ELECTRICITY EFFICIENCY IS A MUST FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY PAGE-8 (OPINION)

NATIONAL
CBM, Construction Ministry, Union Gov't Office explain 3rd-year performances
PAGE-4

NATIONAL
Tatmadaw to take proper legal action against village in-charge linked to AA
PAGE-5

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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State Counsellor inaugurates 145 MW gas power plant in Bellin, Kyaukse Township

A 145 MW gas engine power plant was inaugurated yesterday in Bellin, Kyaukse Township, Mandalay Region, by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Chairperson of the Rural Areas and National Races Development Central Committee.

In her opening address, the State Counsellor said it has been found that Myanmar is meeting just under 50 per cent of its electricity needs, which is one of the major requirements for the development of the country, while most neighboring countries have achieved over 80 per cent, over 90 per cent, and cent-per-cent electrification.

Therefore, the country needs to make the utmost effort to increase production of electricity, she said adding, the Union Government has set up new infrastructure for the power system, including installation of new cable lines and opening of new sub-power stations.

"Before the end of this year, it is expected that about 50 per cent of the demand for electricity will be fulfilled. We have been making efforts to increase power production from 30 per cent in 2016 to 50 per cent by the end of this year. It is our target to achieve nationwide electrification in 2025," said the State Counsellor.

Under the incumbent government, power plants were launched in Mandalay Region, including a 225 MW power plant with two high-efficiency gas turbines and waste heat generators, a 90 MW gas engine power plant by V Power Company, the 145 MW Bellin Gas Engine Power Plant, and a 65 MW Gas Engine Power Plant, which became operational in May, 2016. Together, the plants can produce 525 MW of power. The power produced by the factories is transmitted not only to Mandalay Region, but also to the national grid, reaching the people in the whole country, she said.

To supply sufficient electricity to Mandalay Region, the 230-KV Ahtet Yeywa-Shwesaryan power grid project, the 230-KV Myanmar-Meikhtila-Taungdwingyi power grid project, the 500-KV Meiktila sub-power station project, and the 60-MW Didok Hydropower Plant are being implemented currently, said the State Counsellor.

SEE PAGE-3

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (Centre), Union Minister U Win Khaing (Left) and Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung (Right) inaugurate the 145 MW gas power plant in Bellin, Kyaukse Township, Mandalay Region yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Power, transport crucial for development: State Counsellor

INSIDE TODAY

PARLIAMENT
Motion on PPP for crop-substitute programmes for poppy farmers approved
PAGE-2

PARLIAMENT
Amyotha Hluttaw approves motion on preventing oil pollution
PAGE-2

NATIONAL
Anti-Corruption Commission discusses whistle-blower protection in workshop
PAGE-5

ARTICLE
Full moon day of Kasone: Buddha Day
PAGE-8-9

Pyithu Hluttaw

Motion on PPP for crop-substitute programmes for poppy farmers approved

AT the seventh-day meeting of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw's 12th regular session held yesterday morning Hluttaw approved a motion urging the government to invite public businesses to conduct crop-substitute programmes for poppy farmers systematically in cooperation with the government under the Public-Private Partnership -PPP.

MP Daw Ni Ni May Myint.

Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe. **PHOTO : MNA**

MP U Khin Maung Myint.

Extending the term of Pyithu Hluttaw Judicial and Legal Affairs Committee

At the meeting the Hluttaw was first informed by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat on the extension of the term of Pyithu Hluttaw Judicial and Legal Affairs Committee.

Asterisk marked question and answer session

In the asterisk marked question and answer session that follows Daw Ni Ni May Myint of Taungup constituency asked first if there was a plan to open a nurse and midwife training school in Taungup Township. Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe replied that such training schools can be opened only at 200-bed hospitals and if either the state government or Hluttaw representative can help obtain a land in Kyaukpyu 200-bed hospital the matter of opening the training school will be included in fiscal year 2020-2021 budget.

On the matter of upgrading Kaung Bo health clinic in Kaung Bo Village, Yaksawk Township to a station hospital raised by U Khin Maung Myint of Yaksawk constituency, Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe replied that the health centre met all five norms required for upgrading to a station hospital while 5.5 acres of land had been donated for it. Therefore the health centre will be upgraded and while the process for an upgrade was being undertaken, necessary preparations will also be made so that the upgrade can be conducted as soon as possible, said the Union Minister.

Similarly, the Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe also responded to questions raised by U Nyunt Win of Kanpetlet constituency and U Saw Tin Win of Kya-in-Seikkyi constituency.

Union Election Commission member U Aung Myint also responded to a question raised by U Myo Zaw Aung of Kawlin constituency on teaching election systems and general knowledge on election in schools so as to students become well acquainted on election practice and procedures through school elections.

Hluttaw approves Child Rights Bill

Next on the matter of Child Rights Bill returned by Amyotha Hluttaw with amendments Bill Committee member U Nay Myo Tun disagreed on the amendments of the Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee and submitted to the Hluttaw amendments approved by the Pyithu Hluttaw. Pyithu Hlutatw Speaker obtained the decision of the Hluttaw on the matter and announced the Hluttaw approval.

Bill Committee secretary U Kyaw Soe Lin then tabled a motion for the bill to be discussed in Pyidaungsu Hluttaw as there was disagreement between the two Hluttaws. Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker announced that the matter will be submitted to Pyidaunsu Hluttaw where it will be discussed and decided.

Motion on cancer tabled, supported and approved

Afterwards U Kyaw Aung Lwin of Sedoktara constituency tabled a motion urging the government to prevent and reduce the occurrence of cancer through effective information campaign in accordance to the law and explained in detail about the reason for tabling the motion. The motion was supported by Dr. Daw Pyone of Indaw constituency.

After obtaining the decision of the Hluttaw to accept and discuss the motion Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat made an announcement about it and added further for Hluttaw representatives who want to discuss the motion to register their names.

SEE PAGE-6

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw approves motion on preventing oil pollution

AT the seventh-day meeting of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw's 12th regular session held yesterday morning Hluttaw approved a motion urging the Union Government to draw up laws, rules and directives to take precautionary measures in an attempt to protect the natural environment, resources and interests of coastal states and regions from possible heavy oil pollution of giant crude oil tankers delivering crude oil to the pipeline at Made Island, Rakhine State.

Deputy Minister U Hla Kyaw. **PHOTO : MNA**

Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win. **PHOTO : MNA**

MP Daw Ma Ma Lay. **PHOTO : MNA**

In the earlier question and answer session, questions raised by 8 Hluttaw representatives were answered by Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw and Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win.

Question and Answer session

In the question and answer session, a question raised by Daw Ma Ma Lay of Shan State constituency 8 on a plan to connect farmers planting organic plants in Shan State south Pindaya and Ywangan townships with local and international market was answered by Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo.

U Kyaw Kyaw of Rakhine State constituency 4, U Kyaw Tote of Mandalay Region constituency 7 and U Mya Min Swe of Magway Region constituency 9 raised questions relating to embankment and reservoir were answered by Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw.

Questions by U Ngun Hay of Chin State constituency 1, U Tun Tun Oo of Mandalay Region constituency 2, U Whey Tin of Chin State constituency 11 and U Soe Thein of Kayah State constituency 9 on using President's emergency fund for preventing erosion of rive banks caused by river flows during rainy season, educating the people about records kept by Irrigation and Water Utilisation Management Department in National Archive, opening of a township Internal Revenue Department office and resource sharing plan for locals of income obtained from Baluchaung hydroelectric power station were answered by Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win.

Motion on preventing oil pollution discussed, responded to and decided

In the final agenda of the day a motion tabled by U Maung Maung Ohn of Ayeyawady Region constituency 5 urging the Union Government to draw up laws, rules and directives to take precautionary measures in an attempt to protect the natural environment, resources and interests of coastal states and regions from possible heavy oil pollution of giant crude oil tankers transporting crude oil to the pipeline at Made Island, Rakhine State was discussed by six Hluttaw representatives.

U Hsan Myint of Ayeyawady Region constituency 3, U Khin Myo Win of Taninthayi Region constituency 12, U Htay Oo of Yangon Region constituency 2, U Myo Win of Mon State constituency 8, Tatmadaw representative Maj Tin Htut and U Sa Khin Zaw Lin of Ayeyawady Region constituency 2 discussed the motion.

In his discussion, Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Dr. Ye Myint Swe said Ministry of Transport and Communications was following international norms of ISGOTT and BUNKER 2001 in addition to Myanmar Port Authority Law and rules. Once the National Contingency Plan for Marine Pollution was submitted and approved, the plan will be implemented, said the Deputy Minister.

SEE PAGE-6

State Counsellor inaugurates 145 MW gas…

FROM PAGE-1

Since taking office, the incumbent government has realized that the two main tasks for the development of the country are transportation and electrification, she said.

If our country's people get access to good transportation and electrification, their socio-economic life will improve quickly, she added.

Getting access to electricity benefits the people not just for light, but also the education of the children and small-scale industries at home for their parents, she added.

The State Counsellor said the electricity brought light to the people physically and technically, adding that it is the light of wisdom that is brighter than the light from the electricity and let it shine in the country. The light of loving kindness is valuable than the light of wisdom.

"Our people must work hard to become wise. Wisdom means the power of right understanding over a situation. We need the wisdom which comes after right understanding to make responsible decisions for betterment of the situation," she said.

Myanmar is a Union, and thus the Union Government takes a balanced view while performing its duties, she said.

"We should not take only an economic view, such as getting electricity would bring development and prosperity to this area," she said, "To strengthen our Union Spirit, when we think about how to use our wealth and how to obtain investments from local and foreign investors, we have to use the "Union Spirit"."

The Union Government was implementing the development projects which can lead to prosperity and unity among the ethnic peoples of the Union and strengthen the understanding among them, she added.

The electrification sector is considered not just for money, but for the future of the country, she said.

Myanmar has not achieved 100 per cent peace since her independence. The flames of armed conflicts are burning here and there. More important than electricity is that we need to let the light of loving kindness shine in our country to quench the flames of armed conflicts in our country.

