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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi poses for a documentary photo together with local people in Tamu Township in Sagaing Region yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor holds talks on development programmes with locals in Tamu Township

STATE COUNSELLOR Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Chairperson of the Committee for Development of Rural Areas and National Races, held a meeting with local people in Tamu Township in Sagaing Region yesterday.

Her entourage included Union Ministers U Min Thu, U Ohn Win and Dr Myint Htwe; Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Aung Thu and U Hla Maw Oo, Chief of Myanmar Police Force Police Lt-Gen Aung Win Oo and officials.

The State Counsellor met with the locals at the Satyaungbilu Stadium of the Tamu Township.

SEE PAGE-3

Press Statement on the decision by the ICJ on 'provisional measures' in the case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar

Myanmar Takes Note of ICJ Decision

There was No Genocide in Rakhine

THE Government of Myanmar takes note of today's decision by the International Court of Justice on 'provisional measures' in the case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar.

Myanmar has appeared before the Court in this case to assist the honourable Judges to make the correct factual findings on the proposition made by The Gambia that genocide occurred in Rakhine State in 2016-17. As concluded by the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) in its recent report, there has been no genocide in Rakhine. The Commission found that war crimes had occurred, and those are now being investigated and prosecuted by Myanmar's national criminal justice system.

SEE PAGE-2

Press Statement on the decision by the ICJ on 'provisional measures' in the case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar

FROM PAGE-1

It is important for Myanmar that the Court reaches a factually correct decision on the merits of the case. The unsubstantiated condemnation of Myanmar by some human rights actors has presented a distorted picture of the situation in Rakhine and affected Myanmar's bilateral relations with several countries. This has hampered Myanmar's ability to lay the foundation for sustainable development in Rakhine.

We should all be aware that one of the historical functions of the 'provisional measures' has been to protect the Court against possible accusations of failure take preventive action at the start of a case. As the Court stated, "the Court's decision given in the present proceedings in no way prejudges the question of the jurisdiction of the Court to deal with the merits of the case or any questions relating to the admissibility of the application or to the merits themselves".

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Dated, 23 January 2020

VP U Henry Van Thio addresses ethnic empowerment for national development

VICE President U Henry Van Thio, in his capacity as Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs, Public Affairs Management and Service Committee, delivered a speech at the coordination meeting concerning the Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival 2020 and the Ethnic Sustainable Development Forum yesterday morning.

Held at the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw, the meeting was also attended by Union Ministers U Ohn Maung and Nai Thet Lwin, regional and state Chief Ministers U Phyo Min Thein and U L Phaung Sho, Deputy Ministers U Aung Hla Tun, Dr Mya Lay Sein and U Tin Latt, state/regional ethnic affairs ministers, members of leading bodies of self-administered divisions/zones, and other officials.

Vice President U Henry Van Thio delivers the speech at the coordination meeting concerning the Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival 2020 and the Ethnic Sustainable Development Forum in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

The Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival will be held from 1 to 7 February, 2020, at Kyaikkasan Sports Ground, Yangon, while the Ethnic Sustainable Development Forum is currently slated to be held in May this year.

In his speech, the Vice President first recalled that the Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival was first held from 25 to 31 January in 2019, in the same location it will take place next month. He said the main dance this time will be the traditional Kayah monumental column dance.

He said the objectives of the festival are to assist the national peace process, showcase ethnic solidarity and culture to Myanmar citizens and foreign visitors, boost tourism, expand regional products and ethnic textiles to international markets, and create employment opportunities for ethnic youths.

The Vice President said this festival can be likened to a union festival where interaction with ethnic nationals and their culture is available and aims to boost travel and all-round development for their regions. He said Myanmar is gifted with beautiful natural scenery and has the potential to boost nature-based tourism and support the development of ethnic regions.

He urged media cooperation to proliferate ethnic culture and travel potential to domestic and international audiences and requested the ethnic nationals participating in the festival to deepen their admiration and respect for their own traditions and cultures in order to strengthen the union spirit.

The Vice President then said the first Ethnic Sustainable Development Forum was held from 18 to 19 January in 2018. He cited the emergence of ethnic entrepreneur associations from that forum as showing the importance of forum results.

He said the next forum slated for March aims to network ethnic entrepreneurs, increase the role of ethnic nationals in the business sector, uplift regional products into high-quality goods for international markets, strengthen economic market opportunities, and increase international investment in ethnic regions.

The Vice President said the voice and opinions of local ethnic residents is crucial in fulfilling their requirements and development as only when their actual needs are made aware can implementation be effective. He said this is the reason why economic forums need to be organized at the state and regional level. He said ethnic entrepreneurs of Kachin and Mon states have organized economic forums and he attended the Kachin State Economic Forum, which was held from 15 to 16 November, 2019.

The Vice President said ethnic entrepreneurs of other states and regions need to follow suit and organize similar economic forums and urged ethnic affairs ministers to work together with relevant ministries and state/regional cabinets for this purpose.

He said the union-level ethnic sustainable development forum would be immensely more effective ethnic entrepreneurs organized economic forums in all the states and regions and collected their results for consideration.

The Vice President concluded his speech by saying that the Union government is putting emphasis on ethnic development and urged the meeting attendees to offer their suggestions and ideas to ensure the ethnic culture festival and ethnic development forum are both imminent successes.

This was followed by in-depth discussions from the attendees on their respective assigned duties pertaining to the festival and forum, to which the Vice President responded and then concluded the meeting. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

State Counsellor holds talks on development programmes with locals in Tamu Township

FROM PAGE-1

During the meeting the State Counsellor said, "I am delighted to meet the locals in Tamu Township. We also thank you all for the warm welcome which is a strong encouragement for us. These strengths are aimed for the people.

"I found some ethnic people in Tamu, as well as Gurkha people here. I am very glad to see all of them. It should not be forgotten that all of us are related with each other. Gurkha people are the descents of Nepal. When I visited Nepal, people in that country welcomed me joyously. It showed a good relationship between us. If all the people of different races and faiths of our country can live peacefully and unitedly, it is a dignity forour country. We must have mutual respect and understanding. We must be satisfied with people living peacefully with others in our country. I take pride in this," the State Counsellor added.

She also said, "Wherever I go, I am very pleased to see national ethnic racial groups, citizens and all the residents in the country living in close friendship with each other. I take great pride in this. It is a real strength for the country and is an essential Union spirit.

I have not visited the western part of Sagaing Region for many years and there have been significant developments during this period. However, it has not reached the expected level. Development is witnessed among difficulties. School enrollment rate is one of the improvements in the region, and I am very happy about this.

Meanwhile, I am worried about the surge of drug addiction rate among the young people. If we do not fight against narcotic drugs, our missions to support health and education for young people will be invain. It is also a common problem for the whole country.

It was learnt in Kalay Township that over 75 per cent of local young people are addicted to narcotic drugs. It is really an unpleasant situation. We need to find the root cause of it. Were they trying out the narcotic drugs? Were they enticed by the drug dealers? We need to think about this. I would like to remind the young people that narcotic drugs should not be tried. It will pose dangers for the whole life. They have long journeys ahead of them. Old people do not have much time left. I want them to live happily in good health as they have many years in front of them. To be healthy and happy, they have to do it themselves.

Younger persons come to me for paying respect in accordance with Myanmar traditions. The number of respect-paying persons has increased year by year as I grow older gradually. I grant them wishes in the traditional manner to be healthy, wealthy and to be free from dangers; however, for these wishes to be fulfilled they must put in their own efforts.

I wished for both physical and mental well-being. Actually, peace of mind is very important. An ailing person could not enjoy a sense of well-being.

A peaceful mind could only be developed by themselves. It cannot be fulfilled by other persons. Therefore, people must cultivate self-reliant attitude, and share it with their societies.

I also wish them with emphasis on getting great rewards as all the outcomes do not give out peace and happiness.

I would like to share a western quote: more tears are shed for unfulfilled wishes than for fulfilled wishes.

The quote means that bad consequences of outcomes may lead to miseries. Therefore, I wish that all the citizens of the whole country find fulfillment of the good wishes.

What are the wishes of our people? The expectations of our people are very simple. They hope for good transportation, electricity, healthcare services and a better education system. Their expectation is very reasonable. We must try to fulfill them as best as we can. However, I have seen that sometimes these wishes turn out to be for themselves rather than for the majority. I want our citizens to ponder deeply about this.

Consideration for others can benefit oneself. I want you all to see that a wider perspective can help expand personal view. It also fosters a sharper and powerful brain. Such an attitude could improve their lives gradually. School children must learn views and behaviours of their classmates. They must appreciate others' advantages and help each other in learning subjects. All the citizens need to follow this practice.

