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Consecration ceremony of Eternal Peace Pagoda held in Nay Pyi Taw

WITH sacred religious objects enshrined into its upper reliquary and a golden umbrella hosted atop it, the Eternal Peace pagoda was consecrated yesterday in Dekkhinathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw.

President U Win Myint, First Lady Daw Cho Cho and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended the ceremony in the compound of the pagoda near Gangaw Roundabout on Yazathingaha Road.

It was also attended by the members of the Sangha led by Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, Patron of Bhamo Monastery in Mandalay, Abhidhaja MahaRatthaguru AggaMaha

Saddamma Jotika Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa, Vice President U Myint Swe and wife Daw Khin Thet Htay, Chief Justice of the Union U Htun Htun Oo, Constitutional Tribunal Chairman U Myo Nyunt, Union Election Commission Chairman U Hla Thein and wife Daw Aye Thida, Deputy Commander in Chief of Defence Services Vice Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe, Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein and wife Dr Sein Sein Thein, Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Aye Tha Aung,

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The congregation led by President U Win Myint, First Lady Daw Cho Cho and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receive the Nine Precepts from Shwe Parami Forest Monastery Sayadaw Ashin Candadhika at the ceremony to consecrate the Eternal Peace Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

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Consecration ceremony of Eternal Peace Pagoda held in Nay Pyi Taw



President U Win Myint fixes the diamond bud atop the Eternal Peace Pagoda.
PHOTO: MNA



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sprinkles scented water over the religious object before it is fixed atop the Eternal Peace Pagoda. **PHOTO: MNA**

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the Union Ministers, the Union Attorney-General, Chairman of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, Chairman of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, the Chief of General Staff (Army, Navy and Air), Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command, Deputy Ministers, Members of Nay Pyi Taw Council and wives, donors and invited guests.

Before the ceremony, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi offered alms-food in the emerald bowl, fruits, flowers and water to the Buddha Image in the compound of pagoda.

Then, the President and First Lady, together with the State Counsellor, paid homage to the sacred objects to be enshrined in the pagoda.

Next, the President and the First Lady, the State Counsellor and the

congregation took the nine precepts from the Bhamo Sayadaw after which the members of Sangha recited the Parittas.

The President and the First Lady, the State Counsellor, the Vice President and wife, the Chief Justice of the Union, the Chairman of Constitutional Tribunal, the Chairman of Union Election Commission and wife, the Deputy Commander in Chief of Defence Services and Commander in

Chief (Army) and wife, Union Ministers and donors donated holy relics of diamond buds with jewelries, pennant-shaped vane, Buddha images and other sacred items to the members of Sangha.

Then, Shwe Parami Forest Monastery Patron Sayadaw Ashin Candadhika gave a brief speech to express his sympathetic joy in connection with the construction of the Eternal Peace Pagoda.

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President U Win Myint and First Lady Daw Cho Cho convey religious objects which will be fixed atop the Eternal Peace Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi conveys religious objects which will be fixed atop the Eternal Peace Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

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Next, State Ovadacaria and Patron of MahaVisutarama Zaygone Monastery Abhidhaja Maha Ratthaguru Dr Bhaddanta Kavisara gave a sermon extolling the virtues of the good deeds and the congregation led by the President, the First Lady, and the State Counsellor shared merits for the donations thus made.

Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, as chairman of the Eternal Peace Pagoda Construction Steering Committee, presented certificates of appreciation to Tet Lann Companies Group Chairman U Shein Win, Say Paing Company Chairman U Maung-Weik, Architect Dr Toe Toe Win, MORE C.N.C Company Chairman U Moe Oo and San Hteik Than Company's floral motifs specialist U Kyi Soe, who contributed their works in the construction of the pagoda.

At the enshrining ceremony, the President and First Lady, the State Counsellor, the Vice President and wife and the congregation carried the sacred objects in ceremonial clockwise procession including a small contingent representing devas and another contingent representing royalty. After this lay devotees conveyed these holy objects to the upper reliquary.

Then, Shwe Parami Forest Monastery



The scared religious objects being conveyed to the Eternal Peace Pagoda. PHOTO: MNA

Sayadaw, the President, the Vice President, the Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council and the donors enshrined the relic objects into the reliquary and sprinkled it with scented water.

To hoist the holy umbrella, the First Lady, the State Counsellor, the wife of Vice President and the congregation participated in conveying the jewel studded diamond bud, pennant-shaped vane, layers of golden

umbrella and other religious objects to the top of the pagoda by a ceremonial flying carriage that used ropes and pulleys.

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President U Win Myint and First Lady Daw Cho Cho offer religious objects to Sayadaw at the consecration ceremony of Eternal Peace Pagoda yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi offers religious objects to Sayadaw at the consecration ceremony of Eternal Peace Pagoda yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



Vice President U Myint Swe and wife Daw Khin Thet Htay offer religious objects to Sayadaw at the consecration ceremony of Eternal Peace Pagoda yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



Chief Justice of the Union U Htun Htun Oo offers religious objects to Sayadaw at the consecration ceremony of Eternal Peace Pagoda yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



Sayadaw Ashin Candadhika, President U Win Myint, Vice President U Myint Swe and Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman pay homage to diamond bud and sacred items atop the Eternal Peace Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**



Sayadaw Ashin Candadhika, President U Win Myint and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi view a religious object. **PHOTO: MNA**



President U Win Myint and First Lady Daw Cho Cho strike a bell at the ceremony to consecrate the Eternal Peace Pagoda. **PHOTO: MNA**



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi strikes a bell at the ceremony to consecrate the Eternal Peace Pagoda. **PHOTO: MNA**



Constitutional Tribunal Chairman U Myo Nyunt offers religious objects to a Sayadaw. **PHOTO: MNA**



Union Election Commission Chairman U Hla Thein and wife offer religious objects to a Sayadaw. **PHOTO: MNA**



Vice Senior General Soe Win and wife offer religious objects to a Sayadaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

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Shwe Parami Forest Monastery Sayadaw, the President, the Vice President and the Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council attached the golden holy umbrella to the top of the ornamented Victory Column or Tagundaing, and sprayed with scented water on it. The State Counsellor also sprayed scented water over the monument of the Victory Column. Then, the President and wife, and the State Counsellor struck the golden bell, and the Vice President and wife struck the golden gong nine times respectively before spraying the scented water on these ceremonial objects.

The Shwe Parami Forest Monastery Sayadaw, the President, the Vice President and the Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council attached the golden holy umbrella to the top of the ornamented Victory Column or Tagundaing, and sprayed with scented water on it. The State Counsellor also sprayed scented water over the monument of the Victory Column. Then, the President and wife, and the State Counsellor struck the golden bell, and the Vice President and wife struck the golden gong nine times respectively before spraying the scented water on these ceremonial objects.



Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein offers offertories to a Sayadaw. **PHOTO: MNA**



Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung offers offertories to a Sayadaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Finally, President U Win Myint and wife, and the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi scattered ceremonial gold and silver to mark the successful completion of the ceremony.—MNA (Translated by Aung Khin)

Aung San Suu Kyi scattered ceremonial gold and silver to mark the successful completion of the ceremony.—MNA (Translated by Aung Khin)

Mandalay celebrates Tazaungdine Festival

YESTERDAY was Fullmoon of Tazaungmone also known as Samannaphala Sutta Day and according to tradition townships in pagodas and congregation halls in townships of Mandalay Region were thronged with people lighting up pagodas and Buddha images with oil lamps and electric lights while Matho Robe Weaving Contests and offering of Matho Robes were conducted in some pagodas. People grouped together as shop sellers, school teachers and students, personnel of public and private offices were also sending off their Kathina Robe offerings to respective monasteries with cars, trucks and tricycles. Free food offerings to the general public were also conducted in some wards and streets of Mandalay.

