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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is welcomed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as she arrives at the celebration of the 69th Republic Day of India in New Delhi yesterday. The State Counsellor joined nine other ASEAN leaders as special guests. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Counsellor views parade celebrating India's 69th Republic Day

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended the celebration of the 69th Republic Day of India in New Delhi yesterday, observing a parade, stunt performances and cultural displays along with other ASEAN leaders.

Leaders of South-East

Asian countries were hosted as special guests by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to participate in the celebrations.

The celebrations included marching bands, floats and traditional cultural performances from Indian states, performers on motorbikes,

aerial displays and military weaponry.

Leaders from Viet Nam, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia were invited by Prime Minister Modi to enjoy the 90-minute parade.

India shares a 1,643km-long border with Myanmar and is involved in building a trilateral highway linking Myanmar and Thailand to the north-eastern part of India that will serve as a gateway to the rest of South-East Asia.

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President U Htin Kyaw arrives back from Singapore

PRESIDENT U Htin Kyaw returned from Singapore and arrived in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday after receiving medical check-ups in Singapore.

He left for Singapore on 23 January accompanied by Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe.

The President was welcomed at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe, Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr. Myo Aung and Deputy Minister for the Office of the President U Min Thu and officials.—MNA ■



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State Counsellor attends 25th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit

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Vice President U Myint Swe addresses meeting of Environmental Conservation committee

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VP U Henry Van Thio visits pearl farm and Salon ethnic national development works

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'BEST BANK IN MYANMAR'

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Pyithu Hluttaw

Rural electrification, meter boxes discussed by Pyithu Hluttaw

Mi Mi Phyo

THE electrification effort and the meter boxes that will measure usage were among the issues discussed by the 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw 7th regular session seventh day meeting held yesterday in Pyithu Hluttaw meeting hall, Nay Pyi Taw.

The questions on the electricity sector were answered by Ministry of Electricity and Energy Deputy Minister Dr. Tun Naing.

Replying to a question raised by Daw Aye Aye Mu (a) Daw Sharmie of Kalay constituency on plans to install sufficient numbers of meter boxes for household use, Deputy Minister Dr. Tun Naing said depending upon the usage amount, three-types of digital meter boxes were being planned for purchase and installed for household use in place of a single meter box previously used so that a huge number of meter reading personnel are not required. Tenders were called with the 2017-2018 fiscal year ordinary expenditure budget to purchase 5/30 ampere meters that will be read directly for use in rural villages,

5/30 ampere meters that can be read by hand held unit (HHU) for use in small towns and 10/60



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

ampere meters that can be read by HHU for use in big towns. The 10/60 ampere meter can use twice the amount of power of the previous meters and once these arrive in early April 2018, arrangements are being made to fulfil the meter box requirement. On the question of plans to review and install Ever brand household digital electricity meters asked by U Naing Naing Win of Tamu constituency, Deputy Minister Dr. Tun Naing said tenders had been called for in a transparent and fair manner in fiscal year 2017-2018 to purchase three types of digital meters for rural, small and big town usage.

Among the meters submitted in the tender, one which has good technology and quality and can be acquired at a fair price will be bought and, starting in the coming fiscal year, arrangements are being made for the price of the household meters to be reviewed and reduced.

Next, Daw Cho Cho of Ottwin constituency asked if there was a plan to provide electricity to villages on the banks of the Sittaung River in Ottwin Township, to which Deputy Minister Dr. Tun Naing said the six villages of Aung Thar, Kan Thar, Thauktan, Thaukgpu, Kyetlesit and Chaungkyo on the banks of

the Sittaung River in Ottwin Township are more than 5 miles away from the 11 KV power line, and therefore not included in the initial stage of the national electrification plan (NEP).

By the second stage of the NEP project, electricity will be provided to these six villages via Ziphayuthaung and Thayetaw villages. Some villages are in places where road communication is not good and it is difficult to transport the concrete poles, power lines and transformers needed.

In response to a question by U Oo Tun Win of Kyauktaw constituency on plans to provide electricity to the Pane Ne

Chaung-Kyauk Swe Phyu beach area, the Deputy Minister said electricity provided to a total of 30 villages near Goppi Daunt village along the Kyauk Swe Phyu beach area will be included in the 2021-2022 fiscal year five-year plan implemented with Union funds to construct nine miles of 66KV power transmission line and a 66/11 KV, 5 MVA sub-station in Goppi Daunt village.

Once the Goppi Daunt sub-station is constructed, providing electricity to 30 villages near Goppi Daunt village along the Kyauk Swe Phyu beach area will be implemented by coordinating with Rakhine State government to fund the required 11 KV power line and 11/0.4 KV transformers.

A bill to amend the television and video law was then submitted by Ministry of Information Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun to the Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee member Thakayta constituency Dr Wei Phyo Aung read and explained the committee's report on the bill.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint said that Hluttaw representatives who want to discuss the bill should enroll their names.

The 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw 7th regular session eighth day meeting is scheduled for 29 January. ■

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw discusses road construction work

Aye Aye Thant, Myo Thu Hein (Myanmar News Agency)

Asterisk-marked questions were asked and answered and two bills were discussed at the seventh-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw, held yesterday morning in the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting hall.

During the meeting, U Kyaw Htway of the Yangon Region constituency (8) raised a question regarding the Zaykabar Company's non-compliance with the agreement terms made with the Ministry of Construction while laying the Hlinethaya-Dalla-Twantay-Kawhmu-Kungyangon-Dedaye road under the build, operate, transfer (BOT) system. Replying to the question, Ministry of Construction Deputy Minister U Kyaw Lin said the construction

contract for the 54-mile 7-furlong Hlinethaya-Dalla-Twantay-Kawhmu-Kungyangon-Dedaye road was granted to Zaykabar Company by the Ministry of Construction's Department of Road, and after receiving permission from the Myanmar Investment Commission, an agreement was signed on 8 October 2013. From 2013, when the construction work was started, until 2015, before the tolls were collected under the BOT system, the tolls were collected under a tender system at the Panhlaing, Pyawbwey and Kanbe gates. The tender fees were provided to the government, so there is no effect on the government. Of the 54 miles and 7 furlongs, Zaykabar Company had constructed the 11-mile and 1-furlong Hlinethaya-Dalla-Twantay section, the 3-mile and 6-furlong Twantay town detour road, the 9-mile Kanbe-Pyawbwey-Dalla



Deputy Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin. PHOTO: MNA

section, and the 17-mile and 5-furlong Twantay-Kawhmu-Kungyangon section, totalling 41 miles and 4 furlongs.

Of the 54-mile and 7-furlong section that Zaykabar Company is constructing under the BOT system, the 13-mile and 3-furlong Kawhmu-Kungyangon-Dedaye section has yet to be completed. The Ministry of Construction has not permitted the collection of

road tolls for that section. For the remaining 13-mile and 3-furlong section, asphalt-concrete is being laid on the 5-mile, 3-furlong and 24-foot-wide Kawhmu-Kungyangon section. Further, seven bridges are being widened and an additional layer of asphalt is being laid on the 8-milelong and 18-foot-wide Kungyangon-Dedaye section. The company is being instructed to complete these tasks by the end of May, before the rains. If the company is unable to complete the work in the stipulated time, action will be taken against them, potentially resulting in the termination of the work. The Ministry of Construction will ensure that the company builds the road to the satisfaction of the representatives and the people of Kawhmu, Kungyangon and Dedaye, explained the deputy minister.

Questions raised by U Okka

Min of the Taninthayi Region constituency (8) and U Myo Win of Mon State constituency (8) were also answered by U Kyaw Lin.

Next, a bill on industrial design copyright was discussed by U Soe Thein @ U Maung Soe of the Taninthayi Region constituency (10) and Dr. Pyae Phyo of the Ayeyawady Region constituency (7).

Later, a bill on trade mark copyright was discussed by Dr. Khun Win Thauk of Kachin State constituency (11), Naw Chris Tun @ Dr. Arr Kar Moe of Kayin State constituency (7), Dr. Pyae Phyo of the Ayeyawady Region constituency (7) and U Soe Thein @ U Maung Soe of the Taninthayi Region constituency (10).

The eighth-day meeting of the seventh regular session of the second Amyotha Hluttaw meeting is scheduled to be held on 29 January. ■

State Counsellor attends 25th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended the 25th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi on 25 January together with leaders of ASEAN.

“There still exists ample room for deepening the existing cooperation between ASEAN and India and further strengthening ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership in the future,” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the plenary session of the summit.

“The peoples of ASEAN member States and the people of India have close traditional ties and share cultural affinities that go back to historic times. The civilizations of ASEAN and India have been enriched by cross cultural exchanges over the decades,” she said.

“I would like to claim that my own country, Myanmar, has the strongest cultural and historical linkages with India. The struggle to free ourselves from colonial rule established solid ties between us. Our geographical location makes Myanmar India’s important gateway to the East serving as the land bridge between India and ASEAN,” she added.

“Reflecting upon the 25th anniversary of ASEAN-India relations, Myanmar values the tangible developments and sustained progress in multi-sectoral cooperation and strategic partnership between ASEAN and India over the past two and a half decades,” said the State Counsellor.

“We are delighted with India’s Act East Policy and growing willingness to intensify its engagements with ASEAN.



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attends the 25th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi on 25 January. PHOTO: MNA

This important foreign policy of India, coupled with ASEAN’s outward looking policy, has further strengthened the existing relations and cooperation between India and ASEAN,” said the State Counsellor.

India is the 8th largest trading partner of ASEAN and its trade is amounted to 2.6% of the ASEAN’s total trade.

“We are therefore confident that the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) will open up greater market opportunities for the ASEAN Member States and India in the near future,” said the State Counsellor.

“We are grateful to India for its unwavering support for ASEAN Connectivity initiative through its US\$ 1 billion Line of Credit to enhance sea, air, land and digital connectivity,” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

She also stressed the im-

portance of connectivity to promote trade and people to people links, saying that Myanmar has placed the highest emphasis on infrastructure projects related to connectivity.

The State Counsellor also welcomed the extension of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway to link up with Laos, Cambodia and Viet Nam.

