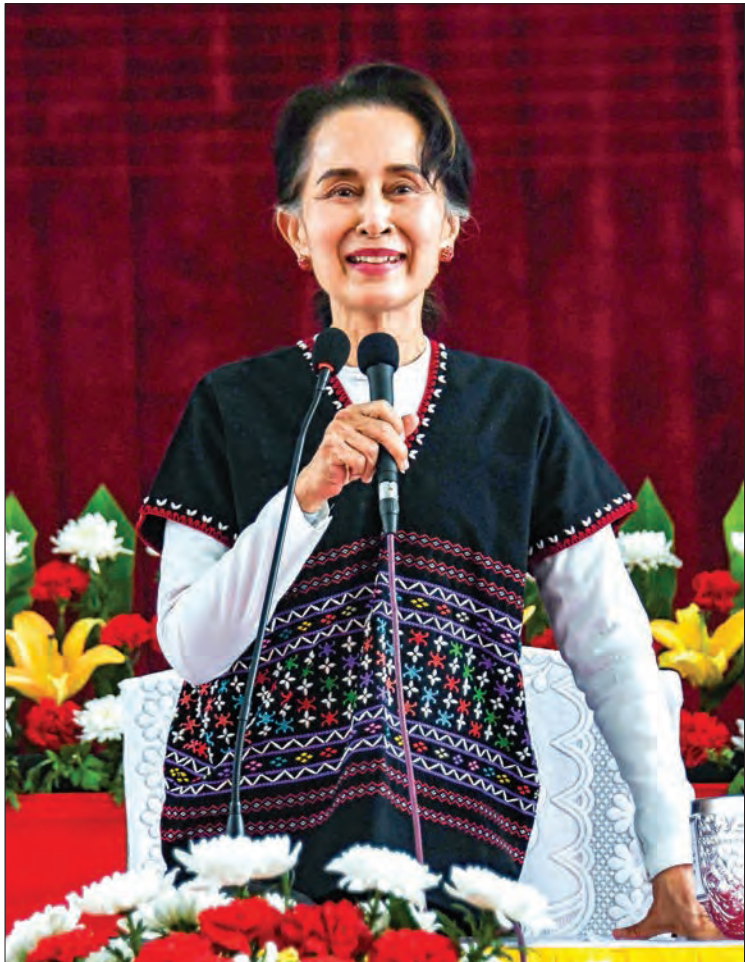


THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VI, No. 314, 3rd Waxing of Tabaung 1381 ME

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Tuesday, 25 February 2020



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meeting with local people in Kya-In-Seikkyi, Kayin State. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor meets locals in Kawkareik, Kya-in-Seikkyi tsps

STATE COUNSELLOR and Chairperson of the Central Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, departed for Mawlamyine, Mon State, by special flight from Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

She was accompanied by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Soe Htut, Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Thura U Aung Ko, Dr Aung Thu, U Ohn Win, and Dr Myint Htwe, Deputy Minister U Hla Maw Oo, Chief of Myanmar Police Force Lt-Gen Aung Win Oo and other officials.

The State Counsellor and entourage were welcomed at Mawlamyine Airport by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye, Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nan Khin Htwe Myint, Mon State Chief Minister Dr Aye Zan, state ministers, Hluttaw representatives, department officials and local residents.

The State Counsellor and entourage then departed by helicopter with the Kayin State Chief Minister to Kawkareik and were welcomed by Kayin State Chief Justice U Saw San Lin, state ministers, officials, and local residents.

The State Counsellor then met with residents of the various townships in Kawkareik District at the Kayin New Year grounds, where she first delivered a speech: "We are delighted to hold a public meeting with local people in Kawkareik District, and thanks for the warm welcome.

The main objective for this public meeting is just for sharing. That means to share all the good and the bad of the country, as well as the cause and effect. To share the blessings of good fortune. To bear the sufferings of ill fortune together. We will be together in weal and woe. This is the responsibility and rights of citizens.



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Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw raises queries to ministries, approves recommendations for road safety bill

THE 15th regular session of second Pyithu Hluttaw held its 10th day meeting yesterday, with the MPs raising queries to the Union Supreme Court, the Ministry of Office of Union Government, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy.

MP U Bo Gyi from Chauk constituency asked about filling human resources and other resources, and the Union government's plan to fulfill them.

Union Supreme Court Judge U Myo Tint replied that the allocated budgets for all courts were 0.131 per cent for Capital Expenditure and 0.106 per cent for Revenue Expenditure in 2018-2019 financial year, and 0.114 percent for Capital Expenditure and 0.095 per cent Revenue Expenditure in 2019-2020 financial year.

He added that the Union Supreme Court will use modern equipment and technologies to be able to reduce manpower depending on the availability of budget in respec-



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat. **PHOTO: MNA**

tive financial years.

MP U Lar Mar Lay from Hsawlaw constituency asked about possible use of land plot owned by the General Administration Department (headquarters) for construction of building for Kachin State High Court.

Union Supreme Court Judge U Myo Tint answered application of land permit for the building, and Deputy Min-

ister for the Office of the Union Government U Tin Myint will allow the use of land plot for the court building as a property of GAD.

U Nay Soe Aung from Wuntho constituency asked about enlisting Kyaukpaset Village into the management of Ministry of Home Affairs. Deputy Minister U Tin Myint represented the Sagaing Region government in answering that

the plan was being coordinated with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

MP Dr Salai Riyan Vel from Falam constituency asked to change Wai Lu Wun camp in his constituency into the local name Valung village.

Deputy Minister U Tin Myint replied that the process is underway to change into the local name of village in accordance with the procedure of Falam Township General Administration Department.

MP U Aung Theik from Seikpyu constituency asked to establish two sub-stations with the capacity of 66/11 kVA and 5 mVA each in Let Sal village and Nyaungnichaung village in his constituency.

Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy U Khin Maung Win replied that the two sub-stations are estimated at the total cost of K6.6 billion, and will be implemented with Union budget of 2022-2023 financial year.

MP U Nay Myo Htet from Kyauktada constituency asked about reform plans for the Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation, the Mandalay Electricity Supply Corporation and the Electricity Supply Enterprise with foreign investments to ensure effective electricity supply, better service and prevention of power losses. MP Daw Nang Htwe Thu from Phasaung constituency asked about appointment of staff for the vacant positions at the electricity engineering office in her constituency.

Deputy Minister U Khin Maung Win answered the questions.

The Pyithu Hluttaw also approved recommendations on the Road Safety and Vehicle Management bill without any objections.

The date to convene 11th day of Pyithu Hluttaw will be confirmed on the appropriate day.—Aye Aye Thant (MNA)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw discusses tax collection

THE tenth-day meeting of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw's 15th regular session was held yesterday.

In the Q&A session, Dr Pyae Phyo of Ayeyawady Region constituency 7 asked what measures have been taken towards tax evasion since the ratification of the 2019-2020 Union Tax Law and the amendment to the Myanmar Stamp Act.

Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry, U Maung Maung Win, said the amount of income tax collected, with the exception of undisclosed income assessment, for the first three months of last year was K572.868 billion and the amount levied for the first three months of this year is K598.094 billion, marking an increase of K25.226 billion and by 4.403 per cent.

He said the reduction of tax on undisclosed income



Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than. **PHOTO: SOE WIN TUN**

assessment is mentioned in Section 25 (a) of the Union Tax Law and is collected as such. He said there has been an increase in the number of taxpayers and the amount of tax paid compared to previous years and that there has been no cases of tax evasion since the enactment of the law.

Afterwards, Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee member Daw Nan Ni Ni Aye read the committee's report on the National Library Bill sent back from the Pyithu Hluttaw with amendments.

Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than gathered the deliberation of the Hluttaw and approved

it. He then submitted the ethnic rights protection bylaw and court file copy bylaw sent by the Pyithu Hluttaw with amendments and sought the approval of the assembly.

Also in the Q&A session, U Ze Kaung of Kachin State constituency 3 asked whether the Singyaing-Gukan road in Waingmaw Township will be upgraded.

Deputy Minister for Border Affairs Maj-Gen Than Htut replied that his ministry has received the MP's proposal for the upgrade and has included it in the 2020-2021 FY budget proposal. He said they will follow procedures when it is approved.

