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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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2020 New Year Dhamma Ceremony commences in Yangon

YANGON Region Government is organizing the three-day dhamma ceremony at the People's Park near Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday evening to welcome 2020 New Year.

Bhamo Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa delivered a sermon on the first day of event which was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and wife, Regional Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, its Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, cabinet members, donors and people from the regional townships.

Bhamo Sayadaw also donated replicas of five hair-relics, and four tooth-relics of the Buddha and six pagoda statuettes by drawing lots to the audience.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and officials presented a mosaic

painting and the paintings of Bodh Gaya donated by Visakha Foundation and Lay Kyun Thu Foundation to the Sayadaw.

At the ceremony, members of Myanmar Red Cross Society, civil organizations and philanthropic groups provided their voluntary services to the congregation, as the Yangon City Bus public transportation and private taxis offered their free services.

An estimated number of over 80,000 people attended the New Year's dhamma ceremony on the first night.

Rector of Sitagu World Buddhist University and Abhidhamma University Dr Bhaddanta Nandamala Bhivamsa, and Chancellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Academies Sayadaw Dr. Ashin Nyanissara will deliver sermons on 2 and 3 January respectively.—Min Thit (MNA) (Translated by Aung Khin)



Bhamo Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa delivers the sermon. PHOTO: YEHTUT



The congregation listens to the sermon delivered by Bhamo Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa on the first day of three-day Dhamma ceremony to welcome the 2020 New Year at the People's Park in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: YEHTUT

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Whatever we do, we must keep in mind the good of our Union

Our country is a union. A union is a nation comprised of many ethnic nationalities. Whatever we do, we must keep in mind the good of our Union. Whatever you do, please think for the good of our Union and the peoples of our Union. Further, please work to bring the peoples of our Union closer together, more bonded, more united.

(Extract from the opening speech given by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 3 August 2018 at Meeting No. 1/2018 of the National Tourism Development Central Committee.)



Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung inspects the construction site of the Surbung Airport project in Falam Township, Chin State, on 29 December. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister inspects Surbung Airport construction project in Chin State

UNION Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung looked into construction project of Surbung Airport in Falam Township, Chin State, on 29 December morning. Deputy Director-General of the Department of Aviation and In-Charge of the Project U Kyaw Soe updated the project at the briefing hall. The Union Minister coordinated with the Chin State Government for the project.

The airport facilities include a fire fighting station attached to the 60-ft high air traffic control tower and the structure foundation for DVOR. The airport is aimed to promote transportation of mountainous and remote Chin State, and it will become one of the 69 airports of the country in which three international airports and 31 domestic airports are in operation. —MNA (Translated by Aung Khin)

Mandalay bustles with visitors during New Year holiday

PILGRIMS, domestic and foreign travellers and local residents of Mandalay filled up the compounds of its numerous pagodas and ancient cultural sites during the New Year holiday. In particular, Mahamuni Buddha Image, Kyauktawgyi, Shwekyee Myin Pagoda, Kutodaw Pagoda and Aungtau-mu Pagoda were thronging with visitors in the early hours of the morning. Visitors then took a trip to Shwekyanggyi, the palace and Inwa area in the afternoon before heading to the famous U Bein bridge and Mandalay Hill to watch the sunset later in the evening.

Being their first time in Myanmar, an Italian tourist said arriving in Mandalay checked off their bucket list of places to visit, which included Yangon and Bagan as well. They said they were fascinated with the architecture of Bagan's temples and they hoped to walk to the end of U Bein bridge while watching the sunset. They said they will encourage their friends to visit



Tourists enjoy the sunset on the Mandalay Hill during their New Year holiday. **PHOTO: AUNG PHYO KYAW**



People visit the U Bein Bridge in Amarapura, Mandalay Region. **PHOTO: AUNG PHYO KYAW**

Myanmar when they go back and they themselves hope to visit here again after experiencing the friendliness and hospitality of local residents. U Aung Myint and his family are also part of the large number of visitors for New Year's, having come from Nay Pyi Taw to gain good merits and impart knowledge on his children in Mandalay. He said because Myanmar's infrastructure is getting better and the practice of travelling during the holidays is getting more popular, he noticed a lot of domestic travellers in every place he visits.—Min Htet Aung (Man Sub-printing Hpuse) (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Union Minister U Ohn Win inspects tree nursery, community forest, elephant camp in Nyaung U

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win inspected tree nursery, community forest and elephant camp in NyaungU Township of Mandalay Region yesterday.

The Union Minister and party first arrived at the tree nursery established by the Dry Zone Greening Department, and gave advice on growing appropriate plant species with the region.

They later proceeded to Palin Kan Tharyar Elephant Camp

to inspect the constructions of an elephant museum, jetty for relaxation and community forest jointly set up by the Forest Department and a Japanese forest developing association.

The community forest project was implemented from 2017 to 2019 with primary objectives of afforestation, meeting the local consumption of forest products, and participation of local people for their socioeconomic development.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Union Minister U Ohn Win feeding an elephant at the elephant camp in NyaungU Township, Mandalay Region yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement makes donations to philanthropic cause

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye and Deputy Minister U Soe Aung visited Myat Su Mon Youth Sanctuary at the Dhamma Lingaya Monastery in Pyinmana Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, yesterday and donated offertories to the presiding Sayadaw and other donations for the sanctuary.

The donation included K500,000 in cash, K5.94 million for purchasing rice for the 110 children there, K10.23 million for food and clothing, K360,000 as assistance to the sanctuary keeper, and school uniforms and T-shirts.

Next, the Union Minister and entourage visited the Yedashe Home for the Aged in Yedashe Township, Bago Region, and donated K500,000 in cash, K1,404,000 to purchase rice for the 26 elderly residents there, K2,418,000 for food and clothing, K360,000 to support the in-charge, and longyis, towels and shirts.

Afterwards, the Union Minister and entourage visited Ma Soe Yein Monastery in Thapayagon, Nay Pyi Taw, and donated offertories, robes and cash for the Sayadaw and monks there.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye and Ma Soe Yein Monastery Sayadaw pose for a group photo together with students at the monastery in Thapayagon, Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi participates in the garbage-free campaign in Hline Campus of Yangon University and Yangon University of Economics yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi joins garbage-free campaign in Hline Campus

UNION Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi joined a campaign of collecting garbage in Hline Campus of Yangon University and Yangon University of Economics yesterday morning.

At the event, the Union Minister emphasized the motto of ‘We Clean, We Educate, We Change’ for this year as a clean environment could devel-

op pleasant feeling and mental strength.

The campaign was also joined by rectors, pro-rectors, teachers and students.

They also conducted garbage collecting campaigns at the Yangon University in 2018 and 0 milepost of Yangon-Mandalay highway last year.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Information Minister presents awards for photo, postcard contests

UNION Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint gave awards to the winners at the photo and postcard contests organized by the Information and Public Relations Department under the title of “Value of State, Prestige of Nationality”.

The award-giving ceremony at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Yangon yesterday was also attended by Yangon Region Government’s Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister U Zaw Aye Maung, departmental heads and officials, representatives from organizations and associations, award-winners and invited guests.