Yesterday morning at 4 am a face washing ritual team led by Yaydaw Sayadaw Bhaddanta Okkahta performed the ritual daily face washing of the Mahamuni Buddha image followed by offering of golden robe, meal, water and flower. Devotees also offered meals, water, flowers and oil lamps to the Buddha image while religious groups conducted reciting of parittas.



Pilgrims pay homage to Mahamuni Buddha Image in Mandalay on the fullmoon of Tazaungmon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

At 5 am, Mahamuni Pagoda Trustee Board conducted 30th Matho Robe Weaving and Offering event that was attended by Mandalay Region Hluttaw Speaker U Aung Kyaw Oo, Region ministers, pagoda trustee board chairman U Soe Lin and wife, officials and devotees.

After the Matho Robe was weaved, Yaydaw Sayadaw Bhaddanta Okkahta led Region officials to place the robe onto the Mahamuni Buddha image.

Next, Region Hluttaw Speaker, Region ministers and pagoda trustee board chairman presented the robe weaving groups with cash awards and documents of honors.

In the same way, Matho Robe weaving and offering event and lotus flower throwing event were held in Mar Le Pagoda in the Mahamuni Pagoda compound. As the day dawns, invited monks were offered meals and offertories

while a donor family that make donation every year on this day offered foods and drinks to their friends and relatives as well as devotees paying homage to the pagoda.

In the afternoon, Mandalay Region government's 4th Kathina Robe donation and merit sharing ceremony was held at Maha Atula Waiyan Atumashi Kyaungdawgyi.

On the evening of Fullmoon of Tazaungmon, pagodas in

Mandalay region were flocked with devotees offering golden robes, flower, water, fruits while religious groups conducted recitation of Pa Htan (Patthana). Locals and visitors from afar paying homage to the pagodas were also offered with meals, soft drinks and snacks by donors at the pagodas itself as well as in the wards and streets.

— Tin Maung (Mann sub printing house)

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Irrawaddy Literary Festival successfully concludes



The last day of the 5th Irrawaddy Literary Festival takes place in Mandalay, yesterday. **PHOTO: AUNG PHYO KYAW**

THE third and last day of the 5th Irrawaddy Literary Festival took place at Hotel Mercure, Mandalay, yesterday.

The festival had paper reading sessions on arts and humanities, roundtable discussions, cartoon drawings and poem recitals as well as

over a hundred authors from home and thirty from abroad participating.

In addition, literature enthusiasts and students from Mandalay's colleges and high schools took part in question and answer sessions, making it a wonderful success, said

a panellist from Australia, Mr Christopher Lamb.

He said he participated in the discussions on education reforms and Myanmar's peace talks. He said he loved the fact that writers from all across Myanmar could gather to exchange thoughts and ideas on the

varied topics of the nation in one place.

The festival was graced by the Union Minister for Information while State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi send a video with well-wishes.

Ma Aye Pyae Sone, a monastic education student, came to listen to lectures from authors at the festival. She said the festival focused on what literature young people should read. She said young people are not

reading less, but rather they way they read has changed. They are more likely to read digitally than from a hardcover.— Min Htet Aung (Mahn Sub-printing House)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



A book shop attracts students at the Irrawaddy Literary Festival in Mandalay. **PHOTO: AUNG PHYO KYAW**

Samannaphala Day celebrated at pagodas in Yangon



Shwedagon Pagoda is crowded with pilgrims on the Fullmoon of Tazaungmon in Yangon yesterday.

PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

SAMANNAPHALA Sutta was preached by Lord Buddha on Fullmoon of Tazaungmon and the day was celebrated as Samannaphala Sutta Day. Samannaphala means the benefit of becoming a Sangha. As Lord Buddha preached the benefit of becoming a Sangha on this day, Fullmoon of Tazaungmon is also Sangha Day. In Yangon, the day's celebration starts early in the morning at Shwedagon Pagoda. Shwedagon Pagoda trustee held the 35th Shwedagon Pagoda Matho Robe offering ceremony at 4 am on the platform of the pagoda. Lotus Matho Robes weaved overnight were carried around the pagoda starting from Victory Land at Rahu Corner and then offered to Buddha images in the pagoda by the pagoda trustee members.

Afterwards meals, oil lamp, flower, water and fruits were offered to Shwedagon Pagoda and morning meals were also offered to Sayadaws and Sanghas. The pagoda trustee members and audiences then took Nine Precepts from Shwedagon Pagoda Ovadacariy Sayadaws and shared merits for the good deeds performed.

Similarly, 22nd Thirimingalar Kaba Aye Pagoda Matho Robe weaving contest was held on the evening of 10 November and the pagoda trustee members presented prizes to the

winning contestants. Yesterday morning, the Matho Robes weaved the evening before were carried around the pagoda once and celebration of Fullmoon of Tazaungmon or Samannaphala Sutta Day was continued by pagoda trustee members and religious organizations.

Botahtaung Pagoda also held its 37th Matho Robe offering ceremony and presented documents of honors to donors at 4:30 am and later in the evening paid homage to the pagoda by lighting up 27,000 oil lamps.

The day also saw donors carrying offerings by cars and tricycles to monasteries while in many wards and streets, free offering of foods and merit making market events were held. Later in the evening, the pagodas, offices, residences, streets and roads were lighted up with oil and electric lamps fully displaying Myanmar's tradition that was held on every Fullmoon of Tazaungmon.— Yi Yi Myint

(Translated by Zaw Min)

Devotees, merit makers throng to Nay Pyi Taw pagodas on Fullmoon Day

DEVOTEES and merit makers thronged to pagodas across the country yesterday to observe the fullmoon of Tazaungmon. Pagodas in Nay Pyi Taw were no exception.

In the morning 11th Tazaungdine lotus-robe offering event and a ceremony to celebrate the successful conclusion of the 120th Pathana Pali chanting was held at Uppatasanti Pagoda, Nay Pyi Taw.

At the event Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee member U Aye Myint and officials offered Tazaungdine lotus-robe, alms, fruits, flowers and water to Buddha images at the pagoda.

Next, Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee member and guests took the Nine Precepts from the Nay Pyi Taw Lewe Town Paunk Myaing Pariyatti monastery Sasana Dhaja Dhamma Cariya Sayadaw Bhaddanta Candaw Basa and listened to the parittas. They then offered donations to the Sayadaws and Sanghas and shared merits for the meritorious



Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee member U Aye Myint and officials offer Tazaungdine lotus-robe to Buddha image at Uppatasanti Pagoda, Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

deeds performed.

In the evening devotees and members from various religious organizations lit 9,000 oil lamps and recited parittas at the pagoda.

Similarly locals and pilgrims visited Nay Pyi Taw Satta Sattaha Buddha Gaya, Thatkya Ranthi Standing Buddha image, Datu Saya Dat Paung Su Pagoda, Phaya Koe Su, Koe Khan Gyi Pagoda and

other pagodas in the Nay Pyi Taw.

Locals and visitors were also seen visiting Nay Pyi Taw Zoological Gardens, Safari Park, National Races Village and hot springs.