Daw Htu May of Rakhine State constituency 11 asked whether the run-down high school building in Layhtaung, Yembye Township, will be replaced with a new one. Union Minister for Education Dr

Myo Thein Gyi replied that the matter has been included in accordance with its priority ranking in the 2020-2021 FY construction capital fund.

U Kyaw Thaung of Sagaing Region constituency 1 asked whether a river pumping project for the fields and Mu River near Kabo reservoir, Sagaing Region, will be implemented. Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw replied that the matter has been included in the Sagaing Region government's capital fund proposal for 2020-2021 FY and will be implemented after approval.

The eleventh-day meeting of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw's 15th regular session will be held on 6 March.—Aung Ye Thwin

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

State Counsellor meets locals in Kawkareik, Kya-in-Seikkyi tsps

FROM PAGE-1

While we enjoy the rights, we also need to carry responsibility. This is the objective of our public meetings across the country. We want to establish a government that allows people access to participation and guarantees protection. To do so, regular contacts between the government and the public is required.

We want to hear the people's voice and we also want the people to know our replies. Some regions of our country, like Kawkareik, are more important, I think. It does not mean to discriminate one region from other areas.

Kayin State seriously suffered the consequences of civil war for many years. However, the local people have realized the essence of peace after ceasefire, comparing with the situations while the area was ravaged by armed conflicts. It is very important for our country.

We also need to develop the devastated sectors caused by the civil war. No success will be achieved without people's participation.

I still remember the discussions of Kayin youths during the first meeting with young people for peace. As they were around 20-year old at that time, they could compare the situations before and after the ceasefire in the region. I asked them their feeling on the differences. They replied frankly and simply about better roads and transportation. I explained to them that the good transportation also resulted in other benefits such as education, economy and healthcare services. We had to work hard for better roads.

Similarly, there will be a



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with local people in Kawkareik Township, Kayin State yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

large development gap in different areas depending on the access to electricity which is a fundamental necessity for daily life. Peace is very important for these fruitful results.

The Myanmar Sustainable Development plan has well recognized that development cannot be distinguished from peace. All the national people in Kayin State are advised to maintain peace. Actually, peace begins from within us. In contrast, the lack of peace is also caused by individuals who do not want it. Everybody needs to have self-confidence in peace. So, I frequently advise all to have self-confidence to secure peace. We must have absolute belief to bring about peace. Our people must have confidence that peace is the only tool to estab-

lish a peaceful state. Such belief must be implanted into the mind of young children. People need to have positive attitude, good intentions (cetana) and (metta) loving-kindness along their way to the intended destination.

The government is also responsible for helping people build up confidence. One of the objectives of the government is to establish rule of law. It goes far beyond police and courts. The term for rule of law is wider than this scope.

Rule of law must be capable of protecting people physically and mentally and while sleeping and in waking up without having any concerns about security inside the home, in public area, at work, in schools or in markets.

Public participation is crucial

for rule of law. No government could implement major plans without support of the people. An administration that neglects the role of the people is not a democratic government. They will not maintain long term success.

Therefore, people are very fundamental for the country. Their ability reflects the capacity of the country. The value of the country depends on its people. So, our government focuses on health and education of the younger generation to develop them into valuable citizens. They need both physical and mental wellbeing. Wisdom means the quality of the mind, and it cannot be measured by academic degrees. Instead, it is the capacity and ability to overcome difficulties and challenges. That is why, I always recommend vocational education. The unemployment rate of graduates is increasing in developing and the most developed countries, while some graduates are unable to get jobs in the professions of their choice.

Therefore, the developing countries have gradually realized the importance of vocational education. Our country can take lessons from others' mistakes although we lag behind other countries in the education sector. That is why we are striving to develop both academic education and vocational education on an equal basis. We also invite public participation. We have found people are requesting establishment of vocational education centres. They have understood the importance of vocational education.

We all know the bad effects of underdevelopment. But there are also good effects of under development. I also invite questions from the people to make close relations between the government and people in accordance with democratic practices.

We want to know concerns, problems and expectations of the people, and how we can solve these issues.

Some audiences are so well-disciplined that they have enough capability to build a genuine federal union.

I also advise the people to raise questions with the interest of the whole community in mind instead of making personal attacks.

Considering welfare of others is as important as personal interest in developing the country. This concept must be introduced to the young children by their parents even while they are living with their close relatives.

Parents must serve as models for their children instead of giving just instructions. If the parents are leading in the wrong way, they could not give valuable advice to their children.

Our government is responsible for giving clear and precise answers to the people's questions. The government officials need to explain when and how the requests of people could be fulfilled, and give reasons why some requests could not be fulfilled. The government policies and rules must be explained in simple and concise terms."

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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with students from the training school for the development of national races in Kya-in-Seikkyi, Kayin State yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor meets locals in Kawkareik, Kya-in-Seikkyi tsps

FROM PAGE-3

Following this, the State Counsellor, Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe, State Chief Minister Daw Nan Khin Htwe Myint, state ministers and officials replied to questions from the local residents on matters that can be immediately addressed, those that require long-term solutions and those that require thorough reviews.

The questions were divided into two parts – those submitted in advance and those raised at the meeting by residents who drew lots. The questions included inquiries into upgrading roads, bridges and hospitals, electrification, appointing sufficient medical staff, relinquishing confiscated lands, promoting Kayin literature and allotting land for Kawkareik Township's interfaith group.

Next, the State Counsellor gave a short speech where she thanked everyone for their precise questions. She said the questions focused on three topics in particular – road infrastructure, electrification and land issues. She said after the Hluttaws have legislated laws, ownership issues have been cropping up all over the country. She said this was a dark legacy but people cannot separate the bad and only take the good from legacies.

She said there was no choice and asked for understanding from the public. She said all the citizens are united and urged them to cultivate a spirit of working for their region and their country and to fulfill their duties and exercise their freedom of choice properly. She said the purpose of these meetings was to share her thoughts and feelings with the public.

The State Counsellor then



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is welcomed by local people in Kawkareik District, Kayin State yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

took a documentary photo with the gathered residents.

From there, the State Counsellor traveled by helicopter to Kya-in-Seikkyi and was welcomed by the State Auditor-General, state ministers, department officials, local residents, and the Kayin traditional Don Dance troupe.

She was also welcomed by local residents along the road to the town hall, where she held a public meeting with the residents.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi first delivered a speech, where she said:

Speech delivered by the State Counsellor at the mass gathering in Kya-in-Seikkyi

We hold mass gatherings with the people because we want to hear the voice of the people, and we want our people to hear our views. The Prime Minister of the

State Daw Nan Khin Htwe Myint informed me that the local people had some questions concerning the Constitution, and asked me if she should stop such questions. I said, No because the people have the right to raise questions and get informed. I asked her what the questions were, and she told me the questions had to do with the presence of 25% of the representatives of the Tatmadaw in the Hluttaw and Article 59 (f). Here is my answer to your questions. This is a matter which concerns each and every one of us.

The Constitution is the concern of all our people. Actually, no questions have ever been raised in the mass gatherings like this. I am glad to hear that the people show interest in the matters related to the Constitution. Our people should always be alert to what's going on in the country so that

our country can make progress. As you all know, the Constitution embodies the basic principles and laws of a nation. It is this Constitution that mainly dictates how a nation is going to be shaped. When our country regained independence, it assumed the name, The Union of Burma. It was since then that our architects of independence had well accepted the idea of the Union. It goes without saying that a nation in the form of a Union was dreamed of, and this idea had been much valued.

Our country is a Union. I often remind you that we should always bear in mind that we as citizens are the brothers and sisters of the Union because our country is built of a rich variety of national races. To make sure this sort of country gets politically stable, makes progress and enjoys peace, the spirit of the Union is of crucial importance. Only if we citizens are equipped with the spirit of the Union can the progress of our country really be consolidated.

Union spirit means the spirit of unity. Unity or standing united doesn't mean One Mind or standing under One Command. Unity or being in blood ties is based on the abilities of negotiating over different views or concepts. If you let your different concepts get you in aggressive mood or get you killing each other, our country would never enjoy peace and stability.