People in Tamu have more chances to learn the situations and development of their neighbouring country. Good practices must be imitated without feeling jealousy, while abstaining from bad practices. In this way we can achieve progress.

Our people are also advised to have self-confidence and respect others to be able to trust and value others. Cultivating loving kindness first on oneself is not a selfish behavior, but it is very practical.

Everybody expects a happy and wealthy life. It is empathy for others. We need to develop our mind like learning mathematics at school. We have to begin from number one and move on. We should not stop there. If we stop there the kids will not learn anything. We have to teach them how to count up to ten and then move on to the hundreds, thousands, millions. That's how they should be taught.

Our life lessons are like this. We cannot start at one and end at one. You cannot begin and end with yourself. Of course you need to begin with yourself, that is natural. However, in the end the more people from your community you can bring into this process the better.

Therefore, we are trying to meet with many people in every corner of the country, in addition to major cities such as Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw.

Since I was involved in the government, I could not go freely in the country. In the past, I got a chance to talk with the rural people during my trips. They also discussed their hopes and concerns openly. We also shared our objectives and political views. It must be done by the politicians.

SEE PAGE-4

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivers the speech at the meeting with local people in Tamu Township, Sagaing Region.
PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor holds talks on development programmes with locals in Tamu Township

FROM PAGE-3

So, we try to keep doing it as muchas I can. Duties must be performed actively and voluntarily with might and main.

Meeting with the public is not only a duty, but also an interest for me. I would feel guilty if I did not talk with the people. Moreover, I would also miss these opportune moments. I advise all the people to make close and friendly relations with others and have consideration for all.

I also suggest to spread loving kindness and good wishes into infinity, by starting to count from one. I found some public meeting more exciting as I could make close and friendly conversations with more people. I prefer the meetings in open air.

I could not answer all the questions of people and reply to the voices due to time limitation. Therefore, some questions were answered by the local government and Union government members. Questions were also allowed by drawing lots. Those who did not win lots can submit their questions, either complaints or requests though the proper channel."

After the speech of State Counsellor, the Union Minister, the Deputy Minister and local government ministers replied to the pre-submitted questions of local people on establishment of economic zone, power supply from the national grid, major renovation of Satyaungbilu Sports Stadium, developing cultivation lands, construction of a stone-retaining wall, building a creek bridge, upgrading nine bridges in the town and upgrading a Bailey bridge into a concrete-reinforced bridge.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is welcomed by traditional dance troupes with traditional dance performance in Tamu, Sagaing Region yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Three locals who won in drawing lots out of 16 persons in the stadium asked about threats of legal action against a fish breeding business, high cash fines in automobile accidents, reviewing on electing village administrators, misconducts in confiscation of narcotic drugs, land seizures, putting Chin Kuki tribes into the list of 135 ethnic national people, election of representatives for Shan ethnic people in Tamu area, anddeveloping Shan language curriculum at the schools.

Three locals who won in drawing lots out of 7 persons outside the stadium asked about fighting against narcotic drugs, holding student sports festival, construction of embarkment and prevention of erosion at the cultivation fields.

The State Counsellor discussed developingcultivation lands without destroying forest areas, solving disputes on fish breeding ponds, reviewing high cash penalty in vehicle accidents, helping ethnic affairs and promoting literature, taking legal actions against narcotic drug cases and preventing soil erosions at cultivation lands.

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

The India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway is now under construction, and India is providing assistance in upgrading Yargyi-Kalewa section (75 mile 5 furlong) into a tar-concrete road and renovation of 69 bridges on the Kyigone-Tamu road section of 93 miles in Sagaing Region. The projects are expected to complete by 2021.

The highway could promote bilateral trade between Myanmar and India, and the Sagaing Region government has granted permit for 32.176 acres of land for establishment of aborder trade zone by drawing a master plan with the Ministry of Commerce for the project.—MNA

(Translated by AungKhin)

UEC holds coord meeting on 2020 General Election

THE Union Election Commission held a coordination meeting with its region and state sub-commissions yesterday at its office in Nay Pyi Taw in preparation for the 2020 General Election.

In his opening address, UEC chairman U Hla Thein said the commission is making preparations to ensure the 2020 General Election meet five standards: they are free, fair, transparent, reliable, and harmonious with the people's desire.

"The commission is making efforts to ensure eligible citizens do not lose their votes. It has also compiled a electoral role nationwide. It will continue to scrutinize the list. It will work in cooperation with political parties and civil society organizations when the comprehensive electoral role is announced," he said.

He said that the UEC will announce the Hluttaw constituencies prior to the 2020 General Election. "The UEC is making a list of people from nationalities whose population is above 0.1 per cent of the national population. It will amend and publish election-related laws, acts, rules and regulations, in accordance with the current circumstances. It will also amend the Code of Conduct (CoC), ratified since 2015, for election candidates. It will set up a coordinating committee and a security management committee for a tranquil and peaceful general election. It will also draw a directive for news media and an ethic for police force," he added.

UEC Chairman U Hla Thein delivers the speech at the coordination meeting with the region and state sub-commissions in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

The Commission chairman said that the UEC is cooperating with the Information Ministry, Myanmar Press Council, and the Facebook team. "It has formed an information committee for issuing true and genuine news about the election. It is working with various organizations to put election measures in place. It is also supporting the work of state and region commissions," said U Hla Thein.

He stressed the need to implement public and constituent awareness programmes for the 2020 General Election; disseminate election news and information speedily and effectively to the public; use the UEC Facebook page in the near future in order to avoid misinformation and disinformation; and, for persons in charge at different levels of commissions to be competent and qualified in their work, and exert their utmost efforts to make the 2020 General Election successful.

Then, the Union Election Commission Office's director-general explained the work being carried out for the elections. Next, the Union Election Commission chairman answered questions and discussed suggestions from officials of state, region, and Union Territory election commissions.

The commission chairperson concluded the coordinating meeting and inspected a makeshift election booth. —MNA

(Translated by GNLM)

IPRD celebrates 29th anniversary in Nay Pyi Taw

Union Minister Dr Pe Myint addresses the ceremony to mark 29th anniversary of Information and Public Relations Department in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Information and Public Relations Department under the Ministry of Information held its 29th anniversary at its headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

It was attended by Union Minister Dr Pe Myint, Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung, departmental heads, officers and staff members.

The Union Minister extended his appreciation to officers and staff members of IPRD at all levels of States, Regions, districts and townships, who contributed to development and improvement of the department.

He also advised the staff members to learn more skills in production of video clips for presenting news, and the librarians are to do more in promoting the role of libraries and cooperation with relevant organizations.

The Union Minister then presented the best performance award to Hpa-an District Office, the second prize to PyinOoLwin District Office and the third prize to Hakha District Office.

Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung gave awards to township-level offices.

Director-General U Ye Naing, Director-General U Aung Myo Myint and Acting Managing Director U Thet Swe presented special awards to township-level offices, prolific news coverers for texts and videos, and other outstanding staff members.

Director-General U Ye Naing then presented commemorative gifts to all the staff members of department, and gave honorary certificates to the winners of Civil Service Awards.

Then, a documentary titled, "Moving Forward to Serve the People, IPRD with Intense Activities' was screened, followed by expressing thanks of an award winning officer.

A lucky-draw programme was also held for the staff members to mark the anniversary of deparment.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Minister Dr Pe Myint presents the third prize for performance award to Haka District IPRD Office at the ceremony. **PHOTO: MNA**

Tatmadaw holds press conference at Defence Services Museum

Tatmadaw True News Team holds a press conference at the Defence Services Museum in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Tatmadaw True News Team organized a press conference at the Defence Services Museum in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

It was attended by Chairman of Tatmadaw True News Team Maj-Gen Soe Naing Oo, Vice Chairman Maj-Gen Tun Tun Nyi, Secretary Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun and senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army).

Media personnel from local news agencies, daily newspapers, journals, local TV news agencies and locally-based foreign news agencies were also present at the press.

The Chairman of Tatmadaw True News Team explained participations of the Tatmadaw in peace-making process in 2019 and 2020 and confiscation of narcotic drugs in previous year.

Vice Chairman Maj-Gen Tun Tun Nyi clarified activities of the Tatmadaw to promote international relations of the Tatmadaw, official friendly visits of the Commander in Chief of Defence Services to foreign countries, receiving international delegations, and meetings with peace organizations, ethnic armed organizations, religious organizations, UN agencies, NGOs and INGOs.

