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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. IV, No. 248, 4th Waxing of Pyatho 1379 ME

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Thursday, 21 December 2017



A mobile medical team provides health care services to Muslim families in Buthidaung, Rakhine State. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

Over 5,000 receive free medical care in Rakhine

A MEDICAL mobile team has provided free medical treatment to over 5,000 people so far, including care for contagious and infectious diseases, to villagers in Buthidaung Township, Rakhine State, according to a medical official.

“I am a doctor from Taung-

bazar station. Now I have been assigned to Buthidaung Hospital.

There are a total of six mobile teams including one in Zaytipyin Village. Since 14 July, the six mobile teams have provided medical treatment to 5,529 patients in the villages”,

said Dr. Saw Min Thein. The mobile teams provide free medical treatment to the villagers 20 days a month. The mobile teams will continue to provide medical treatment over the next six or seven months with the use of Union budget funding.

The areas of Buthidaung

and Maungtau that were affected by terrorist attacks faced difficulties in re-opening the clinics and hospitals in the region.

The mobile teams will provide medical treatment in the villages until the clinics and hospitals are fully operational.—Myint Maung / Zayar ■

India pulse companies stock up on Myanmar beans

May Thet Hnin

WITH the expectation that Myanmar beans will be imported into India by the end of March, some bean companies in India are starting to stock up on Myanmar beans, according to U Min Ko Oo, the secretary of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seed Merchants Association.

Four months ago, India restricted the import of non-domestic pulses and beans, which dramatically affected the pulses sector in Myanmar.

“Some India bean companies started buying Myanmar beans in order to be ready to sell in the market and expect the bean price to rise, if India’s Restricted Pulse Import Policy changes at the end of March,” U Min Ko Oo said.

“The current purchases by the companies in India are not imported, but stored in Myanmar for the short-term until the restrictions are lifted,” he added.

According to the India import amended policy issued in August, India could buy only 200,000 tons of pigeon bean and 300,000 tons of mung bean and green bean from other countries, including Myanmar.

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VP President addresses coordination meeting for 2018 Independence Day

Vice-President U Myint Swe addressed the 3rd coordination meeting of the 70th Anniversary Independence Day Convening Central Committee yesterday at the Office of the Union Government in Nay Pyi Taw.

U Myint Swe informed the meeting that the elaborate celebrations will consist of two sessions, morning and evening.

“Today’s meeting is the 3rd coordination meeting of the 70th anniversary of Independence Day convening central committee for successful convention of the Independence Day ceremony. With a view to successfully hold the Independence Day Ceremony, in accord with 5 national objectives, the 70th anniversary of Independence Day convening central committee comprising 36 members including myself, was formed on 29th September 2017, under notification 72/2017. The 1st coordination meeting held on 13th October 2017 laid down 12 decisions, for implementation of which 9 sub-committees



VP U Myint Swe delivers the speech at the meeting of the 70th Anniversary of Independence Day Convening Central Committee. **PHOTO: MNA**

were formed, with the 2nd coordination meeting held on 10th November 2017 laying down 17 decisions. The decisions were found to have been implemented by respective sub-committees. The ceremony will be held in two sessions, and in the morning session ceremony for hoisting

the national flag, ceremony for saluting the national flag whereas dinner party will be hosted in the evening session”, U Myint Swe said.

The Vice President added, “It is necessary for nine sub-committees to systematically implement the assigned duties. Only if

respective sub-committees can cooperate collectively by sectors, the ceremony will be successfully held with full political essence. As the time to hold the ceremony approaches we firmly believe that the tasks to be performed will have been implemented by respective sub-committees. Be-

ing the national-level ceremony, concerted efforts must be exerted for any hindrances not to occur. If there are difficulties, it needs to be openly discussed.”

Major General Myint Maw, Chairman of Ceremony for Hoisting and Saluting National Flag sub-committee and Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command, Dr. Myo Aung, Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council and Chairman of Convening sub-Committee, U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation and Chairman of Reception and Convening Dinner Party sub-Committee, Brig-Gen Moe Kyi and Maj-Gen Aung Soe, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs, Dr Pe Myint, Union Minister for Information, U Win Maw Tun, Deputy Minister for Education, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe gave updated reports on their assignments.

The meeting came to a close with the Vice President speech. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Notification of Disbursement of Medium-term Loan from MEB to SMEs

THE Government is encouraging development of agricultural and livestock breeding enterprises, small and medium enterprises and construction companies in accord with national economic policies. In doing so, assistance will be provided for acquisition of capital needed for the enterprises in accord with the prescribed rules and regulations. Accordingly, the State-owned Myanma Economic Bank (MEB) will disburse loans to entrepreneurs who are actually running the businesses and in need of capital investments under the special programme.

Loan disbursement programmes are as follows:

Sector	Business	Sector to Disburse	Interest rate	Periods
Agriculture	1. agriculture 2. livestock breeding 3. agriculture and livestock breeding and related enterprises	Disbursement via MADB	8.5% from MEB to MADB, 9% from MADB to entrepreneurs	From 3 to 5 years
Small and Medium Enterprises Sector	1. Industries 2. Trading 3. Export products enterprise 4. Import substitute product enterprises 5. Recycling and Energy Saving enterprises 6. Technology-based enterprises and services	Direct disbursement from MEB	9%	From 3 to 5 years
Construction Sector	1. Construction 2. Construction materials production enterprises	Disbursement via CHDB	MEB will give loans to CHDB at 9% interest rate, and CHDB will disburse loans to SMEs at 11% interest rate	From 3 to 5 years

Those desirous of borrowing loans in respective sectors are to comply with the restrictions designated by the bank. Borrowers can give movable and immovable properties as surety for the loan. Arrangements have been made for those who cannot afford to pay surety and those who do not have adequate amount of money for surety to be able to link with loan insurance organisations. Entrepreneurs who would like to apply for getting loans can receive detailed information at the nearest branches of the MEB, Myanma Agricultural Development Bank (MADB) and Construction & Housing Estate Development (CHDB) Bank. —Myanma Economic Bank ■

Thiri Pyanchi U Tun Nay Linn presents
Credentials to President of Nepal

Thiri Pyanchi U Tun Nay Linn, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, presented his Credentials to Her Excellency Ms. Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal on 10 December 2017, in Kathmandu.—Ministry of Foreign Affairs

India pulse companies stock up ...

FROM PAGE-1

Following India’s import restriction on pulses in August, mung bean and pigeon peas prices plummeted. Before this announcement, a ton of pigeon peas fetched up to Ks650,000, while mung bean price was Ks800,000 per ton. Moreover, around 100,000 tons of pigeon peas and nearly 200,000 tons of mung bean were stockpiled in August when India suspended pulses importation.

Currently, the price of mung bean and pigeon peas increased slightly with demand from Bangladesh, Nepal, Malaysia, Indonesia and Dubai, even though India has suspended pea purchases.

“The stocks will gradually decrease because we export around 30,000 tons of beans per month to other countries. At present, a huge stock of around 30,000 tons of pigeon peas and 120,000 tons of mung beans are

piling up,” said U Min Ko Oo, the secretary of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

Currently, the price of mung bean is Ks545,000 per tons while the pigeon peas are selling for Ks375,000 per tons. To be able to control the bean market, traders have formed a committee and purchased 10,000 tons of pigeon bean and over 3,800 tons of mung bean. During the time that India has suspended pea purchases, the government will buy directly from local growers with a Ks15 billion fund in January. The bean cultivators are also planning to grow other crops instead of mung bean and pigeon bean next season. The market of mung bean, pigeon bean and green which are cultivated in Myanmar relied on only India bean market. Myanmar has exported around 1.5 million tons of bean to India annually. ■

Reverend father sends Christmas prayers to Myanmar citizens from Presidential Palace

FOLLOWERS led by Reverend Father U Saw Aung Lwin of the Multi-racial Baptist Churches Union in Thabyaegone in Nay Pyi Taw visited the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw to send Pre-Christmas Prayers to all citizens of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and President U Htin Kyaw, First Lady Daw Su Su Lwin and family yesterday.

Followers of the Multi-racial Baptist Churches Union of Thabyaegone Quarter in Nay Pyi Taw led by Reverend Father U Saw Aung Lwin, praised the virtues of Jesus Christ by singing psalms, followed by the sending of prayers to all Myanmar citizens, including President U Htin Kyaw and First Lady Daw Su Su Lwin.