The ability of negotiating over different views is a requirement of each and every member of the Union. This both young and old should realize and accept. So the Union spirit means negotiat-

ing over different attitudes. If you stick to the attitude that you must get hold of a hundred percent of what you want, our country would never be politically stable or make progress. For example, suppose in this hall, this ceremony would be a failure if every one of you should feel happy to take the seats only in the front row. So there is some kind of adjustments or give and take. We have children in the front rows because it has always been the custom of our mass gatherings.

On some occasions, the children want to be there. But when there is no more space, we usually get them to take seats over there. Some people might think they are kids, they have no interest, they do not understand. But I believe that the interest in politics should be cultivated in our children no matter that they are still young. That's why I always encourage the participation of children in the mass gatherings.

I really welcome you, people of Kyar In-Seik Gyi, to raise questions about the Constitution. I'll share two points you want to find out. The first point is the presence of 25 % of the representatives of the Tatmadaw in the Hluttaw and the second point is Article 59 (f). Some of you may already know what we have been doing in the Hluttaw about the measures being taken to reform the Constitution. You may have made studies on this topic, or you may have read the newspapers carefully, and get informed about what is being said.

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

State Counsellor meets locals in Kawkareik, Kya-in-Seikkyi tsps

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Our government has been taking measures for the reforms of the Constitution because, to put it simply, when we entered the election, we made a pledge to the people that we would launch the reforms of the Constitution. We did not make that pledge off-handedly. Why do we want to bring about reforms to the Constitution? This question is more important. This our people should understand. I believe you have understood to some extent, because on our visit to the Kayin State, I was astonished to find that even the local children showed interest in the reforms of Article 59 (f).

This showed how strongly the local people of the Kayin State have shown their interest in politics. We want to bring about the reforms of the Constitution, not because we have no ordinary objective, but because we want to build a genuine democratic, federal Union, purely because we want to include the points that would enable us to build a genuine democratic, federal Union.

While we are taking measures for fulfilling this pledge, we do not forget the issue of national reconciliation. We have openly declared, since we founded the National League for Democracy, that we shall aim at achieving national reconciliation. By this, I mean getting reconciled between those who do not believe in democracy and those who really do because it was the 1988 democratic movements that had given birth to the National League for Democracy. We have since then held a strong belief in democracy. Why do we believe it? A simple answer: I suppose everyone knows what is democracy: democracy means the rule of the people. However, it is practically impossible that the people would govern the whole country so the governing body is formed of the elected representatives under representative



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi chats with students from the training school for the development of national races in Kya-in-Seikkyi, Kayin State yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

democracy.

Man is not perfect. Man has flaws and defects. So a system improvised by man has, of course, flaws and defects. Nothing can go smooth and perfect. But a world famous politician says democracy has flaws, it is the best of all the systems man has ever improvised. This does not mean that this system is free from flaws. This I personally accept. Democracy is not free from defects; it has its own shortcomings.

However, it is the best political system man has ever created. It is the best, because it is a system that values and respects the people. In other words, the majority are held in values and respect. To add essence to the democratic system, it represents the will of the majority while safeguarding the rights of the minority. To speak frankly, why do we want this system? Because it rules the country with the exercise of the desire of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority. This, we assume, is the best system

man has ever improvised on this earth, and that is why we support this system.

Of course, there are people who do not support this system and those who really do. The former sticks to their belief that Democracy is not born in this country, but it has been exported from another country. If you look at our country after the 1988 democratic revolution, there arose two forces: one believes in democracy and the other doesn't. That was why I drew attention to the issue of national reconciliation, and I meant the reconciliation between those two forces engaged in tension. Of course, we all are the citizens of the same country.

With the objective of building reconciliation between the offspring of the Union, we have held this as a policy of ours. Later, national reconciliation is also related to peace making process of ours. Concerning the reforms of the Constitution, when we had made a tour in organizing the people in terms of reforming Article 59 (f), I informed the people like this: if one of your family members happens to hold a foreigner registration card, he or she has no chance to be the President or the Vice President. In a word, many have understood that this Article makes a particular reference to me. And I also realized a bit of the personal reference.

In fact, we raise objection against the Article 59 (f), not out of personal grudge, but because of the policy of democracy. By this, every citizen must have the right for equality, the values of individ-

ual rights. We must respect that. We do not refer to the Constitution, but the law still in practice which states that a person reaching over the age of eighteen years is a grown-up, who is supposed to take responsibility for his or her own fate. Parents must take responsibility of what a child below eighteen has done. But when he or she is already eighteen, parents have no more responsibilities of such kind, and are not liable for punishment over a problem that their child has made. To put it simply, a law having juxtaposing the life of an adult and the life of the parents does not fit into the fundamental criteria. This does not fit into the fundamental principles of democracy, and we object. We object not because we assumed it was a personal attack to me.

The second point you have raised is the presence of the 25 % of the representatives of the Tatmadaw in the Hluttaw. In fact, we want to bring about reforms about this point not because it is something to do with the Tatmadaw. In a country really exercising the democracy, if the representative is not elected by the people, he has no right to exercise and exert influence on the Hluttaw or parliament because democracy is a system of government by the people. It is only the representatives elected by the people who have the influence or power over the system ruled by the people. It does not mean there are no representatives not elected by the people. But these non-elective members have limited rights. Sadly enough, the present Constitution

has no such limitations. That is why we want to bring about the reforms. We object, not because it is the Tatmadaw, but we will raise objection to any organization having such privileges. Any organization that believes in democracy should not take advantage of such opportunities that do not fit into the principles of democracy. This we shall object outright.

In 2014, in the Hluttaw, while having tension at the Hluttaw concerning the reforms of the Constitution, we the National League for Democracy proposed a statement that this reform be made. We did not do so in a secretive manner. We let everyone get informed openly. It is a matter to be presented at the Hluttaw concerning the reforms of the Constitution in the present.

I do not mind making a clarification about this point. We draw attention to this point not because we want to show our aggressive attitude towards the Tatmadaw. We aim at bringing about the reforms with the concept that the Constitution must be reformed so as to fit into the framework of the genuine democratic, federal Union. We aim at the political stability and the national reconciliation and we will bring about the changes step by step. In the present, we made a proposed statement about the phase by phase reduction of the 25 percent because the democratic politics must have flexibility.

Yes, we must be flexible for the sake of the stability of the state, for the sake of peace for our people, for the sake of our independence and unity. As long as we have the mindset that I must get what I claim for; that our force must get what we have claimed for; our country would never enjoy peace. Then we would not be able to make progress. Then there goes the vicious circle of the lack of progress and the lack of peace. So I give credit to you, local people of Kyar-in-Seikkyi, for showing interest in the reforms of the Constitution.

Be interested in what stage our country has reached, where we are heading to. Discuss among yourselves. Stand together to put into practice what you want to do, what you dream of. Some people say, why not the government do this or do that? Please keep in mind that the people's support is important for the success of the government's tasks. Please do not underestimate yourself. Every one has his or her values. Keep this in mind.

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Be interested in what stage our country has reached, where we are heading to. Discuss among yourselves. Stand together to put into practice what you want to do, what you dream of.

State Counsellor visits Strand Walking Street in Mawlamyine



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi enjoys the traditional performance by dance troupe in Mawlamyine yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

FROM PAGE-5

How can you show this? Finally, it is in the election that every citizen shows his or her support. Everyone has a vote. This means every individual has values. In the election the President has a vote so does a citizen entitled to voting. Finally, your value is the same as those of the head of the state.

Therefore, under the democratic system, every citizen has value, and you should exercise your value correctly for your sake, for the sake of your country, for the sake of your state. With this kind of mentality, we can make much progress. We know we have many things to fulfil for the needs of our people. Please cooperate and collaborate for the fulfilment of these needs. We will try our best

and you, our people, may try your best, too. It is, not a great government, but great people who make a great country.

A government may be great, but without the collaboration of the people, no progress can take place. After the World War II there appeared countries reaching the top, as well as war-torn countries, and the conqueror countries. The final victory is just momentary; what is important is the ability of the people who could transform the defeat or victory into their progress or success in the long run.

