a representative from Myaungmya District IPRD at the 28th anniversary of Information and Public Relations Department in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun presents second prize to a representative from Natmauk Township IPRD at the 28th anniversary of Information and Public Relations Department in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

The IPRD is conducting children's literature festivals, paper reading events, and literary talk circles. These works have been successful since inception because they were required and necessary, the minister said.

Children's literature festivals have been held successfully in states, regions, and district levels, and under regional arrangement in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and relevant state or region governments. To encourage reading, an 'All who can read should read' campaign was held in Nay Pyi Taw in 2018.

"Public talk circles are being implemented in Community Centres. Previously, there was no practice of holding discussions or talk circles, but these are now coming into existence. The aim is to nurture the habit of free speech, criticism, and peaceful resolution of problems. Conducting discussions and talk circles helps develop the quality of the people," said the Union Minister.

Next the Union Minister presented district level first, second and third best work conduct prizes to PyinOoLwin, Myaungmya and Myitkyina district offices respectively.

Afterwards Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun presented township level first, second and third best work conduct prizes to Patheingyi, Natmauk and Pazundaung township offices respectively. Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung presented prizes to staffs who won in literature and photo competitions while Printing and Publishing Department Director-General U Aung Myo Myint presented prizes to outstanding staffs in training courses.

IPRD Director-General U Ye Naing also presented prizes to outstanding staffs in training courses and then presented 2,751 cloths to staffs from IPRD head office, state/region, district and township offices as commemorative gifts on the occasion of the anniversary.

A video titled "IPRD for the people" was then screened and then a prize winner said words of thanks on behalf of all the prize winners.

Finally, a lucky draw program was held where the Union Minister and the Permanent Secretary presented prizes to winner of big prizes.

After the event the Union Minister, Deputy Minister, attendees and prize winners took commemorative group photo. —MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Certificate Course in Enhanced Diplomatic Skills – EDS (5/2019) inaugurates

THE Opening ceremony of the Certificate Course in Enhanced Diplomatic Skills (5/2019), conducted by the Strategic Studies and Training Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was held at Wunzinminyarzar Hall of the Ministry at 10:00 a.m. yesterday, with a opening address delivered by U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation.

Present on the occasion were retired Myanmar Ambassadors, Directors-General and responsible officials of the departments under the Ministry, senior diplomats, professors, faculty members of Universities and experts from other Ministries and instructors as well as trainees.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs is carrying out its duties in enhancing knowledge and skill in diplomacy of private and public sectors by conducting the basic diplomatic trainings.

The Certificate Course in Enhanced Diplomatic Skills-EDS is conducted and targeted for Basic Diplomatic Skills – EDS certificate holders. The 8-week long course covered the subject related to diplomacy, negotiation skills, international relations, contemporary international affairs, economics and policies.

This course is designed to provide up-to-date and emerging issues which will be lectured by instructors, professors and senior diplomats. Fifty participants attend the Certificate Course in Enhanced Diplomatic Skills.—MNA

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin delivers the speech at the inauguration ceremony of the Certificate Course in Enhanced Diplomatic Skills (5/2019) in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

DEPUTY CHIEF EDITOR
Aye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
Kyaw Myaing

SENIOR TRANSLATORS
Zaw Min
Zaw Htet Oo
Win Ko Ko Aung

INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR
Ye Htut Tin,
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

LOCAL NEWS EDITORS
Tun Tun Naing (Editor),
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor),
nwenwe9131@gmail.com

TRANSLATORS
Khaing Thanda Lwin,
Hay Mar Tin Win,
Ei Myat Mon
Kyaw Zin Lin
Kyaw Zin Tun

REPORTER
Nyein Nyein Ei,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

PHOTOGRAPHER
Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar

COMPUTER TEAM
Tun Zaw, Thein Ngwe,
Zaw Zaw Aung, Ye Naing Soe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Thein Htwe

EDITORIAL SECTION
(+95) (01)8604529,
Fax – (+95) (01) 8604305

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION
San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114

ADVERTISING & MARKETING
(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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

Mdy Region gov't issuing tourist permits for Mogok

THE Mandalay Regional government is now issuing permits to tourists seeking to visit Mogok region, said U Myo Thit, the region's Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. Thanks to the move, travellers will not have to wait long for permits, he said.

"Previously, visitors had to submit an application in Nay Pyi Taw to visit Mogok. Then, they had to wait for one month or one and a half months for the permission. Now, permission is being granted by the regional government. So, tourists can now get permits to visit Mogok within five days," the minister said.

Tourists planning to travel to the region now have to submit the dates of their visit, location of their hotel, and personal information of their licensed tour guide to the Mandalay Region's Directorate of Hotels and Tourism. Mogok has been well-known for decades for its gemstones, especially ruby and sapphire. Most tourists visit the area to learn how ruby and other gemstones are mined. They also like to observe the traditional culture of the local people.

Foreign travellers seen in Mogok. **PHOTO: KHINE SATT WAI**

Mogok was temporarily closed to tourists and was reopened for tourism on 10 September 2018. A total of 490 tourists visited Mogok between September and December. They arrived in the region via Mandalay.

To develop the region as a tourist attraction, authorities in February gave the green light to foreigners visiting three more villages — Kyaukpyathet, Panling, and Bernard.

"Bernard Village is an ice village of Lisu ethnic. Panling Village has a joint venture for mining rocks and gemstones. Most tourists visited the Garden Gems Market in Mogok. The hotels, restaurants, and local producers of Mogok region will be back to regular business, if foreign travellers come here," said Daw Phyu Phyu Myint, the chairperson of Mogok Garden Gems Market Brokers Association.—Khine Satt Wai

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Myanmar Trade Center to be opened in Hainan, China

By Aye Yamone

A BRANCH of the Myanmar Trade Center will be opened in Hainan to sell value-added products from Myanmar in China, according to the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization, under the Ministry of Commerce.

The Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization will set up the branch in collaboration with Glope Shenzhen Co. Ltd, an e-commerce company officially permitted by the Chinese government.

The Myanmar Trade Center (Hainan) and a Chinese products gallery will be opened at a building constructed on land owned by Glope Shenzhen Co. Ltd.

"We expect to open the Myanmar Trade Center at the end of April. We will announce the opening on our website so Myanmar entrepreneurs will be able to participate. Then, we will inform each and every organization. There is no limitation. But, if the quality of the products is not good, they won't sell well. That is why, entrepreneurs will have to try to penetrate the market with sale of quality products. We will not limit the quantity of the products. But, entrepreneurs will have to send samples of their products first," said Dr. Thet Lwin Oo, the commercial attaché.

The department will invite entrepreneurs through the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization's website as well as through entrepreneurs' associations to sell value-added products at the Hainan trade center.

Sample products from Myanmar will be sold at the center by Glope Shenzhen Co. Ltd. Agricultural finished products, including foodstuffs, jades, handcrafts, and other traditional souvenirs will be sold at the Myanmar Trade Center, free of any service charges or commissions.

