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Message of Greetings sent by President U Win Myint on the occasion of the Peasants Day Celebrations

(2 March 2019)

Dear esteemed peasants, our benefactors,

This day has been designated as the historic "Peasants Day" to honour with great dedication all peasants living all over the country who may be regarded as our benefactors. On this auspicious day, I send this Message of Greetings and good wishes to our benefactors, the

peasants and their families for their good health and happiness, to be blessed with auspiciousness, good crops and livestock and for the continued progress of their socio-economic conditions.

At this time, we are striving for people-centered and inclusive sustainable development based on the

12 point economic policy for "all round development, food sufficiency and export promotion. To achieve this we are working to achieve an economic model which maintains a proper balance between agriculture and livestock production on one hand and mechanized agriculture on the other."

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Social protection programmes steadily on the rise in Myanmar: Vice President U Myint Swe



Vice President U Myint Swe addresses the second meeting of the National Level Social Protection Committee held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

THE National Level Social Protection Committee held its second meeting at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Vice President U Myint Swe, who is Chairman

of the committee, delivered a speech at the meeting.

Background of the committee

The Vice President first explained the committee's pur-

pose and objectives. He said it is important development for the reduction of poverty and development of human resources, which was among the priority tasks of the State. According to worldwide research findings,

social protection projects were most effective for poverty reduction and human resources development. The President's Office formed an 11-member National Level Social Protection Committee, led by the Vice

President, on 17 May 2018, and established 11 main projects to allow the government to conduct social protection programmes throughout the country.

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Pyithu Hluttaw

Second Pyithu Hluttaw's eleventh regular session holds 19th-day meeting

By Aye Aye Thant (MNA)

THE 19th-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw was held at the Pyithu Hluttaw meeting hall of the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

At the meeting Hluttaw agree to form a committee and designated the formation, duty, responsibilities, rights and terms of the committee. A question and answer session, discussions on a bill and a motion were also made.

Formation of Women and Children's Rights Committee

As a first agenda of the day Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat obtained the consensus of the Hluttaw on forming Women and Children's Rights Committee, the committee's duty, responsibilities, rights and terms. Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker then announced the committee to be formed with Dr. Khin Soe

MPs arrive to attend the 19th day of the 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw 11th regular meeting. PHOTO: MNA

Soe Kyi of Pyay constituency as chairperson, Dr Daw Kyi Moh Moh Lwin of Singaing constituency as secretary, U Win Naing of Mogaung constituency, Daw Nan Than Than Lwin of Hpa-an

constituency, Daw Wint Wa Tun of Shadaw constituency, Daw Ni Shwe Hlwan of Thantlang constituency, Dr. Daw A Zin Lat of Shwebo constituency, Daw Khin Sandi of Launglon constituency,

Daw Mi Kun Chan of Paung constituency, Daw Yin Min Hlaing of Gangaw constituency, U Naing Htoo Aung of Natogyi constituency, Daw Nan Khin Saw of Kunhing constituency, Daw

Khin Saw Wai of Yathedaung constituency, Dr. Daw Shwe Pon of Bago constituency and Tatmadaw representative Col. Myint Cho as members and also announced the duties, responsibilities, rights and terms of the committee.

Question and answer session

U Tin Aye of Metmung constituency posed the first question of the day and asked if there was a plan to construct a hydro-power station on Namtnan creek in Metmung Township. Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr. Tun Naing said the ministry raised the matter with Shan State Government and received a reply that the arrangements are underway to construct the station using Border Affairs Ministry union fund, electricity distribution state fund and rural development department's state fund in fiscal year 2019-2020.

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Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw approves motion to establish National Land Law

By Aung Ye Thwin,
Lu Maw (MNA)

THE 19th-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of Second Amyotha Hluttaw held at Amyotha Hluttaw building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning approves a motion urging the Union government to review National Land Use Policy in Line with the Laws related to land. The meeting also renamed and amended the duties and rights of a committee, approves a bill and Hluttaw was informed of the extension of the terms of 13 Hluttaw Affairs Committees for another year.

Renaming of Local and Overseas Labour Affairs Committee

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than first informed the Hluttaw of renaming Local and Overseas Labour Affairs Committee as Immigration, Local and Overseas Labour Affairs Committee and amending the duties and rights of the committee.

U Kyaw Htwe of Yangon Region constituency 8 then explained about the amended duties and rights of the Immigration, Local and Overseas Labour Affairs Committee and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker obtained the approval of the Hluttaw on the name change

MPs of the 2nd Amyotha Hluttaw arrive to attend the 19th-day meeting in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

and amending of the duties and rights. An announcement was accordingly made of the committee name change and amending of the duties and rights.

Hluttaw approves Myanmar Insolvency Bill

Next, Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee member U Sai Tun Aung read and explained about the committee's report on Myanmar Insolvency Bill.

Justice of the Supreme Court of the Union U Mya Han then tabled a motion to approve the bill as amended and the motion was

supported by Saw Sha Phon Hwa of Kayin State constituency 12.

As there was no objection from the Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker announced the Hluttaw's approval of the bill as amended.

Hluttaw approves a motion to establish National Land Law

Afterwards, a motion tabled by Dr. Pyae Phyto of Ayeyawady Region constituency 7 urging the government to review National Land Use Policy to establish a National Land Law was dis-

cussed by Daw Ei Ei Pyone of Ayeyawady Region constituency 8, Dr. Khun Win Thauang of Kachin State constituency 11, U Khin Myo Win of the Taninthayi Region constituency 12, Daw Myat Thida Tun of Mon State constituency 5, U Zaw Min Latt @ U Ko Latt of Shan State constituency 1, Daw Shwe Shwe Sein Latt of Bago Region constituency 3 and U Aye Min Han of Mon State constituency 1.

In his explanation on the motion Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Envi-

ronmental Conservation Dr. Ye Myint Swe said the ministry is taking the National Land Use Policy as a guideline toward enacting a new National Land Law in an increasing momentum together with land use committees and supporting work committees according to suggestions made at the forum on national land use policy and recommended the Hluttaw to keep the motion on record.

As the motion proposer want the decision of the Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker obtained it through a vote where there were 160 for, 6 against and 4 abstaining and an announcement was made about the motion being approved by the Hluttaw.

Hluttaw informed of extending terms of 13 Hluttaw Affairs Committee for a year

Finally, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker informed the Hluttaw that the terms of 13 Hluttaw Affairs Committees formed under Amyotha Hluttaw Law and rule had reached one year and were being extended for another year according to Amyotha Hluttaw rule. The 20th-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw will be held on 4 March. ■ (Translated by Zaw Min)

Message of Greetings sent by President U Win Myint on the occasion of the Peasants Day Celebrations (2 March 2019)

FROM PAGE-1

Furthermore, as I have said in my New Year speech to the people on 17 April 2018, I have mentioned among other things, the Union Government's 11 priority tasks to be accomplished in the short term. As included in the above priority tasks, we have been working on a priority basis to grant land ownership permits within one year, to give agricultural loans before the planting season, give tax exemption on agricultural inputs, availability of drinking water, agriculture, electricity and transportation.

Also, the Union Government has been working with diligence and focused attention for the release of illegally confiscated farmlands, to give out compensation and grievances suffered, to return released farmlands to original owners as quickly as possible, to make sure that confiscated farmlands which have not yet been released are investigated and reviewed as speedily as possible by the various committees and returned to the original owners.

It is the intention of the Law to protect and promote peasants rights, it is stated that with regard to confiscated farmlands, assistance should be provided to farmers to ensure that their interests are not harmed and to provide protection and security for farmers to work on their farmlands; in accordance with this stipulation, the Central Commission for the review and scrutiny of cases of confiscated farmlands and other lands and committees at the state/region levels have been working for the return of these confiscated farmlands. As of the end of 2018, a total of (425406) acres have been released. Out of these a total of (406719) have been returned to the farmers. As for the farmlands which have not yet been re-

leased, work is being done to return these farmlands to the farmers in accordance with established policies and procedures as speedily as possible.

In addition, work is being done in accordance with the Law Amending the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law which was enacted on 18 September 2018, to grant ownership rights for agricultural lands speedily, to grant farming rights speedily, and to ensure that in the case of ancestral lands which are related to traditions and cultures, and lands which have been granted public use, no such lands are to be classified as vacant, fallow or virgin lands.

We are also working on providing agricultural loans, obtaining fair prices for agricultural produce and stable markets, obtaining technical inputs and ensuring efficient and smooth production processes, in times of natural disasters to provide assistance to minimize loss and damages. In addition, in accordance with the Law to protect and promote farmers rights which was amended for the second time on 18 September 2018, we are assisting farmers working on small plots to protect their interests.

In the "Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030), out of the three pillars, under pillar number 2, which is for prosperity and cooperation, there are three goals. It has been stipulated that goal number 3 is to work for job creation and private sector led development. According to that goal, to reduce poverty in rural areas, we are encouraging inclusive all-round agricultural and livestock production practices. We are working for the creation of an environment which would nurture an economy which would foster the production of all kinds of products. We are working on this as a strategy.

To implement the above strategic

process, we need to work for the emergence of a sustainable agricultural production system. Thus we can produce agricultural and livestock products which are able to compete on the international markets. In this way we can elevate the socio-economic life of the rural people and also to contribute to the country's economic development. With this in mind we are helping towards the transformation of traditional farming plots to mechanized agriculture. In addition, we are also working for ensuring a longer lifespan for dams, projects for utilization of river water, conducting public education campaigns and exhibitions for effective use of water and projects for production and distribution of quality seeds.

We are also working with special focus to ensure that farmers are able to plant new crops which will thrive under the changing climatic patterns; establishment of agricultural systems, emergency plans to overcome natural disasters to avoid food shortages; to keep emergency seed banks in order to meet these challenges; to build irrigation systems; to improve the quality of export products; to ensure that products are free from chemical residues; to prevent post-harvest losses; to work for the improvement of agricultural and livestock products so as to be able to compete in international markets to obtain better prices; to allow farmers to participate in the production process from the initial stage of seed planting to the exportation stage; and to conduct education campaigns to ensure that the latest agricultural techniques reach the farmers easily.