If the people are qualified, they can make victory no matter how many times they are defeated. Finally, they will win victory rather than defeat. So what I love about Kyar-in-Seikkyi is this re-

gion has been a dearly won region, and my heart is always with you. I would like to request you all to collaborate for the progress of the country and national reconciliation, unity and peace.

The State Counsellor then answered questions from the audience. The questions covered a wide range of topics, including water purification, constructing and upgrading roads and bridges, issuing small-scale mineral testing licenses, reopening the Myanmar-Thai border gate at Phayathonzu Sub-Township, electrification, reducing the number of Tatmadaw Hluttaw representatives from 25 per cent, the reason for the delay in amending Article 261 of the Constitution that can potentially grant federal status

to ethnic regions, and the reason for amending Article 59-f of the Constitution.

The State Counsellor, Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe, State Chief Minister Daw Nan Khin Htwe Myint, state ministers and officials replied to questions from the local residents on matters that can be immediately addressed, those that require long-term solutions and those that require further reviews.

Next, the State Counsellor gave a short speech where she said she wished to leave good legacies for the generations to follow and urged everyone to work together to create lasting valuable legacies. She then took a group documentary photograph with all those present.

From there, the State Counsellor visited the training school for the development of national races in Kya-in-Seikkyi. She greeted the students cordially, answered their questions, and gave them food and monetary assistance.

She then inspected the library, dormitories and the cafeteria.

Afterwards, the State Counsellor and entourage departed for Mawlamyine in the evening and visited the Strand Walking Street at night, giving support to the market stalls there. She also watched Mon traditional dance troupe performances at the Culture Show there. —MNA

(Translated by Dr Zaw Tun, Aung Khin, Zaw Htet Oo)

Workshop on air pollution, acid deposition in progress in Nay Pyi Taw

THE Meteorology and Hydrology Department and the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) are jointly organizing a two-day workshop titled 'National Awareness Workshop on Acid Deposition and Other Related Atmospheric Pollutions', at the Hotel Royal Aster in Nay Pyi Taw.

Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung made an opening remark and Secretary of EANET Mr Tomi Haryadi extended a greeting on the first day of workshop yesterday.

At the workshop, the EANET's experts and invited guests discussed the ongoing activities of the network, acid depositions and air pollutions resulted by climate changes, atmospheric pollutions in regional countries, results and

findings from monitoring process, prevailing challenges and reduction of air pollutions.—

MNA
(Translated by Aung Khin)



Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung and attendees pose for a documentary photo at the National Public Awareness Workshop on Acid Deposition and Other Related Atmospheric Pollutions in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Hluttaw holds conference to share experiences in peace building processes

A CONFERENCE titled ‘The Role of Parliament in Peace Building Processes’ was opened at the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon, with the aims to exchange views of well-experienced international parliamentarians, Myanmar Hluttaw representatives and stakeholders in peace building processes.

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat delivered an opening remark at the ceremony that is also attended by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein, Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung, speakers of State/Region Hluttaws, chairpersons of Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw committees, secretaries, Member of the Hungarian Parliament states and Chairperson of Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Dr Agnes Vadai, Joint Com-



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat delivers the opening speech at the conference titled ‘The Role of Parliament in Peace Building Processes’ at the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

mittee on International Inter-Parliamentary Union Chairman Dr Than Win and committee members, Hluttaw representatives, MPs of State/Region Hluttaws, invited guests and Hluttaw staff members.

In his opening remark, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat recognized mutual

understanding, friendly relations and close cooperation between the IPU and Myanmar Hluttaw.

He also emphasized the important role of Hluttaw representatives in peace building processes, socioeconomic losses of ethnic people in conflict-torn areas and the government’s peacemaking efforts.

The Speaker also urged the Hluttaw representatives to promote all-inclusive democratic policies and awareness for peace in respective constituency.

Then, Dr Agnes Vadai and Dr Than Win delivered speeches.

The dialogue on the issue of consequences from conflicts and the role of parliamentarians was

taken part by the parliamentarians and experts from Myanmar, South Africa, Thailand and the Philippines.

After the question and answer session, Dr Agnes Vadai read out IPU’s message on the event which will be held until 26 February.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

MoC Union Minister attends signing ceremony for GMS Corridor Towns Development Project

THE loan agreement signing ceremony for the GMS Corridor Towns Development Project was held at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Construction in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

Union Minister U Han Zaw of the Ministry of Construction first said that the proposed project will upgrade basic infrastructure and strengthen urban management capacities to de-

velop the towns of Mawlamyine in Mon State, and Hpa-An and Myawady in Kayin State along the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC), in accord with

the feasibility study reports, with the ADB’s loan US\$80 million and the NEDA’s (Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency) loan US\$23.4 million.

The Ministry of Construction will take a leading role to implement the project as an Executing Agency (EA) and the Kayin and Mon States’ governments will perform their respective duties as Implementing Agencies (IA).

The Project Implementation Units (PIU) will collaborate with the Project Management Units (PMU) and the Consultant Agencies concerned in order to implement the project and pay back the loans.

The project will facilitate the urban development and basic infrastructure development in Myawady, which is a

major border trade town, and improve bilateral trade and economic conditions as well as enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries, he added.

Ambassador Mrs Suphatra Srimaitreephithak, Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry and NEDA Chairperson Ms Chularat Suteethom then gave their remarks at the event.

Afterwards, the ceremony was concluded with Treasury Department Director-General Daw Si Si Pyone of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry and NEDA President Mr Perames Vudthitornetraks signing and exchanging the loan agreement. —MNA

(Translated by Aungthu Ya)



Union Minister U Han Zaw attends the signing ceremony of loan agreement of Third Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) Corridor Towns Development Project in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Objectives of the 75th anniversary of the Armed Forces Day

- (1)

Uphold our three main national causes: Non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity, and perpetuation of national sovereignty as a national duty, to serve the country at the risk of our lives
- (2)

Participate in the peace-making process with the State Government under the six-point peace policy of the Tatmadaw as part of efforts to gain eternal peace
- (3)

Guard peace and stability and protect the interests of the people; build a modern, strong, and capable army
- (4)

Safeguard the fine traditions of the Tatmadaw which has been dutiful in discharging State and national political duties



THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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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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Decent work agenda, labour law reform discussed at Fourth National Stakeholders Forum

THE opening ceremony of Fourth National Stakeholders Forum for Implementing the Decent Work Agenda and Labour Law Reform was held at Park Royal Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Union Minister U Thein Swe of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population said in his opening speech: "The meeting aims to receive the technical assistance which is essential to implement the decent employment programme and amendment to labour laws and by-laws as a priority of the State. In order to make any other necessary changes in labour affairs that need to be prioritized, it also aims for all the stakeholders such as the government, the employers and the employees, the international economic enterprises, the development partners, the international non-governmental organizations, the international organizations, the international labour organizations, and the experts to discuss and decide the future programme to be carried out."

The first-day session will discuss the major role of promoting the decent employment programme through appropriate legal framework and good practices to empower the social dialogue on policies and workplaces.



Union Minister U Thein Swe addresses the Fourth National Stakeholders Forum in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

PHOTO: MNA



The second-day session will discuss the amendment to the labour laws and by-laws and the technical assistance programme as an immediate priority.

He added that the government, the employers' and employees' organizations, the ILO have drafted the Decent Work Country Programme – DWCP 2018-2021 in line with the ILO standards, the UN Sustainable Development Goals as well as the requirement of the State. It is now being undertaken with the help of the development partners.

Forced labour cases like under age recruitment and recruiting of those without consent have been handled by the National Complaint Mechanism and the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting UNCTF-MR. World societies and the ILO should have confidence and co-operate in this implementation.

The number of social insur-

ance workers was increased up to 1.46 million in January 2020. That is why, in order to expedite in providing the social insurance workers with their benefits, the Social Security Board has been undertaking the reform programme with the ILO technical assistance as well as with the fund assistance of development partners.

Three five-year projects have been carried out for eradication of child labour, with the help of the US. A 15-year project is now being undertaken with the National Committee led by the Vice President and 8 Working Committees. In honour of the ILO Centenary, the formal ratification process is underway after the Hluttaw's approval on the Minimum Age Convention (138).