"Those who sell their products at the center will not have to pay any charges or commissions for our service. The company will sell all the products using the cross-border e-commerce system. Sellers will not be required to take FDA and AQSIQ certificates from China. Cross-border e-commerce system means selling sample products at the center. If consumers like the products, they can order. We will also sell products online," said Dr. Thet Lwin Oo.

Glope Shenzhen Co. Ltd conducted an information-sharing conference at the Chatrium Lake View Hotel on 11 February to discuss how Myanmar entrepreneurs can sell their products at duty-free shops, online portals, and shopping centers in China. At the conference, the company shared their experiences, product registration process, and quality inspection procedures.

The Hainan branch of the Trade Center will be the first to be set up in China for sale of value-added products from Myanmar. The company plans to open similar trade centers in cooperation with other foreign countries.

"It is a great idea to sell our products at a Myanmar Trade Center abroad. It is not easy to open a shop individually If we get a chance to sell our products at the center, our products will be able to penetrate the international market," said Daw Lei Lei Oo, an exporter. A team comprising 20 exporters was formed with the aim to scrutinize export markets for agricultural products. The team has negotiated with officials from the Ministry of Commerce to find an agricultural food market abroad.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Fog disrupts Dala-Pansodan ferry service

SEVERAL thousand passengers stranded at Dala and Pansodan jetties yesterday morning for over one hour due to dense fog yesterday morning.

The fog-induced poor visibility forced the ferry service which starts at 5 am normally to stop at 7:30 pm. But, small motorized boats provided ferry services to passengers amid dangerous situation.

The jetties on both sides of the Yangon River was crowded with passengers until the ferry ships resumed the service at 8:15 am when the fog dispersed.

Local people have urged the authorities to make necessary preparations to ensure smooth transportation for those students who will sit for matriculation exam in March, 2019.—Mg Yin Oo-Dalla

(Translated by La Wonn)

PHOTO: MG YIN OO-DALLA

Message of Greetings from President U Win Myint on the 72nd Anniversary Union Day

FROM PAGE-1

It is confident that all regions and states will be developed within a short time when peace prevails across the Union, and the dream of all ethnic people will come true. People from ethnic nationalities are urged to solemnly envisage the development they want to see in their respective regions and states, after achieving national reconciliation and peace.

Therefore, on this auspicious day, the 72nd Anniversary of the Union Day, I solemnly urge all Union citizens to cooperate with the Union Government, the Hluttaw, and the Tatmadaw in implementing the tasks for building a federal democratic Union, achieving national reconciliation and socio-economic development of the people, and to participate and cooperate in the implementation of the five Union Day National objectives: –

1. All ethnic nationals to work with collective strength for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, perpetuation of national sovereignty; and to work for preservation and protection of the above.
2. To strive for the emergence of a Constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
3. To strive for the success of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panlong and thence till the success of the internal peace process.
4. All union nationals to cooperate and work in "Unity and Harmony" for rule of law and for the people to be secure and free from danger.
5. All union citizens to be able to enjoy good education and adequate health care protection.

(Unofficial Translation)

* * * * *

72nd Anniversary (2019) Union Day National Objectives

1. All ethnic nationals to work with collective strength for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, perpetuation of national sovereignty; and to work for preservation and protection of the above.
2. To strive for the emergence of a Constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
3. To strive for the success of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panlong and thence till the success of the internal peace process.
4. All union nationals to cooperate and work in "Unity and Harmony" for rule of law and for the people to be secure and free from danger.
5. All union citizens to be able to enjoy good education and adequate health care protection.

POEM

We Have a Dream

We have a dream,
A dream of standing together;
We have the hands,
The hands for building
the nation;
We have the hearts,
The hearts for restoring peace.

Unity is Beauty,
Beauty the Unity,
Must stand firmly,
restore peace,
And build the nation together.

Dr Zaw Tun

Spread democracy!

We must spread democracy, and must try to build an independent Myanmar through this system. Only democracy is suitable for independence as it is the only system that supports peace. So, democracy must be our goal!

(Excerpt from the speech delivered at the fourth State leaders meeting in August 1945)

Keeping our Union spirit strong

TODAY marks the day we were able to firmly establish the unity of entire Myanmar. We are able to stand tall and proud as an independent sovereign nation and hoist our flag as the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, without fear, on the global stage, because we succeeded in strengthening our solidarity with the Union spirit.

All ethnic nationals of Myanmar have been living together on the motherland for generations. We have worked hand-in-hand for shared benefits in the politics, business, and social sectors, and to maintain relations. This is why all ethnic nationals in the country are akin to close relatives. We are one family which has to face challenges together.

> All ethnic races must always be united. We must be supportive of each other's prosperity and avoid harming each other's welfare.

All ethnic races must always be united. We must be supportive of each other's prosperity and avoid harming each other's welfare. This perspective was included in the Magga Deva Lingar Thit composed in 1905 by Manle Sayadaw as a warning to all ethnic nationals during colonial rule.

During his speech in the middle of the Shwedagon Pagoda on 20 January, 1946, Bogyoke Aung San had said a 'national race' is defined as people who go through hardships and prosperity together, with a united mind. While we must place a degree of importance on our own race, religion, and language, we must place greater emphasis on our legacy of cooperation and unity.

National leaders and wise heroes have constantly attempted to reawaken the Union spirit slumbering in the hearts of our ethnic nationals.

The Union spirit is what has kept us united despite various attempts by colonialists to segregate us. On 12 February, 1947, we signed the historic Panglong Agreement and showed the world our collective unity.

The expansionists had to gradually accept our solidarity and respect our Union spirit. Ultimately, they had to relinquish control and grant us independence.

The Union spirit played a special role in Myanmar's independence and continues to do so in our journey to safeguard it.

We urge all ethnic nationals to heed the 72nd Union Day and follow the path laid down by our wise ancestors as we march forward, taking care to maintain our unity and solidarity.

■■■

The case for national unity

By Zwe Thann Shinn (Thonze)

NATIONAL leader Bogyoke Aung San had a firm belief, which spread and took root. He believed that due to lack of unity among Myanmar people, our lands were attacked and annexed by the British, resulting in the loss of independence and imposition of servitude. He also believed that national unity was vital for independence, and therefore, if the people of Myanmar were united, then, they were sure to regain freedom.

71st Union Day celebrated in Panglong. **PHOTO: MOE LWIN OO (LOILEM)**

National Unity means

Bogyoke Aung San delivered an address to the first Congress of AFPFL on 20 January 1946 and said, "This leads me to come to the task of organizing and mobilizing our entire people in the country for our common national objective. Of course the first thing before us is national unity. Now we have the AFPFL as the central organization symbolizing this. We must further consolidate its position, systematize it and develop it. We have placed our suggestions for its constitution and further improvement before you. But here I want to discuss what we mean by national unity and what form it should take. By national unity, we don't mean only unity; we mean the unity of the entire people, irrespective of race, religion, sex and sectarian and party interests, in action and not in words for national takes and objectives. As for the form this country is to take, there are some views that all parties should merge their identities completely with the national organization. Those holding such views are genuinely concerned that the existence of parties may undermine the strength of the national movement. But we must face this question as a practical one."