The Tatmadaw True News Team replied to queries raised by reporters from news agencies, and Deputy Judge Advocate General Maj-Gen Thaung Naing from the Office of Judge Advocate General under the Commander in Chief of Defence Services (Army) explained the issues of ICC, ICJ, ICOE report and court martial cases, according to the report of Office of the Commander-in -Chief of Defence Services. —MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union SWRR Minister receives Ooredoo Myanmar delegation

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye received a delegation led by B2B Director Mr Tiberius of Ooredoo Myanmar at his ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

They discussed Ooredoo Myanmar's current information and technological services, information relaying system for natural disasters, direct communication with people stricken by natural disasters, providing direct financial assistance to beneficiaries of social services, and incorporating Ooredoo Myanmar's corporate social responsibility processes in the ministry's processes for public welfare.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye holds talks with a delegation led by B2B Director Mr Tiberius of Ooredoo Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union PFI Minister discusses economic prospects with Young President Organization

UNION Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Soe Win met members of the Young President Organization (YPO) Yangon Chapter at the National Records and Archives Department in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The theme of the meeting was 'Future Economic Prospects of Myanmar and Recommended Areas of Cooperation for Businesses', and was attended by Deputy Ministers, permanent secretaries, directors-general, deputy directors-general, YPO Yangon Chapter members, and other officials.

The Union Minister discussed the Union government's implementation of the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, the formation of the Project Bank to facilitate the processes of the MSDP, establishing the Public-Private Partnership Centre to work together with Project Bank, promoting a digital economy and developing economic sectors by basing off it, and how establishing the Digital Economy Development Committee aims to improve the socioeconomic livelihoods of citizens through their use of digital technology.

The Union Minister also discussed tax affairs and how customs duty is handled, and working for the formation of a loan insurance organization with regards to providing loans to micro, small and medium enterprises.

Next, the YPO members discussed Myanmar's economic prospects and their current and future processes. They also raised questions to which the Union Minister and officials replied. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Coord meeting held to close down Kyauktalon IDP Camp in Kyaukpyu

A COORDINATION meeting on closing a camp of the internally displaced persons-IDPs in Kyaukpyu was held at the Rakhine State Government Office in Sittway on 21st January.

The Kyauktalon Camp will be closed in accordance with the IDP camps closure National Strategy which will ensure all displaced people at IDP camps return home safely and with dignity and rebuild their life without depending on others, said Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye in his opening remarks at the meeting.

The Union Minister continued to say that a state level committee, working committees and sub-committees will be formed to close down the camp, calling on local authorities and IDPs to cooperate in implementing the tasks until success. The IDPs in Rakhine have been suffering the consequences of conflicts which have also delayed their socio-economic development.

To establish the rule of law and bring about socio-economic development in Rakhine State, the state's Stability and Development Committee has carried out tasks through its four working committees since its formation in 2016. The National Strategy for the closure of nationwide IDP camps and resettlement of IDPs., which is one suggestion made by the Advisory Commission led by Dr Kofi Annan, was adopted and implemented in 2018.

While the strategy is being drafted, Nidin Camp in Kyauktaw Township and Taungpaw Camp in Myaybon Township were shut down systematically.

Education, health and livelihood are important issues when it comes to implementing regional development tasks, said the Union Minister.

To implement the tasks, the Union Government, the regional and state governments will mainly fund the projects in cooperation with the international organizations and partner countries.

The Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance and Resettlement, and Development in Rakhine State-UEHRD, which was formed to work in cooperation with the Union Government, the peoples, private organizations, international organizations and partner countries, will take a leading role in implementing the resettlement and rehabilitation, regional development tasks and free from conflicts in the long run in Rakhine State.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye delivers the speech at the coordination meeting on closing IDP camp in Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State on 21 January. **PHOTO: MNA**

At the meeting, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu also made remarks on closing the Kyauktalon IDP Camp.

Afterwards, Chairman of the Committee on Closing Kyauktalon Camp and Resettlement of IDPs Rakhine State Minister Col Min Than detailed about formation of committees and work committees at state level, site chosen for resettlement and plans for assisting in livelihoods of the IDPs.

Afterwards, Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, members of the Rakhine State Cabinet, officials of the UEHRD and departmental officials reported on construction of infrastructures, humanitarian aid, security, the rule of law, freedom of movement, peaceful coexistence between different communities and process for issuing national verification cards in accordance with the law.

Following the meeting, the Union Minister, the Chief Minister and officials visited the site chosen for constructing the Dreams University to be implemented by Asian Philanthropy Circle-APC and Mainly I Love Kids (MILK) in cooperation with the UEHRD.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

A group of tourists pose for pictures on their way to Shan State. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Places of traditional significance attracting tourists

PLACES of traditional significance are proving a draw for tourists this year, with visitors showing interest in observing the traditions and cultures of the ethnic people and traveling to areas where the ancient cultural mores and traditions of the ethnic people still remain intact.

Recently, a group of eight tourists — seven Germans and one Swiss national — arrived at the Yangon International Airport under an arrangement with Diethelm Travel Ltd., and under the supervision of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. Their visit lasted from 11 January to 18 January.

The tourists visited Yangon-Heho-Inle region. On 14 January, they hired three motor vehicles and traveled along the Pindaya-Mandalay-Poppa-Bagan Yangon route. On 18 January, they flew out of the country from the Yangon International Airport.

Tourists are nowadays showing greater interest in visiting new destinations created by the authorities. The authorities have also relaxed the rigid rules and regulations imposed on tourists in many aspects.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is making efforts to develop the hotels and tourism sector in Myanmar by ensuring the convenience of the tourists. — GNLM *(Translated by Hay Mar)*

Agro exports up $153.98 mln in current FY

MYANMAR'S exports of agricultural products between 1 October and 10 January in the 2019-2020 financial year rose to US$998.728 million from $844.747 million in the corresponding period of the 2018-2019FY, which reflects an increase of $153.98 million, according to trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

In the export sector, the agriculture industry performed the best, along with the natural gas sector. The chief items of export in the agriculture sector are rice and broken rice, pulses, corn, and rubber. Fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro products are also exported to other countries.

Myanmar agro products are primarily exported to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. However, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand.

Myanmar faces slower access to market information, which sometimes poses obstacles in the market. Moreover, the country has poor logistics and warehouse infrastructure, which leads to degradation in the quality of fruits, said an official from the Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producer and Exporter Association (MFVP).

According to the Myanmar Rice Federation, quality control and food safety are key to the promotion of exports. Therefore, improved agricultural practices need to be developed.

Additionally, the country requires specific export plans for each agro product, as they are currently exported to external markets based upon supply and demand. Contract farming systems, involvement of regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups are required in order to meet production targets, said an official from the Agriculture Department.

Farmers unloading the corns from the back of the truck at a distribution depot in NyaungU Township.
PHOTO: KO HTEIN

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges, such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and erratic weather conditions.—Ko Htet ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Myanmar Franchise Expo and Conference 2020 to be held on 6-8 March

THE third edition of the Myanmar Franchise Expo and Conference will take place on 6-8 March at Myanmar Expo, Fortune Plaza. It will feature world-class franchising and licensing opportunities in Myanmar.

The expo is being organized by ALT Exhibitions, with the aim to improve Myanmar's franchise sector and local businesses. It will be co-located with Tastefully Myanmar 2020 and Myanmar Coffee, Tea and Sweets Expo 2020.

A number of companies will exhibit their products at the expo, said organizer U Naing Win. Franchised goods, machines, food, drinks, and supplies, and local coffee and tea will be displayed at the expo.

The Myanmar Franchise International Conference entitled 'Transforming the Economy – the Franchising Way' will feature a panel discussion by foreign and local experts, who will share their success story and ways to address the issues and challenges facing the industry itself.

Some of the biggest challenges in finding franchisees in Myanmar is the lack of understanding of franchising as a concept, skill shortage, and inability to get financing from banks.

The three-day-expo is expected to attract 10,000 visitors, according to the expo implementation committee.

Myanmar's franchise sector started in 2013 and now, the country has nearly 65 foreign franchise companies working mostly in the largest cities. —GNLM ■

(Translated by EMM)

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Domestic oil prices slide on global cues

DOMESTIC oil prices have been on the decline since 10 January owing to a fall in global oil prices, according to traders.

Oil prices dipped to US$62.25 per barrel for Brent oil and $55.7 per barrel for WTI crude oil yesterday in the global oil markets.

According to the domestic oil market, at present, Octane 92 is pegged at K825-845, Octane 95 at K932-950, diesel at K915-950, and premium diesel at K927.5-950 per liter.

Domestic oil prices started to slide on 10 January. The prices have dropped by around K50 compared with the first week of January, said traders.

On 10 October, 2018, due to an increase in global crude oil prices and the weakening of the Kyat against the US dollar, oil prices had touched a high of K1,065 per liter for Octane 92, K1,115 for Octane 95, K1,085 for diesel, and K1,105 for premium diesel.

Ninety per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally.

