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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Wednesday, 9 May 2018



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomes Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Ichiro Maruyama at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor receives Indonesian Minister, Japanese Ambassador

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of My-

anmar, received Dr. H. Wiranto, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, at

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 May 2018 at 10:00 am.

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar Office of the President Announcement 2/2018

9th Waning of Kason 1380 ME
8 May 2018

1. According to section 68 of the Constitution and section 100 of the Union Government Law, the President has furnished a list of family assets under his direct supervision to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker.
2. Similarly, union-level personnel previously employed and additionally employed by the President with the approval of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, and union-level personnel employed by the President in accordance with the Constitution have furnished a list of their businesses and assets to the President in accordance with section 101 of the Union Government Law.

EU approves €221 mln grant to Myanmar to promote quality education

EU member states have decided to approve a €221 million (Ks356 billion) grant for Myanmar to expand quality education across the country.

Ambassador of the European Union to Myanmar Mr. Kristian Schmidt made the announcement in his message of greeting at the Europe Day ceremony held at the Kempinski Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening.

“We will channel this grant directly to the Ministry of Education, a sign of our partnership and trust, and that we share your government’s ambition to dramatically improve Myanmar’s education outcomes,” said Mr. Schmidt.

“We think education is the best possible investment in your country’s democratic future”.

Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government U Thaung Tun also attended the ceremony and extended a greeting and thanks.

The EU is already the world’s leading donor, accounting for 57 per cent of global official development assistance (ODA) in 2017. All of the assistance is donated in the form of grants.

Last night’s event opened with the national anthem of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the anthem of the European Union (EU).

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Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat holds talks with Belgian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Philippe Kridelka in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat holds talks with Danish Ambassador Mr. Peter Lysholt Hansen in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives Danish, Belgian Ambassadors

PYITHU HLUTTAW Speaker U T Khun Myat received the Danish Ambassador H.E. Mr. Peter Lysholt Hansen at 1p.m at the Pyithu Hluttaw guest hall, at the Pyithu Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday af-

ternoon.

At the meeting, they exchanged views and discussed matters relating to providing assistance in enacting and amending laws appropriate to a democratic system and assist-

ing in the peace process.

Similarly, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat received Bangkok-based Belgian Ambassador to Myanmar H.E. Mr. Philippe Kridelka at 2 p.m yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to promoting friendship and cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries, investment and economic development and

amendment of laws.

Present at the meetings were Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Aung @ U Tun Tun Hein and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw office. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Local media personnel gather news in Maungtaw region

LOCAL media personnel who were in Maungtaw, Rakhine State, went to the Taung Pyo Letwe and Nga Khu Ya reception centres, bilateral friendship bridge, border area between border posts 34 and 35 and Ngan Chaung Village in the Maungtaw region, Rakhine State, to gather news yesterday.

The local media personnel arrived at Taung Pyo Letwe Reception Centre in the morning, where officials explained to them the preparations made for

assessment works and issue of national verification cards (NVCs) for the returnees.

The officials also answered questions raised by the media personnel. Next, the media personnel visited the bilateral friendship bridge and the area between border posts 34 and 35.

Later, the media personnel arrived in Kyeinchaung Village, Maungtaw Town, and met the Hindus, Mro and Maramargyi ethnic nationals and enquired about their livelihood, social

situation, requirement, work opportunity, population and the requirement for regional development.

The media personnel then went to Nga Khu Ya Reception Centre, where the officials explained the preparations made for assessment works and the issue of NVCs, and answered questions raised by the media personnel. The media personnel also met Muslims in Ngan Chaung Village and enquired about their livelihood, works, requirement and heard a first-hand account of the terrorist events. Next, the media personnel went to Maungtaw District General Administration Department, where Maungtaw District Deputy Commissioner U Ye Htut explained the work processes of Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State (UEHRD). U Ye Htut also replied to questions raised by the media personnel on the status of villages reconstructed by the UEHRD, the redevelopment work processes, creation of job opportunities, rights of NVC holders, support provided to the villages and other matters. — Myo Myint ■



An immigration official answers questions at Nga Khu Ya reception centre in Maungtaw, Rakhine State. **PHOTO: THET LWIN SOE**

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than receives Japanese Ambassador



Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than welcomes Japanese Ambassador Mr. Ichiro Maruyama in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than received Japanese Ambassador H.E. Mr. Ichiro Maruyama at the Amyotha Hluttaw guest hall in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, they discussed matters related to strengthening the Japan-Myanmar bilateral friendship, as-

sisting and cooperating in economic sector development and increasing bilateral friendship between the two parliaments.

Present at the meeting were Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung and officials from the Amyotha Hluttaw office. — Myanmar News Agency ■

marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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Today at this time, we are witnessing the transformation of an era and a system in accordance with democratic principles. This is just the beginning of the democratic transition. To make this transition process smooth and successful, it is very important for our peoples, government employees and civil servants to change their dogmatic mindset and habits. Those government institutions which are lagging behind in the transformation process will need to be put under tight management controls. The country's weak judiciary system would need to be strengthened. More efforts need to be exerted to stamp out corruption. More efforts need to be exerted to prevent human rights violations. More efforts need to be exerted to crack down illegal drug trade. We need to manage public funds properly so that there is no wastage. Measures need to be taken to return confiscated farmland to farmers and to give compensation to farmers for losses they have suffered in accordance with the law. We also need to improve the socio-economic life of farmers, improve the lives of workers and ensure that students gain access to higher education.

(Excerpt from the speech by President U Win Myint at the ceremony to take oath of office at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 30th March 2018)



That is why in the coming year 1380, our Union Government has decided to keep in high regard the need for "collective strength" to overcome our country's challenges.

(Excerpt from the speech by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the 2nd Anniversary of NLD Government on 1st April 2018)

State Counsellor receives Indonesian Minister, Japanese Ambassador

FROM PAGE-1

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to Rakhine State and Indonesia's assistance for Myanmar's democratization process. Also present at the meeting were U Thaung Tun, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government and National Security Advisor; U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation and responsible officials

from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Similarly, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Ichiro Maruyama at 11:00 am. During the meeting, they discussed on the matters relating to bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries.—MNA ■



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Dr. H. Wiranto in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

EU approves €221 mln grant to Myanmar to promote quality education

FROM PAGE-1

The event included dinner and the taking of commemorative photos of the union minister, the ambassador and other guests.

The ceremony was also attended by Union Election Commission Chairman U Hla

Thein, Constitutional Tribunal of Myanmar Chairperson U Myo Nyunt, union ministers Dr. Myo Thein Gyi and U Kyaw Tin, deputy ministers, Hluttaw representatives, ambassadors, departmental heads and other invited guests.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister U Thaung Tun welcomed by EU Ambassador Mr. Kristian Schmidh at Europe Day ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**



Indonesian Coordinating Minister Dr. H. Wiranto and his delegation attend a working lunch hosted by Union Minister U Thaung Tun in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister hosts working lunch for Coordinating Minister of Indonesia

AT the invitation of Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government and National Security Advisor U Thaung Tun, a delegation led by Dr. H. Wiranto, Coordinating Minister for Political,

Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, arrived in Nay Pyi Taw on the evening of 7 May. Yesterday afternoon, U Thaung Tun hosted a working lunch for the delegation, led by

the Coordinating Minister, at M-Gallery Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw.

In the evening, the Coordinating Minister and his delegation left Nay Pyi Taw by a special flight.—MNA ■

ACTING CHIEF EDITOR

Aye Min Soe,
ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

EXPATRIATE CONSULTANT EDITOR

Mark Angeles,
markrangeles@gmail.com

SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

Kyaw Myaing

SENIOR TRANSLATORS

Zaw Min,
zawmin.gnlm@gmail.com
Win Ko Ko Aung,
kowink2aung@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR

Ye Htut Tin,
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

LOCAL NEWS EDITORS

Tun Tun Naing (Editor),
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor),
nwenwe9131@gmail.com

TRANSLATORS

Khaing Thanda Lwin,
Hay Mar Tin Win,
Ei Myat Mon
Zaw Htet Oo
Kyaw Zin Lin
Kyaw Zin Tun

REPORTER

May Thet Hnin,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
mayreporter.mm@gmail.com

PHOTOGRAPHER

Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar

COMPUTER TEAM

Tun Zaw ,
Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,
Ye Naing Soe, Nyi Zaw Moe,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin

EDITORIAL SECTION

(+95) (01) 8604529,
Fax – (+95) (01) 8604305

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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

Fifth Food & Hospitality Trade Exhibition to be held in June

THE largest food and hospitality trade exhibition will be held from 6 to 8 June at the Myanmar Event Park in Mindhama Road in Yangon.

The three-day exhibition is aimed at promoting Myanmar's food and drink industry, hotels, bakeries, restaurants and food service equipment, supplies and hospitality industry.

Some 230 exhibitors from

27 countries, including South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey and the United States, will take part in the three-day event by showcasing various products and services.

The 5th Food & Hospitality Trade Exhibition Myanmar 2018 event will house six showrooms in the 4,800-square-metre exhibition hall to accommodate companies wishing to partici-

pate in the event.

Other highlights of the event are that the competition will also hold the 5th Myanmar Culinary Arts Competition and the 5th Myanmar National Barista Championship. A Food Science and Technology Association of Myanmar (FoSTAM) Seminar 2018 will also be held during the event.

The Food & Hotel Myanmar

2018 exhibition is being organised by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar Hotelier Association, Myanmar Restaurant Association, Myanmar Chef's Association, Myanmar Retailers Association, Myanmar Food Processors and Exporters Association, FoSTAM, Barista Association of Myanmar and the Myanmar Coffee Association.—GNLM ■

Plan underway to develop economy, reduce commodity prices

THE region government will implement a plan in the Yangon Region to develop the economy and reduce the commodity price, said Yangon Region Planning and Finance Minister U Myint Thaung.