Later in the evening devotees and merit makers lighted up the pagodas with oil lamps. — Aung Ye Thwin, Aye Aye Thant (Translated by Zaw Min)

US-based institute to initiate Bagan conservation project in January

THE Getty Conservation Institute announced its 10-years conservation project which is scheduled to begin in January next year in Bagan, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Myanmar.

The project announcement ceremony yesterday morning was held at Myin-Pya-Gu Temple, with the opening remarks of Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Kyi Min and Mandalay Region government's Minister for Planning and Finance U Myat Thu.

Mr. Tim Whalen John,

the Director of Getty Conservation Institute, also explained action plans under the Getty Conservation Project for Bagan. After the project announcement ceremony, the invited guests observed the inside of Myin-Pya-Gu Temple.

The Getty Conservation Institute based in Los Angeles of California will begin a long-term commitment in Bagan to conserve and protect ancient cultural heritages in coordination with the Department of Archaeology and National Museum under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and

Culture. The project will include a number of case studies in collecting information about future conservation efforts in Bagan and elsewhere, while it will start at Myin-Pya-Gu, an expensive and picturesque temple, which was closed to the public for many years due to conservation concerns. Under this project, the Getty Conservation Institute will provide training for international best practices to support the Department of Archaeology and National Museum and capacity building for its staff.— MNA



A delegation led by Director of Getty Conservation Institute Mr. Tim Whalen John and officials from Department of Archaeology and National Museum pose for a photo in Bagan. PHOTO: MNA

Over 20,000 buyers show interest in Yangon government-owned land

By Nyein Nyein

THE Yangon Region government recently announced the sale of land plots for setting up industrial businesses and public housing, and more than 20,000 application forms were sold from 7 October to 8 November, said U Than, Joint Secretary of the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

The plots of land owned by the Yangon Region government will be sold in three phases.

In Phase 1, land-use applications for 500 land plots in Hlinethaya, Shwepyitha, and four Dagon townships were sold on 7 October at the office complex of the General Administrative Department (Eastern District), and interested buyers purchased 20,000 forms as of 8 November, when the deadline ended, said U Than.

However, of the 20,000 applications purchased, only 2,500 have been submitted, he said.

Meanwhile, more than 180 plots from the Myaungtagar Industrial Zone will be sold in Phase 2, and more than 9,000 acres, previously marked as agricultural

land, in East Dagon and Dagon Seikkan townships will go under the hammer in Phase 3, he added.

The Land Management Committee will screen the applications and sell the plots to selected individuals and organizations for setting up businesses and housing projects.

“As the land is being sold by the regional government, it will have full guarantee,” said Yangon Mayor U Maung Maung Soe.

The plots that are slated to be sold were previously seized by the government, and compensation had not been awarded to their original owners. Therefore, to compensate the original farmland owners, the lands are being sold again, according to officials.

At present, there are over 3,000 cases with the Yangon Region government’s Committee for Scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands. Compensation of K6.9 billion was awarded to farmers on 28 September. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, compensation of K31 billion would be provided to the original farmland owners.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

External trade touches \$3.19 bln in one month



Containers seen at the container yard in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

MYANMAR’s external trade as of 1 November in the current fiscal year reached US\$3.19 billion, an increase of \$417 million compared to the corresponding period of the 2018-2019 fiscal year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

In the previous FY, trade stood at \$2.78 billion.

Between 1 October and 1 November, 2019, both maritime and border trade showed a rise of around \$400 million

compared with the year-ago period. Myanmar’s exports were estimated at \$1.57 billion, and imports were valued at \$1.6 billion.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital goods, raw industrial materials, and consumer goods.

The country’s export sector relies more on the ag-

ricultural and manufacturing sectors. Export earnings from the CMP (cutting, making, and packaging) garment businesses are rising, while reliance on natural resources, such as natural gas and jade, is lessening.

The government is trying to reduce the trade deficit by screening luxury import items and boosting exports, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

– GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



Bee-keepers inspect beehives for honey production in Magway. PHOTO: ZAYYATU (MAGWAY)

Honey production season on, but demand low in Kani Township

THIS YEAR, beekeeping businesses in Kani Township have registered low demand during the plum honey production season from September to November, in spite of a higher yield. The price of honey has also declined compared to last year, said beekeepers.

Although beekeepers could produce more honey in the season, they said they faced low de-

mand from Kani and Yinmabin townships in Sagaing Region.

“Though we could produce 60 buckets of plum honey from over 500 beehives this year, the prices have been on the decline. Earlier, more than 500 beehives produced only 50 buckets, but beekeepers were doing well,” said Ko Kyi Soe, a beekeeper. In the current season, plum honey is being harvested six times compared to five last

year. A viss (a viss equals 1.6 kg) of honey fetched K2,900 last year, which is higher than the current price of K2,800 per viss, according to beekeepers.

In 2019, 40,687 buckets of honey have been produced in Kani Township and 5,300 buckets in Yinmabin Township, according to Division of Apiculture’s data.

—Than Htay Aung (Kani)

(Translated by La Wonn)

Two Korea-funded projects worth \$150 mln under construction in Yangon, Bago

By Nyein Nyein

TWO industrial parks are being built in Yangon and Bago regions with a capital of around US\$150 million received from Korea, said U Thant Sin Lwin, secretary of the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), who is also director-general of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The MIC has issued permits

for the two zones. At present, construction work has begun, he added.

One of the industrial projects, valued at \$28 million, will be developed by Taekwang Myanmar Development Co Ltd on 203.6 acres of land in Nyaunginn village-tract, Bago Region. It is being wholly funded by the Korean company. The project was approved by the MIC in 2018 and is slated to be completed in three years.

The second project — the Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC) — is a joint venture between Korea and Myanmar. A Korean company will hold 60-per cent shares in the KMIC project, which includes the Nyaungnapin training school on 555.81 acres of land in Hlegu Township, Yangon Region. The project has pulled in investments of \$120 million.

The KMIC project was given the go-ahead in 2019 by the MIC.

Phase I of the project will be carried out in the current fiscal year and Phase II will be carried out in 2022-2024. Myanmar has been inviting investments from Korea. In recent days, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic relations U Thaung Tun attended the 35th ASEAN Summit held in Thailand, and also joined the 14th East Asia Summit. The Union Minister met with the South Korean Economy and Finance

Minister for open discussions to boost investments. At the meeting, he was invited to the Korean Asian Special Summit, which will be held in Busan, South Korea.