We conducted a review whenever a new power station was opened or a power supply work was successfully implemented. What was the benefit to the country from having one more power station? What were the economic, social and political benefits? We have to think in this manner. As mentioned earlier, politics means a process based on union spirit. If we can work in unity on politics based on union spirit this country can overcome whatever difficulties or challenges it faces and it would develop quickly. The main belief was that a sustainable development could be maintained firmly into the future.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visits Tamoteshinpin Shwegu Pagoda built by King Anawrahta near Kyaukse. **PHOTO: THET AUNG**

That was why the people were relied on and trusted. The work of politics was to be conducted by relying and trusting on the people. Some spoke only about their rights as they mention democracy. You could not talk about rights only. Duties and responsibilities need to be known. Use the light obtained from electricity for the benefit of the people. As students read and learn more, those reading and learning should be for the majority.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visits the Myogyi Dam in Kyaukse, Mandalay Region, yesterday. **PHOTO: THET AUNG**

As the projects succeed for our hope of providing 100 per cent to the country, the country must become an exceptionally developed country. Why do I say exceptional? The world today has been prioritizing physical development. But there was no solution yet on resolving social problems caused by prioritizing physical development. Even though our country was at the very early beginning of physical development we need to instil in ourselves a truly developed mindset and morality. If we have this our people will become valuable people that would benefit the people more than the people of developed countries. May this additional power station bring forth development of opportunities for peace in our country. May our people bring benefit not only to the union but also to the world, said the State Counsellor in conclusion.

Next Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing explained about works conducted on the power station and works conducted on providing electricity to the whole country while Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung explained about electricity obtained by Mandalay Region and the benefits obtained from constructing the power station.

After a video record of constructing the power station was shown Region Hluttaw representative U Win Hlaing spoke words of thanks.

Union Minister U Win Khaing then presented a certificate of honor to Chief Engineer U Thein Aung of Ministry of Construction Department of Highways for the support provided in transporting the engines for the power station and a fruit basket to Powergen Kyaukse Co., Ltd Chairman U Maung Kyay and officials for constructing the power station.

Afterwards the State Counsellor, Union Ministers, Region Chief Minister and officials, Powergen Kyaukse Co., Ltd. Chairman and officials posed for a commemorative group photo.

Next, Region Hluttaw Chairman U Aung Kyaw Oo, Deputy Minister Dr. Tun Naing, Mandalay Region Minister for Electricity, Energy and Construction U Zarni Aung, Singaing Township Pyithu Hluttaw representative Dr. Kyi Mo Mo Lwin, Amyotha Hluttaw representative Daw Ohn Kyi, Region Hluttaw representative U Aung Naing Lin and PowergenKyaukse Co., Ltd Director U Aung Hlaing Oo cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the power station.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Union Minister U Win Khaing and Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung next pressed a button to put the 145.49 MW of electrical power generated by the power station onto the national grid.

SEE PAGE-10

Central Bank of Myanmar, Ministries of Construction, Union Government Office explain third-year performances

THE press conference on the third-year journey of the Union-level entities was continued yesterday. The Ministry of Construction, the Central Bank of Myanmar, and the Ministry of the Office of the Union Government answered to reporters in the Ministry of Information's meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw.

Deputy Construction Minister U Kyaw Lin, center, replies to the media during a press conference on the Union-level organizations' third year performances. **PHOTO: MNA**

U Kyaw Lin (Deputy Minister for Construction)

The Deputy Minister explained the work undertaken by each of the departments under the Ministry of Construction in the third year of the civilian government administration.

The Department of Buildings, and mainly the Construction Assessment Committee under it, reviewed and approved 2,991 construction projects of 25 Union ministries for the six-month period of the 2018 FY.

He said the department constructed 43 assemble board houses in four villages in Maungtaw District, Rakhine State, to accept the return of displaced people. He said the department handled 384 projects for constructing high courts, hospitals and colleges/universities in the 6-month period of 2018 FY and 319 projects in 2018-2019 FY.

The Department of Highways paved or upgraded roads and constructed retaining walls, box culverts and other additions to roads in all the states and regions with loans from JICA, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank in the 2018-2019 FY.

The Department of Bridges has constructed and upgraded numerous bridges across the country and is handling bridge projects that are nearing completion.

These projects include Tiyanzup Bridge and Drukha Bridge in Kachin State; Chindwin Bridges Khamti and Homalin in Sagaing Region; Thamote Lut Lut Bridge, Pu Lone Tone Tone Bridge and Taninthayi Bridge in Taninthayi Region; Sittaung Bridges Yedashe, Otpyat and Myo Soe and Shwe Kyin Bridge in Bago Region; Myitha Bridge (Gangaw), Mone Chaung Bridge (Pwintpyu) and Yaw (Kantwin) Bridge in Magway Region; Sintewa Bridge in Mandalay Region; Attayan Bridge (Sabel Gu) in Mon State; Dar Lat Chaung Bridge, Thein Nyo Bridge, Kyap Sin Bridge, Sett Yoe Bridge, Kin Chaung Bridge and Ramaung Bridge in Rakhine State; Dawbon (Thakayta) Bridge, Myanmar -Korea (Dala) Friendship Bridge and Bago Bridge (Thanlyin Bridge No. 3) in Yangon Region; Laylu Bridge, Takaw Bridge and Thanlyin Bridge (Tarsan) in Northern Shan State; and Shwe Taung Yan Bridge (MaGyi Chaung), Nga Wun Bridge (Laymyethna), Myaungmya Bridge, Sawke Bridge, Kyun Byatet Bridge, Kyun Gon Bridge, Pathein Bridge, Shwe Laung Bridge, Wakema Bridge and Labutta Bridge in Ayeyawady Region.

In the housing development sector, the Ministry of Construction has constructed 3,322 rooms of low-cost housing in Yangon Region, 676 rooms of Ommar Dhanti Housing and 96 rooms of Pyi Taw Tar Housing in Pathein, Ayeyawady Region, and 48 rooms of Kyar Inn Taung Housing in Hpa-an, Kayin State.

The Construction, Housing and Infrastructure Development Bank (CHIDB) handles 25,109 accounts in its housing mortgage system which has saved K23.53 billion and has given out K35.17 billion for 2,720 house purchases. Cooperating with JICA, CHIDB is working to give out 15-year loans at a reduced 8.5 per cent interest rate.

U Soe Thein (Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar)

U Soe Thein said they handle Myanmar's inflation rate through the Reserve Money Targeting Monetary Policy Framework, and aims to meet its reserve money target by calculating on the country's GDP, inflation, velocity and money multiplier.

He said the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) is working towards the national objective for keeping the GDP at 7.6 per cent within an inflation rate of 5.5 per cent in 2018-2019 FY by trying to keep the reserve money rate at 11 per cent and the total money rate at 21 per cent.

U Soe Thein said CBM has called 25 deposit auctions within the 12 months between April 2018 to March 2019, and managed to seize approximately K281 billion in excess money from the market in each auction. He said the interest rates of the auction winners was roughly 2.94 per cent at the lowest and 7.13 per cent at the highest.

U Soe Thein said 5 additional directives to the 2016 Financial Institutions Law were issued on 3 May 2018 and intend to improve the governance of all banks.

He said they will implement Phase II of CBN-NET as signed with JICA on 8 August 2018. He said this phase will include linking CBM's system with commercial banks, setting messaging standards to ISO 20022 Adoption, providing liquidity saving facility, ACH, cheque truncation, alert and dashboard function, DR site and data redundancy, user authentication, and automatic data linkage (such as with YSX, auction system).

CBM and the Internal Revenue Department collaborated on the CBN-NET system customer credit transfer function that allows people to pay their taxes online starting from February 2019, said U Soe Thein.

He said they have currently permitted 13 foreign banks to open branches in Myanmar and have plans to permit more in the future. He added that they are also permitting subsidiaries to open up as well.

U Soe Thein said CBM has allowed domestic private banks to have up to 35 per cent of their capital from foreign investments as of 29 January 2019. He said they have allowed domestic corporate banks to give out loans in both foreign and domestic currency since 8 November last year.

He said CBM is the supervisory authority of all banks and financial institutions in Myanmar and has conducted risk management trainings and awareness campaigns on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Act (AML/CFT) in addition to monitoring their progress in adhering to it.

As of March 2019, 27 private banks have opened 1,844 branches throughout Myanmar, said U Soe Thein, adding that they have allowed 25 non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) to open up. He said 10 private banks are currently offering mobile banking services since CBM gave the green light. He said there is one NBFI partnering and three mobile network operators providing mobile financial services and they are scrutinizing another mobile operator for permitting mobile-enabled financial services.

U Myint Than (Director-General, General Administration Department)

U Myint Than first highlighted the fact that the General Administration Department (GAD) was moved from the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Ministry of the Office of the Union Government during the third year of the civilian government administration. He said they continue to uphold the same four objectives the have always held to support the socioeconomic development of the people.

He said they have issued 127 religious grants, 53 Buddhist orientation hall grants, 42 grazing land grants, 123 grants for land above 5 acres, 15,299 grants for land under 5 acres, and 500 village grants throughout the entire country in the third year of governance.

U Myint Than said they have arrested 5,202 illegal alcohol dealers in the third year and have opened a total of 754 cases to 575 people who have violated the alcohol distribution license.

He said the GAD used to levy tax on alcohol under a single standard value but since being transferred to the respective region and state governments, the rates have been decided by the state and regional Hluttaws that best reflect the economic situation of their area.

The Director-General said they had estimated levying K18,101.646 million for the four alcohol taxes in April-September 2018 but exceeded the mark at 112.68 per cent after having levied K20,396.741 million instead.

He said the Union Government has allotted K284.50 million to implement 98 rural development projects in 2018-2019 FY.

He said 211 domestic organizations and 28 international organizations had registered in the incumbent government's third year in office. He added that they have provided 1,411,456 services throughout Myanmar in the this third year.

He said a workshop was held in Nay Pyi Taw consisting of current and former GAD staff from 26 to 28 February 2019 and the results from that workshop were combined with recommendations from ministry officials and the advisory team to produce the GAD's vision and mission statements.