Bogyoke Aung San also delivered a proposal to the first Congress of AFPFL on the necessity of national unity by saying that working for independence needed the unity of the people; that if there was no unity then it was impossible to enjoy the independence by the people and the nation; that if we were not in a position to get united then it might tantamount to the betrayal and disgrace to our ancestors who fought and gave their lives for the independence.

Prominent Speech

Unity meant to have the common interest, the common work, the common destination, the common agreement, and that it meant for the whole of the country and the entire people. It should have the same work, the same interest, and the same goal, and only then it deserved to be termed as unity.

At the City Hall public meeting, Bogyoke Aung San said that in Myanmar, the unity was a necessity, especially unity among the nationalities and also among the people, and that in the absence of this combination, no matter what type of party or government ruled the country, the nation would remain nominally independent in the name sake but it would be identical to prostitute like nation.

Regaining Independence

As the diverse nationalities were residing together in Myanmar, it was necessary that all nationalities were to be respected and acknowledged including language, culture, tradition and faith, and only then the unity could be built upon was the belief of Bogyoke Aung San.

With this belief, Bogyoke Aung San wrote in his letter of 19 February 1945 sent to Kayin national conference mentioning his conviction and his future vision.

As all the national leaders joined hands in unity with Bogyoke Aung San, the independence was regained on 4 January 1948, and that the unity of the nationalities was manifested in the Panglong Agreement.

Genuine Unity

After regaining independence, the national unity started to crumple and collapse, and that the leaders of successive eras tried their best to reconstruct the unity of the nationalities.

The desire of the people was also the same to build the unity of the nationalities and enjoys the fruit of peace in the country.

Despite the efforts, the people were deprived off the national unity and peace for over (70) years. On many occasions, the national leader Bogyoke Aung San urged and inspired to unite in acquiring the independence and that State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also urged for national unity from time to time.

No unity....No Peace

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi believes that without the national unity, it would not be able to create peace, and it is therefore, among the organizations and the forces must construct unity by all means.

Moreover, the expectation, the feeling, and the belief of a nationality must be respected and valued by other nationalities, and only in this way, the genuine unity could be fostered and the peace could be implemented. In March 2013, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that first requirement among the nationalities was unity in the country, and that in building a united union we must understand and respect the expectation, the anticipation, the feeling, and the belief of the nationalities.

Without mutual understanding and the reciprocal admiration among the nationalities, it would not be able to acquire genuine unity.

Devoid of warmth and feeling of genuine unity, it would not possible to achieve long term internal peace. Diverse ideas and different thoughts are there in the mindsets of the individuals, the organizations, and the groups, and it is therefore, mutual respect and shared understanding must be constructed.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was of the view that the existence of diverse and varied outlooks of the nationalities was not to be worried, and pointed out the following reasons. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that our nation is a union, and that the unity is very much essential for a union, and that the unity among the diverse groups is crucial for the country and thus building understanding among ourselves is necessary. We must decide in advance how to transform the diverse outlooks into potency and strength.

Common aspiration must be identified for national unity

In order to create unity, it was necessary to build trust and confidence first and that on the journey towards national unity, a common ground of agreement was to be identified said State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who delivered a speech at the signing ceremony of National Ceasefire Agreement at the MICC – II in Nay Pyi Taw on 13 February 2018.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said, "I wish to say with great seriousness that we need to bring forth National Unity which has been lost in our country for many years. If we can achieve National Unity, there is nothing we cannot accomplish together. In the same way, if we cannot achieve National Unity, we will meet many difficulties when we have to overcome huge challenges. Resilience is not weakness. Negotiating does not mean giving in. It is important not to be afraid of meeting for negotiations. As we march towards National Unity, we need to reduce issues that could cause disunity and discord among us. We need to seek out common points of agreement that could bring us together and make us more united."

In conclusion the writer hailed the 72nd anniversary of Union Day, that all the political forces must have the desire for unity for the sake of solidifying the democratic foundation, the national reconciliation, the internal peace, and the building of democratic federal union in line with the aspiration of the people.

Translated by UMT (Ahlon)

> "... Without the national unity, it would not be able to create peace, and it is therefore, among the organizations and the forces must construct unity by all means ...

PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

The solid foundation of the Union

The first Panglong

By Kaung Zan Thein

(CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY)

The fourth White Paper

IT HAD become inevitable for the colonialists to grant independence to Myanmar sooner or later when the World War II ended in 1945. The colonial government implemented the White Paper, which divided the plains and hill region in governing the country. So, General Aung San and leaders of frontier areas started making preparations to demand independence for the Myanmar proper and the hill regions as a whole.

The colonial government did the utmost to prevent Myanmar proper and hill regions from making political contacts and collaboration between them. The colonialists sow seeds of mistrust between ethnic Bamars and other ethnic races. .

Unity and harmony

The meeting of the AFPFL headquarters that was held from 16 to 18 August 1945 adopted a unanimous decision to restore independence through the united involvement of all the national races of the whole nation. The decision was seconded at the Nay Thu Rein mass rally held on 19 August. All Myanmar Conference which was held at the third terrace of Shwedagon Pagoda on 20 January 1946 urged the minorities to take part in the independence struggle with might and main. The second AFPFL conference, held from 16 to 23 May 1946 made a resolution to oppose the White Paper that might torn the country apart. An announcement was issued on 31 December 1946 for all the hill regions to join the Union of their own volition.

Aung San-Atlee

The resolutions and demands of the mass rallies and leading body meetings were reflecting the national unity. The main goal was the establishment of the united and independent Union that is free from any discrimination between the states and the Myanmar proper. In accordance with the goal, General Aung San told Prime Minister Atlee at the London meeting that his aspiration was to reestablish the united Myanmar. He said, "In my view, there will be no difficulty in establishing a united nation if all the nationalities of the country are granted freedom and allowed to meet each other, without any eternal insti-

> ... In spite of obstacles and disagreements, the First Panglong Conference established the Union Spirit in the hearts of the nation.

gation." Then the Panglong Agreement was signed. The Panglong Conference stated in the Agreement referred to the meeting hosted by the Shan Chieftains with the participation of Myanmar representatives and the representatives of the hill regions in the following month.

The First Panglong Conference

Visionary Shan chieftains made arrangements for hosting a conference between the leaders of hill regions and leaders of Myanmar proper at a certain venue in Shan State. So, the Panglong Conference was held in February 1947. Before the Panglong Conference, some Shan feudal lords and leaders were launching a movement against the merging of the Myanmar proper and hill regions. A meeting was held at a middle school in Nanphatka, a Kachin village, near Kutkai in northern Shan State to debate the issue of partition or integration. The British Parliamentary Secretary on Dominion Affairs arrived in Myanmar on 4 February 1947.

