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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Officials from Myanmar and Bangladesh discuss the repatriation of refugees at a meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Repatriation of refugees to commence next Tuesday

A repatriation plan was signed yesterday that will allow the return of Muslims who fled to Bangladesh to escape conflict in Myanmar last year, following a meeting of the neighbouring countries in Nay Pyi Taw.

Myanmar would receive the returnees who fled Rakh-

ine State five days per week, according to the statement released by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The first meeting of the Joint Working Group on the Repatriation of Displaced Myanmar Residents from Bangladesh was held on Monday at

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and continued yesterday.

The Myanmar delegation was led by U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar. The Bangladeshi delegation was led by Mr. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh. The Physical Arrangement for Repatriation of Displaced Myanmar Residents from Bangladesh under the Return of the Displaced Persons from Rakhine State agreement was signed by the two sides yesterday.

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Security agencies warned not to use State security garb

THE Ministry of Home Affairs has warned private security companies and organisations not to wear clothing or carry badges used by State security units.

“Action will be taken against those who wear similar uniforms of State security units under the law,” said the statement released by the ministry yesterday.

The ministry said it has learnt that private security agencies and organisations are using the uniforms of the State security bureau or similar uniforms.

According to Penal Code 171, wearing garb or carrying tokens used by public servants with fraudulent intent can be punished with a three-month jail sentence or a fine of Ks20,000.

The statement also quoted the Myanmar Official Secrets Act that reads: A person guilty of an offence for intruding into prohibited places, for helping others to intrude prohibited places or damage State security, for wearing uniforms of State security bureaus or similar uniforms shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or a fine, or both.—GNLM ■

Action will be taken against those who wear similar uniforms of State security units under the law.



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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses budget for 6-month FY gap

THE 2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 7th regular session's 2nd day meeting was held yesterday in Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meeting hall, at which Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe and Transport and Communications Deputy Minister U Kyaw Myo explained the use of Ks22.72 billion in emergency funds included in the 2017 Union Budget Law.

Deputy Minister U Kyaw Myo said repairing water damage to railway embankments was a necessary work for which the ministry was permitted to use Ks8.41 billion. From this amount, Ks8.22 billion was used on 12 embankment erosion preventive works and Ks177.73 million on repair works on two damaged embankments.

Because of these works, further inundation of railway lines were prevented, allowing safe and secure travel for the people as well as damage from flooding to people's houses, farms, religious buildings, schools, clinics and historical pagodas, the Deputy Minister said.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker then announced the Hluttaw's approval on the use of Ks22.72 billion in emergency fund included in the 2017 Union Budget Law.

Next, Union Ministers, Union-level members and Deputy Ministers from the President's Office, the Union Government Office, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office, the Pyithu Hluttaw Office, the Amyotha Hluttaw Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Union Auditor General's Office, the Union Supreme Court Office, the Constitutional Tribunal of Myanmar, the Union Election Commission Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the State Counsellor's Office, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, the Union Attorney General's Office and the Union Civil Service Board explained to the Hluttaw about projects in the National Planning Bill and incomes and expenditures of the Union Budget Bill for the six-month period from 2018 April to September.

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin, on behalf of the Ministry of For-



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is being convened in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe. PHOTO: MNA



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin. PHOTO: MNA

eign Affairs and the Ministry of International Cooperation, said the main income of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are service fees that are considered ordinary income. Ks893.5 million in income is earmarked as ordinary income from bank interests, sales of tenders forms and old assets.

On expenditures for both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of International Cooperation, an ordinary expenditure of Ks34.78 billion was proposed and Ks34.76 billion was approved after assessment in stages by combined financial assessment groups and then submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Ordinary expenditures include expenses for meetings that Myanmar is hosting in the coming six months. The meetings are the Fourth Vice Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the East-West Economic Corridor, the Sixth Myanmar-China Yunnan Forum and the 16th Myanmar-Thailand Consultation on Technical Cooperation.

In capital expenditures, Ks12.79 billion was proposed and was assessed in stages by the three committees of the project planning department, the Ministry of Construction and the machinery management committee. Ks11.95 billion was permitted and submitted to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Ks46.7 billion in ordinary and capital expenditures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of International Cooperation was submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday for the 2018 April to September period to implement the 2018 aims of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and are for necessary works that will be implemented during the coming six months, explained the Union Minister.

Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe then explained that a capital expenditure of Ks146.86 billion is requested to implement the six main work programmes during the 2018 April to September period. The main construction expenditure of Ks44.3 billion includes repairing/maintaining buildings for the forces and departments of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Myanmar-Bangladesh border fence construction and related works of the Myanmar Police Force, buildings for four border police forces that will be formed, construction works in prisons of the Correctional Department and buildings for the Myanmar Fire Services Department.

Another expenditure of Ks2.49 billion is for 5 per cent commercial tax payment for capital expenditure works of the minister's office, forces and departments, payment of land rents

and land compensation fees for confiscated lands.

Regarding the income and expenditures of Ministry of Home Affairs included in the Union Budget Bill for the six-month period from 2018 April to September, a total income of Ks97.68 billion and an expenditure of Ks176.11 billion is requested.

For the six-month period from 2018 April to September, a total of Ks322.97 billion, a capital expenditure of Ks146.86 billion and an ordinary expenditure of Ks176.11 billion are being requested for approval, explained the Union Minister for Home Affairs.

Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint explained that the duties of the Ministry of Information are to inform, educate and entertain and to implement those duties through print media, television and broadcasting media, as well as new media such as the internet and other public relations methods.

Five policies were set to do this and they are to inform the works of the legislative, administrative and judicial sectors, inform matters relating to states and regions and other important matters, to show programmes that provide services, entertainment, news and educate the people, provide programmes that benefit the people that could not be provided by the private media, fulfil the requirements of the people, establish community centres and community libraries that will provide information to individuals and groups for personal and regional development and to provide library services in accordance with the requirements of people in rural and urban areas.

The financial commission had approved a Ks17.5 billion income to the Ministry of Information for the six-month period

from 2018 April to September. The Ministry of Information had proposed ordinary expenditures of Ks25.59 billion, capital expenditures of Ks1.63 billion, totalling Ks27.22 billion. After assessment by the financial commission, Ks2.43 billion was reduced and an ordinary expenditure of Ks23.49 billion, capital expenditure of Ks1.29 billion totalling Ks24.78 billion was set.

The Union Minister for Information submits to the Hluttaw for the confirmation of the Union Budget Bill for the six months period from 2018 April to September as the ministry has already assessed the bill in stages explained the Union Minister.

Next, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr. Aung Thu said that according to policies, aims and processes, a total production value of the farm sector is targeted to be implemented to Ks2.94 trillion, an increase of 3.5 per cent and Ks2.41 trillion, an increase of 3.7 per cent in the livestock and fishery sector for the six-month period from 2018 April to September. Thirty-two projects and 295 works were planned to be implemented in the ministerial office, departments and universities and Ks149.88 billion was requested and Union Government Project Commission and Financial Commission permit it after assessment.

The ordinary expenditures of Ks184.65 billion are Ks149.34 billion requested from the government and foreign aid of Ks35.31 billion. Capital expenditures (including foreign aid and loans) for 2018 April to September is Ks149.88 billion. Construction expenditure is Ks89.28 billion, expenditure for machinery is Ks9.55 billion and other expenditures total Ks51.04 billion.

The capital expenditures of Ks149.88 billion includes Ks61.1 billion requested from the government, Ks2.94 billion in foreign aid and Ks85.83 billion in foreign loan.

The Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation explained that the ministry will utilise the allocated budget according to the set policies of the government for the full benefit to the agriculture sector and people in rural areas.

The 2nd Pyidaungsu Hluttaw 7th regular session 3rd day meeting will be continued on 17 January, it is learnt.—Myo Thu Hein, Mi Mi Phyo ■

Vice President U Myint Swe inspects progress of Chindwin Bridge

VICE President U Myint Swe yesterday inspected a bridge under construction over the Chindwin River in Khamti, Sagaing Region.

The Vice President arrived at the site yesterday afternoon along with Sagaing Region Chief Minister Dr. Myint Nang, Commander of North-West Command Maj-Gen Phone Myat, Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Aung Soe and Maj-Gen Than Htut. They arrived in Khamti Township from Nanyun Town, where they attended

a New Year Festival in Naga Self-Administered Zone.

The Vice President inspected the Chindwin Bridge which is 92 per cent complete.

The bridge situated on Khamti-Hsintey-Lahe Road is 449.5 metres long, 8.5 metres wide and is flanked by one-metre wide pedestrian walkways.

After the inspection tour of the bridge, U Myint Swe and party returned to Nay Pyi Taw by a Tatmadaw Air Force special plane — Myanmar News Agency ■



Vice President U Myint Swe arrives Khamti to inspect Chindwin Bridge (Khamti) yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Trade volume at Maungtaw Trade Zone exceeds target



Workers unloading rice bags at the jetty in Maungtaw Trade Zone. PHOTO: AUNG MIN

BORDER trade in Maungtaw, Rakhine State, exceeded the target of the 2017-2018 FY, reaching more than US\$9 million up to 14 January, according to an official of the trade zone.

The trade zone set the target of US\$6 million, with US\$5 million from exports and US\$1 million from imports in this current fiscal year, which started on 1 April and ended on 31 March.

“We did not have high expectations for the trade volume due to the situation here,” said U Cho Htwe, In-charge of Maungtaw Trade Zone.

So far, the trade zone has seen more than US\$5 million from exports of agricultural products, more than US\$3 million from fishery products, more than

US\$500,000 from forest products and more than US\$400,000 from industrial products, according to trade zone statistics.

Myanmar’s main exports to Bangladesh are rice, ginger, silk, cotton, onions, fish, prawns, dried fish, bamboo, sugar cane and industrial goods.

Imports arriving through the Maungtaw Border Trade Zone from Bangladesh have ceased since the terrorist attacks of October 2016.