“In this regard, we thank India and Thailand for their contributions towards the improvement or upgrading of roads in Myanmar, which will become part of the Trilateral Highway linking India and ASEAN,” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

“In the bilateral context, we are pleased to see growing momentum in the further consolidation of traditional ties of friendship and bilateral relations between India and Myanmar with the frequent exchange of high-level visits,” said the State

Counsellor.

“I recall with great pleasure the recent fruitful visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Myanmar in September 2017 which broadened the areas of mutually beneficial cooperation and further enhanced closer relations and friendship between our two countries and peoples,” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

We have initiated a number of major infrastructure projects which can link India to South-east Asia.

The State Counsellor also invited the Indian and ASEAN business communities to invest in Myanmar’s Thilawa Economic Zone and Dawei and Kyauk Phyu Deep Seaports which will give an immense boost to the connectivity and promote regional and international trade.

“Furthermore, we are confident that transport infrastructure projects such as India-My-

anmar-Thai Trilateral Highway Project, Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project connecting North Western regions of Myanmar and North Eastern regions of India will serve as India’s major gateway to South-east Asia,” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

“On this special occasion of the 25th anniversary, we look forward to the adoption of the proposed “Delhi Declaration” which will serve as a milestone document to intensify the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership for Peace, Progress and shared Prosperity in the years ahead,” said the State Counsellor.

In conclusion, she expressed Myanmar’s commitment to work closely with fellow ASEAN Member States and India to strengthen the ASEAN-India relations and strategic partnership.—Myanmar News Agency ■

State Counsellor views parade celebrating India’s 69th Republic Day

FROM PAGE-1

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who studied and lived in India, is among nine ASEAN leaders who arrived Thursday for the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit and to attend the annual 69th Republic Day parade as chief guests.

The constitution of India

came into effect on 26 January, 1950, following its independence from British colonialists in 1947.

In the evening, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended an “At Home” meeting between India and other ASEAN countries held at the Mughal Garden in the Presidential House.

Following the meeting, the

State Counsellor met with families of Myanmar diplomats stationed in India at the residence of the Myanmar Ambassador in New Delhi. U Moe Kyaw Aung, the Myanmar Ambassador to India, then hosted a dinner in honour of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.—Myanmar News Agency ■



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi observes the parade at the celebration of the 69th Republic Day of India yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

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Agro products export up by \$170 million this FY

MYANMAR'S export earnings from its agricultural sector from 1 April 2017 to 19 January 2018 this fiscal year (FY) was US\$2.4 billion, up by \$170 million compared with last FY.

Rice forms a major part of Myanmar's agro exports. More than 2.6 million tonnes of rice, worth \$700, were shipped abroad, as of the first week of January, in the current FY. The export volume of rice this FY increased by 1.5 million tonnes compared with last FY.

Similarly, the export of pulses, another key product, reached some 10 million tonnes, with an estimated value of Ks400 million. Despite an increase of 25,000 tonnes in the volume of pulses exports, earnings are down by \$400 million, according to the commerce ministry.

This was a result of the changes in India's import policy. Natural gas and agricultural products individu-



Workers gathering and scooping unhusked rice into sacks at their farm in Ayeyawaddy Region. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

ally made up 25 per cent of the exports, while cut-make-pack garments accounted for 16 per cent; minerals for eight per

cent; fisheries for five per cent; and forest, animal and other products for 21 per cent.

As of 19 January in the

current FY, the export income reached \$11.1 billion, registering an increase of \$1.87 billion against last FY. —Htet Myat ■

Over 7,000 hives kept in Bago Region

MORE than 7,000 hives were farmed by the Bago Region Apiculture Enterprise and private beekeeping enterprises in the Bago Region, according to a report in the City News yesterday.

Myanmar's honey is trying to penetrate the European Union market.

The Bago Region Apicul-

ture Enterprise is conducting activities such as testing for bee diseases, buying honey and bee products at a price set by the department, quality testing, issuing certificates for honey produced by the beekeeping enterprise, and holding awareness campaigns on farming and bee diseases.

The Bago Region Apicul-

ture Enterprise has 600 hives, while there are some 66 private beekeepers farming 7,110 hives.

The beekeeping enterprises are mostly found in the Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions and the Shan State.

China is the main buyer, while, South Korea, Japan, Viet Nam and Thailand also buy Myanmar's honey.

China buys Myanmar's honey for use in traditional medicine and food, owing to its high medicinal value.

Some 1,642 metric tonnes of honey were shipped to foreign markets, as of the first week of January this FY, with an estimated value of \$2.47 million, according to the Apiculture Enterprise.—GNLM ■

Over 9,700 shares of TMH traded on YSX

TMH Telecom Public Co., Ltd, debuted on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) yesterday, trading some 9,788 shares, worth Ks31.4 billion, according to the YSX.

The base price of TMH is Ks3,000, which is much lower than those of the four other listed companies.

A unit of TMH shares fetched some Ks3,200 at closing time.

Shares of five listed companies — First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB), First Private Bank (FPB) and TMH — are currently being traded on the YSX.

The stock trading volumes of the five listed companies were 21,368, including 421 shares of FMI, 11,069 shares of MTSH, 50 shares of MCB, 40 shares of

FPB and 9,788 shares of TMH. The estimated trading values were Ks70.3 billion.

The YSX approved the listing of TMH Telecom Public Co., Ltd, on 1 December 2017 after scrutinising the submitted application documents and a deliberate listing examination, in accordance with Section 41 (c) of the Securities Exchange Law and Sections 7 and 8 of the

Securities Listing Business Regulations. TMH is offering technology services, fixed and mobile network engineering services, as well as BTS and fiber installation and maintenance, among other services.

The share prices yesterday were Ks12,500 for FMI, Ks2,950 for MTSH, Ks7,700 for MCB, Ks26,500 for FPB and Ks3,200 for TMH at closing time. — Mon Mon ■

Price of garlic from Shan State unstable in domestic market

THE prices of garlic produced in Shan State are unstable in the domestic market, according to wholesalers.

U Saw Maung, a wholesaler from Pyay Township of the Bago Region, said, "Garlic mainly enters the Pyay market from Shan State and China's Kyukote (Pang Hseng). From the third week of this month, the market saw a decline in the flow of garlic from China.

"Kyukote garlic prices gradually increased because of the shortage in the market.

However, the prices of garlic produced in Shan State, which borders China, Laos and Thailand, are steadily declining in the market," he added.

Based on their size, quality and species, the prices of garlic vary from Ks2,100 to Ks2,800 per viss (3.6 pounds) in the wholesale market.

Garlic is a commonly bought kitchen crop and a popular ingredient in cooking due to its strong smell and delicious taste. The crop is also used to make traditional

medicines.

Garlic is mostly cultivated in Shan State and the Salin, Pwintphyu, Yenangyaung and Pakokku towns in Magway Region.

Myanmar mainly exports garlic to its neighbour Thailand through the Kengtung and Tachilek border trade camps.

In the last few years, Thailand has imported garlic not only from Loilin District but also from Taunggyi District. —GNLM



Labourers unload sacks of onion from a truck in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Individual trade from Myanmar-China borders hits nearly Ks1.7 billion

INDIVIDUAL trade through the Myanmar-China cross-border points, as of 12 January, reached some Ks1.7 billion, according to the official statistics from the commerce ministry.

Using individual trading cards (ITCs), border traders imported some Ks1.7 billion worth of domestically produced goods in the last 10 months of this financial year, including Ks38 million from the Muse border gate, Ks70 million from the Lwejel gate, Ks4 million from the Chinshwehaw point and nearly Ks1.6

billion from the Kanpaiktee trade station. However, no import trade was carried out through the Kengtung border this fiscal year (FY).

During the same period, commodities with an estimated value of more than Ks185 million were sent to the neighbour through the Kanpaiktee and Kengtung borders.

Individual trade through the 12 border entry points between last April and the second week of this month exceeded Ks34 billion, including Ks30.7 billion in imports and

Ks3.3 billion in exports.

Among the border trade camps, the value of trade through the Myawady border gate was the highest at Ks25.7 billion.

The commerce ministry has issued 140 cards to border traders in the current FY. The ministry introduced ITCs for border traders from late 2012 to promote individual trade transactions with neighbouring countries. Currently, there are some 1,404 ITC holders at the cross-borders.—Shwe Khine

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

တနင်္ဂနွေနေ့တိုင်း: "Sunday Special" အချုပ်ပိုင် (၈) မျက်နှာပါဝင်သော The Global New Light of Myanmar နေ့စဉ်ထုတ် သတင်းစာကို အောက်ပါမြို့များတွင် ဖတ်ရှုနိုင်ပါပြီ

နေပြည်တော်
ပြန်ကြားရေးဝန်ကြီးဌာန၊ ရုံးအမှတ်(၇) နေပြည်တော်၊ သတင်းနှင့်စာနယ်ဇင်းလုပ်ငန်း (ရုံးချုပ်)၊ ဝိသေသရော့ဌာန၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၆၇၄၁၂၁၀၈

နေပြည်တော်
နေပြည်တော်သတင်းစာတိုက် (တပ်ကုန်း)၊ ဝေယျာသီရိမြို့နယ်၊ ခရောင်လမ်းဆုံ၊ နေပြည်တော်၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၆၇၃၆၁၄၈၊ ၀၆၇၃၆၁၂၉

ရန်ကင်း
The Global New Light of Myanmar သတင်းစာတိုက်၊ အမှတ် ၁၅၀၊ ငါးထပ်ကြီးဘုရားလမ်း၊ ဗဟန်းမြို့နယ်၊ ရန်ကင်းမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၁၀၆၀၅၅၃၂၊ ၀၉၉၇၄၄၂၄၁၁၄

မန္တလေး
လမ်း (၂၀ x ၂၀) ကြား၊ (၁၂ x ၈၃) လမ်းကြား၊ ပုလဲဓမ္မရောင်ရမ်းမန္တလေးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၂၃၂၇၂၉၊ ၀၂၃၂၅၅၀

တောင်ကြီး
ရုံးကြီးလမ်း၊ သစ်တောရပ်ကွက်၊ တောင်ကြီးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၈၁၂၁၁၆၄၊ ၀၉၅၂၁၄၃၅၇