Pre-Christmas and prayers singing Christmas songs for President U Htin Kyaw, First Lady Daw Su Su Lwin and family at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Afterwards, the President and First Lady presented followers of the Multi-racial Baptist Churches Union with gifts, with the Reverend Father presenting a Christmas gift in return.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin accepts credentials from Mr. Andrew Kirkwood, Director & Representative of UNOPS Myanmar

UNION Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin received Mr. Andrew Kirkwood, newly-appointed Director & Representative of UNOPS Myanmar Office and accepted his credentials on 20 December 2017 at 3:30 pm at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on matters pertaining to the current and future cooperation between Myanmar and UNOPS as well as working with the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) Committee.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin accepts the credentials from Mr. Andrew Kirkwood, Director & Representative of UNOPS. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor receives Indian Foreign Secretary of Ministry of External Affairs



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received a delegation led by H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External

Affairs, the Republic of India at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at 2:00 pm on 20 December 2017.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on mat-

ters pertaining to the further strengthening of bilateral cooperation and India's assistance to socio-economic developments in Rakhine State.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Social security services to be upgraded

THE Social Security Board-owned hospitals and clinics would be upgraded through the Public Private Partnership system, said Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe yesterday.

“Three local companies and four foreign companies have offered the Social Security Board

to jointly promote the health care services of the Social Security Board,” U Thein Swe at the meeting on upgrading the hospitals and clinics owned by the board in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The ministry is currently carrying out four reforms of the Social Security Board based on the information technology So-

cial Security projects as part of efforts for gaining trust from employers and employees.

The Government's economic affairs committee has given green light to the ministry to carry on its efforts for promoting health care services through the Provider Purchaser Split.—Myanmar News Agency ■

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Printed and published at the **Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory** at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the **Global New Light of Myanmar Daily** under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

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12th Pyin Oo Lwin flower festival to feature 200,000 flowers

THE 12th Pyin Oo Lwin Flower Festival held in the National Kandawgyi Botanical Garden, Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Region from 16 to 31 December will showcase close to 200,000 flower species.

Officials said that if the situation of the flowers is good, the festival will be extended. The flower festival will also include musical entertainment and shops. Tens of thousands of people usually visit the annual flower festival, said Ko Kyaw Lin Oo, in charge of the National Kandawgyi Botanical Garden.

"There were more visitors this year, and if the conditions of the flowers and the weather are good, the festival will be extended beyond 31 December", added Ko Kyaw Lwin Oo.

About 200,000 flowers of differing colours from 48 different types of flowers will be displayed. The entry is Ks500 for children and Ks1,000 for adults. About 10,000 visitors are expected to visit daily. Due to recent rain, there were some difficulties in planting the flow-



People are sightseeing around the site at the flower festival of Pyin Oo Lwin, also known as the city of flower. **PHOTO: MNA**

ers, officials said.

"About 20 per cent of the flowers displayed are fakes, but 80 per cent are real. Even the flower festival in Chiang Mai, Thailand is unable to display 100 per cent real flowers. The real flowers for the festival were

planted in October, so almost everything is ready" said U Wai Phyo Aung, the executive director of National Kandawgyi Botanical Garden.

Rain also caused a problem for the 2016 flower festival, where more than 200,000 flow-

ers were planted, but only 30,000 survived the weather. Flowers are planted four times a year for at the National Kandawgyi Botanical Garden for the festival, including flowers from Thailand and China, it is learnt. — Aung Thant Naing ■

Ninth day of 2017 Mid-Year Myanmar Jade and Gems Emporium

Merchants are detecting the jade lots at the 2017 Mid-Year Myanmar Jade and Gems Emporium. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win toured the 2017 Mid-Year Myanmar Jade and Gems Emporium at Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning, the ninth day of the country's largest gems show.

As of yesterday, a total of 4,429 local and international gems merchants have visited and bought 873 jade lots under

an open tender system.

The 32 gems lots with the base price of 0.767 million euros, and 4,393 jade lots with the base price of 362.491 million euros, were sold. Jade lots No. 5751 to No. 6685 will be sold today under an open tender system.

The 2017 Mid-Year Myanmar Jade and Gems Emporium will sell today.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Dawei special economic zone project to start first phase

THE beginning phase of the Dawei Special Economic Zone project will focus on nine areas, according to a report in the Myawady Daily yesterday.

"We will operate the Dawei special economic zone in two phases - the initial and the main phase. The initial phase will be included in nine parts because of large-scale investment," said Dr. Tin Htoo Naing, the chairman of Man-

agement Committee for Dawei Special Economic Zone.

The Dawei SEZ has 48,000 acres of land and the initial phase will be implemented on 27 square kilometers of land.

The initial phase will include roads, a jetty, electricity, water supplies, a residential estate, and an industrial estate. The construction of dams, jetties and around 400 houses have been built for relocation of villagers in the

project area.

The Dawei SEZ committee will give priority to electricity supply for industrial as well as households.

"We are facing some challenges in implementing the Dawei SEZ because we have to all infrastructures.

For development of Dawei SEZ, Myanmar is drawing the Master plan with the cooperation of Japan and Thailand.—GNLM ■

A speed boat capsizes in Yangon River

The speed boat named "Myint Myat Thazin- 7/15" with 14 people capsized at the Kamakasit jetty in Dala Township, Yangon Region yesterday early morning.

While the engine fan of the boat was entangled with weeds, the boat collided with an anchored cargo ship and then the boat sunk in the river.

The officials of the Township rushed to the scene and rescued nine men and two women. There are still three missing people and they continue to carry out rescue operation.—Myanmar Digital News ■

Sea trade reaches US\$16.8 billion as of 8th December in current FY

TRADE through sea routes fetched US\$16.8 billion from 1st April to 8th December in the current fiscal year, an increase of \$3.8 billion against last year.

Exports via sea routes amounted to \$6.2 billion, whereas the import value was \$10.6 billion. Unlike sea routes, exports performed better than imports at border gates. Border trade as of 8th December this FY totalled \$5.24 billion, comprised of \$3.35 billion worth of exports and \$1.88 billion worth of imports.

Rice, various peas, sesame seeds, corn, vegetables, fruits, dried tea leaves, fishery products, rubber, minerals and animal products are exported to neighbouring countries whereas machinery, agricultural equipment, trucks, plastic raw materials, consumer products, cosmetics, and electronic tools enter the domestic market.

Sino-Myanmar border



Unlike sea routes, exports performed better than imports at border gates. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

trade is flowing in and out of Muse, Lweje, Chinshwehaw, Kanpiketee and Keng Tung gates.

Thai-Myanmar border

trade is carrying out through Tachileik, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Mawtaung and Muse. Indo-Myanmar trade is conducting via

Tamu and Reed checkpoints while Sittway and Maung-taw land points of entry are Bangladesh and Myanmar. —Ko Htet ■

Ocean liner sailing in Attayan River causes shortage of fish

FISHERMEN in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State have been catching fewer fish because of ocean liners entering the Attayan River, according to the report in the Myawady Daily. Ships carrying charcoal, cement, equipment and other raw materials in and out of the Attayan River can lead to destruction of water resources and harms mangrove forest areas, officials said.

The incursion of ocean liners threatens the small boats of students attending school on the other side of the river. Now, the catch volume of fish is only 10 per cent of what it was, officials said.

Previous fiscal year, the Fishery Department put out tenders for fishing blocks in Gyaing, Thanlwin and Attayan rivers and the state earned revenue of over Ks14 million. Moreover, revenue levied on fishing tools of the fishermen was more than Ks 6 million. —GNLM ■

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Hello Tomorrow



\$25 million from India for development of Rakhine State



Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung shakes hands with Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar after signing the MoU between Myanmar and India yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

AN agreement was reached yesterday in which the government of India will provide US\$25 million (Ks34.1 billion) to Myanmar for the development of Rakhine State.

The Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye received a delegation led by Dr. S. Jaishankar at May Khalar Hall in the ministry yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to providing assistance, which can help the socio-economic development in Rakhine State, the importance of assistance for locals and the commitments, which includes a development package for Rakhine, and extending the bilateral agenda.

On behalf of the Myanmar

and Indian governments, the Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung and Foreign Secretary Dr. Jaishankar signed the MoU.

According to the MoU, the two ministries agreed on long-term socio-economic development of Rakhine state.

The Indian Government will grant Myanmar a total of US\$25 million in five years, and Myanmar will receive US\$5 million annually.

This grant will help in the process of raising education, healthcare, agriculture, creating infrastructure, building small bridges, paving the roads, vocational training schools, preservation of cultural heritage, empowering women and nurturing children in the region.

—Myanmar News Agency ■

Army to investigate 10 bodies found in Rakhine

THE Tamadaw sent a team to Maungtaw, Rakhine State yesterday, to investigate the 10 bodies recently found buried in a mass grave in Indin Village.

