

NATIONAL

Chinese, US embassies in Myanmar release public statement on Muse conflict

PAGE-3

NATIONAL

MNHRC, UNDP discuss continued cooperation

PAGE-3



NATIONAL

One killed, three wounded at Phakant jade mining riot

PAGE-7

BUSINESS

US tightens import rules for seafood, agro products

PAGE-5



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Picture

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw puts implementation in Rakhine on the record

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw held its first day meeting of the eighth regular session yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, with hearing implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY (NEWS ON PAGE-2)**

Ks4,800 daily minimum wage set officially

THE NATIONAL Committee on Minimum Wage announced yesterday that the minimum wage will be Ks600 per hour and Ks4,800 per eight-hour work day irrespective of the type or location of work.

This minimum wage does not apply to small and family-owned businesses with less than 10 employees, it was noted in the committee's Notification No. 2/2018.

As per the Minimum Wage Act 2013 section 10, sub-section (a), the National Committee on Minimum Wage notified the public of this new proposed minimum wage with Notification No. 1/2018 dated 2 January 2018. After the minimum wage law was enacted, a tripartite National Minimum Wage Committee (NMWC) representing employers, employees and the government was formed under the Office of the President in September 2013 and given the task to define an appropriate level for the minimum wage.

The committee received comments, objections, and proposed amendments from employers, employees, and organisations. The proposal to enact a new minimum wage received support from employer and employee organisations from states and regions. Feedback was obtained, assessed and submitted by states and regions including union territory committees, it was learnt.

The decision for the minimum wage of Ks600 per hour, Ks4,800 per day of eight working hours irrespective of type and location of work is in accordance with the Minimum Wages Act 2013 section 10, sub-section (a), officials said.

— GNLM ■

Our strength exhibited in battling Htein Bin fire: State Counsellor

The following is an unofficial translation for a public announcement of gratitude from the Office of the State Counsellor released on 13 May.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the State Counsellor
(13 May 2018)
Words of gratitude to the Public

THE announcement reads that the Union Government is working with unflagging zeal for rule of law, the people's socio-economic development, national reconciliation and peace, and constitutional amendment for laying the foundation for a democratic federal union. For several reasons, Myanmar has

fallen behind other countries in many aspects and is in a state where all our efforts must be exerted to get back on the right track. All our citizens and ethnic peoples of Myanmar are currently living in a historical moment where we are all working our hardest to usher in a new era.

Thus, it is necessary more than ever to use the collective strength of the people of the country to go forward together in developing the nation. Mutual understanding and helping one another is a strong characteristic of the Myanmar people

and if we can use it effectively in developing our nation then without a doubt we will reach our goals in a short amount of time. This invaluable trait long hidden within our society was recently brought into action in full glory during the fire at the Htein Bin garbage dump.

The Htein Bin landfill in Hlinethaya Township in Northern Yangon District caught fire due to extremely high temperatures on 21 April. Due to the hot summer weather, large area of the landfill, and the fact that trapped pockets of gases below the surface were caught

in the combustion, it required a massive force of people and machinery to contain the situation. The fire was successfully extinguished on 2 May after repeated operations.

The official record of all personnel involved in combating the fire, providing security and healthcare services included 1,747 firefighters (including reserves), 722 YCDC staff, 41 staff from the Department of Irrigation and Water Utilization Management, 328 police officers, 24 staff from the Department of General Administration,

SEE PAGE-7

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw puts implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State on the record

PYIDAUNGSU Hluttaw held its first day meeting of its eighth regular session yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, with hearing implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State.

Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe and Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye submitted the implementation of recommendations including the process of issuing the National Verification Card-NVC.

Union Minister U Thein Swe explained the duties and responsibilities of the NV card holders.

The Office of the President of Myanmar issued a Notification Number 19/ 2015 on 11 February 2015 declaring that the validity of Temporary Identification Card or White Card expired on 31 March 2015 and that cards were to be

surrendered not later than 31 May 2015. The temporary identification card were issued in 1995.

NV Cards were issued beginning 1 June 2015, with the clear and good purpose to identify the persons residing within the jurisdiction of the country while they are supposed to undergo scrutiny process or waiting for such verification procedure under the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law.

Union Minister U Thein Swe also read out the responsibilities and rights of the NV card holders.

“NV Card is the first and foremost document to hold on in the scrutiny process on the pathway to enjoy rights of citizenship. The NV Card holder has been recognized as person residing in the jurisdiction of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. In accordance with the term “Nation-

al Verification”, the holder must undergo for scrutiny process,” said the Union Minister.

Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye also briefed about achievements in implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State, saying that about 60 local investment businesses were permitted in the 2018 and land compensations were given to the farmers under the economic and socio-economic development sector.

To create job opportunities, garment factories and traditional weaving businesses have been established in Rakhine State with the assistance of the government.

In the communication sector, more than 600 mobile radio stations have been established.

In the agriculture sector, about 1,300 agricultural machin-

ery to members of the cooperative societies in 15 townships in Rakhine State while more than 23,300 baskets of quality seeds to the farmers.

Health care services and facilities were upgraded in Rakhine State, said the Union Minister, adding that the government provided to the pregnant women and children aged under two with cash assistance in the 2017-2018 Fiscal year.

Regarding the efforts of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhin, the Union Minister said more than 800 houses, monasteries and road, water and power supply infrastructures are under construction in Rakhine State.

Similarly, infrastructures were built to accommodate the returnees from Bangladesh un-

der the repatriation program.

He also refuted the misinformation in media that NV card holders will get rights for free movement in the whole nation.

He said when he met with the displaced people in Bangladesh during his visit to Bangladesh, he explained that benefits of the NV card holders, saying that they would get rights to travel freely but their travel must be in accordance with the rules, regulations and directives issued by the Rakhine State government.

Regarding the closing of IDP camps established after the conflict in 2012, the government is taking measures step by step to close the camps so that the people sheltering in the camps can travel freely in accordance with the law and can participate in the development tasks.

—Myanmar News Agency ■

2nd Pyithu Hluttaw's 8th regular session holds 1st-day meeting

By Aye Aye Thant

THE first-day meeting of the second Pyithu Hluttaw's 8th regular session was held at the Pyithu Hluttaw meeting hall, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning.

In his opening message, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat spoke of putting on record the works conducted by the Pyithu Hluttaw representatives when the Hluttaw was in recess and his appreciation towards it. The forthcoming Hluttaw session has some 150 asterisk marked questions, 12 motions and 28 bills in the agenda, said the Pyithu Hluttaw speaker.

“Observing the current world situation, it can be noted that there are policy changes, along with changes in political aims. We should be aware of the policy changes and do our part to make our country a developed and modern nation. Laws that are not in sync with the time and system must be amended and repealed, while new laws that benefit the people and protect their basic human rights need to be enacted,” he said.

“If we study the parliaments in the world, it can be seen that these are conducting post legislative scrutiny of the effects of the enacted laws. The Hluttaw representatives must



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat. PHOTO: MNA

examine whether the enacted laws are beneficial to the people and the implementing ministries can operate them accordingly,” he stated.

The Hluttaws need to strive towards becoming a legislative pillar that can check and balance the administrative and judicial pillars according to the democratic norms, and is reliable and beneficial to the people. At a time when the people of the country, including the ethnic nationals, are going all out with collective strength to establish a federal union, the Hluttaw representatives must participate in this wholeheartedly. All are urged to assist and support in building trust among ethnic nationals for national reconciliation, the Pyithu Hluttaw speaker said.

For the establishment of democratic practices in the country, the Hluttaw representatives must act and conduct themselves in an exemplary manner and enact laws that ensure freedom, equality and justice in the country. People will trust and conform to the laws only when the laws provide them with protection. The Hluttaw speaker pledged to do his best not only as the Hluttaw speaker but also as a Pyithu Hluttaw representative to continue strengthening the legislative pillar. The Hluttaw representatives are urged to continue their works for the benefit of the people and the country, as true representatives of the people, said the speaker.

SEE PAGE-6

2nd Amyotha Hluttaw's 8th regular session holds 1st-day meeting



Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than. PHOTO: MNA

By Aung Ye Thwin

THE eighth regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw held its first-day meeting at the Amyotha Hluttaw's meeting hall yesterday morning.

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than greeted the Hluttaw representatives and asked them to serve their constituency with good health and a happy mind. He believed all the representatives had listened to the voices of the public on their difficulties and wishes, and noted the requirements for the development of the region in their respective constituencies. They must implement the wishes of the public by raising questions, tabling motions, enacting laws and working according to the

set laws, rules, procedures and processes, he added.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe replied to five asterisk marked questions.

In reply to a question by U Yaw Nar of Kachin State constituency (5) on the plan to open a Rural Health Centre in Lachin Village, Lachin Village-tract, Hsawlaw Township, Kachin State, the union minister said Lachin or Lanse Village was under a single Jangyang Rural Health Centre in Hsawlaw Township that had 15 staff members.

Lachin Village is some 95 miles away from the Jangyang Rural Health Centre and can be reached only by foot.

SEE PAGE-7

“ 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)

“ Let me solemnly thank all our friends at home and abroad, who have helped us and are still helping us; organizations, business entrepreneurs, people from academia and professionals, and especially our people who have supported and assisted us with understanding and empathy. Those who have helped us once, we should never forget. Those who have helped us again and again are our real friends; they bring fulfillment to our lives.

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



MNHRC members pose for a documentary photo together with UNDP's officials in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

MNHRC, UNDP discuss continued cooperation

THE Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Myanmar held a meeting at the MNHRC office in Yangon yesterday.

MNHRC Chairman U Win Mra, its members, UNDP Deputy Country Director

Dawn Del Rio and UNDP officials in Myanmar attended the meeting.

At the meeting, the MNHRC Chairman explained the commission's progress in promoting and protecting human rights and its role in international relations before explaining its future plans.

Next, the UNDP officials explained the strengthening accountability and rule of law (SARL) programme for Myanmar and the MNHRC's importance.

The two sides continued their discussions on future co-operation. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Chinese, US embassies in Myanmar release public statement on Muse conflict

On 12 May, an armed conflict broke out between the Myanmar armed forces and a few Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) in Muse Township in Northern Shan State. The Chinese Embassy and the US Embassy in Myanmar released public announcements yesterday addressing the incident.

