ESSENCE OF SECTION 354 OF THE CONSTITUTION P-8-9 (OPINION)

NATIONAL
Free medical treatment to be provided to 3,000 people in Buthidaung
PAGE-3

NATIONAL
"There's been no trace of threats. The villagers I've met did not seem to have any fear so that's what we saw." : H.E.Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai
PAGE-6

NATIONAL
Office opened for developing Bogyoke Aung San's biopic
PAGE-2

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Schoolchildren take part in the first tsunami preparedness drill at Basic Education High School 1 in Kungyangon yesterday. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

Children hold Tsunami Drill

SCHOOL CHILDREN participated in the first tsunami simulation exercise at Basic Education High School No. 1 in Kungyangon yesterday. A second tsunami exercise will be carried out at Basic Education High School in Letkokkon at 2p.m.

These drills are being organised as part of a government of Japan-supported regional project to strengthen the tsunami preparedness of schools in 18 Asia-Pacific countries, which is being implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In Myanmar, the project is supported by the Relief and Resettlement Department, operating under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement; the Ministry of Education; and NGO Seeds Asia, which is supporting UNDP in the implementation.—GNLM ■

AHA Centre inspects repatriation offices

THE ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) has handed over a collective donation of humanitarian aid to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

The donation included US$450,000 worth of basic necessities from ASEAN countries and $75,000 worth of kitchen appliances from Singapore. Both donations were made on 14 November, 2017.

The aid is being distributed among Sittway, Buthidaung and Maungtaw townships in Rakhine State by the local government.

Three members from the AHA Centre's Emergency Response and Assessment Team travelled to Ngakuya Relocation Camp and Hla Phoe Khaung transit centre on 27 and 28 January. The team inspected the technological support and distribution of humanitarian aid in the camp. The visit from the AHA Centre shows the unity of the ASEAN countries and creates awareness about Rakhine State's rehabilitation process in neighbouring countries. — Myanmar News Agency

KBZ BANK
STRENGTH OF MYANMAR
'BANK OF THE YEAR IN MYANMAR 2017'
Awarded by Financial Times (The Banker)

Union minister inspects IPRD office, MRTV retransmitting station in Kawthoung

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint inspected the office of the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD) and the Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV) retransmitting station in Kawthoung Township, Taninthayi Region, yesterday.

In the afternoon, the union minister, together with officials, arrived in Kawthoung by air and met with Taninthayi Region Chief Minister Dr. Lei Lei Maw, Region Minister for Agriculture and Livestock U Myint San, Region Minister for Planning and Finance U Phyo Win Tun, Region Hluttaw Representative Daw Yi Yi Cho and other officials to discuss the region's affairs.

Later, the union minister visited the office and library of IPRD and viewed the mock-up Salon traditional houses and utensils, as well as photographs that were displayed at the mini-museum inside the library. The union minister also urged the officials to collect and keep more traditional utensils and mineral materials, to assure that a variety of regional traditional heritages are collected. The union minister then greeted and presented toys to pre-school children visiting the children's reading room.

Also, the union minister inspected the MRTV retransmitting station in Kawthoung, urging officials to collect rain water, prevent fire hazards and to stay alert and maintain the security of the factory.

Additionally, the union minister donated 50 set-top boxes, which were accepted by Myeik District Deputy Commissioner U Lin Ko Ko, for the use of Myeik Township. The group also visited the Zewazoe bird nest production on strand road in Myeik, Bayintnaung Hill and Bayintnaung Cape in Kawthoung Township. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint visits the mini-museum at Kawthoung IPRD office. **PHOTO: MNA**

Office opened for developing Bogyoke Aung San's biopic

AN office to develop the biographical film on Bogyoke Aung San opened yesterday morning at the Kanbawza Yeiktha (Chin Chaung Nan Daw) on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon.

During the opening ceremony, U Lu Min, joint secretary (2) of Bogyoke Aung San's Biopic Development Committee, explained the making of Bogyoke Aung San's biopic and its production.

Chairman of Bogyoke Aung San's Biopic Development Committee and Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, Yangon Mayor U Maung Maung Soe, Chairman of Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation U Zin Wine, Joint secretary (2) of Bogyoke Aung San's Biopic Developing Committee U Lu Min and Director Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi opened the ceremony by cutting the golden ribbon.

Next, the attendees watched and enjoyed the trailer of Bogyoke Aung San's biopic, which was filmed in 2015.

Zaykabar Co. Ltd. and Shwe Than Lwin Co. Ltd. donated Ks100 million each for filming the biopic, Tatlan Co. Ltd. donated Ks10 million, VeVe Soft Drink donated Ks8 million, New Win Myittar film and video production donated Ks5.5 million, and Myint Enterprise Co. Ltd. and Ei Thitsar Agency donated Ks5 million each.

Some Ks3 million each was donated by AA Pharmacy, Pride International School

Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko accepts cash donated by U Khin Shwe of Zaykabar Co Ltd for biographical film on Bogyoke Aung San. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

Myanmar, U Win Lwin-Thiha Thudhama Theingi Daw Cho Mar Lwin (Myaungmya) and Grand Group of Companies, as well as SI Group Co. Ltd, Viking Marine Product and Thudhama Manizawta Daya U Maung Maung Lay-Daw Myint Myint Khaing.

The film got Ks2.5 million from Tawwin Tun Travel Agency; Ks2 million each from Aye &Thet Co. Ltd., Living Square and Thiha Thudhama Manizawta Daya U Myo Zaw Tun; Ks1.503 million from Sandhiherbal Medicine; and Ks1 million each from Thudhama Theingi Daw Sitei, Seinlan Myay Family, Thiha Thudhama Manizawta Daya U Tin Sein (a) U Ni Ni-Thudhama Theingi Daw Khin Myint Yi, Pwint U Thit San Food Centre, Thukha Sonesan Company and Naing Family construction materials trading.

Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko and U Lu Min received cash of Ks270.503 million and presented certificates of honour to each of the donors, while the union minister thanked them.

Next, Thura U Aung Ko, Permanent Secretary U Tun Ohn, U Lu Min and Director Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi answered questions posed by reporters.

Also present at the ceremony were Yangon region cabinet ministers, the biopic development committee members, sub-committee chairman and secretaries, as well as donors, performers, reporters and other guests. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Import of capital goods by private sector sees decline

THE import of capital goods by the private sector this fiscal year (FY) reached some US$4.67 billion, down by $195 million against the same period last year, according to figures released by the ministry of commerce. This time last year, the private sector imported $4.89 billion worth of similar products from international traders.

Between last April and mid-January this year, the government sector bought $565 million worth of capital goods from its trade partners. Despite a decrease in the value of capital goods by the private sector, the import of these products by the government increased by $296 million, compared with the same period last year. In the current FY, the total value of imports between Myanmar and its international trade partners was at $14.77 billion, including $5.26 billion worth of capital goods, $5.94 billion worth of intermediate goods and $3.57 billion worth of consumer products. The total import figures increased by $1.97 billion, compared with the same period last year, according to the ministry.

Myanmar carries out external trade with Asian countries, ASEAN member states, island nations and Middle East countries, as well as European and African states, and some western countries, mainly through sea routes. —Shwe Khine ■

Union Attorney-General receives UNICEF Resident Representative

Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo received Ms. June Kunugi, UNICEF Representative to Myanmar, at the Attorney-General office in Nay Pyi Taw on 26 January.

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to cooperation in promoting rights of children prescribed in the children rights bill, conducting courses on children rights for law officers and expanding areas in which rights of children can be promoted. Permanent Secretary Daw Nu Nu Yin, Director-General U Min Swe and Dr Thida Oo from Union Attorney-General office also attended the meeting. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Free medical treatment to be provided to 3,000 people in Buthidaung

A mobile medical team of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) has provided free healthcare to local people in Buthidaung, Rakhine State.

The team comprising nearly 20 specialists, including surgeons, obstetricians, gynaecologists and orthopaedics, as well as paediatricians, physicians and nurses, began their first mission at Buthidaung Township Hospital yesterday.

The mobile medical team will also tour other areas in Rakhine State to give medical care to the local people.

"We have provided medical treatment to the local people without discrimination," said Dr Win Sithu, chairman of the medical team.

Before giving medical check-ups to outpatients, the team checked the patients at the township hospital yesterday.

According to Dr Win Sithu, two patients needed urgent operations. During its two-day programme, the team will provide medical care to more than 3,000 patients. The Rakhine State Cabinet and Health Department jointly conducted the free medical care programme.

"As healthcare service is essential, our Rakhine State Cabinet has assisted doctors, physicians and professors from Yangon," said Dr Chan Tha.

The government has also arranged accommodation for patients who come from other areas. —Aung Ye Twin/ Ko Min ■

People receive medical check-ups provided by nurses in Buthidaung. **PHOTO: AUNG MIN**

Seminar on entrance exams held in Maungtaw

Faculty members meeting with schoolchildren in Maungtaw. **PHOTO: AUNG MIN**

A SEMINAR was held at B.E.H.S No. (2) in Maungtaw Township to discuss ways to raise the number of qualified applicants for the 2018 entrance exams.

Dr Chan Tha, Rakhine State Minister for Social Welfare, said the State Counsellor had suggested holding the seminar, and inviting teachers and professors from Sittway University. The purpose of the seminar is to provide information on raising the percentage of people passing the entrance exam, as Rakhine State has the lowest pass percentage.

Dr Chan Tha said that when the State Counsellor arrived in Maungtaw District, she found the standards of education were pretty low, and in fact, Rakhine State scored a pass percentage of only 17.14 per cent in the entrance exam qualifications in the whole country last year.