In delivering a speech, Union Minister Dr Pe Myint said that the Ministry of Information is organizing photo and



Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint looks winners' photos displayed at the photo and postcard contests organized by the Information and Public Relations Department under the title of “Value of State, Prestige of Nationality” in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

First-prize winning photo

ဆုရှင် - နန်း (Ko San)
အသံထွက် - ဒု.နယ်
လက် - ရန်ကုန်တိုင်းဒေသကြီး
ရန်ကုန်မြို့နယ်

First-prize winning postcard

ဆုရှင် - ဦးစု
အသံထွက် - ရန်ကုန်တိုင်းဒေသကြီး
လက် - ရန်ကုန်မြို့နယ်

The Union Minister presented first prizes to the award-winners in photo and postcard contests, and other awards were given by the dignitaries.

Director-General of IPRD U Ye Naing awarded honorary certificates to Retail Market Manager U Zwe Yan Bo from the TMW Enterprise Limited and Vice Chairman of Myanmar Motion Picture Organization U Zaw Min from Mingalar Cinema Group for their contributions in the prize-awarding ceremony.

The Union Minister also looked around the award-winning photos and postcards at the event.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

postcard contests annually to mark the Independence Day, and the 72nd anniversary will fall on 4 January 2020.

The event was aimed to convey messages through photos and postcards on distinguished historical traditions of the country, cultural heritages and customary practices of each nationality, unveiling unity, peace and tranquility, historic sites, natural beauties, happiness and freedom in the country.

A total of 181 professional and amateur photographers joined the photo contest with their 735 pictures, and 23 contestants with 224 postcards in the competition for eight awards each in the two contests.

Third-prize winning photo

ဆုရှင် - ဦးစု
အသံထွက် - ရန်ကုန်တိုင်းဒေသကြီး
လက် - ရန်ကုန်မြို့နယ်

Special-prize winning postcard

ဆုရှင် - ဦးစု
အသံထွက် - ရန်ကုန်တိုင်းဒေသကြီး
လက် - ရန်ကုန်မြို့နယ်

Special-prize winning photo

ဆုရှင် - ဦးစု
အသံထွက် - ရန်ကုန်တိုင်းဒေသကြီး
လက် - ရန်ကုန်မြို့နယ်

Taninthayi Region secures most gold in national student sports festival

THE 2019-2020 Academic Year Basic Education Student Sports Festival awarding ceremony was held at 6 pm in Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi, Deputy Minister U Win Maw Tun, directors-general and deputy directors-general of MoE, officials from the Ministry of Health and Sports, and coaches and students from across the states and regions attended the ceremony.

During the ceremony, the Union Minister, Deputy Ministers U Win Maw Tun and Dr Mya Lay Sein and the directors-general conferred awards on the winning teams for foot-

ball (men, women), volleyball (men, women), and men's sepak takraw competitions. The sports festival began on 26 December, 2019, and will end on 2 January, 2020, with competitions held for four sports (football, volleyball, track and field, sepak takraw).

The results are 15 gold, 2 silver and 4 bronze medals for Taninthayi Region, 3 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze for Shan State, 2 gold, 4 silver and 6 bronze for Magway Region, 2 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze for Bago Region, 2 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze for Kachin State, 2 gold, 3 silver and 1 bronze for Ayeyawady Region, 2 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze for Yangon Region, 1 gold, 5 silver and 2 bronze for Mon State, 1 gold, 2



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi and winners pose for a documentary photo at the 2019-2020 Academic Year Basic Education Student Sports Festival awarding ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

silver and 3 bronze for Mandalay Region, 1 gold, 1 silver and 3 bronze for Sagaing Region, 1 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze for Nay Pyi Taw, 1 gold and 1 silver and 2 bronze for Rakhine State, according to the Ministry of Education.—GNLM
(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

MRTV to move from SD to HD transmission next month

1. The Myanma Radio and Television will undergo a transition from Standard Definition (SD) to High Definition (HD) transmission of its channel for better quality broadcasting. Both systems will be broadcast commencing 15 January 2020 as a transition period, and the complete switch to HD is scheduled on 15 February 2020 on the 74th anniversary of MRTV.
2. The transition is aimed to improve broadcast quality, and the digital satellite receivers could pick up HD quality transmission.
3. Analogue TV sets do not require tuning for the switch.
4. However, auto tuning is required at DVB-T2 set-top box or at LCD/LED TVs with DVB-T2 Tuner for HD quality of MRTV Channel.
 - (a) For DVB-T2 set-top box,
Menu → ChannelSearch → AutoSearch → Press OK.
 - (b) For LCD/LED TVs with DVB-T2 Tuner
Menu → Channel → Tuner Type → Antenna → Auto Scan → Country (My-

- anmar) → Mode (DTV+ATV) → Start → OK
- (c) For Analogue TV (Tube) linking with Set-top box
- Menu of Set-top box → Picture → Aspect Ratio → 16:9 Wide Screen → OK
5. The following channels will be available in Channel Box after adjustments.
 - (1) MRTV—HD
 - (2) MRTV—SD
 - (3) MRTV Hluttaw
 - (4) MRTV NRC
 - (5) MRTV Farmer
 - (6) MRTV Sport
 - (7) MRTV Entertainment
 - (8) MI
 - (9) MRTV—4
 - (10) Channel—7
 - (11) 5—Plus
 - (12) MNTV
 - (13) Channel—9

- (14) Mizzima
 - (15) DVB
 - (16) Channel K
 - (17) YTV
 - (18) Fortune
 - (19) Myanma Radio
 - (20) Upper Tineyin Thar
 - (21) Lower Tineyin Thar
- (6) The above-mentioned channels will also require Auto Tuning in accordance with the steps in paragraph 4 commencing 15 January 2020.
- (7) The MRTV audience may contact the following phone numbers for any inconvenience in switching to HD transmission.
- (a) 9 Meter Earthstation (Tatkon, Headquarters) Phone: 09 408082090
 - (b) 9 Meter Earthstation (Yangon, Pyay Road) Phone: 09 408082080

Myanma Radio and Television

Nepalese Embassy celebrates 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, Visit Nepal 2020

THE Nepalese Embassy in Yangon celebrated the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Myanmar and the launch of Visit Nepal 2020 at the Chanthargyi Hall of the Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday evening.

Speaking at the event, Nepalese Ambassador Mr Bhim K. Udas highlighted the strength of the two countries' relations, stretching back to the time of Buddha, who was born in Nepal.

The ambassador also pro-

moted the State Counsellor's book on Nepal, published in 1983, which encourages people to visit Nepal.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein also graced the event and called for greater efforts to welcome more visitors to Nepal.

Some 60,000 Myanmar tourists visited Nepal last year.

Following the event, the Nepalese community in Yangon and other attendees lit oil lamps at the Shwedagon Pagoda to mark the anniversary.—GNLM



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Nepalese Ambassador Mr Bhim K. Udas and attendees lit the oil lamps at the Shwedagon Pagoda. **PHOTO: KYAW ZEYA**

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YBS vehicles to be standardized, non-standard vehicles decommissioned

By Nyein Nyein

YANGON Bus Service (YBS) vehicles being operated in the Yangon Region will be standardized, and non-standard vehicles will no longer be permitted to operate in the region, said U Phyo Min Thein, the Yangon Region Chief Minister.

YBS, formerly All Private Bus Lines Control Committee, will celebrate its third anniversary on 16 January.

