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President U Win Myint, right, chairs yesterday's meeting of the National Planning Commission in Nay Pyi Taw. Second from right is State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. **PHOTO: MNA**

President guides NPC toward FY planning

Meeting will determine 2018-2019 development projects based on national need, budget

PRESIDENT U Win Myint, Chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC), addressed the commission's meeting (2/2018) held at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The meeting was attended by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice-Presidents U Myint Swe and U Henry Van Thio, Union Ministers, the Union Attorney General, the Union

Auditor General, the Union Civil Service Board Chairman, the Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, the Central Bank of Myanmar Governor, Chief Ministers of states and regions, Deputy Ministers, regional chairmen and officials of self-administered division and zones.

President U Win Myint said the day's meeting was held to disclose, discuss and approve the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 National

Plan before submitting it to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in accordance with the 2008 Constitution.

Starting from FY 2018-2019, the financial year of Myanmar was designated to be from 1 October 1 to 30 September. A national plan and regional projects should be conducted according to the newly designated fiscal year.

In changing the financial year, the six-month period from

April to September of this year is considered a transitional period during which the National Planning Law is being enacted and implemented.

In drawing up projects for national development, it is necessary to effectively coordinate and draw up work processes according to the current requirements of the people and for the sustainable development of the country, in accordance with state

policies, priorities and available State budget.

Union ministries, states and regions are to draw and propose project aims based on the United Nations post-millennium sustainable development goals, economic policies set by the State, long and middle-term aims and in accordance with their own policies, work processes as well as priority programmes.

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President U Win Myint attends Finance Commission meeting (2/2018)

PRESIDENT U Win Myint, Chairman of the Finance Commission, addressed the Finance Commission meeting (2/2018) held yesterday morning at the Presidential Palace.

The meeting was attended by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Finance Commission Vice-Chairmen, Vice-Presidents U Myint Swe and U Henry Van Thio, Secretary Union Minister U Soe Win, members the Union Attorney General, the Union Auditor General, the Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, along with Chief Ministers from states and regions.

President U Win Myint said the present Finance Commission meeting (2/2018) is being held to discuss and adopt the Union Budget Estimate for Fiscal Year 2018-2019 and the Union Budget Bill for Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

Section 221 of the 2008 Constitution requires that the Union Government draft a Union Budget Bill based upon the annual Union budget, and after coordinating with the Financial Commission submit it for approval to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. As per this section, the Financial Commission is to support the Union Budget Bill for Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

FY 2018-2019 is the first budget year after the new fiscal year was designated. The outcome of designating a new fiscal year will result greater than expenditures than usual, and it is believed it will assist in improved economic development of the union.

The government is consistently working for the benefit of the people and to ensure the full cooperation of those public servants who are participating in the main sector of establishing the union to perform their duties in the union reform work processes, thus their salaries were increased 10 to 20 per cent.

Regarding capital expenditures, the construction and procurement budgets estimated and requested should be for work that can be completed within the fiscal year. Priority is to be given to ongoing work projects, and work projects are to be drawn up in accordance with the priority policies set by the State. Funds are to be requested for construction work only when the land for construction is obtained. Funds are to be requested for tenders that already have designs and can be called within the fiscal year, and to conduct tender work according to guidelines.



The meeting of the Finance Commission in progress yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

It is necessary to obtain the nearest estimate for projects, so that projects can be managed without waste. It is also necessary to manage projects so that there is no waste of public funds and to submit the most accurate estimate for the projects. Estimates and calculations are to be based on the prevailing rate of the region, and extra or excess funds not used are to be estimated, calculated and returned.

It was found that when departments and organisations request expenditures, many indirect expenses, such as procurement of office materials and furniture were included, and there were more departmental expenses in project expenditures. As such, when expenditures are drawn up, departmental expenses are to be reduced as much as possible. As there are limitations in the budgets, the priority should be to include more project work expenses, and to use them effectively. And it is important for the expenditures to be for work that can be completed during the fiscal year. Furthermore, development policies set by the Union government are to be implemented by the departments, according to priorities.

Just as an ordinary person with common sense uses his or her own money appropriately, departments and organizations are to appropriately evaluate and utilize project work expenditures and departmental expenditures.

More expenditures were permitted to construct accommodations and housing for public servants during their service period and upon retirement. Project expenditures for reforestation to prevent natural disasters, reduce climate change, development of infrastructure, such as increasing generation of electricity, availability of potable water, irrigation water, transport and communica-

tions, were being provided as a priority and expenditure for the development of human resources, such as education, health and social benefits being increased.

In order to fulfill the first point of the union's economic policy of ensuring that budget estimates and actual implementations are as accurate as possible, not only will union level departments and organizations, but state and region-level departments and organizations also need to be effectively managed.

The Finance Commission is to discuss and adopt the Union Budget estimate for FY 2018-2019 and Union Budget Bill for FY 2018-2019 so that it could be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, said the President.

Next, Finance Commission Vice-Chairman Vice-President U Myint Swe said the Union Budget estimate was based on provisional figures of FY 2017-2018. For capital expenditures, a project-wise feasibility study was conducted, and only expenditures for construction, procurement and other work that could be completed in the fiscal year were coordinated and drawn up by the project planning department and permitted.

Ks 50 billion was earmarked for capital expenditures by the Nay Pyi Taw Council, including for infrastructure as well as public servant housing construction. Departmental expenditures for office vehicles was reduced by allocating confiscated vehicles and, if this is not possible, through collective purchases. Luxury expenditures that are not related to production expenditures were reviewed and reduced, while office material and machinery expenditures were reviewed by comparing the situation in the past three years and permitted accordingly.

For the FY 2018-2019 (October to September) Budget, the

income is Ks 20,051 billion, expenditures is Ks 24,954 billion, the deficit is 4,903 billion and the deficit to GDP ratio is 4.62 per cent.

The budget includes Ks 682 billion in foreign aid and Ks 2,191 billion in foreign loans. Ks 1,794 billion was supported from the Union fund to cover deficits of states and regions, which was also included in the total expenditure.

Also, an emergency fund of Ks 100 billion was included in the budget for responding to unforeseeable natural disasters. As per the National Natural Disaster Management Law, the State included Ks 20 billion for the National Natural Disaster Management Fund this year.

The Union Budget estimate for FY 2018-2019 and Union Budget Bill for FY 2018-2019 is being submitted to the Finance Commission so that it could review and approve it, according to the Vice President.

Afterwards, Finance Commission Vice-Chairman Vice-President U Henry Van Thio said that Ks 1,793.1 billion will be provided by the Union to the states and regions in FY 2018-2019. The budget prepared by the states and regions were Ks 1,065.632 billion in income, as well as Ks 2,858.732 billion in expenditures and a deficit of Ks 1,793.1 billion.

When the budget of the states and regions were reviewed, it was found that Ks 876.771 billion was earmarked for ordinary expenditures and Ks 1,972.161 billion for capital expenditures. The budget request was found to consist of 31 per cent ordinary expenditures and 69 per cent capital expenditures. Close to 40 per cent, the majority of the ordinary expenditure, was found to be for salaries and wages, while the second largest ordinary expenditure

of 30 per cent was found to be for maintenance and repair. The remaining 30 per cent is for travel, material purchases, service expenses, education and social expenses, pensions, expenses for irrigation and rural development.

Further, 36 per cent of the capital expenditure was found to be for road and bridge construction, while 38 per cent is set aside for rural roads, water supplies and other regional development work. Also, 16 per cent is for office and public servant housing construction and 10 per cent for procurement of office materials, furniture and vehicles.

Ks 545.373 million expenditure for FY 2018-2019 was requested by the Ayeyawady Region government to cover their one year fuel, lubricant, maintenance expenses and staff allowances for river crossing ferries operated to assist in the transport of goods and people across the river because of the collapse of the Myaungmya Suspension Bridge. As this amount was requested after the union fund to support the states and regions in FY 2018-2019 was already submitted to the Union Government office, the total Union fund allocated to support the states and regions would increase to Ks 1,793.645 billion.

The budget estimate drawn up and provided by states and regions for FY 2018-2019 is submitted to the Financial Commission for discussion and approval, said the Vice President.

Finance Commission secretary Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Soe Win explained about the Union Budget estimate for FY 2018-2019 and Union Budget Bill for FY 2018-2019.

This was followed by the Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman and Chief Ministers of states and regions discussing their support of the Union Budget estimate for FY 2018-2019 and Union Budget Bill for FY 2018-2019.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi emphasized about the importance of not using the minimum amount, but to use the funding for the maximum benefit. For implementing sub-standard projects with the sole purpose of reducing expenses, it will not be beneficial for the country, in the long run. The work conducted should not be affected by reducing costs in required areas. Using less money is not the main point. The main point is to use the money for the greatest benefit of the country.—MNA ■

“...We want real freedom and not tinsel and sham of it. When we say real freedom, we mean the freedom not only to plan our political destiny but also the economy and defence of our country by ourselves ...”

(Excerpt from the address made by Bogyoke Aung San at the 2nd session of the Supreme Council of AFPFL, 16 May 1946)



President guides NPC toward FY planning

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Aims of the Union ministries that are responsible for sector-wise development and state and region governments responsible for regional development are to be coordinated with the State's aim, target and policies.

The Ministry of Planning and Finance is to coordinate the aims of the Union ministries that are responsible for sector-wise development and state and region governments responsible for regional development with the State's aim, target and policies and draw the FY 2018-2019 National Plan.

When Union ministries draw up sector-wise aims, special emphasis is to be placed toward equal and all-round development of states and regions, creating opportunities for new generations and establishing an economic system that sustains development. In the same way, drawing up and implementation of state and region local projects should follow the policies and work processes of the Union, and governments of state and region are to conduct the regional projects to be in line with policies set by the Union.

Submitted proposals for the aim of the project are to be in line with their own aims, works processes and outcomes.

As the financial year is being changed, arrangements are to be made to conduct the necessary coordination in drawing up projects, investment programmes in state-owned sectors, preparation of indexes, writing and submitting reports.

Due to the inflow of foreign investment in FY 2018-2019, mid-term loans provided to basic economic work that require financial investment and required coordination conducted for private sector development

and private small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are expected to have more possibilities of developing further. Arrangements are made for inflow of investment and technical know-how into both the state-owned and private agriculture sector that plays the main role in the country's economy. Road networks all over the country have improved, resulting in increased flow of products and people. Financial services are modernized and developed, and new financial services established. The hotel and travel sector is also developing. As such, GDP is expected to grow 7.6 per cent in the National Plan for FY 2018-2019.

Although the country's economy is not developing rapidly, more farm produce was exported, foreign investment flow into the manufacturing sector, SMEs, transport and travel service work, communications, financial and other services improved and, according to end of FY 2017-2018 estimates, the economy was seen to have developed 6.5 per cent.

In addition to this, statistics and data need to be complete, exact and accurate. Systematic management is required for this. Whether the project aims and proposals are feasible, economically viable, beneficial for the people, or not support regional development or not are to be assessed and reviewed. Only then can the State funds be effectively used and national planning aims required for the country and the people are included and conducted.