The Panglong Conference began on 3 February. Shan chieftains, who were the members of the Shan Chieftains Council, and people's representatives held discussions on that day. On 5 February, Shan and Kachin representatives held an informal meeting. An announcement calling for holding a serious demonstration, expressing an ardent desire to restore independence together with the Myanmar proper, in all towns and territories was issued because of the prevalence of make-in-or-break-it situation. The announcement also pledged to drive out the colonialists together with the Myanmar proper and to restore independence in unity between the hill regions and Myanmar proper. On 6 February, Shan and Kachin representatives held a pre-Panglong meeting and laid down resolutions. Chin representatives arrived on that day. Chin representative studied the discussions between Shan and Kachin representatives, made some additions and signed an accord. Then a body on Hill Region Unity was formed. As the British government in Yangon rejected the desires of the chieftains and the people's representatives at 5 pm, over 2000 people held a meeting at 9:30 pm. The decisions were made. The radio station in Yangon aired the event.

The root of Union Spirit

The Panglong Conference continued on 8 February. General Aung San and delegation and the British delegation arrived at Panglong. Soon after his arrive, General Aung San held talks with representatives of nationalities at 8 pm. A paper including demands under the name of Hill Regions Unity Council was presented the following day. General Aung San was so annoyed when he found that the demands were non-negotiable. When the Bamar leaders led by General Aung San were invited to attend the Panglong Conference, British officers in Shan State tried to block them from attending the conference. In spite of obstacles and disagreements, the First Panglong Conference established the Union Spirit in the hearts of the nation.

(Translated by TMT)

Myanmar looking beyond India for beans exports, says Deputy Commerce Minister

By Nyein Nyein

FOR EXPORT of beans, Myanmar has been exploring new external markets besides India, the main buyer of pulses produced in the country, said U Aung Htoo, the Deputy Minister for Commerce.

"At present, we have a market in China. We will continue exploring more external markets," said U Aung Htoo.

Myanmar is also negotiating with India for export of mung beans, pigeon peas, and green grams under a government-to-government (G-to-G) system.

"The G-to-G plan has not succeeded. The Indian ambassador to Myanmar has committed to making efforts to implement the plan. But, we need to wait and see how his efforts pay off. Our Union Minister will visit India after 20 February. During his visit, he will meet with India's Minister for Commerce and Industry," said U Aung Htoo.

"As India is the main buyer of Myanmar pulses and beans, Myanmar growers are affected by any change in Indian policy on import of pulses. As the harvest time of pulses — March and April — is approaching, market stability is of vital importance for the pulses industry," said U Min Ko Oo, the secretary of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans, and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

"India banned the importation of pulses to protect the interests of its own growers. We hope the restriction will soon be lifted. But, we have concerns over the possible export market suspension and delay. Mung beans will be harvested in March and April, and so will pigeon peas and green grams. Possible market friction can affect domestic pulses market, dragging the prices down to their lowest level," said U Min Ko Oo.

The provincial government of India banned importation of pulses on 31 January, leading to a drop in prices of mung beans and pigeon peas. Currently, demand from Pakistan and Nepal has raised prices to K630,000 per ton for mung beans and K740,000 per ton for pigeon peas, said U Min Ko Oo.

"Buyers from India halted trade for their own market in recent days, but some Indian companies purchased pulses to re-export them to Nepal and Pakistan markets. However, traders did not dare to bring pulses into their domestic market," he said.

This being so, a G-to-G agreement with India is crucial for Myanmar pulses industry, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans, and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

"Sure, a G-to-G agreement is the best way to open the trade channel. We can export pulses through the G-to-G channel, even in case of a trade restriction," said U Min Ko Oo.

India's move to restrict importation of pulses in August 2017 severely affected growers and traders in Myanmar.

Of the various pulses grown in the country, over 1 million tons of mung beans, pigeon peas, and green grams were shipped in the 2017-2018FY, but they fetched only US$713 million owing to the fall in prices, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Germany, Myanmar's top trade partner in EU in Q1

PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

THE value of bilateral trade between Myanmar and Germany in the first quarter (from Oct to Dec) of the 2018-2019 fiscal year reached a peak of US$172.87 million, with exports worth $130.8 million and imports valued at $42 million, according to statistics released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Germany ranked as Myanmar's top trade partner in the European Union with the largest value of trade, followed by UK with trade value of $113.9 million. France was listed third with trade of $105 million, while the Netherlands and Spain were placed fourth and fifth, respectively, with trade values of over $100 million. The value of trade with the remaining EU countries was less than $65 million each. Moving beyond regional trade, Myanmar has established trade links with EU member countries. The EU is currently Myanmar's sixth largest trading partner.

Myanmar mainly exports rice, pulses, tea leaves, coffee, apparel made by the garment sector on a cut-make-pack basis, and fisheries, and imports cosmetics, food and beverages, and consumer goods.

Myanmar was reinstated in EU's Generalized Scheme of Preference on 19 July, 2013. Myanmar enjoys GSP in export of fisheries, rice, pulses, agro products, bamboo and rattan finished products, forestry products, apparels, and finished industrial goods. In January, the EU restored its tariff on Myanmar's Indica rice to protect European rice producers.

The value of trade between Myanmar and Germany totalled $373 million in the last mini-budget period, $584 million in the 2017-2018FY, $342 million in the 2016-2017FY, $153 million in the 2015-16FY, $147 million in the 2014-2015FY, $123 million in the 2013-2014FY, $187 million in the 2012-2013FY, and $137 million in the 2011-2012FY.

EU member countries have invested in petroleum and natural gas enterprises, manufacturing, transportation, hotels and tourism, and livestock businesses in Myanmar.—Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Trade with India touches $438 mln in Q1

THE value of bilateral trade between India and Myanmar was registered at US$438 million in the first quarter (from October to December) of the current fiscal year (October 2018-September 2019), according to trade data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Imports outperformed exports, with Myanmar importing goods worth $239 million and shipping goods valued at $199 million to the neighboring country.

Myanmar exports mung beans, pigeon peas, green grams, ginger, saffron, turmeric, bay leaves, areca nuts, other fruits and vegetables, and fishery and forest products to India, while it imports pharmaceuticals, oil cakes, electronic products, motorbikes, steel and other construction materials.

Bilateral trade between the countries was recorded at $800 million in the last mini-budget period (April-September 2018), $1.46 billion in the 2017-2018FY, $1.94 billion in 2016-2017FY, $1.7 billion in 2015-2016FY, $1.34 billion in 2014-2015FY, $1.63 billion in 2013-2014FY, $1.32 billion in 2012-2013FY, and 1.37 billion in 2011-2012FY. —GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-O-Cha. **PHOTO: AFP**

Thai junta chief decries coup conjecture as 'fake news'

BANGKOK (Thailand) — Thailand's junta chief on Monday dismissed rumours of an impending coup as "fake news", as speculation ricocheted across a kingdom unsettled by the ill-fated political union between a princess and a party allied to the powerful Shinawatra clan.

Conjecture has coursed through Thailand since Friday when the Thai Raksa Chart party proposed Princess Ubolratana, King Maha Vajiralongkorn's elder sister, as a candidate for premier after the 24 March election.

Hours later, a royal command from the king appeared to put a pin in her unprecedented political aspirations.

It said the monarchy was above politics and described his sister's candidacy as "highly inappropriate".

The slapdown by an unassailable monarch — protected by some of the world's harshest royal defamation laws — who has never addressed the public in such strong terms, set off a chain reaction.

A chastened Thai Raksa Chart, a key pillar in the election strategy of billionaire ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, swiftly agreed to comply with the command.