The public announcement from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China condemned the violent incident and expressed deep sadness over the injuries and death of innocent people. The Chinese side has sent representatives to the relevant authorities in Myanmar to urge the parties concerned to exercise restraint for an immediate ceasefire, and take concrete and effective measures to prevent the situation from deteriorating, so as to resume peace and stability in the China-Myanmar border area. The announcement said the Chinese side has been actively providing assistance to the third Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong, and the Chinese side

firmly opposed any attempt to undermine the peace and stability along the China-Myanmar border and any act deliberately obstructing the Myanmar peace process. The announcement called for all parties concerned to enhance dialogue, promote mutual trust, and move forward in the same direction, while playing a constructive role in promoting national reconciliation and the Myanmar peace process.

The public announcement from the Embassy of the United States expressed its deep concern and heartfelt sympathy to the families of those killed and injured in the recent clashes in Muse Township. It urged all the relevant parties to exercise restraint to protect the civilian population from further casualties, to allow humanitarian aid to reach all communities affected by the conflict, and to negotiate for peaceful solutions to the problems. The announcement stated the US was ready to support such efforts. —Myanmar News Agency ■



青島商品絲路行 (緬甸展)

Qingdao Silk Road Commodity (Myanmar) Exhibition

Date: May 17-19, 2018

Venue: Myanmar Event Park (MEP)

ပြပွဲအမည် ... Qingdao ကုန်စည်ပြပွဲ (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံခရီးစဉ်)

ပြပွဲအချိန် ... ၂၀၁၈ ခုနှစ် မေလ ၁၇ ရက်မှ ၁၉ ရက်ထိ

ပြပွဲနေရာ ... Myanmar Event Park

Main Sponsor

တရုတ်ပြည်သူ့သမ္မတနိုင်ငံ Qingdao ဗြိ. ကုန်သွယ်မှု ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေး ဝန်ဆောင်မှု ဗဟိုဌာန

Co Sponsor

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Organizer

Qingdao Universal International Consumer Electronics Exhibition Co., Ltd.

Qingdao ကုန်စည်ပြပွဲ (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံခရီးစဉ်)

တရုတ်-မြန်မာ ကုန်သွယ်ရေး ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်မှု စင်မြင်ဆစ်တို့ ဖန်တီးသည့်ဆောက်လုပ်ခြင်း

အတူတကွ ပူးပေါင်းလုပ်ဆောင်ပြီး အကျိုးတူမျှဝေတာ့နိုင်မယ့်အခွင့်အလမ်းသစ်အတွက် လိုက်လံရှာဖွေ စိတ်ဝင်စားအပ်ပါသည်။

တရုတ်-မြန်မာ နှစ်နိုင်ငံစီးပွားရေးကုန်သွယ်မှု ပူးပေါင်းလုပ်ဆောင်ခြင်းများ ပိုမိုဖြစ်ထွန်းလာစေရန်၊ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံရွေးကောက်ပွဲဒီမိုကရေစီနှင့် မြန်မာပြည်သူ့ပြည်သားများအတွက် ပိုမိုကောင်းမွန်ပြည့်စုံသော ထုတ်ကုန်ပစ္စည်းများထုတ်လုပ်ရန် ရည်ရွယ်၍ တရုတ်ပြည်သူ့သမ္မတနိုင်ငံ Qingdao ဗြိ. ကုန်သွယ်မှု ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေး ဝန်ဆောင်မှု ဗဟိုဌာနမှ ဦးစီးကာ Qingdao ကုန်စည်ပြပွဲ (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံခရီးစဉ်) ကို မေလ ၁၇ ရက်နေ့ မှ ၁၉ ရက်နေ့အထိ Myanmar Event Park ဌာန (၃) ရက်တာ ကြီးကျယ်ခမ်းနားစွာ ကျင်းပပြုလုပ်သွားမည် ဖြစ်သည်။

အထူးရေးချယ်ထားသော တရုတ်ပြည်သူ့သမ္မတနိုင်ငံ Qingdao ဗြိ. ရဲ့ နာမည်ကျော်ကုန်ပစ္စည်းများမှ ပါဝင်ပြသခြင်းဖြစ်ပြီး ပြပွဲခရီးစဉ်မှာ ၂၀၁၈ ခုနှစ် ကျော် ကျယ်လောင်ပါသည်။ ပြပွဲတွင် ဆောက်လုပ်ရေးကုန်ပစ္စည်းများနှင့် ဖိနပ်၊ ခါးဆွဲများ၊ ဝတ်ယူမှုပစ္စည်းများနှင့် လျှပ်စစ်ဆက်အားပေးပစ္စည်းများ၊ အိမ်သုံးလျှပ်စစ် ပစ္စည်းများနှင့် နည်းပညာဆိုင်ရာလျှပ်စစ်ပစ္စည်းများ၊ ပရိဘောဂများနှင့် လူသုံးကုန်ပစ္စည်းများ၊ အဝတ်အထည်များ၊ လက်မှုပစ္စည်းများ၊ အစရှိသည့် ပစ္စည်းအမျိုးမျိုးပါဝင်ပြီး တရုတ်-မြန်မာ ကုန်သွယ်မှုများကို ထည့်သွင်းပြသသွားမည် ဖြစ်သည်။

Qingdao ကုန်စည်ပြပွဲ (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံခရီးစဉ်) ၏ အရေးပါသော " နာမည်ကျော်လုပ်ငန်းများရဲ့ ဗြိ.တော် Qingdao နဲ့ ရှိတော်ကုန်သွယ်မှု " တကမ္ဘာလုံးဆိုင်ရာ ကုန်စည်မိတ်ဆက်ပွဲကြီးကို မေလ ၁၇ ရက်နေ့ နေ့လယ်တွင် Myanmar Event Park ဌာန စည်ကားသိုက်မြိုက်စွာ ကျင်းပသွားမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ဟိုအရင်တစ်ကြိမ် Qingdao ၏ စီးပွားရေးဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်လာမှုနှင့် ကုန်သွယ်မှု လုပ်ငန်းလည်ပတ်နိုင်ရေး တည်ဆောက်မှု စသည့် အခြေအနေများကို မိတ်ဆက် ပြောကြားသွားမည် ဖြစ်သည်။ တစ်ချိန်တည်းမှာပင် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၏ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲအုပ်ချုပ်မှုကို လိုက်ပြီး Qingdao ၏ ထုတ်ကုန်များလည်းပါဝင်သည့် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၏ ကုန်ထုတ်လုပ်နိုင်စွမ်းအား၊ လူ့ဘဝလိုအပ်ချက်များနှင့်လည်း တိုက်ညီစေမည့် ကောင်းမွန်သည့် လုပ်ငန်းများကို မိတ်ဆက် ပြောကြားပြီး နှစ်နှစ်ခန့်က ကုန်သွယ်ရေးဝယ်ယူမှုဆိုင်ရာ စုစည်းပွဲနှင့် ဆွေးနွေးနိုင်မည့် အခွင့်အလမ်းများဖြစ်ပေါ်စေရန် ဖန်တီးပေးသွားမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ယခုနှစ်များအတွင်းတွင် တရုတ်-မြန်မာကုန်သွယ်မှုများ တိုးတက်ပြုစုပေးလာခြင်းသည် ယနေ့ပြပွဲကို ဆောင်ရွက်ရာ ကျင်းပနိုင်စေရန် မဟာညံ့ပေမည် ကောင်းမွန်လှသည့် အခြေအနေတစ်ခု ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

" ယခုအကြိမ် ပြပွဲကြီးကနေပြီးတော့ ရလဒ်တောင်းများပေါ်ထွန်းလာပြီး နှစ်နှစ်ခန့်က လုပ်ငန်းရှင်များအတွက် အကျိုးအမြတ်များဖြစ်ထွန်းလာမယ်လို့ ကျွန်တော်တို့ ယုံကြည်ပါတယ်။ ဒါကြောင့်လည်း ကျွန်တော်တို့အနေနဲ့ နယ်ပယ်အသီးသီးက အောင်မြင်နေတဲ့ လုပ်ငန်းရှင်များနဲ့ ပတ်သက် ဆက်သွယ်နေတဲ့လုပ်ငန်းများ ဒီတစ်ကြိမ်ပြပွဲမှာ ပါဝင်ပြသပေးဖို့ စိတ်ဝင်စားပါတယ်။ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲအုပ်ချုပ်မှုကို အတူပူးပေါင်းဖြည့်ဆည်းကာ နှစ်နှစ်ခန့်က အပြန်အလှန် အကျိုးဖြစ်ထွန်းစေမည့် ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်မှု အခွင့်အလမ်းများ တိုးတက်ပိုမိုစေကြောင်း တောင်းဆိုလိုက်ပါသည်။ "

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
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
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globalnewlightofmyanmar

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Lychees earn good income due to high yield in Kayin State

LYCHEES cultivated in the villages of Leiktho town in Hpa-an District, Kayin State, have seen a good yield this year.

Villagers of Leiktho town in Kayin State mostly cultivate areca nut, banana, durian and mangosteen in their villages.

Lychees saw a high yield in Myathargon, Painthilar and Tinbawlaw villages in the Leiktho town. Villagers from the Leiktho town pick the lychees in April and May, and send them to the market.

“Lychees have seen high yield this year. Some lychees that were picked in April were sent to the market and earned a good price. Villagers pick lychees in mid-May when the price declines slightly. Lychees from Kayin State were sent mainly to Taungoo. Good-quality lychees are sold between Ks1,000 and Ks1,500 per viss. Moreover, retail sellers



Lychees on tree in Leiktho town , Hpa-an District, Kayin State, Lychees earn a high yield in Leiktho town. **PHOTO: TOWNSHIP IPRD**

buy the fruit at the field itself. Some sell the lychees on motorbikes around the townships of Bago Region,” said Daw My-

int Myint Khin, a local lychee cultivator.