Dr. Chan Tha said workshops were also held to reform the education system, as well as the essay reading ability of the students. He said the professors visited the rural areas and spoke to teachers, educators, parents and students to give them an idea of how to move forward with the entrance exams.

During the seminar, eight professors, lecturers and assistant lecturers explained the subjects appearing in the entrance exams to the students in attendance. Dr. Chan Tha said similar seminars were also held in Sittway, Minbya and MraukU. —Aung Ye Thwin, Ko Min

Estimated US$ 2 million worth of drugs seized

SECURITY personnel arrested four suspects along with 19,500 stimulant tablets from a row boat near Maungni Village, Maungtaw Township in the Naf River on 26 January.

Similarly, an anti-drug squad raided the house of a suspected drug smuggler in Maungni Village, Myoma Kanyintan village-tract in Maungtaw Township. The force found two suspects in the house and confiscated 1,285,750 stimulant pills from a trawler.

The suspects have been charged with the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Digital News ■

Construction ministry to build RC box culverts on Chauk-Singu-Bagan Road

THE MINISTRY of Construction is currently implementing a project to build reinforced concrete (RC) box culverts near Gangaw Village, Nyaung U Township, Mandalay Region.

The box culverts, which are bridge-like structures, will allow cars, motorbikes and pedestrian traffic to cross over the waterway, while allowing adequate passage for the water.

Funded by the Mandalay Region government, the projects were initiated on 1 December over the two creeks near Gangaw Village to resolve the transport problem for travellers using the Chauk-Singu-Bagan Road, which is prone to frequent flooding.

The government has allocated more than Ks590 million for the project from its budget for the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

The Road Department under the Ministry of Construction and the tender-winning Hi-Tech Land Co have implemented the project, which is now 35 per cent complete, and is expected to be finalised by the end of March.

Concerted efforts have been made by project implementers to complete projects within the set time frame.—Ye Win Naing (NyaungU) ■

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Water quality research in Chindwin River extended one more year

TO get more accurate and thorough details about the water quality of the Chindwin River, which flows through the Sagaing Region, research will be continued one more year, said Dr Win Maung, chairperson of Myanmar Environment Institute (MEI).

"Deforestation occurs in the watershed areas at the upper part of the Chindwin River. There is jade or gold mining and sand digging at the upper reaches of the Uru River, a tributary of the Chindwin River. That's why the water in the Chindwin River is muddy and more sedimentation occurred. Heavy metals might be in the water as well, so we need to continue our research on the water quality in the river," he said.

MEI began researching the Chindwin River's water quality in 2015, and planned to submit a report over the findings that go up to 2017 to the Sagaing Regional government in early 2018. —Myanmar Digital News

Maw Tin Zun Pagoda festival to begin on 1 February

THE Maw Tin Zun Pagoda festival, one of the famous pagoda festivals in Myanmar, will be held for a month from 1 February to 1 March.

For the safety of visitors, boats are arranged at Mawtin and Phonegyi Street jetties in Yangon. In addition, a charter bus service is available that can take visitors to the entrance of the pagoda.

There are 24 new hotels which are now open at all four sides of the pagoda so that visiting guests can stay overnight comfortably.

Small display rooms will be opened during the festival in which people can observe the history of the pagoda.

Visitors can also visit Ngwe Taung bathing site and enjoy the beauty of the beach, said a member of the organizing committee of the pagoda festival. —Myanmar Digital News

Vegetable gum karaya market soars higher

THE vegetable Gum Karaya has fetched significantly higher prices last year, and it has become a lucrative crop for farmers who faced a financial crisis after the prices of mung beans, black gram and pigeon peas had plunged dramatically in October, 2017.

Top quality gum was being sold for K10, 000 per viss (1.65 kilo) in previous years, yet the price has been increasing year by year and now is sold for between K120, 000 and 150,000 per viss.

However, a kilo of the gum is priced at about K200, 000 at the market in Shweli, a major border crossing between Myanmar and China. It is 33.33 % of the price it's sold for in other countries.

The main countries producing the gum that comes from a perennial plant are Mali, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The quality of the gum from Myanmar is whiter and cleaner than of other countries. So, Myanmar's variety of the gum is used for manufacturing food and medicine, while the gum produced from other countries is used as an industrial crop.

Although Myanmar has produced better quality gum, the yield rate is lower than that of other countries. It harvests about 90 tons of gum a year. The regions where the gum is produced the most in Myanmar are Sagaing, Magway and Mandalay regions; these are dry zones in the country.

Myanmar prepared to grow the Gum Karaya in 2004, but instead started in 2007. The production of the gum started in 2011-12 fiscal year. Myanmar exported the gum to its neighboring countries China, India and Thailand in 2014-15 fiscal years.

Local Gum Karaya collectors sold the produce to purchasing centers in Thasi, Meiktila, Magway, Mandalay and Yangon after they bought it at farms where it's harvested.

U Than Aung, a Gum Karaya grower from Aung Chan Thar village in Magwe Region's Myaing Township, said: "The gum buyers from Mandalay and Magway come to me directly and buy all of the gum I have. I don't need to go and sell it at a purchasing center in person. Sometimes, two or more buyers arrive at the same time. So I try to sell the gum to all of them, sharing the produce equally."

He has grown 220 plants of Gum Karaya on two acres of land. The plants are five years old and his annual income is K29 million. The gum harvest time is from May to mid-December.

The quality of the Gum Karaya depends on the weather. It can be grown in hillside areas that have higher precipitation levels, but it is difficult to produce the gum and the quality is lower. The amount of gum produced in dry zones is small, but the quality is the best and buyers are willing to pay a higher price. —Myanmar Digital News

Hand-over of Village Development Funds held in Wuntho

A ceremony for the hand-over of village development funds was held at the U Aung Myat Hall in Katha District, Sagaing Region this morning.

At the ceremony, representative of Pyithu Hluttaw U Nay Soe Aung made remarks and officials explained about village development projects.

Afterwards, the representatives of Hluttaw handed-over Ks 10 million to members of the project committee from respective villages.

A total of 45 villages will have projects undertaken.

Village development projects such as road paving, extending water systems, well digging, constructing of bridges and supplying electricity will be executed with the development funds and additional funds will be added by local villagers.—Myanmar Digital News

Gov't accelerates loan disbursement for SMEs

May Thet Hnin

MYANMAR government is accelerating its efforts to offer Ks200 billion loans to develop small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

"A proposal has already been submitted to the government. We will start disbursing loans to SMEs only after getting the government's approval," said Daw Aye Aye Win, Director-General of the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection (DISI), Ministry of Industry.

The government received Ks700 billion loans from international bodies to develop the country's agriculture, livestock, SMEs and construction sectors. Of the total, Ks200 billion will go to SME sector.

Loan disbursement process is being operated by the SME Development Central Committee through three newly founded bodies—SME development agency, fund management body and work reviews/reports.

Daw Aye Aye Win added, "There may be mistakes when we develop a project urgently. We also learn the lessons from the past to ensure development of the sector. Participants of fund management body will make a detail assessment of applicants from states and regions."

For the disbursement of loans to SMEs, financial assessment committees will be set up in each state and region very soon. Following the detail assessment, the fund management body will put forward the completed loan proposals to the central body.

At present, the authorities are making continuous efforts to invite SME entrepreneurs to take part in the loan scheme, while the Ministry of Planning and Finance has started awareness-raising activities. Thanks to these efforts, some SME operators in regions and states continue to apply for loans at responsible departments, Daw Aye Aye Win added.

At 13th meeting between Vice-President U Myint Swe and businessmen held in late December, Union Minister for Industry U Khin Maung Cho said: "Arrangements will be made to provide SMEs with loans within a month. Experienced Myanmar citizens from foreign countries have already been appointed as advisors to ensure SME development."

"Sometimes, we have no enough funds to disburse loans. However, the process is operating with money returned from the businesses which got loans under the JICA's two-step loan scheme. It will operate well in the future," Daw Aye Aye Win continued.

Daw Thida Tun, an SME operator and founder of GLORY Natural Juice Production, said: "We want the government to carefully make assessment of loan disbursement to ensure operating SMEs get loans. I contacted several banks for loans. Of them, Myanma Economic Bank cancelled my complete loan proposal even though I have recommendation from the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises Development. The reason is I cannot put up collateral. I find it difficult to take loans as an SME operator and am hoping for positive changes in the future."

She continued: "The government should make face-to-face discussions with businesspersons so as to know challenges and difficulties of SMEs. The SME operators wish the government to pay incentive by reducing tax rate for starters. New loan-disbursement policy should be taken into consideration instead of collateral loan."

The financial authorities will disburse loans only to SMEs with at least two years of operation, which can show their SME member cards.

There are more than 64,000 registered SMEs in Myanmar. At the present time, the number of SMEs applying for SME member cards has increased significantly.

According to a research conducted by the Central Statistical Organization in 2015, 98 per cent of more than 120,000 registered businesses are SMEs. In the employment sector, of the 21.9 million workers, 83 per cent are working in unregistered SMEs. ■

Border trade valued at US$ 6.33 billion

THE value of border trade from 1st April 2017 to 19th January this fiscal year increased by US$271 million, compared to the same period last year.

Border trade, measured from 1st April 2017 to 19th January this fiscal year, reached US$6.338 billion, which included US$ 4.07 billion in exports and US$ 2.27 billion in imports, according to statistics from the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar's imports and exports with neighboring countries, including China, India, Bangladesh and Thailand. Sino-Myanmar border trade is carried out at the Muse, Lweje, Kanpiketee, Chin Shwe Haw and Kengtung gates, while Myanmar is conducting border trade with India through the Tamu and Reed border crossings. The country's border trade gates with Bangladesh are Sittway and Maungtaw, and trade with Thailand passes through the Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthaung, Myeik, HteeKhee, Mawtaung and Maese crossings.