"We gave permits to YBS for three years and will review the company on 16 January, based on complaints that some of its branches are running old buses and earning unfair profits. We will not allow YBS to operate non-standard vehicles. Therefore, we need to establish a standard for the vehicles. If the vehicles meet this standard, they can still be run in Yangon. If they do not meet the standard, the vehicles will have to operate in other regions," remarked U Phyo Min Thein.

"Some of the YBS branches are not operating within the approved system. We have to resolve this issue ourselves as we



YBS buses seen in downtown Yangon. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

have already given them three years. If the YBS branches cannot provide good service to commuters, we must replace them. So we are trying to adopt the best system. I don't want YBS branch owners to assume they can do whatever they want," he added.

The Yangon Region Transport Authority will issue marking tables for YBS services on 16 January, identifying strengths

and weaknesses at the company.

"For the last two years, we praised the good services provided by YBS branches, but we didn't take action against the bad services. This year, we will praise the good services and discuss the bad ones. However, we won't take action against them until next year as we want to provide better services to passengers and hope to adopt

a better system," he added.

To improve transport facilities in Yangon, YBS was launched on 16 January 2017, during the new government's term. To date, over 100 bus lines are in operation, with 4,500 buses taking some 135 routes, in addition to the Airport Shuttle and city transit routes. The number of daily commuters is estimated at 1.8 million.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Kayah State attracts local, foreign travellers during December holidays

Many local and foreign travellers visited Kayah State during the December holidays, according to the Kayah State Directorate of Hotels and Tourism.

"This year, both local and foreign travellers visited Kayah State because of the

long December holiday. Some 120,000 local travellers visited Kayah State this year, marking an increase of 50,000 people, compared with only 70,000 who visited in 2018," stated an official from the Kayah State Directorate of Hotels and Tourism.

Further, 12,000 foreign travellers visited Kayah State this year. Previously, pilgrimage tour vehicles had to cross Taunggyi and Inle to reach Kayah State but travellers can now reach famous sites in the State directly.

In 2019, local authorities

permitted the opening of new hotels and guesthouses, but the town still failed to meet demand for accommodation given the large number of tourists arriving during the holiday season.—Aye Maung

(Translated by Hay Mar)

MDY hospital treats nearly a hundred patients on New Year's Eve



Mandalay General Hospital. **PHOTO: AUNG PHYO KYAW**

MANDALAY General Hospital has received over 90 patients who sustained some form of injury either from traffic accidents or scuffles during the New Year countdown, said Medical Superintendent Dr Khin Kyaw.

From 8 pm on 31 December, 2019, to 8 am on 1 January, 2020, the number of outpatients admitted to the hospital included 33 injured by traffic accidents, 30 injured by brawling, and 7 injured by other means. The number of inpatients included 18 injured by traffic accidents, 4 by brawling, and 2 by other means.

The medical superinten-

dent said they were prepared for emergency treatment on New Year's Eve and treated 94 patients that night. The hospital had three ambulances on standby, with seven more from humanitarian groups, and had 70 people working together.

According to the hospital's records, 61 people received treatment and 4 people died from a traffic accident during 2017-2018 New Year's Eve, and 60 outpatients and 21 inpatients were treated during 2018-2019.—Min Htet Aung (Man Sub-printing House)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

ChaungU Township supplies 40 trucks of muskmelons to Muse market daily

CHAUNGU Township supplies 40 trucks of muskmelons to the Muse market every day, stated U Soe Lwin, chairperson of Sagaing Region Watermelon, Muskmelon Growers and Producers Association.

Last year, muskmelon growers faced losses due to the low price. The price rose slightly in the second week of December 2019.

“Some muskmelons were damaged by the poor rainfall. The growers had to use irrigation water to maintain their operations. Muskmelon prices currently range from K400 to K850 per kilogram. Because of the high input cost, the growers can cover their cultivation costs only if they charge K850 per kilogram. They can earn a profit only if each acre produces about 10 tons of crops,” remarked U Kyaw Lwin, a grower.



Farmers collecting melons for sell whereas fruits with export criteria are distributed in the domestic market. **PHOTO: WIN OO (ZAYARTINE)**

There are more than 30,000 acres of muskmelons in the Sagaing Region and over 10,000 of them are managed by the ChaungU Township.

Following a temporary truce between the United States and China to de-escalate trade tensions, Myanmar’s fruit exports to

China have been steadily growing. With Chinese New Year approaching, trading will improve, according to Khwar Nyo Trading Co. Ltd.

Watermelons and muskmelons top the list of fruits being exported to China, and the export volume has increased significantly year-over-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

“If growers follow GAP guidelines, they can charge higher prices. But most of them are still using pesticides,” stated officials.

Watermelons and muskmelons are primarily grown in the Mandalay and Sagaing regions and in Shan State. Myanmar’s watermelons and muskmelons have grabbed a large market share in China. — Win Min Tun/ Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Bricks continue to sell despite price rise in Seikpyu Township



Workers making bricks in Kabargyi Village, Seikpyu Township, Magway Region. **PHOTO: SOE LIN NAING (IPRD)**

BRICKS are selling well in Kabargyi Village, Seikpyu Township, Magway Region, though the local people are selling them at slightly higher prices.

“Most residents of Kabargyi Village, Seikpyu Township, are widely engaged in producing handmade bricks and selling them during winter and summer. Mud, clay and sand are mixed and then placed in the sun for three days after being shaped into bricks with moulds. The bricks are then placed in kilns with plenty of firewood for

three days. If the fire is too hot or not hot enough, the quality of the handmade bricks will be poor,” stated a local handmade brick manufacturer.

A brick kiln is estimated to produce some 400,000 bricks per season, according to a brick maker. Handmade brick enterprises can earn a high income and create job opportunities for the locals. The bricks are typically used in construction projects and for building high-rise apartments. Handmade bricks are selling for K68 each at brick

kilns. Currently, these bricks are being sold for K70 each because of the scarcity of mud, clay and firewood. The price of the bricks may vary depending on the delivery location, which affects labour and transportation charges.

This year, bricks are in demand in Seikpyu Township and the Saw and Kanpetlet townships, according to the local handmade brick maker.—Soe Lin Naing (IPRD)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

\$1bln earned in Sino-Myanmar bilateral trade in first month of FY 2019-2020

THE value of Myanmar’s trade with China in October of the current financial year, 2019-2020, totalled over US\$1 billion, including \$456.86 million for exports and \$549.89 million for imports, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Meanwhile, Myanmar’s regional trade with ASEAN countries showed the highest growth of nearly \$1 billion.

Myanmar primarily exports agricultural products to China through the border gates. However, trade in agricultural products was halted on account of China clamping

down on illegal trade through border gates.

The value of bilateral trade with China was \$11.36 billion in FY 2018-2019, \$6 billion in the past mini-budget period, \$11.78 billion in FY 2017-2018 and \$10.8 billion in FY 2016-2017.

Rice, various types of peas, sesame seeds, corn, fruits and vegetables, dried tea leaves, fishery products, rubber, minerals and animal products are exported to China, whereas machinery, plastic raw materials, consumer products and electronic tools are exported to Myanmar. —GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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Farmland conversions should be weighed more carefully

MYANMAR is an agricultural country, where peasants and farmers make up the bulk of the population. Rice is our staple food, and its production currently exceeds 40 per cent of domestic demand. However, when approving the growth of alternative crops, the supply of rice to serve the country's increasing population and exports should be considered.

At the same time, to overcome food scarcity in the face of natural disasters caused by climate change, we need to collect and store reserve seeds, through cooperation between the government and private organizations.