မကွေး
နတ်မောက်လမ်း၊ တပ်မ (၈၆) တပ်နယ်ရေး အနီး၊ မကွေးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၆၃၂၃၇၁၂

ကျိုင်းတုံ
မြို့သစ် (၃-၁) အမှတ် (၁) လမ်းဆွယ်၊ မြို့ပတ်လမ်း၊ ကျိုင်းတုံမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၈၄၂၂၄၉၂

ကလေး
အောင်ဓမ္မရောင်ကွက်၊ မြို့နယ်အားကစားကွင်းအနီး၊ ကလေးမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၇၃၂၂၁၃၃

မြင်ကြီးများ
အမှတ် (၄၁)၊ ရေခဲကွက်၊ အောင်ဆန်းလမ်း၊ မြင်ကြီးနားမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၇၄၂၂၄၆၂

ဝင်္ကေတွ
ရတနာတံလမ်းနှင့် တက္ကသိုလ်ရိပ်သာလမ်း၊ မိမိတက်ကြီးအနီး၊ မန်ကျည်မြင်ရပ်ကွက်၊ ဝင်္ကေတွမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၄၃၂၃၀၆၈

လားရှိုး
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ခြောက်
မေတ္တာလမ်း၊ ရှမ်းရောင်းရပ်၊ ကလွင်ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု၊ ခြောက်မြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၅၉၄၂၁၈၃

မော်လမြိုင်
ကြာအင်းကျေးရွာ၊ မော်လမြိုင်မြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၅၇၂၇၂၅၊ ၀၅၇၂၇၂၆

ပုံရွာ
နန္ဒဝန်ရပ်ကွက်၊ ဆက်သွယ်ရေး တာဝါတိုင်အနီး၊ ပုံရွာမြို့၊ ဖုန်း - ၀၇၁၂၆၅၅၅၊ ၀၇၁၂၆၅၃၃

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Vice President U Henry Van Thio visits pearl farm, and Salon ethnics in Taninthayi Region

VICE President U Henry Van Thio, who is also chairman of the Central Committee for Development of the National Tourism Industry, visited the pearl farm on Pale Island, Bokpyin Township, Taninthayi Region and rural development work being conducted in Makyone Galet Village, Kawthoung Township yesterday. Vice President U Henry Van Thio, together with Taninthayi Region Chief Minister Dr. Lei Lei Maw, Deputy Ministers Rear Admiral Myint Nwe and U Kyaw Myo and other officials arrived at the pearl farm on Pale Island yesterday morning by express boat. They were welcomed by Myanmar Pearl Enterprise Managing Director U Min Min Oo, who explained the history of pearl farming in Myanmar and various aspects of pearl production and sales.

The Vice President commented that pearl production is a work that provides foreign exchange for the country and urged those involved to work hard.

“There is a need to find new

places to produce pearls and to expand pearl production. Other works damage the natural environment and are not permitted near a pearl production place. Pearl production preserves the natural environment”, said the Vice President.

The Vice President then inspected the pearl farm and viewed the Lampi Island marine national park.

The Vice President then went to Kawthoung Township, Bo Cho Island, Makyone Galet Salon Village and attended the opening of a boarding house for the Salon that was donated and constructed by the Tint Tint Myanmar Company Limited.

The Vice President met with ethnic Salon nationals and locals in the meeting hall of the boarding house and explained the country’s efforts for balanced development of all ethnic nationals.

U Nyo Aye, the director of the Hotels and Tourism, Taninthayi Region, reported to the Vice President the status of travel companies in Taninthayi



Vice President U Henry Van Thio visits the pearl farm on Pale Island, Bokpyin Township in Taninthayi Region. **PHOTO: MNA**

Reigon, the development status of hotels and guest houses, numbers of visitors and income, places to visit in Dawei, Myeik and

Kawthoung districts, village-based travel works and future work for development of the travel sector.

The Vice President pointed out that Taninthayi Region has a long coastline with more

than 800 islands and has many below-and-above-water natural resources and views that are of interest for the world’s tourists.

“When the travel businesses develop, it will create a lot of job opportunities for locals, and the government is putting an emphasis on regional development”, the Vice President said.

The Vice President and

Chief Minister then presented clothes and food to the Salon people and were entertained with Salon ethnic national’s traditional dances.

The Vice President then went on to Khayin Gwa Island and inspected the works conducted for development of their travel industry. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint inspects preparations for Myeik Children’s Literature Festival

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint yesterday inspected preparation work for the Children’s Literature Festival in Myeik that will be held on 27 and 28 January.

The Union Minister arrived at Myeik Basic Education High School No. 1, where the Children’s Literature Festival will be held, and inspected the preparations for the opening ceremony, booths, charity food and entertainment.

Earlier in the day, the Union Minister handed over 50 Set Top Box television receivers donated by Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) for the Taninthayi Region government, which were accepted by Region Minister for Social Affairs and Development U Ho Pin and Kayin Ethnic Affairs Minister U Saw Lu Kar.

In the afternoon, the Union Minister and party visited the MRTV Retransmission Station



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint visits the preparations for the opening ceremony at Children’s Literature Festival in Myeik. **PHOTO: MNA**

in Dawei District, Thayetchaung Township, Pedet Village, where fire breaks are urgently need-

ed to improve the fire safety of the Retransmission Station. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Man hurt in mine blast in Mogaung Township, Kachin State

A 28-year-old man sustained serious injuries in a mine blast that occurred in a field located some six miles from the south of Hsahmaw Village in Mogaung Township, Kachin State.

U Than Soe, a resident of Ward-4, Hsahmaw Village, was grazing cattle in a field on Thursday evening when the explosion occurred, injuring his right leg.

He is currently receiving surgical treatment at the nearest hospital. Following the explosion, Major Myo Min Than, a member of Myanmar Armed Forces, provided financial support to the victim for his treatment.

Four other civilians were also hurt in mine explosions near Tanai Township, Myitkyina District, Kachin State, on 19 and 20 January.—EPN

Married couple found murdered in Hwategon Village

A husband and wife were found dead by villagers near the couple’s home in Hwategon Village, Aungyadana Village-tract, Nattalin Township, Thayawady District, Bago Region, on Friday early morning, according to the police.

Ko Tin Min, 33, and his wife, Ma Mya Nwe, 34, had serious wounds on their heads, necks and backs and were found lying in separate pools of blood in front of their home, said U Kyaw Sein, father of Ko Tin Min.

During the investigation, Ma Pa Ei Phyu, 9, a member of the suspect’s family was interrogated by the police.

She revealed the married couple had been killed by U San Oo, 52, and his son Ko Bo Aung, 25, on Thursday at

around 7 pm after they had a huge quarrel.

The police are conducting further investigations in the case. The two suspects were charged with the murder of the couple under Section 302 of the Penal Code.—GNLM ■

Environmental Conservation committee meets

Vice President U Myint Swe spoke before a meeting of the Central Committee for National Level Environmental Conservation and Climate Change yesterday, saying the country's natural resources need to be managed more effectively with well-planned residential housing, better waste disposal, and responsible land usage.

U Myint Swe's comments came at the fifth coordination meeting of the National Level Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Central Committee held at the meeting hall of the Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Ministry in Nay Pyi Taw.

As the population increases, natural resources are over-extracted, waste is improperly disposed, emissions from factories increases, water, land and air become polluted, the natural environment is degraded and climate change problems are encountered. These are major challenges to sustainable development and severely hinder efforts to reduce poverty, the Vice President said.

To overcome these challenges, natural resources need



Vice President U Myint Swe addresses the meeting of the fifth coordination meeting of the National Level Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Central Committee in Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

to be maintained and managed systematically and effectively to ensure sustained usage.

In addition to increasing regional cooperation through systematic coordination and cooperation with relevant departments and organisations, management of land usage, allocation of residential housing, and systematic waste disposal need to be conducted in accordance to the present time and system, he said.

As local and foreign investments are being invited

for the economic development of Myanmar, the matter of environmental conservation and climate change needs to be coordinated and conducted up to international norms and standards, and the committees need to coordinate with relevant ministries, investors, non-government organisations and civil service societies, the Vice President said.

This is the fifth central committee coordination meeting. In the past meetings, there were 64 decisions made out of which

44 were completed, while 20 are still under implementation.

According to reports submitted, the Ministry of Information was seen to have increased the knowledge of environmental conservation and climate change.

The Ministry of Education is known to be conducting university-level specialised subjects on environmental conservation and climate change as well as including these subjects in the basic level education curriculum.

For the sustainable development of Myanmar, the three main pillars of economic, social and environmental conservation need to be balanced.

Together with the changing direction of international environmental conservation and to face the environmental conservation challenges of the present, sector-wide national environmental policy and strategic frameworks are to be assessed and submitted to the union government according to procedure, he said.

The meeting was attended by Central Committee Chairman Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win, Central Committee member Deputy Attorney-General U Win Myint and Central Committee members, environmental conservation and climate change supervisory chairmen Nay Pyi Taw Council member, states/regions government ministers, officials from six work committees, permanent secretaries, representatives from non-government organisations and civil society organisations and officials. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Public Announcement for remonstration

UNION Solidarity and Development Party that had been allowed to set up as a political party headquartered at No. 5, at the corner of Yazathingaha Road and "C" Road in Nay Pyi Taw Dekkhinathiri Township has submitted its application for the registration as a political party to the Union Election Commission along with the following party's flag.

In their application they

mention that they will use the flag 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 UEC about the party's flag may submit a complaint along with the supporting evidence within seven days starting from issuance of this announcement. — Union Election Commission



Flag of Union Solidarity and Development Party.

Pressure often turns into counterproductive: Deputy Information Minister U Aung Hla Tun

ASKED to comment on the situation that led to Mr. Bill Richardson's dropping out of the Advisory Board to the Committee for Implementations of the Recommendations on Rakhine State, Deputy Information Minister U Aung Hla Tun said: "I'm so sorry that he brought up a hidden agenda that was beyond the mandate of the Board he belonged to. Actually, as far as I understand the President is the only person who has the power

to deal with an ongoing court case. For other people, it could be tantamount to demonstrating outright contempt of court."