In addition we have begun broadcasting via TV to provide practical help at the farm level. This new TV channel called "Farmers TV" contains programs about farm sector news, education and

entertainment programs.

To help farmers get the latest information for practical use, we are using information and communications technologies to disseminate news; creating model plots; giving training and education by conducting lectures and seminars; and giving out award certificates to farmers by conducting field trips. These efforts are not only helping in raising agricultural production but also laying firm foundations for ensuring food security for consumers.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the emergence of organic agriculture systems and to make sure that organic standards are strictly adhered to, we have announced on 26 January 2019 Myanmar Organic Standards based on ASEAN organic standards. As the world's population is increasing daily, the current population of 7000 million will become 9000 in 2050. Therefore we need to produce more to obtain the needed food supply.

As our population will be increasing in the years to come, we need to redouble our efforts to increase agricultural production on all fronts not only to ensure food security but also to be able to boost the export of our agricultural products in the international markets.

Our country is rich in land and water resources. We also have a good climate which is favorable for agriculture and livestock production. Now is the opportune time for our honest and hardworking farmers to strive for the national interest and all round development with increased momentum. That is why as I send this Message of Greetings, I am urging all of you to meet our challenges with collective strength. Let us all march hand in hand till we reach our goal for the interest of all our farmers living all over the country and our citizens.

Rakhine aims at plus 75% electrification by 2025

THE Rakhine State Electrical Engineer Office reports that they are working to increase Rakhine's electrification ratio to over 45 per cent in 2020-2021 and above 75 per cent in 2025.

The state's current electrification ratio is at 21 per cent with electricity distributed to 1,895 out of 3,742 villages. To put it differently, 50.58 per cent of villages in the entire state receive electricity.

The highest electrical consumption of the National Power Grid is 3600 megawatts and increases by 15 to 19 per cent annually. Rakhine State aims to increase its electrical output by utilizing its natural resources. Authorities aim to complete the Thahtay hydroelectric project (111 megawatts) in Thandwe

within the 2024-2025 FY and the natural gas-powered electric station project (135 megawatts) in 2020-2021 FY.

An official from the Rakhine State Electrical Engineer Office said there are four townships left in Rakhine State that do not receive electricity from the power grid, namely Manaung, Kyeintali, Sane, and Taung Pyo. He said they plan to direct electricity to Sane and Kyeintali by the end of March. He said Manaung will receive 24-hour solar powered systems at the end of May and construction of a substation in Kyeinchaung is under way to provide power to Taung Pyo, with support from JICA. The substation will provide 11KV to Taung Pyo. With two townships to receive power in March and one

more in May, Taung Pyo will be the only township left to receive electricity in Rakhine State, said the official.

Plans to link Rakhine State with the National Power Grid were initiated in 2011. By December 2014, authorities completed construction on a 230KVA transmission line (408.25 miles long), four 230KVA primary substations, a 66KVA transmission line (354.71 miles) and a 66KVA substation. This allowed electricity from the National Power Grid to be distributed to Taungup, Kyaukpyu, An, Ponnagyun, Sittway, MraukU, Thandwe, Yanbye, Kyauktaw, and neighbouring villages.

In addition, authorities constructed a 66/11KV 5MVA substation and a 66/33KV 10MVA substation to distribute electricity



Buthidaung electrical sub-station in Rakhine State. PHOTO: MNA

to Maei, Minbya townships and surrounding villages in 2016. In July 2017, a 66KV transmission line 55 miles long from a 230KV substation and a 66/11KV 5MVA substation were linked to Gwa township and surrounding villages. And finally, in 2018, elec-

tric distribution was achieved to Yathedaung Township in March, Buthidaung Township in October, and Maungtaw township in December, according to the Rakhine State Electrical Engineer Office. —Han Lin, Ramanya

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Social protection programmes steadily on the rise in ...

FROM PAGE-1

Ten decisions were put forward in the committee's first meeting of which three have been accomplished, said the Vice President, adding that this meeting will put forward approval for three of the remaining seven decisions, and the rest will be handled with subsequent subcommittees formed.

Maternity and child allowance to age 2

The Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan – NSPSP was validated on 30 December 2014 to implement social protection programmes in the country. Of the eight programmes included in NSPSP, the maternity and child to age 2 financial support programme is conducted throughout the states and regions while giving priority based on average nutritional levels and least development statistics, said the Vice President.

The Vice President said the programme was initiated in Chin State, Rakhine State, and Naga Self-Administered Zone in 2017-2018 FY, expanded into Kayin and Kayah states in 2018-2019 FY, and have drafted plans to expand into Ayeyawady Region and Shan

State in 2019-2020 FY with mixed proportions of the International Development Association Fund and Government budget.

Social pension and protection

The Vice President said the social pension programme was launched in 2017-2018 FY and offered to senior citizens of age 90 and older. The age standard was reduced to 85 in 2018-2019 FY and continued to be offered nationwide. The integrated social protection services programme is also ongoing in 37 townships that have opted for it and social affairs managers are positioned in each township.

The Vice President said the Medium-term Costed Sector Plan (2018-2023) has been drafted and will support the social protection programmes. He said the projected cost for this plan is calculated in line with the NSPSP.

Four main points to consider

The Vice President then spoke about four main points to consider when implementing social protection programmes. First, it must be ensured that it was in line with the policies and priorities set by the state.

Care should be taken so that the sustainable development programme for Myanmar and the Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan were carried out in accordance with

short term, but results such as reducing the income gap between the rich and the poor, rising nutrition and health indexes, and increased developments in childhood education

management sector coordination groups have been formed. These two would help establish better coordination.

Vice Chair and secretary present explanations

Next, the national committee's Vice Chairman, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye, explained the completed and future tasks relating to the NSPSP. This was followed by the committee's secretary Director-General Dr. Daw San San Aye explaining the implementation process of the first meeting's decisions, proposal for forming a working committee and technological support committee, earmarking the Medium-term Costed Sector Plan, and future tasks.

Discussions continued with input from national committee Vice Chairman Union Minister U Thein Swe, deputy ministers Maj-Gen Aung Thu, U Tin Myint, U Win Maw Tun, and U Soe Aung, and permanent secretaries and directors-general. The Vice President then responded to the discussions and concluded the meeting with a closing speech. —MNA■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Investments in the social protection sector would not show significant returns in the short term, but results such as reducing the income gap between the rich and the poor, rising nutrition and health indexes, and increased developments in childhood education need to be displayed as proof.

one another.

The second point was to obtain funds and the ability to bear the cost in the long run. These two points were to be considered together. Funds could be used from the State budget, but there was a limitation on how much could be used. As such, other resources, such as financial support/assistance and low interest loans, also need to be considered.

Investments in the social protection sector would not show significant returns in the

need to be displayed as proof. Only then can this sector attract investments.

The third was to set up a system for country-wide implementation. This system would include management, and an information and funding system.

The fourth focused on coordination. A committee had been formed to coordinate among the government ministries. For coordination between government ministries and partner organizations, the social protection and disaster

Committee discusses drafting by-laws of Broadcasting Law

The Coordination meeting (1/2019) of the Committee for Revision and Drafting By-laws on Television and Broadcasting Law was held at Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

At the meeting Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint said the Broadcasting Law was already enacted for development of broadcasting works and to conduct broadcasting works in a systematic, harmonious and a fair way.

As per the law, draft by-laws of the Broadcasting Law was drawn up. The drafting by-laws include sections on development of video and audio works, public to view/listen many video/audio programs, creating opportunities for more video/audio businesses and maintaining quality.

The sections are to be



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint addresses the coordination meeting (1/2019) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

assessed and reviewed and meeting attendees are urged to openly discuss and suggest,

said the Union Minister.

Next, Myanmar Radio and Television Director-General

U Myint Htwe reported about the status of drawing up the draft rules. Officials from Py-

ithu Hluttaw Bill Committee, Directorate of Communications, Myanmar Investment Commission, Union Attorney General Office, Myanmar Lawyers' Network and Myanmar Broadcasters Association discussed drawing up rules that broadcasters can practice, not include enactments that overrules the main law and to be in line with modern era, international agreement and prevailing laws.

Afterwards, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and Permanent Secretary discussed on additional requirements of by-law drafting.

The meeting came to close after Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint delivered a closing remark. — MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

UN Security Council holds open briefing on ‘The Situation in Myanmar’

AT the request of the nine members of the Security Council of the United Nations - namely, Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States, Equatorial Guinea, President of the Security Council for the month of February 2019, held an open briefing on ‘The Situation in Myanmar’ in the presence of Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, on 28 February 2019 at the UN Headquarters in New York. Myanmar Permanent Representative Ambassador U Hau Do Suan delivered a statement.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs released the full-text of his statement yesterday. In the statement, he says in the spirit of cooperation with the United Nations and as a demonstration of our desire to addressing the issue of Rakhine, we agreed to the appointment of the Special Envoy. We have provided her with all necessary support in discharging her mandate. We appreciate her tireless efforts and dedication in undertaking her mandate with objectivity and impartiality. The Special envoy has made five official visits to Myanmar in the last 9 months since her appointment. Her office in Nay Pyi Taw has been fully functioning now. We will continue to work closely with her in our effort to resolving the issues particularly relating to the situation in Rakhine State.

Peace, stability and development in Rakhine

He continued to say that soon after taking state responsibilities, the NLD government has set high priority to bring sustainable peace, stability and development in Rakhine. We have been implementing most of the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission led by late Dr. Kofi Annan which was set up by the Government voluntarily even before the humanitarian crisis took place as a result of ARSA terrorist attacks. In the process of implementation, we identified five priority areas covering issues of citizenship, freedom of movement, closure of IDP camps, education and health. We are also finalizing a strategy for closure of the remaining IDP camps.

The National Verification Card (NVC) is the necessary step in the citizenship application process. It is a proof of residency in Rakhine State and facilitates freedom of movement. The application of NVC is totally voluntary.

Due to the present security condition, access has been restricted in some areas in Northern Rakhine. However, humanitarian supplies can be delivered through the ICRC as well as the authorities of the Rakhine State.