Election authorities meeting Monday are expected to discuss whether the use of the princess's name was unconstitutional, a first step towards dissolving the party.

Adding to the uncertainty, chatter of an impending coup against the ruling junta leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha and a major change in army top brass has billowed out, with the hashtag #coup trending in the top 10 in Thai Twitter.

But on Monday the gruff former general, who masterminded a putsch against the government of Yingluck Shinawatra, Thaksin's sister, in 2014, tried to stop it short.

"Rumours...? We're investigating. Fake news," he told reporters at Government House about the merits of the speculation.

Coups and plots

Thailand's generals have a penchant for coups, backroom plotting and factional struggles.

They have grabbed power 12 times since the end of absolute monarchy in 1932, including against existing juntas seen to have over-stepped their mark.

Prayut, a gruff ex-army chief turned junta head, has agreed to stand for premier after the election and is aided by an army-scripted constitution.

But critics say he has personalised power and outstayed his welcome with a public wearied by his finger-jabbing style.

The king appointed a new army chief, Apirat Kongsompong, last year from a rival faction of the army to Prayut and his junta allies. Recent days have seeded unease, with the first election in eight years now seemingly dependent on behind-the-scenes power plays by the elite.

"Pls#NoMoreCoup WTF with this country," said one Twitter user, while another said "I wish we have only #election2019".

Meanwhile, the fate of Thai Raksa Chart hangs in the balance. The party, a second to the Thaksin political powerhouse Pheu Thai, was expected to help the Shinawatra machine secure a majority in the 350-seat lower house.

But it is under intense pressure following its bid to bring in the princess.—AFP ■

S Korea's ex-Supreme Court chief indicted in power abuse scandal

SEOUL — A former Supreme Court chief justice was indicted Monday on charges that he abused his authority to influence trials as a political tool to lobby the previous government.

Yang Sung Tae, Supreme Court chief from 2011 to 2017, is the first former or sitting South Korean chief justice to be indicted.

He was placed in pretrial detention on 24 January after being questioned several times by the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office.

The 71-year-old is alleged to have misused his position to lobby the office of then President Park Geun Hye for the establishment of a new appeals court. He is also accused of delaying top-court rulings on controversial wartime forced labor cases involving Japanese firms, at a time when the Park administration was seeking friendly ties with Japan.

The Supreme Court eventually ruled on the wartime labor case in October, upholding a lower court ruling that ordered Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp to pay four South Korean plaintiffs 100 million won ($88,000) each in compensation for forced labor.

The decision and subsequent rulings against Japanese firms in South Korean courts over similar wartime labor cases have drawn criticism from the Japanese government, chilling ties between the two countries. —Kyodo News ■

Yang Sung Tae, former chief justice of South Korea's Supreme Court, speaks to reporters in Seoul on 11 January, 2019, before being questioned at the prosecutors' office over allegations that he used his power to lobby the previous administration of President Park Geun Hye. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

At least 99 dead after consuming toxic alcohol in India

NEW DELHI (India) — At least 99 people have died and scores have been hospitalised in northern India after drinking toxic alcohol, triggering a crackdown against bootleggers, officials said on Monday

News of the deaths in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand has trickled in over the past three days, with police suspecting the moonshine had been cut with methanol.

Cheap, locally-made liquor is common in parts of rural India and bootleggers often add methanol — a highly toxic form of alcohol sometimes used as an anti-freeze — to their product to increase its strength.

If ingested in large quantities, methanol can cause blindness, liver damage and death.

In one district of Uttar Pradesh 59 people had died after consuming toxic alcohol, police spokesman Shailendra Kumar Sharma told AFP. In a neighbouring district a senior police officer said nine had died, adding that 66 suspected bootleggers had been arrested and samples of the liquor sent to a laboratory for testing. Police said at least 31 people died in neighbouring Uttarakhand state and that two had been arrested on suspicion of supplying the liquor. Newspaper reports said around 3,000 people linked with the illegal trade were arrested across Uttar Pradesh in the aftermath of the tragedy

Hundreds of poor people die every year in India due to alcohol poisoning, mostly from consuming cheap alcohol. In 2015, more than 100 people died in a Mumbai slum after drinking illegal moonshine. Of the estimated 5 billion litres of alcohol drunk every year in India, around 40 per cent is illegally produced, according to the International Spirits and Wine Association of India.—AFP ■

Malaysia's Najib in last-ditch bid to delay trial

KUALA LUMPUR (Malaysia) — Malaysia's former prime minister Najib Razak was making a last-ditch bid on Monday to delay the start of his trial over the 1MDB scandal, which contributed to his government's shock election defeat.

Najib is due to go on trial on Tuesday for the first time over allegations that he was involved in the looting of Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1MDB in a fraud that stretched around the world.

Billions of dollars were allegedly stolen by Najib and his cronies from the fund, which was set up to help develop Malaysia's economy, and spent on everything from high-end real estate to expensive artworks.

The scandal was a major factor in his long-ruling coalition's loss at polls in May Since losing power, Najib has been arrested repeatedly and hit with a total of 42 charges linked to 1MDB. He has denied wrongdoing.

The trial due to begin Tuesday is on seven charges related to allegations Najib pocketed 42 million ringgit ($10.3 million) from SRC International, a former unit of 1MDB.

But his lawyers have filed an application for the trial to be delayed pending an appeal on a technicality related to the transfer of charges between different courts. The Court of Appeal is due to rule on the application later Monday

It is just one of several trials Najib is expected to face over 1MDB and involves a fraction of the total purportedly stolen from the fund.

But the start of the first trial will be a key moment, and may relieve pressure on the new government following criticism that it has been slow to act over 1MDB.—AFP ■

New Zealand wildfire expected to burn for weeks

This handout picture taken on 8 February, 2019 and received on 11 February from the New Zealand Defence Force shows a firefighter combating a bushfire near Nelson in New Zealand's South Island. **PHOTO: AFP**

WELLINGTON (New Zealand) — A large New Zealand wildfire is expected to burn for weeks longer but has moved away from some inhabited areas, allowing residents of an evacuated village to return home soon, firefighters said on Monday

About 3,000 inhabitants of Wakefield, just outside Nelson at the top of South Island, were ordered out Saturday as flames razed bushland within two kilometres (1.2 miles) of their homes.

The fire erupted early last week amid scorching conditions in the heavily forested area and by early Monday had swept through an estimated 2,300 hectares (5,700 acres).

Fire chief John Sutton said that although conditions had eased, the blaze remained unpredictable and it was too early to say it was under control.

"There's still an enormous amount of heat there and there's a lot of unburned areas," he told reporters.

"So although we might be turning a corner, there will be firefighters working on that fire until well into March."

Civil Defence regional chief Roger Ball said Wakefield residents could return home as early as Monday evening but the area was still under a state of emergency.

"Returning residents need to understand and accept that they need to be prepared to evacuate again if conditions change," he said.—AFP ■

Over 1,000 Indonesian villagers advised to evacuate as Mt Karangetang spews hot lava

JAKARTA — Indonesian volcanology agency on Monday advised over 1,000 villagers living in no-go zone of Mount Karangetang volcano in North Sulawesi province to leave the dangerous area as the volcano is spewing hot lava.