Afterwards, the officials replied to questions from the media. —Myo Tun, Nandar Han

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

The Inauguration Ceremony of the China – Myanmar Economic Cooperation and Development Promotion Association and 2019 China–Myanmar Economic Corridor First Investment Summit held

Union Minister U Thaung Tun and PRC Former Ambassador Mr. Guan Mu open the inauguration ceremony of the China-Myanmar Economic Cooperation and Development Promotion Association and 2019 China - Myanmar Economic Corridor First Investment Summit in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE inauguration ceremony of the China – Myanmar Economic Cooperation and Development Promotion Association and 2019 China – Myanmar Economic Corridor First Investment Summit was held at the Sedona Hotel in Yangon today.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by U Thaung Tun, Union Minister for the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations and Chairman of the Myanmar Investment Commission, U Tin Maung Tun, Chairman of the Yangon Region Hluttaw, U Myint Thaung, Minister of Planning and Finance of Yangon Region Government, Mr. Guan Mu, Former Ambassador of the People Republic of China to Myanmar, representatives of the China – Myanmar Economic Cooperation and Development Promotion Association, senior government officials, and foreign and local investors.

Speakers at the opening session expressed their conviction that the close ties of friendship between China- Myanmar would be further strengthen through development of trade and investment opportunities.—MNA ■

Tatmadaw to take proper legal action against village in-charge linked to AA

TATMADAW columns are cooperating with the Myanmar Police Force, departmental officials and local residents to gather information on members of the AA group who are instigating fighting and hiding among the villages in Rakhine State.

During the course of these security operations, the police received information that AA members were masquerading as villagers of Shwe Pyi Thar village in Kyauktaw Township. Police and Tatmadaw columns conducted a surprise investigation on 16 May.

They noticed U Thein Soe Aung, who is in charge of the village, taking photos of the security forces from his home. Upon inspecting his phone, they discovered photographic evidence of his connection with the AA. They also discovered sacks of dried rice, cartons of instant noodles, rehydration salt packets and other foodstuff packaged in his home.

The Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services has released news that they are working in line with the proper rules and regulations to take legal action against U Thein Soe Aung for his connection to the AA group.—MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

The photo found in the mobile phone shows U Thein Soe Aung, who is in charge of the Shwe Pyi Thar Village, Kyauktaw Township in AA uniform. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF**

Anti-Corruption Commission discusses whistle-blower protection in workshop

A workshop on drafting a whistle-blower protection law was held at Grand Amara Hotel yesterday morning.

Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman U Aung Kyi first delivered a speech. He said Myanmar signed the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in December 2012 and was brought into effect starting from January 2013.

The ACC Chairman read Article 33 of the UNCAC which says: "Protection of reporting persons—Each State Party shall consider incorporating into its domestic legal system appropriate measures to provide protection against any unjustified treatment for any person who reports in good faith and on reasonable grounds to the competent authorities any facts concerning offences established in accordance with this Convention."

Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman U Aung Kyi delivers the speech at the workshop on drafting a whistle-blower protection law. **PHOTO: MNA**

He said objective 1/4 of the Strategic Plan for Anti-Corruption (2018-2021) includes plans to establish legal protection mechanisms for whistle-blowers and the deadline is slated as 2019-2020.

U Aung Kyi said this law is not just for combating against corruption. He said it will be equally important in government departments and public-oriented organizations when people expose money laundering, drug and human trafficking, counterfeiting food and drugs, technological fraudulence, sexual assault, blackmail and nepotism.

He said we must bravely expose cases of corruption to establish a good administration system and institutions and we must do them now to expect good results in the next decade. He urged the workshop attendees to put in their best efforts to revitalize the integrity of the civil servant workforce.

Next, Ms. Marie Pegie Cauchois from the UNODC Country Office explained that whistle-blower protection supports initial investigations and taking action. She said it protects whistle-blowers from revenge and promotes the emergence of such a law in line with Article 33 of UNCAC. She said people will only come out to expose crime if protection for them exists and welcomed the workshop as a first step towards that cause, adding that they provide whatever aid necessary.

The workshop then commenced. Attending the workshop were the Chairman, secretary and members of the Anti-Corruption Commission, external legal experts, officials from UNODC, UNDP and Union Ministries, journalists and invited persons.—MNA ■ *(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)*

Broadcasting Governing Body holds coordination meeting 3/2019

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun delivers the speech at the Broadcasting Governing Body (BGB) coordination meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

BROADCASTING Governing Body (BGB) coordination meeting 3/2019 was held at Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the event, Deputy Minister for Information and BGB Chairman U Aung Hla Tun said he acknowledged a time of struggle to stand economically for all media businesses including print and electronic media.

The deputy minister also expressed a belief that if the democracy is mature, the role of private media will be more important. He then called for openly discussions to tackle the difficulties in cooperation.

Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung also explained about the development matter of television and broadcasting enterprises. Afterwards, officials from mechanical division and admin division of MRTV, FM Bagan, Padamyar FM, Cherry FM, Shwe FM, Forever Group Co., Ltd, Shwe Than Lwin Media Co. Ltd., Family Entertainment Group, Mizzima Media Company Limited, DVB Multimedia Group Company Limited, Fortune Broadcasting Company Limited, KMA Tele Media Holdings Company Limited and My Multimedia Group Company Limited reported on their mechanical and administrative problems. Then matters were coordinated by the Deputy Minister.—MNA ■ *Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun*

China-Myanmar Economic Corridor office opens in Nay Pyi Taw

Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo, Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang, CECCM Chairman Mr. Liu Ying and Secretary-General of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) U Aung Kyi Soe open the branch office of CECCM in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE opening ceremony of the branch office of China-Myanmar Economic Corridor of the China Enterprises Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar (CECCM) was held at Grand Aster Villa Office Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. The office was opened by Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo, Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang, CECCM Chairman Mr. Liu Ying and Secretary-General of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) U Aung Kyi Soe.

Speaking at the event, Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo said that over 99 per cent of businesses in Myanmar are Micro- Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) those are playing an important role for Myanmar's development.

The Deputy Minister then said Chinese businesspersons to cooperate in the developments of MSMEs related to Myanmar's modern manufacturing, Green Industry and industrial agriculture. There are still financial, technical and market-related difficulties to develop Myanmar's MSMEs, the Deputy Minister said, appealing assistance from Chinese banks to get development and good opportunities for Myanmar's MSMEs.

Chinese Ambassador Mr. Hong Liang also said the branch office in Nay Pyi Taw promotes communication and cooperation between the CECCM and relevant Myanmar government departments. It will also be much beneficial to promote the Belt and Road Initiative and China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, the Ambassador added.

The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor Office will help businesspersons of the two countries run their business transparently and smoothly, creating the two nations' advantages and also help create job opportunities for the people. The matters related to MSDP's Project Bank and ensuring sufficient electricity, upgrading roads and bridges, improving communications, construction, agriculture, transport and technology, and research will also be tackled from the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor.—MNA ■ *(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)*

Motion on PPP for crop-substitute programmes for poppy farmers approved

FROM PAGE-2

Private-public partnership on crop-substitute programmes for poppy farmers

As a final agenda of the day a motion tabled by Daw Khin Hnin Thit of Padaung constituency urging the government to invite public businesses to conduct crop-substitute projects for poppy farmers systematically in cooperation with the government in areas of Myanmar where opium growing was the highest was discussed by Hluttaw representatives.

U Sai Tun Aye of Mongshu constituency, Dr. Daw Pyone of Indaw constituency, Dr. Daw Khin Sithu of Loikaw constituency, U Aung Kyaw Oo of Mongton constituency, Dr. Daw Soe Nwe Aye of TadaU constituency, U Saw Victor Clyde of Thandaungyi constituency, Daw Nan Moe of Mantung constituency, U Paul Hsai of Dimawhso constituency, U Thant Zin Tun of Dekhinathiri constituency and U Pho Maung of Pekhon constituency discussed the motion.

Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Than Htut also discussed in support of the motion.

As the Hluttaw representative who had tabled the motion want to have it approved Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker obtained the decision of the Hluttaw to approve it and made an announcement accordingly.

The eighth-day meeting of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw's 12th regular session was scheduled to be held on 21 May.—Aye Aye Thant (MNA) ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Amyotha Hluttaw approves motion on preventing oil pollution

FROM PAGE-2

Ministry of Electricity and Energy was also making arrangement to prevent oil tankers, oil and gas works from effecting the country's natural resources and environment. And if there were any mishaps, cooperation with relevant organizations and entities were established to minimize the damage and to obtain compensation for damages caused.

Ministry for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation will also conduct environmental impact assessments according to environmental conservation law and rules.

As the motion was tabled to protect damage to natural environment and eco-system, protect the socio-economy of the ethnic nationals and the people, the motion should be approved but note must be taken that the work processes was wide in scope and had to be worked out by relevant government entities, ministerial departments, Hluttaw representatives, local and international experts and would require a lot of time explained the Deputy Minister.

Next, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than obtained the decision of the Hluttaw and announced the motion being approved by the Hluttaw.

The eighth-day meeting of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw's 12th regular session will be held on 21 May it is learnt. — Aung Ye Thwin (MNA) ■ *(Translated by Zaw Min)*

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Affordable housing units for low-income buyers to be sold by instalment

Low-cost apartment buildings in Dagon Seikkan Township. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

THE low-cost and affordable housing estates in Dagon Seikkan and Hlinethaya townships will be sold to people in the low-income group under a long-term instalment plan, said an official from the Urban and Housing Development Department under the Ministry of Construction.

The real estate projects are being implemented with the help of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) program. Long-term home loans will be offered under the program, he added.

People wanting to purchase flats in the housing projects are required to open a savings account with the Construction, Housing, and Infrastructure Development Bank (CHID).

Some of the clients of the bank have deposited enough money to purchase the apartments, and they can apply for purchasing flats in Phases 1 and 2 of the Yuzana housing estate project and the Kanaung housing estate project in Dagon Seikkan Township, and Phases 2 and 3 of the Shwe Lin Ban housing estate project, and the Htihlaingshin housing estate project in Hlinethaya Township. The CHID Bank announced the list of applicants who can purchase the apartments on 10 May at its head office, located on Bogyoke Aung San Road, Botahtaung Township, Yangon. A total of 3,042 people have been approved for purchasing low-cost and affordable flats in Dagon Seikkan and Hlinethaya townships.