Out of sixteen border trade camps, the Muse border trade camp has the largest border trade volume, with a trade value of US$4.45 billion. This was an increase from US$4.22 billion in the same period last year.

The value of border trading, as of 19th January in the current FY, was US$ 4.45 billion in Muse, US$164 million at Lweje, US$421 million in Chin Shwe Haw, US$78 million at Kanpiketee, US$1.59 million in Kengtung, US$60.9 million in Tachilek, US$716 million in Myawady, US$148 million at Kawthoung, US$200 million in Myeik, US$4.24 million in HteeKhee, US$5.55 million in Mawtaung, US$0.73 million in Maese, US$9.61 million in Sittway, US$9.53 million in Maungtaw, US$28.77 million in Tamu and US$32.11 million in Reed.

Myanmar primarily exports agricultural products, animal products, forest products, minerals, fishery products, manufactured goods and other products, while capital goods, raw industrial materials and consumer products are imported into the country. – GNLM ■

Fish stacked on display at a market for sale. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

Myanmar-Australia trade tops $128 million this FY

TRADE between Myanmar and the Commonwealth of Australia totalled US$128 million in the current financial year, according to the monthly statistics of the commerce ministry.

The total bilateral trade with Australia over the first eight months of this FY included $16.492 million from the exports and $111.730 million from the imports. In November alone, bilateral trade was $14.366 million comprising $1.796 million exports and $18.792 million imports. Australia imports crustaceans, fishes, seafood and vegetables from Myanmar and exports wheat, medicaments including veterinary, pigments, paints, varnishes and coal.

The trade of the two countries was $77.673 million in FY2011-2012, $86.009 million in FY2012-2013, $102.063 million in FY2013-2014, $74.012 million in FY2014-2015, $84.655 million in FY2015-2016 and $144.385 million in FY2016-2017. Australia has helped Myanmar promote inclusive economic growth by supporting a policy environment that provides incentives for responsible foreign direct investment, trade and economic reform.—Swe Nyein ■

"There's been no trace of threats. The villagers I've met did not seem to have any fear so that's what we saw." : H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai

ADVISORY Board for Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State led by H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai was formed on 14 December, 2017. The committee met with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice President U Myint Swe, members of the Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State and visited Maungtaw and Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State.

H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai gave an inclusive interview to journalists on 25th January.

Following is the interview with H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai.

H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai meets people from Muslim Community during his visit to Maungtaw. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

First of all, the advisory board, ten of us, the international advisors and Myanmar advisors got together and had a full board meeting for the first time on the 22nd.

We've had 3 board meetings in the past two weeks and looked at our terms of reference. We talked about our modus operandi and exchanged views of the general situation in Rakhine State.

Yesterday we visited several villages in Rakhine State and we saw villages that were burnt down and villages that were left empty. We also saw preparations for the returnees. I've been given the opportunity to talk to the local people; the Buddhists and Muslim, and the Hindus. I've inspected the houses being built to accommodate the people who were supposedly returning on the 23rd of January but that did not happen. But preparation has been underway and we saw the transit camps. Security has been provided. There's been no trace of threats. The villagers I've met did not seem to have any fear so that's what we saw.

I think the advisory board hasn't given any advice yet. We will monitor the situation and have deliberations among ourselves in the days and months to come. I think in two, three months the advisory board will be able to come up with preliminary recommendations as to what else the implementation committee should do and what should be the priorities. We also need to install trust building mechanisms in the villages otherwise the implementations done there will not be sustainable.

We commend the Myanmar government in committing to implement the 88 points recommended by the Kofi Anan's recommendations. The State Counsellor has emphasized on the rule of law and providing justice to the people in the local communities. I think that is the right way to go.

What I've seen from the helicopter is that Rakhine State has a very rich, fertile, agricultural ground and they have plenty of water so there is much potential there. There is much potential for income creation and job creation to train farmers on how they can have better productivity and how they can put more value added into their productions. I can see opportunities for microenterprises and job creations for women, especially in the garment industry.

On the way to Kyaukpyu there is a great opportunity for this special economic zone and there's great opportunity for tourism in Thandwe. So I think that the idea of the State Counsellor that peace and development have to work hand in hand and the establishment of a Union Enterprise to create a public-private partnership is a good one. I can see a lot of opportunities there after I inspected on the ground myself and after talking to the people.

I think in some way the first trip to Myanmar has been very fruitful and constructive. We have seen what has been developed and we have seen the traces of violence and we have heard how the Myanmar government has endeavored to provide a lot of security.

We have seen the step by step preparation of accepting the returnees. The papers have been sent to the Bangladeshi side; they have even prepared a biometric registration for the returners. I hope the repatriation will take place sometime soon. I hope the international community can be helpful and can understand the local constraints. The international community cannot be helpful if it's not inclusive.

H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai.

That's my reflection of the impression I've had on this first trip. The advisory board will have a collective deliberation. We will speak with one voice and our mandate is to give advice to the implementation committee headed by the Minister for Social Welfare. So we expect to come up with recommendations and advice in the next 2-3 months.

Well I have seen the Chinese assistance for the building materials for the offices of the immigration, foreign ministry and security including part of the housing so I think that is to be commended. I think China can play a key role in helping with the repatriation in providing the housing materials to be built and I understand China has been working closely with the Union Enterprise on this.

I think what the returnees need most of all is security. We have seen security provided in 4, 5 villages that we have visited.

Secondly, the returnees will need a proper place to live and there should be full medical facilities adequately for them to stay temporarily then to be resettled in the villages they are from.

They have given us the evidence of the preparations for food to be provided, electricity in the transit camps, health services and things like that. I also inspected the storage for food and how it could be transported. The place was already provided with electricity by the Myanmar government. I encourage the Myanmar government to continue to provide this kind of media access. I think we've had about 20 of us altogether seeing this with our own eyes.

I just like to say one thing if I may. You've probably heard the news that former Governor Bill Richardson is no longer with the advisory board. We came with open minds and we speak with one voice to the implementation committee so we should have given ourselves the chance and opportunity to listen to the policymakers, to the officials, to the villagers, to everyone involved in the problem of Rakhine State and the concerted effort to bring peace and development to the area.

Unfortunately, Governor Richardson might have come with the preconceived notion of wanting to do something; that is the release of the Reuters reporters. He did not raise that in the advisory board at all but he raised it with the State Counsellor. It is not in the mandate of the advisory board. The board was not consulted formerly in the meeting that we had three times.

My personal view is that if it was in the early stage of the persons being arrested then maybe we can do something about it. But the process has gone to the point where the public prosecutor has persecuted and filed a case to court. So I think everyone has to respect the rule of law and I think the State Counsellor has emphasized that whoever they are, everyone is under the same law.

So the advisory board is not in the position and will not like to do pressuring any government or interfering with their criminal justice procedure. The only thing we could do and we did it already; I did it on a personal basis; I raised the issue with Union Minister U Thaung Tun before and he has ensured us that the treatment of the Reuters reporters would be in accordance with the due process of law and proper criminal justice procedure. We have no intention to pressure the government to release anyone or any intention to interfere in the court procedures.

Secondly, I would like to inform the press that I think it's not fair that Governor Richardson said to the international media that the advisory board would be whitewashing or would be representing or protecting the Myanmar government. We don't intend to be the cheerleader of the government or the lead cheerleader of the international community. We are not the mouthpiece of the Myanmar government or the international community. We are independent, impartial and you have seen that the international advisors and Myanmar advisors are people of great dignity. We have our credibility and a lot of social capital and we have been working in the area of peace and development for a long, long time.

My personal view is that the local government has to be more involved. I think the process has to be more inclusive and I would urge the local parliamentarians in Rakhine State to be consultants. I think the entire consultation process has to begin from the community level before going all the way up to the National Government level.

The implementation of Kofi Anan's 88 points cannot be done top-down only or bottom-up only; it has to be under the process of constant consultation from the communities to the executive branch and the legislative branch of the State and National government. Of course, the international community can be included in the consultation process and I think that's how the peace, development and harmony can be sustainable.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Children's Literature Festival held for first time in North Okkalapa, Yangon

By Nyunt Ko Ko

A Township –level Children's Literature Festival was held for the first time in North Okkalapa Township in Yangon yesterday.

The festival was held with the aim of providing good opportunities for the local children to grow their love for literature and develop reading habits. The festival took place at the OaktaraThiri Park, near the North Okkalapa traffic circle in Yangon and was held from 9a.m. to 7p.m.

At the opening ceremony, Deputy Director-General of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Department Dr. San San Aye opened the ceremony and answered some of the questions related to the Children's Literature Festival.

The following are some excerpts of interviews from people who attended the Children's Literature Festival.

A child plays at the Children's Literature Festival in North Okkalapa Township. **PHOTO: NYUNT KO KO**

Ko Sai Thu, In-charge of Youth Social Group

We accumulated our funding and began this festival, which aims at giving a hand to the government and the children. There are many townships like North Okkalapa. This kind of festival is worth celebrating for the children. Children as well as their parents will have a wonderful time together. Some parents also requested to the schools to allow their children to go to our festival. Accordingly, the schools have granted their permissions and the children also can join the festival together with their teachers.

Ko Sai Thu.

As for the Ministry for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, they offered to open two booths; one booth is for learning and the other, for counseling services. For the request of Township Information and Public Relations office, they take a room to provide necessary information. Beside North Okkalapa Township, many children from South Dagon, Shwepyitha, Thingangyun and Latha townships participate in this festival. We are planning to open similar festivals in Hlinethaya Township in February, 2018. We aim at nurturing this practice for our next generations.

Actress Khine Hnin Wai.