The agency said three villages are situated in the dangerous zone of the volcano whose alert status has been upgraded to the second highest on 21 December last year.

"The community living in Batubulan, Baba and Niambangeng villages have to be evacuated to areas which are safe from the threat of hot lava and hot ash," the agency said in the statement received by Xinhua.

The three villages are situated in the radius of 2 and 2.5 km from the crater of the volcano, Wensi Rumbayan, a senior member of the quick rescue team of the agency, told Xinhua over phone on Monday.

The agency has banned tourists and communities from having activities in the radius of 4 km in the northwest and north of the crater, 3 km in the west and northwest of the crater, and 2 km from the main crater (in south) and smaller crater (in north).

Rumbayan said the total number of the villagers in the three villages is between 1,000 and 1,500.

The official said the evacuation operation is underway for those living along the sides of rivers, whose upstream is in the slope of the volcano, for fears of flows of lava through the rivers.

Mount Karangetang is among the 129 active volcanoes in Indonesia, a vast archipelagic nation home to over 17,500 islands. —Xinhua ■

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Agriman Myanmar Co., Ltd မှ ဖြန်ဖြူးသူအဖြစ် မှတ်ပုံတင်ထားသော SHANGHAI TOPCHEMS INDUSTRY CO., LTD ၏ အောက်ဖော်ပြပါ ပိုးသတ်ဆေး (၂) မျိုးအား Myanmar Shwe Thein Trading Co., Ltd သို့ လွှဲပြောင်းဖြန်ဖြူးမည်ဖြစ်ပါ၍ ကန့်ကွက်ရန်ရှိပါက ညွှန်ကြားရေးမှူး သီးနှံကာကွယ်ရေးဌာနခွဲ၊ အနောက်ကြို.ကုန်း၊ အင်းစိန်မြို့.သို့ ကြေငြာသည့်နေ့မှ (၁၄) ရက်အတွင်း ဆက်သွယ် အကြောင်းကြားပေးပါရန် အသိပေးကြေညာ အပ်ပါသည်။

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(၁)	Top–Carbsect 20 EC	Carbosulfan 20% EC	Provisional Reg:	P2017-3410
(၂)	Top–Prince 50 SC	Fipronii 50g/L SC	Provisional Reg:	P2017-3411

Agriman Myanmar Co., Ltd ဖုန်း ၀၉-၄၂၁၁၁၇၉၇

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(၁)	NAB-Queen 25 SC	Quinclorac 25% SC	Provisional Reg:	P2017-3425
(၂)	NAB-Htate Tan 10 EC	Bifenthrin 10% EC	Provisional Reg:	P2018-4077
(၃)	NAB-Friend 80 WP	Thiophanate-methyl+ Thiram 80% WP	Provisional Reg:	2014-1939

Topagri Myanmar Co., Ltd ဖုန်း ၀၉-၄၂၁၁၁၇၉၇

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(၁)	AM-FORWARD 430 SC	Tebuconazole 430 g/l SC	Provisional Reg:	P2018-4135
(၂)	AM-ET25 WG	Thimethoxam 25% WG	Provisional Reg:	P2018-4079
(၃)	AM-PYRAMID 20 SL	Acetamiprid 20% SL	Provisional Reg:	P2018-4080

Agriman Myanmar Co., Ltd ဖုန်း ၀၉-၇၆၉၃၆၈၁၅၅

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V AREZOO VOY. NO. (SCY1051)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V AREZOO VOY. NO. (SCY1051) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12-02-2019 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S LAND AND SEA SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V TOVE MAERSK VOY. NO. (905S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V TOVE MAERSK VOY. NO. (905S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12-02-2019 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

Phone No: 2301185

INVITATION TO OPEN TENDER

Sealed bids are invited by Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Health and Sports for the supply of Medical and Laboratory Equipment by the loan of Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the (2018-2019) Fiscal Year.

Tender documents are available during office hours at the Procurement and Supplying Division, Department of Medical Services office No. (4), Ministry of Health and Sports commencing from (13.2.2019).

Sealed bids are to be submitted to the Office not later than (13.3.2019), 14:00 hour, after which no bid will be accepted. No telegraph/telex proposal will be accepted.

For detail information please contact the phone No. 067-3411510, 067-3411544, Procurement and Supply Division Office, Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Health and Sports.

Procurement and Supply Division
Department of Medical Services
Ministry of Health and Sports

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'Prison of Christ' reopens in Jerusalem's Holy Sepulchre

JERUSALEM — A chapel built on a site where Christians believe Jesus was imprisoned by Roman soldiers ahead of his crucifixion has reopened after repairs, a Church official said on Friday.

The site — in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — was repaired over a period of several years after a fire caused major damage.

"It is in this prison that Jesus was detained after he carried the cross along the Via Dolorosa," a senior Greek Orthodox official told AFP on Friday, asking not to be named.

"Since the end of January, it has once again become a place of prayer and contemplation", the official said.

The chapel houses two holes dug into rock that were used, according to tradition, to bind the feet of Jesus.

The two holes are protected by a window and are adorned by an icon representing Jesus' hobbled feet and hands.

The chapel is under the sovereignty of the Greek Orthodox Church. The site is also revered by the Armenian Church, as well as by representatives of the Catholic Church. According to tradition, the Holy Sepulchre stands on the site of Jesus' crucifixion and burial. The site is in the old city of Israeli annexed east Jerusalem.—AFP ■

A Christian believer visits the "Prison of Christ" in the church of Holy Monastery of the Praetorium, traditionally believed to be the site where Jesus was detained, in Jerusalem's Old City on 8 February, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

Pop star Katy Perry. **PHOTO: PTI**

I'm not so sure that idea is for me: Katy Perry on marriage

LONDON — Pop star Katy Perry says she does not think she will get married again.

The singer, who tied the knot with comedian Russell Brand in 2010 and got divorced in 2012, said she has become more 'pragmatic and logistical' than she used to be. 'I'm very pragmatic and logistical and I am less fantastical about things. I mean, I was married when I was 25. I'm 34.

"It was almost 10 years ago. I was like, 'One person for the rest of my life,' and I'm not so sure that that idea is for me. I'm just such a different person than I was," Perry told Paper magazine. — PTI ■

Wrestling for glory at Viet Nam's 'Vat Cau' festival

HANOI(Viet Nam) — Bare-chested men in brightly coloured belts grapple for possession of a giant wooden ball at a Vietnamese festival, tumbling from corner to corner as hundreds of excited spectators cheer them on.

They are playing Vat Cau — a centuries-old sport which began as a training exercise for soldiers and contains elements of wrestling and rugby.

Vat Cau is the main draw of a three-day annual festival held during Vietnam's much celebrated Tet Lunar New Year in Thuy Linh village, just 10 kilometres (six miles) from the centre of the capital Hanoi.

A single match has four separate teams of eight men wearing waist straps of different colours. They tussle over a 17-kilogram (37-pound) ball made from the wood of a jackfruit tree, laboriously inching it towards one of the holes dug in each team's corner.