"Nobody should use this case for their personal advantages such as popularity or publicity."

"I'd like to request all not to apply any pressure on the government in connection with this case because pressure can be counterproductive at times." — Myanmar News Agency ■



U Aung Hla Tun

Anti-corruption strategy to be formulated by April

THE Myanmar Anti-Corruption Commission will formulate an anti-corruption strategy within four months, according to a report in the Myawady Daily yesterday.

"We have drawn up the action plan for 2018 and will speed up our anti-corruption strategy within four months," said U Aung Kyi, chairman of the commis-

sion.

The strategy will be adopted by April and will be put into practice on a national scale in 2019, he added. It will be formulated with input from ministers, civil society, mediapersons and other stakeholders.

The anti-corruption law took effect in September 2013, and the anti-corruption commission was

first formed in 2014 with 15 members. The anti-corruption commission was reformed on 23 November 2017 with 12 members. The commission received 762 complaints within two months.

Some 121 complaints were about the governments, 56 about the election of ward and village administrators and 489 against judges.—GNLM ■

A historic photograph

Tour great delight and satisfaction, we found an auspicious news photo in the State-owned newspapers of 24th January 2018. It is none other than the documentary photo for which the party headed by the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi posed together with delegations from the New Mon State Party [NMSP] and Lahu Democratic Union [LDU]. As said by the State Counsellor, it is the photograph which reflects the new step of great honour for the entire nation. The documentary photo was taken after separate meetings between the State Counsellor, the Chairperson of the National Reconciliation and Peace Center and the delegation led by Nai Htaw Mon, Chairman of NMSP and the delegation led by Kya Khun Sar, Chairman of LDU at the NRPC in Nay Pyi Taw.

This has been carried out not only for our sake but for the sake of future generations. This showed the value of the historic documentary photo. To put it more accurately, this photo shows that NMSP and LDU have made a firm determination to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement [NCA].

At present, "The role of Myanmar in Regional Economic Co-operation," made us more convinced of the peace sector. Myanmar plays an important role in the regional economic cooperation projects such as ASEAN Economic Community-AEC and One Belt One Road [OBOR]. Had Myanmar managed to play her role effectively, our country sure would have seized many opportunities for successful implementation of economic projects. Failing that, these promising opportunities would have come to nothing. This process is the one which shows the doctrine "development based on peace."

The State Counsellor said, "This has been carried out not only for our sake but for the sake of future generations. This showed the value of the historic documentary photo. To put it more accurately, this photo shows that NMSP and LDU have made a firm determination to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement [NCA]. In other words, the photo shows that development based on peace will be brought about soon." ■

At the news conference held after the meetings, the State Counsellor said, "We would like to express our thanks to our ethnic national brethren, ethnic Mon and Lahu nationals for helping in the enduring existence of the union, peace in the union and development based on peace." Here, the development based on peace carries a deep and broad meaning. Deprivation of peace means voidance of opportunities. Due to lack of full peace for 70 years after gaining Myanmar's Independence, the people of Myanmar lost many opportunities of excellence.

At present, "The role of Myanmar in Regional Economic Co-operation," made us more convinced of the peace sector. Myanmar

Frugality of National Revenue and Sectors of Government Department

By Than Phyto Naing
[Kanyingyo]

THE incumbent government elected by the people had taken its office for nearly two years. On the study of the national spending since the very advent of reign of the new government, to be exact, April 2016 four laws had been promulgated, namely— Union Budget Law [Amendment Law], 2016, Additional Budget Allotment Law of the Union, 2016, Union Budget Law 2017 and Additional Budget Allotment Law of the Union, 2017.

A new initiative for the change of financial year period

Designation of the period from 1st October 2018 to 30th September 2019 as the new fiscal year is underway. Union budget for six-month period in the meantime, that is, from 1st April to the end of September 2018 prior to the change into the new fiscal year and the Union Budget Law, 2018 [Draft] are being put forward to Hluttaw for discussion. Only in July and August it will be discussed again for the new financial year when it will commence to be introduced.

Financial commission meeting held; policies laid down

On 9 January 2018, just prior to putting forth the Union Budget Law [Draft] to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the Financial Commission meeting 1/2018 headed by President of the State was held at the meeting hall of the Presidential Palace. At the meeting, the President gave an instruction not to demand more budget allotment for normal and lump sum expenditures of departments during the six-month period from April to September 2018 as the remaining 4 month-period apart from the first two months are in the rainy season, to reduce spending for the purchase of machines to be bought with foreign exchanges as much as possible, and to demand for the budget just for the machines to be bought during the designated period in accord with the tender rules and regulations, in purchasing machineries as well.

The Union Government



President U Htin Kyaw delivers the speech at the meeting of the Finance Commission 1/2018 at the Presidential Palace. PHOTO: MNA

put forth the Union Budget Estimate and 2018 Union Budget Law [Draft] at the session of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw held on 15th January 2018. Now is the time when the ministries are putting forward to the Hluttaw concerning their respective budget estimates and the projects to be performed.

Respective committees formed by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will scrutinize the submissions before they are to be discussed again in the Hluttaw. Only after that, a report must be submitted to the Hluttaw so that the parliamentarians could make discussions concerning approval, refusal and reduction of expenditures to be submitted by the executive board. After then, the Hluttaw representatives who will participate in discussions must make detailed scrutiny and approval in accord with the authority conferred upon the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Choosing tasks in priority to be performed

The Scrutiny Committee has to scrutinize the budgets submitted by departments via the Union

Government because some were found to be more expensive than local prices, with some found to be less than the actual amounts. Scrutiny was made with a view to avoiding wastage of national revenues. Provided that excess amounts are found, they have to be reduced and if less amounts are found to have been demanded they have to be granted more again. Tasks to be implemented in the spheres such as education and health, tasks for prevention of natural disasters such as floods, torrential rains and landslides to be faced in the process of climate changes and tasks for maintaining and strengthening dams and embankments are to be prioritized.

Performing the tasks of public affair services

Priorities must be given to the national revenue to be spent for disbursement of agricultural loans and distribution of pedigree seeds, pesticides and fertilizers, for farmers which occupy 70 percent of the entire national populace. Industrial projects need to be included in building up the nation so that construction of road

and bridge network and creation of job opportunities can be implemented, with the increase of daily income included.

Responsibility of legislative sector

Such performances will be the good and strong principles for the Union Budget Law to be promulgated in coming financial year 2018. By reducing unnecessary expenditures after detailed scrutiny, Hluttaw and executive bodies should perform the duties for the sake of the national interest, without bribery and corruption.

Later after the promulgation of the Union Budget Law undergoing the process of careful scrutiny, reduction and refusal, as for the departments which must successfully implement projects on the ground situations they must deal with spending the national revenues frugally with the senses of responsibility and accountability so that people's anxieties over the national economy can be erased.

Responsibilities of regional auditors' offices

It needs to have expenditures

of enterprises under implementation on the ground audited as to whether they have been in agreement with the budget allotment granted by Hluttaw and they keep up with the designated standards. As for the departments, it needs to carefully examine as to whether the respective departments performed in accord with rules and regulations in inviting tenders, the initial process of implementation of the projects. Simultaneously, it needs to examine as to whether tender winners have been chosen without doing above board, that is, in dishonest ways by exercising the practices of cronyism.

Actual reports and discussion for the people

As for the Union Auditor General of the Administrative Board to examine the actual expenditure of respective departments on the ground, it is of great importance to strictly examine the statistics, to accurately put forward its findings to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in accord with duties assigned so that the people will be well convinced of spending the national revenues collected from the people. It is an

important factor. Based on the findings of the authenticated audit report, it can be discussed again in the Hluttaw so that warnings to the departments and making advantages and disadvantages known to the public can be made. Every investigation and examination is required to be free from practices of bribery and corruption. That system is called check and balance among the executive body from the legislative body.

To sum it up, the national budgets granted from the national revenues must be for the sake of the people. Moreover, with the changing political systems and times departments are responsible to frugally spend the national budget allotments and so as not to meet wastages. Over spending budgets, Hluttaws are constantly to monitor, transferring cases found, if ever, to the judicial sector for taking legal actions in accord with the existing rules and laws in order that responsible persons will learn to effectively spend the national revenues and the entire national populace can enjoy rights they deserve, to the full. ■

Translated by
Khin Maung Oo

Four Objectives of the 71th Anniversary Union Day

1. To develop the Union Spirit
2. To make the internal peace process a success with unity of ethnic people
3. To build a Federal Democratic Union through the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong
4. To boost the economy of the Union by encouraging small and medium enterprises

Coral reefs get sick from plastic waste - study

By Alister Doyle

OSLO, Jan 25 (Reuters) - Billions of bits of plastic waste are entangled in corals and sickening reefs from Thailand to Australia's Great Barrier Reef, scientists said on Thursday.

The trash is another pressure on corals, already suffering from over-fishing, rising temperatures caused by climate change and other pollution.

In the Asia-Pacific region a total of 11.1 billion plastic items - including shopping bags, fishing nets, even diapers and tea-bags - are ensnared on reefs, the scientists wrote in the journal Science.

They projected the numbers would rise by 40 percent by 2025 as marine pollution gets steadily worse.

The plastic increases the likelihood of disease about 20 times, to 89 percent for corals in contact with plastics from four percent in comparable areas with none.

Trash may damage the tiny coral animals that build reefs, making them more vulnerable to illness.

And bits of plastic may act as rafts for harmful microbes in the oceans.

Scientists were shocked to find plastic even in remote reefs.

"You could be diving and you think someone's tapping your shoulder but it's just a bottle knocking against you, or a plastic trash bag stuck on your tank," lead author Joleah Lamb of Cornell University told Reuters.

"It's really sad," she said.

"Corals are animals like us and have really thin tissues that can be cut and wounded, especially if they are cut by an item covered in all sorts of micro-organisms," she said.

The scientists, from the United States, Australia, Thailand, Myanmar, Canada and Indonesia, surveyed 159 reefs from 2011-14 in the Asia-Pacific region.