Villagers sell lychees at two difference prices — start pick-

up time and abundant crops time. This year, lychees earned a good income compared to last year.—Township IPRD ■

Free vaccination against Hepatitis B, Japanese encephalitis virus from 14 May

HEALTHCARE authorities in Thayawady District, Bago Region, are preparing to officially launch for the second time an immunisation drive against Hepatitis B and the Japanese encephalitis virus to protect the public from the two serious, infectious diseases.

The drive will begin on 14 May and last until 17 May, targeting more than 4,000 people in Minhla Township. The township Public Health Department is currently arranging to successfully carry out the vac-

nation programme through 39 well-trained teams and six groups of rural health, in co-operation with the township Maternal and Child Welfare Association.

A meeting was held between the Minhla Township Public Health Department and respective government departments and social organisations ahead of the drive.

Hepatitis B is a serious infectious disease caused by the Hepatitis B virus that affects the liver, causing both acute

and chronic infections. According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) survey, there are some 400 million people living with the Hepatitis B virus.

The Japanese encephalitis virus, the leading cause of encephalitis in Asia, is spread by mosquitoes. The symptoms of the deadly disease include fever, headache and disorientation. The survivors may also suffer permanent intellectual or neurological problems, according to WHO. — Pauk Sa (Minhla)■

Buddhist monk stabbed to death during armed robbery

TWO young men fatally stabbed a Buddhist monk named U Vimala, residing in Ottha Myothit, Bago Township, Bago Region, late Saturday night, according to a police report.

The incident occurred at some 10.30 pm on 12 May. The police received a complaint from a 60-year-old monk named U Visakkana at around 1.30 am on the following day, who said he was also a victim of the armed robbery. According to the investigation, the victims were living in ShwemyintmoU Monastery near a low-cost housing complex in Ward-8 in Ottha Myothit. The 60-year-old monk said he heard a loud voice at the crime scene. Two robbers, identified as Win Htike, also known as Nga Htike, and Pe Pya, aka Win Kyaw Thu, then demanded money from him. The two fled the scene when he tried to attack them with a wooden stick.

Investigations are being carried out by the township police to arrest the offenders, who will face legal action under Section 302/392 of the Penal Code.—Phyo Ko Lynn (Nyaungwaing) ■

Yaba pills seized in Myitkyina, one arrested

A COMBINED team of officers and staff apprehended a man identified as Kyaw Soe in Shwe Aik ward, Myitkyina, on 13 May. The team seized 2,000 yaba tablets from him. Additionally, the police arrested Soe Moe Aung, who was selling yaba tablets in the ward, near the highway road in Tatgon ward, Myitkyina.

Similarly, a combined team of officers and staff from police ward-42 arrested a man identified as May Thet Khine, who was travelling in a Suzuki

carry pick-up vehicle near Kabar Aye Pagoda car parking ground in Mayangon Township. On searching the vehicle, the team found 1,285 yaba tablets.

Further, a combined team of officers and staff from Tachilek police stopped a vehicle heading to Wanpon from Tachilek, driven by Aik Nwan, along with Sai Kyauk on board, at Wahlayhan check point, Tachilek Township, and found ice weighing 48 kilograms in the vehicle.

The police have filed



Sai Kyauk. **PHOTO: MPF**

charges against all suspects under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force ■

US tightens import rules for seafood, agro products

THE United States (US) is closely screening imported seafood and agro products and sending back inferior products to the origin country, said exporters.

A few of Myanmar's agricultural products have been sent back from the US owing to weak and unsystematic packaging and pesticide residue. Similarly, Myanmar's seafood was rejected by the US, as it was not in accordance with the import regulations, triggering losses to Myanmar's exporters. This being so, producers and exporters have to focus on quality and import criteria, said Dr Myat Min, an exporter. Myanmar's prawn, fish,

mung beans, green gram and pigeon peas are exported to the US. The goods were rejected owing to pesticide and chemical residue, and inadequate labelling and packaging.

Exporters need to strictly adhere to the import regulations placed by the US, especially for marine products, said U Ye Htwe, an exporter from the Mandalay region.

Myanmar reinstated the US Generalised Scheme of Preference for more than 4,900 items, including 34 fishery products. Myanmar and the US signed the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 2013. —Zar Lin Thu (AMIA) ■



A file photo shows workers select shrimps in Kyauktan, Yangon Region. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Exports of forest products decrease to \$13 million

MYANMAR exported a wide range of forest products to overseas traders in the first 27 days of the current fiscal year, earning US\$13.408 million in total, according to the latest report of the commerce ministry.

The total export value of forest products decreased by \$9.9 million, as against the same period last year, when the country earned \$23.337 million.

Over the past 27 days of this six-month interim FY, the country sold forest-based

products amounting to \$1.639 million from the public sector, which was an increase in value of \$1.066 million against last year, while private sector exports of the same reached \$11.769 million, a decrease of \$10.9 million against last year's total of \$22.764 million.

The total export value of forest products from the two sectors in the 2017-2018 FY was \$211.071 million, decreasing by \$35.9 million compared with the previous FY.

The ministry's statistics showed that Myanmar's to-

tal bilateral exports to overseas traders as of 27 April, were valued at \$784.564 million, including \$87.460 million via the public sector and \$697 million through the private sector.

During the period, the country exported agro products worth \$204.5 million, animal products worth \$16.3 million, marine products worth \$51.1 million, minerals worth \$70.359 million, manufactured goods worth \$342.3 million and miscellaneous goods worth \$86.5 million. — Swe Nyein ■

Imports of intermediate goods top \$609 million, up by \$200 million

MYANMAR'S imports of intermediate goods from foreign countries totalled US\$609.766 million in the current fiscal year, an increase of \$200 million against that of the same period last year, according to the commerce ministry.

Between 1 and 27 April, the government imported intermediate goods valued at \$12.1 million from international trade partners, while private sector imports of the same product stood at \$597.6 million. The month of April saw an increase in the value of intermediate goods from both sectors.

The country chiefly buys three groups of products,

consisting of capital goods, intermediate goods and consumer products. It sells six major groups of domestically produced goods to partner buyers, including agricultural products, fisheries, minerals, animal products and manufactured goods.

According to the ministry's yearly statistical report, the country's import value of intermediate goods was \$4.071 billion in the 2011-2012 FY, \$3.728 billion in the 2012-2013 FY, \$5.682 billion in the 2013-2014 FY, \$6.165 billion in the 2014-2015 FY, \$4.820 billion in the 2015-2016 FY and \$7.670 billion in the 2016-2017 FY and FY. — Shwe Khine ■

Measures needed to protect small businesses from being affected

MEASURES are needed to protect small businesses from being affected, following permits granted to foreign wholesale/retail companies to set up shop, said Dr. Soe Tun, a business entrepreneur.

"Local huge companies can partner with foreign companies. But, there are many small family shops in Myanmar. The permitted foreign wholesale/retail companies can affect their small businesses. For example, 7-Eleven mini market shops, which are

owned by foreign companies, will come and set up shop in Myanmar, and local people will only buy from their shops. No one will buy from the small shops. Therefore, we need to think about it," Dr. Soe Tun said.

On the other hand, local people will have many options and enjoy the good services offered by foreign wholesale/retail shops in Myanmar.

Moreover, the government should provide assistance such as supporting technologies,

seeking new markets and providing loans for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), said small business entrepreneurs.

The Ministry of Commerce has permitted certain foreign wholesale/retail companies: foreign direct investment companies and local and foreign joint companies, with the aim of developing SMEs by reviving the local products market and developing the product and service quality by using the latest technology. — Nyein Nyein ■

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Norwegian Ambassador, Union Attorney-General discuss scholarship opportunities

UNION Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo received Norwegian Ambassador to Myanmar Ms. Tone Tinnes and her entourage in the guest hall of his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening.

The two sides discussed scholarship opportunities between the Office of the Union Attorney-General and Norway, as well as sending legal officers

to attend a Master's in Human Rights Law.

They also discussed aid from the Union Attorney General's office in the Myanmar-Norway collaboration in the oil and energy sector, fishery sector, democratisation process, and establishing the rule of law and a federal system.

The two sides also dis-

cussed peace and development efforts in Rakhine State, which concerns itself with the Myanmar peace process.

Present at the meeting were the Union Attorney-General, Deputy Attorney General U Win Myint, Permanent Secretary Daw Nu Nu Yin, and Director-General U Min Swe. —Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo meets with the delegation led by Norwegian Ambassador Ms. Tone Tinnes in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**



Thura U Shwe Mann welcomes Norwegian Ambassador Ms. Tone Tinnes in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Thura U Shwe Mann, Norwegian Ambassador discuss legal affairs

Chairman of the Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann received Norwegian Ambassador to Myanmar Ms. Tone

Tinnes at the Hluttaw Guest Room (I-11) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning. The two sides discussed legal affairs, bilateral relations and cooperation. —Myanmar News Agency

2nd Pyithu Hluttaw's 8th regular session holds 1st-day meeting

FROM PAGE-2

Next, messages of congratulations sent by Chairwoman of the National Assembly of Viet Nam Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan and President of the Laos National Assembly Pany Yothotou on 23 March 2018, President of the National Assembly of Serbia Maja Gojkovic and Chairman of National People's Congress of People's Republic of China Li Zhanshu on 26 March 2018, Secretary-General of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Isra Sunthornvut on 28 March 2018, Speaker of People's National Assembly of Algeria Said Bouhadja on 29 March 2018, Speaker of the Japan House of Representatives in the Diet Tadamori Oshima on 2 April 2018, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea Chung Sye-Kyun, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Martin Chungong and Chairman of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus Vladimir Andreichenko on 3 April 2018, Chairman of the State Duma of Russian Federation Vyacheslav Volodin and Speaker of Lok Sabha of India Sumitra Mahajan on 5 April 2018, Speaker of the Grand

National Assembly of Turkey Ismail Kahraman and Speaker of the Parliament of Singapore Tan Chuan-Jin on 9 April 2018, President of the National Assembly of Cambodia Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin on 10 April 2018, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines Pantaleon D. Alvarez on 12 April 2018 and President of the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg Mars Di Barolomeo on 19 April 2018 was put on record by the Hluttaw.