The team from the Tamadaw joins medical and local investigators in who are already probing the deaths.

The military team is led by Lt-Gen Aye Win of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), who will investigate whether security forces were involved in the killings, officials said. A medical team and local authorities have already commenced a forensic investigation into the bodies that were exhumed by security forces

on 18 December. This investigation team is comprised of the Medical Superintendent of Maungtaw Township Hospital, the Maungtaw Township Judge, officials from the Maungtaw District General Administration Department, and Indian station police. The bodies were found in a mass grave after authorities acted on an anonymous tip-off, according to local police. "An investigation is being carried out to uncover the truth behind the grave," according to the statement released by the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Upgrading of Angumaw-Maungtaw road to be completed in May



Deputy Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin inspects the upgrading construction of Angumaw-Maungtaw road in Maungtaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE upgrading of Angumaw-Maungtaw Road, an important thoroughfare for the development of the Maungtaw region in Rakhine State, will be completed in May, said an official from Asia World Company.

An official from Asia World Company made the statement

when Deputy Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin recently visited the project area. The Angumaw-Maungtaw road project is implemented by Asia World Company under a mechanism of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD).

The road is 49 miles, 6 furlongs long. Asia World Company is upgrading the road as an 18-foot wide concrete road. Upon completion, people can travel from Sittway to Angumaw road by ferry and reach Maungtaw within a short period of time. —Myint Maung / Zayar ■



in
Picture

Dentists gives medical care to locals in Buthidaung. **PHOTO: MNA**



Veterinarian vaccinates cattle in Buthidaung. **PHOTO: MNA**



The harvester is seen in paddy field in Maungtaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Philippine leader declares unilateral ceasefire for Christmas

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has declared a 10-day unilateral ceasefire with communist rebels to allow Filipinos to celebrate a “stress-free” Christmas season, two weeks after peace talks with the insurgents were formally scrapped.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said Duterte had ordered the army and police to suspend offensive operations from 24 December to 2 January “to lessen the apprehension of the public this Christmas season”.

He said he expected the Maoists and their political leaders to “do a similar gesture of goodwill.”

There was no immediate comment from the communist rebel movement, whose top leaders and negotiators have been living in exile in The Netherlands since the late 1980s.

Duterte restarted a stalled peace process and freed several



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. PHOTO: REUTERS

communist leaders as a gesture of good faith when he came to office last year but he recently

abandoned talks due to escalating rebel attacks.

He has vented his fury on

a near-daily basis at what he considers duplicity by the Communist Party of the Philippines

(CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA). He has collectively declared them a “terrorist organization” and has ended the three-decades peace process.

The rebel forces, estimated to number around 3,000, have been waging a protracted guerrilla warfare in the countryside for nearly 50 years in a conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people and stifled growth in resource-rich areas of the Philippines.

The guerrillas have been targeting mines, plantations, construction and telecommunication companies, demanding “revolutionary taxation” to finance arms purchases and recruitment activities.

Duterte on Tuesday night said he only wanted Filipinos to celebrate a “stress-free” Christmas. “I do not want to add more strain to what people are now suffering,” he told reporters. —Reuters ■

Crews battling California wildfire make headway in third day of fair weather

LOS ANGELES — Crews battling a devastating California wildfire that now ranks as the state's second-largest on record capitalized on a third straight day of favourable weather conditions on Tuesday as they made greater progress corralling the flames.

With the so-called Thomas fire blazing into its third week in the coastal mountains, foothills and canyons of Ventura and Santa Barbara counties northwest of Los Angeles, officials scaled

back evacuation orders, sent home some visiting firefighters and reported improved air quality.

“I would definitely say things are looking better today than they have in the last two weeks,” Rudy Evenson, a spokesman for the incident command center, told Reuters by telephone.

Higher humidity, combined with diminished winds and temperatures to ease firefighters' jobs since Sunday, but the region remains “critically dry,” a group

of agencies said in a statement.

More than 1,000 homes and other buildings have gone up in flames and about 18,000 structures remained listed as threatened from a late-season firestorm that kept crews on the defensive for the better part of two weeks. One firefighter died last Thursday near the town of Fillmore in Ventura County.

Still, fire managers are “cautiously optimistic” of having gained sufficient ground this week to protect populated areas

against the return of high winds forecast for Wednesday night and early Thursday.

“We feel pretty confident about that for now,” Evenson added. By Tuesday night, firefighters had carved containment lines around 55 per cent of the blaze's perimeter — up from 50 percent earlier in the day. But the fire has still spread by several hundred acres a day since the weekend.

In total the fire has scorched 272,000 acres (110,074 hectares) of drought-parched chaparral and brush since igniting on 4 December, covering an area equivalent to nearly a third of Rhode Island.

The latest tally makes the Thomas blaze one of the two largest single wildfires documented in California, second only to the 2003 Cedar fire in San Diego County, which consumed a record 273,246 acres (110,600 hectares) and killed 15 people.

The Thomas fire was initially stoked by hot, dry Santa Ana winds blowing with rare hurricane force from the eastern desert, spreading flames across miles of rugged coastal terrain faster than firefighters could keep up. —Reuters ■



Thomas wildfire burns above Bella Vista Drive near Romero Canyon in this social media photo by Santa Barbara County Fire Department in Montecito, California, US on 12 December, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thailand seeks air safety rating upgrade by US aviation body

BANGKOK — Thailand aims to get its air safety rating upgraded by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) by March, the country's transport minister said on Wednesday, after the FAA downgraded the rating in December 2015.

Thailand's Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) was downgraded to Category 2 from 1 because it fell short of the FAA's standards. “We aim to be restored back to Category 1 by March,” Transport Minister Arkom Termpittayapaisith told reporters.

Arkom's comment came three months after the United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) removed a red flag against Thailand over safety concerns in October.

He said Thailand will speed up its inspection of pilot qualifications and aim to have more aviation personnel and qualified pilots to be considered for the safety ratings upgrade.

Bangkok is a regional airline hub and Thailand targeted a record 33 million to 34 million tourist arrivals this year. —Reuters ■

Myanmar Companies Act, 2017 of great virtues

THE new Myanmar Companies Act which entrepreneurs at home and abroad have been waiting for a long time has already been promulgated on 6th December 2017. Just prior to its promulgation, the former Burma Companies Act which was enacted in 1940, has now reached 77 years. Being promulgated under colonial rule, undoubtedly it needs amending.

One characteristic of the presently promulgated Myanmar Companies Act is letting foreign investors invest up to 35 percent in local companies. In other words, it means that the said local company is acknowledged as Myanmar citizen-owned one though foreign investment includes 35 percent whereas in the abolished old act it was acknowledged as a foreigner-owned company if a foreigner owns just one percent of the shares in the company. Here, someone may ask a question as to what benefits we will have over the acknowledgement as Myanmar citizen-owned company, though the equity held by the foreign partner is 35 percent.

The first-ever result we will acquire is that the local companies will accept foreign direct investments willingly. According to the conclusions of international and local experts, the major requirement of local companies is none other than foreign investment. Now, the local companies will be able to enjoy certain benefits such as an access to favorable conditions which will fulfill these requirements. As for the foreign investors, they will bring with their invest-

ments technical knowhow greatly needed by local companies, for acquisition of much profit for them. In addition, foreign investors will wholeheartedly cooperate with local companies to get markets for the produced outputs.

Being the long-awaited setting/scene of Myanmar companies, it is the setting which the newly-promulgated Myanmar Companies Act, 2017 will bring about. Another characteristic of the New Act is that foreign investors have the right to possess 35 percent shares and simultaneously they will have rights to sell their shares at the Yangon Stock Exchange. It is the first and rare chance given by the Myanmar Companies Act, 2017 and it will strengthen Myanmar's sole Yangon Stock Exchange. Here, we would like to express our heartfelt welcome towards the Myanmar Companies Act, 2017 of great virtues. ■

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

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

Make medicines accessible for all

Everyone everywhere should have access to essential medicines



Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh
(Regional Director, World Health Organization South-East Asia Region).

By Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh

ACCCESS to medicines is a critical factor to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being of all people of all ages. Medicines exist. But are often inaccessible for reasons beyond control. They may be too costly - purchasing them may burden household finances, risking poverty or debt. They may be in short supply due to delivery issues in distribution channels, making continuity of treatment difficult. They may be of substandard quality - when medicines are falsified or poorly produced, they are not only ineffective, but also dangerous.