During the second Yangon Region Hluttaw's 6th regular meeting, U Hla Htay, MP from the Hluttaw Constituency 1 of Mingalar Taungnyunt Township, asked a question regarding the plan to develop the economy and reduce commodity prices in the Yangon Region.

Yangon Region Planning and Finance Minister U Myint Thaung said the Yangon Region government was implementing

not only the economic policies of the union government, but also the regional economic project, which has been drawn up according to the law. "We are using the market economy system. According to the market economy, the commodity prices will go up and down depending on the demand and supply," he said.

Product prices have increased due to the rising price of raw materials, transport and service charges, and insufficient electricity. "We are planning to control the price of raw materials and the transport, as well as increase labour productivity, to reduce the price of products," he said.

To reduce the transport charges, the Yangon Region government has stopped collecting tolls on a few bridges. The authorities are also conducting works to access electricity and water for the development of manufacturing, he added.

Further, the region government will implement the Myothit projects, civil employees' housing project and the housing sale project. It is providing training courses at the agricultural service centre for the development of agricultural and livestock breeding. The Myanmar Fisheries Federation will develop the fisheries

sector. The region government will also introduce vocational training centres, industrial zone projects and the Yangon special economic zone. "We have already collected a list of SMEs (small and medium enterprises)," said the planning and finance minister.

The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) has permitted 143 foreign direct investments worth US\$3,221 million, as of March in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. DICA also permitted 45 local investments. It has created some 80,343 jobs opportunities for the local people.—Nyein Nyein ■

Value-added mango products to be showcased at Myanmar Mangoes Sale Festival

VALUE-added mango products will be exhibited at the Myanmar Mangoes Sale Festival to be held in Mandalay from 20 to 22 May, according to a report in Myawady Daily yesterday.

All the native mangoes from Myanmar will be displayed at the festival. The festival will also display mango seedlings, val-

ue-added mango products and other agricultural equipment, according to the Myanmar Mango Market and Technology Development Association.

"Last year, the festival was led by the Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producer and Export Association. This year, our association is holding

this festival. We are planning to display mango seedlings, dried mangoes and mango jams," said U Ko Ko, chairman of the association.

More than 30 shops will be set up at the festival. Anyone can hire a shop for three days at a cost of Ks30,000 to participate in the fair.

Mangoes are cultivated mainly in the Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Bago and Sagaing regions and Shan State (south). Some 95 per cent of Myanmar's mangoes are sent to China.

More than 200 mango species exist in Myanmar. Among them, some 196 mango species are native to Myanmar.—GNLM

Motorcyclist killed in collision with 12-wheel vehicle

A motorcyclist was killed in a collision with a 12-wheel vehicle near Thet War Gone Village, Mogaung Township, on Monday evening. According to the investigation, the motorbike, which

was headed towards Mohnyin from Myitkyina and driven by Aung Aung, 32, overturned while trying to evade a cow between mileposts 361/362 near Thet War Gone village. The 12-wheel ve-

hicle, which was headed from Mohnyin to Myitkyina, then ran over the motorcyclist.

The 12-wheel vehicle driver abandoned the vehicle and fled the scene. The motorcyclist died

on the spot. The police are still searching for the driver of the 12-wheel vehicle.

The police have filed a case under section 304-A of the Penal Code.—U Min Min Oo (EPN) ■

Three Viet Nam-origin pedigree fish, larvae to be imported

By May Thet Hnin

THE Myanmar Fishery Federation (MFF) will import and hatch fish larvae of Viet Nam-origin snakehead murrel, climbing perch and river catfish.

The MFF will buy 1,000 pedigree fish of each species for hatching and 100,000 fish larvae each, said Daw Toe Nanda Tin, vice chair of MFF.

"We have our own native fish, but the quality of fish species in the country is inferior as compared with the foreign ones. Therefore, we will import

them," she maintained.

The MFF will breed the fish varieties for both domestic and foreign markets.

"We are considering dried snakehead murrel as a value-added export item. Therefore, we will import its larvae and the pedigree fish for the hatchery," said Daw Toe Nanda Tin.

It takes only six months to hatch and send the snakehead murrel variety to the market. Also, it is suited to the local taste. It meets both domestic and foreign market criteria,

such as large size and white skin, among others.

Snakehead murrel and climbing perch have become scarce this time of the year, and so, their prices are on the higher side. If the hatching process is successful, the fish larvae will be added to a few rivers.

"Previously, climbing perch were imported from Thailand for the local breeding businesses. But, it did not suit the local taste. Local fishery businessmen mainly breed rohu and carps, but it takes some two years to complete the incuba-

tion and the production processes. Besides these, they are losing market share in the export market. This being so, we are preparing to turn to other fish varieties," Daw Toe Nanda Tin maintained. The MFF will endeavour to boost value-added fishery exports. It is preparing to extend marketable prawn farming businesses, said U Win Kyaing, secretary of MFF.

Some 480,000 acres of fish and prawn farming lakes exist across the country, of which more than 86,000 are in the Yangon Region. ■

Mango yield triples in Sagaing Region

THE Sagaing Region reaped thrice the mango yield this year compared to last year, said U Than Tun from the Sagaing Region Mango Group.

"Despite the high yield of mangoes, we still cannot predict the price. China offers a good price when there is shortage in the market. At the moment, the export companies make outright purchases of mango farms, while the growers manage to maintain a stable price," said a farmer from Dabayinkwe Village.

The village produces some 5,000 to 6,000 tonnes of mangoes per year. China is the main buyer, while 200-300 tonnes were exported to Thailand and Singapore.

This year, a small number of growers plucked the mangoes early. They are due to be harvested mid-May, said a grower.

More than 300 mango growers are active in Debayinkwe Village, growing Sein Ta Lone (Diamond Solitaire) and other mango varieties on some 3,000 acres of farmlands. The village growers group was able to connect with companies from Thailand and Singapore in 2013, besides China.

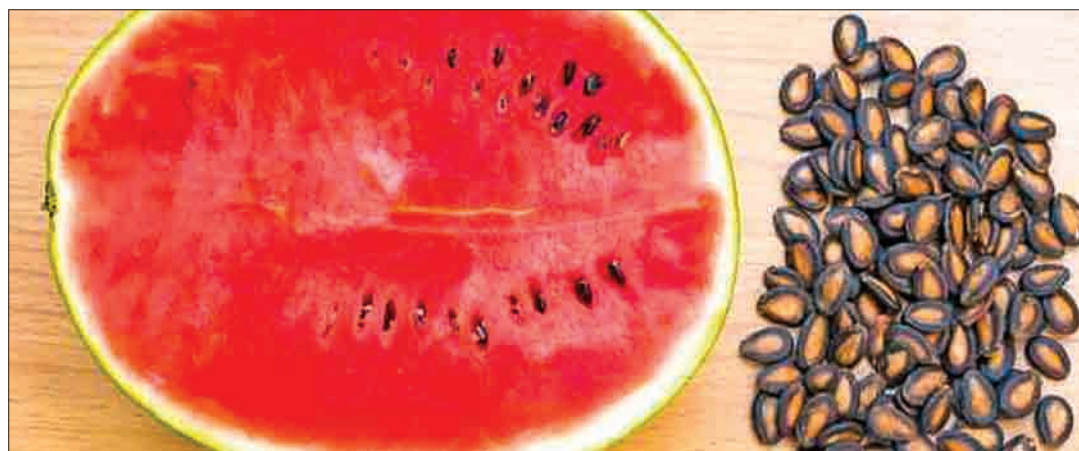
Currently, only China buys mangoes at a price ranging from 80 to 150 yuan depending on their weight. The Sein Ta Lone variety is mainly exported, while other local mango varieties such as Shwe Hinthia and Padanmyar Ngamauk are yet to be harvested, said U Than Tun.—Myo Win Tun (Monywa) ■

Seed prices rise due to high local demand

SEED prices have risen in the local market owing to high demand from local fruit and crop cultivators, according to the seeds and fertilisers market.

"The sale of watermelons and muskmelons has doubled this year compared to last year. The prices of seed have increased in the cultivation season. The prices of sesame and corn seeds have increased the most. The monsoon sesame will be cultivated soon, while seedless corn is being cultivated in other regions," said Dr. Nay Aung, Aung Yadanar, a seed and fertiliser shop owner in Mandalay.

"We are preparing to cultivate monsoon sesame. Earlier, we bought sesame seeds for more than Ks20,000 per basket, but now we have to buy sesame seeds for around Ks30,000 per basket. Seeds are important for the agricultural sector.



We need good quality seeds. While buying watermelon and muskmelon seeds, we need to ensure they are of good quality. Therefore, local farmers usually buy the seeds from familiar shops," said U Lwin Oo, a local farmer from Tatkon Township, Nay Pyi Taw.

In the local market, most farmers bought the seeds a month or two prior to the

cultivation season. The price of onion seeds has increased to Ks10,000 per basket from Ks5,000 per basket. The price of seedless corn has increased to Ks25,000 per pack from Ks9,000 per pack, while the price of watermelon seeds has increased to Ks28,000 per kilogram from Ks20,000 per kilogram. Sesame seeds price has increased to Ks25,000 per basket from

Ks15,000 per basket.

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce granted foreign companies permission to trade seeds and fertilisers so local farmers can buy the seeds at affordable prices in the local market.

Local farmers can check their seed quality at the agricultural department.—Myat Thu (AMIA) ■

Slip price fetches over Ks12 million in Yangon market

With a few old vehicles being deregistered and the demand for vehicle registrations being high in Yangon, the slip price (import permit) has surged to above Ks12 million.

As the tax policy has remained unchanged, car trading is taking place actively in the automobile market these days. Second-hand Japanese cars are

selling well, said car dealers.