Certificates of registration have been issued to a total of 2990 employees' organizations and 29 employers' organization

from 2012 to 2019.

Our ministry would like to express our deepest thanks to the ILO, the International Organizations, the Development Partners and donor countries among others. All the stakeholders and meeting participants should discuss and give good advice and suggestions on the matters of future reform programme and technical assistance, he urged.

Next, Deputy Director-General Mr Greg Vines of the ILO, EU Deputy Resident Representative Ms Eszter Nemeth, Ambassador Mr John Nielsen of Denmark to Myanmar, Deputy Chief of Mission Mr George Sibley of US Embassy and UN Resident Coordinator (Acting) Ms Xiaojie Fan gave their remarks at the meeting.

The forum will continue until 25 February. —MNA

(Translated by Aungthu Ya)

Survey records 79 Ayeyawady dolphins

A survey conducted from 10 to 20 February in the Ayeyawady River between Mandalay and Bhamo has put the population of Ayeyawady dolphins at 79, a record increase that points to the success of conservation efforts, said U Han Win, officer in-charge of Ayeyawady Dolphin Conservation as well as deputy head of the Fisheries Department.

The population of Ayeyawady dolphins has been recorded every year since 2002. The 2002 survey recorded 72 dolphins, while the survey in 2018 found 76 dolphins in the river. The survey this year has found 79 dolphins, which is the highest number on record, he said.

"The Ayeyawady dolphin



survey was started in 2002. A total of 72 dolphins were found from 2004 to 2010. In 2018, 76 dolphins were found. However, the survey also recorded dolphin deaths. So, only 72 live dolphins were counted in 2018, while the rest were found dead. This year, the survey found 79 dolphins between

Mandalay and Bhamo, which is a record high. The increase in dolphin numbers can be attributed to awareness courses on Ayeyawady dolphin conservation and patrols that cracked down on battery-shock fishing," he said.

"This year, the Fisheries Department and the Wildlife Conser-

vation Society (WCS) of Myanmar conducted the population survey of the Ayeyawady dolphins with the Myanmar Maritime Police. They jointly conducted the survey and held training courses to raise awareness about dolphin conservation. They also seized items related to battery-shock fishing during the survey," he added.

"This survey didn't face any challenges. We found more dolphins than we expected. Last year saw a lower rate of dolphin mortality and dolphin calves, too. We expected to find only 75 dolphins. However, to our surprise, we counted 79 dolphins," said U Kyaw Hla Thein, project manager, WCS. The Ayeyawady dolphins give birth to only one calf every three years. —Khine Satt Wai

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Bago mung bean growers earn good profits

FARMERS who cultivated mung beans as a winter crop in Thabyaygon, Zee Taw, and Phatseikgon villages in Pyay township of Bago Region, are pleased with the profits they made this year, according to mung bean growers from Gone Zin village.

Mung bean growers said they were pleased with this harvest period because their farms gave higher yields compared with last year and they received good prices for their crops.

Farmers cultivating mung beans rely on the South Nawin dam, North Nawin dam, and Thasi dam for irrigation. Mung beans are mostly grown in Thabyaygon, Zee Taw, Phatseikgon, and Khweyeegon villages.

“This year, our farmers

are happy with growing mung beans because they made handsome profits and got a high yield. We were happy to give labour charges, too, because we got handsome profits. We paid labour charges of K6,000 to male and K5,000 to female workers.

Last year, the mung bean yield was 10 baskets per acre. This year, the yield was 18 baskets per acre. This year, the price of mung beans was K33,000 per basket. Some farmers did not need to sell them in the market because merchants were coming and buying the mung beans directly from the farm,” said U Kyaw San, a mung bean grower from Gong Zin village.—Zayar Htet (Minbu)

(Translated by Hay Mar)



Mung bean growers work at a farm in Bago Region. PHOTO: ZAYAR HTET (MINBU)

Muse border trade likely to resume in mid-March

By Nyein Nyein

ALTHOUGH China’s departmental offices, schools, and banks reopened yesterday, trade at the Muse border is expected to resume only in mid-March, said U Min Thein, vice chairman of the Muse depot.

“We expect trading to improve in mid-March, even if it does not return to normal. We will have to wait for the situation to go back to normal,” said U Min Thein.

“Moreover, there is one important thing: Even if trade at Muse returns to normal, we will have to monitor the Wuhan virus situation in China,” he added.

Since the Chinese New Year, exports to China via the Muse gate have been almost completely suspended because of the Wuhan virus. While watermelons and muskmelons were sent to China, the volume of exports was low. Currently, Myanmar is exporting a small volume of rice, broken rice, and sugar, and importing some electrical materials, construction ware, and foodstuff from China, according to the Muse depot.

Due to the Chinese New Year and coronavirus (COVID-19), bilateral border trade between Myanmar and China declined by US\$209 million between 23 January and 14 Feb-

ruary, said Dr Than Myint, the Union Minister for Commerce, at a meeting held between Vice President U Myint Swe and entrepreneurs on 22 February in Yangon.

In two weeks, the value of exports dropped by \$152 million, while imports declined by \$57 million this year at Muse, Kanpiketee, Chinshwehaw, and Lwejel compared to the same period last year.

“The export of fruits and marine products on the Myanmar-China border is suffering due to spoilage on account of the spread of COVID-19. So, local watermelon and muskmelon growers are facing dif-

ficulties. Now, the government has created a market for watermelons and muskmelons in cooperation with the Yangon City Development Committee,” said U Than Myint.

Although, the value of border trade has declined due to COVID-19, maritime trade has increased, crossing \$2.1 billion in the past five months of the 2019-2020 financial year. Border trade has reached \$14.5 billion this FY, with exports touching \$6.7 billion and imports pegged at \$7.7 billion, according to the statistics provided by the Ministry of Commerce.

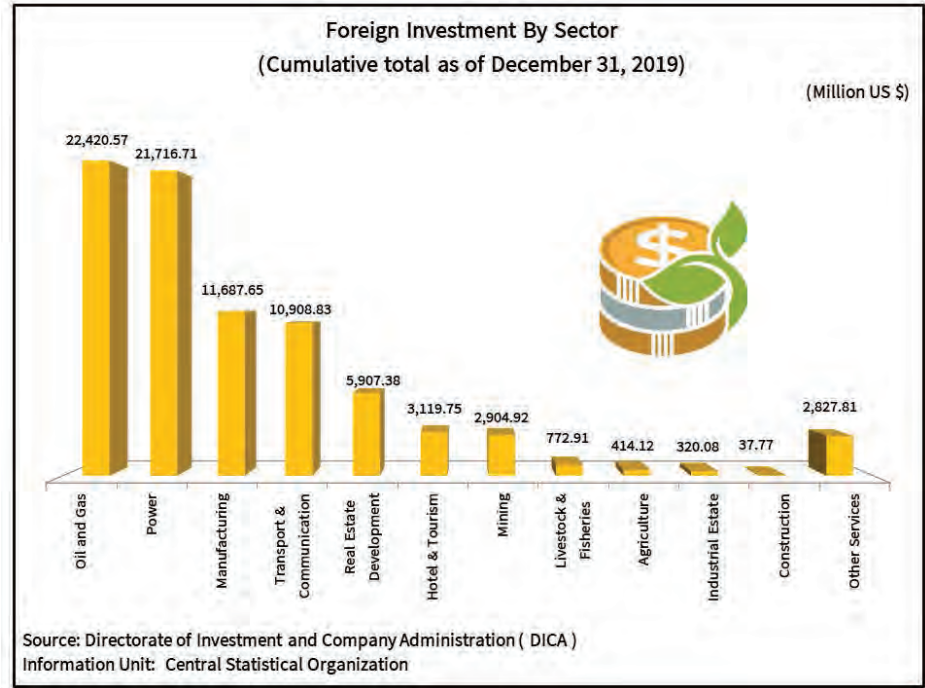
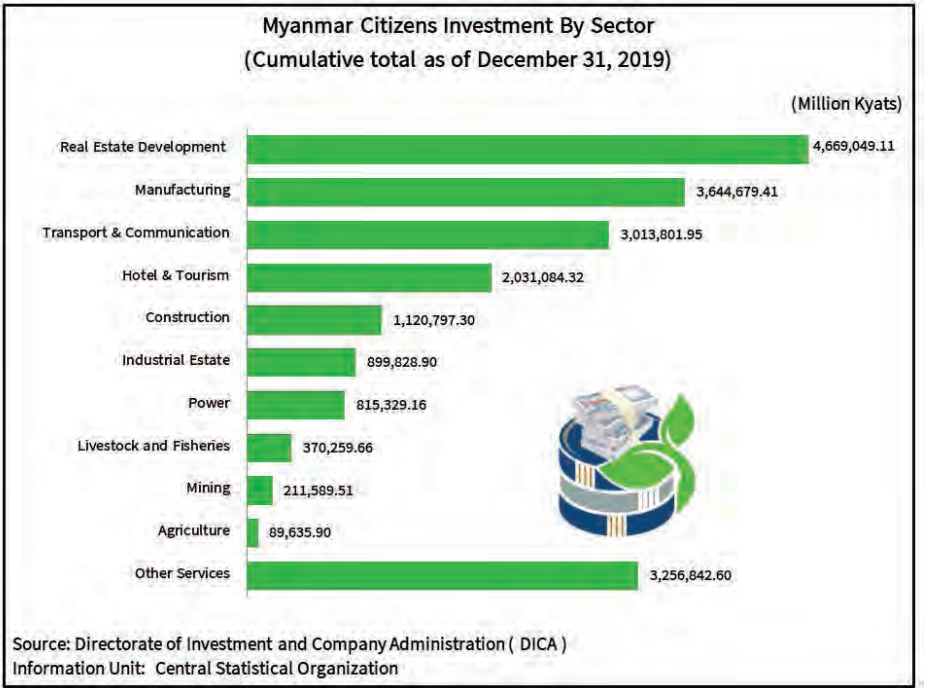
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Union Minister U Soe Win receives NEDA delegation from Thailand



