STRENGTH FROM DIVERSITY CAN HELP TACKLE CHALLENGES PAGE-8 (OPINION)

ARTICLE

Writing a New Chapter in Our Millennia-Old Pauk-Phaw Friendship

By Xi Jinping (President of the People's Republic of China)

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VI, No. 274, 7th Waning of Pyatho 1381 ME www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com Thursday, 16 January 2020

President, First Lady attend Naga New Year Festival - 2020

President U Win Myint greets Naga ethnic people in Lahe at the Naga New Year Festival yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Naga New Year Festival – 2020 was held in the town of Lahe in the Naga Self-Administered Zone, Sagaing Region, at 9 a.m. yesterday. President U Win Myint and First Lady Daw Cho Cho were present at the event.

The Union Flag was first saluted, after which Naga ethnic resident U Mon Pi delivered the opening speech and Naga ethnic resident Daw Khaung explained the history of how the Naga New Year Festival came to be.

Next, President U Win Myint delivered his Message of Greetings for the Naga New Year – 2020. (The full text of the President's message is displayed in page 2).

Next, a message of greetings sent by the Speaker of the Pyidaungsu and Pyithu Hluttaws was read by U Khun Maung Thaung, Chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw Ethnic Affairs and Internal Peace Implementation Committee, and the Regional Chief Minister then explained programmes for socioeconomic development of Naga region.

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State Counsellor attends 68th Kayah State Day ceremony

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is welcomed by local people as she arrives in Loikaw to attend the 68th anniversary Kayah State Day yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Chairperson of the Committee for Development of Rural Areas and National Races State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended the 68th Kayah State Day Ceremony in Loikaw yesterday.

Accompanied by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, U Min Thu, Dr Aung Thu, U Ohn Win and U Thein Swe, Deputy Ministers U Aung Htoo, U Tin Latt, and U Hla Maw Oo and officials, the State Counsellor left Nay Pyi Taw for Loikaw, Kayah State, by special flight yesterday morning.

First, the State Counsellor attended a ceremony to open the archway of the 68th Kayah State Day. The State Counsellor, together with union ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, U Min Thu, Dr Aung Thu, Chief Minister of Kayah State U L Phaung Sho, Speaker of Kayah State Hluttaw U Hla Htwe, Pyithu Hluttaw Representative Dr Khin Sithu, Amyotha Hluttaw Representative U Saw Sein Tun and town elder Daw Lusi Than, formally opened the Kayah State Day.

Afterwards, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi unveiled the archway of

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Message of Greetings by President U Win Myint at Naga New Year Festival-2020 held in Lahe Town in Naga Self-Administered Zone

(15 January 2020)

DEAR esteemed Naga ethnic nationals of the Union and all the national brethren in Naga Self-Administered Zone,

First of all I would like to express my appreciation and honor for this opportunity to personally attend the 2020 Naga New Year Festival. I also make a wish at this great occasion for the auspiciousness and good fortune of Naga people and all the national brethren in Naga Self-Administered Zone.

I firmly believe that the mists of Naga Mountain range, snows and mists, the natural beauty of forests and mountains, traditional costumes of the Naga people at the New Year Festival, ritual dances and gracious hospitality would be able to attract the hearts of local and foreign visitors.

It is learnt that the traditional festival is organized to share experiences of the previous year, to adopt best-laid plans for solving possible challenges in the New Year and to make wishes for good weather, abundant harvest of crops and vegetables, and to pray for good health and success of domestic animal breeding.

Since our Union Government assumed responsibility, we have focused on rule of law, socioeconomic development of people, national reconciliation, internal peace and the Constitution amendment process which is required for laying a firm foundation for the Democratic Federal Union. In working for socioeconomic development of the people, the government has been trying to maintain a harmonious balance among States and Regions, as well as all the ethnic national brothers and sisters in remote areas like the Naga Self-Administered Zone.

President U Win Myint delivers the address at the Naga Traditional New Year Festival. **PHOTO: MNA**

By using the budget allocations of the Union government and State government each fiscal year, relevant ministries are working for development of agriculture, livestock, transportation, education, health, economics and social sectors of Naga areas. The government has arranged to conduct development programmes and training courses for ethnic national people, and is also creating opportunities in line with local requirements. Moreover, support is being given to the students who have passed the matriculation exam to enable them to continue their studies in vocational schools and institutes of higher education.

Dear brothers and sisters of Naga region,

During the term of our Union Government we have been striving hard to implement development programmes in cooperation with Union Ministries, Region/State governments, and the leading bodies of self-administered regions/zones.

We have noticed that the Naga Self-Administered Zone remains undeveloped in education, health and other sectors due to poor transportation to this area. Both urgent short plans and long term plans are needed for multi-sectoral development in the Naga region. The Union Government, State government and the leading body of self-administered zones are carrying out the plans. The cooperation of ethnic brothers and sisters is important in these works.

One of the crucial requirements for the Naga Self-Administered Zone is construction of inter-town road network that links Lashi, Lahe and Nanyun townships. The road section between Lahe and Nanyun has been completed, and it is advised to finalize the remaining section between Lahe and Lashi after allocating budgets in respective fiscal years.

Naga ethnic brothers and sisters,

I really appreciate the effort of relevant departments in upgrading transportation in Naga Self-Administered Zone, and the officials are urged to improve the existing situation. Responsible persons need to work for harmonious development in the education and healthcare sectors for the Naga people. It is also required to continue working for betterment of economic and social sectors for the people in the Naga Self-Administered Zone.

Cooperation of the people plays a crucial role for the success of regional development programmes which require a mindset of taking individual responsibility with good will and enthusiastic efforts . Some civil service personnel in the area are the locals, while some others are from other regions. They all are urged to serve well for the region wholeheartedly to fulfill the needs of the Naga region as much as possible.

I conclude my message of greetings to the New Year Festival of Naga national people with the best wishes for the physical and mental wellbeing of our ethnic national brothers and sisters, fulfillment of their aspirations, good weather conditions, abundant crops, success in livestock breeding, and for peace, prosperity and development of the Union.

China-Myanmar Pauk-Phaw Friendship: Aesthetic photo exhibition held

A China-Myanmar aesthetic photo exhibition to mark their Pauk-Phaw Friendship was opened at the Strand Hotel in Yangon yesterday.

First, Mr Du Zhanyuan, Director-General of Foreign Languages Affairs Department of PRC, delivered an opening speech, followed by U Kyaw Win, Chairman of the Shwe Than Lwin Company, making greeting remarks.

Mr Xu Lin, Minister of the State Council Information Office of China, U Ye Naing, Director-General of Information and Public Relations Department, Director-General Mr Du Zhanyuan, Daw Than Than Nu, Chairwoman of U Nu Daw Mya Yi Foundation, U Khin Maung Lyn, joint secretary of the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS), Consul Mr Yang Shouzheng and Mr Xu Ling, in-charge of Chinese Cultural Center in Yangon, opened the ceremony by cutting ceremonial ribbons, followed by a group photo session.

Mr Xu Lin, Minister of the State Council Information Office of China, U Ye Naing, Director-General of Information and Public Relations Department, and officials open the China-Myanmar aesthetic photo exhibition in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

"Sein Aye Myint" puppet troupe, together with Wai Yan Maung Art & Entertainment" performed a Myanmar traditional puppet show.

Following the puppet dance, officials from China and Myanmar, and guests observed the photographs inside the exhibition hall.

Mr Xu Ling said the Chinese Cultural Center selected the photographs for the exhibition, especially which are depicting the history, scenery and lifestyle of China and Myanmar.

Mr Xu Ling continued that President Mr Xi Jinping will soon visit Myanmar, and 70th anniversary of China-Myanmar diplomatic relations is in 2020.

When President Mr Xi Jinping comes, a China-Myanmar Tourism Year activity will be conducted in Nay Pyi Taw. Supervised by the State Council Information Office of China and Chinese Embassy in Myanmar, the photo exhibition was organized by Foreign Languages Affairs Department of PRC, Pyithu Yokesone Journal, Chinese Cultural Center in Yangon and Shwe Than Lwin Group of Companies.—Yi Yi Myint

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

President, First Lady attend Naga New Year Festival - 2020

FROM PAGE-1

Naga Traditional Literature and Culture Central Committee Patron U Yu San Kyuu then spoke words of gratitude.

Next, Chairman U Kay Saing of the Naga Self-Administered Zone's Leading Body handed over a traditional Naga New Year gift to President U Win Myint, who handed over 4,000 rice bags and 3,000 sheets of zinc roofing provided by the Union Government for the development of Naga Self-Administered Zone in return.

This was followed by Union Ministers, the Regional Chief Minister, Northwest Command Commander and officials handing over cash assistance and other items for development of Naga Self-Administered Zone to Hluttaw representatives, Naga Self-Administered Zone's Leading Body members and other officials.

Next, the chair delivered the closing speech, extended good wishes on the nation and the citizens, and concluded the ceremony.

Afterwards, the President and First Lady cordially greeted the Naga ethnic residents at the ceremony and observed their traditional dance performances.

Next, the President and First Lady observed the exhibition booths for Naga traditional handicrafts and culture, struck a traditional drum, and observed the department exhibition booths for Naga New Year Festival – 2020.

In the afternoon, the President held a meeting with the Union Ministers, Sagaing Region cabinet, Hluttaw representatives, Naga Self-Administered Zone's Leading Body, department officials and local elders and discussed the need for cooperation in developing the Naga Self-Administered Zone.