In conclusion, all are advised to improve and strengthen according to national policies for social economic structure that will reduce and resolve social economic difficulties faced and expose and conduct priority work that are in accord with the

situation, said the President.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that the National Plan is a plan related to the country. Projects of all ministries and all states and regions are underneath a roof called the National Plan.

“Our country will have true progress if all the projects are connected, united and smoothly conducted. When new projects are thought out, the success and progress of past projects need to be observed. This will show how far the life of the people had progressed. From that, we can think of what needs to be done for the life of the people to progress further. Cooperation is required between central government and state/region governments. Soon to be announced Sustained and Balanced Development Project Myanmar will become our strategic paper. If work can be conducted according to the project, there can be sustained and balanced development. Peace and stability is included in the three main pillars of the project. Without peace and stability, it would be difficult to have development. All the projects must know matters that are of interest to the ministry, state and region governments and demands by the people in states and regions. Projects are to be decided by how it is sustainable for the country and could develop. Projects were selected based on budget. Available budget and finance is important. But it is more important to select projects that ought



President U Win Myint addresses the National Planning Commission meeting (2/2018) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

to be implemented. Since our country is not rich, this is more important. Selection should be based on which project provides the most benefit for the country and the people. The National Plan will become a plan for all nationals. It is important that the project should be for all nationals and not for a state, region or a ministry. In drawing up future projects and to implement the selected projects, emphasis should be placed towards sustained benefit for the country and having a balanced cooperation. This could not be conducted by a single ministry and all are interconnected. All are urged to think and conduct strategically in fulfilling own and country's requirements”, said the State Counsellor.

Afterwards, National Planning Commission Secretary Union Minister U Soe Win explained the proposed draft of the FY 2018-2019 National Plan.

Kayin State Chief Minister Nang Khin Htwe Myint, Kachin State Chief Minister Dr. Khet Aung and Union Minister U Win Khaing then explained the requirements for regional development and electricity requirements of the country.

In his concluding speech, President U Win Myint said that the drawing, confirming and implementing of the FY 2018-2019

National Planning Bill is to be done in the same way as past annual national planning bills.

Although the projects described were drawn up based on policies set by the State, current requirements of the people, long-term development required for the country within the budget, emphasis should also be placed toward unity of ethnic nationals, rule of law, stability, human resource development, conservation and protection of natural environment. In addition to this, there is a need to draw up and implement programmes that are connected to financial, monetary and trade policies. Furthermore, the project aims need to benefit the country and people at the moment, in the short term and in the long term. Regional and international economic development should be continuously monitored and projects that are beneficial for the country need to be conducted in a timely manner.

Projects are to be drawn and implemented according to prevailing laws, rules, procedures, notifications and instructions. Implementation status of the projects should be kept in view throughout the entire project period. Only then can there be sustained transformation of the economic structure and balanced all round development, that are the aims of the country.

The strength of past national plans' are to be maintained, weaknesses reviewed and amended when the FY 2018-2019 National Plan is drawn up and implemented. Suggestions and comments made by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw need to be attended to. In addition to coordination within sectors, within regions, within sectors and regions and the aspirations and desires of the people are to be included in the aim of the project. said the President.—MNA

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Tachilek border hosts over 23,500 foreign visitors this week

OVER 23,500 foreign travelers entered the country through the Tachilek land border between Myanmar and Thailand from 6 to 12 July, according to a report of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

Of those foreigners visiting Tachilek, Thai citizens made up the majority. Officials said the tourists visited well-known destinations, such as Talaw market, Bay-intnaung statue, Wankaung market, Koemyoshin spirit house, the replica of Shwedagon Pagoda, Padaung Village, Chinese temples and Buddhist monasteries.

According to official figures released by the Hotels and tourism ministry, the number of foreign visitors entering the country through the Tachilek border exceeded 237,000, including 233,210 day-trippers.

From 1 April to 12 July this year, 2,500 visitors joined a Mongphyat-Kengtung overnight trip that includes short visits to famous Buddhist

Tourists guided by a tour leader near Tachilek border tour gate. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

monasteries and temples, a waterfall near Kattaung Village and other well-known tourist destinations.

The development of cross-border tourism remains

high on the government's list of priorities to boost the country's smokeless industries, based upon promoting natural sceneries and a variety of cultural heritages. Efforts are being made

by the government to promote cooperation with local tourism organisations and other bodies to increase the arrival of international visitors on an annual basis.—GNLM ■

Raw materials shortage hits paper industry

By Nyein Nyein

THE scarcity of raw materials could lead to the suspension of operations at the country's paper mills, manufacturers said at a press conference in Yangon on Thursday.

U Tin Maung Oo, owner of a paper mill in the Sagaing Region and a representative from Upper Myanmar, said there are 36 paper factories across the country, including six large-scale mills in Upper Myanmar. At present, manufacturers are facing a grad-

ual decline in supplies of raw material, as the country's raw products are being exported to China because of high prices being paid. Also, the raw materials shortage has led to an increase in prices, and it is believed that local paper mills could come to a halt in the future if China imports more raw materials, which will largely affect factory workers.

Paper millers have requested that authorities control the export of raw materials to foreign countries.

U Kyaw Lwin, owner of a pa-

per mill in Yangon's Shwepaukan Industrial Zone, noted, "It is expected that our production business will operate normally if authorities strictly control the flow of raw materials outside the country."

Paper millers have already reported about the difficulties caused by shortages to the Myanmar Pulp and Paper Industry Association (MPPIA), and the association forwarded the report to government departments, said U Kyaw Min, deputy chairman of the MPPIA.

He added that all paper mills in the country purchase only domestic raw materials, including newspapers, journals, books and other publications. Millers are likely to send reports to the association in the future if they face a shortage of raw materials. U Kyaw Min noted that there are 130 paper mills across Myanmar, which consume approximately four million tons of raw materials per year. Currently, over 20 paper mills have shut down due to their inability to obtain raw materials. ■

Mandalay oil millers plan seeking FDA certificate

IN a bid to earn the trust of consumers, the Mandalay Oil Millers Association is planning to seek a certificate from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), to compete with other oils being sold in the domestic market, said U Than Lwin, secretary of the association.

A total of 10 mills are running their businesses in Mandalay District, while only four

have the FDA certificate.

This move aims to build trust with the consumers over locally produced cooking oil, he added.

Many imported edible oils, such as soybean oil, sunflower oil, and vegetable oil have market shares in the domestic market. These cooking oils have certificates and an approval logo and their fair price

attracts more consumers than locally-produced edible oil of high quality.

Imported edible oils have certificates only from their country of origin and lack FDA testing. However, local millers cannot compete with them, as marketing and good advertising ensure they sell well, said an oil miller.

The local groundnut oil

millers are suffering as a result, prompting them to reduce the purchase price of raw groundnut. However, this could harm groundnut growers.

Since 1989, there are over 3,000 oil mills across the country. Now, only 10 per cent of them exist, and even those that have survived are struggling. — Maung Thwin (Mandalay) ■



Heaps of sand and stones are seen at a small-scale jade mining in Khamti. PHOTO: KHINE HSAT WAI

Over 100 small-scale jade mining blocks in Khamti win tender

THE Sagaing Region government has granted permits to small-scale jade miners to operate 104 jade mining blocks in Khamti Township, according to U Zaw Zaw, Deputy Commissioner of the District General Administration Department.

He said authorities also granted 92 applicants to operate jade mining businesses within those jade blocks through a competitive tender system on 10 July. The floor price is Ks500,000

per block. The department will report the list of tender winners to the regional government.

U Thein Hlaing Win, a parliamentarian from Khamti Constituency, said authorities want more residents to apply for jade mining permits, noting that the government organises the distribution of permits in the interest of the residents. However, the number of residents who applied for permits remains low, which could result in a decline in jade

mining.

Tender winners will have legal permission to excavate jade and gems for one year. Authorities will announce the date for the launch of the mining businesses only after receiving permission from the regional government.

For the time being, authorities are still drafting rules for small-scale jade and gems mining in other regions and states.—Khine Hsat Wai

MIC grants permits, endorsements to 19 enterprises

A total of 19 permits and endorsements with a capital of US\$143.12 million were recently approved at the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) meeting 9/2018.

The permits and endorsements to enterprises were approved by the MIC and the respective investment committees of Yangon, Bago and Mandalay regions and Nay Pyi Taw. They will be operating in the manufacturing, agriculture and other service sectors, creating 10,922 local employment opportunities. The existing foreign investments also recruited 300 new employees.

A total of 44 foreign enterprises received permits and endorsements, bringing in a capital of \$325.6 million, as of July in the current six-month interim period (April to September) prior to the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Overall, foreign direct investments of \$842 million flowed into the country so far, including increased investments and investments of over

\$149 million in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone.

MIC expects to attain \$3 billion within the six-month (April to September) interim period but only over \$800 million has been brought into the country so far. If projects with large investments, which are delayed by some ministries, are permitted, it can exceed the target. Projects, such as electric supply using LNG, are still under discussion. MIC is facing difficulties to meet the target with the current inflow of foreign investments, said U Aung Naing Oo, secretary of MIC.

In the similar period, five domestic enterprises were approved by MIC and respective investment committees from Chin and Mon states and Mandalay and Bago regions. They will be operating in the hotel and manufacturing sectors, creating over 364 job opportunities for local residents.

A total of 50 domestic en-

terprises made investments of \$135 million (Ks700 billion) over three months. The total domestic investment flow exceeded \$136 million (Ks710 billion).

MIC will facilitate investment and make progress more quickly than before, starting this month. It will also hold investment promotion fairs in states and regions, raising awareness over investment laws. MIC will also link with international commercial attachés and with the international chambers of commerce in Myanmar, promoting investment opportunities in each region.

At present, 60 per cent of foreign investments are in the Yangon Region. Mandalay attracts 30 per cent of investments. Other regions and states attain only a small portion of investments, according to the statistics released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.—GNLM

Trade with Singapore totals \$740 million in two months

BILATERAL trade between Myanmar and Singapore was US\$740 million in the first two months of the current fiscal year, according to the latest statistics from the Ministry of Commerce.

From 1 April to 31 May, Myanmar imported a wide range of commodities amounting to \$634.9 million from the Republic of Singapore, whereas its exports to the island country were valued at \$105.9 million.

Myanmar's exports to Singapore include agricultural products, footwear, textile and clothing, minerals, animal products and other miscellaneous items. Its imports from Singapore include food, rubber and plastics, fuel, capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer products, metals and chemicals, along with other products.

According to the minis-

try's data, Myanmar-Singapore trade reached \$3.838 billion in the 2017-2018 financial year. Myanmar conducts bilateral trade with Singapore mainly by sea.

Bilateral trade was at its peak in the 2014-2015 FY, reaching \$4.895 billion.

Trade between the two countries was \$2.967 billion in 2016-2017 FY; \$3.696 billion in the 2015-2016 FY; \$3.604 billion in the 2013-2014 FY; \$2.826 billion in the 2012-2013 FY and \$3.058 billion in the 2011-2012 FY.