UNION MINISTER U Soe Win of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry received a delegation from the Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, they

Union Minister U Soe Win holds talks with a delegation from Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

discussed matters relating to signing Loan Agreement on Third GMS Sub-Region Corridor Towns Development Project (Water Supply and Solid Waste Management in Myawady) between MoPFI and NEDA, developing power system in Yangon City project in North Okkalapa and Dagon Myothit (North) townships, investment in Dawei Special Economic Zone and construction of two-lane road from Hteekhee, the border checkpoint of Myanmar, to Phunaron, the border checkpoint of Thailand.

— MNA

(Translated by TTN)

Laying down of public policies is of vital importance for service personnel

A Public Policy and Basic Social Research Methodology Training was conducted at the Assembly Hall of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun of the Ministry of Information said at the training: “The training is really important for the civil service personnel at different levels to lay down public policies. Policies are made up of what to do and what not to do. To decide right policies is as important as to use correct and systematic research methodology. Right and appropriate policies should be laid down by reviewing the research results

according to the prevailing circumstances. Hence, the trainees should involve themselves closely in the training and they should make the best and effective use of valuable knowledge and skills they gained for the respective departments and for the nation as well as to share them with their co-peers.

Special Projects Unit Manager Daw Miki Kyaw Myint of the Asia Foundation then briefed on the training.

The training was attended by 31 departmental officials and staff with the Ministry of Information and it will continue until 28 February. —MNA

(Translated by Aungthu Ya)



Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun delivers the speech at the event to conduct the Public Policy and Basic Social Research Methodology Training in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Surveillance and investigation of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Updates at 8 pm 24 February 2020

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports is closing monitoring the outbreak of COVID-19, with conducting surveillance at international gateways and at the hospitals in the forms of people-centered investigation and in coordination with private hospital.
2. From 8 pm 23 February 2020 to 8 pm 24 February 2020, no new case was confirmed for the situation of under investigation.
3. Until 6 pm 24 February 2020, the four persons were kept to monitor for another 48 hours although they were tested negative for COVID-19 at the State/Region hospitals. They were also in good health conditions.
4. The Ministry of Health and Sports would present real-time report if the persons under investigation or suspected cases were found.
5. A 34-year old woman from South Korea visited Yangon from 13 February to 17 February. She was diagnosed with COVID-19 after a laboratory test in her home country on 23 February. On the same day, the Public Health Department from Yan-

gon Region took prompt measures on health conditions of 7 persons and their 15 family members, totaling 22 persons. All of them were found in good health conditions without any symptoms of COVID-19. However, they were advised to report on any symptom of this disease to the health centre and stay at their respective homes in quarantines for 14 days, while township health workers of Public Health Department are carrying out constant surveillance.

6. Although there is no laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 until 24 February , the ministry is conducting round-the-clock surveillance in upward momentum. As the COVID-19 is spreading in 29 countries, including China and some of its neighbouring countries, people are suggested to report on any close contact with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 to the health centres, and to follow health awareness of the Ministry of Health and Sports on prevention of the disease.— MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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Japanese men detained in Manila over phone scam brought to Japan

TOKYO — Nine of 36 Japanese men detained in Manila over alleged phone scams were transferred to Japan and arrested by Tokyo police on Monday.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department said Ryo Imaizumi, 27, and eight other men are members of a fraud syndicate which may have scammed some 1.5 billion yen (\$13 million) from about 1,700 people in Japan since 2018.

The nine men were arrested upon their arrival in Japan for allegedly pretending to be government and police officials and telling a woman in her 60s living in Tokyo over the phone to give her ATM cards to their accomplice who visited her home in November last year.

The police suspect that their syndicate oper-



Photo taken on 14 November 2019, shows a facility in Manila where 36 Japanese were detained over an alleged phone scam targeting people in Japan. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ated a phone scam out of an abandoned hotel in Manila and other locations in the Philippines, targeting mainly elderly people in Japan.

The syndicate's mem-

bers in the Philippines stole victims' ATM cards by telling them over the phone that their bank account information was used in a crime and that their cards need to be replaced, according to the police department. Other syndicate members in Japan visited the victims' homes pretending to be public officials, it said.

— Kyodo News ■

China reports 409 new confirmed cases of coronavirus infection, 150 new deaths

BEIJING — Chinese health authority Monday said it received reports of 409 new confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection and 150 deaths on Sunday from 31 provincial-level regions on the mainland.

Among the deaths, 149 were in Hubei Province and one in Hainan Province, according to the National Health Commission.

Another 620 new suspected cases were reported Sunday, said the commission.

Also on Sunday, 1,846 people were discharged from hospital after recovery, while the number of severe cases decreased by 1,053 to 9,915.

The overall confirmed cases on the Chinese mainland had reached 77,150 by the end of Sunday, and 2,592 people had died of the disease.

The commission added that 3,434 people were still suspected of being infected with the virus.

A total of 24,734 people had been discharged from hospital after recovery.

The commission said 635,531 close contacts had been traced, adding that among them, 16,758 were discharged from medical observation Sunday, with 97,481 others still under medical observation.

By the end of Sunday, 74 confirmed cases including two deaths had been reported in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), 10 confirmed cases in the Macao SAR, and 28 in Taiwan including one death.

Twelve patients in Hong Kong, six in Macao and five in Taiwan have been discharged from hospital after recovery.

— Xinhua ■

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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.

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

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

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Britain starts hearing US case for extraditing Assange

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Britain on Monday began hearing Washington's extradition request for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, in a test case of media freedoms in the digital age and the limits of US justice.

A ruling against the 48-year-old Australian could see him jailed for 175 years if convicted on all 17 US Espionage Act charges and one count of computer hacking he faces.

The charges relate to the release in 2010 by the whistleblowing website WikiLeaks of a trove of classified US government files detailing the realities of the military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

One video from 2007 showed an Apache helicopter attack in which US soldiers gunned down two Reuters reporters and nine Iraqi civilians in broad daylight in Baghdad.

But the US extradition case is only the latest stage of a long-running legal saga that has seen Assange in some form of detention since the documents' release. He spent years holed up in Ecuador's London embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden to face allegations of sexual assault — since dropped — that he and his supporters argue were politically motivated.