President U Win Myint accepts a traditional spear presented by a local leader at the Naga Traditional New Year Festival. **PHOTO: MNA**

From there, the President and entourage visited the Theravada Buddhist Missionary Central Academy in Lahe Town and paid homage and made offertories to the presiding Sayadaw and members of the Sangha.

Later in the evening, the President, First Lady and entourage participated in the traditional bonfire festival to commemorate Naga New Year Festival – 2020.

Sagaing Region Chief Minister Dr Myint Naing, Naga Self-Administered Zone's Leading Body Chairman U Kay Saing and Naga Traditional Culture Committee Chairman U Paung Khu inaugurated the bonfire by lighting the flames. Traditional dance troupes of different tribes were then performed.

The President then presented cash rewards to each of the dance troupes.

Also attending the festival were Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Dr Myo Thein Gyi, Dr Myint Htwe, U Han Zaw and Nai Thet Lwin, Regional Chief Minister Dr Myint Naing, Regional Hluttaw Speaker U Than, the Commander of the Northwest Command Maj-Gen Soe Tint Naing, regional ministers, the Chairman and members of the Naga Self-Administered Zone's Leading Body, representatives of the Pyithu, Amyotha and regional Hluttaws, department heads, leaders of ethnic Naga tribes, the Patron and members of the Naga Traditional Literature and Culture Central Committee, local Naga ethnic residents, elders, invited guests and other officials.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

President U Win Myint, First Lady Daw Cho Cho, officials and Naga ethnic people struck the traditional drum at the Naga New Year Traditional Festival 2020 in Lahe in the Naga Self-Administered Zone, Sagaing Region yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Naga ethnic people participate in the the Naga New Year Traditional Festival 2020 in Lahe in the Naga Self-Administered Zone, Sagaing Region yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor attends 68th Kayah State Day ceremony

FROM PAGE-1

the Kayah State Day ceremony before the 68th anniversary Kayah State Day.

Leaders from nine ethnic tribes of Kayah chaired the ceremony.

The attendees saluted the State Flag and fallen leaders and heroes.

Next, local ethnic people entered the attendees with a song titled "Can't live without Peace."

Afterwards, Chief Minister of Kayah State U L Phaung Sho read the message sent from President U Win Myint to the Kayah State Day.

Next, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered the speech.

(The speech delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the 68th Kayah State Day is covered separately on Page-7).

After her speech, the State Counsellor, union ministers, Kayah State Chief Minister and officials posed for the documentary photos together with leaders of the nine ethnic tribes of Kayah and ethnic people.

Following the photo session, the State Counsellor took part in the traditional performance together with the cultural dance troupes of local ethnic people.

Afterwards, the State Counsellor visited the booths staged by departments at the ceremony.

Messages were sent by the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Kayaw Literature and Cultural Committee, Pa-O Literature and Cultural Committee, Danu Ethnic Affairs League (Central), Kayan Literature and Cultural Committee, Inter-Faith Group (Kayah State) and Shwe Loikaw (Kayah) Philanthropic Society in honor of the 68th Anniversary of Kayah State Day.

Following the ceremony, the State Counsellor and her entourage flew to Nganyo Village, Hsaungdular Village-tract in Dimawso Township, where they were welcomed by deputy ministers U Kyi Min and members of the Kayah State Cabinet, cultural dance troupes and local people.

Afterwards, the State Counsellor attended a ground breaking ceremony to construct the Pyitawthar Peace Pagoda in the village.

The archway of the 68th Anniversary Kayah State Day Ceremony in Loikaw. **PHOTO:MNA**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi opens the archway of the 68th Kayah State Day Ceremony in Loikaw yesterday. **PHOTO:MNA**

At the ceremony, the congregation led by the State Counsellor received the Five Precepts from Sayadaw Dr Zawana and presented the bricks decorated with jewels and offertories to the Members of the Sangha.

Afterwards, the State Counsellor laid the ruby brick at the site chosen and sprinkled scented water over it.

Similarly, Union Ministers Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, U Min Thu, Dr Aung Thu, U Ohn Win and U Thein Swe, Chief Minister U L Phaung Sho, members of the Kayah State Cabinet, laid the bricks decorated with jewels and sprinkled scented water over them. Afterwards, the State Counsellor and entourage returned Loikaw and enjoyed lunch together with leaders of ethnic tribes of Kayah, religious leaders and townselders.

Following the luncheon, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with U Banyar of the Kayini Human Rights, Khu Tu Rae of the Farmers Union, Khun Thomas of the Youths Union, Karcil Parah, a local farmer, Ma Helen of the Kayan Women Asiayone and Khu Ri Rae of the Kayah Liphu Youth Society.

At the meeting, Khu Tu Rae requested the State Counsellor to help settling land confiscation issue and farmers who were sent to prison and are facing for land issues; Khu Ri Rae to make arrangement for another negotiation with officials concerned to settle the Bogyoke Bronze Statue issue and Khun Thomas to build a youth centre for youths in Kayah State, to establish funds and to review the youth affairs policy. State Counsellor urged the local authorities to check the cases in detail in efforts to settle the cases and make arrangements to prevent similar cases in the future.

Regarding the Bogyoke Aung San Bronze Statue issue, the State Counsellor said she would not take a role in settling the issue as it was related with her father. However, she urged the Kayah State Government, youths and representatives from Kayah State and Union Government to meet as soon as possible in efforts to settle the issue.

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State Counsellor, union ministers, Kayah State Chief Minister and officials pose for the documentary photo together with leaders of the nine ethnic tribes of Kayah and ethnic people at the 68th Kayah State Day Ceremony in Loikaw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor attends 68th Kayah State Day ceremony

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sprinkles scented water on the brick laid for construction of a pagoda. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meeting with local youths and societies in Loikaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

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Following the meeting, the State Counsellor met with religious leaders, local people and townselders.

At the meeting, she expressed her delight for seeing the unity and peace among the people of different faiths and stressed the important role of the townselders in maintain peace and stability in their respective areas.In response to the reports, the State Counsellor said that the government takes account of minorities' rights, land confiscation cases in Kayah State will be discussed as soon as possible, all the citizens are invited to participate in peace process, the Hluttaw is making constitution amendment and the government is putting emphasis on upgrading transportation.

After the public meeting, the State Counsellor, Union Ministers, the Chief Minister of Kayah State and officials had documentary photos taken together with religious leaders, local ethnic people and town elders.

Then, the State Counsellor met with the locals at the Kayah State Hall in Loikaw.

We are very glad to visit Loikaw. I also thank the locals for their rousing welcome to us. We try to visit all the corners of the country as much as possible. But we hurried up with these visits as we had not much time. We could spend only about one and half hours for the meeting like this. We understand it is not enough time to deal with the questions of people. However, we really want to interact with the people as much as possible.

It is because we want to hear feelings, concerns, expectations of people. Although it is not possible to hear all of these from the whole country in a single meeting, I have noticed that these are general issues of common people. This shows we are living in the same country. Since I entered politics, I have found that people in other countries where I visited have common expectations, concerns and needs despite slight differences depending on the geographical locations. It has proved that we all are living in a single country. Some want to live separately, but I recommend living in unity and Union spirit. If we asked common people in different areas of the country, it will be found that they have similar feeling and concerns.

For example, we noticed that the farmers from central Myanmar, like Magway, have the same concerns as their counterparts in southern and eastern Shan State, although they have different languages. When we visited northern and eastern Shan State, we had to talk with the locals through interpreters as we do not understand local languages. Actually, they expressed their feelings and concerns like those from central areas of Myanmar.

Therefore, we are living on the same land, drinking the same water and taking the same boat. On the boat, we are affected by its conditions. We also need the same resources for living. It means we are drinking the same water. Our country is an agricultural country until now. So, we must seriously consider the issues of famers, such as ownership of agricultural land. It is also the same problem for the whole country.

Regarding the expectation of our people, they demand promotion of education after infrastructural developments in transportation, communications and electricity. People from every corner of the country say they hope better education. It is a high expectation. At present, our country is one of the least developed nations in the world. We must face this reality. However, they call for better education as they have expectation of better future for their posterity. We seriously take this into account. We need a better education for the development of the country and better economy of the State. However, a correct education system is required for unity and prosperity of the country. The education system must be developed to generate capable citizens as best as we can. These capable citizens must have capacity of multiple visions. A one-sided person is not a capable person. We advise the teachers to support their inquisitiveness of our young people and students.

Why don't the teachers like questioning from students? I draw a two-point conclusion. The first one is that teachers assume that they know better than the students, and that students are now allowed to raise questions. Students are just for listening and following instructions of teachers in the exams. The second one is that some teachers have low confidence, and they fear being questioned by students. They worry that they would not be able to answer those questions. Both of these mindsets must be changed by generating capable teachers with full confidence and good attitude to the students to get rid of worries about their capability. It must be understood that teaching-learning process is taking place between teachers and students reciprocally. Teachers can learn thoughts and idea of students.

This is also the same phenomena for the government and people. Both sides must develop capacities mutually. People can raise questions to the government. Only then, the administration can learn concerns of the people. However, such relations could help people know the government's aims, objectives, difficulties and challenges. During the public meetings, we were asked for transportation and electricity. These are related with development programmes. We have to remind that we are working for the whole country, instead of any specific State and Region, and any single town or village. We have to fulfill their requirements proportionally. For example, the amount of food for a six-month baby will not be equal to that of a ten-year old one. They will need different amounts of food.

Fairness is considered on the proportion of demand and supply.

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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meeting local people in Loikaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor attends 68th Kayah State Day ceremony

FROM PAGE-5

We will supply Kayah State with all the possible supports, while we are trying for other areas. It is our duty. So I am advising all the citizens to develop a spirit of unity. The issues of roads, bridges, electricity and agriculture are common problems of the whole country. All of our people are encountering common challenges from these sectors. We must consider how to help each other who are in the same boat. We must paddle the boat to the same destination, instead of heading to the different directions.