Several farmers, private firms, organizations and departments have submitted applications to grow alternative crops or to change the classification of their farmland.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation has recommended approving these applications based on the country's current rice inventory and production estimates.

The Central Body of Farmland Management is also scrutinizing applications to utilize land for development programmes based on potential access to electricity, transportation, workers, and water and the proximity to towns and villages.

It is illegal to sell farmland for residential purposes due to the higher demand for living quarters created by the increasing population.

This illegal distribution of farmland for urban purposes is a key reason for the dwindling space available for agriculture development.

Although the law prohibits the utilization of farmland for other purposes, several individuals have violated the rules, and strict action has been taken against them.

In the past, using farmland for other purposes was a common practice in Myanmar. To effectively prevent the illegal distribution of farmland, corruption must be rooted out.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation; Ministry of Home Affairs; and other related municipal organisations should cooperate to ensure the regulations and procedures under the law are followed.

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Be Alert, Be Brave, Be Diligent and Be Vigilant in Safeguarding Our Independence

By Htun Tin Htun

IT is learnt from the Global New Light of Myanmar issued on 29th December 2019 that the 72nd Anniversary Independence Day National Objectives are as follows:

1. All National Ethnic Races to defend and protect with “collective strength” to ensure Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of the Unity of National Ethnic Races and Perpetuation of the National Sovereignty;
2. To give priority and work for transformation of the rule of law and justice sector which is important for stability, peace and development of the State;
3. To work on amendment of the Constitution, which is the basic foundation for building a Democratic Federal Union;
4. To build and create conducive environments for Union citizens which can elevate their sense of duty and improve their capabilities while the Democratic Federal Union is being built; and
5. Emergence of a peaceful and prosperous Democratic Federal Union by implementing the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) (2018-2030).

The editorial team of the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM) English Newspaper also wrote several editorial and opinion on the importance of independence since last week and described many articles hailing 72nd Anniversary Independence Day in both Myanmar and English newspaper.

Buddhists all over the world are taught by their monks and instructors to follow the universal Dhamma or cardinal virtues of safeguarding the planet such as “shame to do evil” and “fear to do evil” which are two crucial guarding principles for the world.

Eternal liberty, justice, equality and peace can be attained through the practice of insight meditation as it aims to achieve inner-peace of an individual on this planet.

Always be alert, brave, careful, diligent, efficient, faithful, good, honest, industrious, joyful, knowledgeable, loyal, mindful, nice, obedient, pure, qualified, resilient, strengthened, thoughtful, united, vigilant, wise, excellent, youthful and zealous in safeguarding our Independence.

Liberty is of paramount importance for all human beings in



The flag raising ceremony to mark the 71st anniversary of Independence Day was held in yangon on 4th January, 2019. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

this world and it is also the basic human right.

Easy to do are things that are bad and harmful to oneself; but exceedingly difficult to do are things that are good and beneficial.

Regaining lost sovereignty, territorial integrity and liberty are meant independence in generally speaking and we should better take invaluable lessons from Myanmar's history how the national ethnic patriots fought against the imperialists and fascists as well as neocolonialism.

There are several countries in this world at present that face a constant threat of war and terrorist attacks and therefore these non-peaceful countries cannot be said to be enjoying full independence.

Building a democracy that guarantees rights for all national citizens is of great importance and in fact building a democracy means building a culture.

Essential requisites for an independent and sovereign nation are mutual respect, mutual understanding, freedom, peace, human rights, and equity and equality to the people which can be brought by the genuine democracy for which Myanmar is transitioning.

Be united and brave for the protection and preservation of our independence and sovereignty and

independence and sovereignty are intertwined together at all times and sovereignty is permanent, exclusive, comprehensive, inalienable, absolute and unified.

Right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration are eight in one unique path Myanmar citizens should follow to safeguard the independence and sovereignty of the nation.

As there was no peace since the time we gained independence in 1948 (about 72 years), there was no stability, and we lagged behind in many areas of development and as a result Myanmar became one of the least developed countries.

Very sad to mention here that just after three months after regaining the independence in the nation, the brethren who fought the imperialists and fascists together as band of brothers turned their weapons against each other and killed, leaving behind death, destruction and untold miseries, adding with misery and remorse.

Even today, Myanmar is struggling to escape from the trap of poverty and armed conflicts and great efforts will be needed if we are to catch up with the rest of the world and therefore the people of the Union of Myanmar have been waiting for almost 72 years for a

better and bright future and we believe that only peace can help make our dreams come true.

Be awakened, mindful and diligent in building peace, making national reconciliation and safeguarding the independence.

Exchanging and sharing loving-kindness between two sides could be termed and expressed as genuine principles of democracy which is expounded and defined by the political pundits.

Discipline (character/morality) is power and we need disciplined people in the nation to protect and preserve the independence.

It is our duty to protect and preserve the nation for posterity which is our historical duty and obligation.

Loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic (altruistic/appreciative) joy and equanimity are four universal cardinal virtues (Brahma Vihara) and guarding principles for the world's eternal peace and prosperity.

It can be said that the genuine principles of democracy is about sharing and entrusting loving-kindness, friendship and ties of closer relations and the loving-kindness is tantamount to peace.

Greed, anger and ignorance usually skirt the spirit and soul of

all human beings in this mundane world and when these three bad elements are broaden and enlarged, things move into the harm's way and wreak havoc.

Endurance, forbearance and tolerance are in fact the genuine loving-kindness.

Nothing is impossible to Myanmar citizens with wish-to-do, work hard (effort), will (mind) and wisdom.

Independence is indeed very hard to achieve, but losing the liberty is a matter of disunity and lack of patriotism for which the new generation is to draw lessons from history.

Although the Union of Myanmar has not enjoyed peace entirely, it is fortunate that conditions here are better than some other countries.

No one can deny the fact that the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is an independent and sovereign nation but the peace still eludes the nation.

Due to the armed conflicts in remote and far-flung areas in the country, the sound of gunfire still threatens the people in these areas and leaves them behind.

Be enthusiastic, cooperative and vigilant in protecting, preserving and safeguarding the independence and sovereignty of the nation.

Efforts need to be systematically and collectively prepared and enhanced to strengthen the protective and safeguarding power of the nation in case of emergency.

Victory begets enmity, the defeated dwell in pain; happily the peaceful live, discarding both victory and defeat.

Indeed the independence is fragile beauty of a nation that could lose easily but regaining independence back was undeniably very difficult.

Guard well your thoughts, speeches and actions.

It is imperative that all of us unite to safeguard the independence we have gained through blood, sweat and tears and find peaceful, diplomatic solutions to achieve our wishes and desires.

Let none find fault with others; let none see the omissions and commissions of others; but let one see one's own speeches and acts, done and undone.

Armed conflicts, whether on a large or a small scale, affect a nation's development and are by no means beneficial and therefore we must work together towards resolving issues politically at the negotiations table diplomatically.

Nations across the Globe value their independence and sovereignty and all nations have, at some point, made sacrifices, taken great risks and struggled to attain or protect their independence through their collective will, strength and effort of their people.

The image of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the World Map is adorable which is the outcome and result that stand out as national heritage through the sacrifices with flesh, blood and bone of our ancestors.

We, all national citizens of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, must therefore collectively, cooperatively and collaboratively in unity by being alert, brave, diligent and vigilant in safeguarding our independence.