Protesters gathered outside Woolwich Crown Court in south-east London for the first day of the US extradition hearing on Monday, holding up banners reading "Free Assange".

His father John Shipton, who attended the hearing with Assange's brother Gabriel Shipton, decried the "ceaseless malice" of the authorities against his son.



Assange's supporters argue that his prosecution was political — and personal — from the start. **PHOTO: AFP**

"We're all here to vigorously and firmly support Julian in this 10-year long oppression and political action," he told reporters.

Assange, wearing a dark grey blazer and sweater over a white shirt and flanked by two security personnel, appeared calm inside the packed court room.

Free speech and media freedom campaigners have also decried the US charges against Assange. The Committee to Protect Journalists said in December: "For the sake of press freedom, Julian Assange must be defended."

Trump claim

WikiLeaks initially worked with a string of high-profile newspapers to publish details from the leaked State Department and Pentagon files. But after falling out with their editors, the site released hundreds of thousands of documents in their original form — including the secret identities of diplomats and locals who worked with the US authorities.

The US Justice Department

said last May that the "human resources" compromised by Assange "included local Afghans and Iraqis, journalists, religious leaders, human rights advocates, and political dissidents from repressive regimes".

In a new twist last week, Assange's defence team claimed US President Donald Trump promised to issue a pardon if Assange denied Russia leaked the emails of his 2016 election rival's campaign.

"In August 2017, Donald Trump's administration tried to pressure Julian Assange into saying things that would be favourable to President Trump himself," defence coordinator Baltasar Garzon said.

"When Julian Assange refused, he was charged and an extradition request was issued alongside an international arrest warrant."

The White House called the allegation "another never-ending hoax and total lie" but a judge agreed to add it to the case file.

—AFP ■

Fifth coronavirus death in Italy as infections mount

CASALPUSTERLENGO (Italy) — Italy reported Monday its fifth death from the new coronavirus, as the number of people contracting the disease continued to mount and officials called for calm.

The death of an 88-year-old man was the fourth in the northern Lombardy region, where villages have been put under lockdown and security measures enforced in a bid to stem the spread of the disease.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has said that residents could face weeks in lockdown in an effort to sit out the virus.

Angelo Borrelli, head of the country's civil protection agency, said 219 people had now tested positive in Italy, which has the most confirmed cases in Europe.

Five people have died of the virus in the past four days, including one in the Veneto region.

An Alitalia flight from Rome was being held in Mauritius Monday, after 40 people from Lombardy and Veneto were told they could not disembark unless they consented to being placed in quarantine.

Alitalia said it was arranging for their immediate repatriation instead, despite none of the passengers showing any symptoms.

Eleven towns — 10 in Lombardy and one in neighbouring Veneto — are under lockdown, with some 50,000 residents prohibited from leaving.

Regional authorities have ordered gathering spots, such as bars, restaurants, cinemas and discos to close.

The spread of the virus has disrupted high profile events including Milan Fashion Week and

the Venice Carnival, while Serie A football matches have been postponed. Operas have also had to be cancelled at Milan's famed La Scala.

Masses in churches across the affected regions have been cancelled and funerals limited to immediate relatives only.

The stock market in Milan was down nearly 5.0 per cent on Monday in a broad-based sell-off over virus fears.

'Outbreak in hospital'

Most of the cases in Italy are in Lombardy, a prosperous region in the country's north where Milan is located. They can be traced back to a 38-year-old man in the town of Codogno whom authorities have called "patient one".

Investigators are reconstructing minute by minute the man's movements over the past few weeks — where he slept, ate, walked — in a bid to trace everyone he could have come into contact with.

"We had the most unfortunate situation possible; the outbreak of an epidemic in a hospital," infectious disease expert Massimo Galli told the *Corriere della Sera* daily.

"Unfortunately, in these cases, a hospital can turn into a frightening amplifier of contagion," he said.

The 38-year old patient had not travelled to China and doctors failed to treat him with the necessary precautions.

The man initially believed to have given him the virus after returning from Shanghai later tested negative. "We still do not know who brought the coronavirus to Codogno," Galli said.—AFP ■

French fraud trial opens for ex-premier Fillon

PARIS (France) — Former prime minister Francois Fillon goes on trial in Paris on Monday over claims he embezzled more than a million euros in public funds by creating a fake job for his wife, a scandal that cost him his shot at the French presidency in 2017.

Investigators suspect that Fillon, 65, hired his Welsh-born wife Penelope as his parliamentary assistant between 1998 and 2013, without having her do any actual work.

The allegations that Penelope, who is also charged in the case, was paid up to 10,000 euros

(\$10,800) a month for little to no work buried Fillon's presidential ambitions and caused his centre-right Republicans party to implode.

With the career politician refusing to stand aside in the 2017 contest even after being charged, many right-wing voters drifted to the centrist party of Emmanuel Macron.

Fillon has denied the allegations and insisted that Penelope — who faces charges including complicity in misuse of public funds — did real work for him in his rural constituency of Sarthe.

But investigators say they have found little documentary evidence of her efforts.

They have also seized on a 2016 newspaper interview in which Penelope declares that "Until now, I have never got involved in my husband's political life" — echoing a statement she made to Britain's *Sunday Telegraph* in 2007. The Fillons and a third defendant, Marc Joulaud, who stood in for Fillon in parliament when he was a cabinet minister and also hired Penelope as an assistant, face up to 10 years in prison.—AFP ■



The emergence of the coronavirus has stoked fears across northern Italy. **PHOTO: AFP**



Trump heaped praise on Modi as an 'a great champion of India' in front of a crowd of around 100,000 at the world's biggest cricket stadium. PHOTO: AFP

Trump hails 'exceptional' Modi at huge India rally

AHMEDABAD (India) — US President Donald Trump got a rapturous and romantic welcome to India on Monday, addressing a huge rally and holding hands with his wife at the Taj Mahal, in a maiden official visit big on photo opportunities but short on concrete results.

Casting a cloud over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's welcome however, a policeman was killed in clashes in New Delhi over a contentious citizenship law hours before the US president was due in the Indian capital.

In the world's biggest cricket stadium in Modi's home state of Gujarat in western India, Trump heaped praise on the Indian right-winger as an "exceptional leader, a great champion of India" in front of a crowd of around 100,000.

"America loves India. America respects India, and America will always be faithful and loyal friends to the Indian people," Trump told the ecstatic crowd, many in Trump-emblazoned baseball caps.

Name-checking Bollywood films and Indian cricketers, Trump -- with an eye on elections in November -- paid tribute to the four-million-strong Indian-American diaspora as "truly special people".

"President Trump's visit opens a new chap-

ter in our relationship -- a chapter that will document the progress and prosperity of the people of America and India," Modi said.

"The whole world knows what President Trump has done to fulfil the dreams of America."

Excited spectators had queued from 4:00 am for the "Namaste Trump" rally, reciprocating a "Howdy Modi" event in Houston last year where Trump likened Modi to Elvis.

'Tariff king'

Workers rushed to finish the stadium and erect a wall along the route that locals said was to hide a slum. Stray dogs, cows and monkeys were also kept away.

"Events like these will galvanise people to start to cooperate in new initiatives," said Pramit Maakodan, an Indian-American in the stadium.

Before the speech, Trump and First Lady Melania visited independence hero Mahatma Gandhi's ashram, where Modi gifted him a "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" three wise monkeys statue.

Later Trump and Melania -- in an off-white jump suit and sash alongside her husband in a buttercup-yellow tie -- flew to the Taj Mahal for a pre-sunset tour before heading to Delhi ahead of the main talks

on Tuesday.

Parts of the Taj Mahal, the marble monument to love that UNESCO calls a "jewel of Muslim art", were given a mud-pack facial to remove stains, while efforts were made to lessen the stench of the adjacent river.

Behind the platitudes and blossoming bromance between the two leaders lies a fraught relationship as Trump's "America First" drive collides with Modi's "Make in India" mantra.

Trump has slapped tariffs on Indian steel and aluminium and suspended duty-free access for certain goods, prompting India to raise duties on US produce such as almonds.

Trump has called India the "tariff king", and said before his visit that Asia's third-largest economy had been "hitting us very, very hard for many, many years".