Singapore is one of the top investors in Myanmar, having invested \$2.163 billion during the last financial year.

According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, Myanmar has approved Singapore's three new investment projects, worth \$50.5 million this FY.—Swe Nyein



Workers roll sheets of raw rubber into a machine to dry in the sun. Myanmar still imports rubber from Singapore. PHOTO: KHON (WIN PA)

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State Counsellor holds talks with EAO leaders



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds talks with the leaders of ethnic armed organizations who are attending the Third Session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong. **PHOTO: MNA**

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in her capacity as the chair of the Central Committee on Holding the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong, received the leaders of ethnic armed organizations who are attending the Third Session of the peace conference yesterday.

At the meeting at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Nay Pyi Taw, the State Counsellor was accompanied by Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe, Vice Chairman of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee, Dr. Tin Myo Win, Chairman of the Peace Commission, Deputy Ministers

U Min Thu, U Khin Maung Tin and Director-General U Zaw Htay, while the ethnic delegation was comprised of Saw Mutu Sae Poe, Chairman of the Karen National Union, Vice Chairman Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, U Bhaung Kae and U Sai Ngin of the Restoration Council of Shan State, Chairman of the New Mon State Party Nai Htaw Mon and Vice Chairman Nai Han Thar, Vice Chairman of the Arakan Liberation Party Khaing Soe Naing Aung, Chin National Front Chairman U Pu Zing Cung, Vice Chairman of the PaO National Liberation Organisation Khun Myint Tun, the All Burma Students'

Democratic Front Chairman U Than Gae, Saw Mu Shae of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, General Secretary of the Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council) Naw Kapaw Htoo and Vice Chairman of the Lahu Democratic Union Kyar Har.

At the meeting, the two sides discussed setting a timetable for success of the national reconciliation and peacemaking process, seeking ways for solving the challenges through political dialogues and close cooperation and discussion between key leaders of the two sides to find solutions. —Myanmar News Agency ■

President, State Counsellor send condolences for loss of lives in Japanese floods

President U Win Myint and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar have sent messages of condolences to His Majesty Akihito, Emperor, and to His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, respectively, for the loss of lives and destruction of properties caused by the devastating floods and landslides due to heavy rain in the western part of Japan.—MNA

State Counsellor receives Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs



DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, yesterday afternoon at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay

Pyi Taw. During the meeting, they cordially discussed on the matters related to peace and reconciliation process in Myanmar, including the Third Session of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong and China's continued provision of constructive assistance for the Rakhine State.—MNA ■

Day Three of 21st Century Panglong Third Session

SECTOR-wise meetings were held on the third day of the Third Session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong, which was convened yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw at the Myanmar International Convention Centre II.

During the political sector meeting, U Aung Thwin Oo, Sai Ram Kul Kyone and Daw Chin Chin were facilitators and read the guidelines and rules for conference representatives, observers and facilitators.

Also, meeting attendees discussed political sector policy proposals and compiled the discussion.

During the economic sector meeting, U Aung Hlaing Moe, U Kyaw Lin Oo, Saw Franklin, Nan Yin Han Pha, Daw Thuzar Thant and Sai Wun Latt acted as facilitators and read the conference rules, guidelines and rules for conference representatives,



Land and Environment Sector group holds meeting at the Union Peace Conference. **PHOTO: MNA**

observers and facilitators. Following this, discussions on basic economic sector principles, the compilation of comments from each group, along with the setting and confirming of decisions and records were made.

In the social sector meeting, the facilitators were U Kyaw Kyaw Oo, Salai Aung Myint and Daw Sandar Lwin,

who explained the form of the meeting, guidelines for facilitators and social sector policies. Compilation of the discussion on policy proposals were then put on record.

Similarly, Lt-Col Saw Cho Aung, Daw Z Nan Raw, Sai Om @ U Aung Myo Htwe and Salai Za Kye O Lyan were facilitators for the security sector meeting.

Afterwards, an explanation of programs for sector-wise meetings, the reading and explanation of work guidelines for the facilitator group and questions on the security sector work committee meeting were conducted.

Suggestions for workshops were then obtained and meeting attendees discussed and suggested national defence matters,

sub-titles and definitions of security and reintegration.

Also, U Aung Kyaw Zan, Dr. Lwin Lwin Wei, Salai Ngun Lyan San, U Hlaing Bone Myint and Khun Kyaw Swe were facilitators at the land and environment sector meeting and read the guidelines and rules for conference representatives, observers and facilitators.

Following this, representatives from government, Hluttaw, Tatmadaw, Ethnic Armed Organisations and political parties discussed the policy proposals, point by point, and then put on record the compilation of the discussion.

Later in the day, Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) secretariat members conducted a press conference regarding the sector-wise meetings conducted on the third day of the conference.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Mahn Ba Khaing, ready to lay down his life for independence

By Than Htike
PHOTO: THAN SOE

Mahn Ba Khaing, a Karen national leader, was one of the martyred leaders who was assassinated on 19 July 1947. He was serving as the Minister for Industry and Labour in Bogyoke (General) Aung San's interim government.

A famous quote attributed to him was, "I am not afraid to die for the independence of my nation and countrymen."

Mahn Ba Khaing was feeling ill on the day of the unfortunate meeting at the Secretariat. His wife implored him not to go but he ignored his own health-concerns and attended the meeting, sitting at the right of Bogyoke Aung San and at the edge of the table closest to the door from where the gunmen entered.

"My mother told me when she arrived at the hospital she saw Daw Khin Kyi (Bogyoke's wife) cradling Bogyoke Aung San in her arms, as they took his body home. My mother fainted when she saw my father. The bodies of the martyred leaders were moved to the Jubilee Hall," said Daw Myint Myint Khaing, daughter of Mahn Ba Khaing and a retired professor from Yangon East University (Mathematics Department).

"A national ceremony offering *soon* (meals) to a hundred monks was held at the Jubilee Hall on 11 April 1948. A similar ceremony was held at Yangon City Hall too. My mother used to offer *soon* to 49 monks every year and to 5 monks every month at our home. She continued this till the day she passed away at the age of 61 on 2 July 1975 at our house in University Avenue. I was three years old when my father passed away and my younger brother just an infant," said Daw Myint Myint Khaing.

She and her family currently live in their house in Tamway Township. She said she used to attend the St. Francis Convent mission school (now Basic Education High School 4) across the street together with (Bogyoke Aung San's daughter and now the State Counsellor) Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and (Bogyoke Aung San's son) U Aung San Lin. Daw Myint Myint Khaing and U Aung San Lin were one year ahead in



the Kindergarten class.

"Our family faced a lot of difficulties after my father passed away. Our bad luck started since 1963. My mother's gas station was taken away in the nationalization process on 20 October. My father opened a banana wholesale shop, but after my mother passed away there were no more bananas coming from the villages, so we had to close down our business. The building had to be renovated from bomb blast damages, too," said Daw Myint Myint Khaing.

"When the BOC Company gave us gas permits, my uncle U Ah Maung gave us his plot of land in East Race Course Road to open a store. I was told that General Ne Win met personally with the wives of the martyred leaders when the gas stations were nationalized. He told them they would receive a sort of Ks 1,000 pension a month."

Mahn Ba Khaing was born in Yonetalin Village in Hinthada District. He was born to village elder Mahn Pe Kone and Daw Pu on 26 October 1903. He attended Hinthada ABM School and later established a school to teach the Karen language to children as well as founding the Karen Youth Association. He was elected as a parliamentarian for northern Patheingyi region in 1937. Mahn Ba Khaing was heavily involved in resisting the Japanese and advocated for Kayin-Bamar solidarity.

"When Bogyoke Aung San gave his speech in the town of Zalun, the British issued a warrant for his arrest so he went into hiding. Mary Hla Taw, wife

of a police inspector, brought Bogyoke to Yonetalin Village and introduced him to my father. She told him he was their leader and entrusted him to get Bogyoke back to Yangon safely. Bogyoke slept upstairs in the house and stayed there for three days. He gave speeches on national independence at night. My father's respect for Bogyoke grew since then. He had only heard about Bogyoke but was delighted when he finally met him."

"English spies were hot on Bogyoke's trail ever since he disappeared from Zalun. After staying at the village for three days, my father disguised Bogyoke as one of his workers and sent him to Hinthada on his banana truck. When they reached the docks, my father, after expressing his apology, asked Bogyoke to carry a load of bananas onto the barge so that his disguise would not be discovered. Bogyoke was said to have laughed and carried the load onto the barge. No one suspected it was Bogyoke and my father accompanied Bogyoke all the way to Yangon. I was seven years old then and my elder sister would always tell me that story," said Daw Nant Khin Htay Ye Khaing, another daughter of Mahn Ba Khaing.

Mahn Ba Khaing exerted immeasurable energy for national solidarity and independence, thus earning the respect of Bogyoke Aung San.

"I was told that my grandfather used to say if you are united, you can even drain out the ocean. Now is the time for all

ethnic nationalities to be united for national development and peace. Even if we are rivals, we should view one another as allies with the same objectives and not as enemies. We (the older generation) will not live to see it, but the next generation will be there to reap the rewards of national development, so it is important that we build understanding and cooperation among all nationalities as soon as possible," said 57-year-old Daw Nant Soe Soe Khaing (Hinthada College), Mahn Ba Khaing's granddaughter.

I conclude this article with gratitude towards Mahn Ba Khaing, one of the nine martyred leaders, who helped form the Hpa Hsa Pa La (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League), Chairman of the Karen Youth Association and Minister for Industry and Labour. ■Nant



Daw Myint Myint Khaing.



Daw Nant Khin Htay Ye Khaing.



Mahn Ba Khaing

(26 October 1903 - 19 July 1947)

- * Mahn Ba Khaing, was a Karen national leader. He was one of the martyred leaders, and started serving as the Minister for Industry and Labour in Bogyoke (General) Aung San's interim government in September 1946.
- * He was born in Yonetalin Village in Hinthada District, to village elder Mahn Pe Kone and Daw Pu on 26 October 1903.
- * He attended Hinthada ABM School and later established a school to teach the Karen language to children as well as founding the Karen Youth Association.
- * He was elected as a parliamentarian for northern Patheingyi region in 1937.
- * Mahn Ba Khaing was heavily involved in resisting the Japanese and advocated for Kayin-Bamar solidarity.
- * He bravely participated in the fight against Japanese troops and made utmost efforts to promote friendship between Burmese and Karen societies. He also strived for emergence of Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and served as a member of its central executive committee. He was elected as Chairman of Karen Youth Organization.
- * He, along with other leaders, was assassinated at 10:37 am on 19 July 1947.

Road to peace long, but well worth the effort, for country and people

THE challenges that Myanmar faces are many, and each challenge calls for strength, patience and courage. It is the aim of the incumbent government to carry forward the peace process based on the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

A ceasefire alone is not enough to bring about everlasting national reconciliation and peace in our country. Successive governments have tried in the past to negotiate a ceasefire with ethnic armed groups, but a truce can be broken by a single bullet, which will cause us to fall back into armed conflict again.