If there are 10 persons on the boat, they all must put their efforts in moving the boat forward. If they divided into two groups of fives and paddled to the different directions, the boat will not move on. Even if one person was doing the opposite, the boat will not get a momentum to some extent. As we are in the same boat, we must try in unity by making a common agreement on the destination. So, all of our citizens need to consider about the destination of our country. As we are heading to a genuine democratic State, we all must concentrate on it. This advice is for the whole country because many people do not try to identify the needs for our Union.

I often suggest please consider at least once a day about the requirements for our country. This consideration will help for the development of our country.

If the requirements could be identified, plans for handling these issues could be imagined in the next step, followed by implementations. It is not for the development of a specific State, but for prosperity of the whole country. I also request to make collective efforts for the development of our country.

During the question and answer session, the submitted questions included road constructions, electricity supply, tele communications, markets for local agricultural produce, compensations for seized lands, irrigation for villages, release of confiscated lands, requirements of urine and kidney doctors, upgrading hospital in Dimawhso, assignment of a doctor for Shadaw Township, establishment of Myanmar Economic Development Bank in Dimawhso, wrong naming of Lisu people as Lishaw, and citizenship application system.

The five persons who won lots for questioning from outside the Hall raised queries about construction of inter-village road, expansion of village areas, construction of water retaining wall and religious building, appointment for civil service staff to locals, compensation for lands, release of arrested persons for land disputes, and protest against a dam on Thanlwin River.

Union Ministers U Min Thu, Dr Aung Thu, Deputy Minister U Aung Htoo, ministers of State government and Permanent Secretary Dr Thet Khaing Win discussed possible immediate actions and long term plans.

The State Counsellor concluded that the questions have shown poor relations between the State government and the locals, and advised more interactions with common people to fulfill their needs.

She also discussed the appointments of locals for the public services, land compensation and release of confiscated lands, consequences of national level projects and benefits for the local residents.

After having the documentary photos taken, the State Counsellor visited Buddha Park in Loikaw and paid homage to the Buddha Image.

The State Counsellor waters the Cherry Tree. **PHOTO:MNA**

Then, the State Counsellor attended Japan-Myanmar Friendship Cherry Trees Planting Festival to mark the 68th Anniversary of Kayah State Day.

I am very appreciate for organizing the Japan-Myanmar Friendship Cherry Trees Planting Festival on the Kayah State Day. The first Japan-Myanmar Friendship Cherry Trees Planting Ceremony was held in Nay Pyi Taw in January 2017. Cherry trees are significant in Japanese culture. These flowers represent beauty and elegance. Although these flowers bloom only a short time, they are very beautiful. Good persons are sometimes compared with Cherry flowers. Even such persons did not live long in life, they could lead their lives beautifully.

The planting ceremony is to demonstrate that our country and our national people value elegance, beauty, loyalty and capacity to lead their lives attractively. The festival also represents friendship relations between Myanmar and Japan as the two countries have co-existed friendly for many years. Both of us encountered the good and the bad. However, we emphasized only the positive points to strengthen our relations.

Therefore, Cherry planting ceremony represents friendship relations of our countries. It has proved to be a successful establishment of friendship relations between the two countries with different cultures, different countries and different people. It also reveals that our national people need to build peace, friendship and stability each other.

I also express thanks to all the dignitaries at the festival. The Cherry trees will not bloom overnight. It will take a certain time. It was also leant that researches were carried out for some years to be able to grow cherry trees in Myanmar. Our country has different soils and atmospheres from those of Japan. Research works would need a lot of efforts for successful grow of Cherry trees in this country. We must continue working for the bloom of Cherry flowers. We must also try for it. I hope Cherry flowers will give good lessons for us. These trees will not surely bloom next year. It took some years to grow Cherry trees, and then the flowers will turn out. We would enjoy the beauties of these flowers in the future. So, the festival is organized to mark long-term friendship relationship between Myanmar and Japan. I also wish to organize such auspicious events to honour Kayah State Day in the future.

After the Cherry trees planting festival, U Ye Tun Oo, the member of National Tourism Development Committee and the Myanmar-Japan Tourism Promotion Committee, expressed thanks. Then, the State Counsellor, Union Ministers, the Chief Minister of Kayah State and officials had documentary photos taken and grew Cherry trees at the designated places.

The State Counsellor and party arrived back to Nay Pyi Taw by special flight in the afternoon.—MNA

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye receives UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye meets with Ms Virginia Gamba, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO:MNA**

UNION MINISTER for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye welcomed Ms Virginia Gamba, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and party at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, the Union Minister discussed improvement of issue in children and armed conflict, compared with the situations before May 2018 when the Special Representative made a visit to Myanmar. Myanmar enacted the Child Rights' Law in 2019, which includes one chapter to protect children in armed conflicts, ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 27 September 2019, and formed the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Prevention of the Six Grave Violations during Armed Conflict on 7 January 2019.

The Union Minister also talked on rehabilitation works for children and youth, education and healthcare services for them and future programmes for their roles in building a Democratic Federal Union.

The UN Special Representative discussed to make the world know these improvements, to seek assistance from international communities as these works required financial, manpower and technical resources, and to adopt long term plans for rehabilitation works.

She also advised to discuss the issues of children in the ongoing peace talks to prevent them from child labour and human trafficking cases and from the risks of landmines.

She also asked for accelerating these works to meet the target of 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Union Minister and the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative also discussed the future plans for protection of children.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Speech delivered by State Counsellor on the occasion of the 68th Anniversary of the Kayah State Day celebrations

It's a great pleasure for us to be present on the occasion of the 68th Kayah State Anniversary. Celebrating a State day is possible because we are celebrating a part of the Union. So no discrimination must exist between the Union and the State. Instead, it is very important to have the Union and the states always stand side by side. Since we have regained our independence, we have successfully founded the Union. The Union Spirit, the attitudes of the Union and the values of the Union can be witnessed almost everywhere in a state like the Kayah State. This State has a rich variety of national races who have lived together happily on this land for many years since the days of our forefathers.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivers the address. **PHOTO: MNA**

Naturally, the emblem of the Kayah State is the flying couple of the legendary birds the Keinnari and the Keinnaya. The meaning of this symbol represents loyalty, fidelity and faithfulness. People say these romantic birds can't be separated, since one cannot live without the existence of the other. This carries the profound implications that in order to have the survival of the Union, the States can't be separated, and vice versa. I'd like to highlight the fact that it is only when we move forward with genuine loyalty and the true spirit of the inseparable Union and the states that we will be able to establish the nation we wish for. I was happy to listen to the song our little children sang for us. One line in the lyrics goes: Peace is a must. This concept indicates that peace is the basic need of our country, which I believe the people of the Kayah State understand and accept very well. A state may have been devoid of peace for some time, but when peace has been restored to the state, when ceasefire exist in the regions, there comes progress in the locality, which all national races do not fail to witness. Look at these little children, placing, not guns, but violins on their shoulders, and giving us strength of mind, as well as immense delight, through music. Now they have the blessings of pursuing their education peacefully. Therefore, if we really wish for the progress of our country, we all must cherish in our hearts the truth that peace is a must. From within comes Peace. Only if you have the will for Peace, Peace will be restored. Hence, it is of crucial importance for all our national races to be provided with Peace. Ours is the dream of founding our country as the Democratic Federal Union. And we've been striving for realizing that dream. This, as you see, is highlighted in the message from the President. So, if we really want our country to be the democratic, federal Union, we must pay special attention to each and every word of this name. What do we mean by "the democratic, federal Union"? What aim should we set out for? Of course, the word "democracy" is a very popular catchword. This word has been quite familiar to all of our people, but people differ and their understanding of the word differs. We can't probe into the mind of each and every individual to find out how far they understand the concept. However, to speak exactly from the political point of view, democracy stands for the government of the people. The government established with the representatives elected by the people is the democratic government. Why do we want to build such a democratic, federal Union? Why do we want to build such a democratic nation? This is because we want to provide full guarantees for the rights of our people. There's no one else, except you, who could effectively protect your own rights. Every citizen has to protect his or her own rights, and under the democratic system, every one is responsible for safeguarding the rights of his or her nation. My dear brothers and sisters of the nation, I'd like to draw your attention to the fact that we must not only enjoy our rights but we also have responsibilities.

You want the democratic rights, but if you do not want to carry out the democratic responsibilities, I must say this is only fifty percent democracy. But keep in mind that with only fifty percent democracy, it's no way to build a perfect country. We want democracy because we want to safeguard the rights of our people, and we want our people to cultivate the sense of responsibility and dutifulness, and promote the caliber of performing the duties to the best. Therefore, our government has focused our attention to the sectors of health and education. Through these sectors, we hope we can upgrade the caliber, as well as the morale, of our people.

It goes without saying that only a child enjoying good health can do learning. It is only on the right path of education that our way of thinking will be right. So we must inculcate in our young minds the ideology that Peace is a must. Yes, Peace is a must. If Peace is lacking, there's no chance for our country to make progress, never develop. If we fail to build a developed country, as the vicious circle goes, we cannot make peace ever lasting and strong. It is very important that this kind of concept must be inculcated in the minds of our little children. As you all know, some adult minds, being too much fossilized, are not easy to accept the change. But if you really want a change, you can change at any time. No matter how old you are, you can change your mindset within a minute, within a second. So, while schools train our little children to adopt democratic spirit, our elderly people should train them at home to practice this spirit.