May all beings be free from all dangers, disasters, discomforts, enmity and aversions!! May beings be free from physical pains and mental sorrows and sufferings!! May all beings be long-lived, healthy, happy, peaceful, and prosperous in future!! Wishing all of you a Very Happy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year 2020!!

72nd Independence Day broadcast announcement

THE National Flag will be hoisted and saluted for 72nd Independence Day at Nay Pyi Taw's city hall starting at 7 am on 4 January, 2020.

The ceremony will be broadcast live on MRTV, Myanmar Radio and MRTV Facebook Page beginning from 6:40 a.m. on that day. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

2020, 72nd Anniversary Independence Day National Objectives

1. All National Ethnic Races to defend and protect with “collective strength” to ensure Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of the Unity of National Ethnic Races and Perpetuation of National Sovereignty.
2. To give priority and work for transformation of the rule of law and justice sector which is important for stability, peace and development of the State.
3. To work on amendment of the Constitution, which is the basic foundation for building a Democratic Federal Union.
4. To build and create conducive environments for Union citizens which can elevate their sense of duty and improve their capabilities while the Democratic Federal Union is being built.
5. Emergence of a peaceful and prosperous Democratic Federal Union by implementing the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 1st January, 2020)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 2nd January, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Upper Sagaing Region and Chin State, fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing Region, Kachin and Shan States, scattered in Mandalay Region and isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, Magway, Bago and Taninthayi Regions, Rakhine and Kayah States. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5 – 7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Scattered rain or thundershowers in Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions, Kachin, Shan, Chin and Rakhine States. **FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2nd January, 2020:** Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2nd January, 2020: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR Mandalay AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2nd January, 2020: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).



The 2020 Tokyo Olympics are scheduled to be held between 24 July and 9 August, followed by the Paralympics from 25 August to 6 September. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Olympics: 2020 opening ceremony a character-driven appeal for peace

TOKYO — The 2020 Tokyo Olympics opening ceremony will employ characters from Japan's world-famous animation industry as part of its international appeal for peace, games sources told Kyodo News on Tuesday.

The ceremony's theme will be coexistence among diverse races across the globe with animated characters delivering the powerful message of peace through sport in a way that is easily accessible.

One idea being considered is for rival characters to shake hands while calling for an Olympic cease-fire during the games. In keeping with recent custom, Japan proposed a resolution at the United Nations in December for an Olympic truce that was adopted unanimously.

In 2016, iconic Japanese animation characters such as the robotic cat Doraemon, legendary soccer player Captain Tsubasa and Hello Kitty took part in the handover portion of the Rio de Janeiro Olympics closing ceremony. Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe also played a role, making a dramatic entrance in the guise of Mario from the "Super Mario Bros." video game.

The sources said the game character might also take center stage during Tokyo's opening ceremony. To be hosted in the newly built 60,000-seat National Stadium in Tokyo, the sources said papercraft doves, the bird of peace, could also be used to send out the message of peace to billions across the globe on one of the world's most-watched events.

The opening ceremony, which could involve people riding in flying cars, will also be a platform for Japanese technology. Hydrogen, a next-generation energy source, has been settled on as a fuel for the sphere-shaped Olympic cauldron. One idea is to fuel the flame using hydrogen produced in a plant from Fukushima Prefecture, part of the area that was hit hard by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami and the subsequent nuclear disaster.

In a time when divisions along the lines of nationalism and the gap in wealth are becoming more acute around the world, the games organizers seek to emphasize peaceful coexistence as athletes from diverse backgrounds gather and compete. —Kyodo News ■

Younger patients with stomach cancer have 'distinct' disease, study finds

WASHINGTON — A study on the early onset of stomach cancer found that majority of younger people under 60 who develop stomach cancer have a 'genetically and clinically distinct' disease.

New Mayo Clinic research on stomach cancer in older adults discovered that early-onset often grows and spreads more quickly, has a worse prognosis, and is more resistant to traditional chemotherapy treatments. The research was published recently in the *Journal Surgery*.

This early-onset cancer is increasing, making up more than 30 per cent of stomach cancer diagnoses, while the rates of stomach cancer in older patients have been declining for decades.

"I think this is an alarming trend, as stomach cancer is a devastating disease," says senior author Travis Grotz, M.D., a Mayo Clinic surgical oncologist.

"There is little awareness in

the U.S. of the signs and symptoms of stomach cancer, and many younger patients may be diagnosed late — when treatment is less effective," he added.

From the studies, it has been noted that today, the average age of someone diagnosed with stomach cancer is 68, but people in their 30s, 40s and 50s are more at risk than they used to be.

There is no clearcut age to decide for the early-onset and late-onset stomach cancer, but the researchers found the distinctions held true whether they used an age cutoff of 60, 50 or 40 years.

The researchers found that the incidence of late-onset stomach cancer decreased by 1.8 per cent annually during the study period, while the early-onset disease decreased by 1.9 per cent annually from 1973 to 1995 and then increased by 1.5 per cent through 2013. — ANI ■



FILE PHOTO: A study on the early onset of stomach cancer found that majority of younger people under 60 who develop stomach cancer have a 'genetically and clinically distinct' disease. **PHOTO: AFP**

Huge spike in winter-related problems in Delhi: Doctors

NEW DELHI — The intense winters in the national capital this year has led to a huge spike in the rush of patients at outpatient department (OPD) of hospitals across Delhi, with some even recording as much as 20 to 30 per cent increase, doctors said on Tuesday.

According to experts, children, elderly and people with chronic diseases are more vulnerable to catch health complications. Some of the common winter-related health ailments are fever, stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, chesty cough, headache, aches and pains, fatigue, and respiratory issues.

Speaking with ANI, AIIMS

Director Dr Randeep Guleria said, "Situation in Delhi is worse than hilly areas as the temperature in the city is dipping rapidly. Hilly areas are having the sun in the day time, winter chills are not affecting the people there."

He said that this unusual pattern of winter this time can even put normal individual's health at risk and they can suffer hypothermia.

"However, this extreme winter is not suitable for newborn, younger children, elderly and people with chronic diseases.

They need to keep themselves warm, consume hot flu-



A man rides a bicycle along a street amid smog and foggy conditions on a cold morning in New Delhi on 28 December, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

ids like soup, coffee, milk, etc and keep their bodies hydrated. We are witnessing about 20 per cent rise in OPD cases due to winter-related problems," Dr Guleria said.

"During winter virus stays in the air due to low temperature and hence, cases of infection and viral fever rises. Chances of blood pressure, heart attack and hypertension also increase.

So, these people with these problems need to be extra careful," he added.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also warned that temperature is expected to drop further in the coming days. — ANI ■

India targets new moon mission in 2020

NEW DELHI — India plans to make a fresh attempt to land an unmanned mission on the moon in 2020 after a failed bid last year, the head of the country’s space programme said Wednesday.

Work is going “smoothly” on the Chandrayaan-3 mission to put a rover probe on the moon’s surface, Indian Space Research Organisation chairman K. Sivan told a press conference.

“We are targeting the launch for this year but it may spillover to next year,” Sivan said. Indian sources said authorities had set November as a provisional target for launch.

India seeking to become

only the fourth nation after Russia, the United States and China to put a mission on the moon’s surface and boost its credentials as a low-cost space power.