The reason we have not been able to put an end to protracted armed conflicts that began soon after our country gained independence is because we failed throughout our post-independence history to find common solutions to fundamental political issues through dialogue with open minds and mutual accommodation.

We are sure that those who are currently participating in the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong (Third Session) don't want their grandchildren to grow up in an environment which is not at peace. Nothing is better than peace.

We hope that there will be reduced armed engagements and trust building, and there will emerge NCA signing events before the next Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.

are also urged to join hands and cooperate with the government in efforts which are being speeded up for regional development tasks in conflict areas while peacemaking processes are being carried out under the NCA agreement. The quest for peace has to be reinforced by the attainment of sustainable development, so that the future of coming generations might be assured.

We hope that there will be reduced armed engagements and trust building, and there will emerge NCA signing events before the next Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.

Let's work together to bring out the beauty of our diversity and to make it our strength, by protecting rights, fostering tolerance, and ensuring security for all in an endeavour to carry forward the peace process based on the NCA.

The road to peace is not always smooth, but the journey is worth taking, because this is the only way that will lead our people to their dream of a just and prosperous land that will be their refuge, their pride, and their joy.

Life through the eyes of Boggyoke

By Hanthawady U Ohn Kyaing

ON the eve of the 71st anniversary of Martyr's Day, it is with a gloomy heart that I share in this article some of the outlooks and attitudes to life by Boggyoke Aung San, the architect of our country's independence and our national leader.

Extraordinary outlook

The opinions, outlooks and perspectives to life as seen by Boggyoke Aung San were truthful, straightforward, frank, outspoken, forthright, blunt, open, honest, sincere, direct, plain-spoken, unreserved, and unvarnished.

Intent

The purpose of this article is to share Boggyoke's outlook and attitudes with the new generation, who will shoulder the onerous duties of the nation.

Sham independence granted by Japanese

On 1 August 1943, the Japanese Government granted Myanmar a charade independence, and at the same time Colonel Aung San was promoted to Major General. Myanmar became nominally independent in 1943 under Japanese occupation.

Personal outlook of Boggyoke

At that juncture, Boggyoke was writing an autobiography where he daringly unveiled "one's own thought". Some of his thoughts were translated and quoted into English as follows.

Born to be wild

"I am not sure whether I came into this world as an untamed one. To this date, I am inclined to have savage thoughts in my mind. I am not comfortable to mingle around softly with modern, civilised people. Most of the time, I abhor seeing some people, as I am a tough and rough guy. However, I am straightforward, steadfast and independent in my own way of life. I think I am cool."

I love my untamed life than the modern civilized one

"It does not matter if all the people of Myanmar were unsophisticated and uncivilised. To be able to hold our heads high (as independent people) I love over a hundred times more than to be civilised but non-independent. I would love to sing, dance, jump and shout most happily in the middle of the green grass and wild natural plain."

Character without pretense

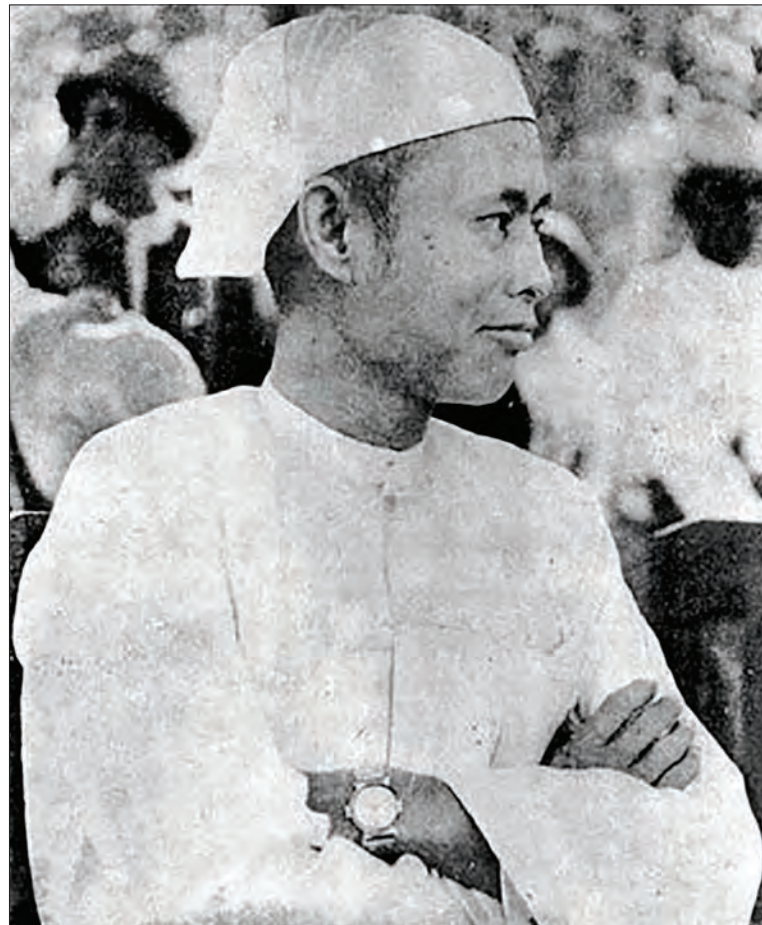
In his autobiography, Boggyoke said being unsophisticated and uncivilised does not matter. It is more worth to live in liberty in plain and natural characteristics without chains and bondage.

Editor of *Oway Magazine*

Boggyoke served as an Editor of *Oway Magazine* when he was elected as EC member of Yangon University Students' Union during the 1935-36 academic year.

Outlook mentioned in *Oway Magazine*

Ko Aung San firmly mentioned with full conviction on his personal life and opinions in conjunction with the outlook and



perspective of human existence in *Oway Magazine*.

"I am thankful to the heavenly angels who lend strong support to my undefeatable mind, even in the darkest hours of the night. Even if my head was soaking with blood; I would never bow down in surrender."

Would never surrender

Beyond the greed and the anger, there is a dangerous monster called "Angel of Death" waiting in the shadow; however, I am not frightened or scared of anyone; never and ever to feel fear from here to eternity."

Outlook on politics of Thakin Aung San

In the February 1940 issue of *Dagon Magazine*, Thakin Aung San had interpreted the politics of the time into a motley assortment of topics in an article.

Muddled politics of Myanmar

"Looking back into the chronicle of Myanma politics, it is found to be a confusing one. Myanmar people have varied and endless ideologies such as the home rule; independent course of action; communal system; rule of the poor; and nationalism."

Boggyoke lamented and bewailed over the different sets of diverse ideologies upheld by the then politicians.

Politics covers all aspects of social affairs.

"When the human being has evolved from the Stone Age into civilisation, the system of "politics" was born out of it. I am of the view that politics must be approached through scientific assessment and evaluation."

Boggyoke Aung San had pointed out his perception on politics in many ways.

Boggyoke advocated for approaching politics through scientific views in conjunction with social affairs, and not to go crazy and wild, similar to what the so-called political parties wanted to do.

Despite the fact that Boggyoke was young in age, righteousness

was always with him. Boggyoke was always morally upright and always spoke the truth.

He was fond of saying: Good moral character and adoring the truth are most important values for the human being.

He even insisted that his mother never lie when selling things at their store. At that time, Boggyoke was only four years old.

Most courageous Boggyoke

In the early part of 1941, Colonel Keiji Suzuki (known by Myanmar people as Bo Mogyo, or Thunderbolt Commander), the leader of Minami Kikan, a secret intelligence operation, called in Boggyoke Aung San and Bo Let Yar to his Japanese war office in Yangon.

Colonel Suzuki was very angry about a matter concerning one of his programmes, and even drew his Japanese sword to attack and harm Boggyoke Aung San. But Boggyoke knew that this was one of his normal tactics. In response, Boggyoke unsheathed his own long sword and prepared to react, eye to eye and toe to toe. Courage was with Boggyoke and he dared to face anyone.

Colonel Suzuki calmed down and appeased Boggyoke.

An advance practice for prison environment

In the early part of 1938, Ko Aung San was a university student. During summer holidays, he stayed at the Yangon University Students' Union building, practicing on living like an inmate. At night, Boggyoke slept on a cane bench meant for seating without a mattress, blanket or mosquito net, embracing all the suffering.

He considered the cane bench as if it were a royal wedding bed. One day, an elderly woman named Daw Kyi Myint, the owner of a tea shop at the Students' Union, asked Ko Aung San why he was enduring all this suffering.

Boggyoke answered that he was practicing to be a prisoner, to suffer and tolerate so that he would be ready when he would actually be jailed by the authorities.

Boggyoke's outlook on English

While serving as student leader, Boggyoke studied the English language very hard. He wrote his speeches in English and he delivered his speeches in English.

On 20 January 1946, he delivered a speech in English in front of a very large audience at the AFPFL Conference held at Shwedagon Pagoda.

On 17 January 1946, Boggyoke also delivered a speech in English at the Supreme Council Meeting of the AFPFL.

His mastery of the English language impressed the British Governor and British officers, who heaped praise on Boggyoke.

Boggyoke studied and mastered the English language not for his personal interest, but for the independence of the country.

Good mediator

In those days, Thakin Nu was encountering a hard time of poverty, and did not even have an extra pair of underwear. Once, Thakin Nu became angry with Boggyoke Aung San because of a difference of opinion. They did not talk for many weeks. At an appropriate time, Boggyoke gave Thakin Nu some underwear, of which he was in dire need. Thakin Nu was pleased and his anger at Boggyoke Aung San was gone with the wind.

On the eve of Martyrs' Day, the author of this article could not suppress the urge to share the moral characteristics of Boggyoke, and therefore, with this article I submit my sincere tribute to the Martyrs with fond memories.

Translated by UMT (HK)

To hoist flag of Myanmar half-mast and to sound siren on 71st Martyrs' Day

THE President's Office has issued an instruction to government departments and institutions, which in turn have to convey the instruction down to the lower levels of government organizations. The instruction stated that the flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar be hoisted half-mast throughout the whole country, on Thursday 19 July (71st Martyrs' Day, Myanma Radio and Television to transmit the sound of wailing siren at 10:37 am, the time Boggyoke Aung San and his colleagues were assassinated, and all vehicles on the roads to stop for a moment and honk their horns.—Myanmar News Agency

U Htin Lynn Presents Credentials to the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam

U Htin Lynn, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Brunei Darussalam, presented his Credentials to His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah Ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar' Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam on 7 July 2018 in Bandar Seri Begawan.—Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 13th July, 2018)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (18:30) hrs M.S.T yesterday, the low pressure area over the North-west Bay of Bengal still persists. Monsoon is strong over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 14th JULY, 2018: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway regions, fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw and Eastern Shan State and widespread in the remaining regions and states with regionally heavy falls in Ayeawady and Taninthayi regions, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon states, isolated heavy falls in Bago and Yangon regions. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with rough seas are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35)m.p.h. Wave height will be about (9 - 12) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Increase of rain in the Coastal Areas.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th JULY, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th JULY, 2018: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th JULY, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw, widespread in Yangon Region and scattered in Mandalay Region.—DMH

State Counsellor attends dinner for artistes from MMPO

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended a dinner hosted by Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint and wife Daw Khaing Nwe Oo for artistes from the Myanmar Motion Picture Organization (MMPO) at the residence of the Union Minister for Information yesterday evening.