The trade zones between Myanmar and Bangladesh mostly rely on the swell and ebb of the river, and the Kanyin Chaung trade zone is being developed to pave the way for larger cargo vessels, according to officials.— Aung Ye Thwin, Ko Min ■

Myanma Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) expands financial services

THE Myanma Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) provides international banking services for the State as well as for the private sector, co-operatives and joint ventures in Myanmar.

Besides international banking services, the MFTB offers additional monetary services for Myanmar currency banking sectors.

The MFTB conducts domestic and external trade, promoting the role of the private

sector and promoting foreign investments.

The MFTB is doing business in accordance with the Financial Institutions of Myanmar Law to conduct international banking and financial services, to provide external trade and non-trade foreign exchange operations in harmony with the market-oriented economy.

The MFTB contributes annual income tax to the state as

follows; In the 2014-2015 fiscal year, Ks5.42 billion together with Ks8.38 billion as a contribution to the state. In the 2015-2016 fiscal year Ks9.89 billion together with Ks18.54 billion as a contribution to the state. In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, Ks5.92 billion together with Ks9.48 billion as a contribution to the state, for a total over three of Ks57.65 billion, according to the MFTB. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Repatriation of refugees to commence...

FROM PAGE-1

According to the Physical Arrangement agreement, Myanmar will receive verified returnees at Taung Pyo Letwe reception centre for those who will be dispatched by land routes, and Nga Khu Ya reception centre for those who will be sent back by river routes.

Myanmar side will also use Hla Pho Kaung as transit camp for the returnees. Bangladesh will establish five transit camps. Myanmar will receive the returnees five days per week. Bangladesh will provide, in advance, the list of prospective returnees and duly filled verification forms to Myanmar side for smooth verification process, according to the agreement.

At the end of the meeting, Myanmar provided to Bangladesh detailed lists of 508 persons of Hindu faith and 750 persons of Muslim faith who

Both sides agreed that the repatriation process will commence on 23 January 2018.

have been verified as Myanmar residents and suggested the latter to include them in the first batch of repatriation.

Both sides agreed that the repatriation process will commence on 23 January.

The meeting also deliber-

ated on the current activities of ARSA terrorists. Myanmar had already provided a list of over 1,000 ARSA terrorists to Bangladesh at the BGP-BGB Central Meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw on 14 November 2017.

During the JWG meeting, Myanmar handed over the list to the Bangladesh delegation and requested that they be extradited in compliance with the Agreement on Border Arrangement and Cooperation (Border Ground Rules) signed in 1980. Myanmar also spoke of preventive measures to be taken in anticipation of possible attacks by ARSA terrorists during the course of the repatriation process. The crisis in Rakhine State erupted after Islamic terrorist attacks on security posts on 25 August. — GNLM ■

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Mandalay registers high inflow of tourists in 2017

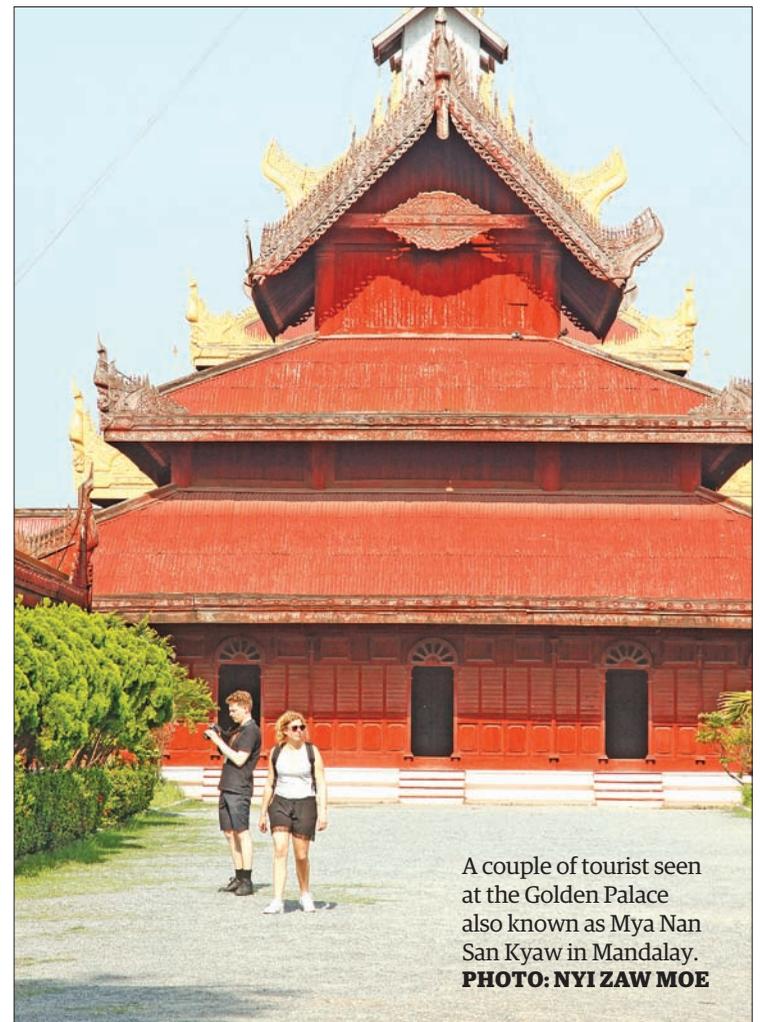
TOURIST inflow into the Mandalay Region was higher in 2017 than 2016, according to Mandalay Region Hotels and Tourism Department.

The Mandalay Region hosted more than 483,780 tourists in 2017, while the region welcomed more than 385,000 tourists in 2016, mostly from China. More than 144,200 tourists visited Mandalay in 2017. The region also attracted tourists from Thailand, India, Singapore, Viet Nam, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, United

Kingdom and America.

Mandalay has been seeing increasing tourist arrivals each year. It received more than 306,000 tourists in 2015.

The number of direct flights to Mandalay was also increased last year. Additionally, tourists visit Mandalay through the border gates in motorcycles or cars. Tourists appear to favour touring cultural zones such as the Bagan-Nyaung U cultural zone, Ava cultural site and Pyin Oo Lwin.—GNLM ■



A couple of tourist seen at the Golden Palace also known as Mya Nan San Kyaw in Mandalay.
PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE

First MIC meeting issues 3 permits, 4 endorsements

THREE investment permits and four endorsements were granted by the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) in its very first meeting this year, which was held last Monday.

The three investment projects will be executed by two domestic enterprises and one joint venture, which will be engaged in the construction, sell-

ing, leasing and management of commercial and residential buildings; hotel services; and logistics and distribution centres, creating more than 390 job opportunities.

Meanwhile, the four investment proposals endorsed by MIC are for a sheep and goat farming business, the distribution of concrete, an import and

export business and bonded warehouse construction, which will create more than 810 jobs.

The new Myanmar Investment Law has granted tax exemption and relief to investors depending on the developments in the regions and states. Investors in far-flung areas can enjoy tax breaks for a maximum of seven years, depending on the

zones.

According to the new Myanmar Investment Law, region and state DICA offices are authorised to grant approvals to investment proposals with a maximum capital of US\$5 million (Ks6,000 million), aiming to facilitate the verification process of investment projects.—Ko Khant ■

800 Star tortoises will release to indigenous native lands of Minsone Taung and Shwesettaw wildlife conservations

LAWKANANDAR Wildlife Conservation and WCS/TSA will release the world endangered species, 800 star tortoises to indigenous native lands Minsone taung and Shwesettaw wildlife conservation after in Mid January, 2018. In 2001, the 42 females and 40 males of star tortoises

are keeping and breeding in Lawkanandar wildlife conservation, Bagan Tsp and populated up to 5000 star tortoises.

On 15 January, 150 star tortoises will be released to Minsone Taung and on 16 January 650 star tortoises to Shwesettaw natural wildlife conservations.

In 1995, 175 star tortoises are keeping in Shwesettaw, Lawkananda, Minsone Taung conservations and Yadanarbon Zoo, populated up to above 10000 tortoises and released 2100 tortoises to indigenous conservations. In 2015 and 2017 also released the star tortoises, said

administrator of Lawkananda wildlife conservation, Bagan Tsp.

In coming century, hoping the 100,000 star tortoises may be released, said WCS/TSA director Dr Kalyar said. The star toises are rared and endangered species and can be found in only Myanmar.—Myanmar Digital News ■

Village development plan to be conducted spending K10 million for a village

THE village development plan will be allocating K10 million for a village in Kayin State, according to the township head of the Department of Rural Development in Hpa-an Township, Kayin State.

He said in the opening ceremony of the training programme for rural development initiatives, which was held on 16 January.

“We will begin village de-

velopment plans in January. We are going to conduct different projects such as roads, bridges, healthcare, education, agriculture, livestock and other necessary developmental areas in villages,” said U Khin Maung Win, the township head of the Department of Rural Development.

The department will furnish funds of K10 million for 45 villag-

es the money will come in two installments, the development initiatives should be accomplished by March.

A development planner from the LIFT Fund will conduct a four day development training program in which two villagers from 15 villages will attend the programme. They should learn how to start up and see through village development plans.

Some of the intentions of the training programmes are to let villagers make their own choices for their village affairs and to empower relevant authorities to set the right plans for the community.

More than 400 villages have been provided for the training in order to carry out the five-year-project.—Myanmar Digital News ■

Myanmar earned \$10.1 million from cashew nut exports

MORE than 2,435 tonnes of cashew nuts were shipped to foreign countries, as of mid-December of the current fiscal year (FY), according to a report in Myanma Alinn yesterday.

Cashew nut exports bring in some US\$14 million annually. The nuts are exported to Viet Nam, China, Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan and India.

This year, cashew nut exports fetched a higher price than last year. The border trade in cashew nuts reached some 1,600 tonnes, while another 819 tonnes were exported through the sea route.

Cashews are grown in the Yangon, Bago, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi

regions and in Mon, Kayah and Rakhine states. Of the 200,000 acres of farmland available for cashew cultivation across the country, some 150,000 acres are fertile.

Myanmar exported some 2,300 tonnes in FY 2011-2012, more than 3,400 tonnes in FY 2012-2013, 3,900 tonnes in FY 2013-2014, 2,400 tonnes in FY 2015-2016 and 1,700 tonnes in FY 2016-2017.