The Republic of Korea is the sixth largest investor in Myanmar. It has brought in \$3.9 billion in investments from 179 projects, accounting for 4.86 per cent of the overall FDI flowing into the country.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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Pagodas in Dawei crowded with pilgrims

ON the fullmoon of Tazaungmon, the significant pagodas in Dawei town were crowded with pilgrims.
On 11 November, prominent pagodas in Dawei Town, including the Shwe Taung Sar pagoda, welcomed large crowds of local residents and visitors from other states and regions. The visitors offered flowers, water, and candles to Lord Buddha.
“Today is the Tazaungdaing full-moon day, and more pilgrims thronged the pagodas today than on normal days. Some visited the pagodas with their whole family because both schools

and offices are closed. There were also a few tourists visiting the pagodas,” said U Kyaw Win, chairman of the Shin Pin Khayu pagoda board of trustees.
Moreover, some historical and significant pagodas and resorts were also crowded with visitors. The public holiday is from 9 to 12 November. So, civil staff from Dawei and their families and visitors from other states and regions visited significant spots.—Dawei (IPRD)
(Translated by Hay Mar)

Local people visit famous pagoda in Dawei on fullmoon of Tazaungdaing.
PHOTO: DAWEI (IPRD)



Cave pagodas in Hpa-an attract holidaymakers

THE significant cave pagodas in Hpa-an town, Kayin State are crowded with pilgrims and visitors during the Tazaungdaing holidays, which is being observed from 9 to 12 November.
“With the government designating long holidays for the Thadingyut and Tazaungdaing festivals, the civil staff and Factories workers who are appointed in other regions can get a chance to meet their families,” said U Maung Ko, chairman of the KOG civil society organization.
The prominent pagodas, caves, hot springs, waterfalls,

and ponds are crowded with local residents as well as local visitors in the public holidays.
“We are visiting Hpa-an for the first time by car with our neighbors and relatives. We are visiting the area as our children have the Tazaungdaing holidays. We have visited many significant pagodas such as Bayint Nyi cave, Yathaypyan cave, and Kawgun cave. We will continue our trip after eating fine food along the way. We will go back in the evening,” said U Ohn Maung, a local visitor from Bago Region.—Nay Myo Lwin (IPRD)
(Translated by Hay Mar)



People visit Kyauk Kalat in Hpa-an Township, Kayin State during their Tazaungdaing holidays. **PHOTO: NAY MYO LWIN (IPRD)**

Hotel rates in Chaungtha rise during Tazaungdaing holidays

DUE to an increase in local and foreign visitors coming to Chaungtha beach in Ayeyawady Region during the Tazaungdaing holidays, hotel room rates are rising in the area these days, according to local visitors.
“Our team visited Chaungtha beach from Nay Pyi Taw. All of the team members are civil staff. We work hard throughout

the year and so recreation in Chaungtha beach is a welcome change from desk-bound heavy work. But, the hotel rates in Chaungtha have given us a headache. We are staying in a normal room, but it is costing us K110,000 per night. There are seven members in our team,” said a visitor from the Nay Pyi Taw civil staff team.
“On normal days, most of

the guest houses on Chaungtha beach charge only K30,000 per night for an ordinary, not well-furnished room, which can accommodate five persons. During regular holidays, most of the rooms are closed because there are no visitors coming to Chaungtha beach. Some hotels and motels charge K50,000 per night on normal days. Most guesthouses operate with mu-

nicipal licenses, while some do not have licenses. Chaungtha beach is crowded with visitors during public holidays, such as the water festival, Thadingyut festival, and Tazaungdaing festival. On such holidays, the hotels are fully booked and room rates are a bit high,” said owners of local hotels, motels, and guesthouses on Chaungtha beach.
On 10 November, local and foreign visitors had to shell out anywhere between K60,000 and over K100,000 to stay at Chaungtha beach, depending on the size and condition of the room. According to local residents, the concerned authorities need to conduct an inspection to ensure the safety of visitors at Chaungtha beach. —Kyaw Kyaw (Mahl-aing)
(Translated by Hay Mar)



More travellers visit Chaungtha beach in Pathein Township during the Tazaungdaing holidays. **PHOTO: KYAW KYAW (MAHLAING)**

Anti-Ebola radio in DR Congo closes down after killing



A young man receives a vaccine against Ebola from a nurse in Goma on 7 August 2019. PHOTO: AFP

GOMA (DR Congo) — A local radio station that has been involved in the fight against Ebola in eastern DR Congo said Monday it was closing down after one of its broadcasters was murdered.

Joel Musavuli, head of Lwemba radio in Mambasa in Ituri province, told AFP that the station had been targeted by armed groups hostile to the campaign to roll back the Ebola epidemic.

“Each of us have received threats since last month. We have now decided to stop broadcasting, Musavuli said, adding that he himself had escaped two kidnapping attempts.

“We are victims of our commitment to the awareness campaign about the spread of Ebola virus disease. We don’t know why the militiamen are targeting us.”

Nearly 2,200 people have died since the notorious haemorrhagic disease erupted in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in August 2018, according to the latest official figures.

The fight against the outbreak has been hampered by local fears and superstitions, exploited by militia groups that are rampant in the remote region.

Several health workers have been killed and media that have supported the campaign have received threats. Several radio stations in the Mambasa area say they have stopped broadcasting anti-Ebola messages because of intimidation.

On November 2, Lwemba broadcaster Papy Mahamba was killed at his home by unidentified men. His wife was injured and their house set ablaze. — AFP ■

Israeli students develop treatment for resistant bacteria, based on engineered proteins

JERUSALEM — Israeli students have developed alternative antibiotics, based on engineered proteins, to overcome resistant bacteria, Tel Aviv University in central Israel reported on Sunday.

According to the World Health Organization, at least 700,000 people die each year due to drug-resistant diseases, and the number could jump to 10 million each year by 2050.

To overcome resistant bacteria, the students developed an alternative system based on pyocins — protein complexes naturally produced by bacteria to attack other threatening bacteria.

When released, each pyocin can bind to an enemy bacteria cell, puncture its membrane and destroy the bacteria single-handedly. This solution also includes novel algorithm-based software for both designing the relevant tail fibers to target specific bacteria, and for optimizing the distribution of the pyocins in a specific medium for cost-effective use.

— Xinhua ■

Sydney region faces ‘catastrophic’ bushfire threat

SYDNEY (Australia) — Sydney residents were warned of “catastrophic” danger and a state of emergency was declared Monday as Australia girded for a fresh wave of devastating bushfires.

For the first time, Australia’s largest city and the surrounding area faced the top level of fire warning — with authorities warning “lives and homes will be at risk”.

“There is nothing built or designed to withstand... catastrophic” conditions, said Shane Fitzsimmons, commissioner of the rural fire service for New South Wales state,

which encompasses Sydney.

High temperatures and strong winds were expected to create tinderbox conditions Tuesday, prompting state premier Gladys Berejiklian to declare the seven-day state of emergency.

More than 350 schools will be closed, a broad fire ban has been put in place and the military is providing logistic support for firefighters.

Three people have died, thousands have been displaced and more than 150 homes destroyed by dozens of out-of-control blazes in the state’s north.

In the last few months, roughly 11,000 square kilometres (4,200 square miles) — an area larger than Jamaica or Kosovo — has been scorched, according to the New South Wales fire service.

Conditions eased on Monday and some residents were able to return home, although a heavy haze lingered over many fire-hit regions.

The Blue Mountains to Sydney’s west, the wine-producing Hunter Valley to the north as well as the Illawarra region to the city’s south are expected to be the hardest hit. — AFP ■

Vivaldi reworked to ‘make climate change audible’

BERLIN (Germany) — A classical orchestra in Germany aims to “make climate change audible” with a reworking of Antonio Vivaldi’s famous violin concertos “The Four Seasons” using algorithms based on climate data.

The project reimagining one of the most widely recognised classical works is entitled “For Seasons” and will be performed in Hamburg on Saturday.

A collaboration between musicians, artists and software developers, the composition has been described by its creators as “disharmonic” and “uncomfortable”. “The piece makes the facts of climate change obvious: the climate and our seasons have grown unbalanced,” the organisers said on the project website.

Using data relating to species extinctions, rises in global tempera-

tures and extreme weather events, the composers claim to have developed algorithms which can “influence the notes on the original sheet”. Changes to Vivaldi’s original score from 1725 include a blurring of the lines between spring and summer and the removal of notes which represent birdsong.

