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State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds talks with Shan State cabinet in Taunggyi, Shan State, yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

## Regional progress, stability on agenda as State Counsellor meets Shan State cabinet

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shares her interactions with local people; advises cabinet to carry out duties diligently

STATE COUNSELLOR Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Chairperson of the Central Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races, met with the Shan State cabinet at the Taung-

gyi Hotel yesterday, as part of her visit to Taunggyi. At the meeting, she shared her observations on ensuring regional development, peace, stability, and harmony.

The State Counsellor deliv-

ered the opening remarks at the meeting. Then, Shan State Chief Minister Dr. Lin Htut detailed completed and planned projects for the development of Shan State. State ministers also submitted

reports on ongoing tasks and requirements.

Thereafter, the State Counsellor spoke at length, sharing observations made during the course of her trip through Shan

State, and reports and submissions from the public and representatives of religious leaders and ethnic races. She then instructed the ministers about ways to fulfil them. **SEE PAGE-3**

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## Pyithu Hluttaw

## Second Pyithu Hluttaw's eleventh regular session holds tenth-day meeting

By Aye Aye Thant (MNA)

THE tenth-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw was held at the Pyithu Hluttaw meeting hall of the Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, where asterisk-marked questions were asked and answered, a motion tabled and a report on a bill was read.

Asterisk marked questions

The first asterisk marked question of the day was posed by U Maung Maung of Htigyaing constituency on the status of publishing and preservation of books and manuscripts of distinguished writer Sayagyi Shwe U Daung, amount of copyright fees obtained and arrangements made to present Shwe U Daung literature award. Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun said Sayagyi U Pe Thein (pen name Shwe U Daung) passed away in 1973 and a books and manuscripts of Sayagyi was learnt to have been preserved by Shwe U



U Maung Maung. PHOTO: MNA

Daung manuscript preservation and protection committee. Sayamagyi Ludu Daw Amar's son U Nyein Chan (writer Saya Nyi Pu Lay) was the relevant person on this matter and the Deputy Minister quoted U Nyein Chan written reply in answering the question. When Sayagyi Shwe U Daung passed away, his wife Daw Kyi Soe was left behind and she asked director/author U Thukha, Ludu U Hla, Ludu Daw Amar, Saya Thawdar Swe and Hanthawaddy Saya U Win Tin to care for the books and manuscripts



U Aung Hla Tun. PHOTO: MNA

of Sayagyi Shwe U Daung. As these persons passed away one by one, the last remaining person Hanthawaddy U Win Tin transferred the responsibility to Sayagyi Shwe U Daung's nephew Saya Ludu U Sein Win.

When Saya Ludu U Sein Win passed away, the responsibility was transferred to Sayagyi Shwe U Daung's grandnephew U Thin Aye (engineer) and Upper Myanmar Writers Association who were still handling this responsibility. Sayagyi Shwe U Daung's copyright fees were being depos-

ited in a bank account is said to be over K 108.9 million.

Discussions were made with families of Sayagyi Shwe U Daung and village elders of Magyi Tone Village, Wetlet Township, Shwebo District, Sagaing Region – birthplace of Sayagyi, to donate funds for Shwe U Daung library and a Basic Education High School in the village.

As for Ministry of Information, when the 100 Myanmar classics was published by Sarpay Beikman in December 2018, volume 2 contains Sayagyi's "Yadanabon" and the publishing committee contacted Sayagyi Shwe U Daung manuscript preservation committee and Saya Nyi Pu Lay on the matter of copyright fees. Both the Ministry of Information and the manuscript preservation committee has no immediate plan on the matter of Shwe U Daung literature award, answered the Deputy Minister.

U Maung Maung of Htigyaing constituency then said the last owner of Sayagyi's copyright

is Daw Kyi Soe and she has transferred this to her niece Daw Myint Myint. Daw Myint Myint had said that she'll donate the fund to the State so that the State could spend the prize money for the Shwe U Daung literature award for eternity and requested the presence of her or her descendants whenever the award is given. As a related question, he asked what the response is on this latest development and the Deputy Minister said Saya Nyi Pu Lay will be contacted on the matter.

Next, U Tun Wai of Phaungpyin constituency asked if there is any plan to set Annual Allowable Cut and allow private sector to extract Tamalan, Padauk and other hardwoods. Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Dr. Ye Myint Swe replied that as per 2018 Forestry Law timber extraction is permitted only to state owned Myanmar Timber Enterprise and there is no plan to permit private sector extraction of timber.

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## Amyotha Hluttaw

## Eleventh regular session of Second Amyotha Hluttaw holds tenth-day meeting

By Aung Ye Thwin

THE tenth-day meeting of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw's eleventh regular session was held yesterday morning at the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting hall. Questions raised were answered and a discussion on a motion started in the ninth-day meeting was continued and then decided in the day's meeting.

### Question and answer session

In the question and answer session Tatmadaw representatives Maj. Zawunna asked about works conducted by Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) and Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Soe Win explained that MIC had permitted four basic education high school level private schools and four higher education level private schools teaching under international curriculum. These are providing education service under the notification of MIC and once the private education law is enacted, these education services will have to continue providing their services in accordance to that law said the Deputy Minister.

As for the Monywa cotton



Maj. Zawunna.

mill, Thein Min Industry Group Co., Ltd. proposed through Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation a long term lease of the mill to produce cotton blankets and mattresses and MIC Permission was granted on 24 March 2016.

After an urgent motion to suspend the works of Thein Min Industry Group Co., Ltd. was tabled at Sagaing Region Hluttaw, a special field inspection group was formed with officials from Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Ministry of Planning and Finance, MIC and Sagaing Region Hluttaw. The special field inspection group inspected the works at the cotton mill on 16 November 2017.

Based on the report of the



U Soe Win.

special field inspection group, MIC meeting 17/2017 held on 22 December 2017 decided to renegotiate leasing rates and to sign a separate agreement. The meeting decided the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation to conduct this matter and then report back to the economic committee.

Accordingly Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is drafting the lease agreement with new leasing rates and once the amendment agreement (draft) is completed, the comments of the MIC and Union Attorney General Office will be obtained and then submit to Unin economic committee said the Deputy Minister.

Similarly questions raised

by U Myint Naing of Rakhine State constituency 5 and U Soe Win of Rakhine State constituency 12 were also answered by Deputy Minister for Office of the Union Government U Tin Myint. **Hluttaw continue discussion and decide a motion to take precise and solemn oath in court**

After the question and answer session Hluttaw representatives discussed a motion by U Soe Moe of Ayeyawady Region constituency 1 for judges, plaintiffs, accused and witnesses to take a precise and solemn oath in court of justice to make the judiciary truthful and trustworthy for the people.

U Hla San of Magway Region constituency 1, U Kyaw Kyaw Win of Rakhine State constituency 8, U Hla Oo of Sagaing Region constituency 4, Daw Nwe Nwe Aung of Mon State constituency 2, U Kyaw Kyaw of Rakhine State constituency 4, U Kyaw Toke of Mandalay Region constituency 7 and Daw Ei Ei Pyone of Ayeyawady Region constituency 8 discussed the motion.

In response to the discussions of the Hluttaw representatives Justice of the Supreme Court of the Union U Myo Tint

said that now is the time when the Union is practicing market economy for socio economic development and arrangement were being made for free trade. Necessary trade laws were being drawn up and enacted for international investments and at such time a motion for judges to take daily oaths may raise the trust of the people but would reduce the image of the judges who are deciding the trade laws and there is no such precedence of daily oath taking internationally. In view of this the motion should only be kept on record said the Justice of the Supreme Court of the Union.

However, the motion proposer U Soe Moe wished for the Hluttaw to approve the motion and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than obtained the decision of the Hluttaw. As there were 165 for, 9 against and 3 abstaining, the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker announced the Hluttaw's approval of the motion.

The eleventh-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw will be held on 13 February.

(Translated by Zaw Min)

## Regional progress, stability on agenda as State Counsellor meets Shan State cabinet

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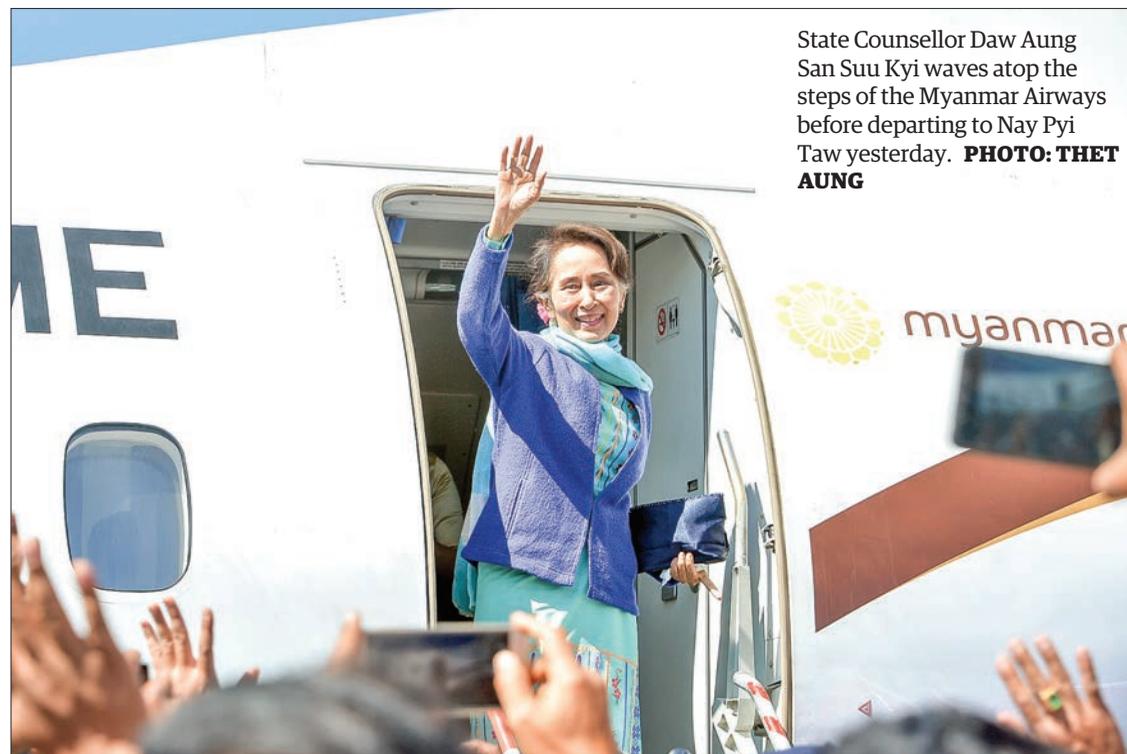
The State Counsellor said that after listening to the people on her trip to east Shan State and Taunggyi, she has found that the greatest needs of the people currently are: access to clean drinking water, better roads and transport system, electricity, education, and healthcare.

She said she also noticed issues pertaining to return of farmland during the trip. She urged the cabinet to understand this is a hardship faced by the people. She said she noticed delays in return of land back to the rightful owners and ongoing court cases relating to the matter. She stressed that the issue needs to be dealt with seriously.