Cashew nuts are in great demand in the United States, the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia, Canada, Japan and Thailand, while India, Viet Nam, Brazil, Benin, Guinea-Bissau and Cambodia are the world's largest producers of cashew nuts.—Myat Thu (AMIA) ■

Over 100 foreign businesses enter manufacturing sector this FY

THE manufacturing sector absorbed foreign direct investments (FDIs) worth US\$1.55 billion through 108 projects in the last nine months.

The export value of finished industrial products from the manufacturing sector reached \$4.93 billion in the first nine months of this fiscal year (FY).

The real estate sector

ranked second in foreign investments, attracting FDIs worth \$1 billion.

Further, some \$804 million worth of FDIs flowed into other services.

Seven enterprises were given the green light to invest in the transport and communications sector, with FDIs amounting to \$653 million.

The hotel and tourism

sector stood fifth in foreign investments, with three enterprises investing up to \$154 million.

The agriculture and power sectors received estimated capital of \$130 million and \$362 million respectively. The livestock and fisheries sector also attracted seven enterprises with FDIs worth \$23 million, while the industrial es-

tate sector obtained investments worth \$34 million.

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) has permitted the execution of 176 foreign projects from April to December this FY, with estimated investments of \$4.78 billion.

Singapore is the major investor this FY, followed by China and the Netherlands.—Mon Mon ■

Border trade at Muse gate up by \$206 million this FY

THE value of Myanmar's trade with its main trade partner China through the Muse border camp was US\$4.24 billion between 1 April and 5 January in the current fiscal year (FY), according to figures released by the commerce ministry.

The trade value through Muse, as of 5 January this FY, was up

by \$200 million compared with the same period last FY. Of Myanmar's border checkpoints, the Muse gate witnesses the largest volume of trading with China.

In addition to the Muse gate, Myanmar carries out border trade with China via Lwejel, Chinshwehaw, Kanpikete and Kengtung checkpoints.

The Sino-Myanmar trade through the five border gates this FY amounted to \$4.87 billion, registering an increase of \$178 million compared to the same period last FY.

Trade values, as of 5 January, were registered as \$154 million at Lwejel gate, \$404 million at Chinshwehaw, \$73 million at Kanpikete and \$1.5 mil-

lion at Kengtung.

Rice, various types of peas, sesame seeds, corn, fruits and vegetables, dried tea leaves, fishery products, rubber, minerals and animal products are exported to China, whereas machinery, plastic raw materials, consumer products and electronic tools flow into Myanmar.—Ko Htet ■

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Rome	950	3,070
London	1,010	3,234
Barcelona	1,126	3,396

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Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs Ministry discusses repatriation efforts of displaced persons from Bangladesh

By News Team / MNA

THE first meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) for the repatriation of displaced Myanmar residents from Bangladesh was held on January 15 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw. An official of the group explained the status of the efforts undertaken for the repatriation of displaced Myanmar residents from Bangladesh.

U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Yesterday, we discussed the repatriation of the displaced Myanmar residents from Bangladesh with the Permanent Secretary of Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I want to explain this further. On November 23, 2017, a meeting at the level of the Minister of Foreign Affairs was held. Myanmar's side was led by Union Minister for the Ministry of State Counsellor's Office U Kyaw Tint Swe, and the Bangladesh side was led by its Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, a framework arrangement for the return of displaced persons from the Rakhine State was signed at the ministerial level. Based on this framework arrangement, a high-level meeting was conducted in Dhaka. I led the Myanmar delegation to the meeting, and the Bangladesh side was led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary. The terms of reference (TOR) for the repatriation was signed at that meeting. The framework agreement signed on November 23, 2017, stated that the repatriation process will start within two months of the signing of the framework agreement.

A bilateral discussion on the physical arrangements for the repatriation process, which will begin on January 23, 2018, was held yesterday. The format of the verification form that will be used during the repatriation was also exchanged at the meeting, with the other side presenting their suggested format while we presented them with our suggested format. The (repatriation) process can be said to have started today, as the high-level officials signed the agreement this morning. At the meeting, we also provided them with a list of 508 Hindus

from the Myanmar who were displaced to Bangladesh, as well as a list of more than 700 persons who are known to be residing in the northern Rakhine State. We provided these lists so that their side can make the necessary preparations to start the repatriation as soon as possible. As we all know, the international media has severely criticised Myanmar for going slow with the repatriation work. We want to show them that this is not the case. We have already arranged to have two repatriation camps ready. People returning via the land route will be accepted at Taungpyoletwei camp, and those returning via water will be accepted at Ngakhuya camp. After the repatriated persons are checked, they will be temporarily held at Hla Pho Khaung camp, where they will be provided with all the necessary accommodations and support.

This is being arranged by the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development Rakhine in (UEHRD) and the Rakhine State government. At the same time, buildings are being constructed by UEHRD in the villages where the repatriated persons will finally be resettled. The construction work for the buildings started on January 7. The concerned officials from UEHRD also conducted periodic field visits to the Rakhine State to inspect the preparation efforts. On my part, I coordinate with the Bangladesh side as a responsible person from Myanmar in the JWG, so that the repatriation process can be carried out smoothly. The repatriation process will start on January 23, 2018. When this begins, the immigration and population department will assess the verification form sent by the other side. Once it is assessed, it will be returned, and the assessed persons will return via a transit camp. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the other side, as well as officials from ministerial departments, have been assigned to repatriation camps since 15 and 16 (January) and are making the necessary preparations.

We also discussed the matter of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorists at yesterday's meeting. We heard that these terrorists



U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

are attempting to disrupt the repatriation process. We also have photographic evidence of this. At the same time, this is a matter that can be handled only through bilateral cooperation, and we have again requested the extradition of these terrorists, in accordance with the 1980 Myanmar-Bangladesh Border Agreement. The Bangladesh Permanent Secretary has also confirmed that Bangladesh will do its bit, as part of the bilateral cooperation with Myanmar. We will accept the voluntary return of the displaced Myanmar residents. As this is a safe and voluntary return, the necessary security arrangements will also be made.

We have specified our requirements within the framework signed on November 23. Those applying for repatriation need to provide some sort of evidence of having resided in Myanmar. In the past, we had issued a white card. Later, the national verification cards (NVCs) were issued. Some family members hold these cards. We will consider anyone who has such evidence of residence. They will also be issued with supporting documents, such as Form 10. We will consider family lists for repatriation as well. Thirdly, there is the matter of split families, as well as those of children. If the Bangladesh court provides recommendations, they will be considered for repatria-

tion. Finally, there is the case of orphans. If orphans meet the set criteria, and if evidence is provided of their parents having lived in Myanmar, we will accept them. Assessments will be made based on the criteria of these categories.

We have formed two groups for this. At the JWG level, the Bangladesh Permanent Secretary and I are the chairmen. Technical working groups, with officials from the Rakhine State, General Administration Department, Immigration and Population Department and the Myanmar Police Force, will be formed at the two repatriation camps.

The assessment and repatriation will be done by the two technical working groups. If a meeting is required during the repatriation process, it will be done through the Flag Meeting mechanism that already exists between the two countries. We will also contact each other through communication channels such as telephones, as well as by holding meetings in the camps.

The United Nations, as well as other international organizations, has been exerting pressure on Myanmar over the people who fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar. Under the framework agreement, we will conduct the repatriation in three months. We have also signed TORs to conduct the physical repatriation. This morning too, we signed an

agreement on the physical arrangements for the repatriation. These are the positive things our country has done. We are providing proof that we are not slow in cooperating internationally. The successful conclusion of today's meeting is the result of bilateral cooperation.

We have not set a deadline for the repatriation. The repatriation camps will be open five days a week. Each camp will repatriate 150 persons per day. Thus, there will be 300 repatriated persons per day, totalling 1,500 per week, in the initial stage. We will continue the process according to the verification form sent by the other side and based on the results of the assessment conducted on it after actually receiving the repatriated persons.

These tasks will be done systematically by the Rakhine State government and UEHRD. We have already implemented the plans for the villages. Further, security will be provided by the Myanmar Police Force and Border Police Force.

Regarding the ARSA terrorists, a bilateral Border Guard Police level central committee meeting was held in Nay Pyi Taw. Our focal ministry, the Ministry of Home Affairs, has provided to the other side a list of more than 1,000 terrorists, inclusive of personal information and photographs. At today's meeting too, I spoke again about extraditing them and taking action according to the law. The other side is also not accepting these terrorists. They will cooperate and work with us. We will conduct coordinated patrols along the border. They will take the necessary action to ensure these terrorists cannot stay on their land. On our part, we will take action according to the law.

The Ministry of State Counsellor's Office will lead this programme. Occasionally, the diplomats will be given a briefing. Further, our Union Minister, Dr. Win Myat Aye, will provide information on some of the work completed by UEHRD. Yesterday's meeting was attended by officials from the Rakhine State government. We will work together with the officials from the concerned ministries, UEHRD and the Rakhine State government. ■

(Unofficial Translation)

Lao PM visits Shwedagon, Thilawa SEZ

AT the invitation of President U Htin Kyaw and his wife Daw Su Su Lwin, Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and his wife Naly Sisoulith visited the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday morning.

The Laotian Prime Minister and his wife signed the guest book and offered flowers, water, candles, joss sticks and cash donations to the Shwedagon pagoda. They walked clockwise around the pagoda and viewed the religious pavilions in the pagoda.

In the afternoon, Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and party attended a luncheon hosted by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and Yangon ministers at the Sedona Hotel.

The Laotian Prime Minister and delegation then visited Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Yangon. Vice President of Thilawa SEZ's



Lao Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and his wife Naly Sisoulith pay homage at Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Management Committee and Minister of Electricity, Industry, Transport & Communication Daw Nilar Kyaw and Chairman of Thilawa SEZ Development

Ltd. U Aung Soe Tha greeted the Laotian Prime Minister and explained the Thilawa projects. Director / Sales and Marketing Officer of Myanmar-Ja-

pan Thilawa Development Mr. Kazuaki Shirozono and officials explained to the Laotian Prime Minister and party how the Thilawa projects are gaining

momentum.