Education Minister replies to asterisk marked questions

On the question posed by U Tin Aye of Metmung constituency regarding the plan to put Metmung Township head of education department under the management of Kengtung district head of education, the union minister said the Metmung Township in Mongphyat District is some 190 miles northwest of Mongphyat Town under the Ministry of Education's organisation setup. Under the administrative districts of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Metmung Township in Metmung District is part of the six townships under Wa Self-Ad-

ministered Division in northern Shan State, while under the administrative districts of the Ministry of Education, it is in Mongphyat District in eastern Shan State. The state head of education has reported the difficulties in conducting educational works for Metmung township via Kengtung Town and had proposed to transfer the management of Metmung township head of education from the role of Mongphyat District head of education to Kengtung District head of education. Arrangements are being made according to the procedure to transfer the Metmung township head of education to be placed under the management of Kengtung District head of education, said the Union Minister for Education.

Replying to a question raised by Dr. Daw Pyone of Indaw constituency on the plan to omit good conduct recommendation by the Myanmar Police Force in the recommendation letters attached to the application for entry to a university, the union minister said this was included in the 2012 guidelines on application for entry to university but was not included since the 2013 guidelines on application

were released. Similarly, it is not included in the 2017 guidelines on application for entry to university, said the Union Minister for Education.

U Aye Naing of Dagon Myothit (South) constituency asked if there was a plan to open a government technical high school or a vocational training school in Yangon Region Dagon Myothit (South). The union minister replied that the Yangon Region government was coordinating to construct a government technical high school on 14 acres of land beside Hlawga Road in Dagon Myothit (South) Ward 105, according to a master plan.

Once the land is transferred to the Department of Technical, Vocational and Training Education, funding for the construction of the school buildings, employment of staff and provision of teaching materials will be included in the yearly budget, according to the regulation, said the union minister.

The union minister also replied to questions raised by Dr. U Than Aung Soe of Minhla constituency, U Win Myint Aung of Dapayin constituency and U Myo Nyunt of Homalin constituency.

Motion to assign staff to schools nearest families rejected by vote

Following the question-and-answer session, U Win Win of Minbu constituency tabled a motion to give priority to assign education staffs to schools that are nearest to their families.

A Hluttaw representative supported the motion, but when the motion was put to vote, there were 118 for, 226 against and seven abstainees. Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat announced the motion had not been accepted for debate.

The Hluttaw then decided to approve the seven amendments on a bill to amend the Early Child Care and Development Law returned by the Amyotha Hluttaw with amendments, which was submitted to the Hluttaw by a bill committee member.

The bill committee secretary then tabled a motion to discuss in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw the four amendments of the bill to which the two Hluttaws did not agree. Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat announced that the Hluttaw would continue to work on the bill. ■

Our strength exhibited in battling Htein Bin fire: State Counsellor

FROM PAGE-1

156 staff from the Regional Public Health Department, 49 Myanmar Red Cross members, and 220 military personnel from the Yangon Region Military Command (including medical corps), bringing the total to 3,287 personnel.

During the first few days, the fire was extinguished using water but the resulting smoke from within spread to nearby townships and caused health

problems even to South Okkalapa and Dagon Myothit (North). It was during this time that KBZ Brighter Future Foundation and partner companies donated Ks 340 million to purchase 5,000 gallons of bio foam from Thailand to put out the fire and mask the smoke. At the same time, 43 philanthropic organizations provided food and other necessities from numerous donors. For this reason the words of gratitude and credit for the month of May should go

to the firefighters, security and military officers, departmental staff, philanthropic organizations, and all the people who helped in whatever way they can in ending the fire in Htein Bin landfill.

The events at the Htein Bin landfill showed us that unity in collective strength enables us to overcome any obstacles and challenges and I would like to humbly request everyone to remember that lesson well as we progress forward with collective strength.

No.	Department/Organization	Number of personnel	Number of philanthropic groups	Remarks
1	Regional Fire Services Department	1747	-	
2	Yangon City Development Committee	722	-	
3	Department of Irrigation and Water Utilization Management	41	-	
4	Police Force	203	-	
5	Security Management Office (2)	125	-	
6	Department of General Administration	24	-	
7	Regional Public Health Department	156	-	
8	Regional Red Cross Society	49	-	
9	Yangon Command	220	-	
10	Humanitarian Organizations	-	43	
	Total	3287	43	

Remark: (1) ASEAN Coordinating centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) provided assistance
(2) KBZ Brighter Future Foundation and partner companies donated Ks 340 million to purchase 5,000 gallons of biofoam. ■

One killed, three wounded at Phakant jade mining riot



A fire broke out at Yadana Shwe Ate jade mining company in Phakant Township, Mohnyin District, Kachin Sate. PHOTO: WIN NAING

A torching incident occurs on the evening of 13 May at Yadana Shwe Ate gem mining company in Kachin Sate, Mohnyin District, Phakant Township, Lonkhin village tract.

The incident occurs when company employees torched and destroy the company office building and living quarters after an unresolved wage rate dispute between the company and its employee resulting in the burning and destruction of the company office building, five living quarters, a backhoe, six 2,400 gallon oil storage tanks. The police force was reported to have detained 49 employees who involved in the event.

On the afternoon of 13 May the company employee demanded the termination of the mining operation on 15 May and to receive overtime payments. They demonstrated after the negotiation break down.

Of the 2,500 persons employed under Yadana Shwe Ate jade mining company, about 1,000 pelted the office building and living quarters with rocks and conducted other destructive acts.

Local Police Force which was providing security for the company fired warning shots but the demonstrators didn't disperse and burnt the buildings, a back hoe, and oil storage tanks. After 10 pm, authorities and responsible person use 10 fire engines to put out the fire and sent people who were hurt to the hospital.

There were 3 wounded and a dead person included among the 49 arrested. In addition to the buildings and machines, about two tons of raw jade other materials were destroyed and lost, according to local authorities. — Win Naing (Kachin land) and Township IPRD ■

2nd Amyotha Hluttaw's 8th regular session...

FROM PAGE-2

The state Public Health Department head has reported that a Rural Health Centre be urgently opened in Lachin (Lanse) Village, as the region had faced natural disasters in 2016. This requirement will be submitted to the union government's office and a union government meeting will be held to open a Sub-Rural Health Centre in Lachin (Lanse) Village as soon as possible, said the union minister.

Next, the union minister replied to a question by U Htein Win of the Ayeyawady Region constituency (4) on the plan to upgrade

the Sub-Rural Health Centre in the Ayeyawady Region, Hinthada District, Zalun Township, Myitwa Village, to a Rural Health Centre. The union minister said the Myitaw Village Sub-Rural Health Centre is providing healthcare services to nearly 15,000 people from more than 3,350 households in 22 villages, and met the five basic requirements of a Rural Health Centre. Furthermore, the head of the Region Public Health Department had supported the upgrade in a report. Therefore, the upgrade will be made as soon as possible, said the union minister.

In response to a question by



Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe. PHOTO: MNA

Dr. Zaw Lin Htut of Mon State constituency (9) on a plan to construct a modern sports ground and training centre in Mon State, Thaton Township, Thudham-

mawadi Town, the union minister said the necessary steps to obtain a land grant for a 800 ft x 600 ft land in field no. (513) has been taken and is at the final stage of completion with the Mon State government. Once the land grant is obtained, the necessary works will be conducted accordingly, said the union minister.

Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe also replied to questions raised by U Kyaw Than of Rakine State constituency (10) and U Ngun Hay of Chin State Constituency (1)

Later, U Than Soe @ Than Soe (Economic) of the Yangon Region constituency (4) and U Kyaw Naing of Yangon Region constituency (12) discussed the Science, Technology and Innovation Bill, returned with amend-

ments by the Pyithu Hluttaw.

U Kyaw Naing said the bill was one of the outstanding 22 bills from the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw term, and thus the Hluttaw representatives had suggested and discussed it. The country has lagged behind in science and technology and because of this, the name of the bill should be Science, Technology and Innovation Bill. If it is named only for innovation, it will be weak. Of the 109 points in the bill, the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw disagreed on 54 and agreed on 55. Discussions will be continued in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, said U Kyaw Naing.

The second-day meeting of the second Amyotha Hluttaw's eighth regular session will be continued on 15 May. ■

Arms do not resolve issues nor bring about peace desired by the people

AFEDERAL system that is acceptable to all is our resolution to end our country's long-running armed conflicts. Our goal is therefore the "emergence of a democratic federal union based on democracy and federalism".

Since the time we gained independence, our country has succumbed to the fires of internal armed conflicts. There was no peace, no stability, and we lagged behind in many areas of development.

Our people over successive generations have seen their socio-economic situation and morale undermined, while our country's future has been gradually corroded. Even today, Myanmar has not yet been able to escape the trap of poverty and conflict, and great efforts will be needed if we are to catch up with the rest of the world.

Our people have been waiting for almost 70 years to witness a ray of hope for a better future and for peace. Our people have witnessed that taking up arms to solve political issues causes protracted armed conflicts.

People in the region suffered and lagged behind in economic development that is being enjoyed by neighbouring countries.

The only way to achieve peace is to end conflicts.

The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) opened the door to the holding of the Union peace conference: 21st Century Panglong.

The 21st Century Panglong Conference is the only way to end all armed conflicts and to establish perpetual peace.

To this end, the NCA needs to be signed by all ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to end all conflicts.

So far, 10 ethnic armed organizations have signed the NCA.

In order to immediately end the armed conflicts in northern Myanmar, the remaining ethnic armed groups are urged to join the Government's peace process, by signing the NCA.

the Government's peace process, by signing the NCA.

At a time when the people of Myanmar are in the process of striving for national reconciliation and peace that had remained elusive to them in the past, it is extremely saddening that 19 civilians were killed and some 30 wounded in the 12th May attack in Muse. Our sympathies and condolences go to the victims who lost their lives and those who were wounded. Meanwhile, villagers in conflict areas fled their homes and are awaiting the day they can return home, sheltering at camps for displaced people.

Are we going to leave behind our country with armed conflicts for the new generation, or are we going to leave behind a unified and strong country worthy of respect by others?