The new work will be premiered by the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie’s resident orchestra.

“Almost everybody in the room will recognise the original, but then quickly think: ‘Hang on, this sounds different, somehow disturbing’,” said Yuri Christiansen, the orchestra’s solo cellist. Tickets for the performance at Hamburg’s modern, waterside concert hall will be free of charge, and the event will also be streamed by regional public broadcaster NDR. — AFP ■



The Elbphilharmonie is where climate change becomes audible. PHOTO: AFP

October economy watcher sentiment drops to 8-year low after tax hike

TOKYO — Business sentiment among workers with jobs sensitive to economic trends dropped to its lowest level in eight years in October due to sluggish sales after a consumption tax hike at the start of the month, government data showed Monday.

The diffusion index of confidence among “economy watchers” such as taxi drivers and restaurant staff decreased 10.0 points from September to 36.7, the lowest since May 2011 when consumption remained depressed after massive earthquake and tsunami hit northeastern Japan in March that year.

The size of the decline was the steepest since April 2014, when the index dropped a seasonally adjusted 15.7 points after the consumption tax was lifted to 8 per cent from 5 per cent. The tax rate was further increased to 10 per cent in October this year.

Business sentiment, which declined for the first time in three months, was also weakened by the effect of a series of natural disasters hitting Japan in October, including Typhoon Hagibis, a government official said.

A reading below 50 indicates that more respondents report-

ed worsening rather than improving conditions over the past three months.

Despite the sharp drop in the index, the Cabinet Office maintained its assessment that “The economy has shown weak movement in its recovery,” with the official describing the impact of the tax hike and disasters as “temporary factors.”

In the survey, a clerk at a home appliance store in the Koshinetsu region, central Japan, said the number of customers had declined following a period of increased demand ahead of the tax hike.

Meanwhile, the diffusion index gauging the economic outlook in the coming months rose 6.8 points to 43.7 as many respondents expect the negative impact of the higher tax rate is likely to wane in the near future.

A worker at a department store in the southern Kanto region in eastern Japan said an economic recovery is likely to come earlier than it did after the previous tax hike as the year-end shopping season is looming.

The survey covered 2,050 people from 25 to 31 October, of whom 1,830, or 89.3 per cent, responded. —Kyodo News ■

SBI Holdings, Fukushima Bank to form capital tie-up



Yoshitaka Kitao, president and CEO of financial service provider SBI Holdings Inc., gives an interview to Kyodo News in Tokyo on 15 August 2019. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

TOKYO — Major Japanese online financial firm SBI Holdings Inc. will form a capital tie-up with Fukushima Bank, becoming the regional lender's biggest shareholder with a 19.25 per cent stake, to help turn around its business, the two said Monday.

SBI will invest 1.11 billion yen (\$10 million) in the bank by the end of January to acquire the stake and will provide expertise on financial product sales and information technology to improve the lender's profitability and efficiency, they said.

“There is a limit to how much a business model can be changed by a tie-up between

two banks. We must be reborn,” Takahiro Kato, president of the bank that has been struggling for profitability under the Bank of Japan's ultraeasy monetary policy, told a press conference.

The first joint-branch bank is planned to open by January in Koriyama in the northeastern Japan prefecture, they said, adding the regional lender will have an outside board director from SBI from June next year.

SBI has been expanding alliances with local banks as it aims to become Japan's “fourth megabank,” joining Mizuho Financial Group Inc., Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group Inc. and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group Inc.

In September, SBI concluded a capital tie-up with Shimane Bank in western Japan, injecting 2.5 billion yen. An alliance with Fukushima Bank is SBI's second tie-up with a regional financial institution.

On future partnerships with other regional banks, Shunpei Morita, senior managing director of SBI, who joined the press conference, said, “We will consider it depending on the other party.”

“We would like the tie-up with Fukushima Bank to provide an example of success,” Morita

said at the lender's headquarters. Fukushima Bank, established in 1922, posted a group net loss of 3.12 billion yen in the business year ended March last year, falling into the red for the first time in seven years.

The Financial Services Agency ordered it to improve its business operations and the bank logged a 521 million yen net profit in the year through March this year.

Many small banks in Japan have been affected by population declines in regional areas and rising costs for developing fintech, the delivery of financial services via information technology, as well as implementing anti-money laundering measures.

Of the 105 regional banks in Japan, 45 recorded losses in their core businesses for at least two straight years through March this year. Of those, 27 have logged red ink for more than five years in a row, according to the agency.

Against such a backdrop, local banks have accelerated moves to shore up their businesses by allying with peers. The Bank of Yokohama and Chiba Bank, both based near Tokyo, said in July they had reached a deal to share customer information. —Kyodo News ■

Lebanon central bank says to protect pound stability

BEIRUT (Lebanon) — Lebanon's central bank on Monday said it would strive to maintain the local currency's peg to the US dollar and ease access to the greenback after weeks of mass protests.

For two decades, the Lebanese pound has been pegged to the greenback at around 1,500 pounds to the dollar, with both currencies used interchangeably in daily life.

But banks have gradually been reducing access to dollars since the end of the summer, sparking fears of devaluation as the unofficial exchange rate reached up to 1,800 pounds.

“The central bank's first and foremost goal is to protect the Lebanese pound's stability,” central bank chief Riad Salameh told journalists at a press conference in the capital Beirut. We have taken measures “to protect depos-

itors, protect deposits”, he said.

Salameh added that he had asked local banks to lift restrictions imposed after mass protests broke out nationwide against the political class on 17 October.

He said the central bank had asked banks to maintain the same ceilings on credit cards and allow customers to repay US dollar loans in the local currency. —AFP ■



A member of the Lebanese security forces stands at the entrance of the Central Bank after anti-government protesters broke down a construction barrier as they rally at the same time of a press conference held by the bank's governor in Beirut on 11 November 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

UK economy avoids recession with 0.3% quarterly growth

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Britain's economy avoided recession in the third quarter, official data showed Monday, but there were signs of slowing activity before the country's general election next month and looming departure from the European Union.

Gross domestic product rebounded by 0.3 per cent in the July-September period after a 0.2-percent contraction in the second quarter, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in an initial estimate.

The technical definition of a recession is two straight quarters of negative growth.

Britain faces a general election on December 12, called by

Prime Minister Boris Johnson to try and finally force through Brexit by a new deadline of January 31.

“GDP grew steadily in the third quarter, mainly thanks to a strong July,” an ONS spokesman said in a statement Monday.

“Services again led the way with construction also performing well.

“Manufacturing failed to grow as falls in most industries were offset by car production bouncing back,” he added.

However, the third-quarter performance fell short of market expectations and the Bank of England's (BoE) growth forecast — which had both stood at 0.4 per cent. —AFP ■

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Romania president on top in first-round vote

BUCHAREST (Romania) — Romania's pro-Europe President Klaus Iohannis has taken a big lead in the first round of the country's presidential election on Sunday, according to partial official results.

With votes from 90 per cent of polling stations counted, Iohannis stands on just over 36 per cent, with his nearest rival, former Social Democrat (PSD) prime minister Viorica Dancila, on 24 per cent.

Iohannis claimed victory on Sunday evening in front of cheering supporters at his campaign headquarters.

"We have beaten the Social Democrats," the 60-year-old leader said.

"But the war is not over, we have to take another step forward in two weeks," he said, referring to the second round ballot on November 24.