Myanmar has imported about one million tons of diesel and petrol worth nearly $600 million over the past two months of this financial year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar imports fuel oil primarily from Singapore, with monthly volumes touching 200,000 tons for gasoline and 400,000 tons for diesel. There are 2,000 fuel stations and 50 oil importer companies in Myanmar. —Ko Khant ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Power sector tops FDI line-up in Oct-Dec

FOREIGN direct investment of over US$538 million has flowed from three enterprises into the power sector in the past three months of the current financial year, according to statistics provided by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The quantum of investment in power is higher than in any other sector.

During the October-December period, FDI of $1.164 billion, including expansion of capital, has flowed into the country. The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) and the investment committees of states and regions have allowed 72 enterprises to invest in the country.

The manufacturing sector has absorbed FDI of $158.89 million from 59 projects in the current FY. The livestock and fisheries sector has drawn two foreign investment projects worth $6.58 million. One project worth $0.4 million has been approved in the transport and communications sector. The hotels and tourism sector has pulled in investment of $0.8 million from one foreign enterprise.

The real estate sector has also raked in $440 million from three foreign projects. Over $18.87 million in FDI has been pumped into the other services sector.

In the current fiscal, the MIC has set an FDI target of $5.8 billion.

In the 2018-2019FY, FDI into Myanmar totaled $4.5 billion, falling short of the $5.8-billion target by around $1.3 billion.

Foreign direct investment into Myanmar was registered at $1.76 billion in the last mini-budget period, $5.7 billion in the 2017-2018FY, $6.6 billion in the 2016-2017FY, and $9.4 billion in the 2015-2016FY. —GNLM ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

24 JANUARY 2020
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

To curb hate speech, fake news during elections, citizens must uphold morality

As the 2020 general elections approach, we have several tasks before us to ensure the elections are free and fair.

Currently, nationwide basic voting lists have been made, and checks and counter-checks are being carried out to ensure the list for the 2020 general elections is free of errors.

Political parties and civil society organizations, on their part, must educate the people to check their names on the lists when they are made public.

The Union Election Commission (UEC) is preparing to announce the designated constituencies for the 2020 general elections, while working on publishing election rules and directives which are in conformity with the current situation.

> However, some challenges, which can disrupt elections anywhere in the world, are fake news, hate speech, and disinformation on popular social media platforms, which are rampant in this age of misinformation.

The Code of Conduct (COC) for political parties and candidates, which was ratified in 2015, is being updated. Meanwhile, plans are underway to form negotiation and security committees at different levels, as parts of efforts to hold the elections peacefully. Directives for the media and COCs for security personnel are being drafted. These tasks reflect that the UEC is well prepared for the upcoming general elections.

However, some challenges, which can disrupt elections anywhere in the world, are fake news, hate speech, and disinformation on popular social media platforms, which are rampant in this age of misinformation.

We need to be on the alert about their potential to disrupt the democratic process. We need to prevent them, and when they occur, we need to be quick to react.

In Myanmar, the number of social media users has increased from 7 million in 2015 to 21 million in 2020. Coupled with the increase in the number of social media users, it is getting harder and harder for people to distinguish between correct news and fake news on social media platforms.

The UEC is well-prepared. It will soon launch its Facebook page to tackle fake news and release correct information. At the same time, all stakeholders in the general elections are urged to find ways or tactics that can effectively curb hate speech, misinformation, and fake news, which can delay our democratic transition.

To end hate speech, we all must observe the code of ethics, written with the consensus of all. The most important and effective way is the observation of morality and civic rules by each citizen.

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Amyotha Hluttaw Public Complaints Committee illustrates duties to the people

By Shin Min
Photo: Kay Kay

> "If any citizen feels that they have been wronged, then we urge them to file a report with concrete evidence, names, addresses and genuine national ID number."
>
> U Hla Myint (a) U Hla Myint Than, Chairman of Amyotha Hluttaw Public Complaints Committee

THE following are excerpts from separate interviews with the Chairman and the Secretary of the Amyotha Hluttaw Public Complaints Committee, who directly hear the voice of the people sent to the Hluttaw.

U Hla Myint, Chairman, Amyotha Hluttaw representative for Mon State constituency 11

U Hla Myint (a) U Hla Myint Than, Chairman of the Amyotha Hluttaw Public Complaints Committee speaks during the coordination meeting of the committee.

"The committee has five duties. We have to check if the submitted complaints are grounded in facts, to inform about the genuine complaints, to submit questions and motions to the Hluttaw if the matter poses a risk to public wellbeing. And with the exception of cases that the court of law has not made a decision on, we have to discuss and advise the concerned groups involved."

"Finally, we assist in the formation of an administration system that delivers fair and just protection on all citizens. And in that regard, we do so with adherence to existing laws and regulations while presenting advice."

Right to evaluation

"With the permission of the Hluttaw Speaker, the committee has the right to question individuals from relevant organizations that can assist in our work. If we receive a complaint that affects public wellbeing then we can perform assessments on the ground. We then have to submit our findings to the Hluttaw Speaker."

"To be a bit more precise, the committee is partially undertaking two of the three duties of the Hluttaw – representing the public and providing checks and balance on the executive and judicial pillars – in its own way."

Nature of complaints

"The committee is formed with a Hluttaw representative from the Tatmadaw and 14 Hluttaw representatives from the states and regions. With the exception of the Chairman and Secretary, the remaining 13 members are divided into three groups that each handle complaints from one of three categories."

"The first group handles complaints pertaining to judicial administration and courts of law, the second group handles matters relating to civil servants, and the third group is tasked with other general complaints."

"Since the committee's formation on 23 February, 2016, we have received complaints from a myriad of context. As of 30 November, 2019, we have received 4,661 letters of complaint referred to us by the Hluttaw Speaker and 5,121 sent directly to us, making it a total of 9,782 letters."

"Land affairs are the most reported about, but we cannot handle matters relating to confiscation of farmlands and other lands. Those are to be sent to the committee headed by Vice President U Henry Van Thio."

"Then there are the letters that do not meet set criteria or are incomprehensive and we have 3,807 of them so far. We have also kept senders of 770 letters informed and we have conducted an assessment on the ground for 59 letters, making 26 trips."

"Our work took us to Kayin, Mon and Rakhine states and Yangon, Bago, Mandalay, Sagaing and Ayeyawady regions. We've relayed complaints to the Union Supreme Court, Union Attorney-General, Nay Pyi Taw Council, Anti-Corruption Commission, ministries and relevant state/regional Hluttaws. We are waiting for 29 letters back from them."

Informing complainants

"Including the Ministry of Office of the President, there are 135 letters left to send back to our committee. The Ministry of Home Affairs has the most letters left to send back to us at 68. Second is the Ministry of the Office of the Union Government at 21 letters and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation at 16 letters. We need to be informed of how they have handled the matter before we can inform the complainants."

"Likewise, the state and regional governments have 623 letters in total to respond to us. The Bago Region cabinet sits at the top of this list with 118 letters we are waiting on, followed by Mandalay Region with 109 letters and Sagaing Region with 91 letters. We will be reminding them all again."

Processing five hearings

"So far, we have held five hearings concerning some of the complaint letters at Hall I-18 of the Amyotha Hluttaw building. Our committee has submitted reports twice in 2017, twice in 2018, and once in 2019 to the Amyotha Hluttaw."

"International organizations have come to meet us as well. These include the visit of UK Upper House MP Lord Malcolm Bruce under the Scholar Wilson Asia Foundation Center, WFD programme, and Ms Christine Schraner Burgener, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Myanmar."

Amyotha Hluttaw Public Complaints Committee conducts its hearing in Bago on 1 April 2019.

"They asked many questions but we were prepared for a question we were expecting them to ask. They inquired if we received any complaints relating to immigration. We had thoroughly checked all the letters we received and so replied there was none received. But those rumours persist."

"However, it's not just the Indian-borns or Muslims who are having trouble in Rakhine State in that regard. Even people born of ethnic descent face difficulties in acquiring an NRC card. Some of them may not know their grandparents' names, or they may not remember all the facts they need, of which they may just have partial knowledge of their ancestry. We explained all that to them."

Observing the present scene

"The UN Special Envoy also discussed amending the 1982 Citizenship law. We explained that the 1947 Constitution defines citizenship one way and so does the 1948 Union Citizenship Law. But the 1974 Constitution has two definitions of becoming a citizen and the 1982 law adds a third."

"The Special Envoy seems to be more aware of Myanmar's actual situation compared to her predecessors so we explained to her that western countries should avoid impeding our nation's progress, especially at a time when we are working hard to implement a federal democratic republic. They should carefully study what is truly going on here first."

"She understood where we were coming from but still said the 1982 law had to be amended. We told her that we need to amend the Constitution first."