"This game is the tradition and the pride of the Thuy Linh people," Le Duc Duong, an athlete with 15 years of experience playing Vat Cau, told AFP on Saturday, the second day of the festival. Before the annual showdown at Thuy Linh's communal temple, each sportsman must train in sports like swimming, running and bodybuilding to get in tip-top shape, he added.

The audience at Saturday's competition were in high spirits, laughing and cheering as a match announcer commented on the athletes pouncing on each other in the field. "Some of our athletes have a six-pack body, and some have a six-pack-in-one," he said wryly. At the end of the three-day tournament, the squad with the most points advances to the next round, and the champions in the final stage will receive a cash prize of $260 to share between them — a small reward that gifts bragging rights to one team among the 16 competing.

Dating back to the 11th century, the game was invented by a revered general to teach his recruits about the importance of teamwork, intelligence and strength when fighting against foreign invaders, festival organiser Le Minh Xuong told AFP.

"(This game) inherits the tradition of our forefathers, which is to train the men in the village to have health and fitness for the ultimate purpose of protecting our homeland," he said.

But for the players today, the stakes are not so high.

"We play this game for fun actually. The prize is not important for us," 20-year-old player Nguyen The Hien, a kickboxing trainer, said. "Each year we play it and it brings joy to us."—AFP ■

This photograph taken on February 9, 2019 shows Vietnamese men wrestling for the prized jackfruit wooden ball during the traditional "Vat Cau" or ball wrestling festival on the fifth day of Lunar New Year celebrations, referred to in Vietnam as Tet, at Thuy Linh pagoda in Hanoi. **PHOTO: AFP**

Country star Kacey Musgraves wins Grammy for Album of the Year

LOS ANGELES (United States) — Kacey Musgraves, one of country music's most critically praised artists, took home the Grammy for Album of the Year Sunday, an upset win for a genre-bending musician who infused "Golden Hour" with elements of psychedelia.

The Nashville-based musician's third studio album beat out a crowded field of heavyweights including rappers Kendrick Lamar and Drake.

She also bested fellow female artists including Cardi B, Janelle Monae and Brandi Carlile to snare the coveted prize, in a year that saw women recognized across the top categories, after largely being snubbed in 2018.

"It was unbelievable to be even in a category with such gigantic albums, really brilliant works of art," Musgraves told the audience at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Musgraves won four Grammys in all; the others were for Best Country Solo Performance, Best Country Song and Best Country Album.

She took the country world by storm in 2013 with her banjo-heavy hit "Merry Go 'Round" — winning a Grammy for Best Country Song in 2014 and scoring a nomination for the coveted Best New Artist prize. She won a second Grammy for Best Country Album that same year.

She is considered an innovator in the historically conservative world of country music.

Rolling Stone Magazine has dubbed her "one of the loudest symbols of young country musicians embracing progressive values."

The 30-year-old has said several of the songs on "Golden Hour" came out of a summertime LSD trip, and the project infuses elements of disco and also uses a vocoder — a machine that manipulates vocal signals with synthesizer signals to create a machine-like effect favored by electronic and pop musicians. —AFP ■

PHOTO: XINHUA

New images from NASA confirm Ultima Thule's flat shape

LOS ANGELES — The New Horizons mission from National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has confirmed the shape of the most distant object ever explored, Kuiper Belt object nicknamed "Ultima Thule," to be flat rather than spherical, according to latest images the spacecraft sent back to Earth.

New Horizons performed its farthest flyby when it approached Ultima Thule within 2,200 miles (about 3,540 km) of the surface at a velocity of 31,500 miles (about 50,694 km) per hour on 1 January.

The latest images were taken nearly 10 minutes after New Horizons crossed its closest approach point, which were the final views New Horizons captured of Ultima Thule, said a NASA release on Friday.

Previously scientists called Ultima Thule "snowman" as the first close-up images revealed its two distinct and spherical segments. However, more analysis of approach images and new departure images have changed that view.

Stringing 14 of the latest images into a short departure movie, New Horizons scientists confirmed that the two sections, or "lobes," of Ultima Thule are not spherical.

The larger lobe, nicknamed "Ultima," more closely resembles a giant pancake, and the smaller lobe, nicknamed "Thule," is shaped like a dented walnut, according to the mission team.

"We had an impression of Ultima Thule based on the limited number of images returned in the days around the flyby, but seeing more data has significantly changed our view," said mission Principal Investigator Alan Stern.

"It would be closer to reality to say Ultima Thule's shape is flatter, like a pancake. But more importantly, the new images are creating scientific puzzles about how such an object could even be formed. We've never seen something like this orbiting the Sun," he said.—Xinhua ■

China improves Long March-6 rocket for growing commercial launches

BEIJING — China announced on Monday that it is developing the modified version of the Long March-6 rocket to add four solid boosters to increase its carrying capacity.

The improved medium-left carrier rocket will be sent into space by 2020, according to the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology under the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, which designed the rocket.

The Long March-6 has been mainly used for the academy's commercial launches.

The rocket completed two space tests in September 2015 and November 2017, carrying 20 satellites and three satellites respectively.

The rocket is 29.3 metres long, with a launch weight of 103 tonnes. It has a carrying capacity of one tonne for sun-synchronous orbit.

Ding Xiufeng, executive manager of the Long March-6 project, said in response to the growing demand for commercial launches, the rocket will further enhance its market competitiveness through technical improvements, to provide easier, faster and more comprehensive services to users at home and abroad.

In January, the China Great Wall Industry Corporation signed a multiple launch services agreement with Satellogic to use the Long March-6 and the Long March-2 rockets to launch 90 satellites for the private Argentine company in the coming years. —Xinhua ■

Chinese researchers develop humanized mouse model to study hepatitis B

BEIJING — Chinese researchers have developed a humanized mouse model to study liver cirrhosis development induced by hepatitis B virus infection.

Developing an ideal animal model of hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection is difficult because the virus has an extremely narrow host range and almost exclusively infects humans.

Previous studies show that mesenchymal stem cells from human bone marrow (hBMSCs) have the potential to differentiate into hepatocyte-like cells in vitro and continue to maintain essential hepatocyte functions in vivo after being transplanted into host mouse livers. Hepatocytes make up 70 to 85 per cent of liver mass.

Researchers from China's Xiamen University and Zhejiang University transplanted hBMSCs into mice.

According to the research paper published online on the British Journal of Gut, the mice show robust differentiation and proliferation of functional human hepatocytes and multiple immune cells.

After HBV infection, the humanized mice developed specific immune and inflammatory responses and showed progression to chronic hepatitis and liver cirrhosis.

The researchers said the new humanized mouse model recapitulates the liver cirrhosis induced by human HBV infection, providing opportunities for better understanding the immune pathophysiology of HBV and testing promising antiviral therapies in vivo.

According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 257 million people are living with HBV infection. It can cause chronic infection and puts people at high risk of death from cirrhosis and liver cancer.—Xinhua ■

Scientists develop air-conditioning clothes that regulate heat

WASHINGTON — American scientists developed a fabric that can automatically regulate the amount of heat that passes through it.