The country’s Chandrayaan-2 module crash-landed on the moon’s surface in September.

Sivan said the new propulsion module, lander and surface rover would cost about \$35 million, with a significantly higher outlay for the launch itself.

He added that India had chosen four candidate astronauts to take part in the country’s first manned mission into orbit, pledged to take place by



ISRO’s Chandrayaan-2 was launched on 22 July, 2019. PHOTO: AFP

mid-2022.

The four are to start training in Russia later this month. Up

to three astronauts are to take part in the mission, which will be one of the landmark projects

scheduled for the 75th anniversary of India’s independence from British rule.—AFP ■

Australia scrambles to reach thousands stranded by bushfires

SYDNEY — Relief supplies began reaching thousands of people stranded in fire-ravaged Australian towns Wednesday after deadly bushfires ripped

through popular tourist spots and rural areas leaving at least eight people dead.

Navy ships and military aircraft were deployed along-

side emergency crews to provide humanitarian relief and assess the damage from the deadliest spate of blazes yet in a months-long bushfire crisis.

Police said three more bodies were discovered Wednesday, bringing the confirmed death toll since late Monday to eight, including a volunteer firefighter who died when a “fire tornado” flipped his 10-tonne truck.

The latest deaths take to at least 17 the number of people killed in one of Australia’s most devastating bushfire seasons of recent years.

There were mounting fears for several others missing after the country’s southeast was devastated by out-of-control blazes, which destroyed more than 200 homes and left some small towns in ruins.—AFP ■



It has been a long and painful bushfire season in Australia. PHOTO: AFP

Grown from necessity: vertical farming takes off in ageing Japan

TOKYO — The nondescript building on an industrial site near Kyoto gives little hint to the productivity inside: 30,000 heads of lettuce grow here daily, under artificial light and with barely any human intervention.

This “vegetable factory”, using the latest vertical farming techniques, is part of a trend born out of necessity in Japan, where traditional farming faces a double threat from the ageing population and migration towards the cities.

With the average age of a farmer in Japan at 67 and few candidates to replace those dying out, the country has been forced to become a pioneer in so-called vertical farming.

Globally renowned firms such as Panasonic, Toshiba and Fujitsu have tried their hand — converting old semi-conductor production lines with varying levels of success.

One of the few companies to turn a quick profit, Spread pro-

duces 11 million heads of lettuce annually from its latest factory in Kyoto, a vast sterile area where the vegetables are stacked on shelves several metres high.

Machines shift the lettuces around the factory to areas where the light, temperature and humidity are ideal for that stage of growth. The process works without soil or pesticide, and only a dozen or so humans are employed to collect the lettuce at the end.

Other countries have employed vertical farming techniques — notably in Denmark and the United States — but Japan’s population crisis means the farmers are dying out, with question marks over how the world’s third-biggest economy will feed itself.

“Given the lack of manpower and decline in agricultural production, I felt a new system was needed,” Shinji Inada, Spread’s boss, told AFP.—AFP ■



In Japan, vertical farming is taking off as traditional methods face a double threat from the ageing population and migration towards the cities. PHOTO: AFP

More US based Chinese scientists heading home, massive boost for China’s scientific prowess: Study

OHIO — An increasing number of foreign-based Chinese scientists are returning to their home country from the US and elsewhere in the world, which has led to further enhancement in China’s already growing scientific prowess.

A recent study has revealed that in excess of 16,000 researchers have made their way back to China from various countries since the nation opened its doors

to international engagement. In the year 2017 alone, more than 4,500 Chinese scientists left the United States amid this trend of reverse brain-drain, which is almost twice the number that was recorded in 2010.

These foreign-trained researchers are helping grow China into a scientific powerhouse, said Caroline Wagner, co-author of the study and associate professor in the John Glenn College of

Public Affairs at The Ohio State University.

“In our lifetime, China has joined the global scientific community to become world-class in a number of critical fields such as AI and materials science,” Wagner said. “As more of their researchers return home, that rise is going to continue.”

The study was published online this month in the Journal of Science and Public Policy.—ANI

US-China ‘Phase One’ trade deal to be signed 15 January



China’s Vice-Premier Liu He said the two sides “reached a consensus, will not fight a trade war, and will stop increasing tariffs on each other”. **PHOTO: AFP**

WASHINGTON — A partial new US-China trade agreement will be signed in the middle of next month, US President Donald Trump said Tuesday, announcing that he will also then travel to China for continued talks.

Trump’s tweet, sent moments before Wall Street opened for the year’s final trading day, set a calendar date for an event that had hung in uncertainty in recent weeks as details remained scant.

Washington and Beijing earlier this month announced a “Phase One” trade deal, de-escalating their nearly two-year trade war as Trump reduced or canceled some tariffs while Beijing promised to adopt trade reforms and buy more US farm exports.

The text has yet to be made public pending what

US officials say is a largely technical review.

“I will be signing our very large and comprehensive Phase One Trade Deal with China on 15 January,” Trump tweeted.

“The ceremony will take place at the White House. High level representatives of China will be present.” US and Chinese officials have said the agreement includes protections for intellectual property, food and farm goods, financial services and foreign exchange, and a provision for dispute resolution.

Under the new deal, China has committed to a minimum of \$200 billion in increased purchases over the next two years from US manufacturers, farmers, energy producers and service providers, according to US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.—AFP ■

Erdogan, Istanbul rival lock horns over ‘crazy canal’

ISTANBUL — President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s dream project of building a canal in Istanbul to rival those at Suez and Panama has turned into a political showdown with the city’s new mayor.

Ekrem Imamoglu, who won a shock victory for the opposition in 2019 to become mayor of Turkey’s largest city, says the 75 billion lira (\$12.6 billion) canal is wasteful, environmentally destructive and could even increase the earthquake risk.

“Canal Istanbul is a criminal project,” he tweeted in December as he launched an “Either Canal or Istanbul” campaign and withdrew from a construction protocol signed by the previous mayor.

“We will do everything for this project not to be realised,” he told reporters.

This has not gone down well with Erdogan, who has fondly dubbed Canal Istanbul one of his

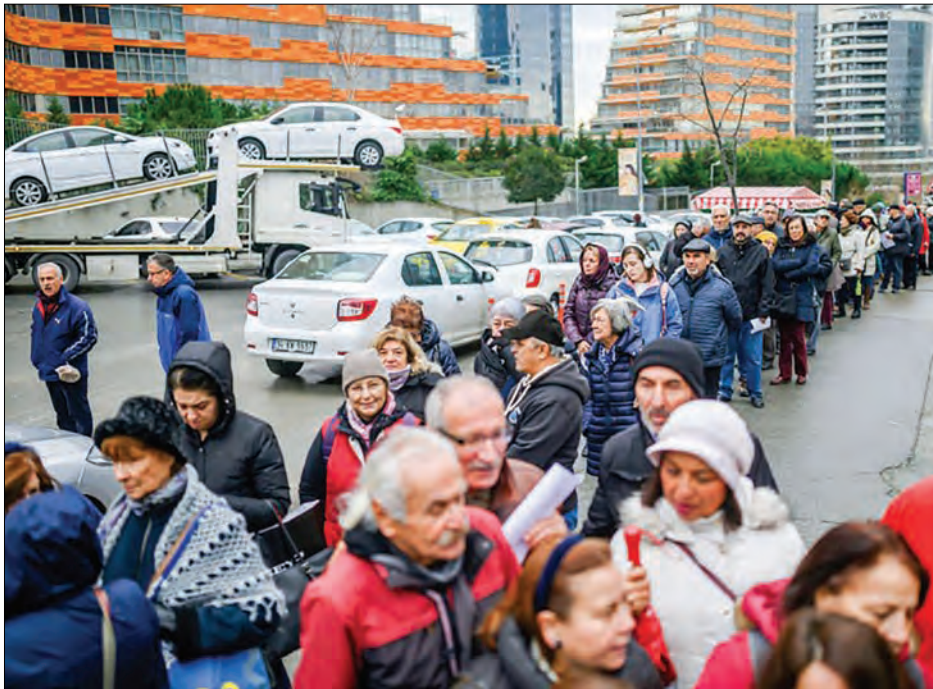
“crazy projects”.