As the capital of Shan State, Taunggyi has improved physically, but the mindset of the people about environmental issues needs to change, she said,



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi greets local people at Heho Airport in Taunggyi, Shan State, before leaving for Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi waves atop the steps of the Myanmar Airways before departing to Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: THET AUNG

citing the depleting green cover in the area.

She suggested drafting a master plan for long-term reforms. She said further efforts are needed to replace opium-producing poppy fields with alternative plantations.

The State Counsellor gave a word of caution that the state cabinet must ensure it is well-informed of the policies laid down by the Union Government, and there must be no laxity on this front. She said it is important to meet closely with the people and explain the government's procedures. She expressed her delight that the people in Shan State are living and working together, without any discrimination against different races

or religions. She instructed the cabinet to help spread this positive mentality from Taunggyi to all of Shan State, and then to the entire Union.

Afterwards, the State Counsellor and her entourage arrived at the Heho Airport where they were welcomed by Hluttaw representatives, local residents, and the Kainari and Kainara dance troupes.

The State Counsellor and her entourage departed by special flight and arrived in Nay Pyi Taw in the afternoon. They were welcomed at the airport by Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr. Myo Aung and his wife, and other officials. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

## Union Attorney-General receives UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict

UNION Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo received UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Ms. Pramila Patten and party at Union Attorney General office guest hall on 7 February afternoon.

At the meeting the Union Attorney General spoke of the involvement of Union Attorney General Office in the amending and enacting laws and pursuing cases against crimes. A bill on prevention of violence against women was being drawn up in accordance with international conventions by relevant minis-

try and will be submitted to the Hluttaw. Actions against crimes of violence against women are being tackled according to prevailing laws and special laws. The nationwide ceasefire agreement signed between Myanmar government and ten ethnic armed organisations includes rules and regulations on protecting women and civilians, said the Union Attorney General. The UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict said a joint declaration on sexual violence against women in conflict was signed with Myanmar govern-

ment on 7 December 2018 and close cooperation will be conducted to implement the joint declaration. Supports will be provided to review, assess and suggest in improving the laws and training courses for relevant persons to conduct cases effectively, said the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Attorney General U Win Myint, Permanent Secretary Daw Nu Nu Yin and directors general Daw Khin Cho Ohn and Dr. Thida Oo. — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Min)



Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo meets with UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Ms. Pramila Patten. PHOTO: MNA

# Lawmakers hold coord meeting in preparation to form Joint Committee to amend 2008 Constitution

A COORDINATION meeting to form a Joint Committee to amend 2008 Constitution was held in Hluttaw Building in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The meeting was attended by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Aung @ U Tun Tun Hein, representatives of political parties and Tatmadaw in Hluttaw, officials and directors general of Hluttaw offices.

In his opening address Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat said that during the First Pyithu Hluttaw term, a joint committee to study the Constitution was formed with a total of 109 representatives from political parties and Tatmadaw representatives in the Hluttaw on 25 July 2013. This was followed by forming of an implementation committee to amend the Constitution on 3 February 2014. This coordination



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat (centre, left) and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than (centre, right) chair the coordination meeting to form a joint committee to amend the 2008 Constitution.

PHOTO: MNA

meeting is aimed at formation of a Joint Committee to amend 2008 Constitution as per the decision made on an urgent motion at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 6 February 2019. Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the joint committee will be Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker and Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker respec-

tively according to their positions and plan to include a total of 45 members of equal numbers from Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw representatives. All are requested to discuss on proportionate inclusion of representatives of political parties and Tatmadaw representatives. Some attendees of this meeting

included members of the two committees on amending the Constitution formed in the first Hluttaw term. Based on this experience as well as the past history, present political, peace, socio economic situation of the country, the preparatory joint committee is to be formed without any attachment to any 'ism,' region,

race and party. Participants are urged to discuss toward achieving beneficial suggestions for the country and the people.

Next, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than urged the Hluttaw representatives from political parties and Tatmadaw attending this meeting to discuss toward the benefit of the country and people. Discuss and suggest what ought to be without any attachment to party, policy and race said the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker.

Afterwards, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker explained about arrangements planned to form the Preparatory Joint Committee on amending 2008 Constitution which was followed with discussions by representatives from political parties.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat responded to the explanations and discussions made, decided to conduct a second coordination meeting on 15 February 2019 and delivered a closing speech. —MNA■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

## 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care 2019 begins

THE 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Myanmar Conference of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care 2019 was held at Sule Shangri-La Hotel in Yangon yesterday.

Speaking at the conference, Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe said Myanmar needs to exert more effort to catch up with global advancements in the field of anaesthesiology. He urged the new generation of anaesthesiologists to exchange experiences and insights with the experts in attendance and to establish networks. He said the conference should discuss not only accomplishments and advantages but also present requirements and challenges.

The Union Minister said the conference has many diverse topics and will certainly support the development of Myanmar's anaesthesiology sector. He said we must pull out the facts from the international experiences shared here that are relevant to Myanmar. He said it is important to share the discussions and advice from this conference with other relevant experts across the country. He called for collaboration between



Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe speaks at an anaesthetic conference in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

the ministry, Myanmar Medical Association (MMA), MSA, and other relevant departments and organizations to further promote the anaesthesiology sector.

Next, Prof. Dr. Aye Thaung, Vice-Chairperson of MMA, and Lt-Col Prof. Dr. Aung Shwe Saw, Chairperson of MSA, delivered separate opening speeches. The Union Minister then opened the conference commemorative exhibits by cutting the ceremonial ribbons and toured the exhibits.

The 13<sup>th</sup> conference continues today and will involve lectures and discussions by 60 anaesthesiologists from Malaysia, Singapore, China, the UK, the Netherlands, Italy, Australia, America, UAE, India and Japan, and 14 anaesthesiologists from Myanmar.

The Union Minister visited The University of Public Health (Yangon) in the afternoon and met with the rector, professors, associate professors, lecturers, assistant lecturers, and stu-

dents at MHA, MPH, and PhD levels.

During the meeting, the Union Minister said his ministry has been supporting an environment of learning, a comprehensive library, classrooms, and establishing a clean and beautiful environment around the campus, and will continue to do so. He urged the students to regularly consult the websites of the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the

Ministry of Health and Sports. He told the students to brush up on their English language proficiency in order to be on an even level with the international community. He informed the students they can attend courses at the Department of Medical Research (PyinOoLwin). He said if we raise the capacity of instructors and teachers then it will likewise raise the capacity of the learners as well, and urged everyone to cooperate in that endeavor.

Following this, the university's rector explained the completed tasks of the processes the Union Minister instructed on and the lecturers and students submitted the university's requirements and their suggestions to the Union Minister. The Union Minister gave instructions to fulfill the immediate requirements where possible and discussed with officials on issues that required long-term solutions.

The Union Minister then inspected around the university and gave instructions as necessary. —MNA ■(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

## Second Pyithu Hluttaw's eleventh regular session holds tenth-day meeting

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Afterwards, U Lin Lin Oo of Tanai Constituency asked for arrangements made to permit small scale businesses and artisans to mine gold and amber in Tanai Township. Deputy Minister Dr. Ye Myint Swe replied that 15 companies had applied for small gold blocks and 52 worksites in Nanbyu, Zibyugon, Labukha and Waylaw regions in Tanai Township but due to security situation, site inspection couldn't be conducted and was

suspended since 14 August 2018. Once the site inspection can be done, permission will be granted according to rules and regulations said the Deputy Minister.

Questions raised by U Kyaw Soe of Bamauk constituency, U Saw Tin Win of Kya-in Seikkyi constituency, U Khin Maung Latt of Myanaung constituency and U Tun Tun Win of Yamethin constituency were then answered by Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr. Tun Naing and Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and

Environmental Conservation Dr. Ye Myint Swe.

Motion on electricity distribution tabled and accepted for discussion

Following the asking and answering of asterisk marked questions U Nyan Hein of Thanbyuzayat constituency tabled a motion for Ministry of Electricity and Energy to establish an electricity distribution agreement with private companies so that the initial investment burden is not passed on to the people and provided explana-

tions for tabling the motion. The motion was supported by U Aung Soe Lin of Ywangan constituency.

After obtaining the decision of the Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker announced the Hluttaw's acceptance to discuss the motion and announced further for Hluttaw representatives who want to discuss the motion the register their names.

Report on bill amending Bar Council Act read

As a final agenda of the day, Hluttaw was informed of

receiving a bill amending Bar Council Act approved and sent with amendments by Amyotha Hluttaw and bill committee secretary U Kyaw Soe Lin read the committee's report on the bill.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker then announced for Hluttaw representatives who want to table amendment motions to register their names.

The eleventh-day meeting of the eleventh regular session of the Second Pyithu Hluttaw will be held on 13 February. ■

(Translated by Zaw Min)

## National-level Trade Facilitation Committee meeting held in Yangon

A third meeting of National-level Trade Facilitation Committee on World Trade Organisation's Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA) was held at Ministry of Planning and Finance, Customs Department head office in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

The meeting was attended by committee chairman and joint chairman Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo and Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win, committee members and

related departmental officials.

At the meeting estimated implementation years and cooperation required for implementing trade facilitation measures under the agreement was discussed and approved.

WTO members concluded negotiations on the TFA at the 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference and Myanmar ratified the TFA on 2015 December. TFA entered into force in February 2017 after it was ratified by two-thirds of the WTO membership.—MNA ■ (Translated by Zaw Min)



Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win delivers the speech at the third meeting of National-level Trade Facilitation Committee on World Trade Organisation's Trade Facilitation Agreement. PHOTO: MNA

## Ethnic cultural troupes visit attractions in Nay Pyi Taw

ETHNIC cultural troupes who will perform at the 72<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Union Day, divided into two groups, visited Nay Pyi Taw

yesterday.

Ethnic cultural performance troupes from Kachin, Kayah, Kayin and Chin and

troupes from Lawwaw and Gaybar ethnic tribes visited the Nay Pyi Taw Zoological Gardens and Safari Park, Planetarium, Both

Gaya, the Uppatasanti Pagoda, the Water Fountain Park and Myoma Market.

The cultural troupes from Taninthayi Region, Mon, Rakhine and Shan and Wa ethnic tribe visited the National Landmark Park, Defence Services Museum, Hluttaw, Myanmar Gems Museum and Junction Centre.

"I am very happy to visit Nay Pyi Taw today. We have broaden general knowledge during the excursion. This is my first visit to Nay Pyi Taw, so I want to visit all attractions in Nay Pyi Taw," said Ma Maw Sae Hmyar, Kayah ethnic woman. "We were very happy to visit the Safari Park and Planetarium. I am also take pride in getting the chance to perform in the Union Day celebrations," said Ma Kai Nuthawng, Kachin woman.—Myo Thu Hein ■

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

## Notice for issuing matriculation exam identity cards

STUDENTS preparing for the matriculation exams to be held from 6 to 15 March, 2019 can collect their identity cards for entering the exam at their respective state or region's Department of Myanmar Examinations (DME) starting from 15 February. Students from Basic Education High Schools, branch schools, affiliated schools, and private high schools can collect their identity cards from their school's principal. External students can collect their identity cards from the supervisor of the DME they are taking the exam in, according to the Ministry of Education.