The sentinel role of countries for access to medicines has become more challenging than ever before, given the nature of the pathogens and reduction in time and space on travel. The rising concern of noncommunicable diseases requiring life course management makes

access to medicines key to good health and prosperity. Ensuring all people everywhere can access essential medicines is one of

WHO South-East Asia's priority areas of work, and a key tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals agenda 2030 of health and wellbeing for all.

In recent years, many countries have made notable progress. Affordability of priority medicines has increased. Supply of priority medicines has become steadier.

Flexibilities in global trade agreements have been leveraged to reduce prices in several countries; there are numerous regional examples of improved public sector purchasing. The countries in the Region have updated their Essential Medicines lists; supply chain management systems have improved to be more effective and reliable. And action by countries to improve quality of medicines has accelerated. Many countries have included health as top priority in national goals. We could do better.

Certain persisting inadequacies are yet to be addressed: Out-of-pocket spending - including on essential medicines - remains high. Further, supply chains in some areas remain weak; countries lacking manufacturing capacity often cannot leverage competitive prices from suppliers.

Despite challenges, the Region's economic status is changing for the better; a positive sign that, however, will lead to reduced access to external financing for medicines and vaccines.

This calls for self-reliance and collaboration by the countries in the Region. The South-East Asia Region member countries, supported by WHO, launched South-East

Asia Regulatory Network (SEARN) to enhance information sharing, collaboration and convergence of medical product regulatory practices across the Region to

guarantee access to high-quality medical products to their people.

There are three key areas of action by the countries for

of game-changing medicines - most notably for hepatitis C. This must change.

Second, guarantee quality and affordability of medicines.

targeted quality control and testing of medicines that are sub-standard or falsified. From manufacture to sale, locally produced medicines should

Supported by a clear vision, the dream of health equity and the Sustainable Development Goals of health and wellbeing for all are within reach.

increasing access to essential medicines and accelerate progress towards health and wellbeing for all. First, countries keep their Essential Medicines List (EML) and medicines policy current. By developing clear accountability systems for medicines selection and procurement, health authorities can harness opportunities for access to affordable medicines.

Despite the rising antimicrobial resistance, purchasing and supply of antibiotics is seldom rationalized. In a major revision of the antibiotics section in the EMLs 40-year history, WHO experts have grouped them into Access, Watch and Reserve — three categories, with recommendations on when each category should be used. This is a good yardstick and starting point for antibiotic use. Also, across the Region, countries are yet to capitalize on the massive drop in price of a range



linked to health insurance programmes, especially where national schemes are in place is equally important. Further, countries can actively exploit flexibilities in global trade agreements when negotiating with medicines manufacturers. They can also bargain collectively to increase market buying power.

The SEARN can help make regulation more efficient by developing the Region's diverse capacities and strengths, with significant gains.

Third, generating high-quality information on access to essential medicines within the countries so that the problems may be better addressed.

Knowing where and why people are facing shortage, where unsafe or ineffective medicines are being sold, is essential to developing lasting solutions. From smartphone apps to household surveys, the array of tools at health authorities' disposal is considerable. By using them effectively authorities can garner the information needed to make smart, high-impact interventions that drive life-changing gains.

Essential medicines should be accessible for all, to achieve universal health coverage.

Supported by a clear vision, the dream of health equity and the Sustainable Development Goals of health and wellbeing for all are within reach. A healthier, more equitable and sustainable South-East Asia Region can be ours. ■

Why gender is important for biodiversity conservation

A recent meeting in Bangkok hosted by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity developed training materials to advance gender inclusion in biodiversity planning in the Asia-Pacific region.

"If we do not consider gender we increase the loss of biodiversity, due to mismanagement and unsustainable use, [and] the loss of important traditional knowledge, skills and experiences," says one of the workshop participants, Soseala Saosao Tiniiau, Tuvalu's Director of Environment. "For example, women in one of the Pacific Island countries [unspecified] were not consulted in coastal fisheries management for the reason that men are responsible for fishing, but it was found that women are involved in agriculture activity which had a downstream impact on a reef through increasing sedimentation," he adds. Disregarding gender can aggravate poverty and inequality, so it is wise to try to do something about it.

UN Environment has been stepping up its work on gender and biodiversity in the region. At the end of November it supported the Convention on Biological Diversity in bringing together 25 biodiversity and gender experts to develop training materials for the region at a three-day workshop in Bangkok.

Gender professionals, national biodiversity stakeholders, civil society, research institutes, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centre for Biodiversity, and UN agencies attended the workshop. The training materials developed will help integrate gender and biodiversity into government planning.

This will be a major contribution to implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. "The material will serve as a bridge between gender and biodiversity to train government staff and national and regional practitioners responsible for supporting the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans," says UN Environment gender and environment expert Annette Wallgren.

Among men and women in the region, biodiversity is closely connected to development, access to resources, income-generating activities, food, and essential household products. From this perspective, the disciplines of biodiversity and gender overlap, and indeed are intrinsically linked. "While collecting, utilizing and selling plant and animal products is a daily routine for many women and men in the world, the concepts of gender and biodiversity remain abstract and unconnected to many policymakers and practitioners in the environment field," says Wallgren.

"Adding to the challenge is the need to tailor knowledge materials to specific region and country contexts," she notes.

Gender perspective

Asia's remarkable economic growth has brought many benefits through higher incomes and employment but this growth has also fuelled threats to ecosystems and biodiversity through habitat degradation and biodiversity loss. These threats affect men and women differently so to plan for the best sustainable solutions, a gender perspective is required. This perspective allows practitioners and policymakers to consider everyone's capacity, skills and knowledge in the design and implementation of sustainable solutions.

Currently gender professionals have insufficient knowledge and experience on biodiversity conservation strategies, while biodiversity specialists do not have the awareness of national policies and priorities for gender equality.

Country support for Lao PDR, Myanmar

In partnership with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), UN Environment is rolling out country support in Lao PDR and Myanmar to build capacity and set up institutional arrangements for gender inclusive National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. Key partners in the initiative are the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and the UN Environment-World Conservation and Monitoring Centre, which will provide support on developing gender indicators. During the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, UN Environment and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity signed a Letter of Intent highlighting the areas of future cooperation between the two institutions, including the integration of gender considerations into National Biodiversity Strategies. —UN Environment ■



US House to vote again on tax bill, Trump on verge of win

WASHINGTON — The Republican-controlled US House of Representatives on Wednesday was expected to give final approval to a sweeping tax bill and send it to President Donald Trump to sign into law, sealing his first major legislative victory in office.

In the largest overhaul of the US tax code in 30 years, Republicans in mere weeks have steamrolled over the opposition of Democrats in an effort to slash taxes for corporations and the wealthy, while offering mixed, temporary tax relief to working American individuals and families.

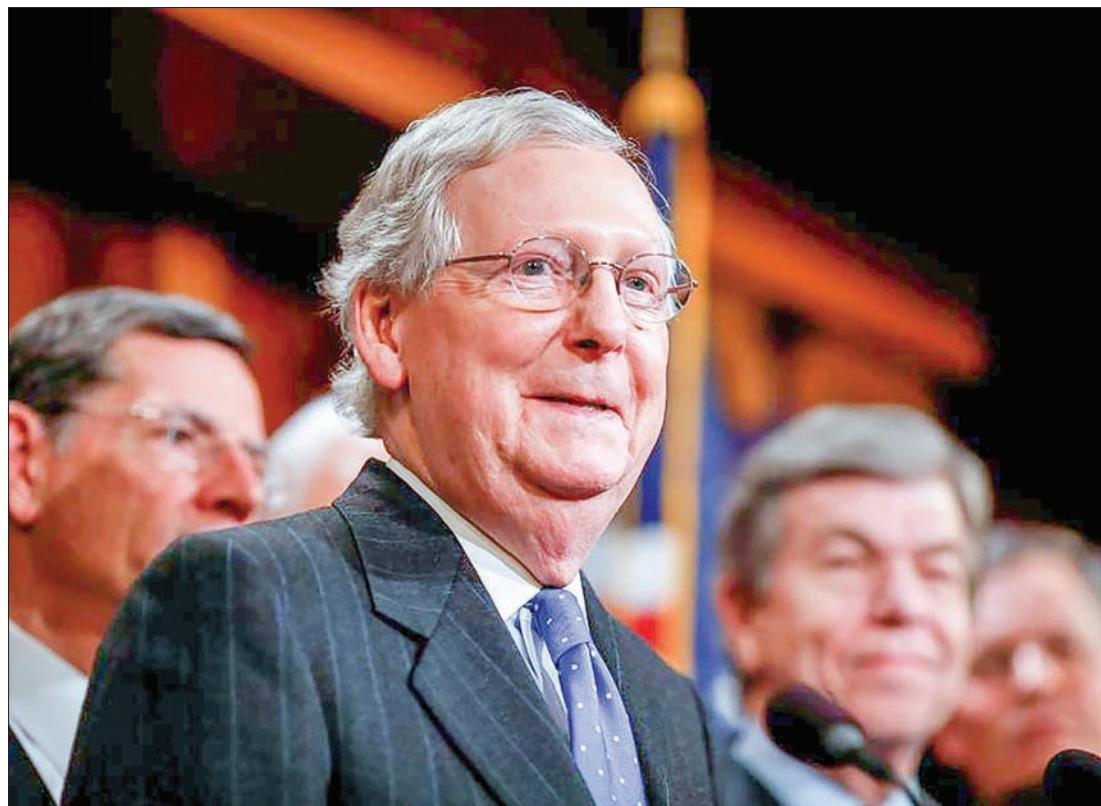
The Senate approved the bill in the wee hours of Wednesday morning on a 51-48 vote, but had to send it back to the House, which had passed it on Tuesday, for a re-vote due to a procedural foul-up that embarrassed Republicans, but was not expected to change the outcome. The re-vote was expected to take place before noon in the House on Wednesday.