Zone A of Thilawa started on 1 December, 2013 and 100 hectares of Zone B was implemented on 24 February, 2017. There are investors from 17 countries among the 89 registered factories, 39 of which are being operated.

The visiting Prime Minister said that he will urge Laotian businessmen to invest in Myanmar and inspected the One-Stop Service Centre in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone.

The wife of the Laotian Prime Minister Naly Sisoulith also visited the renowned Bogyoke Aung San Market in the afternoon.

They were seen off at the airport by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Deputy Minister for Commence U Aung Htoo, the Laotian Ambassador to Myanmar and other officials. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Lisu traditional New Year festival and 60th anniversary of Putao Lisu Literature and Cultural Committee

THE Lisu traditional New Year festival and the 60th anniversary of the Putao Lisu Literature and Cultural Committee was held in Kachin State, Putao Town, Lisu traditional field yesterday morning. The event was opened by Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nai Thet Lwin and was attended by ethnic affairs ministers from states and regions, Hluttaw representatives and ethnic Lisu nationals.

Lisu artistes entertained with a Peace Song and the minister for Lisu Ethnic Affairs and Kachin State cultural troupes

presented Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin with a Lisu traditional headdress, cloth and crossbow.

Next, in his address to the event, the Union Minister told of being proud and happy for Lisu ethnic nationals on holding the Lisu traditional (Khawshi) New Year festival and the 60th anniversary of Putao Lisu Literature and Cultural Committee.

“The Ministry of Ethnic Affairs was formed by the union in order to protect the rights of ethnic nationals and to develop the social economic situation of the ethnic nationals. To

date, six director offices of the ministry were opened in states and regions and works had commenced. Some of the regions where ethnic nationals live are in far-off areas and the development of education, health and economy in those areas depends mainly on peace, and thus there is a need to put an emphasis on achieving peace. The union is striving toward the establishment of a democracy federal union, and ethnic Lisu nationals are urged to participate in this”, the Union Minister said. — Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin delivered the speech at the Lisu traditional New Year Festival in Putao. PHOTO: MNA



Names of more than 1,300 ARSA terrorists sent to Bangladesh

ACCORDING to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a list containing names of more than 1,300 Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorists members had been sent to Bangladesh. It was done at the 4th Myanmar-Bangladesh Central-Level Meeting on Border Security and Law Enforcement Cooperation held in Nay Pyi Taw on 14

November 2017, it is learnt. In addition, it is learnt from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Bangladesh was also informed to extradite the ARSA extremist terrorists according to the 1980 Myanmar-Bangladesh Border Agreement so that action can be taken against them according to the law. — Myanmar News Agency ■

U Myo Nyunt, the Chairperson of the Constitutional Tribunal, receives the Ambassador of Singapore in Nay Pyi Taw

H.E. U Myo Nyunt, the Chairperson of the Constitutional Tribunal, received Singapore's Ambassador to Myanmar H.E. Ms. Vanessa Chan Yuen Ying at the Meeting Room of the Constitutional Tribunal, yesterday 10:30 a.m.

In that meeting, duties and functions of the Constitu-

tional Tribunal, the activities of the Constitutional Tribunal and providing support for the Constitutional Tribunal were discussed. Members of the Constitutional Tribunal Daw Hla Myo Nwe, U Kyaw San and Director General attended the meeting. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Preparedness for natural disasters

WITH the process of climate change happening all over the world, many kinds of natural disasters are threatening people of the world all the time. Generally speaking, now is the time for us to take constant notice of floods, storms, volcanic eruptions as well as earthquakes.

These days Myanmar saw exceptional changes of natural phenomena—unusual rainfalls in winter, cold waves reaching some parts of the nation and 19 consecutive events of earthquakes and tremors which were centered in Myanmar starting from the very first day of the year till 14 January.

Authorities concerned warned that quakes occurred in the country in the following places: at 12 miles far from the east and south-east of Kalaywa on 1st January, at 7 miles far from the south-west of Kalaywa on 2nd January, at 2 miles far from south-west of Thabeikkyin on the same day, at 20 miles far from the north-east of Moe-Hnyin on 4th January, at 19 miles far from the south and south-east of Kalaywa on 6th January, at 20 miles far from the north-east of Gwa on 7th January, at 15 miles far from Homemalin on the same day, at 13 miles far from the south and south-west of Kyaukhtu on 10th January, at three places for three times each in Phyu on 12th January, at 13 miles far from the north-east of Homemalin on the same day, at 2 miles far from the south-east of Htantabin, Yangon Region on 13th January and at 108 miles far from the north of Kaba-aye meteorology and hydrology department, respectively.

Frequent events of quakes and tremors occurred almost every day in January as if tolling warning bells for the public to take advance notice and make preparations for quakes likely to occur anytime, though we need not be too worried.

Frequent events of quakes and tremors occurred almost every day in January as if tolling warning bells for the public to take advance notice and make preparations for quakes likely to occur anytime, though we need not be too worried. It must be regarded to be good luck for us because we—families and authorities concerned can now take time to prepare for potential dangers. In case we happen to be in natural disaster events such as earthquakes or tremors, we need to live in safer places, to live outside the buildings and to be far away from dilapidated buildings. We can also take time to repair parts of our dwelling places in advance in readiness for imminent dangers.

At present, there has been no massive destruction due to a natural disaster. As an arrangement for preparedness for disasters, the National Natural Disaster Management Committee (NNDMC) has already been formed, performing the tasks on disasters since May 2016. Meanwhile, the committee has experienced difficulties and challenges, through which natural disasters can be solved, it is hoped.

Unlike the previous times, now that preparedness can be made in advance, people are now in a safer state. Accordingly, we, the people of Myanmar, should make efforts to learn more about the natural disasters which happen seasonally to take part in the government's campaigns for helping victims of natural disasters.

NOW, it reached exactly one year that transportation sector of Yangon city had been changed starting from 2017, to be exact, 16th January 2017. Yangon regional government started to change the previous transportation system upon which nearly half of the city dwellers wholly relied. Thus, transport system under the control of the former Ma Hta Tha [multi-bus-line controlling committee] changed into YBS [Yangon Bus Services].

From Ma Hta Tha to YBS and Yangon City

Yangon Bus Services launched on 16th January started its transportation with a total of 60 bus lines or so, which were operated by 8 companies, according to Yangon City Transport Authority. Although there were over 300 bus lines plying in Yangon Area, new routes were drawn up again for YBS system. At the invitation of the authorities concerned volunteers took part in the campaign for the success of the YBS system, with enthusiastic individual well-wishers and companies included. At the very start, people found it difficult to go straight to their destinations with insufficiency of vehicles, difficulties to find rightful bus lines and unavoidable transfer of bus lines to reach the destination.

Difficulties and inconveniences lasted for over three months. As for the Yangon Region Transport Authority as well, it was still negotiating with the bus line companies. In changing a system, three months period is a brief one, but according to some experts it may be attributed to the weakness in cooperation in changing into the new system.

On the day when the introduction of the YBS system entered one month period, U Phy Min Thein, Chief Minister disclosed officially at the news conference that the next step will be upgraded as the second initiative after 3 month-period, that is, referred to the month of April. Following that, 1000 neo-buses

were bought from PRC, arriving in early June, and new cars ran in substitution. Though many lines changed their old cars into new ones, until now there are still old buses plying in some areas.

One-year old YBS and its necessities

At the first anniversary of YBS system, there are nearly 100 bus lines. In answer to the requirements, amounts of vehicles will be extended up to 4000. That will be same to that of Ma Hta Tha System, but bus lines were made smaller than the former ones, hence difficulties existing for passengers due to transfers of buses and shortages of buses in some bus lines. What is worse, there used to be outside cars plying just after dark hours in the past, with people relying upon the outside cars since early hours at such a time of 1st anniversary of YBS. In the evenings passengers wholly depend on outside cars only. YBS bus lines mostly use no conductors but there can be spare-men in some bus lines until now. Occasionally, it was heard that some bus conductors collected bus fares instead of putting into cash boxes. Some cars fail to abide by vehicular rules and laws. In addition, it cannot be successfully implemented linking commutes with buses, water buses and rail transport. Once, the

YBS and reforms

YBS bus lines exercised the system of putting bus fares into cash boxes as for the passengers, but bus fares could not be collected to the full. And, some



YBS buses seen in downtown Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Chief Minister of Yangon Region Government had ever said that there would be a perfect transport system at the one year period of the YBS.

YBS and reforms

YBS bus lines exercised the system of putting bus fares into cash boxes as for the passengers, but bus fares could not be collected to the full. And, some



A Yangon water bus is moving along Yangon River in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

YBS, Water Bus, School Bus and Yangon in 2017

By Hsu Hnin Lei

area can apply the card payment system. Simultaneously problem of change will be solved out. The noticeable change is the substitution of new cars.

Most passengers welcomed the change of new vehicles, desirous of knowing the cars transparently, that is, concerning the cars' expenditures, capacities and life of insurance. For this, Yangon Region Hluttaw representatives are discussing as regards the new cars. In importing the cars, Omni Focus Company, Bandoola and other companies imported new Foton cars. In the three month period to come when card payment system will be introduced, we must watch reforms of YBS system.

Yangon Water Bus for Cruise

Yangon Water Bus was launched on 6th October 2017 and started to run for the public on October 7. At the very advent of the launch, water buses were over-crowded with passengers whereas now they are becoming less crowded. At first people seemed to travel by water buses just for fun. It was learnt that they lack to use it as the important transport sector of the country. If the Water Buses can be linked

with other transport conveyances, the present day traffic jam can be solved and it will surely become an effective transport system.

Arrivals of school buses cannot start its operation

Under the arrangement of the Yangon Region Cabinet 200 school buses were bought from ROK. As negotiations are under way with responsible officials of the Basic Education Schools school buses cannot yet operate its running until now. It was learnt that operations can be started only in the new academic year. Starting from the new academic year 2018 the government will no longer allow school ferries such as "Dyna" ply.