If we have adopted the spirit of democracy among our family members, in our local community, and are ready to serve the duties for the cause of all, if we rightly safeguard the rights related to all and everyone, then we are doing for the cause of democracy. Concerning the federal system, we must think why we want to follow the federal system.

Our country being composed of a rich variety of national races, it is of vital importance for all our nationalities to stand united so as to build a strong nation, a peaceful prosperous nation. In fact, it is from our hearts that unity takes place. Where there is unity, there's equality. In the case of two friends, to make friends, both must enjoy equality: if one is taking too much advantage, there could be no equality, and so no chance for making friendship. So, in the case of our country, if we wish for harmony and unity among our nationalities, there must be equality among us. We need equality, and at the same time, we must have the strong belief that we are enjoying equality. That is why we are heading towards the federal system. Like the word "democracy", the word "federal system" has been familiar to our people. What does it mean? How many of our people have pondered over its meaning? I just wonder. It's a political system. There's the mainland, there are states and divisions, the mainland and the parts of the country. It is necessary to have equal rights and responsibilities enacted in accordance with the laws.

Because it is a system in which equality is guaranteed and maintained under the laws, we aim at marching towards this federal system. We aim at achieving democracy because we believe we can safeguard the rights of our people and promote the sense of responsibility among our people, because we believe it is the people alone who can best safeguard the interest of the people. We aim at implementing the federal system because it is through the federal system that we can maintain the everlasting peace of a country composed of a rich diversity of national races, as well as the everlasting political stability and the progress based on the eternal trust among ourselves. But there's the umbrella term, the Union, under which both democracy and federal system come. We are now striving to build the democratic, federal Union.

Whenever I have a chance, I always seize the opportunity to talk about the Union. It's a very beautiful word, very graceful. It's of vital importance for all of us to cherish the underlying meanings of this word. The word 'Union' means a country built with the collective forces. This implies that such a country, built with collective strengths, is quite unlike those countries with no collective strengths. I'd like to stress that it is only when we have transformed our differences, our diversity, into strengths that we can build a Union. But it's no little power to make such astounding transformations. We can't get that power overnight. That's why we should go step by step, collect our strengths from the diversity and promote our caliber into empowerment. How can we promote our caliber? Well, it's through individual endeavours. Each and every one of us must endeavor. So we all brothers and sisters of the Union should think whether, in our daily life, our way of thinking and our actions have been in line with the Union spirit. We speak a word, and should think, "Does this word support the building of unity among ourselves?" Or does it damage the process of building the unity? Is our action supportive, or destructive, towards the building of unity? Is our way of thinking directed towards, or diverted from, the building of unity?

If we always keep ourselves alert about the Union spirit, we can unfailingly build a peaceful, prosperous country. Especially, all our local people know well the differences before the ceasefire agreement and after this laudable agreement in Kayah State. Therefore, we all need a ceasefire agreement. We all need peace.

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Strength from diversity can help tackle challenges

PEACE is sine qua non for our country, which is a union and home to diverse ethnic races.

The hopes and concerns and the needs of the people in every region of the country are the same. This reflects that our country is a Union. Without internal peace, development work in ethnic areas would not be effective and it would not benefit the local ethnic people as much as it should.

> In fact, the Union stands on the collective strength of our diversity. Each citizen needs to use the capacity of turning our diversity into strength.

We all live on the same land and drink the same water. We all are travelers on the same boat. The resources we all rely on for our livelihood are the same.

For the perpetuation, peace, and development of the Union, we need to build unity among our ethnic people. To build unity, equitable opportunities or equal rights are necessary. That's why our country is now marching towards the goal of establishing a Democratic Federal Union, which can guarantee equal rights to all people, protect their rights, and promote the spirit of responsibility among the people.

Our Union Spirit influences both the democracy and the federal system. In fact, the Union stands on the collective strength of our diversity. Each citizen needs to use the capacity of turning our diversity into strength.

To establish a federal Union and the unity of all diverse people, armed conflicts need to end. Only when peace prevails can the local people enjoy the fruits of development.

The government alone cannot bring development to ethnic areas. To achieve this, we need all hands on deck — the administrative machinery in the regions and states, departmental staff, parliamentarians, and those working for the judiciary sector.

The administrative machinery must guarantee freedom and security to all the ethnic people. In other words, it must underpin the rule of law. The executive pillar must uphold justice or we won't be able to build stability. Justice is the birthright of all ethnic people and all citizens.

At the same time, the legislative sector needs to enact laws when necessary in order to protect the rights of the people of the country.

The judicial machinery must be operated in accordance with the Union Judiciary Law to ensure that all are deemed equal before the law.

On the part of the people, they must abstain from deeds and thoughts which can weaken unity. As long as we all adhere to the Union Spirit, our country will enjoy prosperity.

To achieve this, every citizen is obliged to take responsibility. We need not rely on the government or anyone else. Our collective strength can help us overcome all challenges.

■■■

Writing a New Chapter in Our Millennia-Old Pauk-Phaw Friendship

By Xi Jinping (President of the People's Republic of China)

AS we mark the 70th anniversary of China-Myanmar diplomatic relations, it gives me great pleasure to pay a state visit to Myanmar at the invitation of President U Win Myint. I visited this beautiful land in 2009, and was deeply impressed by its serene landscape, diverse cultures and hardworking people. With the upcoming visit, I look forward to renewing China's "pauk-phaw" ties with Myanmar and discussing our future cooperation.

China and Myanmar are close neighbors connected by shared mountains and rivers. Our people have lived alongside each other for thousands of years. In Myanmar language, pauk-phaw means siblings from the same mother. It is an apt description of the fraternal sentiments between our two peoples, whose close ties date back to ancient times. As early as the 4th century BC, our ancestors began to trade with each other through the "Gold and Silver Road" linking China's Sichuan and Yunnan provinces with Myanmar and India. In the heyday of China's Tang Dynasty in the early 9th century, the Prince of Pyu led a troupe of dancers and musicians on a visit to Chang'an (the capital of Tang Dynasty known today as Xi'an). Their enchanting performance was celebrated by Bai Juyi, the foremost Chinese poet of his time, in an ode to music from the kingdom of Pyu. Soon after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Myanmar was the first of countries with a different social system to recognize New China. The elder statesmen of our two countries have since made enormous efforts to develop China-Myanmar relations. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, who visited Myanmar nine times, is still fondly remembered for celebrating Thingyan Festival together with the people of Myanmar while dressed in traditional local attire.

Throughout the 70 years of our diplomatic ties, China and Myanmar have together championed and put into practice the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Our relationship has been marked by mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual support. It has become a prime example of equality, win-win cooperation and common development between countries of different sizes. Our close ties have delivered real benefits to people in both countries.

> In China and Myanmar, people have similar sayings to the effect that more exchanges will bring families and friends closer together. In this 70th anniversary year, China-Myanmar relations stand at a new starting point.

— We have further cemented political mutual trust. In the 1960s, Myanmar became the first among China's neighbors to settle the boundary issue with China in the spirit of equal consultation, mutual understanding and mutual accommodation. Today, our two countries enjoy close high-level exchanges, and our comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership is growing steadily. China firmly supports Myanmar in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions. China supports the efforts of the Myanmar government to promote peace and reconciliation, and supports Myanmar in safeguarding its legitimate rights and interests and national dignity in the international arena. Myanmar, for its part, has given China staunch support on issues involving China's core interests and major concerns.

— We have further expanded our practical cooperation. The economies of China and Myanmar are highly complementary, promising great room for cooperation. China has long been Myanmar's largest trading partner and most important source of investment. Our bilateral trade reached US$16.8 billion in the first 11 months of 2019. More and more agricultural and livestock products from Myanmar are making their way to Chinese kitchens. Fruitful cooperation is taking place in infrastructure construction and many other fields. With Myanmar as an important partner country of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), our two sides have capitalized on the convergence of our development strategies. We have signed cooperation documents on building the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) and established a joint CMEC committee to oversee steady progress.

— We have further strengthened people-to-people bonds. Our vibrant cultural, religious and personnel exchanges provide solid support for deepening our pauk-phaw friendship. China's national treasure, the Buddha tooth relic, was displayed four times in Myanmar for public obeisance. With donations from Myanmar, a Myanmese-style shrine has been built at the White Horse Temple in Luoyang, Henan province of China. With the help of Chinese doctors and nurses, many cataract patients in Myanmar have had their sight restored and children with congenital heart disease have received proper medical care. Popular Chinese films and TV programs have found a wide audience in Myanmar.

This year, China will achieve its First Centenary Goal of ushering in a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Myanmar is making continuous progress in economic and social development. As we mark the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic relations, it is important that we carry forward our traditional friendship and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, so that we will bring China-Myanmar relations into a new era.

Buddha's tooth relic from China is conveyed to Myanmar for public obeisance.

Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, who visited Myanmar nine times, is still fondly remembered for celebrating Thingyan Festival together with the people of Myanmar while dressed in traditional local attire.

— We need to draw a new blueprint for bilateral ties by strengthening strategic communication. Our two sides may continue to harness the vital role of high-level exchanges in guiding our relations, step up communication and coordination at all levels and share development experience. It is important that we continue to show strong mutual support on issues concerning each other's core interests. By deepening our comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership with a strategic and long-term perspective, we will make the idea of building a community with a shared future take root in the hearts and minds of our people. China supports Myanmar in advancing the peace and reconciliation process through political dialogue. The two sides may work together to ensure peace and stability along our border.