Students facing any difficulties can contact their respective principal, local DME supervisors, township education officers, or directly to the main DME office.—MNA ■



Ethnic cultural troupes feeding elephants at the elephant camp in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: KYAW ZIN HTAIK

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

## Japanese cherry tree begins to blossom at Yangon Region Hluttaw

A CHERRY TREE planted in the compound of Yangon Region's Hluttaw on 27 January began to blossom on 6 February.

"Twelve days after planting, cherry has begun to blossom at tree No. 12. May Japan-Myanmar friendship last long," stated Naw Pan Thinzar Myo, Yangon Region's Karen Ethnic Affairs Minister, on her Facebook page yesterday.

About 300 cherry trees were planted in Yangon at the 3<sup>rd</sup> cherry planting ceremony, which was held as part of a program to promote Japan-Myanmar friendship and tourism.

About 120 trees were planted in the compound of the Hluttaw, 140 at the People's Park, and five at the Maha Bandoola Park.

The trees have been genetically modified so they can thrive in Myanmar's climate.

The first cherry planting ceremony was held in Nay Pyi Taw in 2017, with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi planting trees, and urging the people of both countries to consider it an act of cultivating, nurturing, and strengthening the friendship between Japan and Myanmar. She also highlighted the need for peace and environmental conservation in Myanmar.

A total of 1,000 cherry trees from Japan are targeted to be planted on both sides of the Zawana Road — from the Kyapan roundabout to the Hluttaw Building. About 1,250 trees were planted in Chin State, and 800 in Mogok, PyinOoLwin, Kalaw, and Inle areas last year. A total of 3,250 cherry trees have been planted in Myanmar between 2017 and 2019.—Thi Thi Min ■ (Translated by GNLM)



A first cherry tree is beginning to blossom at Yangon Region's Hluttaw compound.

PHOTO: AUNG MYINT (IPRD)

## Authorities to take strict action on illegal fishing across Sagaing

THE SAGAING Region government will take decisive action to curb illegal fishing in the region with the help of fisheries departments and regional authorities of the states and regions, said U Kam Za Mon, the region's Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation.

The minister said a plan will be drafted soon to control illegal fishing in the region. The plan will cover encouraging collaboration between regional fisheries departments and related government departments, raising public awareness on the impact of illegal fishing and the importance of conserving marine resources, and taking action against those who flout existing

laws, rules, and regulations, he said.

"Sagaing Region is now facing a decline in marine resources in its lakes, creeks, inlets, and rivers because of fishing using electricity. The practice also affects crops nearby. Thus, we are making a concerted attempt to eliminate illegal fishing across the region," said U Kam Za Mon.

As per official data, the authorities have charged 12 persons with illegal fishing, including electrofishing, in the current fiscal year. In the 2016-2017FY, there were 17 cases of illegal fishing reported in the region.

The Sagaing Region's Department of Fisheries and the Wildlife Conservation Society



An illegal fishing boat, seized by Sagaing Region government officials, is moored on the river bank. PHOTO: MYO WIN TUN

have been making efforts to fight against illegal fishing. They are conducting monthly inspections on a regular basis in designated

areas, especially protected areas.—Myo Win Tin (Monywa) ■ (Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)



Two men died after a 12-wheel truck struck the tree on Yangon-Mandalay Expressway in Bago. PHOTO: KYAW HSAN MYINT

## Two killed after truck smashes into trees in Bago

Two men were killed early on Thursday after their 12-wheeled cargo truck struck some trees near the mile post No. 125 on the Yangon-Mandalay Highway in Bago Region, said police.

The truck headed to Mandalay from Yangon was loaded with imported medicines and was reportedly speeding. It crashed into a big tree on the side of the road and the momentum carried it to the opposite side of the road,

where it hit a second tree. The driver, identified as Kyaw Thet Paing, 35, and passenger, identified as U Khin Maung Lwin, 60, sustained serious injuries and died on the spot. The vehicle was badly mauled in the single-vehicle crash. Police have filed a case of reckless driving under Section 304 (a) of the Penal Code.—Kyaw Hsan Myint ■ (Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

## CBM mulls new system of bank payments in Myanmar-China trade

By Aye Yamone

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) has said it will allow traders to make payments through banks for conducting trading activities with China.

The CBM will allow the payment facility beginning this year, and plans to grant permits to private banks to offer the facility. Under the new service, individual traders will be able to make transactions for the purchase and sale of legal goods through designated banks without having to open a bank account.

U Bo Bo Nge, the Deputy Governor of the CBM, said the system will allow traders to use banks in Myanmar and China to pay for trade of goods that are legally recognized by both countries. The two nations have signed an agreement under which Chinese banks will exchange the yuan for other currencies when Myanmar banks have a large reserve of Chinese yuans, he said.

The CBM has asked banks



Trucks from Myanmar carrying agro-products, fishery products and animal products wait Chinese buyers at Kyin San Kyawt Gate near Muse. PHOTO- VAN YO HTAN (MUSE-IPRD)

to submit proposals for permits for the payment system. The CBM is taking the lead in implementing the new system, he added.

Under the new system, Myanmar merchants at the border will be able to trade goods worth up to 5,000 yuans per day. At present, Myanmar merchants conducting border trade with

China have to reportedly open hundreds of accounts at China-owned banks. The CBM has said it has received no report about such transactions yet.

Earlier, the Chinese yuan earned through exports to China flowed into accounts in China, with the People's Bank of China finding it difficult to control the use of the accounts

to pay for illegal goods and activities.

Later, China began to suspect imbalanced cash flows in and out of bank accounts opened by Myanmar traders, thanks to its advanced technology. Thereafter, China froze the accounts of Myanmar traders suspected of gambling and dealing arms and drugs. The

CBM has said it is not authorized to deal with such account closures as Myanmar traders had opened accounts in China without seeking a recommendation from the central bank.

For the time being, only Myanma Economic Bank is making transactions with Chinese banks. The CBM is planning to allow private banks to provide this service soon.

"It is not true that Myanmar has no agreement with the People's Bank of China and the Bank of Japan to carry out the currency exchange service. Myanmar has already issued licences to branches of foreign banks to exchange Chinese yuan and Japanese yen for other currencies. Myanmar has also negotiated with the People's Bank of China and the Bank of Japan to implement a government-to-government (G2G) system to settle payments which involve large sums of money," said U Bo Bo Nge. ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

## CBM to issue remittance service licenses to 'hundi' operators within two months

By Aye Yamone

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) is making arrangements to issue remittance service licences to operators running 'hundi', an informal money transfer system, within two months and plans to make security deposits mandatory for them.

"We are making preparations to issue licences to 'hundi' businesses. However, all those businesses may not turn to the legal channel. We have formulated rules for authorized remittance services. They will have to keep a security deposit to avoid scams, and report the money in circulation to us as we will raise the security deposit rate, if necessary," said U Bo Bo Nge, the Deputy Governor of the CBM.

The central bank will take necessary measures, such as offering courses set apart for 'hundi' operators, as part of its aim to control illegal remittances. The bank formulated a plan to discourage illegal remittance services in January 2019 and will work to issue

licenses to operators offering the services informally.

"Only a small number of people are used to the official banking service. Most of the people are using informal financial services outside formal banking. In other countries, money inflows outside banking are considered illegal. Export and import businesses often claim lower amounts, rather than the actual trading value, and they entrust the remaining money to the respective foreign banks and withdraw it when needed. Import businesses also create commercial invoices with lower value than actual ones to save on import duty. There are many informal traders and money exchangers using the 'hundi' system," said U Bo Bo Nge.

The Ministry of Planning and Finance, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Myanmar Customs Department announced plans to work together to combat illegal remittance businesses at a press conference held on 6 February at the CBM's Yangon branch.

Additionally, the CBM is in discussions with the Trade Department to take severe action against illegal exchangers and to ensure systematic inflow of foreign currency through export and import businesses.

To encourage official remittance businesses, registration fees will not be set at a high rate, but severe penalties will be imposed on businesses found flouting the rules.

The CBM will allow citizens to officially transfer foreign currency not exceeding US\$10,000 a week, and remittance statements and reports will have to be submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Currently, the CBM allows three state-owned banks, 19 private banks, and 13 foreign bank branches to offer outward remittance services. Of the 19 private banks, 13 are making money transfers with the help of Western Union, MoneyGram and True Money. ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Trade with Japan reaches \$452 mln in Q1

BILATERAL trade between Myanmar and Japan totalled US\$452 million in the first quarter of the 2018-2019 fiscal year, registering a slight decrease of nearly \$2.3 million, or 0.5 per cent, compared with the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, the Ministry of Commerce reported.

According to the ministry's trade report, Myanmar's exports to Japan topped \$125 million, while its imports from the East Asian country exceeded \$110 million, during the three-month period between October and December.

The data showed that the trade between the countries totalled \$154 million in December, \$146 million in November, and \$152 million in October. During the same period in the 2017-18FY, bilateral trade was pegged at \$138 million in December, \$152 million in November, and \$164 million in October.

Normally, imports outper-

form exports in bilateral trade with Japan, which is conducted mainly through the maritime routes. Items traded between the countries include garments, marine products, rice, sesame, rubber and other agricultural products, machines, electronic devices, fertilizers and chemical products, medicines, and automobiles.

During the mini-budget period (April-September) in 2018, Myanmar-Japan trade hit nearly \$1.095 billion, an increase of \$170 million from \$925 million recorded in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

During the first quarter of the 2018-19FY, the Myanmar Investment Commission permitted three Japanese enterprises to bring in foreign direct investment of \$13.234 million. Japan's investment in Myanmar in the mini-budget period totalled \$134.6 million.—Swe Nyein ■

(Translated by Khaing Thanda Lwin)

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# Preserving infrastructure is key to sustainable development

**M**YANMAR'S society comprises small, close-knit groups. Roads, bridges, water transport, and power grids are all basic infrastructure necessary for the survival of ethnic nationals. The Union and its citizens need to support each other so they can both develop and ensure their progress is sustainable.

In her address at the stake-driving ceremony of the Thanlwin Bridge (Tarsan) on 6 February, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said: "We must make consistent efforts to maintain peace and stability in order to ensure national sustainability. I encourage you to foster the Union spirit wherever you go. It is up to everyone to maintain the Union, strengthen it daily, and make repairs where necessary."

The Union of Myanmar is a physical construct that is susceptible to gradual wear and tear. If the infrastructure is allowed to deteriorate, ethnic nationals living in the Union will face a lot of difficulties. Therefore, we must work together to preserve the Union and prevent it from reaching a state of complete deterioration.

The Union of Myanmar is a physical construct that is susceptible to gradual wear and tear. If the infrastructure is allowed to deteriorate, ethnic nationals living in the Union will face a lot of difficulties. Therefore, we must work together to preserve the Union and prevent it from reaching a state of complete deterioration.