The sprawling, debt-financed legislation cuts the US corporate income tax rate to 21 per cent from 35 per cent, gives other business owners a new 20 per cent deduction on business income and reshapes how America taxes multinationals along lines the country's largest businesses have recommended for years.

Millions of Americans would stop itemizing deductions under the bill, putting tax breaks that incentivize home ownership and charitable donations out of their reach, but also making their tax returns somewhat simpler and shorter.

It keeps the present number of tax brackets, but adjusts many, though not all, of the rates and income levels for each one. The top tax rate for high earners is reduced. The estate tax on inheritances is changed so far fewer people will pay.

In two provisions added on to secure needed Republican votes, it also repeals part of the Obamacare health system and allows oil drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, accompanied by members of the Republican Conference, speaks at a news conference about the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Acts at the US Capitol in Washington, US on 20 December, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Democrats have railed against the legislation as a giveaway to the wealthy and the business community that will widen the income gap between rich and poor, while adding \$1.5 trillion over the next decade to the \$20 trillion national debt, which Trump promised in 2016 he would eliminate as president.

Democratic Senator Chris Van Hollen said the bill "will harm millions of middle-class families ... It contains huge, permanent giveaways for big banks and corporations, and asks our children, millions of working Americans and senior citizens, and future generations to pay the price."

A few Republicans, whose party was once defined by its fiscal hawkishness, have protested deficit-spending entailed by the bill. But most of them have voted for it anyway, saying it would help businesses and individuals, while boosting an already expanding economy they see as not growing fast enough.

"We've had two quarters in a row of 3 per cent growth. The stock market is up. Optimism is high. Coupled with this tax reform, America is ready to

start performing as it should have for a number of years," said Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell after the chamber's vote.

Despite Trump administration promises that the tax overhaul would focus on the middle class and not cut taxes for the rich, the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, a think tank in Washington, estimated middle-income households would see an average tax cut of \$900 next year under the bill, while the wealthiest 1 per cent of Americans would see an average cut of \$51,000.

The prospect of a Republican victory came tinged with embarrassment. House lawmakers initially voted 227-203, largely along party lines, to approve the bill on Tuesday afternoon.

That sent the measure to the Senate, where the Senate parliamentarian ruled three minor provisions in violation of an arcane Senate rule. To proceed, the Senate deleted the three provisions and then approved the bill.

Because the House and Senate must approve the same legislation before Trump can sign it into law, the Senate's

late Tuesday vote only ping-ponged the bill back to the House.

Democrats pounced on the mistake as evidence of the hurried, often secretive process used by Republicans in developing the bill. Ignoring Democrats and much of their own rank and file, Republican congressional leaders and White House officials drafted the bill behind closed doors, unveiling it on 27 September.

No public hearings were held on the measure. Numerous narrow amendments favored by lobbyists were added late in the process, tilting the package more toward businesses and the wealthy.

"When future generations look back at the short and messy history of the Republican tax bill, its most enduring lesson will be what it has taught us about how not to legislate," said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer on the Senate floor.

"After only a few months of frantic backroom negotiations by only one party, we are left with a product as sloppy and as partisan as the process used to draft it... What a disgrace." —Reuters ■

WORLD BRIEFS

US takes India back to WTO in solar power dispute

GENEVA — India has failed to comply with a World Trade Organization ruling on solar power, the United States will tell the WTO dispute settlement body next month, triggering a fresh round of litigation, according to an agenda published on Wednesday.

WTO appeals judges ruled in September last year that India had broken the trade rules by requiring solar power developers to use Indian-made cells and modules. India had until 14 December to comply with the ruling and said last week that it had done so. —Reuters ■

Canada, US announce Jan meeting to keep pressure on North Korea

OTTAWA — Canada and the United States said on Tuesday they will co-host a meeting of foreign ministers in Vancouver in January to demonstrate international solidarity against North Korea's continued nuclear and missile tests.

Following a meeting with Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the pressure campaign on North Korea would not abate until the country agreed to give up its nuclear ambitions. —Reuters ■

Former Mexican drug cartel leader extradited to US — Justice Dept

WASHINGTON — An alleged former leader of a Mexican drug cartel has been extradited to the United States to face drug conspiracy charges, the US Justice Department said in a statement on Tuesday.

Mario Ramirez-Trevino, an alleged former leader of the Gulf Cartel, was extradited on Monday and appeared in US District Court in the District of Columbia on Tuesday, the statement said. —Reuters ■

Zimbabwe's Mnangagwa drops hint military chief set for vice presidency

HARARE — Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa gave his clearest signal yet on Tuesday that he would appoint as vice president the military leader who led the de facto coup that ousted former leader Robert Mugabe last month.

At a ceremony marking Constantino Chiwenga's retirement and hand-over of the military reins to Phillip Sibanda at an army barracks near Harare's international airport, Mnangagwa lauded Chiwenga for his consistency and steadfastness.

"I therefore urge you to maintain the same loyalty, robustness and dedication to duty as you move to your next assignment which is quite prominent," he said without elaborating.

Mnangagwa said on Friday he would fill the two vice presidential posts in the following few days. Chiwenga is the top contender in what is seen as a reward for helping to end Mugabe's 37-year rule.

Mnangagwa has appointed several senior military officers to his cabinet and the ruling party's executive politburo since he was sworn in as president on 24 November in what some political analysts say reflects the army's consolidation of power since it turned against the 93-year-



Retired Commander of Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) General Constatino Chiwenga hands over the military flag to his predecessor General Philip Valerio Sibanda at a farewell army parade in Harare, Zimbabwe on 19 December, 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

old Mugabe.

Chris Mutsvangwa, special adviser to the president and the influential leader of the war veterans' association, rejected criticism of the military appointments, saying they were not unique to Zimbabwe. He pointed to the former generals in US President Donald Trump's cabinet.

He also denied a report by the privately owned NewsDay newspaper that he had said the army would play a role in elections due next year.

"It's a lie ... I said there was a team which helped to undo the dynastic tendencies of geriatric Mugabe and his mid-wife (sic)," he told reporters at his offices in Harare.

"I promised to the new president that we are

going to deliver an electoral victory but that team specifically excludes the army because the army had played a role earlier and because the army is a professional army and does not get involved in election campaigns."

The elections are due by July 2018 but Mnangagwa has said they may be held sooner than expected.

Mnangagwa told members of his ruling ZANU-PF party on Friday they would have to start fixing the economy if they wanted a chance of winning next year's vote.

The southern African nation's economy collapsed in the latter half of Mugabe's rule, especially after the violent seizures of thousands of white-owned commercial farms. —Reuters ■

Terror attack on provincial governor foiled in SW Pakistan

ISLAMABAD — Pakistani security forces on Wednesday successfully foiled a terror attack targeting the Balochistan provincial governor and arrested two terrorists during a raid in the Pakistani province, an official said.

Balochistan Home Minister Sarfraz Bugti said that two suspected suicide attackers were arrested for making a plan to attack Balochistan Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai in

the Gulistan area of Killa Abdullah in the province.

The security forces also seized two suicide vests along with a huge amount of arms and ammunitions, said Bugti.

The terror plot was crafted in Afghanistan and the timely action had saved many lives, the provincial home minister said, adding that the detainees belong to the group involved in a suicide attack on Punjab Home Minister

Shuja Khanzada back in August, 2015, which killed 22 people including Shuja Khanzada.