In tandem with maintenance of peace and stability and provision of humanitarian assistance, the Government has been implementing a number of projects to provide socio-economic development of the people in Rakhine. Development is the best solution to ending communal conflicts. In this regard, the Rakhine State Investment Fair was held recently to generate job opportunities, income and long term development.

Ready to receive verified returnees

The most urgent task of the Government at hand is to commence the repatriation process as soon as possible to resolve the humanitarian situation. We are ready to receive verified returnees in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner in accordance with the bilateral agreements and arrangements with Bangladesh. We have proposed recently to Bangladesh side to resume the Joint Working Group meeting in April. We are confident that we can make the repatriation plan a success if we both act strictly in compliance with the agreements.

On the other hand, we have been working with the UNDP and UNHCR to create conducive conditions in accordance with the trilateral MoU. We have agreed to implement 35 Quick Impact Projects as soon as the security condition permits. Another 36 QIPs are under consideration. The QIP assessments will also be extended



U Hau Do Suan

to other designated villages in northern Rakhine.

Moreover, we are also working with ASEAN to facilitate the repatriation process. We have invited ASEAN-AHA Centre to dispatch a needs assessment team to identify possible areas of cooperation in Rakhine State to assist the repatriation. The ToR of the Needs Assessment Team was agreed during the visit of the ASEAN Secretary-General to Myanmar in December last year. ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) will be sent to Rakhine as soon as possible. The presence of the ASEAN assessment team at the repatriation process will enhance trust and confidence of the returnees.

The Government of Myanmar is willing and able to address accountability issue. Therefore, we strongly reject any move to bring the issue to international judicial system.

IIM, external discrimination on Myanmar

While we are engaging constructively with the United Nations in our effort to resolve the multitude of challenges we are facing as a nascent democracy, some groups and countries in the UN system continue to exploit various UN systems to exert discriminatory and illegitimate political pressures on Myanmar with malicious intent. One vivid example, among many others, is the establishment of the Independent Investigative Mechanism (IIM) on Myanmar by the Human Rights Council. This action is yet another step to take in a series of unprecedented discriminatory scrutinization on a member State. We had strongly objected the establishment of the IIM. The reasons are simple. The IIM was set up beyond the Council's mandate. It represents selectivity, discriminatory and double standard practice of the UN human rights body. Besides, its ToR is very intrusive on a sovereign country's domestic jurisdiction. It would only serve political purpose of those who wish to exploit the HRC for their political agenda. Such intrusive measures without the consent of the country concerned will only further polarize different communities and will exacerbate tensions.

ARSA, a real threat

Some members of the Council in this Chamber have just made reference to the report of the HRC Fact Finding Mission (FFM) in connection with the accountability issue. In this respect, I would like to reiterate our firm position as I did before in this very Chamber on 24 October last year; that Myanmar has categorically objected FFM since its

establishment. We also reject its narrative based report.

The FFM report was totally biased and one-sided. Its investigation targeted only Myanmar security forces and excluded violations committed by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The report was prepared mainly on the result of interviews, and information gathered from some NGOs and human rights groups. Above all, the report fully adheres to the stories of Muslim displaced persons while rejecting any contradicting evidences. The FFM ignored reports revealing the massacres by the ARSA and discounted its atrocities. Most importantly, the conclusions of the report are politically motivated with the aim of creating maximum damage to the image of the country and its leadership of Myanmar.

ARSA is alive and active. On 25 February, news media reported the news of the death of one of the top ARSA military commanders, Nurul Alam in a gun fight with Bangladesh Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) at Muchuni camp in Cox's Bazar. Bangladesh local media also reported recently of abduction, murders, disappearances and rape committed by members of ARSA in 30 camps of Ukhia and Teknaf border in Cox's Bazar. They are also threatening people who wanted to go back to Rakhine.

ICoE requests access to refugees camps in Cox's Bazar

The Government of Myanmar has repeatedly stated that it will not condone human rights violations and will take action against perpetrators according to the law if the allegations are supported by sufficient evidence.

Therefore, the Government of Myanmar has established an Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICoE) to investigate all allegations of human rights violations following ARSA terrorists attacks in August 2017 in northern Rakhine. The mandate of the Commission is to seek accountability and reconciliation. The Commission is carrying out its mandate with independence, impartiality and objectivity.

The ICoE will investigate allegations of human rights violations based on hard evidences. Therefore, it will gather all information and analyze evidences by setting up a sub-committee. It is seeking technical support of external experts in such areas as information and communication, legal, forensic and criminal investigation. Each member of the Commission will also appoint their own supporting staff and experts.

The Commission has publicly invited submission on the allegation of human rights violation. The deadline for the submissions had been extended from 31 January 2019 to 28 February 2019.

The Commission has received over 40 submissions concerning allegation of human rights abuse. The Commission is also requesting access to the refugees camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. We urge the Government of Bangladesh to facilitate the Commission's visit to the camps to meet with the alleged victims of abuse. The Commission's work will be evidence based. Therefore, the international community should support the work of the Commission. ICoE will submit its interim report to the Office of the President in March, and the final report will be submitted towards the end of the year.

The Government of Myanmar is willing and able to address accountability issue. Therefore, we strongly reject any move to bring the issue to international judicial system.

With this firm commitment and also with the spirit of cooperation with the United Nations, the Government of Myanmar has signed the Joint Communiqué with SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict to prevent and address the conflict-related sexual violence. The Government of Myanmar has recently facilitated the visit of SRSG Ms. Patten.

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Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker receives WFD Country Representative



Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein meets with Country Representative for Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Daw Sao Siri Rupa in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

U TUN TUN HEIN, Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and Chairman of the Joint Coordination Committee on Hluttaw Development, received a delegation led by Daw Sao Siri Rupa, Country Representative for Westminster Foundation

for Democracy (WFD), at the Hluttaw building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed WFD's contribution to organizing Hluttaw development programmes, upgrading the legislature and role of Hluttaw

committees, and exposing Hluttaw representatives and Hluttaw staff to international parliamentary experiences and facilitating capacity building trainings and workshops for them.—MNA ■ (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Union Minister U Soe Win receives outgoing Singaporean Deputy Chief of Mission

U SOE WIN, Union Minister for Planning and Finance, received Mr. Koh Chee Chian, the departing Deputy Chief of Mission and Counsellor of the Singapore Embassy, who completed his tour of duty in Myanmar, at his ministry yesterday. They discussed ongoing joint projects and matters relating to investments, education, banking, and tax between Myanmar and Singapore during the meeting. —MNA ■

(Translated by
Zaw Htet Oo)



Union Minister U Soe Win and Singaporean Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. Koh Chee Chian pose for a photo. **PHOTO: MNA**

SWRR Union Minister receives Denmark State Secretary for Development Policy

DR. Win Myat Aye, the Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, received a delegation led by Ms. Trine Rask Thygesen, State Secretary for Development Policy from Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at his ministry yesterday.

The two sides openly discussed the Union Government's continued efforts for implementing stability and developing socioeconomic livelihoods in Rakhine State, collaboration with UEHRD programs, youth volunteers, Myanmar Red Cross, and

ICRC/IFRC to provide humanitarian assistance after conflicts in Rakhine, Myanmar's readiness to receive returnees as outlined in the bilateral agreements signed with Bangladesh for repatriating displaced persons, implementation of the recommendations on Rakhine State, results of the Rakhine State Investment Fair, observations on the fishery programs conducted with Danish funds, and continued cooperation with Denmark during the meeting.—MNA ■ (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye holds talks with Ms. Trine Rask Thygesen, Denmark State Secretary for Development Policy. **PHOTO: MNA**

UN Security Council holds open briefing on ...

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We have also been working closely with the Office of the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Protection and Prevention of Six Grave Violation has been established and training on Six Grave Violations had been conducted in December last year.

Constructive contribution, support of international community is crucial for success of Myanmar's national efforts

The issue of Rakhine is not an issue of religious persecution as wrongly portrayed by massive media campaign against Myanmar. Myanmar is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country where different faiths, including the majority of Muslim population live in harmony across the country for centuries.

The issue of Rakhine State is a political and economic issue involving prolonged cross border illegal migration since colonial time, poverty, lack of rule of law and national security. The issue of Northern Rakhine is not a threat to international peace and security.

The recent outbreak of fighting in northern Rakhine State ignited by the Arakan Army's attacks against three police outposts has further complicated the situation. It also highlighted the urgent

The recent outbreak of fighting in northern Rakhine State ignited by the Arakan Army's attacks against three police outposts has further complicated the situation.

need to achieve nation-wide ceasefire agreement under the on-going national peace process.

We are fully aware of the urgency to solve the humanitarian problems. But we want to seek your understanding of the practicality and possibilities on the ground. There are huge physical as well as psychological barriers that hinder implementation of the repatriation, building peace and stability and development efforts. It takes time and patience as well as courage to build trust and confidence among different communities in Rakhine. We want to resolve the issue as quickly than anyone else.

While the primary responsibility to address the situation in Rakhine rests with the Government and People of Myanmar, objective and constructive contribution and support of the international community is crucial for the success of Myanmar's national efforts.

I wish to express our sincere appreciations to all our friends who are helping and supporting us in various ways to resolve the challenges in Rakhine at this critical juncture.

We shall continue to work in good faith with the United Nations and with all our friends to end the suffering of the people of Rakhine and rebuild the State into a land of peace, harmony and prosperity for all communities, says U Hau Do Suan.—MNA

Second Pyithu Hluttaw’s eleventh regular session holds 19th-day meeting

FROM PAGE-2

Dr. Saw Naing of South Okkalapa constituency then asked for arrangements made to start providing treatment services at a new four-story ward of South Okkalapa Women and Children Hospital. Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe replied that a total of K 3,050 million had been allocated for the construction of the new four-storey ward and as of February, 70 per cent of the construction had been completed. The initial plan requires a total funding of K 3,616.142 million and the funding shortfall of K 566.142 million will be requested from fiscal year 2018-2019 additional fund. If fund is obtained the construction will be completed before the end of this year but if funding is not obtained it will be requested from fiscal year 2018-2019 capital fund explained the Union Minister.

Questions raised by U Zone Teint of Chipwe constituency, U Tun Tun of Pwintbyu constituency, U Kyaw Htay of Leshi constituency, U Myint Oo of Thanatpin constituency and Dr. Than Aung Soe of Minhla constituency were also answered by Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe and Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr. Tun Naing.