Daw Khine Hnin Wai, an actress

This festival entertains many interesting activities for the children and adults alike. They will get a chance to study in detail. We arrange many programs like cartoons, games and other amusing activities. Moreover, we share words of encouragement to single mothers and their offspring. Being an actress, I contribute many voluntary services, especially for orphanages and houses for them.

U Kyaw Khaing.

U Kyaw Khaing, unit **officer of Township Red** Cross Association

Our Red Cross Association aims at promoting health care services, assisting the needy and alleviating their troubles. We are a group of 40 members who are rendering help in the festival. I would like to hold this kind of festival as many places as we can across the country.

Daw Mya Mya Win, **Superintendent of** Ministry for Information **and Public Relations**

As for our department, we are conducting to disseminate useful information to the public. That's why, we cooperate with Youth Social Group in order to open Children's Literature festival and All-round Youth Development programs here. ■

6. 702 acres of relinquished farmlands returned to rightful owners in Kalay

A ceremony to return 6.702 acres of relinquished farmlands to the owners took place in Thayargon Village, Kalay Township in Sagaing Region on 28 January.

The farmlands were returned by the Department of Agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. At the ceremony, Sagaing Region Minister for Chin Ethnic Affairs U Lar Htaw Thang said the farmers should operate the returned farmlands beneficially, putting the interest of the state to the fore.

An official from the Department of Agricultural Land Management and Statistics explained the purpose of returning the lands to the farmers. The regional minister presented the temporary land use certificate (Form-3) to the farmers. A village administrator spoke words of thanks on behalf of the farmers. — Ju Nine ■

Petrified wood museum to be opened

A garden displaying art works of fossilized sal trees in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region will be turned into a museum, said U Myint Shwe (alias) U Ar T from Tree Jade Company.

On display at the museum will be high grade sal trees, one hundred and fifty-foot tall petrified wood, bracelet, beads, necklaces, and cultural items made of petrified wood from Pyu Era. Different assortment of petrified woods with varying size, color, shape and purity, various sizes of well polished petrified woods, petrified wood products and other semiprecious stones, including quartz and crystals, special petrified woods, animal fossils and other rare semiprecious stones will be exhibited at the museum.—Htay Myint Maung ■

Beads made of fossilizes sal trees. **PHOTO: HTAY MYINT MAUNG**

Public security, peace and stability

REGIONAL tranquility and rule of law is needed for maintaining public security and ensuring peaceful living. It is assumed that not only authorities concerned from judicial and security sectors but also the people themselves and the organizations representing the people are responsible to cooperate hand in hand with each other conscientiously for bringing about regional tranquility and rule of law.

At present, criminal offences are frequently being heard here and there across the country. Criticisms as to whether the public security is gradually fading away are appearing among the public. Criminals as well are committing offences openly among the people. What is worse they are beginning to commit atrocities. The increasing amount of crimes is causing uncertainty and insecurity among the people. Thus more and more people are blaming the Union government and state/regional governments and those in charge of security.

Now the respective security organizations are making efforts to effectively take action against criminals while we ourselves should cooperate with the Myanmar Police Force as much as possible by living in a high state of awareness and alertness so that we can live in peace, security and comfort.

In reality, we already have respective rules and laws enacted for prevention of crimes and protection from the dangers of the criminals, with security forces also appointed to prevent crimes and protect us from these criminals. But, the crimes do not seem to have decreased though suppressions have been made. This can be said to have been attributed to lack of public cooperation in the campaigns and lack of knowledge on crimes and potential dangers.

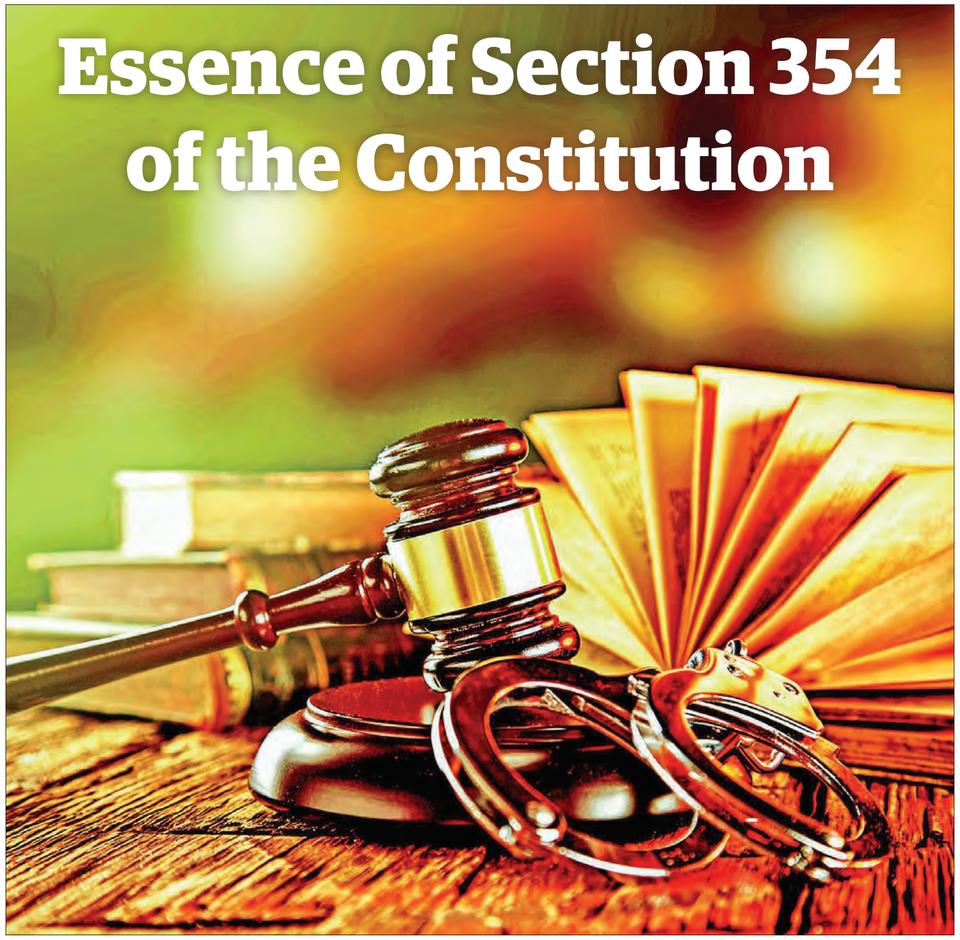
Criminals are neither labeled nor masked to identify themselves as to their actual identities. Being among crowds, we cannot distinguish the good from the evil. Ordinary people are busy with their daily activities in crowded places. Generally, they cannot distinguish as to who the good are and who the evil ones are. At the same time criminals are waiting for easy prey to fall into their traps.

To maintain public security, teams of law enforcement personnel are responsible to constantly monitor all activities in their respective areas whereas it is necessary for the people as well to move about with awareness wherever they go. Especially, we all need to maintain a high state of awareness as to what is happening in our neighborhoods, and failing that we can become easy prey.

Most of the criminal offences which has happened these days can be seen to have happened for lack of public awareness and failure to share information on potential dangers which can be met on roads. As for the authorities concerned as well, they have found to be weak in warning the public about potential dangers.

Now the respective security organizations are making efforts to effectively take action against criminals while we ourselves should cooperate with the Myanmar Police Force as much as possible by living in a high state of awareness and alertness so that we can live in peace, security and comfort. ■

Essence of Section 354 of the Constitution



By Maung Sarga

HERE, the title is in fact referred to the section 354 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008. The section is the well-known one. Why? In it is described that every citizen shall be at liberty in the exercise of the following rights, if not contrary to the laws, enacted for the Union security, prevalence of law and order, community peace and tranquility or public order and morality: [A] to express and publish freely their convictions and opinions; [B] to assemble peacefully without arms and holding possession; [C] to form associations and organizations; and [D] to develop their language, literature and culture they cherish, religion they profess, and customs without prejudice to the relations between one national race and another or among national races and to their faiths.

Some citizens seem to assume that they can freely enjoy these rights as much as they wish. Here is the essence of what I have assessed as to whether they are right or wrong.

Citizens' rights

In section 21(A) of the Constitution, it is described as the basic principles of the Union that every citizen shall enjoy the right of equality, the right of liberty and the right of justice. Based upon these basic principles citizens' rights have been prescribed as included in section 354.

Designations for exercising freely

Concerning the prescriptions of section 354 the main point we must note down is the wording "If not contrary to the laws, enacted for the Union security, prevalence of law and order, community peace and tranquility or public order and morality. It is of great importance. According to it, rights granted under sub-sections [A] [B] [C] and [D] can be enjoyed provided that anyone is not contrary to prescriptions enacted for the Nation and its national populace.

Though prescribed like this, some were found to take no notice to the prescriptions. In talking about or discussing section 354 most failed to make a hint of the introductory note on the section. Instead, they always talk about and point out freedom of speech and freedom of expression only, with the introductory note excluded. Had anyone desired to enjoy rights permitted under sub-sections [A], [B], [C] and [D] only if citizens are not contrary to the national security, rule of law, community peace and stability and the public morality and character, they can enjoy these.

Concerning sub-section D of section 354, we must note down the wording, "without prejudice to the relations between one national race and another or among national races and to their faiths." Though concerned with all sub-sections, only if the person desirous of using this section must agree with the above-said supplementary statement the rights included in sub-section D can be enjoyed.

Legal prescriptions which are worth noticing

Penal code is the one promulgated for Myanmar and India in colonial days, but it is still valid till now. It cannot be cancelled, or amended or renewed so far. If necessary, supplementary amendments were added. As long as a law is valid, it must be followed.