Also attending the dinner were Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr. Myo Aung, Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun, Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Aung Myin Tun, Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee member U Min Thu, Myanmar Motion Picture Organization patron Baji Soe Moe, Chairman of Myanmar Motion Picture Organization U Zin Wine, artistes, directors, producers of motion picture and invited guests.

The State Counsellor extended her greetings to the



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi poses for photo with (MMPO) artistes at the residence of the Union Minister for Information. **PHOTO: MNA**

guests, noting recent efforts by the government to boost Myanmar's film industry.

"We want to establish a modern movie park in Nay Pyi Taw. By doing so, it is expected to promote the development of Nay Pyi Taw and the motion picture industry. We should take

into consideration to make the use of the good points of Nay Pyi Taw such as its natural environment and beauty, and its transportation hub. With the progress of political, economic and social affairs, we should make an attempt to develop the Myanmar Motion Picture sector.

I would like you to collect these historical and arts heritages and turn them into a force for the nation", she said.

The Union Minister for Information explained the process of striving for Nay Pyi Taw to become an entertainment city, and the cooperation with

the Myanmar Motion Picture Organization. MMPO patron Baji Soe Moe also extended greetings, and the MMPO Chairman U Zin Wine was introduced to the attendees. Afterwards, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi greeted the attendees. — MNA ■



Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat holds talks with Ambassador of Malaysia Mr. Zahairi Baharim. **PHOTO: MNA**

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives Malaysian ambassador

U T Khun Myat, Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, received the Ambassador of Malaysia to Myanmar Mr. Zahairi Baharim at the Pyithu Hluttaw building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, they cordially discussed promoting friendly relations and cooperation between Malaysia

and Myanmar, promoting bilateral cooperation in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), boosting economic and investment between the two countries, health care and labour issues.— Myanmar News Agency ■

UPC aims for basic principles for democracy, federal system for 2019

THE Secretariat of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee held a press conference yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw following day three of the Third Session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.

U Zaw Htay, Secretariat member of the UPDJC, said State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and leaders of the ethnic armed organisations held talks yesterday seeking ways for overcoming challenges of the national reconciliation and peace process, for holding better and more effective political dialogues and close cooperation between the decision makers of the two sides.

At the meeting, the two sides agreed to discuss the points in detail following the Third Session of the Peace Conference, he added.

Regarding the political sector discussed yesterday at the conference, U Sai Kyaw Nyunt, representative of the political sector group, said they discussed four points submitted by the UPDJC and all points are expected to be agreed upon at today's meeting.

U Aung Soe, member of the farmland and natural environment sector group, said they discussed two points yesterday and they reached agreement on the two points after some words were amended. In the economic

sector, five groups agreed to the point submitted by the economic sector group, while all seven points were agreed upon in the social sector.

U Zaw Htay recounted the suggestions of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in her opening address that urged the committee to hold the next session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong in 2018 and two sessions in 2019 as part of efforts for getting the basic principles for democracy and a federal system.

The government set its target of reaching agreement on basic principles for a federal system in 2019 and laying down foundations for the federal system in 2020, following the official and unofficial meetings.

Asked which role is taken by China in Myanmar's peace-making process, U Zaw Htay said China has already told Myanmar that it would support the stability at the border areas for win-win interests between the two countries, but it would not interfere in the internal affairs of Myanmar.

Asked whether 14 points submitted by the UPDJC would be included in the Union Accord, U Hla Maung Shwe said the answer to the question will come today.

The representatives of the government, the Tatmadaw, the Hluttaw and ethnic armed organisations agreed on original meanings of the 14 points and will discuss choice of words and spellings in groups today. —Ye Khaung Nyunt ■



UPDJC Secretariat holds a press conference. **PHOTO: PHOE HTAUNG**

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Trade Mark Ads

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New continental report hails E. Africa's economic performance

ADDIS ABABA — The East African region has enjoyed a more resilient economic growth as compared to other parts of the continent over the past few decades, revealed a report released by the African Union (AU) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Center.

Africa's Development Dynamics 2018, which was released on Wednesday at AU's headquarters in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, indicated mixed performances of different African re-

gions in terms of growth, jobs and inequalities.

According to the report, the East African region has enjoyed stronger and more resilient economic growth than the other regions of the continent, at over 4 percent annually since 1990. The report also noted East Africa's economic trajectory as a "more diversified economy."

The first edition of Africa's Development Dynamics report on Wednesday also revealed that the East African region had managed to reduce extreme poverty

by 23 percent between the year 1990 and 2013, followed by West Africa which is able to reduce poverty level by 12 percent during the reported period.

The report, however, indicated the major challenges witnessed in other parts of the continent, including the Central African region, where the number of jobs in the formal economy has been falling since 2015. It also revealed that inequality in Africa is most prevalent in Southern Africa, which in terms of income contains six out of the ten most

unequal countries in the world.

In addition to the underemployment and vulnerable employment that characterize most of the African labor markets, some countries in North and Southern Africa face high structural employment, according to the report.

The report also commended some African countries for their strategic partnership with China and other emerging economies.

"The decision by certain countries to increase investment in infrastructure and the growing number of commercial

partnerships - with China, India and other emerging countries - have also proved judicious," the report indicated.

The report, among other things, revealed that favorable trend in commodities prices, strong domestic demand, progress in the pursuit of macroeconomic policies and strategies to diversify national economies have been major drivers of the continent's recent growth, which is forecast to reach 4 percent annually between 2018 and 2020.

— Xinhua ■

Egypt raises cigarette prices by at least 10 percent to reduce budget deficit

CAIRO — Egypt on Thursday raised the prices of cigarettes and tobacco products by at least 10 percent as part of its efforts to reduce budget deficit in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

"The government seeks to collect 58.5 billion Egyptian pounds (about 3.27 billion U.S. dollars) of taxes from cigarettes and tobacco products in the new budget for the 2018-2019 fiscal year," said Ibrahim al-Imbabi, head of the tobacco division of the Chamber of Food Industries at the Federation of Egyptian Industries.

The prices of some brands of cigarettes, particularly local ones, increased by 10 to 15 percent, while others by up to 29.4 percent.

According to the new price list released by Egypt's dominant cigarette maker Eastern Tobacco Company, the value added tax (VAT) represents at least 70 percent of the pack price.

In a televised statement Wednesday, the company chairman, Mohamed Haroun, said that 50 percent of the new price

increase will be directed to the newly launched health insurance system.

The company said in a recent statement that it produced 83 billion cigarettes in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

Egypt has been suffering economic recession over the past few years due to political instability and relevant security challenges. It devaluated its currency in November 2016 as part of a strict three-year economic reform program based on austerity measures, including fuel and energy subsidy cuts and tax hikes.

The liberalization of the Egyptian pound's exchange rate encouraged the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support Egypt's economic reform plan with a 12-billion-dollar loan, two thirds of which has already been delivered.

In mid-June, Egypt increased fuel prices by up to 66.6 percent as prescribed by the IMF to continue the implementation of the country's economic reform program. — Xinhua ■



Security forces stand guard outside the petrochemical company where two tanks exploded in Cairo, Egypt on 13 July 2018. PHOTO: XINHUA

12 injured in fuel tank explosion near Egypt's Cairo airport

CAIRO — Twelve people were injured in a fuel tank explosion near Egypt's Cairo International Airport on Thursday night, but the air traffic was not affected.

Security sources told the state-run MENA news agency

that the blast occurred in Cairo's heliopolis district.

Two tanks that belong to a petrochemical company exploded outside the airport, said Egyptian Civil Aviation Minister Mohamed Younis al-Masri in

a statement. All domestic and international flights have been operating normally, he said.

The minister added that the explosion was caused by high temperature and the fire was under control. —Xinhua ■

30 killed in US-led airstrikes targeting residential areas in Syria's Deir al-Zour

DAMASCUS — At least 30 people were killed and dozens of others wounded overnight by U.S.-led airstrikes in the eastern Syrian province of Deir al-Zour, state news agency SANA reported Friday.

The airstrikes targeted the residential areas in the towns of Baghour Foqani and Souseh on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River near Al-Bukamal city in eastern Deir al-Zour, it said.

The death toll was likely to rise as many of the wounded are

in critical condition, it added.

Dozens of homes were destroyed in the towns, said SANA, accusing the U.S.-led coalition of attacking the towns to punish the local residents for refusing the entry of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The towns are located inside the small pocket controlled by the militant group Islamic State (IS) in the eastern countryside of Deir al-Zour.

The Syrian government has repeatedly accused the United

States of targeting civilians in Syria, while urging the UN to put an end to the coalition's military operations in Syria.

The U.S. coalition has been operating in Syria since 2014, supporting the Kurdish-led groups in northern Syria in the fight against IS.

The Syrian government, however, contended that the real goal of the coalition is to prolong the crisis in Syria as it uses IS as a pretext to further destabilize the country. —Xinhua ■



A man smokes a cigarette at a public place. PHOTO: XINHUA

Diver describes 'massive relief' finding trapped Thai boys in cave

LONDON — The British diver who found 12 Thai boys and their coach trapped alive in a flooded cave has described his "massive relief" as he counted them one by one, in what he called an unprecedented rescue operation.

Richard Stanton, one of a pair of British caving experts who located the "Wild Boars" team, gave reporters Friday a first-hand account of the moment he saw the boys emerge from behind a rock face onto a muddy ledge kilometres (miles) inside the Tham Luang cave.

"That was a massive, massive relief. Initially we weren't certain they were all alive — as they were coming down I was

counting them until I got to 13," he said.

"We couldn't see them initially — they had to come round the corner."

The discovery prompted the stunning rescue of the boys which captivated Thailand and the world, with the final members finally emerging safely Tuesday after 18 days underground.

In order to rescue the boys, divers had to contend with a treacherous escape route made up of narrow, water-filled tunnels, with the threat of heavy rain injecting urgency to the bid.

The mission was "an order of difficulty much higher than an-

anything that's been accomplished anywhere around the world by any other cave diving team," said Stanton.

Footage of the moment Stanton and John Volanthen discovered the 13 dishevelled and emaciated boys was viewed millions of times after it was posted on the official Facebook page of Thai Navy SEAL, prompting hope for their rescue.

"You hear on the video, John said 'How many?'," Stanton said. "I'd already counted them, they were already there."

Fellow diver Chris Jewell provided new details of the operation, describing how Thai authorities had diverted rivers on



Richard Stanton, one of a pair of British caving experts who located the 'Wild Boars' team, rejected suggestions the divers were heroes.
PHOTO: AFP

the mountaintop to help control water levels in the cave.