The Supervisory Committee for Motor Vehicle Import released an official announcement on 16 October that 2014 would be the oldest model to be issued an import permit in 2018. Additionally, only vehicles with left-hand drive can be imported under the new policy. Therefore, second-hand vehi-

cles with right-hand drives are likely to maintain their price on the high side.

The market for the latest models remains cool despite the occasional trading. Most of the buyers pay in instalments in the automobile market. Some choose new cars, while some still buy second-hand cars.—Htet Myat ■

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Myanmar-China bilateral security, rule of law ministerial-level meeting held

A MYANMAR-CHINA bilateral security and rule of law ministerial-level meeting was held at the assembly hall of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The meeting was attended by Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe, along with Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe, the Chief of Police of the Myanmar Police Force, Police Maj-Gen Aung Win Oo, and other high-ranking officials of the ministry, while the Chinese delegation was led by Zhao Kezhi, member of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Pub-

lic Security, and other officials.

At the meeting, they discussed matters related to cooperation in bilateral security, rule of law and stability, cooperation of countries in the Mekong region, anti-drugs and anti-human trafficking works, cracking down on cross-border gambling and security measures on the Myanmar-China cooperative projects.

The ministers from the two nations then signed the minutes of the meeting.

Later, Zhao Kezhi donated drug-detecting devices and applications worth 14.4 million yuan, police equipment worth 5 million yuan, and police ve-



Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing ceremony between the Ministry of Home Affairs and China in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

hicles, together with reference documents, worth 18.9 million yuan, donated by the Yunnan Province. The goodwill delega-

tion, led by member of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi, arrived in Myanmar yesterday

afternoon on the invitation of Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Union Election Commission Notification 60/2018

9 Waning of Kason 1380

8 May 2018

Announcement of date and vacant constituencies for by-elections

The Union Election Commission, practising the duties and obligations under Section 10 of the Union Election Commission Law and in line with Section 34 (C) and by-law 16 (A) of the Hluttaw Election Law, will hold by-elections for the following vacant constituencies for the respective Hluttaws on 3 November 2018 (Saturday).

Vacant Constituencies for Pyithu Hluttaw

- (1) Kanpetlet Township Pyithu Hluttaw Constituency
- (2) Laikha Township Pyithu Hluttaw Constituency
- (3) Tamway Township Pyithu Hluttaw Constituency
- (4) Myingyan Township Pyithu Hluttaw Constituency

Townships

- Kanpetlet
Laikha
Tamway
Myingyan

Vacant Constituency for Amyotha Hluttaw

Kachin State Amyotha Hluttaw Constituency 2

Township

Myitkyina

Vacant Constituencies for State/Region Hluttaws

- (1) Matupi Township State Hluttaw Constituency 1
- (2) Tamu Township Region Hluttaw Constituency 2
- (3) Ottwin Township Region Hluttaw Constituency 1
- (4) Thabeikkyin Township Region Hluttaw Constituency 1
- (5) Yathedaung Township State Hluttaw Constituency 2
- (6) Minbu Township Region Hluttaw Constituency 2
- (7) Seikkan Township Region Hluttaw Constituency 2
- (8) Ethnic Shan Constituency for Mandalay Region Hluttaw

Townships

- Matupi
Tamu
Ottwin
Thabeikkyin
Yathedaung
Minbu
Seikkan
Entire Mandalay Region except Union Territory

Hla Thein,
Chairman,
Union Election Commission
(Unofficial Translation)

Opening ceremony of NPE's new printing press held



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, NPE's Managing Director U Kyaw Soe and Mr. Peter Kirwan of Goss Graphic Systems (China) cut ribbons to open the new printing press in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE opening ceremony for a new printing press, Goss Community 4 High Tower Four Unit Web Offset, bought by the Ministry of Information, News and Periodicals, Enterprise (NPE) in the 2017-2018 budget year was held at Myanma Alinn newspaper's office, Natmauk Lane (1), Bahan Township, Yangon, yesterday morning.

Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint, Yangon

Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, NPE's Managing Director U Kyaw Soe, and Goss Graphic Systems (China) Co. Ltd. Global Sales Director Peter Kirwan cut the ceremonial ribbon to officially open the printing press.

Next, Dr. Pe Myint and U Phyo Min Thein unveiled the commemorative plaque and observed the new printing press.

The Goss Community 4 High Tower Four Unit Web Offset is capable of printing 35,000 copies of high print quality newspapers per hour.

A 4-High Tower unit can print eight pages of colour tabloid size newspapers, and as the press has four 4-High Tower units, it can print 32 pages of a newspaper simultaneously. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Rakhine State government signs MoU for economic zone

A MEMORANDUM of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony was held in Maungtaw yesterday for the construction of Kanyinchaung Economic Zone in Maungtaw Township, a State government guesthouse and other buildings near Thandwe Airport in Ngapali.

State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu delivered the opening speech inviting businesses to continue to invest and cooperate in the regional development. He said the State government was collaborating with both domestic and foreign investors and stressed the clauses in the MoU would be given priority. Next,

State Minister for Finance, Revenue, Planning and Economy U Kyaw Aye Thein discussed the details of the MoU, followed by explanations by Kanyinchaung Economic Zone Construction Subcommittee Vice-Chairman U Aung Myint Thein and the general manager of Su Htoo San Construction Co. Ltd.

Later, the MoU was signed by the secretary of the State government and officials from Kanyinchaung Economic Zone Construction and Su Htoo San Construction Co. Ltd, while being observed by the chief minister. — Tin Tun (District IPRD) ■



Memorandum of understanding (MoU) signing ceremony for the construction of Kanyinchaung Economic Zone held in Maungtaw yesterday. **PHOTO: TIN TUN (DISTRICT IPRD)**

Joint Monitoring Committee on Ceasefire holds second general meeting

By Ye Khaung Nyunt

THE Joint Monitoring Committees (JMCs) on Ceasefire held their second general meeting in Lotte Hotel, Yangon, yesterday morning.

At the general meeting, Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, chairman of the Joint Monitoring Committee at Union Level (JMC-U), said that in addition to conducting military matters according to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), many other matters remained to be completed. He urged the committees to continue with discussions and negotiations.

The general meeting will be held for two days until 9 May and will be attended by chairmen and members of JMC-U, Joint Monitoring Committee at Region and State Levels (JMC-S) and Joint Monitoring Committee Local-level (JMC-L); members of technical assistance offices of the JMCs, ambassadors to Myanmar and representatives of international organisations.

JMC-U Chairman Lt-Gen Yar Pyae said, "All levels of JMCs attempted to reduce armed conflicts among armed organisations, and it can be seen that a level of success has been achieved. However, armed conflicts were observed in some areas of organisations that had signed the NCA. With regard to this, at the 12th JMC-U meeting, commanders from both sides are being instructed to meet within the JMC-S. However, there are weaknesses in JMC-S, and



Second general meeting of the Joint Monitoring Committees (JMCs) on Ceasefire held in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: PHO HTAUNG**

I would like to urge commanders from both sides to build trust after each meeting and prevent conflicts."

"For the JMC works to progress and develop further, the JMCs need to work more to form more JMC-Ls and Local Civilians Monitoring (LCM) groups in the conflict areas. As these are to be conducted by JMC-S, I urge JMC-S to make more efforts towards these," said the JMC-U Chairman.

The works of the JMCs are different from how it is done in other countries. Instead of allowing foreigners from foreign third-party organisations as monitors, our monitors are representatives of the conflict-affected people. The participation and involvement of these civilian representatives are very impor-

tant, added the JMC-U chairman.

The JMC is conducting monitoring, assessing and conflict resolution. JMCs will monitor pledges made in the agreement. If required, assessment groups will be formed to assess and confirm. Civilian representatives respected by the people are conducting these works.

Representatives from armed organisations also participate in this work; so all need to understand and follow the work processes. The members of the JMCs at all levels are urged to openly discuss the difficulties and problems faced, said the JMC-U chairman in his greeting speech.

The JMC will continue to form JMC-Ss in Shan, Kayin, Bago, Mon and Taninthayi and

JMC-Ls in Langkho, Shan State, Hpapun, Kayin State.

JMC-U Vice Chairman Saw Isaac Po said: "Our JMCs are formed with three groups consisting of the Tatmadaw, ethnic armed organisations and civilians. The civilian group is recognised as a neutral group. In the work guideline of the JMC, the aims of the JMCs at all levels are to reduce and eliminate armed conflicts and to successfully hold political discussions. Trust-building is the main step to eliminate armed conflicts."

The three groups are responsible for the successful implementation of the JMC work. Progress or regress of the JMC work depends on these three groups. The real life situation had shown that regress in the JMC work will result in the loss

of lives and limbs of armed organisation members from both sides and the local populace will face miseries (and death) while avoiding armed conflicts as displaced persons, said the JMC-U vice chairman.

According to the general meeting, 411 complaints were received by all levels of JMCs and some 334 were resolved.

JMC-U Vice Chairman (2) U Pyae Sone said, "After the JMC was formed, armed conflicts in some region were reduced and some were totally eliminated. In some regions, there were armed engagements at the lower levels. This shouldn't be of much concern, but it shouldn't be ignored either. Civilian representatives at all levels of the JMC need to be united. They must be neutral and not biased against any of the two sides. They need to build trust between the two sides by arranging to get to know each other. This is creating trust through knowing one another."

After representatives from the government, ethnic armed organisations and civilians delivered the greeting speeches, JMC-S Shan, JMC-L Langkho JMC-S Kayin, JMC-L Hpapun, JMC-S Bago, JMC-S Mon and JMC-S Taninthayi delivered speeches of greetings.

In the day's JMC general meeting, a video of the two-year works undertaken by all levels of the JMCs was shown. Discussions were also held on the difficulties faced and the challenges that were overcome to implement the ceasefire. ■

Welcoming all key players for national development

RECOGNIZED as the commercial capital of Myanmar, Yangon Region will be the driving force in the country's development process as evident from the plethora of business opportunities springing up in the region. As Yangon City develops economically so too will the economy of the country follow suit, poised to rise as a top investment hub in Asia.