Discussion and decision on Bill to amend Bar Council Act

Following the question and answer session a bill to amend Bar Council Act approved and sent with amendments by Amyotha Hluttaw was discussed on whether amendments should be in English or Myanmar. Bill Committee member U Zaw Win discussed on the amendments to be in English while Daw Khin Moht Moht Aung of Latha constituency and U Saw Thalay

Saw of Shwegyin constituency discussed on the amendments to be in Myanmar.

When the matter was put to a vote the Hluttaw voted 213 for, 137 against and 1 abstaining for the amendments to be in English and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker made an announcement accordingly of the Hluttaw’s decision.

This was followed with the Hluttaw agreeing to approve the bill according to 14 amendments made by the Bill Committee and without agreeing to approve the bill according to amendments approved by the Amyotha Hluttaw.

Finally Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker obtained the Hluttaw’s consensus on approving the entire bill to amend Bar Council Act according to amended clauses and sub-clauses. As there were no objection an announcement was made of approving the bill.

Hluttaw discuss motion on MOEE and put it on record

Afterwards a motion for Ministry of Electricity and Energy (MOEE) to establish an electricity distribution agreement with public companies so that the initial investment burden is not passed on to the people tabled by U Nyan Hein of Thanbyuzayat constituency was discussed by U Win Myint Aung of Tabayin constituency, U Tha Aung of Myothit constituency, U Kyaw Aung Lwin of Sedoktara constituency and Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo of Kyauktan constituency.

Responding to the discussions Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr. Tun Naing explained about the high investment and high technologies for electricity distribution that would drove up the costs of electricity to the people. This would increase the present problems

faced by many folds and thus much thought need to be made toward motion proposed by the motion proposer. As the ministry also had plans to change the way it is conducting electricity distribution it would not require village electrification committees and public companies and people in villages will be able obtain electricity at the same rate as people in urban areas. While giving due recognition to the good intention of the motion proposer, the motion is recommended to be put on record said the Deputy Minister.

As the motion proposer also consented to put the motion on record and there was no objection from the Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker announced the motion to be put on record.

The 20th-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw will be held on 4 March it is learnt. *(Translated by Zaw Min)*

Arrival Data for Foreign Visitors Entering Myanmar

Sr	Subject	January, 2018	January, 2019	Increase	Percentage
1	Arrival by air	130941	150229	19288	+15%
2	Arrival by cruise ship	99	633	534	+539%
3	Arrival at border gates and getting into the country	5124	11750	6626	+129%
	Visitors with visa	136164	162612	26448	+19%
4	Visitors entering to the border area	188341	217560	29219	+16%
	Total	324505	380172	55667	+17%

Foreign visitors arrive in Myanmar:

- (a) Foreign visitors holding visa arrive onboard airlines, cruise ships and through border gates by over 0.16 million in January 2019 and about 0.14 million in January 2018. Visitor arrivals increase 0.03 million (19%) in January, 2019 comparing to last January, 2018.
- (b) Foreign visitors holding border pass, entry permit arrive at border areas by about 0.22 million in January, 2019 and about 0.19 million in January, 2018. Visitor arrivals increase 0.03 million (16%) in January, 2019 comparing to last January 2018.
- (c) Foreign visitors arrive over 0.38 million in January, 2019 and over 0.32 million in January, 2018. Visitor arrivals increase about 0.06 million (19%) in January, 2019 comparing to last January, 2018.

Visitor arrivals by nationality

No.	Nationality	2018(Jan)	2019(Jan)	Difference	percentage
1 2	<u>North America</u>	<u>9145</u>	<u>8757</u>	<u>-388</u>	<u>-4%</u>
	America	7658	7375	-283	-4%
	Canada	1487	1382	-105	-7%
	<u>Other Americas</u>	<u>1707</u>	<u>1391</u>	<u>-316</u>	<u>-19%</u>
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	<u>West Europe</u>	<u>24835</u>	<u>23522</u>	<u>-1313</u>	<u>-5%</u>
	France	7148	6477	-671	-9%
	U.K.	4763	3942	-821	-17%
	Germany	3719	4084	365	10%
	Italy	2065	2296	231	11%
	Switzerland	1442	1254	-188	-13%
	Netherlands	1236	1115	-121	-10%
	Belgium	864	766	-98	-11%
	Austria	505	648	143	28%
	Spain	775	829	54	7%
10	Others	2318	2111	-207	-9%
1 2	<u>East Europe</u>	<u>2995</u>	<u>2673</u>	<u>-322</u>	<u>-11%</u>
	Russia	905	816	-89	-10%
	Others	2090	1857	-233	-11%
	<u>Africa</u>	<u>382</u>	<u>456</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>19%</u>
	<u>Middle East</u>	<u>777</u>	<u>910</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>17%</u>
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	<u>Asia</u>	<u>92433</u>	<u>121439</u>	<u>29006</u>	<u>31%</u>
	Thailand	27770	25325	-2445	-9%
	China	20717	41860	21143	102%
	Hong Kong	22	2634	2612	
	Japan	9327	11468	2141	23%
	Korea	8591	14435	5844	68%
	Macau	2	196	194	
	Singapore	4997	4739	-258	-5%
	Viet Nam	3930	2857	-1073	-27%
	Taiwan	3334	4008	674	20%
	India	3925	4594	669	17%
	Malaysia	4717	3719	-998	-21%
	The Philippines	1674	1727	53	3%
13	Others	3427	3877	450	13%
1 2 3	<u>Oceania</u>	<u>3890</u>	<u>3464</u>	<u>-426</u>	<u>-11%</u>
	Australia	3436	3001	-435	-13%
	New Zealand	440	445	5	1%
	Others	14	18	4	29%
	Total	136164	162612	26448	19%

Let's combine our strengths to improve socio-economic condition of people

TO PROMOTE the agricultural sector, the Union Government has placed special emphasis on the balanced development of agriculture, livestock, and industry to ensure inclusive economic growth, food security, and increased exports.

About 70 per cent of the country's population is residing in rural areas and their main occupation is farming. Although about 30 per cent of the GDP comes from the agricultural sector, the socio-economic life of the farmers is still poor.

While marching towards the goal of development, the Union Government has enacted a law to protect the rights of farmers and promote their interests.

During his speech on the Myanmar traditional New Year in April last year, the President had pledged to deliver land ownership certificates to farmers within a year, give loans to farmers in a timely manner, and grant tax exemption to agricultural inputs.

Having taken the current situation in the agricultural sector and its challenges into consideration, the Union Government is making strenuous efforts to return confiscated farmland to rightful owners.

The committees on scrutinizing farmland and other land in regions and states are also working to resolve the issue, and so far, more than 425,400 acres of land has been released as of 2018, of which 406,719 acres has been returned to farmers.

We need to make combined efforts to promote agriculture, without focusing on paddy alone.

Rigorous implementation of farmers' rights and interests was as an urgent need to ensure the country's economic development.

In addition, the Union Government has laid down 11 goals to ensure food security, nutritional value of food and increased food safety, allow farmers to enjoy full rights and better benefits, and encourage domestic and foreign investment in the agricultural sector.

Another challenge for our framers are climate-change induced disasters, which cause losses every year: We would like to urge all concerned to find a system which can provide a sustainable solution to prevent losses caused by disasters, instead of providing aid annually to farmers in their aftermath.

We would like to urge the people and the authorities to work in unity to overcome the challenges and obstacles faced by our farmers.

On the auspicious Peasants' Day which falls on 2nd March, let us make a solemn pledge to work with combined strength for improving the socio-economic conditions of the people, including farmers.

The Peasants Day on March 2nd

Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja,
Sithu Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

THE Peasant Revolution led by Saya San did not take place on March 2nd. March 2nd 1962 was the day and date of General Ney Win's military coup of the State when he personally announced on Myanmar Radio that he had taken over the reign of the State from the Pyidaungsu Government headed by Prime Minister U Nu on the ground that the entire nation was on the brink of break-up and disintegration. The National Army of the Country was duty-bound to salvage it in time. He did not want to commemorate the date of that coup because the coup was a timely action. He thought that the Peasant Revolution was historically worthy of commemoration. So he made that date of March 2nd as Commemoration Day of the Peasants Revolution.

Does history repeat and react? No absolute affirmative or negative answer can be given. Time, place and circumstances are three major factors to make history either to repeat or re-act, and in its repetition and reaction, only similarities,

not identities are found.

In the short interregnum of the two World Wars—World War 1 of 1914-1918 and s-4, World War 2 of 1939-1945, unexpected forces and circumstances cropped up by leaps and bounds. Among them the Economic Depression was the first and foremost. The Wall Street in the US, the economic nerve of the world, suddenly collapsed and stocks and shares became mere scraps of papers to be burned. Many com-

Myanmar, a colony in the British Empire was no exception to escape. In the economic heydays of British Colonial Rule, Myanmar as a colony enjoyed economic boom. Especially after the opening of the Suez Canal, Myanmar's agriculture products, paddy being the staple crop wealth flew into Myanmar, but not to Myanmar people or peasants to the British capitalists and their Indian under dogs brokers and money lenders, who had been exploiting Myanmar peasants for years. Mortgaged paddy bands and farm cattle were confiscated on failure of

... Saya San's trial was big international news across the world. Not only world media but also many interested historians, writers and biographers came to witness his trial ...

panies and shareholders were reduced to bankruptcy. The evil effect speedily spread to the entire world.

returning borrowed money even young daughters were taken any by force. The British Colonial Government turned a deaf ear



Saya San, the leader of rebellion of 1930-1932 in British Burma.

to such public distresses.

About this time Myanmar educated middle class had formed a nationalist organization "General Council of Burma Association" on the model of Young men Christian Association. Saya San, a herbalist from the Thayawady District was an active member of G.C.B.A. He was sent to his native place to study and report the real situation of the stress of the peasants. After a thorough enquiring, he

returned and made a full-fledged report of his eye witness account with a strong suggestion for armed uprising against the British Colonial Government.