Those who have been approved to purchase flats are required to register themselves between 13 and 17 May. The Urban and Housing Development Department will announce the names of those who will draw lots on 20 May.

The Yangon Region government has already sold over 860 apartments at low-cost and affordable housing projects through the system of drawing lots. Of the total apartment units at the projects, 35 per cent are sold to the public, 25 per cent to civil servants and company staff, and 15 per cent to retired staff, according to the housing projects supervision committee.—GNLM ■ *(Translated by Hay Mar)*

Construction of employee housing estate completed in Mandalay

THE construction of an employee housing estate with 240 apartments, covered by the Aung Myay Mandalar housing project, and located near Me-Kin Gone Village, Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Region has been completed, according to U Thet Naing, Director, Region Urban and Housing Development Department.

The government will allot homes to employees at the housing estate in June, he said. The Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Association (Mandalay) constructed the employee housing estate on a plot of land measuring 33.22 acres with K3,600 million from the Union Government's budget. The housing estate has a total of 12 five-storey apartments with four 650 square-foot-wide flats on each floor. Construction of the estate began in November, 2017.

"The construction of the apartment buildings and upgrading of the roads is now 100 per cent complete. We have already made arrangements for the supply of electricity. We only need to have the meter boxes installed in all flats. The meter boxes will be received in June. So, we would say the rooms are ready for employees. We are also constructing playgrounds, parks, and car parking areas," said U Thet Naing.

The government has already provided accommodation to civil servants who are still in service since June, 2018 at 260 apartments covered by the Aung Myay Mandalar housing project, which were funded by K10 billion from the Regional Government's budget.

"Meanwhile, the government committee is selecting public service personnel for the 240 units of the employee housing quarters at the Aung Myay Mandalar real estate, in accordance with the regional government's policy," said U Thet Naing.

The Mandalay Region Urban and Housing Development Department will construct a total of 530 flats for government employees in 14 townships by September, 2019, with K8,835 million from the regional government's capital budget for the 2018-2019 fiscal year.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing house) ■

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Myanmar's maritime trade slips slightly to $14.3 bln

MYANMAR'S maritime trade topped US$14.3 billion between 1 October and 3 May, registering a slight decline of over $290 million, or two per cent, from the corresponding period in the previous financial year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

While exports were registered at $5.39 billion, imports were valued at over $8.94 billion. During the same period in the 2017-2018 fiscal, Myanmar's maritime trade was pegged at $14.63 billion, with exports of $5.24 billion and imports worth $9.39 billion.

In the week from 27 April to 3 May, the country shipped goods worth nearly $140 million to trade partners by sea, and imported goods worth over $290 million, with total trade pegged at $429 million.

Roughly 80 per cent of the country's total trade is conducted through the maritime routes. Myanmar imports four major groups of products—capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer products, and CMP raw materials. The country predominately exports seven groups of commodities, namely, agro, animal, fisheries, and forest products, minerals, manufactured goods, and other miscellaneous products.

During the six-month mini-budget period (April-September, 2018), the country shipped goods worth $14.231 billion via sea.

According to the Commerce Ministry, Myanmar's maritime trade stood at $25.019 billion in the 2017-2018FY, $21.432 billion in the 2016-2017FY, $20.56 billion in the 2015-2016FY, $22.369 billion in the 2014-2015FY, $20.375 billion in the 2013-2014FY, and $14.6 billion in the 2012-2013FY.—Shwe Khine ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

Exports of animal products quadruple in current FY

MYANMAR earned US$283 million from the export of animal products from 1 October to 3 May, a significant increase of over $200 million from the corresponding period of the 2017-2018 fiscal year, according to the weekly trade report of the Ministry of Commerce.

Over the last seven months, public sector exports of animal products were registered at just $0.238 million, while private sector exports were valued at $283.24 million.

Myanmar exports animal products primarily to neighboring countries—China, India, and Thailand.

During the 2018 mini-budget period (April-September), the exports of animal products totalled $178 million, with the public sector accounting for $2.8 million, and the private sector $175 million.

According to data from the Ministry, Myanmar exported animal products worth $60 million in the 2017-2018FY, $10 million in the 2016-2017FY, $8 million in the 2015-2016FY, $8.3 million in the 2014-2015FY, $15 million in the 2013-2014FY, $32 million in the 2012-2013FY, and $90 million in the 2011-2012FY.—Swe Nyein ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

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18 MAY 2019
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Electricity efficiency is a must for the development of the country

THE recent rains in some parts of Myanmar have brought relief from the intense summer heat. But, the impact of El Niño is expected to be felt till August, according to weather reports. This means we are not out of the woods yet. With monsoons expected to arrive late, the summer heat is expected to increase to dangerous levels, and at such a time, insufficient power supply can serve as another blow to the people.

An 'energy efficiency drive' is sine qua non for us as we march towards the goal of nationwide electrification by 2030. Currently, only 44 per cent of Myanmar households have access to a power grid.

With the mercury soaring, people are increasingly turning to air conditioners and electric fans for relief. Meanwhile, the production of electricity has declined in the summer, as the level of water required to generate hydropower has also reduced. The situation has resulted in the rotational supply of power to the people.

Currently, the country is producing power through 29 hydropower stations, 14 gas-fired and energy-from-waste plants, and one coal-fired power plant.

This time of the year, electricity consumption in the country is at its peak.

Myanmar utilized a maximum of 2,350 MW of power in 2015, 2,670MW in 2016, and 2,900MW in 2017. Power consumption surged by 400 MW in 2018, an increase of 12 per cent.

It is reasonable that higher living standards have led to the increase in power consumption nationwide.

A rise in electricity consumption of up to 400 MW within one year indicates the need for bigger and better infrastructure, along with funding for long-term growth and sustainability. Hydropower plants, which require less time to be set up, have proven to be able to produce more electricity than their designs projected.

However, it is the duty of citizens to turn off electric appliances when they don't use them, as part of observing energy efficiency.

An 'energy efficiency drive' is sine qua non for us as we march towards the goal of nationwide electrification by 2030. Currently, only 44 per cent of Myanmar households have access to a power grid.

The Ministry of Electricity and Energy is supplying power to the people at a loss of over K400 billion. The government is trying to expand hydropower plants as they have proven to be more profitable, as they have a lower cost of production and can help manage our losses by producing more at a lower cost.

To develop our power sector, we will have to make persistent efforts for decades. Our people can lend a helping hand by participating in the energy efficiency drive.

Full moon day of Kasone: Buddha Day

By Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja, Sithu

Buddhist devotees water the Bo Tree at Uppatasanti Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw to mark Buddha Day which falls on the Full Moon Day of Kasone. **PHOTO KYAW YE SWE**

KASONE, the second month in the 12 month Lunar Calendar of Myanmar is the peak of Myanmar Summer.

Geographically the Sun has moved from the Tropic of Capricon to the Tropic of Cancer which is directly on Myanmar. Therefore direct sun rays hit Myanmar causing warmest season. Myanmar sayings go တန်ခူးရေကုန်၊ ကဆုန်ရေခန်း [water diminishes in Tagu. It dries up in Kason];တန်ခူးကဆုန်ဆွေ့ဆွေ့ခုန် [In Tagu and Kasone it is unbearable hot]. But to balance these sayings is another saying ကဆုန်မိုးသေးမြက်သားဖွား [Early showers make tender grass]. Early showers occasionally come down to release us from intensive sun heat.

Traditionally termed as the flower of Kasone month is champak [mioheia] saga in Myanmar which is the native flower of Mt. Popa Area. It is a limbe tree flower, medicinal and religious. Astrologically Kasone is called Vrishabba [Taurus]. Its zodiacal sign is Bull. In the night firmament the moon and Witha Kha asterism rival their lights. Philologists opine that Kasone has two words combined; Ka means water;Sone means to pour. So Kasone means to pour water. But Pali scholars say Kasone is derived from Pali word "Kachina" meaning water shortage. Both interpretations are plausible because the former implies the supply of water and the latter the demand for it.

Full moon Kasone is Buddha's Day for all Buddhists across the world. Abroad this Day is celebrated as Vesak Day or Buddha's Day it. Four major events in the life of Lord Gotama Buddha took place on the full moon day of Kasone. Firstly it was on the full moon day of the Kasone the Lord Dipinkaya Buddha gave divine prophesy to Hermit Thumeda that the Hermit would become Lord Gotama Buddha. Secondly that it was on the full moon day of Kasone in the Maha Sakarit year of 68 that baby Prince Siddhartha was born of Queen Maha Maya. Thirdly it was on the full moon day of Kasone in the Maha Sakarit year of 103 that Prince Siddhartha after six arduous years of practicing austerity as a recluse in the Uruvela forest, became enlightenment, became Gotama Buddha. Fourthly it was on the full moon day of Kasone in Maha Sakarit year of 148 that Lord Gotama Buddha entered Maha Parinibanna [Demise].

Abroad this Day is celebrated as Vesak Day or Buddha's Day it. Four major events in the life of Lord Gotama Buddha took place on the full moon day of Kasone.

Bodhi means wisdom or enlightenment or Buddhahood. Any Tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment is Bodhi Tree. Bamboo Tree, Gantgaw Tree, Kyaung Shar Tree, Yey Tha Phan Tree under the shade of which previous Buddhas become enlightened are also Bodhi Trees. Because Gotama Buddha became enlightened under the shade of the Banyan Tree [ဥဿဉ်ပင် Nyaungbin] we regard Bannyan Tree only is the Bodi Tree. Besides, Bannyan Tree are of different species – Nyaung Kayey, Nyaung Thahye, Nyaung Moke Seik, Nyaung Chey Htaut etc. So we Myanmar celebrate the festival of water pouring of Bodhi Nyaung bin Tree.