The study published on Thursday in the journal Science showed that the fabric allowed infrared radiation to pass through when conditions are warm and moist.

When conditions become cooler and drier, the fabric reduces the heat that escapes, according to the study.

The fabric is made of specially engineered yarn coated with a conductive metal. Under hot, humid conditions, the strands of yarn become compact and change the way the fabric interacts with infrared radiation.

"This is the first technology that allows us to dynamically gate infrared radiation," said the paper's corresponding author Wang Yuhuang, a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at the University of Maryland.

Fibers are created with two kinds of synthetic materials: one absorbs water and the other repels it.

Those fibers will warp when exposed to humidity, bringing the yarn strands closer and opening the pores in the fabric. Then, the yarn distortion allows heat to escape and changes properties of the carbon nanotubes coating the strands to block infrared radiation.

The reaction is almost instant, so before people realize they're getting hot, the garment could already be cooling them down, according to the study

On the other side, as a body cools down, the dynamic gating mechanism works in reverse to trap in heat.

"This pioneering work provides an exciting new switchable characteristic for comfort-adjusting clothing," said Ray Baughman, a professor of chemistry at the University of Texas who was not involved in the study.—Xinhua ■

Ronaldo keeps scoring as Juventus soar 11-points clear in Serie A

MILAN (Italy) — Cristiano Ronaldo headed in his 18th league goal this season as Juventus bounced back from last week's stalemate to soar to an 11-point lead in Serie A on Sunday with a 3-0 win at Sassuolo.

Ronaldo proved decisive, scoring after 70 minutes as Sami Khedira found the net first in Modena with fellow German Emre Can slotting in the third four minutes from time.

The seven-time Serie A champions had been held by promoted Parma last week despite the Portugese forward's double, but leave second-placed Napoli trailing after Carlo Ancelotti's side were held to a goalless draw at Fiorentina on Saturday

Juventus had started slowly with goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny saving twice in the opening minutes as the champions were without injured defenders Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini.

The pair are fighting to be fit for Juventus's Champions League last 16 trip to Atletico Madrid in ten days time.

Juventus broke through after Sassuolo goalkeeper Andrea Consigli rushed out to parry a Ronaldo shot leaving the way clear for Khedira to turn in the rebound after 23 minutes for his second league goal of the campaign. Consigli denied Federico Bernardeschi just before the break with a Khedira header flying wide. But the Portuguese star jumped highest after 70 minutes to meet Pjanic's corner for his fourth goal in his last three league games with Can coming off the bench to score from a Ronaldo assist.

Inter Milan are third — 20 points behind Juventus — after beating promoted Parma 1-0 on Saturday, for their first league win of 2019.

Atalanta are fourth, five points behind, after battling to a 2-1 win over SPAL, with Roma fourth and Lazio fifth after beating Chievo and Empoli respectively during the week.

AC Milan host Cagliari later on Sunday looking to reclaim fourth place.—AFP ■

Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo runs with the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Sassuolo vs Juventus on 10 February, 2019 at the Mapei Stadium - Citta del Tricolore stadium in Reggio Emilia. **PHOTO:AFP**

Chelsea boss Sarri baffled by 6-0 humbling at Man City

MANCHESTER (United Kingdom) — Chelsea boss Maurizio Sarri said he could not understand what happened after Manchester City crushed his side 6-0 on Sunday — their biggest ever defeat in the Premier League.

City scored four times inside 25 minutes and added two more goals in the second half to overtake Liverpool on goal difference at the top of the table.

Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola greets Chelsea's Italian head coach Maurizio Sarri ahead of the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Chelsea at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England on 10 February, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

The result was Chelsea's heaviest defeat in any competition since losing 7-0 to Nottingham Forest in 1991.

"At the moment I am not able to explain," Sarri, whose side slipped to sixth in the table, below Arsenal on goal difference after the defeat, told Sky Sports.

"During the week my feeling was good during training. Maybe the goal we conceded after three minutes it was difficult to play. It was difficult not to give them spaces. We were in trouble. I am not able to understand.

"We made a lot of mistakes against the wrong opponents. They played fantastic football and we made a lot of mistakes. We wanted to press them at the beginning of the action but the plan was completely ruined because we conceded after three minutes. "I think the big difference between the two teams was the intensity of pressing. They pressed really well and we were not able to do it. We were not able to react in the right way. We were not able to stay in the match."

The Italian said his side had a problem away from home and added it was right he should shoulder responsibility for the performance.

"At the moment we have a big problem away," he said. "The beginning of the season we were better away than at home. But everything has changed in the last month. We need to understand. "It is right. I am in charge of the team so it is right (that he faces pressure). You will have to ask the club (if there will be discussions about his future)." —AFP ■

'I'm back to 100 percent', says Nishikori after knee setback

ROTTERDAM (Netherlands) — Japan's Kei Nishikori insisted on Sunday he is back to '100 percent' as he returns to action after a right knee injury forced a painful exit at the Australian Open last month.

The 29-year-old is top seed in Rotterdam where he is looking for a second title of 2019 following a season-opening triumph in Brisbane. World number seven Nishikori, who is no stranger to injury, saw his pursuit of a first Grand Slam title stall when he was forced to quit his Australian Open quarter-final at 6-4, 4-1 down to eventual champion Novak Djokovic in January.

"I am feeling well. It took maybe one week and a little bit to get 100 per cent, but now physically I am going well. I practiced well last week in Florida," said Nishikori on Sunday.

"It's going to be an interesting challenge this week. It's a strong tournament and many good players are playing, so it will be tough. "I used to play (this week) in Memphis and last year in New York, but I like indoors and that's why I chose to come here."

The Asian number one starts his Rotterdam campaign against France's Pierre-Hugues Herbert who was runner-up to Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in Montpellier on Sunday

Seeded second is last November's Paris Bercy champion Karen Khachanov of Russia with Greek breakthrough star Stefanos Tsitsipas, who beat Roger Federer on his way to the Australian Open semi-finals, taking the third seeding.—AFP ■

Japan's Kei Nishikori.
PHOTO: AFP

Watabe left with silver in World Cup photo finish

LAHTI (Finland) — Japan's Akito Watabe missed out on his first World Cup victory of the season by only centimetres on Sunday, when the Pyeongchang silver medalist finished runner-up in a neck-and-neck race with Norway's Jorgen Graabak in Finland.

Watabe led off with a 124-metre jump on Lahti's large hill to start the cross-country segment in second place, and closed the 43-second gap between Austria's Mario Seidl after six kilometres.

Graabak, who began the race 1 minute, 14 seconds behind, overtook the pair on the final lap, but Watabe — careful to avoid causing a similar accident that resulted in his team's disqualification on Saturday — stepped on the gas to reach the Norwegian at the final push.

Both skiers crossed the line in 24:39.8, but the judgement went in favor of Graabak in a remarkably close photo finish. The 30-year-old Watabe earned his fifth podium finish this season, while Seidl took third 15.6 seconds behind.

"I wanted to win," Watabe said. "It's frustrating to lose, but I brought it to a final sprint in the end. I think I'll come away with a good feeling to take to the world championships." —Kyodo News ■