Out of over 200 BEHSs, nearly 300 BEMSs and over 2000 BEPSs existing in Yangon Region, there are events of traffic jam only in 22 schools. School ferry services will be launched for these schools only. Over 300 light-truck cars will be allowed for school ferry services, only up to the end of the present academic year.

Yangon Region Government signed an agreement to purchase 200 school buses from Korea Trade Investment Promotion Agency [KOTRA] on 10th May 2017 at US \$ 36840, it was learnt. But, the said cars cannot ferry students at cheap prices, so parents of the students are desirous of the grants to the existing secure cars such as super customs. Presently the imported school buses are temporarily staying in the parking grounds at Myaynegone.

Though there were many reforms had been made in Yangon City, many things are still left to be done. We are to move on to 2008 route, by making checks and balance between the Government and Hluttaw

representing the entire populace.

Translated by
Khin Maung Oo

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Order 7/2018

15th Waning of Pyatho, 1379 ME
16 January, 2018

Appointment of Deputy Minister

In accordance with the provisions stated in article 234 section (a) (d) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and section 16 (b) sub-section (9) of the Union Government Law, U Tha Oo has been appointed as Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications.

Sd/
(Htin Kyaw)
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Prof. Dr. Iza Fadri as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Indonesia to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Prof. Dr. Iza Fadri was born on 31 August 1962. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Law in 1989 and later obtained Master degree in Law in 1995 and a Doctorate (Ph.D) degree in 2003. Prof. Dr. Iza Fadri started his career as Chief of Cidapad Sectoral Police in Central Bandung City Police in 1989. From 1992 to 2010, he worked in various capacities under the Indonesian National Police. From 2012 to 2014, he worked as Governor of Indonesian National Police and from 2014 to 2016 as the Chief of South Sumatera Regional Police. From 2016 to 2017, Prof. Dr. Iza Fadri worked as Special Advisor to the Chief of Indonesian National Police for Social and Political Affairs and from 2017 to present, he has been working as the Coordinator of Special Advisors to the Chief of Indonesian National Police.—Myanmar News Agency

Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the proposed appointment of Mr. Ahmed Nuhu Bamalli as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, with residence in Bangkok.

Mr. Ahmed Nuhu Bamalli was born in 1966. He received Law degree in 1989 and Master degree in International Affairs and Diplomacy in 2002 from Ahmadu Bello University. In 2015, he received a diploma in Organisational Leadership from Oxford University. In 1998, he joined the FSB International Bank Plc and served as Deputy Manager and was promoted as Senior Manager in 2004. He served as Assistant Director at Abuja Metropolitan Management Authority from 2006 to 2007 and as General Manager at Mobile Telecommunications Limited (MTEL) from 2007 to 2009. Then, he worked as Executive Director Corporate Services from 2011 to 2012 and as Acting Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer from 2012 to 2014 at Security Printing and Minting Plc.—Myanmar News Agency

Foreign Head of State sends felicitation to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

The following is a message of felicitation from Foreign Head of State / Government sent to State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

**From Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili
Prime Minister of Georgia
Excellency,**

On behalf of the Government of Georgia, allow me to extend to you my warmest congratulations on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

On this historic day for your country, I would like to express hope that political, economic and cultural ties between Georgia and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar will be further strengthened in the coming years for the benefit of our countries.

Excellency please accept the assurances of my highest consideration along with best wishes for peace and prosperity to the friendly people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Yangon gov't collects over Ks1,600 million as tax on gold products

THE Yangon regional government earned more than Ks1,600 million from commercial taxes on gold products within seven months, according to a report in the Myawady Daily yesterday.

The internal revenue department has been instructing all gold and jewellery shops to get into the practice of putting tax stamp labels on all purchase vouchers since the end of April 2017.

The government earned Ks542,341,600 from commercial

taxes on gold and jewellery in May. The government also has plans to change the tax rate from next year onwards.

"Gold and jewellery shops in the Yangon Region have started putting the commercial tax stamp labels on vouchers. If they do not follow this practice, the customer can complain to the authorities. The authorities will then inspect such shops and take legal action against them. The government is collecting com-

mercial taxes from food products, goods, gold and jewellery to collect funds that will be used for the development projects in the country," said U Saw Kyaw Htoo, deputy director at the tax policy and research division under the Internal Revenue Department.

Most of the taxes were collected from gold and jewellery shops in the Latha, Pabaedan and Kyauktada townships.—GNLM

Yaba worth Ks353.6 billion seized from 9,544 cases in 2017

THE anti-drug authorities apprehended some 14,000 drug smugglers and users in 9,544 cases across the country in 2017.

In December 2017 alone, the police captured 1,043 drug smugglers and users in 730 cases.

The anti-drug authorities have announced that there are

some 128 kinds of drugs, 121 kinds of psychotropic drugs and 26 kinds of controlled chemicals being distributed in the country.

From among the 9,544 cases, the anti-drug police seized opium weighing 1,256.16 kilograms in 354 cases; heroin weighing 570.62 kilograms in 2,921 cases;

72,815,686 yaba tablets in 5,447 cases; marijuana weighing 198.82 kilograms in 249 cases; and ice weighing 1,107.49 kilograms in 94 cases. In total, the police seized yaba worth more than Ks353.602.44 billion in the 9,544 cases.—Nyi Nyi Than (Nay Pyi Taw)

Illegal drugs worth over Ks240 million seized in Hsenwi

THE anti-drug squad from Lasio seized 4,000 stimulant tablets and 12.529 kilograms of heroin from a vehicle that was intercepted at around 6 am at the Oriental Toll Gate in Hsenwi Town yesterday.

Members of police unit 24 searched a car driven by Kyaw

htun (a) Aik Htun, who was accompanied by Sai Hla Kyaw, and found the tablets and heroin in some 1,139 soap cups.

Following an interrogation, the police arrested two more persons travelling in a car, suspected to be the owners of the illegal drugs, at Oriental

Toll Gate at around 9 am. The suspects were identified as Yan Ale and Kukyan.

The police have filed charges against all the suspects for violating the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar News Agency

One more political party applies for registration

Registration of political parties are being scrutinized by the Union Election Commission (UEC), the Karen National Democratic Party has come to UEC to register itself as a political party on 16 January, it is learnt.—Myanmar News Agency

Public announcement for remonstrations

The Karen National Democratic Party headquartered at Ward 7, U Aung Myat Road, Hpa-an Township, Kayin State, submitted an application for registration as a political party in accord with the Section 5 of the Political Parties Registration Law on 16-1-2018. In their application they mentioned that they will use the following name, flag and emblem as described hereunder.

In accord with Section 14 (d) of the Political Parties Registration Rules, it is hereby announced that those who want to remonstrate with the Union Election Commission (UEC) about the party's name, flag and emblem may submit a complaint along with the supporting evidences within seven days starting from issuance of this announcement.— Union Election Commission

Flag of Karen National Democratic Party



Emblem of Karen National Democratic Party



Public suggestions sought on Communication Service Licence fee change

The Ministry of Transport and Communications has invited suggestions and comments from the public on its plan to change the Communication Service Licence fee for licensed communications companies. Those who wish to offer suggestions and comments should visit www.motc.gov.mm or send their comments and suggestions to the following addresses, from today until February 7.

1. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Communications, 067-3407350, chitwai.ho@motc.gov.mm
2. Director General, Directorate of Telecommunications, 067-3407609, dg.ptd@mptmail.net.mm
3. Director, Licence and Inspection, Directorate of Telecommunications, 067-3407217, ptdregulator@gmail.com

Ministry of Transport and Communications

Erdogan says Turkey will crush “terror army” in northern Syria

ISTANBUL — President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday the United States was trying to create a “terror army” on Turkey’s southern frontier by training a Syrian border force that includes a Kurdish militia, and pledged to crush it before it came into being.

“A country we call an ally is insisting on forming a terror army on our borders,” Erdogan said in a speech in Ankara. “What can that terror army target but Turkey?”

“Our mission is to strangle it before it’s even born.”

On Sunday, the US-led coalition said it was working with the mainly Kurdish YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to set up a new 30,000-strong border force.

The plan has infuriated Turkey, which considers the YPG to be an extension of the

PKK, a Kurdish group waging an insurgency in southern Turkey and deemed a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and European Union.

“This is what we have to say to all our allies: don’t get in between us and terrorist organisations, or we will not be responsible for the unwanted consequences,” Erdogan said.

“Either you take off your flags on those terrorist organisations, or we will have to hand those flags over to you ... Our operations will continue until not a single terrorist remains along our borders, let alone 30,000 of them.”

Erdogan also said that Turkey’s armed forces had completed preparations for an operation against the Kurdish-controlled region of Afrin in northwest Syria and the town of Manbij. —Reuters ■



Turkey’s President Tayyip Erdogan addresses members of parliament from his ruling AK Party during a meeting at the Turkish parliament in Ankara, Turkey on 16 January, 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

Yemen seeks Saudi cash as plunging currency deepens war woes

ADEN — War-torn Yemen said it needs a \$2 billion deposit pledged by key ally Saudi Arabia in November to stabilize a currency that hit new lows this week, pushing its impoverished people closer to starvation.

Yemen has been divided by nearly three years of civil war between the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, backed by Saudi Arabia, and the Iran-aligned Houthis.

The conflict has unleashed the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, including one of the most deadly cholera epidemics in modern times and economic collapse, which has spread hunger.

Authorities sought to boost liquidity by printing money, but the rial plunged from 250 to the dollar to 350 after the first batch of newly printed notes was rolled out last year. The rial traded for 440 to the dollar by year’s end and this week crashed to around 500.

“Government action in this regard is done on several tracks, according to the limited options available, including intensifying communication ... to expedite the completion of the Saudi depos-

itory procedures,” state news agency Saba quoted government spokesman Rajeh Badi as saying on Monday.

Saudi officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the allegedly promised funds.

President Hadi announced on 11 November that Riyadh had agreed to deposit \$2 billion into Yemen’s central bank to shore up the rial and secure shipments of badly needed fuel.