They found most plastic in Indonesia, with about 26 bits per 100 square metres (1076 square feet) of reef, and least off Australia, which has the strictest waste controls.

The link between disease and plastic may well apply to other reefs such as in the Caribbean and off Africa, and may be harming other life on the ocean floor such as sponges or kelp, Lamb said.

At least 275 million people worldwide live near reefs, which provide food, coastal protection and income from tourism. The presence of plastics seemed especially to aggravate some common coral afflictions, such as skeletal eroding band disease.

The scientists urged tougher restrictions on plastic waste. In December, almost 200 nations agreed to limit plastic pollution of the oceans, warning that it could outweigh all fish by 2030.

Co-author Douglas Rader of the U.S. Environmental Defense Fund said better management of fisheries was the best way to strengthen coral reefs to enable them to fend off man-made threats such as more plastics. "This is not a story about 'let's give up on corals,'" he told Reuters. "Overfishing today is the biggest threat." He said nations from Belize to the Philippines were acting to regulate fisheries on corals. —(Reporting By Alister Doyle; Editing by Raissa Kasolowsky) ■



Dagon University's students visit Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

A group of students, who are studying International Relations at the Dagon University, visited Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday.

The delegation comprising of 268 students including faculty members of the univer-

sity was welcomed by Deputy Director-General and officials of the Office of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The officials conducted the students around the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.—Myanmar News Agency ■



in
Picture

Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing is welcomed by Australian Ambassador Mr. Nicholas Coppel as he arrives to attend a reception to mark the National Day of Australia held at No. 18, Golden Valley in Bahan Township, Yangon, on 26th January. **PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY**

Two mountaineers set off climbing Mt. Phon Kan Razi

TWO experienced mountaineers from the Hiking and Mountaineering Association in Meikhtila Township, Mandalay Region, started climbing Mt. Phon Kan Razi in Kachin State's Putao on 25 January.

Ko Naing Min Shein, secretary of the association, and Dr Myat Min set off to climb the snowcapped mountain, which has an altitude of 11,920ft and is situated northwest of Putao. Both climbers hope that young people in Meikhtila will take an interest in hiking and mountaineering and also appreciate the beauty that nature has to offer.

"At the summit of the mountain they will raise two flags; the flag of the Kan Let Myar education and health volunteer group and the flag of the mountaineering association. They are bringing the flag of the volunteer group because the climbers were sponsored and supported by the volunteer group in the past. I think the whole expedition will last nine or ten days," said U Aung Kyaing, executive committee member of the volunteer group.

In 2017, members of the Meikhtila Hiking and Mountaineering Association reached



Ko Naing Min Shein (L) and Dr Myat Min (R). **PHOTO: BO BO**

the summits of five mountains in Mandalay Region and Shan State.

In Mandalay Region, they climbed Mt. Elephant at an altitude of 6280ft in Thazi Township in July, Mt. Popa at an altitude of 4981ft in August and Mt. Pyat Kha Shwe at an altitude of 3700ft in Ku Me in September.

In Shan State, they climbed Mt. Myinmahti at an altitude of 5800ft in Kalaw in September and Mt. Ashay Myin Anauk Myin at an altitude of 7800ft in Ywangan in December.—Bo Bo (Mahlaing) ■

Myanmar to host 2018 Asian Road and Para Cycling Championship

MYANMAR will host 2018 Asian Road and Para Cycling Championship for the first time in the capital Nay Pyi Taw.

The Ministry of Health and Sports and the Myanmar Cycling Federation will jointly organize the tournament from 8 to 12 February. A coordination meeting

on hosting the Asian Road and Para Cycling Championship took place at the meeting room of the Sports and Physical Education Department under the Ministry of Health and Sports this morning. Vice President of Myanmar Cycling Federation U Myat Thu explained matters relating to suc-

cessfully hosting the competition, attracting public attention and broadcasting the event live on television. Officials from respective ministries reported the tasks to be executed by their ministries and the difficulties they may encounter.—Myanmar Digital News ■

Over 780,000 foreign day-trippers visited Myanmar from Thai border this FY

MYANMAR hosted some 789,732 foreign day-trippers, who visited the country through the Tachilek cross-border gate between last April and 25 January of this year, according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. During this period, the day-trippers toured Talaw Market, Mahamyatmuni Pagoda, Shwedagon Pagoda, ethnic villages and Chinese temples, while 13,237 foreigners took the Mongphyat-Kengtung trip.

More than 6,000 visitors entered Myanmar by air this fiscal year (FY). As of last November, the number of foreign travellers with visas increased by 8 per cent, compared with last FY.

In the third week of this month, more than 160 visitors arrived in Tachilek for a one-day trip.

The Myanmar government



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

is trying to promote the tourism sector by exploring new destinations in the states and regions. The tourism authorities are also prioritising the development of cross-border trips.

Sustained efforts are being made to boost international tourist arrivals to Myanmar's natural islands, in collaboration with those in the tourism field, said a

spokesperson of the Hotels and Tourism Ministry.

Myanmar has several natural resources and countless attractions. Besides its cultural sites, the Megui Archipelago, which is part of the Taninthayi Region and is in the Andaman Sea, is gaining popularity among luxury travellers in the international market.—GNLM

New railway helps western China open wider

CHONGQING/GUIYANG

— Trains started running between Chongqing and Guiyang in southwest China Thursday, as a new link opened as part of a sea-rail route between the landlocked west and Southeast Asia.

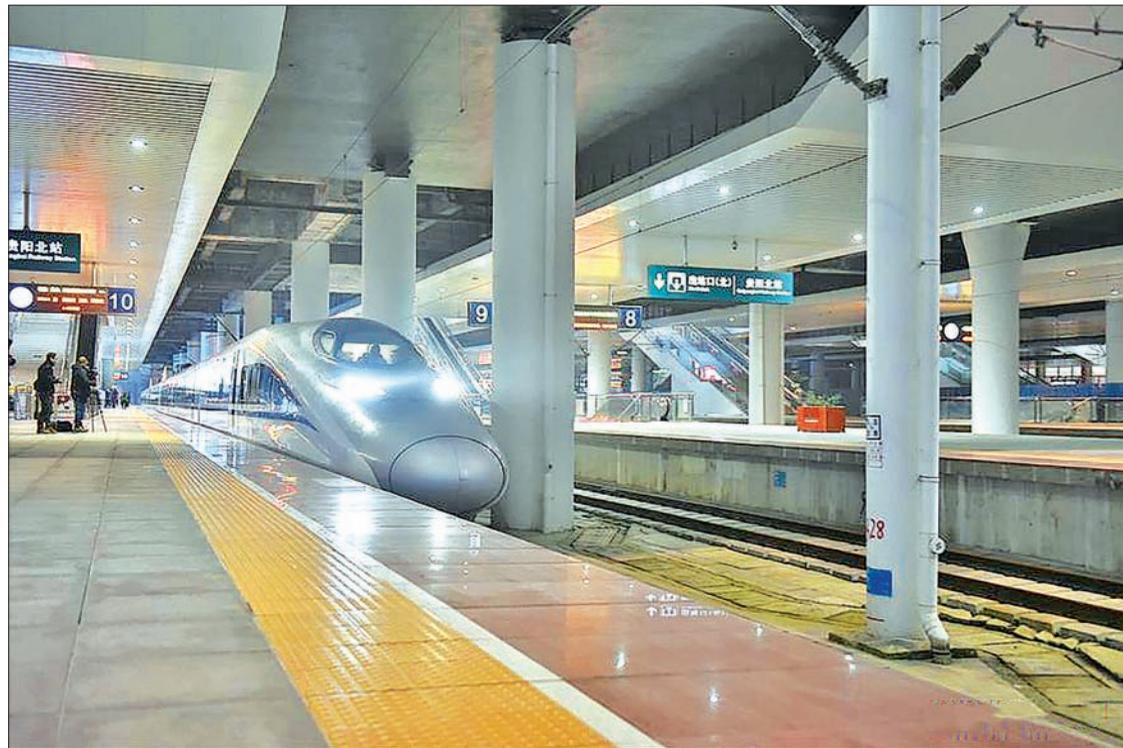
Forty-six bullet trains will run on the 347-km rail line, which was designed for trains running at a speed of 200 km per hour.

The line cuts travel time between Chongqing and Guiyang from the current 10 hours to 2 hours.

A total of 209 bridges, 115 two-way tunnels and 12 stations were built for the new railway. The line will improve traffic between China's southwest, a major source of migrant workers, and booming southern areas.

The line was designed to gradually replace the primitive Sichuan-Guizhou railway constructed between the 1950s and 1970s. The old line has hampered a sea-rail transit route linking Chongqing, Guizhou, Guangxi and Singapore that opened in 2017.

Low design standards, in addition to towering cliffs and ravines along the route, shack-



A railway connecting Chongqing and Guiyang pulls out at Guiyang North Railway Station in Guiyang, southwest China's Guizhou Province, on 25 Jan 2018. A railway connecting Chongqing and Guiyang, two major cities in southwest China opened on Thursday. PHOTO: XINHUA

led the traffic speed of the old line, according to Dai Xu with the Chongqing railway station.

Although freight services of bulk commodities will not be available for the new line for the time being, Mou Chenggang with

Guizhou's railway construction office said the new line would relieve pressure on the old one.

High hopes have been placed on the railway to change the life of people in Guizhou, which is at the forefront of Chi-

na's anti-poverty campaign.

Tongzi county in Guizhou receive more than 200,000 visitors from Chongqing each year. It is set to be more popular after the rail line shortens the travel time between Chongqing and the

county to one hour.

Many Chongqing tourists booked rooms for summer this year, learning about the opening of the Chongqing-Guiyang line, according to Xiong Yongqiang, Party chief of Longtai Village, Tongzi.

"Villages are busy improving infrastructure and cleaning the environment to attract tourists," Xiong said.

Optimistic about the county's tourism prospect, a local privately-owned company poured 400 million yuan (63 million U.S. dollars) into building a tourist project featuring the culture of the Miao ethnic minority. It consists of a tea garden and Miao-style inns, offering jobs to local poor families.