Befitting its title as the country's economic powerhouse, Yangon region takes up the bulk of investments in Myanmar. According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), the investment flow to Yangon Region is the highest amount of the total investment flow in Myanmar. The perks which elevated Yangon to its position as a commercial hub can be seen in its above average infrastructure and ease of access which allows for smooth trading transactions and investments.

These efforts, I believe, will usher in the new age of economic development into Myanmar and lead the country forward into a bright and prospective future.

Investors naturally desire security and some measure of insurance when investing in a venture as well as greater opportunities for investment. With that in mind, the New Myanmar Investment Law was passed in 2017 and numerous efforts were made to raise awareness and inform potential investors on Myanmar's investment framework, the taxation process, and the opportunities and rights of the investors.

The most vital needs of all investors in Myanmar are a fully secure investment law and land area for their investment venture. It will come with a sigh of relief that the Yangon Region Government is working to fulfill both needs. As for investment opportunities, Yangon Region is home to 30 industrial zones including the largest industrial zone in Hlinethayar Township and one special economic zone, namely Thilawa Special Economic Zone.

Now in a bid to further attract investment, Yangon Region's Government is undertaking the inaugural Yangon Investment Forum 2018 (YIF 2018) at the Novotel Yangon Max Hotel on 9 May. The high-level forum is reported to be attended by 700 eager attendants, including 300 foreign investors. At YIF 2018, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein is set to unveil Yangon Region's investment strategies. He will lead a team of regulators, policy-makers and investment experts that will once again shed light on the country's investment framework, review the New Myanmar Investment Law, Myanmar Taxation, present the current investment landscape, and emerging bright spots. Meanwhile, corporate leaders will share their perspectives and experiences in key growth sectors: Industrial Estate, Power and Energy, Logistics, Hotel and Tourism, and Textile and Garments manufacturing.

These efforts, I believe, will usher in the new age of economic development into Myanmar and lead the country forward into a bright and prospective future. ■

Where do the plastic wastes end up

By Khin Maung Myint

IWONDER whether our people have any idea where our garbages end up. I doubt that most of us give any thought to what happened after we disposed them. I don't blame them for that. However, I think it would be very beneficial for the conservation of the eco-system and the environments if we have a vague idea of where they end up and what are their consequences.

Generally the garbages end up in places such as: landfills or garbage dumps, recycling plants, incinerators and in the lakes and oceans. For the purpose of this article, I will be discussing the last on the list, that is the oceans.

The plastic wastes made up a large portion of the disposed garbage. As they are light and float on water; the unscrupulously discarded plastics are carried by rain water and urban floods and are fed to the streams, creeks and rivers, which carry them away. They are then discharged into the lakes, seas and oceans. There the ocean currents take them to far away places in the oceans and seas, while some remain inland in rivers and lakes, polluting them.

As most plastics are non-biodegradable they break up into tiny particles, while floating along

with the river and ocean currents. These tiny particles are carried by the ocean currents and end up in the oceans where they formed garbage patches. The garbage patch in the northern parts of the Pacific Ocean, what is known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is the largest of all. The amount of debris in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch accumulates because much of it is not biodegradable. Many plastics, for instance, do not wear down; they simply break into tiny pieces.

In the ocean, the sun breaks down these plastics into tinier and tinier pieces, a process known as photo-degradation. Scientists have collected up to 750,000 bits of micro-plastic in a single square kilometer of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch—that's about 1.9 million bits per square mile. Most of this debris comes from plastic bags, bottle caps, plastic water bottles, and Styrofoam cups.

These tiny plastic particles endanger the marine animals. Ingesting these particles caused them to die. The garbage that reached to that garbage patch are not only plastics, but contains other debris too. The most damaging to the marine animals are the fishing nets, discarded or detached from fishing trawlers and are also carried along by the ocean currents. The marine animals are

caught up in those "ghost nets", a name given to such nets. Some heavy debris sank to the bottom and cause damage to the coral reefs, which are the habitats for some marine creatures.

Though, as mentioned above, the majority of the debris in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch are plastic bags, bottles, other small utensils and Styrofoams cups, but sometimes there are larger ones like the plastic furnitures, computer monitors and many unthinkable items. So, how come they are there? Some climatologists and environmentalists are of the opinion that some of them are from sunken ships, cargo containers fallen off ships in bad weathers and debris from floods caused by strong tropical storms and tsunamis.

The debris that formed the Great Pacific Garbage Patch are mainly from the land-based activities in the American and Asian continents. Also, a minor portion are from ships plying the Pacific Ocean, boaters and many holiday resorts in the Asia Pacific regions. Some holiday makers have no discretion what-so-ever, where littering is concerned. In Thailand, the authorities had passed regulations regarding littering and smoking on beaches enforced by very heavy fines. It is found that the smoking

ban on beaches has brought good results in reducing litters from the beaches, though it drew much criticisms and controversies in the beginning from tourists.

The seafloor beneath the Great Pacific Garbage Patch may also be an underwater trash heap. Oceanographers and ecologists recently discovered that about 70% of marine debris actually sinks to the bottom of the ocean.

According to the National Geographic Society, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is a collection of marine debris in the North Pacific Ocean. Marine debris is litter that ends up in oceans, seas, and other large bodies of water, such as lakes and ponds. Also known as the Pacific Trash Vortex, it spans waters from the West Coast of North America to Japan. The patch is actually comprised of the Western Garbage Patch, located near Japan, and the Eastern Garbage Patch, located between the U.S. states of Hawaii and California.



"garbage patch"

The entire Great Pacific Garbage Patch is bounded by the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre. An ocean gyre is a system of circular ocean currents formed by the Earth's wind patterns and the forces created by the rotation of the planet. The North Pacific Subtropical Gyre is created by the interaction of the California, North Equatorial, Kuroshiro, and North Pacific currents.

For many people, the idea of a

may conjure up images of an island of trash floating on the ocean. In reality, these patches are almost entirely made up of tiny bits of plastic, called microplastics. Microplastics are almost invisible to the naked eye. Even satellite imagery doesn't show a giant patch of garbage. The microplastics of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch can simply make the water look like a cloudy soup.

About 80% of the debris in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch

comes from land-based activities in North America and Asia. Trash from the coast of North America takes about six years to reach the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, while trash from Japan and other Asian countries takes about a year. The remaining 20% of debris in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch comes from boaters, offshore oil rigs, and large cargo ships that dump or lose debris directly into the water. The majority of this debris is fishing nets. More unusual items, such as computer monitors and toys, come from dropped shipping containers.

Now that we know where the plastic wastes that we indiscriminately and thoughtlessly littered end up, we should be more disciplined in discarding our plastic wastes. Each individual should be aware of the consequences of the plastic pollutions. The authorities should also take necessary steps to educate the public not to litter and also upgrade the present garbage disposal and collection systems. The present garbage management system has much room for improvements. The banning of plastic bags, utensils and packagings should also be seriously considered. Last but not least, "the carrot and stick" policy, which had proven to be successful in our neighbouring nations, such as Singapore and Thailand, should be introduced in our country to make the public strictly abide by the rules and regulations. ■

ASEAN challenges over the next 50 years

By Mark Angeles

THE first 50 years of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, better known as ASEAN, were a period of growth and mostly positive accomplishments, but the next half-century will be fraught with challenges that require major changes that will allow the organization to act in a nimble, proactive manner, said Indonesia's former foreign minister on Friday.

Dr. Raden Mohammad Marty Muliana Natalegawa, Indonesia's foreign minister from 2009 to 2014 and the Director General for ASEAN Cooperation during his country's chairmanship of the

organization, made his remarks last week in an interview with journalists attending the 2nd ASEAN Media Forum in Singapore last week.

The Honourable Dr. Natalegawa, who has also served as Indonesia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the Indonesian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, said recent, significant events involving the Koreans, China, the United States, Myanmar and other countries are harbingers of a rocky future for the association.

"(In the case of) One Belt, One Road, I'm surprised ASEAN does not have a common position. I'm totally flabbergasted that China

is picking us off one by one. Some are invited, some are not. ASEAN needs to be central in this discussion. If we start going to China individually, then we will be at a disadvantage", he said.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a development strategy proposed by the Chinese government that focuses on connectivity and cooperation among Eurasian countries, primarily the People's Republic of China (PRC), the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the ocean-going Maritime Silk Road (MSR). The initiative was known in English as the One Belt and One Road Initiative (OBOR) until 2016.

The ambitious project has

been described by critics as a push by China to take a larger role in global affairs with a China-centred trading network.

Events that occur can't wait until April of a given year when leaders meet, or July when ministers meet, or November when there's a summit, he said.

"North Korea, South China Sea happens, ASEAN is silent," he said, referring to North Korea's nuclear weapons testing and the competing claims of sovereignty over the strategically important islands and waters of the Pacific Ocean that borders China, Vietnam, the Philippines and other countries. Indonesia's former foreign minister said ASEAN has

to decide on how to change its philosophy so that it can be more proactive in the midst of unfolding major developments.

"Within ASEAN there is a variation of thought between minimalist and the need to cajole and encourage. ASEAN needs a transformative outlook", he said.

Dr. Natalegawa cited the transition to democracy in Myanmar as an example of how ASEAN could lend assistance. "With the reform process taking place, this should be the best of times for Myanmar; not where we are now. I hope ASEAN can play a central role in this", he said.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in a speech commemorating the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN in August 2017, seemed to agree with Dr. Natalegawa's vision when she called on the regional body to evolve in order to respond to future challenges.

"The progress achieved during our first 50 should not make ASEAN complacent. It should inspire and enable the peoples of ASEAN to step up the momentum to realize a participative, resilient, and socially-responsible community for the betterment of all ASEAN peoples," she said.