What had happened was that the wheel of four forces, economic depression, economic recession, economic reaction and revolution had turned a full circle. Myanmar agricultural products, mainly paddy lost market, no money from sale no one took. They had to be burnt. But the prices of imports went up while textile, machines, consumers' goods were skyrocketed. In addition to money lender Chatters debts Myanmar peasants were unable to return the money they owed to Chinese retailers for consumers goods. Head over heels in debt the peasants had no money to return debt and no place to live because their lands households were confiscated. လေးရောလည်း ငွေမရှိ၊ ပြေးရောလည်းမြေမရှိ။

So what was the only way out? Armed uprising. Saya San was an alchemist. He was noted to have concocted a mercury compound ball [philosopher's stone] by which you could be immune from all weapons.

According to Myanmar traditional cosmology and mythology, the westerns were presented by dragon. To catch and kill the dragon, the mythical powerful garud bird "Galone" in Burmese was chosen as the symbol charm and an amulet. Saya San assumed the title of Supanaka Garuda Raja" and ceremonially

crowned as King of Myanmar, successor to the throne of King Thibaw of Mandalay Yadanapone Nay Pyidaw. He & his wife "King & Queen" were ceremonially crowned. This news spread across the country and the entire Myanmar people believed and heartily welcome it. The British Colonial Government shrugged its shoulders as "a storm in the tea cup".

But when Saya San's garuda soldiers raided in day time police and sentry outposts and killed armed officers, alarm was raised. They thought that the risings could be dealt with in no time. British police and British Indian soldiers shadowed Saya San to catch him alive. But Saya San escaped miraculously. People believed that Saya San could turn himself into an invisible man by his magic power.

He disappeared under eyes of British police and soldiers in the Temple of Mandalay Maha Muni Buddha Image. After nearly 2 years of his hidings in the Shan State his trusted men betrayed him by keeping all his chasm and amulets from his body while he was in a sleep and handed him over to the police. It was said that the British Government had to bring in sepoys [mounted silks soldiers] to capture Saya San.

Saya San's trial was big international news across the world. Not only world media but also many interested historians, writers and biographers came to witness his trial. Saya San out rightly denied he was a rebel. He said firmly that he was a law abiding British citizen. He only made attempt to salvage the peasants from the whirlpool of debt, distress and devastation as there was no one to help them. When he was about to be hanged, he was said to have yell out "I bravely stand this unjust punishment. In my next existences after my death may I succeed in my fight for freedom of the peasants and my country".

General Ney Win was right in naming the day of his military coup 2 March 1962 as the Peasants Day. We now need to build a commemorative monument of Saya San Statue at an appropriate place where we can hold annual commemorative the Saya San's Peasants' Revolution.

Public Announcement for remonstrance

Democratic Party of National Politics (DNP) headquartered at No. (R/32206) at the corner of Thuriya Road and Myat Lay Yone Road, Dekkhinathiri Ward in Dekkhinathiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw, submitted an application for registration as a political party in accord with Section 5 of the Political Parties Registration Law, on 28-2-2019. In their application they mentioned that they will use the name, the flag and the emblem as described hereunder.

In accord with Section 14 (d) of the Political Parties Registration Rules, it is hereby announced that those who want to remonstrate with the UEC about the party's name, flag and emblem may submit a complaint along with supporting evidence within seven days starting from issuance of this announcement.

Union Election Commission

Flag



Emblem



အမျိုးသားနိုင်ငံရေးနီရိုကရက်တစ်ပါတီ

One more political party applies for registration

Registration of political parties are being scrutinized by the Union Election Commission (UEC), Democratic Party of National Politics (DNP) came to UEC to register itself as a political party on 28 February 2019.—MNA

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Female farmers carry rice seedlings in Ayeyawady Region. PHOTO: THWE THWE TUN

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Daewoo Bus Myanmar to make 500 vehicles a year under SKD system

By Aye Yamone

THE Daewoo Bus Myanmar Company is planning to manufacture 500 buses a year using the semi-knocked down (SKD) system, beginning this month, said an official with the company.

South Korea's top automaker will assemble two bus models in Myanmar — City Bus BS 106 and Leicester Minibus. The company will price minibuses at roughly US\$45,000 and city buses at approximately \$85,000.

Dr. Kyaw Kyaw Aung, the managing director of Daewoo

Bus Myanmar Co, said there is demand for city buses in Yangon. "Buses are also needed in areas between Yangon and other small townships. Currently, school buses are in demand and minibuses can also be used as school buses as well as to ferry passengers. People can make use of five-year instalment plans offered by banks to buy buses," he said.

The construction of Daewoo Bus Myanmar Co's factory on 14 acres of lands owned by the Ministry of Industry in Mingaladon Township, Yangon Re-

gion, started in March, 2017. The factory will officially start operations sometime this month, according to a press conference held on 28 February at the headquarters of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Yangon.

Led by Korean engineers, production lines will be established at the new factory according to international norms and standards.

Dr. Kyaw Kyaw Aung said the company will currently produce two marketable bus mod-

els, which are expected to have a market potential in the future. "The ratio of job opportunities and output is equal. The factory needs 500 people for manufacturing 500 buses," he said.

The two bus models will be sold not only in Myanmar, but also in some ASEAN member states, including Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, where necessary. In addition, Daewoo Bus Myanmar Co is planning to open service centers in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, and Mandalay. ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

Two men arrested for dealing with drugs in Maungtaw

TWO men were arrested along with 66,000 stimulant tablets in Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State according to the Myanmar Police Force.

While the security forces were patrolling by boat in the township at night, two suspects Nur Lamein and Haro Lamein, were spotted near the opening of Mingalargyi creek in Maungtaw Township with the 66,000 stimulant tablets worth K 132.6 million.

According to the tip-off, they were passing illegally passing the border. Police



(Left to right) Nur Lamein, Haro Lamein. **PHOTO: MNA**

have opened charges against the two men are continuing investigations into the case. — MNA ■ (Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

Drugs seized in Maungtaw, Aungmyethazan townships

POLICE seized 14,880 stimulant tablets found in Kanyintan village tract in Maungtaw township, Rakhine State on Wednesday. A combined force including maungtaw Township Police station Police Force inspected a house owned by Numamat in the village and discovered the stimulant tablets, according to authorities.

On the same day, Police also seized 143,990 stimulant tablets along with 1,782g of opium, 2 hand phones and K360,000 while searching the

house of Ma Aye Mon in Dawna Bwar Quarter in Aungmyethazan Township, Northern Mandalay.

Later in the day, police also searched a house owned by Min Han Kyaw in Thiri Marlar Quarter in the same township and seized 2,120 stimulant tablets, one hand phone and K 1,100,000.

The suspects face charges under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to the Myanmar Police Force.—MNA ■

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

Meiktila's mountaineering team gets victory flag to climb Mt. Phonkanrazi in Putao

AUTHORITIES handed over the victory flag yesterday to the Meiktila hiking and mountaineering club which will climb Mt. Phonkanrazi in Putao Township.

At the ceremony held in Meiktila yesterday, the 20-member team of the club accepted the suits presented by representatives of Ravicon.

The Mt. Phonkanrazi snow-capped mountain is 1,1920 foot high.

The last trips of the Meiktila hiking and mountaineering club are Mt. East and West Side Viewing with 7,752-foot high to be climbed on 5 January and Mt. Lwemine with 8,000-foot on Menae Mountain Ranges in February.

The slogan of the club is "Love Nature". Don't discard any trash in every trip".

Alcohol and drug are prohibited among the club



Meiktila hiking and mountaineering club members pose for the documentary photo with the victory flag. **PHOTO: CHAN THA (MEIKTILA)**

members. Failure to follow the prescribed rules will lead to dismissal from the club. Along the trip, doctors from the club give medical treatment to local peo-

ple and make donations.

With over 1,000 memberships, every trip of the club includes between 140 and 200 members. The club climbed Mt.

Popa, Mt. Elephant, Mt. Myinmahti, Mt. Pyaikkhaeywe and Mt. Seinkanauk Myakhanauk in 2018.—Chan Tha (Meiktila)

(Translated by GNLM)

New Yangon City Project: Tax break for firms drawing investors to Zone 2

By Nyein Nyein

AUTHORITIES will grant a five-year tax exemption to businesses involved in investment promotion in Zone 2 of the New Yangon City Project, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC).

“As far as I know, the Seikyikhanaungto Township is included in Zone 2 of the New Yangon City Project. If businesses operating in Zone 2 are related to investment promotion, they may get a five-year tax exemption, under the law,” said U Aung Naing Oo, the Secretary of the MIC.

“Zone 2 of the New Yangon City Project covers areas that are moderately developed. Businesses operating in Zone 2 that are not related to investment promotion will not get a five-year tax exemption,” he added.

“The MIC has received no investment proposals related to the New Yangon City Project. The project is under the purview of the Yangon Region government. Thus, it is difficult to say exactly what types of businesses may or may not get tax exemption,” said U Aung Naing Oo.

The New Yangon City Pro-

ject is being implemented on lands to the west of the Yangon River by the New Yangon Development Co. Ltd (NYDC), which is fully owned by the Yangon Region government. The project is expected to create about two million jobs.

Infrastructure development works related to Phase-I of the project are estimated to cost over US\$1.5 billion. Phase-I of the project will cover construction of five townships, two bridges, a 26 km-long arterial road, 10 square kilometres industrial zone, electric power generation factory and facilities, and water treatment plants.

At present, the NYDC has invited expressions of interest (EOIs) for Phase-I infrastructure development projects for power supply and distribution, public transport, cyber connectivity infrastructure, municipal waste disposal, natural gas supply and distribution, and setting up a convention centre.

Investors can apply for tax exemption or relief under existing laws, rules, and regulations. With the aim of promoting balanced regional development, the MIC is granting tax exemption or relief to eligible investors, especially in sectors that need to be developed in

the country.

Under the Myanmar Investment Law, tax exemption or relief can be granted to investors depending on the zone where they invest in. Regions that are least developed fall under Zone 1, and those who invest in the zone can get a seven-year tax exemption. Those investing in Zone 2, which covers moderately developed regions, may get a tax exemption for five consecutive years. Those investing in Zone 3, which covers developed regions, may get a three-year tax exemption. ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

Individual border imports exceed K17 bln this FY



Commodities entering the Muse 105-mile border trade zone. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

THE import value using the individual trading cards (ITCs) at borders totalled K17.8 billion in the current 2018-2019 fiscal year, while individual exports stood at K3.9 billion, according to the latest report of the Ministry of Commerce.