We may safely say the festival of water pouring at Bodhi Banyan Tree appeared in Myanmar when Buddhism arrived in the country in the Maha Sakarit year of 103 Buddhist Era. Eight sacred hair relics of Gotama Buddha granted on request of two merchant brothers Taphutha and Balika of Ramanya Desa [Today Mon State]. They also brought seeds on saplings of Maha Bodha Tree [Lin Lun Banyan Tree]. Nyaungbin under which Gotama Buddha became enlightenment. Since then Bodhi Nyaungbin has spread across the country due to Buddhist monks, Buddhist missions and Buddhist kings and Buddhist public efforts of planting sacred Bodhi Banyan Trees. First from Budha Gaya, later when Buddhism was taken to Lankadipa by Bhikku Mahenda and Bhikkuni Shanga Mitta who planted the south inching branch of Bodhi Banyan Tree of the original at Bodha Gaya, and well known as Dekhina Thakha tree [Bodhi Tree of the south].

At every major pagoda` and monastic compound is Bodhi Nyaungbin where water pouring festival is held on full moon Kasone. In Mandalay there is well known Bodhikone founded by King Mindon in the Tuesday direction of his palace he was Tuesday born. Also in old capital city Amarapura there are three well known Bodhi Nyaungbin trees where on full moon day of Kasone water pouring festivals are held without fail. Shwekyetyet, Shwekyetkya Pagodas.

Bodhi tree planting in Myanmar continue in modern time. A hill range near Monywa town, upper Myanmar was turned into a man-made arboreal by planting one thousand Bodhi Nyaung Trees. In the precinct of Shwedagon Pagoda are the Bodhi trees - the one at the north west corner was planted on the day of the regaining of Myanmar independence January 1948. Next to it on the right is the Bodhi Tree planted in 1905. Another Bodhi Tree at the south east corner [Tuesday direction] was planted by head monk Meidet Sayasaw. Here takes place annual water pouring event on full moon day of Kasone.

In the precinct of Shwedagon Pagoda are the Bodhi trees - the one at the north west corner was planted on the day of the regaining of Myanmar independence January 1948.

One court poet and minister of Konbaung Period of Myanmar history Letwethondara composed a complete set of three stanzas ratu describing the festival of water pouring festival in Meza hill near Katha town. He was exiled there by king Hsinbyu Shin of Konbaung dynasty. He eye-witnessed the people of Meza people happily celebrating water pouring festival at Bodhi Nyaungbin.

ပွဲခါ ညောင်ရေ
သွန်းမြဲပေတည်း
ရိုသေသဒ္ဓါ၊ ထုံးစံဥာဏ်ဖြင့်
မဇရပ်သူ၊ တောင်းဆုယူသည်
At the Nyaungye Festival
Meza people all devout
Duly fall in prayer and pour
Water to the Banyan Tree

In this complete 3 stanza ratu poem, the poet expressed his heart felt for his King & his family left at the capital. When his Meza Taung Chey Retu was presents to the King, His Majesty pitied him and pardoned him and called back and reinstated to his rank and position.

In the countryside Kasone water pouring festival bears not only religious but also social significance. Young village girls carry pots of water with Eugenia sprigs on their heads. Each carrying more than one pot [up to 10 pots] on the head walk to the Bodhi Nyaungbin with steps in tune with the music played by armature village swains, who help the girls every way, never missing the chance of courting and making love overture to them.

In modern parlance Kasone water pouring festival is public awareness of the importance of green environment and activity in preservation natural environment.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Notification 68/2019

14th Waxing of Kason, 1381 ME
(17 May, 2019)

Permission to register as a political party

Democratic Party of National Politics (DNP) headquartered at No. (R/32206), at the corner of Thuriya Street and Myat Lay Yone Street, Dekkhinathiri Ward, Dekkhinathiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw, has been permitted to register as a political party in accordance with Section 9 of the Political Parties Registration Law on 17 May 2019.

The registration number of Democratic Party of National Politics (DNP) is 114.

(Hla Thein)
Chairman
Union Election Commission

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 17th May, 2019)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 18th May, 2019: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Taninthayi Region and Mon State, fairly widespread in Kachin and Chin States, scattered in Upper Sagaing Region, Southern Shan, Rakhine and Kayin States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4 - 6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of thundery activities in Southern Myanmar areas.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18th May, 2019: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18th May, 2019: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18th May, 2019: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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State Counsellor inaugurates 145 MW gas…

FROM PAGE-3

From the power station the State Counsellor went to Tamoteshinpin Shwegu Pagoda built by King Anawrahta at Nyaungpin Thauk Village, Kyaukse Town to pay homage to the pagoda with flower, water, and oil lamps and donated cash.

After paying homage to the pagoda, the State Counsellor left Kyaukse by helicopters and arrived at Myogyi Dam and was welcomed by Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr. Aung Thu and officials.

The State Counsellor and party inspected storage of water in the Dam and greenery works conducted in the surrounding areas. While the inspection was conducted onboard a motor launch in the Dam, the Union Minister and officials explained about water storage, distribution of irrigation water and the status of the Dam.

The State Counsellor and party went on to inspect the Myogyi hydropower station. Following the inspection of Myogyi Dam and power station the State Counsellor and party inspected the natural environmental situation of Ywangan (Pindaya), Tigit, Pinlaung and Paunglaung regions by helicopters and left for Nay Pyi Taw arriving there in the evening. — MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Statue honoring ex-UN chief unveiled at Buddha's birthplace

LUMBINI, (Nepal) — A stone statue of U Thant, a former secretary general of the United Nations, was unveiled in Lumbini on Friday as a public reminder of his contributions to developing the Buddha's birthplace.

Japanese businessman Tokushin Kasai, a devout Buddhist who funded construction of the statue and a garden it is installed in, said at an unveiling ceremony in the morning that the statue would remind generations to come of U Thant's role in Lumbini's development.

Kasai runs the Hotel Kasai in Lumbini, one of the major destinations for Buddhist tourists.

Burmese-born U Thant headed the United Nations from 1961 to 1971, being the first non-European to hold the position.

He visited Lumbini in 1967 only to be shocked by its state of neglect. He is credited with kick-starting efforts to develop the holy site as a global center for Buddhism.

Thant Myint-U (L) and Tokushin Kasai pose for a photo in front of a stone statue of U Thant in Lumbini, Nepal on 17 May, 2019.
PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

His visit was followed, three years later, by the formation of the UN-sponsored International Committee for the Development of Lumbini. It entrusted Japanese architect Kenzo Tange with forming a master plan, adopted in 1978, for developing a central 8-square-kilometer area into what is now known as the Sacred Garden.

The master plan served as the blueprint to develop the place following Buddhist symbolism.

"What Lumbini is today all started with the compassionate and committed vision of U Thant," said Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya, vice chancellor of Lumbini Buddhist University. However, Thant Myint-U, grandson of U Thant and chairman of Yangon Heritage Trust, was modest about his grandfather's contribution.

"I suppose that Lumbini being such an important site, sacred site, the birthplace of Buddha, it was going to recognized in some way anyway," he said after jointly unveiling the statue with Kasai.

"I am very happy to see that my grandfather U Thant's vision is coming to fruition," he added. — Kyodo News ■

MFF says bank interest rates hindering development of aquatic sector, seeks review

By Aye Yamone

THE Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF) will request a review of bank interest rates as they are hindering the development of the aquatic sector, at a regular meeting between Vice President U Myint Swe and entrepreneurs, held monthly at the office of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

"When SMEs request a loan amounting to K100 million from a bank, the bank provides only K80 million. Then, the bank charges annual interest of 19 per cent on the principal amount of K80 million. Additionally, entrepreneurs have to pay 6 per cent on the remaining K20 million of the loan, without receiving that amount. According to the Central Bank Law, banks are not allowed to charge more than 16 per cent interest without collateral. Now, entrepreneurs have to pay 19 per cent interest on K80 million and 6 per cent interest on K20 million. This makes the entrepreneurs suffer a great deal," said Daw Toe Nanda Tin, the vice chairperson of the MFF. Paying such a high interest is a barrier impeding the development of the SME sector, according to the MFF. Therefore, the MFF said, it is important for banks not to charge a higher interest rate than the one prescribed by the government for SME entrepreneurs. "SME businesses are not very strong businesses. Now, the banks are demanding over 20 per cent interest, and they are only providing K80 million when entrepreneurs request a loan of K100 million. This does not make sense. Such an avaricious act is posing a barrier to the development of the aquatic sector," Daw Toe Nanda Tin added.

On 8 November, 2018, the Central Bank of Myanmar granted permission to foreign bank branches to provide banking services. The foreign bank branches are allowed to provide services in accordance with the Central Bank Law. Therefore, aquatic entrepreneurs had been expecting better banking services with low interest from foreign banks.

"Currently, aquatic entrepreneurs have sought loans from outside at a higher interest rate to keep their businesses operational. And they naturally expect the government to provide low interest loans," said Daw Toe Nanda Tin. "The Ministry has budget constraints when it comes to giving us loans. So, it is impossible to expect the ministry to help us. So, we want the ministry to add only one clause to the existing rules and regulations, permitting entrepreneurs to mortgage, sell, or sublet fish breeding ponds so that funds can be raised to keep the business operational. If the ministry can help us in this way, it will be dramatically beneficial to the development of the aquatic sector," said Dr. Myint Sein, a fish farm owner. ■ *(Translated by Hay Mar)*

YRTA drawing up plans to regulate unregistered city taxis

By Nyein Nyein

THE Yangon Region Transport Authority is working on solutions for regulating unregistered taxis, numbering over 5,000, and will soon submit its ideas to the regional government, said U Hla Aung, joint secretary, YRTA.

The transport authority had asked all taxis to register as city taxis by 31 December, 2017, he said. The deadline was later extended to 31 January, 2018. Even though the deadline was extended, more than 5,000 taxis are yet to be registered due to various reasons, he added. To regulate those unregistered taxis and get them to register, the YRTA will present suitable solutions to the regional government, he said.

City taxi registration was started in 2002 in Yangon to provide better services to taxi users and to supervise drivers. The YRTA, which was formed on 8 July, 2016, by the regional government is looking after registration of city taxis.

"The transport authority has frequently announced deadlines for city taxi registration and their extension through government-owned newspapers. After the end of extension period, the authority will take action against taxis which are not registered as city taxis," the YRTA had said in a recent announcement.