The Thanlwin River flows through Shan State and serves as a means of transport, livelihood, agriculture, and energy. There are nine major bridges along the river, five of which are in Shan State. Of the five bridges, the Kunlong Bridge and Takaw Bridge are about 50 years old and worn down. Thus, the relevant departments and the public need to cooperate to prevent the bridges from collapsing.

Now, another bridge has been constructed to help ethnic nationals in their socio-economic endeavors. Once it is completed, the Tarsan Bridge will ensure better transportation between the southern and eastern parts of Shan State. It will also link Namhsan-Mongnai-Mongton-Monghsat all the way to the border town of Tachiek. The Union is constantly working to provide basic infrastructure, such as the bridge, to support the people of the country.

Before we started on the track to development, our roads and bridges were built by the collective strength of the people. We had to perform duties for the betterment of our own lives. Now, as the government carries out infrastructure construction projects, we all need to chip in to maintain the infrastructure to ensure sustainable development. This is the essence of the Union spirit, and we need to implement it throughout the country. ■

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## Hailing 72<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Union Day

# Let us hold on to the Union Spirit

**A**MICABLE and harmonious Panglong Agreement was successfully reached in a small town of Panglong, Southern Shan State, between the Myanmar government under Bogyoke Aung San and the ethnic nationalities namely Shan, Kachin, and Chin peoples on 12 February 1947 last (72) years ago, paving the way for the emergence of the Union of Myanmar.

Joyful and pleasant celebrations are held yearly across the country in accordance with the historic tradition, and that it is just approaching to rejoice the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Union Day on 12 February 2019.

Unbreakable and solid nature of the "Panglong Agreement" was the sole foundation for building the sovereign and Independent nation of the Union of Myanmar that stands out with delight and pride on this planet.

Road to freedom was not a bed of roses but the hard struggle and the journey was bumpy and tough, being acknowledged by all the nationalities in the country.

Colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had created empires on this earth, and that British ruled in Myanmar, also known as British Burma. It was lasted from 1824 to 1948 from the three Anglo-Burmese wars through the creation of Myanmar as a Province of British India to the establishment of an independently administered colony.

Exactly on the very day that Myanmar had gone down into servitude, the patriotic nationalities across the nation grabbed whatever weapons available and revolted the rulers continuously.

Adding the momentum, the Thirty Comrades constituted the embryo of the modern Burmese army called the Burma Independence Army (BIA) headed by Bogyoke Aung San showed the daring and adventurous self-sacrifices for the country with a strong push in regaining the independence of the nation.

Eventually, with many conditions and circumstances inside and outside of the country, on 8 November 1946, the AFPFL demanded certain agreements from the British Government, and

therefore, Bogyoke Aung San was invited to Britain in November 1946 for negotiation. Subsequently on 27 January 1947, the historic Aung San - Alee Agreement was successfully signed.

Due to a clause specified in the important Panglong agreement, it had necessitated to call and organize a meeting to determine that the local population in the frontier areas and hilly regions accorded and agreed in acquiring the independence of the country.

Therefore, a meeting was held by Bogyoke Aung San and national leaders in Panglong on 9 February 1947. Despite some difficulties were encountered during the meeting, the wisdom and benevolence of Bogyoke Aung San and the leaders of nationalities, the long awaited Panglong Agreement was successfully signed, and finally the nation become independence and sovereign.

Liberty was there, but the full essence of independence was deprived off for the public, as the development of the country was stagnated. The writer of this article would like to share five points with regards to the nation in the endeavor for continuous development by structuring a developed and democratic federal state.

### Our Three Main National Causes

It is our duty to maintain and preserve the independence and sovereignty of the nation being handed down to us by Bogyoke Aung San and leaders of nationalities. If we failed to defend the sovereignty of the nation, then we would be very much irresponsible as the citizens, and that it might be tantamount to disloyalty to Bogyoke Aung San and our ancestors.

Sovereignty and stability of the nation mainly depends on the unity and harmony of the entire nationalities which could be seen clearly in the chronicle of Myanmar.

The shared major duty is residing within the Union with unity and safeguarding Our Three Main National Causes. The three major duties namely, Non disintegration of the Union; Non-disintegration of national solidarity; and Per-

### Maung Khine Mar (Ahtet Min Hla)

petuation of sovereignty is the shared duty which each citizen has to safeguard forever. All the national brethren have to perform and safeguard this duty in union based on Panglong Conference and Panglong Spirit.

### Emergence of constitution in line with the democratic federal union

Following the cancellation and termination of the 1947 constitution and the 1974 constitution, the 2008 constitution stands out and is legally in force.

Since the constitutions were crafted and adopted by the human beings, the changes might occur when time and circumstances called for annulment through the law of nature.

Moreover, the contents of the constitution are not absolute truths, and therefore, when the

When it comes to drafting a new Constitution, if we miss the chance to usher in change at the right time, then we will move away from basic federal norms and upset the relationship between the superstructure and the economic base.

ingredients and the quintessence are not in line with the time and the democratic norms, then the documents are in need of changes.

On 16 October 2016, the government announced the roadmap for national reconciliation and Union peace as follows.

- To review the political dialogue framework;
- To amend the political dialogue framework;
- To convene the Union Peace Conference—the 21<sup>st</sup> century Panglong in accordance with the amended and approved political dialogue framework;
- To sign union agreement—the 21<sup>st</sup> century Panglong Conference Agreement based on the results of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Con-

ference;

- To amend the constitution in accordance with the union agreement and approve the amended constitution;
  - To hold the multi-party democracy general elections in accordance with the amended and approved constitution;
  - To build a democratic federal union in accordance with the results of the multi-party democracy general elections;
- When it comes to drafting a new Constitution, if we miss the chance to usher in change at the right time, then we will move away from basic federal norms and upset the relationship between the superstructure and the economic base. Therefore, we must work hard to formulate a new Constitution that is in line with the principles of a democratic federal Union.

Stepping ahead with the union spirit in the upcoming Union Peace Conference - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong, the "Internal Peace" would be the rewarding trophy in our hands.

### Rule of Law

Rule of law is necessary for the society and that it protects the citizens through judiciary system which includes not only the law enforcement agencies but also the people of the country. Rule of law means the application of the good law being upheld by the judiciary, the government, and the people.

Security of the people has the wider scope of aspects and duty, and that the entire people must involve in the scheme with "unity and harmony", otherwise the sovereignty of the nation would be compromised.

### Better education and adequate healthcare

21<sup>st</sup> century is being termed as education age, and that the education would lead the society to the better future. Under the UN Millennium Goal, there are 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to transform our world.

The Goal (4) is Quality Education among the (17) developments and that "Quality Education for All" has been adopted and all the member countries are implementing the goal on education.

On the part of our nation, Myanmar National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021 has been approved, enabling greater access, quality and equity in the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system. Education Strategy has been adopted and that systematic changes and implementation is underway.

The academic year 2018-2019 has been allocated with (2175) billion Kyats so as to reduce the dropouts and uplift the general conditions of the schools with new recruitments of teachers in the whole of the country. It is heartening to know that the federal education system would be opened up for all the students in the country.

With regards to the national health care of the country in two prongs such as that of objectives

of MOH are as follows.

- To enable every citizen to attain full life expectancy and enjoy longevity;
- To ensure that every citizen is free from diseases.

The other two schemes such as that of (a) providing quality health care of urban and rural populations; (b) hospital based treatment plan and actual field trip and treatment among the population.

The added budget allocation could be noted that of 2018-2019 at (1131) billion Kyats enabling the healthcare to certain extent of standard level.

In wrapping up the situation based on the Union spirit, Bogyoke Aung San and the ancestors had handed us with the "Union Legacy" with their sweat, blood and lives.

### Union Day National Objectives

- All ethnic nationals to work with collective strength for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, perpetuation of national sovereignty; and to work for preservation and protection of the above.
- To strive for the emergence of a Constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
- To strive for the success of the Union Peace Conference - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong and thence till the success of the internal peace process.
- All union nationals to cooperate and work in "Unity and Harmony" for rule of law and for the people to be secure and free from danger.
- All union citizens to be able to enjoy good education and adequate health care protection.

In conclusion, the writer of this article would like to urge that we need to preserve and protect the legacy, and moreover, in building the developed democratic federal Union, the entire nationalities must fulfilled the national objectives being laid down for the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Union Day for 2019 based on the Union Spirit.

Translated by UMT (Ahlon)

## 72<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary (2019) Union Day National Objectives

- All ethnic nationals to work with collective strength for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, perpetuation of national sovereignty; and to work for preservation and protection of the above.
- To strive for the emergence of a Constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
- To strive for the success of the Union Peace Conference - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panlong and thence till the success of the internal peace process.
- All union nationals to cooperate and work in "Unity and Harmony" for rule of law and for the people to be secure and free from danger.
- All union citizens to be able to enjoy good education and adequate health care protection.



### Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued on Friday 8 February 2019)

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS RECORDED AT 09:30 hrs

**MST:** During the past (24) hours, weather has been partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and Kachin State and generally fair in the remaining regions and states. Night temperatures were (2°C) below February average temperatures in Yangon Region, (Northern and Eastern)Shan, Rakhine and Kayah states, (2°C) above February average temperature in Taninthayi Region and about February average temperatures in the remaining regions and states. The significant night temperatures were (1°C) in Haka, (3°C) each in Namhsan and Heho, (4°C) each in Hsipaw, Pinlaung, Loilin, Mongyan and Ramthlo and (5°C) in Mogok.

**BAY INFERENCE:** Weather is a few cloud to partly cloudy over the South Bay and generally fair over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF 9 February 2019:** Light rain will be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Lower Sagaing and Taninthayi regions, Chin State and generally fair in the remaining regions and states. **STATE OF THE SEA:** Sea will be slight in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (1-3) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of isolated rain in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 February 2019:** Fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 February 2019:** Fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 February 2019:** Fair weather.

**WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND:** Weather will be fair in Naypyitaw, Mandalay and Yangon Regions.

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## India's Jet grounds four planes after failing to pay lessors

MUMBAI—India's Jet Airways has grounded four planes after failing to pay lessors, the airline said, in the latest evidence of financial distress at the debt-laden carrier. The airline—India's second-largest by market share—is buckling under the weight of debts worth \$1.1 billion and is urgently seeking funds to continue flying.

The Mumbai-based carrier has been badly hit by fluctuating global crude prices, a weak rupee and fierce competition from budget rivals which has sparked price wars. Millions of dollars have been wiped off its market capitalisation over the past year.

"Four aircraft have been grounded due to non-payment of amounts outstanding to les-

sors under lease agreements," the carrier said in a statement to the Bombay Stock Exchange late Thursday.

"The company is actively engaged with all its aircraft lessors and regularly provides them with updates on efforts undertaken by the company to improve its liquidity," it added.

Jet Airways first hit turbulence in August when it failed to report its quarterly earnings or pay its staff, including pilots, on time. Chief executive Vinay Dube later reported a loss of \$178 million for July-September and announced a cost-cutting programme amounting to 20 billion rupees (\$280 million) over the next two years.