The country saw only ten active borders in individual trade this fiscal year. Border traders imported a wide variety of goods via Tamu, Muse, Myawady, Tachilek, Lwejel, Kanpaiktee, Kawthong, Reed, Mawtaung and Kengtung.

Among these border entry points, the individual import was the highest, both in terms of volume and trade, at the Myawady border gate, reaching K9.9 billion in value, followed by Mawtaung at nearly K5.2 billion, Kawthong at K1.7 billion, Kanpaiktee at K925 million, Tamu at K134 million, Reed at K132 million, Tachilek at K36 million and Muse at K19 million.

Trade through the remaining border stations was valued lower than K5 million.

According to the ministry,

the total individual trade at all border points of entry, as of mid-February, amounted to K21.728 billion.

The Commerce Ministry introduced ITCs at borders in the 2012-2013 FY. Since the programme was launched, over 1,600 ITC holders are operating at the border trade camps. The trade authorities have issued a total of 91 cards to border merchants this FY.—Shwe Khine ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

Myanmar earns \$9.6 bln from maritime trade

MYANMAR'S maritime trade as of 22 February in the current financial year 2018-2019 has touched US\$9.6 billion, up by \$123 million or 1.3 per cent, compared with the corresponding period of the last FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

From 1 October to 22 February, the country's total maritime exports figured out \$3.6 billion in exports, while imports stood at over \$6 billion. During the same period in the previous fiscal year, Myanmar's trade by sea was pegged at \$9.48 billion, with exports worth \$3.055 billion and imports worth \$6.4 billion.

In the 2018 six-month mini-budget period between April and September, the country shipped goods worth \$14.231 billion via sea.

Roughly 80 per cent of the country's total trade is conducted through the maritime routes. According to the ministry, Myanmar's maritime trade stood at \$14.6 billion in the 2012-2013FY, \$20.375 billion in the 2013-2014FY, \$22.369 billion in the 2014-2015FY, \$20.56 billion in the 2015-2016FY, \$21.432 billion in the 2016-2017FY, and \$25.019 billion in the 2017-2018FY.

Myanmar imports four major groups of products—capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer products and CMP raw materials. The country chiefly exports seven groups of commodities, namely, agro, animal, fisheries and forest products, minerals, manufactured goods, and other miscellaneous products.—Swe Nyein ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

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S Korea's Moon says 'meaningful progress' despite no-deal summit

SEOUL (South Korea) — South Korean President Moon Jae-in insisted on Friday the Hanoi summit between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump had made a "meaningful progress", despite it breaking up without a nuclear deal.

"The two leaders had conversations at length, enhanced mutual understanding and built more trust," Moon said in a speech commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1 March Movement against Japanese colonial rule.

Both North and South Korea are united in their shared resentment of Japan's brutal 1910-45 colonial rule over the peninsula.

The no deal outcome from Hanoi will have been a huge disappointment for the South Korean president, who brokered the talks process and had touted the summit as a "remarkable breakthrough" for peace negotiations on the Korean peninsula.

Moon had been set to unveil details of new economic cooperation between the two Koreas this week, and now faces major questions over his dovish approach, but signalled he would not change track. Seoul would consult with the US on ways to resume South Korean tourism to the North's Mount Kumgang and operations



South Korea's President Moon Jae-in delivers a speech during a ceremony commemorating the 100th anniversary of the March First Independence Movement against Japanese colonial rule, in Seoul on 1 March, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

at the Kaesong Industrial Complex, where Southern firms used to be staffed by Northern workers, he said.

Moon has been pushing for the resumption of both projects as he seeks to engage Pyongyang, but doing so would fall foul of sanctions imposed on the North since they were suspended.

A joint North-South economic committee would be set up to benefit both sides "when there is progress in denuclearisation", he added, and said unification of the two Koreas "need not be far away".

But after 70 years of division

the two are now radically different societies and the South is far wealthier than the North.

Despite Moon's optimism, some in South Korea said they did not foresee any more US-North Korea summits.

"It seems like there isn't much left to talk about," said Kim Seong-min, president of Free North Korea Radio, a private broadcaster led by North Korean defectors in Seoul.

"Unless Kim changes his mind and really decides to give up all nuclear weapons and facilities, not just Yongbyon. But that's unlikely."—AFP ■

Pyongyang offered to close nuclear complex: foreign minister

HANOI (Viet Nam) — North Korea said on Friday it had offered to dismantle its Yongbyon nuclear plant in exchange for partial sanctions relief at Kim Jong Un's second summit with Donald Trump, after the meeting ended without agreement.

In a highly unusual late-night statement at the North Korean delegation's hotel in Hanoi, foreign minister Ri Yong Ho said Pyongyang had made a "realistic proposal" at the summit.

He denied Trump's assertion that Pyongyang had demanded the lifting of all sanctions imposed on it over its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes.

If the US lifted clauses that "hamper the civilian economy and the livelihood of our people" from five UN Security Council resolutions, Ri told reporters, "we will permanently and completely dismantle all the nuclear production facilities in the Yongbyon area, in the presence of US

experts".

Pyongyang holds the US responsible for the UN Security Council sanctions imposed on it over its banned weapons programmes. "This proposal was the biggest denuclearization measure we could take at the present stage in relation to the current level of confidence between the DPRK and the United States," he added, using the initials of the North's official name.

The North's stance was "invariable" and its offer would "never change", even if the US proposed more negotiations in future, he said. The minister was reading a statement after the two-day Trump-Kim talks closed with no final deal and the US president gave a press conference before flying out of Viet Nam.

The much-anticipated second summit between the two leaders ended with no agreement reached and a scheduled signing ceremony was dropped.—AFP ■

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Pakistan set to release Indian pilot as 'peace gesture'

ISLAMABAD (Pakistan) — Pakistan was set to free a captured Indian pilot on Friday in a "peace gesture" aimed at lowering temperatures with its nuclear arch-rival, after rare aerial raids ignited fears of a dangerous conflict in South Asia.

Pakistani authorities had not yet announced early Friday when or where Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, who has become the face of the crisis between Islamabad and New Delhi, will be handed back to Indian officials.

In New Delhi the announcement was seen as a diplomatic victory, with Indian leaders welcoming the pilot's return but announcing they would remain on "heightened" military alert, showing little sign of de-escalating the rivalry.

Abhinandan was shot down over Kashmir on Wednesday, af-

ter a dogfight in the skies over the disputed Himalayan region which sent tensions between India and Pakistan to their highest levels in years and alarmed world powers, who issued calls for restraint.

The latest confrontation between the neighbours, who have fought three wars since independence in 1947, erupted after a suicide bombing in Indian-held Kashmir killed 40 Indian troops on 14 February, with the attack claimed by a Pakistan-based militant group.

Twelve days later Indian warplanes launched a strike inside undisputed Pakistani territory, claiming to have hit a militant camp. It was the first such aerial raid since their last war in 1971—before either country had nuclear weapons.

An infuriated Islamabad denied casualties or damage, but a day later launched its own

incursion across the de facto Kashmir border which sparked the dogfight that ended in both countries claiming they had shot each other's warplanes down, and Abhinandan's capture.

Analysts said the pilot could prove to be Islamabad's trump card, but Prime Minister Imran Khan unexpectedly announced on Thursday that he would be released a day later as a "peace gesture", in the first sign of a potential thaw.

Khan alluded to the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war and called for talks, even as he warned India should not take the announcement as a sign of weakness.

Media reports have said Abhinandan could return through the Wagah crossing gate, famed for hosting a daily ceremony by Indian and Pakistani soldiers at sundown.

The pilot's parents travelled to Amritsar, near Wagah, via Delhi late last night and were applauded by all the passengers on the plane they travelled on, TV footage showed.

With the pilot attaining hero

status and the hashtag #WelcomeBackAbhi swiftly trending on social media, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on his citizens to "stand as a wall" in the face of an enemy that "seeks to destabilise India". —AFP ■



Pakistani civil society activists shout slogans as they march during a peace rally in Lahore on 28 February, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

Conservationists release 155 giant tortoises on Galapagos island

QUITO (Ecuador) — Conservationists have released 155 giant tortoises on an island in the Galapagos to help replace a similar species that died out 150 years ago, officials aid on Thursday.

The young tortoises, of the breed *Chelonoidis hoodensis*, were set free on Santa Fe island, the Galapagos National Park service announced.

The tortoises, each aged around 10-12 years old, were raised at the Fausto Llerena breeding centre and are part of a programme to repopulate the island at the centre of the Pacific archipelago.

Also known as the Espanola Giant Tortoise, the newly freed reptiles are a similar species to the *Chelonoidis* spp, which are today extinct.

They originally come from Espanola Island, also known as Hood Island, in the far southeast of the Galapagos chain.

“The tortoises that have been released carry a microchip under their skin with a permanent number attached to make it easier to track them,” said Jorge Carrion, the head of the Galapagos National Park.

The newly released tortoises join 394 others



Members of the Galapagos National Park service measure a giant tortoise on Santa Cruz Island, in the remote Ecuadorean archipelago 600 miles off South America's Pacific coast. **PHOTO: AFP**

which were set free on the 9.5 square mile (24.7 square kilometre) island.

The programme, run by the national park service and the NGO Galapagos Conservancy, is due to run until 2026.

The giant tortoises are “engineers of the ecosystem” because they help spread vegetation in their natural habitat, said Carrion.

The first of the creatures was released on to the island in 2015, said Washington Tapia, in charge of Galapagos Conservancy's giant turtle project.

The animals are “be-

tween 10 and 12 years old and should start to reproduce in the next five to seven years,” he said.

Located some 600 miles off the coast of South America, the islands belong to Ecuador and are classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The islands are best known for their unique flora and fauna, which inspired naturalist Charles Darwin to write his landmark 1859 study on evolution, “The Origin of Species.”