"An interesting point in our discussion with the UK Upper House member was that they only took 2 to 3 days to respond to a complaint letter while we took 2 to 3 months at the least. The difference lies in their use of proper e-mail systems, which would similarly speed up our work if everyone were to use them here,"

Acting with the law

"As of 30 June, 2019, we have taken action against 10 staff of the Ministry of Home Affairs, one from Nay Pyi Taw Council, 3 staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, 5 staff from the Ministry of Health and Sports, 2 staff from the Ministry of Education, 4 staff from the Bago Region government, one from the Shan State government, and a staff member and a judge from the Supreme Court."

"In addition, we helped a staff member who was relieved of their duties receive compensation and their pension and we assisted a student removed from university due to a wrong assessment to be reaccepted."

"We helped the resident of Waboechaung Village in Kyaikto Township, Mon State, receive compensation from the company that confiscated their lands and we assisted the Nay Pyi Taw Council in arresting five individuals accused of smuggling timber. They were given prison sentences and confiscated of five luxury cars and a 6-wheeler truck."

"However, we have received 3 complaint letters that turned out to be untrue when we went to investigate. If any citizen feels that they have been wronged, then we urge them to file a report with concrete evidence, names, addresses and genuine national ID number. We also want the people to know that you do not need to send letters in nice envelopes or with stamps."

(To be continued)

Translated by Pen Dali

2020, 73rd Anniversary Union Day National Objectives

1. All ethnic nationals to preserve and protect for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of National Unity and Perpetuation of Sovereignty.
2. To work on the peace process till success is achieved based on Union spirit.
3. To strive with the collective strength of all ethnic nationals for rule of law, a fair justice system and the security and safety of all citizens.
4. To prevent/protect all people from the danger of narcotic drugs as a national duty and thereby uplift their standard of living.
5. Emergence of a Constitution which will be in alignment with a genuine Democratic Federal Union.

A hundred fruits from the same stem,
Our Union built in brotherhood.

Unity is power,
Cohesion is strength,
This is the heart of our Union.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 23rd January, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 24th January, 2020: Rain will be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly in the remaining Regions and States.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Slight decrease of night temperatures in Upper Sagaing Region, Kachin and Shan States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 24th January, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 24th January, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 24th January, 2020: Generally fair weather.

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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.

YRIC clears 18 foreign, two domestic proposals; to create over 10,000 jobs

THE Yangon Region Investment Committee, at a meeting held on 22 January, has given the green light to 18 foreign projects, with an estimated capital of US$39.708 million. It has also endorsed two domestic projects worth K4.27 billion.

The projects will create over 10,600 jobs, according to the committee.

The manufacturing sector has attracted the most foreign investments in Yangon Region, with enterprises engaging in the production of pharmaceuticals, vehicles, container boxes, and garments on a Cutting, Making, and Packing (CMP) basis.

Since its establishment, the YRIC has approved more than 230 domestic and foreign projects in the sectors of manufacturing, hotel services, and other services from China, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, India, China (Taipei), Malaysia, the British Virgin Islands, and Seychelles.

According to statistics released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, Yangon Region absorbs 60 per cent of all investments in Myanmar, Mandalay attracts 30 per cent, while the other regions and states get only a small share of investments.

To simplify the verification of investment projects, the Myanmar Investment Law allows the region and state Investment Committees to grant permissions for local and foreign proposals, where the initial investment does not exceed K6 billion, or $5 million.—GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Action taken against nearly 500 YBS buses in 2 weeks for flouting rules: YRTA

By Nyein Nyein

Photo shows YBS buses running through on a busy road in downtown Yangon. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

WITH the Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA) clamping down on YBS bus lines for breaking rules and regulations, action has been taken against almost 500 buses in two weeks, said U Hla Aung, Joint Secretary of the transport authority.

Traffic Regulatory Teams are checking and taking action against YBS bus lines found breaking rules and regulations. From 1 to 15 January, the teams took action against 474 buses, while 78 letters of complaints were received from passengers, he added.

"We have taken action against 474 buses and we have received 78 complaints from passengers in two weeks. We will take action on the complaints after scrutinizing them," said U Hla Aung.

According to the official statistics provided by the Traffic Regulatory Department of the YRTA, one bus accident was reported in the two weeks from 1 January. Two people were injured in the mishap.

The Yangon Bus Service (YBS), the main provider of public transport to Yangon's inner-city commuters, will turn three years old this month. However, some YBS drivers are still breaking rules: they do not stop at bus stops and are collecting bus fare instead of letting passengers put the fare in the slot machines, according to the YRTA.

Therefore, the transport authority has issued smart cards to YBS drivers so that it will have personal information on every driver. The YRTA is hoping that will make it easier for the authorities to deal with complaints or take action against undisciplined bus drivers. Currently, more than 8,000 drivers have been issued smart cards.

To reduce traffic accidents and ensure compliance with traffic rules and regulations, a YBS special driver's training course was first opened in July, 2017 by the YRTA and the Road Transport Administration Department (RTAD). As of now, 2,088 drivers have undergone such training courses. Most of them are currently employed by the YBS bus lines, according to the YRTA.

Earlier, the YBS special driver's training courses could be attended by those holding a five-year (E) (Nga) driving license. Now, those who have a three-year driving license can apply for the courses.

The Yangon Bus Service (YBS) was launched on 16 January, 2017, during the incumbent government's term, to improve transportation services in Yangon. At present, more than 100 bus lines are running 4,500 buses on 135 routes, along with the airport shuttle and city transit. The number of daily commuters has been estimated at 1.8 million.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

YRTA proposes 27 sites for YBS terminals to Yangon Region government

By Nyein Nyein

TWENTY-SEVEN sites identified for the construction of YBS terminals have been proposed to the Yangon Region government, said U Hla Aung, Joint Secretary of the Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA).

"The sites are owned by governmental departments and so, we still do not have clarity on how to proceed with the construction of bus terminals," he said.

"We have not figured out how to continue with the land as they are department-owned lands. We are still not sure that the lands will be transferred. For example, we drew plans for developing the Hlinethaya bus terminal. But, the individual, who identified himself as the owner of the land, built a hut there. We have forwarded this problem to the regional government. It remains to be resolved," said U Hla Aung.

"At present, the YRTA is coordinating the merger of individual bus operators to form public companies. The bus terminal is a must for bus-lines and the land problem is the main concern," said U Hla Aung.

"The Yangon Region Chief Minister has said that the implementation of the bus terminals will be funded by management charges collected by the YRTA. We will spend the management charges collected," he said.

The YRTA has constructed a YBS bus terminal on 1.7 acres of land in Pazuntaung Township at a cost of K300 million. It was opened on 29 December and can accommodate 200 buses.

The terminal includes a car wash and workshops, offices, toilets, and entrance and exit gates.

The Yangon Region government plans to construct bus terminals which can accommodate buses as well as private vehicles.

The YRTA is currently levying a management charge of K4,000 per bus per day. More than 4,000 YBS buses are plying on Yangon roads every day.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Economy failing on climate and equality: NGOs

PARIS — The world economy is a direct cause of social breakdown and a key driver of climate change, a green coalition said Thursday launching the first assessment of how governments are re-gearing their economies towards sustainable growth.

The Green Economy Tracker assessed how countries are performing in five key policy areas, including tackling inequality and prioritising nature in the face of the systemic risk posed by warming temperatures and rising seas.

"Our global economy is not fit for purpose," said Oliver Greenfield from the Green Economy Coalition, speaking on the occasion of the initiative's launch in Davos. "Inequality, poverty, climate change and biodiversity loss are not just connected. They arise from the same cause: how economies are organised, ruled and managed."

The global business elite are gathered in the Swiss alpine resort for the 50th edition of the World Economic Forum, and discussions so far have focused on the climate. In its annual Global Risks Report surveying the main preoccupations of business leaders on the eve of Davos, the WEF said the top five global risks to the economy were all environmental.

Oxfam on Monday highlighted the growing gulf in wealth, saying that the number of billionaires had doubled globally and were now richer than 60 percent of the global population combined.

The GEC said governments needed to realise that climate and the economy were intricately linked, and that action to shore up one would have tangible benefits on the other. "Within a generation we need to move to a green and fair economy that respect's natures limits and prioritises well-being," said Greenfield.

The tracker put Sweden at the top of countries surveyed for its national green economy plans, with France coming second. — AFP ■

US President Donald Trump attended the 50th edition of the World Economic Forum in Davos this week. **PHOTO: AFP**

US Treasury Secretary advises Greta Thunberg to 'go study'

DAVOS — US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Thursday advised climate activist Greta Thunberg, who has been bitterly critical of US policy at the World Economic Forum, to study economics before giving out lessons.