Iohannis now seems "assured of a second five-year term" as voters for lower-placed candidates will largely swing behind him, political analyst Andrei Taranu told AFP.

A Iohannis victory would potentially add to a liberal fightback against the region's prevailing nationalism, following the election of an anti-corruption activist as Slovakia's president and a cen-



Romanian President Klaus Iohannis casts his ballot at a polling station, in Bucharest. PHOTO: AFP

tre-left candidate as mayor of the Hungarian capital Budapest.

Dancila meanwhile said she was "happy" with the result, adding: "We are present in the second round, I thank those who voted with their hearts."

The PSD has become increasingly reliant on an ageing, rural electorate and had feared the nightmare scenario of not making it to the second round, which would have been a first in Romania's post-communist history.

A record 650,000 votes from Romanians abroad — who tend to favour liberal candidates — will take longer to count but analysts say they will likely not be enough to knock Dancila out of the race.

The third-placed candidate, Dan Barna from the recently-formed pro-EU Save Romania Union (USR) party, is on around 13 per cent.

'Pro-European signal'

Iohannis, who hails from the centre-right National Liberal Party (PNL), repeatedly clashed with the beleaguered PSD government, which collapsed last month.

Dancila served as the last prime minister in that government, which took power after the PSD won parliamentary elections in 2016.

The PSD looks to have lost 16 percentage points when compared with the 2016 election. — AFP ■

Spain's repeat election fails to break deadlock

MADRID (Spain) — Spain's Socialists faced tough talks to form a government on Monday after the party emerged on top but weakened from a repeat election which produced an even more divided parliament and propelled far-right Vox into third place.

Neither the left nor the right bloc are anywhere near an absolute majority in the 350-seat assembly following Sunday's polls, prolonging a political deadlock in the eurozone's fourth largest economy after a similar result in the previous general election in April.

The "elections did not solve the difficulties in achieving a governing majority. On the contrary, (they) worsened them," top-selling daily newspaper El Pais wrote in an editorial.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez triggered the repeat polls — Spain's fourth in four years — after his Socialists failed to reach an agreement with other parties to forge a parliamentary majority in April.

But his gamble resulted in the party winning just 120 parliamentary seats — three fewer than in April — while far-left Podemos party slumped to 35 seats from 42 the last time around.

Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias urged the left to unite this

time and said he was willing to start negotiating with Sanchez. However their two parties together would still need the support of several smaller parties to build a working majority of 176 seats in parliament.

The main opposition conservative Popular Party (PP) recovered from its worst ever showing in April, finishing second with 88 seats, up from 66, while Vox was the biggest winner.

It won 52 seats — more than doubling the 24 it took during its April parliamentary debut in the most significant showing by a far-right faction since Spain's return to democracy following dictator Francisco Franco's death in 1975.

'Practically impossible'

The deepening Catalan separatist crisis played squarely into the hands of the far right, which has vowed to clamp down aggressively on Catalonia's independence drive.

Catalonia was rocked by days of mass, sometimes violent, pro-independence rallies after Spain's Supreme Court on October 14 sentenced nine politicians and activists to jail for up to 13 years for their role in a failed secession bid in 2017. —AFP ■

Calls for abuse probe as Russian historian in court for grisly murder

SAINT PETERSBURG (Russia) — A Russian historian who confessed to murdering and dismembering his ex-student lover was due in court on Monday as calls grew for an investigation into his alleged abuse of women students.

The case of prominent Napoleon expert Oleg Sokolov drew fresh attention to violence against women in Russia, including in academic circles, which critics said authorities were not taking seriously.

Sokolov, a 63-year-old who taught history at Saint Petersburg University, confessed to murdering his 24-year-old lover and former student and dismembering her body.

He was detained after being hauled out of the icy Moika River on Saturday as he tried to dispose of the woman's arms.

A Saint Petersburg court was to decide Monday whether to formally arrest Sokolov, who lived

with Anastasia Yeshchenko for the past few years and allegedly killed her last week.

News of the case — and allegations that Sokolov had abused at least one other female student — prompted widespread outrage and demands for action.

"This case highlighted the impunity of abusers in society," Alyona Sadikova, the head of the Moscow-based Kitezh women's crisis centre, told AFP.

More than 5,000 people signed an online petition urging authorities to probe the management of Saint Petersburg State University, President Vladimir Putin's alma mater.

The petition said Sokolov had treated students "in a monstrous way" and cited another female student who said the historian had beaten her and threatened to burn her with a hot iron and kill her in 2008. "For unknown reasons, the abuser managed



Sokolov tried to dispose of his murdered lover's arms in the Moika river. PHOTO: AFP

to escape any punishment," the petition said, adding that police who had ignored the woman's complaint should also be probed.

Russia has no specific leg-

islation on domestic violence or sexual harassment in the workplace and feminist movements like #MeToo have had little impact in the country.

Many in Russia see no problem in romantic relations between superiors and subordinates, including professors and students, if they are consensual. —AFP ■

Malaysian court orders ex-PM Najib's corruption trial to proceed



Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak speaks to reporters in Kuala Lumpur on 25 October 2018, after being released on bail. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

KUALA LUMPUR — A Malaysian court on Monday ordered a corruption case against former Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to proceed, saying the prosecution has provided sufficient evidence so far in his first trial linked to a scandal-plagued state investment fund.

Judge Mohamad Nazlan Mohamad Ghazali of the Kuala Lumpur High Court said the prosecution has successfully proven each element of abuse of power, criminal breach of trust and money laundering charges leveled against the former leader, and ordered him to enter his defense.

Najib reacted to the ruling with “shock,” his lead defense counsel Muhammad Shafee Abdullah told reporters, adding that his client had been convinced he would be acquitted of all the charges at this stage.

Monday's ruling is a boost to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who has vowed to bring his immediate predecessor to

justice over his alleged role in the global financial scandal involving the state fund, 1Malaysia Development Berhad.

The trial will resume Dec. 3 and continue for 10 days, with Najib slated to take the stand first, his lawyer said.

Najib faces seven charges — three counts of money laundering, three counts of criminal breach of trust and one count of abuse of power. He has pleaded not guilty to all of them.

The charges are related to three deposits totaling 42 million ringgit (about \$10 million) into his private bank accounts between December 2014 and February 2015. Each time, the money allegedly came from SRC International Sdn. Bhd., a former unit of 1MDB.

The trial concerning SRC International is the first of five trials Najib is facing involving a total of 42 charges that are linked to 1MDB, which was created after he assumed power a decade ago.

The prosecution contends that Najib abused his power for self-gratification when as prime minister he took part in government decisions between August 2011 and February 2012 to approve a government guarantee on a 4 billion ringgit loan to SRC International from the civil servants pension fund known as Kumpulan Wang Persaraan, and received the 42 million ringgit in return.

The 42 million ringgit was on top of \$681 million, allegedly originating from 1MDB, that also found its way into his accounts in 2013, most of which was later returned. — Kyodo News ■

Cheering crowds greet Japan's new emperor in rare parade

TOKYO (Japan) — Tens of thousands of flag-waving spectators cheered Japan's new Emperor Naruhito on Sunday during a rare open-top car imperial parade that was rescheduled after a deadly typhoon.

Some in the crowd camped overnight to nab a prime stop by the palace for the 30-minute parade featuring the emperor and his wife Empress Masako.