First announced when he was prime minister in 2011, it is by far the most complex of a string of new ventures for the city following a tunnel under the Bosphorus, a third bridge across the waterway and a massive new airport.

It envisages a 45-kilometre (28-mile) canal providing an alternative route from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea through western Istanbul, relieving pressure on one of the busiest waterways in the world.

Critics accuse the president of seeking another debt-fuelled, grandiose statement that will benefit his allies in the construction sector at the expense of the environment.

But the president is unfazed by Imamoglu’s campaign: “We will build Canal Istanbul whether they want it or not,” he said in a speech on Monday. “Turkey has the strength to do it.”—AFP ■



People have been waiting in line to lodge their protest against a giant canal project. **PHOTO: AFP**

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS
Ministry of Construction

INVITATION FOR BID

1. The Government of the Union of Myanmar has received a loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) towards the cost of “ Regional Development Project for Poverty Reduction Phase 2 MY-P17” . It is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the Contracts for the construction of the pilot project listed below for “Regional Development Project for Poverty Reduction Phase 2 (MY-P17)”.

2. The Department of Highway (DOH), Ministry of Construction now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the construction and completion of the work below;

IFB No	Project ID	Works
DOH-04A	Taungoo-LeikTho-YarDo-Loikaw-HoPhone Road	9.02 kmx 5.5m wide Concrete Pavement Road, RC Bridge, Drainage structures and other miscellaneous structures
DOH-04B	Taungoo-LeikTho-YarDo-Loikaw-HoPhone Road	9.00 kmx 5.5m wide Concrete Pavement Road, RC Bridge, Drainage structures and other miscellaneous structures

3. Selling of Bid Documents ; (7-1-2020) to (14-1-2020)

4. Submission of Bids ; (12:00) noon on (20-2-2020)

5. Opening of Preliminary Examination Check for Bids; (13:30) hours on (20-2-2020)

6. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidder at the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of ; Fifty Thousands Myanmar Kyat (ks. 50000/-)

7. Interested eligible Bidder (The eligible country of the bidder is the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, only (i.e. Bidders shall be civil engineering firms registered in Myanmar)) may obtain further information from and inspect the Bidding Documents at the office of Project Inspection and Quality Control Department (Construction), Department of Highways, Ministry of construction, Building No. (11), Nay Pyi Taw.

Contact Person; Daw Khin San Nyunt Oo
Phone no; 09-5084576/ 09-257728844/ 09-450330580
E-mail address; pwhqairfield@gmail.com,
dohjica.sector@gmail.com

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV KOTA HALUS VOY.NO. (KHLU 0108 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KOTA HALUS VOY.NO. (KHLU 0108 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AWPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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The new National Stadium, the main venue for the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Abe pledges reforms, successful Olympics in New Year's statement

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged Wednesday to promote reforms in Japan, ranging from social security to the Constitution, while expressing his hope to successfully host the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics this summer.

“Now we have dynamism toward the future and therefore should powerfully press for building a nation for a new era,” Abe

said in his New Year's statement.

Remembering he saw the last Tokyo Olympics in 1964 at age 10, he said, “I hope (this year's Games) will also be a wonderful event that will excite children and let them have dreams for the future.”

On policy issues, Abe said he “will go ahead with major reforms that will shape our country. And beyond that, I see a constitutional

revision.” Last year Abe became Japan's longest-serving prime minister. His current term as president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party is to end in September 2021.

But his long-held goal of amending the pacifist Constitution remains far off, with opposition parties criticizing him for rushing to get debate going in parliament.—Kyodo News ■

Philippines lifts martial law in Mindanao, state of emergency stays

MANILA — The Philippines is going to lift martial law in Mindanao at midnight on Tuesday after two years and seven months, because the law and order has been restored in the southern Philippines.

However, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said Mindanao will still be under a state of nation-

al emergency.

“Upon the recommendation of the security sector President (Rodrigo Duterte) has decided to allow martial law to lapse and not ask for another extension anymore,” Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said in a statement.

“The security sector believes

that the objective of the martial law has been achieved,” said Lorenzana, who is also the martial law administrator, adding the rebellion in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur province and other areas in Mindanao have been “effectively stopped.”

Lorenzana said the security forces “are confident that they can maintain the current peace and order in Mindanao and that an attack similar in scale to Marawi can not be waged by the remnants of the Mautes or by any other terrorist groups in the future.” Martial law was first declared on 23 May, 2017, a day after the Islamic State-affiliated Maute Group attacked Marawi in southern Philippines. It was extended from 24 July to 31 December, 2017.

Two other extensions were granted by Philippine congress for the entire years of 2018 and 2019.—Xinhua ■



FILE PHOTO: Philippine soldiers secure a road as they provide security for a retrieval operation of dead civilians in the outskirts of Marawi on the southern island of Mindanao on 28 June, 2017. Photo: AFP

Hong Kong readies for New Year democracy rally

HONG KONG — Hong Kong was readying for a massive pro-democracy rally Wednesday after seeing in the New Year with an evening of peaceful protests that morphed into tear gas-choked clashes between hardcore demonstrators and police.

The city has been battered by more than six months of unrest with millions marching, as well as confrontations in which police have fired tear gas and rubber bullets, while protesters have responded with petrol bombs.

Thousands gathered before midnight across the financial hub, including along Victoria Harbour and at nightlife hotspot Lan Kwai Fong. Protesters at

the harbourfront counted down chanting “Ten! Nine! Liberate Hong Kong, revolution now!” as they lit up their phones.

Smaller crowds in the Mong Kok district set fire to barricades, before riot police unleashed 2020's first volleys of tear gas in response. Police had also used water cannon to disperse protesters in the same area, and in nearby Prince Edward officers arrested several protesters staging a candlelight vigil.

Earlier in the evening, thousands of people linked arms in human chains that stretched for miles along busy shopping streets and through local neighbourhoods.—AFP ■



More than six months of protests have called for democratic reforms in the Chinese city. PHOTO: AFP

Singapore benefits enormously from globalisation: PM

SINGAPORE — Singapore has benefited enormously from globalisation and it must resist the temptation to turn inwards, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has said.

Lee made the remarks in his New Year Message on Tuesday. He also noted that the state of the world worries Singaporeans as the global slowdown

has affected the economy. Many societies are under stress despite economic growth as the fruits of economic growth have not been shared equitably, with income gaps widening, he said. Singapore has to stay open and connected to the world, the prime minister said, adding, “A Singapore turned inwards cannot survive.”—Xinhua ■

Jakarta area hit by massive flooding, 4 dead

JAKARTA — Indonesia's capital Jakarta and its surrounding area faced massive flooding Wednesday, the first day of the new year, following heavy overnight rains that continued through the day.

Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan said the flooding, the city's worst since 2007, has left at least four people dead and

displaced over 9,000 residents. Unusually heavy rain also hit elsewhere in Java, especially northern and western parts, leading the National Disaster Mitigation Agency to urge residents to evacuate themselves to safer places if their housing areas will be potentially affected by floods.—Kyodo News ■

In New Year messages, European leaders voice concerns and aspirations



Fireworks explode over the Kremlin in Moscow during New Year celebrations, on 1 January, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

LONDON — Leaders of European countries have voiced concerns and aspirations in their Christmas and New Year messages, as the eventful year of 2019 comes to an end.

In her New Year message on Tuesday, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin underlined the importance of social equality.

The 34-year-old Marin noted that the strength of the society

should not be measured on the basis of the strength of the most affluent, but through how the most vulnerable cope with their lives. Marin raised the question whether everyone in Finland has the possibility of a good life.

The world's youngest prime minister acknowledged in her message that much in Finland depends on the world economy, but the government can provide

a stable and predictable environment for enterprises.

"Fast policy changes should be avoided while reacting to the cyclical situation," she said.

Marin also said the 2020s will be the "decade of decisions" for repelling the climate change. She reiterated the government pledge that Finland would be carbon neutral by 2035. She believes that Finland and Europe

could lead international climate work and benefit from that role economically.

German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier voiced concerns over the rise of anti-Semitism and far-right extremism in his Christmas speech, calling on all citizens to fight against them.

He mentioned the deadly attack near a synagogue in Germany's eastern city of Halle in October which killed two people nearby and later injured two others. In his Christmas message, Czech President Milos Zeman praised the low unemployment rate, stable economic growth, relatively low state debt and the growth of the average wage and old-age pensions in the country.

Zeman also drew attention to the problem of "slowness" in construction proceedings and the construction of transport infrastructure in his country.

Greece is welcoming 2020 with optimism, having learnt valuable lessons from past mistakes, leaving the financial crisis behind and moving forward with confidence and unity, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in his New Year message.—Xinhua



Fifty-nine-year-old Simonetta Sommaruga was already the minister for environment, transport, energy and communication. PHOTO: AFP

Socialist Sommaruga takes over Swiss presidency

GENEVA — Cabinet member Simonetta Sommaruga of the Socialist Party took over the Swiss presidency on Wednesday, a largely ceremonial role that rotates between leading political parties.

The 59-year-old Sommaruga is the minister for environment, transport, energy and communication in Switzerland's seven member Federal Council, which is the executive branch in the wealthy Alpine nation.

She has sat on the council since 2010, previously holding the justice ministry post.

Sommaruga took over the presidency from Finance Minister Ueli Maurer of the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP).

Under Switzerland's so-called "magic formula" in place since 1959, cabinet positions are shared between the four largest parties: the SVP, the Socialists, the right-leaning Free Democratic Party (PLR) and centrist Christian Democrats.

The Green Party made historic gains at federal elections in October, prompting calls that it now deserved a cabinet seat, but it has not yet managed to secure a place in the executive branch.— AFP ■

Pro-Iran protesters dig in outside US embassy in Baghdad

BAGHDAD — Pro-Iran protesters dug in outside the US embassy in Baghdad on Wednesday, throwing rocks and burning US flags a day after making a dramatic incursion

into the compound.

Thousands of Iraqi supporters of the largely Iranian-trained Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary force had gathered at the embassy on Tuesday, outraged by

US strikes that killed 25 Hashed fighters over the weekend.

They marched unimpeded through the checkpoints of the usually high-security Green Zone to the embassy gates,

where they broke through a reception area, chanting "Death to America" and scribbling pro-Iran graffiti on the walls.

The protesters set up portable toilets and some 50 tents outside the perimeter wall vowing not to leave until US forces quit Iraq.

On Wednesday morning, a truck delivered hundreds of mattresses in an indication of the protesters' plans.

Crowds of men, some in military fatigues, brandished Hashed flags and chanted anti-US slogans.

"I spent the night here and I won't leave until the Americans leave and we enter the embassy," said one protester, who identified himself only as Abbas.

Some protesters set US flags on fire and hurled rocks towards the compound.

Security personnel inside responded with tear gas, wounding several protesters.— AFP ■



A sentry box burns at an entrance to the United States embassy in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. PHOTO: AFP

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MFF bids farewell to head coach U Win Thu Moe

THE Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) has parted ways with Myanmar national women's football head coach U Win Thu Moe on the expiration of his contract, according to a statement released by the MFF yesterday.

The decision to retire the head coach was made at the MFF's coordination meeting, held on 31 December.

MFF is now urgently seeking a new head coach, noted a source working with the federation.

U Win Thu Moe helped the Myanmar team win the bronze medal in the 2019 South East Asian Games,



Myanmar national women's team head coach U Win Thu Moe. **PHOTO:MFF**

as well as another bronze medal in the previous AFF Women's Championship, and took the gold medal at the India Hero Gold Cup 2019.

The new head coach will be appointed before the Myanmar national women's football team plays in international matches next month.

The Myanmar women's football team will be participating in the qualifiers for the women's football event of the Tokyo Olympics, to be held in February 2020.

Team Myanmar will play in the same group as host South Korea and 2019 South East Asian Games gold medalist Viet Nam.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Myanmar to play friendly match with Thailand



Myanmar's women's football team singing the national anthem at an international football match. **PHOTO:MWL**

IN preparation for the upcoming qualifiers for the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020, Myanmar's national women's football team will play a friendly match with Thailand's team this month.

"The football association of

Thailand has invited the MFF to this friendly match this week. We plan to move our practice sessions to China ahead of the qualifiers, so we are negotiating for this match to be held in January," stated U Ko Ko Thein, secretary-general of the

Myanmar Football Federation.

Myanmar's national women's football team is preparing for the qualifying round of the 2020 Olympic Games, which will be held at the Jeju World Cup Stadium in Seogwipo, South Korea, on 3-9 February.

As North Korea's team has withdrawn from the competition, Myanmar's chances at the Games have improved. The Myanmar team will meet host South Korea and Viet Nam in the final qualifying round.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Lucky draw to be held at MFF Charity Cup 2020

FOOTBALL fans will be treated to a lucky draw, among other programmes, during the MFF Charity Cup 2020, to be

played between Shan United and Yangon United at the Yangon United Sports Complex on 5 January, according to the

Myanmar Football Federation.

The prizes include a Canon camera, five Cannel+ channel receivers, 10 Myanmar

National League jerseys and five Myanmar national football team fan jerseys, according to the organizers of the match.

The match will be a major event, as Shan United is the defending champion of the Myanmar National League and Yangon United is the defending champion of the General Aung San Shield.

The match will start at 3:30 pm and entertainment programmes, including sets by various singers and artistes as well as the Art Robot Music Band, will be held before the match.

Entrance fees for the MFF Charity Cup are K2,000 for grandstand seats and K1,000 for standard seats.

All funds collected from Myanmar football fans will be donated to orphanages across Myanmar, according to the Myanmar National League.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)



Artistes declaring the lucky draw winners at the previous MFF Charity Cup 2019. **PHOTO:MNL**