Nothing is better than peace. We need peace for development to happen. There is no other way. ■

Precautions and safety measure for hovercraft services in Myanmar

By Maung Tin Hlaing (Ministry of Hotel and Tourism)

THE rainy season begins at the end of May in Myanmar. During the early monsoon, things get damp and mouldy, the drains are flooded with water and the roads get blocked when there is a heavy downpour. As a rule, Myanmar tends to experience an impact from the rainy season, due to heavy rains and high winds which threatens and endangers the hovercrafts and passenger vessels in the rivers.

Man has to suffer from thunderstorms and rainstorm which can bring dangers for the travellers who use waterway in the rainy season. Precautionary measures should be taken to ensure that there is an effective risk management strategy. Individuals must be aware of the hazards involved in their work and region they live in.

I often make travels to many places such as Yangon, Maubin and other different places in the country, using hover craft services run by the Myanmar Inland Water Transport.

Achievements of Inland Water Transport

As for the Ministry of Transport and Communications, efforts have been made to improve water resources, to ensure safety in the maritime sector and to preserve the environment which can assist in improving the waterway system in the country. Moreover buoys and markers are placed in



the shipping lanes of inland rivers to guide the inland waterway ships. Dredging and revetment construction are also conducted to improve water flow, prevent river bank erosion and to pump river water for irrigation purpose s.

The Inland Water Transport is one of the State-owned transport enterprises under the Ministry of Transport and Communication in Myanmar. The Ministry has provided a wide range of services for the secure and smooth water transportation in the country.

The Ministry has made concerted efforts for better water transport services for the security and safety of passengers, cargo, vessels and crew in providing water transport services and ensuring the environment does not get polluted in accordance with the existing law. For the development of the Inland Water Transport sector, the Ministry has tried its best to give priority to the future transformation by reforming many sectors in accordance with the rules and regulations.

Meteorology and Hydrology sector

The ministry has also informed the public regarding meteorological and hydrology data, utilizing Automatic Weather Observation System, and plans are under way to install many automatic water level measuring machines in the states and regions where the most flooding occurs in the rainy season.

A Steady Flow of Commodity

Being a writer, I am much obliged to the Ministry of Inland Water Transport for many reasons; the ministry has extended

The ministry has also informed the public regarding meteorological and hydrology data, utilizing Automatic Weather Observation System, and plans are under way to install many automatic water level measuring machine in the states and regions where the most flooding occurs in the rainy season.

coastal transportation services in addition to river transportation in the rural areas which can contribute to the socio-economic lives of the rural populace.

In this regard, the Ministry has laid down some effective policies for the interest of the people and the state. Some objectives have been laid down in order to connect with other transport networks for safe and smooth transportation of passengers and cargo along navigable waterways; to connect with river port management and post ser-

vices which will be developed in accordance time and system; to perform for sustainable development of public transport sector; to extend coastal transportations services in the future; to perform by taking special care for wrested security and safety of passengers cargo and vessels respectively.

To implement the policies and objectives, cooperation is needed to ensure the all-round management of water resources in Myanmar. As water-related works are vital for the country's development, priority must be

given to capacity building works that meet the requirement of the people and the state.

Transportation by waterway

Transporting goods and passengers by waterway is cost-effective. Such navigable rivers in the country as the Ayeyawady, the Chindwin, the Sittoung, the Thanlwin, the Kaladan and many others are flowing in the country. It is evident that lack of waterway channel management and river training are the reason for floods in the rainy season and silting up in the hot season. Therefore measures should be taken to mitigate disasters. To ensure safety in the maritime sector and to preserve environment, the Ministry has followed rules and regulations of International Maritime Organization.

Advantages of Inland Water Transport

Inland Water Transport can provide a service that is far more environment-friendly than either road or rail and it can do a major service by tackling congestion on roads, thus reducing accidents and the horrendous loss of life they cause.

With the aim of promoting the country's economy and reducing prices of commodities, it is important to obtain technology and cooperate for mutual benefit, as well as support and participate in collecting and disseminating water-related data and information. In the all-round management of water resources and related works conducted in cooperation with international organizations, priority must be given to capacity building works that meet the requirement of the people and the state. ■

Translated by William Ko

Investment in Education

MYANMAR people, since ancient times, have been aware of the value of education. The proverb "ပညာရွှေပွင့်၊ လွှမ်းမိုး" (None can steal the golden pot of education) is known to all. It lends credence to the need for investment in education.

Modern Gurus of education cite "seven key reasons" for investment in education. The first key reason is, quote "Provides dividends for life that nobody can ever take from you" unquote. Need I go on with the other six?

Since the advent of the Democracy Government there has been considerable increases in the Budget allocations for education. Under the new National Education Law (as amended in 2015), the education function of Myanmar is to be undertaken by the Government and the Private Sector.

Under the new law, the Public Education Sector includes Schools of Basic Education, Technical and Vocational Education, Institutes of Higher Education and the schools and training centres in the "Non-formal" education sector; in fact all Schools and Educational Organizations run by the various Ministries entrusted with education functions. The new National Education Law objectives include promotion of the Private Sector Education for which a separate law is to be enacted.

The new National Education Law has provisions which will lead to profound changes in the Education System. The most significant of the changes relate to the quality of education. A National level Committee is charged with overseeing the quality of education. For delivery of "quality" education, Standards and Curricula to meet international standards have to be set.

For the Public Sector Education and Training, the Government provides the Budget every Financial Year. However the bulk of the education sector Budget goes to the Ministry of Education.

The Public Sector Education Budget, like all budget allocations, has the "Capital" and the "Current" components. The "Current" component includes recurring expenses such as salaries and benefits of the administrative and teaching staff, their travelling expenses, honoraria and research grants, the cost of education and training materials and consumables etc. These are all crucial for sustaining the quality of education and training delivery to meet required learning outcomes.

Teachers at all levels play an important role in implementing educational change. Hence the training and re-training of teachers is of utmost importance. Training of teachers in modern teaching methods related to the new curricula are being undertaken. Teachers need to be motivated to implement educational change.

Students also need to be "motivated" to acquire learning. The student motivation should involve both teachers, the students and the parents of the students. The teacher should arouse the students' interest in the subject matter and make them understand what is being taught, so as to better create in them the desire to learn. Sometimes the student may not be interested in learning due to domestic or personal problems. In such cases the parent's cooperation has to be sought.

The affect of the changes to improve education delivery and education quality will bear fruit in the years to come. ■

Lokethar.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their works to the Global New Light of Myanmar at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon or by email to dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Real name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.).— Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar news office

Thai University confers honorary doctorate on Yangon Region Sangha Nayaka Chairman Sayadaw

AN Asia Buddhist group consisting of 11 Asian countries conducted a meeting in Maha Chulalongkorn University in Thailand on 11 May it is learnt.

At the event sayadaws from the university, Myanmar State Pariyati Sasana University Rector Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita honorary dhamma professor Dr. Bhaddanta Kumara, Yangon Region Sangha Nayaka Chairman Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Eida Bala, Kyaikhtisaung Sayadaw Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Daja Dr. Bhaddanta Nagadipa, Mawtinsoon Sayadaw, Myanmar Theravada Buddhist Federation and Border Areas and Hill Region Sasana Nugaha Association (Central) Chairman Wunna Kyaw Htin Dr. Khin Shwe. — Myanmar News Agency

the discussion.

Next, at a ceremony held at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Ayutthaya, on 13 May, Yangon Region Sangha Nayaka Chairman Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Eida Bala was presented with an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Administration by Maha Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

Present at the ceremony were Kyaikhtisaung Sayadaw Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Daja Dr. Bhaddanta Nagadipa, Mawtinsoon Sayadaw, Myanmar Theravada Buddhist Federation and Border Areas and Hill Region Sasana Nugaha Association (Central) Chairman Wunna Kyaw Htin Dr. Khin Shwe. — Myanmar News Agency



Chairman Wunna Kyaw Htin Dr. Khin Shwe conferred by Thai University on 13 May. PHOTO: MNA

Ministries hold press conference on performance over 2nd year

THE Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Construction, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation will hold a press conference over their respective second one-year performance at 1 p.m. in Office No. (7) at the Ministry of Information's building in Nay Pyi Taw today.—Myanmar News Agency

Constitutional Tribunal of Myanmar departs for Russia



U Myint Win and U Twar Kyin Paung of the Constitutional Tribunal of Myanmar departed from Yangon International Airport yesterday for Saint Petersburg in the

Russian Federation to attend the 8th Saint Petersburg International Legal Forum, which will be held from today until 19 May.—Myanmar News Agency

Crop insurance pilot project to start in Ayeyawady Region

A crop insurance system will be introduced first in the Ayeyawady region as an experimental measure, according to Myanma Insurance.

The crop insurance system will cover damages to crops due to erratic weather conditions in the country. The government gave the green light to carry out the pilot project for crop insurance on 31 January 2018. This permit is not meant to run the crop insurance business but for the purpose of research and experiment, according to Global World Insurance Company Limited.

The crop insurance scheme will start with paddy, paying for the loss depending on the yield agreed to by both parties. This means the insurance will cover the loss if the yield is lower than the set volume owing to erratic weather, which will be determined by the Meteorology and Hydrology Department.

Among the project areas, the Magway and Ayeyawady Regions chief ministers are organising meetings to carry out the pilot projects for crop insurance.

The Ayeyawady Region held a meeting for crop insurance on 8 May, with the participation of Regional Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung, Regional

Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Natural Resources U Tin Aung Win, Pyithu Hluttaw representative of Nyaungdon Township constituency Daw Ni Ni Moe, Global World Insurance Company Director U Soe Win Thant and other officials.

The new crop insurance system is of national interest as it will benefit farmers and so, the pilot project will be executed as soon as possible in the Ayeyawady Region. Three sites in Hinthada District in the Ayeyawady Region have been selected as pilot areas for the project.

The Global World Insurance Company that developed this crop insurance scheme has been asked to hold awareness campaigns and workshops for farmers, said the Ayeyawady Region chief minister.

Crop insurance was initiated in 2016 and public awareness campaigns for this purpose are being conducted since 2017, said U Soe Win Thant, director of Global World Insurance Company.

Currently, farmers are more interested in life insurance, snake insurance and crop insurance, said U Hla San, Amyotha Hluttaw representative from Magway constituency.—Khin

Waste accumulation major threat to beaches

ALTHOUGH no severe damage to the natural environment has been reported on Myanmar's beaches, garbage accumulation has become a major threat, according to a report in Myawady Daily yesterday.