Asked about the Swedish 17-year-old's demand for an immediate halt to investment in fossil fuels, he told reporters: "After she goes and studies economics in college, she can come back and explain that to us."

The Trump administration and Greta Thunberg have sparred indirectly since Tuesday on panels in Davos but organisers have carefully averted any direct confrontation.

In a speech on Tuesday, US President Donald Trump castigated the "prophets of doom" and those that predicted a climate "apocalypse", while Thunberg sat in the audience. Shortly before leaving the Swiss ski resort, Trump said he would have "loved" to have met the activist, Time magazine's Person of the Year. Thunberg repeated her climate warnings, hammering home in her speech that it was time to "panic" because "the house is burning", as she did the previous year in Davos. — AFP ■

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg listening to the US president's speech. **PHOTO: AFP**

Three American crew killed as firefighting plane crashes in Australia

SYDNEY — Three American crew helping to battle Australia's devastating bushfires were killed Thursday when their water-bombing plane crashed in mountainous terrain during a sortie to tackle another outbreak of the deadly blazes.

Officials said the Hercules C-130 plane erupted in a large fireball on impact in a national park the Snowy Mountains shortly before 1:30 pm (0230 GMT).

The cause of the crash was not immediately known, but New South Wales Rural Fire Service commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons had said earlier in the day that high winds were making flying the water tankers "very difficult".

"We've got a number of firefighters and a number of crew that are in the area and working to contain and work around the fire," Fitzimmons said.

The incident brought the death toll in Australia's bushfires to at least 32 since the crisis began in September.

The highly experienced US firefighting trio was working for Canadian firm Coulson Aviation, which had been contracted to help fight the fires.

State Premier Gladys Berejiklian said the crash highlighted the danger faced by firefighters as they attempted to extinguish massive blazes across Australia's southeast.

"There are in excess of 70 aircraft that have been used today alone and today is a stark and horrible reminder of the dangerous conditions that our volunteers, (and) our emergency services personnel... (face) on a daily basis," she said.

The crash happened as at least seven fires, whipped up by scorching temperatures and strong winds, flared to emergency status following a brief lull brought by rain and cooler temperatures.— AFP ■

A Coulson Aviation C-130 Hercules dropping fire retardent during a sortie in early January. **PHOTO: AFP**

Studies suggest role of bats, snakes in outbreak of China virus

BEIJING — A new strain of coronavirus that emerged in China may have originated in bats or snakes, according to genetic analysis of the virus that has so far killed 17 people.

The theories are based on examination of the genome sequence of the virus released by authorities in the wake of the outbreak, with two studies pointing to the likely role of bats in the outbreak.

One study, published Tuesday in the journal Science China Life Sciences, which is sponsored by Beijing's Chinese Academy of Sciences, looked at the relations between the new strain and other viruses.

It found the coronavirus that emerged from China's Wuhan was closely related to a strain that exists in bats.

"Bats being the native host of the Wuhan CoV (coronavirus) would be the logical and convenient reasoning, though it remains likely there was intermediate host(s) in the transmission cascade from bats to humans," the researchers from several institutions in China wrote in the paper.

That study did not speculate about which animal could have been an "intermediate host," but a second study published Wednesday in the Journal of Medical Virology identifies snakes as the possible culprit.— AFP ■

Nuclear plant host town mayor received money from construction firm

TOKYO — The mayor of a southwestern Japan town hosting a nuclear power plant has admitted to receiving 1 million yen ($9,100) in cash from a construction company in 2018, in apparent violation of the political funds law.

Shintaro Wakiyama, the mayor of Genkai in Saga Prefecture, told Kyodo News he recently returned the money received days after he was elected in July 2018 from a then executive of Shiohama Industry Corp., which is known to have had close ties with a man at the heart of a gift scandal involving Kansai Electric Power Co.

File photo taken in June 2011 shows No. 2 reactor of Genkai nuclear power plant in Saga Prefecture, southwestern Japan. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

The mayor told a press conference Thursday afternoon that he will consider whether to resign after consulting with his support group. "I caused a lot of trouble and regret it," he said.

Shiohama Industry, based in Fukui Prefecture, allegedly approached Wakiyama long before he was elected and conveyed its wish to win business related to Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s nuclear plant in Genkai, sources familiar with the matter said.

They said the company helped Wakiyama's election campaign and handed over an envelope containing the cash at his home on 31 July, 2018. —Kyodo News

Angola's ex first daughter Isabel dos Santos charged with fraud

LUANDA — Angola's billionaire former first daughter Isabel dos Santos has been charged with money laundering and mismanagement during her stewardship of state-owned oil firm Sonangol.

Documents leaked this week alleged the daughter of ex-president Jose Eduardo dos Santos, plundered state coffers to build her fortune, estimated at $2.1 billion (1.82 billion euros).

"Isabel dos Santos is accused of mismanagement and embezzlement of funds during her tenure at Sonangol and is thus charged in the first instance with the crimes of money laundering, influence peddling, harmful management ... forgery of documents, among other economic crimes," prosecutor general Helder Pitta Gros told a news conference late Wednesday.

Investigations into Isabel dos Santos's 18-month tenure as Sonangol head from June 2016 were opened after her successor Carlos Saturnino raised the alarm about "irregular money transfers" and other dodgy procedures.

Dubbed Africa's richest woman, Isabel dos Santos is accused of using her father's backing to plunder state funds. **PHOTO: AFP**

Dubbed Africa's richest woman, Isabel dos Santos is accused of using her father's backing to plunder state funds from the oil-rich but poor southern African country and moving the money abroad with the help of Western firms.— AFP ■

Japan court orders disclosure of phone number over online defamation

TOKYO — In a rare ruling, a Japanese court has ordered mobile service provider SoftBank Corp. to disclose the phone number of an individual who posted defamatory comments online about a real estate company in Tokyo, a lawyer said Thursday.

The Tokyo District Court ordered the carrier last month to disclose the number together with the person's name, home address, and email address so that the company can identify the individual and seek damages.

"It is believed to be the first court ruling ordering the disclosure of a mobile phone number," said Yuichi Nakazawa, the lawyer of the plaintiff. "We can expect that it may become easier to seek damages from an individual who has posted defamatory online comments." A communications ministry ordinance states that only an individual's name, home address and email address can be disclosed, but phone numbers cannot due to privacy concerns.— Kyodo News

Boeing Chief Executive David Calhoun said production on the 737 MAX will ramp back up ahead of mid-2020 / © GETTY IMAGES NORTH AMERICA/AFP/File

New CEO stands by 737 MAX, eyeing reset at troubled Boeing

NEW YORK — Boeing Chief Executive David Calhoun sought to pivot from a bruising period of crisis and scandal on Wednesday, pledging a renewed commitment to safety and transparency and endorsing the long-term viability of the 737 MAX plane.

"I commit to you to be more accessible than the team has been," Calhoun said at the outset of an hour-long conference call with reporters, the first such event with a Boeing executive since the MAX was grounded in March following two deadly crashes.

Calhoun vowed a "safety first" culture and promised investment in the firm's engineers, who critics say have lost influence in the company's zeal to boost its share price.

Without safety "there is no shareholder value, there is no profit-sharing," Calhoun said a day after the company's decision to push back the timeframe for the MAX's return until at least midyear. Calhoun reaffirmed his commitment to the MAX, saying "I believe in this airplane" and pointing to positive feedback from pilots as he dismissed speculation it could be grounded permanently.— AFP ■

TATA Projects to execute Bio Ethanol project for reducing Agri waste burning

MUMBAI — TATA Projects Limited, one of India's fastest-growing and most admired infrastructure companies, today announced that the company has received multiple mega orders in the oil and gas refinery sector with a combined value totalling more than Rs 6000 crore.

Out of these, three orders are from HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Ltd (HRRL) and one from Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL). BPCL's order is for its 2G Bio Ethanol Project at Bargarh, Odisha. The proposed production capacity of this plant is 100 KL per day of Second Generation Ethanol.

This project is significant since the Government of India is encouraging the production of cellulosic ethanol from agricultural residues to provide additional sources of remuneration to farmers.

It will assist in addressing growing environmental concerns and supporting the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) program. In addition to reducing environmental pollution due to the burning of agricultural waste, the project will enhance the nation's energy security.

Once complete, this BPCL 2G Bio Ethanol Project will produce fuel-grade ethanol meeting specifications as per IS 15464:2004, using domestic agro-based lingo-cellulosic feedstock. Rice straw shall be the design feedstock while Maize stalk will be the check case.