The measure "brought us additional time to get this outcome," Jewell said.

Stanton rejected suggestions the divers were heroes.

"We were just using a very, very unique skill set which we normally use for our own interest," he said. "Sometimes we are able to use that to give something back to the community and that's what we did."—AFP ■

Trump torpedoes May's Brexit strategy on UK visit

US President Donald Trump launched an extraordinary attack on Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit strategy, plunging the transatlantic "special relationship" to a new low as they prepared to meet Friday on the second day of his tumultuous trip to Britain.

In an interview conducted before he began his visit, which will draw large protests, Trump said May's plans for close future ties with the EU would "probably kill" her hopes for a trade deal with the United States.

He told *The Sun* tabloid it was not what Britons backed when they voted in a June 2016 referendum to quit the European Union, and also said former foreign minister Boris Johnson, who resigned this week over the Brexit plan, would make "a great prime minister".

Junior British foreign minister Alan Duncan sought to brush off the remarks, telling BBC radio: "Donald Trump is a controversialist, that's his style... I don't think we see it as rude."

But the comments drew outrage from some British lawmakers and will make for an awkward atmosphere with May when the pair meet at her country retreat of Chequers for a working lunch, followed by a press conference.

They also undermine the prime minister as she faces speculation of a leadership challenge from eurosceptics in

May's Brexit plan

- TRADE**
 - Common rulebook to ensure smooth UK-EU trade in goods
 - No customs checks at border between N. Ireland and Ireland
 - UK leaves EU single market, Common Fisheries Policy, Common Agricultural Policy
- SERVICES**
 - UK financial firms lose their passporting rights to operate across the EU
- MIGRATION**
 - End to free movement of people
 - Reciprocal UK-EU arrangements for businesses moving staff abroad, students, tourists and expat pensions
- SECURITY**
 - New treaty on police cooperation, data sharing and extradition
- RULES**
 - Legal disputes settled by UK courts, not European Court of Justice. New UK-EU dispute mechanism needed

© AFP

May's Brexit plan. **PHOTO: AFP**

her Conservative party following the resignations of Johnson and Brexit secretary David Davis.

Trump, a long-time supporter for Brexit, said he had advised May to leave the EU in a different way but was ignored.

"I would have done it much differently. I actually told The-

resa May how to do it but she didn't agree, she didn't listen to me," he told *The Sun*.

"She wanted to go a different route. I would actually say that she probably went the opposite way. And that is fine. She should negotiate the best way she knows how. But it is too bad what is going on." Referring to the Brexit blueprint published by the government on Thursday, which calls for close trading links with the EU after Brexit, Trump said: "The deal she is striking is a much different deal than the one the people voted on."

"It was not the deal that was in the referendum. I have just been hearing this over the last three days. I know they have had a lot of resignations. So a lot of people don't like it."

Duncan suggested the president had not seen the detail of the plan when he gave the interview on Wednesday, while also stressing that the much-vaunted special relationship was about much more than Brexit.

But Anthony Gardner, who was former president Barack Obama's ambassador to the EU, held nothing back in attacking Trump's attack on May as "totally unacceptable" and "unprecedented" in the middle of a high-profile visit.

"He is out of control and an embarrassment. He is (a) one-man wrecking machine," Gardner tweeted.

Trump flew into Britain on

Thursday, having already subjected NATO allies in Brussels to a roasting over their levels of defence spending.

'Kill the deal'

May has insisted that her Brexit plan will allow Britain to strike its own lucrative trade deals with countries like the US after leaving the EU in March next year.

She pressed Trump about the deal on Thursday at a gala dinner at Blenheim Palace, the birthplace of Britain's World War II leader Winston Churchill.

Brexit "creates an opportunity to reach a free trade agreement that creates jobs and growth here in the UK and right across the United States", she said. But Trump poured cold water on May's offer.

"If they do a deal like that, we would be dealing with the European Union instead of dealing with the UK, so it will probably kill the deal," he said.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders later told reporters Trump was "thankful for the wonderful welcome" he received in Britain.

"The president likes and respects Prime Minister May very much. As he said in his interview with *The Sun* she 'is a very good person' and he 'never said anything bad about her'," she said.

Tea with the queen

Trump and May are due

to watch a display of military special forces on Friday before their formal talks which will cover Russia, ahead of a summit in Finland on Monday between Trump and President Vladimir Putin.

Putin's government is accused by May's of unleashing a deadly nerve agent in the English city of Salisbury. Moscow denies the charge, but May is pressing Trump to raise the issue with Putin.

Trump will later Friday take tea with Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle, before spending the weekend in Scotland on a private visit that will likely take in 18 holes at one of the property magnate's golf courses, where more protesters await him.

He will not attend any high-profile events in London but a mass protest is planned in the capital on Friday, where demonstrators will fly a giant balloon next to the British parliament depicting Trump as a nappy-clad baby.

The balloon was authorised by London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who has crossed swords with Trump several times after the president posted factually incorrect messages over a series of terror attacks in Britain in 2017.

In his *Sun* interview, Trump said Khan had done "a very bad job on terrorism", which he linked to migration. The mayor defended his record to the BBC. —AFP ■

Pakistan ex-PM Sharif heads home to face jail before polls

LAHORE (Pakistan) — Pakistan authorities locked down parts of Lahore Friday for the return from London of former premier Nawaz Sharif, who faces possible arrest and a 10-year prison sentence ahead of already tense elections his party insists are being rigged.

Sharif was sentenced in absentia last week to 10 years in prison by a corruption court over the purchase of high-end properties in London, dealing a serious blow to his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party's bid weeks ahead of the July 25 polls.

He has claimed he is being targeted by the military.

"I know that... I will be directly taken to jail," he said in a video released by his party Friday.

"I want to tell Pakistanis I have been doing this for you... Walk with me, join hands with me and change the destination of the country."

AFP could not immediately confirm the production date of the video, which showed Sharif seated on a plane.

On Thursday his brother Shahbaz Sharif, who now



Supporters of Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif are planning to march to Lahore airport to greet the ousted prime minister as he stares down a possible 10-year jail sentence. **PHOTO: AFP**

heads the PML-N, said that hundreds of their workers and supporters had been arrested ahead of Nawaz's expected return in what he said was "naked" pre-poll rigging against their party.

The younger Sharif has pledged to marshal a welcome for the former prime minister, saying thousands of supporters would travel to Lahore airport to back Nawaz.

"The whole world knows that PML-N is being targeted," Shahbaz said. "We'll go to the airport tomorrow despite this brutality, and we will remain

completely peaceful."

Up to 8,000 police officers are set to be deployed in Lahore, according to police chief Sajjad Hasan Man. Containers could be seen blocking some Lahore roads on Friday morning, while travel to and from the airport had reportedly been restricted.

Authorities have pinpointed at least 50 locations in the city to block if needed, according to a police official, who requested anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Despite the crack-

down, PML-N backers continued to flock to the city, vowing to confront authorities if challenged.

"We are going to airport and if anybody stops us then we are ready to go to jail," Khurram Ehsan, 36, told AFP.

"We can go beyond our limits for our leader."

Fighting back

Nawaz left London late Thursday, where his wife is being treated for cancer.

Analyst Zahid Hussain said the ex-leader's return was the latest chapter in his long confrontation with

the country's security establishment.

"He's fighting back for his political life," Hussain told AFP.

However, it remained to be seen how the move would affect his party's chances ahead of the polls.

Since Nawaz returned to London last month, the PML-N has fallen into disarray and failed to mount an organised campaign to rally the base ahead of the polls.

"Certainly it would have been worse for the party's prospects had he not come," Hussain added.

The election will pit the PML-N against its main rival, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, which is led by cricket star-turned-politician Imran Khan.

Recent polling has showed PTT's popularity steadily rising and closing the gap with the PML-N.

The election would be only the second-ever democratic transfer of power in the South Asian country.

Nawaz was the 15th prime minister in Pakistan's 70-year history — roughly half of it under military rule — to be removed before completing a full term.

Sharif has faced — and fought off — similar challenges in the past.

In 1993 he was sacked from his first term as premier for corruption, while in 1999 he was sentenced to life in prison after his second term in office ended with a military coup.

Following the coup he was allowed to go into exile in Saudi Arabia, returning in 2007 before becoming prime minister for a third time in 2013.

The military remains the most powerful institution in the country, and has faced blistering allegations in recent months that it is pressuring the media and politicians in a bid to manipulate the polls against the PML-N.

The armed forces have denied the accusations, and said they have "no direct role" in the elections.

Also in Pakistan on Friday four people were killed when a bomb detonated targeting the convoy of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) politician Akram Khan Durrani in the country's northwest.

Durrani survived the attack, but 39 others were wounded, officials have said.— AFP ■

Kim seeks "new future" in ties with US in letter to Trump

WASHINGTON — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has sought "a new future" in relations with the United States, saying he believes efforts to improve

ties will succeed, according to a letter addressed to U.S. President Donald Trump.

But the letter, which Trump posted in an image with an English

translation on Twitter on Thursday, made no reference to denuclearization, which Kim committed to achieve in a joint statement he signed with Trump in

their meeting last month in Singapore. "I firmly believe that the strong will, sincere efforts and unique approach of myself and Your Excellency Mr. Pres-

ident aimed at opening up a new future between the DPRK and the U.S. will surely come to fruition," Kim said, according to the translation of the letter dat-

ed last Friday.

DPRK is the acronym of North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.—Kyodo News ■

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V AGONISTS VOY. NO. (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V AGONISTS VOY. NO. (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-4 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CA SHIPPING PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V FWN SPLENIDE VOY. NO. (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V FWN SPLENIDE VOY. NO. (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 15-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-4 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S BAY LINE SHIPPING PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V PACITA VOY. NO. (025 W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PACITA VOY. NO. (025 W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/AIPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINE

Phone No: 2301185

‘Skyscraper’ towers over summer schedule of sequels

LOS ANGELES — A glance through the summer movie schedules reveals one rather depressing common denominator: every single big budget release is a sequel — apart from one.

Dwayne Johnson cuts a solitary figure in that all-important late May to early August period — when movie-goers seek refuge from the heat in air-conditioned multiplexes — as the only star of an entirely original blockbuster.

Even “Skyscraper,” which hits US theaters on Friday, is something of a 1970s and 80s disaster movie pastiche, with Johnson walking — or climbing, much of the time — the well-worn path of the traditional action hero.

“I wanted to make a movie that was an homage to ‘Die Hard’ and ‘Towering Inferno,’ ‘The Fugitive,’ ‘Cliffhanger,’ movies like that,” the 46-year-old star said at the premiere in New York on Wednesday.