The event was one of the final events marking Naruhito's ascension to the throne after his father Akihito earlier this year became the first Japanese emperor in two centuries to abdicate.

The royal couple emerged from the palace moments before 3:00 pm (0600 GMT), with the Emperor wearing formal Western clothing and the Empress dressed in a long cream gown and jacket, wearing a tiara passed down by her predecessor.

Security was high for the

event, with long lines forming hours ahead of the parade and thousands of police deployed to search bags and move spectators through metal detectors.

Security forces lined the entire length of the route in double rows, keeping close watch as the slow-moving parade passed, flanked by police on motorbikes.

In the minutes before the parade began, police at one checkpoint warned would-be attendees that the area was full. “We’re at Disneyland levels of crowding. The security check won’t finish in time for you to see the parade,” one policeman with a loudspeaker warned those still in line.

‘Once in a lifetime’

Yoko Mori, 64, lined up from 10:00 am to secure a spot, traveling from Saitama outside Tokyo.

“We came here because it’s a once in a lifetime opportunity and we wanted to celebrate this

event,” she told AFP, flanked by her friend Chiyoe Ito, 70.

“But it’s regrettable that we just had a glimpse of the car. I concentrated so much on taking a photo, I barely looked with my own eyes.” Yoko Yokota, 84, was in tears with excitement at the chance to spot the emperor up close. “I am so happy to see him,” she said. Hours before the parade, Yukari Oshita told AFP she felt a closeness to Naruhito, the first emperor born in post-war Japan.

“The Emperor is a few years younger than me but belongs to the same generation, and I feel connected with him,” she said.

“And Empress Masako is someone who can be a role model for modern women with full-time jobs.” After the national anthem was played, the royal couple boarded a specially made car featuring the chrysanthemum imperial logo on the sides and the royal flag on its bonnet. — AFP ■



Motorcade of Japan's Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako leaves the Imperial Palace during a royal parade in Tokyo on 10 November 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

Cambodia's freed opposition leader Kem Sokha meets US ambassador

PHNOM PENH — Kem Sokha, the leader of the banned opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party who was released from yearlong house arrest on Sunday, met Monday with the US ambassador to Cambodia, who urged authorities to drop all charges against him.

“The move that was made by authorities yesterday is a step forward,” Ambassador Patrick Murphy told reporters after the one-hour meeting with Kem Sokha, who shares the party’s



Kem Sokha (c) and Patrick Murphy (l), US Ambassador to Cambodia are pictured at Kem Sokha's house on 11 November 2019. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

leadership with self-exiled politician Sam Rainsy.

“However, it’s important to see more and my advice, as a friend of the Kingdom of Cambodia, is that the authorities to find the way to restore Mr. Kem Sokha’s entire freedom, liberty and to drop all charges against him,” Murphy said, while also urging the government to release other dissidents.

“We believe this would be really helpful for Cambodia, for governance, for the economy,

that all voices to be heard and participate to make a stronger democracy and to see an inclusive, complete dialogue, and broad reconciliation so that once again Cambodia can be on the path to a full multiparty democracy,” he added.

Kem Sokha declined to brief reporters on his talks with the US ambassador, saying, “I’m sorry that since I’m still banned from engaging in politics, I cannot say anything related to politics at this stage.” — Kyodo News ■

UN, top Iraq cleric urge ‘serious’ reforms after protests

NAJAF (Iraq) — The United Nations’ top official in Iraq and the country’s most senior cleric urged authorities on Monday to get “serious” about reforms after anti-government demonstrations that have left hundreds dead.

Mass rallies calling for an overhaul of the ruling system have rocked the capital Baghdad and the Shiite-majority south since 1 October — the largest and deadliest popular movement in Iraq in decades.

The bloody unrest has sparked serious concern from the UN, human rights groups and the White House, which on Sunday called on Baghdad “to halt the violence against protesters” and pass electoral reform.

After weeks of paralysis, Iraq’s top leaders seem to have agreed to keep the system intact, but the UN in Iraq (UNAMI) urged them to enact a host of

changes. These include electoral reforms within two weeks, the prosecution of those responsible for the recent violence as well as of corrupt officials, and the passing of anti-graft laws.

On Monday, UNAMI chief Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert met the country’s highest Shiite authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, in the holy city of Najaf.

She said the seat of Shiite religious power in Iraq, known as the marjaiyah, had stressed that “peaceful demonstrators cannot go home without sufficient reforms” to answer their demands.

“The marjaiyah expressed its concerns that the political forces are not serious enough to carry out such reforms,” said Hennis-Plasschaert.

“If the three authorities — executive, judiciary and legislative — are not able or willing to conduct these reforms decisively,



Mass rallies calling for an overhaul of the ruling system have rocked the capital Baghdad and the Shiite-majority south since 1 October. **PHOTO: AFP**

there must be a way to think of a different approach,” she warned without elaborating.

There was no statement attributable directly to Sistani, who is 89 and never appears in public.

In his recent sermons, delivered by a representative, Sistani has described the protesters’ demands as “legitimate” and called for the rallies to be handled with

“restraint”.

Rallies flare up

In recent days, more than a dozen protesters have been killed as security forces have cracked down on demonstrators.

They have cleared streets and squares in Baghdad, in the port hub of Basra and the southern city of Nasiriyah, where four

protesters were shot dead on Sunday. Security forces there even chased down demonstrators into a children’s hospital and fired tear gas inside. On Monday, protesters struggled to come out in large numbers there and security forces reopened roads in Basra, stifling attempts to stage sit-ins near the provincial headquarters.—AFP ■

Turkey begins deporting foreign jihadists

ISTANBUL (Turkey) — Turkey said Monday it had begun sending back foreign jihadists to their countries of origin, with an American already expelled and more than 20 Europeans including French and Germans in the process of being deported.

A “foreign terrorist fighter” from the US was deported early on Monday, with two more — from Germany and Denmark — due to be expelled later in the day, interior ministry spokesman Ismail Catakli told state news agency Anadolu.

Seven more Germans were due for deportation on Thursday, he added, while 11 French citizens, two Irish and at least two

additional Germans were also being processed.

Turkey has criticised Western countries for refusing to repatriate their citizens who left to join the Islamic State group (IS) in Syria and Iraq, and stripping some of them of their citizenship.

Interior Minister Suleyman-Soylu said last week that Turkey had nearly 1,200 foreign members of IS in custody, and had captured 287 during its recent operation in northern Syria.

It was not clear if all those being deported this week were captured in Syria, or if some were in Turkish territory.

“There is no need to try to escape from it, we will send them

back to you. Deal with them how you want,” Soyly said on Friday.

‘Turkey not hotel’ for IS

A French official told AFP that the French nationals being expelled were mostly women.

Some had been in Turkey for a long time, while others arrived recently, the official added, without giving further details.

These 11 will be tried, the official said, adding that discussions were under way to determine whether their arrival will be handled by civil or military airport authorities.

A French foreign ministry source told AFP at the weekend that a number of jihadist suspects had been quietly repatriated under a 2014 agreement with Turkey, and that the current deportations were nothing new. “Jihadists and their families are regularly sent back to France and arrested as they leave the airplane. Most of the time it is done secretly. The news is not published, or released much later,” the source said. A German foreign ministry official confirmed the legal proceedings involving the 10 German nationals, saying they included three men, five women (at least two who lived in Syria) and two children.—AFP ■

Bolivia’s Morales resigns after losing backing of security forces

LA PAZ (Bolivia) — Bolivian President Evo Morales has resigned, caving in after three weeks of sometimes violent protests over his disputed re-election, as his allies denounce an alleged coup.