While beaches in other ASEAN countries receive millions of foreign tourists every year, Ngapali beach receives only some 50,000 visitors. The arrival rates in other countries are 20 per cent higher than My-

anmar. Chaungtha and Ngwehsaung beaches see arrivals of thousands of visitors only.

There are no garbage bins and a systematic garbage collection system on Myanmar's beaches. The conservation system for beaches is still weak.

Garbage is a major threat to beaches. If garbage bins are available on beaches, people will use them, said U Naung Naung Han, joint general-secretary of Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association.

Recently, foreign tourists visited three beaches in Myanmar. Ngapali and Ngwehsaung beaches are seeing an increasing number of visitors. Because of a decline in the beach quality and high pollution, the number of visitors to Chaungtha beach has dropped, according to figures released by the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism—GNLM

Erdogan in Britain for talks with 'valuable' ally

LONDON — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Britain was a "valuable and reliable" strategic ally after he arrived in the UK on Sunday ahead of talks with Prime Minister Theresa May.

Erdogan said he wanted to boost trade and security ties between London and Ankara, with Britain preparing to leave the European Union in March next year.

The three-day visit will see him spell out Turkey's foreign policy strategy in a keynote speech on Monday before meeting May on Tuesday.

After arriving, Erdogan spoke on Sunday at the annual Tatlidil Turkish-British forum, where he said he wanted to combine the UK's financial power with Turkey's operational resources.

"I see the strategic partnership between Turkey and the UK as a necessity, rather than a simple choice, for the interests of the two countries," he said, in a speech broadcast by Turkey's state-run TRT television.

"The cooperation we have with the UK is well beyond any mechanism that we established with other partners."

"The UK is a strategic ally that we find valuable and reliable. We are ready to cooperate more with the UK in the post-Brexit in every field."

Erdogan is campaigning for snap parliamentary and presidential elections on 24 June. He has drawn controversy for electioneering in Europe, where there are some three million Turks who are eligible to vote in Turkish elections.

The expatriate vote is generally a source of support for Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

The early election is set to accelerate Turkey's transition to the new presidential system

with full executive powers which critics fear will lead to one-man rule.

May is under pressure from parliamentarians and rights groups to raise civil liberties issues with Erdogan.

'Climate of fear'

"The Turkish authorities have deliberately set about dismantling civil society, locking up human rights defenders, shutting down organisations and creating a suffocating climate of fear," said Kate Allen, Amnesty International's UK director.

The group said Erdogan's nationwide crackdown has resulted in mass arrests, a silencing of activists in the country and the near-destruction of Turkey's legal system.

May's spokesman said: "The visit is an opportunity for the UK and Turkey to demonstrate our close bilateral relationship and to have important discussions about issues of shared interest."

It is not known if Erdogan will be meeting British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, who in 2016 won a prize that called for rude poems about Erdogan in solidarity with a German comedian facing prosecution for doing the same.

He won the prize for a limerick about a "young fellow from Ankara" who "sowed his wild oats / With the help of a goat / But he didn't even stop to thankera."

Speaking to reporters at Istanbul's Ataturk airport before leaving for Britain, Erdogan said the economy, security, defence and the fight against terror were the priority areas in the two NATO allies' relationship.

There are growing concerns over Turkey's economic health, notably due to a wide current account deficit and fears the economy is overheating.—AFP ■



A Syrian army tank advances through a street in al-Hajar al-Aswad as they push against the Islamic State (IS) group in the area on the southern outskirts of Damascus. PHOTO: AFP

Syria talks renew in Astana amid growing regional fears

ASTANA (Kazakhstan) — Negotiators from Iran, Russia and Turkey gathered in Kazakhstan's capital Astana on Monday, hoping to make progress on a political settlement in Syria as diplomatic tensions fan out across the region.

The two-day talks are the first time the three foreign powers most deeply involved in Syria's seven-year war have met together since Iran and Israel became embroiled in a spat over reported cross-border military strikes last week.

It is also the first meeting of the three sides since US President Donald Trump announced Washington's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal earlier this month in a move further complicating the regional picture.

A spokesman for Kazakhstan's foreign ministry Anuar Zhainakov on Monday confirmed delegations from the three power-brokers and the Syrian regime had arrived in the capital and were locked in closed-door talks.

A rebel delegation was expected to arrive late on Monday ahead of Tuesday's plenary session concluding the meeting, he

wrote on Telegram.

The United Nations envoy on Syria Staffan de Mistura was also expected in the capital Monday, Zhainakov wrote.

The latest negotiations in Kazakhstan are set to discuss "further steps to advance the process of resolving the crisis" in Syria, according to a Kazakh foreign ministry statement.

The multi-sided conflict that has killed more than 350,000 people took a new turn last week after Israel and Iran became embroiled in a dispute over reported cross-border strikes.

Israel claims it struck dozens of Iranian targets inside Syria on Thursday in response to a salvo of rockets fired by Iranian forces into the occupied Golan Heights.

The flare-up between the pair may feature in talks between Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow on Monday.

But the main focus of the Moscow talks will be the Iran nuclear deal Washington walked out of earlier this month, triggering broad international condemnation and fears of fresh conflicts

in the region.

Zarif has already visited Beijing and will head to Brussels after Moscow as part of a bid to salvage the deal.

Since negotiations on Syria in Astana began at the beginning of last year, they have mostly focused on attempts to keep Syrian regime forces and their rebel opponents at arm's length.

But any limited achievements in reducing government-rebel hostilities were put into reverse gear in February when regime forces allied with Moscow and Tehran began a devastating assault on Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus that was under rebel control at the time.

On Friday, Syrian state media and The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor both said that the last rebel groups had exited towns close to the capital.

Their departure means that militants from the Islamic State group fighting on the outskirts of Damascus are now the main challenge to government control over the capital and its surrounding area.—AFP ■

Egypt to put 278 people on trial for 'terrorism' offences

CAIRO (Egypt) — Egypt's prosecutor general referred 278 suspected Muslim Brotherhood members to military trial on Sunday on "terrorism" charges, a judicial official said.

The suspects are facing charges including joining militant groups Lewaa al-Thawra,

which assassinated an army general in 2016, and Hasam.

They are also accused of carrying out 12 "terrorist operations" including targeting and killing police officers and personnel, the official said.

Of the 278 people referred for trial, 141 are already in de-

tention.

Lewaa al-Thawra and Hasam emerged after the military ousted former Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, unleashing a deadly crackdown on his supporters.

Police have accused Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood of di-

recting the groups, an accusation echoed in Sunday's referral.

The Brotherhood, which Egypt declared a "terrorist" group in December 2013, denies any links with militancy and asserts it has solely political aims.

Egypt's civilian and military courts have held successive

"terrorism" trials since Morsi was removed from power.

Sunday's announcement comes after 555 people were referred to military trial last week, accused of belonging to a branch of the Islamic State group in the Sinai Peninsula.—AFP ■

China hails DPRK's pledge to dismantle nuclear test site

BEIJING — A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson on Monday applauded the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) announcement that it will dismantle its northern nuclear test ground between 23 to 25 May. "The measures taken by the DPRK demonstrate its goodwill for advancing denuclearization of the peninsula and building mutual trust with related parties," spokesperson Lu Kang said at a daily press briefing.

He said that this is condu-

cive to the political settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue and should be welcomed, encouraged, and supported by the international community.

The DPRK announced that it will hold a ceremony for the dismantling of the northern nuclear test ground between 23 and 25 May, depending on weather conditions, and journalists from China, Russia, the United States, Britain and the Republic of Korea will be allowed to conduct on-site coverage.—Xinhua ■



Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang. PHOTO: XINHUA

Colombia rebels declare election ceasefire

HAVANA, CUBA — Colombia's last active rebel group on Monday declared a five-day ceasefire for the country's presidential election.

The announcement from the National Liberation Army came after peace talks resumed on Thursday in Havana, Cuba.

"The ELN will stop military activities from zero hour, on 25 May, to 24:00 on the 29th to provide favorable conditions permitting Colombian society to express itself in the elections," the group said, using its Spanish acronym.

The rebels' magazine Insurreccion carried the announcement in its latest issue, as did the guerrillas' Twitter account.

Colombia's government had said it hoped for agreement on a ceasefire before the 27 May ballot.

President Juan Manuel Santos is trying to conclude a peace agreement with the ELN similar to one signed with the larger FARC guerrillas in November 2016.

The FARC has since become a political party.

Santos steps down in August and has admitted that any peace deal with the 1,500-strong ELN will likely come too late for him to sign.

The opinion polls' favorite to succeed him, right-wing senator Ivan Duque, is opposed to negotiations with the rebels.

Santos ordered his team to resume peace talks in March in response to a unilateral ceasefire by the ELN for that month's legislative elections.

Gustavo Bell, head of the government delegation, told reporters on Thursday that the talks would focus on building "a more robust ceasefire" than a 101-day truce that ended in January after Bogota accused the rebels of a spate of deadly attacks. Cuba stepped in to host the talks after Ecuador, where several rounds of negotiations took place, pulled out last month to protest an upsurge of violence on its border with Colombia.—AFP ■

20 political parties register for Cambodia's 29 July election

PHNOM PENH — Twenty political parties have registered to participate in Cambodia's 29 July general election, an official said on Monday, but the country's only viable opposition party, dissolved by a court order late last year, is not among them.

Dim Sovannarom, spokesman of National Election Committee, told Kyodo News that four of the 20 parties who submitted required documents during the 15-day registration period have so far been officially recognized, while the others are still being reviewed.

He also said 8.3 million of the country's 15 million people have registered to vote in the election, which will be the first since 2013.

The exclusion of the Cambodia National Rescue Party, which was the only opposition party represented in parliament, ensures an easy victory for the Cambodian People's Party of Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has been in power for over three decades.

The CNRP has called for voters to boycott the "fake" election to deny it legitimacy and to send out a message of support for the opposition par-

ty, whose leaders have been banned from politics.

It says the polls can in no way be free and fair if the "only credible challenger" to the CPP is barred, even though a score of newly formed political parties — none of which have any elected representatives in the National Assembly — might participate in them.