In Chapter 6 of the Penal Code prescriptions are included concerning offences against the State. Chapter 7 includes offences relating to the army, navy and air forces. The Chapter 8 is prescribed for stability of the State. The said 3 chapters are prescribed for the national security, rule of law and peace and stability. Chapter 14 deals with public health, safety, public order and morality, with Chapter 15 dealing with offences relating to religion.

As regards public order and morality, some of existing laws being exercised in the country are 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, Anti-Corruption Law, 2013 Myanmar, Myanmar Tele-communication Law, 2013, 2014 Anti-Terrorism Law, 2014 Law Relating to Registration of Organizations, 2015 restrictions on religious conversions and polygamy and 2015 Myanmar Monogamy Law.

Peaceful assembly and peaceful procession law

Peaceful assembly and peaceful procession law emerged so as to bring about genuine and well-disciplined democratic system, a basic principle of the Constitution, 2008. The objective of peaceful assembly and peaceful procession law are as follows:

[A] for every citizen to keep the national security, rule of law, regional peace and stability and people's morality
[B] for every citizen to enjoy rights granted by the Constitution—peaceful assembly and peaceful procession, giving protection under law,
[C] to protect people from hindrances caused by those who exercise rights given by the peaceful assembly and peaceful procession law

As for citizens and organizations desirous of having rights granted by the law, they need to submit to the township police forces office in writing, informing the matter of disclosing what they want to do with, the location where the demonstration will be made, amounts of participants to take part in the demonstration and other particular matters attached with the application, and thence to submit further to township administrative office, district administrative office and district police forces, it has been prescribed.

In making assembly and procession, it is strictly prohibited not to be armed with a kind of weapon, not to harm others and not to destroy properties along the route, not to make public nuisances in words or manners, not to block roads and traffics, not to make racial and religious conflicts with blasphemous talks or statements, not to make political agitations with fabricated stories, not to hold other signboards and posters apart from the ones informed to the township police force, not to use load speakers except for hand-speakers, not to shout slogans which had not been submitted, not to persuade others to take part in protests by paying or threatening or in dubious ways and not to breach the agreements negotiated with responsible officials, according to the requirements of the region.

Respective police forces are assigned duties under the peaceful assembly and peaceful procession law, to take action against violators of the above-said restrictions.

Enjoying citizens' rights in accord with the law

According to the prescriptions of the Constitution, 2008 every citizen has the right to enjoy equality in freedom and justice, simultaneously responsible for bringing about peace, stability, rule of law in the nation. And, every individual must take responsibility for making efforts for building up the national unity and development, based upon the Union Spirit.

The people need to pay respect with admiration to the government elected by the entire national populace, themselves. Under the leadership of the government, people are required to abide by existing rules and laws. They are to take active participation in the government's activities, keeping the concept in their mind that they all are responsible for implementing national security and rule of law in the nation.

May our citizens enjoy their rights freely, by abiding by laws and working hand in hand with the government! ■

Translated by
Khin Maung Oo

The Floating Palace

FRIENDS, what you are taking photographs of is the Floating Palace (not really floating, as it is fixed to the ground) in the Royal Lake, also known as Kandawgyi Lake.

For newcomers from far and near who wish to know more about this Floating Palace, also known as the Royal Barge, I hereby present these details.

The glorious Shwedagon Pagoda, which was built on the Singuttara Hill, to the west of Kandawgyi Lake over 2500 years ago, casts its shadow on the cool, calm waters that glisten like a mirror. Like the Shwedagon, the Royal Barge is also a golden colour. Situated on the eastern bank of the lake, the Floating Palace seems to be trying to swim to the opposite bank where the Shwedagon Pagoda is located, perhaps competing in a natural beauty contest.

When we think of an ordinary barge, we envision a flat-bottomed vessel used to carry goods on canals and rivers.

But the Royal Barge is a grand mansion that has been constructed with spires and steeples are all around for the royal families. The Floating Palace could be called The Royal Palace.

The Royal Barge of Alaung Si Thu:

The barge shown in the photo is actually only the model, the kind that the great king Ah Long Si Thu (AD 1113-1167) was enthroned in during the Bagan Dynasty.

The original Royal Barge was many times larger than the one in Kandawgyi Lake, you see, because, the ancient Royal Barge used to have rooms for members of the royal family, armed guards, royal music and dance bands that were used for celebrations and ceremonies, rations, kitchen utilities, cooks and servants.

The Royal Barge of the great king, in the shape of a mythical bird that was said to have a melodious cry, was found to be very miraculous, because wherever it sailed there happened to be plentiful water ahead. It is said the Royal Barge is so wonderful because of a philosopher's stone, or alchemy ball, possessed by a young prince named Parakkayar, of Wai Sa-Li, India, on his journey in the sky from Wai Sa-Li, India, up in the sky to Pagan – a kingdom where his beloved, the princess, Shwe Aing Si (daughter of King Saw Lao) was living. One day, while the young prince Praikkaya was on his way to the Bagan Kingdom, he unexpectedly met an ahrahat, or a Buddhist saint, in the sky.

"Where do you come from, Sir?" Praikhayar asked.

The saint said: "Well, young prince, I come from the Pagan Kingdom, after attending the wedding-feast ceremony of the princess, Shwe Aing Si". On hearing the news, Praikhayar was shocked and shouted with his mouth wide open, causing the philosopher's stone to fall out of his mouth down into the hollow of a tree trunk. He was so struck by the sorrowful news that he fell into a bamboo grove and died in the wilderness.

His deep, true love for Shwe Aing Si became legendary. In later years, it is said that royal engravers found the withered tree trunk and carved it into the mythical bird, to be affixed on the bow of the Royal Barge. The vessel became very omnipotent, creating water ahead wherever it sailed. We observe monuments to the Royal Barge in various places of Myanmar, even in the Shan Plateau.

For those who want to know, the history of the Royal Barge ends in the tragedy of the pitiable poor young Prince Praikkayar of Waisali, India, who died of a broken heart. ■

Yours Sincerely,
U Than Zaw (Grand-Pa)
D.C.C.A (Day care Centre for the Aged)

US President Donald Trump. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Trump says he would negotiate Brexit with 'tougher' attitude than Theresa May

LONDON — US President Donald Trump would take a "tougher" approach to Brexit negotiations than Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May, he said in a television interview to be broadcast later on Sunday.

In the interview with British channel ITV, Trump said the European Union was "not cracked up to what it's supposed to be" and claimed he had predicted the result of the June 2016 referendum in which Britons voted to leave the EU. Trump was elected to the US presidency later the same year.

When asked if May was in a "good position" regarding the ongoing Brexit talks, Trump replied: "Would it be the way I negotiate? No, I wouldn't negotiate it the way it's negotiated ... I would have had a different attitude."

Pressed on how his approach would be different, he said: "I would have said the European Union is not cracked up to what it's supposed to be. I would have taken a tougher stand in getting out."

May was the first foreign leader to visit Trump after his inauguration in January last year and they were filmed emerging from the White House holding hands. But the "special relationship" between the two nations has since faced several ups and downs, including Trump rebuking May on Twitter after she criticised him for retweeting British far-right anti-Islam videos.

He said in an earlier extract from the same interview that he had not intended to cause offence in Britain by sharing the videos and that he would apologise if the original posters were horrible racists.

Trump's comments on militant attacks in Britain have angered some and he has often exchanged barbs on social media with Mayor of London Sadiq Khan. Trump also said in the interview that he had anticipated the Brexit referendum result because of many Britons' concerns over immigration — also a key plank of his US election campaign. "I said because of trade, but mostly immigration, Brexit is going to be a big upset. And I was right," he said. "I know the British people and understand them." "They don't want people coming from all over the world into Britain, they don't know anything about these people."

Trump also said he had been invited by May to make two visits to Britain this year.

Earlier this month, he cancelled a trip to London to open a new embassy, saying he did not want to endorse a bad deal agreed by the Obama administration to sell the old one for "peanuts". Some Britons are angry at the prospect of a visit by Trump, with large protests expected when he does arrive. —Reuters ■

Sample machine for China's exascale supercomputer operational this year

TIANJIN — A sample machine for China's new-generation exascale supercomputer is set for launch this year, a researcher said.

"The launch of the sample machine will pave the way for the development of a supercomputer capable of a billion billion calculations per second," said Zhang Ting, a researcher with the National Supercomputer Center in Tianjin.

The new supercomputer will be 200 times faster and have 100 times more storage capacity than the Tianhe-1 supercomputer, China's first petaflop supercomputer launched in 2010, Zhang said.

The supercomputer center in Tianjin began developing the exascale supercomputer with the National University of Defence Technology in 2016.

According to the national plan for the next generation of high performance computers, China will develop an exascale computer during the 13th Five-Year-Plan period (2016-2020).

At present, the Tianhe-1 supports various tasks including oil exploration, high-end equipment manufacturing, biological medicine and animation design.

"The Tianhe-1, which performs more than 1,400 tasks each day, is running at full capacity. We need a new-generation supercomputer to replace it," Zhang said.—Xinhua ■

WORLD BRIEFS

"Door is open" if Britain wants to change mind on Brexit, says EU's Moscovici

PARIS — The "door is open" should Britain want to reverse its 2016 vote to leave the European Union, Pierre Moscovici, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Union, told French media in an interview on Sunday.