“I resign my post as president,” the leftist Morales said Sunday in a televised address, capping a day of fast-moving events in which many ministers and senior officials quit as support for Latin America’s longest-serving president crumbled and created a temporary leadership vacuum in the country.

The streets of La Paz immediately exploded in celebration, with jubilant Bolivians waving the country’s flag, but violence and vandalism later erupted overnight and in the neighboring city of El Alto. In the confusion, a group of 20 lawmakers and government officials took refuge at the Mexican ambassador’s residence, and Mexico announced it was offering asylum to Morales as well. Morales later tweeted that there was a warrant for his arrest, but police commander Vladimir Yuri Calderon told lo-



Bolivian President Evo Morales resigned on 10 November 2019, a day after this pictured address. **PHOTO: AFP**

cal Unitel television that was not the case. Morales also wrote that “violent groups” had attacked his home. Police announced on Sunday night that they had arrested Maria Eugenia Choque, the head of the country’s electoral court, an institution slammed by the opposition as biased.

Morales, a member of the Aymara indigenous community, is a former coca farmer who became Bolivia’s first indigenous president in 2006.

He defended his legacy Sunday, which includes landmark gains against hunger and poverty and tripling the country’s economy during his nearly 14 years in office.—AFP ■



Turkey captured many IS fighters in recent operations in Syria. **PHOTO: AFP**

Advance tickets for Myanmar, Tajikistan match on sale in Mandalay

ADVANCE tickets are currently on sale for the upcoming group stage match between the national football teams of Myanmar and Tajikistan for the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, scheduled to be held on 14 November at the Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

Both the teams have been placed in Group F for the qualifiers. The sale of tickets for the match started on 11 November in Mandalay at the eastern gate of the Mandalay Thiri Stadium at the side of 68 street and the Myanmar Football Academy (Mandalay) during office hours, according to the MFF.

Myanmar will seek to put their qualification ambitions back on track this month with home matches in Mandalay against Tajikistan and Mongolia.

Team Myanmar underwent training at the Mandalay Thiri Stadium yesterday ahead of the qualifier.

The pre-press conference for the match will be held at 2 p.m. on 13 November at the Jasmine Hall of the Pullman Mandalay Mingalar Hotel, and the MFF has invited journalists and mediapersons for the briefing.

The Myanmar vs Tajikistan match will start at 5 p.m. (Myanmar Standard Time) on 14 November.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)



The Myanmar national team footballers undergo special training at the Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay ahead of the match against Tajikistan. **PHOTO: MFF**



The Myanmar U-22 national footballers arrive in Bangkok yesterday for a friendly match against the Thailand U-22 team. **PHOTO: MFF**

Myanmar U-22 to test Thailand, Viet Nam teams

THE Myanmar U-22 men's national football team will play friendly matches with U-22 teams of Thailand and Viet Nam in Bangkok, Thailand this month, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

The Myanmar U-22 team arrived in Bangkok yesterday to play their first friendly match against the Thailand team.

Myanmar will play a friendly match against Thailand on 13 November and against Viet Nam on 17 November.

The friendly matches are aimed at preparing team Myanmar for the men's football competition at the South East

Asian Games.

Myanmar has been placed in Group A for the tourney, with host Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Timor-Leste.

Myanmar will play the opening match at SEA Games against Malaysia on 25 November and host the Philippines on 27 November at the Rizal Memorial Stadium in Manila. They will take on Cambodia on 2 December at the Biñan Football Stadium in Biñan.

In the meantime, defending champions Thailand face tough competition in Group B, where they have been placed along with Viet Nam, Indonesia, Laos, Singapore, and Brunei.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Khaka says he is ready to battle for Arsenal place

LONDON (United Kingdom)—Granit Xhaka may have been stripped of the Arsenal captaincy due to his public run-in with the club's fans but he says he will be staying and fighting for his place in the team.

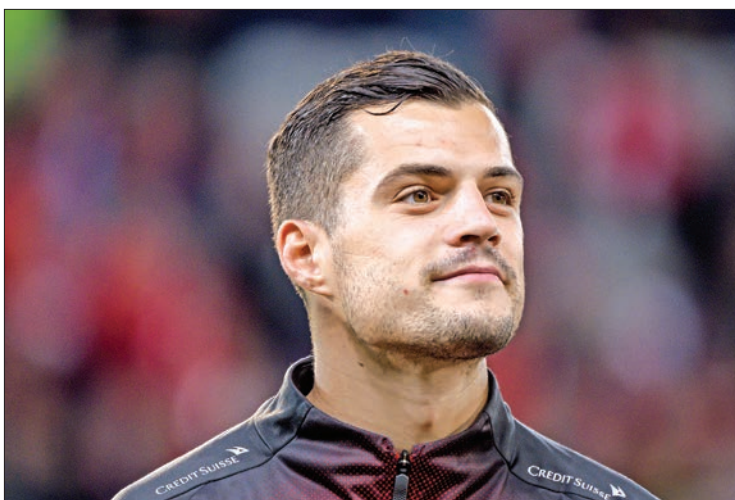
The volatile 27-year-old Swiss international midfielder has not played since he mouthed an obscenity at a section of Gunners fans jeering him when he was substituted in the Premier League match with Crystal Palace a fortnight ago.

However, despite manager Unai Emery deciding he could not carry on as skipper — a role he was given after a secret ballot of the players — he told Swiss newspaper Blick he would not be leaving. Xhaka has had a fractious relationship with Arsenal

supporters since his arrival from Bundesliga outfit Borussia Mönchengladbach in 2016, costing the Premier League side a fee reported to be £38 million (\$49 million). “You can be sure that I’ll keep fighting and putting myself out there in every training session,” Xhaka said.

“I feel last week has been dealt with and I’m ready. “My time at Arsenal has been very positive for a long time. “After a difficult start, I played a lot and overall I’ve had a great time at Arsenal. “My family and I also feel very well in the city of London.”

Xhaka, who has been linked with a move to struggling Newcastle in the January transfer window, said the boos and jeers has not altered his views of the city or the club.—AFP ■



Granit Xhaka may have lost the Arsenal captaincy but he has no intention of leaving the club despite his fractious relationship with the supporters. **PHOTO: AFP**

Three talking points in European football this weekend

PARIS (France)— A record home crowd saw Marseille beat Lyon in a fiery encounter and Freiburg's coach was barged over by the opposing team's captain in a weekend of European football when passion spilled over into anger.

AFP Sport looks at three of the main talking points: Record crowd and bus attack in Marseille Marseille's supporters confirmed their reputation as France's most passionate fans as a 65,421 crowd set a home attendance record at the Velodrome and the stands were lit up by flares and a remarkable visual effect of the Mediterranean port's Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde Basilica to mark the club's 120th anniversary. On a more sinister note, Lyon's team bus was pelted with missiles on the way to the stadium, smashing windows on one side of the vehicle.

A stormy match was decided by Dmitri Payet who scored twice and Marseille clung on for a 2-1 win despite having Alvaro Gonzalez sent off for denying Moussa Dembele a clear scoring chance. Ugly scenes in Freiburg as coach barged over Eintracht Frankfurt captain David Abraham was sent off for barging into Freiburg coach Christian Streich on the sidelines of a bad-tempered Bundesliga match on Sunday.—AFP ■