The operation came days after four suicide bombers attacked a church in the provincial capital of Quetta, killing nine people and injuring some 57 others.

Two terror attacks had been foiled by security forces so far after the Quetta church attack. —Xinhua ■

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Myanmar Investment Commission
Notification No. 84/2017
5th Waning of Thadingyut 1379 ME
(10th October, 2017)

Announcement on Application of Income Tax Exemptions or Reliefs

1. In exercising the power conferred under section 100 (b) of the Myanmar Investment Law, the Myanmar Investment Commission announce that existing investors who are carrying out their businesses without receiving a permit or endorsement of the Myanmar Investment Commission can submit an endorsement application in accordance with the Myanmar Investment Law.
2. The announcement is therefore made that such investors cannot apply for income tax exemption although they may receive the endorsement. They can only apply for tax exemptions and reliefs in accordance with section 77 (b), (c) and (d) of Myanmar Investment Law.

(Kyaw Win)
Chairman

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Myanmar Investment Commission
Notification No. 85/2017

The 13th Waning of Tazaungmone 1379 ME
(16th November, 2017)

Announcement on Manufacturing of Automobile under SKD - 2 System

1. In exercising of the power conferred under section 100 (b) of the Myanmar Investment Law, the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) advises that automobile manufacturing shall be in line with the new definition of Semi- Knock- Down (SKD) system by using the 10 groups of component parts that have been assembled and produced as follows:

No.	Name of group of component parts
(a)	Engine assembly, transmission & clutch system
(b)	Welded/ painted body, including chassis group (without installation of combination meters, interior trimming parts, lamps, wind shield and wire harness)
(c)	Front axles/ front independent suspension/ rear axles
(d)	Suspension component
(e)	Steering wheel and related parts
(f)	Exhaust system
(g)	Wheels & tyres
(h)	Seat assembly
(i)	Trimming parts, dashboard, instrument panel, windshields, wire harness and other accessories
(j)	Door group (front and rear) without accessories

2. This notification took effect on 12th July, 2017.

Kyaw Win
Chairman

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Myanmar Investment Commission
Notification No. 86/2017

The 13th Waning of Tazaungmone, 1379 M.E
(16th November, 2017)

Temporary Suspension of Approvals for Wood-based Industries

1. In exercising the power conferred under section 25 (a) and section 100 (b) of the Myanmar Investment Law, the Myanmar Investment Commission suspends temporarily the issuing of new investment permits and endorsements for wood-based industries using raw timber extracted from natural forests.

Kyaw Win
Chairman

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Myanmar Investment Commission
Notification No. 87/2017

2nd Waxing of Nadaw 1379 ME
(20th November, 2017)

Describing 100% Export-oriented Investments

1. In exercising of the power conferred under section 100 (b) of the Myanmar Investment Law, the Myanmar Investment Commission has prescribed investment activities as 100% export-oriented investments if the investors supply all of their finished goods and semi-finished goods manufactured locally to investment businesses which are 100% export-oriented without supplying the domestic market.
2. The announcement is therefore made that such 100% export-oriented investments can apply for tax exemptions or reliefs in accordance with the section 77 (b) of the Myanmar Investment Law.

Kyaw Win
Chairman

Three advanced early warning radars enter service in Russia

MOSCOW — Three Voronezh-type early warning radars entered combat duty in Russia, the commander of the Russian Aerospace Defence Forces, Col Gen Alexander Golovko, said in an interview published on Wednesday. “For the first time in history of the Russian Federation’s armed forces, three advanced Voronezh-type radars of the early warning system <...> entered combat duty simultaneously, in respective areas,” he said in an interview with the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper.

The new radars were deployed in Siberia’s Krasnoyarsk and Altai regions and the Orenburg Region in southern Urals. This brings the overall number of Voronezh radars on duty to seven. Until recently, four new Voronezh radars were in operation: near Russia’s second largest



Voronezh-type radar. PHOTO: TASS

city of St Petersburg, in the Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad, East Siberia’s Irkutsk region and South Russia’s Krasnodar region.

The missile early warning system is designed to get and provide data on missile launches and missile trajectories to

state and military government posts to warn about a missile attack. The system also provides data on space objects for outer space con-

trol. Russia’s new-generation Voronezh radars make the basis of the country’s ground-based missile early warning system.—Tass ■

EU seeks to end Brexit transition no later than end-2020

BRUSSELS — The European Union wants a transition period after Brexit to end no later than 31 December, 2020, according to the European Commission’s negotiating directives agreed on Wednesday.

“The transitional arrangements should apply as from the date of entry into force of the Withdrawal Agreement and should not last beyond 31 December 2020,” the published text showed.

Coinciding with the end of the EU’s current seven-year budget period, the end of 2020, 21 months after Brexit at the end of March 2019, had long been expected as the target end date of the transition but this was the first official confirmation that this is the official goal of the Union negotiators.

British Prime Minister Theresa May had formally asked for a transition to last around two years.

The four pages of new directives for EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier were in line with guidelines issued by EU leaders at a summit on Friday and will form the basis of talks on the transition which Barnier hopes to start next month.—Reuters ■

US President Trump to visit Britain in February — Daily Mail

LONDON — President Donald Trump plans to visit Britain in February to open the new US embassy in London but will not meet Queen Elizabeth, the Daily Mail newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Trump’s planned visit to Britain has proved controversial since Prime Minister Theresa May in-

ited him for a state visit, which typically involves lavish pageantry and events hosted by the queen.

However nearly 2 million people have signed a petition saying Trump should not be invited because it “would cause embarrassment” to the queen, and protests could be expected to greet the

US leader.

The Daily Mail cited a source in Westminster as saying Trump had told May during a call on Tuesday that he planned a working visit to Britain to open the new embassy, a billion-dollar building which overlooks the River Thames, in late February.

A spokesman for

May’s Downing Street office declined to comment on the report. He said the position on the state visit had not changed. An offer had been extended but no dates have been arranged.

May originally invited Trump to visit by the end of 2017. Britain regards its close ties with Washington as a “special relationship”

and a pillar of its foreign policy as it prepares to leave the European Union.

However the ties have been strained in recent months, most recently when Trump sparked outrage by rebuking May on Twitter after she criticised him for retweeting British far-right anti-Islam videos.—Reuters ■

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V KOTA HADIAH VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KOTA HADIAH VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-12-2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT 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 ADVANCE CONTAINER
LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V KUO HSIUNG VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KUO HSIUNG VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-12-2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AWPT 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 CHINA SHIPPING LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM’S DAY NOTICE

M.V MAERSK WOLGAST VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MAERSK WOLGAST VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-12-2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT 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 MCC TRANSPORT
(S’PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

Expansion of Japan's missile defence shield poses no threat to Russia — Foreign Ministry

TOKYO — Japan's plans to install the US Aegis Ashore missile defence systems are entirely defensive and pose no threat to Russia or any other neighbouring states, the Japanese Foreign Ministry's press service told TASS while commenting on concerns voiced by Moscow and Beijing.

"The efforts that our country has been making in the missile defence field are purely defensive, Japan operates such systems independently," the ministry's spokesman said. "They pose no threat

to Russia or any other neighbouring state. By using various opportunities, we have many times notified Russia about that, particularly at the recent meeting between the two countries' foreign ministers," he added.

On Tuesday, Japan's government made a decision to expand the country's missile defence shield with the US-made Aegis Ashore missile defence systems, which are supposed to help ensure the country's security from possible ballistic and cruise missile attacks.



On Tuesday, Japan's government made a decision to expand the country's missile defence shield with the US-made Aegis Ashore missile defence systems. PHOTO: TASS

China's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday expressed concern over Tokyo's decision, which, according to Beijing, may affect global security and trust among nations. Russia has also many times voiced concern over Japan's plans to introduce the Aegis Ashore systems. In particular, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said that it directly influenced Moscow's security interests. As for Europe, such systems have already been installed in Romania and will soon be deployed to Poland.—Tass ■

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES – FIRMS SELECTION)

MYANMAR

South East Asia Disaster Risk Management Project

Project ID. P160931

Assignment Title: Component 3 Preparation of Detailed Engineering Designs and Bidding Documents for the seismic retrofitting of 20 buildings in Yangon, and Construction Management and Supervision of the Works

Reference No. C3 CS1

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has applied for financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the South East Asia Disaster Risk Management Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds to finance the Works for seismic retrofitting of 20 buildings in Yangon and the cost of Consulting Services.