Giant tortoises are believed to have arrived on the remote volcanic island chain about three to four

million years ago, borne by ocean currents. With no natural predators, they spread across the islands and split into different species.

However, in the 19th century their population was devastated by sailors who used them as storable fresh meat on long ocean voyages, and by invasive rats, cats and ants which ate their eggs.

Last week, conservationists announced they had discovered a giant tortoise from a species thought to have become extinct more than a century ago. —AFP ■



Bushfires are common in Australia's arid southeast but spread far into the tropical northeast in January as climate change continued to push up summer temperatures. **PHOTO: AFP**

Australia suffers hottest summer on record, little relief in sight

SYDNEY (Australia) — Australia suffered its hottest summer on record from December through February and forecasts show the southern autumn will continue to be drier and warmer than average, the government said on Thursday.

“After a record hot December and January, it won't come as a surprise that this summer will be our warmest on record,” said Andrew Watkins, manager of long-range forecasting at the Bureau of Meteorology.

Although the final figures won't be available until Friday, the bureau said it was already clear the average maximum and mean temperature for the three months of summer would for the first time be more than two degrees Celsius higher (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) than long-term averages.

Rainfall was also be-

low normal, and the bureau said it saw no let-up in a severe drought that has gripped vast areas of the country's agricultural heartland in the east and southeast for many months.

“Unfortunately, the outlook isn't giving a strong indication that we'll see a return to average or above average rainfall in many areas over the autumn period,” Watkins said.

The bureau reported earlier that January had been the hottest month ever recorded in Australia, with mean temperature across the continent exceeding 30 degrees Celsius for the first time.

Watkins said weather patterns over the Indian and Pacific oceans contributed to the higher temperatures and lower rainfall, but that long-term climate change trends were also involved. —AFP

Italy's M5S abandoned environment promises, say critics

ROME (Italy) — Italy's anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) made the environment one of its main campaign themes in 2018.

But eight months after coming to power in a populist coalition with the far-right League, it has little to show for it, say environmental activists.

“We expected much more from them in terms of climate and the environment,” admits Stefano Ciafani, national head of Italy's environmental lobby Legambiente.

Electoral promises

No fewer than 52 pages were dedicated to the

chapter on the environment in the M5S electoral programme, the fruit of a wide-ranging consultation online with the movement's members.

Between the general election in March, and the drawing up of a “government contract” with the League at the end of May, “the environment, the green economy and zero waste” was cut to three pages. “Those who do not respect the environment do not respect themselves. We must... put the ecological issue at the centre of politics,” the contract read.

But the toxic mix of Italy's colossal public debt and an economic downturn

saw both parties prioritise their flagship measures — pensions and an income support plan — over the environment.

Funds cut

It was a familiar scenario: according to a WWF report, “in the last ten years, resources for the environment ministry have been cut in half” in Italy, from 1.65 billion euros (\$1.87 billion) in 2008 to 880 million in 2018.

While the M5S had promised to pour in resources, the budget is set to be slashed once again in 2019. “The high expectations raised by the Five Star Movement during

the election campaign as regards the environment, energy and climate have been dashed somewhat,” Ciafani says. “This government's policies are geared to addressing three topics — immigration, pensions and income support,” he said.

“When the M5S was in favour of protecting the environment, it was ideological; it actually supported protests against any industrial project,” Ciafani said.

“But now that they are in government they are faced with their responsibilities and are forced to make proposals, which they have never done.” —AFP ■

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Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch back on market at steep discount

LOS ANGELES (United States)—Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch in California is back on the market for \$31 million, a steep cut from the \$100 million asking price four years ago.

The 2,700-acre (1,093 hectare) estate located near Los Olivos and renamed Sycamore Valley Ranch features a main house with six bedrooms along with three guest houses, a four-acre lake with a waterfall, tennis courts, several barns and animal shelter facilities.

The dramatic price cut for the iconic property is partly due to years of drought in the region that affected the real estate market, Kyle Forsyth, one of the listing agents, told US media.

He said the compound has been well maintained and "with the drought ending and the Santa Ynez Valley in full bloom," now was the best time to sell.

Jackson reportedly paid \$19.5 million for the property in the 1980s but a real estate investment firm bought it in 2008 for \$22.5 million after the singer defaulted on a loan.



This file photo shows an aerial view of singer Michael Jackson's Neverland Valley Ranch on 25 June, 2001 in Santa Ynez, California. Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch in California is back on the market for \$31 million, a steep cut from the \$100 million asking price four years ago. **PHOTO: AFP**

The King of Pop died the following year.

News of the sale comes as HBO is set to air on Sunday a damning four-hour documentary titled "Leaving Neverland," which includes the testimonies

of two men who claim Jackson sexually abused them as children all over the ranch, including the attic, the master bedroom and the pool. Jackson faced multiple allegations of child sex abuse during his lifetime.

His ranch was raided in 2003 as part of a child molestation case against him and police at the time seized a large collection of pornography and images of nude children. Jackson was acquitted in the case in 2005.—AFP ■

Jonas Brothers reunite, will release first new music in years

NEW YORK (United States)—The Jonas Brothers are getting the band back together—and will release their first single in six years, the heartthrob trio announced on Thursday. "We're baaaccek-kkk..." the band tweeted.

The Grammy-nominated boy band is set to drop their new song "Sucker" Friday at midnight, their label said, after splitting nearly six years ago, citing a "deep rift in the band."

The brothers—Joe, 29, Kevin, 31, and Nick, 26—teased their reunion in a "Carpool Karaoke" spot for The Late Late Show with James Corden. "It's nice to be able to finally tell somebody," Nick said in a promo for the segment. "We've kept this a secret now for almost seven, eight months. This is basically our first performance back." "Sucker" will be the first release from the trio since June 2013's "First Time." Releasing their first album in 2006, the brothers skyrocketed to global celebrity and found massive commercial success in part thanks to their appearances on the Disney Channel network.

The brothers, who hail from New Jersey, were from a devout Christian family, and in the early stages of their careers their wholesome image included wearing purity rings that promote chastity until marriage. Following their band's break-up both Nick and Joe pursued other musical projects while Kevin appeared in reality television shows and founded a real estate company. In December 2018, Nick wed Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra in a lavish ceremony dubbed India's "wedding of the year."—AFP ■

Ed Sheeran marries girlfriend in 'tiny wedding': report



Sheeran has known Cherry Seaborn since his childhood. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON (United Kingdom)—British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran has married his girlfriend Cherry Seaborn in a "tiny winter wedding", The Sun newspaper reported on Thursday.

"Ed got married a few days before Christmas. It was very quiet—just Ed's oldest school pals, limited family and the priest," an unnamed source told the tabloid.

The 28-year-old, one of the best-selling artists in the world, has known Seaborn since his childhood in Suffolk, eastern England.

They have reportedly been dating since 2015.

The Sun reported that there were only about 40 people at the ceremony at his estate in Suffolk.

"He wanted no fuss and he wanted it to be something entirely for them—a tiny winter wedding," the source said.

However, the couple are said to be planning a "festival-style party" in the summer.

Sheeran announced his engagement on Instagram in January 2018, saying: "We are very happy and in love, and our cats are chuffed as well."

Sheeran's record label did not immediately respond to requests for comment.—AFP ■

'Lost Caravaggio' unveiled before \$170-mn auction

LONDON (United Kingdom)—The naked warrior grimaces as a graceful woman methodically slices off his head with a sword.

It is a burst of violence painted in haunting tones by a Renaissance master worth an estimated \$170 million—or yet another fake distressing the art world. The mystery took another plot twist on Thursday with the unveiling of the fully restored version of what some believe to be Caravaggio's long-lost

masterpiece. French art expert Eric Turquin has been looking after the life-size canvas since its discovery during pipe repair work in the attic of an old house in the southwestern French city of Toulouse in 2014. "Not only is it a Caravaggio, but of all the Caravaggios that are known today, this is one of the great pictures," Turquin said ahead of the painting's 27 June auction in Toulouse. "It's not just an addition—it is a major addition to

the oeuvre of the artist."

Turquin said his 150-million-euro (\$171 million) valuation was based on the 160-million-euro price tag Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum and the Louvre in Paris put on a pair of Rembrandt portraits they jointly purchased in 2015. The painting's existence was first referenced in a series of letters written by dukes and art dealers who were thinking of buying it four centuries ago.

Caravaggio's mastery elevated Europe's understanding of art by the time he died from what some scientists think was gradual poisoning from the lead in his paint at the age of 38 in 1610.

His arresting interplay of shadows and radiant light heralded the onset of the brooding Baroque style that flourished for 150 more years and produced the likes of Rubens and Vermeer.—AFP ■

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Crocodiles and birds were ‘prehistoric bedfellows’



Romanian palaeontologist Matyas Vremir and a team of researchers found that the fossilized eggs discovered in 2011 belonged to two bird species as well as two reptile species, the ancestors of modern crocodiles and geckos. **PHOTO: AFP**

CBUCHARREST (Romania)—Crocodiles and birds may not seem the most obvious bedfellows, but scientists now say a prehistoric fossil find in Romania suggests that at one time the two species may have shared nests.

In 2011 Romanian palaeontologist Matyas Vremir found fossilised eggs and eggshell fragments dating back roughly 68 million years on a river bank in the Oarda de Jos area of central Romania. Some two million years later, land-based dinosaurs were wiped out by a cataclysmic event, probably an asteroid strike that may have

also triggered massive volcanic activity. Vremir analysed the find with an international team of researchers who found that the eggs belonged to two bird species as well as two reptile species, the ancestors of modern crocodiles and geckos.

The team published its conclusions this month in the journal *Nature Scientific Reports*, saying the fossil find was “unique in the vertebrate fossil record and represents the earliest record of disparate animals sharing the same nesting area”.