"The YRTA will act against unregistered taxis according to the existing laws. Of more than 66,000 taxis, over 5,000 taxis are estimated to have remained unregistered. It is hard to say whether the unregistered taxis are operating in Yangon or not. Some may be running outside Yangon Region, while some cars of old models may have been sold under the substitution scheme for old model cars. Therefore, it is difficult to predit at an exact number for unregistered taxis in Yangon. Hence, the YRTA is now working out plans for appropriate management of those taxis and will submit them to the government," said U Hla Aung. At present, there are more than 66,000 registered taxis in Yangon Region. ■ *(Translated by the Khaing Thanda Lwin)*

Finland RCS continues documenting villages in Loikaw

Finland Red Cross Society team pose for a photo with villagers in Loikaw Township yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Finland Red Cross Society team continued filming documentary of activities of villagers in Loikaw Township under the Disaster Resilience Project yesterday.

They continued their third day of filming in Lwel Htwae village, Nwar La Way village-tract where they filmed the two donated 5000-gallon tanks, 20 water tokens, a bathroom for children with disabilities, a two-chamber toilet for schools, a 500-litre water tower equipped with sink, how villagers used insecticide treated mosquito nets, businesses ran by working capital loans, the daily life of a local family, and interviewed locals on their challenges.

The crew will continue their fourth day of filming in Kanni village, Law Pita village-tract. —Loikaw Tar ■ *(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)*

260MW wind power projects likely to start by 2020-end

WIND power projects in Minhla, Mindon, and Chauk townships of Magway Region are likely to become operational by the end of 2020, the Magway regional government has said. The projects are expected to produce over 260MW of power, according to expert estimates.

"Feasibility studies are being conducted to install ground rods, construct transmission towers, and compensate farmers for loss of land. At present, the ownership of the sites for the projects remains with the regional government, and the government will lease out the land. As feasibility studies for wind power generation have been carried out over a year and a half, the project will reap fruitful results," said Magway Region Chief Minister Dr. Aung Moe Nyo at a press conference held on 14 May. The Magway Region government and Singapore-based Infra Capital Myanmar-ReEx Company signed an MoU on 4 April, 2017 to implement the wind power projects. An analysis of wind speed, environmental impact, and compensation for land has been carried out.

"The MoU signed with the regional government will be presented to the Union Government. After the two parties reach a power purchase agreement for the rate per unit, the projects will become operational. The projects are slated to commence around the the end of 2020 and early 2021," said U Myint Zaw, the Magway Region Minister for Environmental Conservation, Natural Resources Affairs, Electricity, and Energy. The wind turbines installed under the projects will be 225 meters (750 feet) high. Feasibility studies on the projects have been conducted by experts from accredited companies of the international environmental groups. —*Zeyatu (Magway)* ■ *Translated by Ei Myat Mon)*

PHOTO: LU AUNG (KATHA)

23.14 tons of 'ownerless' illegal timber seized in Katha Tsp

The authorities seized 23.14 tons of 'ownerless' illegally harvested teak logs and lumber on the evening of 16 May near the Ayeyarwady River in Laybothar village, Katha Township, Sagaing Region.

Acting on a tip, teams led by U Myint Naing Oo, the assistant director of Katha District Forest Department, and U Tun Tun Naing, the head of the Township Forest Department, searched the area near the river and found 23.14 tons of illegal timber, including 46 teak pillars weighing 6.302 tons, 82 teak logs weighing 12.86 tons, 163 pieces of lumber weighing 3.1 tons, 20 pieces of timber of varying sizes, weighing 0.4 tons, and 30 pieces of hardwood weighing 0.45 tons. The seized timber is estimated to be worth more than K3.8 million.

The Township Police Station has filed a case under the Forestry Law. — Lu Aung (Katha)

(Translated by La Wonn)

Abe hopes Japan-China ties will improve with Xi's visit in June

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Friday he hopes Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Japan in late June for a Group of 20 summit will help accelerate recent improvements in bilateral relations.

"With President Xi's visit, I want to further develop bilateral ties that have returned to a normal track and jointly create a new era for Japan and China," Abe said when meeting China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi at the prime minister's office.

Yang, a member of the Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee, responded by saying he sees "new momentum" for bilateral relations.

"I'm confident that our ties are not only back on a normal track but will continue to develop in a healthy and stable manner," he said. Japan and China have for years been mired in a territorial row in the East China Sea. But their ties have been improving recently with mutual visits by senior government officials and business leaders. Abe and Yang agreed to step up preparations for what will be Xi's first visit as president to Japan on the occasion of the G-20 summit in Osaka on 28 and 29 June, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said. During a separate meeting earlier in the day, Foreign Minister Taro Kono expressed hope of demonstrating that the bilateral relationship has been "markedly improving" at the G-20 gathering. Yang said China hopes the summit in Japan will be successful. The leaders of the G-20 major economies will discuss global issues at a time when the United States and China are involved in an escalating trade conflict, casting a shadow over prospects for the world economy. Abe plans to meet with both Xi and US President Donald Trump on the G-20 fringes.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (R) shakes hands with China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi at his office in Tokyo on 17 May 2019. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Yang also met with Shotaro Yachi, Japan's national security adviser and a close aide to Abe, on Thursday and Friday in the central Japan resort town of Karuizawa. Yang told Abe that he and Yachi had "in-depth and wide-ranging" talks.

The Japanese government said Yang and Yachi agreed on the importance of realizing peace and cooperation in the East China Sea, and that they also discussed the situation in North Korea and the US-China trade battle.— Kyodo News ■

Toll in deadly Shanghai building collapse rises to 10

SHANGHAI (China) — The death toll in the collapse of a Shanghai commercial building that was undergoing renovation rose to 10 overnight after three more victims were added to the grim tally, the city government said Friday.

About half of the low-rise building collapsed around midday on Thursday, crushing construction workers under piles of toppled concrete pillars and shattered wooden beams.

Authorities said 25 people had been found in the rubble, 10 of whom had succumbed to their injuries.

The latest announcement on a city government social media account did not make clear whether any others were still missing, but added that search and rescue work was "basically finished."

Medical personnel were making "all-out efforts" to treat the injured, the announcement said.

Rescue personnel pulled bloodied and dust-coated workers out from the rubble throughout Thursday afternoon and evening, according to AFP journalists at the scene.

The building had previously been used as a dealership for Mercedes-Benz cars, the national emergency ministry has said.

But the property had changed hands and was being redeveloped as a mixed-use arts and innovation site, according to Chinese media reports.

China is no stranger to building collapses and deadly construction accidents, which are typically blamed on the country's rapid growth leading to corner-cutting by builders and the widespread flouting of safety rules.

At least 20 people were killed in 2016 when a series of crudely-constructed multi-storey buildings packed with migrant workers collapsed in the eastern city of Wenzhou.—AFP ■

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Huawei becomes flashpoint in China-US economic showdown

WASHINGTON (United States) — The US crackdown on Huawei has made the Chinese telecommunications giant the flashpoint in a monumental economic and technological showdown between the two superpowers that is testing allies of both.

One day after the US moved to block Huawei from the US market and banned the export of US technology and materials to the company, China warned Washington Thursday against further harming trade ties.

At the same time, Beijing formally arrested two Canadians who have been detained for months on national security grounds, a move widely seen as retaliation for Ottawa's arrest of a Huawei executive last year at Washington's behest.

In Britain, a heated debate continued over the government's reported decision to allow some Huawei technology in its coming 5G mobile network, a decision that has miffed Washington and led to the 1 May firing of defense secretary Gavin Williamson.

Trade war worries

And the spat over Huawei added to the uncertainty over negotiations between Washington and Beijing to end a bruising trade war, after the two sides exchanged fire with tariff hikes in recent days.

"The US's bullying and maximum pressure tactics have caused the China-US economic and trade talks to suffer a serious setback," Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesman Gao Feng said. "China does not fear any pressure, and has the confidence, resolution and ability to respond to any risk and challenge," he added.

The tough talk has hit global financial markets and stirred concerns in other capitals of dangerous fallout.

"I think launching now a technological war or a trade war vis-a-vis any other country is not appropriate," French President Emmanuel Macron warned Thursday.

"First, it is not the best way to defend your national security — we don't need it. Second, it is not the best way to develop your own ecosystem and have a world of cooperation and decrease tensions," he said. — AFP ■

Tensions have further escalated between Beijing and Washington over the effective barring of Huawei from the US market. **PHOTO: AFP**

North Korea seeing worst drought in a century: state media

SEOUL (South Korea) — North Korea is experiencing its worst drought in over a century, official media reported Friday, days after the World Food Programme expressed "very serious concerns" about the situation in the country.

The isolated, impoverished North — which is under several sets of sanctions over its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes — has long struggled to feed itself, and suffers chronic food shortages.

It recorded its worst harvest for a decade last year, according to the United Nations, down by 500,000 tonnes as natural disasters combined with its lack of arable land and inefficient agriculture to hit production.

In the year to Wednesday the North received just 56.3 millimetres of rain or snow, the RodongSinmun newspaper reported Friday, the lowest since 1917.

Water was running out in the country's lakes and reservoirs, said the paper, the official mouthpiece of the ruling Workers' Party, adding: "The ongoing drought is causing a significant effect on the cultivation of wheat, barley, corn, potatoes and beans."

In their most recent estimates, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme (WFP) said about 10.1 million North Koreans — 40 per cent of the population — were suffering from severe food shortages, a similar figure to recent years.

Hundreds of thousands are believed to have died during a famine in the mid to late 1990s, a period known as the "Arduous March" in the North.

Pyongyang has been frequently condemned by the international community for decades of prioritising the military and its nuclear weapons programme over adequately providing for its people — an imbalance some critics say the UN's aid programme encourages.

But neighbouring areas are also seeing low rainfall this year.

The South received just 157 mm of rain in the same period this year, less than half the 364 mm in 2018, Seoul's Korea Meteorological Administration said, describing it as a "mild drought".

And according to China's National Meteorological Centre, rainfall in northeast China — which includes the provinces of Liaoning and Jilin, which border North Korea — was 27.6 mm in the year to 9 May, down 55 per cent on 2018.