In January the airline ad-

mitted it had failed to meet debt payments to banks as it seeks investment to help turn around its fortunes.

Jet has been in talks with Etihad Airways over an injection of cash that would see the Abu Dhabi-based airline increase its stake. Jet is also in negotiations with India's biggest lender, the State Bank of India, about turning debt into equity.

India's passenger numbers have grown six-fold over the past decade and the country's aviation sector is projected to become the world's third-largest by 2025. But airlines—including India's largest by market share, IndiGo—and loss-making national carrier Air India are struggling to turn demand into profit.—AFP ■



A Jet Airways plane is pictured at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi on 10 September 2018. PHOTO: AFP

## Asian markets fall on US-China talks, gloomy growth forecasts

HONG KONG—Asian stocks fell sharply Friday following losses on Wall Street as fresh doubts emerged over the prospects for US-China trade talks and global growth outlook. Tokyo led the slump, while Hong Kong returned from the three-day Lunar New Year break also in the red as investors reacted to negative signals from the US ahead of next week's crunch trade negotiations in Beijing. US President Donald Trump told reporters he did not expect to meet Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping before the March 1 deadline, when US duties on many Chinese goods are due to jump.

Top White House economist Larry Kudlow further doused expectations by saying Washington and Beijing are a "sizeable distance" apart in talks, adding that no date for a US-China summit has been set.

Analysts say Trump meeting with Xi ahead of the cut-off would make a meaningful deal more likely, although the difficulty of matching schedules had been flagged in advance with the US president flying to Viet Nam to meet North Korea's Kim Jong

Un later this month.

Economists say the imposition of the tariffs could weaken the global economy after a brief rally at the start of 2019.

"Share markets have had a great rebound from oversold conditions in December and are now up against technical resistance and getting overbought," Shane Oliver, head of investment strategy at AMP Capital, told Bloomberg. "Meanwhile a bunch of balls remain up in the air regarding the trade war, the US shutdown and slowing global growth. So there is a high risk of a pull back from here." Tokyo closed down 2.0 per cent, while Hong Kong shed 0.3 after paring heavier early losses. Seoul lost 1.2 per cent, Jakarta 0.4 per cent and Manila 0.3 per cent. Shanghai and Taipei remain closed for the week.

Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of Australia became the latest central bank to slash growth forecasts, citing the effects of a weaker housing market.

It said growth would reach 2.5 per cent in the middle of this year, well down from the 3.25 per cent it previously projected.—AFP ■

## EU slashes eurozone growth forecast as Germany cools

BRUSSELS—The European Commission sharply cut its eurozone growth forecast for 2019 on Thursday as an unexpected slowdown in Germany and protests in France weigh on the economy in Europe.

The EU also cut Italy's growth rate to a five-year low, a situation that risks reopening bitter differences between Brussels and Rome about the government's spending plans this year.

The commission, the EU's executive arm, is now expecting growth of 1.3 per cent in the eurozone this year, a significant cut from 1.9 per cent predicted in November.

It said the full European Union would grow by 1.5 per cent instead of the earlier 1.9 per cent.

The health of the German economy is fast emerging as a worry for the EU as slumping demand for foreign cars in China takes a toll on Europe's export powerhouse.

The commission said Europe

is facing international headwinds that have now taken the steam out of a post-crisis recovery in the eurozone.

The slowdown "reflects external factors, such as trade tensions and the slowdown in emerging markets, notably in China," said European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis.

"The possibility of a disruptive Brexit creates additional uncertainty," he added.

Another problem is Italy, which the commission said would grow by a paltry 0.2 per cent this year, still better than a recession, but a huge cut from the 1.2 per cent forecast late last year.

Slower growth spells big trouble for populist-led Italy, where huge amounts of government money are swallowed up each year to help pay down about two trillion euros in public debt.

Rome's coalition government of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the League party was already

forced to water down its ambitious budget in December to avoid being punished by the EU Commission and financial markets.

The latest growth forecast

may force Italy to again review its spending plans for 2019 in order to satisfy Brussels and assuage investors.

"The commission will contin-

ue to monitor closely the situation in Italy," said EU Economic Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici, who handles the fraught negotiations with Rome.—AFP ■



The troubles of the car industry are worry for Europe's overall economy. PHOTO: AFP

## May, Juncker hold 'robust' Brexit meet, agree new talks

BRUSSELS — Britain and the EU agreed Thursday to hold more talks to try to avoid a no-deal Brexit after a "robust" meeting between Prime Minister Theresa May and European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker.

Juncker reiterated in a joint statement that the EU-UK divorce agreement struck in November cannot be renegotiated, rebuffing May's attempts to change arrangements for the Irish border.

But Juncker expressed "openness to add wording" to a parallel political declaration laying out plans for future EU-UK ties, with hopes this could break the deadlock.

After his own talks with May, EU President Donald Tusk warned there was "no breakthrough in sight", although the British leader said she had seen willingness from Brussels to find a deal. May has been desperately trying to salvage the withdrawal agreement she spent months negotiating with Brussels, after it was rejected by the British parliament last month.

She has been working with her own MPs to find a way through, but an EU official said that in Thursday's meeting with Tusk, she "did not offer any new concrete proposals".

Instead, Tusk apparently suggested to May that she study a plan laid out by British opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

May has already rejected the proposal for an EU-UK customs union, but the EU leader said it "might be a promising way out of



British Prime Minister Theresa May (l) is welcomed by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (r) ahead to a meeting on Brexit, on 7 February 2019 in Brussels. PHOTO: AFP

the impasse", the official told AFP.

Talk has been growing that even if MPs finally back the deal, Britain may have to delay Brexit, scheduled for 29 March, to get the necessary legislation through parliament.

But May vowed: "I'm going to deliver Brexit, I'm going to deliver it on time."

### Legally-binding changes

The impasse has deepened fears that Britain could crash out of the EU without a deal in 50 days time, disrupting trade and supplies to manufacturing.

In a sharp reminder of the urgency of finding a solution, Bank of England governor Mark

Carney warned that Britain's economy was "not yet prepared" for a no-deal departure.

Speaking to reporters as she left Brussels, May said she had spelled out Britain's "clear position" that legally-binding changes are needed to the so-called backstop plan for the Irish border.

Her MPs fear the arrangement, which would keep Britain tied to EU trade rules if and until another way was found to keep the frontier open, is a "trap".

Such changes to the Irish question were not forthcoming, but instead May got a fresh round of talks. EU negotiator Michel Barnier will now meet British Brexit Minister Stephen Barclay

in Strasbourg on Monday for what an EU official described as "exploratory" negotiations.

May herself will meet Juncker again before the end of February. She is also sending her top lawyer, Geoffrey Cox, who has been looking at a possible time limit or exit mechanism on the backstop, to Dublin ahead of her own dinner on Friday night with Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar.

Varadkar, whose government has stressed the importance of maintaining an open border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, said recent "instability in British politics" showed why a backstop was essential.—AFP ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel, US to hold major joint military exercise next week amid regional tensions

JERUSALEM — The Israeli and US militaries will hold a major joint military exercise in Israel next week, the Israeli army said Thursday.

As the most significant joint exercise between the United States and Israel for 2019, the Juniper Falcon 19 will be held from Sunday to Thursday, according to a statement by the Israeli army. The exercise will involve the US European Command and several Israeli units including the air defense array, the Planning and Operations Directorate as well as logistics and medical units.—Xinhua ■

### Iran reveals underground missile production bunker despite West's pressure

TEHRAN — Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on Thursday revealed an underground missile production facility, semi-official Fars news agency reported.

The factory of the IRGC is the underground ballistic missile production site which was put on show for the first time, the report said. The IRGC also unveiled a ballistic missile, named Dezful, in the production site. Dezful is a smart surface-to-surface missile with the range of 1,000 km and high destruction power, according to Fars.—Xinhua ■

### Three suspects arrested for murder of two Afghan journalists

KABUL — Three major suspects were arrested late Thursday, less than 48 hours after the murder of two local Afghan reporters, Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs confirmed on Friday.

"Afghan National Police personnel arrested three suspects in northeastern Takhar province in charges of murdering of two journalists of a local radio in Takhar," the ministry said in a statement. On Tuesday night, two staff of Radio Hamsada based in northeastern Takhar province were shot dead inside their office by unidentified gunmen.—Xinhua ■

## Trump lashes out as Democrats open probes into his taxes, Russia ties

WASHINGTON — Newly empowered House Democrats kicked off a barrage of investigations into President Donald Trump's taxes, real estate business and Russia ties Thursday, raising the pressure on the White House after two years of insulation by a Republican majority.

Trump lashed out about "presidential harassment" as one House committee opened a hearing into forcing the release of his long-hidden tax returns, and another began questioning his controversial policy to separate immigrant children from their parents at the US-Mexico border.

"The Dems and their committees are going 'nuts,'" Trump tweeted. "The Republicans nev-

er did this to President Obama, there would be no time left to run government," he said.

Both sides were girding for tough legal clashes pitting congressional powers against those of the presidency.

House Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler threatened Trump's acting attorney general, Matthew Whitaker, with a subpoena if he did not turn over records of his communications with the White House in reference to Special Counsel Robert Mueller's ongoing investigation into Russian election meddling.

And Adam Schiff, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, laid out a plan to begin probing Trump's business ties to Russia, citing fears of

money laundering and of "foreign financial or other leverage over President Trump."

Schiff's committee is planning to hear testimony from the president's former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, who has already divulged to investigators inside information about the operations of the president's real estate business, the Trump Organization and Trump's 2016 election campaign.

"So now Congressman Adam Schiff announces, after having found zero Russian collusion, that he is going to be looking at every aspect of my life, both financial and personal, even though there is no reason to be doing so. Never happened before!" Trump tweeted.

### Probes heighten impeachment threat

House Democrats have a long list of Trump-focused issues to probe after being stifled for two years by majority Republicans. Winning control of the House in November allows them to open an investigative assault on the White House in the same way that — contrary to Trump's claim — Republicans laid siege to former president Barack Obama. A shortlist of topics include conflicts of interest and mismanagement by cabinet members; Trump's benefits from family business while in the White House; and security lapses by Trump and his White House staff.—AFP ■

## Thai party nominates king's elder sister as PM candidate

BANGKOK — A Thai party close to ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on Friday nominated the elder sister of the country's king as a prime ministerial candidate for the upcoming general election that will end over four years of military rule.

It is extremely rare for Thai royalty to be involved in politics, but Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya, 67, reportedly has close ties with Thaksin, who lives in self-exile abroad.

The princess's foray into politics as the likely "face" of pro-Thaksin forces injects considerable uncertainty into the March 24 election, in which pro-Thaksin parties will face the pro-junta Palang Pracharath Party and the Democratic Party.