The authors say that the presence of the two reptile species “perhaps suggests that

these animals were not only tolerated, but were perhaps not perceived as a threat to enantiornithine eggs or nestlings,” referring to one of the prehistoric bird species. According to Vremir, the researchers found 13 whole enantiornithine eggs, along with thousands of eggshell fragments, including those of crocodiles. Vremir said many similar fossils could yet be excavated. “The bird eggs measure 2.5 by 4 centimetres, while the crocodile eggs are a little smaller than a ping-pong ball,” Vremir told AFP, adding that the reptile itself measured between 1 and 2.5 metres. — AFP ■

SpaceX to launch test for resumption of manned US flights

WASHINGTON (United States)—SpaceX will try to send a dummy to the International Space Station this weekend in a key test for resuming manned US space flights, perhaps this year if all goes well.

Since the shuttle Atlantis returned to earth on 21 July, 2011, no American astronaut has blasted off from US soil for a tour in space. NASA pays Russia to get its people up to the orbiting research facility at a cost of 82 million dollars a head, round trip. In 2014, the US space agency awarded contracts to SpaceX and Boeing for them to take over this task. But the programme has suffered delays as safety requirements are much more stringent for manned flights than for unmanned missions to deploy satellites. No one in America wants to relive the tragedies of the US space shuttles Challenger and Columbia, which disintegrated in mid-air in 1986 and 2003. Three years behind schedule, a Falcon 9 rocket is scheduled to blast off Saturday from Cape Canaveral at 2:49 am (0749 GMT) with a Crew Dragon capsule in its nose. It will aim for a rendezvous one day later with the ISS. The capsule is scheduled to return to Earth on 8 March.

If all goes well, two astronauts will be aboard the next time such a seven-seat capsule is launched. That is supposed to happen in July but delays are possible. “These things always take longer than you think,” said Lori Garver, who was the number two official at NASA when the contracts were awarded to SpaceX and Boeing under then president Barack Obama. Back

then this decision was controversial, with lawmakers complaining about changing the way America sends people into space and the loss of contracts and jobs for big, veteran aerospace companies based in their states. “We have very few heroes left, and astronauts are our heroes. And loosening our grip at NASA and allowing companies to take the lead on transporting them was a challenge for some. It still is,” said Garver.

Less expensive

SpaceX is no rookie when it comes to trips to and from the space station.

The company founded by Elon Musk and based in Los Angeles has carried out 15 resupply missions to the orbiter since 2012. One of its ISS-bound rockets exploded in 2015. The second, crewed version of the Dragon rocket has been adapted from the cargo model, which has proved to be reliable.

Saturday’s mission is still a

“big deal,” said SpaceX vice president Hans Koenigsmann. “This is an absolutely critical first step that we do as we move towards returning the crewed launch capability back here to the US,” said William Gerstenmaier, associate administrator with NASA Human Exploration and Operations. It has taken years to get within reach of that goal. “I don’t think very many people thought that the length of time between the termination of Shuttle and a new vehicle was going to be as long as it has been,” said Roger Launius, former chief historian of NASA.

The cooling of US relations with Russia has increased pressure for the US to be able to send people to space on its own. NASA has always relied on the aerospace industry for its manned space programmes. Launius recalls that back in the days of the Apollo moon missions “almost everybody in that room were contractors, not NASA employees.” — AFP ■



This image courtesy of SpaceX and obtained from NASA shows, the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Crew Dragon spacecraft rolled out to Launch Complex 39A at NASA Kennedy Space Center on 3 January, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**



David Saint-Jacques of the Canadian Space Agency, a member of the International Space Station (ISS) expedition 58/59. **PHOTO: AFP**

‘Canada is going to the Moon’: Trudeau

OTTAWA (Canada)—Canada will join NASA’s space mission to put an orbiter around the Moon in a few years, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on Thursday.

“Canada is going to the Moon,” Trudeau told a press conference that included a live video link from the International Space Station with Canadian astronaut David Saint-Jacques. NASA plans to build a small space station, dubbed Gateway, in the Moon’s orbit by 2026.

It will serve as a way-station for trips to and from the lunar surface, but will not be permanently crewed like the International Space Station (ISS), currently in Earth’s orbit. According to the Canadian Space Agency, Gateway will provide living space for astronauts, a docking station for visiting spacecraft and research laboratories.

Canada will develop and contribute an autonomous robotic system—Canadarm3—that will be used to repair and maintain the station.

The original 15-metre remote-controlled mechanical Canadarm, also known as the Shuttle Remote Manipulator System, was used on the Space Shuttle for 30 years, deploying, capturing and repairing satellites, positioning astronauts, maintaining equipment and moving cargo. Its successor is used on the ISS. Trudeau also announced Can\$2.05 billion (US\$1.55 billion) over 24 years for Canada’s space programme, which will help support a push to develop new “artificial intelligence-based technologies” for space.

Due to communications lags between Earth and remote outposts, it will be increasingly necessary to automate many robotic functions on space stations and vehicles. The last person to walk on the Moon was Eugene Cernan in December 1972, during the Apollo 17 mission. Before humans set foot on the lunar surface again, NASA aims to land an unmanned vehicle on the Moon by 2024. So far, only Russia, the United States and China have made the 384,000-kilometer (239,000-mile) journey and landed spacecraft on the Moon. — AFP ■



Myanmar's Myat Noe Khin (red) vies for the ball along with a Bangladesh player in yesterday's AFC U-16 qualifier at Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay. **PHOTO: MFF**

Myanmar's AFC dream fades after narrow loss to Bangladesh

MYANMAR'S chances of advancing into the next stage of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship were crushed after it suffered a narrow 0-1 loss against Bangladesh in the second round of the qualifiers at the Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay yesterday.

Myanmar lined up with goalkeeper Khin Myat Moe, Su Pyae Pyae Kyaw, Lar Ell War, Kay Kay, Zin Mar Htwe, Captain Myat Noe Khin, Swe Mar Aung, Win Win, Pont Pont Pyae Maung, May Thet Mon Myint, and Phyu Phyu Win.

Both teams played equally well, resorting to speedy attacks with counter play and good passes right from the kickoff.

Team Myanmar got goal

chances at the 30 plus minutes mark, but Bangladesh defenders were strong and cleared nearly all balls. The first half ended with a score of 0-0.

In the second half, Bangladesh resorted to a new tactic, which paid off, giving the team an edge over Myanmar.

A miscalculation by Myanmar goalkeeper led to Bangladesh scoring the winning goal at 68 minutes.

The goal came from the corner and was netted by Monika Chakma as Myanmar keeper Khin Myat Moe struggled to stop the ball.

The score remained unchanged until the final whistle.

With the win, team Bangladesh will advance to the next stage of the championship.

After their massive 10-0 win over the Philippines, Bangladesh only needed one win against either Myanmar or China to secure a spot in the semifinals as well as a place in the eight-team final round.

Bangladesh will next play their final group match on 3 March against China, which has also made it to the finals. The match will decide their positions in the table.

Although out of reckoning for the championship, Myanmar will play against the Philippines the same day.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

National football league matches resume today

AFTER a month-long break, the Myanmar national football league will start Week 5 of matches today, which will take place in major cities across the country, according to a statement released by the Myanmar National League.

The matches had been postponed since January on account of Myanmar national footballers participating in international tournaments.

Week 5 will have some interesting matches featuring Yangon United, Shan United, Yadanarbon United, and Ayeyawady United.

Ayeyawady United will face Southern Myanmar F.C. at Patheingyi Stadium in Patheingyi at 3:30 p.m. today, and the match will be broadcast live on MRTV-4.

In another match scheduled today, local stars Magwe F.C. will take on newcomers

Dagon F.C. The match will be streamed live on MySports' Facebook page.

On Saturday, Yadanarbon F.C. will play against Hantharwady United at the Bahtoo Stadium in Mandalay at 3:30 p.m. The match will be broadcast live on MRTV-4.

Defending champions Yangon United will take on Rakhine United in the home stadium of the Rakhine team.

Meanwhile, former champions Shan United will play against Chin Land F.C. at the Thuwunna stadium in Yangon. The match will be streamed live on MySports' Facebook page.

At Monywa Stadium on Sunday, host team Sagaing United will entertain its fans by competing against Zwegapin United. The match is scheduled to take place at 3:30 p.m.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Federer two wins from 100th title

DUBAI (United Arab Emirates)—Roger Federer advanced to the semi-finals of the Dubai Championships on Thursday, beating Hungary's Marton Fucsovics 7-6 (8/6), 6-4 to move closer to a 100th career title.

The Swiss star, who is also chasing an eighth trophy in the emirate, plays either Croatia's Borna Coric or Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia for a place in the final.—AFP ■

Chase down Tottenham, Emery urges five-star Arsenal

LONDON (United Kingdom)—Unai Emery urged Arsenal to take the chance to chase down Tottenham in the north London derby on Saturday after sweeping aside Bournemouth 5-1 on Wednesday to close to within four points of Spurs.

Mesut Ozil made the most of being handed a rare start by Emery as the German and Henrikh Mkhitaryan masterminded an excellent performance from the Gunners to remain a point clear of Manchester United in fourth.

Chelsea's 2-0 win over Tottenham at Stamford Bridge means the gap between third and sixth is now down to seven points in the battle for two Champions League places next season.

"Yes, it's a big motivation," said Emery of the chance to further close the gap on Spurs in third.

"We have a great opportunity on Saturday, they are at the moment better than us in the table." Emery now has a welcome selection headache for the visit to Wembley as Ozil and Mkhitaryan starred on their first start together in the league since November. Emery has been reluctant to use Arsenal's highest earner in his debut season in charge as Ozil was making just his second league start of the year. Yet, the former Real Madrid midfielder showed why Arsenal handed him a contract worth a reported £350,000 a week last January by



Arsenal's Spanish head coach Unai Emery gestures on the touchline during the UEFA Europa League round of 32, 2nd leg football match between Arsenal and Bate Borisov at the Emirates stadium in London on 21 February, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

rolling back the years in a freer role alongside Mkhitaryan.

Arsenal were helped along the way by some feeble Bournemouth defending as the Cherries succumbed to a 10 consecutive away defeat. "It was a difficult night for us, epitomised by the start of the match and we never truly recovered," said Bournemouth boss Eddie Howe. "We weren't good in any aspect of the game, with or without the ball or mentally. We have to reflect on that honestly."

Artur Boruc should have got a stronger hand to Ozil's shot that bounced over the Polish goalkeeper to give the hosts a perfect start after just four minutes.—AFP ■