"We have very serious concerns" about the situation in the North, WFP's executive director David Beasley said during a visit to the South earlier this week.—AFP ■

As seen from an airplane, much of North Korea's countryside is dry and parched as the country suffers from what state media says is the worst drought in a century. **PHOTO:AFP**

Activists petition court to halt Japan dolphin hunt

TOKYO (Japan) — Campaigners on Friday urged a court in Japan to halt so-called "drive hunting" of dolphins in the country as part of an unprecedented lawsuit that argues the practice violates Japanese law.

The plaintiffs argued before the court that the hunting method is cruel, and also that the capture of dolphins for sale to aquariums cannot be deemed a traditional cultural practice, said Kyoko Yoshida, who is representing the activists.

The lawsuit, filed in February, is the first-ever legal challenge to the hunt in the town of Taiji, in Japan's western Wakayama prefecture, the plaintiffs say.

The town was thrust into the international spotlight by the Oscar-winning documentary "The Cove", which filmed the process of "drive hunting," whereby fisherman herd dolphins into a cove by beating on boats to disorient them.

The panicked animals can get tangled in nets, suffocate and drown, and can also be injured or killed when they smash into rocks, activists say.

Other dolphins are killed when fisherman thrust a long metal rod repeatedly into the body to damage the spinal cord, a practice activists consider excessively cruel.

Many in Japan felt the film unfairly targeted the town's fishing community, but others were horrified by the disturbing footage.

The plaintiffs want the governor of Wakayama to revoke a three-year drive hunting permit in Taiji.

But defenders of the hunt say dolphins have long been a traditional source of meat and call the practice an important part of local culture.

They also point out that dolphins are not endangered.

Activists say an increasing number of dolphins are also being trapped and sold live to aquariums as demand rises from China or elsewhere.

The plaintiffs argue that the hunting method violates Japan's animal welfare act, which stipulates animals shall not be abused or killed unnecessarily and that -- when they must be killed -- their pain must be minimised.

Their suit challenges the way the hunt is carried out, rather than all kinds of dolphin hunting.

It also claims fishermen are catching more dolphins than allowed by legal caps. Contacted by AFP, a Wakayama prefectural official declined to comment.

"We've been hunting dolphins for decades, and I don't think we are doing something illegal," Yoshifumi Kai, a senior official with the fisherman's union in Taiji, told AFP. —AFP ■

The lawsuit is the first-ever legal challenge to the hunt in the town of Taiji. **PHOTO: AFP**

Invitation for Request for Quotation (RFQ)

Ministry of Transport and Communications(MoTC) now invites eligible firm to submit the proposal for **"Telecommunications Infrastructure / Network Inspection Tools "**as part of the Telecom Sector Reform Project supported by the World Bank's Loan. The deadline for submission of RFQ is June 17th, 2019 by 13:30 PM (Myanmar Standard Time).

Attention:

Director General
Posts and Telecommunications Department.
Ministry of Transport and Communications
Office Building Number 2
Nay Pyi Taw
Myanmar
Telephone: +95 67 3407225
Facsimile number: +95 67 3407216
Electronic mail address: dg.ptd@mptmail.net.mm

The detail information and requirements can be seen in the Request for Quotation (RFQ)and it can be downloaded at PTD Website:https://www.ptd.gov.mm.

Tender Committee
Ministry of Transport and Communications

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Norway pushes Venezuela mediation effort

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido denied talks were underway in Norway with President Nicolas Maduro's government. **PHOTO: AFP**

OSLO (Norway) — Norway confirmed Friday it was trying to mediate a solution to Venezuela's political crisis, after opposition leader Juan Guaido said he sent delegates to Oslo but denied talks were underway with President Nicolas Maduro's government.

The Scandinavian country said in a statement it had had "preliminary contacts with representatives of the main political actors of Venezuela".These were "part of an exploratory phase, with the aim of contributing to finding a solution to the situation in the country.""There are some envoys in Norway," Guaido told a rally of his supporters in Caracas on Thursday.Oslo was trying to bring both sides together, but talks have not taken place, he said.

The mediation bid comes after a months-long power struggle between the National Assembly leader and the socialist president, amid sometimes deadly street clashes.

"There is no negotiation whatsoever," Guaido made clear in comments to reporters. Instead, Norwegian officials were "trying to mediate" with both sides to bring them to the table.

Maduro did not confirm the meetings but later said a close adviser, Communications Minister Jorge Rodriguez, was "on a very important mission for peace in the country ... in Europe" and would return shortly. Norway's NRK radio and television network, quoting anonymous sources, earlier reported that talks had taken place over "several days" at a secret Oslo location and the delegations were due to return to Caracas on Thursday.

Several South American media outlets also reported talks were held.

Delegates in Oslo

Speaking to reporters in Caracas, Guaido confirmed reports that National Assembly vice president Stalin Gonzalez and former lawmaker Gerardo Blyde represented the opposition in Norway.

Media reports said Venezuelan Communications Minister Jorge Rodriguez and the governor of Miranda province Hector Rodriguez represented Maduro's government.Guaido insisted the purpose of any negotiations must be the "cessation of the usurpation" by Maduro with a view to establishing a transitional government ahead of "free elections".

US-backed Guaido is recognized by dozens of countries as interim president after dismissing Maduro's presidency as "illegitimate" following his re-election last year in polls widely dismissed as rigged.

Maduro has been shunned by much of the international community for presiding over the country's economic collapse, which has led to shortages of basic goods — forcing millions to flee — as well as brutally suppressing dissent.He retains the backing of major creditors Russia, China and Cuba, as well as the powerful military.—AFP ■

Iran says no talks with the US as Gulf tensions soar

WASHINGTON (United States) — Amid rising tensions in the Gulf, Iran on Thursday rejected negotiations with the US and said it was showing "maximum restraint" after Washington sent extra military forces to the region against what it claimed was an imminent threat from Tehran.

US officials meanwhile said the deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group and B-52 bombers to the Gulf, one of the world's most strategic waterways, was in reaction to photographs showing that Iran had loaded missiles onto small traditional boats.

In Tokyo for talks with Japanese officials, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called the US escalation "unacceptable."

There was "no possibility" of negotiations with the United States, he told reporters. "I don't know why President Trump is confident."

"We exercise maximum restraint," he said, despite the Trump administration's unilateral move last year to withdraw from the international agreement on Iran's nuclear program.

On Wednesday, Trump predicted Iran would "soon" want to negotiate, even as the State Department ordered the evacuation of most personnel from the US embassy and consulate in Iraq, fearing an attack by Iranian-directed Shiite militias.

"I'm sure that Iran will want to talk soon," the president tweeted.

A US Navy MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter hovers over the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, which is among forces the Pentagon has dispatched to reinforce Gulf-region security after alleged threats from Iran. **PHOTO: AFP**

Pressure to justify escalation

The White House and Pentagon remained under pressure to demonstrate the reason for the huge buildup in forces and heightened rhetoric of the past 11 days.

Two major pro-Iran armed groups in Iraq rejected allegations that they were plotting an attack on US diplomatic installations in the country.

Nasr al-Shomari, a military commander for the Iran-backed Harakat al-Nujaba, told AFP the claim was "a pretext" by Washington to create "an uproar" in Iraq.US coalition partners in Iraq had suggested earlier this week that the threat level there had not risen significantly, and members of Congress demanded to see the information behind the Trump administration's warlike rhetoric.

"I think they should tell us what the hell is going on," senior Republican Senator Lindsey Graham told CNN.—AFP ■

Former Belgian king faces fines if refuses paternity test

BRUSSELS (Belgium) — The former King Albert II of the Belgians has been ordered by a court to submit to a DNA test or face daily fines of 5,000 euros ($5,600) lawyers said Thursday.The order was the latest twist in a Belgian's sculptor pursuit to prove that she is the former monarch's daughter."I believe that the king will submit to this test, since he has the guarantee that it will remain confidential," Albert's lawyer, Guy Hiernaux, told AFP.

Another lawyer, Alain Berenboom, cautioned that the final decision remains with the monarch.The court-ordered fine was a major development in a long battle between Albert II and Delphine Boel, who launched proceedings before a top Brussels court in 2013 to have Albert's paternity recognised.Boel claims she was born in 1968 after a long affair between her mother, Sibylle de Selys Longchamps and the then crown prince Albert, married since 1959 to Paola Ruffo di Calabria.

The 81-year-old former monarch, who reigned from 1993 until 2013, has always refused to acknowledge that he could be her father.Last October, the Brussels Court of Appeal ruled in favour of Boel and ordered Albert II to submit to a genetic sample in order to finally decide the matter.Albert refused any test, which led to Thursday's order at the appeals court in Brussels.The ex-king must now report to an appointed forensic expert who, on the basis of a saliva sample, will carry out a comparative analysis with the DNA of Boel and her mother.

After a request made by Boel, the court said the result of the DNA test would remain secret until the end of the legal proceedings, which could last a year.Boel "herself suggested this option in order to calm the situation and avoid a media storm", her lawyer Marc Uyttendaele told AFP.

"I can't imagine for a second that he (Albert II) doesn't submit to the test," he said. —AFP ■

SpaceX postpones launch of its first internet network satellites

WASHINGTON (United States) — SpaceX postponed a launch of 60 satellites into low-Earth orbit that was scheduled for Thursday night, possibly until next week, citing a need for software updates.

The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launch from Cape Canaveral was to be the first of potentially thousands in its Starlink project to beam broadband internet across the planet.

"Standing down to update satellite software and triple-check everything again," said a tweet from the official SpaceX account. "Always want to do everything we can on the ground to maximize mission success, next launch opportunity in about a week."

The launch, which was initially envisaged for Wednesday, was first delayed because of high winds.

A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is set to take off from Cape Canaveral in Florida at 10:30 pm (0230 GMT Friday) **PHOTO : AFP**

Billionaire Elon Musk's firm, which is leading the private space race when it comes to rocket launches, is now looking to seize a chunk of the future space internet market.

The launch will make it an early forerunner, along with rival OneWeb, a startup, but well ahead of Amazon's Project Kuiper, the brainchild of Musk's space rival Jeff Bezos.

Musk is hoping to grab three to five per cent of the future global market, a figure he shared Wednesday during a call with reporters.

That could earn SpaceX an eye-watering $30 billion a year, more than ten times what rocket launches make, he added.