— We need to bring new impetus to our mutually beneficial cooperation by deepening trade and economic exchanges. Our two sides need to deepen results-oriented Belt and Road cooperation and move from a conceptual stage to concrete planning and implementation in building the CMEC. Efforts need to be made to promote the three pillars of the CMEC, namely the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone, the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone and the New Yangon City. We also need to deepen practical and mutually beneficial cooperation in such areas as connectivity, electricity, energy, transportation, agriculture, finance and livelihood to deliver more benefits to both peoples.

— We need to add new substance to our pauk-phaw friendship by scaling up exchanges and mutual learning. Our two sides have designated 2020 as the China-Myanmar Year of Culture and Tourism. Myanmar's charming natural scenery and fascinating cultural heritage will surely attract more and more Chinese tourists. To celebrate the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic ties, the two sides will host a string of events to expand exchanges and cooperation on education, religion, media, movies and TV programs. Such joint events will help strengthen public support for China-Myanmar friendship, thus cementing and re-energizing our pauk-phaw friendship.

— We need to make new progress in regional peace and stability by enhancing coordination and cooperation. Confronted by rising unilateralism and protectionism, our two countries need to strengthen coordination and collaboration in the multilateral fora, such as in the United Nations and within the framework of East Asia cooperation and Lancang-Mekong cooperation. In this new era, we need to champion the spirit of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, encourage efforts to foster a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation, and strive to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

In China and Myanmar, people have similar sayings to the effect that more exchanges will bring families and friends closer together. In this 70th anniversary year, China-Myanmar relations stand at a new starting point. Let us work hand in hand to build an even closer China-Myanmar community with a shared future and write a new chapter for our millennia-old pauk-phaw friendship.

■■■

Speech delivered by State Counsellor on the occasion of the 68th Anniversary . . . .

FROM PAGE-7

It is through peace that we can make progress. And we should consider how we can continue to maintain this state of progress. You may note that the President's message highlights that Loikaw has been given recognition for winning the ASEAN Clean Tourist City Award. This marks the collective contributions of all, the contributions of our Union government, the contributions of the State Government, especially the local people.

I'd draw your attention to the fact that if you want to develop your state, it's you who take the first step. Don't rely on the government or others. It's you who should start. If you want a clean township, every local person must keep his or her surroundings clean, and you get your environment clean. The government alone cannot keep the whole town clean without the collaboration of the local people.

Some people, I'm sorry, not some people, I am sure, not many in the ASEAN Region know the name of the town Loikaw. They have never heard of the town. But through the ASEAN, this unfamiliar town has won the pride of winning the ASEAN Clean Tourist City Award. Who did it? Well, it was you who did it. Was it you alone who did it? No. It was through the collaboration with other hands that you all made a success in the matters like this. Indeed, the credit goes to our Kayah State.

However, if we do not stand united among ourselves, this would make a disastrous effect on the progress we have already achieved. Progress does not always go straight. It depends on your diligence, perseverance, and your dedicated efforts. Sometimes, progress and backwardness go hand in hand. You may have made some progress, but there's no guarantee that this progress will go on forever. You just can't ignore the ongoing progress. We must nurture it every minute, just like we care about our health conditions. Health is to be taken care of, not one single day, but only if we care about our health every day can we keep ourselves fit and strong. So while our people of the Kayah State are feeling proud of the laurels of success, you may make an overall view and find out any weaknesses, if there is any, and make efforts to overcome this weakness. I believe you all have the power and caliber to overcome your weaknesses and shortcomings.

Please go over the song of our little children in your mind. They sang the song, Peace is a must (Can't live without Peace.). Do you think these little kids had the opportunities like this five years ago or ten years ago? Let alone playing violin and giving entertainment to the audience at the state level. Think how many of the children had enjoyed the favourable circumstances for school going? This is, I must say, the Fruit of Peace. This is the bright future of our children. Only if the future of our children shines brightly, the future of our country will shine. Children, or youths, are our future. Of course, in the course of the Law of Impermanence, our older generations have to leave this world one generation after another. However, our younger generations must have the caliber to make a better state, a better Union of ours, a better world of ours. For this purpose, we the present generation have this responsibility to carry out to the best of our abilities.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that our Kayah State will strive on with the spirit of the Keinnari and the Keinnaya, the symbol of the State, never to part, but ever to be loyal and faithful, till we have established the democratic, federal Union. I believe you have all the calibers to strive on successfully, and we promise we will also make collaborations with you. I pray for you, May all the nationalities living in the Kayah State, all the local people of the Kayah State, be able to serve for the interest of the State more and more. May you be able to serve for the interest of our Union. May you be able to make progress in all sectors such as social, politics and economic May you be able to safeguard and consolidate these outcomes of progress, and leave this good heritage for posterity!. *Thank you.*

(Translated by Dr. Zaw Tun)

VP U Myint Swe presides over 11th private sector development committee meeting

VICE PRESIDENT U Myint Swe called for stronger cooperation between public and private sectors in his address to the 11th Private Sector Development Committee Meeting yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

The meeting at the Ministry of Commerce was attended by PSDC Vice Chairman Union Minister for Commerce Dr Than Myint, Union Ministers U Thant Sin Maung and U Win Khaing, Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo, Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win, Central Bank of Myanmar Deputy Governor U Soe Thein, Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of five work committees, officials from Ease of Doing Business Ranking Promotion Working Group, Permanent Secretaries, directors general, the General Secretary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Chairman of Myanmar Industries Association and departmental officials.

The Vice President, in his capacity as the Chairman of PSDC, said the term of committee has been three years as it was formed on 24 October 2016 with 20 members to implement the five objectives for private sector development, led by three deputy ministers and two permanent secretaries.

The PSDC has passed a total of 87 resolutions, and of which 79 points have been implemented, and the remaining 8 points are being undertaken.

Vice President U Myint Swe addresses the 11th Private Sector Development Committee Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO:MNA**

The committee received 369 suggestions from 31 monthly meetings with private firms till December 2019, and these issues have been replied by the relevant ministries, Nay Pyi Taw Council, Region/State governments, five work committees through the UMFCCI. The Vice President urged the officials to increase their momentum for implementations by designing systematic work plans.

A World Bank report listed Myanmar in the top-20 improvers in Doing Business 2020 by six points from 171st place to 165th place out of 190 countries on the index, proving certain improvement of the country. The Vice President also expressed thanks to the relevant organizations and international agencies for the success.

In the report of Doing Business 2020 Report, Myanmar was listed in the top 20 countries for ease of doing business in the five sectors of Starting a Business, Dealing with Construction Permits, Registering Property, Protecting Minority Investors and Enforcing Contracts.

The country remains unchanged in two sectors of Foreign Trade and 'Settlement of Indebtedness' and has declined in three sectors of 'Availity of Loan', 'Taxation' and 'Access to Electricity'.

Vice President U Myint Swe also advised to implement suggestions for improving ease of doing business in Myanmar in 2020 made by the International Finance Corporation through short, medium and long term plans.

He added the relevant departments are upgrading laws, bylaws, rules and policies to be able to promote Myanmar in the next edition of 2021 Ease of Doing Business Ranking, and these developments should be learnt by other state agencies and private firms for their better cooperation.

Vice-Chairman of the Committee and Union Minister for Commerce Dr Than Myint explained the committee's works for development of private sector and improving ease of doing business.

Secretary of Committee and Permanent Secretary U Aung Soe explained discussed the implementation of resolutions in the previous meetings.

Ministry of Education Director-General Dr Aye Myint, Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Maung Maung Win, Union Attorney-General Office Permanent Secretary Dr Daw Thida Oo, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Commerce U Aung Soe, and Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry Permanent Secretary U Tun Tun Naing discussed the relevant topics. Secretary of Ease of Doing Business Ranking Promotion Working Group and Permanent Secretary U Aung Soe explained the working process of his committee for improvement of each indicator.

Committee members Union Ministers U Thant Sin Maung, and U Win Khaing, Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo, Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win, CBM's Deputy Governor U Soe Thein and UMFCCI General Secretary U Aye Win discussed construction of e-Government data centres, electricity supply, legal issues, economic development of the country, foreign investments, financial reforms, loans and supports to private firms.

Permanent Secretary U Aung Soe presented resolutions of the 11th PSDC meeting and the committee approved nine of them.

The Vice President coordinated the discussions and delivered a closing remark on the meeting.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

New documentary TV series on Chinese history launched

THE documentary TV series 'Marching on the Main Road' was introduced in a launch ceremony held at Rosewood Hotel, Yangon, at 2 pm yesterday.

Firstly, Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint met with Mr Xu Lin, Minister of the State Council Information Office of China (SCIOC), at the guest hall of Rosewood Hotel and discussed matters related to information of both countries.

Next, the Union Minister and the SCIOC Minister attended the launch ceremony of 'Marching on the Main Road'.

Students of Pann Mudra group of the National University of Arts and Culture, Yangon, performed Myanmar traditional 'Bagan Khit Dance' and 'Pakan Dance' and opened the ceremony.

Union Minister Dr Pe Myint and SCIOC Minister Mr Xu Lin struck the ceremonial gong . **PHOTO: HLA MOE, ZAW MIN LATT**

Next, Counsellor Mr Yang Shou Zheng of the Chinese Embassy delivered the opening speech and Shwe Thanlwin Chairman U Kyaw Win gave an address.

Mr An Xiaoyu, Head of Asian and African Language Programme Centre of China Media Group, also gave an address, after which a sample of the TV series was played.

Afterwards, Union Minister Dr Pe Myint and SCIOC Minister Mr Xu Lin struck the ceremonial gong and announced broadcast of 'Marching on the Main Road' had begun. They then posed for a group documentary photo.