Rather than a wide-ranging trade deal, reports said Trump and Modi may instead sign smaller agreements covering products such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles and US dairy products.

"We are in the early stages of discussions for an incredible trade agreement," Trump told the rally, calling Modi a "very tough negotiator". "I am in no rush," he told reporters later. — AFP ■

ORBITUARY

Deepest Condolence U Sien Kyi (@) Cheng Shing Chi

Toronto, Canada

Age (74) Years

Founder and Senior Consultant

Myanmar Oriental Bank(MOB)

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Myanmar Oriental Bank's founder and senior consultant Cheng Shing Chi who passed away peacefully on February 19th, 2020.

Board of Directors and Shareholders
Myanmar Oriental Bank

Turmoil in Malaysia as PM Mahathir resigns

KUALA LUMPUR (Malaysia) — Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resigned Monday in a shock move after his political allies sought to bring down the government and block the succession of leader-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim.

It came after months of rising tensions in the "Pact of Hope" coalition, which stormed to a shock victory in 2018 against a corruption-plagued government that had ruled Malaysia for six decades.

But there were calls for Mahathir, the world's oldest leader at 94, to stay in office from allies who insisted he had not backed the formation of a new government and had quit in disgust at the plot.

The political drama began on Sunday when Anwar's rivals from the ruling coalition and opposition politicians held a series of meetings around Kuala Lumpur, stoking speculation a new alliance was taking shape.

That coalition would reportedly have excluded Anwar, Mahathir's presumptive successor and a former opposition icon who was jailed for years on questionable sodomy charges, blocking his ascent to the premiership.

With the fate of the



Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resignation was accepted by the king, but he was asked to stay on as interim premier. PHOTO: AFP

government still uncertain Monday, Mahathir submitted his resignation to the king. The monarch accepted it, but appointed him interim leader until a new premier is found, according to an official statement.

Anwar — who has famously stormy relationship with Mahathir — said the premier assured him "he played no part" in attempts to form a new government, and was "very clear that in no way will he ever work with those associated with the past regime".

The proposed new coalition was reportedly set to include the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) — the party of disgraced ex-leader Najib

Razak, which was ejected from office two years ago.

Anwar and Mahathir put their differences aside and joined forces to take on a corruption-plagued government at the 2018 polls. Mahathir, who previously served as premier from 1981 to 2003, had made a pre-election pledge to hand power to Anwar but has repeatedly refused to fix a date.

Shortly before his resignation, Mahathir's Bersatu party quit the ruling coalition and several lawmakers resigned from Anwar's party, leaving the Pact of Hope in tatters and fuelling suggestions efforts could be underway to form a new alliance.

Mahathir also quit as Bersatu chairman. — AFP

AFC Cup 2020: Yangon United to play against Lao Toyota today

MYANMAR'S Yangon United FC will take on Lao Toyota F.C. today in the group stage match of the AFC Cup 2020, scheduled to be held at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon, according to the Myanmar National League's website.

This will be the second match for Yangon United in Group F and will be broadcast live on Fox Sports, Pyone Play Sports, and Channel 7.

The match between Yangon United and Ho Chi Minh City on 11 February ended in a 2-2 draw. In the remaining Group F matches, Yangon United is scheduled to play against Hougang United on 10 March at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon and 15 April at the Jurong West Stadium in Singapore.

The team will face Ho Chi

Minh City on 29 April at the Thong Nat Stadium in Ho Chi Minh City and Lao Toyota on 13 May at the New Laos National Stadium in Vientiane.

Shan United is representing Myanmar in Group H of the AFC Cup 2020.

Shan United will play against PSM Makassar on 26 February at the Gelora Bung Karno Mady Stadium in Jakarta. In their first match in Group H, the team was defeated by Kaya-Iloilo 0-2.

Shan United will go up against Tampines Rovers on 10 March at the Jurong West Stadium in Singapore, Kaya-Iloilo on 28 April at the Rizal Memorial Stadium in Manila, and PSM Makassar on 12 May at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon.

— Kyaw Khin ■

MFF 'C' certificate coaching course 2020-2021 opens in Tamway

THE Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) and the Tamway Township Football Association jointly launched the MFF 'C' certificate coaching course 2020-2021 yesterday at the office of the football association in Tamway, Yangon.

The MFF has been conducting coaching courses, basic football skills trainings, referee courses, and youth football festivals in cooperation with township football associations to encourage Myanmar's football community. — Kyaw Khin ■



Players and coaches from Myanmar men's national U-19 football team pose for a group photo at the Yangon International Airport before they leave for Japan on 23 February. **PHOTO: MNL**

Men's national U-19 football team leaves for Japan-ASEAN tourney

THE Myanmar men's national U-19 football team left for Japan late on Sunday evening from the Yangon International Airport to compete in JENESYS 2019 (Japan-ASEAN U-19 Football Tournament).

JENESYS 2019 is scheduled to take place from 26 to 29 February in Kagoshima, Japan.

U Soe Myat Min is the head coach of the men's national U-19 football team.

The squad includes goal-

keepers Hein Htet Soe and Pyae Phyo Thu; defenders Sithu Moe Khant, Thet Hein Soe, Min Khant Maung, Myo Ko Ko Lin, Kaung Khant Kyaw, and Saw Htaw Nay Mue; midfielders Kaung Zin Moe, Lwin Zaw Maung, Yan Naing Lin, Okkar Naing, Thura Aung, Moe Swe, Myo and Thura Tun; and forwards Pyae Phyo Khaing, Nyi Nyi, and Saw Kyaw Ae.

A total of eight teams divided into two groups — A

and B — are taking part in the Japan-ASEAN U-19 Football Tournament 2019.

Myanmar has been placed in Group B with Cambodia, Timor-Leste, and Japanese U-18 football club Kagoshima United FC.

In the group stage, the Myanmar U-19 will compete against Kagoshima United on 26 February, Timor-Leste on 27 February, and Cambodia on 28 February. — Kyaw Khin ■

Banned Kenyan runner Asbel Kiprop to turn to motorsport

NAIROBI (Kenya) — Suspended Kenyan Olympic 1,500 metres and three-time world champion Asbel Kiprop has announced he is turning his back on athletics to try his hand at motorsport.

The controversial athlete, who is serving a four-year doping ban imposed in April 2019 after he tested positive for EPO, has joined a Nairobi motor-rallying academy with the hope of honing

his motorsport skills.

"I am ready to begin again in a sport that doesn't have doping conspiracy," the 30-year-old Kiprop, who waged a long battle to prove his doping innocence, said on Twitter. "I will be patient again to be able to be champion. I will be climbing this ladder hoping to learn the next game."

Kiprop is known for being a fast driver, resulting in a road crash in November 2013 when he lost control of his vehicle that left him with a few bruises. Kiprop's entry into motorsport comes only five months before Kenya welcomes the return of the World Rally Championship — the Safari Rally in July. — AFP ■



Kiprop is a three-time world champion. **PHOTO: AFP**

Messi 'greatest' ahead of Maradona, says Napoli boss Gattuso

NAPLES (Italy) — Lionel Messi is the "greatest" footballer of all time, ahead of even Diego Maradona, Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso said on Monday ahead of his side's Champions League clash with Barcelona.

The 32-year-old Messi scored four goals at the weekend in Barcelona's 5-0 win over Eibar and has now been involved in more than 1,000 goals in his career, scoring 696 and assisting another 306. Gattuso was quick to praise Messi, comparing the Barca star to Napoli legend Maradona.

"He's the greatest and an example for everyone," said Gattuso ahead of the sides' last-16 first leg on Tuesday.

"He never says anything in-

appropriate. He does things that only exist on the Playstation, unthinkable things.

"But I saw him (Maradona) on VHS, or DVD. I never saw him up close, at a stadium.

"I know the champion he was and I know I missed something wonderful. I regret it. Today I see Messi doing things that Maradona was doing."

Napoli captain Lorenzo Insigne was not so keen to accept that Messi has reached greater heights than 1986 World Cup winner Maradona. "Messi is the best in the world today," said Insigne. "But for us Neapolitans, Maradona is everything and I don't want to compare them. Maradona is sacred." — AFP ■