"As a leading engineering & technology company, we have a specialised division that executes construction of environmentally beneficial and challenging projects. — ANI ■

Investment-starved Ukraine plans 'nanny' for wealthy foreigners

DAVOS — Ukraine, battling a sharp decline in foreign investment, on Thursday announced a novel plan to attract more cash inflows — a "nanny" to look after foreigners wary of putting their money in the country.

Prime Minister Oleksiy Goncharuk told investors at the economic forum in Davos that such a nanny would be a multilingual point person within the government for big foreign investors ready to help with any issue.

President Volodymyr Zelensky has pledged to make life easier for foreign investors in Ukraine. **PHOTO: AFP**

Foreign direct investment (FDI) into Ukraine has plummeted since the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Mosocw and the war with pro-Russian separatists in the east which led to the rapid pullout of Russian investors. "We are offering an investment nanny," Goncharuk told a breakfast meeting of investors at the Davos World Economic Forum (WEF) organised by the Viktor Pinchuk Foundation. "You will have this opportunity to have a specific individual in the government who will hear you," he added.

He pledged that the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky would "show the world that Ukraine is open to investment" notably by fighting corruption, which is regularly seen as the biggest scourge for the economy.

"There is no doubt that at the highest level there is no corruption," he said. "But this is not enough." — AFP ■

US expects UK trade deal 'this year': Mnuchin

WASHINGTON — US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Thursday said a post-Brexit trade deal between the United States and Britain was a top priority and he expected such an agreement by the end of the year.

The top US economic official made his comments before heading to London to lay out ways the two countries could reach a quick accord after the UK leaves the EU on 31 January. Responding to Mnuchin's remarks, the spokesman for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson declined to offer a timetable.

"Both sides have been clear in public that they want to agree an ambitious free trade agreement as quickly as possible," the spokesman said.

"Once we have left the EU in just over a week's time we'll be free to start having discussions with countries around the world including the US," he added. Mnuchin's UK counterpart, Sajid Javid, will embark on trade talks with both the EU and the US, in the hope of sparing the British economy any short or medium-term shocks of Brexit.

Javid told the US "they wanted to accomplish both these deals in 2020. That's obviously an aggressive timeline," Mnuchin said on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

A UK-US deal "is an absolute priority for President (Donald) Trump and we expect to complete that with them this year, which we think will be great for them and great for us," he added. US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross insisted the UK and US would have an easier time striking the deal than the EU, given close existing ties. — AFP ■

FILE PHOTO: Lorries queue up at the port of Dover. Dover in Kent, South East England handles up to £122 billion ($172 billion, 140 billion euros) of trade annually, with trucks currently processed in two minutes. **PHOTO: AFP**

Japan's supermarket sales fall 1.8 per cent in 2019 due to tax hike

TOKYO — Japan's supermarket sales in 2019 fell 1.8 per cent from the previous year on a same-store basis, down for the fourth consecutive year, affected by the consumption tax hike on 1 October and unfavorable weather, an industry body said Thursday.

Sales at 10,550 supermarkets, including newly opened ones, operated by 55 companies totaled 12.43 trillion yen ($113 billion) in 2019, down 4.3 per cent, according to the Japan Chain Stores Association.

Prolonged rainy days in summer as well as warm temperatures in winter contributed to the decline, it said. "The negative impact of the tax hike remains strong and consumption may continue to be weak for a long time," said Atsushi Inoue, a senior official of the association. Clothing sales decreased 7.1 per cent, while sales of food items, which were generally exempted from the 2-percentage-point tax increase from 8 per cent, dipped 1.5 per cent. —Kyodo News

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3.	Tricel 20% EC	Chlorpyrifos 20%EC	Full	F2011–234
4.	M–Panda	Cypermethrin 4%+Profenofos 40%EC	Provisional	2016–3008
5.	M–Conazole25% WG	Tebuconazole 25% WG	Provisional	2015–2445
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7.	M–Meda 70 WG	Imidacloprid 70% WG	Provisional	2015–2447

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Chinese paramilitary police wearing masks stand guard at a Shanghai train station as the country faces a virus crisis at the start of the Lunar New Year holiday. **PHOTO: AFP**

China locks down two cities to curb virus outbreak

BEIJING — A new virus that has killed nine people, infected hundreds and already reached the United States could mutate and spread, China warned Wednesday, as authorities scrambled to contain the disease during the Lunar New Year travel season.

China locked down nearly 20 million in two cities at the centre of a deadly virus outbreak on Thursday, banning planes and trains from leaving in an unprecedented move aimed at containing the disease which has already spread to other countries.

The respiratory virus has claimed 17 lives since emerging from a seafood and animal market in Wuhan, infected hundreds of other people nationwide and been detected as far away as the United States.

Streets and shopping centres in Wuhan, a major port city in central Hubei province with a population of 11 million people, were eerily quiet after authorities told residents not to leave town "without a special reason".

Trains and planes out of Wuhan were indefinitely suspended, tollways on roads out the city were closed, leading to fear and panic for those who were trapped.

Hours later, authorities in neighbouring Huanggang announced that public transport and train services would be suspended at midnight, while people were told to not leave the city of 7.5 million.

All of Huanggang's cinemas, internet cafes, and the central market will close.

A third city, 1.1 million-population Ezhou, announced the train station had been temporarily closed earlier in the day.

"We are feeling as though it is the end of the world," said one Wuhan resident on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform, voicing concerns about shortages of food and disinfectant.

Another described being on the "verge of tears" when the de facto quarantine was announced, with the misery compounded by it coming on the eve of the Lunar New Year holiday.

In Beijing, the government cancelled massive gatherings that usually attract throngs at temples during the New Year holiday. —AFP ■

1 civilian killed, 6 others injured in grenade attack in Afghanistan

MAIMANA — One civilian was killed and six others were injured after a few militants attacked a medical store with grenade in Dawlatabad district of the northern Faryab province on Wednesday, police spokesman in the restive province Abdul Karim Yurash said Thursday.

The militants threw a grenade to a medical store in Dawlatabad district on Wednesday evening, killing the owner of the store and wounding six others, the official said. He said police had arrested one person in this regard and the arrested man admitted to his affiliation with the Taliban outfit.

Taliban group has yet to make comments. Dawlatabad district in the Faryab province with Maimana as its capital 425 km northwest of Kabul, has been the scene of Taliban-led militancy over the past few years.—Xinhua

Hong Kong holiday camps become quarantine zones as virus fears spike

HONG KONG — Hong Kong has turned two holiday camps, including a former military barracks, into quarantine zones for people who may have come into contact with carriers of the Wuhan virus, officials announced Thursday.

The international financial hub has been on high alert for the virus, which has killed 17 people since the outbreak started in central China.

The same sites were used as quarantine facilities during the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak 17 years ago.

Nearly 300 people in Hong Kong were killed by SARS, a tragedy that left a profound psychological impact on one of the most densely populated places on earth.

So far, two people in the city have tested positive for the new coronavirus — which is similar to the SARS pathogen. Both had visited Wuhan in recent days and are being treated on isolation wards in hospital.

The gambling hub of Macau, which is hugely popular with mainland tourists, also confirmed two cases this week. On Thursday, Macau's tourism bureau announced it was cancelling all official Lunar New Year celebrations in response.

In Hong Kong, officials announced two parks usually used by campers and holidaymakers had been prepared to isolate any potential cases while they await test results.

"We will have a full team of staff to operate the quarantine camps," Wong Ka-hing, the director of the Centre for Health Protection, told reporters.

Wong said three people who had come into close contact with the two confirmed cases would be taken to a camp in rural Sai Kung district.

Another holiday camp, a former British military barracks on Hong Kong island, was being prepared to serve as a quarantine facility.—AFP ■

Police have set up blockades outside the quarantine camps. **PHOTO: AFP**

Actors paid to protest for Huawei exec's release: media

VANCOUVER — Protestors outside a Canadian courtroom pressing for the release of a senior Chinese telecommunications executive fighting extradition to the US were paid actors, they told local media.

It was not clear, however, who footed the bill.

A dozen men and women on Monday, at the start of the hearing considering whether or not to hand over Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou to US authorities to face fraud charges, held up red and white hand-written signs that read "Free Meng" and "Trump stop bullying us."

They declined to speak to an AFP journalist at the scene.

But later a handful were tracked down and spoke to Canadian media, saying they were paid Can$100 ($76) to Can$150 for two hours work that they had understood to be as extras in a movie shoot.

The offer, they said, came through Facebook or acquaintances.

"A CBS reporter approached me and my friend and she started interviewing us. And it was in those moments and questions where I started realizing, OK, if this was background work, they wouldn't need detail on background people," Julia Hackstaff told public broadcaster CBC.