The Consulting Services ("the Services") shall consist of two stages: Stage 1 covering Detailed Design; and Stage 2 covering Contract Management and Construction Supervision. A single proposal (technical and financial) covering both stages will be requested. Separate contracts will be awarded for each stage with award of the contract for Stage 2 being conditional on satisfactory performance on Stage 1. Stage 1 shall include carrying out a risk assessment of the targeted buildings, detailed structural analysis and engineering designs for the retrofitting of 20 buildings (all of which are of heritage significance), preparation of an environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) in conformity with an existing Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF); detailed cost estimates; prioritization of retrofitting works; proposals for procurement packaging and preparation of Bidding Documents for a number of priority bid packages using World Bank Procurement Guidelines and Standard Bidding Documents. Stage 2 shall cover Contract Management and Construction Supervision of the works including assisting Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) with overall coordination, including during the Defects Liability Period of the works.

The duration of services for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are estimated at about eight (8) months and twenty-four (24) months respectively excluding Defects Liability Period. The Defect Liability Period is expected to be 12 months.

The budget available for the priority seismic retrofitting works is approximately US\$18 million.

The Yangon City Development Committee with the Engineering Department (Buildings) (EDB) will be implementing the Project and now invites eligible consulting firms ("Consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the Services.

Interested Consultants must provide specific information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

The short listing criteria: (1) At least 10 years of experience in the field of seismic structural analysis and design and retrofitting of existing structures; (2) At least 3 projects of similar scope and nature; (3) Substantial experience in developing construction documents, bidding documents and plans; (4) Substantial experience in the management of large construction projects, including supervision of construction activities and contractual financial management processes; (5) Prior experience in developing and monitoring effective QA programs and compliance records; (6) The ability to interact with a varied set of stakeholders, ranging from government partners to

the private design community; (7) Experience developing and delivering capacity and knowledge transfer programs; (8) Proven experience in carrying out similar assignments within the past 5 years.

Interested Consulting firms are requested to provide specific information and past project examples to demonstrate their ability to meet each the shortlisting criteria above. Individual CV's of proposed 'team members' need not be supplied at this stage (individual team members will be evaluated at RFP stage) and will not be taken into consideration. **Proven ability to undertake seismic analysis, detailed seismic design (for retrofitting) and project/construction management** activities are of critical importance and must be clearly demonstrated. **Examples of past project experiences (including contract reference and scope undertaken) should be provided.** Failure to do so may result in Consulting Firms not being evaluated.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the World Bank's *Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants [under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants] by World Bank Borrowers* dated January 2011 and revised in July 2014. ("Consultant Guidelines"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest. Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub consultancy to enhance their qualifications. The "association" may take the form of a joint venture or a sub consultancy. In case of a joint venture (JV), all members of the JV will be evaluated jointly for the purpose of short listing and shall be jointly and severally liable for the assignment and shall sign the contract jointly in case of award is made to that JV. Interested consultants should clearly indicate the structure of their "association" and the duties of the partners and sub consultants in their application. Unclear expression of interests in terms of "in association with" and/or "in affiliation with" and etc. without indicating the status of the partnership and designation of the lead partner may not be considered for short listing.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method set out in the Consultant Guidelines. Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours [9.30 a.m to 4.30 p.m, Monday to Friday].

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by fax, or by e-mail) **by Monday, January 15, 2018 before 12.00 pm (midday).**

Engineering Department (Buildings) Yangon City Development Committee

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Lady Gaga heads for Las Vegas concert residency

LOS ANGELES — Pop star Lady Gaga is swapping touring for a two-year stint in Las Vegas, joining the likes of music divas Celine Dion, Britney Spears and Shania Twain who have recently taken up concert residencies in the entertainment mecca.

Gaga, 31, said on Tuesday she will start a two-year engagement at the 5,300-seat Park Theater at the Park MGM resort on the Las Vegas strip in December 2018.

"It's the land of Elvis, Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra, the Rat Pack, Elton John, Judy Garland and Liza Minnelli. It has been a life-long dream of mine to play Las Vegas," the singer said

in a statement. "I am humbled to be a part of a historical lineup of performers, and to have the honor of creating a new show unlike anything Vegas has ever seen before," she added. Gaga made her name almost 10 years ago with catchy pop songs, arresting dance routines and outrageous stunts like setting her piano on fire and wearing a raw meat dress.

In February, she kicked off her the halftime show at the annual Super Bowl by singing "God Bless America," from the top of Houston's NRG Stadium. But in September, the "Bad Romance" singer postponed until early 2018 the European leg of her "Joanne"



Lady Gaga performs for the five former US presidents, Jimmy Carter, George HW Bush, Bill Clinton, George W Bush, and Barack Obama during a concert at Texas A&M University benefiting hurricane relief efforts in College Station, Texas, US on 21 October, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

world tour, citing severe pain. She was hospitalized in 2013 for a hip injury and more recently has said she suffers from the musculoskeletal disorder fibromyalgia. Las Vegas residencies have become a

popular draw for top music stars because they allow performers to remain in one place and draw large crowd without the rigors of touring. Exact dates and ticket prices for Lady Gaga's residency

will be announced at a later date.

The Park Theater is part of the transformation of the Monte Carlo hotel on the Las Vegas Strip into a redesigned Park MGM resort.— Reuters ■

Most men I've worked with are not sexual harassers: Matt Damon



Actor-producer Matt Damon. PHOTO: PTI

LOS ANGELES — Actor-producer Matt Damon has said amid the climate of sexual misconduct allegations in Hollywood people should also talk enough about all the men in the entertainment industry who are not sexual predators.

The actor said the "preponderance" of men he has worked with are not predators and he would decide whether to collaborate with people accused of inappropriate behavior on a "case-by-case basis."

"We're in this watershed moment and it's great but I think one thing that's not being talked about is there are a whole s*** load of guys the preponderance of men I've worked with who don't do this kind of thing and whose lives

aren't going to be affected.

"If I have to sign a sexual harassment thing, I don't care, I'll sign it. I would have signed it before. I don't do that and most of the people I know don't do that," Damon said in an interview with Business Insider.

The 47-year-old actor was asked if he would back out of a movie if someone prominent involved, such as an actor, director, or producer, had been accused of sexual misconduct.

"That always went into my thinking. I mean, I wouldn't want to work with somebody who life's too short for that. But the question of if somebody had allegations against them, you know, it would be a case-by-case basis. You go, 'What's the story here?'" Damon responded.

Last week, Damon ignited controversy after discussing the topic with critic Peter Travers.

He similarly championed the "watershed moment" of women coming forward while also cautioning against conflating "pating someone on the butt and rape or child molestation."

He mainly compared the allegations that have been made against Senator Al Franken, who recently announced he would be resigning from the US Senate, and Harvey Weinstein.—PTI ■

Michael Kors brand going cruelty free

LONDON — Fashion designer Michael Kors is making his brand cruelty free and has vowed not to use fur in his creations.

According to The Guardian, production of current designs using fur, such as coyote and rabbit, will be phased out by the end of 2018, the brand has confirmed.

This new model will also apply to the luxury footwear brand Jimmy Choo, which was

acquired by Michael Kors Holdings this year.

"Due to technological advances in fabrications, we now have the ability to create a luxe aesthetic using non-animal fur. We will showcase these new techniques in our upcoming runway show in February," said the brands eponymous designer, referring to alternative materials that look and feel like leather and

animal fur but are made from synthetic fibres.

The moves comes around six months after Kors, 58, was shout down by anti-fur protesters during his speech at New Yorks Metropolitan Museum of Art. Several protesters got on to the stage and encircled the designer, making sounds of animals being tortured and shouting at him for using fur.—PTI ■

Abrams to receive Leading Man Award at Athena Film Festival

LOS ANGELES — Filmmaker JJ Abrams will be honoured with the Leading Man Award at Athena Film Festival.

The 2018 edition of the festival will celebrate Abrams "extraordinary career and continued support and advocacy of

women in the entertainment industry," which includes his work on "Alias" and introducing the world to Daisy Ridleys Rey in the new "Star Wars" trilogy, reported Entertainment Weekly.

"I am deeply humbled to be recognised by the Athena Film Festival.

Any good Ive done has been achieved because I have worked alongside women, and I share my gratitude with all of them for being honoured with this award," said Abrams.

Past recipients of the Athena Leading Man Award have included filmmaker Paul Feig in 2016, and actor David Oyelowo in 2017. The 2018 Athena Film Festival will take place from February 22 to 25 at Barnard College in New York City.—PTI ■



Filmmaker JJ Abrams. PHOTO: REUTERS

KAMAZ introduces Russian trucks to Myanmar

KAMAZ, Russia's largest truck producer, launched its market launch of trucks in Yangon yesterday.