Among the most significant accomplishments of ASEAN since 1967, the State Counsellor said, were the trust and partnerships established among the member countries that have facilitated common goals and the strengthening and nurturing of the bloc as an economic social and cultural powerhouse. The 10 ASEAN countries now constitute the world's seventh biggest economy.

But there is still much to be accomplished, Dr. Natalegawa said. For Myanmar, which faces ongoing challenges in Rakhine State that have prompted international scrutiny, he suggested that ASEAN could offer a solution.

"With Myanmar; there should be a process of mutual encouragement", he said, an approach that could help ease, not inflame tensions.

"The key element that ASEAN must create is trust. Because this is certainly an issue internal to Myanmar. Having said internal, this doesn't mean that there is no potential regional contribution. I remember when we were dealing with Myanmar's first ASEAN chairmanship (in 2014). ASEAN was able to speak with one voice on Myanmar; but at the same time cajoling Myanmar behind the scenes to deliver on promises. Yes, it is a national issue, but there's a regional contribution".

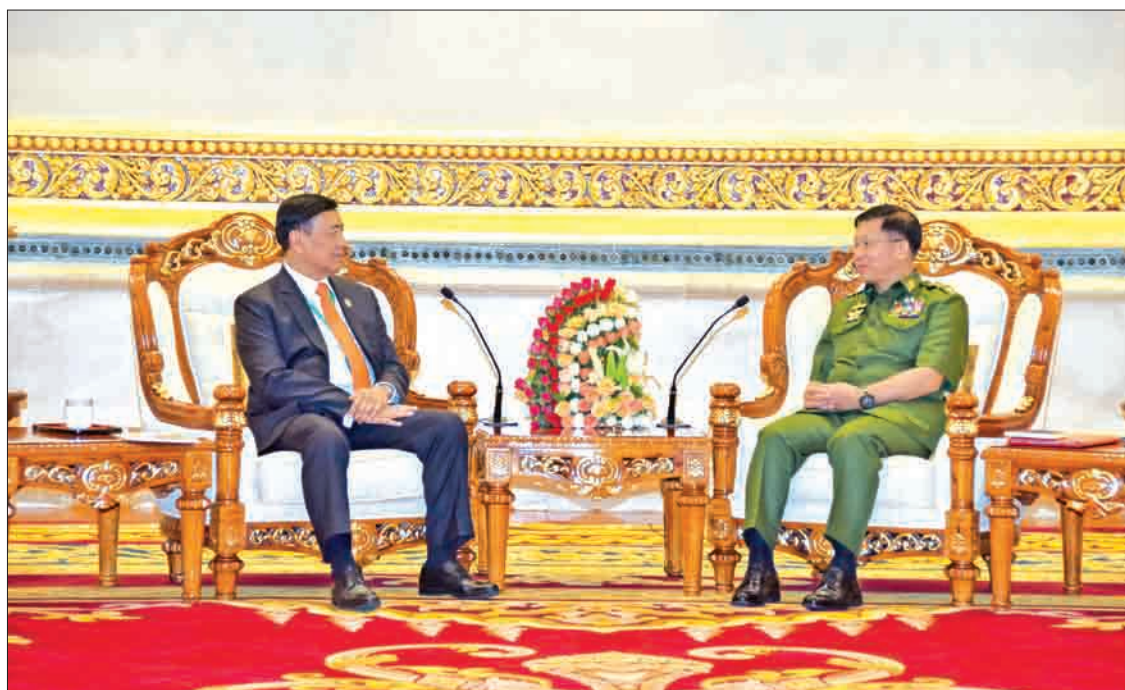
ASEAN was founded in 1967 and would eventually represent Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, and Laos. ■

Senior General receives JPF, coordinating minister of Indonesia

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received the Joint Peace Fund (JPF), led by Italian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Pier Giorgio Aliberti, at Bayint Naung Guesthouse in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning. At the meeting, they discussed the formation and works of the JPF, six peace policies established and conducted by the Tatmadaw, and the need for the JPF to study and understand the true events to assist in the peace process in Myanmar.

Similarly, Tatmadaw Com-

mander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received a delegation led by Dr. H. Wiranto, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, in the afternoon. During this meeting, they discussed matters related to accepting returnees according to the Myanmar-Bangladesh bilateral agreement, the problem of ethnic armed organisations and the drug trade along Myanmar-India-Bangladesh border. — Myanmar News Agency ■



Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Mr. Pier Giorgio Aliberti, Italian Ambassador to Myanmar, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**



The two suspects and seized stimulant tablets. **PHOTO: MNA**

WY stimulant tablets seized in Nay Pyi Taw

A DRUGS eradication team seized 1,700,000 stimulant tablets worth over Ks4.8 million yesterday in Thawon Chaung Check Point in Nay Pyi Taw.

Acting on a tip-off, police waited for suspects Private Aung Kyaw Naing and Aung Than Htay at the Thawon Chaung Check Point in Nay Pyi Taw at 9am yesterday, officials said. After a search, 18,500 WY stimulant tablets were seized from Aung Than Htay and Aung Kyaw Naing, who were allegedly trying to

sell the drugs, police said.

Acting on information obtained from the suspects, police went to search a house in Kone Tan village in Yathaytaung Township, where eight bags containing hundreds of thousands of WY stimulant tablets were seized. Private Aung Kyaw Naing and Aung Than Htay, together with their mother Daw Kyin Sein were detained at Zayte Pyin Police Station in order to have lawsuit filed against them.—Myanmar News Agency ■

28th NEAT Country Coordinators Meeting

THE Opening Ceremony of the 28th NEAT- Network of East Asian Think-Tanks-NEAT Country Coordinators Meeting, jointly organized by the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Myanmar ISIS) and NEAT China, was held in the morning of 8th May 2018 at the Sule Shangri-La Hotel, Yangon.

The meeting started at 9 am

with a welcome address by H.E. U Nyunt Maung Shein, Chairman of the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies.

The meeting was attended by NEAT Country Coordinators from ASEAN and Plus Three (APT) countries, members of Myanmar ISIS and Director U Soe Myint, ASEAN Department,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The meeting was conducted in four sessions; namely Report of the 27th NEAT CCM and the 15th Annual Conference, Report of NEAT Memorandum to APT-SOM in 2017, NEAT Working Group Concept Papers, and Theme and Preparation for the next 29th NEAT CCM and the 16th Annual Conference.—GNLM ■

Htein Bin garbage dump heat emissions under control

By Zaw Gyi

THE Htein Bin garbage dump fire in Hlinethaya Township, Yangon Region has been officially declared under control, but will remain under surveillance for heat emissions, officials said yesterday.

U Myint Oo, Head of Yangon Region's Northern District Fire Service Department, said they withdrew fire department and YCDC personnel in the afternoon after a last surveillance patrol deemed the situation was under control. "We are handing over to the YCDC fire department to continue with any necessary investigations," said U Myint Oo.

The YCDC fire department will continue surveillance with four fire engines in the area. Saw Soe Soe Myint, Head of the YCDC fire department, said they will continue surveillance opera-



Firefighters celebrate after accomplishing their mission on heat and smoke emissions from Htein Bin garbage dump in Hlinethaya Township. **PHOTO: PE ZAW**

tions for an indefinite period, but added that the situation is firmly under control.

The Htein Bin garbage dump was first designated as a landfill in 2001 and since then has seen 2,500 tons of waste disposed each day at the site. Spanning

300 acres, the fire that broke out on the afternoon of 20 April covered a hundred acres and was extinguished using water and biofoam with the combined efforts of the fire department, military and other relevant department personnel. ■

Israeli soldier gets hero's welcome after serving manslaughter term

RAMLA (Israel) — An Israeli soldier convicted of manslaughter for shooting dead a prone Palestinian assailant was freed from prison on Tuesday and greeted by supporters as a hero after serving nine months behind bars, half his original sentence.

Elor Azaria was lifted onto the shoulders of a man who was part of a small group of supporters outside his home following his release and he later paraded the streets in celebration in a small convoy of cars and motorcycles.

"We've been through a very difficult period, very difficult," Azaria's father Charlie told supporters.

"Today we're celebrating. We'll continue to rejoice. There will be a time and place to say what we have to say."

Azaria did not speak to supporters but smiled broadly as he was lifted in celebration. Some family members wore T-shirts with Azaria's photo on it.

The former soldier was initially condemned to 18 months in prison for the 2016 killing of Abdul Fatah al-Sharif in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron.



Israeli soldier Elor Azaria (C), who shot dead a wounded Palestinian assailant in March 2016 sits between his parents during a hearing at a military court in Tel Aviv on 30 July, 2017. PHOTO: AFP

Armed forces chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot later reduced the term by four months and in March a parole board ordered a further cut, to a total of nine months.

Azaria was released two days ahead of schedule, and as word of it spread supporters began to visit his home in Ramla near Tel Aviv, including the city's

mayor.

Israeli media said he was freed early from Tzrifim military prison to allow him to attend his brother's wedding. The military confirmed his release but provided no further details.

A sign outside Azaria's home said "welcome back Elor the hero".

Education Minister Naftali

Bennett, head of the far-right Jewish Home party, tweeted his congratulations to Azaria along with a picture of the family, saying "it's good to have you home".

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had called for the former soldier to receive a presidential pardon, told reporters he was "happy that the affair is over".—AFP ■

OCP reclaims phosphate cargo after S Africa legal dispute

RABAT — Morocco's phosphate industry giant OCP on Tuesday announced it had recovered a 55,000-tonnes cargo "for a symbolic one dollar" after a legal dispute with South Africa.

Otmame Bennani Smires, the company's legal director, told AFP the deal had been reached more than a year after South Africa seized the cargo while en route to New Zealand.