He Wenxiu, a farmer from Xingfu Village of Zunyi City, is among 360 villagers working as inspectors along the rail line. He is responsible for a small section in the Dalou Mountain. Earning 2,500 yuan a month, he and two fellow villagers work 24 hours a day in three shifts.

"I farmed for most of my life, and finally got a stable job like this," He said. —Xinhua ■

Turkey says 14 killed, 130 wounded in operation in Syria's Afrin

ANKARA — Turkey's health minister said on Friday that 14 Turkish soldiers and Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebels were killed and another 130 people were wounded following Turkey's incursion into Syria's Afrin region.

Speaking to reporters after visiting wounded soldiers in hospitals, Ahmet Demircan said three Turkish soldiers and 11 fighters from Turkey-backed FSA factions have been killed so far in clashes in northern Syria.

He said 130 people had been brought to Turkish hospitals and that 82 of them had been released after receiving treatment. None of the wounded were in critical condition, he said, adding that additional medical personnel were sent to the area.

On Saturday, Turkey launched an offensive against the Kurdish YPG

militia, which it views as a security threat, in Syria's Afrin, opening a new front in the multi-sided Syrian civil war and further straining ties with its NATO ally Washington.

Dozens of combatants and more than two dozen civilians have been killed so far in the offensive, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, has said.

The Turkish military said in a statement on Friday it had killed at least 343 militants in northern Syria since the operation started.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) however, a YPG-dominated umbrella group backed by the United States in the fight against Islamic State, has previously said that Turkey was exaggerating the number of the dead. — Reuters ■

US panel deals blow to Philip Morris tobacco device

The recommendation is not binding and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration could still allow Philip Morris to make such a claim, but some analysts think the agency might ask for additional data first.

"It's a process," said Bonnie Herzog, an analyst at Wells Fargo. The FDA will likely approve the request eventually, she said, "but timing is tough to predict."

Philip Morris, which has spent more than \$3 billion to develop products that can counteract the decline in traditional cigarette sales, said it was encouraged by some of the committee members' comments that iQOS may have risk-reduction potential.

"We are confident in our ability to address the valid questions raised by the Committee with the FDA as the review process for our application continues," Corey Henry, a Philip Morris spokesman, said in a statement.

FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb recently proposed a broad tobacco policy shift that would reduce nicotine in ciga-

rettes to "non-addictive" levels while increasing development of lower-risk alternatives for those unable to quit.

iQOS is a sleek, penlike device that heats tobacco but does not ignite it - an approach Philip Morris says produces far lower levels of carcinogens than regular cigarettes. It is used by nearly 4 million people in 30 markets outside the United States but needs FDA authorization to be marketed in America.

Last month, a Reuters investigation described irregularities in the clinical trials that supported Philip Morris' iQOS application to the FDA.

The company's shares fell 2.8 percent to close at \$107.49 on Thursday, after falling as much as 6.8 percent.

Matthew Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, said panelists "identified that serious questions remain" about the company's application. He said it could amend the application and the panel's recommendation does not rule out an ultimate approval.

The panel said Philip Morris had not proven that iQOS reduced harm compared with cigarettes. It did conclude that the product exposes users to lower levels of harmful chemicals but said the company had not shown that lowering exposure to those chemicals is reasonably likely to translate into a measurable reduction in disease or death.

Philip Morris needs to show both in order to claim in its marketing materials that the product reduces a user's exposure to harmful chemicals.

Some panelists were concerned that not all the harmful or potentially harmful chemicals in iQOS were lower than in cigarettes. Philip Morris presented data showing an overall exposure reduction of about 95 percent.

"The negative recommendations did not come as a surprise," said Gregory Conley, president of the American Vaping Association. He said the panelists "disconnected themselves from the facts in favor of ideology." —Reuters ■

As cold blast hits, China's utilities warn of heating, power cuts

BELJING — Four of China's top utilities have told the government some regions will face heating and electricity shortages due to tightening supplies of coal ahead of the Lunar New Year, the latest sign the nation's winter heating crisis may deepen.

China's State Power Investment Corp (SPIC), China Datang Corp, China Huaneng Group and China Huadian Corp asked the government in a letter to boost supplies of coal and tame a wild price rally. The letter, reviewed by Reuters and dated 22 January, was sent to the National Development & Reform Commission (NDRC). A source familiar with the letter confirmed



A loader is seen amid coal piles at a port in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, China on 25 January 2018. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

its authenticity. NDRC and the four companies did not immediately re-

spond to requests for comment.

"If the coal invento-

ries don't rise to a reasonable level by Spring Festival, then it will be

really difficult to deal with the drop in temperatures in some key regions and in the winter heating regions," the letter said. Some utilities only have enough supplies for two to three days, while others are getting hit by a big increase in rail transportation fees, the letter said. The NDRC met with the companies to discuss the issue on Thursday after receiving the letter, the source who confirmed the document said, declining to give further details.

Maintaining stability is a main priority for the Communist Party, particularly ahead of and during Spring Festival. The week-long holiday, also known as Chinese or Lunar New

Year, starts in mid-February this year. It is the longest holiday break of the Chinese calendar.

"Some utilities are reluctant to buy coal and are waiting for coal miners to cut prices," said Cheng Gong, analyst at China Nation Coal Association.

"But rail prices rose as much as 10 percent while the weather is getting worse, so it costs more to buy coal now."

Thermal coal futures have jumped nearly 10 percent this year, extending a months-long rally, as utilities have scrambled for supplies this week to deal with soaring demand because of a cold snap that has swept across the north.—Reuters ■

Shell buying spree cranks up race for clean energy

LONDON — Royal Dutch Shell has spent over \$400 million on a range of acquisitions in recent weeks, from solar power to electric car charging points, cranking up its drive to expand beyond its oil and gas business and reduce its carbon footprint.

The scale of the buying spree pales in comparison to the Anglo-Dutch company's \$25 billion annual spending budget. But its first forays into the solar and retail power sectors for many years shows a growing urgency to develop cleaner energy busi-

nesses. The investments are not limited to renewables such as biofuels, solar and wind. Shell, as well as rivals such as BP, Exxon Mobil and Chevron, are betting on rising demand for gas, the least polluting fossil fuel, to power the expected surge in electric vehicles in the coming decades.

To that end, Shell agreed in December to acquire independent British power provider First Utility for around \$200 million, according to several sources close to the deal. The value of the acquisition

had not been previously disclosed.

Shell declined to comment.

With First Utility, the company hopes to find an outlet for its gas supplies via the retail power market, betting on rising demand as drivers charge electric vehicles at home.

Earlier this month, the company ventured back into solar after a 12-year hiatus when buying a 43.86 per cent stake in Silicon Ranch Corporation for \$217 million.

In the last three months of 2017, Shell also

invested in two projects to develop charging stations for electric vehicles across Europe's highways. It has also signed agreements to buy solar power in Britain and develop renewables power grids in Asia and Africa.

According to analysts at Bernstein, Big Oil has invested over \$3 billion on renewables acquisitions over the past five years, most of which went towards solar.

"Green" merger and acquisition (M&A) activity today averages 13 per cent of total energy M&A

activity, they said.

"However greater scale is needed for the majors to effectively operate and leverage their trading skills in this market, necessitating more M&A," they said in a note.

Other companies have also made investments.

BP got back into solar power with a \$200 million investment in solar generator Lightsource late last year, six years after exiting the sector with a large writedown.

Total bought battery maker Saft for \$1 billion in 2016.—Reuters ■

One man dies, 9 made ill by pufferfish poison in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH — A Cambodian fisherman died and nine others were treated at hospital after eating a variety of pufferfish containing a deadly neurotoxin, the government said Thursday. In a statement, the Ministry of Health said a 36-year-old fisherman died on Monday after eating a 6-kilogram pufferfish that he had caught at sea. Nine other people who ate the fish were also treated at two hospitals. All 10 lived in Koh Sdach village in coastal Koh Kong province, more than 200 kilometers west of Phnom Penh. According to the ministry, 10 kinds of pufferfish can be found in Cambodian waters and three are poisonous. The symptoms of pufferfish poisoning include numbness and tingling around the mouth, salivation, nausea and vomiting within 20 minutes to two hours after eating. The symptoms may progress to paralysis, loss of consciousness and respiratory failure, and can lead to death.—Kyodo News ■

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V NINOS VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V NINOS VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-1-2018 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 NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES**
Phone No: 2301185

The Myanmar Companies Law (2017) Draft Model Constitution for Private Companies

Pursuant to the Myanmar Companies Law 2017, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) has released a draft model constitution for private companies limited by shares for public consultation and feedback. The draft model constitution is available on www.dica.gov.mm.

Interested parties are requested to provide comments to DICA by 28th February 2018. Please send submission by email or fax to:

- Email: Dica@mtmail.net.cmm and Lawreform.dica.mm@gmail.com
- Fax: (95) 01 658135

Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

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Fire in South Korea kills at least 37 people, raises concern about public safety

SEOUL — A fire at a hospital in southeast South Korea killed at least 37 people and injured dozens of others, raising concern about public safety, local media reports said Friday citing police and firefighting authorities.

The death toll from the fire, which gutted Sejong Hospital in the Miryang city, some 390 km southeast of the capital Seoul, surged to 39 as of 1:10 pm local time (0410 GMT), chief of the Miryang firefighting authorities told a press briefing. It was later revised down to 37 as some deaths were counted twice.

Eighteen people were in a serious condition, while 113 others suffered minor injury. The firefighting authorities said the number of deaths could rise as 10 people sustained life-threatening injuries.

According to local media reports, police estimated the death toll at 41.

No sprinkler was installed inside the hospital, the firefighting authorities said while explaining about the high figure of deaths.

Witnesses told the police that the fire erupted at about 7:32 am local time from the dressing room of



Firefighters work in a damaged room of a hospital after a fire in Miryang, South Korea on 26 January 2018. PHOTO: XINHUA

nurses, next to an emergency room in the first floor. The police launched an official investigation into the cause of the fire.

Most of the deaths came from patients in the first-floor emergency room and the second-floor rooms who were of old age or difficult to move. They died of smoke inhalation, not burn, after being moved to nearby hospitals.