The CNRP's longtime co-leader Sam Rainsy, speaking to a big crowd of Cambodians living in the United States on Sunday night, likened such parties to "fireflies because of their ephemeral character."

He said their "only role is to help Hun Sen in its desperate effort to legitimize a fake election."

During a visit to Tokyo last month, Sam Rainsy accused Hun Sen of putting forward smaller parties under his control in an attempt to portray Cambodia as having a multi-party system.

"But nobody will be fooled," he said.

"A real election requires the participation of the CNRP"

Sam Rainsy predicted on Sunday that if the election were held fairly, the CNRP would get 50 per cent of votes against 30

per cent for the CPP.

Eight political parties took part in the 2013 general election but only two of them — the CPP and the CNRP — won seats in the 123-seat National Assembly.

In that election, the results of which were disputed by the CNRP, the opposition party ended up with 55 seats, compared with 68 for the CPP.

After the Supreme Court ordered the CNRP's dissolution last November for allegedly attempting to topple the government, all 55 of those assembly seats were taken away and redistributed to smaller parties that had not won any before, while 118 senior CNRP members were banned from participating in politics for five years.

The CNRP's president, Kem Sokha, is in jail for allegedly conspiring with United States to topple the government, while Sam Rainsy has been forced into exile abroad and faces jail time if he returns home. Both the United States and European Union have withheld funding for the upcoming election in view of the government's extensive crackdown on dissent and opposition ahead of the polls.—Kyodo News ■

Malaysia's Mahathir quickly shows he will reopen 1MDB investigation

PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia — Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad began his first day at work on Monday by telling Attorney General Mohamed Apandi Ali, who closed the government investigation into the alleged looting of billions of dollars from the investment fund, to go on leave.

“Since there are problems with the attorney general, the AG will go on leave. His post will be taken over by the Solicitor General,” Mahathir told a press conference after a hectic first day.

Mahathir, 92, who led the rag-tag four-party opposition Alliance of Hope to a stunning electoral victory in Wednesday's general election, ending the 61-year reign of the National Front coalition, has promised to clean up the government and the mess left behind by his predecessor, Najib Abdul Razak.

This includes reopening the 1Malaysia Development Berhad investigation that Apandi ordered closed in January 2016 after absolving Najib of any criminal wrongdoing.

Najib was implicated



Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. PHOTO: AFP

ed in the 1MDB scandal when the Wall Street Journal broke the news in July 2015 that nearly \$700 million was transferred from the fund into Najib's personal bank account in 2013.

Apandi declared to a skeptical public that the massive sum was a personal donation for the Saudi royal family and most of the money had been returned. He then ordered the Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission to close its investigation into alleged looting of the 1MDB fund.

It was widely rumored the MACC had recommended that Najib be charged.

Apandi's appointment as the attorney gen-

eral was controversial. His predecessor, Abdul Gani Patail, was heading a separate investigation into the WSJ claim but barely two weeks into the job, he was fired by Najib and replaced by Apandi.

MACC top brass also faced action. Its former chief was forced to step down and was replaced by Dzulkifli Ahmad, while other officials were either transferred to other government agencies or forced into early retirement.

Sensing he was also in Mahathir's line of fire, Dzulkifli resigned Monday.

“Tomorrow I hope I can appoint a new MACC chief,” Mahathir said.

Meanwhile, Najib and

his wife have been banned from travelling abroad, and Mahathir said more people have been put on the list.

Those others may include Apandi and 1MDB chief executive Arul Kanda, according to speculation.

The possibility of rampant looting of 1MDB money is also being investigated by other countries including the United States, Switzerland and Singapore.

US authorities say \$4.5 billion was misappropriated from the fund by Najib's cronies and his step son, and used to buy luxury condominiums, expensive jewelry and art.

The mastermind behind the grand larceny is said to be Low Taek Jho, a 35-year-old playboy tycoon and close ally of Najib. US authorities are suing Low and others to recover assets purchased with ill-gotten gains.

There is also pressure within Malaysia to bring him to justice.

“We have not requested the Interpol to track Jho Low but we know where he is,” Mahathir said.—Kyodo News ■

Two families staged Indonesian suicide bombings: police

SURABAYA, Indonesia — A family of five, including a child, carried out the suicide bombing of a police headquarters in Indonesia's second city Surabaya on Monday, police said, a day after a deadly wave of attacks on churches staged by another family.

The spate of bombings has rocked Indonesia, with the Islamic State group claiming the church attacks and raising fears about its influence in Southeast Asia as its dreams of a Middle Eastern caliphate fizzle.

Indonesia, which is set

to host the Asian Games in just three months, has long struggled with Islamist militancy, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed over 200 people — mostly foreign tourists — in the country's worst-ever terror attack.

Security forces have arrested hundreds of militants during a sustained crackdown that smashed some networks, and most recent attacks have been low-level and targeted domestic security forces.

But that changed Sunday as a family of six — including two young girls —

staged suicide bombings of churches during morning services in Surabaya, killing 18 including the bombers.

On Monday, members of another family blew themselves up at a police station in the city, wounding 10.

“There were five people on two motorbikes. One of them was a little kid,” national police chief Tito Karnavian said. “This is one family.”

An eight-year-old girl from the family survived the attack and was taken to hospital, while her

mother, father and two brothers died in the blast, he said.

The church attacks were claimed by the Islamic State group.

The father of the church suicide bombers was a local leader in extremist network Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) which supports IS, and the second family was also linked to the the group.

“It ordered and gave instructions for its cells to make a move,” Karnavian said of the Islamic State's role in the church attacks.—AFP ■

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Leave the movie at the bedroom door say Cannes couples

PARIS — Hepburn and Tracey, Bogart and Bacall, Joel Coen and Frances McDormand: movie magic often has real-life love stories behind it, but star couples at Cannes say you must tread carefully when mixing work and romance.

Spanish Oscar winners Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem, who have replaced Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt as the smouldering A-list pair on Cannes' red carpet, have already teamed up on nine movies but said they were in no hurry to rush back to a film set together.

After the premiere of their new thriller, "Everybody Knows", which opened the festival, Cruz said dryly that while she enjoyed working with her husband, she wouldn't want to do it all the time.

"It's not something that we plan on doing every two years."

Cruz said she and Bardem, who have two children, were paid equally for the film and have strict ground rules about leaving the push-and-pull of their personal relationship far from the set.

"It would not make your life better, I think, if you used certain things from your private life (on a film). So the fact that we know each other and trust each other so much only helps," said Cruz.

Shop talk, pillow talk

China's Zhao Tao, who influential movie website IndieWire last week called "one of the



Spanish actress Penelope Cruz (L) and Spanish actor Javier Bardem have replaced Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt as the smouldering A-list couple on Cannes' red carpet. PHOTO: AFP

greatest actresses in the world", has made a half dozen films with her spouse, director Jia Zhangke, including "Touch of Sin" and "Mountains May Depart".

Their latest is another Cannes contender, "Ash is Purest White".

She calls her husband "Director Jia" while shooting, just like the rest of the cast, keeping their shop talk and pillow talk sharply separate.

"When I come home and we get back to our own family we have nicknames for each other — but that is something that just belongs to both of us privately,"

she said.

Zhao said their relationship had grown more "dynamic" and collaborative since they made their first picture together, "Platform", in 2000.

"Back then, if the director thought a scene was good, I tended to think 'Yeah, it's good enough'," she said.

"Now it's more of a dialogue about the characters — how I want from a female perspective to make a character come alive. I think he's very responsive to my opinions and suggestions."

Jia, who won the Golden Lion top prize at Venice in 2006

for "Still Life", told AFP their sometimes hard-fought consensus covered even ostensibly trivial details like costumes.

He said their shared love of Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill" movies led the couple to occasionally borrow some of the eye-watering colours of its costumes.

They revived the look in "Ash is Purest White", whose first chapter set in the 2000s recalls Tarantino and the Hong Kong action movies that inspired him with their ultra-stylish violence. "We were just on the same page," Jia said of his wife.

'Really terrifying'

It's often a cinema passion project that brings lovers together in the first place, as with AB Shawky and the producer of his debut feature "Yomeddine", Dina Emam.

"We didn't start dating until maybe right before production," Emam told reporters in Cannes.

The film, set in an Egyptian leper colony using non-professional actors who were not able to read or write, proved to be more of a bonding experience than they bargained for.

The two survived a "really terrifying" shakedown by amateur security guards, Cairo's byzantine bureaucracy and the vagaries of crowdfunding a complex project that surprised everyone by getting into Cannes' vaunted competition.

"It was a gruelling shoot, I can't sugarcoat it," said Shawky, at 32 the youngest director in the Cannes competition.

Emam agreed: "There's no amount of planning that could have prevented the things that happened on this shoot — I think maybe we were a little cursed."

But after their baptism of fire, Shawky and Emam decided they were ready to take the next step.

"As soon as we were done with the film we decided 'I think we've gone through the hardest thing we'll ever go through in our lives — I think marriage will be a piece of cake'," she quipped. —AFP ■

Spike Lee's signature: entertainment, activism, rage

NEW YORK — Spike Lee, whose new film "BlacKkKlansman" will premiere in Cannes on Monday, has captivated audiences for more than 30 years with his depictions of life in black America, infused with his signature mix of entertainment, activism and rage.

Lee first grabbed attention at the festival with his breakout feature, "She's Gotta Have It" — shot in two weeks in black and white during the hot summer of 1985, in part thanks to his grandmother's savings.

With that film, which won a youth prize at Cannes, Lee "broke the glass ceiling" for black filmmakers and "opened the doors for everybody who's come after him," says Michael Genet, an actor and screenwriter

who penned the script for "She Hate Me."

African-American director Ryan Coogler "couldn't be who he is today with 'Black Panther' without Spike Lee doing what he did," he adds. "It's impossible."

Lee — born Shelton Jackson Lee in Georgia on March 20, 1957 — was raised in Brooklyn's Fort Greene neighborhood, where he filmed "She's Gotta Have It" and which is still home to his production company 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks.

A small man with a piercing gaze from behind his round glasses, Lee acted in that first film, taking the supporting role of motor-mouthed Mars Blackmon, one of the main character's three suitors.