The ceremony held at Yangon Waterboom, Shu Khin Thar, in Dawpone Township was opened with speeches by Russian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Nikolay A Listopadov and an official of the Kamaz.

KAMAZ Group of Companies is the largest automobile corporation in the Russian Federation and one of the world's top 20 heavy duty truck producers.

By early October 2017, the KAMAZ automobile plant had built more than 2 million 230 thousand finished trucks since the production launch in 1976. —GNLM ■



Visitors check the Russian KAMAZ trucks at the market launch in Yangon. PHOTO: SUPPLIED



A customer drinks a 'Selfieccino' coffee at the Tea Terrace in London, Britain on 19 December, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

London cafe unveils the 'selfieccino' — self portraits in froth

LONDON — A cafe in London is taking barista art to a new level by giving customers the chance to sip on their own self-portraits.

The Tea Terrace, based in House of Fraser's Oxford Street branch, has become Europe's first location to deliver the "Selfieccino," which features an image of customers' faces on the frothy topping of their drinks.

Patrons send their headshots via an online messaging app to the barista and are given the choice of either a cappuccino or hot chocolate as their canvas.

The image is uploaded to the "Cino" machine while the drink is placed in position. The picture is then scanned and reproduced onto the froth using a flavourless food coloring. The process takes around four minutes before an

image is presented on the froth, ready to be photographed and sent to all points via social media before drinking, and costs around 5.75 pounds. (\$7.5) "Due to social media, the dining experience has completely shifted," Ehab Salem Shouly, owner of The Tea Terrace told Reuters. "It's not enough any more to just deliver great food and great service — it's got to be Instagram worthy."

Over 400 of the personalized drinks have been sold since they launched on Saturday, with the hash tag "Selfieccino" going viral across various social media platforms. The Tea Terrace hopes to trademark the term as they expand the service across their other two locations in London Victoria and Guildford, Surrey. —Reuters ■

France pulls Marquis de Sade erotic novel from auction

PARIS — The auction of one of the world's earliest and most sordid erotic novels — the Marquis de Sade's "120 Days of Sodom" — has been halted after the French state declared it a national treasure and said it could not be sold to a foreign buyer.

De Sade's 1785 work, written in tiny script on 33 pieces of scroll while he was imprisoned in the Bastille, was due to be auctioned on Wednesday as one of the prize items in a vast collection of notes, letters and musical scores being sold off.

But De Sade's 12-metre long manuscript, along with four works by one of the founders of surrealism, Andre Breton, were this week declared national treasures by France's Ministry of Culture, keeping them out of contention.

The two lots, from a trove of documents and artifacts assembled by a now-defunct French company, had drawn interest from US and European private buyers, Paris-based auctioneers Aguttes said.

The French state will now have 30 months to raise the funds for the purchase from citizens or the help of private fortunes, or the items will be put back on sale.

De Sade's daring novel — left behind in his cell when he moved out in 1789, during the French Revolution, and only later discovered and published — had been expected to fetch

between 4 million and 6 million euros (\$7.09 million).

It recounts the story of four aristocrats who resolve to experience every sexual perversion.

The works by Breton on surrealism, which helped define the 20th century artistic movement, had been forecast to sell for up to 5.5 million euros for the lot.

The auction is the first in a series of attempts to liquidate a 130,000-strong collection of artworks and literary treasures pulled together by Aristophil, a group set up in 1990 that raised funds from some 18,000 inves-

tors in exchange for a share in the pieces.

The company went bankrupt in 2015, causing losses for its backers, while founder Gerard Lheritier was detained and put under investigation for fraud, a charge he denies.

Other items in the collection include original manuscripts by 'The Three Musketeers' author Alexandre Dumas and operatic scores drafted by Richard Strauss, and have drawn interest from Chinese buyers and European institutions, the auctioneers said. — Reuters ■



An employee displays the Marquis de Sade's original rolled manuscript called Le Rouleau de la Bastille of "Les 120 jours de Sodome ou l'école du libertinage" (The 120 Days of Sodom, or the School of Libertinage, 1785) before its auction at the Hotel Drouot auction house in Paris, France on 23 November, 2017.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Renowned goal scorer Christopher Chizoba to stay with Shan United

CHRISTOPHER Chizoba, one of the most prolific goal scorers in the Myanmar National League (MNL) has renewed his contract with Shan United FC, the 2017 MNL champion.

The contract will be inclusive throughout the upcoming 2018 season of the MPT Myanmar National League.

“It was good to play here and so I accepted the Club’s offer to extend the contract. I will keep trying to get more achievements with the team,” Christopher stat-

ed on the website of Shan United.

Chizoba is one of the premier strikers in the league and scored 15 goals last season.

Chizoba, 26, was born in Nigeria. He previously played at various clubs around Kolkata, India and once in North-East India before 2014.

He started his professional football life in Myanmar playing for Ayeyawady United in 2016.

Shan United will recruit more players according to the teams’ website.—Kyaw Zin Lin ■



Shan United’s reliable striker Christopher Chizoba who has renewed his contract with his team. **PHOTO: MNL**

Arsenal’s Giroud to miss Liverpool clash with hamstring injury

LONDON — Arsenal striker Olivier Giroud has been ruled out of Friday’s Premier League match against fierce rivals Liverpool with a hamstring injury, manager Arsene Wenger has said.

Giroud, who has scored seven goals this season, was substituted in the second half

of Arsenal’s 1-0 victory over West Ham United in the League Cup quarter-finals on Tuesday and will undergo scans on Thursday to assess the damage.

“It doesn’t look very good for him,” Wenger told reporters after the victory. “I think he’s out of Friday night...”

“We have to wait. Nowadays

you do the scan 48 hours after the injury. That will happen on Thursday, then we’ll have a precise kind of grade on what his hamstring is.

“When you listen to him, the pain is quite big, but the grade is not always linked with the intensity of the pain.”

Midfielder Francis Coquelin

was also substituted in the final stages of Tuesday’s match with a knock but Wenger expects the 26-year-old to be fit to face their fellow top four contenders.

Arsenal are fifth in the league, a point and a place behind Liverpool, and host the Merseyside club at the Emirates.—Reuters ■

Uzbekistan wins gold, Viet Nam bronze in M-150 Cup

THE Viet Nam U-23 football team secured third place in the M-150 Cup when they beat host country Thailand 2-1 in Buriram Stadium in Thailand on Friday.

Viet Nam striker Nguyen Cong Phuong scored the ice-breaker only seven minutes after the start of the match with a superb header, and then doubled his team’s advantage at the 22-minute mark with a second goal from inside the box.

Thailand got a penalty shot at the 38-minute mark, but missed a golden opportunity when Nattawut Sombatyotha slipped and completely missed the ball, squandering a chance to get on the board.

Two minutes after the restart, Thailand’s Supachok Sarachat pulled a goal back for the hosts to give them a fighting chance to draw the game even.

But luck was on Viet Nam’s side as they hung on to the one-goal lead until time expired.

In the final match, Uzbekistan became champions of the M-150 Cup by defeating Japan, 4-3. The winner of the championship match was decided with a penalty shootout, as the score at the end of regulation was 2-2. The Japanese team was pleased with their second place finish, unlike Myanmar, which finished in sixth place after failing to win a single match.—Kyaw Zin Lin ■

Chelsea’s Christensen can emulate Terry, says Conte

LONDON — Defender Andreas Christensen’s rapid rise at Chelsea has impressed manager Antonio Conte, who believes the 21-year-old has the talent to emulate John Terry’s success at the Premier League club.

Christensen, who spent the last two seasons on loan at Borussia Monchengladbach, has gained prominence in Chelsea’s first team, helping the London side maintain nine clean sheets in 20 appearances across all competitions this season.

Former England international Terry progressed through Chelsea’s youth system and made over 650 senior appearances, captaining the team since 2004 and winning five league and FA Cup titles along with numerous other trophies.

“This is a big comparison — John Terry wrote the history of this club and won a lot,” Conte told reporters.

“I wish Christensen to have the same career as John. I think



Chelsea manager Antonio Conte. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

he has the right characteristics to play for this club for many years, to become an important player...”

“Every time I decided to give him the opportunity to play,

he played with an amazing performance. These performances convinced me that Christensen has to play with regularity.”

Terry, 37, joined Championship (second tier) side Aston Vil-

la before the start of the current season.

Chelsea host Bournemouth in the League Cup quarter-finals later on Wednesday.—Reuters ■