The major blaze was put out about two hours later, preventing the fire from spreading further.

The hospital, which was reported to have accommodated about 100 patients, treated patients

with cerebrovascular disease and stroke.

All of the 94 patients at a nursing home, annexed to the hospital, evacuated safely right after the fire broke out.

The hospital fire raised concern about public safety standards of South Korea, in which a fire in December killed 29 people. Most of the victims to the December fire came from a public sauna in the second floor of the sports center building.

The government under President Moon Jae-in sought to allocate budget to an increased number of firefighters

and police officers to better secure public safety.

The main opposition Liberty Korea Party strongly opposed the expanded budget for the firefighters and the police, citing worry about the waste of budget for more bureaucrats.

President Moon convened an emergency meeting with his senior secretaries, ordering officials to make best efforts at minimizing the number of casualty. Moon express deep regrets over the deaths, instructing officials to draw up measures to prevent fire from breaking out. —Xinhua ■

Myanma Port Authority “Notice of High Tide”

Exceptionally high spring from 20.0 feet to 20.7 feet high above the chart datum are expected to occur in Yangon River during the period of January 31st to February 3rd, 2018.

Please be noted that it is not serious level of tide because the highest tide level have reached up to 22 feet above the chart datum in year 2014 and 2015, and this notice is normally issued whenever high tide of Yangon River is expected to reach over 20 feet high above the chart datum to inform the high tide to the public living near river foreshore area of Yangon City.

INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER (2/2018) [TENDER NO. MPPE / HSD / T / 2 (2017 – 2018)]

1. Open Tender is invited for the Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise, Ministry of Electricity and Energy for the supply of High Speed Diesel (376,000 ± 10% Barrels)
2. Tender Closing Date & Time - 8-2-2018, 12:00 Hrs
3. Tender Opening Date & Time - 8-2-2018, 13:00 Hrs
4. Delivery Time - March 2018 to June 2018
5. Tender documents and details information are available at the Department of Finance, Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise, Nay Pyi Taw, during our office hours commencing 26-1-2018 on payment of Myanmar Kyat One Hundred Thousand (Kyats 100,000.) per set.
6. Only bid from tenderer who has purchased tender document officially from Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise will be accepted for evaluation.

Managing Director
Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise
Ministry of Electricity and Energy
No(6) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw

Contact Phone No.
067-3411487/3411486/3411280/3411129

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population
Social Security Board

Invitation for EOI Proposal to upgrade Health facilities of Social Security Board by Public Private Partnership (PPP) System

1. According to Social Security Law(2012), Social Security Board implement social security project and when insured workers' face sickness, maternity, employment injury, Social Security Board give them to medical treatment and provide related cash benefit for insurance systems. For more and more increased insured workers, the SSB is planning to upgrade our health facilities of SSB clinics, workers' hospital and contracted clinics established nation-wide by Public Private Partnership (PPP) System.
2. Social Security Board now invites EOI proposal from interested local, international or joint-venture companies for upgrade health care system of Social Security Board (SSB) by Provider-Purchaser Split System and Private Public Partnership (PPP) System.
3. The companies who interested in EOI shall request to the Director (Medical Department), Social Security Board (head office), No.(77), Corner of Thiri Yadanar Road and Naykyar (8th) Street, Ottarathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. The interested companies can get these EOI during office hours commencing from 25-1-2018 at the Medical Department, Social Security Board.
4. Please note that you should submit EOI proposal to mention address not later than 14:00 pm on 23-2-2018. The EOI proposal shall be sealed and if the proposal is torn(or) opened (or) submitted by e-mail, the EOI proposal shall not be considered.
5. For further detail information, please visit Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population; Website www.mol.gov.mm and inquiry ph.no +(95)(67-3417916) during office hours.

Tender Invitation and Appraisal Committee
Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

Philippines prepares for three-month-long volcano emergency

LEGAZPI CITY — The Philippines is bracing for a possible three-month-long emergency in areas around an erupting volcano, which has already displaced more than 81,000 and led to overcrowded temporary shelters, the disaster agency said on Friday.

Mount Mayon in central Albay province remained at alert level 4, a notch below the highest level, as it continued to spew lava, ash and oth-

er superheated material, volcanologists said.

“We’re gearing up for three months” of emergency, said Romina Marasigan, spokeswoman of the country’s disaster agency, citing similar situations during previous eruptions of the 2,462-metre (8,077-foot) volcano.

Displaced families may need to stay in evacuation centres for that long, she said.

Food and other supplies remain adequate but

concerns are growing over health and hygiene conditions at all the 69 temporary shelters away from the danger zone.

Respiratory illnesses are possible because of the series of ash falls, she said.

“We remain on red alert,” Marasigan told a media briefing, adding that 69,672 evacuees were housed in schools while nearly 12,000 took shelter in tents or went to relatives in more secure

locations.

Health workers are giving free check-ups and medicine to elderly women and children in evacuation centres grappling with a sanitation shortage.

“The province is doing everything to close the gaps for these toilet facilities,” said Nestor Santiago, assistant secretary at the health ministry.

The number of cancelled flights has risen to 97, the disaster agency said.—Reuters ■

Oprah says she's not running for president but fans are undeterred

Media mogul Oprah Winfrey apparently ended her brief flirtation with a run for the US presidency in 2020, telling *InStyle* magazine in an interview published on Thursday that she was not interested.

But the leader of a political action committee supporting Winfrey said it would still try to persuade her to run and continue seeking to recruit 1 million supporters.

Winfrey, 63, stole the show at the Golden Globes awards ceremony earlier this month with a speech against sexual harassment and assault. It sparked an online campaign to lure her into running against Republican US President Donald Trump in the next election cycle.

"It's not something that interests me," Winfrey told *InStyle*. "... I met with someone the other day who said

that they would help me with a campaign. That's not for me."

Winfrey, long associated with Democratic Party causes and fundraising, could not be reached for immediate comment.

Winfrey's friends had backed the idea with her long-time partner in business and life, Stedman Graham, telling the *Los Angeles Times* "she would absolutely do it" if there was sufficient public support. Confidante Gayle King said on "CBS This Morning" that Winfrey was "intrigued" by the idea.

After the Golden Globes, Democratic political consultant Cormac Flynn said he began receiving calls from associates who immediately persuaded him to support a Winfrey run, and he formed the National Committee to Draft Oprah Winfrey for President



Oprah Winfrey poses backstage with her Cecil B. DeMille Award at the 75th Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California, US, on 7 January 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

of the United States 2020.

The committee would continue despite the *InStyle* interview, Flynn said, noting that other politicians have decided to run after initially declining.

"The purpose of our committee is to convince Oprah to reconsider," said Flynn, whose independent expenditure committee, or Super PAC, consists of two unpaid staff and two con-

sulting firms that are donating their time.

"She's an exceptional leader and would be a tremendous president," Flynn said.

Known by millions on first-name basis, Winfrey first rose to fame as the host of a television talk show, using it to build a media empire that spans magazine publishing, movie and television production, cable TV and satellite radio. Born into poverty, she is now one of the world's wealthiest women and been nominated for two Academy Awards.

Trump relished the idea of a celebrity-versus-celebrity campaign, telling reporters earlier this month he did not think Winfrey would run but believed he would win that matchup.

"I'll beat Oprah," Trump said. "Oprah would be a lot of fun." —Reuters ■

2018 Grammys: Will hip-hop finally even the score?

NEW YORK — several near misses and heaps of outrage, this could finally be hip-hop and R&B's year at the Grammy Awards on Sunday where rappers Jay-Z and Kendrick Lamar dominate nominations for the top prizes on the biggest night in music.

Rap is now officially the biggest music genre in the United States after surpassing rock in 2017, but the odds are historically stacked against a hip-hop artist winning album of the year at the Grammys. "Hip-hop and black music in general has really had its finger on the pulse of the American temperament for the last few years," Ross Scarano, vice president of content at *Billboard* magazine, told Reuters.

"There is a sense that maybe this year some of the wrongs will be righted. I think people are looking to Kendrick and to Jay to do that," Scarano said. In the 60-year history of the most prestigious honors in music, only two hip-hop albums have ever won album of the year; Lauryn Hill's "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" in 1999 and Outkast's "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" in 2004. Lamar, 30, whose fusion of jazz, poetry and blues with social themes and love songs has made him one of the most innovative rappers of his generation, missed out in 2016 with his critically acclaimed album



CBS EVP for music and special events, Jack Sussman, Executive Producer Ken Ehrlich, host James Corden, Recording Academy President and CEO Neil Portnow roll out the Red-Carpet for The 60th Annual Grammy Awards at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan in New York City, US, on 25 January 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

"To Pimp a Butterfly." This year, he is back with album of the year nominee "Damn." and record of the year entry "Humble." A year ago, British pop star Adele's "25" swept aside Beyoncé's influential "Lemonade," a win that stunned even Adele. This year, Jay-Z, 44, was nominated for album of the year for "4:44," in which he examines the infidelity that was so scathingly detailed by his wife

Beyoncé in "Lemonade."

Scarano said the fact of Jay-Z "getting down on his knees, so to speak, and baring his soul really resonate in a year where we've seen a lot of men taken to task for really objectionable behavior." Jay-Z goes into Sunday's ceremony in New York with a leading eight nominations followed by Lamar (7), Bruno Mars (6) and Childish Gambino, the alter ego

of actor Donald Glover, with 5. Ed Sheeran was snubbed in the album, song and record of the year categories despite his romantic pop album "Divide" being the biggest seller of 2017. That omission leaves only New Zealand-born singer-songwriter Lorde's album "Melodrama" and the Latin global hit single "Despacito" to mount a serious challenge in the top races.—Reuters ■

Actor Casey Affleck withdraws as 2018 Oscar presenter

LOS ANGELES — Oscar-winning Casey Affleck, who has been accused of sexual harassment by female crew members on an earlier film, has withdrawn as a presenter at the 2018 Academy Awards, a spokeswoman for the organization said on Thursday.

Affleck, 42, who won the best actor Oscar last year for his performance in the family drama "Manchester by the Sea," was expected to present this year's best actress award in keeping with Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences tradition. "We appreciate the decision to keep the focus on the show and on the great work of this year," the academy spokeswoman said.