After filing the princess's candidacy with the Election Commission, the Thai Raksa Chart Party issued a statement saying she agreed to become its candidate as she wants to promote reconciliation in a country that has experienced intense political turmoil. The princess also wants to help develop Thailand with her experiences both in Thailand and overseas, according to the statement. The party was founded by former parliamentarians from the Pheu Thai Party, a major political force that is widely perceived as Thaksin's political vehicle. The development came on the same day Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha accepted the nomination to be the candidate for the Palang Pracharath Party.

Prayut, the junta chief who came to power in a 2014 coup that toppled a Pheu Thai-led civilian government, said in a statement that he has accepted Palang Pracharath's nomination because he wants to work for the country.

"The decision was not easy because it is an important period for the country," Prayut said. "I am ready to dedicate my life to protecting Thailand."

He reiterated, however, that he does not intend to cling on to power. Each party can nominate up to three candidates for prime minister, from among whom a new prime minister will be chosen when a new parliament forms after the poll.

The princess, the eldest child of the much-revered late King Bhumibol, is one year older than King Maha Vajiralongkorn. In 1972, while studying in the United States, she relinquished her royal title in 1972 to marry a foreigner. They had three children but later divorced, after which she returned to Thailand.

Her only son died in a 2004 tsunami that hit Thailand and other countries.

The Pheu Thai Party has nominated former health minister Sudarat Keyuraphan as its candidate for prime minister, while the Democrat Party has nominated party leader and former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. A five-day candidate registration period for the lower house election ends Friday. — Kyodo News ■

## 'Hundreds of thousands' of cattle feared dead after Australia floods

TOWNSVILLE (Australia) — Hundreds of thousands of cattle weakened from a severe drought are feared to have died in record-breaking floods in northeastern Australia, authorities said Friday, as they stepped up efforts to feed surviving livestock.

Incessant rains over an almost two-week period have flooded swathes of Queensland state, with the full scale of the devastation on drought-hit cattle stations becoming clearer as floodwaters recede.

"We are expecting hundreds of thousands in terms of stock losses," Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters in Sydney. "This will be heartbreaking to these communities that have been experiencing years of drought, only to see that turn into a torrential inundation which threatens now their very livelihoods in the complete other direction."

Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk Friday spoke of seeing a "sea of dead cattle" when she toured one region on Thursday.

"To see the cattle spread across these yards, not moving, it made you feel sick in the stomach," she told national broadcaster ABC.

Bales of hay and fuel have been transported into towns near the disaster zones and are being distributed to farmers so they can carry out airdrops to their stock.

Farmer Rachael Anderson and her husband, who manage Eddington cattle station near



This handout picture taken by Anthony Anderson on 7 February 2019 and released to AFP on 8 February shows a flood-affected area near Julia Creek township in Queensland state. "Hundreds of thousands" of cattle weakened from a severe drought are feared to have died in record-breaking floods in northeastern Australia, authorities said on 8 February, as they stepped up efforts to feed surviving livestock. Handout. PHOTO: AFP

Julia Creek township, said 800 of their 1500 cattle were still unaccounted for.

"The cattle didn't have anywhere else to go... We've got a railway line close to us and the whole railway line is just tangled with dead cattle," Anderson told AFP.

"If the floodwater wasn't enough to kill them, then those that got to higher areas were exposed to elements that were not conducive like rain hitting them at 60 kilometres an hour. They can't survive them long term."

Anderson — who had been hand-feeding cattle over the past few months amid the crippling drought — said there were also many dead kangaroos as well as

birds that were falling dead on the ground.

About half of Australia's 25-million strong cattle herd is bred in Queensland state, and graziers say the floods — described as a once-a-century event — could devastate their industry.

"This will finish a lot of people, there's some people who've lost everything, every beast they own, so there's no income at all," farmer William McMillan told the ABC.

Australia's tropical north typically experiences heavy rains during the monsoon season, but the recent downpours have seen some areas get a year's worth of rainfall in just a week. —AFP

## Death toll in Istanbul building collapse rises to 10



Officials carry out search and rescue missions on the debris of an 8-storey building after it collapsed in Istanbul on 7 February, 2019. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ISTANBUL — Ten people have been killed since an eight-storey apartment building collapsed in Istanbul on Wednesday, local media reported Thursday.

The reports said 13 others have been injured so far, including a 5-year-old girl who was rescued on Thursday, 18 hours after the incident in a mostly residential district on the Asian side of the city.

Rescue teams are responding to voices from the debris and continuing efforts to reach the survivors, they said. — Kyodo News ■

## Japanese city to use AI to predict seriousness of school bullying

OTSU (Japan) — A western Japan city said Friday it plans to use artificial intelligence to predict the seriousness of suspected school bullying cases, in what will be the first such analysis by a municipality in the country.

"Through an AI theoretical analysis of past data, we will be able to properly respond to cases without just relying on teachers' past experiences," Otsu Mayor Naomi Koshi said regarding the planned analysis beginning from the next fiscal year starting April.

AI will be used to analyze

9,000 suspected bullying cases reported by elementary and junior high schools in the city over the six years through fiscal 2018. It will examine the school grade and gender of the suspected victims and perpetrators as well as when and where the incidents occurred.

Statistical analysis of the data is expected to help local authorities and teachers to identify forms of bullying that tend to escalate in seriousness and require particular attention, said the Otsu city education board in Shiga Prefecture. — Kyodo News ■

## Cold wave grips Hokkaido, snowfall expected Sat. in Tokyo

TOKYO — A cold wave brought by an air mass of record-low temperatures gripped Hokkaido on Friday, causing traffic disruptions on the northernmost Japanese mainland.

As temperatures plunged below minus 20 °C in some parts of the region, the Japan Meteorological Agency also predicted snowfall on Saturday in eastern Japan, with central Tokyo expected to see 5 to 10 centimeters.

The agency said a cold air mass of minus 24.4 °C, the lowest since it began compiling data in 1957, was hovering about 1,500 meters above Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido, where the mercury dropped to minus 12.5 °C in the morning.

The annual Sapporo Snow Festival, one of Japan's most celebrated winter events, has been underway since Monday, with visitors having to protect themselves against the cold.

The temperature in the town of Oketo, nearly 200 kilometers east of Sapporo, sank to minus 22.7 °C in the early hours of Friday, with that in Rikubetsu town, adjacent to Oketo, hitting minus 20.3 °C, prompting the agency to issue warnings about outdoor activities, water pipes freezing and crop management.

Hokkaido Railway Co said it has suspended 74 train services as of 12:45 pm Friday, with some brakes and rail switching points frozen.

A bus connecting Sapporo and Wakkanai, a northern Hokkaido city, slid off the road shortly after midnight due to an apparent whiteout which blocked the view. No injuries were reported among the 25 passengers and the driver, police said. —Kyodo News ■

## Melting ice sheets may cause 'climate chaos': study

PARIS — Billions of tonnes of meltwater flowing into the world's oceans from the Greenland and Antarctic icesheets could boost extreme weather and destabilise regional climate within a matter of decades, researchers said Wednesday.

These melting giants, especially the one atop Greenland, are poised to further weaken the ocean currents that move cold water south along the Atlantic Ocean floor while pushing tropical waters northward closer to the surface, they reported in the journal Nature.

Known as the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), this liquid conveyor belt plays a crucial role in Earth's climate system and helps ensure the relative warmth of the Northern Hemisphere.

"According to our models, this meltwater will cause significant disruptions to ocean currents and change levels of warming around the world," said lead author Nicholas Golledge, an associate professor at the Antarctic Research Centre of New Zealand's Victoria University of Wellington.

The Antarctic ice sheet's loss of mass, meanwhile, traps warmer water below the surface, eroding glaciers from underneath in a vicious circle of accelerated melting that contributes to sea level rise.

Most studies on ice-



Visitors interact with blocks of melting ice, an exhibit entitled 'Ice Watch' created by Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson and leading Greenlandic geologist Minik Rosing outside Tate Modern in central London on 11 December 2018. PHOTO: AFP

sheets have focused on how quickly they might shrink due to global warming, and how much global temperatures can rise before their disintegration — whether over centuries or millenia — becomes inevitable, a threshold known as a "tipping point."

But far less research has been done on how the meltwater might affect the climate system itself.

### Cooler temperatures

"The large-scale changes we see in our simulations are conducive to a more chaotic climate with more extreme weather events and more intense and frequent heatwaves," co-author Natalya Gomez, a researcher in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at McGill University in Canada, told AFP.

"By mid-century," the researchers concluded, "meltwater from the Greenland ice sheet noticeably disrupts the AMOC," which has already shown signs of slowing down.

This is a "much shorter timescale than expected," commented Helene Seroussi, a researcher in the Sea Level and Ice Group at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, who was not involved in the study.

The findings were based on highly detailed simulations combined with satellite observations of changes to the icesheets since 2010.

One likely result of weakened current in the Atlantic will be warmer air temperatures in the high Arctic, eastern Canada and central America, and

cooler temperatures over northwestern Europe.

The Antarctic and Greenland icesheets, up to three kilometres (1.8 miles) thick, contain more than two-thirds of the planet's fresh water, enough to raise global oceans 58 and seven metres (190 and 22 feet), respectively, were they to melt completely.

Besides Greenland, the regions most vulnerable to global warming are West Antarctica and several huge glaciers in East Antarctica, which is far larger and more stable.

In a second study published Wednesday in Nature, some of the same scientists offered new projections of how much Antarctica will contribute to sea level rise by 2100 — a hotly debated topic.

### Ice cliffs

A controversial 2016 study suggested the continent's ice cliffs — exposed by the disintegration of ice shelves that jut out from glaciers over ocean water — were highly vulnerable to collapse, and could lead to sea level rise of a metre by century's end.

That would be enough to displace up to 187 million people around the world, especially in populous low-lying river deltas in Asia and Africa, research has shown.

But the new study challenges those findings.

"Unstable ice-cliffs were proposed as a cause of unstoppable collapse of large parts of the ice sheet," said lead author Tamsin Edwards, a lecturer in geography at King's College London.

"But we've re-analysed the data and found this isn't the case."

Both of the news studies, Edwards told AFP, "predict a most likely Antarctic contribution of 15 centimetres" by 2100, with an upward limit of about 40 cm. A special report on oceans by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), due out in September, will offer a much anticipated estimate of sea level rise.

The IPCC's last major assessment in 2013 did not take icesheets — today seen as the major contributor, ahead of thermal expansion and glaciers — into account for lack of data. —AFP ■

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY  
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE  
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)  
(7/2019)

1. Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in Myanmar Kyats and United States Dollars.

Sr.No.	Tender No.	Description	Remarks
(a)	DMP/L-178(18-19)	Applied Research Centre (8) Items	Ks
(b)	DMP/L-179(18-19)	Liquid Spere (200) Can	Ks
(c)	IFB-043(18-19)	Applied Research Centre (5) Items	US\$

2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available free download at the Ministry of Electricity and Energy Website Portal ([www.moeec.gov.mm](http://www.moeec.gov.mm)) as from 8 February 2019. Tender forms will not be sold.

3. The interested Bidders should submit the Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in each separate sealed envelopes on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than 14:00 pm on 8 March 2019.