Some British politicians have said another referendum should be held on whether to leave the EU once the terms of departure and likely future relationship between Britain and the economic bloc are known. Asked about that in the joint interview with French TV station C News, Europe 1 radio and newspaper Les Echos, former French finance minister Moscovici said: "The door is open." "If the British want to change their mind, that would be very welcome," he added.—Reuters ■

Spanish court says Puigdemont must attend parliament in person

MADRID — Spain's Constitutional Court said on Saturday the former leader of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, could only attend a swearing-in session to become regional leader if he was physically present in the parliament and had a judge's permission to attend.Puigdemont, living in Brussels since October, is wanted in Spain on charges of sedition and rebellion for spearheading an independence movement. He is due to face a vote of confidence as the region's only presidential candidate on 30 January.—Reuters ■

IKEA founder Ingvar Kamprad dead at 91

STOCKHOLM — Ingvar Kamprad the founder of iconic Swedish flat-pack furniture firm IKEA has died, the company said on Sunday.

"The founder of IKEA and Ikano, and one of the greatest entrepreneurs of the 20th century, Ingvar Kamprad, has peacefully passed away, at his home in Smaland, Sweden, on the 27th of January," the company said in a press release. Kamprad was 91. —Reuters ■

Turkish, Russian top diplomats discuss preparations for Syria peace congress in Sochi

MOSCOW — Foreign Ministers Sergei Lavrov of Russia and Mevlut Cavusoglu of Turkey spoke by phone on Saturday, focusing on preparations for the Syrian National Dialogue Congress due in Sochi on 29-30 January, the Russian Foreign Ministry's press service said on Saturday.

"On 27 January 2018, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation SV [Sergei] Lavrov and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey Mevlut Cavusoglu had a phone conversation requested by the Turkish side," the ministry wrote on its Facebook page.

"In the context of preparations for the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi on 29-30 January, 2018, the ministers shared views on final aspects of organizing and holding the given event," it says.

The Syrian National Dialogue Congress is due to take place in the Russian Black Sea resort city of Sochi on 29-30 January. The peace conference is expected to bring together about 1,500 participants from the entire spectrum of Syria's political forces.—Tass ■

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **PHOTO: TASS**

Afghan capital in shock after deadly ambulance bomb attack

KABUL — Kabul reacted in despair and fear on Sunday, a day after a suicide bomb in the centre of the city killed and wounded more than 250 people in the worst attack seen in the Afghan capital in months.

With security officials warning that more attacks were possible after an ambulance packed with explosives blew up in a crowded city street on Saturday, there was a mix of helpless anger at the seemingly endless wave of attacks.

"How are we to live? Where should we go?" asked shopkeeper Mohammad Hanif, who was in his shop near the site of the explosion when it went off.

"We have no security, we don't have no proper government, what should we do?" he said. At least 95 people were killed and 158 wounded in the blast, which was claimed by the Taliban, a week after they claimed a deadly attack on the city's Intercontinental Hotel.

It was the worst attack seen in the Afghan capital since a truck bomb near the German embassy killed 150 people in May.

"People were running everywhere to escape, there were wounded people lying on the ground, people with wounds to their arms, legs, heads," Hanif said. After a deadly week in which an office of the aid group Save the Children in the eastern city of Jalalabad was also attacked, President Ashraf Ghani's Western-backed government has faced growing pressure to improve security.

Despite a major tightening in checks following the 31 May attack, the ambulance was able to get through the checkpoints, apparently without difficulty.

"People don't have work, there's no life for people in Afghanistan, people have to look for a life somewhere else, there's nowhere," said shopkeeper Sameem. The attack, described as "an atrocity" by the head of the UN mission in Afghanistan, drew universal condemnation from allies and neighbouring countries.

US President Donald Trump, who last year sent more American troops to Afghanistan and ordered an increase in air strikes and other assistance to Afghan forces, said the attack "renews our resolve and that of our Afghan partners". —Reuters ■

Afghan policemen inspect the site of a bomb attack in Kabul, Afghanistan on 28 January, 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Several killed in clashes in Yemen's southern city Aden

ADEN — Several people were killed and injured as armed groups fought each other in the southern Yemeni city of Aden on Sunday, medical staff at hospitals in the city said.

Gunmen were deployed throughout most districts of the city and there was heavy gunfire, according to reports from residents.

There have been rising tensions between southern separatists, who are allied with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the Saudi-backed government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi over control of the southern half of the country.

The two groups had been united throughout Yemen's three-year civil war against the Iran-aligned Houthi group in the north, but now their feud could cripple the effort by their Gulf Arab backers to roll back perceived Iranian expansion in Yemen.

The clashes in Aden come as a deadline imposed by the separatists for the government to resign expired on Sunday.

Hadi's administration nominally controls about four-fifths of Yemen's territory, but political and military leaders in Aden now want to revive the former independent state of South Yemen.

The southern separatists — the Southern Resistance Forces — last week accused Hadi's cabinet of corruption and inefficiency and demanded they quit. —Reuters ■

Syrian government says Turkish shelling damaged ancient temple

BEIRUT — The Syrian government and a war monitor said on Sunday that Turkish shelling of the Kurdish-held Afrin region of Syria had seriously damaged an ancient temple.

Ain Dara is an iron age temple with remains of large carved basalt blocks and wall reliefs. Pictures circulating online, which Reuters could not independently verify, showed an apparent shell crater in the site.

A statement from the Syrian government's antiquities department carried by Syrian state media called for international pressure on Turkey "to prevent the targeting of archaeological and cultural sites".

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said Ain Dara was exposed to Turkish shelling, causing significant damage but no casualties.

The Turkish military was not immediately available for comment.

Turkey's operation against the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia in Afrin began a week ago and has included heavy bombardment but limited advances by its army or allied Syrian rebel groups.

The Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad has condemned the Turkish assault, but it also opposes the YPG and Kurdish aspirations for autonomy in northern parts of Syria.

Syria's civil war which began in 2011, has led to major damage to many historical remains including widespread destruction in the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Palmyra and the Old City of Aleppo. —Reuters ■

Russia's advanced aerial refueling tanker performs debut flight

MOSCOW — Russia's latest Ilyushin Il-78M-90A aerial refueling tanker has performed its debut flight, the Ilyushin Aircraft Company told TASS on 25 Thursday January.

"Today, on 25 January, the flight model of the Il-78M-90A perspective aerial refueling plane performed its first flight. The plane was piloted by Ilyushin Chief Pilot, Hero of Russia, Merited Test Pilot of Russia Nikolai Kuimov," the company said in a statement.

Vice-President of the United Aircraft Corporation and CEO of the Ilyushin Aircraft Company Alexei Rogozin said that some foreign partners were showing interest in the latest aerial refueling tanker.

"Today the upgraded Il-78M-90A aerial tanker performed its first flight, which lasted 35 minutes. The new plane differs from its predecessor by its modified wing, new engines and the control system, and also has a large lifting capacity and a big volume of fuel carried aboard. The plane has been developed for Russia's Aerospace Force but some of our foreign partners are also showing interest in the tanker," Rogozin said.

The perspective aerial refueling plane boasts an increased flight range thanks to its four new-generation engines.
PHOTO: TASS

New aerial refueling tanker

Russia's improved aerial refueler modification is derived from the latest Il-76MD-90A military transport plane while its designing, the development of design documentation and its production were carried out using modern digital technologies.

The perspective aerial refueling plane boasts an increased flight range thanks to its four PS-90A-76 new-generation engines and can take a larger amount of fuel on its board for aircraft refueling compared to previous models. These engines consume 12-14% less fuel than D-30KP motors mounted on earlier modifications of aerial fueling tankers.

Besides, the latest refueler features a completely new aircraft navigation system and also an all-glass cockpit, which helps reduce the crew workload and enhance flight safety.

The aircraft is furnished with three hose and drogue air refueling pods: two units on the outer wings and one on the right side of the rear fuselage. The Il-78M-90A will be capable of refueling two frontline aviation planes at a time.

The tail unit allows refueling long-range and special aviation aircraft. On the ground, the Il-78M-90A can simultaneously refuel four planes.

"The latest Il-78M-90A aerial refueling tanker has retained its capability as a military transport plane. Re-equipping won't require a large volume of work and can be carried in aerodrome conditions. If necessary, fire-fighting equipment can be mounted on it," the company said.

First Russia-assembled Il-78 plane

The Ilyushin Aircraft Company is the principal developer of the new aerial refueling tanker while its producer is Aviastar-SP enterprise.

Serial-produced aerial refueling tankers will be assembled at the Ulyanovsk-based Aviastar-SP where work is currently underway to install a final assembly line for Il-76MD-90A heavy military transport planes and Il-78M-90A refuelers.

The new plane will be the first aerial refueling tanker produced in Russia. Before that, all Il-78 aircraft were assembled in Uzbekistan.—Tass ■

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Reg. No.4/13543/2017 (14.12.2017)

SUMITOMO

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Finland's president Niinisto tipped for re-election in first round vote

HELSINKI — Polls opened in Finland on Sunday for a presidential election in which incumbent Sauli Niinisto is seen as likely to secure re-election on the first round of voting.

Niinisto, 69, is credited with helping Finland maintain a delicate balancing act between its relations with neighbour Russia and its links with NATO. It is not a NATO member but developed closer ties with the alliance after Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014.

Final polls released on Thursday showed support of 58-63 percent for Niinisto, who is originally from the conservative National Coalition Party (NCP), but campaigns as an independent.

His closest challenger — Pekka Haavisto of the Greens of Finland — had the support of 13-14 per cent of respondents, while six other candidates shared a combined backing of 24-28 per cent.

If Niinisto gets half of the votes on Sunday, he would be the first candidate to win the presidency in the first round since the electoral system was changed to a direct popular vote in 1994.

"His gruff, down-to-earth manner and facts-based approach truly appeals to Finns," said Juho Rahkonen, Research Manager at pollster Taloustutkimus.—Reuters ■

Presidential candidate Jiiri Drahos and his wife Eva wave hands as they wait for election results in Prague, Czech Republic on 27 January, 2018.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Czech President Zeman re-elected with anti-immigration message

PRAGUE — Czech President Milos Zeman won a second term in a presidential election on Saturday, gaining the backing of voters for his tough stance against immigration and his courtship of Russia and China.