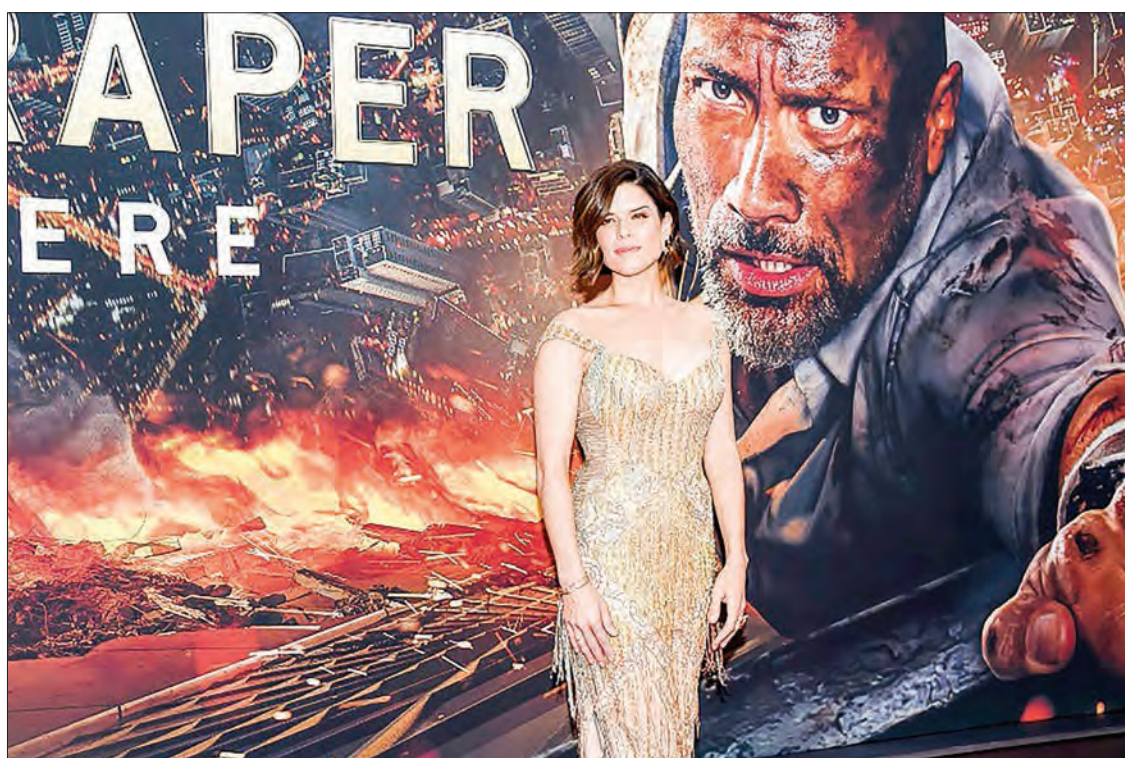
The Universal release casts the former wrestler as a retired amputee FBI hostage rescuer turned security expert who has to clear his name and snare the bad guys when the world’s tallest building goes up in flames in Hong Kong.

Men in tights

It’s been a tough few months for film fans desperate to see something a little more nuanced than giant robots and men in tights larruping each other repeatedly in mid-air.

“There are 11 sequels on either side of us in our corridor. Who really gets to say they are in an original movie that this brilliant mind created from scratch?” said “Skyscraper” producer Beau Flynn, gesturing down the arrivals line to writer-director Rawson Marshall Thurber.

“Everything was created from his head and it is something



“Skyscraper” has been admired in some quarters for presenting women in empowering roles, including Neve Campbell, who plays Dwayne Johnson’s hard-as-nails ex-military wife. **PHOTO: AFP**

that has to be admired, I think, by the audience, and hopefully supported. It’s very hard to do that at this scale in Hollywood today.”

“Avengers: Infinity War” and “Deadpool 2” kicked off the blockbuster season, although both were released before what most people think of as the peak period, when school’s out and kids are begging to see the latest Marvel

or DC offering. Since late May, we’ve been treated to “Solo: A Star Wars Story,” “Action Point” — part of the “Jackass” series of movies — “Ocean’s 8,” “Incredibles 2,” “Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom,” “Sicario: Day of the Soldado,” “The First Purge” and “Ant-Man and the Wasp.”

If they all sound familiar, it’s probably because you’ve seen

or heard about their relatively similar predecessors — and we still have “Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again,” “The Equalizer 2” and “Mission: Impossible - Fallout” to sit through before the August schedules bring back more creative storytelling. It hasn’t entirely been a summer of retreads, capes and spandex suits, of course. — **AFP ■**

Ruling from your home: Inside Australia’s micronations boom

SYDNEY — Lounging on a sofa in his flowing robes, a gold crown resting on his snowy hair and a stuffed white toy tiger at his feet, Paul Delprat looks every bit a monarch. Delprat, 76, is the self-appointed Prince of the Principality of Wy, a micronation consisting of his home in the north Sydney suburb of Mosman.

Micronations — entities that have proclaimed independence but are not recognised by governments — have been declared around the world. One of the latest is Asgardia, started by Russian scientist and businessman Igor Ashurbeyli, who in late June declared himself leader of the utopian “space nation”.

But the pseudo-states are particularly popular in Australia, with the island continent home to the highest number in the world, about 35, out of an estimated total of up to 200. “For me, it’s a passion, it’s an art installation,” Delprat, a fine art school principal, tells AFP as a large painting of himself decked out in full regalia with his wife and children looms above his head. “My favourite artist is Rembrandt, who loved dressing up. In a world where we haven’t sorted out our differences, art is



The rise of micronations hasn’t just stemmed from the relaxed attitude of Australian governments willing to tolerate the tiny fiefdoms as long as they pay taxes. **PHOTO: AFP**

the international language... the philosophy of Wy is live and let live and above all, laugh if you can.” Delprat’s homemade kingdom, filled with monarchical and historical paraphernalia, is, like some micronations, born out of a dispute with authorities. Blocked by the local council for more than a decade from building a driveway, Delprat seceded from Mosman in 2004. Instead of drawing the ire of authorities, he became a local celebrity — even attracting adoring fans from Japan.

Disdain for authority

The rise of micronations hasn’t just stemmed from the

relaxed attitude of Australian governments willing to tolerate the tiny fiefdoms as long as they pay taxes. Australians’ healthy disdain for authority — a source of national pride — has also fuelled the phenomenon, says constitutional law professor George Williams. “In Australia, there’s a strong streak of people wanting to thumb their noses at authority,” Williams of the University of NSW tells AFP.

“There is a bit of a larrikin (maverick) streak here, a sense that this can be a bit of fun... and often they are hobbies that have got wildly out of hand.”

Establishing a micronation is not without its hazards.

John Rudge, the Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Avram in Australia’s southern island state of Tasmania, issued his own notes and coins in 1980 after writing a PhD thesis about setting up a central bank. The government disputed his use of the word “bank” on the notes and took him to court, although the case was eventually dismissed, Rudge tells AFP. The country’s oldest micronation, the Principality of Hutt River, 500 kilometres (300 miles) north of Perth, was set up by Leonard Casley in 1970 after a row with the Western Australia state government over wheat quotas. Prince Leonard, who owns some 75 square kilometres (29 square miles) of farmland — an area larger than that of more than 20 bona fide states, territories or dependencies — was last year ordered by a court to pay Aus\$3 million (US\$2.2 million) in taxes. Even so, the property reportedly makes a tidy sum for the now-retired prince — who handed over the reins to his youngest son Graeme last year — as a tourist attraction. — **AFP ■**

Willem Dafoe joins Disney’s ‘Togo’

LOS ANGELES — Actor Willem Dafoe will star in Disney’s live action film “Togo”.

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, “The Florida Project” actor will play Seppala in the film. To be directed by Ericson Core, the film is about 1925 serum run to Nome, Alaska, also known as the Great Race of Mercy, in which dog-sled teams relayed to transport diphtheria antitoxin serum through harsh conditions over nearly 700 miles to save the town from an epidemic.

The film is being developed for Disney streaming service which is expected to launch next year. It will be produced by Kim Zubick. Dafoe, 62, will also be seen in DC’s “Aquaman” which will hit the theatres in December this year.

He also has Dee Rees’ Netflix film, co-starring Anne Hathaway and Ben Affleck. — **PTI ■**

First space tourist flights could come in 2019

LONDON — The two companies leading the pack in the pursuit of space tourism say they are just months away from their first out-of-this-world passenger flights — though neither has set a firm date.

Virgin Galactic, founded by British billionaire Richard Branson, and Blue Origin, by Amazon creator Jeff Bezos, are racing to be the first to finish their tests — with both companies using radically different technology.

Moments of weightlessness

Neither Virgin nor Blue Origin's passengers will find themselves orbiting the Earth: instead, their weightless experience will last just minutes. It's an offering far different from the first space tourists, who paid tens of millions of dollars to travel to the International Space Station (ISS) in the 2000s.

Having paid for a much cheaper ticket — costing \$250,000 with Virgin, as yet unknown with Blue Origin — the new round of space tourists will be propelled dozens of miles into the atmosphere, before coming back down to Earth. By comparison, the ISS is in orbit 250 miles (400 kilometers) from our planet.

The goal is to approach or pass through the imaginary line marking where space begins — either the Karman line, at 100 kilometers or 62 miles, or the 50-mile boundary recognized by the US Air Force.

At this altitude, the sky looks dark and the curvature of the earth can be seen clearly.

Virgin Galactic

With Virgin Galactic, six passengers and two pilots are boarded onto SpaceShipTwo VSS Unity, which resembles a private jet.

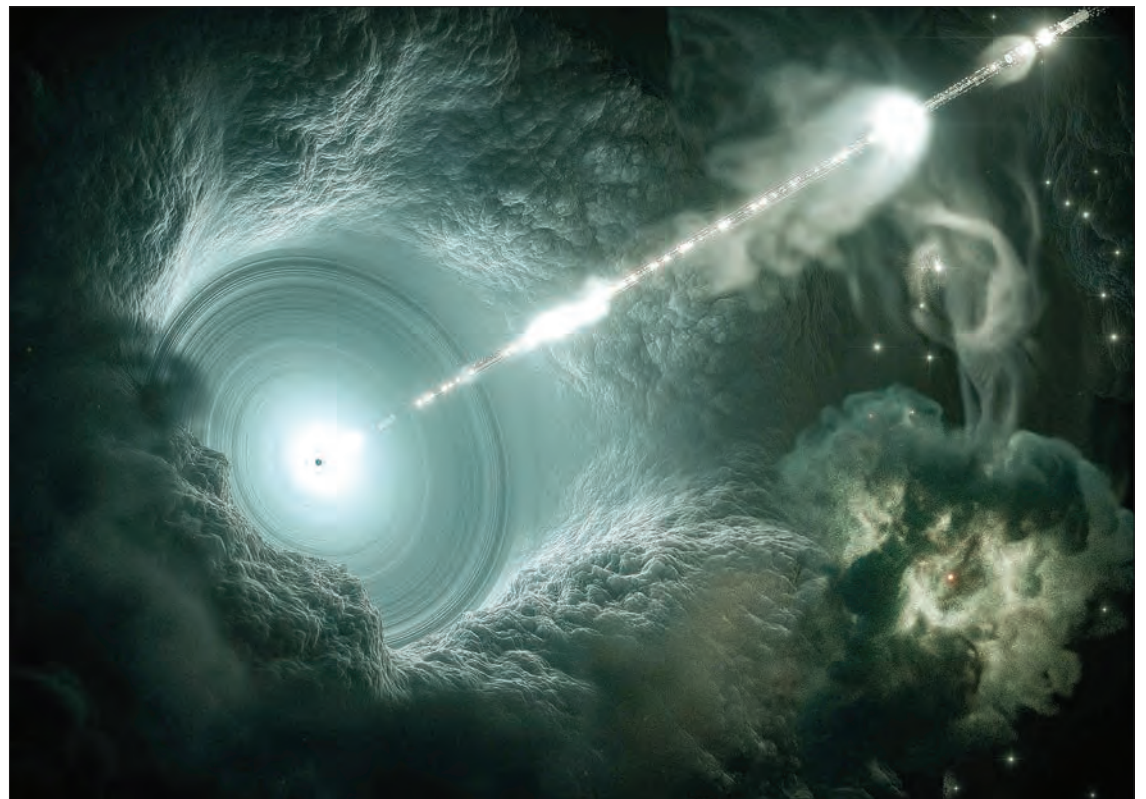
The VSS Unity will be attached to a carrier spacecraft — the WhiteKnightTwo — from which it will then detach at around 49,000 feet (15,000 meters.) Once released, the spaceship will fire up its rocket, and head for the sky.