4. Tender Closing Date & Time – 8-3-2019, 14:00 pm

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise  
Ph No. + 95 67 – 411206

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M.V MCC SEOUL VOY. NO. (905S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC SEOUL VOY. NO. (905S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 09-02-2019 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/M.I.P 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.

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## Binoche hails starring role for women as Berlin filmfest opens

BERLIN—Europe's first major film festival of the year, the Berlinale, kicked off Thursday with jury president Juliette Binoche welcoming an unprecedented line-up of female directors. The 11-day event prides itself on being the most politically engaged of the A-list cinema showcases, presenting 400 movies from around the world, most on hard-hitting topical themes including rising extremism and economic exploitation.

But its red carpet promises a steady stream of glamour too with Christian Bale, Diane Kruger, Tilda Swinton, Catherine Deneuve, Jonah Hill, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Casey Affleck all awaited in the frosty German capital. French Oscar winner Binoche, 54, is leading a six-member panel choosing the winner of the prestigious Golden and Silver Bear prizes, to be awarded at a gala ceremony on 16 February. Last year, with the #MeToo movement against abuses of power roiling the industry, the innovative docudrama "Touch Me Not" about sexual intimacy by Romania's Adina Pintilie clinched the top honours. For the first time this year, seven out of the 17 contenders are women—a more than 40-percent share that eclipses rivals such as Cannes and Venice, which have come under fire as chummy men's clubs. The top festivals have long faced



Director of the Berlinale Film Festival Dieter Kosslick (R) presents the jury (R-L) French actress and president of the Berlinale jury Juliette Binoche, US Film critic Justin Chang, German actress Sandra Hueller, Chilean film director Sebastian Lelio, British actress and producer Trudie Styler and US Chief Curator of Film at MoMA Rajendra Roy at the opening ceremony of the 69th Berlinale film festival and screening of the film "The Kindness of Strangers" in Berlin, on 7 February 2019. PHOTO: AFP

pressure to boost their female representation as they serve as gatekeepers to international distribution, awards and box office cash.

### 'Big step forward'

Binoche welcomed the more diverse selection, saying it was long overdue and sent a message beyond the world of cinema. "I think that's a good step forward, 10 years ago was not like that," she told reporters. "Open minds—it's a good sign." British producer, director and actress Trudie Styler, 65, who is also on the jury, said the Berlinale had long championed films by under-represented groups but that

this year's line-up was "not only courageous but a big step forward". Denmark's Lone Scherfig, who made the Oscar-nominated coming-of-age tale "An Education" in 2009, started the festival with the premiere of her film "The Kindness of Strangers". The bittersweet drama stars Zoe Kazan ("The Big Sick") as a mother of two fleeing domestic violence who has to rely on her fellow New Yorkers for help, in a cast including Andrea Riseborough ("The Death Of Stalin") and Bill Nighy ("Love Actually").

"This is about a woman who is stronger than she thinks," Scherfig, 59, told reporters. She said that as cosmopolitan New

York is "kind of everybody's capital", it was the right backdrop for a story about how societies deal with their most vulnerable members. "(The characters) are not political creatures but the film and the backdrop — the juxtaposition of very luxurious New York and the soup kitchens — is, I hope, a way to address political issues in a kind of intimate way."

Nighy, who also appeared in Scherfig's 2017 feel-good movie "Their Finest", said that given the "current climate" where the two films are set — in the United States and Britain — he welcomed her upbeat message.

"I think any film currently that emphasises those things

which unite us rather than those things that divide us... is not only desirable, it's essential," he said.

### Gay marriage in 1901

In June, festival chief Dieter Kosslick will be succeeded after 18 years at the helm by Carlo Chatrion, the current head of Switzerland's Locarno film festival, and Mariette Rissenbeek, the Dutch director of German Film, which promotes home-grown movies abroad. Kosslick, 70, will be handing over the reins at a time of growing competition from streaming services. He told AFP he saw scope for cinemas to "co-exist" and thrive, even as box office receipts fell 14 percent in Germany alone last year.

After winning the Golden Lion top prize at the Venice film festival in September with "Roma", Netflix will enter the Berlin race for the first time with the drama "Elisa and Marcela".

The picture by Isabel Coixet ("The Bookshop") is based on the true story of two women who pioneered gay marriage in Spain in 1901 by posing as man and wife. For his last edition, Kosslick has opted to make a parting political statement, offering to buy tickets for leaders of the far-right Alternative for Germany party to a screening of "Who Will Write Our History?", a documentary about the Warsaw Ghetto. —AFP ■

## Actress Jennifer Lawrence to tie the knot

LOS ANGELES — Oscar-winning actress Jennifer Lawrence, one of Hollywood's most eligible singles, is tying the knot.

The 28-year-old "Hunger Games" star is engaged to art dealer Cooke Maroney, 33, her publicist told the Los Angeles Times on Wednesday.

The couple have been spotted together since last summer after reportedly being introduced through friends.

Rumors of the engagement began circulating recently after the Kentucky-born actress was spotted at a New York restaurant with a "massive ring" on her finger, according to celebrity gossip Page Six.

Lawrence, known for her blunt manner, was previously romantically linked to director Darren Aronofsky, Coldplay frontman Chris Martin and "X-Men" costar Nicholas Hoult.

She won an Oscar for best actress for her role in the 2012 comedy-drama "Silver Linings Playbook."

She was also nominated for three other Oscars for her roles in "Joy", "Winter's Bone" and "American Hustle."

She shot to fame after starring in the wildly popular fantasy franchise "The Hunger Games" and became one of the world's highest-paid actresses. —AFP ■

## Priyanka Chopra gets a wax statue at New York Madame Tussauds

NEW YORK—Actor Priyanka Chopra is the latest Indian A-lister to get a wax figure at Madame Tussauds museum here.

The actor shared the news on social media and said her wax figure will also be unveiled in other cities across the world, including London, Sydney and Asia.

"It's finally here! You can now see my wax figure at Mad-

ame Tussauds in NYC!! (& at other locations very soon!)" she wrote on Facebook.

The "Quantico" star also shared a brief video where is working closely with Madame Tussauds artists.

Priyanka's wax statue is dressed in a red Jason Wu outfit that she wore at the 2016 Emmy Awards. It also wears a replica of the diamond ring her husband Nick Jonas gave her.

The Madame Tussauds also shared a video where Priyanka's wax figure is unveiled in front of her.

"It really is a surprise. That's crazy... I love my eyebrows," she said in the video.

Priyanka, 36, is currently awaiting the release of Hollywood film "Isn't It Romantic?". She also has "The Sky Is Pink", opposite Farhan Akhtar and Zaira Wasim. —PTI ■

## I was first choice to host the Oscars, says Dwayne

LOS ANGELES—Actor Dwayne Johnson has revealed that he was the first choice of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) to host the upcoming Oscars ceremony. Responding to a fan, who asked the actor to host the ceremony next year, Johnson revealed that the Academy

approached him for the hosting gig this year but things did not materialised due to his commitments to "Jumanji 2".

"Ah mahalo dude, I was their first choice to host this year, and my goal was to make it the most fun and entertaining Oscars ever. We all tried hard, but couldn't make it work

since I'm shooting 'Jumanji', the actor wrote. "Academy and I were super bummed but maybe one day down the road," he added. The Oscars are currently without a host after Kevin Hart stepped down from the job following a controversy over his resurfaced old homophobic tweets. —PTI ■

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# Gender funding gap grows when research pitches get personal: study

PARIS—Women are less successful in receiving research funding than men if the selection process focusses on the scientist making the pitch rather than the science presented, according to new research released Friday.

In an edition of *The Lancet* medical journal dedicated entirely to gender issues in health and science, the paper showed that the gap between male and female success rates in grant acceptance grew when things got personal.

The experiment analysed nearly 24,000 grant applications over five years at the Canadian Institute of Health Research—Canada's main public medical research funder.

In 2014 the body changed its application process, splitting funding reviews into two separate schemes—one with an explicit focus on the applicant, the

other evaluating the science. In doing so, they created a “unique natural experiment”, according to the authors of the study. When assessments were based solely on the quality of the science, the gender gap between grants accepted was a mere 0.9 percentage points.

But when the assessments were based on an evaluation of the principal scientists pitching the project, the gap between male and female acceptances grew to 4 percent.

“This shows us that men and women proposed science is evaluated to be of similar quality, but men and women are not evaluated similarly as scientists,” said Holly Witteman, associate professor at the Department of Family and Emergency Medicine at Laval University, Quebec.

Witteman said there may be a number of reasons behind this,

including individual or systemic biases. Whether consciously or unconsciously, reviewers may “tend to think as men being better scientists than women,” she told AFP.

## ‘Purely on merit’

Friday's edition of *The Lancet* also featured studies into sexual harassment within scientific and medical fields, and how women are poorly represented in the research community despite making up 75 per cent of health workers worldwide. “Something has gone badly wrong in global health,” said the journal's editor-in-chief, Richard Horton. “The global health community has abdicated its responsibility for achieving gender justice in health.” Witteman said that despite some progress — notably the awarding of last year's Nobel Prizes for physics and chemistry

to women—science and medicine had a long way to go to redress their trenchant gender imbalances. “I would like this to be done and solved and for us not to have to worry about bias getting in the way of assessing science and awarding grants based purely on merit,” she said.

“I believe that prizes should be awarded on merit and I believe that merit should be free of bias.” In October, Canadian scientist Donna Strickland became just the third woman in history to win the Nobel Physics Prize. Twenty-four hours later, US biochemist Frances Arnold was awarded the chemistry prize, only the fifth woman to receive the honour. “It's convenient for some people to believe there is no bias in the system but when we look closer we often find that there is,” said Witteman.— AFP ■

## Scientists urge Kenya to fast track development of astronomical observatory

NAIROBI— Scientists meeting in Kenya's capital city Nairobi, on Thursday urged the country to fast track development of an astronomical observatory in order to boost the country's technological progress, officials said on Thursday. David Buckley, senior astronomer from South Africa Astronomical Observatory, said that Kenya occupies a unique geographical area for astronomy on the equator but has no existing observatory.

“Such a telescope in Kenya would be the only research-class observatory in equatorial Africa, providing a focus of interest for the East Africa region and indeed the entire continent,” Buckley said.

During the six-day symposium, the scientists from over 10 countries explored the benefits an observatory can bring in terms of capacity building in science, engineering and technology at all levels from primary schools to universities and industry. Bitange Ndemo, Chairman of Kenya Optical Telescope Initiative said that the development of astronomical observing facilities will assist the country study the structure of the universe.

Ndemo noted that the establishment of an optical astronomical observatory would enable Kenya to leverage the project to achieve technology development in the area of optical engineering and related technologies.

He added that the giant telescope will enhance technology transfer into Kenya by allowing Kenyan scientists to work with international partners as possible stakeholders in the construction and running of the facility.