Hadi’s government moved the central bank in 2016 from the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa to the southern port city of Aden, where the government is currently based.

Both the central bank in Aden and the one in Sanaa suffer from depleted reserves, but they have played a key role in mitigating widespread economic pain by paying some public sector salaries, as soaring prices threaten to push basic commodities out of reach for many Yemenis.

The Aden authorities accuse the Houthis of plundering the bank’s foreign reserves to fund their war effort when it was based in the capital, charges the group and the Sanaa bank deny. — Reuters

South African court authorizes freezing of \$130 mln in McKinsey case — source

JOHANNESBURG — A South African court has authorized the freezing of 1.6 billion rand (\$130 million) in assets earned by global consultancy McKinsey and a firm linked to friends of President Jacob Zuma, a source at the state prosecutors’ office told Reuters.

The Pretoria High Court made the decision in December after a request by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to freeze the fees earned by McKinsey and local consultancy Trillian for advising South African power utility Eskom.

Privately-held McKinsey, one of the world’s largest management consultancies, has already lost several clients over the contract.

This month Zuma agreed to set up a commission of enquiry into allegations of influence peddling by the Gupta brothers, who controlled the firm McKinsey partnered with on the 1.6 billion rand contract to advise Eskom in 2016.

Separately, parliament is investigating whether McKinsey knowingly let funds from

Eskom be diverted to Trillian as a way of securing the contract.

“On 14 December, 2017, the NPA obtained a preservation order from the Pretoria High Court to preserve assets worth around 1.6 billion rand relating to Trillian and McKinsey,” said the NPA source, who declined to be identified.

“Tomorrow parties in the case will be served with the order,” the source said. The order allows prosecutors to freeze assets pending the outcome of an investigation.

A spokesman for McKinsey said on Monday it had not received formal communication about the preservation order. “As we have said before ... we will return the fee we earned from the Eskom turnaround programme (R1.028bn) no matter what,” the spokesman said in an email to Reuters. McKinsey will cooperate with South African authorities in their investigations into the case, he added.

McKinsey launched its own investigation into its handling of the partnership with Trillian and says it ceased work

with the firm in March 2016 after due diligence showed links to the Gupta brothers.

Trillian did not respond to a request for comment from Reuters on Monday. When contacted in November by Reuters, Trillian denied wrongdoing relating to the Eskom contract.

Both Zuma and the Gup-tas deny wrongdoing. Zuma’s spokesman did not reply to a Reuters request for comment.

The court decision is one of the first instances in which authorities have acted on allegations of wrongdoing by three Gupta brothers, Ajay, Atul and Rajesh, who South Africa’s anti-corruption watchdog accuses of siphoning off public funds.

Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa was elected last month to replace Zuma as leader of the ruling African National Congress, putting him in pole position to become South Africa’s next president.

He ran on a pledge to root out cases of corruption in government and on Saturday he said the judicial enquiry which Zuma agreed to set up should be given top priority.—Reuters

Defence chief sets sights on beefing up Russia's nuclear triad with advanced weaponry

MOSCOW — The share of state-of-the-art armaments in Russia's nuclear triad should be at least 90% by 2021, Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu said on Wednesday.

"The main focus should be made on further bolstering strategic nuclear power. The share of advanced armaments in the Russian nuclear triad

should constitute at least 90% by 2021," he said at a Russian Defence Ministry meeting.

It is necessary to considerably improve the mobility of forces in terms of logistics, deployment and supply, as well as continue to build up the potential of special operations forces and enhance the combat capabilities of the airborne

landing forces, he said.

"The task was set to provide the unconditional fulfilment of the state arms programme. The army will be receiving more precision-guided weapons and cutting-edge systems of reconnaissance, communications and electronic warfare, as well as modern military gear," Shoigu specified.—Tass ■



The share of advanced armaments in the Russian nuclear triad should constitute at least 90% by 2021, the Russian defence minister said. **PHOTO: TASS**

Kosovo Serb leader shot dead in northern town

PRISTINA — A Kosovan Serb leader, Oliver Ivanovic, who was awaiting trial over the killings of ethnic Albanians during the 1998-99 war, was shot dead outside his party office in the northern town of Mitrovica on Tuesday, a state prosecutor said.

In a protest against the killing, Serbia said it would quit the ongoing round of a European Union-sponsored dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on the normalisation of relations that was due to take place in Brussels. "I can confirm that Oliver Ivanovic has died from gun shots. Investigators are on the scene," Shyqyri Sylja, a state prosecutor in Mitrovica, told Reuters.

Known as a moderate among Kosovo Serb politicians, Oliver Ivanovic had been one of the chief interlocutors for NATO, United Nations and European Union officials based in Kosovo after the war.

In 2016 he was found guilty of war crimes linked to the killings of four ethnic Albanians during the war and was jailed for nine years. But after a retrial was ordered he was released last year and awaiting a new trial.

Some 40,000-50,000 ethnic Serbs live in northern Kosovo, rejecting integration with the mainly Albanian state since it declared independence from Serbia in 2008.—Reuters ■

Czech PM ready to face allegations as he fights for minority government

PRAGUE — Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis on Tuesday requested that lawmakers lift his parliamentary immunity so he can face allegations of fraud as he fights to win support for a minority government.

Police are investigating whether Babis, the Czech Republic's second-richest person, illegally received a 2 million-euro European Union subsidy a decade ago by hiding ownership of a farm and conference centre. Babis denies wrongdoing.

Babis made his request before he appeared at a parliamentary committee hearing on whether to recommend his immu-

nity be lifted. The lower house was also set to resume debate on a vote of confidence in Babis's one-party government. He was expected to lose, because most other political parties say the cabinet should not be led by a person under investigation.

Babis's ANO party won election in October by a wide margin but short of an absolute majority, with 78 of 200 seats in the lower house. If it loses the confidence vote, Babis's government will stay in office until a new one is formed. He may end up leading any new government; his pledges to weed out political corruption and run government with

a businessman's touch have kept him popular.

His situation could be further complicated by a presidential election that is heading to a tight run-off on 26-27 January. It pits incumbent Milos Zeman, who has backed Babis, against Jiri Drahos, who has said it would be unacceptable to have a sitting prime minister who faces criminal charges.

Babis reiterated on Tuesday the allegations against him have been fabricated by political and business opponents. He added the case should not be linked to his government's confidence.

"Citizens are not stupid and know it is a political

affair that should damage me since 2016, that should prevent me from being in politics," he told a news conference alongside ANO party deputy Jaroslav Faltny, who is also involved in the case and denies wrongdoing.

"We have never doubted ... that we will let ourselves be handed over (to face police charges)."

The lower house unexpectedly adjourned its session last week to give more time for parliament's immunity committee to make a recommendation. It is uncertain whether the confidence vote would also take place on Tuesday; it may come later in the week.—Reuters ■

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BATAM VOY. NO. (034)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR BATAM VOY. NO. (034) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17-1-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT 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 INTERASIA LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V FSL SANTOS VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V FSL SANTOS VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17-1-2018 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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V OCEAN REEF VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V OCEAN REEF VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17-1-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-3 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 COMET SHIPPING &
CHARTERING LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

Philippine lawmakers start talks for switch to federal system of government

MANILA – Philippine lower house lawmakers on Tuesday kicked off discussions on possible changes to the 30-year-old constitution, with the aim of shifting to a system of federal government and allowing the president up to two terms in office.

The switch to a federal system was one of the key planks of President Rodrigo Duterte's election campaign, aimed to remedy what he saw as neglect by a Manila-cen-

tric political establishment that has left provinces in perpetual poverty.

Duterte's allies, who dominate the nearly 300-member house, want a constitution that broadly aims to expand both legislative chambers, lengthen lawmakers' terms, give provinces more fiscal autonomy, have a prime minister as head of government, and a separately elected president.

The tentative plan is to agree and draft the

amendments late this year and hold a referendum in May 2019.

Roger Mercado, head of the house panel on constitutional amendments, said lower house representatives were on track to vote and approve a resolution this week that would convene both chambers of Congress into a constitutional assembly.

"Let's not waste people's money and time. Let us go ahead and convene already," Mercado told a

hearing on Tuesday.

The alternative, of creating a special constitutional convention, would cost 11 billion pesos (158 million pounds), he added.

Senators are opposed to combining the two chambers to draft the amendments, which would make the normally powerful 24-seat upper house less relevant in the process. On Monday, Senator Panfilo Lacson launched a resolution urging the senate to convene a constitu-

ent assembly of its own.

The push to change the constitution has been a divisive issue, with critics accusing lawmakers of trying to prolong their stay in office, or of creating a way for Duterte to stay in power beyond the end of his term in 2022.

Opponents warn the process could bring a repeat of the 1970s-era of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos and say they are troubled by Duterte's stated admiration for him, and the

president's similar authoritarian traits.

The opposition says the 1987 constitution was drafted to stop that from happening.

Duterte has made clear he has no desire to stay longer than his term and, if anything, would prefer to retire earlier.

Lawmakers have yet to decide on what federal model to adopt, Mercado said. Duterte's preference is for one similar to that of France. —Reuters ■



Clouds partially cover Mayon volcano's crater as it spews a column of ash during another mild eruption in Legazpi City, Albay province, south of Manila, Philippines on 16 January, 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

Philippines shuts more schools as volcano spews ash and lava

MANILA— The Philippines' most active volcano spewed lava that cascaded downslope and emitted ash that fell on nearby towns, state volcanologists said on Tuesday, prompting the provincial government to shut more schools.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) recorded nine episodes of tremor, four of which accompanied lava fountains, and 75 lava collapse events as pressure builds up leading to lava flows and ash plumes, reiterating its warning that a hazardous eruption could

happen any time.

Mount Mayon, a volcano in the coconut-growing central Bicol region that draws tourists because of its near-perfect cone shape, has shown increased restiveness since Saturday, displacing thousands of residents.

Phivolcs said the advancing lava and pyroclastic flows had reached the six-kilometre radius no-go zone, from which some residents fled. "Alert level 3 remains in effect over Mayon Volcano, which means that it is currently in a relatively high level of unrest as magma is at the crater and hazardous

eruption is possible within weeks or even days," it said.