John Canada Terrell, one



Spike Lee. PHOTO: AFP

of his co-stars in the movie, described Lee as a "very strange, cerebral kind of cat."

"Spike was always quiet. He kept to himself but I called him the idea man," recalls Herbert Eichelberger, an associate pro-

fessor of film at Clark Atlanta University whom Lee calls his mentor.

"He would come with all kinds of ideas about doing films and making certain kinds of approaches to a situation."

Storyteller

"From the start, he was a good storyteller," says Eichelberger, who thought Lee's career would be focused on documentaries, given his keen powers of observation of society around him.

But Lee would embrace that format only once, in 1997 with "4 Little Girls" — the Oscar-nominated story of the racially motivated bombing of an African-American church during the US civil rights movement.

In the decade in between, Lee established himself as a force to be reckoned with, producing films with an often political bent like "Do the Right Thing," "Malcolm X" and "Jungle Fever." —AFP ■

Australian breaks world record with Everest summit

KATHMANDU — An Australian climber reached the top of Mount Everest on Monday, becoming the fastest person to summit the highest mountain on each of the world's seven continents.

Steve Plain conquered Everest 117 days after he reached the peak of Mount Vinson — the highest mountain in Antarctica — breaking the previous seven-summit speed record by nine days.

"Steve reached the summit this morning with Jon Gupta and Pemba Sherpa," Iswari Paudel of Himalayan Guides Nepal, which organised logistics for Plain's Everest ascent, told AFP.

Plain's GPS tracker also showed he had stood atop the 8,848 metre (29,030 foot) mountain.

The Australian began his quest to break the record just four years after a swimming accident left him with a broken back.

He and two team-mates left the last camp before the Everest summit late Sunday to make their final ascent.

"We are now resting at camp 4, for a few hours at least. Our plan is to set off this evening aiming to reach the top early tomorrow morning.



This picture taken on 24 April, 2018, shows climbers at Everest Base Camp practicing their techniques on the Khumbu glacier before trying to summit Everest, some 140km northeast of the Nepali capital Kathmandu. **PHOTO: AFP**

Time to get this finished off," Plain wrote in a blog update on Sunday.

The Australian climbed six of the seven summits with British climber Gupta who tweeted Monday: "Hello from the top of the world!!! We've done it!! We're on the summit of Everest!! Words simply can't begin to describe what I can see & how I am feeling — it's very emotional!!"

The previous record for the fastest ascent of the seven summits was set last year by Polish climber Janusz Kochanski, who did it in 126 days.

There is some controversy over which mountains should make the list of the highest continental summits.

In one version Australia's Mount Kosciuszko (2,228 metres) makes the list, while the other list defines the Cars-

tenz Pyramid — a much harder 4,884 metre climb in Indonesia — as the highest peak of the Australian continent.

For good measure, Plain climbed both. As well as the 4,892-metre Vinson, the other summits are Aconcagua (6,962m) in Argentina, Tanzania's Kilimanjaro (5,895m), Elbrus (5,642m) in Russia and Denali (6,190m) in the United States.—AFP ■

Businesspersons invited to join Mandalay Beauty & Lifestyle Expo

THE Mandalay Beauty & Lifestyle Expo is being held at Mandalay's City Hall, showcasing a wide range of value-added products.

To introduce quality products and services to visitors under a single roof, the current event is being organised by Smart Business Group, a leading exhibition organiser. The trade expo began on 11 May and will go on until 14 May, with the organiser inviting people, especially businesspersons, from upper Myanmar to participate in the four-day event.

During the exhibition, domestic and foreign companies will display their value-added products, including cosmetics and fancy items for women, electronic devices, foodstuff, clothing, home decoration accessories, kitchen utensils, plastic wares, machinery, cameras, watches, medicines and auto accessories. Myanmar spent more than US\$4.4 billion on the import of consumer products last financial year. To reduce the country's trade deficit, the trade authorities in cooperation with private entrepreneurs are trying to further boost the productivity of value-added products. — Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Sacred oxen augur good times ahead for Thailand

BANGKOK — Thai palace astrologers on Monday predicted a strong harvest after a pair of sacred oxen munched on grass and drank water and liquor in an annual ritual that tests the omens for the kingdom.

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn presided over the colourful "royal ploughing ceremony", which saw Brahmin priests head a procession of the white oxen around a field outside Bangkok's Grand Palace.

The ceremony is held every year in Thailand, one of the world's top rice exporters, to mark the start of the growing season.

Royal soothsayers base

their predictions on which foods the animals choose to eat after the ploughing, when they are offered bowls of rice, maize, green beans, sesame, liquor, water and grass.

This year the bulls chose water, grass and liquor, according to officials.

"The royal prediction is that rice, fruit and food will be plentiful," said Thanit Anekwit from the Agriculture Ministry.

The liquor also "means communication and trade with foreign countries will be facilitated well," he added.

After the ceremony crowds swarmed the field, as is tradition, to collect 'lucky' grains of rice that had been scattered



Thais believe the ceremony predicts what the year's harvest will be like. **PHOTO: AFP**

over the soil during the ploughing.

Thailand's constitutional monarchy has few legal powers but wields vast influence

behind the scenes and is also extremely wealthy.

The status of the crown is buttressed by elaborate ceremonies and palace protocols.

Royals are also protected from any criticism by a draconian defamation law that can land offenders decades behind bars.—AFP ■

Resurgent Marseille flying the flag for France again

PARIS — Twenty-five years have passed since Marseille's crowning moment, but the only French club ever to have been European champions are finally dreaming of more glory on the continental stage.

After a Europa League campaign that began in late July, Rudi Garcia's side now find themselves up against Atletico Madrid in Wednesday's final in Lyon, at the home of one of their great rivals.

OM will not be the favourites against Diego Simeone's formidable team, and indeed anybody brave enough at the start of the season to tip a French side to go all the way in Europe would probably not have said Marseille.

But Paris Saint-Germain again came up short in the Champions League, despite the world-record signing of Neymar, and Lyon failed to reach the Europa League final in their own stadium, leaving Marseille to fly the flag.

They have done that with distinction before — Basile Boli's headed winner against AC Milan in the 1993 Champions League final in Munich allowed them to become European champions for the first time.

No French side has repeated that feat, with PSG's victory in the now defunct Cup Winners' Cup in 1996 the only other European trophy success for the country's

clubs.

Marseille have had their moments though — already beaten in the 1991 European Cup final, on penalties by Red Star Belgrade, they lost the UEFA Cup finals of 1999 to Parma and 2004 to Valencia.

Still France's best supported side, they are preparing for their fifth European final altogether, looking to give their notoriously passionate fans a night to remember.

"It's fantastic. I'd really love to write history with OM. We have had a great run and given ourselves this chance," said Florian Thauvin, their outstanding player this season.

Those fans will travel the three hours by road to Lyon in big numbers, relishing the prospect of lifting that trophy in their rivals' own backyard, even if only around 11,000 tickets have been allocated to them.

In a Mediterranean city that lives and breathes for its football team, there have been more downs than ups in the last quarter of a century, and fans descended on the Old Port to celebrate in style after the semi-final win over Salzburg.

"When you are a player and you live in Marseille, you understand right away," Boli, now 51, said in an interview with France Televisions.

"You go to the butcher, the



Dimitri Payet's quality and experience have helped spur Marseille's renaissance. **PHOTO: AFP**

baker, you go to pick up your daughter, the city is like that, you don't need to be told that you represent something extraordinary. You experience it every day."

McCourt's 'road to glory'

The 1993 success of Boli's side ended up closing a golden period in the club's history — a match-fixing scandal erupted at the same time, and finished with Marseille being consigned to the second division a year later.

OM have been French champions only once since, under Didi-

er Deschamps in 2010, and since then have seen their greatest enemies, PSG, become one of the richest clubs on the planet under Qatari ownership.

PSG's budget is around four times that of Marseille, and the capital side have just won a fifth Ligue 1 crown in six years. But they have consistently fallen short in the Champions League.

Marseille will certainly settle for victory in Europe's less prestigious competition, as they look to cap their first full season since American tycoon Frank McCourt

took over at the Stade Velodrome.

Former Los Angeles Dodgers owner McCourt bought the club from Margarita Louis-Dreyfus in October 2016 and immediately launched his 'Champions Project', insisting: "We're going to put our club back on the road to glory."

After spending significant money to bring in experience and quality in the likes of Dimitri Payet, Luiz Gustavo and Adil Rami, Marseille are well down that road now, and it leads to Lyon this week.—AFP ■

Pochettino urges Spurs superiors to take risks in transfer market

LONDON — Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino called on the club's chairman Daniel Levy to match his ambitions by being "brave" in the transfer market ahead of moving to a new 62,000 capacity stadium.

Spurs sealed Champions League football for a third straight season by finishing third in the Premier League despite having reportedly just the sixth highest wage bill behind Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea, Arsenal and Liverpool.

Tottenham have also spent only a fraction of the hundreds of millions outlaid in the transfer market by the two Manchester

clubs to take the top two spots in the league. Instead, Pochettino has worked wonders by developing and improving an extremely talented young squad.

However, patience may be wearing thin for some players not earning as much they could elsewhere after it was revealed last month that chairman Daniel Levy saw his own pay last season rise £3.16 million (\$4.3 million) to just over £6 million a year.

"I think Daniel is going to listen to me. But you know me and sometimes I have some crazy ideas," said Pochettino.

"You need to be brave. In this type of situation, with a club

with our unbelievable fans, being brave is the most important, and to take risks.

"I think it's a moment the club needs to take risks and if possible work harder than the previous season to be competitive again." However, Pochettino's wishes could be hampered by spiralling costs for the new stadium, reportedly set to hit £1 billion. Outgoing Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger even suggested last week that prized assets like Harry Kane might need to be sold to balance the books in the wake of the stadium move.

Wenger was forced to battle to keep Arsenal competitive



Tottenham's Mauricio Pochettino. **PHOTO: AFP**

despite the financial handicap of paying back bank loans and selling a number of his top players following Arsenal's move from Highbury to the Emirates in 2006.

The Frenchman said keeping Arsenal in the Champions League for the following nine years was his "best job" as a manager.—AFP ■