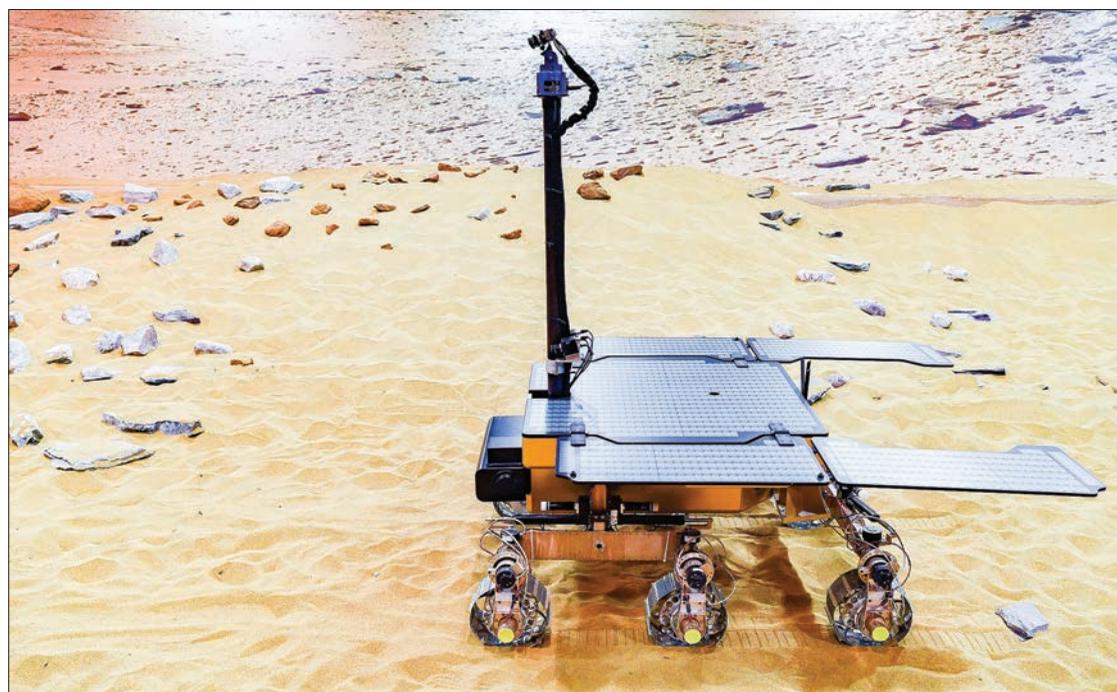
Paul Baki, head of physics and space science at the Technical University of Kenya said that the country's North-west region around the Lake Turkana is an ideal location for an astronomical observatory because of its unusually low cloud coverage. “This dry area on the equator gives access to more than 85 percent of the sky in both northern and southern celestial hemispheres,” Baki said.— Xinhua ■

# New Mars rover named after DNA pioneer Rosalind Franklin

STEVENAGE (United Kingdom)—A British-made rover that will set off for Mars next year in search for signs of life was named Thursday after DNA pioneer Rosalind Franklin. UK astronaut Tim Peake revealed the name of the first European scavenger of the Red Planet at the Airbus factory just north of London where it was built.

Cambridge-educated Franklin “helped us understand life on Earth and now her namesake will do the same on Mars,” UK Science Minister Chris Skidmore said at the unveiling. The brilliant, but long-unrecognised, 20th century British scientist's name was selected with the help of a public competition in which nearly 36,000 took part. “Just as Rosalind Franklin overcame many obstacles during her career, I hope ‘Rosalind the Rover’ will successfully persevere in this exciting adventure, inspiring generations of female scientists and engineers to come,” said Skidmore.

Franklin's work was used to formulate the seminal 1953 hypothesis about the structure of DNA—the molecule containing an organism's genetic code. She died of cancer at the age of 37 in 1958. The three men who were



A picture shows a working prototype of the newly named Rosalind Franklin ExoMars rover at the Airbus Defence and Space facility in Stevenage, north of London on 7 February, 2019. PHOTO: AFP

awarded the Nobel Prize for their work on DNA four years later did not mention Franklin in their acceptance speeches. Franklin's contribution to their research remained largely overlooked in science books until the 1990s.

The new rover is planned to land on Mars in 2021 as part of the ExoMars programme which is being conducted jointly by the European Space Agency (ESA) and its Russian counterpart Roscosmos. It follows in the

tracks of three similar missions conducted by the United States. The six-wheeler will be “looking for traces of life beyond Earth,” said ESA human and robotic exploration director David Parker. “Can we find primitive life on the Red Planet?” he asked.

## ‘Big moment for Britain’

The new rover will try to answer that question by drilling two metres (6.5 feet) into the hot planet's surface to sample and

analyse the soil. It will use solar power to drive around with the help of optic sensors. Scientists said it will have a degree of “intelligence” that allows it to make some rudimentary decisions on its own.

The rover will first undergo a series of stern tests to make sure it can survive extreme temperatures and vibrations endured in a journey that takes it more than 55 million kilometres (35 million miles) from Earth.— AFP ■



Myanmar national women football team seen at an international football tournament. PHOTO: MFF

## Myanmar to host 2<sup>nd</sup> round of 2020 Women's Olympic qualifiers

MYANMAR will host the second round of qualifiers for women's football teams for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The matches will be held from 1 to 9 April, said a source with the Myanmar Football Federation. Besides Myanmar, Palestine and Uzbekistan will also hold qualifying matches for the women's Olympics.

A total of 12 women's national football teams have qualified for the second round of qualifiers. They are — Myanmar, Iran, Uz-

bekistan, Jordan, Palestine, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, India, Nepal, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam.

There will be a total of three groups with four teams each at the group play stage, said a source with the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

A drawing ceremony for the fixture of the group play will be held soon, said the source.

"At the drawing ceremony, Myanmar will be placed in Pot (1)

along with Viet Nam and Chinese Taipei. Pot (2) will comprise Jordan, Iran, and India. The Philippines, Hong Kong, and Indonesia will be in Pot (3). Palestine, Nepal, and Uzbekistan will be in Pot (4). The ceremony will be held soon by the AFC," said the source with the MFF. Currently, the Myanmar national women's football team is gearing for the Hero Gold Cup, which will be held in India from 9 February (today).—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

## MFF seeks volunteers for international tourneys

THE Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) is calling for young volunteers for international tournaments, including the second round of the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers which will be held at the Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay from 27 February to 3 March.

The Myanmar women's junior football team will be competing in the tourney, said the MFF.

The football federation is inviting youths to volunteer for the matches, which will be super-

vised by the MFF. There are some criteria for interested volunteers, said MFF officials. Both girls and boys can apply for the positions, and interested candidates must be in the 20-25 age group, the MFF stated on its website.

Volunteers need to be interested in the sport, and must have a mindset for volunteering, besides good social and communication skills, the MFF stated.

Fluency in English is the most important criteria, and applicants must be studying at the

graduate or undergraduate level, the federation stated.

Applicants must be willing to discharge duties assigned by the federation, which will include liaising with foreign football federations. The MFF has asked interested candidates to mail their personal information with passport-sized photos to adm\_mff@mff-ma.com by 14 February, said the federation. Candidates can also mail inquiries to the same email address, it added.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

## Tokyo strikes gold, silver and bronze with e-waste Olympic medals

TOKYO—All medals for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will be made from metal collected by recycling electronic waste, games organisers said on Friday. Tokyo's organising committee in 2017 launched a project to collect assorted electronic waste—including old smartphones and laptops—from the public to collect metal for the medals. Recycled metal has also been collected from local Japanese businesses and industry. In a statement issued on Friday, organisers said the collection was expected to reach its goal and will end in late March.

By November last year, municipal authorities had already collected 47,488 tonnes of discarded devices, with the public handing in another five

million used phones to a local network provider.

Organisers had set a target of 2,700 kgs (about 5,950 pounds) of bronze, 30.3 kgs (67 pounds) of gold and 4,100 kg (about 9,040 pounds) of silver. They hit the target for bronze last June, and by October had more than 90 per cent of the gold and 85 per cent of the silver. "It is estimated that the remaining amounts of metal required to manufacture all Olympic and Paralympic medals can be extracted from the devices already donated," the organisers said. Recycled metals have been used in previous years to make Olympic medals, including in Rio where some 30 per cent of the silver and bronze in medals came from recycled materials.—AFP ■

## Scrivener, Kaufman take charge at pioneering Australia event

GEELONG (Australia)—Australia's Jason Scrivener and Nick Flanagan shared a two-shot lead while American Kim Kaufman took charge of the women's tournament at the pioneering Vic Open on Friday. The event, co-sanctioned by the European Tour and the US-based LPGA Tour, is the only one in the world with male and female fields playing, in alternate groups, on the same course and for equal prize money. Scrivener carded six birdies in his six-under-par 66 on day two while fellow Australian Flanagan, a former US amateur champion, shot a 68 to go with his opening round 62.

"It's been two solid days' work," said Scrivener, who continued his strong early season form which has been rewarded with three top-10 finishes on the European Tour. "It's just patience really, I think knowing there's a lot of birdies out there helps. If you try to rush them, you can make mistakes, so just plodding your way around and being smart about it." James Nitties, who sank a world record-equalling nine birdies in a row on Thursday at the 13<sup>th</sup> Beach Golf Links south of Melbourne, could only manage one in his round of 74, which was marred by a double bogey on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Kaufman, who has never won on the LPGA Tour, positioned herself for the weekend with her second 66 in a row—including a birdie-birdie finish—to be two ahead of Japan's Haru Nomura.

"I just kind of did the same thing as yesterday. With all the par 5s out there, everything's just pretty solid. Just been fun," said Kaufman, who added that she had been keen to play the male-female event. "Last year was when I kind of heard about it and I've been pretty outspoken about coming down here," she said. "It's lived up to every expectation, which has been great." England's Felicity Johnson, the first round leader, could only muster a second round 74 to be seven off the pace. One of the day's biggest movers was veteran Karrie Webb, who stroked a 65 to be six behind Kaufman.—AFP ■



Jason Scrivener of Australia chips onto the green during the second round of the Vic Open golf tournament at the 13th Beach Golf Links at Barwon Heads near Melbourne on 8 February 2019. PHOTO: AFP

## Colombia appoint Carlos Queiroz as national coach

BOGOTA — Portuguese Carlos Queiroz vowed to build on the legacy left by his predecessor Jose Pekerman after he was officially unveiled as Colombia's new head coach on Thursday. The Colombian Football Federation (FCF) identified the 65-year-old as its preferred candidate late last year but had to wait until his contract with Iran's national team expired after last month's Asian Cup. "It's an honor for me to accept this job. I will do my best (...) to continue the development that Colombia has shown in recent years," Queiroz told a news conference here. "Continuing the legacy left by the previous manager [Pekerman] and working hard to maintain the prestige and reputation that Colombia has today is my first priority and my obligation," he said. Colombia had been without a head coach since September, when Pekerman stepped down after six and a half years in charge.

Queiroz and the FCF finalized details of a five-year contract this week and the manager will reportedly earn an annual salary of around three million US dollars. His first match in charge will be a friendly against Japan in Tokyo on 22 March. The FCF said it is trying to schedule another friendly in Asia four days later.—Xinhua ■