Alert level 4 means an eruption is possible "within days" while level 5 is when a hazardous eruption is under way.

The Albay provincial government has expanded its class suspension order to include more towns around the 2,462-metre (8,077-foot) volcano, and advised travellers to avoid ashfall-hit villages amid poor road visibility. Class suspensions have allowed the government to use schools as temporary shelters for displaced people. —Reuters ■

Canadian suspect in Singapore bank robbery faces UK court on extradition

SINGAPORE/LONDON — A Canadian man suspected of a rare bank robbery in Singapore in 2016 faces a court appearance in Britain on Thursday after he was detained on an extradition request from Singapore.

David Roach allegedly stole S\$30,000 (16,454 pounds) from a Standard Chartered bank branch in July 2016, before fleeing to Thailand where he was jailed for 14-months for failing to declare such a large amount of money

when he arrived.

Singaporean authorities said they had repeatedly asked Bangkok to send Roach back to face charges in the city state, but Thailand decided to deport Roach to Canada last Thursday.

Later that day and apparently en route to Canada, British police said they detained Roach at London's Heathrow Airport.

"David Roach, 28, was arrested on Thursday, 11 January at Heathrow Airport by officers from the

Metropolitan Police Extradition Unit following a request from authorities in Singapore," London police said in a statement late Monday. Police said Roach appeared in court on Jan. 12 and was remanded into custody to appear again in court on 18 January. Singapore's Attorney General's Chambers and the Ministry of Home Affairs said on Monday they had asked British authorities to arrest Roach and extradite him to face charges in Singapore. —Reuters ■

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (1/ 2018)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	DMP/L-085(17-18)	HDD-KSD 25 (Road Boring Machine) Spares (10) Items	Ks
(2)	DMP/L-086(17-18)	(S5 N40) SAE 40 Gas Engine Oil (Shell) Mysella (600) Drum	Ks
(3)	DMP/L-087(17-18)	Spares for 3NB 1300C Rig Pump Ex ZJ 50D Drilling Rig (22) Items	Ks
(4)	DMP/L-088(17-18)	Fire Extinguisher (Local Standard & Class), Dry Chemical Powder (3) Groups	Ks
(5)	DMP/L-089(17-18)	Assorted Sizes for Float Shoes & Collars (28) Items	Ks
(6)	DMP/L-090(17-18)	Phoenix Contact AC to DC Power Supply Spares (5) Items	Ks
(7)	DMP/L-091(17-18)	2 7/8" & 2 3/8" Tubing Swab Cup (2) Items	Ks

Tender Closing Date & Time- 13-2-2018, 16:30 pm

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 12 January 2018 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No (44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph . +95 67 - 411206

Colour returns to Hollywood's red carpets but Time's Up still strong

LOS ANGELES — After making a strong statement in black dresses at the Golden Globes to protest sexual harassment, actresses brought a burst of colour back to the red carpet last week but said the message of the Time's Up campaign will continue throughout Hollywood's awards season.

From white gowns on Angelina Jolie and Greta Gerwig to bold tones on Nicole Kidman, Jessica Chastain and Allison Janney, actresses and filmmakers donned a vast palette at the 11 January Critics Choice awards.

"The 'Wear Black' specifically was for the Golden Globes but the (Time's Up) message remains. Enough is enough," said Rachel Brosnahan, award-winning star of Amazon series "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel."

"This is just the beginning of a much larger conversation that's being translated into action, black

or not," said Brosnahan, who was dressed in a pale pink shimmering Zuhair Murad dress.

With glamorous stars drawing millions of spectators, red carpets have become the fashion world's most coveted runway.

The Golden Globes saw throngs of top male and female talent wear black and don pins in solidarity with Time's Up, launched by more than 300 entertainment figures to address workplace sexual harassment.

The 7 January Golden Globes turnout raised questions about whether black would rule every show through the awards season, which culminates in the Oscars ceremony on 4 March.

"The unity on the night was absolutely vital, but definitely going forward, we would want any woman to wear what she feels great in," said InStyle editor-in-chief Laura Brown.

At the Critics Choice Awards,



L to R: Laura Dern, Nicole Kidman, Zoe Kravitz, Reese Witherspoon and Shailene Woodley pose backstage after winning the award for Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for "Big Little Lies" at the 75th Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California, US on 7 January, 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

a handful of actresses stuck with the black dress code including Reese Witherspoon in Prada, Laura Dern in a Balmain jumpsuit and Emilia Clarke in Dolce and Gabbana. All three helped launch Time's Up.

The scramble for black outfits at the Golden Globes is likely to have left actresses with numerous options for upcoming ceremonies such as the 21 January Screen Actors Guild awards, said Marilyn Heston, founder of publicity firm MHA Media.

For an actress hoping to

stand out on the red carpet, a bold colour is often the way to win approval from the fashion world.

Black dresses, however, have always been good for business.

"There's a lot of women out there who love wearing black dresses. They sell," Heston said.

"If there's really beautiful black gowns and cocktail dresses created for some of the other events, I would say a great number of women will go 'wow, wonderful dresses, can I buy them?'"

The award shows coincide with fashion weeks in New York,

Paris, Milan and London, where designers will showcase their autumn/winter 2018 collections.

Whether there will be a flurry of black dresses on the runway remains to be seen, Brown said, but she added designers are conscious of the movement.

"The last thing you want for a designer is to not be themselves, but also designers are acutely aware of the world around them so hopefully there's a way they can marry their own signatures with being cognizant of where we are," Brown said.—Reuters ■

Dolores O'Riordan, The Cranberries frontwoman, dead at 46

LONDON — Dolores O'Riordan, the lead singer of The Cranberries, has died. She was 46.

The news was confirmed by the Irish musician's publicist, Lindsey Holmes that O'Riordan passed away suddenly.

No cause of death has yet been announced, The Guardian reported. O'Riordan had been in London for a recording session, after she cancelled a tour to Europe and North America with a

reunited Cranberries last year because of a back problem.

The band released the acoustic album 'Something Else' in 2017. "Family members are devastated to hear the breaking news and have requested privacy at this very difficult time," the statement added.

A Metropolitan police statement also confirmed the news, saying the singer's body was found at a hotel in Park Lane.

"At this early stage the death

is being treated as unexplained," the statement by the police read.

The Cranberries was formed Limerick, Ireland towards the end of the 1980s and the band shot to fame in the 1990s with blockbusters such as "Zombie" and "Linger".

O'Riordan, who was born in Limerick in 1971, was the chief lyricist and co-songwriter of the music group. Her wailing voice in the distinctive west Irish accent reverberates as strongly as the songs of the band.

The Cranberries made their debut in 1993 with LP 'Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?', which featured the hit single "Linger" and went on to sell record-breaking copies.

The album was followed by an even bigger hit in 'No Need To Argue', that produced "Zombie", a torturous anthem laced with political overtones highlighting the violence of Northern Ireland's conflict in the 20th century called Troubles.—PTI ■



January Jones . PHOTO: PTI

January Jones is dating Nick Viall

LOS ANGELES — "Mad Men" actor January Jones is reportedly dating Nick Viall who starred in the 21st season of "The Bachelor" in March.

During the show Viall got engaged to contestant Vanessa Grimaldi. He and Grimaldi split just months later, in August.

According to Page Six, Jones and Viall got together after she said on "The Late Late Show With James Corden" that she was a "Bachelor" fan.

"They've been dating for

about two months.

She went on 'The Late Show' in mid-November and said Nick had reached out to her and tried to get her to lip-sync battle with him. She declined, but then he asked her out to a drink and she accepted. They've been seeing each other since," a source said.

Jones celebrated her 40th birthday with Viall and some of her "Mad Men" former co-stars at Inkwil in LA on Saturday, the source added.—PTI ■



Dolores O'Riordan. PHOTOREUTERS

China, Mongolia win gold prizes at 12th Budapest Int'l Circus Festival

BUDAPEST — The Chinese National Acrobatic Troupe and the Mongolian Nomuna Troupe placed first at the 12th Budapest International Circus Festival Sunday at the Capital Circus of Budapest.

Besides the two gold prizes, three silvers went to Andrejs Fjodorvs from Latvia, the Russian duo Funcoholics and the Russian trio Without Socks.

Spectators watched a special lotus bloom during the per-

formance of the Chinese National Acrobatic Troupe. Unlike traditional umbrella jugglers, new juggling skills were offered through the pulsating movement of elegant human lotus that originated in the Chinese culture.

The umbrellas shone as the petals of the bloom of a magnificent human composition, and demonstrated the amazing beauty of the Chinese temperament. The Chinese troupe also

wowed spectators by presenting an amazing diabolo act.

By contrast, the Nomuna Troupe from Mongolia presented a dynamic, reckless world through their performance and offered two acts — one springboard and one hand voltage production — in the competition.

The troupe of 12 members, founded by Erdene Nergui, the head of the Mongolian State Circus in 2013, has acquired extraordinary knowledge in

rhythm and precision.

Meanwhile, Fjodorvs from Latvia brought some real magic on stage with his dog and pigeon act and displayed the harmonious relations between animals and humankind. Youthful energy characterized the Russian clown trio Without Socks, who put on a fresh and humorous performance based on the tradition of clown art.

The Russian duo Funcoholics is composed of a married

couple. The husband, Konstantin Gvozdetkiy, had performed at the festival in 2002, and was awarded a silver medal back then. His wife Victoria has been his partner in the duo since 2012.

The first Budapest Circus Festival was held in 1996.

The 12th Budapest International Circus Festival, held on 8-14 January, also celebrated the 250th jubilee of the first modern circus, which opened on 9 January in 1768.—Xinhua ■

Visually impaired welcomed into art conversation in Japan

TOKYO — Opportunities for blind or visually impaired people in Japan to appreciate art are on the rise thanks to the increased use of audio descriptions, tactile methods and simple human dialogue.

Whether a person is disabled or not, conversations among patrons and staff at museums across the country are helping art lovers gain a deeper understanding of the multitude of opinions concerning the works on display.