The shipment of phosphate left the city of Laayoune in Western Sahara — a former Spanish colony controlled by Morocco where the Polisario Front group is fighting for independence — and was detained by authorities in Port Elizabeth. South Africa supports independence for Western Sahara and in February a court in Port Elizabeth ruled the cargo could be auctioned following a petition from the Polisario.

The month-long auction started on March 19 but failed to receive any bids, according to OCP.

"No buyer has legitimised the sale, nor the grounds that the court gave to the Polisario," Smires said. The operators of the Cherry Blossom vessel covered the costs of the auction and then returned to cargo to OCP "for a symbolic one dollar", the company said in a statement.

OCP dubbed the auction a "clear breach of basic principles of domestic and international law" which "threatens the freedom and security of international commerce".

The Polisario claimed the phosphate on grounds that it was extracted in Western Saharan territory, allegedly in contravention of international principles.

In recent months the group has launched a series of legal challenges seeking to block the export of resources from Western Sahara.

Rabat considers the region to be an integral part of Morocco and has proposed autonomy under its governance, but the Polisario demands an independence referendum. Morocco and the Polisario fought for control of Western Sahara from 1975 to 1991, when Rabat took over the desert territory before a UN-brokered ceasefire.—AFP ■

Iran's Rouhani 'losing everything' due to Trump

TEHRAN—Iran's President Hassan Rouhani staked his legacy on efforts to end decades of tension with the West. With the landmark nuclear deal unravelling, what hope is there for his political future?

Regardless of whether US President Donald Trump tears up the 2015 nuclear deal that was the centrepiece of Rouhani's diplomatic efforts, it is clear that the traditional animosity between the US and Iran has returned for the foreseeable future.

"Rouhani bet big on the nuclear deal and invested all his political capital in it," said Mojtaba Mousavi, a political analyst in Tehran.

"Now the deal is gasping its last breaths, and so Rouhani is losing everything — all his economic and political plans — that he built on the back of the nuclear deal," Mousavi told AFP.

A boon for conservatives

From the start, Rouhani's

conservative opponents were deeply suspicious of his negotiations with Washington, and their fears were borne out when it became clear that US pressure would continue to hobble Iran's trade ties even after the 2015 deal.

With his constant threats to tear up the accord, Trump has ensured the world stays wary of doing business with Iran.

"The uncertainty around the JCPOA (nuclear deal) is a victory for the conservatives who feed off the hostility of US foreign policy to reinforce internal repression and limit the reach of the Islamic republic's elected institutions," said Clement Therme, an Iran expert with Britain's International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Behind-the-scenes conservative forces have made their presence felt in recent months, with sweeping arrests of dual nationals and NGO workers on espionage charges, the block-

ing of Iran's most popular social media app Telegram, and pressure on high-profile reformers that forced the resignation of Tehran's mayor and a top environmental official.

Rouhani has overseen a moderate easing of social restrictions, but in Iran the presidency is only one of many power centres.

He faces powerful conservative forces embedded in the clergy, the judiciary and a Guardian Council with veto power over laws and election candidates, not to mention the over-riding authority of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"Rouhani has totally flunked on all his promises, but he has doubled down on the reform rhetoric recently, trying to maintain his popular base and finger-pointing at the conservatives," said Ardavan Amir-Aslani, an author and international lawyer with an office in Tehran.

"But opening a few new ca-

fes and letting women push their headscarves back a few inches are not the fundamental reforms that Iran needs," he added.

Need for unity

What may save Rouhani from being completely sidelined is the establishment's fear of a greater unravelling.

Protests in December and January showed that anger over the economy and civil liberties was much wider spread than in the past, affecting dozens of second-tier towns and cities.

"I think the leader (Khamenei) is still trying to help Rouhani. Protecting the prosperity and unity of the country is his top priority, especially in this tough situation," said Mousavi.

Rouhani won a second term as president a year ago, with the backing of reformists who saw him as the best option from the small selection allowed to stand by the Guardian Council.—AFP ■

Russia will do its utmost to ensure that WWII horrors are never repeated, Lavrov vows

MOSCOW — The lessons of a global alliance against a common threat are particularly relevant nowadays, in addition Russia will do its best to ensure that the horrors of World War II will never happen again, acting Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday.

Russia's acting top diplomat made this statement at a wreath-laying ceremony by memorial plaques in the lobby of the Russian Foreign Ministry commemorating the ministry's staff who gave their lives defending their Homeland during the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany in 1941-1945.

"Every year, we celebrate this great date in the history of our country - Victory Day," the acting minister said.

"This is a day of joy and a day of grief for those who remained on the battlefields forever. This year, we are celebrating several jubilees at once: the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Stal-



Acting Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. PHOTO: TASS

ingrad, the 75th anniversary of the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, the United States and Great

Britain and the 75th anniversary of the Tehran Conference at the highest level," Lavrov said.

"A common threat and ene-

my enabled countries with contradicting ideologies to unite to keep humankind from plunging into an epic catastrophe," he

pointed out.

"We need to learn lessons from this experience, which is especially relevant today," Russia's acting foreign minister said.

Lavrov urged everyone not to forget "other lessons of that epoch when national egoism and the unwillingness to respect the principle of equal and indivisible security took the upper hand."

"I mean the Munich Betrayal that came as the apotheosis of the Western powers' efforts to appease the aggressor," the acting foreign minister said.

"This was a prelude to the beginning of World War Two," Lavrov noted.

Russia "will never act to the detriment of the security of others and is open to honest and sincere dialogue based on respect for all partners' interests," he vowed. "We will do everything to ensure that the horrors, which humankind lived through during World War Two, are never repeated," Russia's acting foreign minister pledged.—Tass ■

Oliver North, known for arms sale scandal, to be next president of NRA

WASHINGTON— Oliver North, a key figure in the Iran-Contra arms sale scandal under US president Ronald Reagan, is set to become the next president of the National Rifle Association gun lobby.

North was convicted on three charges in connection with the Iran-Contra scheme, under which money from arms sales to Tehran was funneled to rebels in Nicaragua, but the convictions were later overturned.

The NRA said that its board had approved North's candidacy on Monday and that he would take over as president in the next few weeks, after current president Pete Brownell chose not to seek a second term.

"Oliver North is a legendary warrior for American freedom, a gifted communicator and skilled leader," NRA executive vice president and CEO Wayne LaPierre said in a statement. "In these times, I can think of no one better suited to serve as

our president."

"This is the most exciting news for our members since Charlton Heston became president of our association," LaPierre said, referring to the Hollywood star who held the post from 1998 to 2003.

After retiring from the US Marine Corps as a lieutenant colonel, North, now 74, authored several best-selling books and worked as a conservative commentator on Fox News.

He is leaving Fox effective immediately, according to the NRA. While assigned to the National Security Council in the 1980s, North was involved in the Iran-Contra affair, an international arms sale scandal about which he lied to Congress.

Arms sale scandal

Weapons were sold to Iran "in contravention of stated US policy and in possible violation of arms-export controls," according to a report on the scandal,

a move Reagan administration officials hoped would help facilitate the release of Americans held hostage in civil war-racked Lebanon.

Money from the weapons sales was funneled to the Contras — US-backed rebels who were fighting Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government — despite a congressional prohibition on such aid.

North became a household name, spending days before a joint congressional committee tasked with investigating the scandal and admitting he had lied to Congress about his involvement in it. But his convictions — for shredding and altering documents, aiding and abetting obstruction of Congress, and accepting an illegal gratuity — were subsequently overturned. His appointment to head the NRA — which has staunchly opposes tighter firearms regulations aimed at curbing widespread gun violence in

the US — comes as a student-led movement pushes for stricter gun laws in the United States.

The grassroots campaign for gun control was launched by students from a Florida high school where 17 people were shot dead by a troubled former classmate on 14 February.

But the Republican-controlled Congress has taken little action and polls indicate public sentiment in favour of stricter gun laws — which soared after the Parkland, Florida shooting — is cooling, as it has after previous mass killings. President Donald Trump had flirted with tougher gun laws in the wake of the Parkland attack, but faced with pressure from donors and tough midterm elections, he quickly backtracked. Trump gave a speech at the NRA's annual meeting last week, rejecting calls for tighter regulations and echoing the gun lobby's assertion that armed citizens will help prevent deadly shootings.—AFP ■

Hong Kong cabbie held after \$140,000 left in car

HONG KONG — A Hong Kong taxi driver has been arrested on suspicion of stealing HK\$1.1 million (US\$140,000) that a passenger left in his cab.

The owner of a currency exchange left the bag full of cash in the taxi on her way home Sunday night, according to local newspaper Ming Pao. The driver — identified by his surname, Tang — was tracked down through the call centre used by the woman to book the ride.

Tang, 57, first told investigators that he hadn't seen the money and suggested another passenger may have stolen it later that night, local media quoted the police as saying.

But the cash was later found at Tang's house, according to Ming Pao. The cabbie was arrested Monday on suspicion of theft and for misleading officers, Hong Kong police said in a statement.—AFP ■

Xi Jinping, Kim Jong Un hold talks in Dalian

DALIAN — Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Chinese president, met Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), in Dalian, northeast China's Liaoning Province, on 7-8 May.

Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, attended related activities.

Xi held talks with Kim and hosted a welcome banquet for him. Together, they also took a stroll and attended a luncheon. In a cordial and friendly atmosphere, the top leaders of the two parties and the two countries had an all-round and in-depth exchange of views on China-DPRK relations and major issues of common concern.—Xinhua



Xi Jinping (R), general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Chinese president, holds talks with Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), in Dalian, northeast China's Liaoning Province on 7-8 May. PHOTO: XINHUA

Philippine president accepts resignation of tourism secretary over corruption scandal

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Tuesday accepted the resignation of Tourism Secretary Wanda Teo who was reportedly forced to tender her resignation amid corruption allegations.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque confirmed to reporters that Teo submitted her

resignation letter before the cabinet meeting on Monday night.