After more journalists approached seeking comments, she said she realized that the movie she thought she was appearing in was in fact a very real event. —AFP ■

Actors say they were paid to be protesters outside a Vancouver courtroom on 20 January, 2020, calling for the release of a Chinese telecommunications executive fighting extradition to the United States. **PHOTO: AFP**

AIA celebrates UN – Grand Opening event in Yangon

AIA Group Limited President Mr, NG Keng Hooi, AIA Myanmar CEO Mr. Nhon Ly (Luc) and attendees pose for a photo at the UN - Grand Opening event in Yangon. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

AIA, one of the world's largest insurance companies, organized the 'UN' Grand Opening event - an immersive experience creatively blending art and culture, at Junction City recently in Yangon.

The grand opening event comes just months after it commenced offering its first life policies in November 2019, soon after receiving its life insurance license from Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry to operate in Myanmar through a 100% wholly-owned subsidiary. In attendance were Mr. Ng Keng Hooi, AIA Group Chief Executive and President, Mr. Tan Hak Leh, AIA's Asia-Pacific Regional CEO, Mr. Nhon Ly (Luc), CEO of AIA Myanmar, AIA's partners, media and AIA Myanmar employees.

The concept 'UN' – which means 'One' in French – carries a deep significance for AIA. It refers to the company's many "firsts" but was also inspired by its aim to creatively express its innovative brand through a digital medium.

'UN' is also a transformative prefix and when placed in front of words, it changes the ultimate direction and energy such as 'Uncovered', 'Unleashed' and 'Undivided'. This is the energy that AIA aims to generate in Myanmar by going in uncharted directions not seen before.

Bringing this concept to life were striking visual demonstrations within 5 artfully designed thematic rooms, each corresponding to distinct elemental representations of its journey to-date and ambitious aspirations for the future.—GNLM

Siam Kubota unveils business strategy for 2020

SIAM KUBOTA has unveiled their business strategy for 2020 to support Myanmar farmers at "KUBOTA Diesel Engine ZT Real Power Real Prize" lucky draw event recently, focusing on three key areas; sales network expansion, financial support plan for farmers, and the enhance the excellence of after sales service.

For the sales network, Siam Kubota will continue to expand the outlets in order to support their end users in term of service and providing spare parts.

For the enhancement of the after sales service, Siam Kubota promises to continue to providing the best after sales service and spare part through their mobile service which is the service program that the company delivers the after sales service to customers at their homes.

The company has entered Myanmar since 2011 with 34 authorized dealers and sub-authorized dealers around Myanmar including the North, Central, and the South with the plan to increase the number of the dealers in the near future.—GNLM

"KUBOTA Diesel Engine ZT Real Power Real Prize" lucky draw event held in Yangon on 16 January. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Queen gives assent for Britain to leave EU

LONDON — Queen Elizabeth II gave her formal assent Thursday for Britain to end its decades-long involvement in the European Union and seek a more independent but uncertain future at the end of the month.

The head of state's ceremonial approval of the withdrawal legislation allows Britain to leave its closest neighbours and trading partners after years of bickering and three delays.

Two top EU officials in Brussels are expected to sign the separation treaty on Friday and Prime Minister Boris Johnson — the pro-Brexit figurehead of Britain's seismic 2016 referendum — will put his name on it in the coming days. "At times it felt like we would never cross the Brexit finish line, but we've done it," Johnson said after both houses of the British parliament ratified the withdrawal bill on Wednesday. "Now we can put the rancour and division of the past three years behind us and focus on delivering a bright, exciting future."

Two top EU officials in Brussels are expected to sign the separation treaty on Friday. **PHOTO: AFP**

The 31 January split caps a remarkable political comeback for Johnson at one of the most difficult points in Britain's post-war history. He quit former prime minister Theresa May's government in 2018 in protest at what he viewed as her pro-European separation terms. Johnson returned as May's successor in July last year and has since managed to negotiate his own deal with Brussels and regain the government's control of parliament in a risky early election last month. — AFP ■

WORLD BRIEFS

Iraq protester gunned down in second night of violence

BAGHDAD — An Iraqi demonstrator was shot dead in the southern city of Basra overnight, a security source and the human rights commission said Thursday, the latest in a string of protester deaths.

The anti-government demonstrations rocking the Iraqi capital and the Shiite-majority south since October had abated in recent weeks amid spiralling tensions between Iraq's key allies, the United States and Iran.

To recapture momentum and boost pressure on authorities, protesters this week began shutting down roads across the country — but violence against them has escalated, too. The young demonstrator was shot dead by unidentified assailants after he left the main protest camp in Basra, a security source said. He had no papers on his person and police were waiting for someone to identify the body, the source told AFP .— AFP ■

Iran says to launch new home-made satellite

TEHRAN — New Iranian satellite Zafar will be sent into the orbit in a few weeks, the Minister of Information and Communications Technology Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi announced on Wednesday.

Jahromi said Zafar will be launched before 11 February, Tasnim news agency reported.

Two versions of Zafar have been manufactured, so that if the first launch fails, the second satellite will be immediately prepared as a replacement, he was quoted as saying.

The new satellite will be sent to space with the Iranian Simorgh satellite carrier, he added.

According to official IRNA news agency, Zafar is a 90-kg remote-sensing satellite equipped with color cameras and can be used for surveying oil reserves, mines, jungles and natural disasters. The satellite is designed for an 18-month orbiting at an altitude of 530 km.—Xinhua ■

Olympics Qualifiers preparations: Myanmar to test Thai squad

THE women's national football teams of Myanmar and Thailand will play two friendly matches next week at the MandalarThiri Stadium in Mandalay, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

The matches are part of team Myanmar's preparations for the upcoming third round of qualifying matches for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, for which Myanmar has been placed in Group A with the world-class South Korean squad and 2019 SEA Games gold medalist Viet Nam.

The Myanmar women's national football team arrived in Mandalay on Sunday to train ahead of the friendly match with the Thai team.

Myanmar women footballers trained yesterday morning at the National Football Academy and in the afternoon at the MandalarThiri Stadium in Mandalay.

The Thailand national football squad also arrived in Mandalay yesterday afternoon, and the team will also have a training session today, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

The friendly matches will be played on 25 and 28 January, and entry to the matches will be free, according to a statement issued by the MFF. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Myanmar women footballers take part in a training session in Mandalay ahead of friendly matches with the Thailand squad this month. **PHOTO: MFF**

Yangon United players celebrate their 6-1 victory over Indera SC on 22 January at the HassanalBolkiah National Stadium in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei. **PHOTO: YUFC**

AFC Cup play-off: Yangon United trounce Brunei's Indera SC in 1st leg

MYANMAR National League powerhouse Yangon United beat Brunei Darussalam's Indera Sports Club (SC) by 6-1 in the first leg of the AFC Cup 2020 play-off on 22 January at the HassanalBolkiah National Stadium in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei.

Yangon United, which is representing Myanmar, had secured a place in the play-off stage of the tourney after winning the 2019 General Aung San Shield.

Brunei's Indera SC qualified for the preliminary stage of the AFC Cup 2020 as the team met the AFC club licensing requirements, according to officials.

Yangon United relied on their strikers to dominate over the Brunei team.

Than Paing scored the opener for Yangon United at 11 minutes, and he made the second goal for the team at 18 minutes.

Yangon United landed their third goal at 43 minutes, when Ernest Barfo scored a quick goal to establish a 3-0 lead.

Barfo scored the fourth goal for Yangon United and MaungMaungLwin netted the fifth goal at 58 minutes.

The sixth and final goal for Yangon was scored by AungKyawNaing at 71 minutes.

Five minutes later, Indera player Marcelo Carvalho bagged a goal for his team, but the match ended with a 6-1 win for Yangon United.

The second leg of the tie will be played on 29 January at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon, and the winner of the first and second leg will enter the group stage of the AFC Cup 2020. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Myanmar Futsal League: VUC still leading with no losses

AT the end of Week-15 of the MFF Futsal League 2020, the Victoria University College Futsal Club is still at the top of the standing table with no losses so far in the tourney.

The VUC F.C. has notched up 43 points from 14 wins and one draw against the Myanmar Imperial University Futsal Club.

Meanwhile, the Myanmar Imperial University Futsal Club is trailing VUC F.C. with the same points, but with goal difference.

GV Futsal Club is in the third place with 39 points from 13 wins and two losses.

In the meantime, Winner Futsal Club is in the fourth place with 28 points from 9 wins, one draw, and five losses, and On Doctor Futsal Club is fifth with 25 points from eight wins, one draw, and six losses.

The Futsal Chit Thu Futsal Club is currently at the bottom spot with 4 points from one win, one draw, and thirteen losses. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

The Victoria University College Futsal Club seen at a Myanmar Futsal League match. **PHOTO: VUC FUTSAL CLUB**