Last September around 20 people, including some with visual and hearing disabilities, gathered at the National Art Centre in Tokyo's Roppongi district, where a Southeast Asian art exhibition was being held.

A participant with full sight described a painting that created a "pastoral impression" despite including a depiction of a bombing. The leader of the group, who is blind, then asked "Which parts make you feel this way?"

"It's the houses on stilts and animals," the person answered. The painter is "probably expressing the daily life of war mixed with a feeling of serenity."

A man in his 30s, who listened to the conversation with his eyes shut, said, "I was able to get an image with the words of others and found it possible to appreciate art without relying on my eyesight."

"Listening to other people's opinions helped me deepen my appreciation," added a woman in her 20s.

The event was organized by a nonprofit organization that has held more than 100 similar programs since 2012 in cooperation with art museums across Japan.

"We would like to provide opportunities for blind people to know other people's feelings through dialogues instead of giving one-sided explanations to them," said Kenta Hayashi, head of the NPO.

But it is also important that the blind and those with low vision interpret pieces for themselves and not solely rely on explanations from museum staff, experts argue. Mori Art Museum, also located in Roppongi, has held some 40 events to help the blind appreciate art, attracting around 500 participants, since 2003. In



Photo taken on 9 September, 2017, shows a group of people, including some with visual and hearing disabilities, exchanging views about a painting at the National Art Centre in Tokyo. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

2016, the museum incorporated audio descriptions for people with and without visual impairments.

When an event is held, staff will meet participants at nearby train stations and ascertain the degree of their disabilities to customize appropriate programs.

Participants exchange their thoughts and impressions about three or four pieces of art. Staff members then explain the pieces in detail so that participants can deepen their understanding while enjoying conversations.

Artists also participated in a program in mid-October last year, sharing their own explanations of the pieces they created.

A female participant, who has a congenital form of blindness, said, "I had nothing to do with art because I was born blind, but I could relate and enjoy the pieces by touching them."

Sumika Takashima, a staff member at the Mori museum, said, "We will cooperate with artists to offer programmes that enable many people to enjoy art

in their daily life."

Outside of Japan, there are several innovative ways in which art is becoming accessible to the visually impaired community.

3D printing of art, especially famous pieces, allows blind people and those with low vision to experience iconic works through touch. Other methods include incorporating Braille into visual art, extra-textured paintings, and tactile art and tactile tours customized for the blind.—Kyodo News ■

Saudi Arabia begins screening films after decades-long ban lifted

JEDDAH (Saudi Arabia) — Saudi Arabia began screening feature-length animated children's films this weekend in a makeshift theatre, after a 35-year-old ban on cinemas was lifted in the conservative Islamic kingdom.

The first permanent theatres could open as early as March, part of a liberalising reform drive

that has already opened the door to concerts, comedy shows and women drivers over the past year.

For now, the authorities are sponsoring temporary settings, like the state-run cultural hall in the Red Sea city of Jeddah equipped with a projector, a red carpet and a popcorn machine.

"Until now, there is no infra-

structure for movie theatres, so we are trying to take advantage of (alternative) venues to approximate the cinematic form," said Mamdouh Salim, whose Cinema 70 brand organised the week-long screenings.

"We tried to use these films to be a starting point as the first cinematic screening after the de-

cision on 11 December to permit movie theatres."

Cinemas were banned in the early 1980s under pressure from Islamists as Saudi society turned towards a particularly conservative form of religion that discouraged public entertainment and public mixing between men and women.

But reforms led by 32-year-old Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have eased many of those restrictions, as the government tries to broaden the economy and lessen its dependence on oil. In a nod to conservatives, films will be censored to make sure they remain in line with the kingdom's "moral values".—Reuters ■

Sithu Aung is top scorer in Myanmar National League 2018

YADANARBON FC's footballer Sithu Aung is the top scorer so far after the first-week matches in the MPT Myanmar National League 2018.

On 15 January, Yadanar FC played Ayeyawady United FC on their home ground (Man-

dalarthiri Stadium, Mandalay), beating them 5-2.

During the match, Yadanarbon's Sithu Aung scored four goals at the 7th-minute, 57th-minute, 83rd-minute and 88th-minute marks.

Following the goals, Sithu

Aung said, "I am grateful to my teammates. I could score the goals because they supported me. This year, our team must try harder, as there is no foreign player in our team. We have tried our best to produce a good result in this season. Our fans must come and watch the next matches. We are doing our best."

Sithu Aung also became the first player to score a hat-trick in the MPT Myanmar National League 2018.

After the first-week matches of the Myanmar National League 2018, Sagaing United FC drew with Rakhine United FC, Zwegabin United FC drew with Shan United FC and Myawady FC drew with Magwe FC, with a 0-0 score line each. Meanwhile, Yangon United FC beat Hantharwady United FC 2-1; GFA (Gospel For Asia) FC drew 1-1 with Southern Myanmar FC; and Yadanarbon United FC defeated Ayeyawady United FC 5-2. — GNLM Sport ■



Yadanarbon FC's footballer Sithu Aung, the first hat-trick player of MPT Myanmar National League 2018 is seen at Mandalathiri Stadium on 15 January 2018. **PHOTO: MNL**



File photo taken, on 16 January 2018 shows the competition of Magway FC and Eastern Shan FC at KBZ Bank Girls' U13 Tournament 2018. **PHOTO: MFF**

KBZ Bank Girls' U13 Tournament 2018 final to be played tomorrow

THE final match between Magway FC and Southern Shan FC in the KBZ Bank Girls' U13 Tournament 2018 will be played tomorrow (4pm) on the Myanmar Football Federation's (MFF's) artificial turf in Yangon.

The two teams advanced to the final after Magway FC beat Eastern Shan FC 9-2 and Southern Shan FC defeated Taninthayi FC 7-3.

Sponsored by the Myanmar Women's League Organising Committee and KBZ Bank Ltd., and organised by the MFF and the Ministry of Education, the tournament began on 6 January

and will conclude on 18 January.

Four matches between the various states and regions participating in the tournament were played each day.

On the opening day, (January 6) Taninthayi FC crushed Kachin FC 8-0, Shan FC beat Kayin FC 1-0, Eastern Shan FC bested Mon FC 3-2, while Ayeyawady FC thrashed Rakhine FC 12-1.

On 9 January, Nay Pyi Taw FC defeated Chin FC 3-0, Sagaing FC drew 1-1 with Kayah FC, Magway FC drew 1-1 with Southern Shan FC, and Bago FC drew 2-2 with Mandalay FC. — GNLM Sport ■

French referee provisionally suspended for kicking out at player

PARIS — Referee Tony Chapron has been provisionally suspended after he appeared to kick out at Nantes player Diego Carlos in Sunday's French Ligue 1 game against Paris St Germain.

During stoppage-time, Chapron bumped into Carlos and fell over with TV footage showing him swinging his leg towards the running defender's shins.

"The technical direction of refereeing and the federal commission of refereeing have decided on the withdrawal of Tony Chapron, who had been appointed for Wednesday's Ligue 1 game between Angers and Troyes, until further notice," the French federation said in a statement on Monday.

Chapron will also be summoned before the league's disciplinary committee.

A few seconds after the incident, Chapron gave Carlos a yellow card, which resulted in



Nantes' Diego Carlos is shown a red card by referee Tony Chapron at The Stade de la Beaujoire —Louis Fonteneau in Nantes, France on 14 January, 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

the player being sent off as he had also been booked in the first half. Chapron apologised to Carlos on Monday.

"This clumsy gesture was inappropriate. I therefore wish to apologise to Diego Carlos," he was quoted as saying in

French media.

The French league (LFP) said later on Monday that it had cancelled Carlos's second yellow card, meaning he is eligible to play in Ligue 1 against Toulouse on Wednesday.—Reuters ■

Federer breezes through opener in Melbourne

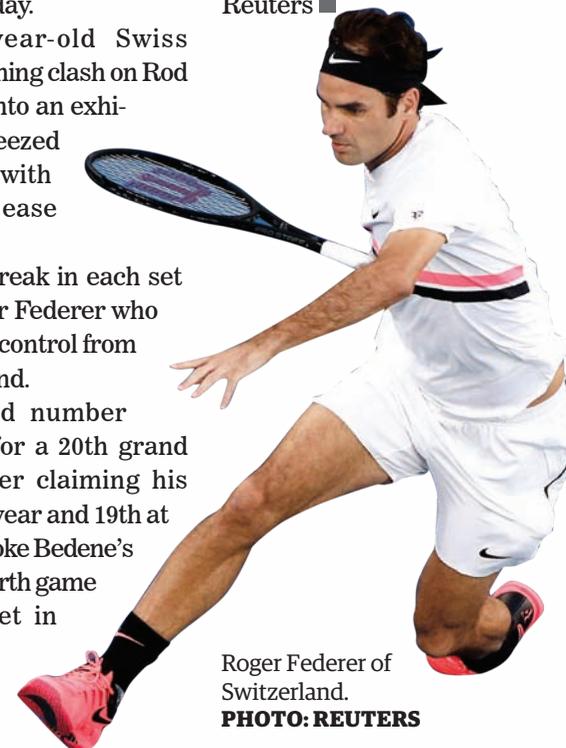
MELBOURNE — Defending champion Roger Federer got quickly into his majestic stride with a straight-sets win over Slovenian Aljaz Bedene in his opening match at the Australian Open on Tuesday.

The 36-year-old Swiss turned the evening clash on Rod Laver Arena into an exhibition as he breezed past Bedene with consummate ease 6-3, 6-4, 6-3.

A single break in each set was enough for Federer who looked in total control from beginning to end.

The world number two, bidding for a 20th grand slam title after claiming his 18th here last year and 19th at Wimbledon, broke Bedene's serve in the fourth game of the first set in which he conceded only three points

on his serve. Federer pounced immediately at the start of the second to gain another break and cantered through the rest of the match against a player who he had never played before.—Reuters ■



Roger Federer of Switzerland. **PHOTO: REUTERS**