In the run-off against strongly pro-European Union academic Jiri Drahos, Zeman scored 51.4 per cent to 48.6 per cent for his challenger. Zeman, 73, is the last prominent figure among active politicians from the country's post-communist transitional period in the 1990s, and has shifted from being a centre-left prime minister 16 years ago to being a president with leanings toward the far-right.

The vote showed Czech voters' concerns over security despite a period of fast economic growth and rising wages. Immigration was a key issue, more than two years after the European Union first faced a major influx of refugees — almost none of whom ever appeared in the Czech Republic.

The result will also influence the formation of the next Czech government, with Zeman one of the few political backers of Prime Minister Andrej Babis, whose minority cabinet lost a confidence vote this month due to fraud allegations hanging over the billionaire businessman.

Zeman has been a polarising force, publicly belittling opponents and sniping at intellectual elites and the media. He was one of the few European politicians to back Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election.

He has upset many with his warm relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and calls to end EU sanctions against Moscow imposed over its annexation of Crimea.

His stance toward Brussels has been lukewarm. He calls himself a federalist and supports membership of the EU while also favouring holding an in-or-out referendum, like the one that led to Britain's impending exit.

Speaking to supporters after claiming victory, Zeman said he would continue travelling the country to meet citizens and hear their worries.

"This is my last political victory, there will be no political defeats," he told the crowd, flanked by advisers and the leaders of the far-right, anti-EU and anti-NATO SPD party and the Social Democrat party that he once led. —Reuters ■

Revolutionary Guards, Islamic State fighters clash in west Iran

BEIRUT — Three members of the Revolutionary Guards and three Islamic State militants were killed in clashes in the west of Iran on Saturday, a top Guards' commander said, according to Tasnim news agency. A team of 21 Islamic State fighters were tracked after they crossed Iran's western border before being attacked by the Guards, the most powerful military force in the Islamic Republic, according to Sepah News, the Guards' official news site. General Mohammad Pakpour, head of the Guards' ground forces, said 16 militants were arrested and two fled but were now surrounded, Tasnim agency reported. In June, Islamic State militants attacked the parliament in Tehran and mausoleum of the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, killing at least 18 and wounding dozens. The attackers in the June assault were all Iranian Kurds from the Kurdish region of western Iran near the Iraqi border. The Guards fired several missiles at Islamic State bases in Syria on June 18 in response to that attack.— Reuters ■

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"Coffee syrup; coffee-flavored soft drinks; tea-flavored soft drink; chocolate-flavored soft drink; cocoa-flavored soft drink; non-alcoholic beverages; preparations for making non-alcoholic beverages; coffee-flavored beverages; preparations for making coffee-flavored beverages; tea-flavored beverages; preparations for making tea-flavored beverages; chocolate-flavored beverages; preparations for making chocolate-flavored beverages; cocoa-flavored beverages; preparations for making cocoa-flavored beverages; beverages containing sweet potato; preparations for making beverages containing sweet potato; sweet potato latte; potato latte; beverages containing potato; preparations for making beverages containing potato; fruit juices; fruit-flavored beverages; fruit-based beverages; preparations for making fruit juices; preparations for making fruit-flavored beverages; preparations for making fruit-based beverages; syrups for beverages; sports drinks" included in **International Class 32**.

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Dated **29th January 2018**

Jay-Z makes peace with Grammys as he is honoured at Clive Davis party

Shawn "JAY-Z" Carter greets Neil Portnow, president of The Recording Academy, after being honored during the 2018 Pre-GRAMMY Gala & GRAMMY Salute to Industry Icons presented by Clive Davis and The Recording Academy honoring Shawn "JAY-Z" Carter in Manhattan, New York, US on 27 January, 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

NEW YORK — On the night before the Grammy awards, Jay-Z took the stage at a New York dinner attended by music industry titans to discuss his complex relationship with music's highest honours, where the odds are historically stacked against hip-hop artists winning top accolades.

Jay-Z, who was honoured by the Recording Academy at veteran music producer Clive Davis' annual pre-Grammy party on Saturday, spoke about his decision to boycott the Grammy awards in 1998 when rapper DMX did not get any nominations despite having two hit albums out that year.

Jay-Z said he only returned to the awards show in 2004, when Beyonce, to whom he is now married, was nominated for her breakout solo album.

"The Academy, they're human like we are and they're voting on things that they like, it's subjective ... we care because we're seeing the most incredible artists standing on that stage and we aspire to be there, so I was like, I have to be here," the rapper said.

"It's our duty to make sure that not only are we making the greatest art, that we're upholding and supporting things that are super real," he added.

Jay-Z, 48, goes into Sunday's Grammy awards with a leading eight nominations for his emotional, soul-baring album "4:44," in which he examine the infidelity that was so scathingly detailed by Beyonce in 2016's "Lemonade," as well as searing commentary on race in America.

The rapper has won 21 Grammy awards over his career, but he is yet to win the top accolades for song, record or album of the year, all of which he is nominated for on Sunday.

In 60 years of the Grammys, only two hip-hop albums have ever won album of the year; Lauryn Hill's "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" in 1999 and Outkast's "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" in 2004. Brooklyn native Jay-Z, real name Shawn Carter, made his breakout with 1996's "Reasonable Doubt" and has become one of the best-selling US musicians and respected rap lyricists. He was honoured on Saturday for not only reshaping rap over his career but also as an entrepreneur, including reshaping the music business with his streaming service Tidal.

Singer Alicia Keys said Jay-Z's music was "the soundtrack to my life" growing up and she sang a medley of his hits including "Hard Knock Life," "Encore" and their New York anthem, "Empire State of Mind." —Reuters ■

Post-Sundance, female filmmakers find Hollywood dream elusive

Octavia Spencer, Jessica Chastain pose at 75th Golden Globe Awards - Arrivals - Beverly Hills, California, US on 7 January, 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

LOS ANGELES — Sundance, the premiere US independent film gathering, this week saw a record number of female filmmakers showcased and it has championed women for four decades, but the Hollywood success that so often comes for male directors has proven elusive.

A study published this month by University of Southern California's Annenberg Inclusion Initiative analyzed 1,100 Hollywood films from 2007 to 2017 and found that out of 1,223 directors, women accounted for only 4 per cent of honourees.

In contrast, women made up 37 per cent of directors represented across the 122 films debuting at Sundance this week.

"The biggest problem is that it is so much harder to convince studios ... that we can also make the bigger movies," said Hannah Fidell, who wrote and directed "The Long Dumb Road," debuting at Sundance.

Michael Barker and Tom Bernard, who co-founded Sony Pictures Classics and often usher Sundance movies to Oscar success, said they have produced films by 59 female filmmakers, but that a lot of those filmmakers have struggled to find success elsewhere.

"I don't think women have been given those opportunities after their experience with us from all these other companies, and I think it's right to stand up and say they deserve more attention than they were given," Barker said.

Male directors, such as Quentin Tarantino, David O. Russell, Darren Aronofsky and Damien Chazelle, who all got their starts at Sundance, have gone on to enjoy studio success.

This year's Sundance festival comes amid the rise of the Time's Up movement in Hollywood, launched by more than 300 industry figures to fight against sexual misconduct and discrimination in the workplace.

Several panels at the festival focused on the gender gap in Hollywood with actresses such as Octavia Spencer speaking out about pay parity. Spencer said she and Jessica Chastain had teamed up to negotiate five times her asking salary for an upcoming film the two are working on together.

Along with pay issues, many filmmakers are looking for stories that move beyond female typecasts.

Reed Morano first came to Sundance in 2008 as the cinematographer for "Frozen River." This year, she returned to Sundance with her film directorial debut "I Think We're Alone Now," centered on a man (Peter Dinklage) and a teenage girl (Elle Fanning) in a post-apocalyptic world. "Out of 10 projects I get sent, seven or eight are female protagonists and that's not the only thing I'm interested in," Morano said. "I do think it's unfair for women who get pegged with creating fare for other women," she added. After writing and directing two films with strong female leads, Fidell said she purposely chose to center her latest film "The Long Dumb Road" on the story of two boys.—Reuters ■

Traditional music concert kicks off Chinese New Year celebration in Houston

HOUSTON — A concert featuring traditional Chinese music on Friday kicked off celebrations for the upcoming Chinese lunar New Year at the Chinese Consulate General in the US city of Houston.

Dubbed "Greetings of Spring," the concert featured traditional Chinese music performed by local Chinese artists, enthralling about 100 guests, including politicians, members of the business community and leaders of social organizations. Chinese consul general in Houston and host of the event Li Qiangmin said in a speech that music is one of the best ways for cross-border communication, adding that "China will keep interacting with the world to enhance mutual understanding and friendship." Li said he believed there are more opportunities and cooperation than challenges in future China-US relations.—Xinhua ■

Home alone: men especially face harsh times ahead

TOKYO — More people in Japan are living alone but what is particularly alarming is their identity: mainly Japanese men with loose ties to their local communities.

Many are elderly men in isolation, lacking any support, or those of the working generation who have delayed or shunned marriage, only now to find they are facing the unwitting prospect of growing old alone.

Indeed, Japan is in a predicament where it needs to create a social security network that stretches beyond the family as the basic household unit of society.

A Tokyo man in his 90s whose wife died nearly 10 years ago is a textbook example of what can happen to people left to their own devices: he began to show signs of dementia after five or six years living on his own.

Although he was formally recognized as "requiring support," the man insisted that he be left alone when a facilitator at the local Community General Support Centre recommended he receive nursing-care services.