Then, the passengers will float in zero-gravity for several minutes, before coming back to Earth.

The descent is slowed down by a “feathering” system that sees the spacecraft's tail pivot, as if arching, before returning to normal and gliding to land at Virgin's “spaceport” in the New Mexico desert.—AFP ■



The Virgin Galactic VSS Unity, seen during a test flight over the Mojave desert in California on 29 May 2018. PHOTO: AFP



Artist's impression of the active galactic nucleus. The supermassive black hole at the center of the accretion disk sends a narrow high-energy jet of matter into space, perpendicular to the disc. PHOTO: XINHUA

High-energy “ghost particle” reveals birthplace of cosmic rays: studies

WASHINGTON — An international group of astrophysicists has for the first time determined the birthplace of a highest-energy neutrino, nearly four billion light-years away from Earth.

Two papers published on Thursday in the journal *Science* reported the multi-messenger observations that provide a clue to an unsolved mystery: the origin of cosmic rays.

High-energy cosmic neutrinos are ghostly subatomic particles that can travel unhindered for billions of light years from the most extreme environments in the universe, carrying unique information about the regions where they are produced.

IceCube, the largest detector specialized in hunting the particles, which was located at the South Pole, detected on Sept. 22 in 2017 the neutrino whose energy was more than 40 times that of the protons produced in the world's largest particle accel-

erator at CERN outside Geneva.

The birth of neutrinos is always linked to proton interactions while the cosmic rays largely consist of high-energy protons, according to the studies.

Neutrinos, always accompanied by the photons, possess no charge, so unlike the electrically charged particles of cosmic rays that can be deflected by cosmic magnetic fields, they can travel through the universe without detours.

Then, a space observatory called Fermi-LAT reported that the direction of the neutrino was in line with a known gamma-ray source in an active state: the blazar TXS 0506+056, making the blazar a highly likely candidate for the neutrino source.

The blazar, a giant elliptical galaxy with a massive, rapidly spinning black hole at its core, is situated just off the left shoulder of the constellation Orion. It ejects outflows of particles and

energetic radiation moving close the speed of light.

Those huge “jets” shoot out into space at right angles to the massive vortex that sucks matter into the black hole, according to the studies.

Astrophysicists have long suspected that these jets generate a substantial proportion of cosmic particle radiation.

“Now we have found key evidence supporting this assumption,” said Elisa Resconi from the Technical University of Munich, whose group contributed to the findings.

The findings, confirmed by ground- and space-based telescopes around the globe, demonstrated the advantage of combining the signals from different cosmic messengers, like neutrinos and photons. “The era of multi-messenger astrophysics is here,” said National Science Foundation director France Cordova.—Xinhua ■

Rare skull of elephant ancestor unveiled in France

PARIS — A French farmer kept quiet for years after stumbling across the skull of an extinct ancestor of the elephant near the Pyrenees mountains, the Natural History Museum of Toulouse has told AFP.

The farmer discovered the first-ever skull of a Pyrenean mastodon in 2014 while doing work on his land near the village

of L'Isle-en-Dodon, about 70 kilometres (44 miles) southwest of Toulouse.

Worried that the farm would be overrun by hordes of amateur paleontologists he kept the find a secret for two years before eventually contacting the museum.

“It was only when we went there, in 2017, that we realised the significance of the discov-

ery,” the museum's management said.

The gomphotherium pyrenaicum was “a kind of elephant with four tusks measuring around 80 centimetres, two on the upper jaw and two on the lower jaw,” museum director Francis Duranthon told AFP on Wednesday.

Before that the only evidence that the giant herbivores

had roamed the area millions of years ago were four teeth found in the same area in 1857.

“Now we have a full skull which will allow us to get a clearer picture of the anatomy of this species,” Duranthon said.

“We're putting a face on a species which had become almost mythical,” the museum's curator Pierre Dalous added.

The skull has been unearthed and brought to a laboratory partly encased in rock.

“Now we have to chip away, centimetre by centimetre, to reveal the rest of the skull,” Dalous said, adding that experts were halfway through the work which is expected to be completed within six to nine months.—AFP ■

Dejected England, Belgium aim to leave World Cup on a high

SAINT PETERSBURG (Russia) — England manager Gareth Southgate admits the World Cup third-place play-off is a game that no team wants to play, but Saturday's match against Belgium offers the chance to finish the tournament on a winning note.

A gut-wrenching 2-1 loss to Croatia after extra-time denied England a shot at a second World Cup triumph, instead setting up a consolation game against familiar foes Belgium. Roberto Martinez's side, who were beaten 1-0 by France in the last four, topped Group G ahead of England after an Adnan Januzaj goal settled a low-key encounter in Kaliningrad.

That game saw both coaches heavily rotate their teams, and a similar scenario is likely in Saint Petersburg, with several fringe players pushing for a start.

"The honest thing is, it's not a game any team wants to play in," said Southgate, whose side



Gareth Southgate (left) and Roberto Martinez will try to rally their teams after agonising losses in the semi-finals for England and Belgium. **PHOTO: AFP**

have drawn praise for the way they have briefly united a country bitterly divided over Brexit.

However, he insisted that will not alter England's approach as they look to achieve their best finish since they won the competition in 1966.

"We'll want to give a perfor-

mance of huge pride, there's no question about that," said Southgate.

"Every time we wear the shirt of our national team we want to play with pride, we want to play well and we want to win."

Reserve goalkeepers Jack Butland and Nick Pope are the

only two members of England's 23-man squad yet to feature in Russia, as Southgate stuck with the same line-up throughout the knockout phase.

'Important game'

For Belgium and their "golden generation", many of the key players should return for the 2022 World Cup, even if Vincent Kompany and Jan Vertonghen will probably be gone by then.

Martinez, who signed an extension until after Euro 2020 in May, can guide Belgium to the nation's best result at the World Cup. They finished fourth in 1986.

"We want to finish on a high and these players deserve to finish on a high," said the Spaniard.

"You need to try to see the opportunity of finishing third at the World Cup. That doesn't happen too often, so we need to understand that this is an important game.

"But I would accept it is very difficult when you had the ambition of getting to the final. It's very difficult to prepare for the next game."

European teams have claimed third place at the past nine World Cups. The Netherlands beat Brazil 3-0 in 2014 after the hosts were embarrassed 7-1 by Germany in the semi-finals.

England skipper Harry Kane is the tournament's top scorer on six goals, while Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku trails by two in the race for the Golden Boot.

With one more goal Kane would become the highest scorer at the competition since 2002, when Ronaldo struck eight times, including twice in the final, as Brazil clinched a record fifth title. The Tottenham forward would be just the second England player to scoop the award, after Gary Lineker was the top scorer in 1986. —AFP ■

Inaugural Athletics World Cup set for London lift-off

LONDON — The inaugural Athletics World Cup will be staged in London this weekend with the IAAF and British organisers hoping the concept will find a permanent slot in the calendar, despite clashing with other major sports events. The competition comes from the stated drive of the International Association of

Athletics Federations (IAAF) president Sebastian Coe to attract new audiences with fresh ideas, utilising a format which provides non-stop action. There will be eight competing nations, with one entrant per team in every male and female track and field event up to the 1500 metres. Points tallied up at the close of two days at the

London Stadium will determine which country lifts the platinum winners' trophy. Great Britain, the United States, Jamaica, South Africa, China, Germany, France and Poland all qualified as the top eight in the medal standings at the 2017 IAAF world championships, also in London, and will share the \$2 million (£1.42m) prize

fund. "Each event is going to be filled with high-level athletes and high-level competition," USA shot putter Darrell Hill said. And yet some argue the clash of dates with Sunday's football World Cup final in Moscow, and the concluding day nearby of the Wimbledon tennis tournament, has left the new competition toiling to gain traction out

of the starting blocks. As has the absence of a number of leading performers, including the current top three in the men's 100 metres world rankings, Americans Noah Lyles, Ronnie Baker and Michael Rodgers, and British favourites Dina Asher-Smith and Laura Muir, with Germany and China also fielding weakened teams. —AFP ■

Judo course at University of Yangon launched

WITH the aim of promoting the sport of judo in Myanmar, a judo course was launched in Yangon on Wednesday, along with an exhibition and opening ceremony under the arrangement of the Myanmar Judo Federation (MJF) and the sport team from Yangon University.

During the opening ceremony, chairperson of the Judo Federation, U Tun Tun, attended and delivered a speech.

The Myanmar Judo Federation was founded in 1958. The sport originated in Myanmar in 1941 with the effort of 30 men (Thirty Comrades) who had studied military training in Japan.

Judo was introduced at Yangon University in 1965. Now with the aid of award-winning coaches and modern judo equipment, the MJF will be undertaking an ef-



Judo athletes show their skills during the opening ceremony of Judo course batch No. (1) in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

fort to train and nurture new and talented judo fighters in Yangon University, said U Tun Tun.

He also remarked that, although judo disappeared from the university from 1969 to 1986, the quality of the athletes from Yangon University did not decline, as many judo athletes were qualified to compete in the 1969 Southeast Asian Peninsula

Games hosted in Myanmar.

The ceremony was attended by university officials led by Rector of the University of Yangon Dr. Phoe Khaung, judo coaches and judo exhibitors from MJF.

The course will be attended by 30 judo devotees, with the aim of participating in judo competition at the university level. —GNLM ■



**FIFA WORLD CUP
RUSSIA 2018**

Final 21:30 MST (15.7.2018)			
France			Croatia
Play-off for 3rd place 20:30 MST (14.7.2018)			
Belgium			England