The documentary TV series is dubbed in Myanmar language and produced by China Media Group. It has 24 episodes that are each thirty minutes long. Starting from yesterday, the TV series can be viewed on Sky Net Knowledge TV channel at 7 pm daily.

The TV series includes Chinese President Mr Xi Jinping's modern socialist system thinking that contributes to valuable historical documentary visual art and a lot of information to show how within 70 years, successive communist leaders of China have led its citizens to revolution, formation and reforms towards the socialist system and the major results and valuable experiences along the way.

The TV series shows the exciting events and important milestones of the People's Republic of China during its period of paving a new path and also the daily lives of thousands of Chinese citizens.—Yi Yi Myint

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Think Tank summit explores China-Myanmar relations

AS the 70th anniversary of relations between China and Myanmar approaches, the Think Tank Scholars Summit on Myanmar – China Relations in the New Era was held at Lotte Hotel, Yangon, yesterday morning.

The event was organized by the Myanmar Affairs Study Group, an extension of the Research and Information Division (Yangon) under the Ministry of Information, and the Institute of Myanmar Studies (IMS) of Yunnan University.

Thirteen scholars from the university and seventeen from Myanmar discussed the advancements of Myanmar-China relations and additional benefits to expect in the future in a 4-part programme at the summit.

Firstly, U Aye Maung Kyaw of the Myanmar Affairs Study Group, Dr Aung Tun Thet of the Myanmar Peace and Investment Committee, and Mr Li Chenyang, the Rector of Yunnan University, delivered remarks on the basic needs of both countries and their main driving forces for establishing good future relations between the two. The summit then commenced and the first section of the programme saw discussions by U Ye Myint Kyaw on China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, Yangon Region Hluttaw representative Daw Sandar Min on constructing China-Myanmar relations bridge, Dr Zhai Kum on the latest development of the Belt and Road Initiative, U Aye Lwin on cross-border trade and investment, and Mr Chen Xiangqiu on the effects of the new Silk Road, Myanmar's national development, scope and benefits.

The Think Tank Summit to mark Myanmar-China Relations being held in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO:MNA**

In the second section of the programme, Dr Li Chenyang discussed the achievements and experiences of 70 years of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and China under the heading 'Myanmar-China Relations from Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Cooperation to the Community of Shared Futures'.

Dr Fan Hongwei also discussed on changes in the bilateral relations, Director U Thein Naing of the Ministry of Information discussed developments to Myanmar's film industry, and other scholars discussed the transparency in bilateral cooperation, assessment of 70 years of Myanmar-China relations and development.

Next, scholars discussed China-Myanmar education exchange in the third section and cooperation on addressing global and regional challenges in the fourth section of the programme. Scholars and experts from both nations also discussed the framework for bilateral cooperation, sustainable development projects and special economic zone development. As a result of these discussions, agreements were made to promote and strengthen Pauk- Phaw relations between the governments and citizens of both countries, expanding strategic affiliate cooperation, and laying a strong foundation for a society that shares future benefits between Myanmar and China.

Similar discussions such as this summit were held twice in 2019 and also arranged by the Myanmar Affairs Study Group and Institute of Myanmar Studies. This summit is the third to be organized and also aimed to commemorate 70 years of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

Scholars and officials from universities in Beijing, Shamen, Jinan and Yunnan and China Chamber of International Commerce, Hluttaw representatives, officials from Myanmar Peace and Investment Committee, Central Information Committee of the National League for Democracy and its Central Commerce Committee, professors from the Center for Economy, Environment and Society – CEES Myanmar, Yangon University's History Department, International Relations Department and Yadanarbon University, and officials from Myanmar Affairs Study Group participated in yesterday's summit.

The Myanmar Affairs Study Group was formed under the Research and Information Division (Yangon), Information and Public Relations Department, under the directive of the Union Minister for Information in July 2006. The group aims to redevelop research activities in Myanmar and publish research-based journals.

Yunnan University established the Institute of Myanmar Studies in December 2015 after reforming the previous Center for Myanmar Studies which was formed in 2011. It is one of two academic bodies for Myanmar studies in the world, with the other one formed in Northern Illinois University in 1986, and the only one of its kind in all of China.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

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Printed and published at the **Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory** at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the **Global New Light of Myanmar Daily** under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

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

14 wild elephant deaths in Mandalay in seven years

OVER the last seven years, 14 wild elephants died in Mandalay Region either due to natural causes or poaching, according to the regional Forest Department.

From 2013 until now, 14 elephants have died in Tabeikkyin and Singu townships in Pyin Oo Lwin District, including one in 2013, six in 2017, four in 2018, and two in 2020. While five elephants died of natural causes, nine were killed by poachers.

On 4 January, two elephants were electrocuted in the Shwe Oo Daung forest reserve in Tabeikkyin Township.

Officials from the Myanmar Police and the Forest Department have conducted three checks at two sites in Mandalay Region where animal parts have been recovered from.

Elephants have been included in the list of endangered species in Myanmar, according to the Forest Department. — Aye Cho

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Mowailut residents celebrate Naga New Year Festival

THE Naga New Year Festival was observed on 15 January by the Naga community in Mowailut of Sagaing Region.

The festival is traditionally celebrated in mid-January every year, after crops were harvested and before new ones are planted.

The festival is aimed at helping future generations understand the cultural heritage of the Naga ethnic people, showing the solidarity of Naga people living across the country, and maintaining peaceful ties with ethnic groups.

Government officials, invited guests, members of the Naga Literature and Culture Committee, Naga people, and local residents took part in the festival. During the celebrations, the committee members and the moderator remarked on the emergence of the Naga New Year Festival.

Naga ethnic women perform their traditional dances during the Naga New Year Festival in Mowailut on 15 January. **PHOTO: TOWNSHIP IPRD**

Young Naga people also performed the traditional Myay Wine dance and the Naga dance as part of the festivities. — Township IPRD

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Officials installing navigational aids along Ayeyawady River in Magway Region

An official installing a naigational aid near the Ayeyawady River in Magway. **PHOTO: ZAYYARTU (MAGWAY)**

NAVIGATIONAL aids are being installed along a 180-mile (289-kilometer) stretch along the Ayeyawady River in Magway Region for the safety of passenger and cargo ships, according to the Magway Region Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems.

The project was launched on 9 January. It will be implemented in four phases and cover 180 miles — 53 miles from Lanywar to Nyaungkya Pakokku Township; 42 miles from Nyaungkya to Minhla Town; 49 miles from Minhla to Aunglan Town; and, 36 miles from Aunglan to Sasanyan Village, Kanma Township.

A total of 100 navaids on the river bank and 180 navaids in the river will be installed this month, while 110 navaids on the river bank and 180 navaids in the river will be installed in February.

"For the safety of the passenger and cargo ships or water vessels, we are installing the marks onshore and offshore after inspecting the waterway so that vessels can cruise by on seeing the marks. We will show both danger signs and direction signs," said U Ko Ko Aung, Assistant Director of the Navigation Section.

The Department has designated the low water period from 15 November to 15 May. So, water depth may reach 5 feet in some parts of the Ayeyawady River. Meanwhile, water marks will be installed on some waterways which are difficult to travel on.

Although the department planned to install only 100 watermarks and 80 onshore marks, it will install more watermarks and onshore marks during the low water period, U Ko Ko Aung added.—Zayyartu (Magway)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Curtain falls on Germany's 'golden decade' of growth

BERLIN — German economic growth plummeted in 2019, official data showed Wednesday, providing fresh ammunition for debate about how to use fiscal surpluses to boost gross domestic product.

Europe's powerhouse expanded just 0.6 percent last year, compared with 1.5 per cent in 2018, federal statistics authority Destatis said in preliminary figures.

"Growth momentum ebbed significantly" last year, Destatis expert Albert Braakmann told reporters at a Berlin press conference.

But the office also noted that 10 successive years of growth had made for the longest expansion since German reunification in 1990.

Looking ahead, "the golden decade Germany has seen for growth is gradually coming to an end," said Holger Schmieding of Berenberg bank.

Trade conflicts, political upsets such as Brexit, slowing global growth and a near-unprecedented rate of change in the car industry have all weighed on Germany's manufacturing backbone in recent years.

"The difficult foreign trade environment meant permanent stress for German industry," said Fritzi Koehler-Geib, chief economist at KfW public investment bank. — AFP ■

Ardent book lovers visit The Big Bad Wolf book sale

Book lovers browsing the books at the Big Bad Wolf book sale in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

LITERATURE enthusiasts and avid readers from far and wide in Myanmar are filling The Big Bad Wolf at Fortune Plaza Myanmar Expo Hall in Thakayta Township, Yangon, to the brim as the world's biggest book sale opened for the 5th day yesterday.

People are offered a selection of reading materials from more than a million books on sale at low discount prices at the event from 10 to 20 January.

Event organizer U Myo Aung said the book sale has over ten thousand new varieties of books than last year and also has Myanmar literature on sale in addition to English books. He said they had introduced 13 major publishing companies this year and aim to increase that number in the year to come.

A collection of 1 million brand new English books are offered with amazing discounts of 50% - 90% off recommended retail price. The available genres range from bestseller titles, novels, science fiction, romance, literature, graphic novels, business books, self-help, architecture books, cookbooks and many more. Parents will also be able to find a wide offering of children's books for all ages such as storybooks, activity books, board books, coloring books, picture books, and interactive books.

Daw Khin Thein of Thakayta Township said she missed the first The Big Bad Wolf and made an effort to attend it this year. She said while her eyes don't allow her to read as much as she used to, she still admired the wide range of literature available at the event. She encouraged more youths to visit the event as it currently has the biggest selection of books anywhere.