Local newspaper The Philippine Star reported, Duterte met with Teo on Monday night and told her to hand in her resignation as tourism chief. Though, Teo's lawyer issued a statement later saying there was no demand from Duterte.

Calls for Teo's resignation mounted following a Commission on Audit initial finding that the Department of Tourism (DOT) placed a 60-million pesos (1.2 million US dollars) advertisement to a television program produced and hosted by her brothers.

Teo has denied the allega-

tions. She said on Monday that she has no plans to resign.

The Office of the Ombudsman said it would investigate Teo over the DOT's controversial multi-million ads deal. Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales said on Tuesday that her office "will do a fact-finding" investigation.—Xinhua ■

Another nuclear reactor in central Japan to be back online on Wednesday

TSURUGA (Japan) —Kansai Electric Power Co said on Tuesday it will restart the No 4 reactor at the Oi nuclear plant in central Japan at 5 pm the following day, aiming to resume its commercial operation in early June.

At the complex in Fukui Prefecture, the No 3 reactor has been brought back online and restarted commercial operation in April. The No 4 reactor will be rebooted for the first time in four years and eight months.

The plant's operator originally planned to reboot the No 3 reactor in January and No 4 unit in March, but the schedule was pushed back to confirm whether any parts were affected by Kobe Steel Ltd's product data manipulation scandal.

Following the No 4 reactor's restart, Kansai Electric plans to lower electric bills possibly in July. Both the reactors have cleared stricter safety standards in Japan set after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

The two Oi plant reactors are located 14 kilometres away from the No 3 and 4 units at the Takahama nuclear plant, which restarted their commercial operation last year.

Local residents are worried about the lack of an evacuation plan in the event that accidents occur simultaneously at both the Oi and Takahama complexes.

Masaharu Nakagawa, minister for nuclear emergency preparedness, said a drill will be held around summer to prepare for accidents hitting both nuclear plants at the same time.—Kyodo News ■

Malaysia's Anwar urges voters to oust scandal-hit government

KUALA LUMPUR (Malaysia) — Jailed opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has made an impassioned plea to Malaysians to vote out scandal-plagued Prime Minister Najib Razak at the elections on Wednesday.

Anwar, 70, has allied himself with his former tormentor, ex-premier Mahathir Mohamad, who came out of retirement to spearhead an opposition challenge to the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition.

The unlikely Anwar-Mahathir partnership is one of the most remarkable aspects of a gruelling campaign for an election many expect to be one of the country's closest ever.

Their high-profile falling out in the late 1990s shook Malaysian politics.

"I urge you all to join the people's movement to demand change," Anwar said in a statement posted on the Facebook page of his People's Justice

Party late Monday.

"I call upon the people to support him (Mahathir) in repairing the damage to our country," added Anwar.

"In 24 hours, the future of the country and fate of the people will be determined by you all."

Anwar once served as Mahathir's deputy before he was sacked in 1998 in a bitter political feud, and later jailed on sodomy and corruption charges.

The verdict was overturned in 2004 and Anwar was freed, but he was jailed for sodomy again in 2015, a conviction that his supporters said was politically-motivated. He is due to be released in June.

In the years since, Anwar has become a key figure in the opposition, which won the popular vote at the last election in 2013 but could not form the government as the BN won more seats in parliament.

Mahathir and Anwar united to take on the ruling coalition after Najib was caught in a multi-billion-dollar corruption scandal linked to Malaysian state fund 1MDB.

Najib and the fund deny any wrongdoing.

Mahathir is challenging Najib for the premiership but has said he will eventually make way for Anwar to take over should the opposition win.—AFP ■

A few good women: Female filmmakers at Cannes

PARIS — In a year dominated by the #MeToo movement, the Cannes film festival — which starts on Tuesday — is feeling the heat to address glaring gender imbalances in the competition for its top prize, the Palme d'Or.

But the numbers show the festival still has some way to go in the battle of the sexes.

And the winner is...

Of the 268 filmmakers who have claimed one of Cannes' top three prizes, only 11 — or four percent — have been women, an analysis by AFP shows.

New Zealand's Jane Campion remains the only female director to have received the highest accolade, the Palme d'Or, awarded for her masterpiece "The Piano" in 1993.

Iranian prodigy Samira Makhmalbaf snagged the prestigious Jury Prize twice, first for her 2000 breakthrough feature "Blackboards" and again three years later for "At Five in the Afternoon".

The last major prize winner was Italian director Alice Rohrwacher, who took home the

Grand Prix for "The Wonders" in 2014. She's back in the running this year with "Happy as Lazzaro".

Director's cut, or not

Women have made up barely 3.5 per cent of the best director and best screenplay winners over the past seven decades.

Only four of the 111 winners have been female — and two of them were last year when Sofia Coppola became only the second woman to secure the best director trophy with her American Civil War drama "The Beguiled".

Meanwhile, Briton Lynne Ramsay's "A Beautiful Day" scored best screenplay.

Struggle to get in

If only one woman has won the Palme d'Or it is also because very few of them ever get nominated.

Since 1946, only 84 of the 1,790 directors whose films has been shown in competition at Cannes have been women — in other words, less than one in 20.

The latest edition doesn't buck the trend, with just three female directors among the 21 main competition contenders.

This is still better than the 2010 and 2012 festival editions, which featured all-male lineups.

While Cannes organisers acknowledge the gender inequality, they insist this merely reflects the underrepresentation of women directors in the cinema industry as a whole.

Jury duty

Australian actress Cate Blanchett heads this year's starry majority-female jury, which also includes Kristen Stewart and Lea Seydoux. While Blanchett is the 12th chairwoman in the festival's 71-year history, only one woman director, Jane Campion in 2014, has had the honour.

She has said that Cannes needs to have an all-female jury one day to counter the decades of male domination. Apart from the president, the jury is composed of four women and four men — a parity ratio observed since 2013. Overall women fare slightly better as judges at Cannes, although it is still relative. One in five jury members have been women in its seven-decade history.—AFP ■



Director Robert Rodriguez, pictured here in 1996, rose to fame with the release of his widely acclaimed 1992 low-budget "El Mariachi," about a Mexican musician who takes up arms against a gang of outlaws. **PHOTO: AFP**

'Alita' director Robert Rodriguez on emulating legend James Cameron

LOS ANGELES — Before James Cameron turned "Avatar" into the highest-grossing movie in history, he was working on a new kind of cinematic heroine with the big-screen adaptation of manga series "Battle Angel Alita."

The legendary director behind "The Terminator," "Aliens" and "Titanic" — the second biggest hit of all time — had a whole franchise planned for Yukito Kishiro's graphic novels about a cyborg discovered on a garbage heap.

The runaway success of "Avatar" — \$2.8 billion in worldwide ticket receipts — has led to a staggering four sequels being greenlit, however, so Cameron made the unprecedented decision to let go of his baby, entrusting his 600-page "Alita" script to his friend Robert Rodriguez.

"I totally bought into his version of it and I wanted to help him get it to the screen. I wanted, as a fan, to see that movie," Rodriguez, 49, told AFP at the recent CinemaCon industry convention in Las Vegas.

"So that was my approach to it, not to go and take it and turn it into something else, but help Jim finish what he had started out to make."

"Alita: Battle Angel" — the title was flipped, in keeping with all of Cameron's films since the early 1980s beginning with a T or an A — is set hundreds of years in the future.

The unconscious Alita is found in a scrapyard by Ido, a doctor who realizes that somewhere in her abandoned cyborg shell is the heart and soul of an extraordinary young woman.

Oscar winners

He tries to shield Alita from

her mysterious past as the corrupt forces that run things come after her — and she discovers she has unique fighting abilities.

Rosa Salazar, known for the "Divergent" and "Maze Runner" teen franchises, leads an all-star cast featuring Jennifer Connelly, Mahershala Ali and Christoph Waltz — all Oscar winners.

Rodriguez, who befriended Cameron a quarter century ago, rose to fame with the release of his widely acclaimed 1992 low-budget "El Mariachi," about a Mexican musician who takes up arms against a gang of outlaws.

This led to a diverse career that has included the seminal vampire thriller "From Dusk Till Dawn," the dark action film "Sin City" and the child-friendly "Spy Kids" franchise, as well as Mexican-set actioners "Machete" and "Desperado."

Rodriguez didn't so much rewrite Cameron's "Alita" script as edit it down to a manageable length, suggesting some additional photography and dialogue, and moving the action to South America. "If I wrote (Cameron) a question he'd send back a whole very long, broken down, analyzed, easy-to-digest-and-learn-from answer," Rodriguez said.

"And he's very generous, very much a mentor and, at the same time, 'Make this your own, you know, Robert — you make this your own. Here's what I think but make your own decision.'"

Cameron and long-time co-producer Jon Landau ("Titanic," "Avatar") haven't ruled out a franchise, but first the movie — due out on 21 December — will need to overcome some misgivings about the look of Alita.

—AFP ■



New Zealand film director Jane Campion (2nd R) accompanied by (from L), Harvey Keitel, Holly Hunter, and Sam Neill, arrives, for the screening of her film "The Piano" at the 1993 Cannes festival. **PHOTO: AFP**

'Avengers' muscles rivals aside to continue box office dominance

LOS ANGELES — "Avengers: Infinity War" flexed its considerable muscle anew this weekend in North American theaters, pulling in a robust \$114.8 million and leaving other top films in its dust, according to figures released on Monday.

The three-day take by the Marvel superhero epic gave

it the second-highest second weekend of all time, behind only "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." Only five movies have hit the \$100 million mark in their second weekends.