A publicist for Affleck, Mara Buxbaum, confirmed that Affleck would not be attending this year's ceremony, which is scheduled for March 4 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, but declined further comment. Affleck, the younger brother of actor and director Ben Affleck, topped challenges from Denzel Washington and Ryan Gosling to win the 2017 award.—Reuters ■

Colossus of ancient Egyptian King Ramses moved to new home, carefully

CAIRO — Egypt moved an 83-tonne, 3,200-year-old statue of King Ramses II to the atrium of Cairo's new Grand Egyptian Museum on Thursday in a complex operation undertaken by army engineers and specialist contractors.

The ancient colossus was taken on its 400-metre (437.45-yard) journey inside a cage mounted on a truck and suspended like a pendulum from a steel beam to help offset any jolts from the ground during transport.

The road surfaces were treated with special materials to ensure they could adequately bear Ramses's huge weight. The transfer operation cost 13.6 million Egyptian pounds (\$770,000).

Speaking at a ceremony to mark the move, former antiquities minister Zahi Hawass

underlined the importance of the museum project to Egypt's tourism sector, which has been damaged in recent years by political violence.

"It will tell people that Egypt is safe and you can come and visit us because we need the tourism for the preservation of the Egyptian antiquities."

At its new location the statue will be the first thing visitors see as they enter the museum, part of which will open later this year ahead of its expected official launch in 2022. The colossus was unearthed at the Mit Rahina archaeological site in 1820 by the Italian adventurer Giovanni Cavaglia. Thursday's move was the fourth it has seen over its several millennia of existence.

It was first moved from the quarry where it was made to Mit Rahina before being shifted in



The Statue of King Ramses II is seen on the way to the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Egypt on 25 January 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

1955 to Ramses Square in Cairo. Increasing pollution and congestion at the square prompted its next move in 2006 to safekeeping in a storage area where it was kept of public view until now.

Egypt's tourism sector is one of the country's main sources

of foreign currency but it has struggled since a 2011 uprising that led to years of violent instability including a spate of Islamist militant attacks.

The sector saw an improvement in 2017, with revenues jumping 123.5 percent year-on-

year to \$7.6 billion and the number of tourists visiting rising 54 percent to 8.3 million.

The number of visitors in 2017, however, was still well below the 14.7 million who came in 2010 before the uprising. — Reuters ■

Theatrical sales outpace streaming buys at quieter Sundance

PARK CITY — After years of frenzied bidding wars driven by digital giants like Amazon and Netflix, a more subdued market greeted buyers at the Sundance Film Festival this week, with more traditional theatrical distributors snagging the buzziest films. The most active buyers at the 10-day Park City, Utah, film festival, regarded as the premiere hunting ground for awards-worthy independent fare, were companies committed to bringing films to theaters.

A year ago, Amazon.com Inc and Netflix Inc grabbed headlines by paying high prices for numerous much-hyped films. This year, both streaming platforms showcased films at the festival, but so far have not made any acquisitions.

Instead, relative newcomers to the market, such as Neon, the studio behind Oscar-nominated "I, Tonya," dropped a reported \$10 million with the Russo Brothers' AGBO for female-driven horror film "Assas-

sination Nation."

Bleecker Street and 30West bought Keira Knightley's "Collette" for a reported \$5 million, Lionsgate snapped up opening night film "Blindspotting," starring "Hamilton" actor Daveed Diggs, and The Orchard and MoviePass bought heist drama "American Animals."

So far, there are no reported price tags as high as the \$12.5 million Netflix paid for "Mudbound" or the \$12 million Amazon shelled out for "The Big Sick" in 2017. Both films scored Oscar nominations this week.

"People are being more careful because they are looking for a certain kind of movie meant for them and they are also buying all year round," said David Linde, chief executive officer of Participant Media, which with Magnolia Pictures bought theatrical rights to the CNN Films documentary "RBG," about Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. —Reuters ■

A golden idea? Museum offered 18-karat toilet to Trump

NEW YORK — New York's Guggenheim Museum offered to lend an 18-karat gold toilet to President Donald Trump after the White House asked to borrow a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, the Washington Post reported on Thursday. The museum's chief curator offered to loan the toilet, which had been used by tens of thousands of visitors, in a 15 September email to a Trump administration official, the newspaper reported. A Guggenheim spokeswoman declined immediate comment on the Washington Post report and White House officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It was not clear how the White House responded to the Guggenheim curator's offer.

The piece, by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan's, is an 18-karat gold, fully functioning toilet. It is called "America." It was put on display in 2016 in a single-stall bathroom at the Guggenheim, where it was used in private luxury by more than 100,000 people, according to a Guggenheim blog post. The museum said the object, which was on display for



Maurizio Cattelan's "America," a fully functional solid gold toilet is seen at The Guggenheim Museum in New York City, US on 30 August 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

a year, "skewers social complacencies" and the extravagances of the wealthy. Trump, a real estate developer turned reality television star, campaigned for president as a savvy businessman with the commercial sense to succeed in the White House. His exact personal wealth is unknown. The offer came in response to a White House request to borrow the painting "Landscape with Snow" by 19th century Dutch painter Vincent

Van Gogh, for installation at the president and first lady's private living quarters, the Washington Post reported. The request for the painting was declined. Guggenheim chief curator Nancy Spector had previously written about the toilet in a 2017 blog post, in which she took swipes at the president. She wrote that the "Trump reference" inherent in the gold toilet resonated with people "during the sculpture's time at the Guggenheim." —Reuters ■

Traditional Lethwei club launched in Maungtaw

UNDER the supervision of the Myanmar Traditional Boxing Federation, a Myanmar lethwei club named Shwe Maung Tan was opened at Alhotaw Pyae Kyaung in Maungtaw, Rakhine State recently.

The Myanmar traditional lethwei club was opened aiming for youngsters in the region to know the basic methods of the Myanmar Lethwei, gain job opportunities as a Lethwei fighter, and to prevent illegal acts, said an official from the Myanmar Traditional Boxing Federation.

Lethwei or Burmese bare-knuckle boxing is a full contact combat sport from Myanmar that uses stand-up striking along with various clinching techniques. Lethwei is considered to be one of the most aggressive and brutal martial arts in the world, because the fighters fight bare-knuckle with only the use of tape and gauze on their hands. The use of fists, elbows, knees, feet but more surprisingly, the head makes it a very unusual martial art.—KyawZin Lin ■

Best coach, player of the month to be featured in MPT MNL 2018

BEST coach and player of the month will be presented for every month of the MPT Myanmar National League season, according to an official from the Myanmar National League.

A similar plan was instituted during the 2016 MNL season, but was not carried over into last year. The effort will be restarted this year, officials said.

In choosing the best coach and player of the month, marks will be recorded from each match towards making the final decision.

The marking system will be supervised by the Board of Referees, head coaches and responsible officials from the Myanmar Football Federation.

“The plan is very good for the Myanmar National League, as all the players will try their best to garner their dignity”, said Yar Zar Htet, a Myanmar football fan. The prizes for the best coach and player of the month will also be given in the Myanmar National League-2 according to the Myanmar National League.—KyawZin Lin ■

PSG's Alves banned for three games

PARIS — Paris St Germain defender Dani Alves was banned for three games after reacting angrily at a referee's decision during a Ligue 1 game.

The French League's disciplinary commission also added a suspended one-match ban to the initial suspension.

Alves was sent off by referee Clement Turpin after almost going head against head with him during PSG's 2-1 defeat at Olympique Lyonnais last Sunday.—Reuters ■



Germain's Dani Alves in action. PHOTO: REUTERS



Hungary's Tímea Babos and France's Kristina Mladenovic celebrate winning the Women's Doubles Final with the trophy after winning their match against Russia's Ekaterina Makarova and Elena Vesnina. Tennis - Australian Open - Women's Doubles Final - Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne, Australia on 26 January 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

Babos, Mladenovic win Australian Open women's doubles

MELBOURNE — Hungarian Tímea Babos and France's Kristina Mladenovic defeated Russian duo Ekaterina Makarova and Elena Vesnina 6-4 6-3 to win the women's doubles title at the Australian Open on Friday.

Babos and Mladenovic claimed their

first grand slam title as a partnership, denying the Olympic champion Russians a sweep of grand slam doubles crowns at Rod Laver Arena.

The win was Mladenovic's second major women's doubles title after she won the 2016 French Open crown

with compatriot Caroline Garcia.

The Russians pushed hard to prise break points from Mladenovic as she served out the match but the French-Hungarian duo held firm to close out the match in one hour and 20 minutes.—Reuters ■

Southampton striker Carrillo eager to spark club's attack

LONDON — Southampton's new striker Guido Carrillo says he has the qualities re-

attacking player that can lead the line and bring others into play,” the

26-year-old Carrillo told the club's website (southamptonfc.com). “I like to be active in and around the box to put away chances.” The powerful forward spent 2-1/2 years at Monaco, helping them win the French title and reach the Champions League semi-finals last season.

He worked with Southampton boss Mauricio Pellegrino during their time at Argentina's Estudiantes in 2015. “I am someone that will give my all, try my hardest and do whatever is asked of me by the manager,” Carrillo added. “I will show what I am about, I think we have good players and I think we can improve things.” Southampton are winless in their last 11 league games, losing five times in that period.—Reuters ■

quired to rejuvenate the club's misfiring attack as they bid to climb out of the Premier League's relegation zone in the second half of the season.

Southampton, who are 18th in the table on 22 points, a point from safety, signed the Argentine from French club AS Monaco on Thursday for a reported club record fee of about 19 million pounds (\$26.94 million). The south coast club have struggled up front with 24 goals in as many league games and Charlie Austin, their top scorer with six goals, is out injured while fellow forwards Manolo Gabbiadini and Shane Long have contributed four goals between them. “I'm an

The Stade de la Beaujoire - Louis Fonteneau, Nantes, France - on 29 November 2017 Monaco's Guido Carrillo at Soccer Football - Ligue 1 - Nantes vs Monaco. PHOTO: REUTERS