Daw Lwin Lwin Hman from Kamayut Township said she came to purchase books for her grandchild and chose reading that would promote discipline and learning in children

The book sale was organized to support the Ministry of Information's literature promotion plan and expand reading habits among all citizens.

The Big Bad Wolf book sale was first held at Myanmar Event Park, Yangon, in January 2019 and a second time in June of the same year at Myanmar Convention Center, Mandalay.—MNA *(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)*

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ALS SATSUKI VOY.NO. (014W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ALS SATSUKI VOY.NO. (014W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP/MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES
Phone No: 2301185

Trade Mark Ads Call Thin Thin May, 09251022355,09974424848

MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE
EXPORT MARKETING & MILLING DEPARTMENT
INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER

1. MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE WILL SELL TEAK & HARDWOOD ROUND LOGS AND SAWN TIMBERS BY OPEN TENDERS IN US DOLLARS. PARTICULARS OF THE OPEN TENDER SALES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

(a) DATE & TIME - (23-1-2020) (09:00)A.M
(EX-SITE) HARDWOOD LOG ONLY
(24-1-2020) (09:00)A.M
YANGON & EX-SITE TEAK/HARDWOOD (LOG AND CONVERSION)
(27-1-2020)(12:00)Noon
YANGON TEAK LOG ONLY

(b) COMMODITIES & VOLUME
- TEAK LOGS ABOUT (1200) TONS
- THIRD QUALITY & UP TEAK CONVERSION ABOUT (180) TONS (EXPORT MARKETING & MILLING DEPARTMENT)
- THIRD QUALITY & UP TEAK CONVERSION ABOUT (152) TONS (WOOD BASED INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT)
- PYINKADO, KANYIN, INGYIN, SAGAWA, ABOUT (20067) TONS
- HARDWOOD LOGS **(INCLUDING 2018-2019 EXTRACTION YEAR)**

(c) PLACE - TAW WIN HALL, GYOGONE, INSEIN TOWNSHIP, YANGON.

2. FOR FURTHER DETAILED INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE HEAD OFFICE AND ALSO VISIT MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE WEB-SITE (www.mte.com.mm).
Contact; Office Ph; 01-528771, 01377296, E-mail: marketing1ppy@gmail.com

OPEN TENER COMMITTEE
MYANMA TIMBER ENTERPRISE

Expression of Interests sought for Private Sector Participation in Myingyan Steel Mill No.(1) Heavy Industrial Enterprise, Ministry of Planning, Finance & Industry

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar through the Ministry of Planning , Finance and Industry, is seeking expressions of interest from private sector entities interested in participating in the recommissioning and operation of the Myingyan Steel Mill.

The Myingyan Steel Mill is located near Sar Khar village, Myingyan Township in the Mandalay Region of Myanmar. The mill is approximately 3.3 miles west of milepost 450/0 on the Yangon Myingyan Highway. The production capacity is estimated to be approximately 1,883,000 tonnes per year.

The Government is willing to consider a range of proposals for different types of public private partnerships including the possibility of limited disposal of certain designated Product lines Currently located at the Myingyan Steel Mill.

The details of the current plant and assets will be set out in a Request for Proposals which will be available to bidders who express an interest in putting forward a proposal and have experience in respect of the commissioning or operation of a steel mill.

The interested parties may sent a letter expressing interest on company letterhead and duly signed by an authorized signatory with company seal. The letter should be titled "Expression of Interest: Myingyan Steel Mill – Tender Process 001/2020" and be addressed to:

Managing Director,
Office No.30, No.(1) Heavy Industrial Enterprise,
Ministry of Planning Finance and Industry,
Zeya Htani Road, Naypyitaw.
The last date for selling the Eol form is (14 February 2020)
The last date and time for receiving expressions of Interest
(17 February 2020), (03:00) PM.

For any clarification, please call
Ph - 067-3405158, 067-3405159, 067-3405322
Email - hie1.steel@gmail.com

Japan minister becomes first to announce paternity leave

Koizumi said it had been a difficult decision to balance his duties as minister and his desire to be with his newborn. **PHOTO: AFP**

TOKYO — Japan's environment minister said Wednesday he would take two weeks of paternity leave, the first time a cabinet minister has publicly committed to such a move in the country.

Shinjiro Koizumi, a media-savvy 38-year-old married to a former television anchorwoman, told a ministry meeting it had been a difficult decision to balance his duties as minister and his desire to be with his newborn.

"I want to take a total of two weeks off flexibly, making exceptions for important public duties," he said, adding he hoped his decision would help change perceptions and encourage other fathers to follow suit.

He will not take the weeks off consecutively and said he expected to work remotely or have shortened days during the leave period — which will be spread over three months from his child's birth.

The government's top spokesman backed the move, saying it was "important to create a conducive work-place atmosphere and social acceptance and support for men to ask for and take parental leave."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters that he hoped Koizumi's decision would have a positive impact on attitudes to male parenting.

There are no official records on whether cabinet ministers have previously taken parental leave, but Koizumi is the first to publicly announce he is doing so.

'Paternity harassment' cases

The son of a former Prime Minister, Koizumi was named environment minister in a cabinet reshuffle in September, becoming the third-youngest Japanese minister since the end of World War II.—AFP ■

Brunei hosts forum to promote ASEAN tourism

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN — The ongoing ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) Travel Exchange (TRAVEX) held in Brunei provides a platform to showcase ASEAN destination products and services, and promote inbound and intra travel within the region, coupled with structured appointments between ASEAN sellers and buyers.

According to ATF on Wednesday, ATF is a cooperative regional effort to promote the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region as one tourist destination. Meanwhile, the ATF TRAVEX is a platform for the selling and buying of regional and individual tourism products, which aims to provide convenient business-matching opportunities for suppliers of tourism products and services in ASEAN and for international buyers to meet and foster business relationships.

Visitors and reporters get on board a boat in the Water Village in Brunei's capital city Bandar Seri Begawan, 24 April, 2013. Dubbed as Venice of the East and situated along the Brunei River, Kampong Ayer is the world's largest water village, sheltering about 30,000 inhabitants. It covers an area of 2.6 square kilo-meters and consists of 10 villages whose building are constructed on the Brunei River. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Some 161 buyers from 43 countries or territories, including China, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Germany, the United States are attending the ATF Travex on Jan. 14-16.

The largest number of buyers are from China (11 percent), followed by the Philippines (7 percent), Singapore (6 percent) and India (six percent).

"Visit Malaysia 2020 will be featured at ATF TRAVEX 2020. We are eager to invite all industry players to unite and welcome 30 million tourists to Malaysia through the focus on sustainable tourism, arts and culture," said Noran Bin Ujang, director of International Promotion Division (Southeast Asia) of Tourism Malaysia.— Xinhua ■

Treason trial opens for Cambodia opposition leader

PHNOM PENH — The treason trial of Cambodian opposition leader Kem Sokha opened Wednesday, more than two years after his arrest in a case decried by his family as a "farce" and described by the US as politically motivated.

The 66-year-old co-founded the now-banned Cambodia National Rescue Party, once considered the sole viable opponent to the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led by strongman premier Hun Sen — who has ruled Cambodia with an iron fist for 35 years.

Sokha was arrested in 2017 and his party dissolved ahead of widely criticised elections the following year — leaving the CPP to canter to victory virtually uncontested.

The opposition leader was first detained in a remote prison then placed under house arrest before his bail conditions were relaxed in November last year. "I haven't committed any acts... detrimental to the national interests," Sokha said in a statement posted on his official Facebook page as the court sat. "My political activities were focused on the participation in free, fair and just elections."—AFP ■

NEWS In BRIEF

Family of dead Franco-Irish teen push for inquest in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR — The parents of a Franco-Irish teenager whose body was found in a Malaysian jungle are demanding an inquest after authorities ended investigations into the case, the family's lawyer said Wednesday.

The unclothed body of 15-year-old Nora Quoirin was discovered in August after a massive hunt through dense rainforest not far from the resort where the London-based family had been on holiday. Her parents say they believe there was a "criminal element" to her death as the teen had learning difficulties and would not have wandered off alone, but Malaysian police insisted there was no sign of foul play. The girl disappeared a day after arriving at the Dusun Resort, triggering a 10-day hunt involving hundreds of people, helicopters and sniffer dogs. Her body was found more than a mile from the resort.

An autopsy found Nora likely starved and died of internal bleeding after about a week in the jungle, police said in August, adding there was no indication she was abducted or sexually assaulted.— AFP ■

France notes member's request for UNSC meeting over Kashmir issue

NEW DELHI — France has taken note of a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) member's request to raise the Kashmir issue again in the council. However, the country's position remains 'unchanged' and the matter must be settled bilaterally between New Delhi and Islamabad, French diplomatic sources told ANI.

Earlier in the day, Radio Pakistan reported that the UNSC will meet on Wednesday to discuss the situation in Kashmir. "France has noted the request of a UNSC member to raise Kashmir issue again in this body. France's position is unchanged -- Kashmir issue must be settled bilaterally as we have stated on several occasions and will continue to reiterate to our partners on UNSC," sources said.—ANI ■

Iran's Rouhani calls for 'national unity' after jet downing

Rouhani appealed for national unity after angry protests in Iran over the accidental downing of a Ukrainian airliner. **PHOTO: AFP**

TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday called for "national unity" and flagged the need for changes to the way Iran is run after the accidental downing of a Ukrainian airliner.

Demonstrations have been held for four successive days in Tehran after the armed forces admitted to shooting down the Boeing 737 in a catastrophic error last week.