He refused hospital visits, and even his pacemaker began to malfunction. He stopped attending neighbourhood association meetings and other events he used to when he was healthy.

Having no children to care for him, the man found himself in virtual isolation. He had not taken a bath in years, nor changed his clothes. Because of his erratic dietary habits, he failed to get proper nutrition, leading to a worsening of his dementia. The man finally entered a private residential nursing home last November.

Similar examples can be seen across the nation. Yoko Shimazaki, who is in charge of the man's case at the Community General Support Center, said keeping tabs on those living alone, especially at night, is troublesome.

"For people living alone, we are in the dark sometimes, especially at night. It is difficult to get a comprehensive view of everything happening with them," Shimazaki said. Isolation is an issue affecting many, even the working generation. "When I think of getting old all I see in front of me is darkness," an unmarried man in his 40s who lives in Tottori Prefecture, western Japan, said with a look of gloom.

The man graduated from a prestigious university in the Kansai region but was unable to secure a job at his company of choice during the so-called "employment ice age." He quit his job after working several years for a small manufacturer.

Afterwards he jumped around in part-time jobs, and he now works as a temporary employee for a local government office. He is seeking marriage, but when he tells potential partners his annual salary he is often rejected. According to a survey conducted by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the ratio of people who have never married before turning 50 — the "lifetime unmarried ratio" — continues to rise, reaching 23 per cent and 14 per cent for men and women, respectively, in 2015.

For people, like the aforementioned man, following the so-called second baby boomer generation (those born from 1971-1974) who went through the employment ice age as young adults, many have not seen income growth, and hence hesitate to marry because of financial difficulties. For the man, the fear of dying alone cannot be ignored. "If I get sick or become unemployed I would be cut off from society. It is scary to live alone but there's nothing I can do."

People living alone will make up nearly 40 per cent of all households in 2040, according to a prediction by the same national research institute. Some companies see the rise of elderly people living alone as a unique business opportunity. Venture startup PowerElec based in Nagoya, west of Tokyo, has developed a device already on the market that can gauge power consumption between home appliances, such as television sets, and a Wi-Fi plug. For example, the device detects abnormal patterns in power from a TV that has been left on or off for an extended period, and the data is transmitted to the company's cloud server. Family members or local government agencies are then notified either via email or with a cellphone app to confirm the person's safety.

File photo taken in November 2017 in Asahikawa, Hokkaido, shows an apartment room where a 68-year-old man was found dead on a chair alone about a month after his death. More people in Japan are living alone but what is particularly alarming is their identity: mainly men with loose ties to their local communities. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

PowerElec says its new internet of things (IoT) service was deemed necessary to deal with the social problem of elderly people living alone. The majority of service users are family members living apart from their elderly relatives, but the city of Nagoya has also incorporated the service to check the safety of elderly people living alone in municipal housing, and the service is expanding.

Katsuhiko Fujimori, a chief researcher at Mizuho Information & Research Institute, said that in the future a social network that expands beyond a family will be necessary to cope with the rise in mainly unmarried men living alone as they grow old.

"We won't be able to rely on families to care for the elderly, unlike up to now. Along with a strengthening of social security with enhanced nursing-care services, it will be necessary that mechanisms be created to promote interaction among housing residents," Fujimori said. —Kyodo News ■

Jean Paul Gaultier gets into swing of the 60s on Paris catwalk

PARIS — Psychedelic swirls, Beatles-style bobs in vibrant colours and plenty of swishing fringes filled Jean Paul Gaultier's runway on Wednesday, in a celebration of the 1960s designed in homage to avant-garde French couturier Pierre Cardin.

Black-and-white stripped dresses — ingeniously cut to float down the catwalk from the front while revealing a cinched silhouette from behind — mingled with bold pink or yellow pant suits in the collection, unveiled during Haute Couture week.

Fringes on boots, trousers, dresses and sleeves twisted and turned to the 1960-inspired soundtrack as models strutted down the runway.

Some struck over-the-top poses as they went, like model Coco Rocha, who had spectators swooning as she took to the catwalk with her two-year-old daughter, dressed identically in an asymmetric baby-blue gown.

Ninety-five-year-old Cardin, who gave the self-styled bad boy of fashion Gaultier his first stint as an apprentice in 1970, surveyed the show from the front row, with actress Marion Cotillard and singer Paloma Faith also in attendance.

"It's my beginning. Why not come back to that funny period that was the 1960s," Gaultier told reporters after the show, adding that he had been in awe of Cardin's futuristic, geometric designs when he was still a teenager. "Even before I started with him I was looking at magazines, at TV programmes on what he was doing." "I was very frightened when he arrived (at the show), I wondered, 'What will he tell me?'" Gaultier added. "I was like a little student of fashion."

French designer Jean Paul Gaultier appears at the end of his Haute Couture Spring-Summer 2018 fashion collection in Paris, France on 24 January, 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Gaultier, 65, stopped producing ready-to-wear collections in 2014 to focus on his haute couture line and perfumes. His brand is owned by Spanish perfume group Puig. The couturier, known for his irreverent and playful style, is preparing a musical stage production, the Jean Paul Gaultier Fashion Freak Show, which is billed as a pop extravaganza showcasing eccentric characters and episodes from his life. The show, which will run from October to December at the Folies Bergeres music hall in Paris, will feature new Gaultier designs as well as some referencing his most famed creations, such a conical bra worn by singer Madonna on tour in 1990. —Reuters ■

Yangon United stays in top shape in MPT MNL 2018

AS a match of MPT Myanmar National League, 2018, Yangon United trounced Sagaing United 3-1 in the home stadium of Sagaing in Monywa yesterday.

Yangon United lined up with Goal Keeper Kyaw Zin Htet, David Htan, Moukailou, Pyae Phyo Zaw, Min Kyaw Khant, Kyi Lin, CaptainYan Aung Kyaw, Kosuke, Maung Maung Lwin, Aee Soe and Sylla. Noticeably, Yangon's great player Emmanuel was in the substitution list in yesterday's match.

Both teams played very well in yesterday's match.

Yangon made an opening goal by the Maung Maung Lwin while keeper palmed away David Htan's cross. At the 45 minutes mark Yangon's reliable player Kyi Lin scored second leading goal over the support from his team mate Mg Mg Lwin.

In the second half, Sagaing made more defensive but the third goal came at 68 minutes by Mg Mg Lwin by showing brilliant twisting.

Yangon United football star Kyi Lin poised to shoot the ball in yesterday's MPT MNL 2018 match at Monywa Stadium. **PHOTO: YUSC**

In the late minute of the match, Sagaing United played more aggressively to garner their goals and scored a goal by Zaw Zin Oo via penalty in 89 minutes.—KyawZin Lin ■

Federer fights off Cilic to win sixth Australian Open

MELBOURNE — Roger Federer survived a second set 'freeze' and an onslaught from Croatia's Marin Cilic to claim a record-equalling sixth Australian Open title on Rod Laver Arena on Sunday.

The Swiss maestro wobbled at times in the face of some fierce resistance before winning 6-2, 6-7(5), 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

With the stadium roof closed to keep out the withering Melbourne heat, the 36-year-old grabbed the first set in 24 minutes as a 20th grand slam title looked a formality.

But Cilic, who suffered a nightmare in last year's Wimbledon final against Federer when blisters wrecked his chances, was not going to let his first Australian Open final slide by in a flash. Despite fighting a lone battle against Federer and most of the crowd, he reeled off five consecutive games to extend the champion into a deciding set. —Reuters ■

Paul Peterson wins Leopalace 21 Myanmar Open Golf Tourney 2018

PAUL Peterson from USA wins the Champion title of the Leopalace 21 Myanmar Open Golf Tournament in the final competition.

The tourney's final day was held alongside tremendous fans at Pun Hlaing Golf Club in Yangon yesterday.

The final day's shots were very thrilling to watch as there were no so many differences of points between the golf players.

Paul Peterson did the best with 13 shots below par while Tomoyo Ikemura and Satoshi Kodaira from Japan tied for second place with 11 shots below par while Berry Henson from America garnered the third place of the tourney with 10 shots below par.

The winner Peterson started his final day two shots off the lead, but racked up quickly with two birdies and an eagle in his opening five holes.

Champion of Leopalace 21 Myanmar Open Golf Tournament 2018 Paul Peterson holds the cup, seen with officials. **PHOTO: PHOE THAW ZIN**

Peterson's lead was briefly threatened when he dropped two shots on 15 and 17 but the American maintained his composure by sinking a crucial birdie at the last hole for his Asian Tour breakthrough.

Myanmar golf star Ye Htet Aung also stands in 35th place with one shot below par.

Officials awarded the first prize money USD 135,000 to the Champion Peterson.—Ye Yint Shine ■

Myanmar football teams to contest for 2020 Summer Olympics in Japan

MYANMAR has selected the members for men's and women's football teams which will take part in the AFC U23 Championship qualification. Winning the Championship will give Myanmar the chance to enter in the 2020 Summer Olympics that will be hosted in Tokyo, Japan.

The qualification for the men's team will start in March, 2019.

Three teams will qualify for the Olympics after passing the Final Round of the qualification of the Asia Zone well. The host team will automatically qualify for the Olympics Game.

Meanwhile, the women's qualifications will be played with three stages set up including the final round. There will be two women football teams in Asia Zone that will qualify for the Olympics.

The association football tournament at the 2020 Summer Olympics will be held from 22 July to 8 August 2020 in Japan.

In addition to the Olympics' host city of Tokyo, matches will also be played in Ibaraki, Saitama, Sapporo, Sendai, and Yokohama.

Having previously hosted the 1964 Summer Olympics, Tokyo will become the first city in Asia to host the Olympics twice.—KyawZin Lin ■