"Avengers" sees a veritable army of superheroes — including Dr. Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch), Black Widow (Scarlett

Johansson), Ironman (Robert Downey Jr) and Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman) — joining forces to save the universe from powerful purple alien Thanos (Josh Brolin). Globally, "Avengers" has hit the \$1 billion mark in just 11 days — the fastest ever — and it has yet to open in China. —AFP ■

Fashion priestesses get holy at New York Met Gala

NEW YORK — Madonna and Rihanna stunned as fashion high priestesses on the red carpet at New York's Met Gala on Monday, headlining the most sought after invitation in the celebrity universe.

Madge, the Catholic girl from Michigan and queen of pop whose 1989 hit "Like a Prayer" remains a dance-floor classic 30 years later, presided over the "Sunday Best" theme dressed head to toe in Jean Paul Gaultier.

The 59-year-old mother of six balanced a golden crown studded with crucifixes on her head, shrouded her face in a black fish-net mantilla and donned a very flouncy, very full and very black gown.

Held every year on the first Monday in May, the black-tie extravaganza is the chief source of income for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, reportedly raising more than \$12

million in 2017.

The gathering of A-list models, musicians and movie stars, dubbed "the Oscars of the East Coast," saw Amal Clooney, Rihanna and Donatella Versace join Vogue supremo Anna Wintour as this year's co-chairs.

Tickets are said to cost \$30,000 each or \$275,000 for a table, but all guests must be invited, ruling out all but the most elite Hollywood actors, music superstars, top models and fashion designers.

If A-listers have shunned the theme in the past, this year's "Sunday Best," a nod to the "Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination" exhibition at The Costume Institute, proved popular.

Wing and a prayer

Rihanna, the Barbadian superstar and one of the biggest pop stars on the planet, proved her red carpet pulling power in a

jewel-encrusted gown from John Galliano's Maison Margiela and bejeweled bishop's hat.

There were celestial crowns like a Virgin Mary icon, lashings of cardinal red, virginal white and New York's de rigueur clerical black.

Katy Perry dressed as an angel with enormous feathered white wings that towered over her petite frame and trailed the floor; a Versace chain-mail gold mini-dress and thigh-high stilettoed gold boots

Clooney, the international human rights lawyer and this month's Vogue cover star, wore the pants as she arrived on the arm of her movie star husband George, dressed in blue cigarette trousers with a strapless bustier and voluminous skirt by up-and-coming Briton, Richard Quinn.

Jennifer Lopez and Alex Rodriguez, the celebrity couple of the moment, also stepped out,



French Designer Jean-Paul Gaultier and Madonna arrive for the 2018 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. **PHOTO: AFP**

the "Jenny from the Block" songstress in a beaded and feathered gown with a giant mosaic crucifix on the front.

Sarah Jessica Parker, a doyenne of New York high society and the "Sex and the City" fashionista, walked the red carpet in full-length gold brocade by Dolce and Gabbana and an astonishing

head piece. But for all the glitz, the event has also been dogged by rumors that once inside, it can be intimidating and unfriendly.

Tina Fey once called it a "jerk parade," complaining to David Letterman that: "If you had a million arms and all the people you would punch in the whole world, they're all there."—AFP ■

Watching the detectives: the movie sleuths saving silent cinema

LOS ANGELES — In the Spanish colonial-style environs of Hollywood's Roosevelt Hotel, around 100 film buffs chew pencils, polish spectacles and furrow brows in the flickering glow of long-forgotten silent movies.

These cinema sleuths are being shown a selection of snippets from thousands of old films stored lovingly by the US Library of Congress — despite no one having the foggiest idea what most of them are.

The library hosts annual "Mostly Lost" workshops at its Packard Campus in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, where scholars and plain old enthusiasts gather to find out as much as possible about the unknown, or little-known, films.

"The Library of Congress is intensely committed to investigating, identifying, preserving and making accessible our silent film heritage, so much of which is still unknown," said Greg Lukow, head of the national audiovisual conservation section.

The library has gone on the road to bring its work to the TCM Film Festival, a celebration of Golden Age Hollywood held every year in the spiritual home of American cinema.

Attendees quiz neighbours, consult databases on tablets and

smartphones and shout out the names of actors, locations, car models and anything else they recognize as piano maestro Ben Model accompanies the clips.

"That's Balboa Park in San Diego!" yelled a middle-aged woman in a red baseball cap as one clip played. "There's a gas tank like that in east LA!" another added breathlessly.

These film buffs are relying on knowledge amassed over a lifetime, information that cannot

simply be culled from the Internet Movie Database or crowdsourced on Twitter.

We're very proud'

"Anyone recognize that typewriter?" Library of Congress technician Rachel Del Gaudio asked hopefully, poised with pen and pad as those present scrutinized the grainy monochrome footage.

"Some attendees have a great knowledge of film history already but that's not required.

Sometimes people just have a great memory for stories," Del Gaudio said.

"Maybe somebody happens to know that the film playing on screen is some forgotten-about tale from the 17th century. Or maybe you're a world class researcher. Maybe you're like one of our star attendees who easily recognizes faces. Or sometimes butts."

She's talking about Steve Massa, of the New York Public

Library for the Performing Arts, a legend at Mostly Lost since he named a fat silent actor two years ago after seeing just a few frames of his backside.

The 45-acre (18-hectare) Packard Campus, about 75 miles (120 kilometres) southwest of Washington, houses 7.5 million films, TV and radio shows and other recordings, on more than 90 miles of shelving.

A little over half of the 763 clips shown since 2012 have been identified, in the workshops themselves and through further research.

"We're very proud of that. Some of those films exist elsewhere in more complete form, but with quite a few of those, that is literally the only known existing material of that title," Del Gaudio said.

A 2013 study for the Library of Congress showed three-quarters of nearly 11,000 silent films released by major studios between 1912 and 1929 have been lost.

Experts argue, however, that many were likely forgotten for a reason and, even if their identities are restored, would not be held up alongside "Ben-Hur," "The Gold Rush" or "The Ten Commandments." — AFP ■



A man pushes a cart through the hallway of the nitrate film vaults at the Library of Congress's National Audio-Visual Conservation Centre in Culpeper, Virginia on 10 February, 2011. **PHOTO: AFP**

Leeds United arrives Myanmar for friendlies

YANGON — Leeds United arrived yesterday to play two friendlies as part of its an end-of-season tour in Myanmar.

The second-tier English football club are scheduled to play two friendlies as they seek to build a fan base in the Southeast Asian nation.

The 22-man travelling party sees a mixture of first-team players, under-23s and under-18s included for this week's friendly double-header against an Myanmar league all star team on Wednesday and the Myanmar national side on Friday.—GNLM



Members of Leeds United FC arrive in Yangon international airport on 8 May 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Chinese club denies move for Barca star Iniesta

SHANGHAI— China's Chongqing Lifan denied making a big-money move for Andres Iniesta as Spanish media said the Barcelona captain could now be headed for Japan or Australia.

Reports in China and Spain have linked Chongqing with the 33-year-old Spanish World Cup-winner, who is leaving Barcelona after two decades of phenomenal success.

Chongqing said Iniesta wouldn't be joining "as a player" but left the door open to future cooperation with the midfielder, who has promotional and marketing links with the city.

Chongqing added that they wanted to support the "healthy development of Chinese football" — a reference to China's clampdown on heavy transfer spending and focus on homegrown talent.

"Our club will never violate the development prospects of Chinese football and we are determined to make due contributions to the healthy development of Chinese football," a statement said. It added: "The other sports industry sections of our club's controlling shareholder have in-depth cooperation with Mr. Iniesta in sports brokerage, sports marketing, and youth training and education.

"We don't rule out that in the future there may be more in-depth cooperation between the two sides in the Chinese market, but this does not mean that Mr. Iniesta will join the club as a player." Japan's Vissel Kobe, named in Spanish media as a possible next club for Iniesta, had no comment on Tuesday when approached by AFP. Football Federation Australia also made no comment after Spain's Sport website named the A-League as Iniesta's "preferred destination".—AFP■

Ferguson showing signs of recovery: reports

LONDON — Former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson is sitting up and talking to his family following emergency surgery for a brain haemorrhage, media reports said on Tuesday.

Widely considered to be the most successful manager in the history of British football, Ferguson, 76, won 38 trophies in more than 26 years in charge of United, including 13 Premier League titles and the Champions League twice.

Britain's Mail Online said the Scot, who retired in 2013, was out of a coma and showing promising early signs of recovery following the haemorrhage on Saturday.

"Surgery went very well and the 76-year-old's response to treatment has given encouragement and cautious optimism to those close to him," the report said.

"However, they recognise it will still be a slow road to full recovery as he continues to be assessed." "The prognosis is good and his closest friends in football are being kept abreast



Alex Ferguson won the Premier League 13 times with Manchester United. PHOTO: AFP

of any developments," a source told The Sun newspaper.

United midfielder Michael Carrick, who played under Ferguson, has spoken of the respect in which his former boss is held.

"The whole football world is incredible but outside of that as well, from all corners of the globe and different walks of life, people have shown their support," he

told MUTV. "That's the effect he had on people. It was the effect he had on everyone. He means a lot to me, as he does to this club."

"We were all praying for him and thinking of him, Cathy and the family," said Carrick. "It's a tough time for everyone but I'm thinking positive and hoping he will pull through."

United have thanked the

many well-wishers, including Premier League managers Arsene Wenger, Pep Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp, who have spoke of their admiration for Ferguson.

Wenger enjoyed a long, and at times fractious rivalry with Ferguson as they battled for Premier League supremacy in the first decade of the Frenchman's long reign in charge of Arsenal.

However, they later became friends and with Wenger leaving Arsenal at the end of the season, Ferguson presented his old adversary with a memento on his final visit to United's Old Trafford ground just last weekend.

"I was with him on the pitch last week. I went to see him in the box after the game and he looked in perfect shape," said Wenger, after his final home game as Arsenal boss on Sunday.

"He told me he is doing a lot of exercise, and he looked very happy but that kind of accident can happen. We wish him all well and to recover very quickly. He is a strong man and an optimistic man."—AFP■