The air disaster claimed the lives of all 176 passengers and crew on board, mostly Iranians and Canadians and including many students.

Rouhani also said Iranians want "diversity" as he urged the electoral authorities to refrain from disqualifying would-be candidates for a February 21 general election.

"The people are our masters and we are its servants. The servant must address the master with modesty, precision and honesty," Rouhani said after a cabinet meeting.

"The people want to make sure that the authorities treat them with sincerity, integrity and trust," he said in the remarks aired live on state television.

Rouhani also said the armed forces should "apologise" and fully explain what happened in the air disaster, which came hours after they fired a wave of missiles at US troops stationed in Iraq.

The missile attack was launched in retaliation for a US drone strike that killed Iran's most prominent general, Qasem Soleimani, who headed the Revolutionary Guards' foreign operations arm. At least 59 mourners were trampled to death at a funeral procession for Soleimani in his hometown of Kerman, in southeast Iran, on 7 January. Iran has also been wracked by flooding since Friday that has claimed the lives of at least three people and left hundreds of villages cut off.— AFP ■

Anger in Scotland after British PM rules out new independence vote

Scottish National Party (SNP) leader and Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon speaks, Edinburgh, 13 December, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON — Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon hit back at British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday after he rejected paving the way for a new independence referendum for Scotland.

Prime Minister Johnson has written to the Scottish National Party l(SNP) leader saying that she and her predecessor Alex Salmond had made a personal promise that the first referendum in 2014 would be a once-in-a-generation vote.

Scottish voters backed remaining as part of the UK by 55 to 45 in the 2014 referendum.

"I cannot agree to any request for a transfer of power that would lead to further independence referendums," Johnson said. He said a further independence referendum would continue the political stagnation that Scotland has seen for the last decade.

"It is time we all worked together to bring the whole of the United Kingdom together and unleash the potential of this great country," Johnson told Sturgeon.

In Edinburgh, Sturgeon said Johnson's formal refusal of her request for a referendum to be held later this year was predictable but also unsustainable and self-defeating.

She insisted that Scotland will have the right to choose.

Responding to Johnson's letter, Sturgeon said: "They know that given the choice the overwhelming likelihood is that people will choose the positive option of independence." —Xinhua ■

Meghan could face estranged father in court over leaked letter: media

LONDON — Prince Harry's wife Meghan could face her father in court over the publication of a letter she wrote to him, British media said Wednesday, as she made a public appearance in Canada.

Meghan launched legal action against The Mail on Sunday's publishers in October after the tabloid printed a handwritten letter it had been shown by Thomas Markle.

The middle-market weekly newspaper has now issued its defence, leading to the possibility that Meghan and her father could be called to testify against each other.

Harry and Meghan are in the eye of a storm after sensationally quitting as full-time royals last week — before they had discussed their plans with Queen Elizabeth II.

Meghan has been the regular target of criticism in sections of the British press. **PHOTO: AFP**

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, as they are also known, are now in talks with senior royals about how their wished-for new roles could work. Final details are due in the coming days.

The prospect of a high court showdown only adds to the pressure on the couple.

Harry, sixth in line to the throne, married US former television actress Meghan at Windsor Castle in May 2018 following a whirlwind romance.

Her father, an award-winning former lighting director now living in Mexico, did not attend the wedding after staging paparazzi photographs and being hospitalised with chest pains in the build-up.— AFP ■

NEWS In BRIEF

Russia's Sergey Lavrov meets PM Modi, Jaishankar

NEW DELHI — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Wednesday.

The Russian Foreign Minister also met Jaishankar, who said that they held a "wide-ranging conversation" on the recent developments. "Pleasure as always to meet FM Sergey Lavrov of Russia. Wide-ranging conversation on recent developments. Reflected the comfort of our long-standing friendship," Jaishankar tweeted.

During his address at the Raisina Dialogue 2020, Lavrov advocated for permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) seats for countries including India and Brazil and said that developing countries should be given "adequate representation".

He further outlined that India and Russia have developed a special and privileged strategic partnership over the last few years.— ANI ■

Suspected Israel strike kills 3 Iran-backed fighters in Syria: monitor

DAMASCUS — A missile strike on a Syrian airbase that Damascus blamed on Israel killed at least three Iran-backed militiamen, a monitor said on Wednesday.

Four missiles hit the T4 base in Homs province, north of the capital, at around 10:00 pm (2000 GMT) on Tuesday, state news agency SANA reported, blaming the attack on Israel.

It said the strike caused damage but no casualties.

But the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least three Iran-backed militiamen were killed.

It said the strike damaged an Iranian arms depot, two military vehicles and a building still under construction.

Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said the dead were all non-Syrians, adding that Israel was likely behind the attack. He said both Iranian forces and Russian military advisers were stationed at the base, which has been hit by Israeli forces in the past.—AFP ■

Week-13 of Myanmar Futsal League ends with VUC in the lead

A striker from the VUC Futsal Club (red) kicks the ball towards the net during the Week-13 match of the Myanmar Futsal League yesterday at the National Indoor Stadium II in Yangon. **PHOTO: MFF FUTSAL**

THE Week-13 matches of the Myanmar Futsal League ended with the Victoria University College (VUC) Futsal Club in the lead. The matches were held yesterday at the National Indoor Stadium II in Yangon and proved to be thrilling.

The Victoria University College Futsal Club and Myanmar Imperial University Futsal Club managed big wins, while there was intense competition in five other matches which ended with a narrow result.

The Victoria University College (VUC) Futsal Club claimed a huge 9-0 win over the Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) U-19 Futsal Team.

The Myanmar Imperial University Futsal Club trounced Futsal Chit Thu Futsal Club by 7-0. The GV Futsal Club beat Do Do Ko Ko Futsal Club by 1-0, Myoma JY Futsal Club beat On Doctor Futsal Club by 4-2, AMM Brothers Futsal Club played to a 3-3 draw against Winner Futsal Club, and Dream Team Futsal Club beat Let Wel Thone Nara Futsal Club by a score of 7-4.

After the Week-13 matches, the Victoria University College Futsal Club is still leading the table with no losses, and the Myanmar Imperial University Futsal Club is in the second place with goal differences from the first placed team.

The GV Futsal Club is in the third place.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)■

Myanmar National League U-21 tourney to begin on 24 January

THE 2020 edition of the Myanmar National League U-21 tourney will begin on 24 January, under the supervision of the Myanmar Football Federation and the Myanmar National League, according to the MNL.

There will be 19 teams, including one newcomer, competing in the tourney, said organizers. The football clubs participating in the tournament include Ayeyawady United, Shan United, Yangon United, Hantharwady United, Yadanarbon F.C., Magwe F.C., Sagaing United, Zwekapin United, Rakhine United, Southern Myanmar F.C., Chin United, Institute of Sports and Physical Education F.C., Myawady F.C., Chin Land F.C., Mawrawady F.C., Kachin United, University F.C., Silver Stars F.C., and newcomer Yaw Myay F.C.

The matches will take place at the South Dagon sports ground, Yangon United Sports Complex, Padonmar Football Stadium, M3 sports ground of Bahan Township, and Salin Stadium.

The first round of the tourney will be held from 24 January to 28 May, according to a statement issued by the Myanmar National League. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Man Utd axe training camp over Middle East tensions

LONDON — Manchester United have called off a winter training camp in the Middle East due to fears over tensions in the region.

United have often used the Nad Al Sheba Sports Complex in Dubai as a warm-weather base in recent years, and the Old Trafford outfit were set to visit the venue in the upcoming first ever winter break for Premier League clubs.

But United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer confirmed those plans have now been shelved in the wake of the United States' killing of Iran's general Qassem Soleimani.

The incident has triggered a tense political mood in the region and Solskjaer admits United won't travel to Qatar due to security concerns.

"If there's one thing that worries me, it's not on the football pitch," Solskjaer said. "It's other things that worry me more.

"We were looking at the Middle East but that's definitely not going to happen."

Solskjaer indicated he would instead give his players some time off to spend alone during the winter break, which will follow United's home match against Wolves on February 1.

"I'm going to give them a few days off, so I don't know where they'll all scatter around but we'll stay in Europe," he said.

Solskjaer sees the mid-season break, introduced this season, as being vital for his players after an intense run of games.

With United still competing on four fronts, Wednesday's FA Cup third-round replay against Wolves at Old Trafford will be their 15th game in 49 days, and the number will reach 19 in 66 days by the time they meet again at the start of February.—AFP ■

Spurs sign Portugal's Gedson Fernandes with option to buy

LONDON — Portugal midfielder Gedson Fernandes became the first signing of the Jose Mourinho era at Tottenham on Wednesday as the manager bids to revive the club's Premier League campaign.

The 21-year-old signed an 18-month loan deal with an option to make the transfer permanent for a reported £56 million ($73 million).

Fernandes will provide vital cover in midfield following a three-month lay-off for Moussa Sissoko, who has had knee surgery.

"We are delighted to announce that we have reached agreement for the 18-month loan of Gedson Fernandes from Benfica with an option to make the transfer permanent," said a club statement.

Fernandes, capped twice at senior level, told Spurs TV he was looking forward to working with compatriot Mourinho.

"All young players want to work with Jose Mourinho because he's one of the best. All of us as players want to stay near the best, so it's fantastic to work with him."

"I have no words to say about the stadium because it is fantastic," he added. "I have never been or seen anything like this, It is unbelievable."

Fernandes was offered to Spurs by Mourinho's friend and super agent Jorges Mendes and they beat off competition from West Ham, who were keen to bring him to London.—AFP ■

Portugal midfielder Gedson Fernandes (left) has signed for Tottenham / © AFP/File