The goal is to finance the development of future rockets and spacecraft, to realize the boss's dream of colonizing Mars.

Each of the satellites weighs just 227 kilograms (500 pounds) and was built in-house in Redmond, near Seattle.

The second stage of the rocket will begin to release them one hour after launch, at an altitude of 270 miles (440 kilometers), and then the satellites will use their thrusters to take up their places in a relatively low orbit of 340 miles (550 kilometers).

That's slightly higher than the International Space Station, but well below the majority of terrestrial satellites, the highest of which sit in a geostationary orbit of 22,400 miles (36,000 kilometers).

The advantage of being so low is reduced lag times, key for broadband connectivity.

The disadvantage though is more satellites are required to cover the globe, and, being closer to the atmosphere, they fall back to earth faster, after a few years.

SpaceX will therefore have to replace them regularly — something that only became realistic from a price perspective recently with the rapid decline in the cost of manufacturing satellites and the development of mini-satellites.—AFP ■

Lone midwife delivers amid chaos of Colombia jungle river

ISLA MONO (Colombia) — Reaching out a weathered hand, Marciana Caycedo prods the smooth round bellies of the mothers-to-be, feeling for their baby's outline inside the taut skin as they line up at her home.

In time, she will deliver those babies, into a world where families are big but food, medicine and even water are in short supply.

For Caycedo is the only midwife on Isla Mono, a small island marooned in the middle of the wide brown San Juan river, on Colombia's remote and rainy Pacific coast.

"The first baby that I brought into the world was the last of my mother's, the youngest of my 23 brothers and sisters," says Caycedo in her simple wooden house, light streaming through the wall's ill-fitting boards.

Now 60, she has been through 17 pregnancies of her own. She has mice in her house. They trot along its wooden beams as she bends to examine a small 17-year-old who thinks she is eight months pregnant.

Caycedo feels the small mound of her abdomen: "It's a boy," she says.

"You're anemic," she tells the girl. "Even if you don't like it, you're going to have to eat lentils and carrots."

Midwife Marciana Caycedo examines a pregnant woman on the remote Isla Mono, an island in the middle of Colombia's San Juan river. **PHOTO: AFP**

Which poses a challenge on Isla Mono, where practically nothing edible grows on the sandy soil, apart from coconuts and potato-like taro.

Fruits and vegetables and the like are brought in from Buenaventura, two hours away in a fast skiff with a roaring outboard. But the cost of fuel to run the engines is exorbitant for most of the 370 islanders, who subsist on fishing and timber, making many basic goods inaccessible.

"I want to stop because it's very hard but... the people tell me I have to continue," said Caycedo, who earns 28 dollars a birth — even if sometimes it means braving a raging tropical storm in the dead of night.

Salty coffee against bleeding

At her side is Durley Maya Salazar, a 33-year-old obstetrician-gynecologist, who is making an unanticipated visit to the island.

Salazar works with a hospital ship, the San Raffaele, that roams the coast. Fortuitously for locals, it's here only because it ran aground on a sandbank.

Medical specialists aboard decided to see what good they could do for the neglected locals, while the ship waits for a rising tide. The gynecologist and the local midwife exchange tips. Caycedo tells her about using strong coffee and salt to stop post-partum bleeding, and local plant extracts to ease mothers' anxieties.

Salazar is relieved to discover Caycedo rejects the folk method of shocking a baby into taking its first breath: by introducing the head of a little chick into the newborn's anus.

The baby is meant to cry out and fill its lungs. "The midwives here lack gloves, masks, anti-hemorrhagic drugs," said Oscar Arley Gomez, a specialist on the hospital ship, who has designed medical guides adapted for Afro and indigenous cultures.

Surprise medical landing

The medics are neither surprised nor encouraged by what they find. Pathways between the humble dwellings — built on stilts — are paved with tree trunks providing a sort of raised walkway above the thick mud left by a tropical storm. There are stagnant cesspools, malarial mosquitoes and the ever-present odor of open latrines.Huge blue plastic drums await the next downpour, providing vital water. Isla Mono has none, and depends on the skies for its drinking water. —AFP ■

China plans int'l research center for Cambrian period biota

WUHAN — An international research center is expected to be established in Changyang County in central China's Hubei Province to better preserve fossils dating back to the Cambrian period.

The city government of Yichang, which administers Changyang, has signed an agreement with Xi'an-based Northwest University to further conservation and protection of the Qingjiang biota, where the latest discovery of immense fossils dating back to 518 million years old sheds new light on the diversity of early animal life during the Cambrian period.

The Qingjiang biota was first discovered in 2007 when a team led by professor Zhang Xingliang of the university was doing field research in Changyang.

The soft-bodied fossils in the latest discovery make the biota an ideal resource for research in evolutionary paleontology.

Plans for a fossil museum and a scientific education base are underway, the Yichang government said.—Xinhua ■

VUC F.C. to compete in Asian Futsal Club Championship 2019

Players from the Victoria University College (VUC) Futsal Club pose for a group photo at the MFF Futsal Open Cup 2019 in Yangon. **PHOTO : MFF FUTSAL**

MYANMAR'S Victoria University College (VUC) F.C. will compete in the Asian Futsal Club Championship 2019 in Thailand, according to a statement released yesterday by the Myanmar Football Federation.The VUC F.C. finished second in the MFF Myanmar Futsal League 2018, and now, they will participate in the Asian Futsal Club Championship 2019, which will be held at the Futsal Arena Indoor Stadium in Bangkok from 7 to 17 August. The drawing ceremony for deciding the team placements for the group stage will be held at the headquarters of the Asian Football Confederation on 27 June, the MFF stated.

The VUC F.C., which will represent Myanmar, has been placed in Pot 4 for the drawing ceremony.

Besides Myanmar, 15 teams are competing in the championship: host Thailand's Son Nam F.C., Iran's Mes Sungun Varzeqau F.C., Viet Nam's Thai Son, Lebanon's Bank of Beirut F.C., Iraq's Naft Al Wasat F.C., Japan's Nagoya Oceans F.C., Indonesia's Vamos F.C., Kyrgyzstan's Erem F.C., UAE's Al-Dhafra Sport and Cultural Club, China's Shenzhen Nanling Tielang F.C., Qatar's Al Rayyan F.C., Kyrgyzstan's Sors Company F.C., Uzbekistan's AGMK F.C., South Korea's Star FS Seoul F.C., and Kuweit's Kazma F.C.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Mandalay Football Academy conducts final round of student selections

THE Mandalay Football Academy is conducting the final round of selections for outstanding students for the 2019-2020 academic year from 15 to 18 May, under the supervision of the Myanmar Football Federation, according to a statement from the federation.

Youths from different states and regions, including star youth footballers who participated in the U-14 and U-12 tournaments, are taking part in the selections in Mandalay, the MFF stated.

Youths who qualify will get a chance to attend football academies in Yangon, Mandalay, and Pathein, said an official.

A board of coaches and the technical team, led by Technical Director of the MFF, Mr. Eric, the Joint General Secretary of the MFF, U Tin Myint Aung, and the Youth Development Director, U Nyi Nyi Latt, is conducting the selections.

Starting from 15 May, 20 outstanding youths from the U-14 States and Regions Tournament and 33 outstanding youths from the U-12 States and Regions Tournament have arrived for the selections. In addition, more than 150 youths from Pakokku, Mawgyun, Northern Shan State are also in Mandalay for the selections.

The selections are being held twice a day: from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., and from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

"We saw many talented youths during the selections. Last year, we chose new players just by encouraging them to show their football skills, including touching the ball, and by judging their kicking prowess. But, this year, we are choosing new youth players by watching how they perform in a test game. By watching them, we can identify their talent. Most youths participating in the selection are physically weak, but we saw about five youths with a good built during the selection," said Youth Development Director U Nyi Nyi Latt. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Youths participate in a game in the final round of selections at the Football Academy in Mandalay yesterday. **PHOTO : MFF**

Football must get to grips with mental health, says Rose

LONDON (United Kingdom) — England's Danny Rose says football has a long way to go to get to grips with mental health issues, revealing a club interested in signing him first wanted to make sure he was not "crazy".

The Tottenham left-back, 28, opened up about his struggles with depression in the build-up to the 2018 World Cup, an illness that was triggered by a significant knee injury and the death of a close family member.

Following his revelation, a club considering signing him said they wanted to meet him to check on his mental state.

He told the BBC One documentary, 'A Royal Team Talk: Tackling Mental Health': "I think there's still a long way to go in football because in the summer I was speaking to another club, and they said, 'The club would like to meet you, just to check that you're not crazy' — because of what I'd said and what I'd been through. "I was embarrassed, as whatever I've been through I like to think it doesn't affect me doing my job. I still know I'll always give 100 per cent."

"In the end they didn't put a bid in, but to think that people assume I might be crazy is embarrassing and I'm still angry about it to this day," said Rose, who has also spoken out strongly on racism. "If that opportunity came around again I'd definitely say no now."

The documentary also features Prince William, president of the Football Association, former France star Thierry Henry and England boss Gareth Southgate.

Prince William earlier this week announced a new campaign that uses football to get more men talking about mental health.

Heads Up is a partnership between the FA and Heads Together, the campaign spearheaded by William's Royal Foundation.—AFP ■

Tottenham defender Danny Rose (right) says football must get to grips with mental health issues. **PHOTO: AFP**

Kiwi Lee gets early start in pursuit of Koepka at PGA

BETHPAGE (United States) — New Zealand's unheralded Danny Lee, one shot off the overnight lead of defending champion Brooks Koepka, teed off Friday morning in hopes of an early charge at the PGA Championship.

The 28-year-old South Korean-born Kiwi, who fired a six-under par 64 on Thursday, was in the opening group off the 10th tee in cool conditions as the second round began to unfold at Bethpage Black.

Third-ranked Koepka, a two-time US Open champion who opened with a bogey-free course-record 63, was set for a late afternoon start alongside Masters winner Tiger Woods and 2018 British Open champion Francesco Molinari, who both opened on 72 to stand nine strokes adrift.

"That was one of the best rounds I've played as a professional," Koepka said.—AFP ■